

LONG ISLAND

Bill to ban microbeads is revived

BY JENNIFER BARRIOS
jennifer.barrios@newsday.com

The state attorney general today plans to submit a bill to the State Legislature banning microbeads from personal-care products in New York, after an identical bill pushed by his office last year stalled in the Senate.

The Microbead-free Waters Act would prohibit the sale, manufacture and distribution of cosmetics and personal-care products that contain microbeads — tiny spheres of plastic that end up in waterways, causing contamination and health concerns.

The bill carries a penalty of \$2,500 per day for the first offense, and \$5,000 per day for a second violation.

“This common-sense legisla-

tion will stop the flow of plastic pollution from ill-designed beauty products into our vital waters,” Attorney General Eric T. Schneiderman said in a statement.

When it was first introduced last year, the measure unanimously passed the Assembly, but failed to advance out of the Senate’s environment committee.

About 1.3 tons of microbeads in Nassau County are discharged into the area’s waterways each year by consumers using products such as toothpaste or facial scrubs that contain the plastics, according to a May report from Schneiderman’s office.

Since the beads are too tiny to be caught by filters in sewage-treatment plants, they end up in

the state’s waterways, where they can be introduced into the food chain and eaten by fish mistaking them for food, the report said.

Microbeads in septic and cesspool systems, such as those used in 70 percent of Suffolk County, also eventually would travel into the water system, according to a SUNY Fredonia professor who has studied the effect of the beads on the Great Lakes.

Schneiderman’s bill, which he will present to the legislative leadership, is the second version of a microbead ban before legislators this year.

Earlier this month, Assemb. Michelle Schimel (D-Great Neck) introduced her own legislation banning the sale, but not manufacture, of microbeads in the state.

An identical bill she authored last February did not advance out of committee.

Schimel also signed on as a cosponsor to Schneiderman’s version of the bill last year, and Assemb. Steve Englebright (D-Setauket), the body’s new environmental conservation committee chair, said Schimel will be the first sponsor listed on Schneiderman’s bill this year.

“This year, I’m more hopeful” the ban will be passed, Schimel said.

Last year, Illinois became the first state in the nation to ban microbeads.

“The national conversation on this is much more robust,” Englebright said. “It has a higher profile, so it does have a better chance of emerging as one of the priorities in both houses.”