NATIONAL ACADEMIES Sciences Engineering Medicine

ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH MATTERS INITIATIVE

Microplastics and Health Webinar Series: Webinar 4 – Research Priorities, Mitigation Strategies, and Public Communication in the Face of Uncertainties

June 9th, 2025 | 11:00AM – 1:00PM ET

June 9th, 11:00AM - 1:00PM – All Times in Eastern Time

Submit your questions for our speakers on Slido!

11:00pm	**Welcome and Meeting Overview**	**Moderator: Margaret Spring**, Monterey Bay Aquarium
11:05pm	**Session 1: Research Pathways and Priorities** **Q&A Moderator:** Rachel Meidl, Rice University	**Introduction: Rachel Meidl,** Rice University **Speakers:** **Raymond Pieters,** Utrecht University **Katrina Korfmacher,** University of Rochester Medical Center
11:45pm	**Session 2: Mitigations in the face of uncertainties** **Q&A Moderator:** Gina Solomon, University of California San Francisco	**Introduction**: **Gina Solomon,** University of California San Francisco **Speakers**: **Sam Mason,** Gannon University **Winnie Lau,** The Pew Charitable Trusts **Sylvie Lemoine,** European Chemical Industry Council (CEFIC) **David Wooley,** University of California, Berkley
12:30pm	**Session 3: Risk Communication/Perception** **Q&A Moderator:** Margaret Spring, Monterey Bay Aquarium	**Introduction: Bob Skoglund**, Covestro **Speaker:** **Sabine Pahl,** University of Vienna
12:55pm	**Brief Reflections and Webinar Wrap-Up**	**Moderator: Darrell Boverhof,** Dow
1:00pm	**ADJOURN**	**Please submit your feedback on our post-event questionnaire**

About the Webinar

The fourth and final webinar in the series aims to inform the public about emerging science, policy responses, and public communication strategies surrounding microplastics and human health. With growing evidence of widespread exposure and ongoing uncertainty about health impacts, this discussion will explore key research gaps and opportunities, examine past, present, and potential mitigation efforts, and discuss how risk communication can be used to support informed decisions in the face of scientific uncertainty. Through three sessions focused on science, solutions, and communication, the webinar will identify the next steps for research, policymaking, and public engagement.

Learn more and register:

YOU CAN SET THE AGENDA! We invite you to answer a very short questionnaire to better understand your concerns and what you hope to get from this and future webinar.

Example Questions that could be covered

Questions:

- How can research be prioritized?
- What are the key needs in this effort?
- How can efforts [local and global] overlap to make the most significant impact?
- How do we move forward in the face of clear uncertainty regarding research?
- How are your organizations currently addressing microplastic mitigation, and what evidence is guiding these actions despite the scientific uncertainties?
- Given the current gaps in knowledge, what are the top research or policy investments we need now to ensure MPs mitigation efforts are both effective and equitable?
- What criteria are used to define what mitigation measures should be explored?
- Where are the places we could push to reduce exposure, acknowledging we don't understand the health risks with that exposure?
- What are the best approaches for educating consumers on reducing their microplastic exposure in daily life?
- What role do corporate sustainability commitments play in addressing microplastic exposure risks?
- How do we communicate risks and choices in the context of uncertainty?
- Based on your research, what key insights have you gained about this issue of uncertainty, and how do they inform the next steps?
    - For example, given the uncertainty in science, what are strategies for communicating with the public to avoid polarization and empower informed decision-making?
- In your sector, how do you approach microplastic risk communication? How do you bridge the communication of risk with potential mitigation measures?
- What role should risk communication play in the development of regulations or public health guidelines?
- How should research findings on microplastic exposure be communicated to policymakers and the public in a way that drives action without inciting unnecessary fear?

Speaker Biographies

Katrina Korfmacher

Katrina Smith Korfmacher, PhD is Professor of Environmental Medicine and Director of Community Engagement for the Environmental Health Sciences Center (EHSC) and the Institute for Human Health and the Environment at the University of Rochester. She co-directs the Lake Ontario Center for Microplastics and Human Health in a Changing Environment, a partnership between the University of Rochester and the Rochester Institute of Technology, which is supported by the NIH/NSF Centers for Oceans and Human Health program. Korfmacher holds a M.S. in Water Quality Management and Ph.D. in Environmental Studies from Duke University's Nicholas School of the Environment. As a policy scientist, her research focuses on the roles of science and communities in decision-making. Korfmacher has worked with community partnerships and national groups related to childhood lead poisoning prevention, healthy homes, air quality, built environment, fracking, water pollution, and other environmental justice issues for over twenty years. She has served on numerous local and state advisory boards, including the National Advisory Environmental Health Sciences Council. She is author of Bridging Silos: Collaborating for Environmental Health and Justice in Urban Communities (MIT Press 2019).

Winnie Lau

Winnie Lau, PhD directs Pew's preventing ocean plastics project, which aims to implement science- and evidence-based solutions and policies to reduce the global plastic pollution problem. She led the global multidisciplinary research team that produced the seminal report "Breaking the Plastic Wave" and was the first author in the complementary article in Science. Lau started with Pew's international conservation unit in 2014, and focused on developing strategies, new projects, and partnerships in Asia. Prior to joining Pew, she was the climate change science and technology adviser for the United States Agency for International Development's mission to Sri Lanka and Maldives. Lau also served as manager of the Marine Ecosystem Services Program at Forest Trends, as well as an American Association for the Advancement of Science (AAAS) science and technology policy fellow at the U.S. State Department. For nearly 20 years, she has focused on connecting science and policy in ocean conservation. Her passion has led notably to a presentation at the TEDx Rio+20 conference and a podcast on Science Rules! With Bill Nye, among numerous articles and speaking engagements. In giving back to her community, Lau serves on various advisory committees, including as a former committee chair of the Junior League of Washington and a current member of the Advisory Board for the Bigelow Laboratory for Ocean Sciences, and has served on the Executive Board for the Women's Aquatic Network. Lau holds a bachelor's degree in integrative biology and environmental sciences from the University of California, Berkeley and a Ph.D. in oceanography, as well as graduate certificates in environmental management and technical Japanese, from the University of Washington.

Sylvie Lemoine

Sylvie Lemoine, PhD has more than twenty years of experience in EU regulatory affairs focused on chemicals policy, working in both trade associations and in chemical companies. Since 2019, she has served as the Executive Director of Product Stewardship at Cefic. In 2024, she transitioned to champion Industrial Policy within the organization. Prior to Cefic, Sylvie held different roles in chemical companies. Besides her Cefic role, Lemoine is also actively involved in the International Council of Chemical Associations (ICCA) at an international level. She holds a chemical engineering degree and a PhD in Chemistry.

Sam Mason

Sherri A. Mason (aka "Sam"), PhD currently serves as the Director of Project NePTWNE at Gannon University. Her research group was among the first to study the prevalence and impact of plastic pollution within freshwater ecosystems. She earned her bachelor's degree from the University of Texas at Austin and completed her doctorate in Chemistry at the University of Montana as a NASA Earth System Science scholar. Mason has been featured within hundreds of mass media articles including the BBC, The Guardian, the New York Times, the Huffington Post, and National Public Radio's All Things Considered and Studio A1. Her work formed the basis for the Microbeads-Free Water Act, which was signed into law by President Obama in December 2015. Similar legislation has been approved or is being considered at various locations internationally.

Sabine Pahl

Sabine Pahl, PhD is Professor of Environmental Psychology at the University of Vienna and Honorary Professor of Applied Social Psychology at the University of Plymouth. As a Social Psychologist, Pahl engages in basic and applied research and her applied work focuses on the human dimension in environmental issues. She investigates perceptions and behavior change, particularly in the area of protecting marine environments, marine litter and microplastics and energy efficiency. Other applied work examines restorative effects of natural environments including the use of natural environments in healthcare. Pahl has contributed to two microplastics reports with the Joint Group of Experts on the Scientific Aspects of Marine Environmental Pollution (GESAMP WG40) and has led the UN Environment Programme (UNEP)-funded global stocktake of actions against plastic pollution in 2020. She was co-chair of an interdisciplinary working group that reported to the EU Group of Chief Scientific Advisors (SAPEA, 2019) and has contributed to a G7 working group in Oct 2019 and a World Health Organization (WHO) working group in March 2020. She is staying hopeful and looking forward to joining the final Plastics Treaty negotiation, INC-5.2, in Geneva in August. Pahl obtained her Ph.D. from the University of Sheffield, UK in 2002 and M.Sc. in social & applied psychology from the University of Kent in 1998.

Raymond Pieters

Raymond Pieters, PhD is Associate Professor at Institute for Risk Assessment Sciences (IRAS) and full professor in Innovative Testing in Life Sciences & Chemistry at University of Applied Sciences Utrecht (UASU). His research is focused on understanding immunotoxicological effects of substances in food (e.g. food allergy), airborne particles (e.g. inflammation and allergy) and drugs (intestinal and liver effects). Developing animal-free approaches to assess efficacy and safety of these substances is an important objective. He coordinated many national and international projects and currently leads the EU-Horizon project POLYRISK on human health risk assessment of micro- and nanoplastics.

David Wooley

David Wooley, JD is the Executive Director of the Center for Environmental Public Policy (CEPP) and a lecturer at the University of California Berkeley, Goldman School of Public Policy. He has over 30 years' experience with electric power regulation, climate policy and Clean Air Act implementation. He received his J.D. from Rutgers University – Newark. Wooley is a co-author of the 2035Report.com, a series of econometric modeling studies on how to decarbonize the electric power and transportation sectors and the role of offshore wind generation. He manages a research center focused on maritime port and freight decarbonization, renewable energy policy, microplastic pollution, air pollution hot-spot remediation in environmental justice communities, climate risk assessment and disclosure in municipal bond markets, and offshore wind energy. He has served as an Assistant Attorney General in New York, taught energy and environmental law at Pace University Law School and was the Executive Director of the Pace Energy Project. Later he directed the American Wind Energy Association's Northeast Policy Project, represented distributed solar industry in state regulatory proceedings, served as Counsel to the Clean Air Task Force and as Vice President for Domestic Policy Initiatives at the Energy Foundation in San Francisco. Wooley is co-author of Thompson-Reuters' Clean Air Act Handbook (2024).