

Island Trails Network Seeing Flood of Tsunami Debris

Tuesday, 17 July 2012

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Brianna Gibbs/KMXT

As many west coast news outlets have reported, remnants of the 2011 Japanese tsunami have already started showing up on the shores of the U.S. This sea-voyaging debris has littered both the headlines and beaches, and Kodiak is no exception.

Andy Schroeder is the executive director and founder of Island Trails Network, a local organization that builds and maintains trails across the island, in addition cleaning up marine debris. Schroeder and his trail crew recently returned from a beach clean up in Halibut Bay, where he said relics from the tsunami have begun to gather.

-- (Tsunami Debris 1 :43 "You almost can't take any single piece of marine debris and tie it to the tsunami, but there are some new pieces of debris that have been showing up in great numbers that didn't show up before the tsunami, and this year they multiplied ten-fold. And those two items are large 30-50 gallon cylinders, solid cylinders of polystyrene. So it's shaped like a barrel but it's just a solid cylinder if Styrofoam. And the other one is an olive shaped rigid float with eyes on either end of it. So both of them are roughly the same size, one person can pick them up, they're a little smaller than a 55 gallon drum, and those have been showing up by the thousands.")

He said it's more than just a coincidence when they show up in those numbers.

-- (Tsunami Debris 2 : 39 "I've seen photos and I read the writings and blogs of Dr. Curtis Ebbesmeyer, who's an oceanographer in Seattle and an authority on the subject. And he says that those olive shaped rigid floats are part of the aquaculture industry in Japan, specifically oyster farming. So those are oyster floats, as we call them. And those oyster floats were inundated by the tsunami, they were all washed out and I have even seen photos of after the tsunami, of different bays and Japan that were littered with these things. So we know that that piece of debris is all over the ocean. And when they started showing up here in these numbers, well you can put two and two together and say yes we are seeing debris from the tsunami.")

Schroeder

isn't surprised that these are the first to show up on Kodiak, seeing as their lite weight quality allows them to travel greater distances by wind, rather than currents. He said he is worried about the forecast these floats might be for the amount of debris heading our way.

-- (Tsunami Debris 3 : 15 "But all predictions say that in the next two to three years we'll see all the rest of it. So if the oyster floats are any indication, we are at the beginning of several years of increased debris showing up on our beaches, and we want to be ready for that.")

The ITN crew heads back to Halibut Bay today (Tuesday) for a third clean up this season. It will be the fifth trip they have taken to the bay over the past two years.

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