



# ***Center for Alaskan Coastal Studies, Inc.***

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## **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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## **The First Wave of Tsunami Debris Cleanup**

May 15, 2012 Homer, Alaska

The Center for Alaskan Coastal Studies is joining the Gulf of Alaska Keeper to conduct the first major cleanup of marine debris caused by the Japan Tsunami event of March 11, 2011. On May 22, 2012, we will be leaving from Whittier, Alaska to sail to Montague Island in Prince William Sound. Aerial surveys flown two weeks ago along Montague Island beaches showed hundreds of buoys and other high floating debris items that had been transported by wind and currents to Alaska from Japan.

Large scale marine debris cleanups generally take time to organize and fund. Fortunately, this particular cleanup had been planned months before the Japan Tsunami debris was discovered, and this will enable us to begin removing the newly discovered debris accumulations this month. The Marine Conservation Alliance Foundation is funding this effort through one of their annual marine debris removal grants for remote cleanups in Alaska. Initially it was thought that Japan Tsunami debris would take more time to travel across the Pacific. But, as the flight over Montague Island showed, it is here now! This cleanup will provide the first opportunity to begin to understand what is coming ashore.

Through the cleanup beginning on May 22<sup>nd</sup>, we can start to bring the story of the Japan Tsunami debris to citizens, government, and funding agencies. With that story we hope to answer some questions and create an awareness of the magnitude and importance of this daunting problem. The tsunami debris was caused by an act of nature, and we must work together to find a solution before long term ecosystem effects are felt.

Although the Japan Tsunami has created unprecedented amounts of ocean trash, marine debris from foreign and domestic sources has been washing up on the Alaskan coast for a long time. Most of this debris is caused by human choices. The solution to the global problem of marine debris is changing our habits and the way we dispose of our waste, and the first step towards that solution is creating an awareness of the problem.

The Center for Alaskan Coastal Studies has been cleaning and monitoring beaches and working to promote marine debris prevention awareness for 28 years. The Gulf of Alaska Keeper has been doing large scale cleanups for over ten years. We will be posting pictures and information about the clean-ups immediately after we return from the June 2<sup>nd</sup> clean-up event. More information can be found on our websites: [www.akcoastalstudies.org](http://www.akcoastalstudies.org) and [www.goak.org](http://www.goak.org)

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