

# DEEP

How can you do your part to help the oceans?  
These 25 tips can make a difference.

# THOUGHTS

BY ELIZABETH GEHRMAN

**1 BE GREEN.** Reducing your carbon footprint, conserving water, eating organic food, being vegetarian, and buying nontoxic products can help lessen global warming, which is causing water temperatures to rise, upsetting the oceans' delicate balance.

**2 DON'T WASH YOUR CAR IN THE STREET.** Not only does it use 60 percent more water than a commercial car wash, but the detergent runoff ends up – untreated – in streams, lakes, and the ocean.

**3 PICK UP AFTER PETS.** A recent US Geological Survey study of streams and creeks in Kansas showed that pet-waste germs made up approximately a quarter of the bacteria in samples collected from local waterways. When enough bacteria gets into the ocean, it can cause beach and shellfish-bed closures and threaten the drinking supply.

**4 WATCH WHAT YOU WASH DOWN THE DRAIN.** Cooking grease, excessive food waste, and trash in sink drains and disposals can accumulate in city sewer lines and cause blockages that create sewage overflows into the ocean.



**5 USE NATURAL PERSONAL-CARE AND LAUNDRY PRODUCTS.** Everything you put on your body eventually goes down the drain when you shower, as does the rinse water from your washing machine. Waste-water treatment plants are not equipped to filter out these types of chemicals.

**6 BE A BLUE BOATER.** Use nontoxic cleaning products and paints over a dropcloth, recycling used oil, and scheduling regular maintenance to avoid fuel and lubricant leaks.

**7 ORGANIZE CLEAN-UPS OF NEARBY BEACHES.** Last year, volunteers collected almost 18,000 pounds of debris from 130 miles of coastline, according to Coastsweep, a UMass-Boston group that organizes statewide cleanups. For more info on how to start one in your neighborhood, check [coastsweep.umb.edu](http://coastsweep.umb.edu).

**8 USE CLOTH SHOPPING BAGS.** So plastic ones don't end up in the harbor. Plastic bags cause the deaths of 100,000 marine animals each year when the animals mistake them for food, so if you must use them, always recycle them in the bin at your supermarket.

**9 CHOOSE YOUR FISH CAREFULLY.** Many marine species are overfished, and some have high levels of mercury and PCBs. Do your research by searching "ocean-friendly seafood" at the New England Aquarium's web site, [www.neaq.org](http://www.neaq.org), or browsing sites like [blue-ocean.org](http://blue-ocean.org) (its fish phone can send a text message report to your cell phone), and [montereybayaquarium.org](http://montereybayaquarium.org).

**10 CUT UP MONOFILAMENT FISHING LINE, STRING, AND ROPE BEFORE DISCARDING,** and never let balloons drift off. Seabirds and other creatures can get tangled in lines, and marine mammals often mistake balloons for food.

**11 VOTE WITH THE ENVIRONMENT IN MIND.** Lobby your legislators to end harmful fishing methods, set tougher safety standards for oil spills, and keep shoreline development in check, among other things.

**12 USE LESS PLASTIC** and always recycle. According to Greenpeace, about 10 million tons of plastic ends up in the ocean annually; much of it has collected in a spiral in the north Pacific. The "garbage vortex" is the size of Texas, and it's not getting any smaller.

**13 HELP PREVENT AIR POLLUTION.** Air pollution contributes to water pollution and increases acidity in oceans and lakes. You can reduce your output by avoiding aerosols and driving less, for starters.

**14 USE ONLY NATURAL LAWN PRODUCTS,** and plant trees and shrubs around your property to lessen erosion. About 60 percent of soil that's washed away ends up in waterways, bringing pesticides, fertilizer, and terrestrial bacteria with it.

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**RETURN UNUSED OR EXPIRED MEDICATIONS TO THE DRUG STORE** instead of flushing them. Hormones, antidepressants, painkillers, and other drugs are showing up in our water supply and harming aquatic life.

**16 IF YOU HAVE A SALT-WATER FISH TANK, BUY ONLY** Marine Aquarium Council certified fish and never return them to the ocean. Pacific lionfish are just one species that has proliferated in the southern Atlantic and Caribbean after hobbyists released them when they got too big for their tanks. A single lionfish can reduce recruitment of other fish on a reef by a staggering 85 percent, and these apex predators are threatening both commercial fishing and tourism.

**17 FLEX YOUR CONSUMER POWER** by learning about companies' environmental policies and buying only from those that promote green – and blue – practices. Don't buy products that exploit the oceans, such as coral calcium, shark cartilage supplements, and coral jewelry, and if you take fish oil, substitute it with equally healthy flaxseed oil.

**18 IT MAY SEEM BASIC, BUT DON'T THROW TRASH INTO WATERWAYS.** Cigarette butts, which take up to five years to break down in saltwater, can kill birds and aquatic animals that mistake them for food.

**25 LEARN MORE ABOUT OCEAN HEALTH** and pass on your knowledge to others.

**19 DON'T USE ANTI-BACTERIAL SOAP.** Its most common ingredient, triclosan, is not completely removed during waste-water treatment, and is toxic to marine organisms.

**20 DON'T USE ANY SOAP IN OR NEAR OPEN WATER.** Only three parts per million can kill sea urchin embryos, for example.

**21 TAKE MOTOR OIL, PAINT, ANTIFREEZE, PESTICIDES, AND SOLVENT CONTAINERS** and leftovers to a hazardous-waste dropoff site rather than pouring them into storm drains or sewers. Clean up spills rather than hosing them into the street.

**22 MAKE SURE YOUR SEPTIC SYSTEM** operates properly by having it inspected and pumped at least every three to five years.

**23 TAKE UP SCUBA DIVING.** It's safe and will help you appreciate the underwater world.

**24 IF YOU CAN, PROVIDE FINANCIAL SUPPORT** to conservation efforts.

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