Microplastics from ocean fishing can 'hide' in deep sediments

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and the China-Indo peninsula that lacks substantial industrialization and urbanization. They also wanted to look for this type of contamination in deep sediments, up to 2 feet below the surface, which have not been well studied with respect to **microplastic pollution**.

The researchers collected 52 sediment samples from Beibu Gulf and adjacent rivers in July 2017. Microplastics were separated from sediment samples and counted under a microscope. Most of the particles were made of polypropylene (PP) or polyethylene (PE), which are materials widely used in fishing nets and rope. The team found a strong correlation between the intensity of fishing activities, such as capture fishing or mariculture, and the abundance of PP and PE fibers.

Unexpectedly, microplastics were detected even one foot below the surface, which corresponds to about the year 1913 (before the observed plastics were invented). The particles could have been transported to deep sediment layers by marine worms. Because most previous studies have considered only microplastics in surface sediment, this type of pollution in ocean sediments worldwide could be greatly underestimated, the researchers say.

**More information:** "Underestimated Microplastic Pollution Derived from Fishery Activities and 'Hidden' in Deep Sediment" *Environmental Science & Technology* (2020).

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