Australia's National
Science Agency

Global Plastic Leakage Baseline Data Summary Report, Yeongsan, South Korea

Report for fieldwork conducted November 2017 and May 2018

CSIRO Marine Debris Team* in collaboration with Our Sea of East Asia Network (OSEAN)+

February 2021

Citation

CSIRO Marine Debris and OSEAN teams (2021). Global Plastics Leakage Baseline Data Summary Report, Yeongsan, South Korea. CSIRO, Australia. EP211108.

* CSIRO Marine Debris Team contributors included (in alphabetical order) Britta Denise Hardesty, Leigh Keen, TJ Lawson, Qamar Schuyler, Tim Reid and Chris Wilcox.

[+] OSEAN team contributors included (in alphabetical order) Dr. Sunwook Hong, Jongm Young Lee, Jongsu Lee and Shin Young Park.

Copyright

Important disclaimer

Foreword

Plastic volume in the ocean is increasing rapidly, affecting wildlife, economies and potentially human health. Recent model projections suggest that somewhere between four and twelve million tons of plastic flow into the world's oceans each year, with much of this waste coming from urban centres (Jambeck et al. 2015). However, to date there has been very little data collected to empirically document the existence and extent of these plumes and to validate the model estimates.

Through this collaborative field-based project, CSIRO is developing the first global, empirical baseline estimate of mismanaged waste entering the coastal and marine environments near major urban centres in countries around the world. The project aims to identify links between land-based waste management and pollution entering the marine environment. The data collected is helping to clarify the magnitude of this pollution to the public, to industry and to policy makers. Learnings from the project can serve as a basis for decision making, and to support social pressure for investment in infrastructure and regulation for improved waste management. We hope the results can also be applied to engage with industry, the retail sector, government and consumers alike regarding best-practices. We also aim to improve waste management and increase the value of plastic to reduce poverty and create alternative livelihoods that are socially, culturally, economically, and environmentally appropriate and sustainable.

We are carrying out this research in countries all over the world, and thus far have surveyed major metropolitan centres in numerous countries in the Asia Pacific region, as well as South America and Africa. In South Korea, CSIRO and the Our Sea of East Asia Network (OSEAN) joined together to help achieve this goal, with the support of numerous volunteer participants.

Contents

Figures

Acknowledgments

This work has been supported by Our Sea of East Asia Network (OSEAN) and CSIRO Oceans and Atmosphere, with funding support from Oak Family Foundation, PM Angell Foundation and Schmidt Marine Technologies. We thank the numerous participants for their efforts in the training sessions and field work, including Sunwwok Hong, Jongm Young Lee, Jongsu Lee, Mijeong Lee, Shinyeong Park, Para Do, Jeongbin Lee, Gyeongdo Ha, Veomsoo Gim, Moonjin Kim, Eunhye Lee, Imchul Jeong, Taehui Kim, Sehan Lim, and Hyeonjeong Yoon. We also thank the citizens, government employees and interested members of the public who are committed to reduce litter, marine debris, and illegal dumping in the environment.

1 Introduction

Increasingly considered a tragedy of the commons of the 21st century (Vince and Hardesty 2016), plastic pollution is a wicked problem (Landon-Lane 2018; McIntyre 2020). Trash knows no geopolitical borders, moving with people, rivers, through the landscape and ultimately, if not managed properly, it can be lost into the global ocean. We know that mismanaged waste results in negative social, economic and ecological outcomes. There is substantial value in collecting data to help improve our understanding of the sources and drivers of why, when, where, and how waste is lost to the environment. Furthermore, knowing how waste moves through the environment, the impact our waste has on people, communities, wildlife and economies, and how we can implement policies to result in better outcomes can arm us with the knowledge to make better decisions. Data, collected properly and consistently affords us a metric, a tangible means of measuring change through time and space. This is fundamentally important to understand how effective new actions, activities and legislative measures are in terms of reducing waste entering the environment.

In late 2016, CSIRO was successful in securing funds to embark on a world first project which aims to quantify how much waste is leaking to the environment, where it is entering the environment, and to identify interventions that may be successful in stemming the flow of plastic pollution from land to the sea. The primary objective of the project is to use field sampling and mathematical modelling to document the distribution of plastic in the ocean, on the coast and in the nearshore environment generated by major urban centres and surrounding areas that have been identified as having significant waste mis-management losses into the coastal/marine environment. We initially targeted 6-8 major metropolitan areas in different countries around the world, with a focus in South East Asia. We were focusing on this part of the world because it has been identified as a region of high waste losses to the environment (Jambeck et al. 2015). Furthermore, recent work has suggested that many of the world’s major polluting rivers are located in Asia (Lebreton et al. 2017). Rivers are increasingly recognized as critical conduits to plastic waste entering the oceans (Wagner et al. 2019), further highlighting the need for research such as this where empirical data is used to ground-truth predictions and inform model-based estimates of waste in the environment. However, this does not mean that we want to overlook other critical countries and regions of the world where mismanaged waste is also a significant issue. In fact, with the growing population numbers and change in accepting waste from overseas across countries in Asia, ensuring representation from countries across Africa and the Americas is critical.

Understanding the transport of plastics from land into coastal and marine systems is critical for modelling the distribution and trends of plastic in the ocean, estimating its impact on regional economies near sources, and clarifying the magnitude of this pollution to the public, to industry, and to policy-makers. With a robust, comparable baseline of information, we not only are poised to evaluate policy effectiveness and change through on-ground activities at local, national and international scales, but we are starting to see these changes happen.

A further objective of the global plastics leakage project is to increase the capacity and skillset for on-ground partners in multiple countries, helping to build the breadth and depth of skills to monitor coastal and ocean health beyond the life of this project. The more people are armed with knowledge and skills across jurisdictions, the better equipped individuals, communities and governments will be to make the decisions needed to ensure the best outcomes possible to ensure growth, health, wealth and well-being and ensure sustainability and a reduction in waste leaking to the environment.

We hope that the results from this work will serve as an international baseline against which progress can be gauged through time and space. Ideally, governments from all levels, from local or municipal to state and national will be able to use the information from this work to inform or underpin policies and decisions that will ultimately lead to a reduction in waste entering the environment. We also hope that the results can provide opportunities to engage with industry regarding best-practices and product identification for major brands which are frequently lost into the environment.

1.1 A Partnership in Action

In November 2017, CSIRO staff, with support from Our Sea of East Asia Network (OSEAN), worked with staff and volunteer participants to quantify the amount of debris coming from land in the metropolitan and surrounding regional areas of Yeongsan, South Korea, and arriving at the coast. The Yeongsan region was selected in collaboration with our partners because it represented an urban region of significance within the country. Furthermore, Dr. Sunwook Hong identified the region as an area that could be sampled within a reasonable time frame (~ 2 weeks) with a team she was able to assemble. The region or watershed also has a river system which could transport debris to the sea, and hence was deemed appropriate in the context of the overall global project. Our ultimate goal was to develop a baseline measurement of debris along an approximately 200 km stretch of coastline and the surrounding riverine and inland areas of Yeongsan, South Korea. To this aim, we conducted field surveys that included coastal, inland, river-side, and trawl debris surveys following a statistically robust and user-friendly sampling methodology. In 2018, OSEAN staff repeated the survey at the same locations, enabling not only an initial baseline, but a second survey which could serve as a point of comparison. Results from both surveys were not significantly different, and are reported here as a combined analysis.

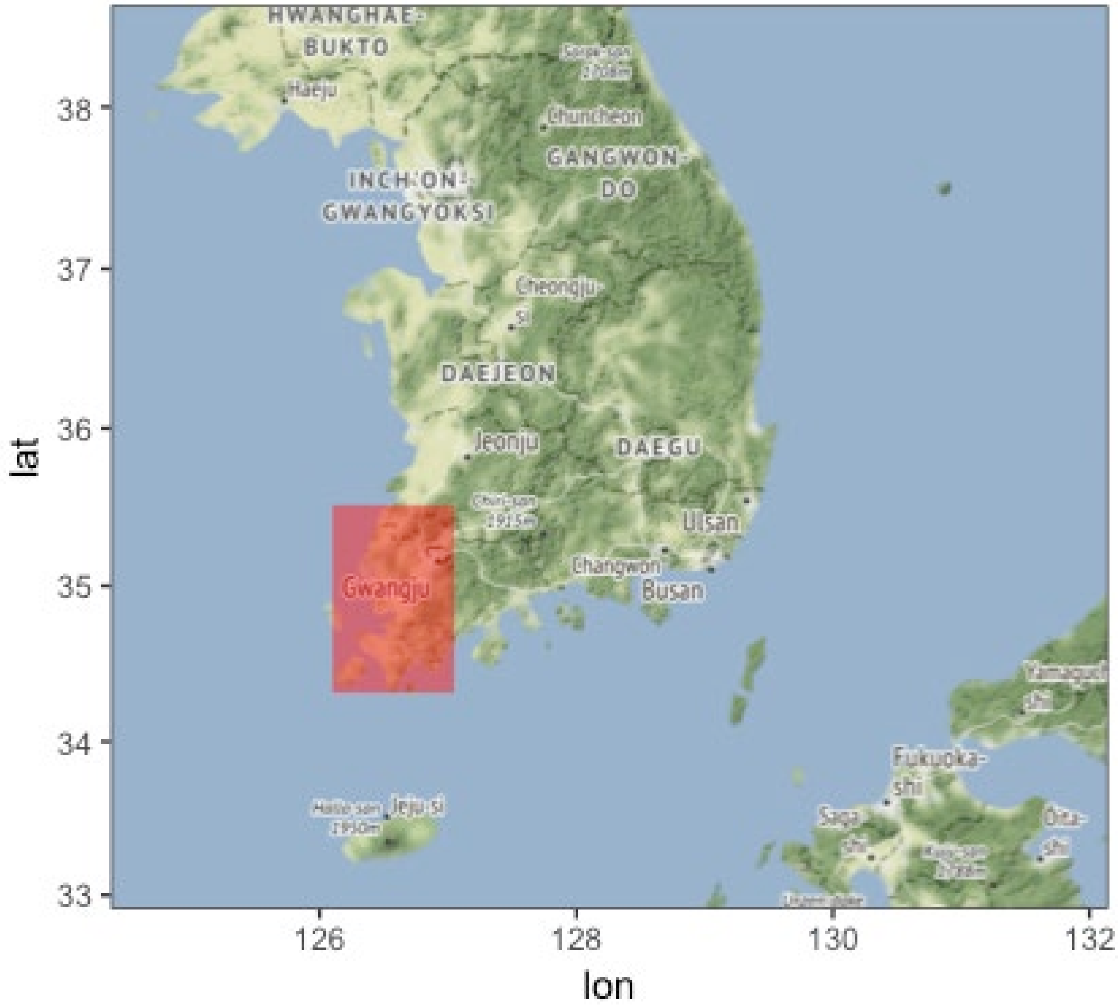

Figure 1. Location of study area.

1.2 Site Selection and Study Area

Our target area included the metropolitan and regional areas surrounding Mokpo. We selected a region roughly 200 km long along the coastline. The sites stretched north past Yeonggwang south to the island of Wan-do. The inland and river sites surveyed extended inland past Gwangju in the west towards Damyang and Gochang. The study area was constricted by mountain ranges in the south and south-east.

Survey locations were provided by CSIRO to partners in South Korea in advance, so they could be assessed for suitability and any alterations needed could be made prior to arrival to conduct fieldwork. Sites were selected based on a suite of criteria, and were intended to sample across the range of a variety of covariates, including population density, land use type, road and transportation networks. We aimed to strike a balance between sites that were representative across the watershed region we were surveying, and ensuring travel times between sites were not so long as to make field work impractical. While all the sites were selected in advance, occasionally chosen site locations could not be accessed in the field. This could be due to a range of reasons, including that the points fell on private land or were unsafe to access. In these instances, surveyors chose the nearest location that was accessible to and in a similar environment as the originally designated site.

In May 2017, during the first four days, participants and trainers worked together to ensure all participants received consistent, intensive training on how to collect, record, report, and make decisions regarding debris items, site selection characteristics, and other key factors required for consistency in data collection for four different survey methods (coastal, inland, river, and trawl). Following the training period, we divided into a number of teams to carry out fieldwork safely and securely across the chosen study region. Over a two week period, the group successfully completed surveys at a total of 99 land-based sites and 10 trawl sites (Figure 2). In November 2018, the group repeated the survey at all but one of the original sites, and added in two extra sites, for a total of 101 land-based sites. Ten trawls were also completed in 2018.

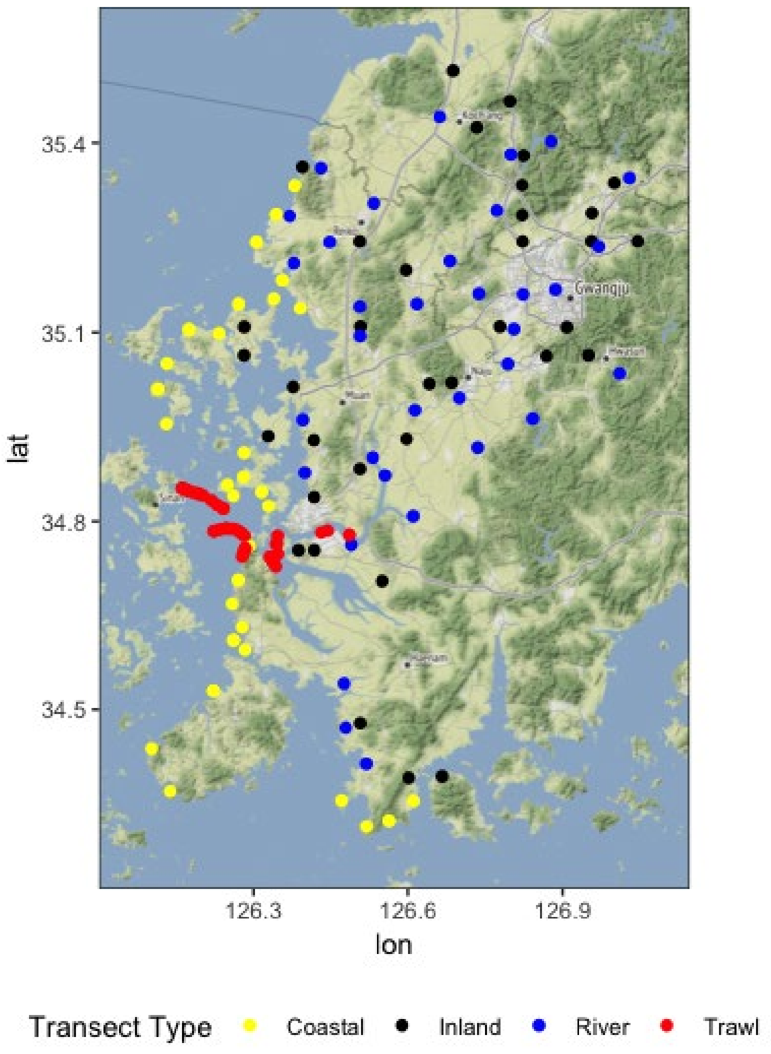

Figure 2. Location of sites around southern South Korea. Yellow points are coastal transects, blue points are river transects, black points are inland transects, and red points are where trawl surveys were conducted.

1.2.1 Coastal sites

Coastal sites are defined as those sites that occur directly up to the ocean's edge. They could encompass any of a number of substrates and were not limited to sandy beaches. Coastal sites were selected between Baekamri, Baeksueup, Yeonggwang to the north of Mokpo to Seohongri, Bukpyeongmyeon, Haenam in the south near Wando island, at approximately 7 km intervals along the coastline. We selected this interval because this provided us with an adequate or appropriate number of sites to be representative of the coastline as a whole and was enough samples to provide the statistical robustness required for analysis purposes. Slight adjustments had to be made at a couple of coastal sites due to accessibility.

1.2.2 Inland sites

To select inland survey sites, we placed a 5 km grid over the study region and selected the centre of each 5 km x 5 km cell. We then used globally available Geographic Information System (GIS) spatial layers to quantify several factors that have been shown in our previous work to be associated with the amount of debris or litter observed (covariates). Covariates included the local population density, land use type, distance to the nearest road, distance to the coast, distance to the nearest river and distance to the nearest railway station. We also used two different proxies for socio-economic status, night lights within 1 km radius of the site, and a measurement of the total monetary value of the built environment (both rural and urban), calculated by the United Nations as part of a global exposure dataset aimed at disaster risk management (UNDDR, 2015).

We carried out a stratified random sampling design to select sites that covered, as much as possible, the full spectrum of these important covariates.

1.2.3 River sites

We used a global GIS data layer of rivers (https://hydrosheds.org/), and subset the layer to select sites every 10 km along the river features, starting at the coast. From this set of points, for ease of access, we selected sites that were less than 2 km from the road and no more than 10 km from another inland site.

1.2.4 Trawl Surveys

We are also interested to understand the 'urban plume' of floating plastic around major urban centres. To measure the amount of floating or positively buoyant debris in the nearshore environment, we conducted surface trawl sampling at ten stations along the Yeongsan river and around the islands near the mouth of the river. We conducted three tows (each was 10-15 minutes long) at each station and recorded all the anthropogenic debris collected in the net.

2 Methods

The initial few days the team was together were spent explaining the goals of the project and training participants in the survey methods. All participants learned to search for and identify debris based on known categories, to record data (Figure 3), and to lay out transects for river, inland and coastal surveys. Furthermore, participants were provided an electronic copy of CSIRO's survey methods handbook for reference, and a hard copy of the handbook was available for each vehicle transporting participants.

Debris was measured at each land-based site type (river, coastal and inland) using a consistent survey method. Once a site was chosen, a Site Information Sheet was completed before any surveys took place. This sheet collected information about the site's aspect, accessibility, apparent cleanliness, and number of people present, as well as weather conditions, time of day, and details of the survey recorder.

At each site, a minimum of three and a maximum of six transects were carried out. For river and coastal surveys, transect lengths varied depending on site characteristics such as the width of the beach (distance from the waterline to the backshore vegetation) and riverbank height. There is no fixed length for these two survey types, the length of the transect is dependent upon the local environment, and each transect is 2 m wide. For inland surveys, survey length is fixed. Each inland transect was either 12.5 m long x 2 m wide, or 25 m x 1 m wide.

Transects were laid out with a metre tape. For coastal and river transects, the transect always began at the water's edge and ran perpendicular until reaching two metres into the backshore vegetation. For inland transects, the starting point was that which was closest to the GPS location identifying the site. The transect was also divided into ten equal distance intervals that encompassed the full length of the transect. For example, an 18 m long transect would have ten 1.8 m intervals or segments. Typically, two people walked the transect (each surveying a 1 m wide swath) while a third person recorded the debris category for every item found, and whether it was a whole item or a fragment. This information allows us to understand whether the items are likely to have been recently littered, or are slightly older and more degraded. Observers were each provided with a string that was one metre wide to ensure only items within the survey width were recorded. This prevents errors that can occur if observers include items that may fall just outside the one metre wide transect zone.

Each item observed was recorded in a debris category (See Appendix A). The size class was also recorded for the first item found in each distance interval (and if no item occurs in that distance interval a 0 or dash (-) was recorded). The purpose of recording this size information is to gain an indication of the sizes of items across the each transect. We are striking the balance between time required and important information to collect. We acknowledge it would be too time consuming and labour intensive to record the size of every single item (particularly since we can sometimes report hundreds or even thousands of items on an individual transect).

Over the two years of data collection, trawl surveys were conducted at 20 stations along the Yeongsan river and near the islands at the mouth of the river. Sampling took place in November 2017 and May 2018. Three tows were conducted at each station, using a neuston net with mesh size of 300um and a mouth opening size of 0.6 m x 0.3m. Tows lasted 10-15 minutes each. The vessel moved at slow speed (no more than 2-3 knots) to ensure the trawl net does not skip or jump. Sea state and wind conditions must be mild for proper sampling. After returning to the lab, a visual search was conducted to count and categorise all plastics found in the sample net. For each sample, an observer removed all organic material and then searched for 15-20 minutes to locate any non-organic material. This process was repeated 3 times (with at least 2 different observers) to ensure observer fatigue does not reduce detection of small sized plastic items. The minimum size of plastic able to be caught by the net was 330 µm, and the maximum size was anything that could fit within the sixty centimetre mouth of the net.

For an in-depth description of the methodology used for each of the survey types please refer to the CSIRO handbook (Schuyler et al. 2018).

2.1 Analysis

To design effective interventions and prevent mismanaged waste from entering the sea, it is important to understand what is driving the distribution of debris. Based on previous work, we investigated several different factors that could influence debris distribution. At each survey site, we collected information on the local conditions, including the number of visible humans, the slope of the land, the height of the vegetation, the percent of the transect that was bare ground, and the substrate colour (see Schuyler et al. 2018 for example data sheets).

We also integrated information from globally available GIS layers, including the local population density, land use type, distance to the nearest road, distance to the coast, distance to the nearest river and distance to the nearest railway station. We also used proxies for socio-economic status, including night lights within 1 km radius of the site. Additionally, we included a measurement of the total monetary value of the built environment (both rural and urban), calculated by the United Nations as part of a global exposure dataset aimed at disaster risk management (UNDDR, 2015). We put these covariates into a statistical model, designed to determine which factors are most strongly correlated with debris amounts in the survey sites. We used the R program mgcv and MuMin packages (Wood, 2011; R Core Team, 2018; Bartoń, 2018) to find the model with the lowest AIC value, which explains the most amount of the variability in the data. More than one model was within two AIC points of the best model, which means they are essentially equivalent models. In order to incorporate information from all relevant models, we used model averaging to get the best-fit model.

For coastal analyses, we used an offset of lineal metres for the model, to reflect that the measure of interest was the amount of debris along the lineal coast, while for inland analyses, we used the offset of the area of each transect. We examined residuals of the models to look for indications of non-linear patterns in explanatory variables. We ran comparative models using some variables as categorical, or continuous smoothed variables to identify better fit.

To be able to directly compare the covariates and determine which best predicts the observed debris amounts, we calculated the effect size. Terms with a positive effect size have a positive correlation with the amount of debris, while terms with a negative effect size are negatively correlated with the amount of debris. In other words, the higher the value of the covariate, the lower the amount of debris. The higher the absolute value of the effect size, whether positive or negative, the more that particular covariate explains the variability in the debris found (Figure 9 and Figure 12).

3 Results and Discussion

A total of 7,439,113 debris items were detected and recorded across the 101 sites surveyed across both years of surveys (2017 and 2018). The ten most abundant fragment debris items found in the surveys are shown in Figure 3. The most abundant fragment item was polystyrene with 97.9% of all fragment items found, followed by thin film carry bag at 0.8%.

The ten most abundant whole debris items found in the surveys included beverage bottles, polystyrene, food wrappers and bottle caps (Figure 4). Beverage bottles <1 L comprised 12.7% of all whole items found, followed by polystyrene at 11.6%.

In terms of debris density, coastal surveys had the highest debris density with 810.1 items found per m^2 (Figure 5). Overall, coastal debris density was 1905.6 times that observed at inland sites, and 1587.6 times that observed at river sites (see detail below).

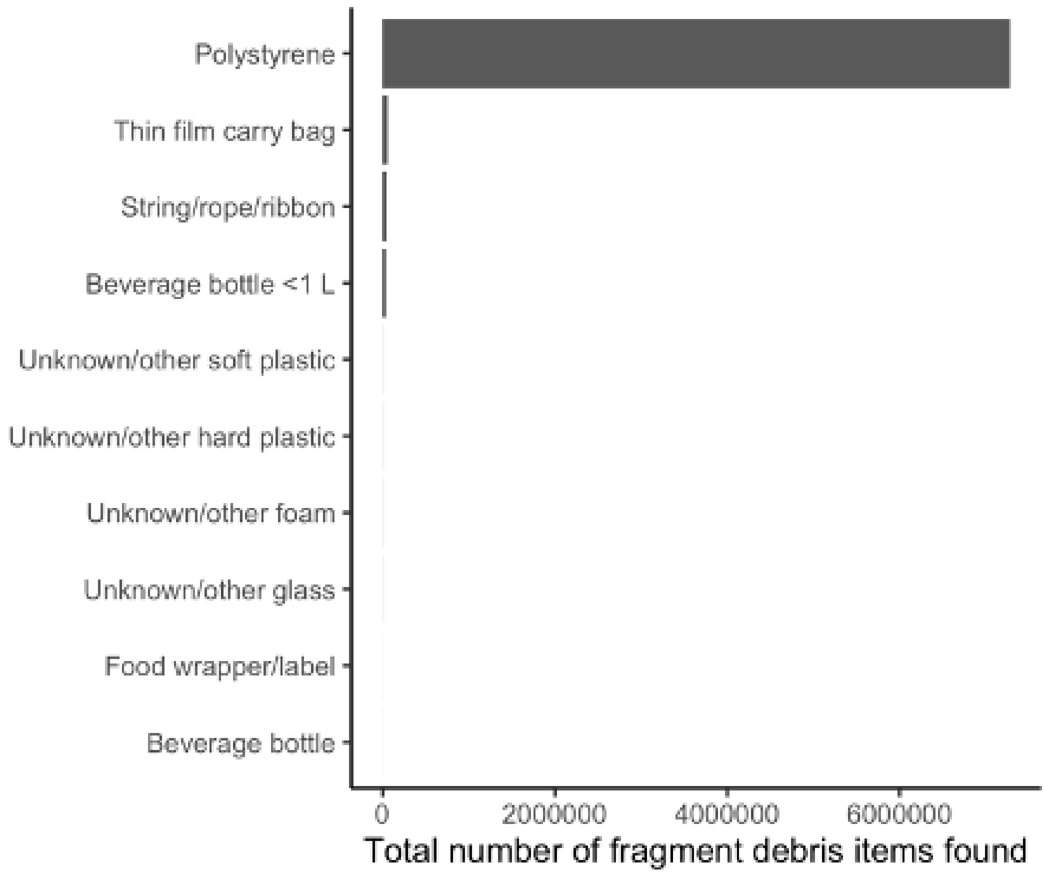

Figure 3. The ten most abundant debris items (fragments) found across the coastal, inland, and river surveys combined.

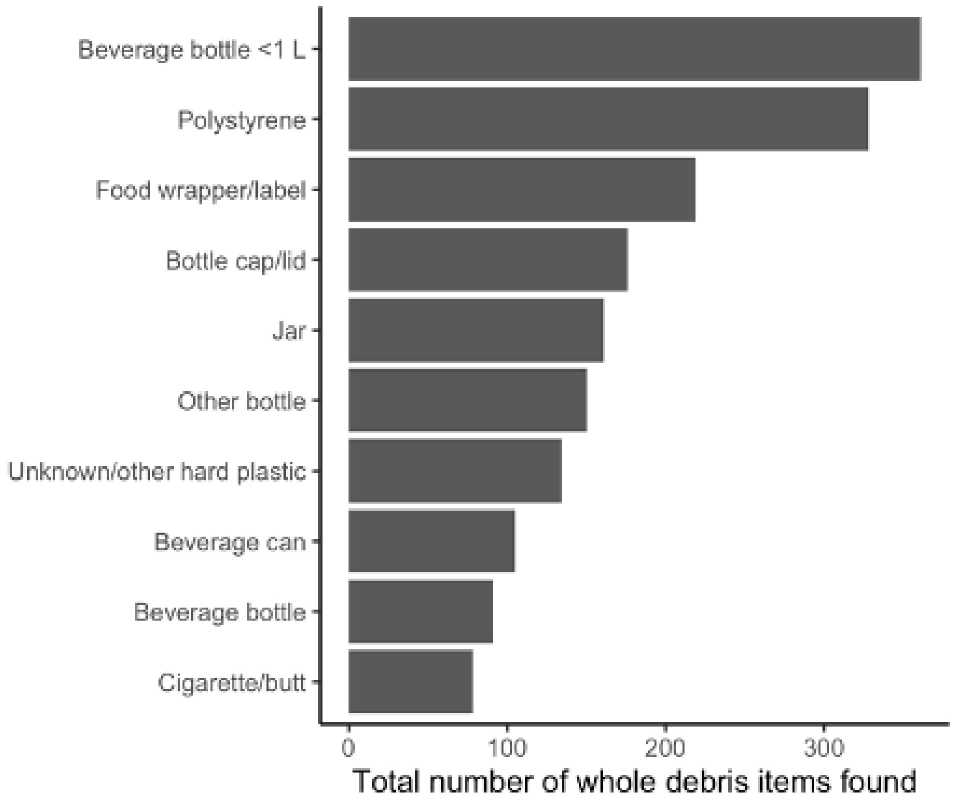

Figure 4. The ten most abundant debris items (whole) found across the coastal, inland, and river surveys combined.

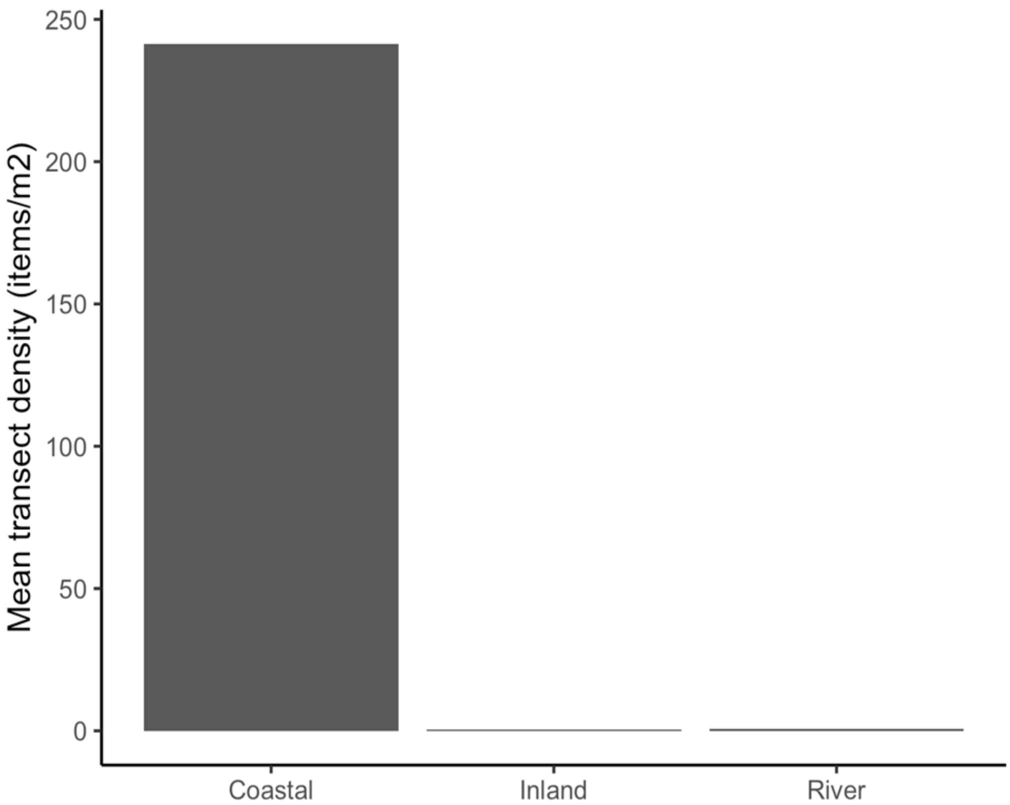

Figure 5. The mean transect density of debris found in the coastal, inland river surveys.

3.1 Coastal Surveys

A total of 186 transects were completed at 32 coastal sites over both survey years. Figure 6 shows the team conducting coastal surveys at two different coastal transect sites. Overall, 7,434,157 items were recorded within coastal surveys (>99.9% of all items were from coastal debris). On average, across all transects, 19,984.29 items of debris per lineal metre of coastline were recorded.

Polystyrene was the most common *fragment* type found with 7,278,353 pieces or 97.93% of the total fragment items recorded. At one site alone (Baekamri beach, site YSC22, Figure 7) 6,249,235 polystyrene fragments were recorded over the two years of data collection, likely from local aquaculture activities. Fragments of thin film carry bag was the second most commonly recorded item with 60,130 items recorded and String/rope/ribbon fragments was the third most common, with 47,516 pieces recorded.

Figure 6. Team members surveying two different coastal sites.

Polystyrene was the most common *whole* item found with 325 pieces or 18.42% of the total whole items recorded. Beverage bottle <1 L was the second most recorded item with 281 items recorded and bottle cap/lid was the third most common, with 142 pieces recorded. Beverage bottles and lids are commonly single use consumer items, used once and then discarded.

A size class was estimated for 1031 debris items with size class 7 being the most common found (size class 7 objects are larger than 21 cm x 29.7 cm (an A4 page)). For further information refer to the size class chart in the Marine Debris Survey Handbook. Of all items recorded, 22% were 16 cm^2 or smaller.

Figure 7. Polystyrene littering Baekamri beach.

There was substantial variation in the number of debris items observed across the coastal surveys (in the unit of log number of items per lineal metre) (Figure 8).

Much of the observed pattern was likely driven by exceptionally high counts at a single coastal transect where a plethora of polystyrene was observed. At one transect, over 5 million items were recorded. Even with this outlier excluded, however, the average across other transects was 5,966.32 items per lineal metre (there were four other transects with extremely high (>100,000 items) debris loads). Presuming a similar distribution of debris across the entire 2,413 km of South Korean coastline (as reported from Wikipedia, accessed 21 October 2020), this would equate to an estimated total debris load of >48 billion debris items along the entire South Korean coastline. We acknowledge that this is a rough estimate, given the variability in annual weather patterns, coastal topography, population density, and other factors, but it provides a baseline to understand the relative magnitude of the problem. This this case, given a single item type (polystyrene) accounts for the majority of items recorded, there are opportunities for interventions or policies to help reduce this main contributor to coastal debris.

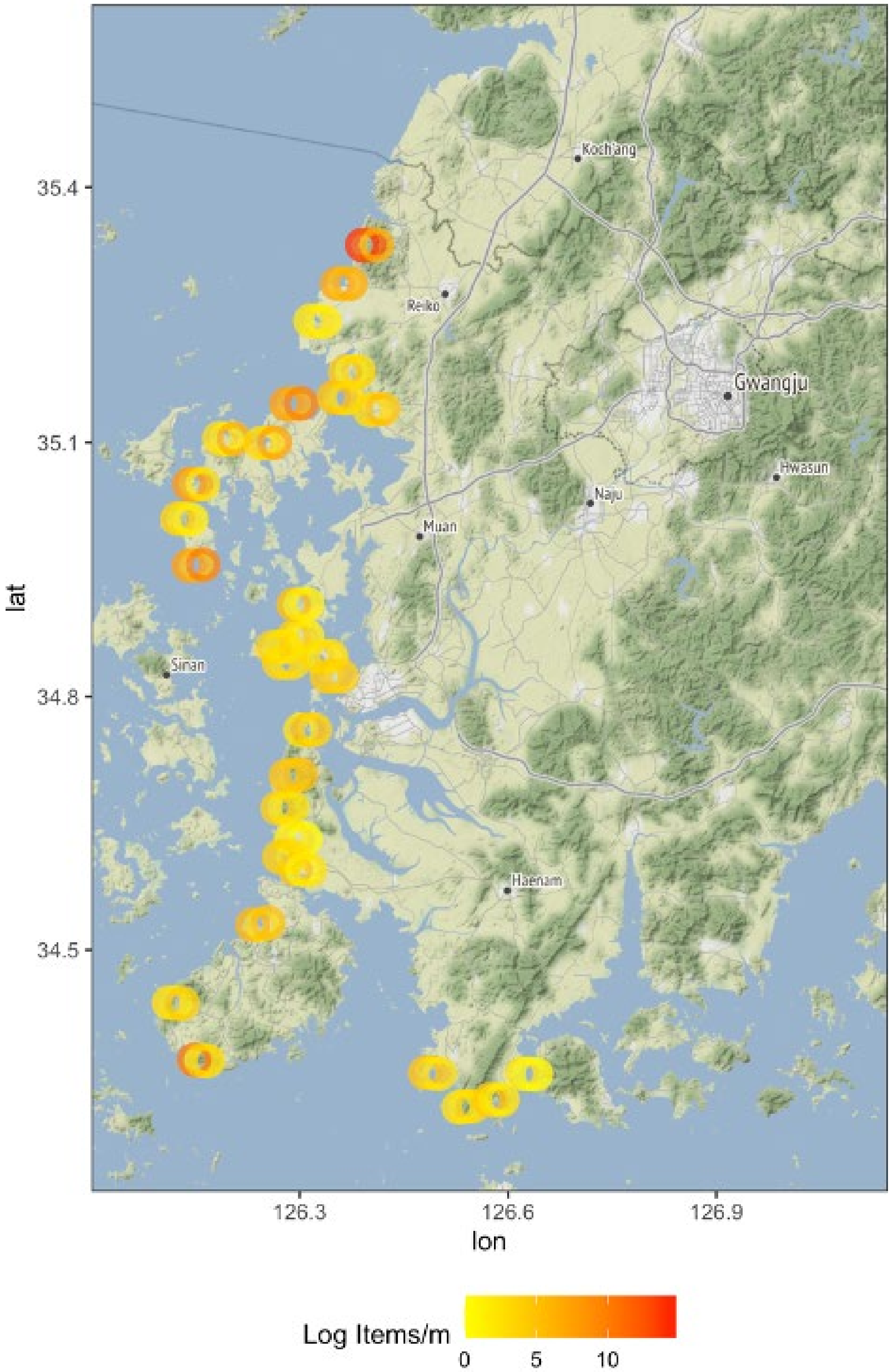

Figure 8. The log number of items per lineal metre for coastal sites in South Korea.

In South Korea, after running the GAM, five coastal models were functionally equivalent, based on AIC values. These models were averaged to get the best final model. In the best final model, four terms were statistically significant. While the remaining terms were not statistically significant at P = 0.05 level, they did explain some of the variability in the model, and thus were included in the final model. The terms with the highest effect size were the direction the shore was facing, and distance to rivers, with more items on north facing than east facing shores, decreasing densities with increasing distance from rivers and increasing density with increasing population.

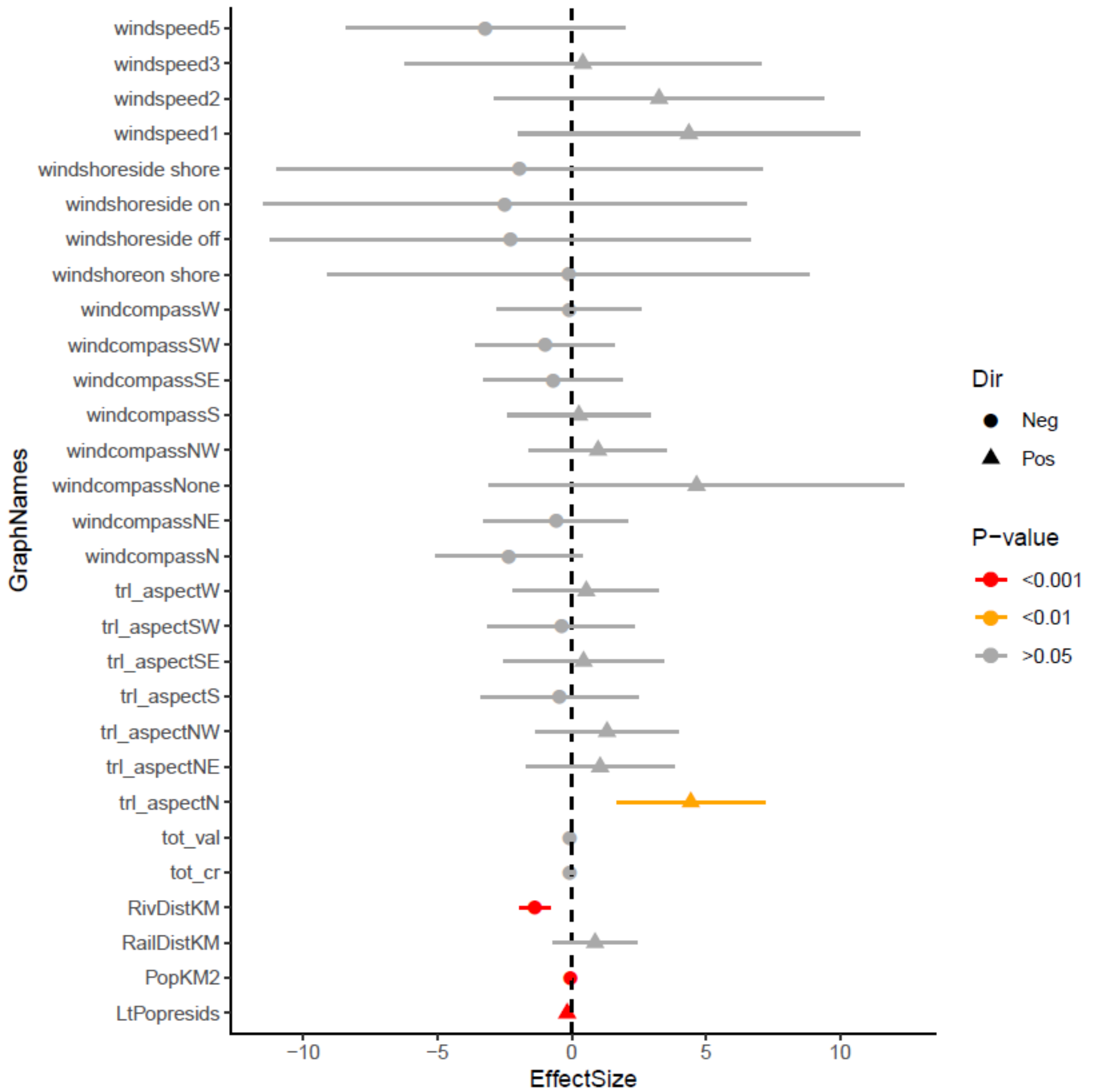

Figure 9. Model averaged effect size plot for coastal transects. Colour represents the p-value significance level, and the lines are the standard error for each term. Triangles denote a positive coefficient for a given factor, whereas circles denote a negative coefficient. The effect size is calculated as the median value of the factor times its coefficient. The reference levels were None for wind shore (the direction of the wind relative to the shore), east for wind compass (direction of the wind) and east for trl_aspect (direction the shore was facing).

3.2 Inland Surveys

The team completed 212 transects over both years at 35 inland sites across a range of site types including roadways, car parks, natural vegetation and agricultural landscapes (see Figure. 10 for example 25x1 m inland transect along a roadway). A total of 2253 items were recorded; equivalent to an average of 0.43 pieces of debris for every square metre of land surveyed.

Figure. 10 Inland transect conducted along a roadway.

Unknown/other soft plastic was the most common *fragment* type found at inland sites with 394 pieces or 20.7% of the total fragment items recorded. Unknown/other hard plastic was the second most recorded item with 289 items recorded and sheeting was the third most common, with 193 pieces recorded.

Cigarette/butt was the most common *whole* item found with 52 pieces or 14.7% of the total whole items recorded. Food wrapper/label was the second most recorded item with 50 items recorded and beverage bottle <1 L was the third most common, with 22 pieces recorded. Again, whole items tend to be single use consumer items.

A size class was estimated for 752 debris items with size class 3 being the most common found (size class 3 objects are larger than 2 cm x 2 cm, but smaller than 4 cm x 4 cm). For further information refer to the size class chart in the Marine Debris Survey Handbook. In total, 33% of all items found were 16 cm^2 or smaller.

There was substantial heterogeneity in the number of debris items observed across the inland surveys (in the unit of log number of items per square metre; Figure 11). The highest number of items found on an inland survey was in Hwangjinri village (site YSI33) on Wando island. Of the 96 items recorded at this site, 43 of them were classified as S3_F: sheeting fragments.

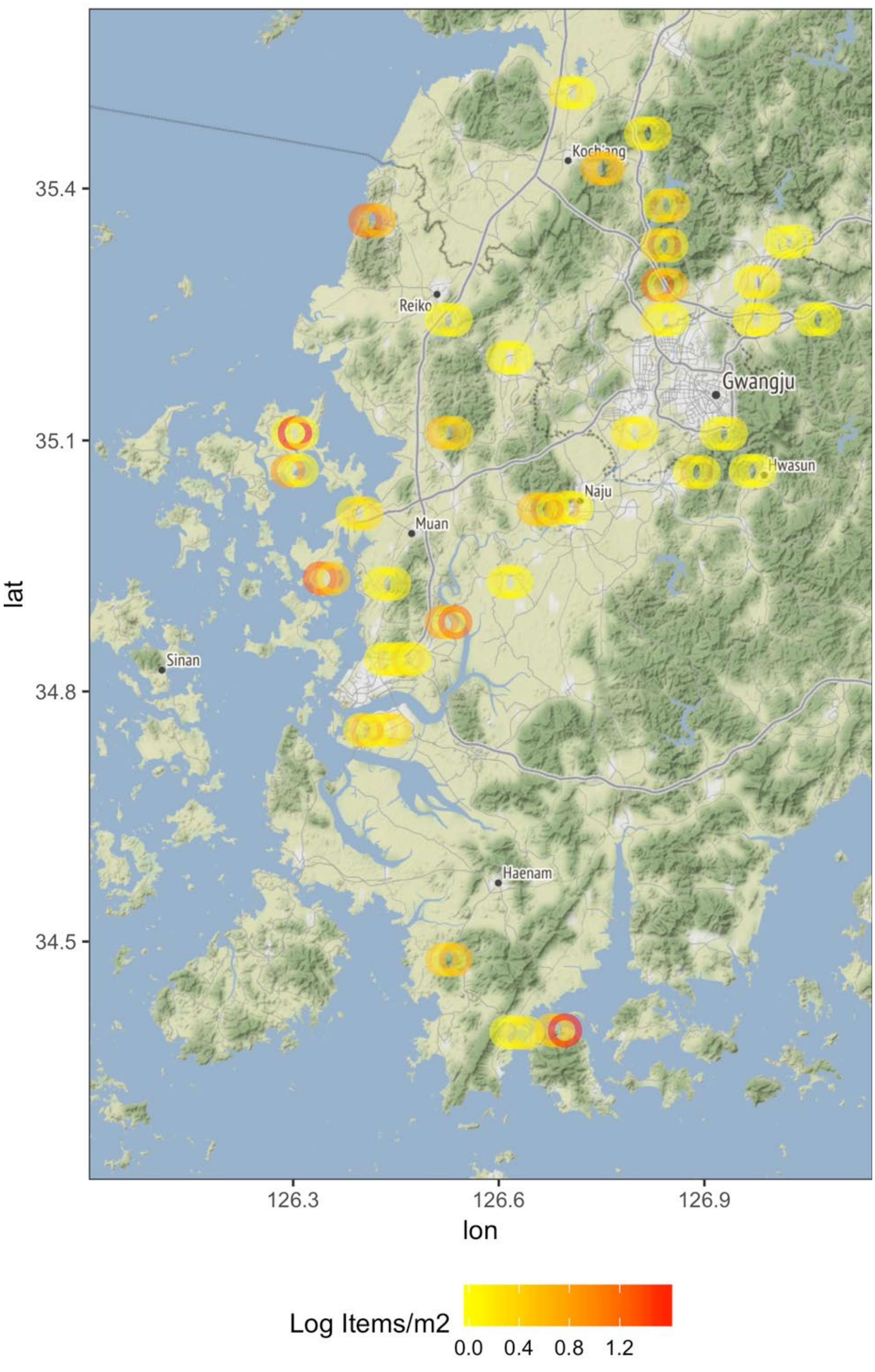

Figure 11. The log number of items per square metre for inland sites in South Korea.

In South Korea, after running the GAM, 21 inland models were functionally equivalent, based on AIC values. These models were averaged to get the best final model. In the best final model, only one term was statistically significant. While the remaining terms were not statistically significant at a p = 0.05 level, they did explain some of the variability in the model, and thus were included in the model. The terms with the highest effect size were land use and substrate colour, but they were not statistically significant. Distance to rail was statistically significant, with longer distances to rail station correlated with higher amounts of debris. The term for Survey Number did not appear in the top models, indicating that the two years of data were not significantly different from one another.

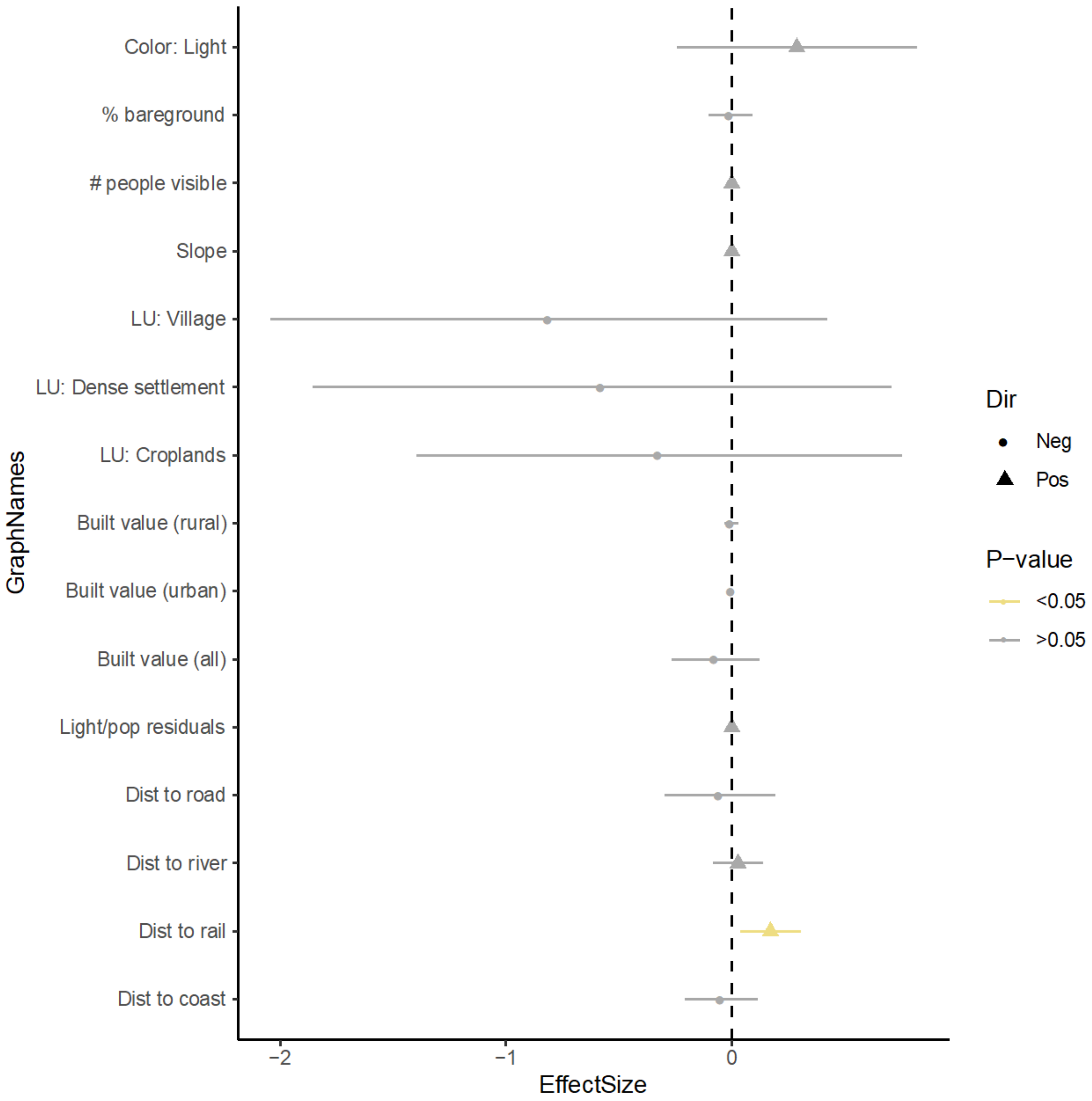

Figure 12. Model averaged effect size plot for coastal transects. Colour represents the p-value significance level, and the lines are the standard error for each term. Triangles denote a positive coefficient for a given factor, whereas circles denote a negative coefficient. The effect size is calculated as the median value of the factor times its coefficient. The reference value for land use is urban, meaning that the other terms are all compared to urban land use.

3.3 River Surveys

A total of 204 river transects were conducted at 34 river sites over 2017 and 2018. Some river sites had fully flowing rivers, some were tidal (see Figure 13 below, right) which had one end (of the river transect) bounded by a sea wall while the other end was natural vegetation. Other sites surveyed occurred on the banks of seasonally dry rivers. A total of 2703 items were recorded; an equivalent of 5.31 pieces of debris on average for every lineal metre of riverbank surveyed.

Figure 13. Teams conducted river sampling along dry riverbeds (left panel) and a river with water (right panel).

Polystyrene was the most common *fragment* type found with 545 pieces or 27.4% of the total fragment items recorded. Unknown/other hard plastic was the second most recorded item with 237 items recorded and unknown/other soft plastic was the third most common, with 203 pieces recorded.

Glass jar was the most common *whole* item found with 157 pieces or 21.9% of the total whole items recorded. Food wrapper/label was the second most recorded item with 86 items recorded and beverage bottle <1 L was the third most common, with 58 bottles recorded in total.

A size class was estimated for 569 debris items, with size class 7 being the most common found (size class 7 objects are larger than 21 cm x 29.7 cm (an A4 page)). For further information refer to the size class chart in the Marine Debris Survey Handbook. Overall, 15% of all items found were less than 16 cm^2.

We observed substantial variability in the number of debris items observed across the river surveys (in the unit of log number of items per lineal metre) (Figure 14). The highest number of items found on a river survey was at site YSR18, located at 34.5421 °N, 126.4754 °E. Of the 515 items recorded at this site, 131 of them were classified as D4_F: polystyrene fragments.

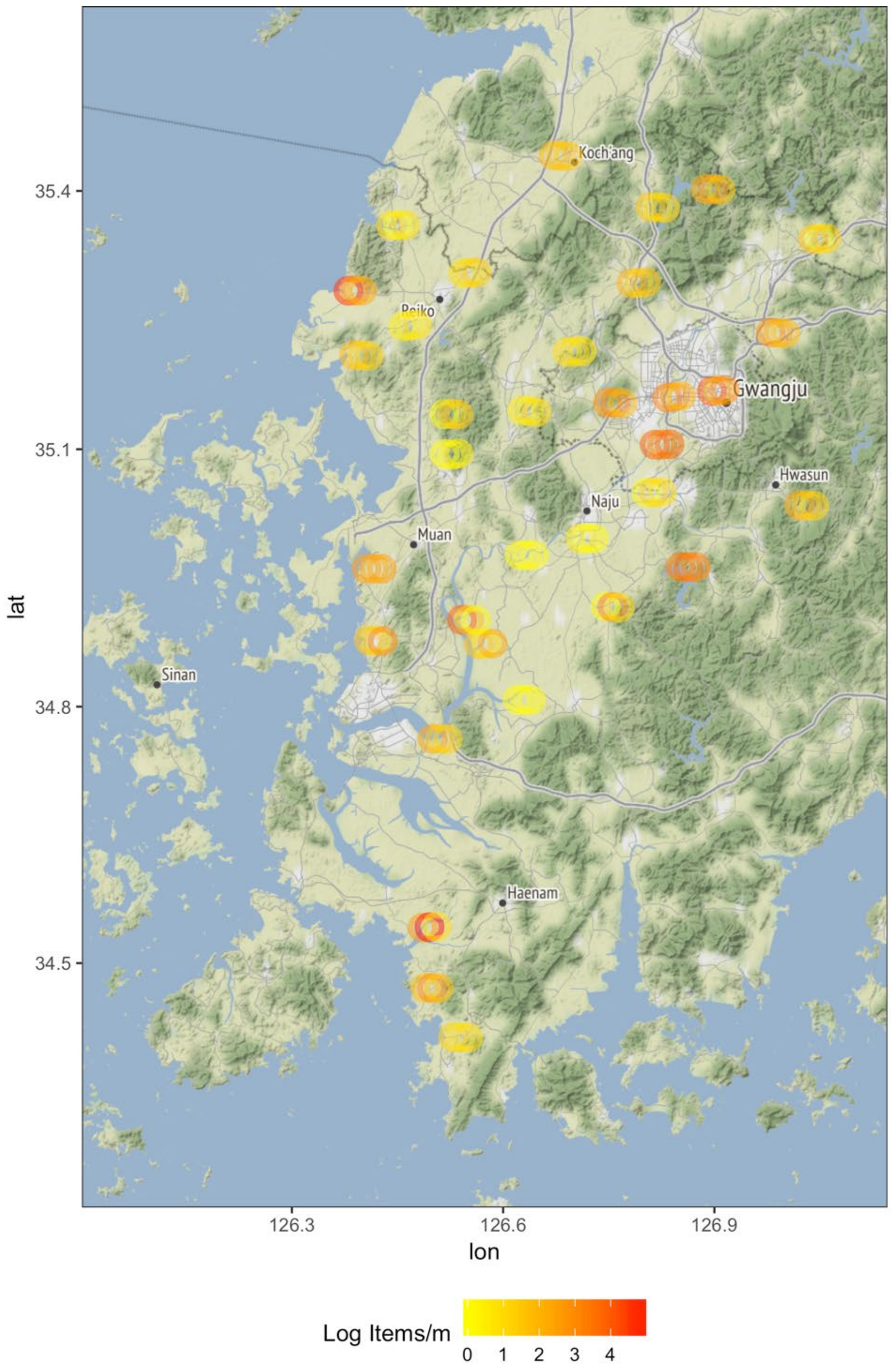

Figure 14. The log number of items per lineal metre for river sites near Yeongsan, South Korea.

3.4 Trawl Surveys

Figure 15. Trawl surveys with the manta net.

A total of 60 tows were conducted at 20 sites, along the Yeongsan river and near outlying islands (Figure 15). The mean density of the debris found across all tows was 55,192.95 items per square kilometre, and ranged from 0 to 116 items observed on any single tow. Overall, the most common type of debris found was foam/polystyrene, with a total of 703 items, or 45.5% of all items found. In the coastal and marine environment, polystyrene is often associated with fishing activities or aquaculture.

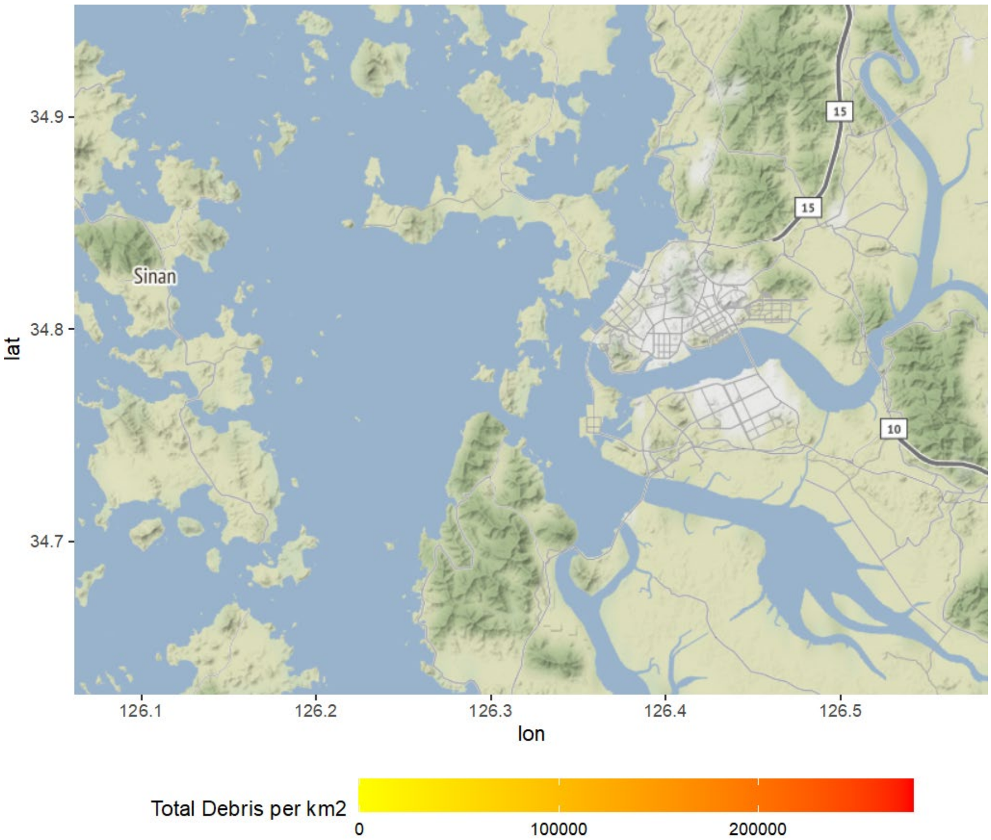

Figure 16. Location of trawl samples sites near Yeongsan. Colour gradient represents the amount of debris per square kilometre.

4 Summary

Surveying the Makpo region of South Korea was a massive undertaking, which required substantial coordination, field effort by a number of participants and patience and good humour. In total, over the two years of surveys, data was collected on a total of 662 transects (including 186 coastal transects, 212 inland transects, 204 river transects, and 60 trawls). To our knowledge, the data collected provides the first comprehensive baseline look at plastics and other anthropogenic debris on land, along rivers and at the coastal interface for such a large portion of the island country of South Korea. While we note these data provide a ‘snapshot’ in time, this information can be used as a baseline against which change and seasonal differences in debris deposition and movement can be compared. Such information provides an important first step that can be used to inform policy and decision making. Furthermore, as new policies or practices are implemented island-wide or in some areas of the country, the data can be used to quantify the changes that may come with such policies, practices or awareness-raising campaigns. We also hope to use these data in conjunction with statistical models to produce figures that highlight the litter plume of this particular urban and nearby area.

Furthermore, the data collected here contributes to a world first, statistically robust, global baseline study of how much waste is lost to the coastal and marine environment. By using the same methodology and building capacity for individuals in multiple countries around the world, we are better able to make large scale predictions about not only local, but also national, regional and global debris losses into the environment. Additionally, we can look at differences we identify in types and amounts of debris across coastal, inland and riverine areas between countries to identify the drivers that may be similar or different amongst surveyed regions.

Based on surveys conducted in the Makpo region, it appears that the total coastal debris load in South Korea is much higher than densities observed using similar methods for the Australian coastline, based on surveys conducted around the entire continent (10.2 items/m; Hardesty et al. 2016) and the United States (based on data collected along the west coast of the US (16.5 items/m). Loads here also appear substantially higher than findings from surveys conducted in the Ha Phong region of Vietnam (though there are notable differences in areas surveyed to consider). The presence of such high counts of polystyrene also exceed findings from other countries surveyed to date. Importantly, however, working with local aquaculture businesses and fisheries industry partners in the area could likely change this coastal litter substantially within a short period of time.

Using this dataset and others collected from around the world, ultimately we will be able to estimate the amount of waste, most of which is plastic, from these plumes that is lost to the open ocean or redeposited back to land. We are also able to discern regional differences that may occur. For instance, the most common debris item found in Kenya was hard plastics, which contrasts to Seychelles where glass is most abundant. With a robust, comparable baseline of information gathered in multiple major metropolitan centres around the world, we will have the data in hand to evaluate policy effectiveness and change through on-ground activities at local, national and international scales.

Understanding the transport of plastics from land into marine systems is critical for modelling the distribution and trends of plastic in the ocean and estimating its impact on regional economies. This project will clarify the magnitude of this pollution and hopefully help identify opportunities for interventions or interdiction to the public, to industry, and to policy-makers.

Appendix A

An example of the debris survey items list showing all debris categories

all | debris

ITEMS LIST

Site ID Code:

Date: ☐ **No debris found**

Transect No. ____ of ____

Page _____ of ______

Subsampled? Y N

	ITEMS	ID	Fragment	Whole
Hard Plastic	Pipe/PVC	H1		
	Beverage bottle <1 L	H2		
	Other bottle	H3		
	Bottle cap/lid	H4		
	Food container	H5		
	Utensil/plate/bowl	H6		
	Bucket/Crate	H7		
	Lighter	H8		
	Lollipop stick/earbud	H9		
	Unknown/other hard	H10		
Soft Plastic	Thin film carry bag	S1		
	Food wrapper/label	S2		
	Sheeting	S3		
	Cup/lid	S4		
	Straw	S5		
	Unknown/other soft	S6		
	Other plastic bag	S7		
Plastic Straps	String/rope/ribbon	BP1		
	Packing strap	BP2		
	Cable ties	BP3		
	Unknown/other strap	BP4		
Metal	Pipe	M1		
	Wire	M2		
	Aerosol	M3		
	Beverage can	M4		
	Food can/tin	M5		
	Lid/cap	M6		
	Food wrapper	M7		
	Aluminium foil	M8		
	Bucket/drum	M9		
	Unknown/other hard	M10		
	Unknown/other soft	M11		
Glass	Beverage bottle	G1		
	Jar	G2		
	Light globe/tube	G3		
	Unknown/other glass	G4		
Rubber	Thong/shoe	R1		
	Tyre	R2		
	Balloon	R3		
	Rubber band	R4		
	Unknown/other	R5		
Cloth	String/rope/strap	C1		
	Clothing/towel	C2		
	Wipes/cloths	C3		
	Insulation/stuffing	C4		
	Unknown/other	C5		
Timber	Wood/timber	T1		
	Utensil/food stick	T2		
	Bottle cork	T3		
	Pallet	T4		
	Unknown/other	T5		

	ITEMS Cont.	ID	Fragment	Whole
Foam	Food container	D1		
	Cup/plates/bowls	D2		
	Polystyrene	D4		
	Unknown/other	D5		
Paper	Cigarette/butt	P1		
	Paper/cardboard	P2		
	Magazine/newspaper	P3		
	Bag	P4		
	Box	P5		
	Food container/box	P6		
	Food wrapper/bag	P7		
	Beverage container	P8		
	Cups	P9		
	Plates/bowls	P10		
	Unknown/other	P11		
Fishing	Net	F1		
	Fishing line	F2		
	Fishing Lures	F3		
	Buoys/floats	F4		
	Glow stick	F5		
	Fishhook/sinker	F6		
	Unknown/other	F7		
Miscellaneous	Battery	Z1		
	Brick/cement	Z2		
	Carpet	Z3		
	Ceramic	Z4		
	E Waste	Z5		
	Furniture	Z6		
	Appliances	Z7		
	Large car parts	Z9		
	Large boat parts	Z10		
	Bag/box dom. waste	Z11		
	Nurdles	Z12		
Other		O1		
		O2		
		O3		
		O4		
		O5		
		O6		

Size class (and sub-sampling intervals)

Interval start (m)	Dist on tran	ID (F/W)	Size class
1 0 -			
2			
3			
4			
5			
6			
7			
8			
9			
10 - (end)			

References

Bartoń, K. (2018). MuMIn: multi-model inference. R package version 1.40.4.

Hardesty, BD, TJ Lawson, T van der Velde, M Lansdell and C Wilcox. (2016) Estimating quantities and sources of marine debris at a continental scale. Frontiers in Ecology and Evolution, 15, 18-25. https://doi.org/10.1002/fee.1447.

Hardesty, BD, C Wilcox, Q Schuyler, TJ Lawson and K Opie (2017). Developing a baseline estimate of amounts, types, sources and distribution of coastal litter – an analysis of US marine debris data. A final report for Ocean Conservancy and NOAA, 23 October 2017.

Jambeck, JR, R Geyer, C Wilcox, TR Siegler, M Perryman, A Andrady, R Narayan, K Lavender Law (2015). Millions of tons of plastic waste end up in our oceans every year. *Science* 768-771. DOI: 10.1126/science.1260352.

Landon-Lane, M, (2018). Corporate social responsibility in marine plastic debris governance. *Marine pollution bulletin*, *127*, pp.310-319.

Lebreton, LC, J Van Der Zwet, JW Damsteeg, B Slat, A Andrady, and J Reisser (2017). River plastic emissions to the world's oceans. *Nature communications*, 8, 15611.

McIntyre, O (2020). Addressing Marine Plastic Pollution as a 'Wicked' Problem of Transnational Environmental Governance. 25/6 Environmental Liability: Law, Policy and Practice 282-295., Available at SSRN: https://ssrn.com/abstract=3637482.

R Core Team (2013). R: A language and environment for statistical computing.

Schuyler QA, K Willis, TJ Lawson, V Mann, C Wilcox and BD Hardesty (2018). Handbook of Survey Methodology - Plastics Leakage, V1.2. CSIRO Australia. ePublish 182021.

United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction UNDDR (2015). Global Assessment Report on Disaster Risk Reduction 2015. https://www.preventionweb.net/english/hyogo/gar/2015/en/home/.

Vince, J and BD Hardesty (2016). Plastic pollution challenges in the marine and coastal environments: from local to global governance. Restoration Ecology. http://doi/10.1111/rec.12388/.

Wagner, S, P Klöckner, B Stier, M Römer, B Seiwert, T Reemtsma, and C Schmidt (2019). Relationship between discharge and river plastic concentrations in a rural and an urban catchment. *Environmental science & technology,* 53(17), 10082-10091.

Wood, SN (2006). Generalized Additive Models: An Introduction with R. Chapman Hall/CRC: Boca Raton, FL, USA.

O·S·E·A·N 동아시아바다공동체 오션

As Australia's national science agency and innovation catalyst, CSIRO is solving the greatest challenges through innovative science and technology.

CSIRO. Unlocking a better future for everyone.

Contact us

1300 363 400
+61 3 9545 2176
csiroenquiries@csiro.au
csiro.au

For further information

Oceans & Atmosphere
Britta Denise Hardesty
+61 3 6232 5276
denise.hardesty@csiro.au
https://research.csiro.au/marinedebris/