

## ME AND MY COMMUNITY

“**ASK:** Does marine debris only affect ecosystems or does it impact other things too?

“**SAY:** Can we make a list of things other than ecosystems marine debris could impact?

These questions are trying to get participants to think about trash as ugly and something they don't want in their community. This is also the time to help spur discussion about the potential impact of marine debris on human health: if a small fish eats tiny pieces of plastic, then a bigger fish eats the smaller fish, and we eat bigger fish, what could that mean?

To facilitate this discussion, “**ASK:** Where are some places you like to visit or vacation? Does anyone enjoy vacationing at the local landfill?

Marine debris doesn't only affect ecosystems. It also has a negative impact on local communities, economies and even human health.

- **Tourism:** Marine debris, or trash, on the beach is not aesthetically pleasing. It negatively impacts the beauty of seashores around the world. This can make people choose other locations for vacations. For towns that rely on beach visitors, marine debris can have a negative economic impact. For example, shops may have to close because there are no longer enough visitors to buy merchandise.
- **Cleanup Costs:** To keep beaches marine debris free, many towns will spend money to remove the trash. This can cost a lot of money—thousands and even millions of dollars. This money could be spent in other ways, perhaps building playgrounds, sports fields or libraries.
- **Boat Damage:** Marine debris is often difficult to see when on a boat, and an encounter with marine debris can result in expensive damage. Large and small debris can be dangerous to boats and passengers. Large debris could crack the bottom of a boat, propellers may become entangled with fishing line, or system intakes can be clogged with a plastic bag.
- **Human Safety:** Marine debris can also be dangerous for people. Like other animals, swimmers can become entangled in debris. People can step on broken glass or needles. Passengers on boats that strike debris can be injured. Also, if people eat fish that have ingested plastics, what could that mean for our health? This is an emerging area of marine debris research, but a good start for a discussion on bioaccumulation.

Pose some or all of the following discussion questions to the participants:

- **Would you rather** visit a beach with trash or one without? Why?
- **What are some reasons** one beach may have less marine debris than another beach?
- **Do you think** an ice cream shop on a clean beach or on a beach with lots of trash would have more customers?
- **How might** a coastal economy fare if its beach is littered with marine debris?

## **ACTIVITY:** TALKING TRASH & TAKING PRIDE

**OBJECTIVE:** Participants will think proactively about marine debris solutions after considering how trash could affect somewhere or something they feel significant pride towards.

### **MATERIALS (OPTIONAL):**

- Pens/pencils/markers and paper for each participant

### **INSTRUCTIONS:**

1. Instruct participants to think about their favorite place, person or activity.
2. Then ask participants to consider all the different ways trash and/or marine debris could impact that place, person or activity.
3. Have participants think about ways they can encourage others to take pride in this place, person or activity, and to prevent marine debris and trash from affecting this place, person or activity.
4. Ask participants to develop a catch phrase (no materials needed), poster, flag, flier or anything else they think would motivate their peers to also have pride in this favorite place, person or activity.
5. The end goal of the motivational piece is to develop broader pride so that people care enough to prevent trash and marine debris from having any negative impacts on the place, person or activity.
6. Example: A favorite activity could be surfing. The catch phrase could be: "Ride Waves NOT Waste; Put Trash in its Place!" or for soccer, a poster could have a picture of a young person kicking trash into a garbage can, and it reads: "Make the Game Winning Save, Kick the Littering Habit!"

Talking Trash & Taking Action is a marine debris education partnership between Ocean Conservancy and the NOAA Marine Debris Program. View the full curriculum at <https://marinedebris.noaa.gov/talking-trashand-taking-action>

