

Microplastics: Sixteen Attorneys General Letter to U.S. Environmental Protection Agency/NOAA Seeking Possible Regulatory Action



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Sixteen State Attorneys General sent a May 8th letter to the United States Environmental Protection Agency (“EPA”) and National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (“NOAA”) addressing the topic of plastic microfibers (“Microplastics”).

The Attorneys General executing the letter were from the following states:

- Connecticut
- California
- Delaware
- District of Columbia
- Illinois
- Maryland
- Michigan
- Minnesota
- Nevada
- New York
- Oregon
- Pennsylvania
- Rhode Island
- Vermont
- Washington
- Wisconsin

(Collectively, “AGs”)

Microplastics are generally defined as plastic debris less than five millimeters in length. The AG’s letter references microfibers (i.e., strands of synthetic clothing) as the most common type of Microplastics pollution in the environment.

The AG’s letter initially requested that EPA, NOAA, and the Interagency Marine Debris Coordinating Committee:

. . . continue providing leadership on this issue and to develop a more robust national microfibers strategy in ongoing consultation with stakeholders including the undersigned Attorneys General.

The letter expresses concern that Microplastics:

- Are ubiquitous in the environment
- Can pose harm because of exposure to a wide range of species living in diverse habitats
- Can be ingested by humans through our drinking water, air, and food
- Are regularly released into wastewater treatment plants as they are shed from clothing in the wash cycle

The AGs acknowledge that there has been a federal response to this issue but, nevertheless, ask that the agencies:

- Explore Clean Water Act authorities, including existing programs and standards, to address the pervasive problem of plastic microfibers.
- Encourage the development and implementation, in conjunction with State stakeholders and industry groups, of microfiber filtration systems and technology in residential and commercial washing machines; and
- Conduct and pursue research and studies as to the harms to the environment and human health caused by microfibers, with specific emphasis on harms caused by microfibers to environmental justice communities.

A copy of the AG's letter can be downloaded [here](#).