

Stemming the tide of ocean plastics

April 18 2018



Credit: CC0 Public Domain

As people in the developing countries become more affluent, they end up buying more plastics. But these areas often don't have good waste management procedures in place, so a lot of that plastic eventually ends up in the ocean, according to an article in *Chemical & Engineering News*, the weekly newsmagazine of the American Chemical Society.

Senior Correspondent Alexander Tullo explains that with rising wages, people in [developing countries](#) can suddenly afford the convenience of plastic-wrapped foods and drinks, as well as other plastic items. But the infrastructure in these areas have not kept up, leaving citizens with few environmentally sound ways to get rid of plastics once they're done with them. The [waste](#) piles up on beaches and is taken away into the ocean by the tide, resulting in between 4.8 million and 12.7 million metric tons of plastic floating in the ocean during 2010. And the material has been found in birds and fish where it could cause harm to them and to people and animals who consume them.

The outlook is getting brighter, though, as governments, nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) and industry work together to overcome this challenge. Recent research has identified China, Indonesia, the Philippines, Thailand and Vietnam as the main sources of this wayward plastic, and some of the governments in Asia are starting to take action, thanks to prodding from NGOs. For example, Indonesia is committing to reducing [plastic waste](#) to certain levels, and Sri Lanka is even banning the use of single-use [plastic](#) items like shopping bags altogether. Companies are working with governments and NGOs to establish better waste management practices and are recycling the plastics for use in roads, computers and product containers.

More information: "Fighting ocean plastics at the source," [cen.acs.org/materials/polymers ... astics-source/96/i16](https://cen.acs.org/materials/polymers...astics-source/96/i16)

Provided by American Chemical Society

Citation: Stemming the tide of ocean plastics (2018, April 18) retrieved 20 April 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2018-04-stemming-tide-ocean-plastics.html>

This document is subject to copyright. Apart from any fair dealing for the purpose of private study or research, no part may be reproduced without the written permission. The content is provided for information purposes only.