



VPIRG

An Introduction to VPIRG

Paul Burns (Executive Director)
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VPIRG's Work with the Committee on Environment and Energy

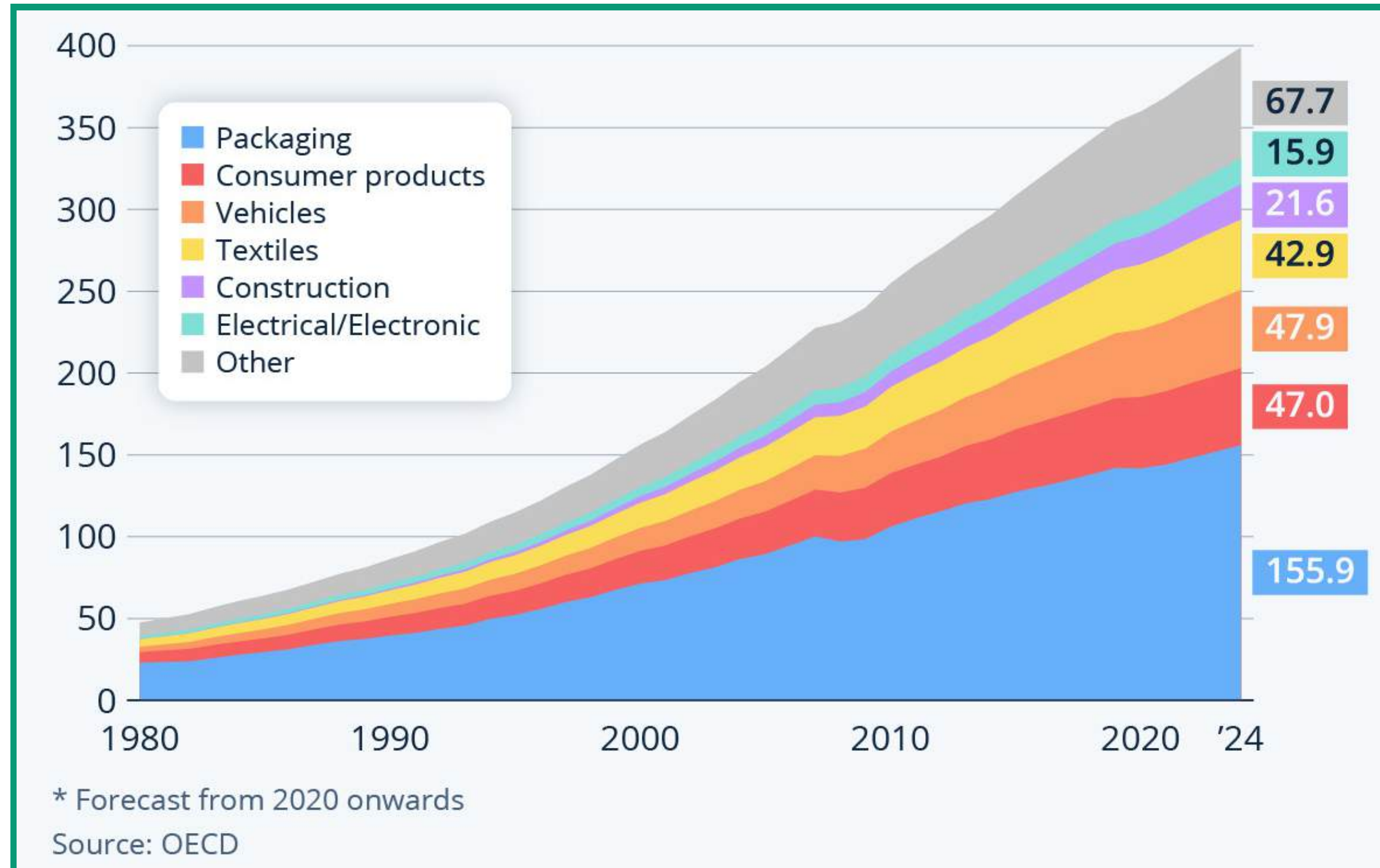
- **H.500**
 - An act prohibiting the sale of mercury lamps in the State
- **S.259**
 - Vermont Climate Superfund
- **H.158**
 - Modernizing Vermont's Bottle Bill



Relevant Policy Areas this Biennium

- **Plastic Pollution**
- **Bottle Bill**
- **PFAS**

The Plastic Problem



The Waste: Over 400 billion tons annually. That number is expected to double by 2050.

The Plastic Problem

The Toxics:

Out of the 16,325 chemicals identified in plastic production, over 4,000 are considered highly hazardous (2023 PlastChem Report and Database)

The Plastic Problem

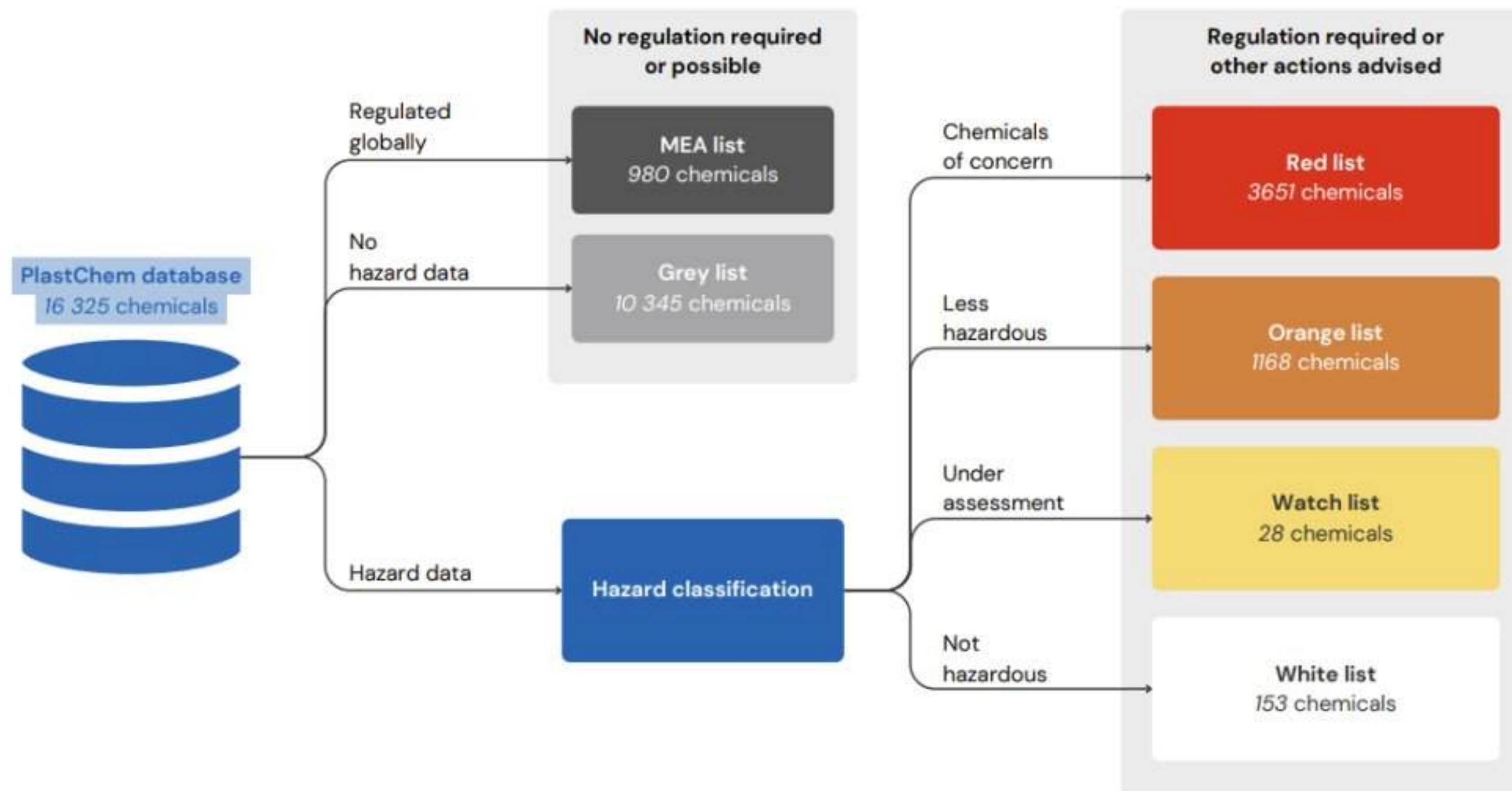


Figure 14: Overview of the six PlastChem lists.

The Plastic Problem

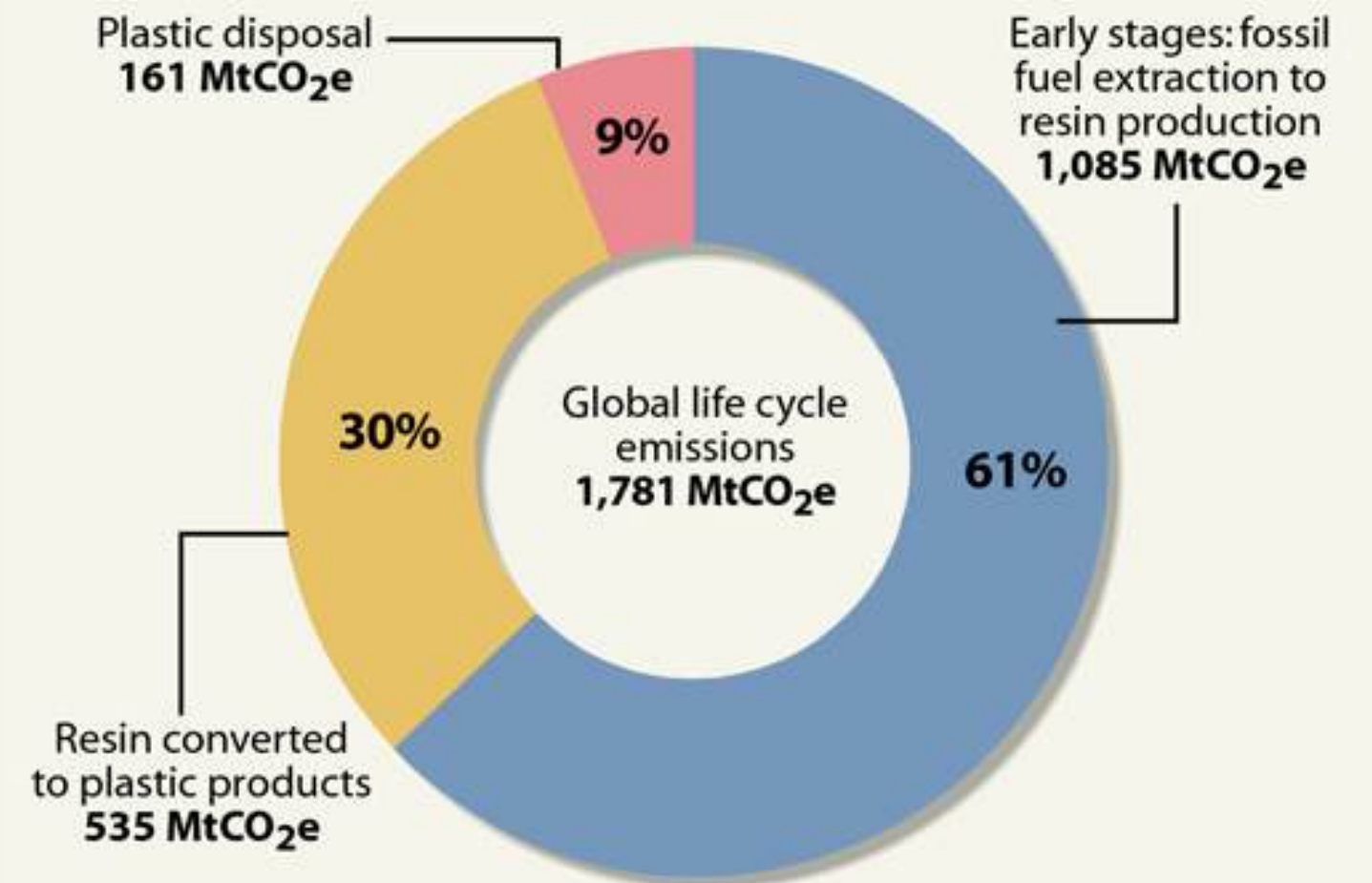
The Emissions:
1.8 billion metric tons
of GHGs annually. That
number is supposed to
reach 4.3 billion by
2050.

Plastic's Life Cycle Greenhouse Gas Emissions

Looking at the entire life cycle of fossil fuel-based plastics today, nearly two-thirds of its greenhouse gas emissions are produced in the early stages, from fossil fuel extraction through the production of resin, research shows. Converting resin to pipes, bottles, bags and other products generates just under a third of its emissions. The remainder comes from the disposal phase.

LIFE CYCLE EMISSIONS OF FOSSIL FUEL-BASED PLASTICS

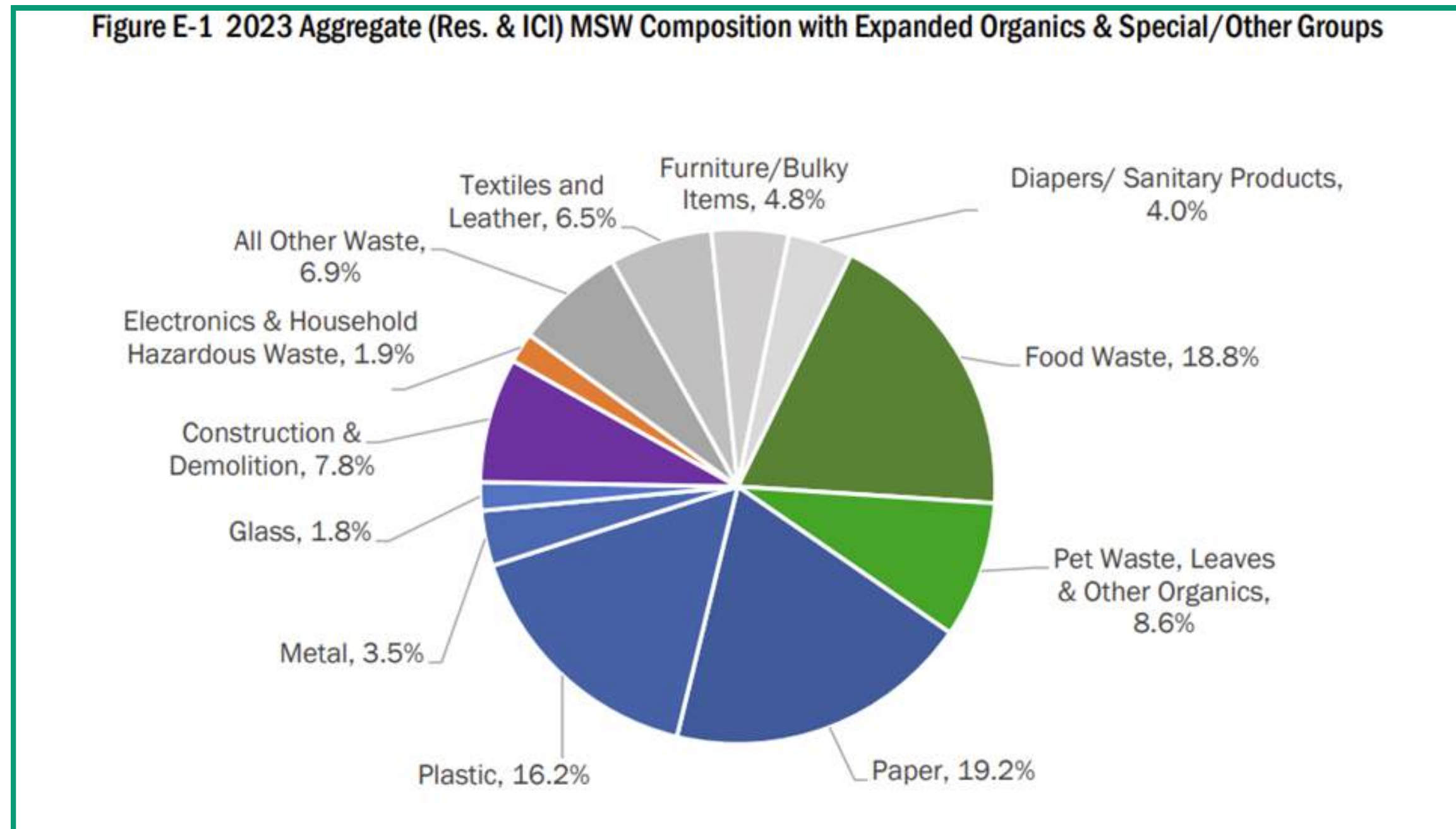
In metric tons of CO₂ equivalent, 2015



SOURCE: Jiajia Zheng and Sangwon Suh, 2019

PAUL HORN / InsideClimate News

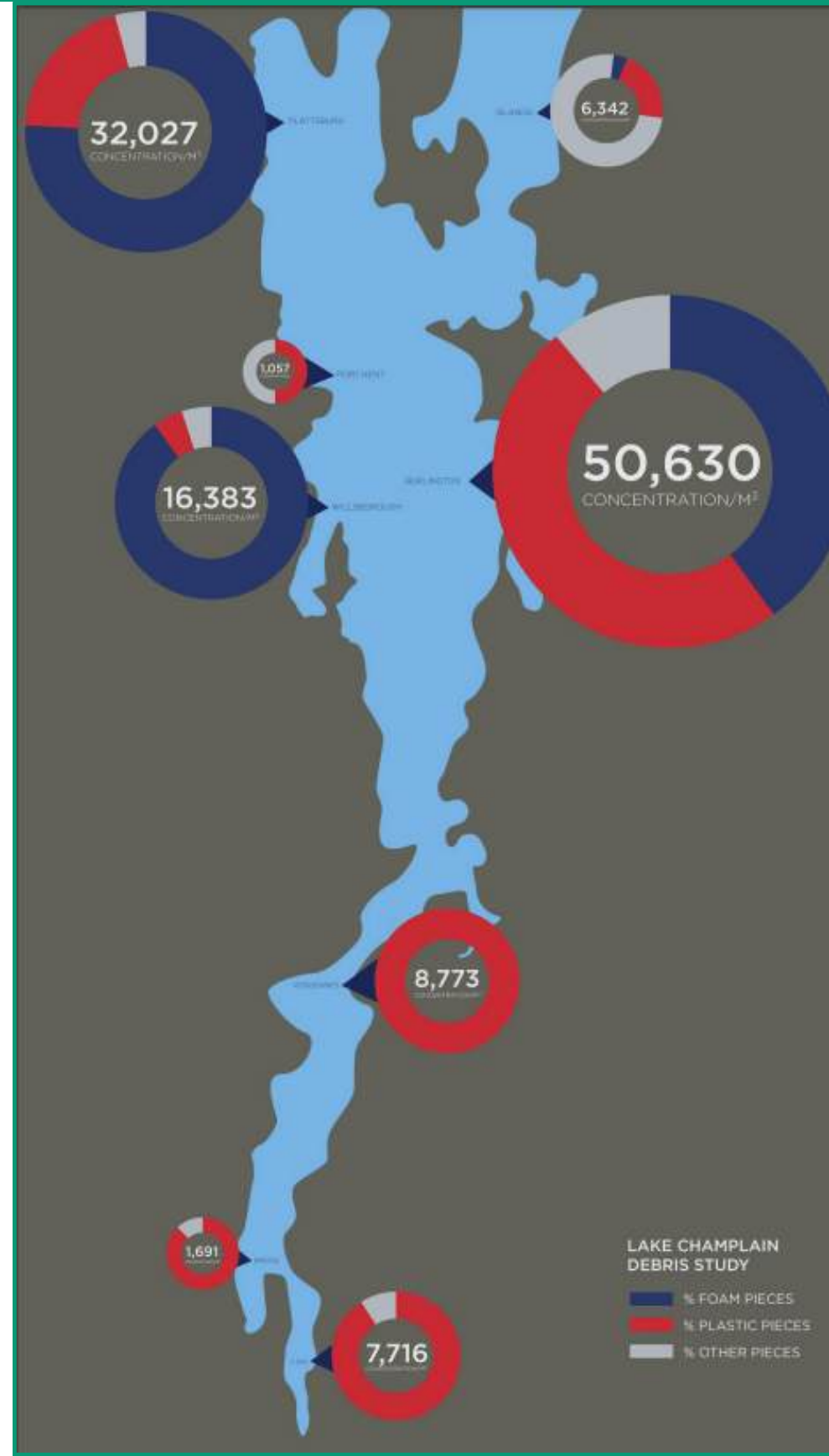
The Plastic Problem In Vermont



16.2% of our landfill in Vermont is plastic (DEC)

The Plastic Problem In Vermont

Microplastics found in Lake Champlain



VPIRG's Priorities on Plastic

Overarching Goals:

- Reduce the quantity and toxicity of plastic

How:

- Source reduction with increasing goals over time
- Chemical/material bans
- Prohibit chemical recycling

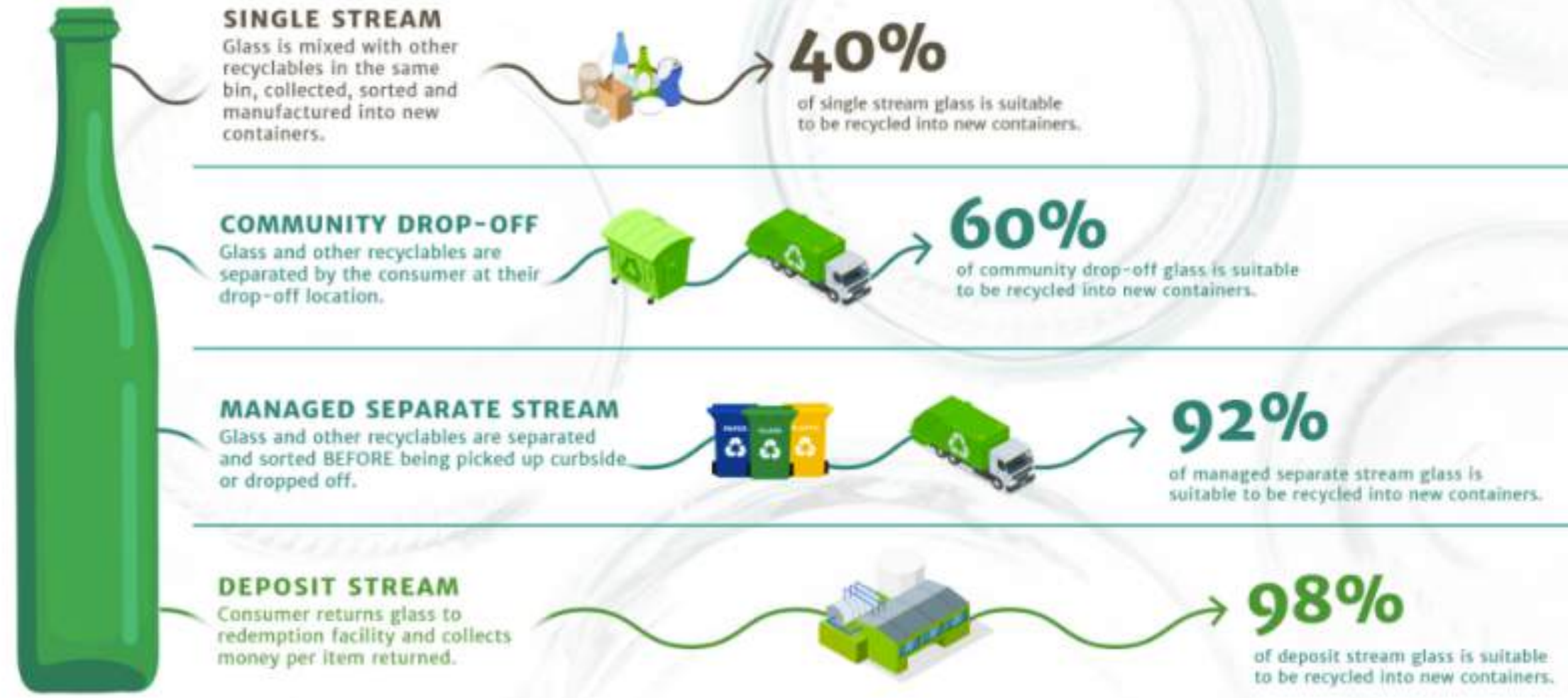


Bottle Bill



UNDERSTANDING RECYCLING STREAMS

How glass is collected affects the quality and volume of the material and influences yield and value.



SINGLE STREAM

Glass is mixed with other recyclables in the same bin, collected, sorted and manufactured into new containers.

40%

of single stream glass is suitable to be recycled into new containers.

COMMUNITY DROP-OFF

Glass and other recyclables are separated by the consumer at their drop-off location.

60%

of community drop-off glass is suitable to be recycled into new containers.

MANAGED SEPARATE STREAM

Glass and other recyclables are separated and sorted BEFORE being picked up curbside or dropped off.

92%

of managed separate stream glass is suitable to be recycled into new containers.

DEPOSIT STREAM

Consumer returns glass to redemption facility and collects money per item returned.

98%

of deposit stream glass is suitable to be recycled into new containers.

Bottle Bill

- **What does Vermont's Redemption Program look like today?**
- **Why does the Bottle Bill need to be updated?**
- **What are the priorities?**

PFAS "Forever Chemicals"

What are PFAS Chemicals?

- Heat + water resistant synthetic chemicals
- Persistent and long lasting
- Remain in the environment and bioaccumulate

PFAS "Forever Chemicals"

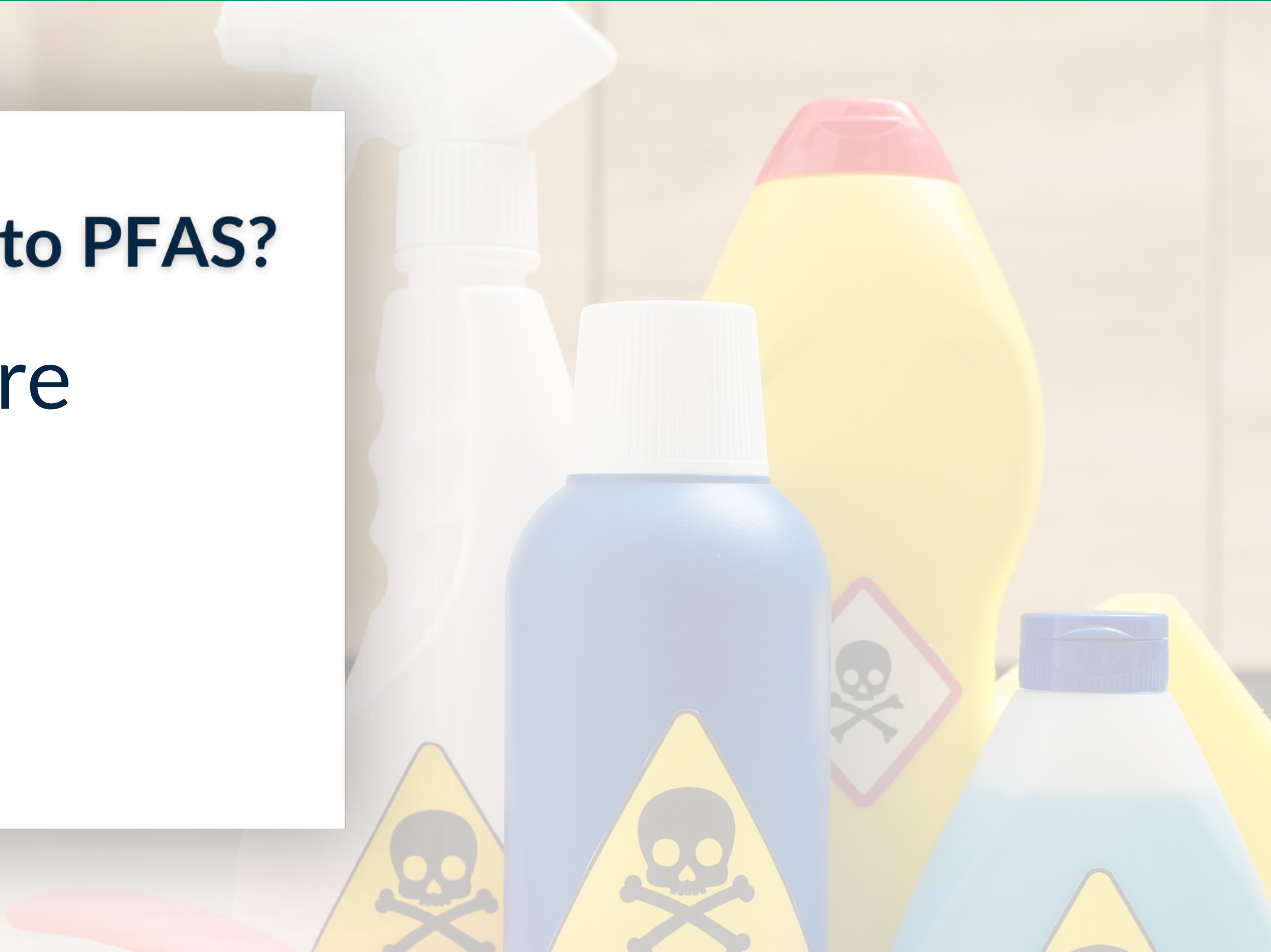
Common uses of PFAS

- Cleaning products
- Textiles
- Furniture
- Cosmetics
- Personal care products
- Outdoor gear
- Cookware
- Fire fighting foam
- Food packaging

PFAS "Forever Chemicals"

How are people exposed to PFAS?

- Dermal Exposure
- Inhalation
- Ingestion



PFAS "Forever Chemicals"

Health Impacts

- Increased risk of cancer
- Kidney and liver disease
- Thyroid conditions
- Pregnancy complications
- Auto immune disorders
- Increased cholesterol
- Hormone disruption



An “Upstream” Solution: Act 131



Passed in 2024, Act 131 banned intentionally added PFAS from a multitude of consumer categories including:

- **Cosmetic products**
- **Menstrual products**
- **Artificial turf**
- **Incontinence products**
- **Juvenile products**
- **Cookware**
- **Textiles**

PFAS "Forever Chemicals": What's next?

Expanding upon Act 131

- Extend PFAS bans to new products categories
 - ex: cleaning products, dental floss, upholstered furniture, fluorinated containers
- Retain a strong PFAS definition

Look into new ways we can safeguard our environment and public health from PFAS chemicals

- PFAS in pesticides and treated seeds
- PFAS in biosolids





Thank you! Questions?

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