MULTIDISCIPLINARY COLLABORATION TO IMPROVE MARINE LITTER MONITORING IN THE CANARY ISLANDS (OCEANLIT PROJECT)

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Abstract

During last years, plastic pollution has become into an important menace. The concern about it has raised quickly during the las decade withing the scientific community as well as the general public. Focusing on marine debris, every day more people is concerned and moving against plastic pollution, such us social groups and public institutions organizing beach cleanups, boats taking out marine debris from the seas, diving centers arranging cleanups on seafloors, or researchers conducting scientific studies in specific areas. However, only in few cases on citizen science activities, an adequate classification of litter collected is conducted, and different protocols are used by researchers to classify litter collected on their studies. Improve capacities, simplify protocols, and conduct trainings could provide standardized tools to enhance marine debris monitoring.

For this reason, in Canary Islands the OCEANLIT Project aims to reinforce the harmonization of data collection at different levels: i. *Awareness level*; ii. *Monitoring level*: identifying and quantifying most common litter items; iii. *Scientific level*: based on scientific analysis. To date, an important review on different activities related to marine debris (cleanups, scientific studies, litter monitoring, etc.) has been conducted, and main results has been analyzed to develop protocols and tools to improve data collection, focusing on harmonize litter classification at different levels, based on national (App MARNOBA) and European directives (Marine Strategy Framework Directive, MSFD).

Finally, more than 70 local teams and 40 recreative boats were contacted, and specific trainings are being carried out along 2022. In other hand, specific studies involving different working teams are being conducted, such as floating debris monitoring (macro and micro litter) in the marine protected areas of Gran Canaria (*ZEC Mogán*) and Tenerife (*ZEC Teno-Rasca*) Islands, involving local institutions (Canary Islands Government), NGOs (ADS Biodiversidad), and researchers from the University of Las Palmas (EOMAR, ULPGC).

Keywords: marine litter, citizen science, beach litter, floating debris, Canary Islands

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