



A Great Big Dumping Ground?

In 1997, a survey by the American Academy of Science estimated that 6.4 million tonnes of rubbish enters the world's oceans each year. Around 60-80 per cent of the rubbish floating on ocean surfaces is estimated to have come from land.

Plastic items are one of the most common marine pollutants. Around the world, it's estimated that 100,000 marine mammals and one million seabirds die each year of plastic entanglement or ingestion. The Ministry for the Environment says plastic may be a greater cause of death among the world's marine mammals than other marine pollutant.

Oil spills are another cause of marine pollution. Oil slicks can present a serious threat to marine habitats and inhabitants.

Sewage and stormwater is also a significant marine pollutant. Stormwater run-off from towns and cities and sewage from both rivers and coastal outfalls flows into New Zealand's harbours, estuaries and coastal waters.

In some areas, coastal water near river mouths, in harbours and estuaries, and near outfall pipes is unsuitable for shellfish gathering and, in rare cases, may be unsuitable for bathing.

Other activities and processes that can cause marine pollution include:

- ✘ Discharges from industrial facilities into waterways which flow into the sea
- ✘ Runoff from dairy farms into waterways
- ✘ Other agricultural discharges including pesticides and fertilisers
- ✘ Sediment and soil carried downstream from road and house construction
- ✘ Land developments and forest clearance.

Regional councils are responsible for the control of discharges and dumping in the coastal marine area. The Maritime Safety Authority (MSA) is responsible for these activities within New Zealand's Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ). The MSA is also responsible for managing oil spills.