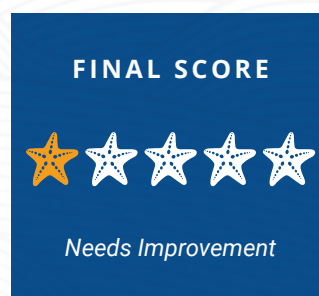
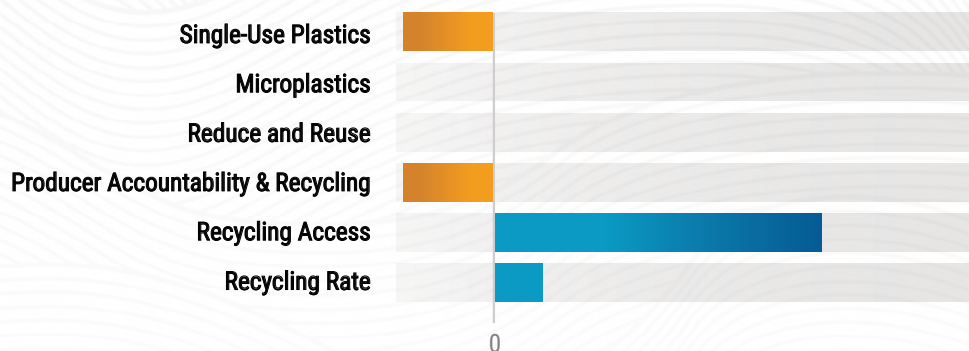


# United States OF PLASTICS

## West Virginia

MISSOURI-MISSISSIPPI DRAINAGE

West Virginia, while landlocked, is intricately connected to the ocean through its expansive river systems, particularly the Ohio River, which flows through the state and feeds into the Mississippi River before ultimately reaching the Gulf. The state is home to lush forests covering over 70% of its land, the third highest in the country, that rely on the health of the river systems.<sup>1</sup> These waterways are crucial to the state's economy, supporting industries such as agriculture, tourism and recreation, while providing drinking water to many communities. Despite taking pride in its natural beauty, West Virginia has yet to pass legislation to address plastic pollution and has enacted laws that could hinder further progress.



<sup>1</sup> ["West Virginia."](#) National Association of State Foresters. Accessed May 2025.





### Single-Use Plastics

West Virginia has a law limiting local governments' ability to regulate single-use plastics and has not passed any laws restricting the single-use plastics covered in our study.<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 or deposit return programs for packaging or beverage containers. The state has also adopted policies that support harmful chemical recycling.<sup>3</sup>

## RECOMMENDATIONS

- West 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.
- West Virginia would benefit from increased participation in Ocean Conservancy's International Coastal Cleanup® (ICC). Organizing cleanup efforts removes harmful plastic pollution from the environment, helps raise citizen awareness and gathers important data to better target policy solutions. A great way to get involved and contribute valuable data is to download Ocean Conservancy's Clean Swell® app or join an ICC event.

## Top 10 Items Collected by ICC Volunteers

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

<sup>2</sup> HB 2500, 2021 Reg. Sess. (W. Va. 2021).

<sup>3</sup> W. Va. Code § 22-15-2. 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.