



# OCEAN INITIATIVES

## AWARENESS SHEET

### ABOUT SURFRIDER FOUNDATION EUROPE?

**European non-profit organization** created in 1990 in Biarritz.  
Founders: **3 surfers** including Tom Curren (triple world champion).  
Mission: **to protect** the ocean, waves, coastline, and its users  
Representing a **community** of ocean lovers.  
Present in **Europe**.

### WHAT ARE THE OCEAN INITIATIVES EXACTLY?

Organisation's flagship project created in 1995. Clean-up actions, participatory science and awareness raising organized by volunteers around the world. The goal is to educate people on marine litter, its impact on the environment, its origin, and act as a gateway to European environmental commitment

### WHAT KIND OF WASTE IS MOSTLY COLLECTED NOWADAYS?

Plastic! 85% to 90% of aquatic litter is plastic based? If you talk about ocean pollution, then you'll have to talk about plastic.

### WHEN AND WHY WAS PLASTIC CREATED?

In the 60's, it was viewed as a great invention of petrochemistry and a symbol of modernity (2 Nobel prizes): a light, cheap and completely malleable material.

### WHAT ROLE DOES PLASTIC PLAY IN OUR MODERN SOCIETIES?

Since it was created: It became a source of wealth and employment. It revolutionized everyday life in many fields (aeronautics, automotive industry, food security etc.).

### WHY DID THIS USEFUL MATERIAL BECOME A PROBLEM?

3 conditions caused plastic to become a scourge of modern times:

**Its lifetime:** plastic never completely disappears. It takes nearly 500 years for plastic to degrade into tiny micro and nanoplastics that remain eternally in the environment.

**Its production expansion:** 350 million tonnes of plastic is produced every year around the world.

**Single-use** (water bottles and plastic bags): we use these items for an average of 10 minutes before throwing them away, but they stay in the environment forever. 70% of the plastic that is collected in the environment is of single use.

### WHERE DO THESE 350 MILLION TONNES OF PRODUCED PLASTIC END UP?

Everywhere: the ocean, the coasts, in the water we drink, and in the food we eat, mainly as micro or nanoplastics: Mariana Trench, Arctic sea ice, drinking water, honey, salt, sea foods... Today we have no idea of the extent of impact plastic has on human health.

## MARINE WASTE CHARACTERISTICS (BACKING UP THE BANNER)

100% of it is of human origin: we are 100% responsible but we also are 100% a part of the solution. 80% of it comes from inland (rainfalls and winds carry waste from cities and other inland sources to eventually reach the ocean). 8 million tonnes of plastic waste end up each year in the ocean. Only 15% of marine litter gets washed up on the coast: the vast majority of it sinks or gets swept out to the deep sea, far from our sight.

## WHAT PROBLEMS RESULT FROM THE PLASTIC IN THE ENVIRONMENT?

Danger to biodiversity: the swallowing, strangulation and holes in digestive system that lead to the death of 100 000 marine mammals and 1,5 million of birds each year. Chemical pollution released by plastic when it degrades due to sunrays and salt water. Public health issues: nowadays, we eat, drink and breathe plastic. The scientific community struggles to measure the extent of danger it represents for human beings but it is particularly alarmed. The economic cost: regular clean up actions led by cities, impacts on tourism, etc.

## PLASTIC WIDELY AFFECTS BIODIVERSITY

Many experts raise the alarm on the fact that humanity is "burning the library of life"

## IN YOUR OPINION, WHAT PERCENTAGE OF BIODIVERSITY DO WE REPRESENT AS HUMANS?

According to the most recent studies, humans represent 0,01% of the living beings on the planet.

## AND WHAT PERCENTAGE OF MAMMALS AND PLANTS HAVE WE DESTROYED?

We are responsible for the 6th mass extinction: while we represent 0,01% of the living beings on the planet, we have destroyed over 83% of mammals and 50% of plants

## WHY SHOULD I CARE ABOUT BIODIVERSITY?

Because the air you breathe, the water you drink, the food you eat depend on it: plants give us oxygen, bees pollinate, forests and mangroves protect us from cyclones and tsunamis and many medicines are based on nature. The ocean is the blue lung of the Earth: every other breath of air comes from the ocean. Financially, the UN estimates that the benefits we gain from biodiversity is measured in billions of \$ (twice the global GDP).

## WHAT CAN I DO?

**Join** an Ocean Initiative.

**Organize** an Ocean Initiative.

**Refuse single use plastic** by buying Hessian bags and reusable water bottles for example.

**Download the Ocean's Zero** app and take a challenge a day to reduce your impact on environment.

**Become a volunteer or a member** of Surfrider Foundation Europe.

## GOING FURTHER

Link to Marine litter, top predator of the ocean :

<https://en.oceancampus.eu/apprendre>

# INITIATIVES OCÉANES

UN PROGRAMME DÉVELOPPÉ PAR

