Turning the Tide Against Marine Debris: Part One

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Derelict fishing nets are seen strewn across a beach on the northeast side of Shuyak Island. Kodiak Island Trails Network Director Andy Schroeder said he hopes to send crews to clean up this portion of the archipelago this summer. Brianna Gibbs Photo

Brianna Gibbs/KMXT

Today we begin part one of a three-part series examining marine debris, and where places in Alaska, specifically Kodiak, stand in clean up efforts.

It’s been about three years since the tsunami in Japan washed away entire towns, sending thousands of tons of debris out to sea, subject to the mercy of ocean currents. Less than eight months after the tsunami, items started showing up in Alaska and have continued to do so in the months and years since.

A plastic float of unknown origin is found on a beach on northeast side of Shuyak Island.Schroeder said debris has been washing up from around the world for decades, so linking any particular piece to the 2011 Japanese Tsunami isn't always easy. Brianna Gibbs Photo

It will still be a few months before clean up crews will take to Kodiak’s beaches, but as KMXT’s Brianna Gibbs recently learned, the planning process for those clean ups is already well under way.

Schroeder holds up one of marine debris' biggest culprits -- plastic water bottles. He said most of what is washing up on beaches is plastic, but more often then not it is the by-product of single-use 21st Century lifestyle, and not from the 2011 Japanese Tsunami. Brianna Gibbs Photo