



22 APRIL 2024
EARTH DAY
Planet vs. Plastics



April 22 each year is observed as The Earth Day. The day marks the anniversary of the world's largest environmental movement, in which more than 1 billion people participate each year, making it the largest civic observance in the world. Observance of the Day broadens the base of support for environmental programs, rekindles public commitment and builds community activism around the world through a broad range of events and activities. More than a billion people participate in campaigns every year through over 150,000 partners in nearly 192 countries. The first Earth Day led to the creation of the Environmental Protection Agency in the USA and acts such as Clean Air, Clean Water, and Endangered Species. It inspired other environmental movements elsewhere in the world. The Day is observed focusing on a pertinent theme every year and this year Earth Day is about “Planet vs. Plastics.”

The word environment means what surrounds you. Now plastics do more than surround us. Now this once-thought amazing and useful product has become something else, and our health and that of all other living creatures hangs in the balance. Plastics extend beyond an imminent environmental issue; they present a grave threat to human health as alarming as climate change. As plastics break down into microplastics, they release toxic chemicals into our food and water sources and circulate through the air we breathe.

Plastic production now has grown to more than 380 million tons per year. More plastic has been produced in the last ten years than in the entire 20th century, and the industry plans to grow explosively for the indefinite future. Plastics are produced in polluting facilities that somehow seem to always be located in the poorest neighborhoods. Some plastics are lethal when combusted; other plastics transmit hormone-disrupting chemicals; and all plastics can starve birds and suffocate sea life. At every stage of their life cycles, from the oil well to the town dump, plastics are a dangerous blight.

More than 500 billion plastic bags-one million bags per minute-were produced worldwide last year. Many plastic bags have a working life of a few minutes, followed by an afterlife of centuries. Even after plastics disintegrate, they remain as microplastics, minute particles permeating every niche of life on the planet.

100 billion plastic beverage containers were sold last year in the United States. That's more than 300 bottles per inhabitant. A few of them will be converted into park benches; none of them will be made into new plastic bottles and 95% of all plastics in the US won't be recycled at all. Even 5% of plastics being recycled are “downcycling” to inferior products or shipped to poorer countries for “recycling”, leaving the

demand for virgin plastic undiminished. People seldom think of water when they think of plastics. But making a plastic water bottle requires six times as much water as the bottle itself contains.

The fast fashion industry annually produces over 100 billion garments. Overproduction and overconsumption have transformed the industry, leading to the disposability of fashion. People now buy 60% more clothing than 15 years ago, but each item is kept for only half as long. Approximately 85% of garments end up in landfills or incinerators, with only 1% being recycled. Nearly 70% of clothing is made from crude oil, resulting in the release of dangerous microfibers when washed and continued contribution to long-term pollution in landfills.

The Planet vs. Plastics campaign is a call to arms, a demand that we act now to end the scourge of plastics and safeguard the health of every living being on our planet. students, parents, businesses, governments, churches, unions, individuals, and NGOs in an unwavering commitment to call for the end of plastics for the sake of human and planetary health, demanding a 60% reduction in the production of plastics by 2040 and an ultimate goal of building a plastic-free future for generations to come.

To achieve a 60% reduction by 2040, the goals are :

- (1) promoting widespread public awareness of the damage done by plastic to human, animal, and all biodiversity's health and demanding more research be conducted on its health implications, including the release of any and all information regarding its effects to the public
- (2) rapidly phasing out all single use plastics by 2030 and achieving this phase out commitment in the United Nations Treaty on Plastic Pollution in 2024;
- (3) demanding policies ending the scourge of fast fashion and the vast amount of plastic it produces and uses
- (4) investing in innovative technologies and materials to build a plastic-free world.

Content courtesy; <https://www.earthday.org>
