

# Understanding sources of plastics in the Antarctic Treaty area

National Antarctic programs use macro-plastics in support of science, for operations and logistics in the Antarctic. Often, using plastics make good sense and reduces fuel requirements for shipping since plastics weigh less than alternatives that exist. National Antarctic programs have good macro-plastic waste management and waste return systems in place.



Research into micro-plastic distribution show that micro-plastics have been found in the marine area south of 60S. To reduce plastics in the Antarctic Treaty area four key recommendations for national Antarctic programs are:

- ✓ **Take Action on Micro-Plastics.** Artificial fabrics and personal care products often contain micro-plastics which can enter the marine environment. Educate your expeditioners about this. Ban personal care products that contain micro-plastics from being brought to Antarctica (see list at <http://www.beatthemicrobead.org/product-lists/>). Investigate ways to prevent micro-plastics from clothing from entering the Antarctic environment—particularly through washing. Perhaps wash clothes less often in Antarctica, use a wash bag, or install filters that capture micro-plastics before they can enter the Antarctic environment.
- ✓ **Do Research and Talk with your Suppliers.** Clearly, much of the plastic pollution from in the area south of 60S latitude comes from outside of that area. However, it is not clear from where exactly. Research is the key to understanding sources of plastic pollution and such research should be supported. This includes research into the consumer-drivers for plastics and how we, as consumers, can work with our suppliers to reduce plastics going to Antarctica when possible.
- ✓ **Clean-up Plastic Pollution when Discovered and Record Meta-data.** If possible, remove any plastic pollution you discover in the Antarctic environment. But note details of the plastic and record the position where found. Also remember it is important to record areas that are pollution free.
- ✓ **Couple Clean-up Activities and Actions with Research.** We need cost-effective responses to reduce plastics of all types entering the Antarctic environment. This requires research, support to the research and feedback into national Antarctic programs procedures.