



# Marine Litter Issues Overview

WFO tracks the latest news and developments on marine litter to bring you its new monthly Marine Litter Issues Overview. Working on the issue? Send us your story to be in next month's overview!

## European Commission invests €7.5 million in projects for Blue Growth


In April, the European Commission announced that it would be investing €7.5 million under its European Maritime Fisheries Fund in boosting innovation, encouraging growth and creating jobs within the marine and maritime sectors.

The investment is comprised of three calls for proposals: the Blue Careers Call, the Blue Labs call and the Blue Technology Call. The Blue Labs call promotes "laboratories" for students and experienced tutors to work on marine and maritime issues such as innovative solutions to the marine litter and microplastics problem. The Blue Careers call is seeking to provide the useful skills needed for the marine and maritime economy. Both the Blue Labs and the Blue Careers calls end on May 31st.

The European Maritime Fisheries Fund (EMFF) is the fund for the EU's maritime and fisheries policies for 2014-2020, and, complemented by national funding, is used to co-finance projects that help coastal communities, fishermen and, generally speaking, improve the quality of life along European coasts.

The European Commission is looking to overcome the bottlenecks currently affecting the drive for skills, creativity and technology linked to Blue Growth.

Source: [European Commission](#)



## EMFF Blue Growth

Delivering innovation in the Blue Economy

**Blue Careers**

- 31/05/2016**
- € 3.452m**
- up to 7 projects**

- WHAT**  
Concrete actions to fill the skills' gap between education offer and industry needs and increase employability in the blue economy.
- FOR WHOM**  
Consortia of educational institutions, companies, chambers of commerce, professional associations etc.

**Blue Labs**

- 31/05/2016**
- € 1.7m**
- up to 6 projects**

- WHAT**  
Young scientists, researchers, industry and stakeholders team up and develop innovative solutions to tackle maritime challenges.
- FOR WHOM**  
Consortia of research bodies, business, local communities, etc.

**Blue Technology**

- 30/09/2016**
- € 2.52m**
- up to 4 projects**

- WHAT**  
Strategic partnerships for developing investment roadmaps and bankable demonstration projects at sea basin level to bring research results faster to the market.
- FOR WHOM**  
Transnational consortia of clusters and business networks, cooperating with research and innovation agencies, public and private enterprises, etc.

Please note that information provided in this document is only indicative and does not constitute the reference text for these Calls for Proposals

@EU\_MARE
#bluegrowth
[ec.europa.eu/easme/](http://ec.europa.eu/easme/)

Executive Agency for SMEs

ISBN: 978-92-9202-191-7  
Catalog number: EA-04-16-264-EN-N  
DOI: 10.2826/091975  
© European Union 2016



Crab caught in a fishing net underwater



Pollution on Australian beaches

## New guidelines for reducing fishing gear lost at sea

New international guidelines are being developed by the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) to reduce amounts of lost or abandoned fishing gear currently making up one-tenth of all marine litter in the oceans. FAO, a United Nations agency, has had growing concerns over lost fishing gear as it can be harmful and sometimes deadly to marine life.

In early April, an initial set of draft guidelines was discussed during a meeting of experts held at FAO's Headquarters in Rome. The results will next be presented to FAO's Committee on Fisheries in July for review. Previous efforts to establish such guidelines have not been successfully put in place on an international level, remaining in the jurisdiction of national governments.

Current advances in marking technology provide new possibilities to efficiently track and recover lost gear. Such a system would also help understand the reasons behind the problem in order to better tackle it. Easily identifying the ownership of gear would also benefit the fishermen, minimizing losses. FAO Fishery Industry Officer Petri Suuronen stated: "The effective marking of fishing gear in busy multi-user sea areas is key to preventing its loss and protecting marine ecosystems".

Source: [United Nations](#)

## Australia misled by biodegradable plastic

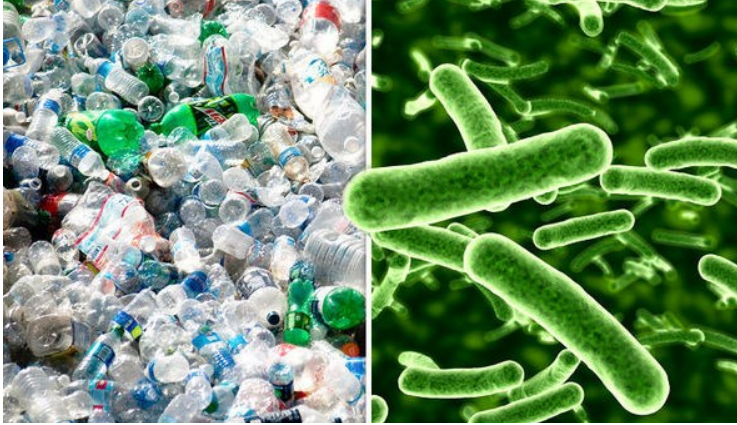
A Senate committee in Australia recently produced a report on marine plastic pollution and concluded that biodegradable plastic bags are not better for the environment than regular plastic bags. The report states that biodegradable plastic in fact turns into harmful microplastic more quickly. Biodiversity experts and scientists who participated in these findings expressed that biodegradable material has the "same level of environmental impact" as regular plastics bags.

Furthermore, University of Queensland academic Kathy Townsend informed the committee that, by using such terms as "degradable" and "biodegradable", confused consumers actually littered more, wrongly believing the litter would "degrade and go away".

The committee, composed of mainly Labor and Greens members, called for educational campaigns to help change consumer behaviors. The Managing Director of Clean Up Australia, Terrie Ann Johnson, stated that it was a common misconception that marine debris and plastic pollution in Australia is a result of international pollution. Australia's national science agency, the Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation (CSIRO), shared that 75% of Australian marine debris is generated by the local population.

Sources: [The Sydney Morning Herald](#) and [News.com.au](#)





Scientists discover new bacteria that can degrade PET



Photographer Zak Noyle captures polluted waves in Indonesia

## Scientists discover bacteria that can degrade plastic bottles

Scientists in Japan have recently discovered a species of bacteria that can degrade PET, a plastic found in most disposable water bottles. The team, led by Dr. Shosuke Yoshida of Kyoto University, collected 250 PET samples from a recycling site and thus contaminated by soil, sediment and wastewater. The scientists screened the microbes living on the samples and discovered a bacterial species that could not only grow on PET, but break it down as well.

The bacteria, which they named *Ideonella sakaiensis*, was able to break down a thin film of PET at a rate of 0.13mg per square centimeter over the course of six weeks at a temperature of 30°C held steadily in the lab. The bacteria uses two enzymes to do so, during which it is provided with energy and carbon to grow.

Speaking on the subject, Mr. Tracy Mincer, a scientist at the Woods Hole Oceanographic Institution, a world-leading organization dedicated to ocean research, stated: "I don't see how microbes degrading plastics is any better than putting plastic bottles in a recycling bin so they can be melted down to make new ones." The findings do pave the way for further research in this field and to finding similar microbes in areas around the world.

Sources: [Nature](#) and [Science](#)

## Ocean currents push debris around the globe faster than previously thought

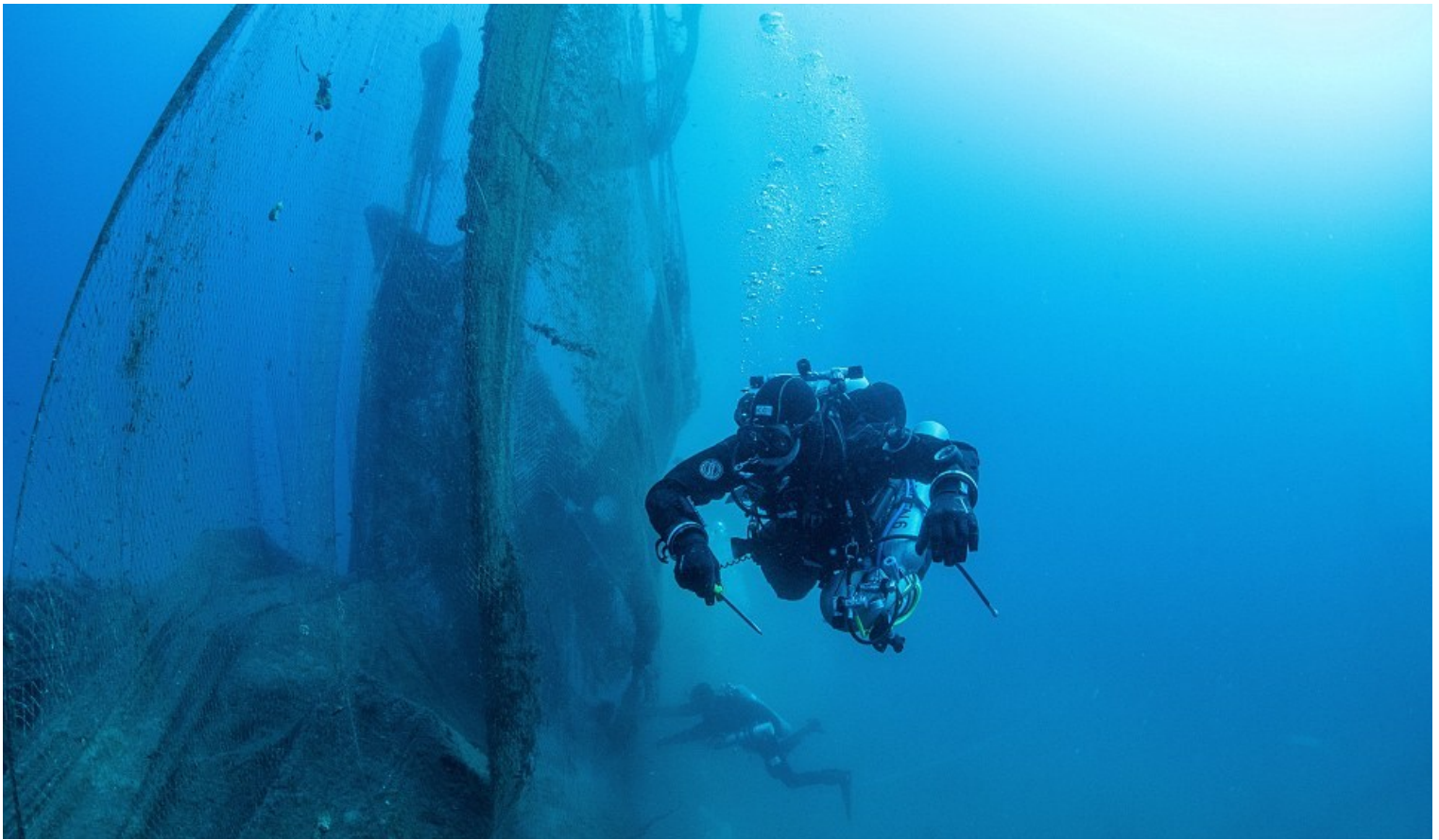
A recently published study by Princeton University researchers found that ocean currents can push objects around the globe in just ten years – faster than previously thought. This means that ocean pollution can be problematic in an area far away from its origin just a few years prior.

The researchers used a computer algorithm to calculate global routes with a model for objects having no control over their movement such as phytoplankton and marine debris. Bror Fredrik Jönsson, an associate research scholar in Princeton's Department of Geosciences who helped conduct the study, stated that "because most marine organisms are mobile, this particle-tracking approach can yield new insights compared to the approach of studying one area of ocean."

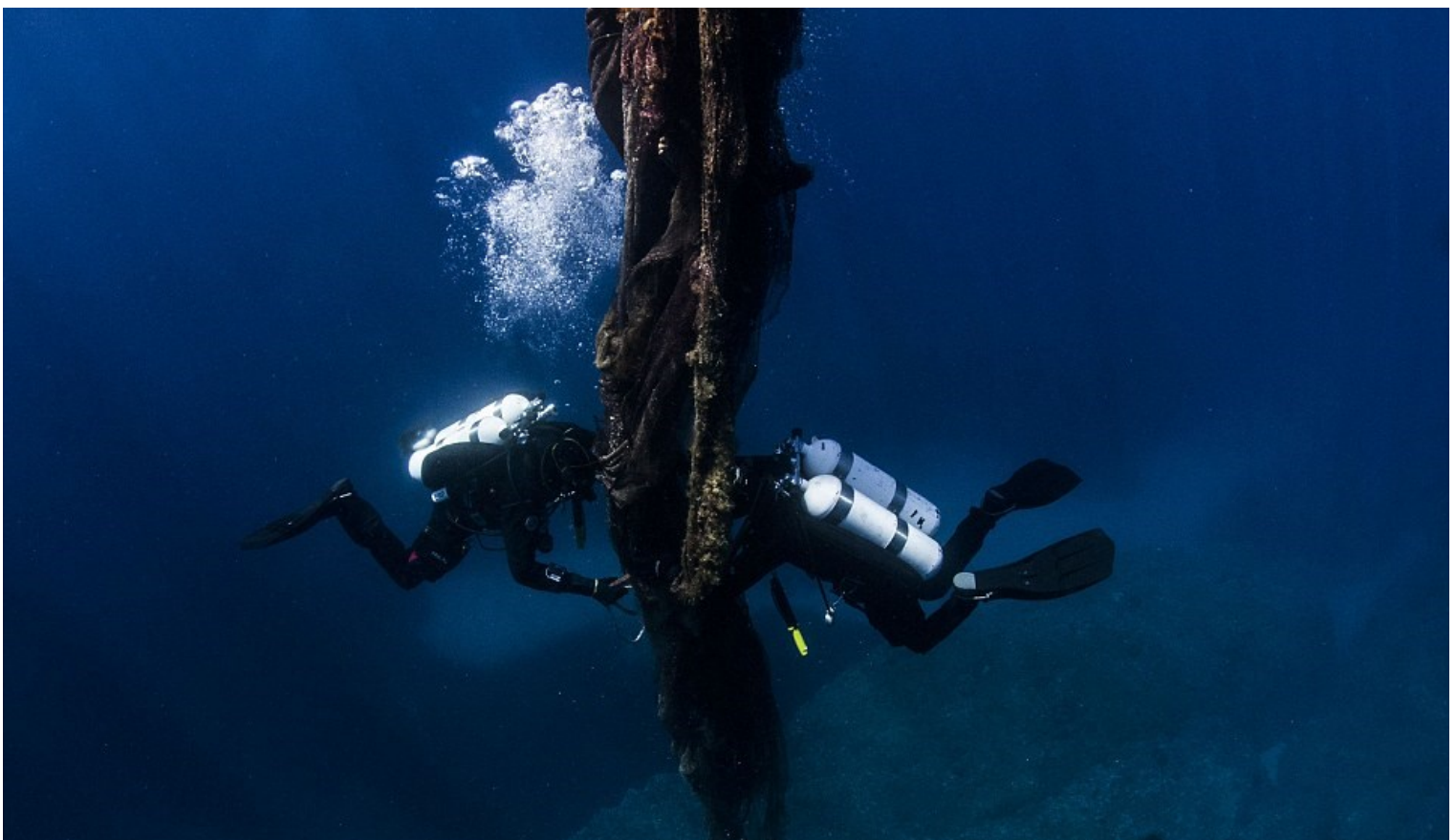
The researchers compared their calculations with known travel times of marine debris such as the "Great Shoe Spill of 1990", when a container ship lost over 60 000 Nike shoes near Alaska due to a storm. The shoes carried serial numbers which allowed those that eventually washed ashore to be identified. Their model was able to match the time it took for the materials to travel.

Source: [ScienceDaily](#)

## Volunteer divers remove lost fishing gear



A diving team formed by Greek and Dutch volunteers removed big ghost fishing nets from a reef in Greece. [View the story](#)



Discarded fishing nets and traps were removed from a shipwreck by the team. [View the story](#)