

## What Now? - STRAWS + Smog of the Sea



Many of us have heard of the Great Pacific Garbage Patch, a huge gyre of waste that churns about in the middle of the ocean. This was caused by our waste making its way to the ocean rather than being contained in a landfill or just not producing it in the first place! Now we are facing another problem: ocean smog. In addition to a trash heap in the middle of the ocean, we now have a “smog” of tiny micro plastics scattered throughout the ocean, causing hazy waters and negatively affecting wildlife.

**Learn more about the films by visiting their official websites here:**

The Smog of the Sea: [www.thesmogofthesea.com](http://www.thesmogofthesea.com)

STRAWS: [www.strawsfilm.com](http://www.strawsfilm.com)

**How much trash is actually in the oceans?**

It’s been estimated that 8.5 million metric tons of plastic debris currently exist in the ocean. This debris contributes to the smog.

**How does so much trash make its way to the ocean?**

It’s estimated that every single day over 500,000,000 plastic straws are used once and immediately thrown away in the United States alone. Straws are also the #5 most common litter found on beaches. From this statistic, it’s easy to see how small plastic debris adds up and how easily beach waste enters the ocean.

**What Can We Do About This?**

Reducing plastic waste sounds simple, but plastic is widespread in our lives. It’s in many of the products we use, and especially used to wrap and contain items we eat and drink.

**Here are some easy ways to reduce your own use of plastic:**

- ❖ When you order a beverage at a restaurant, let them know you don’t need a straw.

- ❖ Use a reusable cup with a reusable straw, many places offer discounts for this! (Including Loaded Joes!)
- ❖ Bring your own reusable bag to the grocery store, avoid those pesky plastic bags!
- ❖ Bring your own bag for produce instead of using the plastic bags provided. These are easy to find and order online.
- ❖ Buy items (rice, oats, nuts, etc.) in bulk to avoid unnecessary plastic packaging. Buying in bulk also saves you money.
- ❖ Avoid plastic water bottles; reusable bottles are more efficient and save money!
- ❖ Avoid using single-use plastic utensils. If ordering take out, let them know you have your own utensils at home or simply bring your own.
- ❖ Participate in beach, river, or creek cleanups. Check out the [Eagle River Watershed Council](http://www.erwc.org) to learn more about our local river cleanups. – [www.erwc.org](http://www.erwc.org)
- ❖ Avoid plastic packaging as much as you can! Instead, try to purchase items in paper or cardboard.
- ❖ Research what organizations, like those listed in some of the links above, are doing to combat this issue. You can get involved, donate, or spread the word to your peers.
- ❖ Start a conversation! Simply talking about this issue and asking questions can spark a new idea.
- ❖ Click on Take Action at [www.thesmogofthesea.com](http://www.thesmogofthesea.com) to gain access to a variety of resources to reduce plastic waste, including online campaigns, petitions you can sign, toolkits, strategies to organize your community, and info on how to reduce specific single-use plastic products.

### Attend Upcoming Events to Learn more!

[Actively Green Workshop: Waste of What?](http://www.walkingmountains.org/ag) – Teach your business how to create an effective waste reduction strategy. Register at [www.walkingmountains.org/ag](http://www.walkingmountains.org/ag)

[Zero Waste Events and resources:](#) Make your next event low waste by ensuring any plastic materials you purchase for it are recyclable.

Want to know how to make sure your plastic is recyclable in our community? Look it up on the [Waste Wizard!](#) Download it on Google Play or the App Store.

