



MARITIME FORUM

Map of the week – Seabed litter – Fishing related items density

Published on: Fri, 08/05/2020 - 11:32

The map of the week shows the density of fishing-related items at the seafloor.

Marine litter refers to any persistent, manufactured or processed solid material discarded, disposed of or abandoned in the marine and coastal environment[1]. Many of these materials are resistant to degradation and persist in the marine environment, causing potential harm to marine and coastal life. In fact, with millions of tons of litter entering the ocean worldwide each year, fishing related items and other marine litter cause a major hazard for marine life as animals can get entangled or ingest the trash, exposing them to harmful chemicals. These can make their way up through the food chain threatening human health on a global scale, posing environmental, economic, health and aesthetic problems. Each year, up to 640.000 tonnes of fishing related items are estimated to be lost or abandoned in the oceans[2]. Some of these discarded fishing gear unfortunately end up ‘ghost fishing’, entangling fish, even when they are no longer in use for human activities[3].

As with other environmental problems, there are calls to further control and minimize marine litter. Fishermen already have the obligation ([Council Regulation \(EC\) No 1224/2009](#) [1]) to retrieve or report lost gear and minimizing this - and other marine litter - further requires collaboration among all stakeholders, relevant regulations and policies, and adequate support infrastructure. Scientists, policy makers and fishermen are standing together to combat marine litter. In 2019, the European Union (EU) adopted a [directive on the reduction of the impact of certain plastic products on the environment](#) [2] to restrict the use of several disposable plastic products and fishing gear, as an integral and complementary part of a much wider, comprehensive approach, namely the [Plastics Strategy](#) [3]. In addition, the EU also adopted a [directive](#) [4] on port reception facilities for the delivery of waste from ships. The [Marine Strategy Framework Directive \(MSFD\)](#) [5] requires EU Member States to ensure that, "properties and quantities of marine litter do not cause harm to the coastal and marine environment" by 2020. In addition to the existing European regulatory framework, the problem of marine litter has also been tackled by many [EU projects](#) [6]. Fishermen have also joined the effort, working in partnership (e.g. [with KIMO](#) [7]) to increase the recovery and recycling of discarded fishing gear and wider marine litter, including passively fished waste.

This map shows the density of fishing-related items at the seafloor, expressed as the average number of bags collected by fish-trawl surveys over the period of one year[4]. This knowledge about the

distribution and density of seabed litters are crucial to realise a shared vision for “litter-free marine environments” through the ongoing efforts among all of the various actors and stakeholders concerned!

[Access the map](#) [8]

The data in this map were provided by [EMODnet Chemistry](#) [9].

[1] UNEP (2009) Marine Litter: A Global Challenge. Nairobi. 232 p.

[2] <http://europeche.chil.me/post/european-fishermen-taking-the-lead-in-the-...> [10]

[3] <http://www.fao.org/news/story/en/item/1099767/icode/> [11]

^[4] https://www.emodnet-chemistry.eu/repository/20190321_EMODnet_Beach_Seabe... [12]

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Links

[1] <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX:32009R1224>

[2] <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?qid=1575369636397&uri=CELEX:32019L0904>

[3] <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=SWD:2018:0254:FIN>

[4] <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:32019L0883&from=EN>

[5] <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:32008L0056&from=EN>

[6] <https://webgate.ec.europa.eu/maritimeforum/en/frontpage/articles/544>

[7] <http://www.kimointernational.org/fishing-for-litter/>

[8] https://ec.europa.eu/maritimeaffairs/atlas/maritime_atlas/#lang=EN;p=w;bkgd=5;theme=282:0.8;c=361693.2234430993,6773732.070190632;z=8;e=t

[9] <https://www.emodnet-chemistry.eu/>

[10]

<http://europeche.chil.me/post/european-fishermen-taking-the-lead-in-the-fight-against-marine-litter-204116>

[11] <http://www.fao.org/news/story/en/item/1099767/icode/>

[12] https://www.emodnet-chemistry.eu/repository/20190321_EMODnet_Beach_Seabed_ML_Products.pdf