CHARTING A COURSE TO

Plastic Free Beaches

Part 2: An Ocean Conservancy Policy Report Informed by Nearly 40 Years of International Coastal Cleanup® Data

Ocean Conservancy®

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About Ocean Conservancy

Ocean Conservancy is working to protect the ocean from today's greatest global challenges. Together with our partners, we create evidence-based solutions for a healthy ocean and the wildlife and communities that depend on it.

Ocean Conservancy has led the fight for a clean, healthy ocean free of plastics since 1986, when the U.S.-based nonprofit launched its annual International Coastal Cleanup® (ICC). Since then, Ocean Conservancy has mobilized millions of ICC volunteers to remove trash from beaches and waterways around the world while pioneering upstream solutions to the growing ocean plastics crisis. Ocean Conservancy invests in cutting-edge scientific research, implements on-the-ground projects, and works with conservationists, scientists, governments, the private sector and members of the public to change the plastics paradigm.

To learn more about our Trash Free Seas® program visit oceanconservancy.org/trashfreeseas.

REDESIGN

In the nearly 40 years Ocean Conservancy has hosted the annual International Coastal Cleanup® (ICC), millions of dedicated volunteers have collected data on hundreds of millions of pieces of trash collected from beaches and waterways. For the first 34 years of the ICC, cigarette butts were the number one item volunteers collected worldwide. Then in 2019, a new item took the top spot for the year: plastic food wrappers.

This shift is not surprising—the use of single-use plastics has grown exponentially over the last few decades. In fact, half of all plastics ever made have been produced in the last 20 years. Incredibly, 80% of global litter items are made of plastics, primarily food and beverage items such as plastic bottles, according to a recent study that collated more than 12 million data points from the ICC and other data sources.[1]

Food wrappers, along with other single-use plastics such as plastic bottles, bottle caps, cups, plates and lids, are all among the top ten items most commonly collected by ICC volunteers around the world. These top ten ICC items account for one-seventh of all plastic waste generated in the United States each year. Taking action to address plastic pollution from these top items will go a long way to address the ocean plastics pollution crisis and the exponential growth of plastic production, which is also fueling the climate crisis and perpetuating environmental injustice.

How to best address pollution from items like food wrappers or bottles is fundamentally different from items like cigarette butt filters or plastic bags, which can effectively be banned or replaced with alternatives, as shown in Charting a Course to Plastic Free Beaches Part 1: Reduce. Products such as food wrappers and bottles, at least in some circumstances, remain necessary. Although they cannot be easily banned, we can reduce how many we use and redesign them to be reusable or recyclable.

On an individual level, each of us can do our part to reduce our reliance on these products. But, to make a real dent in stopping these products at the source, we need to take a systemic approach to rethink how these items are designed, produced and used, and how our waste management systems work so we can ensure that we are reducing and reusing as much as possible. The good news is that there are already many good options to reduce and redesign these items to be less harmful.

Driving Systemic Change to Reduce and Redesign

We have policy models in place to reshape our waste management systems holistically so that it is just as easy to reduce, reuse and recycle as it is to throw away single-use items. For example, California's groundbreaking 2022 plastics reduction bill, known as SB 54, requires plastics and packaging producers to pay to improve the state's reuse and recycling systems while also requiring that at least 4% of single-use plastics be shifted to reusable or refillable systems by 2030. Enacting policies like SB 54 are key to driving systemic change towards reduction, reuse, and redesign.

If the U.S. could achieve the same minimum reuse standards as SB 54, Ocean Conservancy estimates the country could reduce more than 700,000 tons of single-use plastics every year. Investing in systems to reuse plastic packaging can directly help prevent massive amounts of plastics from entering the environment and can also prevent significant greenhouse gas emissions from the production of new plastics. Scaling up the SB 54 reuse standards nationally would prevent more than 3 million tons of greenhouse gas emissions each year.

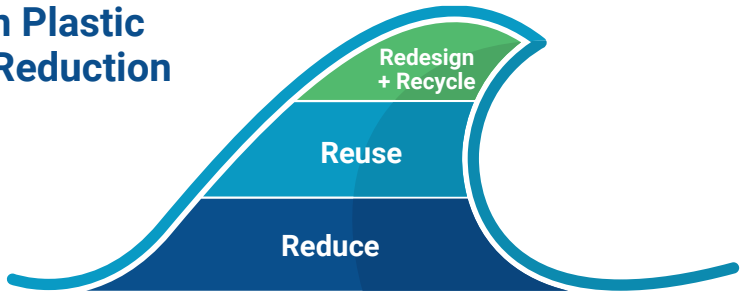
This report provides guidance on how to redesign systems and products to sharply reduce our reliance on highly polluting single-use plastics and transition to an economy with less waste where materials are fully reusable, recyclable or compostable. By focusing on solutions for some of the most common single-use plastic items polluting our beaches—food wrappers, plastic bottles, bottle caps, cups, plates and lids—we can put the U.S. and the world on a path toward plastic-free beaches.

TOP TEN
Plastic Items Collected by ICC Volunteers
(1986-2023)

1. **63,207,042** **Cigarette Butts**
2. **30,206,931** **Food Wrappers** *(Candy, Chips, etc.)*
3. **24,344,647** **Beverage Bottles**
4. **23,802,977** **Plastic Bags** *(Grocery and Other)*
5. **18,600,786** **Bottle Caps**
6. **15,466,088** **Straws, Stirrers**
7. **9,414,312** **Foam Foodware** *(Take Out Containers and Cups, Plates)*
8. **8,026,935** **Hard Plastic Cups, Plates**
9. **7,317,594** **Lids**
10. **6,748,559** **Forks, Knives, Spoons**

Excluding cigarette butts, these ten items make up one out of every six plastic items used each year in the United States.

The Ocean Plastic Pollution Reduction Hierarchy



There is no one-size-fits-all solution to ocean plastic pollution. Every product is different and presents its own challenges, and some solutions are better than others for the health of our ocean. In addition to helping product designers and manufacturers identify the best solutions for any given product, the waste hierarchy can also help advocates and decision-makers identify key elements in policies to reduce plastic pollution.

1 REDUCE | Does the Product Need Packaging?

The gold standard for reducing pollution throughout the entire plastics lifecycle is to eliminate unnecessary and single-use packaging wherever possible, which is why reduce is the foundation of the ocean plastic pollution reduction hierarchy. This means removing a piece of plastic without replacing it with another type of material. Eliminating unnecessary packaging is also the most effective way to reduce greenhouse gas emissions from across the plastics lifecycle.

Reducing packaging can take many forms, including removing packaging that is unnecessary (e.g., plastic wrap around bananas or cucumbers), foregoing secondary packaging (e.g., a second layer of plastic wrap around a multi-pack of already-wrapped paper towels), or switching to reusable products and refillable packaging systems to eliminate the need for single-use items altogether (explained below).

Reduction in Action

In 2020, Tesco, the U.K.'s largest supermarket chain, stopped using plastic film wrapping around its multi-packs of canned products.[2] Small measures like this can add up to sizable impacts: Tesco estimated that this simple measure would result in the elimination of 67 million pieces of hard-to-recycle plastic film and roughly 350 metric tons of plastic.[3]

In a similar vein, Walmart Canada, which operates more than 400 stores, announced in 2019 that it has eliminated plastic wrapping from around bananas and bell peppers, a straightforward measure that the company expects will eliminate nearly 94 metric tons of plastic every year.[4]

2 REUSE | Can the Packaging Be Made Reusable?

If an item does need packaging—whether for transportation, food safety or other reasons—the next best option is to transition to systems where the packaging itself is either reusable or refillable. Shifting to reusable or refillable products may include redesigning packaging to use materials other than plastics. Reusable and refillable packaging cuts down on the need to produce new plastic packaging while reducing overall waste and climate impacts.

Making standardized reuse and refill systems widely available and accessible is important for the success of refill systems.[5] Although systemic changes—such as bottle refill programs or reusable takeout containers—can be challenging because they require consumer behavior change, there are good examples of designing systems to incentivize consumer behavior change, such as by offering discounts or loyalty points for consumers who bring refillable packaging back to a store.[6] Starting to roll out reusables in closed systems, such as restaurants, event venues, or airports, can also help pave the wave for broader reuse by familiarizing consumers with reuse systems.

Reuse in Action

Many coffee companies, from global chains to local shops, have successfully incentivized customers to bring in reusable cups by offering a small discount on each drink. Updating policy can be helpful, or necessary, to support these types of actions. For example, in 2023 Oregon passed a law, (SB 545), to require the Oregon Health Authority to update the state's health code to make it easier for restaurants to provide reusable container options, including providing options to allow consumers to bring their own reusable containers and fill them with food and beverages from the restaurant. This type of legislation and rulemaking ensures convenient access to sustainable alternatives while also maintaining food health and safety standards.

3 REDESIGN | Can the Packaging Be Made Recyclable or Compostable?

If a product requires packaging that cannot be reused or refilled, it should be designed to be compatible with the local circular economy. This means that the packaging needs to be fully recyclable or fully compostable within existing recycling and composting systems. Redesign for recycling or composting systems may include changing to materials more readily accepted by those systems.

Although many companies claim that their products are recyclable or compostable, that may not be the case. In too many instances it is currently not economically practical or technologically feasible for some items to be recycled or composted, despite claims to the contrary. To cut through these claims, clear definitions of recyclability and compostability are needed, along with standardized labeling to ensure consumers know how to properly dispose of packaging without confusion.

Defining Recyclability

For packaging and products to be considered recyclable, they need to be designed and manufactured so that they are compatible with existing recycling systems. Whether or not packaging is considered recyclable is generally based on its design, collection and acceptance in recycling systems, its ability to be sorted, and whether there are viable end markets that are willing to buy and actually reuse that material.

In 2021, California became the first U.S. state to tackle the question of how to define what is recyclable, through its "Truth in Labeling Law" (SB 343). In addition to considering the compatibility with the recycling system, this law includes upstream product design requirements in assessing what can be considered recyclable.

Based on California's SB 343, for an item to be labeled as recyclable it must:

- be designed to be recyclable (for plastics, this means complying with the Association of Plastic Recyclers' APR Design® Guide),
- not contain intentionally added PFAS (per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances),
- be collected through curbside recycling programs that collectively encompass at least 60% of the state, and
- be sorted into defined streams for reclaiming at an end market, consistent with international standards (the Basel Convention).

Defining Compostability

To be considered compostable, packaging and products must be designed to be compatible with existing composting infrastructure and meet evidence-based standards to ensure that the packaging and products fully break down without causing harm.

California, again, became one of the first states to pass legislation that establishes robust standards for products and packaging to be considered compostable in AB 1201. Based on this law, an item can only be labeled compostable if it:

- meets specific testing standards (ASTM International standards D6868-21, D6400-21) to show that the product or packaging will actually break down in compost,
- is certified as compostable by a third party,
- is allowed as an input in organic production under the U.S. Department of Agriculture's National Organic Program,
- does not contain intentionally-added PFAS,
- is designed to be used, and therefore disposed of, with desirable compostable material like food waste or yard scraps, and
- is labeled in such a way that consumers can identify the product as compostable.

Food Wrappers

Plastic food wrappers—a broad category consisting of chip bags, candy wrappers, and similar flexible packaging—are among the most common items that ICC volunteers find on beaches and waterways.

Plastic food wrappers are typically made of thin and flexible plastic and composite materials such as polyethylene, polypropylene, and/or aluminum coatings and have several characteristics that make them largely unrecyclable. Their light and flexible form clogs the sorting machinery in recycling facilities[7] and many wrappers are composites made of multiple layers of different materials that cannot be separated for recycling.[8] Since these wrappers can't be recycled, they end up accumulating in landfills, being burned in incinerators or polluting the environment.

Food wrappers pose a significant pollution challenge because their light weight makes them highly transportable once in the natural environment. At least six different marine mammal species[9] and three turtle species[10] have been documented with flexible food wrappers in their stomachs, some where the brands were still identifiable.

Despite the challenges this type of packaging poses to the environment and the recycling system, the use of plastic wrappers and flexible plastic packaging in general continues to grow as demand for convenience increases. Ocean Conservancy estimates that Americans use an astounding 77 billion plastic food wrappers each year. This is more than 200 wrappers per person every year![11]

There are currently limited options to eliminate or replace highly polluting food wrappers and there is not a one-size-fits-all solution for dealing with such a broad and challenging category of materials. The best solutions to preventing this type of plastics pollution at the source involve improving and expanding reuse systems to eliminate the need for single-use wrappers and redesigning any the food wrappers we continue to use so that they are either recyclable or compostable. This means that producers and policymakers should use the ocean plastic pollution reduction hierarchy as a guide to review each type of product and packaging to determine the best solution.

International Coastal Cleanup® data

In 2019, the ICC collected and removed a record number of food wrappers—nearly five million—in a single day's effort. That year, the category of food wrappers displaced cigarette butts for the first time in the history of the cleanup as the number one collected item.

From 1986 to 2023, ICC volunteers collected a staggering 30 million plastic food wrappers from beaches and waterways globally.

Making Wrappers Recyclable

Because not all food wrappers can be effectively banned or phased out, companies are redesigning their packaging to use less material and to ensure that the material is recyclable or compostable. For example, several major food and drink companies are piloting the use of paper wrappers. Nestlé Confectionery announced in 2022 that its Quality Street candy brand will move to 100% recyclable paper packaging by 2025. This measure by Nestlé Confectionery will remove more than two billion pieces of packaging material from the brand's supply chain. However, these types of innovations need to be significantly scaled to make a dent in the amount of single-use plastic wrappers produced each and every year.

If designed correctly, paper wrappers that do not contain plastics or other toxic additives can be either compostable in industrial compost facilities or recycled along with other paper products.

Plastic Bottles

Plastic bottles date back to the early 20th century when they were first developed as a lightweight and durable alternative to glass bottles. However, it wasn't until the 1960s when plastic bottles began to be used more widely than glass bottles. They now significantly outnumber glass bottles in the bottled water market, with plastic bottles making up 97.3% of the market.[12] Ocean Conservancy estimates that 127 billion plastic bottles are used in the U.S. each year.[13]

Plastic bottles are also a major contributor to environmental pollution. As with all plastics, these bottles break up into microplastics that enter the environment and can pose a threat to wildlife and human health. Plastic bottles themselves in fact may be contributing to our exposure to microplastics even before the bottles become pollution. Researchers recently estimated that the average liter of bottled water may contain up to a quarter million micro- and nanoplastics.[14] This adds to the growing body of research that has found a higher concentration of microplastics in plastic bottled water than in tap water, suggesting the packaging itself is a significant source of microplastics.[15]

Most plastic bottles are made of polyethylene terephthalate (PET), which is often recognized as the most highly recycled plastic. However many PET bottle designs and labels prevent them from being recycled. Barriers to recycling these bottles include the color of the plastic or labels that can get in the way of its ability to be sorted. These barriers are so common and problematic that the U.S. Plastics Pact includes opaque or pigmented PET, as well as certain labels that disrupt recycling, on its list of problematic or unnecessary materials that should be eliminated by 2025.

The vast majority of bottled water use can be eliminated through investments in infrastructure to support clean drinking water access and refill stations. However, bottled water does remain essential in areas that suffer from disasters, that chronically lack sufficient access to clean drinking water, or that currently do not have necessary water infrastructure in place. For essential uses of water bottles, they should be redesigned to be reusable or fully recyclable.

International Coastal Cleanup® data

Plastic bottles are the third most common type of plastic pollution collected in the history of the ICC. From 1986 to 2023, volunteers collected 24.2 million plastic bottles from beaches and waterways.

Policies to Support Reuse

By investing in infrastructure—to ensure clean and drinkable water for all and to build accessible refill stations—we can eliminate the need for most bottled water. Policy measures can play an important role by requiring convenient and accessible refill stations to support reuse.

For example, in 2023, the Illinois state legislature approved a law (SB 1715) that requires all new buildings that have water fountains to also include water bottle refill stations starting in 2026. This policy will increase the infrastructure necessary to enable the expanded use of reusable water bottles instead of single-use plastics.

Other policies such as extended producer responsibility (EPR) or deposit return systems (DRS, also known as "bottle bills") can also play an important role in redesign and scaling up reuse through mandatory reuse targets (such as California's SB 54) and financial incentives. In addition to improving recycling rates and recycling infrastructure, DRS policies have been found to lead to a significant reduction in litter. One analysis found that DRS policies consistently lead to a reduction of litter from beverage containers of between 70% and 84%, and an overall litter reduction of between 34% and 47%.[16] Together with reuse mandates, producer responsibility policies such as EPR and DRS can be powerful tools to spur the redesign of products and the entire waste management system to significantly reduce these highly polluting plastics.

Bottle Caps

Along with the rise of plastic bottles in the 20th century came the rise of plastic bottle caps. These plastic bottle caps have their own unique environmental challenges. Despite their small size, they represent an enormous problem, with consumers in the U.S. alone using nearly 140 billion bottle caps each year, which includes all the caps needed for the PET plastic bottles discussed above as well as the caps for other types of plastic bottles, such as for milk jugs.[17] Plastic caps are typically made from polypropylene (PP) or high-density polyethylene (HDPE), while metal caps for glass bottles are usually made from aluminum or steel and sometimes have an internal plastic liner.

Although plastic and metal bottle caps can be recycled, when they end up detached from bottles in the waste stream the bottle caps are too small to be properly sorted, which renders them either as contamination or as unrecyclable.

It used to be common for recycling facilities to discourage the inclusion of bottle caps. Over time, technology has improved to allow for bottle caps to be included in many recycling systems, but only if the caps are screwed back onto the bottles. Once the bottle and cap are chopped up into flakes as part of the mechanical recycling process, the plastic from the cap is then separated from the rest of the plastic, which enables both types of plastics to be recycled.

Despite their small size, bottle caps can have an outsized and deadly impact on marine life. Ocean Conservancy has identified plastic caps as one of the top five deadliest forms of marine pollution to large species such as seabirds, sea turtles, and marine mammals, largely due to ingestion.[18] Sea birds are particularly vulnerable to ingesting bottle caps and their ingestion has been linked to their death due to obstructing their gizzards.[19]

Plastic bottle caps also have been shown to wear down and generate microplastics simply due to the twisting action that people use to remove a cap from its plastic ring, which potentially increases human exposure to microplastics in the beverage being consumed.[20]

Many of the challenges and solutions associated with plastic bottle caps are the same as those regarding plastic bottles. In most cases, the best solutions involve switching to reusable and refillable bottles. In the instances where bottles, and therefore bottle caps, are still needed, there are some additional solutions focused on upstream redesign that can help reduce cap pollution into the environment.

International Coastal Cleanup® data

Since 1986, International Coastal Cleanup volunteers worldwide have collected more than 9 million plastic bottle caps.

Bottle Redesign: Tethered for Success

As with bottles, single-use plastic caps are not always needed. We can build infrastructure and business models that dramatically reduce our dependence on these highly polluting items by encouraging consumers to bring their own reusable bottles with reusable caps.

For bottles and caps that are not eliminated through reuse, innovative and practical upstream redesign can help ensure that bottles and bottle caps stay attached for recycling. One approach is to redesign bottle caps so that they remain attached or tethered to the bottles: this would prevent the caps from ending up as separate litter and would improve the recyclability of the caps.

Again, policy measures can be an effective tool in requiring this upstream redesign to protect the environment. For example, the European Union approved a directive (2019/904) in 2019 to require that lids and caps of single-use plastic bottles must be tethered together by July 2024.

Cups, Plates, and Other Foodware

Single-use plastic cups, plates, and other foodware are a significant source of plastic waste, with billions of these items discarded annually worldwide. Ocean Conservancy estimates that 18.6 billion plastic cups are used annually in the U.S. alone. This is about 1.5 billion pounds worth of plastic cups, equivalent to twice the weight of the Empire State Building.[21]

While Part One ("Reduce") of this report focuses on the waste reduction solutions for cups and plates made of expanded polystyrene ("plastic foam"), here we look at solutions for cups and plates made from other types of plastics including non-foam polystyrene (PS), PET, and PP.

Although plastic foodware sometimes is made from plastics that can be recyclable, most recycling facilities do not accept plastic cups, plates, and other foodware because these items are frequently contaminated with food and because their shapes are difficult for a recycling facility to sort and process. The result is that most of these single-use plastic foodware items effectively are not recyclable.

Black plastic containers, which are popular for use for a variety of food service products, especially for restaurant take-away containers, pose an additional challenge. Often the pigment used in these types of plastic make them undetectable by recycling sorting technology, which relies on near-infrared sorting. This makes the containers unsortable, and therefore, unrecyclable. However, this is not common knowledge: a 2021 survey conducted by Ocean Conservancy found that 63% of Americans indicated that they believed black plastics are recyclable. This misunderstanding leads to contamination in the recycling system, which is why plastics with undetectable pigments, such as carbon black, are included on the U.S. Plastic Pact's list of problematic and avoidable items to be phased out by 2025.

In addition, while disposable foodware items are convenient in the short term, they can be costly for businesses in the long run. In 2016, restaurants spent $19 million (nearly $24 million in 2024) to purchase disposable foodware and an additional $1 billion ($1.25 billion in 2024) to dispose of these items.

The best option for most single-use foodware is to eliminate it by switching to reusable—especially for dine-in settings—or returnable packaging. Where that is not possible, these types of foodware should be redesigned to ensure that they are fully recyclable or compostable.

International Coastal Cleanup® data

Between 1986-2023, ICC volunteers collected more than 8 million plastic cups and plates and more than 5.6 million plastic take-out/away containers, amounting to more than half a million pounds of plastics!

Economics of Reuse:

One way to reduce waste from foodware is by switching from disposable to reusable foodware, especially in dine-in settings. This can also help businesses save money in the long run. One nonprofit in California, ReThink Disposable, has assisted 251 businesses in incorporating reusables since 2018, which has helped these businesses save more than $650,000 in total each year and has cut total annual waste by more than 260,000 pounds.[22] Policy can also help drive this change. In California, Los Angeles County approved an ordinance in 2022 that required full-service restaurants to use reusable foodware (e.g., cups and plates) for dine-in customers beginning in 2023.

Lids

Plastic lids—such as a "sippy cup" lids that come with a cup of coffee, or a clear plastic lid with a hole for a straw that tops a fountain beverage—are some of the most commonly littered single-use plastic items on our beaches and waterways. The U.S. alone uses more than 60 billion single-use plastic coffee and fountain beverage lids each year.[23] That is enough for every adult in the U.S. to have a coffee or fountain beverage with a single-use plastic lid every day for eight months each year!

Lids, like bottle caps, are too small for recycling sorting machines to manage, and thus contribute to contamination in the recycling system as well as in the environment. This means that the only effective options for disposing of these lids are by other harmful means, mostly by dumping them in landfills or burning them in incinerators.

Another common challenge with plastic lids is that they are typically used in to-go settings, such as grabbing a coffee or a fountain drink while people are out and about. This creates an added challenge for lids and other disposable foodware discussed in this report, because there is not always sufficient public infrastructure to dispose of these items properly. Many cities confront this challenge. Los Angeles, for instance, is working to increase the number of public trash bins per square kilometer; in 2015, the city reportedly had less than one public bin per square kilometer.[24]

As with plastic bottles and other items, the need for many plastic lids can be eliminated through investments in reuse or small behavior changes. For those lids that are not eliminated, they should be redesigned to be fully recyclable or compostable, which would also mean significant investment in recycling and composting systems to manage these types of materials.

International Coastal Cleanup® data

Between 1986-2023, ICC volunteers collected almost three million plastic lids from beaches and waterways globally.

Taking Reuse on the Road

The most effective solution for lids is to transition to reusable cups and lids. While reuse has traditionally been challenging in to-go settings, more companies are working to make reuse easy for businesses and consumers. Companies such as r.World, ShareWares, Good To Go Cups, TURN, and others are partnering with established businesses and venues to offer returnable cups and other types of foodware around the country. Depending on the business and its approach, customers receive beverages in returnable cups and then return the cups to either the same store or to another participating store or drop-off location when they are done with the cups. Replacing one disposable coffee cup and lid every day for a year with a reusable mug would result in about 15 pounds of plastic waste prevented! Imagine if 100 million people did this, just under half of all adults in the U.S., it would result in roughly 1.5 billion pounds of plastic prevented each year.

Let's Redesign a Future Without Waste

The most effective way to prevent ocean plastic pollution is to reduce the amount of plastics we are using in the first place and to make sure we are effectively managing the plastics we do use to prevent them from becoming pollution. By tackling the items most commonly collected from our beaches and waterways first, we can have an immediate and direct impact on the health of the ocean and the wildlife that depend on it.

Coupled with product bans—as outlined in part one of this report—redesigning packaging to be reusable, recyclable or compostable is essential to prevent these items from ending up in a landfill, being burned in an incinerator, or winding up as pollution in the environment.

While this report highlights some early success in reuse and redesign, we need transformational change to make and use less plastics, including by redesigning products to be reused or recycled. Ultimately, policy is needed to require upstream changes and hold producers accountable for upstream redesign and investments in reuse, recycling and composting systems.

Comprehensive policies such as extended producer responsibility coupled with deposit return systems can require producers to provide funding for infrastructure while establishing mandates for producers to redesign products and offer products in reusable packaging. Other types of policy changes, such as investments in refill infrastructure and updating health codes, can help ensure that it is just as easy and convenient to reuse and return items as it is to throw them away.

The scale and impact of the plastic pollution crisis are enormous, and it will take all of us to tackle this problem—through our individual actions and by adding our voices together to collectively call for change.

Want to take action? Start with these steps.

Stay informed. Find your local, state and federal representatives and get in touch. Tools such as USA.gov/elected-officials can help you get started.

Act locally. This report provides examples of effective local policies that have led the way toward larger state, federal, and international actions. Read up on the laws governing plastics in your community, find out from the International Coastal Cleanup what types of plastics items are common in your area and call on your local representatives to pass legislation to tackle the most prevalent plastic pollution found on our beaches.

Join us. Visit Ocean Conservancy's action center and add your voice to the chorus of people calling for change from governments and corporations alike.

Together, we can put an end to plastic pollution.

www.OceanConservancy.org

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Endnotes

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