

PRESS RELEASE

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LOOKING FURTHER

European researchers find ways to keep plastic soup off Europe's marine menus.

'CleanSea' documentary film première in EYE Amsterdam 3 December

For the past three years, researchers from 11 EU Member States have been probing the issue of marine litter - pollution that is predominantly made up of plastics - together with 6 SMEs, an NGO, fishermen, waste managers, harbours and a large network of coastal communities. The CleanSea Project is led by Dr. Heather Leslie of the Institute for Environmental Studies at VU University Amsterdam. They applied newly developed techniques to study impacts in the marine environment and explored the best practices and policy options for Europe to abate the problem of our littered seas. This "CleanSea team" will present their research highlights and a short marine litter documentary film entitled 'CleanSea' in EYE Amsterdam on 3 December 2015. Executive Director Hans Bruyninckx of the European Environment Agency will deliver the keynote. Press is invited.

Sources and impacts

The sources of marine litter are diverse, from beach visitors being careless with their packaging waste, to fishermen losing gear overboard, to wastewater treatment plants incapable of digesting plastic particles from consumer products in wastewater streams. The project demonstrates the problem will not go away by itself, as most litter does not easily break down into innocent substances. It is difficult to find a marine species unaffected by marine litter, and litter has entered the marine food chain including species for human consumption. The potential economic impacts of marine litter run into the billions of euros due to high costs of clean-up, foregone recreational and amenity benefits, and potential consumer avoidance of litter-contaminated seafood.

Actions

"Marine litter is a problem in the sea that has to be addressed on land," says the project's Coordinator Heather Leslie. "We have learned that there is no silver bullet, but that noticeable reductions of marine litter over time can happen when the energy of individuals to act is supported by transformations in the system in which they are acting - and vice versa. It will take technological fixes but also social and political innovation and wake up calls in many areas of policy, not only the European Marine Strategy. We know much more about marine litter science than three years ago. We need to keep up this momentum, continue to monitor and assess the situation, and implement the marine litter reduction policies and actions we now have at hand." The CleanSea project results will arrive in time to help achieve the goals of the European Marine Strategy Framework Directive - the EU's key legislation on protecting the sea - and the Commission's long-awaited Circular Economy Package due to be presented before the end of December 2015.

NOTE TO EDITORS

For more information about the CleanSea Project, or to schedule an interview please contact Heather Leslie, Coordinator of European FP7 research project CleanSea: *Towards a Clean, Litter-Free European Marine Environment through Scientific Evidence, Innovative Tools and Good Governance*.

Free, public, English language marine litter symposium and world première of the CleanSea documentary film will be held in the EYE Film Institute, 13:00-17:30, IJpromenade 1, Amsterdam on Thurs. 3 Dec. 2015. Online registration required.

REGISTER FOR SYMPOSIUM/SCREENING ONLINE: <http://www.cleansea-project.eu/drupal/?q=en/symposium>

Project website, film trailer, additional downloads and info : www.cleansea-project.eu.

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CleanSea

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