

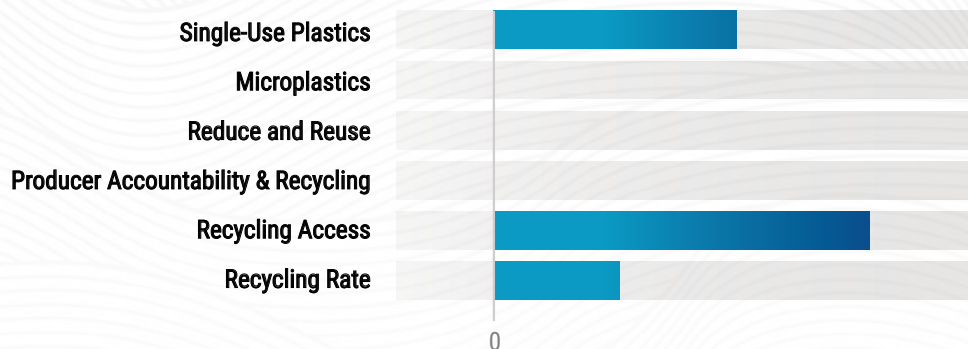
United States OF PLASTICS



Rhode Island

NEW ENGLAND

Known as the "Ocean State," Rhode Island has an extensive shoreline along the Atlantic as well as numerous rivers and bays. The state's economy is deeply connected to maritime industries, including fishing, boating and tourism. The waters of Narragansett Bay, which provides a critical ecosystem for marine life, are also vital to the state's economy, supporting shellfish harvesting and recreational activities, among other industries. Rhode Island is also home to renowned coastal communities, such as Newport, which rely heavily on its oceanfront attractions for tourism. Many species, like the Atlantic cod, American lobster and a threatened species of sea turtle, rely on the health of Rhode Island's waterways. While Rhode Island has been a leader in addressing plastic pollution, many opportunities remain for continued action.





Single-Use Plastics

Rhode Island has phased out expanded polystyrene foodware and single-use plastic bags.¹ The state also requires that single-use plastic straws be provided to consumers only by request.²



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. The state recently passed a law commissioning a statewide needs assessment and recommendations for future action on comprehensive EPR with a bottle bill.³

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Despite having a high recycling access rate, Rhode Island has a relatively low recycling rate. Policies like comprehensive EPR with a deposit return system together could increase the amount of material that is recycled and kept out of the environment without increasing costs for local governments.
- Given the increasing detection of microplastics in seafood⁴ and the importance of fisheries to the state's economy, Rhode Island should consider policies to address microplastic pollution such as requiring filters for new washing machines to reduce microfiber pollution and safeguard its seafood industry.

Top 10 Items Collected by ICC Volunteers

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

1 H 5090/S 14, 2023 Reg. Sess. (R.I. 2023) (expanded polystyrene); H 7065/S 2446, 2022 Reg. Sess. (R.I. 2022) (bags).
 2 H 5131/S 155, 2021 Reg. Sess. (R.I. 2021).
 3 H 6207/S 996, 2025 Reg. Sess. (R.I. 2025).
 4 Smith, M., et al. (2018). *Current Environmental Health Reports*.