



Best Practices for Solid Waste Management: A Guide for Decision-Makers in Developing Countries

Marine Litter

Inadequate solid waste management on land leads to an increase in marine litter, which contributes to environmental and economic impacts. As the graphic on page two shows, the majority of plastic marine litter (as much as 80 percent according to some estimates) comes from land-based sources. This flyer describes several best practices for preventing and reducing marine litter.

Impacts

Key impacts associated with marine litter include:

Species impacts. Fish, mammals, and plants can be directly impacted by marine litter, whether through ingestion of materials, physical damage from floating or sunken objects, or entrapment (e.g., in detached nets).

Habitat damages. Marine litter can harm entire habitats or ecosystems through physical impacts (e.g., on coral reefs) or through cascading effects on species at the bottom of the food chain.

Economic impacts. Marine litter can damage marine infrastructure and vessels, degrade aesthetics in areas dependent on tourism (e.g., beaches), and harm individuals and businesses that depend on the health of marine resources.

Best Practices

The most effective means of minimizing impacts of land-based marine litter is to focus on its sources, which involves:

Minimizing and preventing waste. An excellent way to prevent marine litter is to avoid generating waste in the first place.

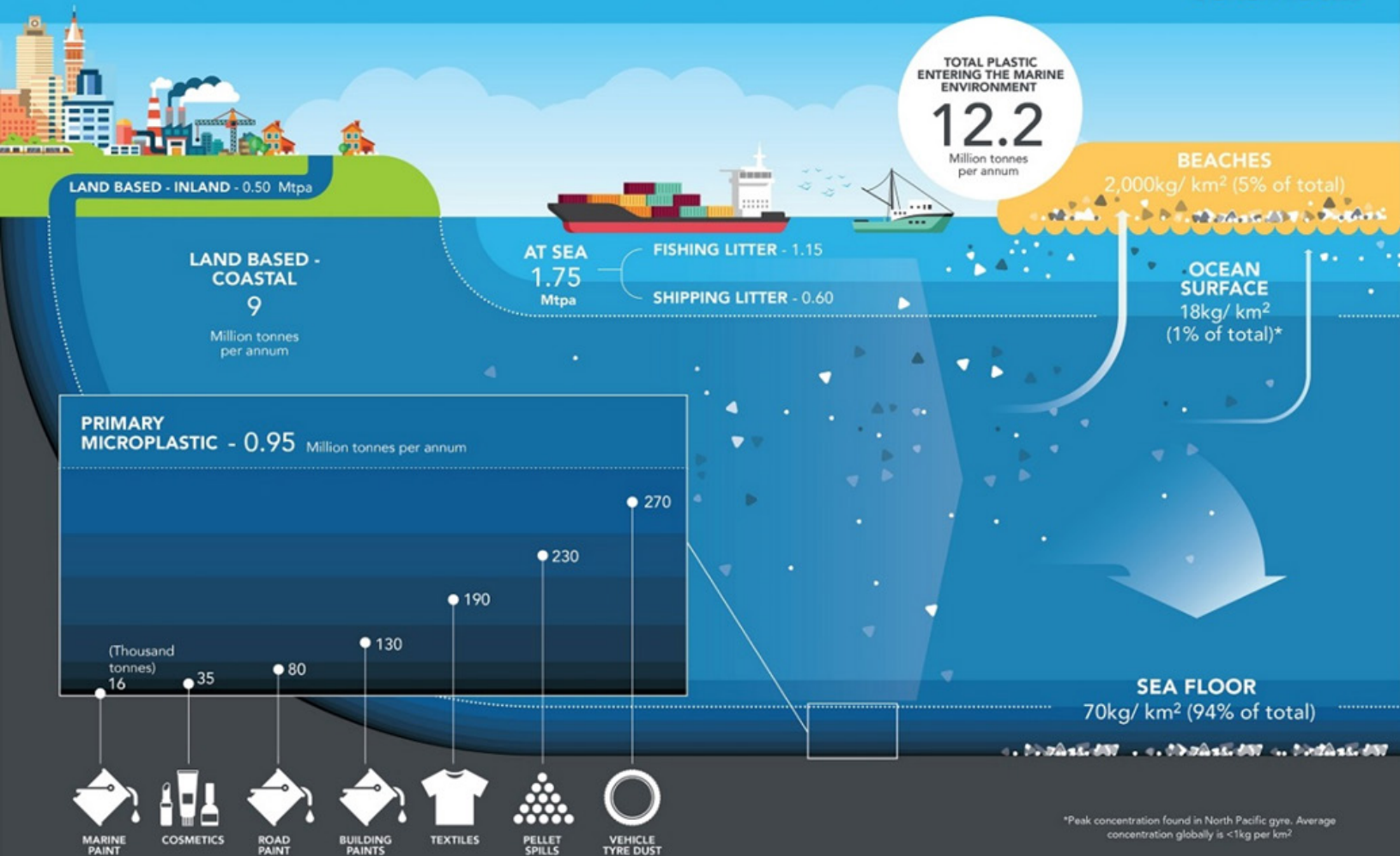
Improving waste collection systems. Improving waste collection systems (e.g., by increasing collection coverage and efficiency) can help reduce the risk that waste will be improperly disposed of in waterways, accidentally swept downstream during storm events, or otherwise allowed to enter oceans.

Bolstering recycling efforts. By supporting the local recycling industry, cities can create demand for materials (especially plastics, which account for as much as 90 percent of marine litter) that might otherwise enter ocean-bound waterways.

Improving environmentally sound disposal of waste. If waste cannot be recycled, it should be managed and disposed of in an environmentally sound manner. It is important to have disposal options to limit or prevent illegal dumping or open dumpsites where waste can quickly be carried by the wind and end up in waterways and, eventually, the ocean.

PLASTICS IN THE MARINE ENVIRONMENT: WHERE DO THEY COME FROM? WHERE DO THEY GO?

eunomia



Source: Eunomia.



Download EPA's **Best Practices for Solid Waste Management** guide to learn more

Additional Resources

[Fighting for Trash Free Seas: Ending the Flow of Trash at the Source](#)

[Global Partnership on Marine Litter](#)

[NOAA's Marine Debris Program](#)

[Plastics Policy Playbook: Strategies for a Plastic-Free Ocean](#)

[Strategies to Reduce Marine Plastic Pollution from Land-Based Sources in Low and Middle - Income Countries](#)