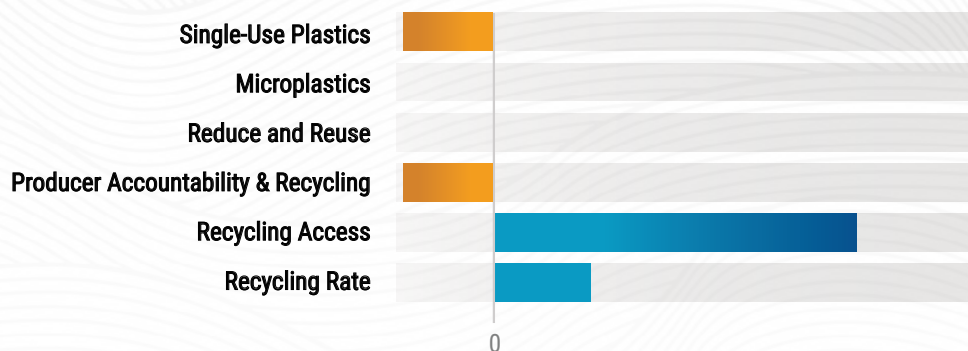


# United States OF PLASTICS

## Ohio

GREAT LAKES BASIN

Ohio is deeply connected to water through its position along the southern shore of Lake Erie, one of the five Great Lakes that together hold over 20% of the world's surface freshwater and eventually drain into the Atlantic Ocean via the St. Lawrence River.<sup>1</sup> The Ohio River runs along the state's southern border and connects Ohio to its neighboring states. Lake Erie plays a central role in Ohio's economy, environment and public health, supporting commercial and recreational fishing, shipping, agriculture and tourism. The lake also provides drinking water to millions of Ohioans. However, Lake Erie has faced significant pollution challenges, including harmful algal blooms and increasing levels of plastic and microplastic pollution, which threaten aquatic ecosystems and water quality. While Ohio sits between two major water sources and relies on their continued health, the state has yet to pass legislation to address plastic pollution and has enacted laws that could hinder further progress.



FINAL SCORE



*Needs Improvement*

<sup>1</sup> ["Great Lakes Facts and Figures."](#) U.S. EPA. Accessed May 2025.





### Single-Use Plastics

Ohio limits local governments' ability to regulate single-use plastics and has not passed any laws restricting the single-use plastics covered in our study.<sup>2</sup>



### Microplastics

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



### Reduce and Reuse

The state has not enacted any laws relating to plastic reduction or reuse.



### Producer Accountability and Recycling

The state does not have extended producer responsibility (EPR) or deposit return programs for packaging or beverage containers. Ohio has also adopted policies that support harmful chemical recycling.<sup>3</sup>

## RECOMMENDATIONS

- Ohio 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.
- Despite having a high recycling access rate, Ohio has a low recycling rate. Policies like comprehensive EPR with a deposit return system could increase the amount of material that is recycled and kept out of the environment without increasing costs for local governments.
- Given the high concentration of microplastics found in the Great Lakes, the state 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.<sup>4</sup>

## Top 10 Items Collected by ICC Volunteers

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

<sup>2</sup> HB 110, 134th Gen. Assemb. (Ohio 2021).

<sup>3</sup> Ohio Rev. Code § 3734.01. Ocean Conservancy considers chemical recycling technologies to be harmful when they do not recover plastic and create environmental and social harm. Learn more about our position on chemical recycling.

<sup>4</sup> Kidd, K., et al. "Final Report of the IJC Great Lakes Science Advisory Board Work Group on Microplastics." Nov. 2024.