

Rubbish has a Direct Route to the Ocean by Karen Bryan

Have you ever wondered, “Who left their trash at the beach?” Sometimes, it happens, and there will be a harsh scolding by people who care on social media! And other times, maybe no one left the rubbish on the beach, but it was left on a neighborhood street. In Hawai‘i and many other communities on the mainland U.S., the stormwater system leads directly to bodies of water. The stormwater system is a series of drains, ditches, curbs, and gutters that move rain water to keep our roads from flooding. At MCBH, our stormwater system leads directly to the ocean. So, any rubbish that blows out of your yard and into the street could be carried to the ocean the next time it rains. Do you throw cans, plastic bottles, and other unwanted items in the back of your pick-up truck? Ever wonder what happened to it? Well, it probably blew out of your truck while you were driving on the H-3. Myna birds, mongoose, and cats are notorious scavengers that root through our uncovered trash and leave it scattered on the ground. All of that rubbish gets blown by the wind or washed by the rain through the stormwater system, and eventually to the ocean. Occasionally, trash clogs the stormwater system causing roads to flood during torrential rains. Rubbish is easy to see, but what about the other things on the ground that we can’t see like chemicals and pet waste? Sadly, the rain washes them to the ocean too. So, how can you help to keep our oceans clean and healthy? Here’s a few tips:

- Avoid washing your vehicle at home. Use the car wash station located near the corner of Mokapu Blvd. and Harris Ave. The car wash is properly equipped to manage the chemicals.
- Bag your trash and store it in a receptacle with a lid. Un-bagged trash in your bin or the back of your truck may be blown away.
- Rake yard clippings when possible, and put them in your green bin.
- Pick up after your pets. Unremoved pet waste decays, gets washed to the ocean, and can sicken marine life such as endangered Hawaiian monk seals.
- Don’t pour anything down the storm drain.

Activity: Post photos in the comments of a neighborhood clean-up you or your family did while practicing social distancing. Random drawings for prizes will be held when social distancing has been lifted.

Mālama i ka ‘āina—care for and live in harmony with the land. Celebrate Earth Day every day.