

How trash makes its way to the great pacific garbage patch is pretty much straightforward. When a plastic cup gets blown off the beach in, say, San Francisco, it gets caught in the California Current, which makes its way down the coast towards Central America. Somewhere off the coast of Mexico it most likely meets the North Equatorial Current, which flows toward Asia. Off the coast of Japan, the Kuroshio Current might swoop it up and yank it eastward again, until the North Pacific Current takes over and carries it past Hawaii to the garbage patch. These are the currents that make up the North Pacific Gyre. It takes about a year for material to reach the Eastern Garbage Patch from Asia and several years for it to get there from the United States. Now multiply that one cup by billions of plastic items over years and years - actually about 60 years, starting after World War II, when we really began to make plastic products by the masses.



These tiny  
*plastic* particles  
can get sucked up by  
filter feeders and  
**damage**  
their bodies.