



## The Last Straw

Seattle, Washington recently became the first major U.S. city to ban plastic drinking straws. The reason for the ban is that plastic straws are not recyclable, and they take more than 500 years to biodegrade. It is estimated the United States uses 500 million straws per day - that is enough straws to fill 127 school buses.

Many used straws make their way into the world's oceans. One recent study showed that 71% of seabirds and 30% of sea turtles examined had plastic in their stomachs which cuts their life expectancies in half.

Cities around the U.S. are considering banning plastic straws in the hope that a ban will help reduce the amount of plastic in oceans and landfills. However, some scientists say that because the U.S. is not the country producing the most plastic waste, the ban will have little, if any, effect on the overall problem. They suggest the solution to cleaning up the world's oceans may not be to ban plastic straws, but instead to help developing countries create recycling programs. Can you think of a solution to the plastic straw problem?



## Scientists Are Trying to Stop the Extinction of Northern White Rhinos

Scientists around the world are desperately trying to save the northern white rhinoceroses from extinction. Northern white rhinos are native to Central and East Africa and had large populations. However, primarily because of poaching, their numbers have dwindled severely. The last male northern white rhino, named Sudan, died in March. Now there are only two female northern white rhinos left, and they are both living in a game reserve in Kenya, Africa.

Scientists from many countries around the world, including Germany, Italy, and the Czech Republic, have been working on a method in which the southern white rhinos may help with saving the northern white rhinos. If everything goes according to plans, a northern white rhino calf may be born within the next three years.

## Volcanic Activity in the U.S.



According to the U.S. Geological Survey, there are currently 169 active volcanoes in the United States. Of those 169, only 55 are on alert for potentially eruptive activity, and one is erupting right now!

The volcano currently erupting is Kilauea located in Hawaii. It has been continually erupting since January 3, 1983. The lava flowing from one of its vents is pouring into the ocean, and more than 10,000 residents have been evacuated since 1983.

The U.S. Geological Survey is responsible for alerting people about potential volcanic activity and issuing warnings about possible volcanic eruptions. They currently have Kilauea as an orange level alert because of elevated sulfur dioxide emissions. There are four warning levels – green, yellow, orange, and red, with red being the highest and most hazardous.

Volcanoes located in remote areas are only of concern to airlines. When there is a potential threat, airlines have to change their flight routes to avoid airborne volcanic ash. People living near a volcano may need to take precautions, such as using dust masks and staying out of the danger zones. In extreme cases, residents living near an eruption will be advised to evacuate.

## Comprehension Questions

### The Last Straw

1. Why are cities banning plastic straws?
2. How can the U.S. help developing countries create less plastic waste?

### Scientists Are Trying to Stop the Extinction of Northern White Rhinos

1. How many northern white rhinos are left in the world?

2. In what country are the last northern white rhinos currently living?

### Volcanic Activity in the U.S.

1. How many volcanoes are there in the U.S.?
2. Who monitors volcanic activity?

# Comprehension Answers

## The Last Straw

1. Why are cities banning plastic straws?  
**They are not recyclable and take more than 500 years to biodegrade.**
2. How can the U.S. help developing countries create less plastic waste?  
**By helping them create recycling programs.**

## Scientists Are Trying to Stop the Extinction of Northern White Rhinos

1. How many northern white rhinos are left in the world?  
**Two**
2. In what country are the last northern white rhinos currently living?  
**Kenya**

## Volcanic Activity in the U.S.

1. How many volcanoes are there in the U.S.?  
**169**
2. Who monitors volcanic activity?  
**U.S. Geological Survey**