

# Anglers, beachcombers asked to watch for transponders from Japan

September 26 2014, by Mark Floyd

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Northwest anglers venturing out into the Pacific Ocean in pursuit of salmon and other fish this fall may scoop up something unusual into their nets – instruments released from Japan called "transponders."

These floating instruments are about the size of a 2-liter soda bottle and were set in the ocean from different ports off Japan in 2011-12 after the massive Tohoku earthquake and tsunami. Researchers from Tattori University for Environmental Studies in Japan have been collaborating with Oregon State University, Oregon Sea Grant, and the NOAA Marine Debris Program on the project.

The researchers' goal is to track the movement of debris via ocean currents and help determine the path and timing of the debris from the 2011 disaster. An estimated 1.5 million tons of debris was washed out to sea and it is expected to continue drifting ashore along the West Coast of the United States for several years, according to Sam Chan, a watershed health specialist with Oregon State University Extension and Oregon Sea Grant.

"These transponders only have a battery life of about 30 months and then they no longer communicate their location," Chan said. "So the only way to find out where they end up is to physically find them and report their location. That's why we need the help of fishermen, beachcombers and other coastal visitors.

"These bottles contain transmitters and they are not a hazardous device," Chan added. "If you find something that looks like an orange soda bottle with a short antenna, we'd certainly like your help in turning it in."

One of the first transponders discovered in the Northwest washed ashore near Arch Cape, Oregon, in March 2013, about 19 months after it was set adrift. The persons who found it reported it to Chan, who began collaborating with researchers in Japan.

Another transponder was found near the Haida Heritage Site, formerly the Queen Charlotte Islands – the same location where a Harley-Davidson motorcycle floated up on a beach in a shipping container long after being swept out to sea in Japan by the tsunami.

"These transponders have recorded a lot of important data that will help us better understand the movement of tsunami and marine [debris](#) throughout the Pacific Ocean," Chan said. "Everyone's help in recovering these instruments is greatly appreciated."

**More information:** Persons who find a transponder are asked to photograph it if possible, and report the location of their find to Chan at Samuel.Chan@oregonstate.edu; or to the NOAA Marine Debris Program regional coordinator in their area at [marinedebris.noaa.gov/contact-us](https://marinedebris.noaa.gov/contact-us).

Provided by Oregon State University

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