



The Ocean Cleanup
Plastic is retained in front of an extended cork line in the Pacific Ocean. A Dutch inventor says that after a series of setbacks his system for catching plastic floating in the Pacific between California and Hawaii is now working.

Pacific plastic-cleaning boom is back to work

By MIKE CORDER
Associated Press

THE HAGUE, Netherlands — After a series of setbacks, a system for catching plastic floating in the Pacific between California and Hawaii is now working, its Dutch inventor said Wednesday.

Boyan Slat, a university dropout who founded The Ocean Cleanup nonprofit, announced that the floating boom is skimming up waste ranging in size from a discarded net and a car wheel complete with tire to chips of plastic measuring just 1 millimeter.

The results are promising enough to begin designing a second system to send to the Great Pacific Garbage Patch, an area of floating plastic trash twice the size of Texas, Slat said.

But he sounded a note of caution, saying “if the journey to this point taught us anything it is that it’s definitely not going to be easy.”

The floating boom with a tapered 10-foot-deep screen is intended to act like a coastline, trapping some of the 1.8 trillion pieces of plastic that scientists estimate are swirling in the patch while allowing marine life to safely swim beneath it.

After it was towed out to sea last year, the barrier did not catch any trash in its first weeks of operation because it was moving at the same speed as the plastic. That problem was overcome by using an underwater parachute anchor to slow the boom so it catches quicker moving trash.

Also, late last year, the barrier broke under the constant pummeling by wind and waves in the Pacific, requiring four months of repairs before being relaunched from Vancouver in June.

The system also experienced a problem with “overtopping” — waves that pushed the plastic over the line of floating corks that hold the screen. That was solved by using a line of larger corks to corral the plastic.

The organization wants to continue developing the plastic traps, scale them up and deploy more to the Pacific so they can gather thousands of tons of plastic each year. However, Slat did not say when the second



Crew members sort through plastic on board a support vessel on the Pacific Ocean.

version would be ready for launch.

Slat’s organization is one of a handful of groups working to collect trash from the open oceans.

There is more than enough to keep them busy.

It is estimated that between 600,000 and 800,000 metric tons of fishing gear is abandoned or lost during storms each year in the oceans, according to the Trash Free Seas Program at Ocean Conservancy, a nonprofit environmental advocacy group.

Another 9 million tons of plastic waste, including plastic bottles, bags, toys and other items, flow annually into the ocean from beaches, rivers and creeks, according

to experts.

Slat said the next move is to scale up the device and make it stronger, so it can stay at sea for longer and hold onto all the plastic it collects for a year or more before a ship collects the trash.

Summarizing, he said: “There’s a lot of work still ahead of us.”

Would you choose to let a server pick what you will be eating?

Dear Annie: For a long time now, my wife has had a habit of making our server choose what side dishes she is going to have. If there is a choice of wedding soup or creamy chicken and potato or broccoli or peas, my wife will often say to the server, “Surprise me.” I think this puts pressure on the server. What if my wife does not like the choice that someone else made for her? — *Puzzled in PA*

Dear Puzzled in PA: At upscale restaurants, it’s not uncommon to let the chef select your meal. At chain restaurants and more casual places, I can see how this question might put unfair pressure on employees. However, I’d be curious to hear from servers on this topic.

Dear Annie: I’m raising my two grandchildren, ages 6 and 5. My wife and I have court-ordered custody of them. Our daughter, their mother, is a heroin addict and, like most heroin addicts, seems completely helpless to the drug’s powerful hold. I wrote the following poem that appeared

in my home paper, The Bartlett Express, a few years ago. It was shared online thousands of times. It would mean a great deal to me if you were to print it. Maybe, just maybe, it will prevent a teenager from trying the deadly drug that first time. — *Tennessee Papa*

*Hello, young person.
My name is Heroin.
It is so good to meet you for the first time. And I just know we are going to be the best of friends.
Go ahead: Try me. Don't pay any attention to what your parents and society have been telling you your whole life about me.
I promise you will LOVE me!
I will take you by the hand and take you to places of warmth and happiness and joy the likes of which you've never dreamed.
I guarantee you, we will become inseparable!
Because while I have you by the hand, I will also take you by the throat in a vice-like grip that will make it hard for you to breathe. Everything in your life that used*

*to be so important will pale in comparison to the relationship you and I will have.
I will own you.
You will do whatever it takes to keep me around.
You will lose job after job. But I'm expensive, so you will steal from your friends and family. You will find creative ways to pay for me because what used to be enough of me will soon not be nearly enough.
Unless you're incredibly lucky, you'll spend time in jail because of me. But I'm worth it. I must be because you'll return to me at the first possible moment you're able.
Because now you're weak, and I'm incredibly strong.
Don't have kids because you'll ignore them. And neglect them. And eventually lose them.
Because I'm more important than even them.
Rehab? Forget about it.
Oh, you'll try. Several times. But only a precious few are able to cut ties with me*

*permanently.
You'll discover that you hate me.
There's really only one way that I'll release my hold on you.
When years of addiction finally take their toll. When life with me is no longer worth living. When either disease or desperation reach that final inevitable conclusion.
When my grip finally chokes the very life out of you.
When your heart stops, I'll stop.
And then you'll be gone.
But I'll still be around. Looking. Always looking.
For that next victim.
Ah, there's one.
Hello, young person.
My name is Heroin.
Dear Tennessee Papa: I am happy to print your poem, though sorry that this message needs to be shared. For anyone struggling with addiction, call the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration’s 24/7 national helpline at 1-800-662-4357.*

DEAR ANNIE



ANNIE LANE
Creators
Syndicate Inc.