Changing Your Skin Care Products Will Help Save the Ocean

Background Information
Many facial cleansers utilize microbeads as an exfoliant. These particles are anywhere from 4.1 to 1240 μm in diameter. As microplastics travel through lotic systems to reach the ocean, they absorb organic pollutants present in the water. Microbeads then effect marine life in a variety of ways:

- When consumed by fish, microbeads accumulate in the body and are harmed by the released toxins and the beads themselves.
- Zooplankton are also harmed by ingesting microbeads as they block feeding structures, limit food intake, and block/damage their alimentary canal.
- Microbeads imbedded in sea turtle nest cause the nest to retain excess heat which causes improper egg development.

These are just a few examples of how microbeads effect an array of marine life. While a way to reclaim already existing microbeads is not yet a reality, a way to reduce the input is.

How Microbeads Relate to You
Since microbeads are in a number of skincare products, even people in landlocked states are contributors to the accumulation of microplastics in marine environments. Microbeads can travel thousands of kilometers from the source since they are light weight and have a low density. Therefore, those introduced into the water in all reaches of the world contribute to the accumulation in marine environments.

What We Can All Do Individually
The next time you buy self care products such as facial wash, body scrubs, or masks, opt to buy one that uses natural exfoliants rather than microbeads. Alternatives include:

- Salt Scrubs
- Sugar Scrubs
- Oil Based Beads

If consumers can phase out these microbead based products, then the overall input can be reduced.