

July 22, 2021

The Honorable Deb Haaland
Secretary of the Interior
Department of the Interior
1849 C Street, N.W.
Washington, DC 20240

Dear Secretary Haaland:

Congratulations on your historic confirmation as the first Native American to lead the Department of the Interior. Encouraged by your strong record as an environmental leader, we are approaching you on an issue of growing public concern: plastic pollution.

We, the undersigned, strongly request that you direct the National Park Service (NPS) to eliminate the sale or distribution of single-use plastics in our national parks, building on the Green Parks Planⁱ and previous efforts to reduce the sale of bottled water in parksⁱⁱ and ensure access to safe, potable water. Eliminating single-use plastics will reduce plastic pollution and save money for parks, visitors, concessionaires and park partners, while also advancing the Biden administration's goals for addressing environmental justice and the climate crisis. This request is consistent with the Presidential Plastics Action Planⁱⁱⁱ delivered to the Biden-Harris transition team and Congress on December 8, 2020, which highlights eight executive actions to address the plastic pollution crisis.

By reducing single-use plastics, NPS will contribute to the Biden administration's commitment on environmental justice "to hold polluters accountable, including those who disproportionately harm communities of color and low-income communities."^{iv} Petrochemical facilities, and disposal of the plastics that they create, disproportionately harm people of color and low-income communities.^v Continued efforts by industry to site new plastics facilities in "Cancer Alley" in Louisiana provide a stark case of environmental racism.^{vi} Extensive research has shown that incinerators and landfills are more often sited in frontline communities.^{vii} **The best way to manage plastic waste is to stop generating it.**

The earth is awash in plastic pollution. Plastic has been found everywhere, from the deep ocean^{viii} to remote mountains,^{ix} in the rain in our national parks and wilderness areas^x and in our food.^{xi} Globally, humanity produces about 300 million metric tons of plastic waste each year.^{xii} An estimated 15 million metric tons (33 billion pounds) of that plastic enter the ocean each year,^{xiii} roughly equivalent to dumping two garbage trucks full of plastic into the ocean every minute. Plastics are affecting every form of marine life from zooplankton and fish to sea turtles and seabirds, and they pose significant health concerns.^{xiv} It is estimated that the average person is eating a credit card's worth of microplastic every week with unforeseeable consequences to development, disease, fertility and beyond.^{xv}

Nearly 40% of the plastic produced annually is for single-use plastics and packaging^{xvi}—materials that are made to last forever but designed to be used briefly and thrown away. Plastic production is projected to quadruple between 2014 and 2050,^{xvii} greatly compounding the problem since a meager 9% of all the plastic waste ever generated has been recycled.^{xviii} Plastic water bottles are considered more recyclable than some other plastic products, yet three out of four bottles end up in landfills or incinerators.^{xix} We cannot recycle our way out of this problem. We must reduce the production and use of single-use plastics; our parks and communities depend on it.

Plastic pollution, from tiny microplastics to plastic bottles to larger plastic debris, is polluting our national parks. Plastic trash is often visible in parks, impairing visitors' experiences of these treasured natural and historical sites. Plastic harms wildlife and ecosystems, from horrific entanglements of large animals like sea turtles and whales^{xx} to impairment of microscopic organisms in soil.^{xxi} This plastic makes its way into our air, food, and drinking water, most directly when leaching into water we drink from plastic water bottles.^{xxii}

Plastics are also fueling the climate crisis, a critical problem that presents NPS with extraordinary adaptation challenges.^{xxiii} Most plastics are made from petrochemicals derived from fossil fuels, which of course are the main drivers of climate change. If plastic were a country, it would be the fifth-largest emitter of greenhouse gases.^{xxiv,xxv} As our economy shifts toward clean energy resources, oil and gas companies are turning to plastic production as the next growth area for their industries. Petrochemical production is expected to account for over a third of global growth of fossil fuel demand by 2030, and nearly half by 2050—more than trucks, aviation and shipping combined.^{xxvi} Furthermore, studies show that plastic contributes to climate change at every stage of its life cycle.^{xxvii}

On average, the NPS manages nearly 70 million pounds of waste annually, equivalent to the weight of 155 Statues of Liberty. If you include waste managed by park concessionaires, that number more than doubles.^{xxviii} Plastic waste—such as water bottles, plastic bags, and non-recyclable or compostable food packaging—is a significant source of landfilled waste from parks. NPS staff and volunteers spend considerable time and expense cleaning up litter and hauling waste to landfills.^{xxix} In Yellowstone National Park, a 2013 review found that plastic water bottles represent 50% of the park's solid waste load.^{xxx} A 2016 survey found that more than one-third of park visitors (35%) use disposable water bottles, yet nearly four out of five visitors (79%) would support removing single-use bottles in parks to help reduce waste.^{xxxi}

We recommend eliminating the sale in national parks of single-use plastic beverage bottles; plastic bags; disposable plastic foodware, including cups, plates, bowls, and utensils; and expanded polystyrene products. Reusable water bottles that cost less than a dollar each can be readily purchased and refilled at water fountains or refill stations,^{xxxii} reducing plastic pollution and saving consumers money.

We acknowledge that the lands in today's national parks were once home to Native People who stewarded these lands for many generations.^{xxxiii} Native People were driven from these lands, in some cases specifically to convert the lands to national parks.^{xxxiv} We seek to honor their

stewardship by eliminating plastic pollution from these parks, and we are collaborating with local and native communities at every stage of this effort.

The national parks are an obvious leader in the movement towards a regenerative and inclusive future. We cherish these special places and hope to share this appreciation with countless generations to come. We are confident that ending the sale of single-use plastics in our national parks will benefit park visitors, park budgets, and park ecosystems, as well as contribute to the Biden administration's larger goals on environmental justice and the climate crisis. Thank you for considering our views, and we look forward to discussing this proposal with you and NPS leadership.

Sincerely,

1 STEP

100 Grannies for a Livable Future

350 Maine

350 Seattle

350Brooklyn

5 Gyres Institute

7th Generation Advisors

A Healthy Blueprint

Active San Gabriel Valley (ActiveSGV)

Alaska Clean Water Advocacy

Alaska Wilderness League Action

Alaska's Big Village Network

Algalita

all good goods

Alliance of Mission-Based Recyclers

American Littoral Society

American Sustainable Business Council

Animal Welfare Institute

Apalachicola Riverkeeper

Aquatics for Life

Arizona PIRG

Arroyo Vista Village

Atchafalaya Basinkeeper

Athens ReThinks Plastics

Aurorans for Climate and Environmental Sense (ACES)

AWAREHAUS

Azul

BAN SUP

Basel Action Network

Beaver County Marcellus Awareness Community (BCMAC)

Beyond Plastics

Black Warrior Riverkeeper

Blue Horizon Group

Boomerang Coffee LLC

Boulder Clean

BRINGiT For a Better Planet
Broad Riverkeeper
BYOBottle
California Interfaith Power & Light
CalPIRG
Cape Fear River Watch
Capital Region Interfaith Creation Care Coalition
Casselwood, LLC
Center for Biological Diversity
Center for Coalfield Justice
Center for International Environmental Law
Cetacean Society International
Charleston Waterkeeper
Church Women United in New York State
City of Boynton Beach Sustainability Action Team
Clean Fairfax Council
Clean Water Action
Climate Action Alliance of the Valley
Colorado Ocean Coalition
Colorbrightongreen
Communities First Sewickley Valley
Concerned Healthcare Professionals of Pennsylvania
Congaree Riverkeeper
ConnPIRG
Conscious Fashion Campaign
CoPIRG
Corporate Accountability
Cup Zero Inc.
Defenders of Wildlife
Delray Beach Historical Society
Don't Waste Durham
Dr. Meghnad N. Saha Science Club
Earth & Me
Earth Day Every Day of Harrisonburg VA
Earth Island Institute
Earth Law Center
Earthbilt
EARTHDAY.ORG
EarthEcho International
Earthjustice
Earthworks
Eastern Surfing Association
Eco Maniac Company
Effect Partners
Ekosfere LLC
Elders Climate Action
Endangered Species Coalition
Environment America
Environment Arizona

Environment California
Environment Colorado
Environment Connecticut
Environment Florida
Environment Georgia
Environment Illinois
Environment Iowa
Environment Massachusetts
Environment Maryland
Environment Michigan
Environment Minnesota
Environment Missouri
Environment Montana
Environment North Carolina
Environment New Hampshire
Environment New Jersey
Environment New Mexico
Environment New York
Environment Nevada
Environment Ohio
Environment Oregon
Environment Rhode Island
Environment Texas
Environment Virginia
Environment Washington
Environmental Action
Environmental Action Coalition
Environmental Defense Center
Environmental Law & Policy Center
Everyday Earth Energy
Extinction Rebellion Pittsburgh
Fight Dirty Tybee
Florida PIRG
Food & Water Watch
Fourth Universalist Environmental Justice Team
FracTracker Alliance
Friends of the Earth
Friends of the Great Dismal Swamp National Wildlife Refuge
Friends of the San Juans
Gas Free Seneca
Georgia PIRG
Glacier Technology, Inc.
Global Alliance for Incinerator Alternatives
Global Movement for Myanmar Democracy
Grades of Green
Grassroots Environmental Education
Greater Cincinnati Earth Coalition
Green Schools Alliance
GreenLatinos

Greenpeace USA
Hands Across the Sand
Hannah4Change
Healthy Ocean Coalition
Heirs To Our Oceans
Highland Heights Green Task Force
Hobie Sports
Hudson River Sloop Clearwater
Hudson Riverkeeper
Humane Action Pittsburgh
Illinois PIRG
Inland Empire Waterkeeper
Inland Ocean Coalition
Inland Ocean Coalition Alaska Chapter
Inland Ocean Coalition Arizona Chapter
Inland Ocean Coalition Buffalo, NY Chapter
Inland Ocean Coalition Central Texas Chapter
Inland Ocean Coalition CSU Fort Collins Chapter
Inland Ocean Coalition CU Boulder Chapter
Inland Ocean Coalition Great Lakes Chapter
Inland Ocean Coalition Illinois Chapter
Inland Ocean Coalition Montana Chapter
Inland Ocean Coalition North Texas Chapter
Inland Ocean Coalition University of Michigan Chapter
Inland Ocean Coalition Utah Chapter
Inland Ocean Coalition Washington, D.C. Chapter
Inland Ocean Coalition Wyoming Chapter
International Marine Mammal Project of Earth Island Institute
It's Easy Being Green (IEBG)
Izaak Walton League of America - Allegheny County Pennsylvania Chapter
Jack Johnson
Jamesville Positive Action Committee (JAM-PAC)
Just Salad
Keep Virginia Beautiful
KIDS for the BAY
Kids Think Big
Kim Lewand Martin, LLC
KingstonCitizens.org
Kōkua Hawai'i Foundation
Lake Pend Oreille Waterkeeper
Larson's General
League of Conservation Voters
League of Women Voters of Broward County
Lite Foot Company LLC
Los Angeles Waterkeeper
Maine Conservation Voters
Maine Rivers
Marine Mammal Alliance Nantucket
Maryland PIRG
MASSPIRG
Matanzas Riverkeeper
Mazaska Talks

Milwaukee Riverkeeper
MoPIRG
MountainTrue
Muuse
Nassau Hiking and Outdoor Club
National Aquarium
National Audubon Society
National Ocean Protection Coalition
National Parks Conservation Association
National Stewardship Action Council
National Wildlife Federation
Natural Resources Defense Council (NRDC)
Nature in the City
NCPiRG
News from the Neighborhood
NHPIRG
NJPIRG
NMPIRG
NoPetroPA
NY4WHALES
Ocean Blue Project
Ocean Conservancy
Ocean Conservation Research
Ocean First Divers, LLC
Ocean First Education
Ocean First Institute
Oceana
Oceanic Global
Oceanic Preservation Society
Oceanic Society
Ohio PIRG
Omega Institute for Holistic Studies
One Ocean Media Foundation
Open Water
Orange County Coastkeeper
Orca Network
Organizing for Plastics Alternatives
Our Children Our Earth
Patuxent Conservation Corps, Inc.
Peak Plastic Foundation
PennEnvironment
PennFuture
PennPIRG
People Over Petro Coalition
Permian Gulf Coast Coalition
PIRGIM
Pittsburghers Against Single Use Plastics (PASUP)
Plaine Products
Plastic Free Delaware
Plastic Free MKE
Plastic Pollution Coalition
PlasticScore, Inc.
Prepare with Cher, LLC
Promote PT
Protect Franklin Park
Protect Our Parks (POP)

Public Employees for Environmental Responsibility
Puget Soundkeeper
Putting Down Roots
r.Cup
ReImagine Turtle Creek Watershed & Airshed Communities
Remark
Resource Depot
Reusable Solutions
Rio Grande International Study Center
RIPIRG
River Valley Organizing
Russian Riverkeeper
Sailors for the Sea Powered by Oceana
San Anselmo Climate Action Commission
San Antonio Bay Estuarine Waterkeeper
San Francisco Baykeeper
Sanctuary Education Advisory Specialists (SEAS)
Savannah Riverkeeper
Save Our Shores
Save RGV (Rio Grande Valley)
Save the Bay
Save the Manatee Club
Save the Pine Bush
Sea Hugger
Sea Life Love LLC
Sea of Life
Sea Save Foundation
Sea-Straw, Inc.
SeaSmart
SeaStrawUSA
Seattle Aquarium
Seatuck Environmental Association
Seneca Lake Guardian
Seven Circles Foundation
Shark Stewards
Shedd Aquarium
Shenandoah Green
Sierra Club
Simply Straws
Sisters of Charity Federation
Sisters of Charity of Leavenworth Office of Justice, Peace, and Integrity of Creation
Sisters of Charity of Nazareth Congregational Leadership
Sisters of Charity of Nazareth Western Province Leadership
Society of Native Nations
South Carolina Wildlife Federation
South Shore Audubon Society
Spokane Riverkeeper
Student PIRGs
Surfing Florida Museum
Surfrider Foundation
Sustainable Bainbridge
Sustainable Roanoke
Sustainable Saratoga
Sustainable Sewickley
Sustainable Works
Tennessee Riverkeeper

Tethra Advisors and Officers (TAO)
TexPIRG
The Altai Project
The Azulita Project
The Borneo Project
The Center for Oceanic Awareness, Research, and Education (COARE)
The Climate Reality Project Orange County Chapter
The Climate Reality Project: Capital Region, NY Chapter
The John Muir Project of Earth Island Institute
The Last Beach Cleanup
The Last Plastic Straw
The Moore Charitable Foundation
The Ocean Foundation
The Rachel Carson Council
The Story of Stuff Project
Think Zero LLC
Thrive_At_Life: Working Solutions
Transition South Pasadena
Turtle Island Restoration Network
U.S. PIRG
UNCAGED
Uncommon Goods
United for Action
United Methodist Caretakers of God's Creation
United Methodist Women
Upslope Brewing Company
Vessel Works
Virginia Aquarium & Marine Science Center
Virginia Coastal Alliance
Virginia Conservation Network
Virginia League of Conservation Voters
Viva Sierra Gorda - Earth Island Institute
W2O Women Working for Oceans
WashPIRG
Waterkeeper Alliance
Waterkeepers Chesapeake
WESPAC Foundation, Inc.
Wholly H2O
WILDCOAST
Willamette Riverkeeper
Winyah Rivers Alliance
Wisconsin Environment
WISPIRG
Wood Doing Good
Zero Waste Action - Sonoma County
Zero Waste Company
Zero Waste Hawai'i Island
Zero Waste NYC Workshop
Zero Waste Washington

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