

MICROPLASTICS: THINGS TO KNOW



What are they?

Microplastics are an emerging pollutant of concern. **These small plastic particles found in the environment are less than 5 mm in diameter** (smaller than the width of a pencil eraser)! While these are often not visible to the naked eye, they can be as dangerous as larger plastic trash.

Because they don't biodegrade, they can be ingested or incorporated into the tissues of many organisms. Microplastics can either be manufactured directly like microbeads in beauty products, or result from the breaking apart of larger plastics.

Microplastics are found throughout the world in both air and water. **When they are present in high levels, they can negatively impact aquatic life and human health.**

What are we doing about them?

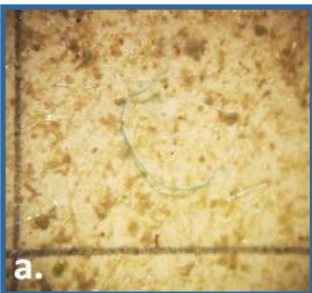
To reduce the amount of microplastics introduced to our waterways, we first need to know where and what amount of them are present. That's why the **CHNEP is partnering with the Gulf of Mexico Alliance (GOMA)** on their microplastic samplings across the Gulf of Mexico, and with **Florida Sea Grant's Microplastic Awareness Project**.

CHNEP provides equipment and support for the Sea Grant **CITIZEN SCIENCE MICROPLASTICS MONITORING PROJECT**. Volunteers collect and analyze sand and water samples from all over the Charlotte Harbor area.

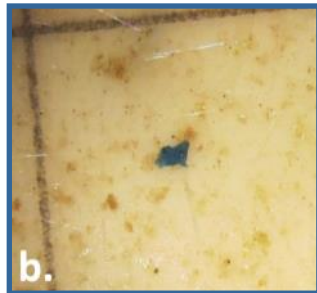
Please contact Charlotte County Sea Grant agent Betty Staugler to become a volunteer:

Under a Microscope

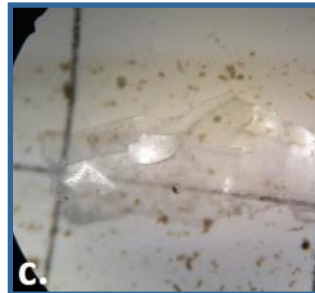
FIBERS: look like thin threads and are often colored



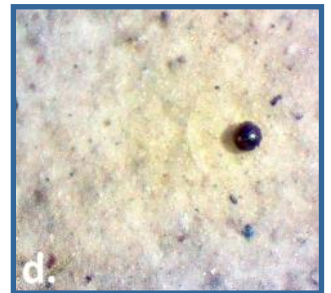
FRAGMENTS: pieces of plastic with varying shapes



FILM: thin pieces of plastic (e.g., plastic food wrappers)



MICROBEADS: small spherical plastic pieces



How You Can Help

Step 1: Sign up to become a Citizen Scientist at www.chnep.org.

Step 2: Check your emails periodically for invitations to attend a volunteer training event.

Step 3: Collect samples from sandy beaches and waters near you.

Step 4: Process samples at the sample processing station near you.

If you can't volunteer, please consider donating to support the continuation of this important work at chnep.org

Water Sampling



Sediment Sampling



What can **you** do to reduce microplastics pollution? **Here are five fast things to do!**

- 1) Avoid products with microbeads (which if manufactured before ban went into effect, are still for sale. Look for the words “polyethylene” or “polystyrene” on the ingredient label.)
- 2) Wash fleece and other synthetic fabrics less often. This also saves water and energy.
- 3) Don't litter, and pick up the litter you see. Take part in beach and other litter cleanups.
- 4) Close the lid on your trash and recycling carts when you place them at the curb.

THANK YOU TO ALL OUR CITIZEN SCIENCE MICROPLASTICS MONITORING PROJECT PARTNERS!



FOR MORE INFORMATION:

Coastal & Heartland National Estuary Partnership
326 W. Marion Ave
Punta Gorda, FL, 33950
chnep@chnep.org
(941) 575-5090
www.chnep.org

