



Celebrating Ten Years of the EPA's Trash Free Waters

HISTORY OF THE PROGRAM

The EPA Office of Water created the Trash Free Waters (TFW) program in 2013 to support stakeholder efforts to reduce the volume of trash entering waterways around the country and to collaborate across Agency programs to increase the focus on tackling the problem of aquatic trash.

The EPA started by working with leading organizations and experts to listen to recommendations for how best to use the Agency's strengths and resources to address the specific problem of trash in our oceans. Those conversations led the program to transition early on towards focusing on preventing trash from entering inland waterways. To this end, the program over time grew its efforts on providing educational and technical resources, supporting partners on a wide array of place-based projects, and grappling directly with the microplastic pollution problem.

Over the last ten years, the TFW program has developed over 20 technical reports and coordinated with local, regional, and state partners to assist over 90 place-based projects around the country.

TFW PROGRAM GOALS

- 1 Prevent waste generation at the source and change behaviors that add trash to the environment.**
- 2 Remove trash from US waterways by supporting trash capture solutions and other remediation efforts.**
- 3 Improve understanding of the sources, causes, pathways, and impacts of aquatic trash, including microplastics.**

LOOKING TOWARD THE FUTURE

Although important progress has been made to address the problem of trash in the nation's waterways, there is still a lot of work to be done.

Multiple reports and testimony from experts have made clear that a business-as-usual approach towards addressing plastic waste – a major component of the overall trash problem – isn't enough. Along with the EPA's Office of Resource Conservation and Recovery, the TFW program is co-leading the development of the National Strategy to Prevent Plastic Pollution – a requirement of the Save Our Seas 2.0 Act of 2020. This strategy will include actions across the plastic lifecycle intended to maximize impact, as well as circular economy approaches such as facilitating material reuse.

Consistent with this approach, the TFW program is working with partner cities to launch citywide reusable foodware systems and is exploring other national initiatives to reduce trash generation. TFW will also help implement other strategy actions related to education, research, trash capture, and more. The program will continue to develop and implement trash mitigation efforts in specific locations through partnerships with the EPA's place-based programs and other entities, as well as strengthening the existing emphasis on disadvantaged communities impacted by trash in local waterways.

By implementing these priorities, the TFW program will continue to grow its role to effectively address this critical issue.

Learn more about the TFW program at:

<https://www.epa.gov/trash-free-waters>



TFW PROGRAM MILESTONES



The EPA establishes the Trash Free Waters (TFW) program

2013

2014

TFW starts publishing *The Flow* newsletter, which provides information about TFW efforts and other relevant news

TFW finalizes its Gulf regional strategy and coordinates with stakeholders on seven projects

TFW finalizes its Mid-Atlantic regional strategy and coordinates with stakeholders on seven projects

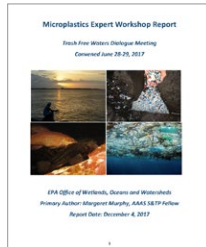
2015

TFW meets with corporate and government officials to discuss solutions to prevent trash from entering waterways

2016

National summit with the EPA headquarters, regional program leaders, and outside experts to develop the EPA's first full-Agency strategic plan for Trash Free Waters

TFW publishes Aquatic Trash Prevention National Great Practices Compendium



TFW Microplastics Expert Workshop results in report outlining priority microplastics research needs

2017

2018

TFW provides financial and technical support to the Santa Monica Bay National Estuary Program to work with local food service establishments to minimize use of single-use packaging



TFW works with partners to fund five "litter gitter" trash capture devices and one Bandalong litter trap in the Proctor Creek watershed around Atlanta

2019

2020

TFW releases the first issue of *The Rapids*, a monthly communication to stakeholders

Save Our Seas 2.0 Act is signed into law, authorizing grant programs and reports such as the Report on Microfiber Pollution and the National Strategy to Prevent Plastic Pollution

The EPA releases "Report on Priority Microplastics Research Needs: Update to the 2017 Microplastics Expert Workshop"



2021

2022

TFW partners with Washington, D.C. on an outreach and education project, case study, and summary report on the reduction of trash spillage on collection days

TFW program logo developed

After holding two stakeholder roundtables, TFW publishes "Where the Rubber Meets the Road: Opportunities to Address Tire Wear Particles in Waterways"

Release of the "Puerto Rico Strategic Plan to Reduce Aquatic Debris"

2023



Anticipated release of the National Strategy to Prevent Plastic Pollution

Anticipated release of the Report on Microfiber Pollution

2024