



Yale University
School of Forestry & Environmental Studies

2011-12

Industrial Environmental Management Lecture Series:
PRODUCERS, PACKAGING AND PUBLIC POLICY
presents

The Science behind Ocean Garbage Patches

Burke Auditorium, 195 Prospect St. New Haven CT
Lecture 12:00PM-1:00PM, January 18, 2011
Free and Open to the Public, Light Lunch Provided

Kara Lavender Law, Ph.D, a Research Oceanographer at Sea Education Association (SEA), will speak at the Yale University School of Forestry & Environmental Studies on Tuesday, January 18th, at 12:00PM in the Burke Auditorium, 195 Prospect St. Her talk, entitled “*The Science behind Ocean Garbage Patches*,” is organized by the Industrial Environmental Management (IEM) Program.

The talk is the first of a special 2011/2012 IEM Speaker Series sponsored by Nestle Waters North America. In its 21st year, the IEM Lecture Series brings speakers from companies and organizations to the Yale School of Forestry & Environmental Studies to discuss the relationship between business and the environment. This year’s lecture series, *Producers, Packaging and Public Policy*, explores the topic of extended producer responsibility (EPR) and packaging. Nestle Waters, an industry leader in exploring EPR issues, is the primary sponsor of this special lecture series. The goal of the lecture series is to explore the advantages and disadvantages of the application of EPR to packaging waste and municipal solid waste more generally in the U.S.

EPR is a policy strategy that makes producers responsible for their products when they become waste. Dr. Law’s talk on plastic marine debris is one of several in this year’s series that will set the context for debates over public policy towards plastic packaging. Plastic debris in marine environments—often called “garbage patches”—is a growing concern that is raising questions about materials choice and waste management for packaging and other products.

Dr. Law is a leading researcher on the topic of plastic marine debris. A research oceanographer with SEA, she received her doctorate from the Scripps Institution of Oceanography in 2001. SEA is an educational institution dedicated to exploration, understanding and stewardship of the oceans that specializes in taking college students to the deep ocean on a traditional sailing vessel to learn about the sea. As part of its SEA Semester program, SEA has been collecting data on plastic marine debris for more than a quarter of a century, generating a unique and powerful data set.

Dr. Law has been using SEA's 25-year data set to study plastic marine debris, including how ocean physics determines the distribution of plastic and other marine debris, and the ultimate fate of plastic in the harsh ocean environment. That work culminated this fall in the publication of a widely read article in the journal *Science*.

This year's IEM Lecture Series, *Producers, Packaging and Public Policy*, is supported with major funding by Nestle Waters North America, the market leader in bottled water in North America and a division of Nestlé S.A., the global food and beverage company. Nestle Waters is seeking to significantly improve the recycling of beverage containers and all recyclable packaging materials. As part of that effort, they are supporting discussion and debate over the feasibility and effectiveness of EPR in the U.S.

The *Producers, Packaging and Public Policy* Lecture Series will feature a series of live presentations and webinars. A schedule of events for the lecture series can be found at <http://cie.research.yale.edu/lecture-series/2011-epr-lecture-series.html>. The next scheduled event is a talk on February 10 by Anne Johnson, executive director of the Sustainable Packaging Coalition, on biodegradability and packaging.

Keep America Beautiful (KAB), a U.S. nonprofit organization promoting litter and waste reduction, and Resource Recovery Forum, a UK-based international non-profit network organization interested in sustainable waste management, are assisting in publicizing the lecture series on EPR.

Ongoing funding for the IEM Lecture Series is provided by the Joel Omura Kurihara Fund. For more information about the lecture series, please contact Melanie Quigley, program coordinator, at 203.432.6953 or melanie.quigley@yale.edu.

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