



OCEANS 2019 Seattle - Marine Debris Town Hall

Science and Technology for advancing global sustainability and societal information

Tuesday, October 29
6-8 pm

Marine debris is of growing global concern. Increasing material consumption and plastic production contribute to more marine litter and have resulted in estimates that over 8 million tonnes of plastic leak into the ocean each year. While quantitative information on production and use of plastics is to a large extent available, the fate of plastics discarded or leaked into the environment is highly uncertain. In particular, knowledge of how much plastic at different scales down to micro and nano levels reaches the ocean and the trajectories of the plastic in the ocean remain poorly known.

The Earth observation community so far has not managed to establish a global tracking and information system that would provide quantitative information on where and how plastics move in the ocean and allow the identification of the points where marine plastic pollution could be reduced most effectively. A necessary first step in addressing marine litter includes establishing a knowledge base for the amount of marine litter that has entered the ocean. In order to establish this knowledge base, the right actors need to be involved and they require a global platform to coordinate monitoring marine litter and informing action.

Panel session from 6 to 7 pm: “The Global Challenge of Marine Debris”

- Information needs for marine plastics and other debris: SDG 14.1 indicators (Emily Smail, NOAA/ GEO Blue Planet)
- Bringing the Knowledge of Plastic Debris in the Oceans to Society (Hans-Peter Plag, MARI-ODU)
- Challenges to monitoring plastics in the oceans: coupling observation technologies and circulation models (René Garello, IMT Atlantique / IEEE OES)

Breakout sessions from 7 to 8 pm: “Addressing the Challenge”

The panel session will be followed by a breakout session where the audience will be able to participate in a more detailed discussion of the issues and next steps for the following topics:

- *Breakout Session 1: Information needs for marine plastics and other debris: SDG 14.1 indicators*
- *Breakout Session 2: Current knowledge of plastic debris in the oceans (water column, seabed, washed/deposited on shorelines)*
- *Breakout Session 3: Challenges to monitoring plastics in the oceans: coupling observation technologies and circulation models*
- *Breakout Session 4: Bringing the knowledge to society: existing and developing global platforms*

These sessions will be followed by a brief summary of the discussions by each of the breakout session leads and the session will end with a wrap-up by the moderator presenting a plan for action and future progress meetings.

For further information, please contact Elisabeth Creed (elcreed@ieee.org) and René Garello (r.garello@ieee.org)