

Congressman Dave Joyce  
2065 Rayburn House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515

February 27, 2024

Dear Rep. Joyce,

Plastic pollution is everywhere and it is harming our waterways and wildlife. That's why we're seeking your support as an original cosponsor of the Plastic Pellet Free Waters Act, which stops the dumping of plastic nurdles into our waterways.

Nurdles are tiny plastic pellets that form the raw material for plastic manufacturing. Because nurdles are small, cheap and easily contaminated, they're often dumped by plastics manufacturers or spilled during transport (1). In the United States, clean water organizations and volunteers have documented pellet dumping and spills in Texas (2), South Carolina (3), Pennsylvania (4) and beyond. A study of 66 beaches in the Great Lakes region found 60 percent contained nurdles (5).

Once plastic enters our waterways, it is easy for animals to mistake it for food. Eighty kinds of seabird (6) and every species of sea turtle (7) have ingested plastic, and concentrations of microplastics have significantly increased in freshwater fish in the Chicago region (8). Animals who eat plastic can starve to death, and plastic pellets can also absorb toxic chemicals including DDT, PCBs, and mercury (9).

Plastic pellets are extremely difficult to clean up once they reach our waterways, and often polluters are not held accountable. One example: In Louisiana, 743 million pellets were spilled from a container ship in the Port of New Orleans. It took weeks to begin clean-up while agencies and companies debated who was responsible, by which point a local expert estimated as many as 75 percent of the pellets had already swept downstream (10).

We need to protect clean water and put wildlife over waste. The Plastic Pellet Free Waters Act would do just that by banning the dumping of plastic pellets into our waterways.

Congress must act before the problem gets any worse. Pellets dumped into our waterways are contaminating the streams and rivers Americans enjoy for fishing, swimming and recreation, and an estimated 10 trillion plastic pellets enter the ocean each year (11).

We urge you to support the Plastic Pellet Free Waters Act to protect our beloved waterways and put wildlife over waste.

Signed:

Ohio

Lake Erie Waterkeeper  
Alliance for the Great Lakes  
Environment Ohio  
Lake Erie Foundation

Illinois:

Triveni Institute  
Go Green Vernon Hills & Lincolnshire  
Bright Beat  
Climate Reality Chicago  
Go Green Glen Ellyn  
Seven Generations Ahead  
Green Dolphin Project Global  
John G. Shedd Aquarium  
Schaumburg Monach Initiative  
Friends of the Chicago River  
Climate Reality Project - Chicago Metro Chapter  
Go Plastic Free  
Organizing for Plastics Alternatives  
Environment Illinois

Michigan:

Freshwater Future  
Environment Michigan

Wisconsin:

Milwaukee Riverkeeper  
Wisconsin Environment

New York:

Seneca Lake Guardian  
WESPAC Foundation, Inc.  
Grassroots Environmental Education  
Environment New York

Pennsylvania:

Three Rivers Waterkeeper  
Beaver Valley Preservation Alliance

Sustainable Pittsburgh  
Wetlands & Ecology, Inc.  
Lower Susquehanna Riverkeeper Association  
PennEnvironment

National:

Clean Water Network  
Waterkeeper Alliance  
Environment America  
Surfrider Foundation  
Environmental Working Group

Footnotes

1. Ashleigh Deemer, "What are nurdles?" *PennEnvironment*, Oct. 16, 2023, <https://environmentamerica.org/pennsylvania/articles/what-are-nurdles/>.
2. Naveena Sadasivam, "Millions of plastic pellets in Lavaca Bay? Formosa says it's just 'trace amounts'" *Texas Observer*, Feb. 4, 2019, <https://www.texasobserver.org/millions-of-plastic-pellets-in-lavaca-bay-formosa-says-its-just-trace-amounts/>.
3. *Charleston Waterkeeper and South Carolina Coastal Conservation League v. Frontier Logistics, L.P.*, Dec. 14, 2020, <https://casetext.com/case/waterkeeper-v-frontier-logistics-lp-1/>.
4. "PennEnvironment, Three Rivers Waterkeeper sue Styropek USA to stop plastic pollution," *PennEnvironment*, Dec. 5, 2023, <https://environmentamerica.org/pennsylvania/media-center/pennenvironment-three-rivers-waterkeeper-sue-styropek-usa-to-stop-plastic-pollution/>.
5. Patricia L. Corcoran et al, "A comprehensive investigation of industrial plastic pellets on beaches across the Laurentian Great Lakes and the factors governing their distribution," *Science of The Total Environment*, Vol. 747, 141227, Dec. 10, 2020, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.scitotenv.2020.141227>.
6. Chris Wilcox, Erik Van Sebille, and Britta Denise Hardesty, "Threat of plastic pollution to seabirds is global, pervasive, and increasing," *PNAS*, Vol. 112 No. 38, Aug. 31, 2015, <https://www.pnas.org/doi/10.1073/pnas.1502108112>.
7. Emily M. Duncan et al, "Microplastic ingestion ubiquitous in marine turtles," *Global Change Biology*, Vol. 25, Issue 2, pp. 744-752, Dec. 4, 2018, <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/gcb.14519>.
8. Loren Hou et al, "A fish tale: a century of museum specimens reveal increasing microplastic concentrations in freshwater fish," *Ecological Society of America*, Vol. 31, Issue 5, Mar. 01, 2021, <https://doi.org/10.1002/eap.2320>.
9. See Deemer.
10. Jacob Wallace, "When plastic pours into the Mississippi, who's responsible?" *E&E News by Politico*, Sept. 29, 2020, <https://www.eenews.net/articles/when-plastic-pours-into-the-mississippi-whos-responsible/>.

11. Neel Dhanesha, "The massive, unregulated source of plastic pollution you've probably never heard of," Vox, May 6, 2022,  
<https://www.vox.com/recode/23056251/nurdles-plastic-pollution-ocean-microplastics>.