

## Press release

SDN Press Office  
pressestelle@sdn-web.de  
www.sdn-web.de

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# Playing with sea foam on the beach can endanger your health

**Schutzgemeinschaft Deutsche Nordseeküste e.V. (SDN) calls for an end to the ongoing chemical pollution caused by 'eternal chemicals' PFAS**

**German North Sea.** 'Increasing littering and oiling of the beaches and the dumping of industrial waste into the North Sea forced coastal communities and districts to actively defend themselves against this over 50 years ago by founding the protection organisation,' recalls SDN Chairman, Mayor Gerd-Christian Wagner. 'Back then, the North Sea was misused as a large rubbish bin. Which even individual scientists and politicians in Bonn thought was harmless.' In reality, however, this was not only a major ecological problem, but also an extreme threat to one of the lifebloods of the German coast, the tourism industry.

'Today, the problem is no longer dumped dilute acid or large quantities of oil, but much more waste in the form of plastics,' explains the second SDN chairman, captain and sea pilot Ulrich Birstein. For example, the sea foam on the beaches of the German North Sea and Baltic coasts is heavily contaminated with extremely harmful 'eternal chemicals'. This is one of the most serious cases of chemical pollution of our environment. And, due to the properties of these PFAS microparticles, for many centuries to come. 'Of this group of substances, which comprises more than 10,000 different variants and does not occur naturally, only a fraction has been investigated for its environmental and health risks.' Analyses of sea foam on beaches in Belgium, the Netherlands and Denmark have been revealing alarmingly high PFAS concentrations for years. 'However, Germany, as one of the world's largest producers of these substances, has so far held back with such clarifications!'

'Once PFAS are released into the environment, they are permanently distributed everywhere via water, air and sediment. Even into the bodies of living organisms,' Birstein continues. One very obvious example of this is the mussels that have colonised offshore wind farms. 'The many years of operation under harsh weather conditions of the rotor blades, which are made of plastic in addition to protective layers, leads to both surface erosion and material decay, which is distributed as abrasion in the marine environment. And that over many hundreds of tonnes per year.'

In order to prevent the increasing damage from becoming even greater, the SDN is calling on the current and future German government to

- to ban the use of PFAS in consumer goods,
- However, due to the risk that the industry could switch to other PFAS, not only to name individual substances,
- prescribing the use of PFAS-free alternative substances for all possible applications.

## Press release

With friendly request for publication,

SDN Schutzgemeinschaft Deutsche Nordseeküste e.V.

- Press office -

Peter Andryszak

pressestelle@sdn-web.de

0172-4363439

www.sdn-web.de

### **Additional information 1:**

#### **The group of per- and polyfluorinated alkyl substances PFAS**

PFAS comprises over ten thousand chemicals. Many of them are harmful to health and the environment. Due to their high heat resistance, oil and water repellency and chemical resistance, they do not degrade and also accumulate in the food chain.

PFAS is an abbreviation for per- and polyfluorinated alkyl substances - also known as PFCs (per- and polyfluorinated chemicals), PFTs (perfluorinated surfactants) or 'forever chemicals'. Long-chain PFAS have (very) persistent, (very) bioaccumulative and toxic properties, while short-chain PFAS are extremely persistent and mobile.

PFAS-free alternatives are available for almost all applications in consumer goods.

### **Additional information 2:**

#### **The Schutzgemeinschaft Deutsche Nordseeküste e.V. (SDN)**

is a supra-regional and non-profit environmental protection umbrella organisation that was founded in 1973 in response to extensive pollution of the North Sea. Since then, the conservation organisation has been committed to the protection of the North Sea as a living, economic and natural environment on a professional and cross-party basis. It serves around 200 municipalities, districts, nature conservation organisations, institutes, associations and individual members as a mouthpiece for the public as well as the ministerial administrations and parliaments of the federal government and the four North Sea coastal states. The common goal is to protect the unique features and beauty of the North Sea, the Wadden Sea and the neighbouring coastline from harmful human intervention and to find solutions to the problems of North Sea protection.

Some of the measures in recent decades in which the SDN has represented the interests of the coast as a lobby organisation and which are now considered to have been largely dealt with are the dumping of dilute acid, waste and sewage sludge, the emergency towing concept, antifouling, air monitoring, ballast water, tank cleaning, MARPOL I to IV and the acquisition of modern emergency tugs for the North Sea and Baltic Sea, as well as the Lower Elbe at present. [www.sdn-web.de](http://www.sdn-web.de)