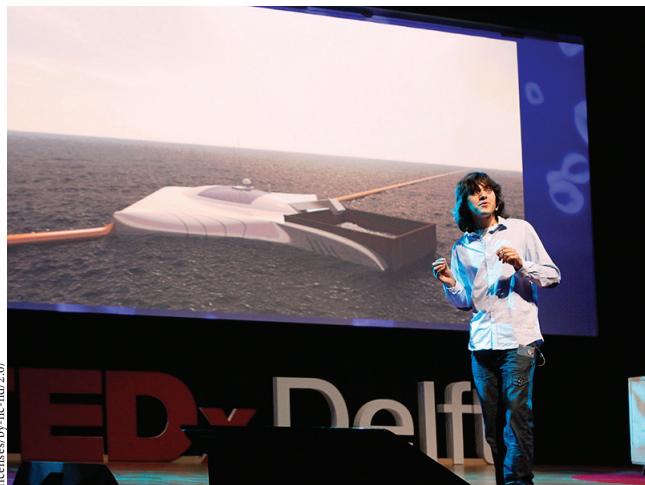


Taking Out the Trash— By the Ton

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Brightly colored fish swim through the ocean. That's what 17-year-old Dutch student Boyán Slat expected to see when he went diving in Greece.

Instead, he saw plastic bags. Someone has to clean this up, he thought. Then he decided that would be his job.

Because more than half of Earth's surface is ocean, cleaning it is a huge job. In fact, one patch of garbage in the Pacific Ocean has about 3.5 million tons of trash. Just stopping people from throwing trash into the ocean will help in the future, but it won't remove the trash that's already in the water now.

First, Boyán studied the ocean's trash problem. He learned that trash kills thousands or even millions of ocean animals each year and puts harmful chemicals into the water. Boyán also learned that the winds and tides keep the ocean constantly moving. That means that the trash in the ocean is constantly moving, too.

In 2012, Boyán came up with a plan. He'd let the

ocean do the work. He designed a huge floating barrier that would be attached to the sea floor. It would stay in place while the ocean's movement brought the trash to it. Animals could swim under or around the barrier, but trash would be trapped.

Once the trash is gathered, people can easily pick it up. Boyán even thinks that the plastic he takes out of the ocean could be recycled and sold. That means that cleaning the ocean may even make money. Or at the very least, recycling the plastics may make enough money to build the huge floating barriers.

Boyán is still experimenting to see if his idea works. Like all inventors, he will test his design many times and make changes that improve it. That's what inventors do: they test ideas until they build something that works.

Someday, we may once again have clean oceans.

And that may be because 17-year-old Boyán Slat saw a problem and decided it was his job to solve it.



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