



Socio-Oceanography Workshop 2024

SESSION 3 DESCRIPTION

Can community engagement solve the ocean plastics problem? (Env lead: Dr. Alice Horton, NOC; Social Science lead: Prof. Lesley Henderson, University of Strathclyde)

Plastic pollution is a widespread, highly visible and increasingly politicised problem. Plastics pervade the environment in an array of items, shapes, sizes and polymer materials, which has a variety of negative consequences for ecosystems and human society. We, as humans, are responsible for this problem. In order to tackle this issue, we need to address not only the environmental spread and effects, but the human behaviours that drive the manufacture and use of plastics, their improper disposal, and the action needed to tackle these once in the environment. Improving communication between the various stakeholders (scientists, industry, NGOs, media, general public) is also key. Understanding what drives the wider community and their needs, will enable more efficient action between scientists and the general public around regional and national activities such as citizen science, beach cleans and behaviour change to reduce plastic use. This will require the coordinated effort of social scientists alongside environmental scientists to ensure that ongoing efforts are working not only in parallel, but in collaboration.

This workshop will facilitate cross-disciplinary discussions between social and environmental scientists with a view to a tangible output as a perspective paper which will guide future research, policy, industry and NGO activities.