

MARCO, MACO and the Mid-Atlantic Marine Debris Work Group

June 18, 2019

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Mid-Atlantic Ocean Action Plan

HEALTHY OCEAN ECOSYSTEM



Action 4 - Develop a regionally appropriate strategy for marine debris reduction.

Marine debris is a problem that threatens the health of Mid-Atlantic ocean ecosystems and human health through the bioaccumulation of plastics in the marine food web, and in particular the ingestion of plastic particles by commercially sought species. Its resolution requires collaboration across levels of government and with the public and partners. The purpose of this action is to build on efforts of NOAA's Marine Debris Program,⁴³ EPA's Trash-free Waters Program, and other existing programs and partnerships in the region to develop regionally appropriate and feasible marine debris reduction strategies that address key issues such as: debris from storms, derelict fishing gear, plastic food containers, microplastics, plastic bottles and bags, balloons, and cigarette butts. Strategies may include source reduction, coordinated cleanups, regionally applicable public outreach, education, and social marketing campaigns aimed at behavior change.



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Mid-Atlantic Marine Debris Projects Database

MID-ATLANTIC

Marine Debris Collaborative

HOME ABOUT RESOURCES

WELCOME LOCATIONS DETAILS

View our interactive map and table to learn more about marine debris projects in the Mid-Atlantic.

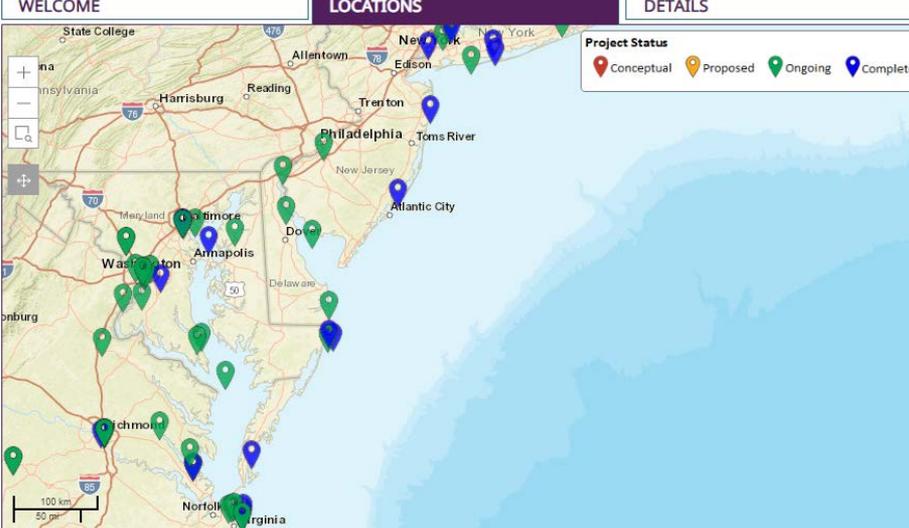
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WELCOME LOCATIONS DETAILS



Project Status
● Conceptual ● Proposed ● Ongoing ● Complete

WELCOME LOCATIONS DETAILS

EXPORT SEARCH:

Name	Overview
Trash Pollution Solutions: A Community-Based Approach for Baltimore City	Trash Free Maryland is launching a multi-year social marketing campaign to reduce land-based litter in Baltimore City in partnership with the Maryland Port Authority, the US EPA, and a collection of Baltimore nonprofit organizations. Through this grant, the team will conduct formal a small-scale social marketing campaign in five target neighborhoods (Baltimore Highlands, Brooklyn/Curtis Bay, McElderry Park, Mondawmin, and the Harbor) to promote litter cleanup activities and prevention. After a mid-year evaluation, the team will develop a revised plan to roll out the initial campaign campaign will add new audience segments and target littering behaviors in future years. The ultimate aim of the project is to reduce the amount of litter in the neighborhoods and waterways. The campaign will be accomplished through interviews and working with stakeholders to identify key anti-litter activities will primarily include installation of signage and advertising, distribution of tools supporting the desired behavior, and community enga
Ocoquan River Cleanups (Spring and Fall)	Friends of the Ocoquan organizes these cleanups. In the fall, they are part of the ICC and collect data.
Virginia Clean Marina Program	The Virginia Clean Marina Program promotes the voluntary adoption of measures that prevent or reduce pollution from traditional and non-trad boatyards and recreational boats. Marina operators that adopt these measures are designated as "Virginia Clean Marinas." The program is host of Marine Science
BoatUS, TowBoatUS	In 2016, TowBoatUS removed two commercial fishing nets that are entangled on an artificial reef in the Atlantic Ocean offshore Ocean City, MD. The nets were still actively fishing and trapping aquatic life.

BoatUS, TowBoatUS Ocean City Large Debris Removal Project

In 2016, TowBoatUS removed two commercial fishing nets that are entangled on an artificial reef in the Atlantic Ocean offshore Ocean City, MD. In both locations the nets were still actively fishing and trapping aquatic life.

Status: Complete | **Funding:** \$51,000
Funding Source: NOAA Marine Debris Program, BoatUS Foundation

<https://midatlantic-mdc.diver.orr.noaa.gov/#>

Training in “Community-Based Social Marketing”



Selecting a Project



BALLOON DEBRIS: A RISING CONCERN IN THE MID-ATLANTIC

Why Focus on Balloons?

Balloon marine debris is of immediate concern to the Atlantic Coast because of its potentially severe impact on marine life. More than 270 experts in marine debris, averaging 12 years of experience in their field, were asked by the Ocean Conservancy to rank the severity of impacts of marine debris on seabirds, sea turtles and marine mammals. Balloons were ranked in the number three spot due to the likelihood of entanglement or ingestion by marine life.

Balloons are unique among all the man-made litter and debris found in the ocean and on the land because helium-filled balloons (and their attachments including plastic valves, disks and ribbons) are a form of litter that people actually purchase with the intent to release them into the environment. Some people make the connection that when balloons go up they come back to Earth as potentially harmful litter. However, too many participate in balloon releases without making this connection.



Balloon Debris by the Numbers

In 2016-2017, volunteers participating in the International Coastal Cleanup (ICC) found and reported more than 14,700 littered balloons in Mid-Atlantic states - New York, New Jersey, Delaware, Maryland and Virginia. Of these, 7,383 balloons were found in New York. New Jersey volunteers reported 2,832 balloon litter items, and Virginia volunteers found 2,414 balloons.



Bags of balloons found in one day on a Virginia beach.

ICC data in one mid-Atlantic state—Virginia—reveals that most of the balloon litter is found on its beaches, demonstrating that balloon litter accumulates in coastal environments. During a recent 5-year (2013-2017)

monitoring project on remote islands of Virginia, up to 272 balloons were recorded per mile of beach. The study, which documented a total of 11,441 balloons and balloon-related pieces of litter (e.g., plastic ribbons), also found that balloon litter was the top marine debris item on the beaches that were surveyed. Plastic beverage bottles were in second place.



During the taping of a new video on balloon debris, researchers Christina Trippani and Kelly O'Hara share some of the many balloons they have documented and collected on Virginia beaches.

Impacts of Balloon Debris

Released balloons can drift hundreds of miles and out over our oceans. Latex balloons burst in the atmosphere (photo top right), so that when they fall into the water they resemble jelly fish, a favorite food of sea turtles like the Kemp's ridley shown above with plastic ribbon attached to a balloon protruding from its mouth. Birds are also easily entangled in the balloons and their ribbons. Most of the osprey chick's nest at right is filled with balloons and ribbons. Foil balloons that become entangled in power lines can cause wide-spread power outages.



What is Marine Debris?

Our oceans are filled with items that do not belong there, making marine debris one of the most widespread pollution problems facing the world's ocean and waterway. According to NOAA's Marine Debris Program, marine debris is defined as any persistent

Work Continues through MARCO and MACO



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Mid-Atlantic Committee on the Ocean

MARCO is a committee established by MARCO to foster collaboration among states, federal agencies, the Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council (MAFMC), and federally recognized tribes, and to engage stakeholders. The purpose of MACO is to enhance the vitality of the region's ocean ecosystem and economy through increased communication and collaboration.

Goals:

- Provide a venue for ongoing regional information sharing and coordination about the Mid-Atlantic's ocean ecosystem and economy;
- Generate a deeper understanding and awareness of state, federal, tribal and regional fisheries management entities' programs and other activities affecting ocean waters off the Mid-Atlantic;
- Identify and pursue, where appropriate, opportunities for collaboration on regional ocean issues;
- Generate and maintain a list of contacts engaged in ocean planning to facilitate communication across the region;
- Identify ways to enhance federal data sharing and support for the Mid-Atlantic Ocean Data Portal to inform ocean planning and management; and
- Engage stakeholders in learning about, identifying and responding to regional ocean issues.

The Mid-Atlantic Ocean Forum

Committee members will convene an annual **Mid-Atlantic Ocean Forum** as a venue for regional information sharing, coordination and collaboration, and to enhance the region's ability to leverage existing efforts and information across multiple levels of government, federally recognized tribes, non-governmental entities and other stakeholders. The information and presentations discussed and shared through the Forum will inform the Committee and participants about potential areas to take future action, generate a deeper understanding and awareness of member priorities and policy changes/enhancements that may affect regional

