

Ocean Cleanup Project Successfully Catches First Plastic From Great Pacific Garbage Patch



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Lifestyle

I write topical, environmental and experiential travel stories.

The headline-grabbing first real attempt at a long-term solution to clear up some of the plastic polluting our oceans has announced its first success.

The [Ocean Cleanup Project](#) was first unveiled in 2012 by its inventor, Boyan Slat, and after years of development and testing, launched its latest floating

device in June this year. The 600-metre (2,000-foot) long floating boom has captured and collected its first debris from the Great Pacific Garbage Patch – the island of rubbish in the Pacific Ocean that’s roughly three times the size of France, and growing.



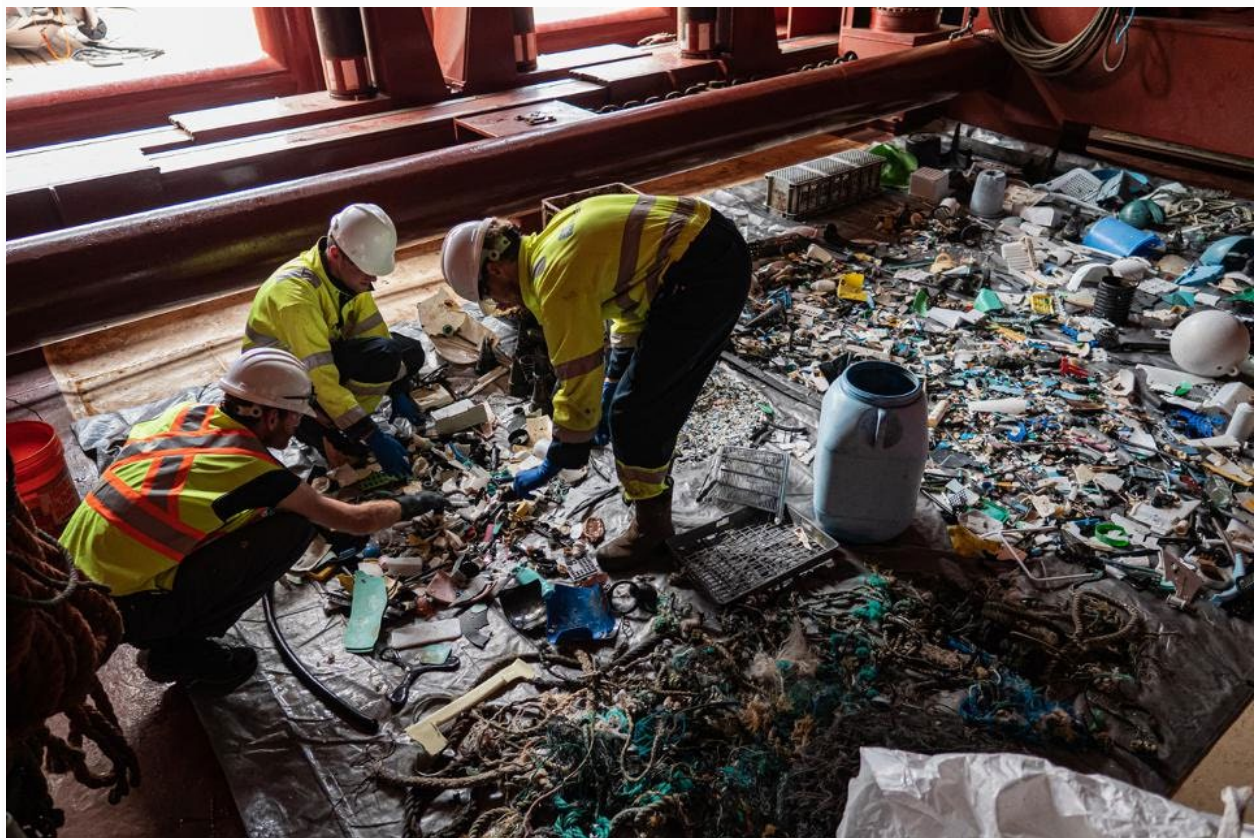
From commercial fishing nets to micro plastics - and a car wheel - the ocean cleanup is underway THE OCEAN CLEANUP

The boom, catchily called System 001/B, is a self-contained system that uses the natural forces of the ocean to ‘passively catch and concentrate’ plastics and other floating debris. Launched from Vancouver in June, the boom collected not only larger visible pieces of plastic and huge ghost nets used in commercial

fishing but also microplastics down to 1mm in size – something the cleanup team described as ‘a feat we were pleasantly surprised to achieve.’

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Alongside an image he [shared on Twitter](#) showing myriad plastics from crates to a car wheel, Slat wrote, “Our ocean cleanup system is now finally catching plastic, from one-ton ghost nets to tiny microplastics! Also, anyone missing a wheel?”



Workers sift through a tiny, tiny portion of the cleanup's plastic bounty. THE OCEAN CLEANUP

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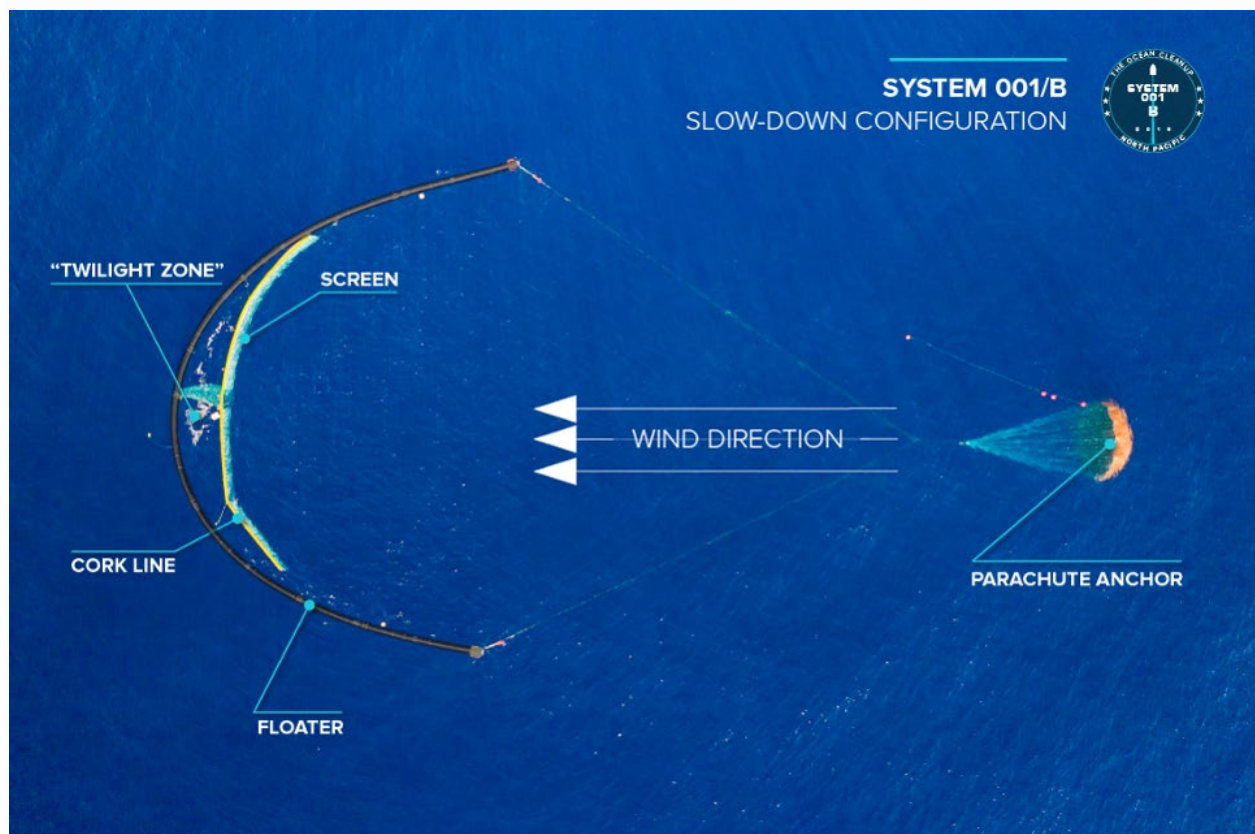
Officially, Slat also commented, “After beginning this journey seven years ago, this first year of testing in the unforgivable environment of the high seas strongly indicates that our vision is attainable and that the beginning of our mission to rid the ocean of plastic garbage, which has accumulated for decades, is within our sights.”

Despite this success, the project team remains cautious about the future and very aware of the scale of the mission ahead, explaining that there’s still much work to do.



The extended corkline is surrounded by a plastic retention boom with the Ocean Cleanup vessel in the ... [\[+\]](#) THE OCEAN CLEANUP

System 001/B is one in a long line of prototypes, trialing technologies to correct inconsistent speed differences between the boom and the plastic it collects after the last version broke up at sea. A parachute sea anchor alongside a new larger cork lining on the booms has helped resolve the issue and prevent the sheer volume of plastic being collected from ‘overtopping’ and escaping.



System 001/B – explained. THE OCEAN CLEANUP

This has formed the springboard for the next cleanup system design – System 002 – which, the company hopes, will be a ‘full-scale cleanup system that is able to both endure and retain the collected plastic for long periods of time.’ Once fully operational, future systems will also be able to return the plastic

they collect to land for recycling although timing is dependent on design and testing.

Around eight million metric tons of plastic waste finds its way into the sea each year from beaches, along with some 600,000 to 800,000 metric tons of abandoned fishing gear. The Ocean Cleanup aims to collect 50% of the Great Pacific Garbage Patch in five years and 90% of it by 2040.



<https://www.forbes.com/sites/duncanmadden/2019/10/03/ocean-cleanup-project-successfully-catches-first-plastic-from-great-pacific-garbage-patch/#2564ba8c4689>