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Man To Swim Pacific Garbage Patch In Giant Plastic Bottle

MESSENGER IN BOTTLE LINES UP PACIFIC GARBAGE SWIM

abc.net.au

December 14, 2009

[Original Link](#)

A Sydney man is hoping to draw attention to the problems of global warming and plastic pollution by swimming between Japan and the US in a giant plastic bottle.

Richard Pain's swim will take him through what is known as the Great Pacific Garbage Patch, an area of rubbish the size of Queensland floating in the ocean.

"My plan is to build a giant recycled plastic water bottle out of thousands of smaller recycled plastic water bottles, and then use that as an enclosure or shark cage to then swim from Japan to America, through what is called the North Pacific Gyre or Great Pacific Garbage Patch," he said.

"It's an area, and some estimates vary, at least the size of Texas, full of plastic... down to about a depth of six metres, so it's an environmental catastrophe.

"Basically there are four currents in that area of the Pacific that circulate in a clockwise direction and they aggregate all this plastic in to this central becalmed area called the gyre."

Mr Pain says he is undertaking the journey to combat 'green fatigue' and raise the profile of a cause presently being ignored by governments around the world.

"I think it's time for everyone to do something, basically my view is if I can do something this crazy everyone else can do something," he said.

Charged With Three Counts
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"It's a call to arms... an attempt to combat green fatigue.

"And on an environmental level the nature of the problem is so immense and the fact it doesn't fall under the jurisdiction of any particular country means as a cause it's kind of like the runt of the litter, something that no particular country wants to take responsibility for.

"So that sounds like my kind of cause."

Killer slick

He says the public needs to be more aware of the environmental damage the patch is doing.

"It's a patch of ocean like any other when you look at it from the side, it still undulates, it still has a swell and waves and all the rest of it," he said.

"When you look down into it however, if you're passing over it in a boat you'll see plastic passing below you continuously, everything from a kayak down to a nurdle, which is a building block a couple of millimetres across.

"They blow off the land and ships in their billions and are aggregating in this area, the gyre in the middle of the Pacific.

"Obviously the sea birds and mammals are eating this stuff and it's killing them. Also, plastic doesn't biodegrade, it only photodegrades, so no matter how small it breaks down to they are still, at a molecular level, still plastic.

"Those plastics absorb toxins, persistent organic pollutants and PCPs, which we know are contributors to cancer and a whole range of health issues. So they are concentrated in this plastic, which is then eaten or absorbed by salps and jellyfish, and it then moves into the food chain."

Mr Pain says he is hoping to complete the swim in just over six months.

"I'm planning to be out there for the best part of six months or more," he said.

"I'm planning to swim five days a week for eight to 10 hours a day, have a couple of days off, be on the boat in the meantime.

"My goal would be 40 kilometres a day."

He plans to leave in 2011, and says has his work cut out for him to prepare for the journey.

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"I have had advice from a scientist and very experienced diver that because the temperatures involved, which can drop to 16 degrees which is quite chilly, to be in the water for that long to maintain body heat and the energy to do it, she has estimated I may need to put on 30 kilos," he said.

posted @ Wednesday, December 16, 2009 8:01 AM by David

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