

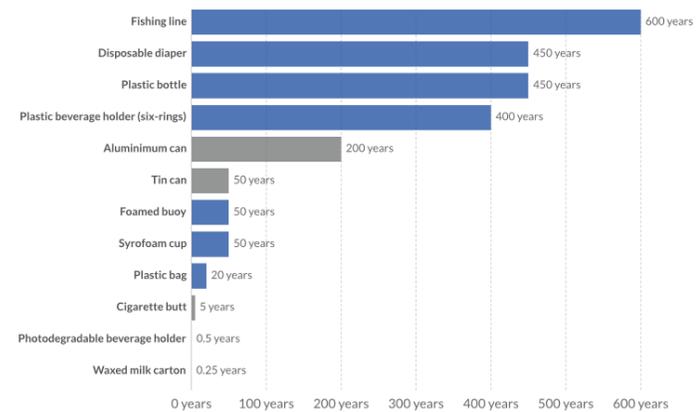
# WHAT CAN YOU DO TO HELP OUR OCEANS?

## Addressing A Large Issue like Plastic Pollution in our Oceans

You may be thinking, “plastic pollution in our oceans is too intimidating, such a large issue is too difficult to fix, it’s too late”. The issue of the large amount of plastic in our oceans is certainly intimidating, but that does not mean that you should stop helping, advocating, and educating. In fact, it is due to the vastness of this issue that your help is so desperately needed. Aquatic wildlife is dying, our beautiful blue oceans are covered in trash, and the problems have only continued to grow over time. Just because these problems may not directly affect you does not mean they do not exist.

### Decomposition rates of marine debris items

Average estimated decomposition times of typical marine debris items. Plastic items are shown in blue.



Source: U.S. National Park Service; Mote Marine Lab; National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration Marine Debris Program

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Did you know that it takes 600 years for fishing line to decompose? Something so small, so supposedly unproblematic, will be choking sea turtles, strangling fish and dolphins, tangling crabs, and hurting your favorite aquatic animals for 600 years. The fishing line accidentally lost on fishing trips will still be in the ocean with everyone else’s pollution for 21 generations. Doesn’t that make you feel sad and angry? It is certainly not only fishing line polluting the ocean. Plastic bottles, plastic drink-holders (six rings), plastic bags, etc, all take almost as long to decompose as fishing wire.

## A Small Change in Your Immediate Surroundings- Reuse

Addressing a monumental issue like plastic pollution in our oceans, it is easy to get lost and to feel small. Start by making a difference in your immediate surroundings! Are you still using a single-use plastic bag at the grocery store? Try bringing reusable bags! They’re not only stronger and nicer looking but they make a positive environmental impact! If everyone in your family and all of your friends and neighbors used reusable bags at the grocery store, think of the impact you could have! Similarly, try using a reusable water bottle! There are so many different choices, you can absolutely find one to perfectly fit your needs. Why waste money on buying individual plastic water bottles that will litter the earth and pollute our oceans when you can drink from a reusable bottle that may even keep your water cooler. Having a reusable water bottle with you at all times is a great way to stay hydrated and healthy while keeping the earth a little cleaner.

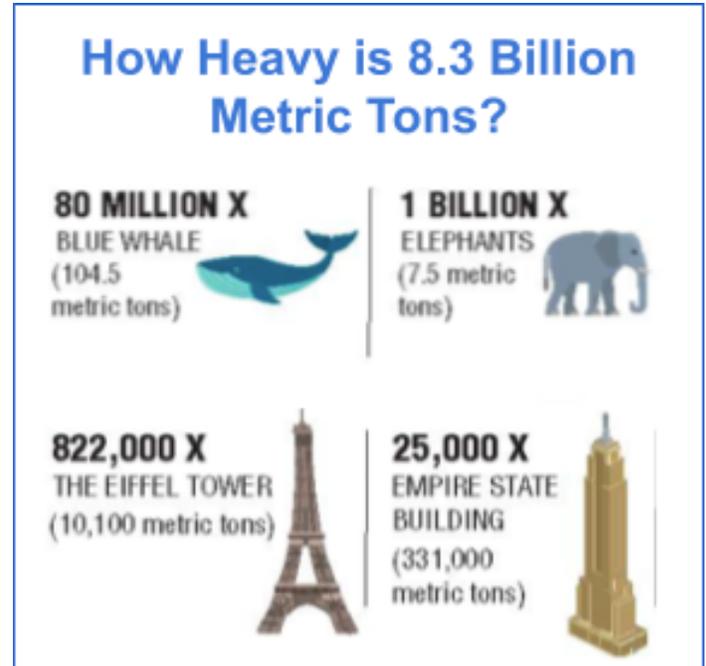
## A Bigger Change in your Greater Surrounding Area- Legislation

After starting to make these smaller differences in your immediate surroundings you can focus on a greater surrounding area. We should continue to recycle but it should not be your only step towards cleaner oceans, it cannot be your only step. Only 10 percent of plastics put out for recycling actually stay out of landfills. This is why, in addition to recycling and using reusable bags and water bottles, you should take legislative action. It is possible to ban plastic bags in the state of Pennsylvania, it has been done in other states like Washington, California, Maine, New York, and a few others. Why not Pennsylvania?

Philadelphia attempted to ban plastic bags but their attempts were blocked by the state of Pennsylvania. Pennsylvania state lawmakers added a provision to a budget bill last May that blocked Philadelphia from banning plastic bags until at least this July. The Philadelphia city council passed the ban in 2019 but the implementation date has been delayed twice now due to the pandemic. City solicitor Diana Cortes says "This preemption provision is both undemocratic and unconstitutional, and directly harms Philadelphia" \*.

### Picture One Billion Elephants. Is that even possible?

In 2015, the recorded amount of plastic waste was 8.3 million metric tons of plastic. This is equivalent to over one billion elephants - think about that for a second. One billion elephants floating in our oceans, blocking the sun from reaching aquatic life under the surface. How is aquatic life supposed to survive with that immense amount of pollution? If this upward trend continues, the accumulation of plastic emissions by 2050 will be roughly 12 billion metric tons. This amount of plastic in our oceans will have a detrimental effect on the wildlife in our oceans, from the fading coral reefs to the fish plagued with disease and microplastics, all of which will eventually catch up to us.



### In Summary

Why use plastic when there are so many available options for reusable bags, water bottles, straws, etc. The aquatic wildlife that we are killing cannot advocate for themselves, they desperately need your help. This project is to raise awareness for this issue and inspire others to do the same. CORAL wants to challenge our peers to advocate for something they strongly believe in. Do you believe that aquatic wildlife should be dying? Do you believe that a billion elephants worth of plastic should be littering our oceans? If not, do something about it!

**CHANGE STARTS  
WITH YOU.**