# Ending Plastic Straw Pollution

- Approximately 500 million plastic drinking straws are used and discarded every day, and 175 billion straws are used a year, in the United States alone.[1]

- Straws are often littered, or caught by the wind, and washed into storm drains that empty into streams, bays, and other waterways, and otherwise end up in our ocean and beaches. Plastic straws are frequently cited as one of the top ten contributors to marine debris pollution.[2]

- Over the past few years, plastic straws have been the sixth most commonly found litter picked up along the California coast in the annual International Coastal Cleanup Day beach cleanups.[3]

- In 2015, over 20,000 plastic straws were picked up during Coastal Cleanup Day cleanups from California beaches.

- Plastic does not biodegrade, but instead, photodegrade into smaller pieces of plastic causing pollution that is virtually impossible to remediate. When plastic enters our waterways, it adsorbs toxic chemicals such as DDT, PCBs, PAHs, and flame retardants found in our waterways. In 2011, the National Oceanic Atmospheric Association found that plastic debris accumulates pollutants such as PCBs up to 100,000 to 1,000,000 times the levels found in seawater.[4]

- Marine life, including sea turtles, can be harmed by ingesting plastic straws and broken down plastic polluting our ocean and waterways.[5] In one upsetting highly publicized recent incident, an endangered Olive Ridley sea turtle was found with a four inch plastic straw lodged in his nasal cavity, inhibiting his breathing and sense of smell, critical to his ability to find food.[6]

- As toxins from marine plastic pollution make their way up the food chain, it poses a dangerous threat to humans and wildlife who consume them, and can lead to health problems including birth defects, cancer, and learning and growth deficits in children. Many plastics contain chemicals that leach out, especially when exposed to weathering, heat, or UV light.[7]

- In April 2012, the City of Miami Beach became the first city to enact a plastic straw ban.[8] Many restaurants in California and across the United States have already voluntarily stopped using plastic straws.[9]

---

[1] See www.thelastplasticstraw.org, and http://ecocycle.org/bestrawfree/faqs (this number is based on estimates from straw manufacturers, and is believed by some to be a low estimate)
[2] See https://www3.epa.gov/region9/marine-debris/pdf/marine-debris-toolkit-epar9-2015.pdf, and http://act.oceanconservancy.org/pdf/A_Rising_Tide_full_lowres.pdf , at p. 8.
[3] See http://www.coastal.ca.gov/publiced/ccd/extinct.html and
[4] See http://marinedebris.noaa.gov/sites/default/files/Gen_Plastic-hi_9-20-11_0.pdf
[5] Id.
[6] See http://www.plasticpollutioncoalition.org/pft/2015/10/27/the-turtle-that-became-the-anti-plastic-straw-poster-child
[7] See New York State Attorney General, at 4; *citing* Mason, S., unpublished data, (State University of New York at Fredonia) Alliance for the Great Lakes public presentation April 29, 2014, available at https://ag.ny.gov/pdfs/Microbeads_Report_5_14_14.pdf
[8] See Miami Beach Municipal Code, § 46-92, and http://big.assets.huffingtonpost.com/20120411titlesagenda_0.pdf
[9] See, e.g., http://thelastplasticstraw.org/restaurant-directory/