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Contact: Megan Sever
msever@earthmagazine.org

EARTH: Tracking Plastic in the Oceans

Alexandria, VA – Humans produce over 260 million tons of plastic each year. Almost a third of that plastic goes into disposable, one-time-use items, and only about 1% of it is recycled globally. Where does the rest of the plastic go? How does it interact with our environment? And how will it impact us in the future? In this month's issue of EARTH Magazine, follow the fate of many plastics as they make their way from our homes to our planet's oceans.

While no one knows exactly how much plastic is in the ocean, studies over the past few decades have suggested that millions of square kilometers of ocean surface may be covered with floating garbage "patches." Today, at least five such patches are known to exist. The largest, the Great Pacific Garbage Patch, floats miles off the coast of Hawaii and is estimated to be roughly the size of Texas. Where did this refuse come from? How is it affecting our oceans? And will we ever be able to remove the trash? Find out at <http://www.earthmagazine.org/article/tracking-plastic-oceans>.

Plastics not your bag? Read this story and more in this month's issue of EARTH Magazine, available online now at <http://www.earthmagazine.org/>. Also in this month's issue, revisit water on mars as scientists search for clues to see if Mars could support life; learn how radiation is affecting residents in Fukushima, Japan; and, travel to Virunga National Park in the Congo to hike Mount Nyiragongo.

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Keep up to date with the latest happenings in Earth, energy and environment news with EARTH magazine online at <http://www.earthmagazine.org/>. Published by the American Geosciences Institute, EARTH is your source for the science behind the headlines.

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