

Project Topic:

Kachemak Bay CoastWalk:

Long-term monitoring of marine debris on Kachemak Bay beaches.

Project Leads:

Katie Spellman & Beth Trowbridge,
Center for Alaskan Coastal Studies

Primary Goal(s):

- Survey marine debris accumulations on Kachemak Bay beaches.
- Determine changes in marine debris sources through time.
- Educate community on the issue of marine debris, and spread CoastWalk model to other communities.

Background:

- 2009 marked the 25th year that Kachemak Bay citizens have conducted CoastWalk, logging in 9066 volunteer hours in the past 25 years.
- CoastWalk is an annual biodiversity and human impact survey of 32 beach zones around Kachemak Bay.
- In 2001, use of Ocean Conservancy International Coastal Cleanup data cards was incorporated into CoastWalk to better identify sources of marine debris.
- Since 2007, CACS was able to spread the CoastWalk model to other Alaskan coastal communities with the support of the NOAA Marine Debris Program.

Interesting Results:

- In the past decade, shoreline and recreational activities have produced the highest proportion of marine debris items collected from Kachemak Bay beaches. This suggests targeted education efforts to recreational beach users may help prevent further debris from entering marine habitats.
- The proportion of debris from shoreline and recreational activities has decreased in the past decade. This is likely due to subtle increases in debris from smoking related activities (primarily cigarette butts), and from increases in debris of local concern (primarily pieces of styrofoam).

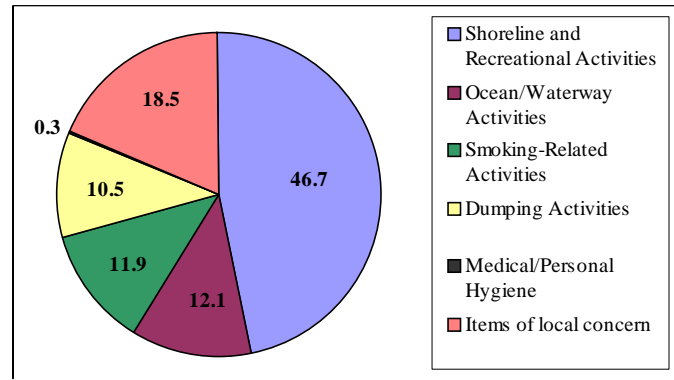


Figure 1. Percentage of items collected on Kachemak Bay beaches during CoastWalk from 2001-2009. Categories represent Ocean Conservancy International Coastal Cleanup classifications for debris sources.

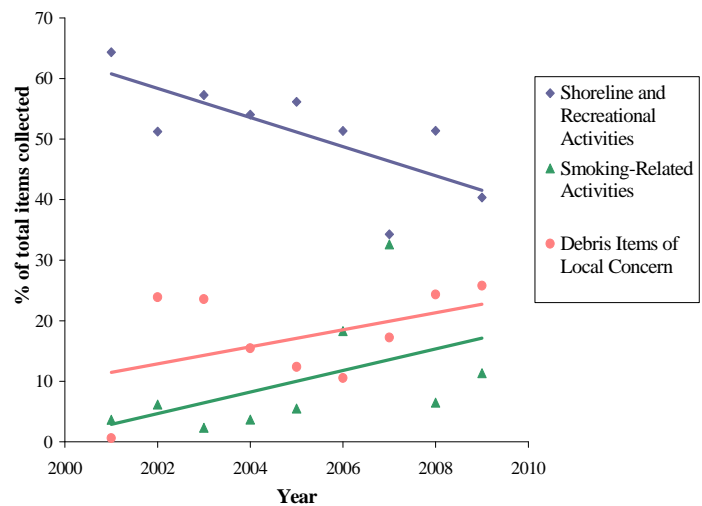


Figure 2. Long-term trends in the proportion of marine debris items generated from various activities that have been collected from Kachemak Bay beaches from 2001-2009.



Figure 3. Kachemak Bay CoastWalk has offered long-standing educational opportunities for youth and adults to learn about the health of local coastal habitats. Over 400 volunteers conducted marine debris surveys in 2009. Photo by Scott Dickerson.