

MARINE DEBRIS ACTION PLAN

2020 Accomplishments Summary



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 (nccoast.org/actionplan). In 2020, the Action Plan inspired strategic coordination, focus and direction for the organizations and communities that address marine debris on many levels. This is a summary of the 2020 Action Plan accomplishments, for a full report click [here](#).

GOAL 1: LEAD AND COORDINATE

The Action Plan is being implemented under the guidance of a steering committee, a leadership team and smaller working groups associated with each goal that met regularly throughout the year. Since the overall Action Plan duration is five years, this ensures that measurable progress is being made consistently.



GOAL 2: PREVENT

In the realm of business education, voluntary programs expanded despite many challenges caused by the COVID-19 public health crisis. The Ocean Friendly Establishments program awarded seven businesses with \$1,000 in grant funding provided by the N.C. Aquarium Society and Plastic Ocean Project to support their work to minimize the use of plastic products in their businesses and recruited 31 new businesses to join the program. North Carolina Green Travel added 11 new certifications.



The N.C. Clean Marina program received the Clean Vessel Act Grant provided by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service for \$120,000 to provide a source of funding for pump out projects.



Partner groups educated 8,295 K-12 students about marine debris, and an additional 1,355 educators and professionals were involved in marine debris education. The UNCW MarineQuest program educated a majority of these students through their Turtle Trash Collectors program, funded by the NOAA Marine Debris Program. Turtle Trash Collectors also completed 29 solo cleanups and developed a citizen science program to encourage others to collect litter in their neighborhoods.



The Town of Beaufort, the Town of Atlantic Beach and Carteret Big Sweep were instrumental leaders in conducting impactful marine debris efforts in their communities, including large-scale debris removal, installation of signage and inspiring community involvement.

GOAL 3: REMOVE

The North Carolina Coastal Federation in partnership with the N.C. Division of Coastal Management, the Natural Resources Conservation Service and NOAA received approximately \$800,000 in federal and state funds to hire contractors to remove storm-related debris from publicly owned coastal shorelines and marshes. Projects focused on cleaning up debris from Rachel Carson Reserve, Hammocks Beach State Park, Permuda Island and Masonboro Island Reserves, as well as public lands and dredge spoil islands in Carteret, Onslow, Pender, New Hanover and Brunswick counties. A total of 346 tons (693,800 pounds) of marine debris was removed during 2020. Debris removal is continuing in 2021 with some of this funding.



GOAL 4: PREVENT AND REMOVE ABANDONED AND DERELICT VESSELS

The N.C. Wildlife Resources Commission utilized ArcGIS Online to create a web based mapping tool that will serve as a searchable interactive map for the public, and will provide an active inventory of abandoned and derelict vessels in coastal NC. The map will be available for public view on the ArcGIS Online website. It shows the location of 150 vessels, most of which are storm-related vessels eligible for removal under grant funding.

The N.C. General Assembly provided \$1 million to N.C. Wildlife Resources Commission to remove abandoned boats from coastal waters. The North Carolina Coastal Federation working with the commission and the Division of Coastal Management received over \$3 million through the Natural Resources Conservation Service's Emergency Watershed Program, the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation, and NOAA to remove boats from Currituck to Brunswick Counties. An estimated 70 boats will be removed from coastal waters in 2021.

In 2020, the federation in collaboration with the commission and N.C. Division of Coastal Management worked with legislators to clarify the process for removing abandoned vessels – including public notice- from public trust waters and lands. These changes helped speed the removal of abandoned boats while also protecting boat owners' private property rights.



GOAL 5: RESEARCH AND ASSESSMENT

N.C. Sea Grant and N.C. State University secured a \$25,000 grant from the National Ocean and Atmospheric Administration to research how much macro- and microplastic is being delivered through streams and river flow to the lower Neuse River. Sampling began in summer of 2020 at fifteen locations using various methods including fine trawl nets, streamside and streambed trash collection, and visual assessments of floating debris. Partners include University of North Carolina-Wilmington, Plastic Ocean Project and Sound Rivers.

Imagine a North Carolina where people and wildlife never encounter marine debris. This vision inspired the creation of the Debris Free NC social media site in the early stages of the N.C. Marine Debris Action Plan. Debris Free NC connects the public to the Action Plan and advertised cleanups while inspiring participation and change. This year, the Debris Free NC logo was updated to attract more public attention and best reflect the hope for the future that the Action Plan provides. Show your support of the Action Plan on social media by using the tags @debrisfreenc and #debrisfreenc.

