

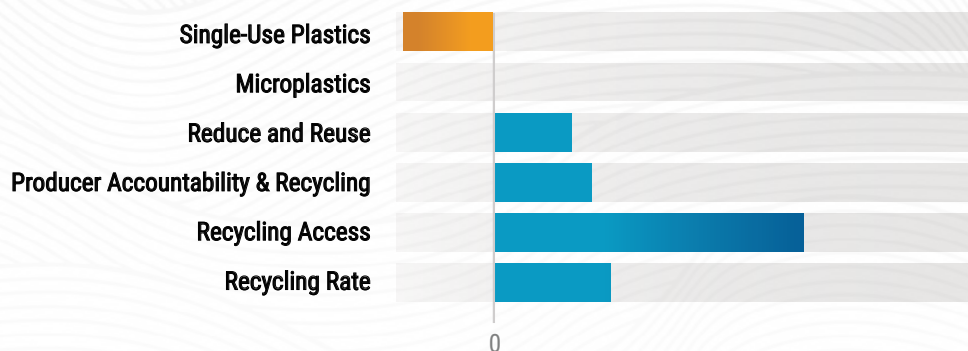
United States OF PLASTICS



Iowa

MISSOURI-MISSISSIPPI DRAINAGE

Iowa, while landlocked, is connected to the ocean through its extensive river systems that flow into the Mississippi River which ultimately drains into the Gulf. These waterways support diverse aquatic ecosystems, providing habitats for numerous species and serving as crucial corridors for migratory birds that traverse hemispheric routes. Iowa's agriculture relies heavily on these waterways for irrigation and for raising livestock. While the state depends on the health of these waterways, Iowa has yet to pass legislation to address plastic pollution and has enacted laws that could hinder further progress.



FINAL SCORE



Fair



Single-Use Plastics

Iowa has a law limiting local governments' ability to regulate single-use plastics and has not passed any laws restricting the single-use plastics covered in our study.¹



Reduce and Reuse

The state enacted a waste reduction and recycling fund to support projects that focus on reuse and reduction in addition to recycling.²



Microplastics

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



Producer Accountability and Recycling

Although the state has a deposit return system for certain beverage containers,³ it has not enacted an extended producer responsibility program for packaging. Iowa also has adopted policies that support harmful chemical recycling.⁴

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Iowa has policies in place that are impeding progress towards addressing plastic pollution. The state should:
 - Remove restrictions on local governments and allow them to regulate single-use plastics in their communities.
 - Reverse policies that enable harmful chemical recycling technologies and undermine reduction and effective recycling practices.
- The state would benefit from increased participation in Ocean Conservancy's International Coastal Cleanup® (ICC). Organizing cleanup efforts removes harmful plastic pollution from the environment, helps raise citizen awareness and gathers important data to better target policy solutions. A great way to get involved and contribute valuable data is to download Ocean Conservancy's Clean Swell® app or join an ICC event.
- As microplastics have been shown to affect soil health and crop productivity,⁵ the state should consider policies to address microplastic pollution such as requiring filters for new washing machines to reduce microfiber pollution.

Top 10 Items Collected by ICC Volunteers

- Forks, Knives, Spoons
 - Beverage Cans
 - Cigarette Butts
 - Beverage Bottles (Plastic)
 - Beverage Bottles (Glass)
 - Food Wrappers (Candy, chips, etc.)
 - Other Plastic/Foam Packaging
 - Bottle Caps (Plastic)
 - Grocery Bags (Plastic)
 - Toys
- *2016 onward

¹ HF 295, 87th Gen. Assemb. (Iowa 2017).

² Iowa Code § 455D.15 (2024); "Solid Waste Alternative Program (SWAP)." Iowa Department of Natural Resources. Accessed May 2025.

³ "Bottle Deposit Law." Iowa Department of Natural Resources. Accessed May 2025.

⁴ SF 534, 88th Gen. Assemb. (Iowa 2019). 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.

⁵ Hoang, V.-H., et al. (2024). *Science of the Total Environment*.