

Electronic Press Kit

SINGLE-USE PLANET



*A search for the true headwaters
of plastic entering the ocean finds
more than it bargained for.*



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singleuseplanetmovie.org



Single-Use-Planet

KQED
PRESENTS

Table of Contents

This Electronic Press Kit is intended for use by public television stations, journalists and other publishers to support coverage of *Single-Use Planet* and the issues that it presents. The film will begin airing on PBS stations across the country in April 2025 (check local listings) and streaming on the PBS website and app.

Draft Press Release **1**

Film Descriptions **3**

An Overview of the Film **4**

The Cast **5**

The Filmmakers **7**

Why We Made the Film **8**

The Issues **9**

Research and Resources **11**



Draft Press Release

1

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For Immediate Release

[STATION LOGO HERE]

Contacts:

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New Documentary Film on the Impacts of Single-Use Plastics Coming to Public Television Stations Across the Country

Exploration of the Environmental, Heath, and Political Dynamics Will Begin Airing in Time for Earth Day in April 2025

San Francisco—The new documentary feature film, [Single-Use Planet](#), which explores the impact of single-use plastics, will begin airing across the country in April 2025—in time for Earth Day observances throughout the month. The film is made available to public television stations nationwide by KQED Presents, the national distribution service of public media station KQED in San Francisco, one of the country's leading PBS and NPR affiliates.

Public Television station [station name] in [city & state] will be premiering the program on [premiere date] and looks forward to providing viewers with the opportunity to learn more about this complex and important issue.

“While filming content for another project out at sea, we found ourselves at times amidst vast gyres of ocean plastic stretching from horizon to horizon; we knew at that point that we had to tell the story of the growing dangers of the over-use of discardable single-use plastics that are threatening our oceans and, in many cases, our health” said Steve Cowan, director and producer of the film.

Narrated by actor Peter Coyote, a noted voice providing narration for many public television films and programs, the film’s investigation proceeds from a central question: “how do we keep the benefits that plastics provide, but protect ourselves from its negative impacts? Our search for answers goes upstream from the ocean to where millions of tons of plastic are being produced with limited oversight while this waste continues to grow despite so many efforts to reduce it.

“KQED is proud to be the presenting station for *Single-Use Planet*. We are committed to offering the finest programs to public television stations around the country through our KQED



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Draft Press Release

2

Presents service. *Single-Use Planet* is a great example of how public media delivers value to communities and viewers nationwide,” said Amy Miller, Director, Video Production & Distribution for KQED.

An official selection at a range of notable film festivals, including Indie Fest, the Austin International Film Festival, the Colorado Environmental Film Festival, and winner of an Impact Doc Award, *Single-Use Planet* continues to make a significant contribution to the ongoing discussion and debate about how best to manage our production and consumption of plastics.

“My hope is that public television stations and their viewers will watch the film and use it as an opportunity to consider their own use of plastics as well as the impact these materials have on our health and the environment,” added Cowan. Ultimately, each person and family will make their own decisions about using plastic—we simply hope to provide as much information as possible to inform those decisions.

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Single-Use-Planet

Very Short Description (54 words)

Single-Use Planet is a documentary feature film coming to PBS stations nationwide beginning in Spring 2025. The film explores the political, economic, health and environmental impact of single use plastics. Following the construction of new manufacturing facilities in Pennsylvania and Louisiana, the film delves into a powerful industry and its impact on local communities.

Short Description (185 words)

Single-Use Planet is a documentary feature film coming to PBS stations nationwide beginning in Spring 2025. The film explores the political, economic, health and environmental impact of single use plastics. Following the construction of new manufacturing facilities in Pennsylvania and Louisiana, the film delves into a powerful industry and its impact on local communities. Plastic is vital in so many ways to our modern way of life and well-being—but not all forms of it. In search of why evermore single-use plastic debris enters the ocean despite all efforts to recycle, the filmmakers take viewers upstream to where millions of tons of raw plastic are being made amidst the ruins of America's bygone steel industry in Pennsylvania. Further upstream the economic and political realities that have boosted the industry are revealed—realities reaching all the way to rural Louisiana where plans are laid to build the biggest plastic plant in the world. Can the powerful industry be persuaded to temper the production of single-use plastic? The investigation leads to Washington D.C. and finally to France, where policymakers have implemented a nationwide ban of most single-use products.



An Overview of the Film

4

The investigation opens with a glimpse of the essential uses of plastic and the flood of single-use, disposable plastic debris entering the ocean.

Narrator Peter Coyote asks, “how do we keep the benefits that plastics provide, but protect ourselves from the negative impacts... and why does this waste continue to grow despite so many efforts to reduce it?” The search for the true headwaters of the deluge goes upstream from the ocean to where millions of tons of plastic are being produced with limited oversight—a discovery leading to the politics that brought it into being.

The film takes viewers to **Pennsylvania**, opening with views of the Royal Dutch Shell’s gigantic plastic plant being built on the Ohio River. State lawmakers explain why they offered Shell the biggest subsidy in their state’s history to land the project: the restoration of local economies devastated by the loss of the steel industry. Outside the capitol, some citizens are questioning the incentives of lawmakers who’ve enabled its arrival.

In **Louisiana** the location shifts to St. James, a rural, predominantly Black community alongside the Mississippi River where another foreign-based chemical conglomerate, Formosa Plastics, is planning to build a \$9.4 billion complex that would become the world’s largest plastic-making plant. Many residents fill meeting halls to let government agencies know they oppose the project, saying they’re already surrounded by the industry in a region known as “Cancer Alley.”

In **Washington DC**, wondering if Congress might be better able to address the problems around plastic pollution, the filmmakers visit Capitol Hill where a federal bill to regulate the industry remains stalled by industry opposition. The legislation would phase out the manufacture of certain types of single-use packaging and temporarily pause the construction of new “ethane crackers” pending a thorough study of the pollution involved. The bill’s sponsors weigh in, as do industry lobbyists who say it would hurt the economy—lobbyists representing organizations that funnel millions of election campaign dollars to members of Congress and state legislators throughout the country.

Finally, a different story unfolds across the ocean in **France**, where one European democracy has been able to effectively regulate the manufacture and use of single-use plastic, and without hurting their economy. The film takes a brief look at how France prohibits industries and companies from giving campaign money to members of their Parliament. Is it a coincidence France has been able to greatly reduce plastic pollution? A closing animation ponders the question.



Citizens



Lois Bower-Bjornson
Scenic Hill, PA



Pastor Harry Joseph
St. James, LA



Sharon Lavigne
St. James, LA



Gale Leboeuf
Convent, LA

Jesse Lombardi
West Virginia

Rocco Martini
Beaver, PA

Robert Schmetzer
South Heights, PA

Jack O'Neill
Daisytown, PA

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Beaver, PA

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St. James, LA

Leroy Frazier
St. James, LA

Rita Cooper
St. James, LA

Scientists and Experts



David Althoff
Director, Energy Programs Office,
Pennsylvania Department of
Environmental Protection

Matt Mehalik
Director, Breathe Project
and Adjunct Professor,
School of Public Policy
and Management,
Carnegie Mellon University

Vincent Pons, PhD
Associate Professor,
Harvard Business School



Terrence Collins, PhD
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Christopher Rabb
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Joshua Kail
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Representative



C. Denise Marcelle
Louisiana State
Representative

Jeff Merkley
U.S. Senator

Gregory Miller
Louisiana State
Representative

Katie Muth
Pennsylvania State
Senator

Advocates and Lobbyists



Joshua Baca
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Plastics Division,
American Chemistry Council,
Washington D.C.

Sheila Krumholz
Executive Director,
OpenSecrets
Washington D.C.

Carroll Muffett
Center for International
Environmental Law
Washington D.C.

Michael Pollack
Executive Director,
March on Harrisburg
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David Callahan
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Jackie Nunez
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The Last Plastic Straw
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Manager,
Plastic Pollution Coalition

Lew Villotti
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Corporation for Economic
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Matt Seaholm
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Rocco Martini
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Sharon Pillar
Executive Director,
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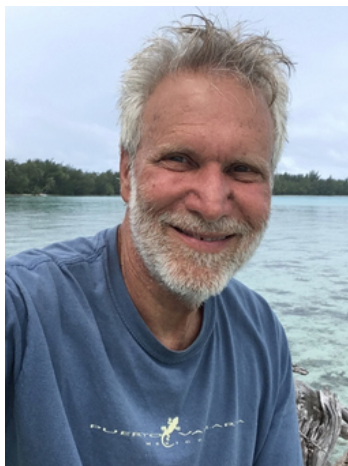
Jack Manning
Board of Commissioners
Beaver County, Pennsylvania





Steve Cowan
Producer/Director

Oversees the production of Habitat Media's wide range of award-winning documentaries that have aired nationally on PBS including the Emmy-nominated PBS series Empty Oceans Empty Nets about efforts to advance marine conservation, and PRICELESS that examines the inordinate influence of industries shaping U.S. farm & energy policy.



Barry Schienberg
Co-Producer/ DP

An award-winning cinematographer and editor with 35 years of credits. He has been principal camera on all Habitat Media—his keen eye helps shape all our stories and edits. Credits include Empty Oceans Empty Nets, Farming the Seas, Ancient Sea Turtles (National Geographic), and documentary profiles of annual Goldman Environmental Prize winners. His camera work has been seen on The Discovery Channel, PBS, A&E, and CNN.



Cameron Harrison
Co-Editor/Associate Producer

Our versatile graphics and special effects editor with use of the whole suite of editing software. Since graduating from the North Carolina School of Filmmaking he's worked as producer, director & editor on numerous award-winning short films, commercials & educational videos. He also co-produced our PBS documentary PRICELESS.



Why We Made the Film

8



Our love for the ocean has been behind many of the films we've made.

The landmark PBS film series *Empty Oceans Empty Nets* examines efforts to advance commercial fishing practices that protect endangered marine life and ocean ecosystems. That series led to *PRICELESS*, our documentary that explores the origins of agrichemical pollution flowing into the Gulf of Mexico—runoff from millions of acres of commodity crops subsidized by federal farm policy. We closely examine the influence of the agrichemical industry in shaping federal farm policy.

While out at sea filming these documentaries, we found ourselves at times amidst vast gyres of ocean plastic stretching from horizon to horizon, and since then we've wondered how it can be—given most Americans' love for the ocean—that we continue to generate more plastic waste per person than any other country? Why does the crisis keep worsening? Why isn't our government able to solve it?

Our search for answers takes us far upstream from the ocean—first to the giant petrochemical plants that make raw plastic, and to the expanse of natural gas drilling operations that supply them. Meeting nearby citizens, business leaders, and their state representative then led us directly to the policymaking that has enabled the unrestrained growth of these industries—policies lacking real safeguards to address the harmful pollution involved. To discover how this troubling reality continues, we take a clear look at the way these industries exert a strong influence on officeholders... and ultimately at what kind of measures might be needed to free policymakers from their obligation.



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Single-Use-Planet

SINGLE-USE PLASTIC

Nearly half of the over 400 million tons produced each year is made into packaging, including grocery bags, food containers, wrappers, plastic bottles, straws and cutlery—waste that doesn't decompose. It's estimated over 8 million tons enters the ocean each year, forming massive gyres the size of Texas, which account for only about one percent of the ocean plastic. A study by researchers from U.C Davis found that a quarter of the fish at markets in California contained plastic in their guts, mostly in the form of plastic microfibers.

HUMAN HEALTH PROBLEMS

A study conducted by the University of Newcastle in Australia found that the average person now consumes roughly 5 grams of plastic every week, equivalent to the weight of a credit card. Microplastics have been documented in the human lung, in maternal and fetal placental tissues, in human breast milk and blood. Numerous studies have documented the presence of certain chemical compounds in plastic food wrap and containers that can leach into the human blood stream. These chemical mixtures have been linked to alterations in sperm quality and fertility, early puberty, immune function, certain cancers, respiratory and cardiovascular problems, diabetes, obesity—and to growth, neurological and learning disabilities.

ALTERNATIVES TO SINGLE-USE PLASTIC

Most single-use plastic products CAN BE REPLACED with materials more easily recycled such as paper, cardboard, glass, and tin foil. Restaurants and stores can also sell food in re-usable bags and containers. Other countries such as France have already mandated these changes, resulting in a huge reduction of plastic pollution.



THE PROBLEM WITH RECYCLING PLASTIC

Less than 10% of all plastic waste is currently recycled, in large part because so much of it cannot be economically recycled. Virgin plastic produced from natural gas is cheaper for manufacturers to buy than recycled plastic. Most of the plastic we drop into recycling bins goes to landfills or is incinerated (resulting in toxic air emissions) or is shipped overseas where it can end up in the ocean. An emerging technology called advanced recycling—a chemical process—turns discarded plastic waste into an oil that can be used to make new plastic. This could, at most, process only a small fraction of the 160,000 million tons of packaging products being manufactured each year.

PETROCHEMICAL PRODUCTION

The industrial process that produces plastic also affects human health and contributes heavily to climate change. The main ingredient for making plastic in the U.S. is natural gas, a fossil fuel extracted by fracking—a drilling practice that pumps millions of gallons of water and chemicals deep underground to fracture layers of rock that contain the gas.

POLITICAL INFLUENCE MONEY

Because most citizens can't afford to make large donations, politicians have come to depend on the generosity of big industries and wealthy business interests—deep-pocket donors that expect and receive a return on their investment. A sobering reality is that legislators in America spend the bulk of their time working on bills written for and by giant industries.



Research and Resources

Journalism and Articles

THE INDEPENDENT

Study shows alarming cost of failing to act now on plastic pollution

WASHINGTON POST

“Scientists just figured out how many chemicals enter our bodies from food packaging”

THE GUARDIAN

Health experts rally for ‘call to arms’ to protect children from toxic chemicals

NEWSWEEK

As Plastic Treaty Talks Near, Study Shows How to Cut Waste Clogging Oceans

YALE ENVIRONMENT 360

Why We Need a Strong Global Agreement on Plastics Pollution

PROPUBLICA

When Is “Recyclable” Not Really Recyclable? When the Plastics Industry Gets to Define What the Word Means.

NPR

How to live without plastics for a month, according to the founder of a global movement

NEWSWEEK

As Plastic Treaty Talks Near, Study Shows How to Cut Waste Clogging Oceans

THE GUARDIAN

Microplastics found in dolphin breath for first time – study

PACKAGING DIVE

Packaging laws taking effect in 2025



Research and Resources

Organizations

Food and Water Watch fights for safe food, clean water, and a livable climate for all of us, from banning fracking, to shutting down factory farms, to making sure communities across the country have access to clean water.

The Last Beach Clean Up volunteers lead catalytic initiatives to move from awareness on plastic pollution to widescale action and achievement, and collaborate with diverse stakeholders who share the goal of ending plastic pollution: local and national governments, nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), socially responsible investors (SRIs), individuals and others.

5 Gyres: With direct links between the plastic crisis and the climate crisis, 5 Gyres platforms plastic pollution globally must be a major environmental priority through scientific research to drive upstream solutions on the plastic crisis and the climate crisis through education, advocacy, and community building.

Breathe Project is a clearinghouse for information on air quality in Pittsburgh, Southwestern Pennsylvania and beyond. We use the best available science and technology to better understand the quality of the air we breathe and provide opportunities for citizens to engage and take action.

FracTracker Alliance risks on communities from oil and gas development through provocative data, ground-breaking supports groups across the United States, addressing pressing extraction-related concerns with a lens toward health effects and exposure analyses, maps, and other visual tools for education.

Ohio River Valley Institute is an independent, nonprofit research and communications center—a think tank—founded in 2020 that equips the region's residents and decision-makers with the policy research and practical tools they need to advance long-term solutions to some of Appalachia's most significant challenges.

Inclusive Louisiana is a faith-based grassroots community advocate organization with deep dedication to protecting the residents of St. James Parish and neighboring parishes from environmental harm caused by industrial pollution.

Louisiana Environmental Action Network (LEAN) is a community based not-for-profit that uses education, empowerment, advocacy, and support to provide the necessary tools and services to individuals and communities facing environmental problems that often threaten their health, safety and quality of life.

