

Thursday January 6, 2011

SITE SEARCH



News Archive Search



[Click here for WRN news alerts](#)



## Researcher: Pacific garbage patch's scope overblown

[Share](#) |

EDITORIAL

[Home/News](#)

[Data & Research Center](#) **NEW**

[Landfill Report](#)

[Residential Recycling Report](#)

[Scrap Report](#)

[Photo Gallery](#)

[Special Reports](#)

[Departments](#)

[Opinion](#)

[Archives](#)

RESOURCES

[Buyers Guide](#)

[Library](#)

[Coming Events](#)

[Commodity Pricing](#)

[Classifieds](#) **NEW**

**WRN CONFERENCES**  
**NEW**

**WRN WEBINARS**  
**NEW**

ABOUT US

[Advertising/Services](#)

[Subscribe](#)

[Contact Us](#)

FOLLOW US

Jan. 6 – A researcher funded by the National Science Foundation say claims about the scope of the Pacific Garbage Patch are greatly exaggerated.

Those claims include that the patch spreads plastic contamination over an area twice the size of Texas, that plastic outweighs plankton in the areas and that the amount of contamination has been growing tenfold each decade since the 1950s.

"There is no doubt that the amount of plastic in the world's oceans is troubling, but this kind of exaggeration undermines the credibility of scientists," said Oregon State University professor of Oceanography Angelicque White. "We have data that allow us to make reasonable estimates; we don't need the hyperbole. Given the observed concentration of plastic in the North Pacific, it is simply inaccurate to state that plastic outweighs plankton, or that we have observed an exponential increase in plastic."

White, using other scientific research and taking part in an NSF funded expedition looking at the impact of plastic debris on microbial communities in the world's ocean, **said the actual area of plastic is less than 1% of the geographic size of Texas.**

"The amount of plastic out there isn't trivial," White said. "But using the highest concentrations ever reported by scientists produces a patch that is a small fraction of the state of Texas, not twice the size."

White studied the relationship between microbes and plastic in the ocean; their expedition found photosynthetic microbes were thriving on many plastic particles.

"On one hand, these plastics may help remove toxins from the water," she said. "On the other hand, these same toxin-laden particles may be ingested by fish and seabirds. Plastic clearly does not belong in the ocean."

For more information on the study visit <http://oregonstate.edu/ua/ncs/archives/2011/jan/oceanic-%E2%80%9C9Cgarbage-patch%E2%80%9D-not-nearly-big-portrayed-media>.

Contact Waste & Recycling News reporter Amanda Smith-Teutsch at 330-865-6166 or [asmith-teutsch@crain.com](mailto:asmith-teutsch@crain.com)

[EMAIL THIS STORY](#)

[PRINTER FRIENDLY](#)

[ORDER REPRINTS](#)

[SUBMIT A COMMENT](#)



**TAKE THE WASTE & RECYCLING NEWS POLL**



[Poll results](#) | [Submit comment](#)  
[Past polls](#)

area of texas=268,580 square miles  
1%= 2,386 square miles  
area of rhode island=1,214 square miles  
garbage patch=almost 2x rhode island



**SUGGEST SITE IMPROVEMENT**

Do you have an idea for a way we can make wasterecyclingnews.com better? Please submit it [here](#).

**OPINION**

- NY's EPR-incineration dilemma
- Deserves attention
- Alt fuels equal cost savings
- This week's cartoon



**SUBMIT STORY IDEAS**

Have an idea for a story that you think Waste & Recycling News should cover? Submit story ideas [here](#).

**RSS FEED**

For up-to-the-minute news delivered automatically to your desktop [click here](#).

**MOST POPULAR STORIES**

**This Week's Top Stories**

- Electronic waste must be recycled in N.J. starting Jan. 1
- Deffenbaugh acquires two companies in Arkansas
- New York City resumes trash collection following blizzard
- Ohio EPA proposes changes to food composting rules
- Advanced Disposal acquires Ga.-based B&W Waste

**This Year's Most Popular Stories**

- Deffenbaugh acquires two companies in Arkansas
- New York City resumes trash collection following blizzard
- Advanced Disposal acquires Ga.-based B&W Waste
- Rumpke acquires Chillicothe, Ohio-based RLS Recycling
- Republic to pay additional fines for Pa. landfill violations