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## REDUCING

# PLASTIC CONSUMPTION

The public conversation around plastic often focuses on detrimental plastic waste in the ocean. While plastic entering the environment as waste is a serious problem, it's only a piece of a much larger issue.

Plastics contribute to climate change throughout their entire life cycle--from fracking and extraction of virgin resources, to production at chemical processing plants that emit air pollution, to their disposal in the environment or at landfills.

The plastic industry is the second largest and fastest-growing source of industrial greenhouse gas emissions. Almost all plastic, the CIEL researchers found, — including resins, fibers and additives — is derived from fossil fuels, including oil, coal, and gas.

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**Worldwide, roughly 300 million metric tons of plastic is produced each year. Plastic production is projected to double in the next 20 years and nearly quadruple by 2050--and 50% of that is due to the production of single-use disposable plastics.**

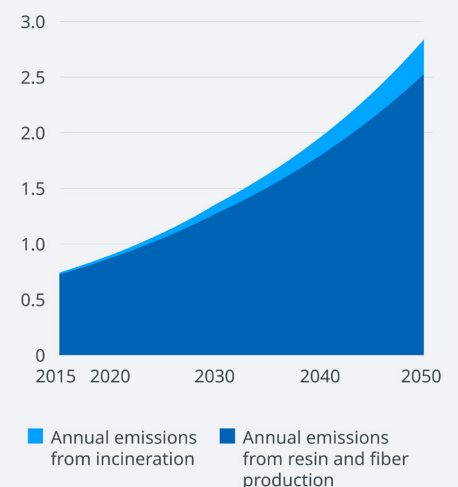
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Nothing we use for a few minutes should be allowed to pollute our soil and water and persist indefinitely in our landfills or environment. Plastics never truly go away, yet they are being produced at an astronomical rate and accumulating in our environment. Only 9% of plastics have ever been recycled, and many plastics--including most single-use plastics like plastic cups, bags, utensils, take-out containers, and straws -- are not recyclable at all.

**We cannot rely on recycling to take care of this problem and its climate impacts; we must reduce plastic production and consumption.**

### Annual plastic emissions 2015–2050

Measured in billion metric tons



Source: Plastic & Climate: The Hidden Costs of a Plastic Planet, May 2019; Center for International Environmental Law.



## Our work focuses on these action strategies:

### MAKE IT LEGAL FOR COLORADO COMMUNITIES TO BAN DISPOSABLE PLASTICS

Under Colorado's state statues (C.R.S. 25-17-24) local communities are prohibited from banning disposable plastic products such as bags, straws, utensils and polystyrene take-out containers. Removing this pre-emption would provide local communities with more options for how to manage the costs and environmental impacts of these polluting products.

**Eco-Cycle helped draft a bill that would strike the plastic preemption in Colorado. While there are 13 states with plastic preemptions, Colorado is the only state introducing a bill that would lift the preemption. In 2020, we will work to raise public and legislative support for the passage of this bill.**

### BAN FOOD- GRADE POLYSTYRENE (STYROFOAM)

Polystyrene is one of the most harmful plastics to human health, according to the Center for International Environmental Law. Styrene, the basic component of polystyrene, is considered to be a carcinogen based on induced cancers and genotoxicity. Studies have shown workers exposed to styrene have increased mortality or incidences of lymphohematopoietic cancers, with evidence for pancreatic and esophageal tumors.

**Eco-Cycle helped draft a bill that would ban food-grade polystyrene throughout the state, including polystyrene food and beverage containers. Other cities with polystyrene bans report a decrease of polystyrene litter up to 71%.**

### CREATE INDUSTRY-WIDE PACKAGING SOLUTIONS

Much of the current plastic production (and predicted increase in plastic production) are generated for food packaging. Eco-Cycle is working with industry pioneers seeking solutions to reduce plastic waste. For example:

**Eco-Cycle's Grain Bag Recycling Program, in partnership with Avery Brewing.** Colorado has the fourth most breweries per capita in the U.S. with more than 400 craft breweries. Sustainability has always been important in the craft beer industry, but one material has been especially difficult to manage: plastic grain bags, which have not had a recycling market - until now. Eco-Cycle and Avery Brewing are pioneering a grain bag collection system and developing a market to recycle plastic grain bags.

**Researching alternatives to plastic packaging for the pet food industry, in partnership with Only Natural Pet.** Many industries, including the pet food industry, use plastic pouches to package their product. Plastic pouches are not recyclable, so Eco-Cycle is working with the pet food and health food industries to research how redesigning their packaging and considering reusable alternatives might eliminate this waste and its impact.