ICES/PICES Session A
Marine litter

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Marine pollution represents one of the most significant environmental problems facing mankind. Over the past decades quantities and types of marine litter went up dramatically following the trends in use. The accumulation of synthetic debris in marine and coastal environments is a result of the intensive and continuous release of highly persistent materials like plastics. Most of the field research takes place on the back of existing fisheries cruises and the effects of marine litter encompasses a wide variety of impacts across marine environments. Marine litter will kill or harm marine life through entanglement or ingestion and thus put an even higher strain on those systems that are already under stress from overfishing and other anthropogenic influences. Around 267 different animals have been reported to suffer from effects of marine litter. The debris also creates new habitats for micro-organisms and other species, allowing would-be invasive species to hitch rides to new areas of the ocean. Other threats to wildlife are, for example, smothering of the seabed or environmental disturbance. Furthermore, it causes damage to people, property, and livelihood. In addition the presence of marine litter along shorelines can lead to serious economic problems for regions that are dependent on tourism. The marine strategy framework directive requires member states to take measures to achieve or maintain good environmental status (GES) by 2020. One of the descriptors (D10) is related to marine litter and thus information from ongoing national and international initiatives and experience gained from this session, can be used to assess the extent to which key evidence gaps are being addressed through existing programmes of work.

Papers are welcome on the following topics: marine litter monitoring (sediment, water, biota etc.), distribution, modelling, impacts and effects of marine litter, microplastic types and quantities, polymer degradation and breakdown, chemical sorbance, and leaching.