

# Plastic Pollution In Our Oceans

The UN declares the official number of tons of plastic flowing into our oceans is about 8.8 million tons (8 million metric tonnes) a year. This is equivalent to a garbage truck load every minute<sup>1</sup>. Other organizations, such as Greenpeace, state the number of tons flowing into our oceans annually is higher<sup>2</sup>, but the UN data is overwhelmingly used as the official figure.

As for the cost of ocean plastic pollution, a report by the Ellen MacArthur Foundation<sup>3</sup> and The World Trade Institute confirms the cost of ocean plastic at \$13 billion a year. However, the cost is defined as “the annual damage of plastics to marine ecosystems”<sup>4</sup>, not necessarily the cost of ocean cleanup alone. The World Trade Institute does note, though, that related economic costs include those linked to clean-up operations, litter removal, and other consequences of ocean cleanup operations (such as damaged sea vessels)<sup>4</sup>.

The Ocean Cleanup, a non-governmental organization focused on devising technologies to remove plastic pollution from the oceans, states that “the removal of garbage from coastlines costs up to \$25,000 per ton of plastic”<sup>5</sup>. Furthermore, individual beach cleanup costs come in at \$72.60 - \$18,552 per ton of plastic (based on figures of €0.07 – €18.0 per kg and current exchange rates)<sup>5</sup>. These are tremendously high costs that some countries may not be able to afford.

Sources:

<sup>1</sup>UN Environment:

<http://web.unep.org/unepmap/un-declares-war-ocean-plastic>

<sup>2</sup>Greenpeace:

<https://www.greenpeace.org.uk/what-we-do/oceans/plastics/>

<sup>3</sup>Ellen MacArthur Foundation:

[https://www.ellenmacarthurfoundation.org/assets/downloads/EllenMacArthurFoundation\\_TheNewPlasticsEconomy\\_Pages.pdf](https://www.ellenmacarthurfoundation.org/assets/downloads/EllenMacArthurFoundation_TheNewPlasticsEconomy_Pages.pdf)

<sup>4</sup>World Trade Institute:

<https://www.wti.org/institute/news/350/protecting-the-oceans-against-plastic-pollution/>

<sup>5</sup>The Ocean Cleanup:

[https://www.theoceancleanup.com/fileadmin/media-archive/Documents/TOC\\_Feasibility\\_study\\_executive\\_summary\\_V2\\_0.pdf](https://www.theoceancleanup.com/fileadmin/media-archive/Documents/TOC_Feasibility_study_executive_summary_V2_0.pdf)