

# Plastics Impact on Florida's Tourism and Economy

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## Summary

Florida's tourism and economy is dependent on the health of our coastal ecosystems. Studies show that the continuation of consuming single use plastics can damage Florida's environment and economy. We estimate the cost of plastic beach trash in tourism dollars alone at \$7 billion / year.

## **Florida's blue economy and tourism**

- Florida ranks #2 as the most visited state in the United States.<sup>1</sup>
- 130 million tourists visited Florida in 2019, a 7% increase from 2018. <sup>2</sup>
- Most tourists visit Florida to enjoy the ocean beaches and parks.
- The state's tourism industry generated \$111.7 billion of expenditures in 2018 and more than 1.4 million jobs. <sup>2</sup>
- Out-of-state tourists spent \$112 billion in 2016, supporting one out of every six jobs, making tourism Florida's largest employer and consistently adding jobs faster than the rest of the state's economy. <sup>2</sup>
- International beach tourists alone spend \$12.4 billion annually in Florida. Moreover, tourists generated \$11.6 billion in local and state taxes to help fund Florida's government and services. The state's beach tourism generates \$6.4 billion in federal taxes.<sup>2</sup>

## **Single Use Plastics Products (SUPPs) in travel & tourism**

- Tourists typically generate up to twice as much solid waste per capita as local residents.<sup>3</sup>
- The Tourism & Food service industries have been identified as major contributors to plastic waste. The increase in food and beverage outlets serving both visitors and the local community resulted in the proliferation of plastic litter.<sup>4</sup>
- The five most frequently polluting SUPPs are water bottles, disposable toiletries, plastic bags and bin liners, food packaging, and cups.<sup>4</sup>

## **Economic impacts of plastic marine debris on other American beach communities**

- Florida has failed to gather data, so we relied on data from other beach communities.
- The cost to local governments to clean beaches along 90 towns in Washington, Oregon, and California was estimated at more than \$500 million in a 2012 study.<sup>5</sup>
- Changes in recreation visits to beaches, as a result of an increase or decrease in marine debris, has cascading economic impacts on the regional economy.<sup>6</sup>
- To understand the relationship between marine debris and beach visits, a federal study by NOAA recruited participants at beaches and asked about how marine debris influenced their beach visitation.<sup>6</sup>
- The potential economic losses from an increase in marine debris were greatest in Orange County, California, where doubling the amount of marine debris on beaches resulted in an estimated loss of \$414 million tourism dollars spent in communities, and a decrease of nearly 4,300 jobs.<sup>6</sup>
- Conversely, eliminating Marine Debris in Orange County, California would result in the Increase of 2.1 million visitor days, increase of \$130 million in recreational value, increase of \$187 million in tourism spending, and an increase of 1,900 jobs.<sup>6</sup>

## **Estimated effect on Florida's economy from marine debris**

We estimate the current cost of plastic beach debris to Florida's tourism at \$7 billion per year.

### **Estimated benefit to Florida's economy of reducing marine debris to zero**

Researchers estimated that Alabama would receive an 8.1% increase if they reduced their Marine Debris to zero. Extrapolate to Florida:

- Florida tourists spend on average \$155/day.
- 91.8% of visitors 102 million tourists participated in outdoor recreation an average 6 days during their Florida visits.
- $102 \text{ million} \times 0.918 = 93,840,000$  beach visitors.
- $93,840,000 \text{ beach visitors} \times 6 \text{ days} = 563,040,000$  visitor beach days.
- $563,040,000 \text{ visitor beach days} \times 0.081 = 45,606,240$  visitor beach days.
- $\$155 \times 45,606,240 \text{ visitor beach days} = \$7 \text{ billion increase to Florida economy}$  if we eliminate all plastic beach trash. That figure is our best estimate of the current cost to Florida's economy from plastic trash on our beaches.

### **Estimated cost to Florida's economy of doubling of marine debris**

Researchers estimated that Alabama would lose -26.5% if their marine debris doubled.

Extrapolate to Florida:

- $563,040,000 \text{ visitor beach days} \times 0.265 = 149,205,600$  visitor beach days.
- $\$155 \text{ per day} \times 149,205,600 \text{ days} = \$23 \text{ billion loss to Florida's economy}$  if beach trash doubled.

### **Estimated cost to Florida's economy of existing marine debris**

Researchers estimated that Alabama would lose -26.5% if their marine debris doubled.

Extrapolate to Florida:

- $563,040,000 \text{ visitor beach days} \times 0.265 = 149,205,600$  visitor beach days.
- $\$155 \text{ per day} \times 149,205,600 \text{ days} = \$23 \text{ billion loss to Florida's economy}$  if beach trash doubled.

### **Works Cited**

<sup>1</sup>Kiesnoski, K. (2015, July 13). *Top 10 states for tourism*. MSN. <https://www.msn.com/en-us/money/markets/top-10-states-for-tourism/ar-AAcVMdS#page=1>.

<sup>2</sup>Florida Ocean Alliance. *Securing Florida's Blue Economy Strategic Policy Plan for Florida's Oceans and Coasts* June 2020 [https://www.floridaoceanalliance.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/FOA-Strategic-Policy-Plan\\_20210304.pdf](https://www.floridaoceanalliance.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/FOA-Strategic-Policy-Plan_20210304.pdf)

<sup>3</sup>Schönberger, H., Martos, G., & Styles, D. (2016, February 29). *Best environmental management practice in the tourism sector : Learning from frontrunners*. Photo of Publications Office of the European Union. <https://op.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/731280a0-df78-11e5-8fea-01aa75ed71a1/language-en>.

<sup>4</sup>United Nations Environment Programme and World Travel & Tourism Council (2021). *Rethinking Single-Use Plastic Products in Travel & Tourism - Impacts, Management Practices and Recommendations*. Nairobi.

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<sup>5</sup>Parker, L. (2018, May 3). *Beach clean-up study shows global scope of plastic pollution*. Environment. <https://www.nationalgeographic.com/environment/article/greenpeace-beach-cleanup-report-highlights-ocean-plastic-problem>.

<sup>6</sup>National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration. (2019, July). *The Economic Impacts of Marine Debris on Tourism-Dependent Communities*. Marine Debris Program. Marine Debris

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