

Keeping Microbeads Out of the Great Lakes

There is rising concern among researchers and the general public about microbeads — tiny plastic particles used in personal-care products such as soaps and facial scrubs — and their ecological impact on our waters.

Why are microbeads harmful to the environment?

- Microbeads absorb toxins found in the Great Lakes and St. Lawrence River. There is rising concern that these toxins may not only harm the animals that ingest them, but work their way up the food chain, having the potential to affect the people and communities that eat and interact with wildlife in the region.

Do alternatives exist?

- Natural, readily available alternatives *do* exist, such as ground almonds, oatmeal and pumice.
- Consumers can determine if their personal-care or beauty products contain microbeads by checking the product ingredient list for “polyethylene” or “polypropylene.”

What is being done to get microbeads out of our waters?

- Legislation to phase out the use of microbeads in personal-care products has passed in Illinois and is being considered in several other U.S. states, including New York, Ohio, Michigan, Minnesota and Wisconsin.
- Several manufacturers, including Proctor & Gamble, Unilever, Colgate-Palmolive, Johnson & Johnson, The Body Shop and L’Oreal have made commitments to phase microbeads out of their products. Companies that avoid use of synthetic ingredients, like Aveda and Burt’s Bees, do not include microbeads in personal-care products.

More information on microbeads can be found at

<http://www.glslcities.org/initiatives/microplastics.cfm> and <http://www.greatlakes.org/microbeads>

MICROBEAD IMAGES:

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2 Microbeads from a 4.2 fl oz tube of facial wash



2 Microbeads are tiny, plastic particles found in many home personal-care products.

