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AMBASSADOR PROGRAM

PLASTIC POLLUTION FACTS

- Approximately 8.8 million tons of plastic enters the ocean from land each year ([Science](#)) which equals one dump truck full of plastic per minute ([World Economic Forum](#)). This amount is expected to double by 2025 ([Science](#)). A majority of this plastic is carried by wind-driven currents into oceanic gyres ([PLOS ONE](#)), while much has also been found in remote islands ([PNAS](#)).
- When plastic is exposed to natural forces like sunlight and wave action, it will degrade into microplastics—defined as plastic particles under 5 mm in size. ([Current Environmental Health Reports](#))
- Conservative estimates suggest 5.25 trillion plastic particles currently circulate in ocean surface waters. ([PLOS ONE](#))
- We have produced 8.3 billion metric tons of virgin plastics to date, with global production growing from just 15 million tons in 1964 to 322 million tons in 2015 – a twenty-fold increase. ([Science](#))
- Of the total amount of plastic waste that’s been generated, only 9% has been recycled, 12% has been incinerated and 79% has accumulated in landfills or the natural environment. If current production and waste management trends continue, roughly 12,000 Mt of plastic waste will be in landfills or the natural environment by 2050. ([Science Advances](#))
- On average, every American throws away 270 pounds of plastic each year. ([Science](#))
- Only about 9.1% of plastic is recycled in the USA. ([EPA](#))
- Many single-use plastic items easily wash or blow into the ocean, where they can have devastating effects on animals and ecosystems through entanglement and ingestion. ([Marine Pollution Bulletin](#))