

Short version

Concern is rising among researchers and the public about the impact of microbeads – tiny plastic particles used as an abrasive in personal-care products – on our waterways and wildlife.

Microbeads are found in a variety of at-home personal-care products like facial scrubs and soaps. When used by consumers, the microbeads are washed down the drain and into nearby rivers and lakes.

Once in the water, these tiny plastic pieces can absorb toxic chemicals. Studies have shown that fish and wildlife of all sizes consume plastic, raising serious concerns about the impacts of microbeads on aquatic species and on up the food chain.

Considering readily available, natural alternatives exist—including ground almonds, oatmeal and pumice—microbeads are not necessary and do not belong in our Great Lakes.

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. More information can be found at <http://www.glsicities.org/initiatives/microplastics.cfm> and <http://www.greatlakes.org/microbeads>.