

TRASH ON THE RIVER

Human-Related Issues

Summary:

The issue of trash in the United States' rivers is an old and continuous problem. When almost any item we purchase has some component that goes in the garbage, it is not too surprising that we generate a lot of waste. All trash has to go somewhere, and while much of it is disposed of properly, some of it still ends up in the waterways, polluting the water and endangering animals. It's hard to believe that trash can be such a huge problem for a river as long as the Missouri River.

Plastic products make up the majority of waste found in the Missouri River, and they are a real threat to the many creatures that call the river home. From Missouri River Relief's list of the top ten items found in the river, plastic products make up four of the top six. Problems associated with plastic range from fish eating small pieces of plastic to birds being strangled by the six pack rings that hold cans together. These plastics also leech chemicals into the water, and the effects on animals and humans who drink those chemicals are still unknown.

Trash in the Missouri River doesn't stay put either. In 2006, Missouri River Relief ran a 754-mile Mega Scout operation to map trash deposits along the Missouri River. While they were scouting, the crew tagged a refrigerator. Over a year later they found the same refrigerator, only it had moved 326 miles downstream.

During river clean-ups in 2016 alone, Missouri River Relief found 11 refrigerators, 4 TVs, 2 chest freezers, 443 tires, 34 55-gallon plastic barrels, 49 large Styrofoam blocks, 39 5-gallon buckets, 22 coolers, and 15 chairs. Missouri River Relief also filled 956 bags full of trash.



Missouri River Relief found 49 large Styrofoam blocks during a Missouri River clean-ups in 2016.

CONT. TRASH



Sources:

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For More Information: This is issue number 14 in volume I of issues all related to the Missouri River. To access the rest of the collection, visit the Missouri River Relief Education page at riverrelief.org. This issue was published in June 2018.

