

Clean Oceans Intl. | Environmental Advocacy & Editorial Content

As a pro bono communications advisor to Clean Oceans Intl., an environmental nonprofit organization, I wrote blogs, social media posts, press materials, and technology explainers to advance the organization's educational mission.



Happy World Oceans Day!



Mark Marinovich

Corporate Communicator, Storyteller, Ghostwriter

June 8, 2018

The Delaware River originates in the Catskill Mountains of New York and meanders south for 330 miles on its way to the Atlantic Ocean. The river drains an area of 13,539 square miles in Delaware, New Jersey, New York, and Pennsylvania, and supplies drinking water to 17 million people. The Delaware River is also home to 90 fish species, more than 400 bird species, and many other animals. Before Europeans arrived, the Delaware River was home to Native American Lenape tribes, and called "Lenape Wilhittuck."

Many of us first became aware of the Delaware River from "Washington Crossing the Delaware," German-American artist Emanuel Leutze's famous painting of Washington and the Continental Army's crossing on December 25, 1776 to surprise attack Hessian forces at the Battle of Trenton. Beginning in 1820, Pennsylvania Quaker minister Edward Hicks commenced a series of some 60 paintings, all titled "The Peaceable Kingdom" and inspired by a prophecy from the biblical book of Isaiah of the coming of Christ and arrival of a peaceful world in which animals and human beings would live in harmony. Hicks set many of his Edenic paintings on the Delaware River.

In March, a survey conducted by the PennEnvironment Research & Policy Center tested 53 waterways for microplastics in Pennsylvania, and microplastic contamination was found in every location tested. Microplastics are tiny pieces of deteriorated plastic less than 5 millimeters in diameter—smaller than a grain of rice—and are difficult, if not impossible, to remove from the environment. Even tinier plastic particles, microscopic nanoplastics, are now found in fish and other sea creatures. "The results of this study should set off alarms for all Pennsylvanians who love our state's rivers and streams," said PennEnvironment's Farin Savitz. "The staggering amount of microplastics we found likely means that no river, lake, or stream is safe from this increasingly common contaminant."

In April, a study published in the journal Science Advances reported that 288,000 pounds of plastic waste is dumped into the Delaware River and carried to the Atlantic Ocean each year, making it one of the biggest contributors of marine plastic pollution in the U.S. The plastic results from littering, illegal dumping, and movement of surface trash by wind and rain from dumpsites near major population centers. The study's authors said most marine plastic pollution is river borne: "Some plastic washes off of beaches or is dropped off of boats, but the vast majority of it is going to go through rivers and into the ocean."

Plastic pollution is not just an eyesore. It strangles, starves, suffocates, and drowns wildlife, and doesn't biodegrade for hundreds and, in some cases, thousands of years. The peaceable kingdom may have to wait.

World Oceans Day is today, June 8. Learn more about plastic pollution and how you can make a difference. Please visit www.worldoceansday.org.

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Earlier this year, scientists at The Ocean Cleanup reported that plastic tonnage in the "Great Pacific Garbage Patch"—the "plastic island" spinning in the North Pacific gyre that's the "size of Texas"—is upwards of 16 times greater than previous estimates and increasing exponentially. A couple months ago "the world's deepest plastic bag" was photographed at the bottom of the Mariana Trench, over five miles beneath the surface of the Philippine Sea. In March, the highest volume of microplastic pollution ever recorded in any waterway was found in a river in England that empties in the North Sea.

Plastic pollution starves, suffocates, shreds and strangles marine life, and poisons coral reefs and the seafood we eat. Plastic that's in the oceans now is probably here to stay for hundreds if not thousands of years.

As plastic pollution escalates, so do efforts to find solutions intensify.

- The Galapagos will ban single-use plastics, Sri Lanka plans to ban Styrofoam, and China will require biodegradable bags.
- The EU has challenged the UK's environment secretary to outdo it in an environmental "race to the top" on its proposed ban on common single-use plastic products including straws, cutlery, plates, cups and cotton swabs.
- Greece reduced usage of plastic bags in supermarkets by 76 percent in the first quarter of 2018 compared with the same period last year.
- New Zealand is making a large investment in an innovative U.S. recycling company that calls itself "Uber for trash."
- The Ocean Array Cleanup, an ocean plastic removal system developed by young Dutch inventor Boyan Slat, is about to be deployed in the North Pacific Ocean.
- The first Children's Clean Ocean Summit will be hosted at the UN's Vienna headquarters on June 22 to inspire children to work together to raise awareness of ocean pollution.

Even small actions to protect the oceans' health make a difference. Learn more about ocean plastic pollution and how you can help. Happy World Oceans Day!