

How to Conduct Your Count

During the month of May, volunteers around the world are conducting pellet counts to help identify where this plastic pellet (nurdle) pollution is happening and make the case for action. Plastic pellet counts can be as quick as 10 minutes. This guide can help get you started.

Where to Hunt for Plastic Pellets

You're welcome to look for plastic pellets anywhere near water. Some of the hot spots for plastic pellets are water bodies near plastic pellet manufacturers, railway lines that transport them, storage-in-transit facilities, plastic pellet bagging (transloading) facilities, domestic and international ports, recycling facilities, and near businesses that frequently use plastic pellets.

If you are looking around a facility that handles plastic pellets, you are most likely to find them near the drainage points, the points of lowest elevation. Since they are small and lightweight, they can also be blown around and get trapped in sheltered cracks and crevices.

If you are near a waterbody, start your search at the new strand line (wrackline), the stretch of debris left behind when the high tide recedes. You may need to search around a bit, as the plastic pellets can be hidden amongst the debris. If you are not finding plastic pellets within the new strand line, look within the old strand line, which is a line of debris left behind slightly higher up. This strand line was left by a more extreme high-tide event in the past. New strand lines show the high-tide line within a daily ebb and flow cycle. Plastic pellets are often found within the smaller debris within the strand lines. If you are looking near a waterbody, it is best to look during low tide.

What Plastic Pellets Look Like



Plastic pellets are specifically plastic created before being turned into other products. typically 2-5mm (size of a lentil), and come in all different colors.

All plastic pellets are microplastic, but not all microplastics are plastic pellets. They can be hard to spot, so go slow and low while looking for them.

Please only report plastic pellets that are round.

Please don't include other types of microplastic in your count, but please do clean up all types of plastic from our environment!

Please **DON'T** include the official count, but please **DO** pick up:

- Secondary microplastic, typically irregular in size shaped
- Hard, smooth plastic
- BB gun pellets
- Expanded polystyrene ('squishy' plastic)
- Clear/opaque or various colors
- Biobeads (gray, rigid surface)

Styrofoam vs. Plastic Pellets



DON'T COUNT:
Styrofoam

DO COUNT! Plastic pellets,
"nurdles"

How to Report Your Data

Once you are at your count location, start looking for pellets. Once you find your first pellet, start a time and record the number of pellets you find for each 10 minute interval.

To report your data, log your data into Nurdle Patrol. You will be prompted to provide:

- How many people were looking?
- How many plastic pellets were found?
- How long did it take to find that amount?
- What was the date of your nurdle hunt?
- Where were you?
- Were you with an organization?
- In the add notes/ comments here section, you can write 'International Plastic Pellet Count'

- Press the Blue button 'Submit Patrol' to submit your data.

All data, even reports of 'zero' pellets, is important. For reference, there is a 5-minute on [how to look for pellets and log them into Nurdle Patrol](#), and how to specifically [look along a river](#).

Please send pictures of your count and what you find to Chelsea McDonald, at cmcdonald@waterkeeper.org so we can record and amplify!

Safety and Equipment

- Make sure you are dressed in proper attire for your day of plastic pellet hunting. You might be near a body of water and on uneven surfaces so make sure you wear proper clothing and the right shoes.
- Beware of tides, waves, and currents.
- Go with a group or let someone know where you will be.
- What to Bring:
 - A container for the plastic pellets. Try to reuse old containers
 - Hand sanitizer and gloves – plastic pellets may have absorbed harmful chemicals and so you might want to protect your skin (optional)

Disposal

Like many types of plastic, plastic pellets are not recyclable. Therefore, if you want to dispose of them, place them in a sealed bag or container before putting them into the garbage to ensure that they do not get lost into the environment a second time. This is a frustrating solution, but is why it is important to stop pellet pollution before it is too late. Alternatively, you can:

- Reach out to your representatives and ask for tougher legislation regarding plastic
- pellet pollution. Tell the story of your plastic pellet hunt, and show or give the plastic
- pellets to your representatives.
- Put them on display to raise awareness
- Donate them to research
- Create art or give to local artists