

April 11, 2024

Good Morning Chairman Sheldon and other committee members,

My name is Ashley Sullivan, and I am the Executive Director of Rozalia Project. Rozalia Project is a Vermont based non-profit working on the problem of marine debris in our local rivers, lakes, and oceans. Marine Debris is defined by NOAA as any persistent solid material that is manufactured or processed and directly or indirectly, intentionally, or unintentionally, disposed of or abandoned into the marine environment. Our organization has been recovering and collecting data on marine debris here in Vermont since 2012 and I have been at the helm of this organization since 2017.

I am here today to share what we have documented and learned regarding unencapsulated polystyrene, sometimes referred to as dock foam found in the marine environment here in Vermont. From 2012 to 2023 our organization performed 556 cleanups in 17 different geographic locations throughout the state including the White River, Otter Creek, Winooski River, Lamoille River, and the shores throughout Lake Champlain. From all these locations we removed over 87k pieces of foam. These pieces range in size from 4ft by 2 ft foam blocks to the tiniest grain of rice.

We catalog over 150 individual items from bottle caps to food wrappers and foam is the number 2 item we have recovered in our public waterways here in Vermont. The first is not surprising, it's microplastics.

Of the 87k pieces of foam we have recovered, 36k pieces were large foam which is defined as larger than 30mm (bigger than the size of a quarter), 14 k pieces of small foam which is defined as between 5-30mm and 36k microfoam defined as between 0-5mm (smaller than a grain of rice).

The rate of accumulation of foam in our waterways is increasing throughout the years and a possible result is our changing climate. With every flood the problem of foam and other debris is exacerbated. This is evident in the documentation of photos and data from both Rozalia Project and CLF. The unpredictable and extreme weather we have experienced since we began collecting data after Hurricane Irene in 2011, it is clear the problem is getting worse and not better.

I live in Burlington near Leddy Park which is on the shore of Lake Champlain. On any given day, I can go down there and find dock foam. On any given day! Once this foam

enters the natural environment it is nearly impossible to remove at mass and the chemical makeup of unencapsulated PS is such that it will be around forever.

The good news is that it doesn't have to be this way and you can make a difference too. I strongly support S.213, the Flood Safety Act and subchapter 2B. Expanded Polystyrene Foam provisions. This is a long-standing issue that should have been address long ago and seamlessly integrates into S.213.

Many commercial dock owners and individuals have already begun to change out to more robust and environmentally friendly types of dock but not fast enough. This legislation would ensure Vermonters are all in with improving water quality by eliminating the use of encapsulated foam docks and buoys.

Thank you,



Ashley Sullivan  
Executive Director  
Rozalia Project