

Marine Litter Guidelines for Tourists and Tour Operators in Marine and Coastal Areas



N O W P A P

Northwest Pacific Action Plan



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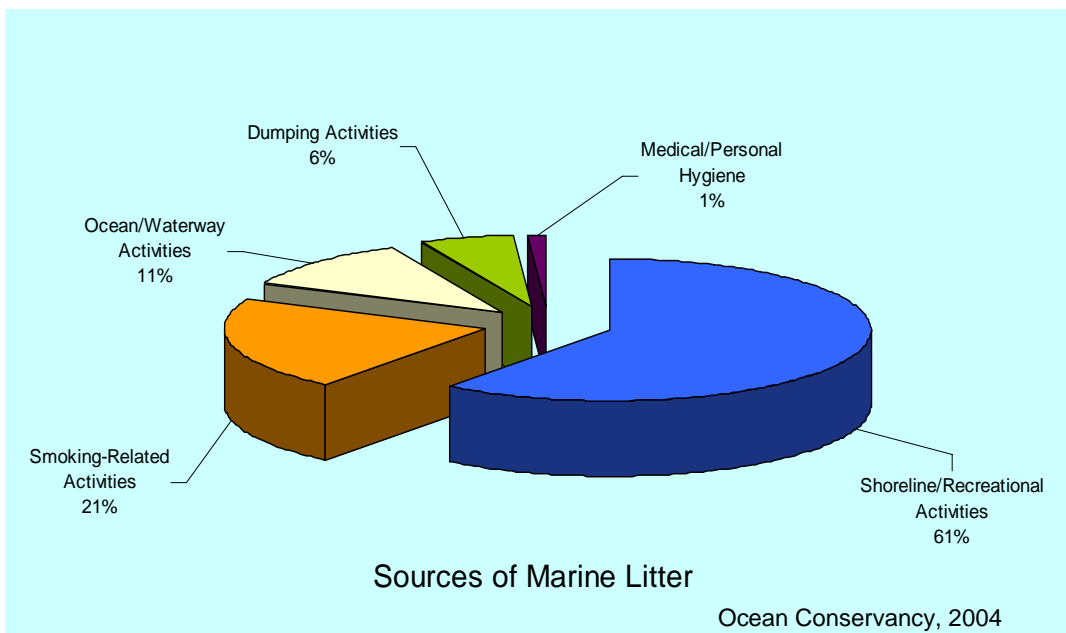


1. Introduction

Marine litter is a serious global environmental problem. It is not only aesthetically unpleasant, but also has serious adverse impacts on marine and coastal environments, human health, marine navigation and so on.

Tourism, especially in the coastal and marine areas, is also heavily affected by marine litter, since the attraction of tourists to these areas usually relies on beautiful landscapes, pristine beaches and healthy marine environments.

Although marine litter is known to originate from various land- and sea-based human activities, tourism in marine and coastal areas is also a major contributor of such litter. Data from worldwide marine-litter surveys conducted by the Ocean Conservancy (a non-governmental organization), indicate that more than 60% of marine litter originates from shoreline and recreational activities. This trend will not improve unless tourists stop littering, particularly as tourism in the coastal and marine areas is expected to grow significantly in the foreseeable future.



In recognition of the expected growth in tourism and the negative impacts of tourists on the marine environment, these guidelines were prepared to help reduce tourist-generated marine litter. The guidelines provide a synopsis on marine litter, its known adverse impacts and best-practice tips for tourists involved in marine recreational activities (cruising, fishing, diving, etc.) and coastal recreational activities (camping, barbequing, bathing, etc.). The guidelines also suggest activities that tour operators can adopt to reduce tourist-generated marine litter.

2. Types of Marine Litter Found in Marine and Coastal Areas

Many types of marine litter can be found in marine and coastal areas. Such litter is commonly comprised of materials that degrade very slowly, such as various plastic products, polystyrene foam, metal and glass fragments. More specifically, tourist-derived litter commonly includes food wrappings, beverage cans and bottles, cigarette filters, plastic bags and fishing lines.

These types of litter do not necessarily stay in the local area around their source; they can be transported to distant locations through wind, ocean currents and waves, and subsequently pollute other beaches and shores. Such litter is also found in the water column and on the seafloor.



3. Impacts of Marine Litter

Some of the adverse impacts caused by marine litter are as follows.

Impacts on wildlife

- Entanglement in fishing lines, can holders, etc
- Ingestion of indigestible litter
- Transportation/introduction of alien species attached to litter

Impacts on tourism

- Reduction of tourists and consequent loss of income due to degraded tourism value
- High cost incurred for the collection and disposal of marine litter

Impacts on fisheries

- Obstruction to fisheries through gear entanglement
- Extra work and cost required for removing litter from fishing nets
- Ghost fishing

Impacts on maritime transportation

- Entanglement to screw propellers and clogging of water intakes

Impact on health

- Injuries on beaches
- Consumption of seafood contaminated by litter



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Japanese Society for Preservation of Birds
(<http://www.jspb.org/>)

4. Best Practice Guidelines (BPG) for Tourists Involved in Marine and Coastal Recreational Activities

BPG for tourists involved in coastal recreational activities (camping, barbequing, bathing, etc.)

- Don't leave litter on the beach.
- Try not to bring items that could become litter, such as disposable plates, cups and plastic bottles—bring reusable items.
- Bring your own rubbish bag for the storage of your litter.
- If you are a smoker, bring your own portable ashtray.
- Take your litter home if there are no rubbish bins.
- Dispose of litter in accordance with local regulations.
- Don't use rubbish bins that are full or nearly full—rubbish may spill out of the bin.
- Secure your belongings to prevent them from being blown away by the wind.
- Voluntarily pick up litter on the beach or in the sea. Picking up even one piece of litter will make a difference if we all do it!
- Participate in beach cleanup activities.

BPG for tourists involved in marine recreational activities (cruising, fishing, diving, etc.)

- Don't throw litter overboard.
- Take your litter onshore or home if there are no rubbish bins on the boat.
- Secure your belongings to prevent them from being blown away from the boat.
- Use environmentally friendly fishing products such as biodegradable fishing lines.
- Remove packaging material on shore to eliminate potential marine litter onboard.
- Refer to the BPG for coastal activities.

5. Suggested Activities for Tour Operators

As described above, tourists visiting marine and coastal areas are major contributors of marine litter, and their influence on the marine and coastal environment will continue to grow with the expected increase in tourism activities. Tour operators play an important role in preventing or minimizing negative impacts from tourists. Some activities that tour operators can adopt to reduce the generation of marine litter are as follows.

Minimization of waste generation

- Reduce the use of items that could become potential waste (e.g. use reusable caps, plates, forks, knives and chopsticks instead of disposables).
- Reuse or recycle waste as much as possible.

Education of tourists

- Enhance the awareness of tourists about marine litter by conducting education programs (e.g. providing short lectures, handing out brochures, displaying posters and placards, onboard briefing, organizing beach-cleanup activities, etc.). These activities could also be conducted in cooperation with other tour operators, local restaurants and shops.

Cooperation with local government

- Strictly follow local government waste-management practices during tourism operations.
- If a local waste-management system is insufficient, request that the local government strengthen its system (e.g. increase of the number of rubbish bins, regular collection of rubbish, employment of recycling system, etc.).



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