

## **State Receives \$50,000 Federal Grant to Address Marine Debris**

### **Local News**

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Washington state will receive a \$50,000 grant from the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) to address the increase in marine debris along the state's coastal beaches resulting from the March 11, 2011, Japan tsunami.

Gov. Chris Gregoire said: "The state can't address this situation alone. I'm pleased the federal government has recognized its responsibility to help our state with debris clean-up, and am confident this grant will support efforts already underway to keep our beaches and shellfish safe."

The Washington State Marine Debris Task Force applied for the NOAA grant in July. Gov. Gregoire established the task force — consisting of the state Military Department's Emergency Management Division (EMD) and several other state agencies — to coordinate state, federal and local activities to monitor and respond appropriately to marine debris along the Washington coast.

The federal grant will be used to address marine debris along Washington's 375 miles of coastal beaches that are owned and managed by eight different landowners. These are the Hoh Indian Tribe, Makah Nation, Quileute Indian Tribe, Quinault Indian Nation, Shoalwater Bay Tribe, Olympic National Park, U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service and Washington State Parks and Recreation Commission.

Of the \$50,000:

? \$19,000 will be used by the Department of Ecology's Washington Conservation Corps (WCC) to clean coastal beaches of debris.

? \$15,000 will help purchase supplies such as gloves and trash bags.

? \$9,000 will pay for trash bin disposal, and hauling and disposing of large debris items.

? \$7,000 will be used to buy equipment such as trash bins.

Working in partnership with tribal, state and federal land owners, Ecology can use the federal money to pay for dispatching WCC crews to areas where the need for debris removal is greatest. Created in 1983 and administered by Ecology, the WCC provides opportunities and training for young adults who carry out on-the-ground environmental restoration and protection projects across the state.

In June 2012, three WCC crews removed 70 pickup loads of debris from 57 miles of coastal beaches between Moclips and Cape Disappointment.

In addition to funding WCC crews, Washington can use the grant to support efforts by volunteers and organized nonprofit groups that clean beaches by providing cleanup supplies and designated dumping stations along the coast.

On July 3, 2012, Gov. Gregoire announced the release of \$500,000 from the governor's emergency fund to address potential debris arriving on state beaches from the Japanese tsunami.

To address nonhazardous debris, Ecology set aside \$100,000 to help local governments and non-profit groups clean up an increase of marine debris on state beaches. Thus far, \$7,500 has

been used to pay for dumpsters and waste collection bags.

For the most part, however, state agencies have been shouldering costs for responding to increases in marine debris within their existing budgets.

Items from many parts of the Pacific Rim, including buoys and consumer plastics, regularly wash up on Washington beaches. It is difficult to tell the origin of the debris without unique information such as an individual or company name, serial number or other identifying information.

Citizens can report potentially hazardous debris 24-hours a day to Washington's marine debris reporting line at 1-855-WACOAST (1-855-922-6278).

When large debris items arrive, the Washington state departments of Ecology, Fish and Wildlife, Health, EMD, Natural Resources, Washington Parks and Recreation Commission and NOAA will work as needed with local, state, tribal and federal partners to better assess the origin of an item and take coordinated action to protect public health, safety and the environment. More about marine debris, including potential tsunami debris:

? There have been sporadic increases in reported debris on our marine beaches including plastic bottles and floats, Styrofoam, pieces of lumber, crates and other small moveable objects.

? Most small debris items are not considered hazardous. Whenever possible, people are encouraged to pick these items up and properly dispose of them.

? NOAA remains the best source for information about Japan tsunami marine debris including modeling, protocols to follow for handling marine debris and frequently asked questions. Go to <http://marinedebris.noaa.gov/tsunamidebris/>

? NOAA is actively collecting information about tsunami debris and asks the public to report debris sightings to [DisasterDebris@noaa.gov](mailto:DisasterDebris@noaa.gov). Please include the time, date, location and, if possible, photos in such reports.

? State Health Department radiation experts don't expect to find any debris with elevated radiation levels. More information at [www.doh.wa.gov/Emergencies/Eme...te/TsunamiDebrisFAQ.aspx](http://www.doh.wa.gov/Emergencies/Eme...te/TsunamiDebrisFAQ.aspx).

? According to state Fish and Wildlife, finding marine debris with invasive species will be rare and most likely limited to large marine structures such as boats, docks, navigation aids and breakwaters that spent a long time in their native waters. Such objects will likely require heavy equipment to remove. People may find organisms attached to smaller debris items &ndash; sometimes in heavy accumulations &ndash; but these will be common open ocean species such as pelagic gooseneck barnacles. Go to [www.wdfw.wa.gov/tsunami/](http://www.wdfw.wa.gov/tsunami/).

? Don't burn driftwood. Salt residue from ocean waters stays in pores of the wood, even after it's dry. According to Ecology, when burned the chlorine reacts with the wood to form toxic compounds called dioxins that are released in the smoke. Such compounds can affect the immune system. If a beach fire is permitted, bring seasoned, non-driftwood, and enjoy.

? State Parks asks people who want to clean debris from beaches to focus on small, non-natural items such as Styrofoam and plastic. Leave wood and kelp because these are an important part of the beach ecosystem. Stripping the beach of its driftwood depletes needed coastal habitat.

? According to state law, it is illegal to burn garbage, and construction and demolition debris. More at <http://apps.leg.wa.gov/RCW/default.aspx?cite=70.94.6512>