



# PLASTIC POLICY SUMMIT

Domestic Solutions  
for a Global Problem

***Key Takeaways***

*May 2024*

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# Introduction

## Impacts of Plastic Pollution

Plastic production and pollution harm communities, livelihoods, ecosystems, and wildlife. Currently, the equivalent of more than one dump truck's worth of plastic enters our oceans every minute. By 2040, plastic production is predicted to double, and plastic pollution entering the ocean is estimated to triple.<sup>1</sup> Plastic production is expected to account for at least 10%–13% of all global emissions by 2050.<sup>2</sup> North American plastic production accounts for nearly one-fifth of global production, and the United States is the largest contributor to global plastic waste.<sup>3</sup>

The problem is clear, and so is the need for immediate action. There is strong public and political will for addressing plastic pollution, with recent public opinion polling showing that [85% of Americans want immediate political action to address plastic pollution](#). All sectors have a critical role to play in advancing voluntary and mandatory efforts to address plastic production and pollution and must work together to be successful.

**With a global treaty on plastic pollution expected by 2025 and strong political and public will, now is the time for urgent action to ensure plastic no longer harms people or the planet.**

## Event Overview

On March 20–21, 2024, World Wildlife Fund (WWF) convened its [second Plastic Policy Summit](#) in Washington, D.C., bringing together 300 policymakers and representatives from businesses, NGOs, and academia. Building on [the 2023 Summit](#), the 2024 event engaged stakeholders on efforts to reduce harm from plastic production and pollution, accelerate coordinated action, and implement and scale successful initiatives.

The Summit's plenary sessions demonstrated a universal commitment to acting on plastic pollution across all stakeholder groups. In his keynote speech, Senator Sheldon Whitehouse advocated for congressional and administrative leadership and emphasized the intersectionality of plastics with other vital land, ocean, and climate issues. Leadership at the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and the U.S. Department of State underlined the Biden Administration's commitment to ending the impacts of plastic on human health and the environment, and the mayor of Blytheville, Arkansas, shared how cities are leading the way toward ending plastic pollution.

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<sup>1</sup> ["Evaluating scenarios toward zero plastic pollution," Science Magazine, July 23, 2020](#)

<sup>2</sup> ["Plastic & Climate: The Hidden Costs of a Plastic Planet," Center for International Environmental Law, May 2019](#)

<sup>3</sup> [Reckoning with the U.S. Role in Global Ocean Plastic Waste, 2022](#)

Across sectors, speakers shared progress made since the last Summit and explained why they feel hopeful about collectively addressing plastic pollution. Leading businesses, including The Coca-Cola Company and Mars, Inc., urged action on an ambitious, legally binding global plastics agreement that [addresses the entire life cycle of plastics](#). Representatives from the [Circular Action Alliance](#) updated participants on implementation in states that have passed Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) legislation and called for alignment on federal EPR legislation. And environmental justice leaders from [RISE St. James](#), [Beyond Petrochemicals](#), and [Azul](#) called for stakeholders to reduce production, invest in safer alternatives, improve community education, and ensure that fenceline communities are consulted and included in all decision-making.

[Through twelve breakout sessions](#), speakers and attendees did a deeper dive on specific pathways to address plastic pollution. These conversations considered how to decrease harm from existing production and use of plastic, optimize product design, and build support for effective legislation at the local, state, and federal levels. Attendees workshopped policy modeling scenarios, built connections to overcome capacity gaps, and brainstormed how to scale reuse and reduction initiatives. This document contains a one-page summary of each of the twelve breakout sessions, reflecting on key themes, upcoming opportunities for action, and additional resources.



# Overarching Themes



**Additional data and research are important, but we already know enough to take action.** New evidence about plastics' impacts on human rights, human health, wildlife, and the environment—as well as the impacts of plastic alternatives—is being published regularly, but we cannot afford to wait until we have every potential data point. Immediate action is both necessary and justified with the existing data.

**While there is no silver bullet solution, many successful legislative and voluntary efforts can already be replicated and scaled.** State policy efforts should be used as a foundation for new legislation, existing federal authorities can be activated to address the problem, and closed-loop systems provide replicable models to cut single-use plastic and shift to reuse. Product redesign, paired with systems change, can reduce problematic materials in circulation, enable reuse, and improve recyclability.

**Collaboration, coordination, and public engagement are all vital to addressing the plastic pollution crisis.** All stakeholders have a role to play in addressing plastic production and pollution, and these groups must work closely together to scale successful initiatives and minimize duplication of efforts. Public buy-in will be critical, and initiatives should strive to include community education, engagement, and empowerment—particularly bringing in underrepresented and frontline communities who are disproportionately harmed by plastic production and pollution.

## Spotlight: Corporate Action

Companies across the value chain are **advocating for regulation to address plastic pollution**. The [Business Coalition for a Global Plastics Treaty](#) is calling for a legally binding treaty to end plastic pollution and level the playing field for businesses. The Business Coalition calls on negotiators to:

- **Develop harmonized criteria to identify harmful chemical substances**, material combinations, product designs, and plastic applications.
- **Promote return and refill models** through a standalone provision.
- **Establish clear definitions and harmonized criteria** on design for circularity.
- **Harmonize EPR systems** around the world with minimum requirements for well-designed and sector-specific EPR systems.
- **Strengthen country waste management systems** and establish minimum requirements for the safe and controlled operation of recycling and waste management.

Domestically, leading companies across the nation are advocating for state and federal EPR legislation. [Brands in OneSource Coalition](#) have **called for a national EPR system** to advance waste diversion targets, incentivize easy-to-recycle packaging designs, stimulate overdue investment and access to recycling systems, and provide clarity to consumers who face an overwhelming system.

WWF has launched the [Blueprint for Credible Action on Plastic Pollution](#), a tool to help companies understand the plastic crisis, set ambitious goals, transform their plastic footprint, advocate for systems change, and invest in circularity efforts. This blueprint includes **key resources, tools, and case studies to help companies develop and execute successful strategies**.





## Spotlight: Environmental Justice

Although plastic production and pollution harm everyone, they have **disproportionate impacts on fenceline and marginalized communities**. Production facilities are frequently established in historically Black neighborhoods. It is imperative that government and plastic producers **create community safeguards, including for local emissions, and develop safer alternatives** to harmful plastics, chemicals used in the production process, and additives. All stakeholders should promote accountability for the damages caused in vulnerable communities. **It is critical that community groups be included in conversations** with government, businesses, and other relevant stakeholders to ensure their voices are heard. Scientific experts should also be consulted on safeguard design, emissions monitoring, alternatives, and the cumulative impacts of pollution on communities.

Federal and international policy mechanisms—across the full life cycle of plastics—can support better environmental justice outcomes. Any international efforts **must include the voices of fenceline communities** and remediate some of the harm they have faced. Domestic action at the federal and state levels can **strengthen community protections, mandate stricter requirements for proposed facilities, and ensure decision-making processes are inclusive** and reflect best practices. The Protect Communities from Plastics Act—last introduced in 2022—offers specific policy approaches for integrating environmental justice considerations. A complete life cycle outlook allows policymakers to push for increased funds for research, upstream regulations, transparency on supply chains and waste management, and regulation on chemicals that harm human health.

# Driving Reduction and Reuse through Legislation



## Key Takeaways

- 1. Incorporating reduction and reuse in legislation can enable wider-scale change.** Although efforts to reduce packaging, phase out problematic materials, and pilot reuse initiatives are valuable, voluntary initiatives alone will not be enough to mobilize a transformational shift to reduction and reuse. Legislative pathways, which could include setting targets, repurposing existing or new infrastructure for reuse, and allocating additional funding, can incentivize this broader shift. Timebound and science-informed targets are likely the most effective, but these should be designed and implemented in such a way as to avoid potential negative unintended consequences.
- 2. Reduction and reuse goals should be incorporated into existing legislative pathways when practical.** Policies such as extended producer responsibility (EPR) and deposit return systems (DRS) can provide funding and infrastructure for reduction and reuse and may provide a more manageable approach to mobilizing resources than entirely new legislation. Ecomodulation fees through EPR legislation offer an example of how to motivate package design that reduces the amount of virgin plastics used and increases the ability to capture the product for recycling or design it to be reusable. However, including reduction and reuse in EPR or DRS may make it harder to pass such legislation.
- 3. Policymakers must consider unintended consequences but should not let negative possibilities or lack of data paralyze potential action.** Without well-designed policy and systems change, reduction and reuse targets could create unintended consequences, including motivating durable items that remain single-use or lightweighting that prevents recyclability. Continued research on potential tradeoffs of alternative materials may be needed. Legislation should consider possible trade-offs and build system requirements that ensure reduction and reuse work hand in hand. However, the biggest risk is that waiting for too much data will maintain the status quo and prevent much-needed action.
- 4. Some products and systems are better suited for immediate reduction and reuse, while others will require greater investment and consideration.** Closed-loop systems (e.g., closed environments like in-house dining or movie theaters) may be a great fit for reuse, while certain product types can offer immediate reduction opportunities. These provide a great opportunity to “start by starting” and can build the foundation for the infrastructure, funding, and legislation needed for wider-scale change.

## What's Next

- Continue engaging in existing and forthcoming packaging laws, including EPR and DRS.
- Engage with the U.S. Plastics Pact, Upstream, and OPLN's new initiative to convert a category of consumer goods to reusable or refillable packaging. [Fill out this form](#) to learn more.

## Learn More

- [U.S. Pact Reuse Policy Guidance](#)
- [SB54 Source Reduction Fact Sheet](#)
- [Upstream Policy Tracker](#)
- [Upstream Lifecycle Analysis Panel](#)
- [Upstream EPR and DRS Policy Principles](#)

## Speakers

**Meredith Soward** WWF  
**Anja Brandon** Ocean Conservancy  
**Sydney Harris** Upstream  
**Roberta Elias** American Beverage Association

# Decreasing Harmful Impacts of Plastics



## Key Takeaways

1. **Environmental justice must be prioritized as the primary strategy for addressing plastic pollution, rather than be treated as an afterthought.** Too often, environmental justice is an add-on consideration in crafting legal frameworks. Impacted communities need decision-makers to engage with them from the outset, drawing on their historical contexts and the disproportionate impact of plastic pollution on their health outcomes. Understanding the historical oppression of Black and Brown communities is vital for informing action, and their involvement in decision-making is critical for effective solutions.
2. **The burden of proof for hazardous chemicals should be shifted from communities to producers.** There is growing evidence that plastic and associated chemicals and additives harm health at all stages of the life cycle. However, legal standards for the hazardous chemicals associated with plastic have not been updated in decades, particularly in the communities where the most production is occurring. At a minimum, impacted communities and advocates want to see producers shoulder costs associated with the burden of proof for the hazardous chemicals associated with plastic production.
3. **Ongoing efforts to decrease the harmful impacts of plastics are important, yet there are too few cases of success.** Communities and advocates are frustrated by some chemical companies' staunch resistance to legal measures proposed by frontline communities, often downplaying the adverse effects of production on local populations. Wins for communities are few and far between. While green chemistry innovations may reduce harm by offering potential alternatives to harmful plastics, breakthroughs will take time. Successful efforts will need scientists and producers to meet with impacted communities to find agreeable solutions that positively impact their quality of life.



# Decreasing Harmful Impacts of Plastics

## What's Next

- Review the [Minderoo-Monaco Commission on Plastics and Human Health](#) to understand the harms of plastic to health at all stages of its life cycle.
- Work directly with rights-holders and frontline communities on any reduction, reuse, and recycling initiatives to maximize positive impacts and avoid unintended consequences.
- Producers should consult communities near existing and planned production facilities and develop plans to minimize the harm to communities. Companies further along in the value chain, along with other stakeholders, can call for accountability from their suppliers.
- Support the [Protecting Communities from Plastic Act](#) when it is reintroduced in the Senate (expected sometime in 2024).
- Update legal standards for hazardous chemicals, such as the process recently undertaken by EPA to consider classifying five chemicals as hazardous under Toxic Substances Control Act.

## Learn More

- [Minderoo-Monaco Report](#)
- [The Descendants Project](#)
- [RISE St. James Chemical of the Month](#)
- [EPA Safer Choice Certified Products](#)
- [UNEP Chemicals in Plastics](#)
- [PlastChem Report](#)
- [TENDR report](#)
- [UNEP Azul Report](#)
- [BRS report](#)
- [A Primer on Compliance and Enforcement Issues for Plastics Pollution](#)
- [Moving Beyond Plastics: The Environmental Justice Impacts of Plastic Pollution](#)
- [MBA: The true cost of plastic pollution: effects, impacts, and hopeful solutions](#)

## Speakers

**Margaret Spring** Monterey Bay Aquarium  
**Jo Banner** The Descendants Project  
**Dr. Kim Terrell** Tulane Environmental Law Clinic  
**Dr. Joel Tickner** University of Massachusetts Lowell

# Reaching the Public: Circularity Education & Outreach



## Key Takeaways

1. **Public engagement and outreach work.** In areas with low recycling rates, data supports that increasing recycling knowledge will improve recycling rates. The same is true for reuse—consumers need clear guidance on how to participate in a reuse system and why it is important.
2. **However, education must be part of a broader shift toward systems change.** Education alone cannot end plastic pollution or the harm from plastic production. While it is critical to build public buy-in, it must be paired with systems change; for example, through building reuse infrastructure and putting in place EPR, including at the federal level.
3. **Effective education requires understanding and adapting to each audience.** Circularity education must be connected to the issues that different audiences care the most about. Rural and conservative audiences may be most motivated by the cost argument, such as shifting the burden of waste management from the taxpayer to the producers or saving money in eateries by reducing unnecessary plastic waste and moving to reuse systems. Emotional connections and centering ideas in their values and beliefs are often the most effective, and complex concepts should be simplified wherever possible.
4. **The public wants more than just education—they want solutions.** Support the public by going beyond the basics and giving concrete, actionable steps such as getting involved in policy advocacy or helping collect data. Citizen science and data-gathering during clean-up can give individuals a greater sense that they are making a difference and increase their connectivity to the issue.

## What's Next

- Integrate the [Recycle Check](#) chatbot by making it available on websites, QR codes, etc.—it can be piloted on products and integrated with local recycling resources. Contact [The Recycling Partnership](#) (TRP) for more information.
- Continue engaging in existing and forthcoming packaging laws, including passage and implementation of EPR and DRS, to ensure strong community education and outreach.
- Consider applying the Plastic Parallel Pathways Platform (4P tool) and keep an eye out for updated versions, which will increase its geographical resolution and add an optimization engine.

## Learn More

- [Mississippi River Cities & Towns Initiative](#)
- [ACP Current Campaigns](#)
- [Recycle Check Chatbot](#)
- [Comparing Parallel Plastic-to-X Pathways](#)
- [Interventions targeting PET bottle recycling in the US](#)
- [Closed-Loop Recycling Technologies for Common Plastics](#)

## Speakers

**Jennifer Wendt** Mississippi River Cities and Towns Initiative  
**Kim McIntyre** Aquarium Conservation Partnership  
**Kate Davenport** The Recycling Partnership  
**Julien Walzberg** NREL

# Connecting the Dots: State Policy



## Key Takeaways

- 1. States serve as a model and testing ground for national and international policies.** States are a “laboratory” for creating policies that can eventually be scaled up to the federal level. States can often lead the way on policymaking due to fewer constraints and more alignment among stakeholders and help build momentum for federal efforts.
- 2. State policymaking processes must incorporate a diverse range of stakeholder interests.** Input from and engagement of local governments, haulers, environmental NGOs, and businesses is essential to ensure various perspectives are considered and effective policy is passed. Voices from rural areas, communities of color, and fenceline communities should also be invited to the table for ongoing discussions and decision-making. By engaging with each other, stakeholders can educate one another and find common ground for the compromises necessary to pass effective policies at the state level.
- 3. States are learning from each other how to pass and implement policies to effectively address plastic pollution.** While there is not a one-size-fits-all approach for state policymaking, stakeholders are building upon bill language and strategies from other states, especially those in their region with similar waste management systems, political dynamics, or populations. Binational and regional partnerships could advance policymaking processes. With more states passing legislation to address this issue, it will be critical to follow policy implementation and take note of best practices and key takeaways.
- 4. Deposit Return Systems (DRS) and Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) can be complementary policies.** When well-designed and implemented, DRS and EPR can work together in a complementary manner to address challenges, improve efficacy, and increase recycling and reuse rates overall. Legislation to include or address Post-Consumer Recycled Plastic (PCR), microfibers, microplastics, and more can supplement EPR and DRS but also address plastic pollution as standalone measures.

## What’s Next

- Keep an eye out for coalition-building opportunities, keeping up momentum from recently passed states.
- Support passage and implementation of state EPR, DRS, and PCR laws, learning from and collaborating with other states.
- Advocate for federal policies that incentivize waste prevention, reuse, refill, and recycled content use and that remove subsidies for virgin materials.
- Improve design to decrease problematic materials and chemicals, which can strengthen state and local recycling systems.

## Learn More

- [NCEL Zero Waste Policy Roadmap for a Plastic-Free Future](#)

## Speakers

**Resa Dimino** SignalFire  
**Dylan de Thomas** The Recycling Partnership  
**Andrea Densham** Alliance for the Great Lakes  
**Martha Ainsworth** Maryland Sierra Zero Waste  
**Susan Fife-Ferris** Seattle Public Utilities

# Optimizing Product Design



## Key Takeaways

1. **Product design is critical to minimizing plastic waste.** Design simplification and optimization drive both upstream and downstream change. Product redesign drives plastic reduction, decreases the amount of waste created, and improves reuse and recycling outcomes for products. Despite existing knowledge gaps, action is needed to phase out harmful substances and additives and improve recycling outcomes.
2. **Collaboration is key.** Product designers should collaborate with their suppliers, share their technology, and integrate consumer input to facilitate the development and implementation of design harmonization and optimization. Efforts should include stakeholders across the supply chain to advance scalability, policy, consumer adoption, and infrastructure.
3. **Road maps for how to effectively tackle reduction, optimization, and problematic materials already exist.** While additional innovation is needed, companies can already work to reduce problematic materials, shift to harmonized designs for reuse systems, and design for our existing recycling systems. Design standards like the Association of Plastic Recyclers (APR) Design Guidelines and the U.S. Plastics Pact's Problematic, Unnecessary, and Avoidable Materials list provide helpful starting places for design change.
4. **Opportunities to integrate design standards into legislation and the global treaty are integral to finding solutions across the plastic life cycle.** Widespread design standards are the only way to ensure universal uptake of design for reduction, reuse, and recycling. California's Truth in Labeling law is a strong example of an effective policy that protects consumers and recyclers by integrating design into regulations. The global treaty could ensure global standards for businesses and incentivize product optimization.

## What's Next

- Review the U.S. Plastics Pact's Problematic and Unnecessary List and watch for the updated list in summer 2024.
- Address the innovation challenge head-on with multi-stakeholder collaboration and support.
- Support policy initiatives that drive harmonization for packaging and recycling.
- Advocate for design standards in the Global Plastics Treaty; companies are invited to join the Business Coalition for a Global Plastics Treaty, and policymakers should review the Business Coalition's policy briefings on [Product Design](#) and [Phase Outs of Harmful Materials](#).

### Learn More

- [APR Design Guide](#)
- [U.S. Plastics Pact Problematics and Unnecessary Materials List](#)
- [Colgate-Palmolive's Recyclable Tube](#)
- [Business Coalition: Product Design](#)
- [U.S. Plastics Pact Problematics and Unnecessary Materials List](#)

### Speakers

**Kate Bailey** Association of Plastic Recyclers  
**Anne Bedarf** Colgate-Palmolive  
**Anton van Zyl** The Coca-Cola Company  
**Erica Nuñez** The Ocean Foundation  
**Shannon Bouton** Delterra



# Leveraging Finance for Change



## Key Takeaways

- 1. Plastic use creates risks for companies and investors.** Companies are facing regulatory, reputational, and legal risks related to plastic—and investors are starting to factor these risks into their decision-making. Over 40% of companies disclosing through CDP on plastic in 2023 stated that plastic-related regulatory risks are material to their business.
- 2. Standardized disclosure is needed to level the playing field, provide certainty, and reduce business risks.** Both federal legislation and the Global Plastics Treaty should be pursued to increase the quality and consistency of reporting. Many companies report through several different reporting mechanisms with different questions and different metrics, creating reporting fatigue and complicating the information that is publicly available. A common disclosure system for plastic will lead to increased transparency and will help companies both internally, through better insights and decision-making, and externally with their stakeholders.
- 3. Disclosure should aim for harmonization, which enables informed decision-making.** Disclosure initiatives should be harmonized and streamlined, supporting companies to disclose more and better data and removing potential barriers to reporting. Disclosure should also give investors, NGOs, and other stakeholders the comparable, decision-useful data they need. CDP's expansion into plastic disclosure provides a way to influence well beyond the 20% of the packaging market currently signed on to EMF's Global Commitment. In 2023, almost 3,000 companies disclosed on plastics through CDP's water security questionnaire. From June 2024, with the introduction of an integrated questionnaire covering all environmental themes, all companies disclosing to CDP (of which there were over 23,000 in 2023) will be able to disclose on plastics.

## What's Next

- Check out CDP's [findings](#) from its first year of plastic disclosures.
- Learn more about [disclosing as a company](#) or becoming an [investor signatory](#).
- Collect data on plastic-related impacts from corporations and other entities using standardized metrics and methodologies.
- Advocate for mandatory corporate disclosure in the Global Plastics Treaty.

## Learn More

- [CDP Scaling Plastics Disclosure](#)

## Speakers

**Darren McCrate** CDP  
**Radhika Mehrotra** CDP  
**Douglass Guernsey** The Green Century Fund  
**David Clark** Amcor Limited

# Activating Existing Authorities



## Key Takeaways

- 1. The federal government already has authorities in place that can be utilized to address plastic pollution.** Federal agencies can leverage existing authorities to address the full life cycle of plastics without congressional action. By examining the full scope of existing law, including the Clean Air Act; Clean Water Act; Toxic Substances Control Act; Resource Conservation and Recovery Act; Food, Drug, and Cosmetic Act; Marine Plastic Pollution Research and Control Act; and Public Health Service Act, the U.S. government can decrease waste generation, encourage innovative product design, improve waste management, and increase interagency data collection.
- 2. Existing authorities should be updated to strengthen the government's ability to address emerging plastic pollution issues.** As research is conducted on new areas of concern, such as microplastics and per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS), revisions to existing federal authorities will be necessary. By updating these authorities, the federal government can establish more efficient risk assessment and review practices. However, current legal disputes over agency deference may limit the government's regulatory abilities in the future.
- 3. Procurement policies provide a tool for quick action against plastic pollution.** Procurement policies can be updated much faster than many other federal standards and can leverage the significant purchasing power of the federal government. By shifting procurement policies to use less problematic and unnecessary materials and increase the amount of reuse and recycled material usage, agencies can drive positive market and consumer change. This can also help incentivize businesses to revise their packaging to align with new federal procurement policies.
- 4. Federal plastic pollution priorities and implementation plans should be established.** A whole-of-government approach requires federal agencies to collaborate on national strategies and tactics to address plastic pollution. As the EPA's Draft National Strategy to Prevent Plastic Pollution is finalized, existing authorities should be considered. Additional efforts, including federal legislative and agency action, will be necessary to ensure federal, state, and local governments can implement ambitious domestic and global initiatives.

## What's Next

- Review [Existing U.S. Federal Authorities to Address Plastic Pollution – A Synopsis for Decision Makers](#) and reach out to Monterey Bay Aquarium and Environmental Law Institute if interested in receiving updates to the report and any further analyses on this topic.
- Analyze the existing federal authorities proposed in the report and encourage agencies to fully activate and leverage those that could support domestic progress and international ambition in the treaty negotiations.

### Learn More

- [Existing U.S. Federal Authorities to Address Plastic Pollution](#)
- [ELI PFAS Deskbook](#)
- [Attorney General's Letter to the Biden Administration](#)

### Speakers

**Muftiah McCartin** WWF  
**Margaret Spring** Monterey Bay Aquarium  
**Cecilia Diedrich** Environmental Law Institute  
**Samir Abdelnour** Hanson Bridgett

# Modeling Scenarios to Address Plastic Pollution



## Key Takeaways

1. **There is no one-size-fits-all solution to end plastic pollution.** The Pew Charitable Trusts, with partners, is conducting an analysis of the United States plastics value chain, with the use of its Pathways Tool, in order to contribute to the development of evidence-based interventions tailored to address plastic pollution nationally.
2. **Despite effective municipal solid waste management, the U.S. is among the largest plastic polluters in the world.** Findings from a preliminary baseline analysis of the U.S. plastics value chain found that only about 4% of U.S. plastic waste generation ends up as pollution. Though this number is relatively low, this is the equivalent of 1.7 million metric tons of waste leaking into the environment, which is among the highest contributions in the world. These figures highlight not only the scale of plastic waste produced in the country but also the U.S.'s contribution to plastic pollution globally.
3. **There are three key drivers of plastic pollution in the U.S.** The initial baseline analysis revealed that the U.S. has the highest waste generation per capita, even doubling or tripling that of other high-income countries. Second, the analysis found that the composition of our plastic waste is almost evenly distributed among the rigid, flexible, and multi-material/multilayer plastic types. This profile of plastic use differs from other high-income countries, where 50% is rigid plastics, and is noteworthy because flexible and multilayer plastics leak into the environment as pollution more than rigid plastics. Finally, the U.S. generates a significant amount of microplastic pollution, with the initial analysis focused on tires and textiles.
4. **Attendees are eager to participate in the process.** Participants engaged in polling and voting exercises to provide input on model assumptions and potential policy scenarios. Some areas that stood out are taking a regional approach and being clear about how those regions are defined, taking a holistic view of the U.S. plastics value chain, and constructing scenarios around policy realities, such as the impact of national EPR legislation.

## What's Next

- Pew is incorporating additional data sources and using the feedback from the session to inform the development of policy scenarios for reducing plastic pollution in the U.S. The analysis is expected to conclude by the end of the year.
- Attendees interested in the analysis are encouraged to provide data sources where available or share additional feedback. Contact Leah Segui ([lsegui@pewtrusts.org](mailto:lsegui@pewtrusts.org)) to learn more and contribute.

### Learn More

- [Breaking the Plastic Wave: full report](#)
- [Pathways Tool factsheet](#)
- [Pathways in South Africa: full report](#)

### Speakers

**Leah Segui** The Pew Charitable Trusts  
**Kerrilyn Miller** The Pew Charitable Trusts  
**John Gilroy** The Pew Charitable Trusts  
**Winnie Lau** The Pew Charitable Trusts

## Mapping Capacity and Knowledge Gaps



### Key Takeaways

1. **Collaboration and information-sharing across sectors can maximize the potential of research, resources, and capacity.** Many resources already exist, but certain sectors lack knowledge or access to this information. When searching for resources or research, stakeholders should reach out to academics, NGOs, and other institutions to see if the information already exists or could be researched. They may be able to share existing resources, build connections with experts, and share their own summaries of major reports.
2. **Investing in students and early career development can foster a circular workforce and drive action.** Graduate students can provide additional capacity and research through programs like Northeastern University's six-month "co-op" internships. Companies, governments, and NGOs can work with students and universities to develop new research, both addressing capacity needs and generating a new workforce that is interested in and experienced at addressing plastic pollution.
3. **University campuses offer prime locations to pilot reduction and reuse initiatives.** Universities have clear data about consumption patterns, existing communication methods with consumers, and semi-closed systems. These assets could be utilized to drive new procurement strategies, test approaches to behavior change, and pilot new models to decrease packaging. Students and professors can contribute to researching, iterating, and gaining feedback on modes of product delivery. These efforts can refine and amplify reuse initiatives for broader adoption and foster a culture of sustainability among students.
4. **NGOs can aid local governments looking to apply for and manage grants.** Funding is a key component of being able to address capacity and knowledge gaps, but applying for, managing, and reporting on grants can be cumbersome. When local governments or small NGOs lack the resources or capacity to hire grant managers, larger NGOs may be able to support grant application and administration.



## What's Next

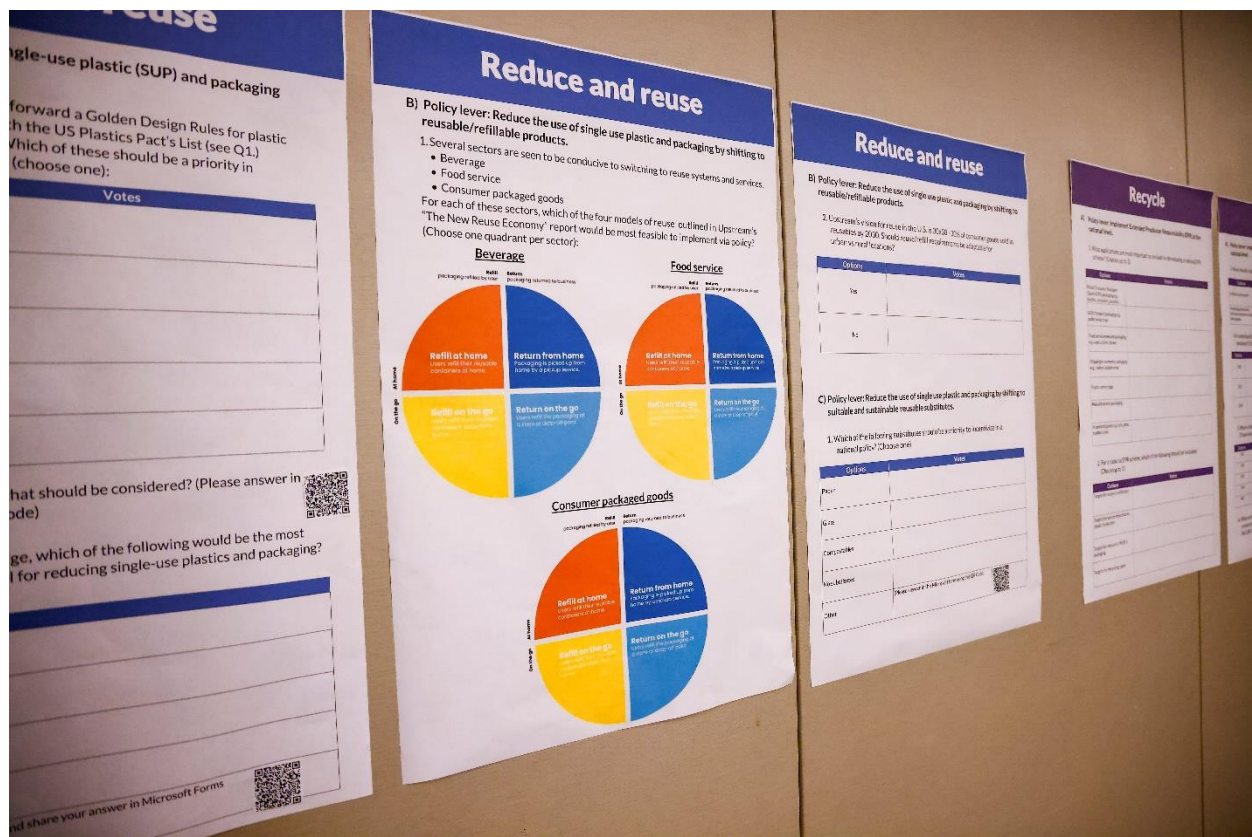
- Foster collaboration and partnerships with other Summit attendees through sharing resources and summaries, meeting regularly for information exchange, and more.
- Develop public-private partnerships, particularly with an eye to bolstering capacity and piloting new projects and initiatives.
- Reach out to Dr. Maria Ivanova if interested in hosting a Northeastern graduate student for a six-month "co-op" internship to augment capacity.

## Learn More

- [Minderoo-Monaco Commission Report](#)
- [Pew Breaking the Plastic Wave](#)
- [UNEP Chemicals in Plastics](#)
- [EPA Safer Choice Certified Products](#)
- [U.S. Plastics Pact's Problematic and Unnecessary Materials List](#)

## Speakers

**Maria Ivanova** Northeastern University  
**Meredith Soward** WWF



# Eliminating Problematic Materials



## Key Takeaways

- 1. While there are different definitions of “problematic” materials, phase-outs are essential to limiting plastic pollution.** Different stakeholders define “problematic” or “unnecessary” plastics differently, but they are generally considered to include plastics that are most likely to leak into nature and those that cannot be recycled. Companies and governments alike should work to define a common list of problematic materials that are specific to national or regional conditions, and then phase out, replace, and redesign these materials. Additional discussion may be needed for further alignment on which materials are the highest priority for immediate phase-out and which need development of safer alternatives.
- 2. There are a variety of approaches to incentivize reduction of problematic materials.** Methods of phase-outs include outright bans with enforcement; fees and disincentives (including ecomodulation fees through EPR); consumer engagement; and investment in innovation, redesign, and alternatives. Public-facing spaces, such as parks, zoos, aquariums, and museums, can pair phase-outs with education about the harmful impacts of materials or products to spread awareness.
- 3. Standardized approaches to tracking consumption of plastics, including problematics, are necessary to measure progress from phase-outs.** Data that tracks plastic production from businesses and use by other entities can serve as a benchmark to drive competition across organizations, allowing for greater advancements and harmonized efforts to eliminate problematic materials. Straightforward and consistent information for consumers is also essential to ensure that the public understands the value of behavior changes and can work collectively to decrease unnecessary waste.

## What’s Next

- Continue building alignment about the value of eliminating problematic and unnecessary materials, especially among corporate communities.
- Drive consumer engagement and industry education on strategies to eliminate problematic and unnecessary materials, especially in high-turnover industries such as restaurants.
- Keep an eye out for the updated version of the U.S. Plastics Pact Problematics List, to be shared this summer, and drive efforts to phase out these materials through investment, education, fees, and other incentives.

## Learn More

- [U.S. Plastics Pact Problematic List](#)
- [National Parks Elimination and Reduction Plan](#)

## Speakers

**Dave Clark** Amcor Limited  
**Shawn Norton** DOI National Park Service  
**Kim McIntyre** Aquarium Conservation Partnership

## Scaling Reuse in Cities and Events



### Key Takeaways

- 1. Reuse works—there are many examples of successful and scalable reuse programs.** City-level initiatives demonstrate that reuse can be successfully integrated across a variety of programs and that high return rates are possible with education and engagement. Modeling suggests that reuse should strive for 90% return rates, but lower rates can still break even on financial and material costs. Public-private partnerships are effectively supporting reuse initiatives in multiple cities, and business-to-business (B2B) already uses a substantial amount of reusable packaging in non-consumer-facing formats.
- 2. For reuse structures and programs to be fully scalable, there needs to be a supporting ecosystem in place.** Reuse is a systems-change issue. Reuse innovators should work with communities to build systems that meet their needs and circumstances to ensure the long-term sustainability of such programs. Initiatives to create shared infrastructure, such as community washing hubs, can further the systems approach. Reliable funding is also critical for reuse programs to function in the long run.
- 3. Infrastructure development must consider equity and accessibility to create reuse systems across sectors that work for all.** Getting reuse infrastructure in place is the lynchpin to making reuse not only accessible to, but also affordable for all. Specifically, we must ensure that collection sites are dispersed throughout all communities within cities and states and not only targeted in certain populations. This should be paired with consumer behavior considerations, such as costs and education efforts.

- 4. Increased industry and cross-sector collaboration will enable practitioners to compare and scale up proven best practices.** There is a need to convene industry representatives across the supply chain and across the public and private sectors to examine overlapping approaches and best practices to better integrate reuse within their standard procedures. Reuse will be most successful if there is broad buy-in and investment.

## What's Next

- When scaling reuse in cities, look to develop partnerships with the state health department to collaborate on navigating or changing state health codes to allow for reuse.
- Cities can promote reuse through bring-your-own (BYO) initiatives, create incentives for businesses, and raise awareness. Businesses can pilot reuse in partnership with cities.
- Schools are a key target for piloting reuse programs as they have high volumes of product use and can have a high impact in reducing single-use waste. Stadiums and other venues are also key locations that already have the scale and funds to implement programs.
- Stakeholders can advocate for or allocate greater funding for reuse programs, and corporates can seek out reuse pilots to support.

### Learn More

- [SystemIQ: Reuse Revolution](#)
- [Upstream's Conservative States Group](#)
- [Chart-Reuse Software](#)
- [Reuse for Onsite Dining Library](#)
- [Perpetual's Reuse Newsletter](#)
- [Earth Action's recent report](#)
- [Reuse Seattle](#)

### Speakers

**Julia Koskella** SystemIQ  
**Crystal Dreisbach** Upstream  
**Michael Martin** R.World  
**Pat Kaufman** PR3  
**Ellie Moss** Perpetual



# Building Consensus for National Policy



## Key Takeaways

1. **A national Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) policy or framework must be sensitive to regional differences.** To be effectively implemented, national EPR will need to consider and account for regional differences and existing infrastructure in different states. Existing state-level EPR policies should not be dismantled, but a national EPR policy can provide harmonization. A regional approach to national EPR implementation will bring together states with similar waste management systems and create regional markets for recycled materials.
2. **Businesses will benefit from advocating for a national EPR policy or framework.** Currently, industry has to comply with standards that are different in every state. A national EPR policy can provide standardization, where applicable and helpful, across the country. The supply of post-consumer recycled content will increase as the cost of these materials decreases. This will help businesses meet their sustainability goals, and it is critical for the private sector to show up and support efforts for a national EPR framework or policy.
3. **A national EPR policy or framework will allow for greater data collection and accountability measures.** Funding collected from a national EPR system can be used to invest in new technologies to better gather waste management data. Products would be assigned a monetary value based on their recyclability, which would encourage innovative product design and increase corporate responsibility. These improvements will help fill existing data gaps and increase overall recycling rates.

## What's Next

- Consult with stakeholders from states that are currently drafting, passing, and implementing EPR legislation at the state level.
- Convene stakeholders across the plastics value chain—such as businesses, haulers, government officials, and NGOs—throughout the policymaking process and encourage compromise.
- Educate Congress to show that there is momentum for a national EPR system.

### Learn More

[WWF-ABA Joint EPR Principles](#)  
[Increasing Recycling Rates with EPR Policy \(TRP\)](#)

### Speakers

**Erin Simon** WWF  
**Kate Davenport** The Recycling Partnership  
**Kate Bailey** Association of Plastic Recyclers  
**Alex Schenck** Walmart

## Conclusion

At WWF's Plastic Policy Summit, participants emphasized the need to take urgent and effective action on plastic waste and pollution. Plastic pollution is increasing exponentially and requires an all-hands-on-deck approach to end it. In light of [public momentum](#) and the ongoing treaty negotiations, it is critical that all stakeholders contribute to both voluntary and mandatory measures to end plastic pollution.

Local, state, and federal governments all have a pivotal role to play in addressing plastic pollution. Through utilizing existing authorities, federal agencies can drive progress on domestic plastic waste as well as negotiate an ambitious global plastic treaty. Congressional opportunities remain to advance legislation that would encourage reduction, foster reuse, improve recycling, and protect communities from harm. State and local governments can implement policy frameworks that could later be scaled to regional and federal legislation, as well as mobilize funding and public-private partnerships toward effective solutions to plastic pollution.

The private sector can lead the way through voluntary efforts, such as innovating design and driving systems change, while continuing to advocate for ambitious domestic and global policy. Public-private partnerships can enable maximum impact and quick testing and scaling of innovative solutions. Companies can build resilience against environmental risks and become more appealing to investors, as well as tap new markets for reusable and lower-waste products. The private sector should also engage in public-private partnerships, which can effectively drive innovation and solutions. Redesign will be a critical piece to minimizing plastic pollution at the source, and companies have the opportunity to act right away.

NGOs, activists, and academia must continue to research and advocate for solutions that make plastic production and pollution less harmful. These entities can also bolster capacity through undertaking research and analysis of critical issues, providing expert consultations for government and the private sector, and participating in public-private partnerships. Through continued advocacy and research, NGOs and activists can push for a just and urgent transition to a circular economy.

Collaboration between all sectors is critical to effectively ending plastic pollution. Sectors cannot work in silos and must work closely to amplify, replicate, and scale solutions. Through a whole-of-society approach, companies, NGOs, activists, academia, state and local governments, and the federal government must work together to collectively create a future where plastic no longer harms people or the planet.

