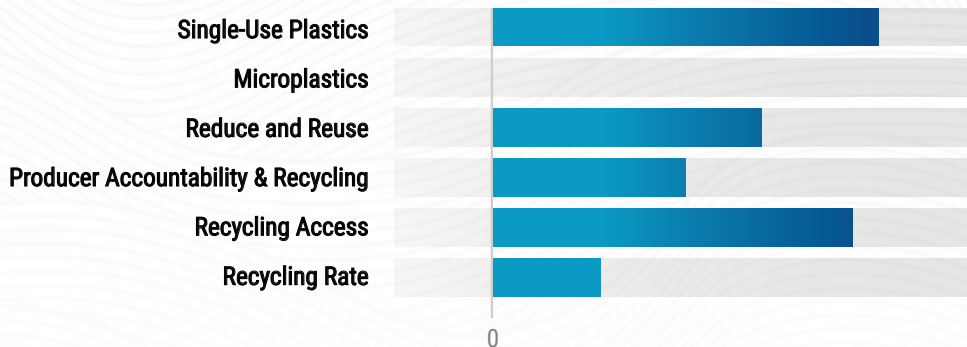


United States OF PLASTICS

Washington

PACIFIC AND COLORADO RIVER BASINS

Located in the Pacific Northwest, Washington boasts a stunning shoreline along the Pacific Ocean and the Puget Sound, the second largest estuary in the United States. Washington's waterways play a vital role in supporting its communities and diverse wildlife. Its coastal waters are critical for commercial fishing and maritime shipping, recreation and tourism, while also sustaining diverse marine ecosystems that are home to iconic wildlife like orcas, salmon and seabirds, all of which are under threat from plastic pollution. Recent research identified a specific chemical released from tire wear—a form of microplastic pollution—that causes the sudden death of coho salmon (as well as other related species like rainbow and lake trout), highlighting the severe impact of pollution on these sensitive ecosystems. Washington has been a leader in environmental stewardship, including on plastic pollution, with policies aimed at restricting single-use plastics and expanded recycling programs. There are many opportunities for Washington to continue making strides toward a cleaner, healthier environment.





Single-Use Plastics

Washington prohibits the sale of expanded polystyrene foodware, coolers and loose fill packaging and restricts the use of single-use plastic carryout bags.¹ Washington has also passed a by-request law for food service accessories, including straws and cutlery.² The state also prohibits hotels from providing single-use personal care products in plastic containers.³



Microplastics

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



Reduce and Reuse

Washington's extended producer responsibility (EPR) law requires plastic source reduction and reuse targets and also directs funding towards reuse.⁴ The state also requires water bottle filling stations in any construction that includes a drinking fountain, making it easier for people to opt for reusable options over single-use.⁵



Producer Accountability and Recycling

In 2025, Washington became the seventh state to pass a law establishing EPR for packaging.⁶

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Washington's recently passed EPR law has the potential to reduce single-use plastics, improve reuse systems and increase recycling. The state should work to ensure robust and timely implementation of the law to realize its full environmental and economic benefits.
- Given the amount of beverage container-related pollution in the top ten most commonly collected items in the state, Washington could consider complementing their EPR law for packaging with a deposit return system (or bottle bill), which is known to immediately and significantly decrease beverage container pollution as well as overall litter.
- Given the outsized impact of microplastics on important species in the state, Washington could consider policies to address microplastic pollution such as funding for tire wear mitigation projects and requiring filters for new washing machines to reduce microfiber pollution.

Top 10 Items Collected by ICC Volunteers

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

1 SB 5022, 67th Leg., 2021 Reg. Sess. (Wash. 2021) (expanded polystyrene); Wash. Rev. Code §§ 70A.530.005 et seq. (bags).
 2 SB 5022 (Wash. 2021).
 3 HB 1085, 68th Leg., 2023 Reg. Sess. (Wash. 2023).
 4 SB 5284, 69th Leg., 2025 Reg. Sess. (Wash. 2025).
 5 HB 1085 (Wash. 2023).
 6 SB 5284 (Wash. 2025).