



PSA-052- Global to Local Concerns

Join WFCRC

The World Federation for Coral Reef Conservation
Vic Ferguson Executive Director

281.971.7703
512.986.1902

P.O. Box 311117
vic.ferguson@wfcrc.org

Houston, TX 77231
info@wfcrc.org

Reprinted 7/5/17

How to turn global issues into local concerns

[Lauren de Wet](#)

Monday, July 3, 2017 - 1:30am

[Shutterstock](#)

According to the [Ocean Conservancy](#), plastic has been found in every known sea turtle species, and in more than 25 percent of fish sampled from seafood markets around the world.

Wait, really?

If you're like me (a non-expert), it's hard to imagine that this is true. Before I came in contact with this issue, I was vaguely aware of the so-called "garbage patch" floating around in the Pacific Ocean, and I had maybe seen a few videos online of sharks and dolphins being caught in discarded nets. But it was still hard to comprehend how prevalent plastic is in our oceans and environment. Experts estimate that [8 million metric tons](#) of plastics enter our oceans each year — most of which are only used once. That's a lot of bottles and straws!

Then I went to Indonesia.

Southeast Asia is largely considered to be the world's [hotspot](#) for ocean plastic, with over half of this waste entering the ocean from Indonesia, China, the Philippines, Thailand and Vietnam. Traveling to Indonesia was eye-opening — all beaches, even the most remote, contained at least some plastic waste, as did all dive sites (we spent a portion of our trip scuba diving).

It's clear that the general public connects with what they can see and experience personally .

It was impossible to ignore, and it appears the locals are paying attention, too. Signs urging patrons to refuse single-use plastic items, such as bags, bottles and straws, were prevalent at many stores and restaurants, and reusable canteens of water were provided at most of our accommodations in place of single-serving plastic water bottles. While in many cases the locals do not have a viable means to discard their waste, they overwhelmingly appear to be trying to do everything they can to address the issue.

Why hadn't I heard about this issue before?

After coming home, I was interested to see how ocean plastic ranks in comparison to other environmental issues in regards to overall interest in the U.S. Some quick research on Google Trends confirmed my hunch: issues such as climate change and pollution have received much more attention over the past five years (with a notable spike in interest for climate change within the past few months).

Why is this? It's clear that the general public connects with what they can see and experience personally — and they're more likely to care about what's in their immediate environment. In fact, we see this over and over again in our [Pulse research](#).

For this reason, [storytelling](#) when communicating about environmental issues takes on an even more important role. To persuade an audience to truly care about an issue that's not part of their daily experience, we can do a few things:

- **Make it visual:** Using ocean plastic as an example, it's hard to actually visualize what 8 million metric tons of plastic looks like. Photos and videos help tell the whole story in a more approachable way.

IN PARTNERSHIP WITH



- **Make it actionable:** People feel more connected to things that they can physically get involved in — whether it's participating in a local beach cleanup or recycling or reusing plastic products. Giving the audience a way to connect with the issue in a more substantial way, via action, will make sure that it sticks.
- **Make it shareable:** Crafting communications that are inherently interesting and visually compelling raises the chances that the audience will share content online — expanding overall awareness.

Even in today's messy, politicized climate, there's still room to connect your audience with an issue — wherever they are in the world — through a little bit of smart narrative.

- **This global issue is the emotional equivalent to a war and should have an equivalent response. Break the mold, no more business as usual. Change how we administer to our oceans, it's the only one we have.....Vic Ferguson**

IN PARTNERSHIP WITH

