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Story of Stuff Project Releases New, 2-Minute Microbeads 'Explainer'

Animated Video Supports Legislation to Ban Polluting Plastic Microbeads introduced in many States and U.S. Congress

Berkeley, CA -- On Wednesday, May 6th, the makers of The Story of Stuff, The Story of Bottled Water and seven other short animated movies will release their first new video in more than a year—a 2-minute animated 'explainer' that tells the story of microbeads. The Story of Stuff Project's previous videos have been viewed online more than 45 million times.

The new video is being released to support growing efforts in the United States, Canada, Europe and elsewhere to outlaw the tiny plastic beads, an increasingly common ingredient in personal care products that escapes most water treatment plants and pollutes the environment.

Microbeads, which can be found in everything from facial scrubs and soap to toothpaste and makeup, show up on ingredient labels under their material names: polyethylene, polypropylene, polyethylene terephthalate or polymethyl methacrylate. Scientists have estimated that as many as a half billion plastic microbeads enter the San Francisco Bay alone each day. Microbeads have been found in over 35 samples of wastewater effluent across the United States.

Narrated by the Story of Stuff Project's founder and current Greenpeace USA Executive Director Annie Leonard, the video uses the trademark Story of Stuff animated style to spotlight the fundamental problem with microbeads: that they're "designed to go down the drain."

"For years, plastics' manufacturers have argued that consumers cause plastic pollution, but in the case of microbeads it's the manufacturers themselves who are clearly to blame. When used as advertised, these products send billions of bits of plastic down the drain and into our public waters each day. That has to stop and whatever ingredient these companies use instead must be harmless to the environment. Period," says, Michael O'Heaney, the Story of Stuff Project's Executive Director.

The Story of Stuff Project has been working with a broad coalition of more than 100 groups to support state-level and national legislation to 'ban the bead.' Project staff co-authored legislation in California, and are consulting on, and supporting legislation based on the California model in Minnesota, Oregon, Vermont, and the Canadian province of Ontario.

THE STORY OF STUFF PROJECT

Dozens of other states are considering bills to outlaw plastic microbeads, though not all legislation is alike. The plastics and personal care products industries have introduced competing bills that leave a loophole for alternative plastic beads that have yet to be proven safe in the environment.

According to Campaigns Director Stiv Wilson, the Project's almost one million online Community members have been pushing personal care product companies to voluntarily remove microbeads from their products, and some companies have pledged to ensure that their replacement formulations are safe. "We're on the cusp of something big here" says Wilson. "These companies know they never should have put plastic in their products to begin with and they can see the jig is up. This legislation and our new video will encourage hundreds of thousands of people to keep the heat on polluters like Johnson & Johnson and Procter & Gamble who have resisted eliminating this senseless and preventable environmental threat."

Viewers of the video will be encouraged to send an email to decisionmakers in state and federal governments, as well as leading personal care product manufacturers.

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The Story of Stuff Project was founded in 2008 to transform the way we make, use and throw away Stuff to be more sustainable, healthy and just. Every day we help our nearly one million online Community members explore their relationship with Stuff and then act on what they've learned. Visit us at www.storyofstuff.org.