

The World's Oceans and Coasts

The world's oceans cover 74 percent of the earth. They are home to more than 80 percent of all the living **organisms** on the planet. Oceans are **vital** to life on Earth.

Most ocean life lives along the world's coasts. Three billion people – about half of the world's population – live in coastal areas. Fishermen around the world catch more than 99 percent of their fish less than 200 miles (320 kilometers) from **shore**.

These days, coastal populations around the world are increasing. Buildings and roads are replacing natural **habitats**. Pollution is destroying fish and other **wildlife**. More **sewage** and **toxic** waste are running into coastal waters. More plastics and other forms of trash are ending up on beaches and in coastal waters.

Compared to the coastal areas, the open ocean is fairly clean. Most ocean pollution comes from shipping activities or from the **atmosphere**, but there is a lot of litter. Plastic items such as bottles and food containers wash down rivers, enter the ocean, and can even be found in faraway Antarctica. These plastics not only destroy the beauty of beaches, but they kill fish, birds, **seals**, and other animals. The major source of this ocean plastic pollution is human activities on land.

*taken from [Language and Civil Society e-journal by Susan Stempleski](#)