

Plastics Awareness on the North Slope

Why are PLASTICS bad for our environment?

- Plastic takes **hundreds of years to decay or decompose**
 - Anything that was ever made of plastic still exists today
- Half of those plastics are single use and end up being thrown away - some ends up in trash, some doesn't.
- A majority of plastics end up in lakes, rivers, and oceans
 - About 1 million sea birds and 100 thousand marine mammals are killed by consuming or being trapped by plastic each year
 - Plastic in the ocean breaks down into tiny particles called **microplastics** which are consumed by fish and other small marine animals
- Plastics can drift and float for years forming patches like the **Great Pacific Garbage Patch**, located off the coast of California, which is two times bigger than the state of Texas



Top: Commercial fishing gear wrapped around mouth and flipper of bowhead harvested near Utqiagvik, 2017



Bottom: Mostly plastic bottles floating on lagoon

Most Common Trash

- Cigarette Butts
- Plastic Bottles and Caps
- Food Wrappers
- Plastic Grocery Bags
- Plastic Lids and Straws
- Glass Bottles
- Styrofoam Food Containers

Deadliest Ocean Trash

- Ghost Fishing Gear
- Plastic Bags/Utensils
- Balloons
- Cigarette Butts (filters)
- Plastic Bottle Caps



Above: Plastic bags and other garbage along road near Utqiagvik



Left Top: Polar bear at garbage dump in Canada in 2013 (photo credit: Leo Ikakhik, Arviat)

Left Bottom: Plastic found in stomach of harvested polar bear near Utqiagvik, 2018



What can YOU do?

- ➔ **REDUCE** Choose “plastic-free” disposables, like paper plates and cups, paper straws, wooden stirrers
- ➔ **REUSE** Use reusable containers
- ➔ **RECYCLE** Sort recyclables
- ➔ **PROPER TRASH DISPOSAL** Put trash in trash containers
Participate in community Clean-Ups
- ➔ **EDUCATE** Talk to family and friends
Community initiatives

