



Our Goal: Reduce single-use plastics in Milwaukee and surrounding communities.

Plastic-Free MKE is not a single non-profit organization, but a **movement**. Our movement includes dedicated community volunteers, non-profit organizations, government agencies, and businesses. Together we make up the Plastic-Free MKE Coalition.

Plastic-Free MKE is addressing plastics because they impact:

- **Our health**- Plastics contaminate our air, food, and water. Each week the average American ingests a credit card's worth of plastic.
- **Our lakes, rivers, and oceans** - 85% of fish from the Milwaukee River contain plastic in their digestive tract. 22 million pounds of plastic enter the Great Lakes each year, half of which is in Lake Michigan.
- **Our planet as a whole** - Plastics are made of fossil fuels and contribute 300 million tons of carbon dioxide to climate change each year.

Plastic-Free MKE Initiatives

Public Awareness, Activism, & Advocacy: Includes public webinars and meetings, presenting for other organizations, tabling and leading activities at community events, educating the public via our social media channels and newsletter, and advocating for policy changes.

Plastics Education Toolkit: The toolkit, created by Plastic-Free MKE volunteers and partners, provides a menu of resources that educators are invited to adapt based on their unique student and classroom needs.

H2O Refill Program: This program supports the community in reducing single-use plastic water bottles by donating reusable water bottles and providing water refill stations at local events and festivals.

Lake Friendly Programs: Plastic-Free MKE supports businesses, neighborhoods, conferences, offices, hospitals, faith-based groups, and other organizations in reducing plastic consumption.

Frequently Asked Questions:

Why can't we just ban plastics?

→ In 2015, Governor Scott Walker enacted a preemptive ban on the regulation of “auxiliary containers,” often referred to as the Ban on Bans. The law prevents the City of Milwaukee (or any Wisconsin city or county) from banning, taxing, or enacting a fee on any single-use item. Private commercial businesses can still choose to charge customers for a bag or decide to go plastic-free, but they cannot be forced to do so by a government entity.

What can we do?

→ Plastic-Free MKE believes in advocating for systemic changes rather than focusing on individual action. We can work as a team to learn, spread awareness, and advocate for positive change. The real solutions to the plastic problem are tied up in our legislation, laws, and bans. As a coalition, we can advocate for policy changes and make it known to our local legislators that plastic harms our health, water, and environment.

Why don't people just stop using plastic?

→ Plastic-Free MKE acknowledges that some single-use plastics are necessary and there may not currently be better alternatives. It takes time, money, and access to resources that not everyone has to reduce their personal plastic consumption. There is no one-size-fits-all solution to reducing the harms of single-use plastic. Rather than focus on individuals who use plastic, the focus should be on the companies producing harmful, unnecessary single-use plastics and the legislation making it harder to encourage companies to do better.

What conventional plastics can be recycled curbside in Milwaukee?

→ Only plastic numbers 1, 2, & 5 can be recycled curbside in Milwaukee. All others will be sent to the landfill, contaminate recyclable materials, or damage the recycling center sorting equipment. We encourage everyone to rethink or refuse any disposables before acquiring them and to think “reduce, reuse, rot, or repair” any remaining items before recycling. Refer people to city.milwaukee.gov/recycles for what can be recycled curbside in Milwaukee.

Want to learn more? Visit our website at plasticfreemke.org