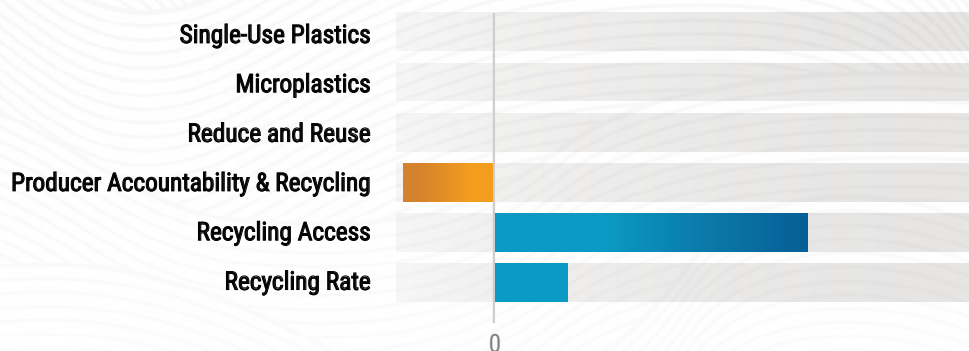


# United States OF PLASTICS

## Virginia MID-ATLANTIC

Virginia's strong connection to water is anchored by its extensive shoreline on the Chesapeake Bay, Atlantic Ocean and a vast network of rivers such as the James, Potomac and Rappahannock. These waterways are vital to the state's history, culture and economy, supporting commercial fishing, naval operations, shipping and tourism. The Chesapeake Bay is an important estuary that provides habitat for species like blue crabs, oysters and striped bass. Virginia's economy benefits from both its natural coastal beauty and its working waterfronts, including the Port of Virginia, one of the busiest on the East Coast. Virginia has made efforts to address plastic pollution, however, the state also has enacted laws that could hinder further progress.



### FINAL SCORE



*Needs Improvement*





### Single-Use Plastics

Virginia has a law to phase out expanded polystyrene foodware.<sup>1</sup> The state also has a law limiting local governments' ability to regulate single-use plastics.<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. Virginia also has also adopted policies that support harmful chemical recycling.<sup>3</sup>

## RECOMMENDATIONS

- Virginia 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.
- The state has both a low recycling rate and a high amount of beverage container-related pollution in the top ten most commonly collected items. Policies like comprehensive EPR combined 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 Beverage Bottles (Plastic)
- 3 Food Wrappers (Candy, chips, etc.)
- 4 Beverage Cans
- 5 Beverage Bottles (Glass)
- 6 Grocery Bags (Plastic)
- 7 Bottle Caps (Plastic)
- 8 Other Plastic Bags
- 9 Straws, Stirrers
- 10 Cups & Plates

<sup>1</sup> HB 1902, 2021 Spec. Sess. I (Va. 2021); "Foam-Free Resources." Virginia Department of Environmental Quality. Accessed June 2025.

<sup>2</sup> Va. Code. § 10.1-1425.

<sup>3</sup> SB 1164, 2021 Spec. Sess. I (Va. 2021). Ocean Conservancy considers chemical recycling technologies harmful if they do not recover plastic and create environmental and societal harm. Learn more about our [position on chemical recycling](#).