



## biography

Marcus Eriksen, PhD.  
Research Director & Co-Founder  
5 Gyres Institute  
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Marcus Eriksen is the Research Director and co-founder of the 5 Gyres Institute. He studies the global distribution and ecological impacts of plastic marine pollution, which has included expeditions sailing through all 5 subtropical gyres, Bay of Bengal, Southern Ocean and inland lakes and rivers, recently publishing the first global estimate of all plastic of all sizes floating in the world's oceans, totaling 270,000 metric tons from 5.25 trillion particles. In 2013 he and colleagues published the discovery of microbeads in the Great Lakes, which became the cornerstone for a US-based campaign to eliminate plastic microbeads from cosmetics, resulting in the Microbead-free Waters Act, which became US federal law in 2015.

In 2000 he traveled to Midway Atoll, finding hundreds of Laysan Albatross with plastic pouring out of their stomachs, and that experience narrowed his focus to plastics. He received his Ph.D. in Science Education from University of Southern California in 2003, months before embarking on a 2000-mile, 5-month journey down the Mississippi River on a homemade raft of plastic bottles to bring attention to this issue. Again in 2008, he rafted across the Pacific Ocean from California to Hawaii on JUNK, floating on 15,000 plastic bottles and a Cessina airplane fuselage as a cabin ([junkraft.com](http://junkraft.com)). The journey, 2,600 miles in 88 days, brought attention to the work of the 5 Gyres Institute, the organization he co-founded with his wife Anna Cummins.

His first book, titled "My River Home" (Beacon Press, 2007) chronicled his Mississippi River experience paralleled with his tour as a Marine in the 1991 Gulf War. The experience of war, sailing across oceans with wonderful crewmates, and long rafting voyages, have led to a strong conservation ethic worth fighting for. "We must understand and define conservation and social justice as our collective self-preservation - a rationale that crosses all boundaries between all people."