

The background of the slide is a photograph of a path or road. The path is heavily littered with plastic waste, including numerous small pieces of clear and white plastic, as well as larger, colorful fragments of what appear to be food packaging or other debris. The path is also covered with fallen leaves in shades of red, orange, and brown, suggesting an autumn setting. The overall scene conveys a message of environmental pollution and the impact of plastic waste.

The Fight Against Plastic Pollution

Land & Water Conservation Summit
March 7, 2020

The Fight Against Plastic Pollution

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The Fight Against Plastic Pollution

Agenda:

- **Plastics Pollution Overview (Kevin)**
- **Local Successes (Kate)**
- **State House Perspective (Rep. McEntee)**
- **Question and Answer**

Problems with Plastics

- Background: the Plastics “Life Cycle”
- Plastics and Environmental Justice
- Plastics and Climate
- What Can We Do?

The Plastics Life Cycle

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What are Plastics?

- 99% of plastics are derived from fracked gas or crude oil
- Plastics are cheap because they are subsidized by the fossil fuel industry
- Plastics are often combined with additives to make them more flexible, more durable, fireproof, or a certain color

Plastics = Fossil Fuels

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The Plastics Life Cycle



Extraction



Consumption



Environment



Refinement



Waste

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An oil pumpjack (jack-o'-lantern) is the central focus, set against a clear blue sky and a flat, arid desert landscape. The pumpjack is a complex mechanical structure with a large, curved walking beam and a counterweight. The text "Plastics Pollute at Every Stage: Extraction" is overlaid in a bold, dark blue font across the middle of the image.

Plastics Pollute at Every Stage: Extraction

Plastics Pollute at Every Stage: Extraction

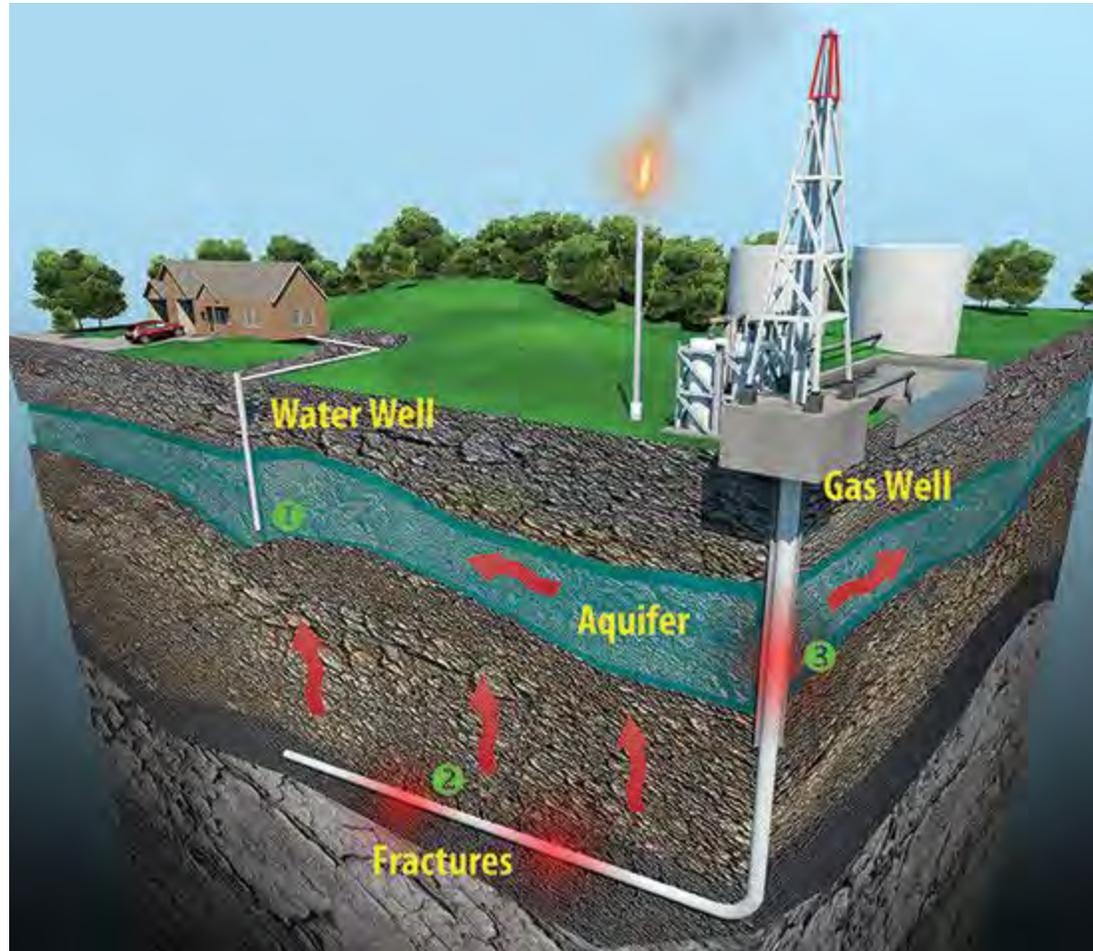
- 170+ toxic chemicals in fracking fluid, including benzene, toluene, ethylbenzene, and xylene
- These chemicals cause cancer and liver, kidney, reproductive, and/or development toxicity
- 7,000+ pipeline leaks in last ten years in U.S.



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Plastics Pollute at Every Stage: Extraction



- Long before a plastic has been made, its raw materials have already polluted our air, contaminated drinking water, and damaged our climate



Plastics Pollute at Every Stage: Refinement

Plastics Pollute at Every Stage: Refinement



- Refining fossil fuels into plastic resins releases hazardous air pollutants like 1,3-butadiene, benzene, styrene, and toluene
- Pollutants can be colorless and odorless
- Linked to cancers and neurological effects

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A top-down view of a grid of tomatoes in plastic packaging. The tomatoes are arranged in rows and columns, with colors ranging from bright red to yellow-green. Each tomato is individually wrapped in clear plastic, and the entire grid is contained within larger plastic trays. The text "Plastics Pollute at Every Stage: Consumption" is overlaid in the center in a bold, dark blue font.

**Plastics Pollute at Every Stage:
Consumption**

Plastics Pollute at Every Stage: Consumption

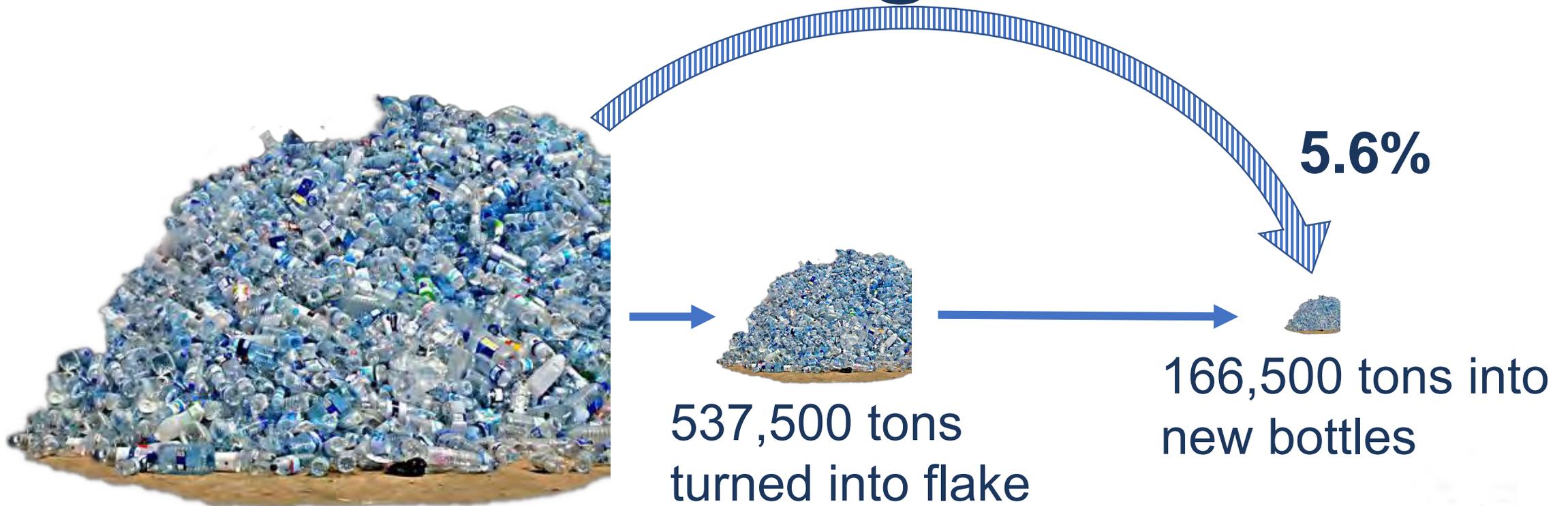


- We ingest micro- and nano-particles shed by plastic food packaging
- Chemical additives in plastic packaging leach into food
- 175+ known endocrine disruptors, carcinogens, and other hazardous chemicals used in plastic food packaging

A man in a blue shirt is seen from the chest up, looking down and sorting through a vast, chaotic pile of discarded plastic waste. The waste includes numerous clear plastic bottles, some with caps, and various pieces of translucent plastic. The background is a dense, textured sea of this waste, filling the entire frame. The overall tone is somber and emphasizes the scale of the problem.

Plastics Pollute at Every Stage: Waste Management

Plastics Pollute at Every Stage: Waste Management



Source: 2017 NAPCOR Report on Postconsumer PET Container Recycling Activity

Plastics Pollute at Every Stage: Waste Management

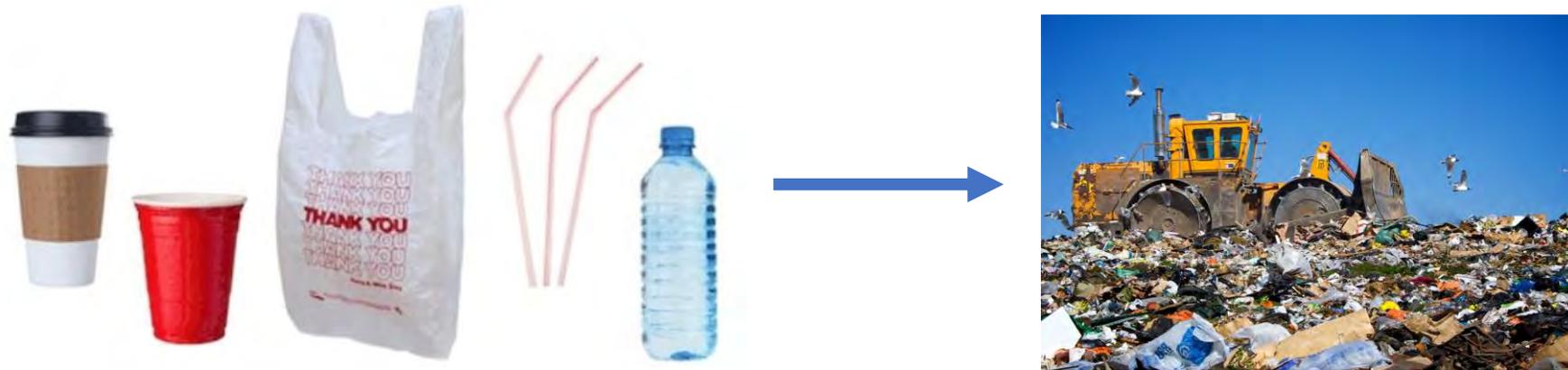


**62,000+ tons/year in the
Johnston landfill each year**



**8,000 tons/year
processed for
recycling**

Plastics Pollute at Every Stage: Waste Management



Up to 44,000 tons of the yearly plastic total in Rhode Island are single-use plastics

Source: 2015 Rhode Island Waste Characterization Study

Plastics Pollute at Every Stage: Waste Management



- Bags and film = 26,000+ tons/year (>5% of all waste)



- Styrofoam = 4,000+ tons/year



- PET bottles = 4,700+ tons/year

Source: 2015 Rhode Island Waste Characterization Study

Plastics Pollute at Every Stage: Waste Management

- Incinerating, gasifying, and pyrolyzing plastic releases dioxins, furans, mercury, PCBs, and other toxics
- These pollutants are linked to cancers, neurological damage, and endocrine disruptions

Don't Burn Plastic!

An underwater photograph showing a dense field of plastic debris floating in clear blue water. The debris includes various types of plastic, such as bags, fragments, and fibers, in shades of white, light blue, and translucent. The scene illustrates the extent of plastic pollution in aquatic environments.

Plastics Pollute at Every Stage: Plastic in Our Environment







Plastics Pollute at Every Stage: Plastic in Our Environment

Rhode Island's 2018 International Coastal Cleanup:

- 43,281 small pieces of plastic and foam
- 13,848 plastic plates, utensils, take-out containers, wrappers
- 7,345 plastic bottles
- 5,576 plastic bags
- 119,975 pieces of plastic (77% of all items collected)

Source: Save the Bay 2018 International Coastal Cleanup Rhode Island Report















Plastics and Environmental Justice

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Plastics and Environmental Justice

- Nationwide, people of color are 75% more likely to live near polluting facilities like petrochemical plants¹
- 80% of waste incinerators in the U.S. are located in environmental justice communities²

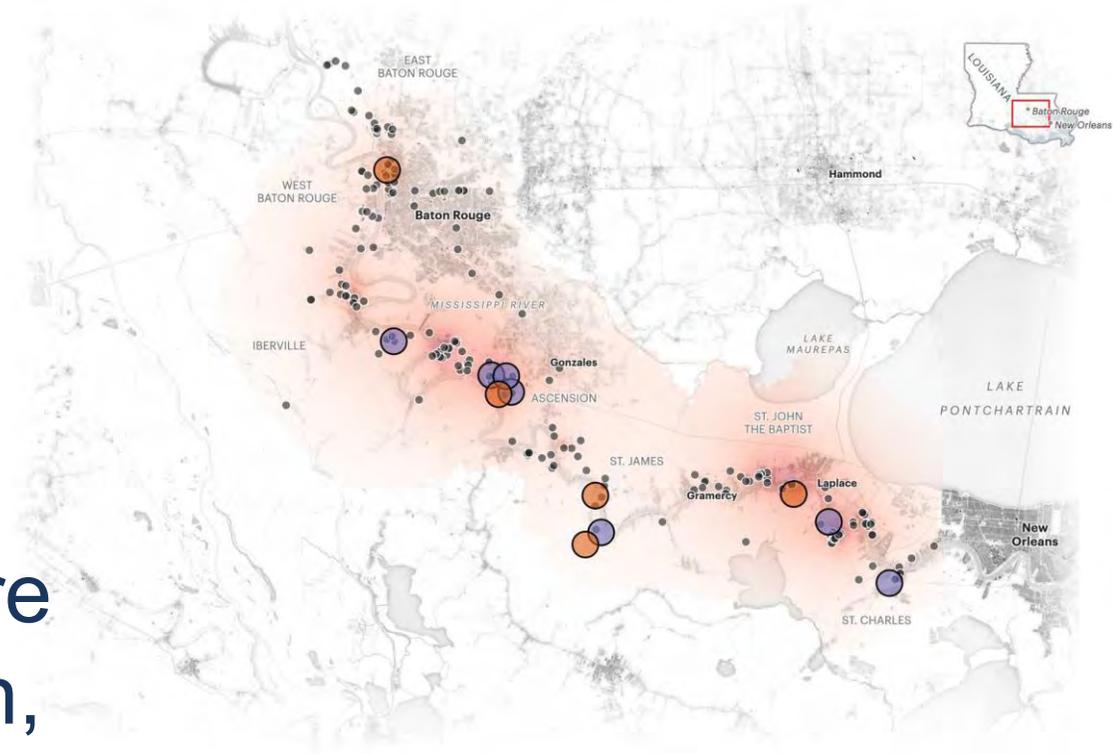


¹Source: NAACP & CATF, Fumes Across the Fenceline

²Source: The New School, U.S. Municipal Solid Waste Incinerators: An Industry in Decline

Plastics and Environmental Justice

- “Cancer alley” in Louisiana is home to more than 200 chemical plants
- More than 30 petrochemical plants—including the world’s largest polystyrene facility—are located near St. Gabriel parish, which has a 29% poverty rate and an average income half the national average



Source: ProPublica, Welcome to “Cancer Alley”

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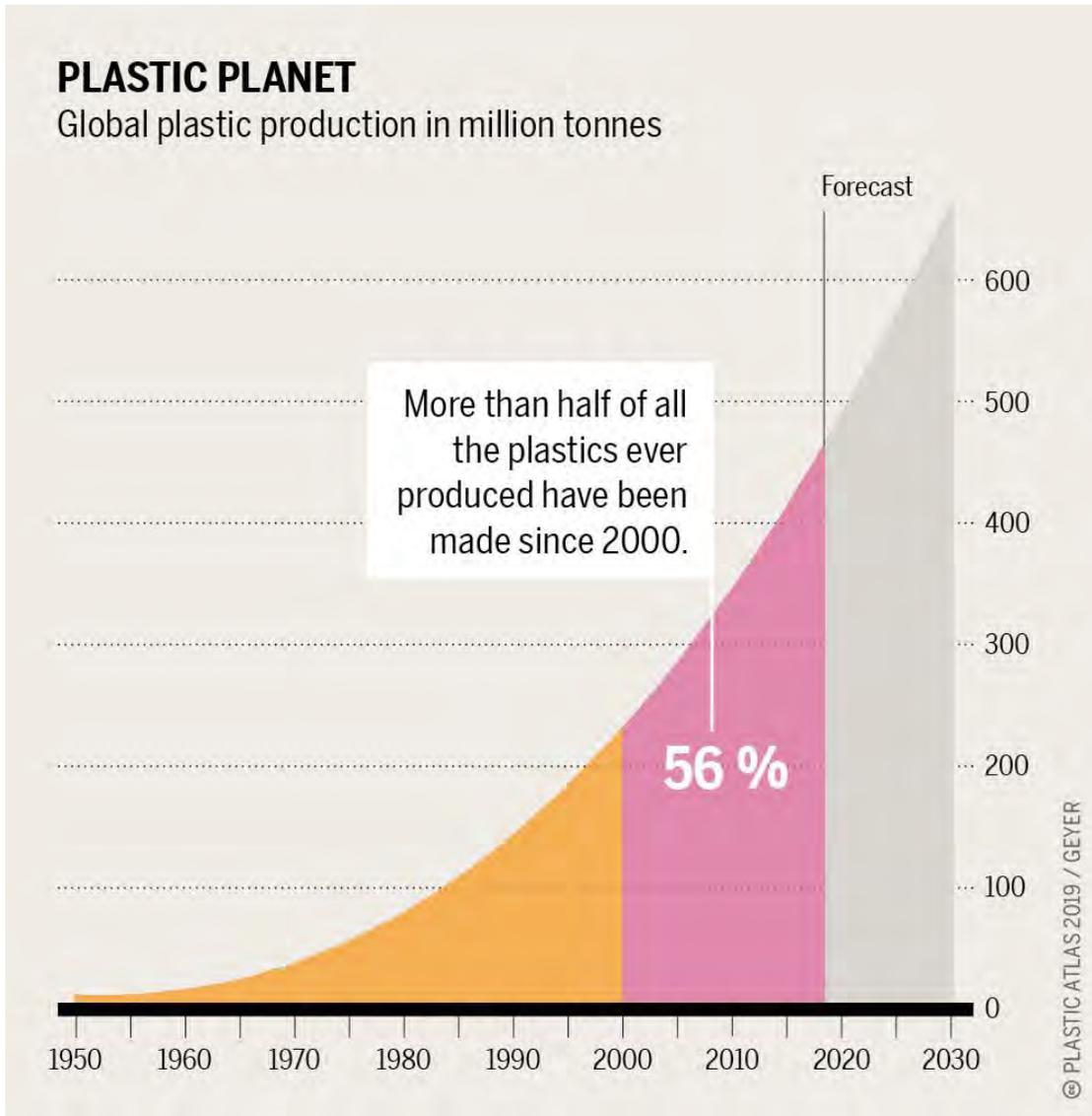
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Plastics and Climate

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Plastics Production is Growing



Global Plastics Production:

1950 = 2,000,000 metric tons

2015 = 380,000,000 metric tons

2050 = 1,800,000,000 metric tons

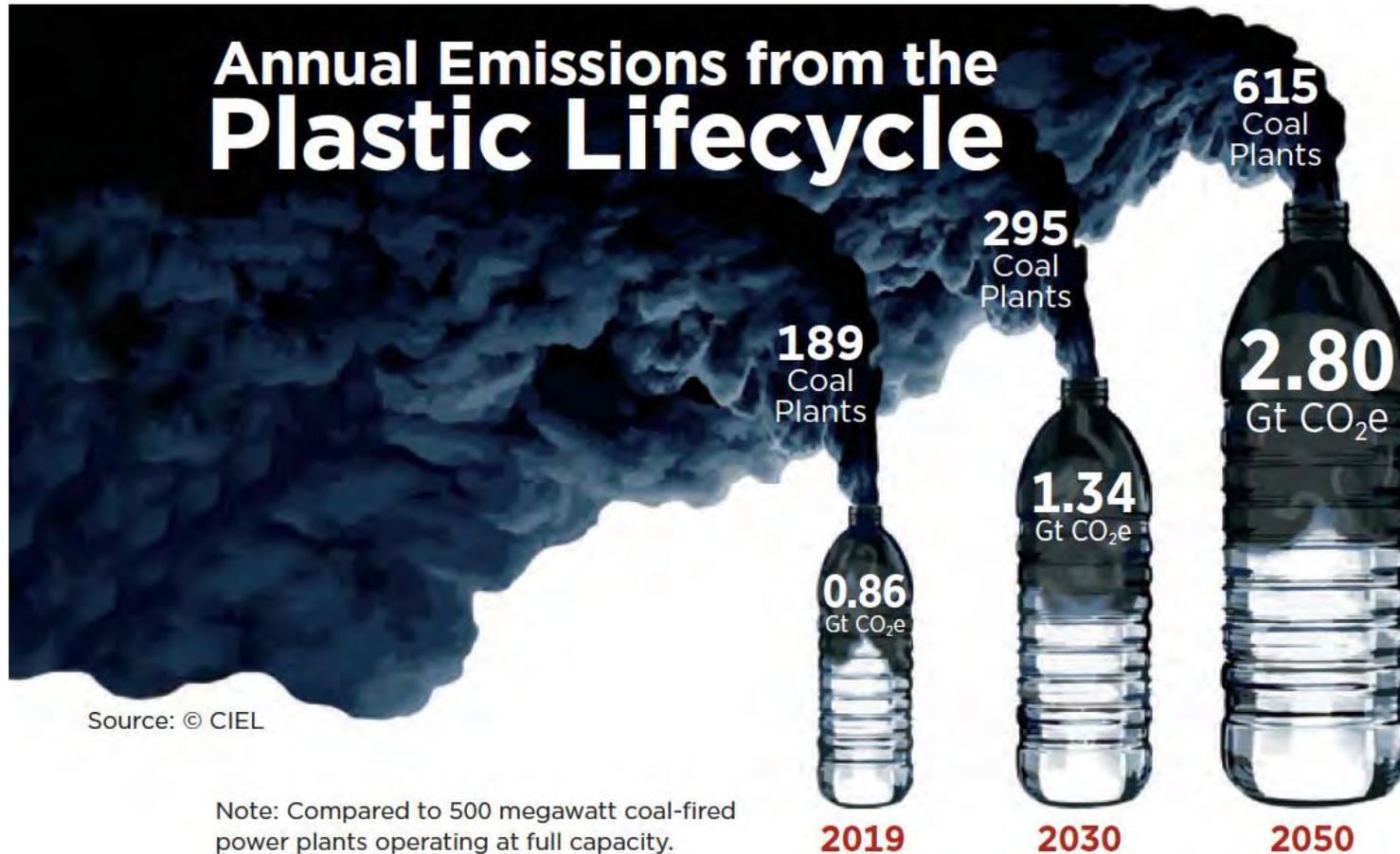
Source: Azouly, Plastic & Health: The Hidden Costs of a Plastic Planet

Plastics Production is Growing

- The U.S. petrochemicals and plastics industries plan to spend more than **\$200 billion** on factories, pipelines, and other infrastructure by 2025
- This includes 12 new petrochemical facilities in “cancer alley” and \$90 billion worth of facilities in the Northeast



Plastics and Climate



If these trends continue, emissions from plastics production and incineration will consume 10-13% of the planet's remaining carbon budget

Source: Hamilton, Plastic & Climate: The Hidden Costs of a Plastic Planet

Plastics and Climate

Burning plastics makes the problem worse!

- Gasification, pyrolysis, and incineration are not solutions to the plastics problem
- Burning plastics:
 - Releases greenhouse gases
 - Emits dangerous pollutants like nitrogen oxides, mercury, lead, and dioxins
 - Does nothing to stop the production of new plastics

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What Can We Do?

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We Have the Tools to Fix This

Better recycling is a start, but
we cannot recycle our way out of the plastics crisis

The path forward:

- Single-use plastics bans
- Deposit-return system (bottle bill)
- Extended producer responsibility for packaging
- Reusable and refillable containers and systems



Local Successes in the Fight Against Plastics Pollution





WHY DO YOU
THINK THE
SEA IS SO
ANGRY?

ONE WORD:
PLASTICS.

Mother Goose and Grimm by Mike Peters



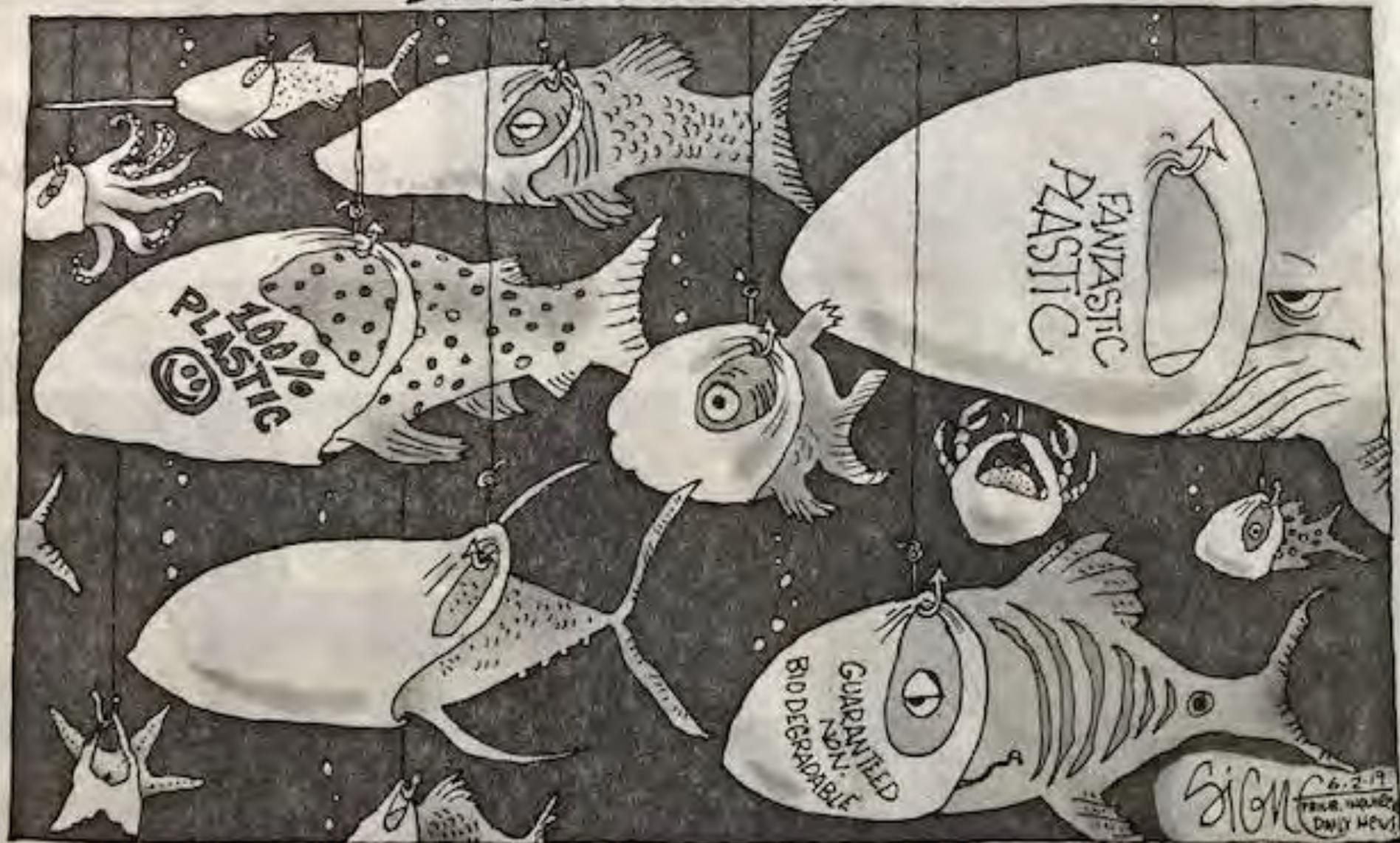
I HEAR THEY TRIED TO DUPLICATE THE OCEAN AS CLOSELY AS POSSIBLE

WATER WORLD

10/3

Mike Peters

BAGGING DINNER...



Rhymes with Orange by Hilary Price

THE
PLAYDATE

She owns a
ton of stuff,
but not one
recycle bin.

IT WAS FUN UNTIL
WE CALCULATED
BARBIE'S PLASTIC
FOOTPRINT.



RhymesWithOrange.com

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1-21 Hilary Price

The background of the slide is a photograph of plastic waste floating in water. The water is a light, pale blue color. The plastic waste includes various pieces of clear and white plastic, some of which are crumpled or broken into smaller fragments. The overall scene suggests environmental pollution and the impact of plastic waste on aquatic environments.

Perspective on Plastics from the State House

Plastics Bills in the State House

Plastic Bags:

- S-2003 Sub A (Senate President Ruggiero) – Passed Senate unanimously!
- H-7306 (Representative McEntee)

Polystyrene Food Containers:

- H-7164 (Representative Bennett)
- S-2636 (Senator Miller)

Plastic Straws:

- H-7163 (Representative Bennett)

Bottle Bill:

- H-7611 (Representative McEntee)
- S-2513 (Senator McKenney)

Vendor Plastic Reduction Incentive:

- H-7872 (Representative Kazarian)



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Discussion

The image features a central text overlay on a background of a beach scene. The background is a faded, semi-transparent photograph of a person surfing on a wave. Overlaid on this is a layer of various pieces of plastic waste and debris, including bottle caps, fragments of plastic, and sticks, which are scattered across the scene, suggesting environmental pollution.