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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**NY/NJ BAYKEEPER RELEASES STARTLING RESULTS OF PLASTIC  
COLLECTION STUDY IN NY-NJ HARBOR**

*More than 165 million plastic particles estimated to be floating in waters surrounding  
NYC*

NY/NJ Baykeeper has released the [results](#) from a plastic collection study detailing the sizes, types, and concentrations of plastic pollution within NY-NJ Harbor Estuary waters. The Harbor Estuary encompasses the Ports of NY and NJ, as far north as the Tappan Zee Bridge and as far south as Sandy Hook Bay. NY/NJ Baykeeper's results represent the first examination of plastic pollution within waters surrounding New York City.

Based on NY/NJ Baykeeper's estimates, at least 165 million plastic particles are floating within NY-NJ Harbor Estuary waters at any given time. The average abundance of plastic particles is 256,322 per square kilometer.

Eighteen samples were collected from New York City and New Jersey waters including the East River, the Upper New York Bay, Newtown Creek, the Lower Harbor near Perth Amboy, NJ, the Passaic River, the Morris Canal, the Arthur Kill, the Lower Newark Bay, and the Upper Newark Bay. Based on results from the sites

sampled, the average plastic quantity per square kilometer from New York City samples was approximately twice the average of New Jersey samples.

“With a population of more than eight million, New York City must take aggressive policy action like phasing out foam and plastic bags to reduce damage caused by plastic pollution,” **said Sandra Meola, Communications and Outreach Associate at NY/NJ Baykeeper.** “Coupled with consumer education, legislation should be a priority, especially in the ‘to-go’ city. We can’t keep using throwaway products that are used for a few minutes, but take decades to break down.”

Samples were collected using a net called a manta trawl, which is designed to collect floatable debris off the water’s surface. The net is of the same specifications used by the Five Gyres Institute for international ocean research and for the survey completed in the Great Lakes region by Dr. Sherri Mason.

“This ground-breaking initial study of the NY-NJ Harbor Estuary continues the story that was started with our work in the Great Lakes. Plastic pollution is everywhere, and the closer we get to the sources (us) the higher the counts,” **said Dr. Sherri Mason, Professor of Chemistry at SUNY Fredonia.** “Our science will continue, but the facts are clear: we must re-evaluate our relationship with this material. Single-use disposable plastics are a plague to our waters and therefore to our society, but fortunately it is one that is easily solved. We had life before plastic and I have full faith we can find a way to break our plastic addiction.”

Plastics present in samples were categorized by size and type, and then counted using a dissecting microscope. Categories included fragments, foam, line, pellets, and film. The most abundant type of plastic present in samples was foam (38%).

Approximately 85% of particles counted were microplastics. Microplastics are particles smaller than 5mm, about the size of a grain of rice. Microplastics are also considered by various experts to cause the most damage to aquatic life and habitat.

"We are beginning to see evidence of just how prevalent plastic pollution is in our waters. Plastic trash and debris, along with microplastics, are contaminating fish, birds, mammals, even plankton,” **said Project Partner, Dave Conover, Education Director at Hudson River Sloop Clearwater, Inc.** “By gathering more data, we can get a clearer picture of the sources of this pollution and create effective strategies to reduce it. We have a responsibility to get plastics out of our waters.”

Moving forward, NY/NJ Baykeeper will continue collecting water column samples, with project partners and will collaborate with EPA Region 2’s Trash Free Waters

Partnership to share and compare research and advocacy strategies. The Trash Free Waters Partnership is a group of New York and New Jersey stakeholders focused on reducing and eliminating plastic pollution.

Rutgers University's Center for Urban Environmental Sustainability (CUES) is supporting the efforts of NY/NJ Baykeeper in their mission to remove plastic materials from the Harbor Estuary's water bodies. **Dr. Beth Ravit, CUES Co-Director**, has been awarded a grant from the New Jersey Water Resources Research Institute that sponsors further research with NY/NJ Baykeeper to determine the impact of microplastic particles in the freshwater reaches of the Raritan and Passaic Rivers.

"These studies will determine microplastic concentrations and analyze persistent organic contaminants associated with the plastic particles. Dr. Keith Cooper of Rutgers will analyze the effects plastics and toxins pose to fish larvae," **said Ravit.**

NY/NJ Baykeeper's report also includes steps the public can take to refuse and eliminate plastic from everyday life including using reusable water bottles, bags, and shopping in bulk at grocery stores. NY/NJ Baykeeper encourages the public to get involved in local shoreline cleanup efforts.

#### About [NY/NJ Baykeeper](#)

NY/NJ Baykeeper is the citizen guardian of the NY-NJ Harbor Estuary. Since 1989, it has worked to protect, preserve, and restore the environment of the most urban estuary on Earth to benefit its natural and human communities. Through Estuary-wide programs NY/NJ Baykeeper seeks to end pollution, improve public access, conserve and restore public lands, restore aquatic habitats, encourage appropriate and discourage inappropriate development, carry out public education, and work with federal and state regulators and citizen groups as partners in planning a sustainable future for the NY-NJ Harbor Estuary.

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Protecting, preserving, and restoring the NY/NJ Harbor Estuary since 1989.  
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