

The Do's and Don'ts of Marine Debris DO ...

- Set an example by not littering.
- Make it a habit to pick up litter when you see it.
- Make sure garbage cans have lids that attach securely.
- Carry a litterbag in your vehicle, bike, and/or boat.
- Share your concern with friends, fellow mariners, and family.
- Recycle, Recycle, Recycle!

DON'T ...

- Participate in activities that contribute to marine debris (i.e. balloon releases).
- Treat our planet as your ashtray.
- Allow trash to be discarded, washed or blown overboard a vessel.
- Assume someone else will properly dispose of your garbage.
- Purchase non-biodegradable items when biodegradable are available.

If you see an injured or entangled animal in the water, contact the nearest Florida Fish & Wildlife Conservation Commission law enforcement office by calling 1-888-404-FWCC. Please do not attempt to rescue the animal. You may further injure the animal or yourself.

To learn more about what you can do to prevent marine debris, contact the Keep Sarasota County Beautiful Program at (941) 861-6767, or Sarasota County Natural Resources at (941) 861-6155.

This publication was made possible through a grant from the Florida Department of Transportation.

Remember, together we can *Keep Sarasota County Beautiful*

**Cover: Manatee Photo by Jim Phillips
Manatees are especially prone
to entanglement and ingestion
of monofilament line that is
commonly found in the seagrass
beds where they feed.**

Marine DEBRIS

How harmful is it?



In addition to being a great place to enjoy the sun and surf, Sarasota County's beaches and waterways serve as important habitat for a great diversity of marine life. Unfortunately, our beautiful beaches and marine life are faced with a serious problem, **marine debris**.

When trash finds its way into our oceans, rivers, and streams, it becomes marine debris. Marine debris is usually the direct result of human activities. It may be garbage that has been intentionally dumped or accidentally dropped on land or at sea. Depending on what it's made of (plastic, glass, metal, rubber, wood, paper, cloth), it may sink to the bottom of the seafloor, drift in the tides, or wash ashore on our coastlines.

Marine Debris Can Kill

Each year in Sarasota County, marine animals lose their life to marine debris. Sea turtles, manatees, dolphins, and whales are prone to entanglement in derelict fishing gear, monofilament line, packaging bands, discarded nets and ropes, plastic six pack rings, and other stray items. Items such as plastic bags, balloons, and cellophane are often ingested by marine animals that mistake them for jellyfish. Some shorebirds will even feed cigarette butts and other human litter to their young. One sea turtle found in New York had actually consumed 590 feet of heavy duty fishing line. Even yard waste, such as grass clippings and tree limbs, can negatively impact the marine environment by starving the seagrasses and marine organisms of the light and oxygen they need to survive.

**Do your part.
Pick up litter
when you see it.**

Boaters Beware

Marine debris not only impacts our local wildlife, it also endangers the safety and livelihood of our fishermen and recreational boaters. Most boaters have experienced some

This endangered Kemp's ridley sea turtle was rescued and rehabilitated at Mote Marine Laboratory after ingesting a balloon. The balloon, attached to several feet of ribbon and other balloons, could have eventually caused the turtle to drown or starve to death.



sort of boating difficulties related to marine debris. Fishermen report heavy time and financial losses due to damage to vessels and equipment. Waterways have been quarantined and beaches closed as a result of irresponsible waste disposal.

A Working Waterfront

Many of us see our waters as a place to live, work, and play. We rely on our coastline to provide opportunities that keep our tourism-based economy strong. Yet, each year over 800,000 pounds of debris are removed from our local waters. Some of this debris, if not removed, would persist for hundreds of years. One careless moment could last for generations, such as:

Aluminum Can	200 Years
Plastic Six-Pack Ring	400 Years
Plastic Beverage Bottle	450 Years
Glass Bottles and Jars	Unknown
Monofilament Fishing Line	600+ Years

Land Ahoy

It is important to note that the majority of marine debris starts on land. Research has shown that most marine debris washes off of streets, into storm drains that empty directly into streams, rivers, and bays. Each time it rains, more litter makes its way into our oceans.



This is litter too!