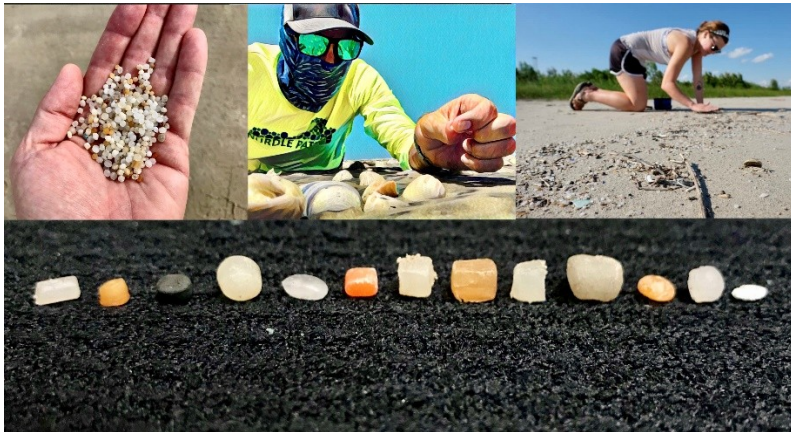


NURDLE PATROL... WHAT'S A NURDLE ANYWAY?



Nurdles are small plastic pellets that are the raw material to almost everything made of plastic, and they are getting out into the environment before they are ever made into a plastic product. They can look like food to animals, and if they eat enough of these pellets, they can clog the digestive tract of the animal and it can starve. These pellets also are known to absorb chemical compounds such as PCBs, PAHs, and DDTs, which can be harmful to the animal. Data collected through Nurdle Patrol is used to inform regulatory agencies where further investigation could be done, creates awareness of the nurdle problem, and removes the plastic pellets from the shoreline where they can be eaten by wildlife.

One year ago, Mission-Aransas Reserve wanted to monitor the movement of nurdles (plastic pellets) around the beaches of the Texas Coastal Bend after a spill of nurdles was found in late September 2018. The goal was to see how far the nurdles had spread, how long the nurdles would be around, and removing the pellets from the beach so animals could not eat them. The interest to monitor the nurdles by citizens was so great, that groups in every state, and Mexico, along the Gulf started conducting 10 minute surveys to document nurdle concentrations along shorelines. One year later there have been over 1,300 citizen scientists, 24 partnership organizations, 3,600 surveys at over 1,300 sites across the Gulf and beyond. In total, over 230,000 nurdles have been removed from the environment, and an awareness campaign that is spreading across the nation with the launching of NurdlePatrol.org.

Nurdle Patrol is a project run by the Mission-Aransas National Estuarine Research Reserve (Reserve) at the University of Texas Marine Science Institute in Port Aransas, Texas. The Reserve brings together scientists, landowners, policy-makers, and the public to ensure that coastal management decisions benefit flora and fauna, water quality, and people. The website mentioned above is an interactive mapping site that allows citizens to enter their nurdle data into a form that populates a map that they can then print up and show folks, such as elected officials and environmental regulators. The hope is that the Nurdle Patrol data will be used by state regulatory agencies to enhance regulations of plastic pellets so that there will be zero loss of nurdles to the environment.

This is a project that anyone can be a part of! After 10 minutes of searching, simply go to NurdlePatrol.org and submit your data on your phone, or at home at your computer. The information can be seen immediately on a map, can be printed, and can be used by the government to find the source of plastic pellets. It's easy, fun, and it helps make a difference!