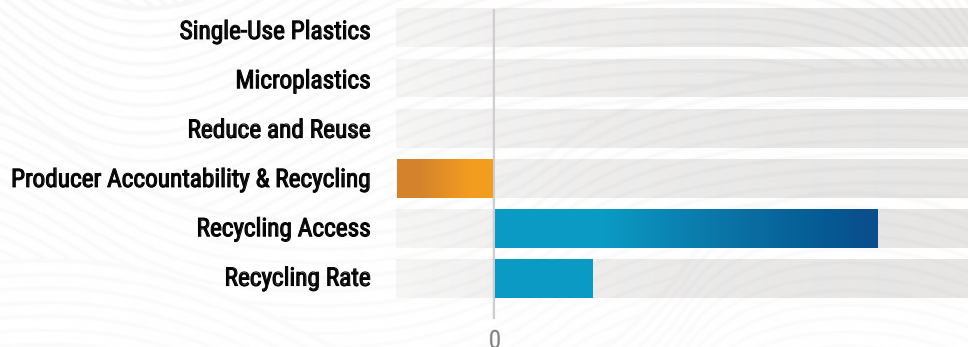


United States OF PLASTICS

Pennsylvania

GREAT LAKES BASIN

Pennsylvania's communities rely on the state's connection to Lake Erie, the smallest yet most biologically productive of the Great Lakes. The fishing and recreational opportunities within the lake contribute tens of millions of dollars towards Pennsylvania's regional economy. Lake Erie also provides fresh water to roughly 11 million people, including thousands within the state, making it critical to protect to support clean drinking water.¹ The state is also indirectly connected to the Atlantic Ocean through its extensive river network including the Delaware and Ohio River Basins. Similarly, the Susquehanna River is the major water source flowing into the ecologically and economically important Chesapeake Bay. While Pennsylvania is home to diverse and unique natural spaces like the Appalachian and Pocono Mountains, the state has yet to pass legislation to address plastic pollution and has enacted a law that could hinder further progress.



¹ ["Lake Erie."](#) U.S. EPA. Accessed May 2025.



Single-Use Plastics

Pennsylvania 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

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. Pennsylvania has also adopted policies that support harmful chemical recycling.²

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Pennsylvania has policies in place that are impeding progress towards addressing plastic pollution. The state should reverse policies that enable harmful chemical recycling technologies and undermine reduction and effective recycling practices.
- 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 raising awareness of the issue for future action.
- Despite having a high recycling access rate, Pennsylvania 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.

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 Bottle Beverages (Glass)
- 7 Tires
- 8 Straws, Stirrers
- 9 Grocery Bags (Plastic)
- 10 Other Plastic/Foam Packaging

² HB 1808, 2019–2020 Reg. Sess. (Pa. 2020). 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](#).