



SAVE OUR FUTURE

Beloved Earth Community of Riverside Church

In This Issue

We need holistic societal changes to “save our planet and ourselves from the negative health, climate, and environmental impact of the production, usage and disposal of plastics.” Judith Enck, Beyond Plastics



PLASTICS ARE POISONS, LAST IN MICRO- FORM FOR THOUSANDS OF YEARS AND ARE NOW IN EVERY CREATURE ON EARTH AND IN THE SEA

What are plastics?

Plastics are a wide range of polymer-based materials that include polyvinyl chloride (PVC), polyethylene, polyester, Styrofoam, and others. John Wesley Hyatt produced the first plastic product “nitrocellulose” in 1869, a highly flammable material also known as guncotton, while Leo Baekend invented bakelite, the world's first fully synthetic plastic in 1907. Most modern plastics are derived from fossil fuel-based chemicals like natural gas or petroleum, and use benzene and vinyl chloride, which are carcinogens.

Why are they a danger to life and environment?

Plastics decompose slowly, cause widespread environmental problems to natural ecosystems, are toxic, and have now been found in our land, water, soil, food, and in the human placenta, lungs, bloodstream, and even the heart.

SPECIFICALLY, PLASTICS...

- Are a non-renewable resource, 90% made from chemicals sourced from fossil fuels.
- Are soft, which increases pollution in the world's oceans and all waterways.
- Comprise up to 80% of all marine detritus.
- Are combustible and produce toxic fumes when burned.
- Require a costly and largely insufficient recycling process, as most can not be recycled at all.
- Break down into “microplastics,” which are smaller than five millimeters in size and make up to 90% of surface water marine plastics; and into “microbeads found in exfoliating products, that pour, unfiltered, into waterways.
- Currently make up 10 billion tons on Earth.



OCEAN AND WATERWAYS POLLUTION: THE BIGGEST THREAT

The ocean is the greatest source of life on earth. It provides oxygen and is home to millions of species in the marine ecosystem. Environmentalists have been concerned about the impacts of plastic pollution in oceans, lakes, and rivers. Because smaller fish, or those species low on the food chain like plankton and oysters, consume microplastics when filtering water. Microplastics, and their toxins, get passed upwards through the food chain, eventually getting ingested by large marine animals and humans; particularly in rural, indigenous, and low-income communities that rely on wild foods

Many of the things we use in our daily lives are a threat to wildlife through entanglement or consumption when they're mistaken for food. Turtles often ingest plastic bags, mistaking them for jellyfish.



Hundreds of species across the world --including shellfish and other fish often sold for human consumption--have been found with microplastics in their stomachs. The impact on animal health can range from problems with feeding and reproduction to death.

An estimated 75 to 199 million tons of plastic waste is currently in our oceans, with a further 33 billion pounds of plastic entering the marine environment every single year

But how do plastics get into the ocean?

- Littering (either intentional or unintentional, with the wind or rain sweeping trash into the ocean)
- Illegal dumping or improper waste disposal.
- Leakage from landfill sites.
- Improper disposal of seemingly innocent personal care products.

What We Can Do:



REFUSE and REDUCE plastic use in your everyday life by eliminating single-use plastics, such as bags, bottles, plastic straws, and coffee cups.

THE CULPRITS AND WHY RECYCLING ALONE WON'T WORK

Plastic industries thrive by promoting “false solutions.” Environmental engineers conclude that only containers labeled No.1(pet) and No.2 (high-density polyethylene) get melted down with any regularity, while almost all plastic falls under the definition of garbage. Plastic-recycling businesses are poorly regulated, and most function in Third World countries. Once the plastic is heated, it produces *nurdles* which are potentially toxic when breathed deep into the lungs, causing workers high rates of lung disease. Sadly, less than 9% of materials collected as “recyclable” are recycled, while 91% just sits in landfills, piling up and breaking down slowly into arguably more dangerous microplastics. (National Geographic) Americans produce more plastic waste each year than the residents of any other country.

SUPPORT FOR LEGISLATION

- Advocate for US counties, states and large entities need to hold producers legally and financially responsible to mitigate the environmental impact of their products and packaging. Shift the cost of cleaning up plastic pollution from taxpayers to companies making and using plastic.
- Toward increasing greenhouse emission reduction and environmental justice policies, tell the US Congress to reintroduce the 2021-22 Break Free from Plastic Pollution Act, (BFFPPA) along with the 2023 Protecting Communities from Plastics Act, to provide a national strategy to reduce the production of plastic waste, increase and enforce recycling efforts and decrease overreliance on single-use plastic, and establish a moratorium on most new plastic facilities and petrochemical plants.
- Support UN Environmental Program international initiatives (2023) to ensure financial incentives, eliminate unneeded plastic products, innovate so all remaining plastics are designed for reuse, recycling, and composting; and circulate everything used out of the environment.

Ten More Ways to Keep Microplastic Out of our Waterways and Ecosystems

1. Choose products with minimal packaging.
2. Skip takeout utensils; keep travel-conscious cutlery.
3. Use area protocols to recycle at home and work.
4. LEVEL-UP: Join beach and neighborhood clean-up efforts through Ocean Conservancy and Orange County Coastkeeper.
5. Track all uses of disposable plastic for one day.
6. Find sustainable alternatives (wood, glass, or natural fibers), and use reusable snack bags and food storage wrap.
7. Carry reusable bags for shopping and produce-packing.
8. Encourage family, friends, and neighbors to make changes.
9. Support government policies that reduce plastic, especially single-use plastic. Ireland saw a 94% decrease in plastic bag use with a plastic bag tax.
10. Participate in advocacy groups like Greenpeace, Plastics Advocacy, Beyond Plastic, Ocean Conservancy, Sierra Club, End Fossil Fuel, and Jane Fonda for Fire Drill Fridays. Remember: Reducing plastic is as important as refusing it.

CHALLENGED BY GREEN ENERGY, PLASTIC = FOSSIL FUELS'S NEW GOLDEN EGG

Annually 12 million barrels of oil create 380 billion plastic bags and wraps (EPA), making the plastics industry a subsidiary of the fossil-fuel industry. ExxonMobil, the world's fourth-largest oil company, is also the largest producer of virgin polymers. This connection means companies and corporations like Coca-Cola, Nestlé, Exxon and Shell will resist any effort to reduce plastic consumption, either openly or surreptitiously. Major oil-producing nations like the U.S. oppose mandatory plastic control measures, preferring a “country driven” approach. **For change to happen, we need not just substitution but also elimination, plus a rethinking of our lifestyle.**

MONTHLY VEGAN RECIPE

AMY KATZ'S VEGAN TUNA SALAD



★★★★★

https://www.veggiessavetheday.com/wprm_print/3704

Newsletter content sources:
<https://www.aplustopper.com/advantages-and-disadvantages-of-plastic/> and
<https://www.horiba.com/int/scientific/resources/science-in-action/microplastics-explained/>

Beloved Earth Community

We call Riversiders to protest the climate crisis and care for the Earth through educational programs, greening the church, changing our lifestyles, and courageous political actions. For more information, or to join, contact David King <davidking1089@gmail.com> or Claudia Canasto <canastoclachi@gmail.com>

- The next Beloved Earth Meeting is on Saturday, October 7th, 1:00 p.m.
- To view this S.O.S. online, visit www.trcnyc.org/belovedearthnewsletter



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