

#7

October 6, 2015

House Natural Resources Committee

Re: HB4345: Microbeads in the Great Lakes, ban

From: Testimony from Michigan Trout Unlimited

Michigan Trout Unlimited is a Michigan 501C3 nonprofit corporation. Our mission is to preserve, protect and restore Michigan's coldwater fisheries and their watersheds. We represent 19 local chapters of Trout Unlimited from all over the state and 7,500 active members. We are the state arm of Trout Unlimited, the country's largest fisheries conservation organization (formed here in Michigan in 1959).

We support and encourage legislation which seeks to ban the use of "plastic" microbeads commonly used in personal care products, but we also seek a definition of "biodegradable" in HB4345, that ensures that these microbeads will not accumulate in our waters and be ecologically available to aquatic life to cause adverse impacts to them.

We have all come to learn of the shocking abundance and ubiquity of these microbeads in our waters. Tragically, those microbeads are non-biodegradable, and will now persist in the Great Lakes where they can cause continued damage to the aquatic life and foodweb of the Great Lakes. At the top of that foodweb are fish species like chinook salmon, coho salmon, brown trout, lake trout and steelhead, which we strive to see healthy and vibrant for the tremendous benefit of our citizens, as well as the state's tourism industry. These microbeads and their impacts will continue to persist at our loss. Therefore, it is imperative to ban future sales of products containing them.

However, language in HB4345, seeks to create an exemption for "biodegradable" microbeads. It is incredibly unclear today, if synthetic biodegradable plastic microbeads are even a possibility. However, if they are created, the period of time in which they must biodegrade is critically important. We are not putting systems in place to prevent these from entering public waters. So going forward, there will be a new annual load of these entering our waters (in addition to the current persistent load of non-biodegradable microbeads already polluting our waters). If the timeframe for them to biodegrade is not short, annual accumulation of them will still create a situation where these products are in significant abundance to be ecologically available to aquatic life, and the harm will continue. At this time, we believe that if an exemption for "biodegradable" is maintained, it should be defined as "100% of microbeads completely breaking down within 12 months or less". While this would prevent annual accumulation, the annual loading of these may still be significant as to cause harm to aquatic life. As no such "biodegradable plastic microbeads" are known to us today, this should not create an economic hardship on an industry, but provide a specific target objective for their development in the future.

Thank you for your consideration of these comments,

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