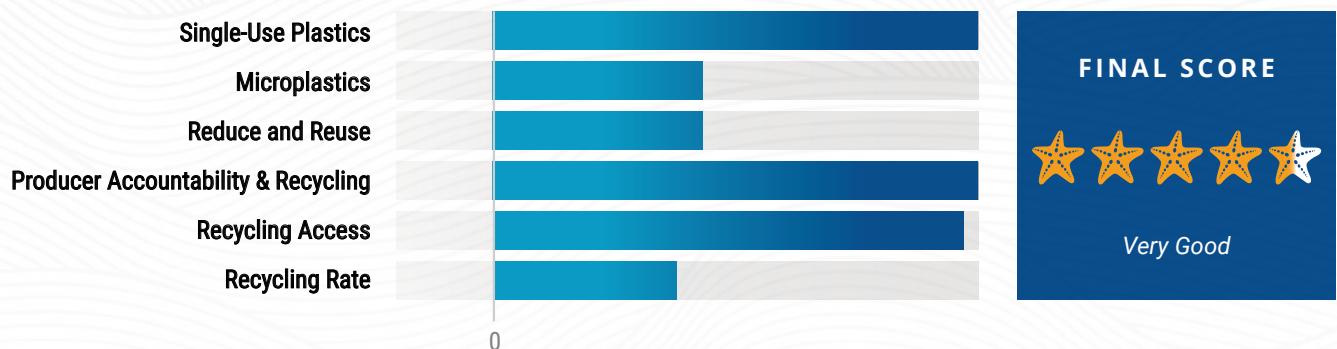


United States OF PLASTICS

California

PACIFIC AND COLORADO RIVER BASINS

California has a long history of leading the U.S. in environmental practices, often resulting in significant changes well outside its borders as one of the world's largest economies. California has over 3,000 miles of shoreline¹ on the Pacific with unique ecosystems supporting many endemic species. Communities within the state rely heavily on its coastal waters to support tourism, fishing and maritime trade. Although California has been a pioneer in many aspects of environmental policy, including tackling plastic pollution, opportunities remain for continued action, especially around microplastics and reuse.



¹ ["Shoreline Mileage of the United States."](#) NOAA Office for Coastal Management. Accessed May 2025.



Single-Use Plastics

California has phased out expanded polystyrene foodware, plastic bags and single-use personal care products in hotels.¹ It also requires that single-use foodware accessories, including straws and utensils, be provided to customers only by request.² California prohibits smoking or improper disposal of cigar or cigarette waste on a state beach or within the state park system, reducing the likelihood of cigarette butts entering coastal waters.³



Microplastics

California is the only state in the U.S. with a law directly addressing pollution from pre-production plastic pellets.⁴ It has also enacted laws supporting research on microplastics to inform future actions, including a first-in-the-nation statewide microplastics strategy.⁵



Reduce and Reuse

California's packaging extended producer responsibility (EPR) law sets a 25% source reduction requirement for single-use plastic packaging and foodware by 2032, with a minimum of 4% of that reduction coming from refill and reuse.⁶ California enacted a law through its appropriations to support the development of glass reusable containers within the state's existing deposit return system.⁷



Producer Accountability and Recycling

California's packaging EPR law holds producers accountable for the products they create and prohibits harmful chemical recycling from counting as recycling.⁸ California also has a deposit return system in place for beverage containers.⁹

RECOMMENDATIONS

- The two greatest opportunities for improvement for California are in taking actions to further promote reuse and to address microplastic pollution. The state should:
 - Look to the California Ocean Protection Council's Statewide Microplastics Strategy¹⁰ for suggested policy actions to address microplastic pollution.
 - Continue to promote reuse and refill through implementation of SB 54 and identify additional opportunities to support reuse, such as dedicated funding, state procurement targets or requirements for dine-in facilities.
- While the state has passed the U.S.'s most ambitious EPR and source reduction policy for single-use plastics to date through SB 54, it now needs to implement the law successfully to realize its full environmental and economic benefits.

Top 10 Items Collected by ICC Volunteers

- 1 Cigarette Butts
- 2 Food Wrappers (Candy, chips, etc.)
- 3 Bottle Caps (Plastic)
- 4 Straws, Stirrers
- 5 Beverage Bottles (Glass)
- 6 Grocery Bags (Plastic)
- 7 Beverage Bottles (Plastic)
- 8 Other Plastic Bags
- 9 Beverage Cans
- 10 Paper Bags

¹ SB 54, 2021–2022 Reg. Sess. (Cal. 2022) (expanded polystyrene); SB 1053, 2023–2024 Reg. Sess. (Cal. 2024) (bags); AB 1162, 2019–2022 Reg. Sess. (Cal. 2019) (personal care products).

² AB 1276, 2021–2022 Reg. Sess. (Cal. 2021).

³ SB 8, 2019–2020 Reg. Sess. (Cal. 2019).

⁴ AB 258, 2007–2008 Reg. Sess. (Cal. 2007).

⁵ SB 1263, 2017–2018 Reg. Sess. (Cal. 2018); SB 1422, 2017–2018 Reg. Sess. (Cal. 2018); SB 1147, 2023–2024 Reg. Sess. (Cal. 2024).

⁶ SB 54 (Cal. 2022).

⁷ AB 179, 2021–2022 Reg. Sess. (Cal. 2022).

⁸ SB 54 (Cal. 2022). Ocean Conservancy considers chemical recycling technologies harmful if they do not recover plastic and create environmental and societal harm. Learn more about our position on chemical recycling.

⁹ Cal. Pub. Res. Code §§ 14500 et seq.

¹⁰ "Statewide Microplastics Strategy." (2022). California Ocean Protection Council.