Major sources and pathways of human generated plastic waste in the marine environment

Pathways, sources, sinks and temporary accumulation

B

Airborne pathway

From anthropogenic activities such as particles from vehicle tyres and brakes and road paint, city dust, synthetic textiles, dried sewage sludge.

Ocean plastic (1950-2017)

Current standing stock of plastic is estimated to be between 75 and 199 million tons.

199

75

Gyres - accumulation

Estimates of the time taken for plastics to be transported from coastal areas to mid-ocean islands and gyres range from months to years.

Aquaculture - source

Fish, shellfish and macroalgae farming.

Direct littering from activities in the oceans

Shipping - source

Galley waste thrown overboard, loss of shipping goods and plastic pellets, marine coatings.

Fishing activities - source

Galley waste thrown overboard, abandoned, lost, or otherwise discarded fishing gear, marine coatings.

Recreational boats - source

Galley waste and litter thrown overboard, marine coatings.

United Nations Environment Programme (2021). From Pollution to Solution: A global assessment of marine litter and plastic pollution. Nairobi.

Illustrated by GRID-Arendal