Illinois becomes first state to ban products with plastic microbeads

With the passage of SB 2727, Illinois has become the first U.S. state to ban the manufacture and sale of personal care products and over-the-counter drugs that contain plastic microbeads. The bill is in large part a response to a recent two-year survey of plastic pollution in the Great Lakes. It found that microbeads (tiny particles often too small to be captured by wastewater systems) account for the highest count of plastic pollution in the freshwater system.

Starting in 2018, Illinois will prohibit the manufacture of personal care products with microbeads; the sale of these products will be banned a year later. A slightly longer time frame is in place for banning over-the-counter drugs that contain plastic microbeads. Legislation has also been introduced this year in four other Great Lakes states: Michigan, Minnesota, New York and Ohio. Under a bill passed by the New York Assembly (AB 8744), the microbeads ban (for personal care products only) would take effect in 2016.

Some manufacturers, meanwhile, have already begun to phase out the use of plastic microbeads in their products. Lakes Ontario and Erie have particularly high levels of plastic pollution.

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