Microplastics

What are Microplastics?

plastic debris that is less than 5mm in size
(think: smaller than a sesame seed)

Types of Microplastics

Primary: Microbeads and microfibers found in cosmetics and clothing that are intentionally manufactured to be small

Secondary: Larger pieces of plastic called "macroplastics" that are broken down into pieces by wave action and sunlight

Where can they be found?

- Microplastics are found moving freely in the water of marine and freshwater environments
- They have also been detected in human drinking water and food
- In a study of the Mediterranean sea-floor, the accumulation of microplastics was the highest ever recorded, where single square meter (10.8 square feet) held a thin layer of up to 1.9 million microplastics.

Dangers of Microplastics

In marine and freshwater, microplastics disrupt reproduction, growth, appetite, cause damage to tissue and liver, and disturb feeding behaviors of organisms.

- These plastics are being found deep in sand where turtles lay their eggs which disrupts the ratio of male to female turtles.

What Can We Do?

In 2015, The Microbead-Free Waters Act was passed, which prohibits microbead plastics from being added to cosmetic and prescription products. While regulations like these are important, greater efforts are required to significantly reduce microplastics in the ocean. We should:

- Avoid single-use plastics and properly dispose of other waste
- Participate in ocean clean-up using blue technologies like Seabins, Skimmers, and FiFish