Why Is the What'SUP Mission Important?

- By the time plastic disposable products are in your hands, they've already taken a toll on the planet: Plastics are mostly made from fossil fuels, in an energy-intensive process that emits greenhouse gases and often creates hazardous chemicals. (Consumer Reports, 2021)
- It is estimated that 87% of plastic bags, sacks, and wraps are never recycled, often ending up in landfills and the ocean.
- A 2018 study referenced in Consumer Reports (2021) notes that only a fraction of plastic is actually recycled. According to the most recent data estimates available from the Environmental Protection Agency, just 8.7 percent of the plastic that was discarded in the U.S. in 2018 was recycled.
- In 2016, the U.S. generated more plastic trash than any other country - 46.3 million metric tons of it, according to a 2020 study published in Science Advances. That's 287 pounds per person in a single year. In 2019 the U.S. reportedly produced 73 million metric tons of plastic waste - this is 5x more than the global average for plastic waste generation per person around the world. (Statista.com, a global data and business intelligence platform)
- At current rates of production and consumption of plastic products. U.S. plastic waste generation is projected to surpass 140 million metric tons by 2060 (Statista.com), and the U.S. recycling system is already struggling.
- Because the U.S. does not have the capacity to recycle all its plastic domestically, large volumes of plastic waste are shipped overseas annually: Canada, Mexico, and India being the major recipients. In 2018, China restricted foreign waste imports, leading many other Asian countries to follow suit (Statista.com), placing further strain on the already inadequate U.S. plastic "recycling system."
- About 34% of dead leatherback sea turtles have ingested plastic, often mistaking plastic bags for jellyfish.
- By 2050, it is estimated that there will be more plastic than fish in the sea. (*Ellen MacArthur Foundation, The New Plastics Economy: Catalysing Action (2017*)