

Plastic Rehab

(Post visit)

Grade Level: 2nd - 5th

Purpose: To reduce the amount of plastic thrown away by students and their families while reinforcing the dangers of plastics to sea life.

Materials:

- 1) Collection bins (trash cans, recycle bins, etc.)
- 2) Plastic from home, school, etc.
- 3) Recycling Center
- 4) Poster board, markers, etc.

Teacher Background Information: Plastic and other trash is a serious threat to various animals. Floating plastic bags are often mistaken by sea turtles as sea jellies (jelly fish) and are eaten. Since sea turtles cannot digest the plastic they feel full and will often not eat enough to stay healthy. Other plastic and trash can cause injuries to all types of sea life including whales, sharks, fish and many other animals. Recycling is an easy way for students to help reduce the amount of trash that ends up in the ocean. This holds true even for students from inland areas since trash can travel down rivers to the ocean or can be transported from their area to a coastal landfill. In fact, some plastic is added to the environment through littering. Every time something is thrown out a window of a vehicle it can end up in waterways and eventually in the ocean.

Procedure:

- 1) Have students create posters showing the dangers of plastic/trash to sea turtles and hang them around the school to spread the message.
- 2) Have students bring in plastic jugs, bottles, bags, etc. and separate them into appropriate containers (Count the items to get an idea of how much is brought in each week. You could graph the amounts of each container as an extension of the project).
- 3) Take plastic to recycling center
- 4) If possible, continue the project for the school year.

Discussion Questions:

- 1) Which plastic was there more of: bags or bottles?
- 2) What impact does plastic have on sea turtles? On other animals?
- 3) Which items were not recyclable? Can you figure out why?