

# OUR PLASTIC POLLUTION PROBLEM

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*"Water and air, the two essential fluids on which all life depends, have become global trash cans." – Jacques Yves Cousteau*

It is estimated that more than 8 million tons of plastic trash enter our oceans each year. If that is not shocking enough, this story also hits close to home. According to a study done by the Rochester Institute of Technology, it has been discovered that 5.5 million pounds of plastic goes directly into Lake Erie ([Zukowski](#)). This plastic includes visible and micro-plastics which are dangerous to both people and wildlife. The most common plastics found near the shores of Lake Erie include cigarette butts, bags, bottles, caps, straws, and even flip flops.

Fortunately, we can do something to help. There are several small changes we can make in our daily lives which will create a big change for the environment. These include:

- **Recycling** – It is estimated that 1 trillion plastic bags are thrown away each year, and of the 1 million bottles purchased every minute around the world, less than half of those will be recycled. Recycling those bags and bottles will help cut down on the amount of “new” plastic in circulation.
- **Skipping the Straw** – 500 million plastic straws are used each day in the United States. An easy fix to not using a plastic straw is to invest in a reusable stainless steel or glass straw. Furthermore, companies such as Starbucks are starting to get on the no straw trend, as they are now giving a 10 cent discount to customers who bring in a reusable cup. Some stores are also beginning to use paper straws which are less harmful to wildlife and the environment ([Nuñez](#)).

- **Keeping Our Coasts Clean** – A fun and rewarding way to help cut down on the amount of plastic pollution entering our oceans and lakes is by volunteering for a beach clean up. The Greater Cleveland Aquarium’s Splash Fund organizes [Adopt-A-Beach](#) cleanups with the [Alliance for the Great Lakes](#) every summer. To register for our beach cleanups, please visit [greatlakesadopt.org](http://greatlakesadopt.org). You can find the Aquarium hosted cleanups by searching the **date of the event**, the **location** (Lakefront Reservation – Edgewater), or **both**. Then click on the event and follow the steps to register. Registration is important because it gives us an idea of how many people to expect and also provides contact information so that we can keep everyone up to date on details or changes (i.e. the weather does not cooperate). We hope to see you there!

