

November 2018 Council Action of the Month -- *Prevent microfibers from getting into the Tennessee River!*

Did you see the articles that came out in October 2018 regarding [microplastics in the Tennessee River](#)? German scientist Andreas Fath conducted a study that found that the Tennessee River has an alarming amount of microplastics in it. Although the pollution is resulting from a combination of factors, the factor that we would like to focus on this month is microfibers from synthetic clothing.

Microplastic fibers from synthetic clothing are washed down drains when you wash your clothes. Any clothing item that is made with polyester, nylon, acrylic, viscose/rayon, fleece, microfleece, elastane/spandex/lycra or acetate contains plastic and is responsible. Municipalities treat sewage water and do filter most microplastics out, but some microfibers are too small to be filtered out by waste treatment plants and the percentage that leaks through is poisoning our waterways. One way to prevent this is by reducing the amount of clothing that you buy with synthetic fibers in them.

We know that many of you are gearing up for the holiday gift-giving season and for our November Council Action of the Month we would like to ask you to avoid buying clothing that contains plastic materials. Look for clothing made of 100% natural materials and buy those instead: cotton, bamboo, hemp, linen, silk and wool. Even though some polyester & fleece items are made with recycled plastic and are a more environmentally friendly choice, those plastic fibers may still be making it to our waterways when the item is washed. In addition, synthetic textiles are designed not to decompose so, unless the textile is recycled properly, they may release toxic substances into groundwater and surrounding soil if they end up in a landfill. Please check the label before you buy something and consider the environmental consequences of washing that clothing item before buying it for yourself or as a gift for someone else.

One easy way to avoid polyester is in t-shirts. Many t-shirts are made with a percentage of polyester. Since t-shirts are mostly worn in hot weather does it make sense to have plastic that is going to make you sweat in your t-shirt anyway? If you are ordering branded t-shirts or other clothing for marketing purposes for a company, or community event, here is a good opportunity to choose 100% cotton and make a difference!

There is a second option for preventing microfibers from getting into our waterways and that is by using a product such as the Guppybag or Cora Ball. Unfortunately, these products are also made of plastic but, they do prevent microfibers from escaping your washing machine. If you already own some clothing with plastic fibers in it, (and you most likely do) this is a good solution for washing the clothing that you already have.

Let's help prevent microplastic fiber pollution from entering the Tennessee River by avoiding clothing with polyester, nylon, acrylic, viscose/rayon, fleece, microfleece, elastane/spandex/lycra

and acetate. If you have these clothes already, consider buying a Guppyfriend Bag or a Cora Ball or giving one of those as a gift this holiday season!