SCIENCE AS COMPASS





SURFRIDER FOUNDATION

BACK TO 2025

CONTEXT

Since 1990, Surfrider Foundation Europe acts to protect the ocean. Each year, thousands of citizens, associations, companies, and scientists take part in collecting data on marine litter, helping to better understand its origin and impact.

In 2025, Surfrider carried out different scientifics and citizen science projects **to analyze the quantity, type and distribution of litter** on the beaches and river banks in Europe.

- **Ocean Initiatives project** enable anyone to collect and quantify 30 types of waste.
- **Biocarriers** collects opportunistic data on the presence and type of biocarriers.
-**Ospar/MSFD** protocol monitors 100-metre sites every season, with a detailed classification of 251 categories of beach and river bank litter.

All the data are used at different levels - local, national and European -**to improve scientific knowledge of the subject.** This information is also used for **advocacy to influence European and national decision-makers and industry, to act at the source of pollution and promote stricter** environmental regulations.

This report highlights the results of these actions and underlines the importance of **collective engagement. Everyone can contribute to preserving the environment and the ocean.**



KEY FIGURES

799

NUMBER OF COLLECTIONS WITH QUANTIFICATION



395 KM

DISTANCE ANALYSED



17 172

NUMBER OF PARTICIPANTS



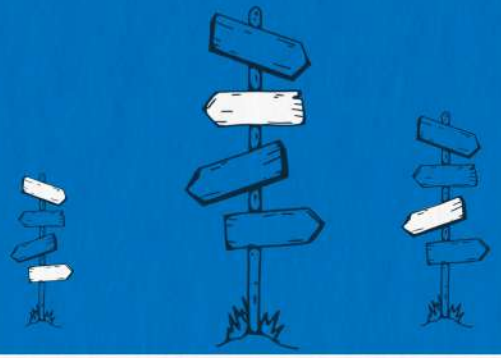
1 372 050

NUMBER OF WASTE QUANTIFIED



347/100M

NUMBER OF WASTE BY 100M

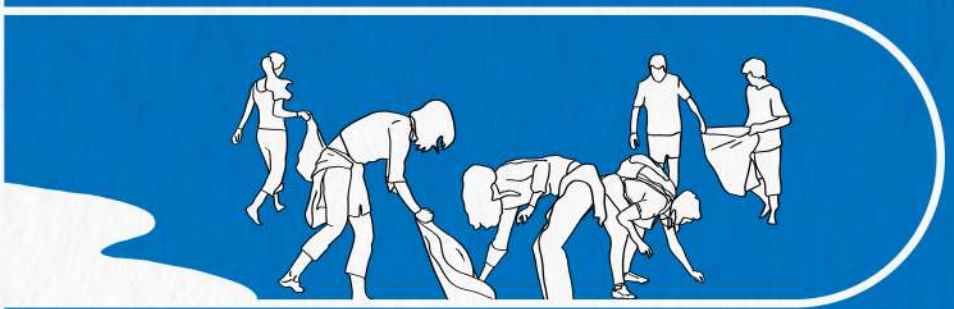


COLLECTION LOCATIONS



1. North Atlantic 3%
2. Baltic Sea 0,4%
3. Greater North Sea 31%
4. Bay of Biscay 41%
5. Black Sea 1,5%
6. Werstern Mediterranean 16,5%
7. Eastern Mediterranean 0,5%
8. Iberian Coast 6%
9. Indian Ocean 0,1%

100%





TYPE OF LITTER QUANTIFIED : BY OCEAN INITIATIVES

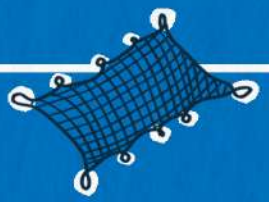
TOP 10



1. Cigarette butts : 587 514



2. Plastic pieces 2.5-50 cm: 84 756



3. Fishing : nets / tangled ropes : 55 505



4. Metal caps 47 776



5. Plastic bags and fragments : 45 491



6. Pieces of glass : 37 821



7. Polystyrene pieces 2.5-50 cm : 33 652



8. Sweet/ snack wrappers : 27 694



9. Food containers : 25 360



10. Bottle caps : 25 250

Shellfish farming waste : 9 149
Cans: 9 117
Cotton bud sticks : 9 071
Plastic bottles < 50cl : 9 026
Pieces of metal : 7 224
Glass bottles : 6 247
Lollipop sticks : 6 128
Plastic bottles >50cl : 5 474
Pieces of fabric: 4 854

Wet wipes: 4 642
Tampon applicators : 3 576
Plastic cups : 4 237
Straws : 3 536
Fishing : lines / hooks bait boxes : 3 360
Medical packaging : 2 185
Hunting cartridges : 2 041
Plastic cutlery : 1 767
Toys : 1 612

Other plastic bottles : 1 424
Lighters: 1 349
Shoes: 1 052
Balloons: 903
Stirrers : 583
Plastic plates : 579
Tyres : 259
Single-use masks : 252

OSPAR (BEACH/RIVER)

IN 2025, 9 SITES ACROSS FRANCE AND SPAIN WERE MONITORED AS PART OF THE SCIENTIFIC FOLLOWING UP PROGRAM.

THE CRITERIA TO BE MET:

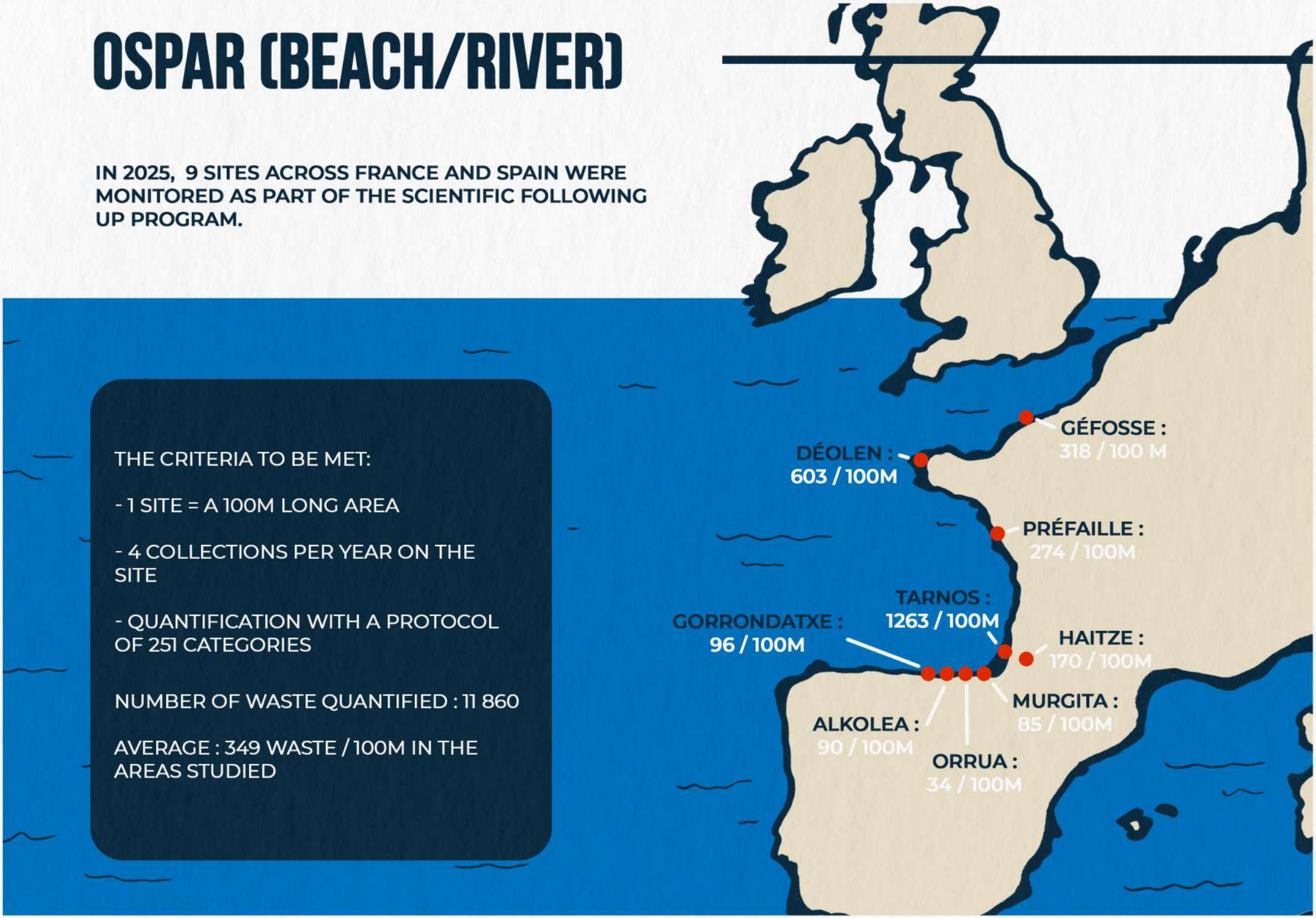
- 1 SITE = A 100M LONG AREA

- 4 COLLECTIONS PER YEAR ON THE SITE

- QUANTIFICATION WITH A PROTOCOL OF 251 CATEGORIES

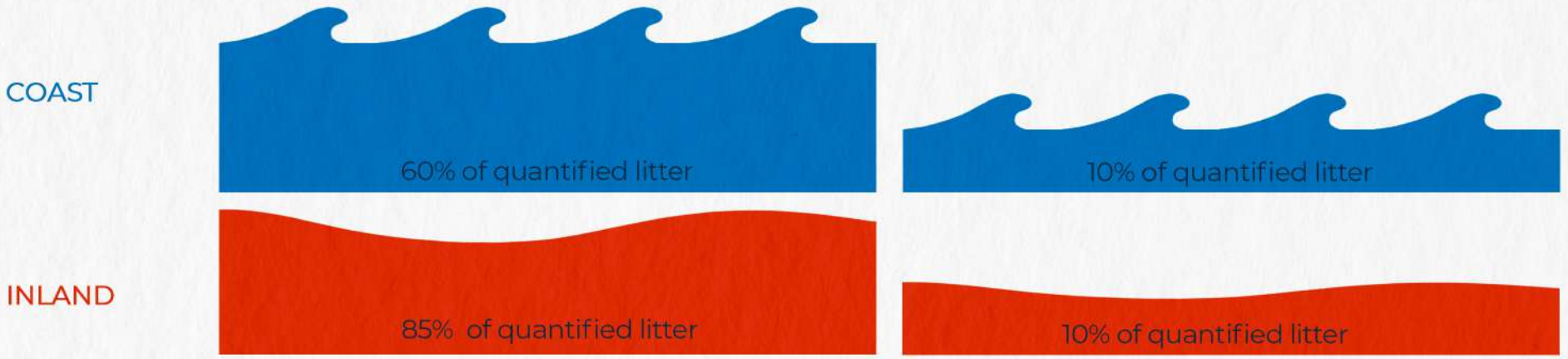
NUMBER OF WASTE QUANTIFIED : 11 860

AVERAGE : 349 WASTE / 100M IN THE AREAS STUDIED



SOURCE OF WASTE

SINGLE-USE PLASTIC AND UNIDENTIFIABLE FRAGMENT



SINGLE-USE PLASTIC :
77% OF QUANTIFIED LITTER

PLASTIC FRAGMENTS :
18% OF QUANTIFIED LITTER

QUANTIFIED WASTE BY USE:



BIOCARRIERS

Biocarriers are bacterial supports used in some types of wastewater treatment plants. These small plastic cylinders, support the growth of microorganisms that settle, multiply, and break down suspended matter in the water.

During floods, intense storms, peak tourist periods generating large flows of water or when infrastructure malfunctions, biocarriers can end up being discharged into the environment.

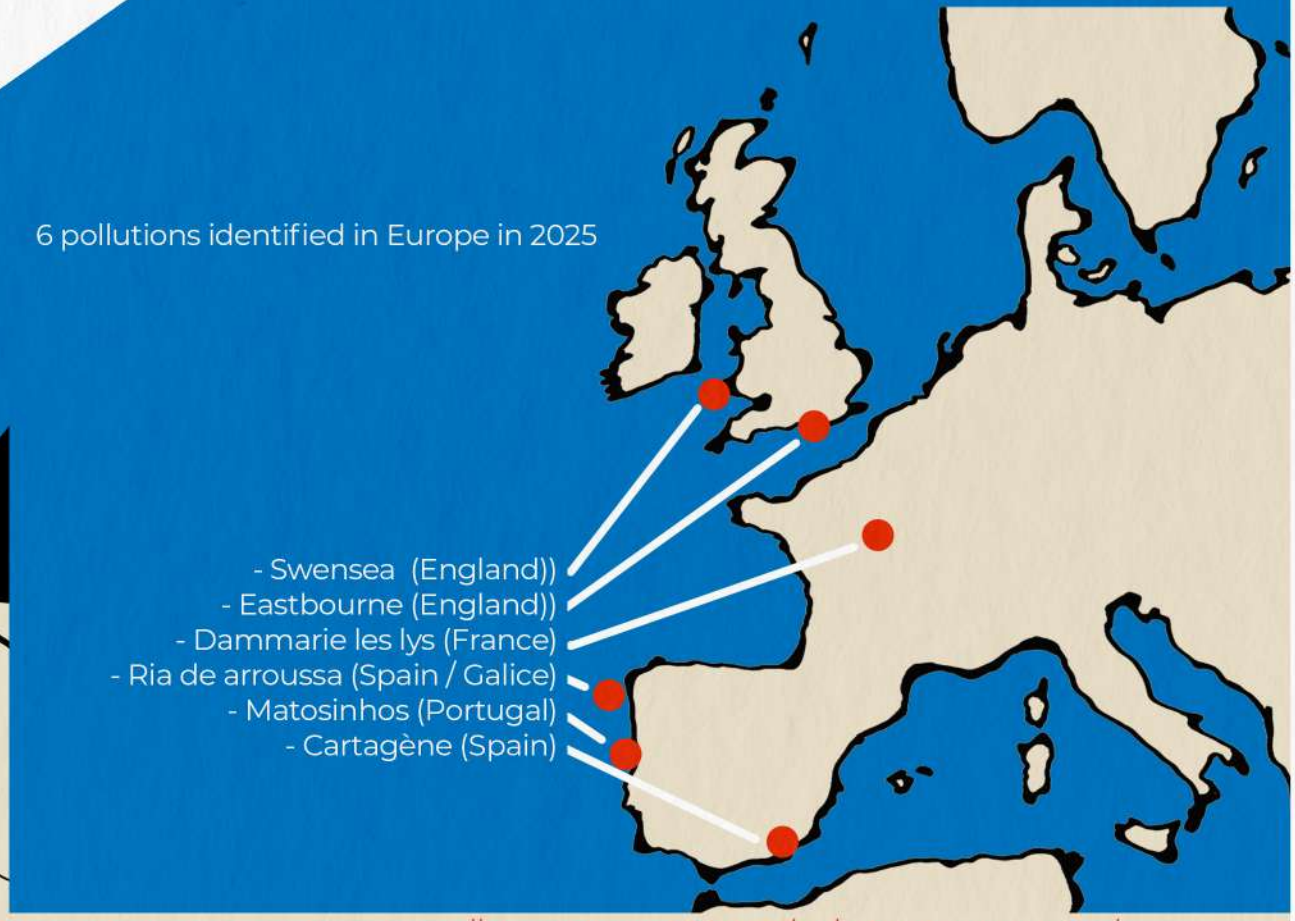
7 197 biocarriers were found and quantified in 2025

Biocarriers were found on beaches and rivers banks of 122 municipalities





6 pollutions identified in Europe in 2025



Do you find them on the beach or on the river bank? Report their presence here: https://biomedia.surfrider.eu/en/submit-your-report/

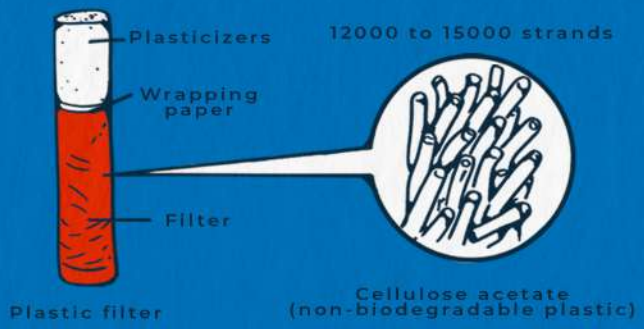
CIGARETTE ~~BUTT~~ PULLUTION

94% of collections reported finding cigarette butts.
880 041 cigarette butts were quantified in 2025.

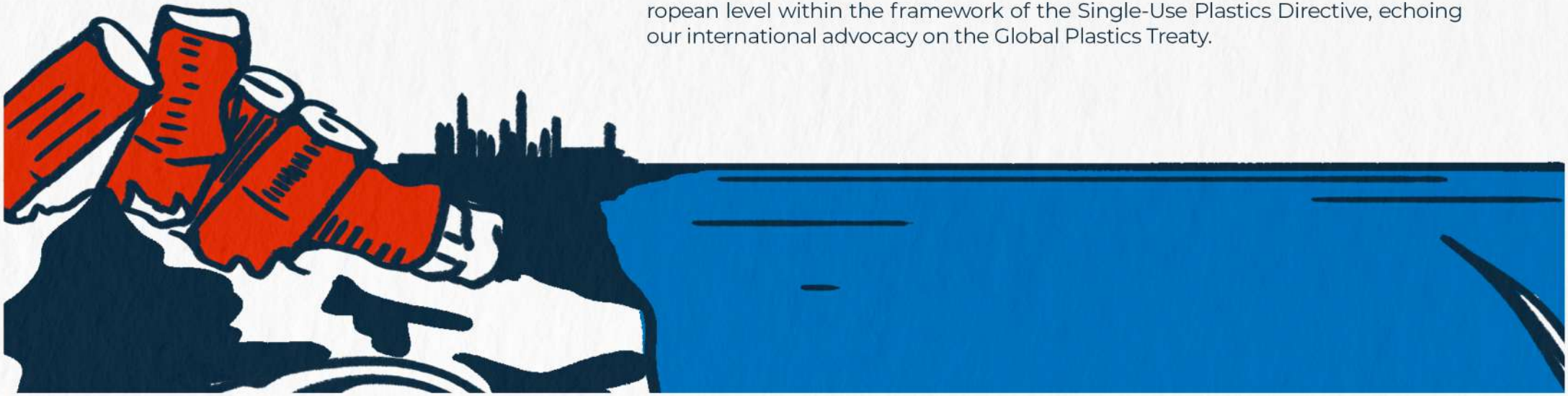
1 CIGARETTE BUTT CAN POLLUTE UP TO 1,000 LITRES OF WATER
A CIGARETTE BUTT CONTAINS UP TO 7,000 CHEMICAL SUBSTANCES

Tobacco related waste, and cigarette butts in particular, are among the most commonly found types of litter in the environment and in aquatic ecosystems.

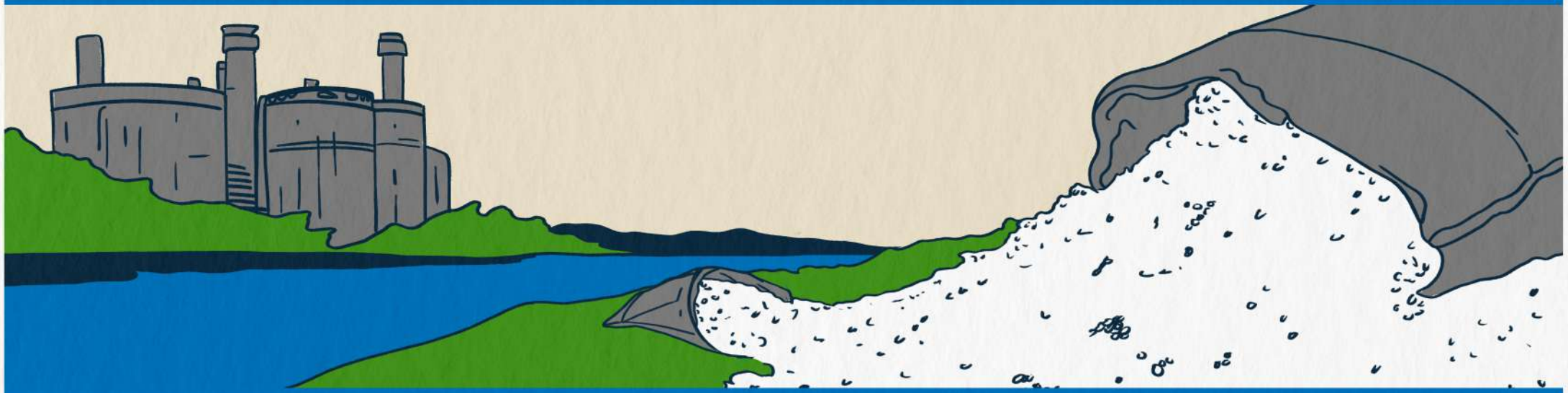
The responsibility of tobacco producers is therefore clearly called into question: it is scientifically established that these filters provide no health benefits, while being real poison for the environment.



In this context, Surfrider is running a campaign calling for a ban on cigarette filters, as well as nicotine pouches and disposable e-cigarettes, two rapidly growing sources of single-use plastic pollution. This demand is being advocated at the European level within the framework of the Single-Use Plastics Directive, echoing our international advocacy on the Global Plastics Treaty.



PELLETS



They are the raw materials used by manufacturers to make plastic objects.

Pollution can occur during the handling of pre-production plastic pellets (ppps), transport (by sea and land), and storage. They are also dispersed by wind and rain, as they are very light.



In 2025

Plomeur (France)
La Test-en-Buch (France)
Tarragone (Spain)

Victory:
In 2025, the adoption of the European regulation on industrial plastic pellets marks a major step forward in the fight against industrial pollution. It finally acknowledges the scale of pellet losses and their impact on the environment. Actors across the plastic value chain are now held accountable and will be required to implement preventive measures, as well as cleanup actions in the event of spills. This adoption represents a collective victory: it demonstrates the key role of field data and citizen mobilization in driving public policy change.

FIELD ENGAGEMENT

The data presented in this report exists thanks to the commitment of thousands of volunteers. In 2025, they mobilized across Europe (and beyond) to collect and quantify waste, turning each field action into a concrete lever for ocean protection. Their involvement is the driving force behind Surfrider's work without them, nothing would be possible.

In 2026, what legislative challenge lies ahead? The revision of the Marine Strategy Framework Directive (MSFD).

Want to take action for the ocean?

You can get involved alongside Surfrider through one of our three programs, Ocean Initiatives, Biocarriers, or OSPAR and turn citizen engagement into tangible impact. Waste collection, data production, or contribution to citizen science: everyone can find their place.



Contact us: citizenscience@surfrider.eu

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Soutenu par

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