

Opinion: Plastic continues to choke oceans

By Charles J. Moore, New York Times

LOS ANGELES – The world is awash in plastic. It's in our cars and our carpets, we wrap it around the food we eat and virtually every other product we consume; it has become a key lubricant of globalization – but it's choking our future in ways that most of us are barely aware.

I have just returned with a team of scientists from six weeks at sea conducting research in the Great Pacific Garbage Patch – one of five major garbage patches drifting in the oceans north and south of the Equator at the latitude of our great terrestrial deserts. Although it was my 10th voyage to the area, I was utterly shocked to see the enormous increase in the quantity of plastic waste since my last trip in 2009. Plastics of every description, from toothbrushes to tires to unidentifiable fragments too numerous to count floated past our marine research vessel *Alguita* for hundreds of miles without end. We even came upon a floating island bolstered by dozens of plastic buoys used in oyster aquaculture that had solid areas you could walk on.

Plastics are now one of the most common pollutants of ocean waters worldwide. Pushed by winds, tides and currents, plastic particles form with other debris into large swirling glutinous accumulation zones, known to oceanographers as gyres, which comprise as much as 40 percent of the planet's ocean surface – roughly 25 percent of the entire earth.

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