# Japanese Tsunami Flotsam Appearing in Kodiak Waters

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{audio}/images/stories/mp3/111223.japanese_tsunami_flotsam.mp3{/audio}

Kodiak fisherman Alexus Kwatchka shows one of the Japanese floats he collected near the island. It has likely been washed across the Pacific after the Japanese tsunami in March. Dave Kubiak photo

Jennifer Canfield/KMXT

A local beach comber and a renowned oceanographer have found that Kodiak is already receiving some of the earliest arrivals of debris from the Japanese earthquake and subsequent tsunami. The 9.0 earthquake hit March 11th and the tsunami that followed devastated Japan's coastline, killing nearly 16,000 people.

Back in September, avid beach comber Dave Kubiak came across a large, white plastic float while out in his boat.

-- (Flotsam 1 :28 "But it's the biggest plastic float... wind is what's gonna drive them.")

Kubiak moved on, not sure if the float was actually from the tsunami. But then he came across several more and then his friend- a fellow beach comber- also reported seeing the floats.

-- (Flotsam 2 :10 "But it's pretty obvious...that's unbelievable.")

Kubiak's friend actually pulled a few of the floats and stored them in the back of his truck. They took pictures and sent them to Dr. Curtis Ebbesmeyer.

Ebbesmeyer is well-known for his study of flotsam and how it travels through the ocean. He sent the pictures to the national media in Japan and asked for help identifying the floats.

-- (Flotsam 3 :20 "Yeah they're from... that's my booey.")

Ebbesmeyer says debris will continue to wash up on shores from Kodiak to Oregon for the next few years. The ensuing reports from beach combers like Kubiak will make for better understanding of how flotsam moves through the ocean.

-- (Flotsam 4 :36 "This is unprecedented...not appreciated even now.")

Ebbesmeyer says scientists are already hypothesizing about the effects of mass amounts of debris traveling through the Pacific Ocean's currents. He points to an unprecedented number of sea turtles washing up on Vancouver Island.

-- (Flotsam 5 :32 "Some scientists are saying...that's a whole new dimension.")

Ebbesmeyer says people who find debris should be especially careful. Personal items and artifacts can still be reunited with people in Japan. He also suggests testing items for radiation, just to be prudent. Ebbesmeyer asks that people send him pictures and accounts of debris sightings through his website, flotsametrics dot com. You can find that link and this story on our website at KMXT dot org. ###