

PLASTIC IN THE OCEANS – Sample student projects:

- Increase the understanding and awareness of the impacts of plastic debris by telling others – parents, other adults, other students – and further increase awareness by such actions as:
 - Posting information online, making posters, writing articles, or creating a video.
 - Create a presentation or talk to present to students in local elementary schools.
- Develop plastic waste reduction programs in your school and/or in your community, such as: (The four worst-offending plastics are Styrofoam, carryout bags, bottles and bottle-tops.)
 - Promoting the use of metal or reusable plastic water bottles instead of buying bottled water. Reusable bottles can be filled with tap water or, in areas where tap water is not potable, from the large 5-gallon reusable purified water containers. For the latter, this would involve schools having ample purified water readily available.
 - Promoting buying beverages only in glass bottles or cans.
 - Promoting using reusable plastic containers instead of plastic sandwich bags for sandwiches and other food.
 - Promoting alternates to Styrofoam and/or trying to have your school or community totally eliminate the use of Styrofoam.
 - Promote the use of alternative carry-out bags, made from all-natural fibres (eg. jute, hemp, woven cotton, canvas) AND when that is not possible to at least reuse plastic bags. Ask stores in your community to totally eliminate the use of plastic carry out bags. For customers who do not bring along cloth carry-out bags, ask stores to provide paper bags, at a small fee, instead of plastic. (These cost more up-front than plastic bags, but have none of the after-costs. Paper bags come from renewable sources, are biodegradable, re-useable, and recyclable. They contain no toxic chemicals.
 - Talking to local produce stores and asking them not to stock produce sold in packages. Also encourage customers to, where feasible, not place each type of produce in a plastic bag, but to carry them loose then have them placed directly into the customer's carry-out bag.
 - Create a video about your project or with information about protecting our oceans to post on YouTube for others to watch and be inspired. Send information and pictures about your project to nereida.org so they can be posted on the nereida website for others to see.
- In areas where the debris near the waterline is replaced every day by people on the beach, random beach cleanups can be somewhat futile, but there is substantial merit in setting an example, in particular if young people are doing this, which may inspire more conscientiousness in the people witnessing this effort.
- In other areas, such as in Canada or the United States, students can participate in beach cleanup programs. In Canada they can join the Great Canadian Shoreline Cleanup any time of the year, anywhere land connects to water. See www.shorelinecleanup.ca
- In coastal areas without garbage or recycle bins on their beaches, student (and teacher) representatives could meet with city/town officials to promote placing garbage and/or recycle bins on beaches and implementing a regular program of collection from these bins. If that is not possible, garbage and recycle bins should be located at street endings beside beaches. This is hugely important, as it is quite likely that a large percentage of discarded plastic would be disposed of properly if it were more convenient to do so.

- Start or get involved in campaigns to eliminate problem products and demand that companies take responsibility for their products. For example, lobby:
 - Companies that use microplastics in their cleansers to replace them with environmental friendly alternatives. In Canada and the U.S., regulations have, or are, being passed to ban the use of plastic microbeads in wash-off cosmetics, but they are still being used in household and industrial cleaning products.
 - Fast food restaurants to stop using plastic cups, plates, cutlery, and straws. Paper is a good replacement for plastic cups and plates and bamboo is a good replacement for plastic cutlery. It is estimated that, for example, worldwide, McDonalds alone uses approximately 60 million drinking straws every day.
 - Coke and Pepsi to stop labelling their bottles with wrap-around plastic labels. These are constantly coming off and being left on beaches and washed into the ocean. Instead the companies could imprint their names and information right on the bottles, or at least come up with a paper (rather than plastic) wrap-around label.
 - Clothing manufactures to stop using synthetic materials, such as polyester and nylon, to make clothing. Synthetic clothes release hundreds of tiny plastic fibers into the wash water every time they are washed. The wash water washes the fibers onto beaches or into the oceans.
 - Your government to have plastics producers implement technological solutions to ensure that all plastics produced are recyclable and less harmful to the environment.
 - Team up with other people or schools in a campaign.
- Pick a project that appeals to you. We all have different talents to use to help with the plastics problem. Set a good example by lowering your own plastic consumption.