



# Synthetic Turf and Turf Infill Chain of Custody

House Bill 131 / Senate Bill 321

## Did You Know?

**Synthetic turf playing fields have an 8-10 year average lifetime and produce a huge volume of waste when they're replaced.**

- An average synthetic turf field is 80,000 square feet and comprised of 40,000 lb of mixed plastic carpet and 400,000 lb of infill between the plastic blades, usually crumb tire waste and silica sand, or other material.
- The materials in synthetic turf carpet systems contain aquatic and human toxins.



**There is no official inventory of the number or location of synthetic turf playing fields in Maryland or where used fields have gone.** As of 2021, Maryland Sierra Club volunteers found 347 fields in 18 counties and Baltimore. For the 328 fields for which field size could be estimated, the waste produced over the next decade as they are replaced would amount to:

- More than 67,000 tons of plastic carpet and infill;
- Nearly 123,000 cubic yards of infill, the equivalent of more than 4,000 30-yard dumpsters; and
- 24 million square feet of plastic carpet (557 acres), the equivalent of a circle that's 1.1 miles in diameter.



**The fate of this enormous amount of plastic waste and infill is difficult, if not impossible, to track.** There is only one certified facility in the world that reportedly can recycle synthetic turf field components on an industrial scale – in Denmark. The industry admits that incineration is not an option for most components. Many waste facilities don't accept synthetic turf field waste because of its high volume, weight, and toxicity. It can end up in rural stockpiles and dumped in the environment. When improperly disposed of and uncontained, especially near waterways, these materials pose risks to humans, wildlife, and the environment.

**Ask your legislators to support HB 131/SB 321 to require a chain of custody for the reuse, repurposing, recycling, and proper disposal of synthetic turf and infill!**

## What This Bill Will Do

Require the producer of synthetic turf and turf infill sold or distributed in Maryland to establish a system to track its chain of custody, from installation to use, repurposing, recycling, and disposal

- For future synthetic turf fields and turf infill, the producer is the first reporter in the chain of custody, after which the owner reports and change in ownership
- For fields already installed, the owner is the first reporter

The information would be reported to the Maryland Department of the Environment and posted on a website.

## Why is this necessary?

- The Synthetic Turf Council's guidelines recommend a chain of custody for turf and infill,<sup>1</sup> but accountability for proper disposal requires that it be reported and that the information be publicly disclosed.
- A publicly disclosed chain of custody will serve as a deterrent for illegal dumping of used synthetic turf fields and infill (see below) and as an incentive for proper disposal.

**Cleona, PA** (photo at right): About 6,000 rolled pieces of turf were stacked about 10 feet high on more than an acre of private land, according to Mayor Larry Minnich. The rolls had been sitting in Cleona for two years, and he decided that was long enough. He was getting complaints from people in town, and there were safety concerns about the pile's flammability and proximity to a fueling station. "This is what it looks like when someone gets rid of a dozen turf fields and there's nowhere to send them," he said.<sup>2</sup>



**Albemarle County, VA** (photo at left): When the University of Virginia decided to replace two synthetic turf fields, no one accounted for where the synthetic turf waste was going. The contractor drove truckloads into rural Albemarle County and the rolls were dumped on a hillside just up from a stream. A neighbor noticed and alerted authorities. After regulators stepped in, the landowner moved the rolls to a more private site, where it was partially buried. When it was found a few months later it was finally taken to a landfill (199 tons worth).<sup>3</sup>

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[sierraclub.org/maryland](http://sierraclub.org/maryland)

<sup>1</sup> Synthetic Turf Council. 2017. *A Guideline to Recycle, Reuse, Repurpose, and Remove Synthetic Turf Systems*.

[https://qhi7a3oj76cn9awl3qcqrh3o-wpengine.netdna-ssl.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/11/CR-STC\\_Guideline\\_for\\_Recycle\\_Re.pdf](https://qhi7a3oj76cn9awl3qcqrh3o-wpengine.netdna-ssl.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/11/CR-STC_Guideline_for_Recycle_Re.pdf)

<sup>2</sup> Candy Woodall. 2019. "Old turf fields raise environmental, health concerns across country," *Rome Sentinel*, Rome, NY, November 30.

<https://romesentinel.com/stories/old-turf-fields-raise-environmental-health-concerns-across-country,87558>

<sup>3</sup> Myers, Pete. 2019. "Hidden gotcha in artificial turf installations," *Environmental Health News*, December

<https://www.ehn.org/hidden-gotcha-in-artificial-turf-installations-2641507579.html>