

THE HISTORY OF OCEAN POLLUTION AND WHERE IT'S HEADED

The First Reports of Ocean Dumping

Because scientists didn't attempt to research this issue until the 1960s, we can assume that it's a centuries-old concern. That's especially true when we compare evidence to information about previous disposal methods. As a process, organizations used to dump harmful products into our oceans as a way to remove them.

In 1968, the National Academy of Sciences found that more than 100 million tons of waste had entered our oceans. These statistics didn't consider plastic, which had only recently become a mainstream material. Additional reports estimated other substantial figures related to chemical, industrial and sewage waste. Luckily, four years later, the U.S. Congress enacted the Marine Protection, Research and Sanctuaries Act.

This effort acknowledged that the U.S. must regulate ocean dumping as it affects both people and wildlife. However, even though the government recognized these adverse influences, it hasn't put a stop to pollution by any means.

How It's Made

Over time, plastic doesn't decompose. Instead, it breaks down into tiny pieces, otherwise known as microplastics. These bits cause enormous issues for marine wildlife, as they continuously mistake them for food. Plus, it's incredibly difficult for experts to track these small particles. Though there's an effort to produce new items with old plastic, it's not substantial enough to make a tremendous impact.

As long as we continue to use plastic, we'll face many consequences.

There's a Long Road Ahead for Clean Oceans

The history of ocean pollution can help us understand what we need to do as we move forward. If we're able to learn from past mistakes, we can transform our situation for the better.

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Publisher

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