



Plastic Pollution in the Laurentian Great Lakes: What we know and how we can act

MICROPLASTICS IN THE GREAT LAKES

In 2011, scientists first reported the presence of microplastics in the Great Lakes along the beaches of Lake Huron near the properties of companies that specialize in making plastic. Since then, macro and microplastics have been reported in all five Great Lakes and their watersheds, in water, sediment, and biota. Scientists estimate that nearly 10,000 metric tons of plastic debris enters the Great Lakes every year.

WHAT HAPPENS WHEN PLASTIC ENTERS THE AQUATIC ENVIRONMENT?

- Plastic does not go away, but instead breaks down into smaller and smaller pieces.
- It can float or sink depending on its density.
- Plastic can be consumed by aquatic biota which may cause them physical or chemical harm.

HOW YOU CAN GET INVOLVED

- Organize or participate in a cleanup in your area to help keep litter out of your local stream, river, and lake. To get involved in Canada, be sure to check out the [Great Canadian Shoreline Cleanup](#). In other countries, you can participate in the [International Coastal Cleanup](#).
- Learn more about the [Great Lakes Plastic Cleanup](#) and their efforts to clean up waterways in the Great Lakes region using innovative trash trapping technology.
- Look through the University of Toronto Trash Team's [waste reduction tips](#) to learn how to reduce your own waste footprint.
- Learn more about Georgian Bay Forever's work to promote [washing machine filters](#) as an effective way to keep microfibers out of the environment.
- The [2022 Great Lakes Public Forum](#) is an event that takes place every three years and provides an opportunity for the Government of Canada and the Government of the United States of America to discuss and receive public comments on the state of the lakes and binational priorities for science and action. This year's event is being held on September 27-29th in Niagara Falls, Ontario. Keep an eye out for your opportunity to submit comments ahead of the event.

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