

# What are

# MICROPLASTICS?

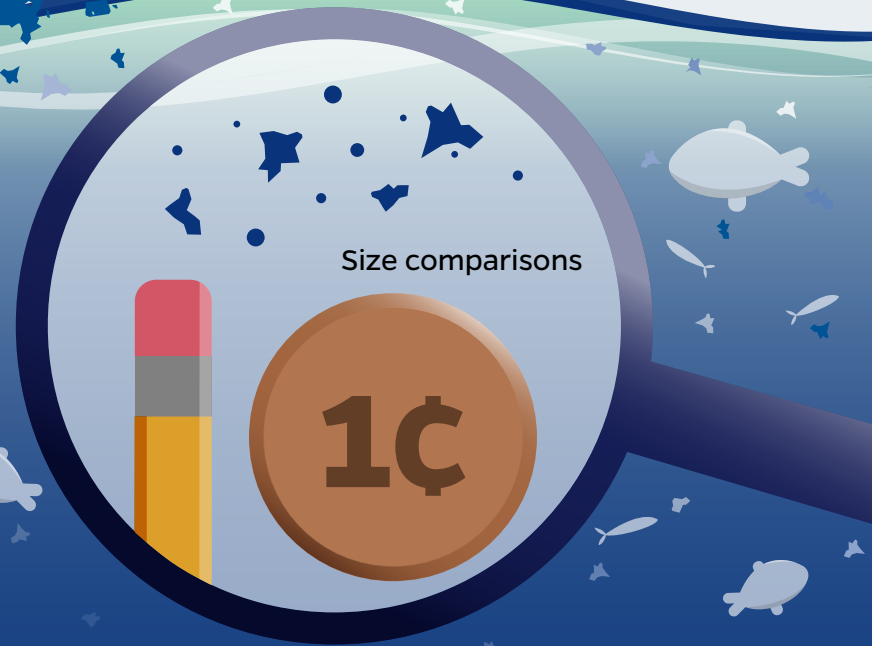
Microplastics are plastic particles that are **LESS THAN 5 mm** or  $\frac{1}{5}$  of an inch.

**Primary microplastics** start out 5 mm or less in size. These could be tiny pellets called nurdles that fill toys, or microbeads that were once commonly included in personal care products, like toothpastes, facial scrubs and body wash. The U.S. Congress passed the Microbead-Free Waters Act of 2015, which took full effect in July 2018, to ban the sale of rinse-off products containing microbeads.

**Secondary microplastics** are created when larger plastics break down. With time, the combination of chemical and physical forces will fragment large plastics into smaller particles.

Microplastics can be carried into water bodies through

- Wastewater from treatment plants.
- Stormwater runoff from urban, landfill and industrial areas.
- Wind.



## Actions individuals can take to **REDUCE MICROPLASTICS** in the environment include

- Cutting back on plastic use, especially single-use plastics (reduce, reuse, recycle, refuse).
- Change habits and products, including checking labels of personal care products for the word "polyethylene," which is a common type of plastic.
- If possible, wear clothing made from natural materials (cotton, wool) rather than synthetic fabrics (nylon, polyester).

