



United States  
Environmental Protection  
Agency

# The Flow of... Trash Free Waters

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## HOW IS IT FLOWING?

The purpose of this newsletter is to provide specialized information to all of our Trash Free Waters partners.

Among the followers, we have federal, state and local government officials. Quasi-governmental organizations like Ports, Transportation Authorities, Airports, and others are monitoring progress. Academic institutions at every level of public and private education are watching as we look to develop good science and educate our youth. We have friends in the private sector representing small businesses and large, associations, confederations, partnerships, and more. Interested citizens, watershed groups, and a whole host of others have expressed interest in our efforts and next steps.



This newsletter is for all of you.

Each quarter we will attempt to report on the progress of Trash Free Waters on a National, Regional, and even local scale. More frequent "Bonus" issues may be published from time to time, as news and opportunities arise. We welcome your feedback.

We sincerely hope you will share your ideas on how to make "The Flow" more meaningful to you, your colleagues and the work that you do to reduce and ultimately prevent trash from entering our watersheds.

Please feel free to send your suggestions to our Team Lead, Laura Johnson at:

[Johnson.Laura-S@epa.gov](mailto:Johnson.Laura-S@epa.gov)

## Upcoming Meetings

NY/NJ Stakeholder  
Trash Free Waters  
Summit  
Oct 30, 2014

Alice Ferguson  
Foundation Trash  
Summit  
Washington, D.C.  
Nov 7, 2014

Puerto Rico  
Stakeholder Trash  
Free Waters Meeting  
Nov 13, 2014

## What is the "Trash Free Waters" Program?

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) National Trash Free Waters (TFW) program is striving to develop a focused set of actions and projects that significantly reduce or even eliminate the

volume of trash and litter entering watersheds, aquatic ecosystems, and the marine environment. Commonly held analysis suggests that up to 80% of trash in the ocean derives from land-based sources. Strategies to

eliminate aquatic trash must necessarily involve measures that reduce litter and trash on land and far upstream of the oceans. These strategies also support initiatives by many public and private stakeholders.

## EPA's Role in Achieving Trash Free Waters

*EPA contracted the National Academy of Sciences to convene an expert panel on Microplastics in the Marine Environment and Potential Human Health Effects this past Spring. Comments are being incorporated into the meeting summary, which is slated to be released next month.*

EPA is developing unique and tailored regional strategies (see below) to enhance federal state and local programs that reduce or prevent aquatic trash from entering our watersheds and ultimately our coastal ecosystems. Our general approach as we expand to different geographic regions of the U.S. is for EPA Headquarters, our Regional Offices and our consulting team:

- Serve as catalyst/convenor of strategic and tactical planning;
- Identify “champions” to serve as project leads on the ground where these projects are evolving;
- Consult with and to government, business, non-governmental organizations, and citizen stakeholders;
- Identify collective actions that enhance trash prevention “drivers” and remove “barriers;”
- Facilitate project implementation; and
- Measure results.

Through these efforts and other activities, EPA hopes to achieve marked reductions in the flow of trash in our nation's waters and along our shores.

## Regional TFW Strategies and Tactical Plans

EPA has had a mature aquatic trash/marine debris program in California and the Pacific Islands led by EPA Region 9. Now, with greater attention at the highest levels at Headquarters, EPA is expanding its TFW program into the lower and upper Mid Atlantic, the Gulf of Mexico region (“the Gulf”) and Puerto Rico.

In each area, we are undertaking a structured, three-phase process to support and advance aquatic trash prevention and reduction initiatives on local, statewide, and watershed levels:

- **Phase I:** Reconnaissance including interviews and research.
- **Phase II: Strategy and Planning**

including stakeholder discussions and priorities

- **Phase III: Tactics and Project Implementation.**

While the regional strategic plans are more static in nature, our projects will be more dynamic with the completion of some and the start-up of others as capacity ebbs and flows.

## TFW in the Lower Mid-Atlantic

(Contact [colombo.matt@epa.gov](mailto:colombo.matt@epa.gov); (202) 566-2518)

Much is happening behind the scenes as we move from our Strategy and Planning phase into Tactics and Implementation. The Hampton Roads Region and the City of Richmond have put forward their initial concept plans for a

Municipal Level Project. The concepts are being refined and private sector partner(s) are being sought. Washington, DC; Baltimore, MD; and Philadelphia, PA are in the midst of defining their early concepts. At our Annapolis meeting earlier

this year, TFW also endorsed a “Great Practices” project, noting that the sharing of successful practices to reduce litter and aquatic trash was an essential component of a TFW Mid-Atlantic regional strategy. After much anticipation,

**TFW in the Lower Mid-Atlantic (continued)**

we are preparing this 'Great Practices' tool. The purpose of this tool is to highlight activities (outreach, policies, programs, etc) in the Mid-Atlantic region that are advancing the goal of reducing the loading of trash to water. Matt Colombo has received your responses to his

request and will be working with SRA International to develop the tool. EPA will be leading a session at the Alice Ferguson Foundation's Annual Trash Summit, entitled Measuring the Progress and Success of Aquatic Trash Reduction and Prevention Activities, on Friday, November 7th. This session will highlight ongoing work in the region

that is reducing and preventing aquatic trash, and contribute to EPA-led dialogue on establishing guidance for commonly accepted measures of aquatic trash reduction/prevention success.

*Our Economic Analysis White Paper looking at the direct and indirect costs to society of trash in waterways will be released in the weeks ahead.*

**TFW in the Upper Mid-Atlantic**  
(Contact colombo.matt@epa.gov; (202) 566-2518)

We are stationed at the headwaters in the Upper Mid-Atlantic (NY/NJ) and readying to move downstream. Matt has participated in a stakeholder call with EPA Region 2, state officials, and local NGOs. Matt will be working closely with EPA Region 2 and facilitation support from

the Syracuse Environmental Finance Center to begin the assessment phase of ongoing activities in NY/NJ. We plan to use this assessment to define a strategic action plan to reduce and prevent aquatic trash. EPA Reg 2 will be hosting a Trash Free Waters Planning

Meeting for the Upper-Mid Atlantic on Thursday, October 30th.

*An EPA State of the Science White Paper, A Summary of the Effects of Plastics Pollution on Aquatic Life and Aquatic Dependent Wildlife, is in review and on track to be released before the end of the calendar year.*

**TFW in Puerto Rico**  
(Contact mercado.noemi@epa.gov; (202) 566-1251)

The TFW Program was introduced to Puerto Rico by Noemi at a meeting held in San Juan on September 9, 2014 with the San Juan Bay National Estuary Program and the Puerto Rico Recycling Partnership. Noemi is working closely

with these two entities, along with EPA Region 2 and facilitation support from the Syracuse Environmental Finance Center (SEFC), to design an action plan with initiatives to reduce loadings of trash into Puerto Rico water bodies.

During the September meeting, stakeholders from different sectors brainstormed actions to address aquatic trash in Puerto Rico. As we move forward with the planning stage, another stakeholder meeting is planned in San Juan on November 13, 2014.

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## **TFW in the Gulf of Mexico**

(Contact Johnson.Laura-S@epa.gov; (202) 566-1273)

This summer we traveled over 2,500 miles of coast, conducted over 25 meetings and met with over 500 stakeholders in the Reconnaissance Phase of our work in the Gulf. Short summaries of the two week-long trips have been distributed to our Gulf stakeholders. Copies are available upon request. We've been consulting with EPA Regions 4 and 6 as well as the Gulf of Mexico Program Office. We have identified project champions and are in the midst of refining six project concepts that support our Regional Strategy. We encourage our Gulf stakeholders to consider a TFW project/program for funding under the RESTORE Act. Please contact your respective Gulf State for information pertaining to applications and due dates.

## **The Rapids: News Drops**

### **PARTNERSHIPS WITH THE PACKAGING INDUSTRIES**

EPA issued a draft charter this month for endorsement by our packaging industry partners. We are seeking ways in which to integrate associations and their membership into projects on the ground in the Mid-Atlantic, the Gulf of Mexico and in Puerto Rico.

### **FUNDING OPPORTUNITIES**

TFW is not a grant program. That said, from time to time our partners do have resources available to those who are looking to make progress in reducing or preventing aquatic trash.

The TFW team is currently working with the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation to explore the opportunity to incorporate language into the Request for Proposals (RFP) that could allow for TFW projects to be considered for funding. The RFP would be issued in November, 2014, and the application due date is in February, 2015. We'll provide updates as we receive more information.

### **NATIONAL PROGRAM ACTIVITIES AND BEYOND**

Bob Benson, the visionary of the TFW program, was invited to make a brief announcement about the program at the State Department's "Our Ocean" Conference in Washington, D.C. Bob attended the Marine Debris Panel discussion and announced the Trash Free Waters program at the conclusion of the panelists' remarks. All in all, the event was a success. The statement was well-received with a warm round of applause from the 250 or so attendees in the auditorium. It was broadcast on the live conference webcast. The announcement prompted a flurry of positive tweets observed on a large projection of the rolling Twitter feed. In July, John Kerry mentioned TFW at a White House National Ocean Council meeting.