



Bringing the Adventure and Science Communities Together

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Nonprofit Teams With Patagonia, Launches Marine Microplastic Initiative Along East Coast

January 6, 2014 - [Adventurers and Scientists for Conservation](#) (ASC), a nonprofit organization dedicated to connecting the adventure and science communities, is leading a charge to empower ocean adventurers to help researchers understand the extent of microplastic contamination in the oceans. ASC has been awarded an environmental grant from Patagonia to recruit outdoor recreation volunteers throughout the Northeast - from Boston, Massachusetts to Eastport, Maine - to sample ocean waters which will be analyzed by the [Marine Environmental Research Institute](#) (MERI), ASC's partner on this project.

Large plastic litter is easy to see in our oceans. Plastic bags drift in the Atlantic, water bottles wash up on shores and a massive collection of debris called the Great Pacific Garbage Patch swirls in the North Pacific. **Microplastics**, however, are only visible under a microscope and until recently they have been overlooked by scientists and the public. Yet, work by ASC and MERI is finding more than 85% of surface samples contain microplastic particles. These particles can resemble phytoplankton and are ingested by marine life. Consumed by larger species, plastic and toxins may then bioaccumulate in larger marine mammals, sea birds and humans.

In recent months ASC adventurers have helped MERI expand its data set by collecting samples from as far away as Thailand and Alaska. To date researchers at MERI have found microplastic contamination in every single sample provided by ASC volunteers, with counts as high as 71 pieces per liter. "Marine microplastics pollution is a global issue that is impacting fisheries and will impact people's lives in the

years to come,” says MERI scientist Abby Barrows. These plastic particles come from environmental weathering of plastic pollution, municipal runoff, manufacturing processes and even common cosmetics.

ASC is working to improve scientific understanding and public awareness for the issue of microplastic contamination with a focus on the Northeast. Mike Kautz, ASC Program Director, is embarking on a speaking tour from January 6-11 to educate and recruit adventurers to participate. By better understanding the distribution and concentration of microplastics, legislators and consumers can take steps to limit the spread of this pervasive form of pollution. Plastic bag bans in coastal communities, recycling programs for plastic commercial fishing gear and improved community recycling programs will all be informed by this research.

“Anyone who likes to spend time on the water can contribute to this study, it is a simple sampling protocol that collects important data,” says MERI’s Barrows. Whether you’re a winter surfer or a summer beach stroller anyone can help.

ASC Program Director Mike Kautz will be available for interviews during his tour and speaking at the following locations:

- Patagonia Store, Boston Massachusetts - Jan. 6, 4-8PM
- Patagonia Store, Freeport Maine - Jan. 8, 9-11AM
- Bates College, Lewiston Maine - Jan. 10

To schedule an interview with Mike please email mike@adventureandscience.org with the subject line “Interview Request”. For more information about [ASC’s microplastic’s project](#) and other projects please visit www.adventureandscience.org. Follow up with the microplastics initiative and other ASC programs on our [blog](#), [facebook](#) and [twitter](#).

About Adventurers and Scientists for Conservation

Adventurers and Scientists for Conservation was founded in January of 2011 with the understanding that many people traveling in the outdoors genuinely want to do more for the places they visit but often struggle with how to help. ASC exists to bridge this gap by pairing adventure athletes already traveling to some of the earth's most difficult-to-reach places with the scientists who need information from these areas. ASC also has the goal of creating unique and innovative learning experiences about science while also saving the scientific and conservation communities millions of dollars in data collection costs. For more information visit www.adventureandscience.org