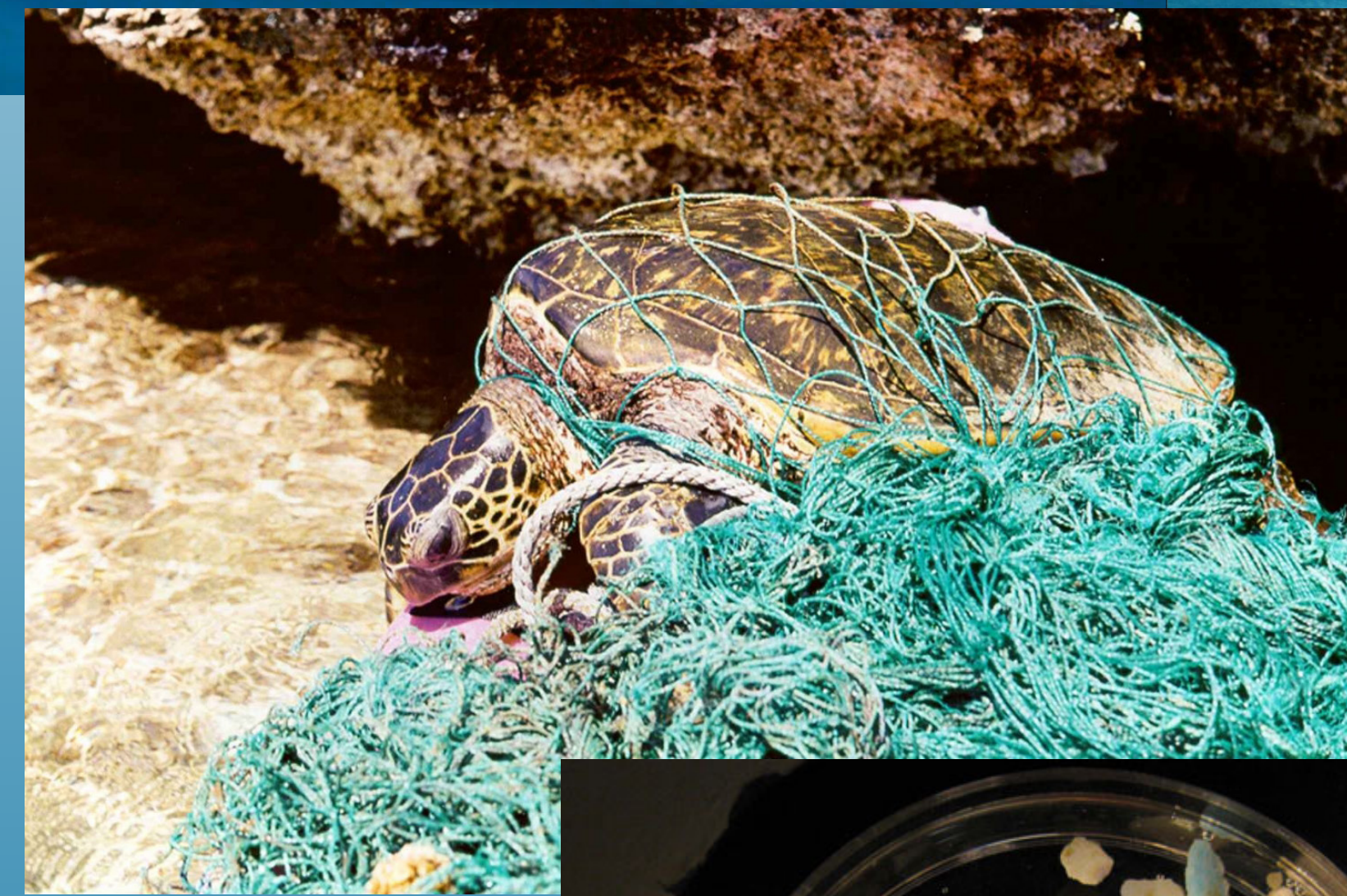
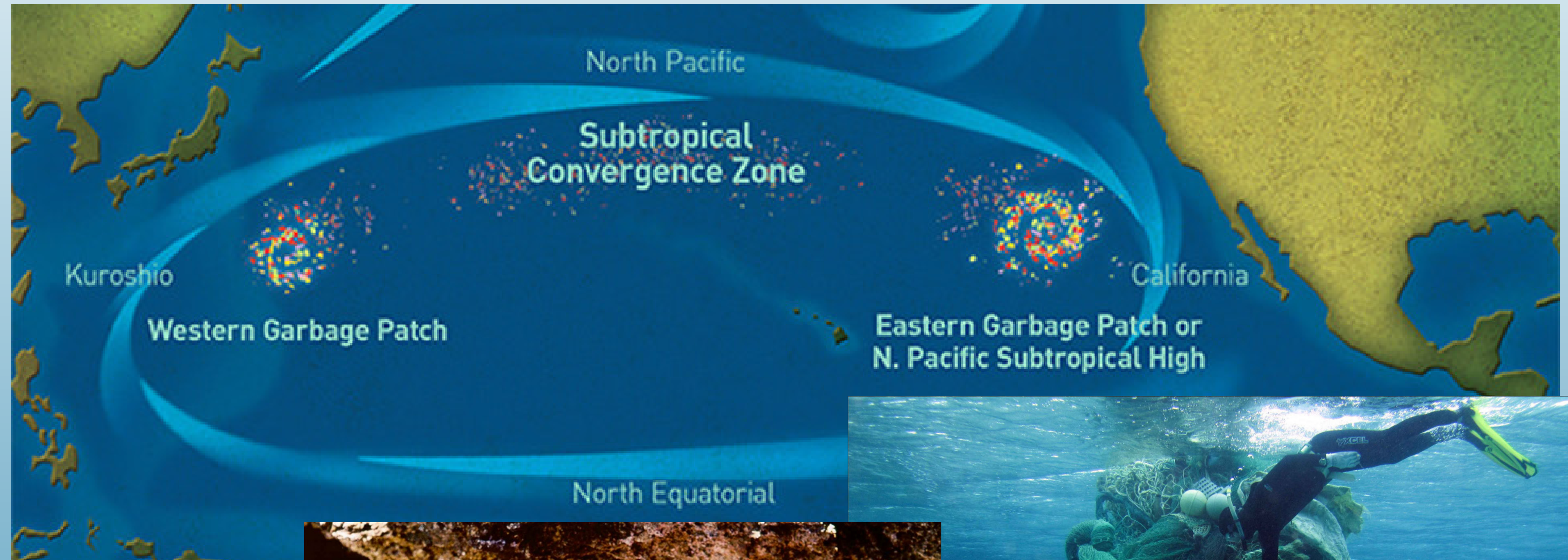


# The Great Pacific Garbage Patch

Once plastic debris gets to the ocean, through dumping from boats, rivers and shorelines, currents take it and sweep it into “accumulation zones” or **gyres**. The most publicized garbage patch is the **Great Pacific Garbage Patch**, but there are other patches located around the world.

Gyres are dynamic and always moving so the size of these concentrated areas is constantly changing.

They are made primarily of microplastics. Because of the different densities and moving currents, garbage patches are not “islands of trash” but concentrated areas of trash accumulation. Some of the pollution is so small it isn’t visible to the naked eye.



Two lanternfish were collected along with several bits of plastic during the Scripps Institution of Oceanography SEAPLEX voyage. Image courtesy of J. Leichter, Scripps Institution of Oceanography, via NOAA.gov.

**Microplastics** are plastic pieces less than five millimeters in size. Many of these are the result of larger pieces breaking down while others are manufactured that size, like the microbeads you find in exfoliating face scrub.

Science is now showing that these microplastics are now being found in alarming amounts all over the food web, including inside humans.

