

A Brand New Type of Rock Has Formed From Our Plastic Waste

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Image: Patricia Corcoran

Scientists have announced the existence of a new, trash-based rock type: plastiglomerate.

The new type of material will stay in the Earth's rock record forever, according to a new study, and will one day act as a geological marker for humanity's impact on the planet.

The research from the University of Western Ontario in Canada has revealed plastiglomerates form when melted plastic rubbish on beaches mixes with sediment, lava fragments and organic debris to produce a whole new type of rock.

So far the material has only been found at Hawaii's Kamilo beach, which is considered one of the dirtiest in the world, but the unique geological material likely exists in many other locations, as Joseph Castro reports for [LiveScience](http://www.livescience.com).

Research on the plastiglomerates from Kamilo Beach have found there are two types: In situ and clastic. The results are published in [GSA Today](http://www.gsa.gov).

The in situ variety is rarer, and forms when "plastic melts on rock and becomes incorporated into the rock outcrop," lead author Patricia Corcoran [told LiveScience](http://www.livescience.com). Clastic plastiglomerates

(pictured above) instead form as loose rocky structures, when a combination of shells, coral, basalt, woody debris and sand are glued together by melted plastic.

Plastiglomerate was first discovered by oceanographer Captain Charles Moore, who thought that molten lava had melted the plastic to create the new rock material. But, as [LiveScience reports](#), the researchers revealed that the lava hadn't flowed since before plastics were first invented, suggesting our waste was definitely to blame.

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