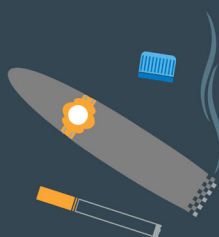


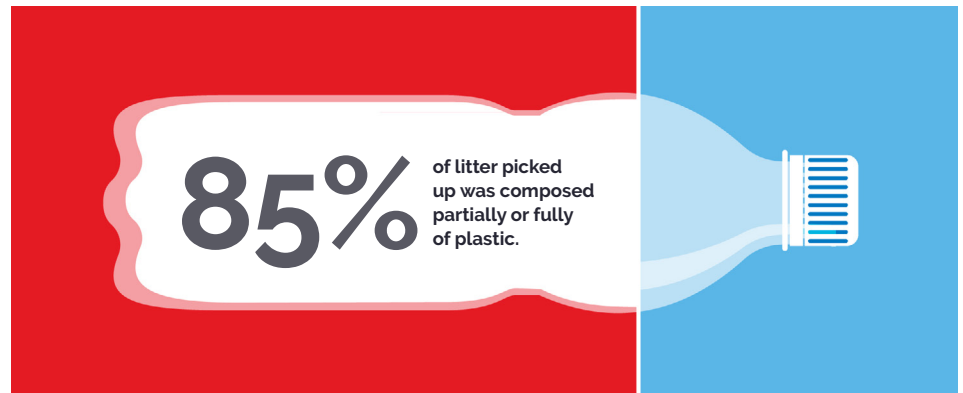


Plastic-Free Great Lakes

**An Advocacy Toolkit to Make
a Difference in Your Community**



Background: Plastic Pollution in the Great Lakes



We all love and depend on clean water. Unfortunately, plastic is polluting our water—in the Great Lakes and around the world. Plastic pollution is everywhere: beaches, rivers, lakes, and even drinking water. And it comes in many shapes and sizes.

For more than two decades, the Alliance for the Great Lakes' Adopt-a-Beach volunteers have been on the front lines of efforts to keep plastic pollution off our beaches and out of the lakes. Over the years, tens of thousands of Adopt-a-Beach volunteers have cleaned up hundreds of thousands of pounds of litter from shorelines along all five Great Lakes.

In 2017, over 85% of the litter picked up by Adopt-a-Beach volunteers was composed partially or fully of plastic. The items included cigarette butts, cigar tips, plastic lids and caps, food wrappers, straws, stirrers, plastic bottles, and plastic bags. Sadly, 2017 wasn't an unusual year. Plastic is consistently the number one type of litter found on beaches year after year.

Plastic pollution can be whole items like plastic bottles and bags. This type of debris accumulates on beaches and can entangle wildlife. Or it can be tiny pieces that have broken off of larger items, or are manufactured to be smaller than 5 millimeters. These miniscule pieces of plastic are called microplastics, and they have been found in the open waters of the Great Lakes, sea salt, seafood, drinking water, and beer. Microplastics can expose wildlife and humans to toxic chemicals if ingested. While the potential health impacts are still being studied, microplastics can expose wildlife and humans to toxic chemicals if ingested.

Communities across the Great Lakes are spending thousands of dollars each year to collect and manage plastic. And some communities are finding innovative ways to stop plastic pollution before it becomes a problem.

If we all cut back on the use of disposable plastic, less of it will get into our Great Lakes. While we can all make individual changes to reduce plastic, policy solutions are the surest way to make systemic change to cut plastic pollution on a large scale.

People around the Great Lakes region have advocated for programs to prevent or reduce plastic pollution at multiple levels of government. In this toolkit, we'll share lessons from their work and provide you with the tools you need to get active in your community.

Fighting Plastic Pollution: A Few Examples of Successful Policy Efforts

Volunteers have been collecting trash, litter, and debris from the shores of the Great Lakes for decades. But the most effective way to keep plastic pollution off the beaches and out of the Great Lakes is by stopping it at its source. Volunteers and activists are taking action in their communities to do just that. Here are a few examples of successful local, state, and federal policies focused on stopping plastic pollution.



Cities Take Action to Reduce Disposable Plastic Bags

The City of Chicago first passed legislation to prevent stores from providing disposable plastic bags in 2014. This plastic bag ban applied to the sale of disposable plastic bags that were thinner than 2.25 mils (2.25 thousandths of an inch) for large chain and franchise stores over 10,000 square feet. The ban was slated to extend to chain and franchise stores under 10,000 square feet in 2016. However, the law's definition of a disposable bag was a problem. Stores realized that they could provide free disposable plastic bags as long as they were thicker than 2.25 mils. As a result, the ban was not very effective and it was repealed.

Advocates from groups like Bring Your Own Bag Chicago urged adoption of a new policy that closed loopholes by covering all disposable plastic bags. In 2016, Chicago passed a new policy to shift consumer behavior and reduce plastic bag use. Instead of banning bags outright, the new policy required a \$0.07 fee on single use plastic and paper bags. The revenue was split between the city (\$0.05) and the retailer (\$0.02). Neighboring communities, like Oak Park, IL, have also implemented plastic bag fees. In Oak Park, half of the fee revenue will stay with the retailer and half will fund local environmental initiatives.

The City of Chicago fee has been effective since it went into effect on February 1, 2017. According to a study by the Chicago mayor's office, it resulted in a 42% decrease in the number of single use plastic bags used per shopping trip. It's also led to a 33% decrease in the number of customers who use any single-use bags at all. And it's resulted in a 20% increase in the number of customers who use reusable bags.

Fighting Plastic Pollution

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A neighboring community, Evanston, IL, has taken a different approach. Like Chicago, it tried to pass a ban on single-use plastic bags, but retailers found loopholes. Instead of additional legislative solutions, Evanston decided to target consumer behavior by creating a series of community initiatives to reduce residents' use of disposable plastic bags.

Today, Evanston has a number of education and service programs that help citizens reduce their use of disposable bags and to recycle used bags. Reusable shopping bags have been distributed at public events, community centers, and on street corners. These bags provide citizens with a free and sustainable alternative to disposable plastic bags. A "Share-a-Bag" program allows citizens to leave clean reusable shopping bags for neighbors to use if they have forgotten their bag. After these bags are used, they are returned to the "Share-a-Bag" bin clean and ready for the next person to use. Grocery stores have agreed to work with the city to collect used bags and recycle them along with their plastic bag and packaging waste.

State Bottle Deposits Increase Recycling of Single Use Cans and Bottles

States and provinces also have an important role to play in reducing plastic pollution in the Great Lakes. Refundable deposits on beverage containers is one alternative that has been successful in several states.

Deposits require consumers to pay a small fee when purchasing a beverage in a can or bottle in several U.S. states. This fee, usually five to ten cents, is then returned to a consumer when that can or bottle is returned. The fee is often applied to metal, glass, or plastic beverage containers for soft drinks or alcoholic beverages. Refundable deposits have been shown to increase recycling.

Michigan, with a refundable deposit of \$0.10, has the highest return rate of any state in the U.S. for items included in the law. But the Michigan law has several exemptions and does not apply to all beverage containers. For example, beverage containers that contain milk products, wine, liquors, hard ciders, tea, sports drinks, juice, or water containing sugar are not included. Advocates are pushing to expand the state's refundable deposit to include water bottles and other non-carbonated beverages.

Fighting Plastic Pollution

CONTINUED

Since the deposit law went into effect in New York State, redemption rates have averaged between 70% and 80%, and beverage container litter has been reduced by 75% according to the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation. In 2009, New York State expanded its refundable deposit beyond soft drinks and alcoholic beverages to include plastic water bottles. While the new law did not cover other non-carbonated beverages like milk products, juice, or sports drinks, research by the New York Public Interest Research Group showed an increase in redemption rates. The 2009 expansion also raised revenue for the state's Environmental Protection Fund by allocating 80% of unclaimed deposits to the fund.

Local and State Microbead Bans Lead to Federal Policy

Sometimes community action can create local policies that lead to huge national changes. Research released in 2012 and 2013 found significant quantities of tiny plastic microbeads in the open waters of the Great Lakes. Upon further study, researchers found that microbeads were coming from personal care products that entered the Great Lakes through wastewater treatment plants. These products, like toothpaste and face wash, used plastic microbeads as exfoliants. Residents and organizations across the Great Lakes began to advocate for bans on personal care products containing plastic microbeads.

Prompted by advocates, Illinois was the first state to pass a ban on plastic microbeads in personal care products. Soon, states across the Great Lakes region and the country began considering similar bills. Where states failed to pass bans, many elected officials and community activists pushed for and secured local level bans, as they did in New York's Erie and Chautauqua counties.

As these laws popped up around the region and country, industries struggled to navigate the patchwork of laws with varying timelines and definitions. They eventually supported Congressional action to pass a federal ban on the manufacture and sale of personal care products containing plastic microbeads, creating a unified national policy.

Now, plastic microbeads in personal care products in the United States have been completely phased out. Manufacture of these products was outlawed in 2017. And the sale of personal care products, like face washes and body scrubs, containing plastic microbeads was banned as of July 1, 2018.

Fighting Plastic Pollution

CONTINUED

More Policy Opportunities to Reduce Plastic Pollution

We've provided just a few examples of policies that can help in the fight to keep plastic pollution out of the Great Lakes. But there are many additional opportunities. Here are just a few more examples.

Type of Policy	Example
	Litter Laws Fine or other penalty for individuals caught littering
	Bans and/or Fees on Specific Products or Behaviors \$0.07 fee on single use plastic bags Prohibition of sale of disposable plastic water bottles at municipal facilities or events
	Deposits on cans, bottles, etc. \$0.05 refundable deposit on carbonated beverage cans
	Recycling Ordinance City law providing curbside recycling collection bins with lids and requiring residents to separate recyclables from trash
	Stormwater Management Plan Regulations that require inclusion of trash, litter, and debris control or capture in stormwater management plan
	Public Education Requires litter prevention messaging at businesses that sell common marine debris items, such as fishing line

Industry Opposition to Reducing Plastic Pollution

Reducing plastic pollution in your community can be challenging. Special interests representing the plastics industry often oppose efforts to limit single-use plastic. Industry lobby groups like the American Chemistry Council, the Progressive Bag Alliance, and others often spread inaccurate claims to support their arguments against plastic pollution reduction legislation. The good news is that we've got facts on our side.



Here are some common pro-plastic myths you might hear, and some responding facts to get you started:

Myth: Fees on plastic items are just another tax. They just generate revenue for the government and don't change behavior.

Fact: Fees are a proven method of motivating people to change behavior. Most fees on plastic items are only a few cents, and revenues are often directed to environmental funds.

Myth: Businesses and consumers rely on single-use plastic. It's fast and convenient. Who has time to remember to bring their own bag anyway?

Fact: There are plenty of common sense alternatives that are readily available. And choosing those options makes it easier to form good habits that are more cost effective, and healthier for both people and the environment.

Myth: Recycling is the answer.

Fact: This myth is problematic for a number of reasons:

- Many plastic items, like straws or plastic packaging, are not recyclable.
- The recycling rate in the U.S. is only about 30%. That means 70% of recyclable items end up in landfills or as pollution in the environment.
- Some items like plastic bags can cause problems at recycling centers, creating tangles and jams in recycling and waste water processing equipment.

Industry Opposition to Reducing Plastic Pollution

CONTINUED

- Profitability of plastic recycling businesses is subject to unpredictable global market forces like oil prices, transportation costs, international processing capabilities, and consumer preference and demand.
- While recycling is an important option for dealing with certain types of waste, reducing consumption in the first place is the most effective way to keep our communities clean and plastic pollution out of our environment.

A Ban on Bans

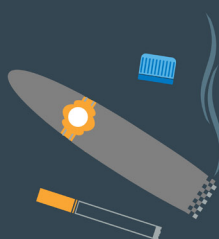
Unfortunately, industry lobbyists have won laws in several Great Lakes states that block the ability of local governments to implement bans or fees on many plastic items — a “bans on bans” so to speak. For example, Michigan, Indiana, Wisconsin, and Minnesota have laws that prohibit municipalities and counties from placing bans or fees on single use items like bags, cups, and bottles. These laws cover a wide range of packaging materials, like cloth, paper, plastic, cardboard, corrugated material, aluminum, glass, and post-consumer recycled material. Basically, an item can't be banned if it's a single-use item used to protect, carry, or consume products from food service or retail facilities.

While we may face challenges, we know that when we work together, we can win. We can learn from communities that have taken significant steps toward reducing plastic pollution. There are lots of potential solutions, and they can all start with you!

Toolkit

Become a Plastic Pollution Advocate in Your Community

We need local champions like you to reduce plastic pollution. We've provided examples of plastic-busting policy solutions. This toolkit is designed to help you drive change in your community and beyond.



Part 1: Building Public Support



Advocating for the changes you want to see means educating people and getting them to support common-sense policies to reduce plastic pollution. Luckily, it's never been easier to get your message out, and we're providing you with tools to help you succeed. This section includes guides and sample materials on the following tools for building public support:

- **How to Write an Effective Letter to the Editor**
- **Digital Tools for Spreading the Word: Tips and Tricks for Effective Social Media**
- **Organize Your Community: Getting the Word Out Face to Face**

How to Write an Effective Letter to the Editor



Writing a letter to the editor can be an effective tool for reaching a broad audience with your message and position on issues that are important to you. Letters to the editor are published on the editorial page in newspapers, which is one of the most read sections in the paper, and are often featured on newspaper websites as well. Many elected officials and their staff also keep tabs on opinion pages to keep in touch with issues of importance to their constituents.

So, how do you write a strong, publishable letter to the editor?

Tips for a strong letter to the editor:

- **Be brief and focused.** Keep it under 200 words, but 150 or fewer is best.
- **Be relevant.** The most publishable letters will respond to specific articles published by the newspaper or refer to current events in a timely manner. Respond to articles within two or three days of publication.
- **Make it personal.** Why do you care? Tell the editor, and readers, who you are and why the issue matters to you and your community.
- **Make your point and back it up.** Clearly make your point. Use facts to back up your claim.
- **Be direct and make a call to action.** Refer to the legislator, organization or other entity by name. Be specific about the action you want them to take.
- **Use your own words.** Be original, don't plagiarize, and don't worry about sounding like a subject matter expert. Your opinion and your voice are what matters.
- **Follow directions.** Most publications accept letters to the editor online and have specific instructions for how to submit your letter. Visit the newspaper's opinion webpage to find instructions or give your newspaper a call to ask.
- **Include your contact information.** Include your name, address, and daytime phone number. Newspapers may want to get in touch with you to verify the letter or if they need to edit it for length.
- **Try, try again.** It's not always easy to get your letter published. So if at first you don't succeed — try, try again!

How to Write an Effective Letter to the Editor

CONTINUED



Below is an example to help you get started; this letter to the editor from Alliance for the Great Lakes staff ran in the Chicago Tribune in 2015.

Please Don't Trash the Great Lakes

Plastic is everywhere. Tiny plastic fibers are in fleece hats and gloves. The shovels used to dig out from a snow storm, the lids on the cups of coffee, snow sleds kids use at a park, the container holding your takeout lunch, the soda bottles bought for parties — all made of plastic.

Invisible microfibers, tiny microbeads, and large floating garbage patches are commonplace, polluting our planet's waters. Most alarming is the plastic pollution in the Great Lakes.

The lakes provide drinking water for nearly 40 million Americans and Canadians and drive an economy that rivals those of entire nations. They are a resource that deserves our utmost care. In two recent research projects, scientists from Loyola University in Chicago and University of Waterloo in Ontario examined data collected by volunteers through the Alliance for the Great Lakes' Adopt-a-Beach program. The studies found that the majority of litter found on beaches around Lake Michigan is left there by beachgoers. And 85 percent of the litter left behind on Lake Michigan beaches is plastic. All of that plastic, from soda bottles to takeout containers, eventually breaks down and ends up in the lakes as microplastics, adding to the plastic pollution problem.

We can all be part of reducing this pollution source. Reduce your use of plastic. Recycle what you can. Place trash in an appropriate trash bin or take it home with you to dispose of properly. Limit your use of throwaway plastic items by using refillable containers.

Olga Lyandres
Research Manager
Alliance for the Great Lakes
Chicago

Jamie Cross
Program Manager, Adopt-a-Beach
Alliance for the Great Lakes
Grand Haven, Michigan

Digital Tools for Spreading the Word:

Tips and Tricks for Effective Social Media

From email to social media to text alerts, information travels quickly and through many different channels. But this can be a double-edged sword. With so much content, it can be a challenge to stand out. When posting on social media, it's important to be clear, concise, and to the point.

Here are a few tips and tricks for effectively communicating your message.

Tips for Effective Social Media Posts

- **Use quality images.** Photos and videos are a great way to catch a reader's eye or spark curiosity. But they can also be an eyesore or a distraction. Be sure to use clear images that are relevant to your issue.
- **Choose a #hashtag.** Hashtags — #plasticpollution, #GreatLakes, #BanTheBead, etc. — are a great way to track a conversation and follow key issues.
- **Grab your reader.** Hook your audience with an interesting fact, photo, or link. For example, link to a recent news article, refer to current events in your community, and use relatable material.
- **Keep it simple.** It's great to provide interesting information, but a social media post is not an encyclopedia entry. Get to the point quickly and clearly.
- **Have a call to action.** Make it clear what action you want people to take after reading your post.



Digital Tools for Spreading the Word: Tips and Tricks for Effective Social Media

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A Closer Look at Social Platforms and Sample Posts

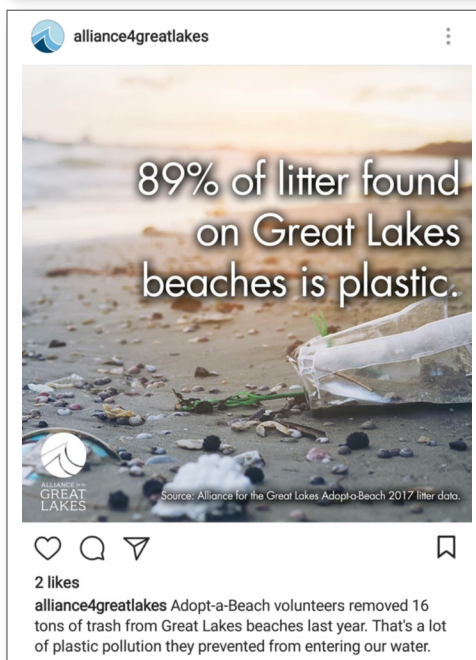
Sample Posts:



Facebook - Posts should include three lines of text or less. Pro tip: When writing your post, once you paste a link address into the post and the preview pops up, you can delete the link address and the hyperlinked preview will remain. And even better, you can edit it! This gives you more control and gives your post a cleaner look.



Twitter - Twitter moves quickly, so hashtags, tagging other users, and visuals are key for getting noticed. There is a tight 240 character word limit. Keep your posts short and to the point, and don't hesitate to let photos and links do some of the communicating for you. Pro tip: Use a URL shortening site like Bitly or Google to save space when you share a link.



Instagram - Instagram is great for sharing eye-catching photos or interesting videos. And a relevant, concise caption can be a really effective way to get your message across. Pro tip: You can't share links in captions on Instagram, so put a link in your bio and let viewers know to find it there.

Organize Your Community: Getting the Word Out Face to Face

There's no reason to go it alone. When you work with existing groups or recruit other community members, you can form a strong, diverse group to fight plastic pollution.

Always set clear goals for engaging community members: Do you want to get petition signatures? Distribute educational materials? Recruit volunteers for upcoming events? Or use your public speaking skills to move people to action? Answering these questions will inform your efforts.



Here are a few ideas for engaging people around plastic pollution:

- **Table at an Event:** Many festivals, community events, and even some stores allow organizations to set up informational tables. Just ask the event organizers or managers if you can set up a table. This is an excellent opportunity to connect with people in an informal setting around their interests and yours.
- **Make an Announcement:** Other community events, like community meetings, service group meetings, and church services, can also be great opportunities to spread the word. Ask event organizers for permission to make an announcement about your efforts.
- **Post Information or Flyers Where People Will See Them:** Even if you can't talk to everybody you want to about stopping plastic pollution, your message can still reach members of your community. Ask to hang informational posters or flyers in public spaces or on community bulletin boards. Shop windows, community centers, and libraries are great places to start.
- **Host Your Own Event:** You can host an event to bring together other community members that support your cause. A screening of a film about plastic pollution or organizing an Adopt-a-Beach cleanup event are fun and informative ways to educate and organize your community.

Organize Your Community: Getting the Word Out Face to Face

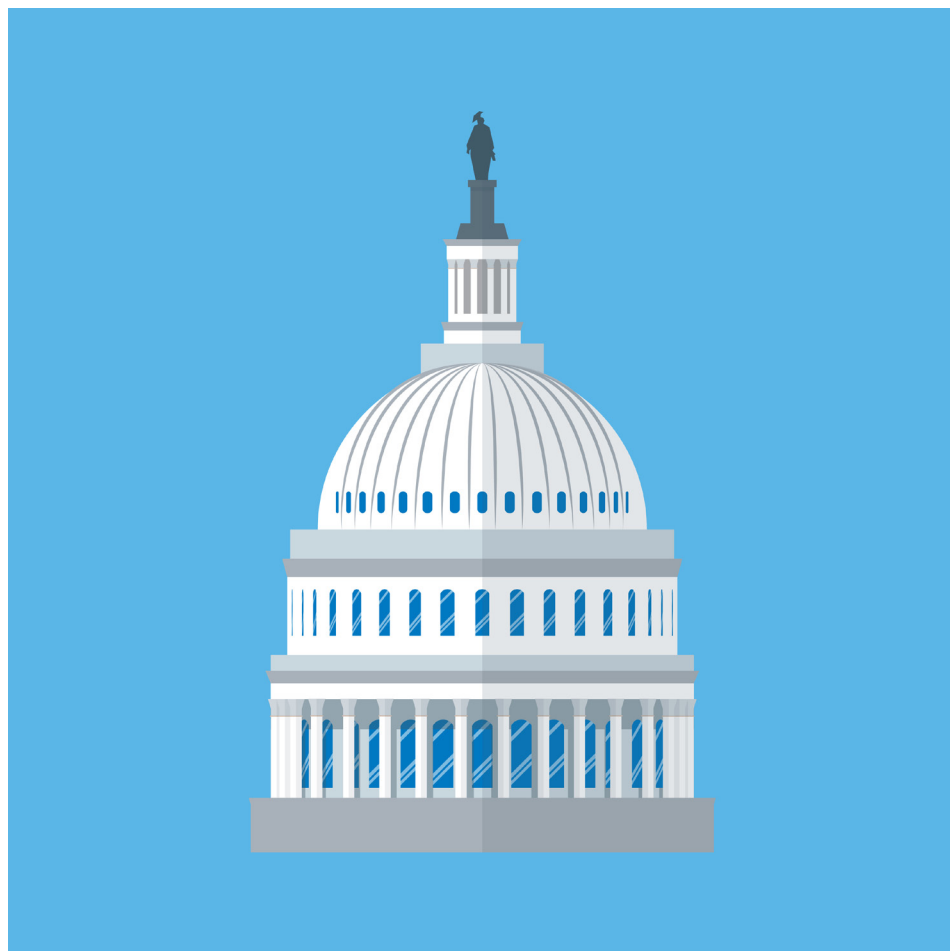
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Below is a list of materials that can be useful when talking to people about plastic pollution:

- **Make yourself a cheat sheet:** Create a list of important points about the Great Lakes and plastic pollution. Preparing your talking points will help you get your message across in a short and effective way.
- **Bring handouts:** Pass out factsheets or information about upcoming Adopt-a-Beach cleanups, public hearings, or other events people might be interested in joining.
- **Bring sign-in sheets or petition forms:** Collect contact information so you can follow up with people who are interested in getting involved. If you're collecting petitions, have copies on hand and consider providing a way for people to sign electronically. Bring pens and clipboards as needed.
- **Bring giveaways:** People love free sustainable or informational giveaways. Stickers, reusable shopping bags, or reusable water bottles can help draw visitors to your table.
- **Use attention-grabbing visuals:** Plastic pollution can be very eye-catching. Bring photos or even actual plastic pollution from your neighborhood. Make a sculpture out of debris collected or the plastic you have used. Be creative!

Part 2: Communicating with Decision Makers



Communicating directly with decision makers is essential to creating change in your community. There are several ways to make your voice and opinion heard. The following tools are designed to help you communicate effectively with decision makers in a range of contexts. This section includes guides and sample materials on the following tools for building public support:

- **Writing a Letter to an Elected Official**
- **Petitions 101**
- **Tips for Talking with Decision Makers:
In-Person and Over the Phone**

Writing a Letter to an Elected Official



Writing to your elected officials is an effective way to communicate your concerns to decision makers and advocate for solutions. This tactic can be especially effective when many constituents write letters about the same issue. When writing to your legislator, consider the following:

- Why is this issue important to your community?
- What is the legislator's track record on this issue, if any?
- What are the legislator's priority issues, and how does plastic pollution connect to those issues, if at all?
- What's the one thing you'd like your legislator to take away from this letter?

Additional tips:

- Keep it short.
- Be direct. State your purpose and make sure you clearly state the policy you want the decision maker to champion or support.
- Thank the legislator for taking the time to read your letter, and for any work the legislator has done on the issue.
- Provide your email and phone number so that someone from the office can follow up with you if they have questions or would like additional information.

Writing a Letter to an Elected Official

CONTINUED



Here's a sample letter or email you can send a local legislator:

Dear Honorable _____ :

As a resident of _____ , I am contacting you today to discuss the issue of plastic pollution in our community and the Great Lakes. Our local waterways are an essential part of our local environment and economy. They are too precious to needlessly pollute with plastic. [Insert your ask here. E.g., request a meeting, ask them to support a specific piece of legislation, etc.]

Plastic pollution was once thought of as a problem only for the world's oceans, far from the Great Lakes. However, researchers recently found microplastics, tiny pieces of plastic smaller than 2.5 mm, in the Great Lakes with concentrations as high as 1 million particles per square kilometer, which is a higher concentration than many parts of the ocean. This is significant because the Great Lakes provide drinking water for more than 40 million people. Many of these microplastics are fragments of larger plastic items like plastic beverage bottles, plastic straws, and plastic bags.

Single-use plastic items, which are only used for a short time, can last in the Great Lakes for decades or longer and can be harmful in many ways: they litter our shorelines and beaches, they can be ingested by wildlife, and they can even enter our drinking water. I have seen the impact of plastic pollution when I visit my favorite shoreline park, _____ , and I am concerned about the impact it is having on our community.

Communities across the Great Lakes are taking action to stop plastic pollution. Many towns and cities have passed ordinances to reduce the use of single-use plastic, launched public education campaigns on the issue, and stopped using single-use plastic items like plastic water bottles at municipal facilities. [Repeat your ask.]

Thank you for your attention to this issue and your hard work to improve our community. I look forward to speaking with you.

Sincerely,

First and Last Name

Contact Information

Petitions 101

One of the most powerful ways to show support for a policy to reduce plastic pollution is to gather petition signatures. Presenting a successful petition to local legislators and other decision makers can be very influential.

A good petition should clearly state the position you are taking and gather important identifying information from supporters—like name, zip code, and some form of contact information. See the example petition to the right for an idea of how to create your own.



Example petition:

Researchers have found that nearly 10,000 metric tons—or 22 million pounds—of plastic debris enter the Great Lakes every year from the United States and Canada. What's worse, plastic never really goes away; it just breaks down into smaller and smaller pieces. Tiny pieces of plastic smaller than 2.5 mm have been found in the Great Lakes with concentrations as high as 1 million particles per square kilometer. These microplastics have been found in drinking water and even beer. Many microplastics are fragments of larger, single-use plastic items like beverage bottles, straws, and plastic bags. These items litter our shorelines and beaches, they can be ingested by wildlife, and now research shows they can even enter our drinking water. Communities across the Great Lakes are taking action to stop plastic pollution, and it's time we join them.

Our local waterways are an essential part of our local environment and economy. They are too precious to pollute with plastic. We the undersigned urge [insert legislator, municipality, etc.] to support a [plastic bag ban/plastic straw ban/etc.] in [your city/municipality/state].

NAME (FIRST, LAST)	ZIP CODE	PHONE NUMBER	EMAIL ADDRESS
1. _____			
2. _____			
3. _____			
4. _____			
5. _____			

Petitions 101

CONTINUED

You can gather petition signatures by door-knocking, tabling, or circulating through email or social media. Set a goal for how many signatures you want to get and a deadline for collecting them.

Once you have your signatures, you can deliver them to your legislators and other decision makers at public hearings, committee meetings, or other events when a proposed policy is being discussed. If there are no scheduled events appropriate to your cause, you can schedule a meeting or drop by a decision maker's office to deliver the petitions.

While the petition itself can demonstrate your community's support, you can also get creative to drive the message home. For example, if you're delivering your petition in person, consider bringing visuals or props to demonstrate the problem and emphasize the need for solutions.



Tips for Talking with Decision Makers:

In-Person and Over the Phone

An in-person meeting or phone call with decision makers is a great opportunity to influence them on an issue you care about. We've provided some tips for the meeting itself, how to prepare ahead of time, and what to do afterward to effectively follow up.

Preparing for Your Meeting

Secure your meeting

- Make your meeting request by email and by phone. Suggest specific times and dates.
- Let them know what issue or piece of legislation (by bill number, if it has one) you want to discuss.
- If you are a constituent of the elected official, make sure the official knows that when you schedule your meeting.

Decide who will be a part of your meeting

- Decide if you will hold the meeting alone or with allies. Consider including people who represent the constituencies that are affected by the issue you are discussing.
- Keep your group small. More than 4-5 people in one meeting can become unmanageable.

Do your research

- Take the time to learn about the person you're meeting with and if they've taken a position on your issue or similar issues in the past.
- Study up on the views and arguments on both sides of your issue.
- Use data, news stories, and other examples to support your position.
- Develop talking points
- Draft 3-5 clear and concise points you'd like to make throughout the meeting and refer back to them throughout.
- If the meeting gets off track, use your talking points to steer the conversation back to your issue.

Make a clear ask

- Clearly define your goal for the meeting and make your objective explicit. For example, are you asking a legislator to vote for or against a bill? Sign a pledge?

Plan and practice for your meeting

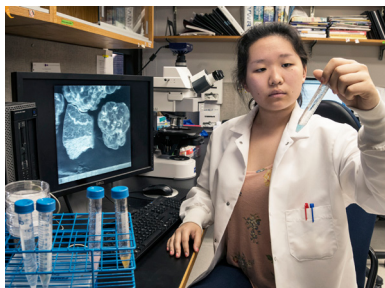
- Whether it's just you or a group, it is a good idea to practice your talking points.
- Have a clear idea of the points you want to make and in what order.
- When meeting as a group, identify roles and responsibilities for each participant. Who will say what?

Bring or offer additional materials

- Be prepared with reference materials such as fact sheets, news articles, or relevant research.
- If your meeting is happening over the phone, offer to send the materials via email or mail.

Tips for Talking with Decision Makers: In-Person and Over the Phone

CONTINUED



During Your Meeting

- **Be prompt and efficient:** Legislative offices generally have packed, tight schedules. Be on time and stay on message.
- **Make it personal:** Introduce yourself, and bring up any relevant personal, professional, or political connections or expertise you have.
 - > Take the time to prepare a brief introduction of who you are, why you're meeting with the decision maker and what you'd like to speak about.
 - > Example intro: *Hi, my name is [your name] and I'm calling from [your location or affiliation] to talk to [decision maker] about potential solutions to plastic pollution in [your city/state/watershed]. Can you connect me with [decision maker] or someone else in your office who would be willing to speak with me about this issue?*
- **Meeting with staff:** In some instances, you will be meeting with staff instead of meeting directly with the decision maker. Staff play a critical role in conveying information to decision makers. Meeting with staff in lieu of the decision maker is still a valuable opportunity and you should treat staff the same way you would a decision maker.
- **Unexpected questions:** If you don't know the answer to a question, never make one up. Make a note of it and tell them you will look into it and get back to them. And then make sure to follow up with the answer.
- **Try to get a commitment:** Try to get a commitment to support your request. Ask questions and wait for the answers. Listen carefully. When in doubt, ask for clarification.
- **Share your visit:** If visiting with a decision maker in person, ask to take pictures with them. If allowed, you can share the pictures on social media. Feel free to share photos with us on social or by sending to alliance@greatlakes.org—we'd love to see you in action!
- **Say thank you:** Thank the decision maker for the time and for any work the decision maker is doing on the issue.

After the Meeting

Review your notes

- Right after the meeting, review your notes and compare notes with others if you attended as a group.
- Get clear on your understanding of what was agreed upon in the meeting.

Say thank you again

- Send a personal thank-you letter to the person you met with, including a reminder of anything he or she may have agreed to do.

Follow up with more information

- If there were questions you were unable to answer or additional materials were requested, follow up on those tasks in a timely fashion.

Resources for Plastic Pollution Advocacy Toolkit

Information and Resources from the Alliance for the Great Lakes

Fighting Plastic Pollution in the Great Lakes - An overview of the problem and links to Alliance for the Great Lakes blog posts on plastic pollution.

Adopt-a-Beach - An overview of the Alliance for the Great Lakes Adopt-a-Beach program and how to get involved.

Microbead Menace - An overview of microbead pollution and links to blog posts about the campaign to ban microbeads from personal care products.

Background on Microplastic Pollution

Invisibles: The Plastics Inside Us - research presented by Orb Media on the presence of microplastics in drinking water around the world.

Plus Plastic: Microplastics Found in Global Bottled Water - research presented by Orb Media on the prevalence of microplastics in bottled water around the world.

Research studies on plastic pollution reduction programs

Preliminary study suggests Chicago's bag tax reduces disposable bag use by over 40 percent - Results of a study commissioned by the City of Chicago to evaluate the impact of its disposable bag policy.

Bottled Up: Beverage Container Recycling Stagnates - Report on beverage container recycling trends and patterns in states with and without container deposit systems.

Can Small Incentives Have Large Effects? The Impact of Taxes versus Bonuses on Disposable Bag Use - Economic analysis of the impact of fees and discounts on changing consumer behavior with disposable plastic items.

New York State Plastic Bag Task Force Report: An Analysis of the Impact of Single-Use Plastic Bags - Report highlighting the economic and ecological impact of disposable plastic pollution and comparing various policy alternatives.

National Conference of State Legislatures: State Plastic and Paper Bag Legislation - Information on which states have existing policies on plastic bags and existing policies pre-empting local municipalities from passing their own policies on plastic bags and other disposable plastic items.

Resources for Plastic Pollution Advocacy Toolkit

CONTINUED

Plastic Pollution Legislation and Government Programs

Below is a list of links to some of the legislation and government programs referred to in this document.

Chicago Checkout Bag Tax - Text of the City of Chicago's disposable plastic bag fee.

Evanston City Code Regulating Disposable Plastic Shopping Bags - Text of City of Evanston's disposable plastic bag ban.

Share-a-Bag and Plastic Film Recycling - Link to information on City of Evanston Share-a-Bag program.

Erie County Microbead Ban - Text of a local policy from Erie County, NY, to ban the sale of personal care products containing plastic microbeads.

Michigan Bottle Deposit Law - Frequently Asked Questions on Michigan's Bottle Deposit Law.

New York State Bottle Bill - Frequently Asked Questions on New York's Bottle Deposit Law.

Illinois Microbead Ban - Text of a state policy from Illinois to ban the sale of personal care products containing nonbiodegradable plastic microbeads.

Microbead Free Waters Act - United States federal ban on the production and sale of personal care products containing plastic microbeads.

Canadian Microbead Bead Ban - Canadian federal ban on the production and sale of personal care products containing plastic microbeads.



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