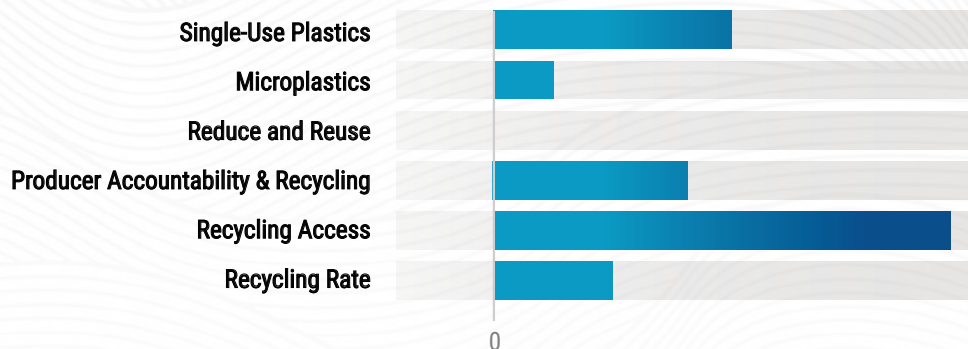


United States OF PLASTICS

Vermont

NEW ENGLAND

Vermont is home to Lake Champlain, one of the largest freshwater lakes in the U.S. with more than 70 islands and 6.8 trillion gallons of water.¹ The water flows northward to the St. Lawrence River which leads to the Atlantic Ocean. The lake serves as a major source of drinking water for tens of thousands of Vermont residents and supports ecological health and wildlife. The Connecticut River, the longest river in New England, flows along the eastern border of the state and plays a crucial role in sustaining ecosystems, supplying drinking water and providing opportunities for outdoor recreation and tourism. Vermont has a strong history of environmental stewardship, which includes passing several laws to address plastic pollution, an important reminder that inland communities can still take actions to protect our ocean and waterways.



FINAL SCORE



Fair

¹ ["Lake and Basin Facts."](#) Lake Champlain Basin Program. Accessed May 2025.



Single-Use Plastics

Vermont has phased out expanded polystyrene foodware and single-use plastic carryout bags.² The state also requires that single-use plastic straws be provided to consumers only by request.³



Microplastics

Vermont has enacted a law to require a study and report on the prevalence of microplastics and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS) in food waste and food packaging in the state.⁴



Reduce and Reuse

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



Producer Accountability and Recycling

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

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Despite having a high recycling access rate, Vermont has a relatively low recycling rate. Policies like extended producer responsibility could complement their existing deposit return system for beverage containers and increase the amount of material that is recycled and kept out of the environment without increasing costs for local governments. Expanding the types of beverage containers covered under the bottle bill and making other updates to improve the system would be another option to decrease plastic pollution and improve local recycling.
- Since tourism is a major part of Vermont's economy, the state has an opportunity to champion sustainable tourism by phasing out single-use plastics for personal care products in hotels. Reducing the use of unnecessary single-use plastics by tourists could lead to a significant reduction in waste and pollution.

Top 10 Items Collected by ICC Volunteers

- 1 Food Wrappers (Candy, chips, etc.)
- 2 Beverage Bottles (Plastic)
- 3 Cigarette Butts
- 4 Beverage Cans
- 5 Beverage Bottles (Glass)
- 6 Other Plastic/Foam Packaging
- 7 Bottle Caps (Plastic)
- 8 Take Out/Away Containers (Plastic)
- 9 Grocery Bags (Plastic)
- 10 Cups & Plates (Foam)

Farewell to Foam Docks

In 2024, Vermont passed a law prohibiting the use and sale of unencapsulated foam for docks, buoys and other floating structures.⁶ Expanded polystyrene, colloquially referred to as "Styrofoam," is the most common type of plastic foam used in docks and other floating structures. Unencapsulated, this foam readily breaks apart from collisions and weathering over time. This results in tiny plastic pieces, including microplastics, that pollute beaches, the ocean and other waterways. Foam pieces are the most common type of tiny trash item (<2.5cm in size) collected by International Coastal Cleanup® volunteers in Vermont and nationwide.⁷ These plastic pieces threaten wildlife through ingestion in addition to containing chemical additives that can leach into the environment and cause harm.⁸ Proactive measures, like the law passed in Vermont, help prevent these microplastics from entering the environment in the first place.

² Vt. Stat. Ann. tit. 10, §§ 6691 et seq.

³ *Id.*

⁴ H 446, 2021–2022 Sess. (Vt. 2022).

⁵ Vt. Stat. Ann. tit. 10, §§ 1521 et seq.

⁶ S 213, 2023–2024 Sess. (Vt. 2024).

⁷ Ocean Conservancy. "Trash Information and Data for Education and Solutions (TIDES) dataset." Retrieved from: <https://www.coastalcleanupdata.org/>. May 2025.

⁸ Thaysen, C., et al. (2018). *Frontiers in Marine Science*.