Solid waste & marine litter

Did you know?

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That solid waste is any persistent, manufactured or processed solid material that is discarded or left abandoned. Such material that is not disposed of properly has the potential to negatively impact the Caribbean Sea.

That less than

35%

of solid waste goes to regulated sanitary landfills lacking maintenance and nearly two-thirds or 275,000 tonnes daily ends up in open-air dumps or in rivers in the Wider Caribbean Region.[1]

That everyday

8,000,000

new solid waste items become marine litter in our oceans and seas. The solid waste collection coverage in major Caribbean cities varies from 10% to over 100% of the population.[3]

That 14,000,000 tonnes of solid waste generated every year in the Caribbean, equalling approximately 39,000 tonnes every day.[1]

That marine litter can be classified into land or ocean waterway-based, depending on how the debris enters the water.[4]

That about

70%

of the litter that enters our seas and oceans ends up on the seafloor, with half of the remaining amount being found on beaches and half floating on the water's surface.[2]

Without concerted global action, there could be one tonne of plastic for every 3 tonnes of fish by 2025, leading to massive environmental, economic and health issues.[6]

That studies have shown that a high proportion

(approximately 50% to 80%)

of sea turtles found dead are known to have ingested some form of marine litter.[5]

That it takes 1,000,000 years for a glass bottle, 600 years for fishing line, 450 years for a plastic bottle, 450 years for a disposable diaper, 80-200 years for an aluminium can, 80 years for foamed plastic, 30-40 years for nylon fabric, 1-5 years for a cigarette filter, 3 months for a waxed milk carton, 2-5 weeks for an orange or banana peel and 2-4 weeks for paper towels to decompose.[7]

That pollution from land-based sources is a primary cause of coral reef degradation throughout the world. The estimated value of coral reef associated tourism in the Caribbean is between US$700 million and US$2.2 billions per year.Within the next 50 years, coral degradation and death could lead to losses totaling US$140 millions to US$420 millions annually.[8]

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4 UNEP 2008, Marine Litter in the Wider Caribbean Region: A Regional Overview and Action plan, United Nations Environment Programme, Kingston, Jamaica.

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