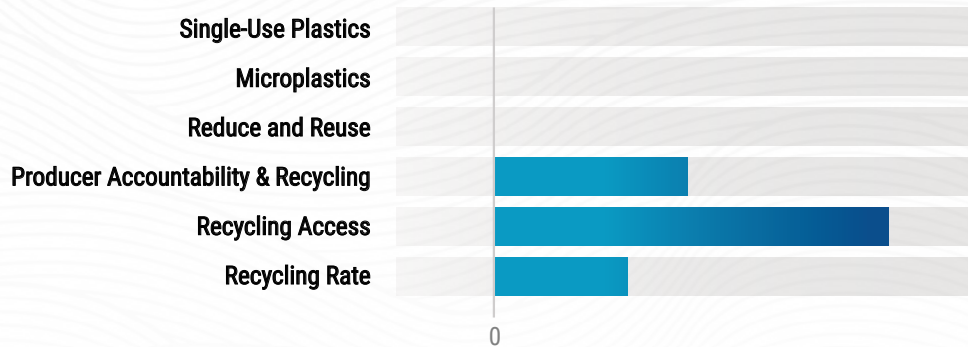


United States OF PLASTICS

Massachusetts

NEW ENGLAND

Massachusetts has a deep and enduring connection to the ocean, with its economy and environment closely tied to its Atlantic shoreline. The state is home to historic fishing ports like Gloucester and New Bedford, one of the most valuable fishing ports in the U.S., and supports robust maritime industries, including shipping, tourism and marine research. Massachusetts is also home to Cape Cod Bay, which supports a myriad of different marine ecosystems and species, including the critically endangered North Atlantic right whale, which use the bay as a feeding ground. The Connecticut River, the longest river in New England, flows through the heart of the state and plays a crucial role in sustaining ecosystems, supplying drinking water and providing opportunities for outdoor recreation and tourism. While Massachusetts has a strong history of environmental leadership, the state has enacted few policies to address plastic pollution, which poses a serious threat to its communities and ecosystems.



FINAL SCORE



Fair



Single-Use Plastics

Massachusetts has not passed any laws restricting the single-use plastics reviewed in our study.



Microplastics

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



Reduce and Reuse

While the state has several funding opportunities to support reuse as part of their 2030 Solid Waste Master Plan, because none of them are enacted in statute, they were not counted in our study.¹



Producer Accountability and Recycling

Massachusetts has a bottle bill for beverage containers that establishes a 5-cent deposit.²

RECOMMENDATIONS

- There are many opportunities to take action in the state. Policies that reduce our reliance on single-use plastics can have a near-term impact on preventing plastic pollution and raise awareness of the issue for future action.
- While Massachusetts has a high recycling access rate, it has a relatively low recycling rate. Policies like extended producer responsibility would complement the state's existing deposit return system and increase the amount of material that is recycled and kept out of the environment without increasing costs for local governments.

Top 10 Items Collected by ICC Volunteers

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

Executive Leadership

In September 2023, Massachusetts Governor Healey signed Executive Order No. 619, making the state the first in the U.S. to ban the purchase of single-use plastic bottles by executive branch agencies.³ This order, which went into effect immediately, prohibits state agencies from purchasing single-use plastic bottles (21 ounces or less), except in emergencies or when alternatives are unavailable. The state is estimated to purchase 100,000 plastic bottles each year, which highlights the power of government procurement policies to lead by example to significantly reduce plastic pollution.

¹ "Reduce, Reuse, Repair Micro-Grant." Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection. Accessed May 2025; "Recycling & Reuse Business Development Grant." Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection. Accessed May 2025.

² Mass. Gen. Laws, ch. 94, §§ 321 et seq.

³ Mass. Exec. Order No. 619: Eliminating the Purchase by the Executive Department of Single Use Plastic Bottles (2023).