

## Marshall Islands

**Status:** Land area of 1,812km<sup>2</sup> and a combined coastline measuring 370km. RMI consists of 29 atolls and 5 islands that are divided into the Ratak (Sunrise) Island Chain and Ralik (Sunset) Island Chain. The capital city, Majuro, is situated on Majuro Atoll, the country's most developed and urban atoll. There is evidence that Majuro has the highest per capita waste generation in the Pacific.

**Population:** The population was 53,158 in 2011 (GoRMI, 2011), distributed across the country's atolls and islands of the two Island Chains (table below). Approximately 14,352, or 27%, live in rural areas, with the remainder living in either Majuro or Kwajalein.

**Accessibility:** United (www.united.com) stops in Majuro and Kwajalein on its island-hopper service between Guam and Honolulu. Nauru Airlines (www.nauruairlines.com.au) also runs flights to the islands from Fiji via Nauru, with connecting flights to Australia.

### Statistics around Waste (including plastic waste data)

	Coastal population	Waste generation rate [kg/person/day]	% Plastic in waste stream	% Inadequately managed waste	Waste generation [kg/day]	Plastic waste generation [kg/day]	Inadequately managed plastic waste [kg/day]	Plastic waste littered [kg/day]	Mismanaged plastic waste [kg/person/day]	Mismanaged plastic waste in 2010 [tonnes]	Mismanaged plastic waste in 2025 [tonnes]	
Marshall Islands	58,086	1.2	16	77	69,703	11,118	8,510	222	0.150	3,187	5,717	

Source Jambek 2016

A daily plastic waste generation of approximately 11.1 t. An estimated 8.7t are mismanaged daily, entering the marine environment through release from uncontained disposal sites or by littering.<sup>1</sup> As a result, an estimated 3,187t of waste plastic became marine debris in the waters around RMI in 2010. If not addressed, the amount is expected to rise to 5,717t by 2025. Of the 11.1t of plastic generated each day, approximately 1.2t may be PET or high-density polyethylene (HDPE) plastic, eligible for recycling under a container deposit scheme (CDS).

A study of the characteristics of waste was conducted in Majuro in 2014 as part of the first phase of the *Promotion of Regional Initiative Solid Waste Management project*, J-PRISM I, supported by the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA). It found, based on household sample survey data, household waste generation to be 1.1 kg per day. Organic waste represented 42.7%, followed by 16% plastic in the overall waste stream.

Marshall Islands has struggled to effectively manage solid waste despite considerable external support from the United States through the Compact of Free Association and other development partners<sup>2</sup>. This is largely due to the islands being low-lying atolls with limited available land. The existing landfill is full but continues to be used, with stored waste often entering the marine environment<sup>3</sup>. Whilst various technologically feasible solutions have been identified, these proposals are not financially feasible for solid waste management authorities<sup>4</sup>. Majuro, the capital of the Marshall Islands, is reported to have the highest per capita waste generation in the Pacific<sup>5</sup>. Recycling for plastics will be undertaken pending the identification of international markets, a challenge other Pacific Island Countries face<sup>6</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> The outcome of mismanaged plastic can be divided into three groups: plastic that remains on the surface or subsurface of the sea as floating debris, plastic that sinks to the ocean floor, and plastic that washes up on beaches. A CDS that recovers 40% of HDPE and PET plastic bottles in RMI may achieve the following reductions in marine debris each year: n 21t in floating plastic n 99t in sunken plastic n 21t in beach plastic.

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.adb.org/sites/default/files/publication/42669/solid-waste-management-marshall-islands.pdf>

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.adb.org/sites/default/files/publication/42669/solid-waste-management-marshall-islands.pdf>

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.theprif.org/file/6732/download?token=RakVzuQZ>

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.theprif.org/file/6732/download?token=RakVzuQZ>

<sup>6</sup> <http://www.uncred.or.jp/content/documents/6277Country%20Report%20Marshall%20Islands.pdf>

The atoll waste management pilot programme, one of the four focus areas of the SPREP PacWaste project, introduced the lokwe Bag collection system on Majura Atoll. A pre-disposal fee is charged on the sale of garbage bags to contribute to the expansion of household waste collections across the atoll.

The outer islands, as well as RMI's tourism/accommodation facilities, do not recycle and do not have storage facilities. There are neither household recycling collection services nor community recycling centres, storage buildings, or balers to process recyclable materials.

**Legal Policy Framework:** RMI's Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) is responsible for the administration of *Environment Protection Act 1984* and *Solid Waste Management Regulations 1989*, which provide the legal and policy framework for waste management. Within this framework, the EPA regulates and monitors standards for the design, construction, operation, and management of solid waste storage, collection, and disposal facilities.

	Single Use Plastic Policy	Dedicated Single Use Plastic Orders, Acts and Regulations							Economic Instruments to internalise costs				Recycling	National Campaigns targeting SUP	R&D Alternatives
		Plastic bags	Polystyrene plates	Straws	Styrofoam food Containers	Cups plates cutlery	PET	Plastic Ice blocks pouches nappies	Container Deposit Scheme	Levy Plastic Bags	Duty SUP	ARDC	Single Use Diapers	Recycling Of plastics	
RMI															

In August 2016, the Government passed the *Styrofoam and Plastic Products Prohibition Act 2016*<sup>7</sup>. The act entered into force in February 2017. This act bans the importation, manufacturing, sale and distribution of Styrofoam cups and plates, disposable plastic cups and plates, and plastic shopping bags. No information on the reception or effectiveness of the ban could be identified via desktop research.

In 2018, the *Styrofoam and Plastic Products Prohibition Act* was amended to incorporate container deposit legislation<sup>8</sup>. The amendment introduced levies on the importation of aluminium cans and glass and PET bottles, with part of this deposit returned and the remainder retained as a recycling fund. The Act seeks to limit the amount of plastics entering the country, as well as in-country production, while providing a revenue basis to fund programs. The legislative approach sets a platform for the introduction of a wider 'polluter pays' funding basis and works in conjunction with local waste management and collection services. The implementation schedule and details for the container deposit scheme could not be identified via desktop research.

There is no comprehensive policy and regulatory framework for solid waste management in the Marshall Islands as the draft National Solid Waste Management Strategy has not been approved by their Cabinet .

It appears that the *National Waste Management Strategy* remains in draft form and that there is currently no established inter-sectoral coordinating mechanism. The Republic of the Marshall Islands also administers waste management issues under general environmental and public health legislation and lacks specific waste management legislation. Development of the latter might assist in coordinating efforts to address solid waste management issues identified in the Republic of the Marshall Islands.

Container deposit legislation introduced in 2016 and implementation of the container deposit scheme has been successful in diverting a significant volume of this waste away from landfill.

<sup>7</sup> <https://rmiparliament.org/cms/images/LEGISLATION/BILLS/2016/2016-0028/StyrofoamandPlasticProductsProhibitionAct2016.pdf>

<sup>8</sup> <https://rmiparliament.org/cms/images/LEGISLATION/BILLS/2018/2018-0103/StyrofoamCupsandPlatesandPlasticProductsProhibitionContainerDepositAmendmentAct2018.pdf>

### Public Awareness- communities/villagers:

The Marshall Island Conservation Society, along with Jo-Jikum, formed the “*Einwot Juon*” Coalition in 2019, seeking to reduce the amount of single-use plastics in the landfill and reefs. The coalition seeks to do this through expanding the current RMI plastic bag ban to incorporate more products and by encouraging more alternative products to be offered and utilized on island.<sup>9</sup> This coalition has received broad support and engages members, such as Majuro Atoll Local Government, RMI Environmental Protection Agency, Miss Marshall Islands, Marshall Islands Marine Resource Authority, traditional leaders, private businesses and youth..<sup>10</sup>

As part of its ongoing efforts to reduce the use of single-use plastic items, the Majuro and Ebeye advocacy Coalitions embarked on a rigorous campaign in 2021 to seek support from the communities in Majuro and Ebeye to sign a petition supporting the ‘*Einwot Juon*’ Campaign.<sup>11</sup> It appears that interest in the pre-paid lokwe Bag has been minimal to date, given the lack of community awareness. In response, MAWC intends to revise its target area and users of the bag.

**Public Awareness- tourism:** Marshall Islands recorded a total of 6,100 tourists in 2019, ranking 200th in the world in absolute terms. It generated around 20.10 million US Dollar in the tourism sector. This corresponds to 8.1 percent of its the gross domestic product.

**Research and Development into Single Use Plastic alternatives** The “*Einwot Juon*” Coalition, is working to expanding the current RMI plastic bag ban to incorporate more plastic products and by encouraging more alternative products to be offered and utilized on island (like metal straws, bamboo cutlery, and hydro-flasks)<sup>12</sup>

**Media and Communications:** A privately-owned weekly is published in English and Marshallese. A government monthly contains official news but avoids politics. State-owned and private radios offer diverse views. US forces radio and TV can be received in some areas and US TV is available via cable. BBC World Service broadcasts in Majuro on 98.5 FM. There were 6,540 internet users by December 2011 (Internetworldstats.com). Access is limited by slow connections and high costs - "the most expensive in the world", says the US State Department (2010), citing the IMF and World Bank.<sup>13</sup>

### Development Partner Initiatives

- PacWaste Plus funded a waste audit in Marshall Islands
- J-PRISM II supported the development of a *Solid Waste Management Plan* for Kwajalein Atoll, with the plan was finalised in 2019<sup>14</sup>
- J-PRISM II has been supporting Marshall Islands in implementing their container deposit legislation<sup>15</sup>
- GEF Ridge-to-Reef project piloted small-scale on-site waste management systems as well as community awareness activities<sup>16</sup>.

### Summary Overview

- Good awareness programs being conducted in Majuro involving youths and communities.
- Scope for assistance with NAP and extending the application of existing SUP laws.

<sup>9</sup> <https://www.atollconservation.org/einwot-juon>

<sup>10</sup> <https://www.facebook.com/EinwotJuon/>

<sup>11</sup> <https://www.spc.int/updates/news/joint-release/2021/09/rmi-advances-campaign-to-ban-single-use-plastic-products>

<sup>12</sup> [https://www.facebook.com/micngos/posts/1498517556993503/?paipv=0&eav=AfZOFwVSov1ucj1b1UjRPeDffegV-rtd0ZKCwFI-fnX3ST7RTBN8pOJs\\_dqmGdim2SY&\\_rdr](https://www.facebook.com/micngos/posts/1498517556993503/?paipv=0&eav=AfZOFwVSov1ucj1b1UjRPeDffegV-rtd0ZKCwFI-fnX3ST7RTBN8pOJs_dqmGdim2SY&_rdr)

<sup>13</sup> <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-15598728>

<sup>14</sup> <https://www.sprep.org/j-prism-2/report-and-materials>

<sup>15</sup> <https://www.sprep.org/attachments/Publications/Newsletters/j-prism-buzz-4.pdf>

<sup>16</sup> <https://www.pacific-r2r.org/resources/programme-documents/national-programme-documents/145-marshall-islands/file>