



North Carolina Marine Debris Action Plan:

Strategic Plan 2020 - 2025

February 2020

Acknowledgements

The North Carolina Marine Debris Action Plan, including this Strategic Plan, is the result of a multi-year collaborative effort. Many thanks go to the participants of the two workshops and North Carolina Marine Debris Symposium session, who provided the content of this plan; to the leadership team that led and executed the process of developing the plan and provided financial support for meetings and workshops; to the North Carolina Coastal Reserve and National Estuarine Research Reserve for supporting the process with facilitation services; and to the advisory and implementation committee for helping to guide the plan in its final stages.

Leadership Team:

Rachel Bisesi, Sarah Bodin, Sara Hallas, Bonnie Mitchell, Leslie Vegas, North Carolina Coastal Federation

Paula Gillikin, North Carolina Coastal Reserve & National Estuarine Research Reserve

Gloria Putnam, North Carolina Sea Grant

Lisa Rider, North Carolina Marine Debris Symposium and Coastal Carolina Riverwatch



Advisory and Implementation Team:



Contact information for the Advisory and Implementation Team is found in Appendix A

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For more information, please contact:

North Carolina Coastal Federation
3609 N.C. 24
Newport, N.C. 28570
252-393-8185

Introduction

The Marine Debris Act (33 U.S.C. §1951 et seq.; P.L. 109-449) establishes the definition of marine debris as “... any persistent solid material that is manufactured or processed and directly or indirectly, intentionally or unintentionally, disposed of or abandoned into the marine environment.” It is a widespread pollution issue of local, national, and international significance that impacts human health and welfare, wildlife, habitats, and economies. Addressing marine debris can prevent negative impacts and support healthy coastal economies and ecosystems.

[The North Carolina Marine Debris Action Plan](#) (“Action Plan”) provides a strategic framework for prevention and removal of marine debris along the North Carolina coast and is based upon a recent evaluation of past and current attempts to address the problem. The Action Plan is meant to inspire strategic coordination, focus, and direction for the organizations and communities that address or will address marine debris over the next five years and into future generations. North Carolina can maintain and perpetuate one of the cleanest and most productive coastal and marine environments in the world with support from the Action Plan.

Over the years, various programs and projects have been implemented in North Carolina to help prevent and remove marine debris; however, no single agency or program coordinates coastwide marine debris management efforts. In 2017, a leadership team composed of partners from the North Carolina Coastal Federation, North Carolina Coastal Reserve and National Estuarine Research Reserve, North Carolina Sea Grant, and North Carolina Marine Debris Symposium initiated a process to develop a coordinated effort to strategically address marine debris. In an effort to first assess the current status of marine debris occurrence and management, the leadership team engaged local and state government agencies, nonprofit organizations, academic institutions, and industry partners. The full assessment entitled [“The State of Marine Debris in North Carolina: An Assessment of Prevention and Removal Efforts”](#) is a companion document to this Strategic Plan.



Purpose

The purpose of the Action Plan is to coordinate, focus and direct efforts over the next five years that will strategically reduce the amount of marine debris and its impacts in coastal North Carolina through tangible and measurable actions.



Foundations

- **Creativity and Credibility:** diverse experts working together are a trusted source of information and solutions.
- **Collaboration:** working together will ensure that realistic and effective strategies are developed and implemented.
- **Efficiency:** wise use of available knowledge and resources will maximize productivity.
- **Empowerment and Accountability:** collaborations enable and empower organizations to do what is necessary to reduce marine debris.



Strategic Plan with Goals and Priority Objectives

To ensure maximum utility of the Action Plan for a diverse array of stakeholders, the detailed Action Plan roadmap was consolidated into this strategic plan with priority objectives found below.

Goal 1: Lead and Coordinate

Lead, coordinate, and communicate in a way that effectively engages partners and other stakeholders to carry out the Action Plan and advance the issue of marine debris at the state level.

Objectives

- Identify core leadership team and establish marine debris stakeholder advisory and implementation committee to support the state Action Plan.
- Publish, distribute, and implement the Action Plan.
- Encourage state level planning, coordination, and assistance for marine debris issues.
- Create a communications strategy centered around the Action Plan that includes at least two stakeholder engagement events per year.



Goal 2: Prevent

Prevent the introduction of marine debris with programs that increase awareness, improve policy, and inspire behavior change.

Objectives

- Collaborate with businesses to implement marine debris reduction strategies.
- Develop a marine debris education strategy for K-12 students.
- Develop two marine debris prevention programs specific to target audiences.
- Implement and promote North Carolina Shellfish Mariculture Best Management Practices.
- Work with state and local governments to improve public policy that supports the prevention of marine debris.



Goal 3: Remove

Remove chronic and storm debris in a strategic and efficient way, inspiring and assisting citizens and other stakeholders to participate as appropriate.

Objectives

- Target select volunteer groups to assist with marine debris cleanups, while maximizing participant and public awareness of the issue.
- Establish an annual paid cleanup of marine debris.
- Increase readiness and capacity for engaging in storm response.
- Devise and implement a microplastic wastewater reduction strategy.



Goal 4: Prevent and Remove Abandoned and Derelict Vessels (ADV)

Implement strategies that support removal of existing derelict vessels, increased capacity for prevention, and careful environmental response.

Objectives

- Establish and maintain a comprehensive georeferenced database of derelict vessels in coastal North Carolina.
- Remove existing abandoned and derelict vessels with state and federal funds that have been provided since Hurricane Florence.
- Establish and adequately fund a formal state program to prevent and remove abandoned and derelict vessels.
- Better coordinate state and federal policy, planning, and response related to ADVs, including ADVs generated during storm events.
- Actively encourage county government ordinances that prevent and remove abandoned and derelict vessels.
- Minimize damage to sensitive habitats caused by displaced vessels.



Goal 5: Research and Assessment

Identify, support and conduct research to understand the extent and impacts of marine debris and monitor trends to progressively improve strategies.

Objectives

- Establish standardized protocols for marine debris cleanups that would contribute to quantitatively assembling and analyzing debris status and trends.
- Produce an annual list of research priorities related to marine debris.
- Improve understanding of plastic debris entering coastal waters.

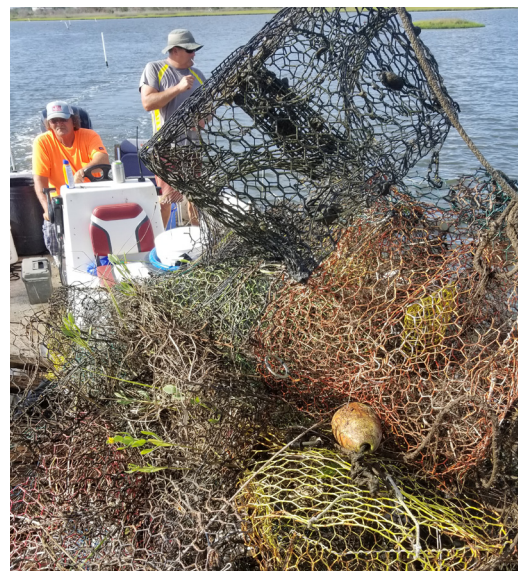


N.C. Marine Debris Action Plan

Appendix A.

Advisory and Implementation Committee Members

Name	Affiliation	Email
Larry Baldwin	Crystal Coast Waterkeeper	larryb@crystalcoastwaterkeeper.org
Rachel Bisesi	N.C. Coastal Federation	rachelb@nccoast.org
Sarah Bodin	N.C. Coastal Federation	sarahb@nccoast.org
Michael Cavanagh	US Coast Guard	Michael.J.Cavanagh@uscg.mil
Paula Gillikin	N.C. Coastal Reserve and National Estuarine Research Reserve	paula.gillikin@ncdenr.gov
Sara Hallas	N.C. Coastal Federation	sarajh@nccoast.org
Stewart Harris	American Chemistry Council	stewart_harris@americanchemistry.com
Sarah Latshaw	NOAA Marine Debris Program	Sarah.Latshaw@noaa.gov
Jenna Livernois	N.C. Aquarium, Jennette's Pier	Jenna.livernois@ncaquariums.com
Samantha Maxwell	US Coast Guard	Samantha.m.maxwell@uscg.mil
Mary McClellan	Carolina Recycling Association	mary@cra-recycle.org
Todd Miller	N.C. Coastal Federation	ToddM@nccoast.org
Bonnie Mitchell	N.C. Coastal Federation	bonniem@nccoast.org
Bonnie Monteleone	Plastic Ocean Project	Bonnie@plasticoceanproject.org
Trish Murphey	Albemarle Pamlico National Estuary Partnership	Trish.murphey@ncdenr.gov
Rett Newton	Town of Beaufort	e.newton@beaufortnc.org
Gloria Putnam	N.C. Sea Grant	gfputnam@ncsu.edu
Wayne Randolph	N.C. DEQ DWM	Wayne.randolph@ncdenr.gov
Lisa Rider	Coastal Carolina Riverwatch	lisar@coastalcarolinariverwatch.org
Dee Smith	Carteret Big Sweep	Dee_edwards-smith@ncsu.edu
Ben Solomon	N.C. Wildlife Resources Commission	ben.solomon@ncwildlife.org
Leslie Vegas	N.C. Coastal Federation	lesliev@nccoast.org
Ray Williams	N.C. DEQ DWM	ray.williams@ncdenr.gov



To read the full plan, visit nccoast.org/actionplan.