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State Assembly passes critical legislation phasing out the manufacture, sale of microbead-containing products.

MADISON - The state Assembly unanimously passed a bill Tuesday that will phase out the manufacture and sale of personal care products containing microbeads, moving Wisconsin waters — especially the Great Lakes — one step closer to being protected from the emerging issue of microplastic pollution.

“Wisconsin’s legislators took a great step forward for our environment by passing this bill,” says Tyson Cook, director of science and research at Clean Wisconsin. “With microplastic pollution on the rise, this legislation is critical to protecting the precious water resources Wisconsinites love and depend on.”

Microbeads are small pieces of plastic added to personal care products like body scrubs and toothpastes. Due to their small size, they can work through water treatment systems and into our waterways. Once there, the microbeads continue to accumulate as they don’t easily break down in the environment.

In addition to polluting Wisconsin’s waters, these plastic particles can find their way into the fish we catch; this not only harms their digestive systems, but the chemicals from the microbeads can also cause other problems. This can kickstart the process of biomagnification, which causes much greater concentrations of chemicals in animals higher up the food chain.

“Given the adverse effects microbeads represent, it’s crucial we do all we can to get these plastics out of our products and out of our waters,” says Cook. “With over 10,000 pounds of microbeads estimated to be washed down Wisconsin drains each year, this bill is critical to protecting our waters, our wildlife and the health of our families.”

Victory for Wisconsin's Waters

Written by Clean Wisconsin

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The bill, introduced by Sen. Rob Cowles and Rep. Mary Czaja, would end the manufacture and stocking for sale of personal care products that contain microbeads. The bill is based on Illinois's 2014 law to ban microbeads. The state Senate unanimously passed the measure last month, and it now heads to the governor's desk for signature. When signed into law, Wisconsin will be the sixth state with microbeads legislation on the books.

"This is the kind of bipartisan legislation we need to ensure our environment remains clean now and for generations to come," says Cook. "The legislature has done excellent work on this bill, and we're looking forward to seeing Gov. Walker sign it soon."

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Clean Wisconsin, an environmental protection organization, protects Wisconsin's clean water and air and advocates for clean energy by being an effective voice in the state legislature and by holding elected officials and polluters accountable. On behalf of its 10,000 members, supporters and its coalition partners, Clean Wisconsin protects the special places that make Wisconsin such a wonderful place to live, work and play. 608-251-7020, www.cleanwisconsin.org

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