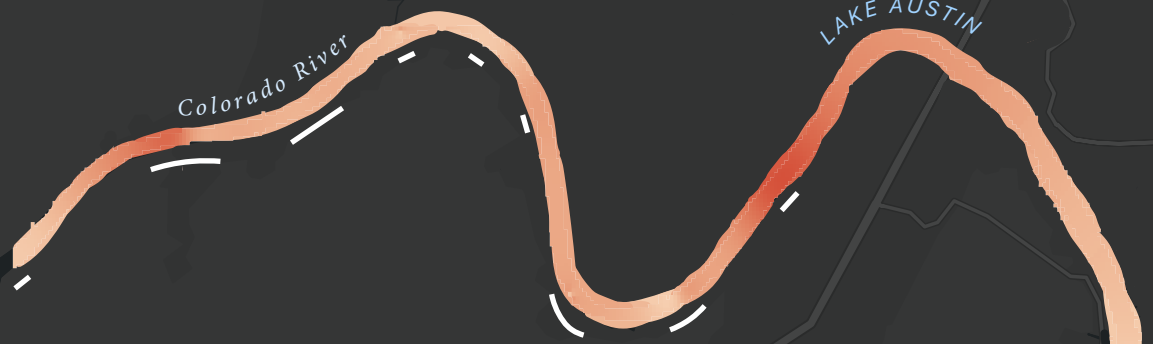
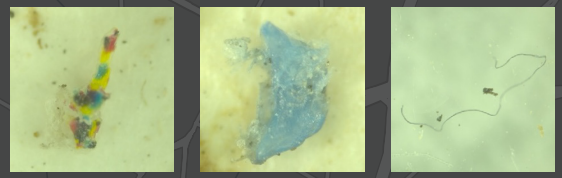
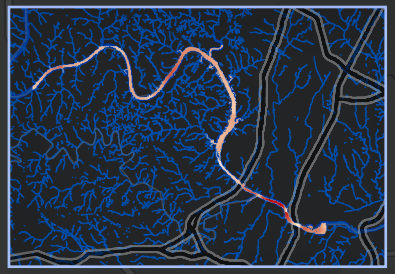
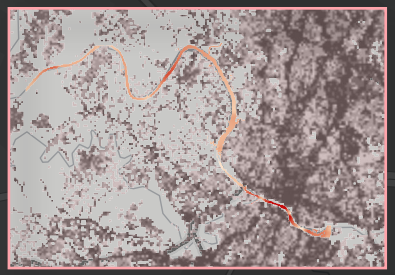
PLASTIC RIVER: Austin, TX



In a fast-growing metro area such as Austin, Texas, microplastic pollution is an ever-growing concern to environmental and human health. Microplastics (fibers and fragments, <5mm) were found in sediment all along the Colorado River, in varying abundances.







0 2.5 5 10 Miles

Population density can help us determine the source of microplastics pollution. Higher population density likely means that more waste is mismanaged, ending up in the Colorado River.

Many **creeks** lead into the Colorado River. Anything that is captured by Austin creeks (pollutants, for example) is deposited into the Colorado River, making it very susceptible to contamination.

Almost all of Austin's downtown area has **impervious cover**, which are human-made surfaces that do not allow fluids to infiltrate. Increased runoff results in more pollutants being transported into tributaries and lakes.

WEST LAKE HILLS

ROLLINGWOOD

DOWNTOWN AUSTIN

LADY BIRD LAKE

MICROPLASTICS PER 100G OF SEDIMENT

450

0

Areas sampled

0 0.5 1 2 3 Miles

N

Cartographer: Danielle Zaleski, GRG 356T Spring 2025
Projection: UTM Zone 14N (Austin maps), NAD 1983 State Plane Texas Central (Texas reference map)
Data sources: City of Austin, UT Institute for Geophysics, census.gov