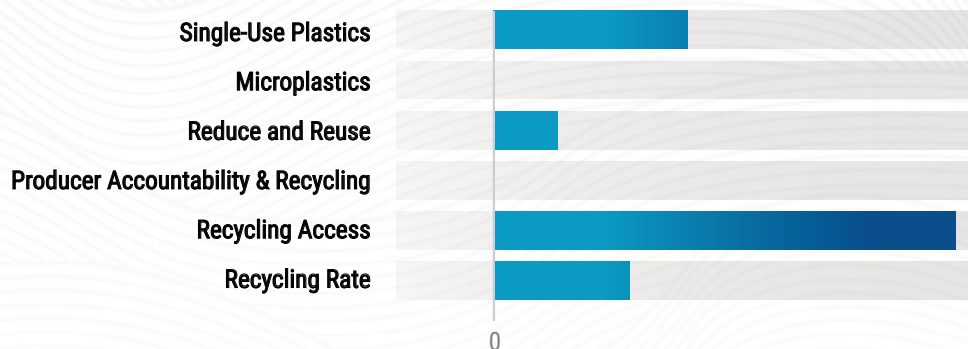


United States OF PLASTICS

Washington, District of Columbia

MID-ATLANTIC

Washington, D.C. (D.C.) is deeply connected to the ocean through the Potomac River and the Chesapeake Bay watershed, which ultimately drain into the Atlantic. This connection supports regional ecosystems and communities that depend on healthy waterways for drinking water, recreation and habitat for fish and bird species. As the nation's capital, D.C. has a unique opportunity to model solutions that protect the health of waterways and the ocean. Recognizing the impact of plastic pollution on these interconnected waterways, D.C. has been an early leader in passing legislation to address plastic pollution. However, many opportunities remain for continued action.



FINAL SCORE



Fair



Single-Use Plastics

D.C. has phased out expanded polystyrene foodware and packaging materials and requires that single-use food accessories like straws or cutlery be provided to consumers only by request.¹ While D.C. does not have a ban on plastic bags, it does discourage their use through a bag fee.²



Reduce and Reuse

D.C. has enacted a law to make grants available to support increased use of reusable foodware.³



Producer Accountability and Recycling

D.C. does not have extended producer responsibility or deposit return programs for packaging or beverage containers.



Microplastics

D.C. has not passed any laws to address microplastic pollution.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Since tourism is a major driver in D.C.'s economy, it 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 in D.C. could lead to a significant reduction in waste and pollution.
- Policies that support local reuse and refill systems, such as requiring reusable foodware at events or for dine-in consumers, could help reduce reliance on single-use plastics and increase awareness around plastic pollution.

Top 10 Items Collected by ICC Volunteers

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

Leading by Example

D.C. has established an ambitious zero waste plan with the goal of diverting 80% of its solid waste by 2040, driven in part by its goal to reduce plastic pollution. If fully implemented, the plan estimates it could divert approximately 958,442 tons of solid waste annually—enough to fill a recycling container the height of the Washington Monument every six months. The plan includes goals to implement policies to support reuse and to shift away from single-use plastics commonly found polluting waterways or contaminating recycling streams.⁴

1 D.C. Code §§ 8-1531, 8-1532, 8-1533.
 2 D.C. Code § 8-102.03.
 3 D.C. Code § 8-1533(f).
 4 "Zero Waste DC Plan." Feb. 2024.