

# PUBLICATION

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## New Federal Strategy for Marine Litter

October 28, 2020

**The U.S. EPA announced a new major initiative called *The U.S. Federal Strategy for Addressing the Global Issue of Marine Litter* (October 2020).**

The Marine Litter initiative contains various components. It first identifies the challenges of marine litter. The mainland-based sources of marine litter are littering, dumping, and poor waste management practices. Sea-based sources of litter include cargo, solid waste, and fishing gear from shipping vessels, ferries, and other industry infrastructure.

The Marine Litter document also highlights the following four pillars for tackling the issue and finding economic opportunities while doing so:

1. Building capacity for better waste and litter management systems by improving infrastructure, government coordination, and public education and engagement;
2. Incentivizing the global recycling market and partnership with the private sector;
3. Promoting research and development for innovative solutions and technology; and
4. Promoting marine litter removal including litter capture systems in seas, rivers, and inland waters. It identifies existing U.S. legal authorities and federal programs already underway that are addressing the challenges of marine litter.

Finally, the document identifies how the four pillars will continue to address the top two sources of marine litter prospectively. The overall strategy presented in the document draws upon previous experiences in the management of domestic marine litter and recyclable materials throughout government, the private sector, and non-governmental sectors. It is also influenced by international efforts aimed at stopping the flow of waste into waters and creates economic opportunities through recovery and recycling of waste materials before they become marine litter.

This initiative will have the potential to increase the regulatory burden on businesses which may generate and/or dispose of litter that could find its way into marine waters. Any business potentially affected by these changes, including the industries and practices identified above, should closely monitor the development of this initiative. For more information, contact a member of Baker Donelson's [Environmental Team](#).