



United States Department of the Interior  
BUREAU OF SAFETY AND ENVIRONMENTAL ENFORCEMENT  
WASHINGTON, DC 20240-0001

June 3, 2024

LETTER TO LESSEES, OPERATORS, AND CONTRACTORS ENGAGED IN AUTHORIZED ACTIVITIES ON THE OUTER  
CONTINENTAL SHELF

**Sustainability: Reduce Single-Use Plastics Offshore**

Marine debris prevention is a critical component of the Bureau of Safety and Environmental Enforcement's (BSEE's) environmental stewardship mission. The Marine Debris Program within BSEE's Environmental Compliance Program focuses on reducing the offshore industry's contribution to marine debris. Plastic beverage bottles and caps have consistently ranked in the top five marine debris items found in the ocean each year.<sup>1</sup> BSEE inspections have shown that storage space for plastic water bottles on offshore facilities is minimal. Often, packages of plastic water bottles are stored outside on the decks and subjected to the elements. Several inspections have found plastic packaging left out on facility decks, as well as numerous empty plastic water bottles not properly disposed of and unsecured outside. These can easily be picked up by the wind and blown overboard. Single-use plastics, such as plastic water bottles, that end up as marine debris negatively impact the marine ecosystem and the services it provides to the ocean economy. The prevention and reduction of marine debris will benefit the ocean economy by providing marine and coastal protection, and by supporting revenue generation, sustainable livelihoods, and the well-being of communities and citizens.<sup>2</sup>

BSEE, along with the rest of the Department of the Interior, is undertaking efforts to reduce the use of single-use plastics within our federal buildings and operations.<sup>3</sup> Similarly, we encourage the offshore industry to reduce single-use plastics during operations related to their work on the Outer Continental Shelf. We recognize some lessees, operators, and contractors may have already instituted plastic-reduction programs and cultures. If your company is currently employing programs to reduce the use of single-use plastic products, especially plastic water bottles, we would like to hear from you and learn more about your program. Our objective is to learn about good practices, benefits, and challenges to incorporating single-use plastic reduction strategies on offshore installations and support vessels. We also look forward to spotlighting company practices that may serve as a model for others in the offshore industry.

Please contact [environmentalstewardship@bsee.gov](mailto:environmentalstewardship@bsee.gov) if you are interested in a meeting with BSEE or have any questions about this letter.

Kevin M. Sligh, Sr.  
Director

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<sup>1</sup> National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, Marine Debris Program. <https://marinedebris.noaa.gov/what-marine-debris/plastic>

<sup>2</sup> United Nations Environment Programme (2017). Marine Litter: Socio-economic Study. <https://wedocs.unep.org/20.500.11822/26014>.

<sup>3</sup> Department of the Interior (2022). Secretary's Order 3407: Department-wide Approach to Reducing Plastic Pollution. <https://www.doi.gov/sites/doi.gov/files/elips/documents/so-3407.pdf>