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Plastic pollution in the water (ocean and freshwater): The great challenge

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Every year, an enormous amount of plastic waste is poured into the water (ocean and freshwater), increasing steadily every year: 10 million/year today and it is estimated that in 2050 there will be more plastic than fishes (by weight) in the sea (Ellen McArthur Foundation for World Economic Forum, 2016). They (European Research Institute and the author) are leading some international project that aims to increase the information in a concrete way about plastic pollution and the severity of their effects until they reach the food chain. How much plastic are in the water? How plastic pollution arrive to the water? Which are the sources? Which are the consequences (human, environment, economy and more)? Solutions? Can we clean the ocean? There are many questions about plastic pollution and there are many different answers. It's important to understand that there isn't just one solution. On the author's way, the first step to work for plastic pollution awareness was to participate at the 5 Gyres Northwest Passage international expedition. The author was the co-founder of the Italian Network for Ocean Literacy: the purpose of ocean literacy is not only to promote the incorporation of sea science into school programs but also to raise awareness about the goods and services that the sea provides. By this way, we can work on the solution(s) of plastic pollution global problem. The primary goal is to raise awareness of the social, economic and cultural importance of sea and sea related services to all stakeholders, including decision-makers, individual citizens and private sector representatives. Research, education and citizen science (that connect research and education) are keys to open the door to the solution(s): with research we will improve our knowledge of the problem and we will find new materials (ecofriendly); with education we will share the knowledge of plastic pollution effect and today's students will prevent the worst tomorrow.

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