

NEWS RELEASE

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House of Representatives Set to Ban Microbeads

Montpelier, VT – The Vermont House of Representatives will vote today on (H.4), a bill that would ban microbeads (tiny bits of plastic in soaps, face wash and toothpaste) from being sold in the state by January 1, 2018.

One of the first bills to be voted on this session, H.4 is widely regarded by environmental experts as the strongest legislation in the country dealing with the problem of non-biodegradable plastic microbeads. The tiny plastic particles inevitably end up in public waterways, presenting a threat to aquatic life and possibly to human health as well.

“Vermonters don’t need and don’t want tiny bits of plastic in their soap, especially if these non-biodegradable microbeads end up polluting our waterways and threatening aquatic life. Plastic microbeads should be banned, and H.4 will do just that,” said **Taylor Johnson**, Environmental Advocate at VPIRG.

This issue was brought to the attention of Legislators and local environmental groups last year by **Representative Patti Komline**. “I learned about the negative impact microbeads have on our environment too late last session to take significant action. I am very grateful to the committee chair, David Deen for moving this bill so swiftly this session,” said Komline.

With many natural and biodegradable alternatives to plastic microbeads on the market, even major companies like Johnson & Johnson have pledged to phase out these plastic bits.

In a statement, **Martin Wolf**, Director of Sustainability and Authenticity at Seventh Generation, explained why Seventh Generation does not use microbeads: “Responsible companies already use the many safe, cost-effective, and natural alternatives to plastic microbeads. Why should Vermonters have to pay to clean-up after companies that aren’t responsible?”

Local scientist **Rachael Miller** of the Rozalia Project has found microbeads on the shores of Lake Champlain. “Lake Champlain has billions of pieces of trash in its sediment and that includes plastic microbeads,” she said. “Rozalia Project found them during marine cleanup and research projects throughout Vermont. Trash in our waters and on our shores is a problem that must be addressed - and it does have solutions. This bill takes a big step in protecting Lake Champlain and Vermont’s rivers by eliminating one of the sources of that trash.”

Microbeads are too small to be captured by most wastewater management facilities. In fact, and as Lori Fischer, the Executive Director of the Lake Champlain Committee pointed out, once introduced to water, microbeads are impossible to remove.

"We don't need plastic microbeads to clean our faces, teeth or bodies", stated **Lori Fisher**, Lake Champlain Committee Executive Director. "There are safer, bio-degradable and non-polluting products that do a fine job of keeping us clean without taxing our wastewater treatment systems, degrading our waterways, and confusing the fish. Microbeads can't be removed from our waters once they are there, we must keep them from getting into the water in the first place."

Because microbeads absorb toxic chemicals once they enter our waterways, this bill is being viewed by many as a continuation of Vermont's long-standing efforts to protect its citizens from toxic chemicals.

Lauren Hierl, political director for Vermont Conservation Voters said "The legislature has stepped up repeatedly to protect Vermont's environment and people from unnecessary exposure to toxic chemicals. We look forward to a strong vote in the House today to continue this tradition by banning microbeads, which pollute our waters and introduce toxic chemicals into our food chain."

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