

National Strategy to Prevent Plastic Pollution:

Part of a Series on Building a Circular Economy for All

Executive Summary



The *Draft National Strategy to Prevent Plastic Pollution*, which is part of EPA's Series on Building a Circular Economy for All, provides voluntary actions that can be implemented in the United States aimed at eliminating the release of plastic waste from land-based sources into the environment by 2040.¹ EPA endeavors to provide an innovative, equitable approach to reduce and recover plastic and other waste, as well as prevent plastic pollution from harming human health and the environment, particularly for communities already overburdened by pollution. Plastic pollution has accumulated over time and will continue to grow as plastic production increases. Therefore, the *Draft National Strategy to Prevent Plastic Pollution*, together with EPA's *National Recycling Strategy*, identifies how EPA can work collaboratively with stakeholders to prevent plastic pollution and reduce, reuse, recycle, collect, and capture plastic and other waste from land-based sources.



With input from stakeholders, EPA identified three draft objectives for the strategy:

- **Objective A:** Reduce pollution during plastic production
- **Objective B:** Improve post-use materials management
- **Objective C:** Prevent trash and micro/nanoplastics from entering waterways and remove escaped trash from the environment

The proposed actions under each objective support United States' shift to a circular approach that is restorative or regenerative by design, enables resources to maintain their highest value for as long as possible, and aims to eliminate waste in the management of plastic products.

Objective A: Reduce pollution during plastic production

Designing products for reuse and recycling, using less impactful materials, phasing out unnecessary products, and ensuring proper controls at plastic production facilities are important upstream actions that manufacturers or consumers can take that can reduce pollution throughout the life cycle of plastic products.

Proposed Actions:

- A1.** Reduce the production and consumption of single-use, unrecyclable, or frequently littered plastic products.
- A2.** Minimize pollution across the life cycle of plastic products.

¹ See the U.S. submission for the second session of the UNEP Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee on plastic pollution:

<https://wedocs.unep.org/bitstream/handle/20.500.11822/41810/USsubmission.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y>.

Objective B: Improve post-use materials management

While EPA's *National Recycling Strategy* identified actions to improve recycling, further increases in circularity can be achieved through other pathways, such as reuse, refill and composting.

Proposed Actions:

- B1.** Conduct a study of the effectiveness of existing public policies and incentives upon the reuse, collection, recycling, and conservation of materials.
- B2.** Develop or expand capacity to maximize the reuse of materials.
- B3.** Facilitate more effective composting and degradation of certified compostable products.
- B4.** Increase solid waste collection and ensure that solid waste management does not adversely impact communities, including those overburdened by pollution.
- B5.** Increase public understanding of the impact of plastic mismanagement and how to appropriately manage plastic products and other waste.
- B6.** Explore possible ratification of the Basel Convention and encourage environmentally sound management of scrap and recyclables traded with other countries.



Objective C: Prevent trash and micro/nanoplastics from entering waterways and remove escaped trash from the environment

Interventions to address trash and microplastics that escape into the environment are necessary for long-term reductions of plastic and other waste in waterways and oceans.

Proposed Actions:

- C1.** Identify and implement policies, programs, technical assistance, and compliance assurance actions that effectively prevent trash/microplastics from getting into waterways or remove such waste from waterways once it is there.
- C2.** Improve water management to increase trash capture in waterways and stormwater/wastewater systems.
- C3.** Increase and improve measurement of trash loadings into waterways to inform management interventions.
- C4.** Increase public awareness of the impacts of plastic products and other types of trash in waterways.
- C5.** Increase and coordinate research on micro/nanoplastics in waterways and oceans.

Next Steps

EPA is opening a [45-day public comment period](#) with the release of this draft strategy. Due to the action-oriented nature of the draft strategy and the need for commitments to execute it, EPA will continue outreach and engagement during the comment period and during finalization of the strategy. Implementation of the strategy is expected to be an iterative process as resources, entities leading efforts, and needs change over time. EPA intends to help facilitate the implementation of actions in the strategy and will provide routine status updates to interested stakeholders.

EPA is seeking feedback on the following questions:

- Which actions are the most important and would have the greatest positive impact at the local, regional, national, and global levels?
Consider:
 - Which actions can best protect human health and environmental quality?
 - Which actions are most important to address environmental justice and climate impacts?
 - What are the key steps and milestones necessary to successfully implement the actions in the draft strategy?
- What are the most important roles and/or actions for federal agencies to lead?
- Is your organization willing to lead an action or collaborate with others to implement the actions?
 - What factors would your organization consider when determining whether to lead an action?
- What are potential unintended consequences of the proposed actions that could impact communities considered overburdened or vulnerable, such as shifts in production or management methods?
- What key metrics and indicators should EPA use to measure progress in reducing plastic and other waste in waterways and oceans?
- What criteria should processes other than mechanical recycling meet to be considered “recycling activities” (e.g., “plastics-to-plastics outputs are ‘recycling’ if the output is a product that could again be recycled into another product or to extent that it can achieve viable feedstock for new plastic materials”)? How should health and environmental impacts be considered in these criteria?
- Are there other actions that should be included in the Strategy?
 - Should EPA expand the scope of the strategy to include sea-based sources?
 - Should specific types of plastic products be targeted for reduction or reuse in this strategy?
- Do you have any additional information or recommendations for EPA regarding these or other proposed actions in the draft strategy?