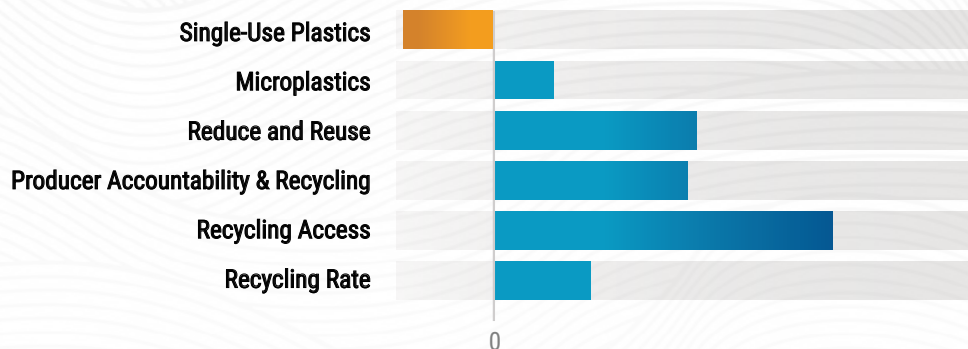


United States OF PLASTICS

Minnesota

GREAT LAKES BASIN

Minnesota, known as the “Land of 10,000 Lakes,” has a deep-rooted connection to water that defines its geography, culture and economy. It is home to the headwaters of the Mississippi River and shares a shoreline with Lake Superior, the largest and deepest of the Great Lakes. These waters ultimately flow into the Gulf, connecting Minnesota directly to downstream marine ecosystems. Communities in Minnesota rely on Lake Superior for drinking water, commercial shipping, tourism and outdoor recreation. The lake also plays a crucial role in the state’s economy by supporting port infrastructure and iconic wildlife including trout, sturgeon, bald eagles and loons. While Minnesota has passed several laws to address plastic pollution, many opportunities remain for continued action.



FINAL SCORE



Fair



Single-Use Plastics

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



Reduce and Reuse

The state's extended producer responsibility (EPR) law requires the state agency to develop targets for reduction and reuse.³ The state has also enacted a law to support funding for waste reduction and reuse projects.⁴



Microplastics

Minnesota has enacted laws to support research on microplastics to inform future actions.²



Producer Accountability and Recycling

In 2024, Minnesota became the fifth state to enact EPR for packaging.⁵

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Minnesota should remove restrictions on local governments and allow them to regulate single-use plastic bags in their communities.
- Minnesota's recently passed EPR law has the potential to reduce single-use plastics, improve reuse systems and increase recycling. The state should work to ensure robust and timely implementation of the law to realize its full environmental and economic benefits.
- Given the amount of beverage container-related pollution in the top ten most commonly collected items in the state, Minnesota should consider complementing their existing EPR law for packaging with a deposit return system (or bottle bill), which is known to immediately and significantly decrease beverage container pollution as well as overall litter.
- Given the high concentration of microplastics found in the Great Lakes, Minnesota should consider policies to address microplastic pollution, such as requiring filters for new washing machines to reduce microfiber pollution, addressing pollution from pre-production plastic pellets and implementing recommendations from the International Joint Commission.⁶

Top 10 Items Collected by ICC Volunteers

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

The Case for Mission-Based Recycling

The Twin Cities in Minnesota is home to Eureka Recycling, a nonprofit that exemplifies the transformative role of mission-based recyclers in addressing plastic pollution and fostering community education. Since its inception in 2001, Eureka has been committed to the principle that "waste is preventable, not inevitable," focusing on zero-waste solutions through education, advocacy and operational excellence. As a founding member of the Alliance of Mission-Based Recyclers (AMBR), Eureka and its partners have played a critical role in shaping policies that push for systemic change that prioritize waste reduction over waste management.

¹ Minn. Stat. § 471.9998.

² For example, HF 2310, 93rd Leg. Reg. Sess. (Minn. 2023).

³ HF 3911, 93rd Leg. Reg. Sess. (2024).

⁴ Minn. Stat. § 115A.565.

⁵ HF 3911 (2024).

⁶ Kidd, K., et al. "Final Report of the IJC Great Lakes Science Advisory Board Work Group on Microplastics." Nov. 2024.