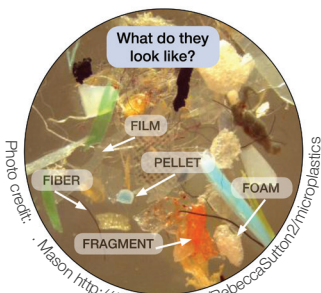


Microplastics

At less than 5mm in size, microplastics are finding their way into surface waters and the food chain.

WHERE DO THEY COME FROM?

Microplastics are found in a variety of forms, such as fibers from synthetic fabrics, pellets that are the raw material for plastic production and the breakdown of larger plastic materials into small pieces.



WHY ARE THEY OF CONCERN?

Once in the environment, microplastics are hard to remove. Even wastewater treatment plants cannot capture and remove all microplastics. Microplastics leach harmful chemicals such as BPA and flame retardants. They may also absorb heavy metals. The tiny particles can then be consumed by wildlife including fish and birds, moving the contaminants into the food chain where they pose risks associated with human consumption.

MICROPLASTICS IN LAKE CHAMPLAIN

Microplastics have been documented in long-term lake and waste water treatment outflow samples throughout Lake Champlain. Microfibers from synthetic clothing are commonly found in the water samples.

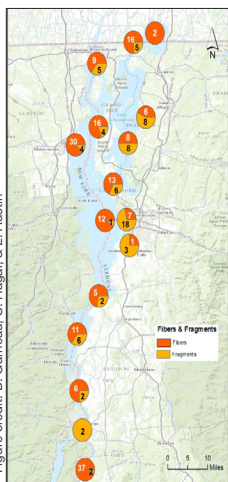


Figure credit: D. Gameau, S. Hagar, & L. Austin

References:

- Kerswar, P. 2016. United Nations Environment Programme from <http://www.unep.org/>.
- Stegman, P. 2016. NOAA from <https://marinedebris.noaa.gov/current-efforts/research>



Photo credit: Bo Eide 2015

How You Can Help

REUSE - BRING YOUR OWN

- Carry metal or ceramic coffee mugs with you
- Remember to bring natural fiber shopping bags to the store
- Use metal or glass lunch containers

RETHINK - IDENTIFY SOURCES

- Ask restaurants to use compostable take-out containers
- Pass on the straw and single-use bags
- Choose products not wrapped in plastic
- Reduce use and washing of microfleece clothing or wash in front-loading machines
- Add a micro plastics filter for your washing machine

REACT - GET INVOLVED

- Participate in cleanup days at beaches and roadsides
- Spread the word!



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