

# plastics

## & SEA TURTLES

An estimated 5-13 million metric tons of plastic waste enter our oceans annually. At this rate, researchers predict that there will be more plastic mass than fish mass in the ocean by 2050. **Plastics last forever**--eventually degrading into microplastics that stick around the marine environment indefinitely.

**Sea turtles have been around for over 100 million years--surviving mass extinctions and outliving dinosaurs--but struggle to overcome the impacts of plastic pollution.**

(SWOT-State of the World's Turtles)

### HOW IT IMPACTS SEA TURTLES

*Plastics can affect sea turtles throughout the various stages of their lives leading to sickness, injury, and death.*

#### INGESTION

- Turtles commonly mistake plastics as their food source leading to:
  - Blockages
    - Prevent the turtle from getting the nutrition they need
    - Buildup of gasses that can lead to buoyancy issues
  - Damage to the intestines
  - Non-food items filling the stomach/GI tract
    - Starvation, malnutrition, and lower immunity
  - Poisoning from harmful toxins within and binding to plastics

#### ENTANGLEMENT

- Debris both on land and in the water can lead to:
  - Hinder ability to swim, surface for air, and feed
  - Drowning resulting from being held underwater
  - Abrasions and loss of limbs
  - Desiccation and dehydration when entangled on land
  - Increased odds of depredation

### HOW TO MAKE A DIFFERENCE

- Avoid single use plastics--buy in bulk or choose items with minimal packaging
- Use reusable options for water bottles, containers, bags, straws, and utensils
- Choose sustainable alternatives such as recycled or natural packaging and wooden or natural products for everyday items

