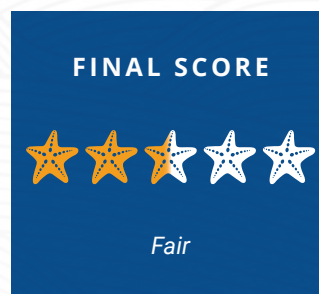
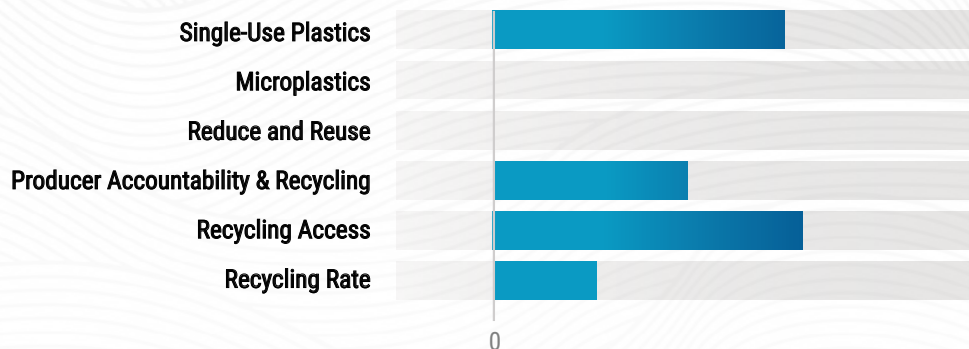


United States OF PLASTICS

Hawai'i

PACIFIC AND COLORADO RIVER BASINS

Hawai'i's connection to the ocean is foundational. Because the island is an isolated archipelago in the Pacific, the ocean has shaped its culture, economy and environment. Hawai'i is dependent on the health of its coral reefs, coastal waters and marine species for food security, cultural identity and a thriving economy. Currents in the Pacific, including those that form the North Pacific Subtropical Gyre, frequently deposit large amounts of marine debris on Hawai'i's shores. While Hawai'i has adopted some policies to address plastic pollution, including at the local level, there are more opportunities for statewide action to reduce plastic pollution and protect Hawai'i's critical ecosystems.





Single-Use Plastics

Each county in Hawai'i has banned single-use plastic carryout bags and expanded polystyrene foodware, creating de facto bans statewide. Hawai'i prohibits smoking in all state parks, including its beaches, which could reduce the number of cigarette butts that enter the environment. However, the law allows designated smoking areas within state parks which could reduce the ban's impact.¹



Microplastics

The state has not passed any laws to address microplastic pollution.



Reduce and Reuse

The state has not enacted policies relating to single-use plastic source reduction or reuse.



Producer Accountability and Recycling

Hawai'i has a deposit return system (or bottle bill) for beverage containers that establishes a 5-cent deposit.² Although the state does not have an extended producer responsibility (EPR) program for packaging, it passed a law requiring the development of a statewide needs assessment and the establishment of an advisory council, which will provide important information towards the development of an EPR program.³

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Since tourism is a major part of Hawai'i's economy, the state has an opportunity to champion sustainable tourism by phasing out single-use plastics for personal care products in hotels. Reducing the use of unnecessary single-use plastics by tourists could lead to a significant reduction in waste and pollution.
- Given the remote nature of Hawai'i as an island state, policies that support local reuse and refill systems, such as requiring reusable foodware for dine-in customers, could help reduce reliance on single-use plastics and the need to transport waste over long distances.

Top 10 Items Collected by ICC Volunteers

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

Collective Local Action

Hawai'i's unique geography as an isolated island chain has enabled county-level initiatives to address plastic pollution that have resulted in de facto statewide policies. The state's four most populated counties—Maui, Hawai'i, Kaua'i, and Honolulu—separately enacted phase-outs of single-use plastic bags between 2008 and 2015.⁴ Each of these counties has also phased-out expanded polystyrene (plastic foam) foodware.⁵ Hawai'i's fifth county has fewer than 100 residents,⁶ which means the collective local action from the four most populated counties has resulted in a comprehensive, statewide elimination of these highly polluting single-use plastics and has replaced the need for further state-level action to address these items.

¹ HB 525, 28th. Leg. (Haw. 2015).

² Haw. Rev. Stat. §§ 342G-101 et seq.

³ HB 750, 33rd Leg. (Haw. 2025).

⁴ "Comparing County Food Ware Bans in Hawai'i." Hawai'i State Department of Health.

⁵ *Id.*

⁶ "Quick Facts: Kalawao County, Hawai'i." U.S. Census Bureau. Accessed May 2025.