



Riverkeeper 2021 Legislative Memorandum

Support - S486/A922 (Krueger/Paulin) - Support

AN ACT to amend the environmental conservation law, in relation to the prohibition of the use of plastic beverage container packaging

Riverkeeper strongly supports legislation to prohibit the use of plastic “six pack rings” and other forms of plastic connecting individual beverage containers by January 1, 2022. Unnecessary plastic packaging contributes to the global plastic pollution crisis and new strategies are necessary to reduce its use. Estimates suggest that without action there could be more plastic by weight in the ocean than fish.¹

Microplastics have been documented in waters and the bodies of marine life around the world, including here in New York. Studies have revealed concentrations as high as 578,333 microplastics per km² in parts of the Hudson.² To protect both human and environmental health, urgent action is needed to reduce the flow of plastic into our waterways.

Since 2011, Riverkeeper has helped communities organize 615 shoreline cleanups as part of our annual day of service, the Riverkeeper Sweep. In total, over 10,000 volunteers have removed 226 tons of debris from hundreds of miles of Hudson River shoreline. Our data indicate that single-use items are the most predominant component of litter. In many cases, we can see at a single clean-up site, the cycle of degradation occurring, with recent litter sitting beside smaller and smaller pieces that accumulate on the shore. These bits enter the water, the ecosystem, and ultimately, people.

Data gathered by Riverkeeper and others points to the prevalence of microplastics - which can result from the degradation of plastic bags and other plastic items - in waters worldwide, including the Hudson River Estuary. Pesticides, toxic industrial compounds - including PCBs - as well as pharmaceuticals and other unregulated contaminants adhere to plastics, and can both contaminate fish and contaminate drinking water supplies.

Alternatives to plastic six-pack rings are available and can help us further reduce our reliance on plastic products polluting our environment and endangering our marine wildlife.³ Riverkeeper strongly urges legislators to cosponsor this legislation and pass it expeditiously.

Riverkeeper strongly supports the passage of S486/A922.

¹ <https://www.theguardian.com/business/2016/jan/19/more-plastic-than-fish-in-the-sea-by-2050-warns-ellen-macarthur>

² https://HUDSONRIVERPARK.org/assets/content/general/Microplastic_Short_Report_Final.pdf

³ <https://www.cbsnews.com/news/florida-saltwater-brewery-non-plastic-six-pack-rings-spare-sea-turtles/>

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