

REDUCE PLASTIC POLLUTION

in Colorado

THE PROBLEM

Single-use disposable plastics contribute to climate change and are a major source of pollution threatening our health and the environment. While the federal government is slow to act, Colorado can follow other states and take action now to address this serious problem.

Plastics are made from fossil fuels and contribute to climate emissions.

Plastic is made from petrochemicals that come from oil and natural gas drilled out of the ground through fracking and other processes. Since the 1950's, plastic production worldwide has exploded from about 2 million tons annually to a whopping 440 million tons in 2015--and is expected to nearly quadruple in the next 30 years.¹ By 2050 plastics may account for 20% of fossil fuel consumption.² ExxonMobil, Shell, and others are investing \$180 billion to expand or build new US plastic "cracking" facilities over the next five years to produce more plastic.³



The production and use of plastic is harmful to human health and disproportionately impacts Black, Indigenous and People of Color (BIPOC) communities.

The manufacturing, use and disposal of plastic pose a serious threat to human health and have been linked to cancers, birth defects, impaired immunity, endocrine disruption, developmental and reproductive effects, and more.⁴ BIPOC communities bear more of this pollution burden because plastic production facilities and disposal sites are more likely to be located in these communities.⁵ Plastic vinyl chloride #3 and polystyrene #6 are two of the most harmful plastics to human health.⁶

1 <https://advances.sciencemag.org/content/3/7/e1700782>

2 <https://www.unenvironment.org/interactive/beat-plastic-pollution/>

3 <https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2017/dec/26/180bn-investment-in-plastic-factories-feeds-global-packaging-binge>

4 <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3299092/>

5 <https://www.surfrider.org/coastal-blog/entry/a-reality-check-on-environmental-racism-plastics>

6 <https://www.ciel.org/reports/plastic-health-the-hidden-costs-of-a-plastic-planet-february-2019/>



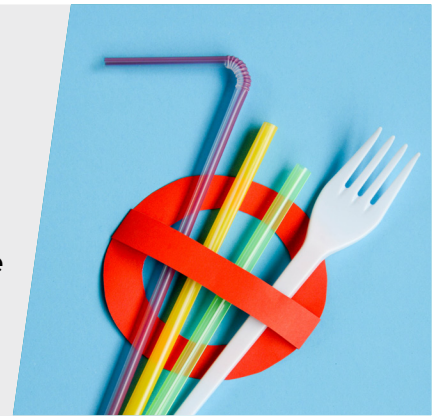


Plastics are impacting wildlife and ecosystems.

Humans have created over 8.3 billion metric tons of plastic, and 79% is now in our oceans, littering landscapes, floating in our rivers or sitting in our landfills.⁷ If we continue on our trend of rapid plastic production growth, by 2050 there will be more plastic in the ocean than fish by weight.⁸ Plastic pollution also affects inland areas. More than 1,000 tons of plastic particles in dust and rainwater a year contaminate national parks including Rocky Mountain National Park.⁹ Plastic bag ingestion poses life-threatening consequences for cattle and economic consequences for ranchers.¹⁰ Plastic bags were also the largest source of litter found in creek cleanups in Colorado.¹¹ Plastic never goes away, it only breaks down into smaller and smaller micro-plastics and gets into our water, our soils, is consumed by animals and ultimately ends up in the food we eat.

THE SOLUTION

Our plastic pollution crisis is tied to our climate crisis. This means we can't just clean up our plastic waste--we have to stop making and using so much plastic. Sixteen Colorado communities, eight U.S. states, over 300 U.S. cities and entire countries such as Taiwan, Canada and all of the European Union have policies in place to ban or restrict single-use plastic packaging such as plastic bags, foam take-out containers and straws.



PLEASE SUPPORT LEGISLATION THAT WILL:

- **Reduce the use of toxic plastics** by prohibiting restaurants, hospitals and school cafeterias and other food and retail establishments from using expanded polystyrene (foam) products (e.g. cups, plates and containers). Polystyrene is one of the most harmful plastics to human health, containing styrene, a known carcinogen. It can be easily substituted with less toxic reusable, recyclable or compostable products.
- **Reduce a common source of plastic pollution** by prohibiting retailers from providing single-use plastic carry-out bags and requiring stores to charge \$0.10 each for paper bags to reduce overall bag consumption.

⁷ <https://advances.sciencemag.org/content/3/7/e1700782>

⁸ <https://newplasticseconomy.org/about/publications/report-2016>

⁹ <https://www.denverpost.com/2020/06/11/plastic-pollution-wind-rocky-mountain-national-park/>

¹⁰ <http://www.txcourts.gov/media/1441866/160748c.pdf>

¹¹ <https://oceanconservancy.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/09/Final-2019-ICC-Report.pdf>