

Reducing Our Use: Plastic Shopping Bags



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1. INTRODUCTION

Thurston County residents use about 90 million plastic shopping bags per year. That figure is based on the low end of the estimated 350-500 per person per year used in the United States. The material that plastic bags are made of, combined with the sheer volume used, has negative environmental impacts.

The Thurston County Solid Waste Advisory Committee (SWAC) began addressing the issue of disposable shopping bags in late 2011. This group consists of elected officials from each jurisdiction, as well as citizen and industry representatives. The SWAC recommended to the Thurston County Board of Commissioners that actions be taken to reduce our use. In January 2012, Solid Waste staff presented the issue to the Commissioners. Staff was directed to provide the community with information about the problem, work with them to identify possible solutions, and provide a report on the efforts and findings.

The following report identifies the concerns related to plastic bag use, the work that was done within the community, and the potential solutions identified. During our research, we reviewed many in-depth reports that have been done on the issue. Those seeking more information on the topic are encouraged to read reports referenced in this document or others available online.

Thurston County Solid Waste staff drafted this report in conjunction with a Solid Waste Advisory Council (SWAC) subcommittee. The draft report was then provided to the full SWAC for review and approval. The SWAC findings are:

This report has made it clear that plastic bags constitute a serious environmental and health hazard. The enumeration of possible solutions, other than a complete ban on the use of bags, makes it clear that the alternatives outlined in this report are not likely to be feasible and effective. We therefore conclude that it is essential to have the same ban on plastic bags that has been adopted by other municipalities in the State of Washington, and we hereby recommend that the city councils of the cities of Thurston County and the Thurston County Commissioners also adopt a plastic bag ban.

2. WHAT ARE THE ISSUES?

Use of Resources

The volume of plastic bags used is astounding. Americans use half a million plastic bags every minute – 30 billion per year. These bags get used, on average, for 12 minutes. Nearly 200,000 plastic bags are discarded in landfills every hour in the U.S.

Plastic bags are either made of a byproduct of natural gas or oil, depending on where they are manufactured. Bags made of high-density polyethylene (HDPE) are the type commonly used by supermarkets and take-away food outlets.



According to an April 2012 “Plastic Film and Bag Collection” report funded by the Plastics Division of the American Chemistry Council, 91-93% of the US population has access to recycling within 10 miles. There are two county-provided sites in Thurston County and several retail stores that provide take-back. However, the industry’s recycling assistance webpage, www.PlasticBagRecycling.org, only lists 14 locations in Washington State (chain retail stores) that provide this service.

Despite this high access, the recycling rate is extremely low. The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) tracks data for Municipal Solid Waste Generation, Recycling, and Disposal in the United States. According to their [Tables and Figures for 2010](#), the nationwide recycling rate for HDPE bags, sacks, and wraps is 4.3%. This represents only 29,670 tons recovered of the 690,000 tons discarded each year. Even more unfortunate is that [recovery rates for HDPE bags](#), sacks, and wraps dropped by half in two years. In 2008, 10.9% were recovered, which represents 60,000 tons of the 550,000 discarded.

Plastic bags are recycled at less than one-third the rate of paper bags, according to the [Environmental Protection Agency](#) (EPA). Paper bags are quite often made with recycled content. When plastic bags are recycled, the material is used to make a lower-quality plastic product. Material from the few plastic bags that do get recycled is used to make composite decking, film, sheet plastic, garden products, crates, buckets and piping. Most of these cannot be recycled.¹ The industry reports it is making some progress in bag-to-bag recycling.

Litter and Storm Drains

Plastic bags are lightweight so they travel easily through the air and water. Even when placed in a trash can, these “urban tumbleweeds” can become airborne during the collection and disposal process. According to data from the Department of Ecology,

¹ Plastic Film and Bag Collection” report funded by the Plastics Division of the American Chemistry Council. Moore Recycling Associates. April 2012² Washington 2004 Litter Study. Department of Ecology

plastic bags are among the ten largest components of litter by weight on Washington roadways.²

Plastic bags in the environment are often washed into waterways. They can clog gutters and storm drains, causing water and sewage to overflow and become a breeding ground for pathogenic viruses and bacteria, as well as vectors such as insects. Serious flooding in India, Bangladesh, and China has resulted in significant loss of life and property. This has been caused, to some degree, by plastic bags choking storm drains, particularly during monsoon season. This fact has prompted bans on plastic bags in these locations.³



Local governments bear the cost of litter cleanup and storm water management. These are funded through residential solid waste rates and taxes so ultimately the public pays for this.

Cost to Retailers

Retailers have to purchase and store the approximately 90 million plastic bags we use. These bags are part of the overhead costs of the retailers that are passed onto customers. This means even if you diligently bring reusable bags to the store every time you shop, you are paying for these bags. Appendix A demonstrates the financial benefits to retailers when only the customers using bags are responsible for funding them.

Marine Impacts

Plastic bags are among the 12 items of debris most often found in coastal cleanups, according to the nonprofit Center for Marine Conservation. [The Ocean Conservancy International Coastal Cleanup report](#) tracks data from coastal cleanups and the number of plastic bags is staggering. The California Coastal Commission notes that a recent study found an average of 334,271 pieces of plastic per square mile in the North Pacific Central Gyre, which serves as a natural eddy system to concentrate material.



Many animals that live in the ocean are exposed to discarded plastic bags. Because

² Washington 2004 Litter Study. Department of Ecology <https://fortress.wa.gov/ecy/publications/publications/0507029.pdf>

³ City of St. Louis <http://stlouis-mo.gov/government/departments/street/refuse/recycle/plasticbags.cfm>

plastic is not natural to their environment, animals do not recognize it or know to avoid it. The Marine Research Foundation estimates that 100,000 marine mammals die each year because of plastic litter in the North Pacific Ocean. Plastic marine debris affects at least 267 species worldwide, including 86 percent of all sea turtle species, 44 percent of all sea bird species, and 43 percent of marine mammal species.

Ingestion: Seabirds, sea turtles, fish, and marine mammals often ingest marine debris that they mistake for food and can cause serious harm. For example, whales and sea turtles often mistake plastic bags for squid and jellyfish. Moreover, a study of 38 green turtles found that 61 percent had ingested some form of marine debris including plastic bags, cloth, and rope or string.⁴

At other times, animals accidentally eat the marine debris while feeding on natural food. Ingestion can lead to starvation or malnutrition when the marine debris collects in the animal's stomach, causing the animal to feel full. Starvation also occurs when ingested materials in the animal's system prevents vital nutrients from being absorbed. Internal injuries and infections may also result from ingestion. Marine debris, especially some plastics, contains toxic substances that can cause death or reproductive failure in fish, shellfish, or other marine life. In fact, some plastic particles have even been determined to concentrate certain chemicals up to one million times the amount found in the water alone.⁵



Entanglement: Marine life can become entangled in plastic debris causing serious injury or death. Entanglement can lead to suffocation, starvation, drowning, increased vulnerability to predators, or other injury. Plastic debris can constrict an entangled animal's movement, which results in exhaustion or development of an infection from deep wounds caused by tightening material. For example, volunteers participating in the 2008 International Coastal Cleanup event discovered 443 mammals and birds entangled or trapped by marine debris⁶. Plastic bags can sink to the ocean floor and smother coral reefs.⁷



⁴ Environmental Protection Agency, Marine Debris Impacts http://water.epa.gov/type/oceb/marinedebris/md_impacts.cfm

⁵ Environmental Protection Agency, Marine Debris Impacts http://water.epa.gov/type/oceb/marinedebris/md_impacts.cfm

⁶ (2008 ICC Report, Ocean Conservancy).

⁷ Environmental Protection Agency http://water.epa.gov/type/oceb/marinedebris/md_impacts.cfm

Solid Waste Industry

The solid waste industry is affected by plastic bags during all stages of collection and management of trash, recyclables, or compostables. The Environment Washington Research and Policy Center surveyed Washington recycling companies for the report titled "[A Solution Not in the Bag; Why Recycling Cannot Solve the Plastic Bag Problem in Washington](http://www.environmentwashington.org/sites/environment/files/reports/A%20Solution%20Not%20in%20the%20Bag.pdf)". Seventy percent of the responders want plastic bags out of the waste stream.⁸

At the Curb: During curbside collection throughout the communities, bags escape from trash and recycling bins that do not have the lid closed. Bags fly out during pickup by the haulers, whether automated or manual transfer, as well as out of the trucks as they go down the road. Thurston Solid Waste routinely receives resident complaints about paper and bag litter from collection vehicles, which we direct to the appropriate hauling companies. Fortunately, the paper will biodegrade.



At the Transfer Station: During delivery and movement of solid waste at transfer stations or landfills, bags create a large problem. Jeff Harwood, District Manager of LeMay South District provided information on the litter issue of plastic bags (Appendix B). He states that the bags are very challenging to control and create significant additional cost in grounds maintenance and litter-control programs. The contractor at the Thurston County Waste and Recovery Center (our transfer station) employs temporary workers to deal with the blown litter problem at the facility. Most of this material is plastic bags. These staff costs are passed on to ratepayers.



At the Recycling Facility: In March 2009, the Washington Department of Ecology developed a southwest regional group to address reducing contamination in commingled recycling systems. The group involved local governments, material recovery facilities, haulers, and end-users. Thurston County Solid Waste, the City of Olympia, and Waste Connections (LeMay) were all active participants. The [findings](#) were that plastic bags, film and non-program plastics were a small percentage of incoming materials but cause significant problems for processors. They can usually remove only 30-40%. Its costs \$700-\$1000 a ton to remove: \$50-60 a ton to sell the

⁸ A Solution Not in the Bag. Environment Washington
<http://www.environmentwashington.org/sites/environment/files/reports/A%20Solution%20Not%20in%20the%20Bag.pdf>

recovered film, and 20-30% of labor spent dealing with film. Materials recovery facility (MRF) film (plastic bags collected and processed with curbside materials) is very dirty and relies solely on the export market.⁹

SP Recycling is the company that processes recyclable materials from Thurston County. Thurston County and the City of Olympia do not allow plastic bags in the recycling. Promotion of this fact is in all curbside outreach materials and bin labels. However, residents do put them in. SP Recycling has provided documentation on the extreme impacts to their operations from plastic film (Appendix C). Due to the growth of plastic bags in the comingle stream, screens are cleaned each shift, which typically takes 4 people per screen around 1 – 1½ hours to cut off approximately 400 lbs. of plastic bags that are wrapped around the shafts of the screen. That is approximately 10,000 lbs. of plastic bag material per month that goes to the landfill with an estimated labor cost of \$35-40K per month. These costs are passed on to ratepayers.



When plastic bag film clogs the screens at recycling facilities, it reduces the screen's ability to effectively sort material. This results in increased labor costs and increased cross-contamination in other grades of recyclables. Cross-contaminated materials sell at a lower value. They also produce a lesser quality recycled content product. This means the entire recycling industry is affected by the plastic bags.

At the Commercial Compost Facility: Waste Connections operates Silver Springs Organics, our local commercial compost facility. They state that “Any prudent and well operated compost facility that desires the production of a final compost product for sale and beneficial use, does not want to encounter any plastic of any kind. Plastic is obviously a non-compostable contaminant that passes through the composting process without degradation other than shredding into fragments and flakes. These particles ultimately end up in the finished compost product and are virtually impossible to screen from the material. An appreciable amount of this material renders the final compost as contaminated and unsuitable for use. Silver Springs has had reasonable success in working with customers to reduce the amount of plastics bags received at the facility. We would anticipate that a ban on plastic grocery store bags would have minimal impact on the facility however, any further controls on reducing plastic contamination would be a positive step”.

3. WHICH BAG IS BEST?

The question of which bag is best does not have a single, clear answer. A number of

⁹ Department of Ecology: Beyond the Curb
<https://fortress.wa.gov/ecy/publications/summarypages/1007009.html>

studies and reports have been done. Results are seldom consistent since they consider varying factors. Resource use, primary and secondary reuse and end-of-life recovery play a key role in the environmental performance of the carrier bags studied. The majority of studies did not take into consideration the environmental impact of litter or damage to marine life. The below does indicate that a reusable poly bag would be a good environmental choice.

Number of Disposable Bags Replaced by One Reusable Bag.

Estimating how many disposable bags would be replaced by one reusable bag is difficult. However, many life-cycle analyses and other reports have attempted to do this. According to the comprehensive [Florida Department of Environmental Protection Retail Bags Report for the Legislature](#), the range is from 56 to 315 disposable plastic bags replaced by a single reusable bag in a year's time. The actual number replaced would depend on the shopping habits of the owner of the bag, the material from which the reusable bag is made, the size of the bag itself and whether or not it is a single trip replacement or lifetime replacement. Even at the low end, taking nearly 60 disposable bags out of circulation for every one reusable bag is remarkable.¹⁰

Life Cycle Analysis of Various Bags

One of the more thorough studies found was the [Life Cycle Assessment of Supermarket Carrier Bags](#), from the Environmental Agency, the leading public body protecting and improving the environment in England and Wales. The report determined that the type of reusable bag definitely makes a huge difference. A non-woven polypropylene bag would need to be used between 11 to 33 times. In comparison, a cotton bag would need to be used 131 to 393 times.

Seattle Public Utilities has studied the environmental impacts of various single-use disposable shopping bags, including the use of price signals (the price charged for a commodity) to suppress their use and reduce waste. The results of that study were published in their report: [Alternatives to Disposable Shopping Bags and Food Service Items](#). Another informative study is the [Green Cities California Master Environmental Assessment](#) designed to provide local governments a one-stop reference about the impacts of restricting the use of single-use grocery bags. This included a study on impacts of grocery bag types in relation to a variety of environmental issues. These studies evaluate the effects of both single-use plastic and recyclable paper carryout bags. While the impacts are somewhat different (paper bags have a larger carbon footprint and produce more greenhouse gas emissions; plastic bags have a more significant impact on wildlife and ocean/water quality), both types of bags have negative environmental impacts. The impact of



¹⁰ Retail Bags Report for the Legislature. Florida Department of Environmental Protection. February 2010

“biodegradable” bags is similar to that of plastic carryout bags with higher greenhouse-gas impact.

4. WHAT IS BEING DONE ELSEWHERE?

The Seattle Public Utilities [Alternatives to Disposable Shopping Bags and Food Service Items](#) Report analyzed voluntary strategies implemented by local governments, supermarkets, and advocacy organizations that concentrate on reducing demand for the bags through education. These programs show limited success since retailers and consumers have little incentive to participate or limit their demand for bags. As an example, despite a 2006 law in California requiring retailers to place bag recycling bins in front of their stores, less than 5 percent of bags there are recycled.



The Seattle report states that in contrast, supply-side actions such as bans, taxes, and levies or voluntary or mandatory take-back programs have been successful. These programs place more of the burden for bag choice and their disposal on the producers and suppliers. At least 20 nations and 88 local governments have passed bans on distributing thin plastic or other types of disposable plastic bags, including the nations of Italy, Kenya, Mongolia, Macedonia, and Bangladesh; the states of Maharashtra, India and Buenos Aires, Argentina; and the cities of Karachi, Pakistan and Telluride, Colorado. Approximately 26 nations and many local communities have established fee programs to reduce plastic bag use and/or increase the use of reusable alternatives, including Botswana, China, Hong Kong, Wales, Ireland, Israel, Canada’s Northwest Territories, Toronto, Mexico City, and Washington, D.C.¹¹

The Florida Department of the Environment maintains the [List of Retail Bag Policies](#). Seven cities in Washington State now have bans in place: Seattle, Mukilteo, Bellingham, Bainbridge Island, Issaquah, Port Townsend, and Edmonds. These are all primarily the same, with a ban on plastic bags and a store-retained fee on paper bags.

The Northwest Grocers Association represents grocery chains throughout Washington. They have been in support of bans on plastic bags that allow stores to charge a fee to lessen the impact of the higher priced paper bags. The letter the Association sent to Thurston County is provided as Appendix D.

5. WORKING WITH THE COMMUNITY

Thurston County Solid Waste has historically promoted the use of reusable bags and proper recycling of plastic and paper bags. Reusable bags are regularly given away at events and presentations. Over the past several months, staff has intensified the bag-

¹¹ Keeping Plastics Out of the Puget Sound. Environment Washington. November 2011

related waste reduction outreach efforts and asked for input from the community. Below is a list of activities completed in 2012.

- Website: The existing “Plastics” page at www.ThurstonSolidWaste.org/plastics was expanded in February. This included information about the issues, external links, meeting schedules, list serve sign-up, studies, reports, and the survey. This site is linked from a variety of external sites of non-profits, cities and other Thurston County pages. The web address was provided in all outreach.
- City Council Meetings: Beginning in April, information on the project was presented to all seven city councils. We wanted to make sure it was understood the project was just to provide outreach and gather input from the community. Most important, we requested city assistance in providing outreach on our activities and requested information on upcoming events and contacts within their community.
- Informational Flyers: In March, a two-sided flyer detailed the issues, the project goals and how to get involved (Appendix E)
- Community Meeting Flyer/Poster: In June, a one-sided announcement was created once the meeting dates were set. (Appendix F)
- Email Updates: Solid Waste has an extensive list of email contacts: residents; businesses; non-profits; environmental groups; media; and local governments. Monthly emails were sent, starting in February, to provide project updates.
- List Serve: the website provided a link in February, for residents to sign up for the list-serve to receive consistent updates. By September, 85 people had signed up.
- Contact with Retail and Grocery Associations: At the start of the project, staff contacted all known associations of businesses that potentially used retail bags. We explained the scope of the project, asked for their input, and requested they contact members in Thurston County to notify them of the project. We provided text they could send to members including project details, web address, and our contact information so they could stay involved. They also received monthly updates.
- Online survey: Staff wanted to ask the public about their bag use habits, their understanding of bag-related issues, and gauge their concern about environmental impacts of bags. We also wanted to know what they thought about a bag ban in Thurston County. The survey was created using SurveyMonkey in April. This program is commonly used and greatly reduces staff time needed to analyze results. Our findings are detailed under “Survey Results”.
- Media: Information about our efforts was regularly provided to local media through direct contact or press releases. This resulted in several articles and interviews for both print and radio. The overwhelming majority were positive, including an editorial in the Olympian. We were often surprised how much web coverage we received. Samples are located at Appendix G.



- Social Media: Thurston County Solid Waste has an active Facebook and Twitter presence. Information was regularly posted and then spread by our followers.
- Presentations: Staff gave presentations to a variety of groups, whenever requested. Listing can be seen at Appendix H.
- *Bag It* Video: While doing research for the project, staff found a documentary DVD that addressed all the issues we wanted the community to be aware of. Several copies were purchased to loan to schools, community groups, businesses, churches, etc. The video was also shown at the community meetings. The movie description is:

Try going a day without plastic. In this touching and often flat-out-funny film, we follow everyman Jeb Berrier as he embarks on a global tour to unravel the complexities of our plastic world. What starts as a film about plastic bags evolves into a wholesale investigation into plastic and its effect on our waterways, oceans and even our own bodies. We see how our crazy-for-plastic world has finally caught up to us and what we can do about it. Today. Right Now.

- Special Events: Staff attended a large number of events spring through fall to provide information, hear from the public, collect surveys, and give away bags. The listing of events is at Appendix H and the display is at Appendix I
- Store Outreach: Staff recreated the special events type of outreach in front of several retail locations. Unfortunately, many shoppers assumed we had petitions or were trying to sell something and avoided us or said no to our survey request. Based on the response and the staff time the efforts required, we discontinued the efforts. Results are in Appendix H
- Bill Inserts: Information on the project was sent out three separate months to approximately 56,000 households in their trash bills. Appendix J
- Talking Trash: Thurston County Solid Waste mails their waste reduction newsletter to all households twice per year. The [Spring 2012 edition](#) had front-page coverage of the project. The Fall 2012 edition also provides an update and will be mailed in November.
- Store Observations: In the survey, residents self-reported their use of reusable bags. As results came in, we thought the figures looked rather high. To see what was actually happening at stores, we decided to do some observations at a variety of local retailers. The number of residents using paper bags, plastic bags, reusable bags or no bag was tallied in one hour at each location. The majority of residents observed were using plastic bags. See results in Appendix H.
- Community Meetings: Eight community meetings were held in August and September to gather input from the public. Schedule and participation can be seen in Appendix H. These meetings were extensively publicized through a variety of



methods including: website; posters; online calendars; emails; list serve; press releases to all media; and flyers at city offices and libraries, and hand delivered to businesses. These efforts required printing costs and extensive staff time. The largest expense was \$6,000 for [radio ads](#) on KGY, Mixx, and Roxy. Unfortunately, participation was low but we did hear a variety of comments, concerns, and ideas from the community.

- Survey of Other Jurisdictions: Staff researched what other cities and counties were doing to successfully reduce bag use. Efforts included web searches, direct contact, and surveying.
- Presentation from Plastics Industry: The Thurston County Solid Waste Advisory Committee invited the American Progressive Bag Alliance to speak at our August 9, 2012 meeting. Mark Daniels, VP Sustainability & Environmental Policy with Hilex Poly Company provided a presentation, video, and handout that are available [on our website](#) under “What Other Communities Are Doing”. In an email, David Asselin, the Executive Director of American Progressive Bag Alliance, expressed concern about job losses in the US because of an increasing number of bag bans. He also stated the US imports 500 million reusable bags each year. Since many reusable bags are made of plastic, it is our hope the US plastics industry adjusts for this market demand for reusable bags rather than single-use items. This would help prevent job loss and reduce the amount of single-use bags.

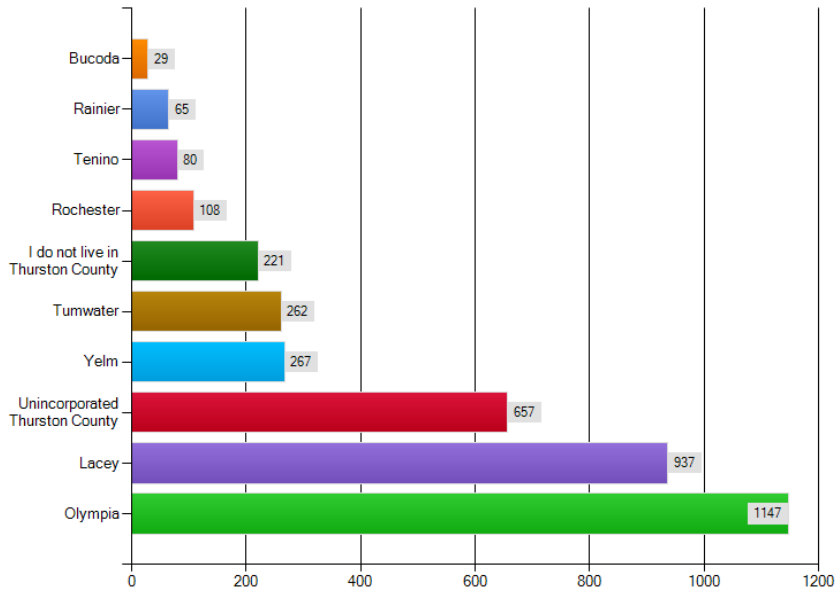


6. SURVEY RESULTS

Staff wanted to gather information from the community to determine knowledge of issues, habit, and opinion. In order to reach as many residents as possible we developed an online survey and matching hard copy for outreach events. We'd had great success in the past using SurveyMonkey, so chose it for this project. The program can analyze results in a variety of ways and greatly reduces staff time needed. The survey was drafted, piloted, and a few changes made before launching in April 2012. Responses to questions, as well as comments, are linked at the top of the [Plastics webpage](#).

As of October 14, 2012, 3,773 residents had responded to the survey with approximately 2,086 completed at community events. There were 1,687 online, with the survey designed so that only one per computer could be completed. Because residents chose to participate, this is considered a self-selected survey. Therefore, results are different from a random survey where everyone has an equal and known chance of being selected. We did receive responses proportionate to populations, from 29 residents in tiny Bucoda to 1,147 from Olympia.

Check the box that best describes where you live.



Knowledge of issues: Sixty-two percent of residents knew that plastic bags do not go in the curbside recycling. However, a combined 38% said yes or did not know. This was surprising considering the information is on the recycle bin lid, a yes/no list is sent with bills at least once per year, and other outreach is ongoing. This speaks to the limitations of outreach efforts.

The other knowledge question asked what percentage of plastic bags actually gets recycled. The correct response is 5%. Approximately two-thirds of responders were correct.

Opinion and Habits: Chart 1 below provides resident’s responses to a series of questions to evaluate their habits and what issues they feel are important.

Residents clearly state that the plastic bag related environmental issues of resource use, litter, and marine life impacts are important to them.

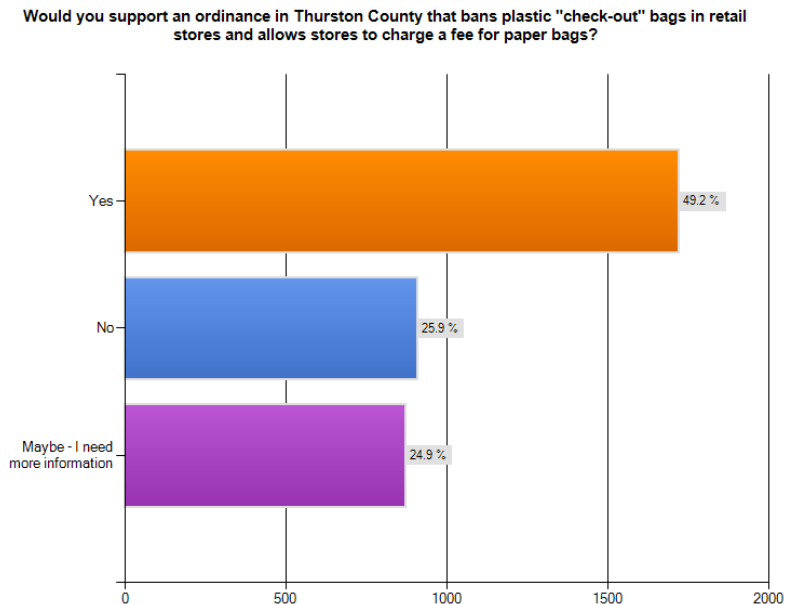
Reuse and Recycling: Once we started using the survey at events, we realized the wording on the three “habits” questions could affect the accuracy of the results. Some residents were unclear on the difference between reuse and recycling, so we could have described the two actions more clearly. In retrospect, we would not have used “always” in combination with the choices given. It may have been better to ask what percentage of their bags they recycle or reuse. Or what percentage of the time they bring their reusable bags to the store.

Reusable bags: As mentioned under “Working with the Community”, the number of residents stating they always used reusable bags seemed rather high. Store observations found the majority of residents observed were using plastic bags.

Of course, there is always the issue of accuracy of self-reporting in general. [The Science of Self-Reporting: Implications for Research and Practice](#) report has in-depth information on this topic. Survey takers tend to overestimate what might be perceived as good behaviors and underestimate the bad ones.

CHART 1: PLEASE RATE THE FOLLOWING STATEMENTS					
Answer Options:	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
I always recycle my plastic grocery bags.	1489	1064	388	273	154
I am concerned about the amount of litter and trash plastic bags create.	1946	941	306	104	116
I always use reusable bags when I shop.	693	1155	822	472	229
Making plastic bags uses too many resources.	1417	815	677	182	215
I always reuse my plastic bags for other purposes, like picking up pet waste or lining my trash can.	2189	941	168	58	34
I am concerned about marine animals & birds being injured or killed by plastic bags.	2125	797	279	92	106

Would you support a ban? When discussing the reduction of plastic bag use, the topic of bans often arises. Seven cities in Washington State have banned plastic bags to date. The publicity around the Seattle ban was hard to miss, so most residents had knowledge that bans were taking place, if not the details. We decided to ask the question to see if a ban was something the public would accept in Thurston County. Approximately 49% responded “Yes” with 26% stating “No” and 35% saying “Maybe – I need more information”.



7. POTENTIAL SOLUTIONS

Below are methods that could be used in Thurston County to reduce our use of plastic shopping bags. Some items are suggestions from the survey responses and others are in use elsewhere. Each needs to be carefully considered in terms of effectiveness and cost effectiveness.

Manufacturers create the bags and make a profit. Retailers distribute the bags as part of their profit-making businesses. Consumers choose to use the bags and determine when and how they will dispose of them. It is left to local government to deal with the waste management and associated costs (whether recycling and education, garbage or litter).

Several of the below solutions rely on efforts or programs that would need to be provided by Thurston County Solid Waste, which has limited financial and staffing resources. Ideally, the chosen solution would place the responsibility on producers and users: manufacturers, retailers, and consumers. Local government does not profit or benefit from plastic bag use. Nor do we have input into the manufacturing, distribution, and use. The cost of end-of-life management should be connected to the use of the product itself.

[The Alternatives to Disposable Shopping Bags and Food Service Items](#) report by Seattle Public Utilities documented many policy options adopted by other jurisdictions to address plastic bag use. This report provides an expanded list of methods, their pros and cons, and their effectiveness.

A. Add bags To Residential Curbside Recycling

Pros:

- Making bag recycling more convenient would increase the amount recycled.

Cons:

- Our residential trash and recyclables are collected with automated, top-loading trucks. Loose plastic bags are lightweight and open on one end so tend to catch air easily and fly during all stages of collection. This results in bags being a common litter problem on streets and around waste management facilities. Employees continually collect litter from facility fence lines, much of which is plastic film. This adds to the costs of solid waste management. Department of Ecology and local governments manage roadside litter programs, which are costly. One of the top 10 materials collected is plastic bags. Plastic film litter is unsightly, can clog storm drains, and can affect wildlife.
- Plastic bags create an extremely large problem at recyclables sorting facilities. Bags become entangled in the equipment and reduce the effectiveness in sorting materials properly. Machines need to be regularly shut down and bags cut out. This costs the facility about \$1000 per day, which increases the cost of our recycling programs.

- Some jurisdictions do allow plastic bags in commingled recycling. Residents are instructed to gather bags into one bag and tie the top closed. This would prevent bags from getting loose in the environment. However, many residents do not follow these instructions and place bags loose in the bin. This creates the problems described in the above two paragraphs.
- In Thurston County, glass is collected in a separate curbside container to reduce contamination of other recyclables (except in Olympia where it is included in the commingled bin). Glass containers are picked up manually by the drivers, rather than by automated truck arms. It has been suggested that the bags could go in with the glass. Since these are small, open topped bins, bags would tend to blow out and become litter, even when tied as a bundle. The bags would need to be sorted from the glass at the facility, adding to the cost of recycling. Olympia does not have a separate glass bin so this solution would not be applicable for their customers.

B. Increase the Number of Stores with Bag Recycling Bins

Pros:

- More stores participating would increase the number of recycling opportunities.

Cons:

- Many stores like Fred Meyer, Safeway, Albertsons, Top Food, and Trader Joes have collection bins where customers can recycle their plastic bags. However, the recycle rate is only about 5% nationwide.
- There used to be more store recycle bins. When the plastics markets were good, haulers were offering free plastic film recycling. Consequently, stores were offering bag recycling as a customer service and were adding the bags to the plastic film collected in their warehouses. When market prices dropped, the stores had to start paying for collection and many customer recycling bins disappeared.
- Residents report that having to take bags somewhere to be recycled is inconvenient and reduces the likelihood of them doing it.
- Thurston County cannot require the stores to provide recycling bins without an ordinance. Each city would have to adopt the same ordinance in order for the effort to be effective.

C. Establish and Fund Community Collection Bins

Pros:

- More locations, in addition to those offered by retailers, would be available.

Cons:

- Stores are a more likely location to have recycle bins, since residents are already going there. Community bins mean additional locations, but if they are not already using existing store bins, it is unlikely that community bins will make much of a difference.
- Thurston County used to have Blue Box recycling facilities throughout the county. These were non-staffed locations, often in store parking lots, where residents could take a variety of recyclables for free. These were closed

because of contamination. Residents would place garbage inside the bins and would leave large items, like microwaves and mattresses, outside of the bins.

- Even without the issue of contamination, these types of collection sites are extremely expensive to manage: cost of containers, site and bin maintenance, materials collection and transportation.

D. Stores Voluntarily Discontinue Distribution of Plastic Bags

Pros:

- Number of bags distributed would be reduced

Cons:

- Some stores have stopped distributing plastic bags to demonstrate their environmental commitment. This actually puts them at a financial disadvantage with their competitors. Plastic bags cost stores about one quarter to one-third the cost of paper bags. Because of the volume of bags used, this can be a substantial amount of money. Without financial incentive for stores to switch to paper bags, participation will remain low. It would be more advantageous to have all stores remove their plastic bags for the greatest impact and to level the playing field for all retailers.

E. Stores Switch to Biodegradable Plastic Bags

Pros:

- Bags would break down into smaller pieces faster than conventional plastic bags.

Cons:

- Many biodegradable bags are made with corn, which is an input-intensive crop (pesticides and herbicides). Scientists are seeing a large dead zone in the Gulf of Mexico due to toxins in river output from the Corn Belt area.
- Biodegradable plastic bags can cost up to 12 times more than a plastic bag. So the majority of stores would be unwilling to use them for financial reasons. They also break down over a relatively short period of time, meaning they would be less sturdy or reliable if purchased and stored in bulk.
- When biodegradable plastics enter the conventional plastic recycle stream they contaminate the end product.
- Biodegradable plastic bags are not accepted at all compost facilities. Silver Springs recently announced they will probably stop taking paper and biodegradable products and will only be accepting food and yard waste. Even if Silver Springs continues to accept some bioproducts, they will need to be tested to be accepted.
- It would be extremely difficult to inform and ensure that all stores were using the correct biodegradable bags. Terms such as *compostable*, *biodegradable*, *degradable*, and *marine degradable* all have different meanings. While many bioplastics are certifiable as compostable in commercial compost facilities, not all can be home composted and not all are biodegradable in the marine environment. Truly biodegradable plastics are plastics that can decompose into carbon dioxide, methane, water, inorganic compounds, or biomass via

microbial assimilation (the enzymatic action of microorganisms). Plastics that meet [ASTM D6400](#), for instance, can be certified as biodegradable and compostable in commercial composting facilities.

- Biodegradable bags do not have any benefit over conventional plastic bags in the landfill. Based on their additional cost, there is really no point in choosing them over regular plastic as landfilling is the disposal method

F. Expand Outreach Efforts

Pros:

- More residents will properly recycle their bags and/or use reusable bags

Cons:

- Outreach requires substantial resources and is only marginally successful. The reason cities, counties and even countries have turned to bans to deal with the problem is that outreach efforts were not making a difference.
- Locally, a good example of outreach effectiveness can be seen in our recent plastic bag survey. We asked the question "are plastic bags recyclable in your curbside recycling cart?" Sixty-two percent answered no (which is correct), and 38% either thought they were allowed or did not know. The label on the lid of every recycle cart in the county clearly states that plastic bags are not to be placed in the bin. There is a photo of a plastic bag with a large red x through it. Each year a recycle calendar is mailed to each customer with a yes/no text and graphics list of what can go in the cart. The information is on our website and periodically in the Talking Trash newsletter as well as customer billing inserts.
- Local governments already spend a substantial amount on managing plastic litter throughout the community and at facilities. These costs are covered through solid waste rates that residents pay either through curbside service or at the transfer stations. Financing the amount of outreach and reusable bags to actually make a difference in the problem would require additional resources. This would mean an increase in rates. So residents pay for the plastic bags at the store as part of overhead passed on to customers. They also then pay for waste management and education and outreach needed to deal with the problems that the bags create.

G. Product Stewardship

Pros:

- The cost of end-of-life management is tied to the product. Manufacturers fund take-back programs and the education related to proper disposal of their product. This takes the financial burden off local government. As an example, Germany and other EU states have reduced litter, increased recycling jobs, and provided recycled feedstock through the Packaging Directive.
- Thurston County could certainly ask the plastic bag industry to initiate a product stewardship program in Thurston County.

Cons:

- Product stewardship is an excellent model for many products and has been used throughout the rest of the world for some time. There are 73 laws across

the United States for toxic products such as mercury lighting, paint, batteries, and electronics. These are all at the state level and required legislation. Currently, there are no stewardship laws in place in the US for packaging. To require the bag industry to provide a stewardship program in Thurston County would be a long, complex and costly effort.

- Some businesses and industries voluntarily provide stewardship programs for their products. The American Progressive Bag Alliance (the plastic industry) was asked to present to the Thurston County Solid Waste Advisory Council (SWAC) on August 9, 2012. When asked what they were doing they indicated they were providing collection bins at stores (see #2). The representative stated they were providing education about their efforts to groups like our SWAC, but did not have the money to provide education and outreach to communities. He acknowledge that they have done too little too late to address the problem, but did not indicate they would be making any additional efforts. It would seem that if an industry that is making a profit off a product does not have the money for outreach, there is no reason the responsibility should fall to the local governments.

H. Tax on Both Plastic and Paper Shopping Bags

As an example, Washington D.C has put a tax on both plastic and paper bags that goes to the Anacostia River Protection Fund.

Pros:

- Overall bag use is reduced
- Tax provides money for local environmental programs.

Cons:

- Plastic bags would still be available so the overall reduction in use would be less than with an outright ban.
- Taxes are not generally seen as a positive thing by the general public
- Paper bags cost 3-4 times more than plastic bags and stores would have to pay that cost, and pass it onto all consumers, whether they use bags or not.

I. Ban on Plastic Bags with No Charge for Paper Bags

Pros:

- Reduces the amount of plastic shopping bags used.
- Paper bags can hold up to 6 times more goods than a plastic bag so overall bag usage would be reduced.

Cons:

- Customers would just switch from plastic to paper. Paper bags actually have a higher environmental impact than plastic.
- Paper bags cost 3-4 times more than plastic bags and stores would have to pay that cost, and pass it onto all consumers, whether they use bags or not.

J. Ban on Plastic Bags with 5 Cent Store Charge for Paper

Pros:

- Over forty-nine percent of our survey respondents stated they would favor a plastic bag ban with a 5 cent store charge

- Eliminates the use of plastic shopping bags.
- Paper bags can hold up to 6 times more goods than a plastic bag, reducing overall bag use and store expenses.
- More customers bring reusable bags when a ban is in place, reducing the overall bag use and store expenses. See Appendix A
- Stores charge 5 cents for paper bags taken, reducing store expenses. See Appendix A for cost scenarios.
- This approach is supported by the Northwest Grocers Association (Appendix D).

Cons:

- Bans can be seen as a negative by the public.
- Developing habits takes time.
- Requires initial public outreach campaign to stores and residents, as well as funds for reusable bag giveaways.
- Need to work with non-profits food assistance programs to develop alternatives to the plastic bags that are commonly used. Note: The Thurston County Food Bank already encourages the use of reusable bags. Participants who bring reusable bags get a bonus ticket for coffee, tea, and condiments. They have also been reducing plastic bag use by providing cardboard boxes (much like Costco).

K. Take No Action

Pros:

- Does not require any changes for stores or residents
- Does not require any additional staffing or financial inputs by Solid Waste

Cons:

- Does not reduce number of plastic bags being used in Thurston County or environmental impacts
- Solid Waste will need to continue: existing levels of education and outreach about bag recycling and using reusable bags; funding bag giveaways; and funding bag recycling at the Waste and Recovery Center
- Local governments will not see a reduction in bag litter.

8. CONCLUSION AND ACTION STEPS

The volume of plastic bags used in the United States is astounding. Life-cycle analysis (LCA) indicates that direct substitution of plastic bags with paper bags is not an environmentally wise solution. However, LCA's do not generally consider the negative effects plastic bags have on the environment, which need to be addressed.

Local government, ratepayers, and taxpayers currently pay for litter, waste management costs, and waste reduction efforts associated with plastic bags. If producers do not want to be responsible for their products, then others will have to make decisions to ensure impacts are reduced.

In the waste reduction hierarchy, reuse is a better environmental choice than recycling. Waste reduction or elimination is always preferred over reuse and recycling. The use of reusable bags, which have the lowest environmental footprint possible, is a better choice over paper or plastic bags.

Solid Waste staff and SWAC spent several months reaching out to the community to discuss the issues surrounding plastic bag use. Several potential solutions were developed through public input or researching what other jurisdictions have attempted. Staff and SWAC analyzed these in terms of potential effectiveness in reducing overall shopping bag use: both paper and plastic. Staff also considered implementation feasibility in terms of available staff and financial resources.



Survey results indicated that support for a ban was surprisingly strong. Many comments encouraged a ban to reduce the waste or resources and environmental damage. The biggest concern, if a ban was in place, is what to use as substitutes for single-use plastic shopping bags that are reused for purposes such as picking up pet waste and lining trash cans.

Thurston County Solid Waste staff drafted this report in conjunction with a Solid Waste Advisory Council (SWAC) subcommittee. The draft report was then provided to the full SWAC for review and approval. The SWAC findings are:

This report has made it clear that plastic bags constitute a serious environmental and health hazard. The enumeration of possible solutions, other than a complete ban on the use of bags, makes it clear that the alternatives outlined in this report are not likely to be feasible and effective. We therefore conclude that it is essential to have the same ban on plastic bags that has been adopted by other municipalities in the State of Washington, and we hereby recommend that the city councils of the cities of Thurston County and the Thurston County Commissioners also adopt a plastic bag ban.

The final report will be provided to the seven city councils in late November, 2012. Solid Waste staff will provide a presentation to each of the cities at their work sessions or council meetings. Staff will request a recommendation from each city regarding which solution(s) they would like the county to pursue. The report and outcomes will then be taken to the Thurston County Commissioners for their recommendation.

All city and county presentation dates will be posted in advance at www.ThurstonSolidWaste.org/plastics. Outcomes will also be added to the website after the recommendations are made.

Appendix A

The City of San Francisco was the first US city to ban plastic bags with a fee for paper bags. Data on their website states that checkout bag charges have been shown to reduce the number of disposable bags used by 70-90 percent.

This has evidently been the case for at least one store in Bellingham, according to a recent [Bellingham Herald article](#). One month ago, Bellingham banned plastic bags with a 5 cent fee for paper. Retailer Kathy McCrady, of Wee Ones Reruns in Bellingham reports that her plastic bag distribution had gone from about 1,000 plastic bags per month to about 100 paper bags per month: a 90% reduction. Customers tend to either bring a reusable bag or chose not to receive a bag.

Let's use how this would look in terms of cost for stores. We spoke to an independent retailer, located in Thurston County, that is currently paying 11 cents per paper bag and 4 cents for plastic. We used his average number of customers and are only assuming one bag per customers. Obviously chain retailers would pay less for bags based on volumes and customers generally use more than one bag. Other retailers can run their own analysis based on their bag use.

	Plastic bags used	Cost: at .04 each	Paper bags used	Cost: at .11 each	.05 paper bag fee collected from customer	Total cost to store
Before ban	50,000	\$2,000	0	0	0	\$2,000
After ban if 50% brought reusables		0	25,000	\$2,750	\$1,250	\$1,500
After ban if 70% brought reusables			15,000	\$1650	\$750	\$900
After ban if 90% brought reusables			5,000	\$550	\$250	\$300



PACIFIC DISPOSAL, INC.
A Waste Connections Company

August 23, 2012

Terri Thomas
Education & Outreach Specialist III
Thurston County Solid Waste
9605 Tilley Road SW
Olympia, WA 98512-9140

Dear Terri,

I am writing in response to your request for information on the impact of plastic bags on collection and transfer station operations. As the impact is essentially the same issue with both, I will consolidate my response.

The major issue with plastic bags is fugitive litter. Plastic bags are a significant contributor to litter due to their ability to expand, inflate and travel. These characteristics are of particular concern when collecting msw with automated trucks and when transferring or unloading msw at transfer facilities. Plastic bags have the ability to inflate in very light wind conditions and travel long distances. This is very challenging to control and creates significant additional cost in grounds maintenance and litter control programs.

On a personal note, being an avid outdoorsman, I have found wind-blown plastic bags in remote areas from Eastern Washington to the Scapegoat Wilderness in Montana. These bags are a hazard to wildlife and defile our outdoor ecosystems. I have personally observed a mature hen mallard with a plastic bag wrapped around her neck on Winchester Wasteway in Eastern Washington. I was disgusted.

Best Regards,

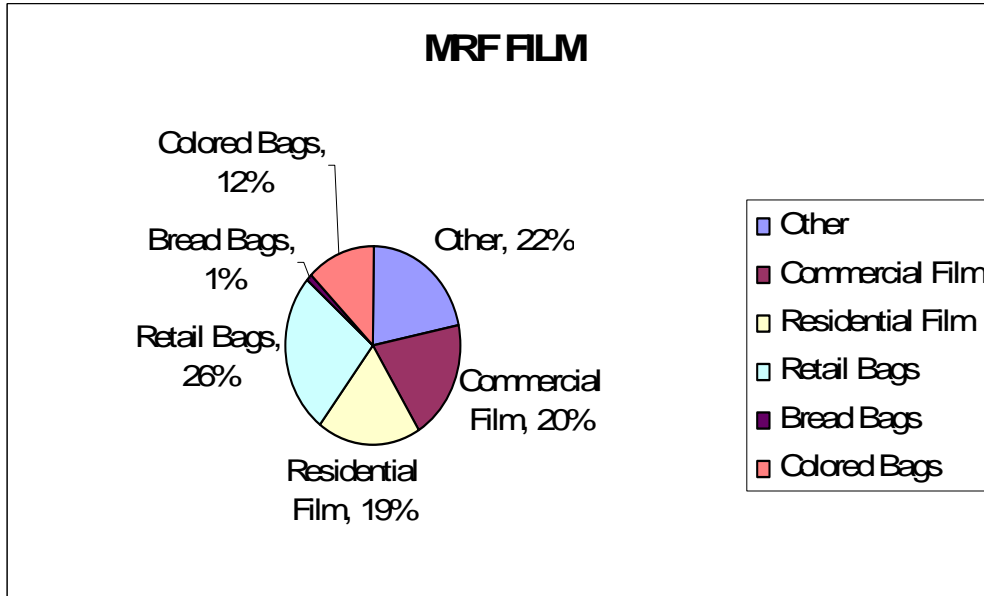
A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Jeffrey O. Harwood", is written over a large, stylized circular flourish.

Jeffrey O. Harwood
District Manager
LeMay South District



SP Recycling Corp.

In 2001 when the SP Recycling Clackamas, OR facility was built, plastic bag film was virtually non-existent. Today, plastic bag film accounts for approximately .76% of the inbound stream with over 50 tons or 100,000 pounds of plastic bag film being hand pulled per month.



Due to the growth of plastic bags in the comingle stream, screens are cleaned each shift which typically takes 4 people/screen 1 – 1½ hours to cut off approximately 400 lbs. of plastic bags that are wrapped around the shafts of the screen. That’s approximately 10,000 lbs. of plastic bag material per month that goes to the landfill with an estimated labor cost of \$35-40K per month.

In addition to the above costs,

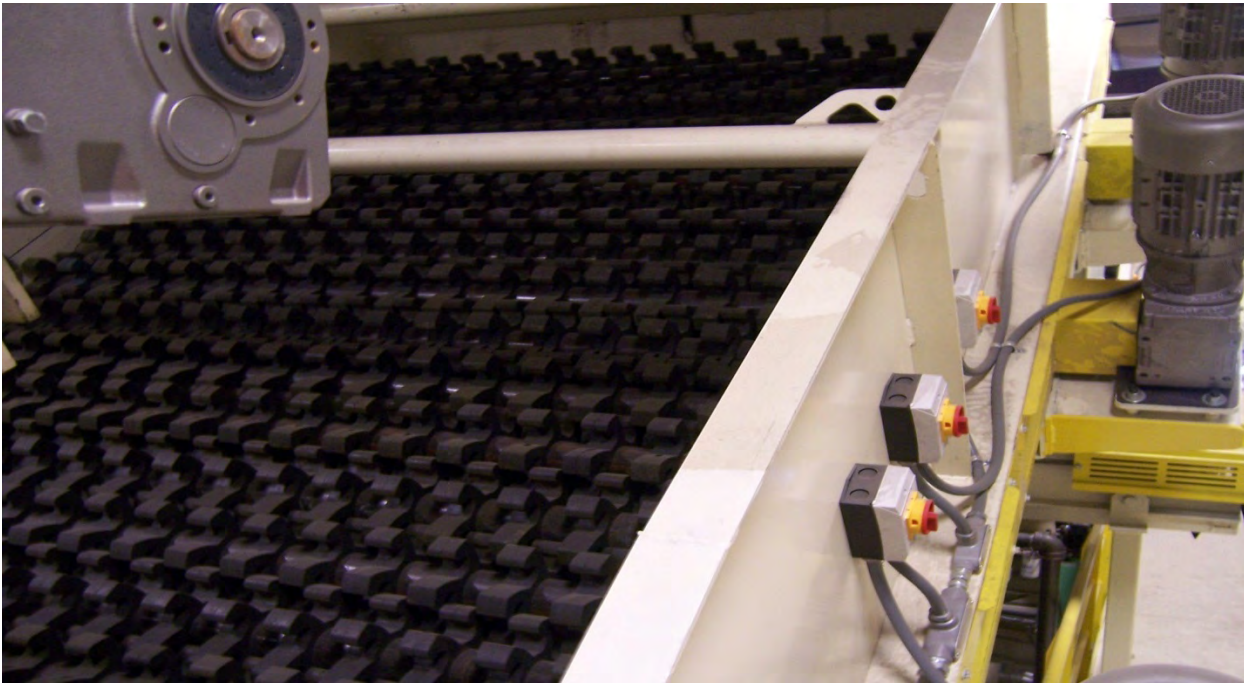
MRF operators face additional losses as the market value of the bag film after baling and transportation costs has ranged from (\$20) to (\$50) per ton over the past year.....if the material can be sold to start with.

An indirect cost of plastic bag film is that it clogs the screens thereby reducing the screens ability to effectively sort material resulting in increased labor costs and increased cross contamination in other grades such as ONP & OCC. We estimate that each facility is wasting 80,000 to 120,000 employee hand pulls per day pulling plastic bag film from the inbound material***.

What if we could use those hand pulls on quality control for ONP and the other commodities?

*** 30 hand pulls per minute for 8 hours = 14400 pulls per day. Assumes 75% of labor spent on bag film is hand pulls.

News screen before the shift.....



News screen after the shift.....



Tacoma Division
4109 192nd Street East • Tacoma, WA 98446
Phone (253) 655-0291 • Fax (253) 846-9019

Appendix D



The Northwest Grocery Association represents retailers and suppliers in all the counties and cities across Washington State. Our membership includes the larger grocery stores – Safeway, Albertsons, Costco Wholesale, QFC, Fred Meyer, and WinCo stores – but not the independent grocers.

Over the past several months NWGA members have worked with various municipalities that which to pass ordinances to ban plastic bags. NWGA supports proposed ordinances that ban plastic but ALSO requires a fee be collected by retailers for paper.

NWGA has supported specific bans on plastic bags, but only if it fits three specific criteria:

- **The legislation must apply to ALL retailers, not just grocery stores. ALL retailers use plastic bags, and ALL retailers should be held to the same standard.**
- **There should be a fee on paper bags that is required to be collected. The retailer would retain this fee. Switching to paper bags can increase costs for a retailer almost \$100,000 per store site, and the nickel will help to offset those potential costs.**
- **It includes all bags, paper and plastic.**

We continue to work with local governments to pass this type of model at the local level. Ordinances that have passed in Seattle and other communities have proven to be workable for the retail community, and these ordinances treat all retail businesses the same.

We remain committed to working with local governments to draft ordinances that meet the above criteria, and which doesn't pit one retailer against another. Please contact me should you be interested in talking about our position further, and how we may assist the Council.

Contact Holly Chisa (360)791-6647



Single-use plastic shopping bags

Waste prevention efforts in Thurston County

What's the problem?

Thurston County residents use about 90 million plastic shopping bags each year. Besides the energy and resources used to make bags, they affect our environment and wildlife and create a financial burden on retailers and governments. Solid Waste staff is working with citizens, cities, and retailers to identify possible solutions to reduce our use. Visit www.ThurstonSolidWaste.org/Plastics for more information.

Environmental concerns

Plastic bags are lightweight. Even when placed in a trash can, they can become airborne during the collection and disposal process and they end up in our waterways.



Plastic bags are among the 12 items of debris most often found in coastal cleanups.

Whales, dolphins, seals, turtles, and birds mistakenly

swallow plastic for food. Smaller animals routinely become entangled in the bags. Plastic bags wrap around living corals quickly "suffocating" and killing them.

Tiny particles of plastic are just as harmful to marine life. They collect high concentrations of harmful chemicals like PCB and DDT, which leach into animals that eat them. In some places of the North Pacific, tiny plastic bits floating at the surface outnumber plankton 6 to 1.

Land animals like livestock can also swallow or become entangled in plastic bags.

Hidden costs

Retailers in the United States spend about \$4 billion on bags each year and pass the cost on to customers. Some stores offer cash back if you bring your own bag.

Governments and taxpayers must pay to clean up plastic bag litter. Bags also clog gutters and storm drains, which causes costly flooding.

What about recycling?

Plastic bags cannot be recycled in our commingled curbside recycling cart because they tangle in equipment at the sorting facility. Some residents put bags in their recycling even though our outreach materials say not to. This costs the recycling facility an extra \$1,000 per day.

In 2009, Americans threw 9,182 tons of plastic film and bags in the trash. According to the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), the nationwide recycling rate for plastic bags is only 4.3 percent despite the availability of collection bins at stores. Even when plastic bags are recycled, the material is used to make a lower quality plastic product.



*Workers remove bags from equipment at SP Recycling, Inc.
Photo courtesy of Waste Connections, Inc.*

Bags by the numbers

- On average, each plastic bag is used 12 minutes.
- Americans use 30 billion bags each year.
- Nearly 200,000 plastic bags are buried in a landfill every hour.

What are others doing?

Data shows that public education is just not a very successful strategy for reducing demand for bags.

However, supply-side actions like user fees, taxes, bans, and take-back programs have been successful here in the United States and abroad.

In Washington, the cities of Seattle, Edmonds, Mukilteo, Bainbridge Island, Bellingham, Port Townsend, and Issaquah have all banned plastic bags.

What can you do?

Thurston County Solid Waste encourages residents to use durable bags to prevent waste in the first place. When possible, just say, "No thanks, I don't need a bag."

If you have plastic bags around the house, recycle them at the Waste and Recovery Center or at a plastic bag recycle bin at your neighborhood grocery store.

Remembering to bring your reusable bags when you shop is like learning any new habit - you can do it with time and practice.

- Make "bring shopping bags" the first item on your grocery list.
- Keep a bag at the office, in your purse, or in your briefcase.
- Hang the bags on your front door knob, or place them with your car keys.
- Put the bags back in your car right after you empty them.
- Keep your bags in the front seat of your car so you can see them.
- Place a "grab the bags" sticky note on your front door or car door handle.
- Charge yourself a dollar every time you forget your bags. Donate the money to charity.



Get involved now!

We want the community to help us identify solutions, so it is important for everyone to get involved.

Visit www.ThurstonSolidWaste.org/Plastics to find out how to:

- Take our online survey about plastic bags.
- Attend an upcoming community meeting in your city or town. These are scheduled from August 21 through September 19.
- Host a showing of the entertaining documentary *Bag It* for your school, community group, church, or neighborhood. Solid Waste has several copies to loan. We can even attend your event for a discussion after the video.
- Invite Solid Waste staff to speak to your organization about plastic bags. We'll also bring free reusable bags to give to your group.
- Sign up to receive periodic email updates about plastic bag issues and planned events.
- Look for Solid Waste staff at events or at your local store, and take our survey in exchange for a free reusable shopping bag.

Questions?

Contact Loni Hanka at (360) 867-2282 or hankal@co.thurston.wa.us.



Thurston County Solid Waste
9605 Tilley Road SW
Olympia, WA 98512



Sources are available at www.ThurstonSolidWaste.org/Plastics.

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Plastic bags

Help us find solutions!

Community discussions

Thurston County residents use about 90 million plastic shopping bags each year! Solid Waste staff is working with citizens, cities, and retailers in Thurston County to discuss the problems these bags can create. Our goal is to identify possible solutions that help us reduce our use.

Join us for a screening of *Bag It*, a film about the issue of plastic bags and their effects on the environment and human health. After the screening we'll discuss plastic bags in our community. We need your ideas to help us reduce plastic bag use, reduce litter clean-up, and keep bags from affecting our environment!

Rochester

Rochester Middle School
Commons
9937 Highway 12 SW
Tuesday, Aug. 21
6 to 8 p.m.

Yelm

Grange building
302 E Yelm Ave.
Wednesday, Aug. 22
6 to 8 p.m.

Bucoda

City Hall
Council chambers
110 N. Main St.
Wednesday, Aug. 29
6 to 8 p.m.

Tenino

City Hall
Council chambers
149 Hodgden St. S
Thursday, Aug. 30
6 to 8 p.m.

Rainier

City Hall
102 Rochester St. W
Wednesday, Sept. 5
6 to 8 p.m.

Tumwater

Fire Dept. Headquarters
311 Israel Rd. SW
Thursday, Sept. 6
6 to 8 p.m.

Lacey

City Hall
Community room
420 College St. SE
Wednesday, Sept. 12
6 to 8 p.m.

Olympia

City Hall
Council chambers
601 4th Ave. E
Wednesday, Sept. 19
6 to 8 p.m.

Learn more

Visit www.ThurstonSolidWaste.org/Plastics for more information about plastic bags. You can also sign up for e-mail updates.

Get involved!

We want to know what you think about plastic bags. Visit our website to take our online survey, and forward the link to your friends and neighbors.

We can also lend you a copy of *Bag It* to screen for your service organization or community group.

Contact

Loni Hanka
(360) 867-2282
hankal@co.thurston.wa.us



Thurston County Solid Waste
9605 Tilley Road SW
Olympia, WA 98512



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Appendix G

Published July 08, 2012

County commissioners should put an end to plastic bags

Thurston County should join the growing number of cities and counties banning single-use plastic carry-out bags, but it would be even better if the Washington Legislature acted to avoid a crazy-quilt of bans across the state.

There are plenty of documented benefits and practically no downside to a ban, which has the support of the Northwest Grocery Association, an organization representing the state's grocery retailers, wholesalers, suppliers and brokers.

Thurston County residents use an estimated 90 million of the flimsy plastic bags every year, most only once and for an average of about 12 minutes. Americans use 300 billion annually.

Fewer than 5 percent of the bags get recycled, the rest end up in landfills or fly away to line fences and trees and are eventually washed down rivers or streams into the ocean. Among the common trash items found on beaches, the bags rank second, contributing significantly to the massive patch of garbage swirling together in the Pacific Ocean, north of the Hawaiian Islands.

The Thurston County Solid Waste Advisory Committee is doing community outreach to citizens and city councils to determine how the South Sound feels about plastic bags, and to what extent people would be willing to support efforts to reduce their impact on the environment.

One of their efforts is an online poll – surveymonkey.com/s/tcbagsurvey. Of the 1,200 who have taken the poll so far, 43 percent say they would support a ban on plastic bags, and 36 percent say they would not.

The Solid Waste Advisory Committee plans community meetings throughout the summer, and will compile its final report in November. After that, any further action will be up to the county commission.

It's surprising that Olympia, a city with such a strong environmental constituency, has not yet banned the bags. Seattle's ban went into effect at the beginning of the month, joining Bellingham, Mukilteo, Edmonds and Bainbridge Island.

From Alaska to North Carolina, and California to New York, some jurisdictions in most states have enacted plastic bag bans. These laws usually only prohibit the thin single-use bags at grocery stores,

put a five-cent fee on paper bags and provide for public service campaigns to encourage reusable grocery bags.

More than 50 jurisdictions in California have banned the bags, including Los Angeles County. And Los Angeles itself recently became the largest city in the United States to outlaw them.

When Honolulu County approved a ban in May – that takes effect in January 2013 – Hawaii became the first state in the nation to outlaw the bags. Hawaiians know first-hand how many bits of plastic are making their way into the Pacific, soaking up toxins like sponges and entering our food chain through the marine life that consumes it.

It's simply time to eliminate these harmful bags. We used to package fast food in Styrofoam boxes, because it was cheap and easy, or so we thought. Once consumers and businesses realized the true costs of the environmental cleanup, it was a painless transition back to paper containers. No one misses Styrofoam, certainly not our city sewers or the mid-ocean garbage gyres.

There is simply no good reason to continue using the plastic bags when there is a constructive alternative available: reusable bags. Grocery stores have been encouraging these for some time, often giving them away.

Until the infamous “paper or plastic” option goes away, too many well-intentioned shoppers will forget their reusable bags in their cars.

The Solid Waste Advisory Committee will likely find broad support for a bag ban. The county commission must then do the right thing, with the support of every city council, and pass an ordinance banning single-use plastic bags.

Besides, when did shoppers become entitled to free bags? It's a convenience we've come to expect, but which our planet can no longer afford.

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Published June 07, 2012

Fighting the plastic grocery bag scourge

CHELSEA KROTZER

Terri Thomas' mission this summer is to educate Thurston County about plastic bags.

An estimated 90 million plastic shopping bags are used in the county each year, Thomas said, most of which are not recycled.

About 4.5 percent of those 90 million bags are recycled and another 9 percent are reused, a number Thomas said is "dismally low."

"They are urban tumbleweeds," said Thomas, an education and outreach specialist with the county solid waste department. "They just catch wind and go everywhere ... it's one of the most common things you will find in litter."

Thomas has spoken with city councils in Bucoda, Yelm, Rainier, Tumwater and Lacey about the statistics. She plans to speak to Olympia and Tenino by early July.

So far, she said most jurisdictions are showing interest in discussing the topic, she said.

"Thurston County is taking a lead on upcoming community dialogues," said Tumwater Councilmember Tom Oliva at a work session in May. "I've been concerned about each city dealing with this itself; it's a regional issue. Otherwise, people could cross city lines to go to another store."

At this point, the county is looking at plastic grocery bags and not bags used for meat and produce, carry-out or thicker bags like the ones found in clothing stores.

CURBSIDE RECYCLING

Plastic bags cannot be recycled with the curb side recycling bins because of the damage they do at the recycling facility.

The bags become tangled in sorting equipment, costing recycling facilities an extra \$1,000 per day to clear them, Thomas said.

Thomas said he hopes this summer's education will lead to understanding where city leaders stand on finding a solution to the issues that come with using plastic bags.

Those solutions could include charging for them at the store or even banning them all together, similar to what Seattle and Bellingham have done.

Grocery stores throughout the county have already begun encouraging customers to use reusable bags versus plastic. Thomas said most also provide a place to recycle the bags.

“I think generally, if you have a reusable bag, that’s better all the way around,” said Thriftway store owner Kevin Stormans.

Signs in his store parking lots remind shoppers to bring in their reusable bags from their cars. Stormans said they have also given away countless bags to local groups.

As for looking to charge for the bags or to ban them altogether, Stormans said he’s not quite ready to weigh in yet. He says it’s not about banning, it’s about changing people’s routines.

“That’s the best solution – that people use reusable bags, not necessarily ban one type of bag or another, but people just need to completely change behaviors and use the reusable bags,” Stormans said.

Cheryl Selby, owner of Vivala, a women’s clothing store in downtown Olympia, said she uses a different type of plastic bag in her store.

“Our shopping bags are made from recycled florist paper,” Selby said. “They repurpose them into shopping bags that are really cute.”

She also uses gift wrapping made from recycled products.

While a ban or charge against plastic bags wouldn’t affect her business, she still supports the idea of changing the way plastic bags are used.

“I strongly support a ban on the single-use plastic bags,” she said. “There are so many statistics; they don’t get recycled ... and they jam up the machines.”

Meetings left on the agenda:

Tenino: Work session, 6:30 p.m. Tuesday.

Olympia: Council meeting, 7 p.m. July 10. Share your thoughts on plastic bags:

Go online to www.ThurstonSolidWaste.org/plastics to take a survey and share your thoughts on plastic bag use in Thurston County. As of Tuesday, 824 people had taken the survey, with 41 percent saying they would support a ban, 35 percent saying they would not support a band, and 21 percent saying they need more information about the issue.

ckrotzer@theolympian.com 360-754-5476 theolympian.com/thisjustin @chelseakrotzer

GriffinNeighbors

A News and Opinion Blog for the Griffin/Schneider Prairie/Steamboat Island Peninsula, Thurston County, Washington.

THURSDAY, JULY 26, 2012

Thurston County Seeks Solutions to Single-Use Plastic Bags



Residents in Thurston County use an estimated 90 million plastic shopping bags per year. On average, each bag is used for only 12 minutes. Besides the energy and resources used to make bags, they can affect our environment and create a financial burden on local government when we are done using them.

Thurston County Solid Waste has been busy this summer working with the community to discuss issues related to plastic bag use. They are seeking input from residents, businesses, and non-profits on how we can reduce our use. They encourage residents to get involved through the below activities:

Check out the webpage set up by Thurston County Solid Waste, full of information and studies, at www.ThurstonSolidWaste.org/plastics. There, the public can sign up for periodic emails about the project and planned activities.

At the website, you can also take the Plastic Bag Survey - over 1,700 residents have completed it. We have been surveying at stores and special events as well - participants get a free reusable bag.

Eight community meetings have been scheduled for mid-August to mid-September. These are all listed on the web site as well. Thurston County Solid Waste hopes you will join them for these important discussions.

If you are a member of a community group, you may want to know that Solid Waste staff is available for presentations on the topic of plastic bags. They also have several copies of the entertaining documentary "Bag It" if you would like to coordinate a viewing for your church, neighborhood, or community group. To view a trailer for the film, just go to their website You can also rent the movie for home use on services such as [Amazon](#) or [Netflix](#). For more information, please contact Loni Hanka at hankal@co.thurston.wa.us or (360) 867-2282.

The Thurston County Solid Waste Advisory Council meets the 2nd Thursday of each month from 11:30-1 at Thurston County Public Works, 9605 Tilley Road SW, Olympia, WA 98512. The public is always invited to attend and share their comments. Mark Daniels of the American Progressive Bag Alliance (the Plastics Industry) has been invited to do a presentation at the next meeting on August 9.

Community input is critical as the folks from Solid Waste work to identify possible solutions to the growing problem of single-use shopping bags. Visit their webpage and send them an email from there, or give them a call and share your thoughts.

For more information, contact:
Terri Thomas
Education & Outreach Specialist III
Thurston County Solid Waste
9605 Tilley Road SW
Olympia, WA 98512-9140
Phone: 360-867-2279
Fax: 360-867-2295
www.ThurstonSolidWaste.org

Thursday, August 02, 2012

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HOME NEWS SPORTS WEATHER LOCAL BUSINESS ENTERTAINMENT ABOUT KMAS NEWSRADIO



Plastic Bags Piling Up

Written by Drew Dawson, KMAS News Radio
Wednesday, 01 August 2012 21:45



Thurston County uses approximately 90 million plastic shopping bags each year, and it's becoming an environmental threat. To find an answer to the growing waste, the Thurston County Solid Waste Division is leading a series of community conversations on how to address the problem over the next 6 weeks. Terri Thomas is an Education and Outreach Specialist with Thurston County Solid Waste. Thomas said, "We're having meetings...to get people together and see if we can... find solutions that people can support".

There is a [survey online](#) on the Thurston County Solid Waste website. Thomas says breaking the plastic bag habit is tough because they're convenient for customers, and cheap and easy to store for retailers. When plastic bags started being used in the 70's, it was to the retailer's advantage because they were lightweight, easier to store and less expensive.

The meetings are scheduled between now and the end of September dates and times are on the website.

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Thurston County Residents Invited To Comment On Plastic Bags

August 2, 2012 | Filed under [LocalTalk](#) | Posted by [ThurstonTalk Editor](#)

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OLYMPIA – What to do with an estimated 90 million plastic shopping bags used in Thurston County each year?—that’s the question the Thurston County Solid Waste Division is taking to the streets this summer with forums where residents, business leaders, and non-profit organizations can get involved and give comments on the issue.

“People are always surprised when they hear that only about four percent of those bags get recycled. It’s a real problem,” said Terri Thomas, Education and Outreach Specialist with the county’s Solid Waste Division. “Community input is critical as we identify possible solutions to the growing problem of single-use shopping bags.”

The “Community Conversations on Plastic Bags” series of public meetings kicks off with a presentation from Mark Daniels of the American Progressive Bag Alliance to the Thurston County Solid Waste Advisory Council on Thursday, August 9 (complete schedule below). The public is invited to attend the advisory council meeting.

Other Community Conversation meetings will be held throughout the county in August and September, where the public is invited to give ideas and comments on the issue of plastic bags.

County staffers have already begun work gathering the public’s comments and ideas on plastic bags with an online survey that runs through September. Over 1,700 participants have completed the online survey so far, and county staffers and volunteers are gathering more comments with in-person surveys at special events throughout the summer. In-person survey participants receive a free re-usable shopping bag.

More information about the Community Conversations on Plastic Bags is available online at www.thurstonSolidwaste.org/plastics. The web page also has a link to the online plastic bag survey, as well as a link to sign up for Solid Waste Division email updates. For more information on the county’s plastic bag outreach programs, contact Terri Thomas, Education & Outreach Specialist for the county’s Solid Waste Division, at (360) 867-2279 or thomaste@co.thurston.wa.us.

The documentary film “Bag It” is also part of the county’s plastic bag outreach effort, and residents are invited to coordinate screenings of the film. Contact Loni Hanka, Education & Outreach Specialist for the Solid Waste Division, at (360) 867-2282 or hankal@co.thurston.wa.us to make screening arrangements and for more information on the film “Bag It.” A link to a short trailer video for the film is available on the county’s website at www.thurstonSolidwaste.org/plastics by scrolling down to the “Plastic Bags—Help Us Find Solutions” section.

Community Conversations on Plastic Bags

Public Meetings

DATE & TIME	MEETING	LOCATION
Thur, Aug 9, 11:30 am – 1 pm	Thurston County Solid Waste Advisory Council Special Guest: Mark Daniels, American Progressive Bag Alliance	Thurston County Public Works 9605 Tilley Road SW south of Tumwater
Tues, Aug 21, 6 – 8 pm	Community Conversation on Plastic Bags	Rochester Middle School Commons 9937 Hwy 12 SW in Rochester
Wed, Aug 22, 6 – 8 pm	Community Conversation on Plastic Bags	Gordon's Grange Building 302 E Yelm Ave in Yelm
Wed, Aug 29, 6 – 8 pm	Community Conversation on Plastic Bags	Bucoda City Hall, Council Chambers 110 N Main St in Bucoda
Thur, Aug 30, 6 – 8 pm	Community Conversation on Plastic Bags	Tenino City Hall, Council Chambers 149 Hodgden St S in Tenino
Wed, Sep 5, 6 – 8 pm	Community Conversation on Plastic Bags	Rainier City Hall 102 Rochester St W in Rainier
Thur, Sep 6, 6 – 8 pm	Community Conversation on Plastic Bags	Tumwater Fire Department HQ 311 Israel Rd SW in Tumwater
Wed, Sep 12, 6 – 8 pm	Community Conversation on Plastic Bags	Lacey City Hall, Community Room 420 College St SE in Lacey
Wed, Sep 19, 6 – 8 pm	Community Conversation on Plastic Bags	Olympia City Hall, Council Chambers 601 Fourth Ave E in Olympia

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Related posts:

1. [Thurston County Solid Waste Working To Reduce Plastic Bag Consumption](#)
2. [Public Invited to Comment on Proposed Prairie Conservation Ordinance Extension](#)
3. [Solid Waste + Thurston County Fair Team Up to Recycle And Compost](#)
4. [Volunteer Opportunities – Thurston County Fair + Master Recycler Composter](#)
5. [Thurston County : Rainier, Tenino and Bucoda Designated Thurston County Substance Abuse Prevention Sites](#)

Thurston County Solid Waste Working To Reduce Plastic Bag Consumption

I have retrained myself to carry reusable totes. At first I was enticed by shaving a few pennies off my grocery bill. But, my true motivation was to minimize the amount of plastic my family consumes.

I had to find the appropriate spot in my car to store the collapsed bags so that I would grab them. The reminder signs on the front door of the grocery store helped too. I admit that it was a learning curve but I have a routine down now and am a faithful tote bag carrier.



Thurston County Solid Waste is educating consumers about the impact that plastic bags have on our environment. The numbers are truly staggering.

- Plastic bags get used, on average, for 12 minutes.
- Americans use half a million plastic bags every minute.
- Nearly 200,000 plastic bags are land filled every hour.
- Thurston County residents use about 90 million plastic shopping bags each year.

The impact to the environment is even more concerning. According to the Center for Marine Conservation, plastic bags are among the 12 items of debris found most often in coastal clean-ups.

But, plastic bags can be recycling, right? “Unfortunately, plastic bags cannot be recycled in our co-mingled curbside program because they tangle the equipment at the sorting facility,” explains Terri Thomas, Education and Outreach Specialist for Thurston County Solid Waste.

“Throwing a plastic bag into the recycling adds an extra expense of about \$1,000 per day to our recycling facilities,” says Thomas.

In addition, the Environmental Protection Agency indicates that plastic bags are recycled at less than one-third the rate of paper bags.

“All disposable bags have benefits and drawbacks. Paper bags actually use more energy and water to produce. But plastic bags create the litter and marine problems that are of great concern. Based on several



life cycle analysis, the best solution is to use reusable bags,” describes Thomas.

So, what does Thurston County Solid Waste recommend?

“Find a plastic bag recycling bin at a nearby grocery store. Recycle your plastic bags there. You can also drop plastic bags at the [WARC Recycle Center](#),” encourages Thomas.

The list of plastic items that can be recycled here is quite extensive. “Recycle plastic bags, dry cleaning bags, bread bags, plastic newspaper sleeves, and any other type of stretchy plastic that you can poke your finger through easily,” explains Thomas.

Thurston County Solid Waste encourages residents to use durable bags to prevent waste and is working with the community to develop possible solutions to reduce our use of plastic bags.

Thurston County Solid Waste wants to hear from the community on ways we can reduce the number of plastics bags used. To gather information, Thurston County Solid Waste will be asking residents for their ideas and surveying at community meetings, special events, and at the entrance to local retail stores. To learn more or attend one of eight community meetings, click [here](#). You can also complete the [short survey online](#). In addition, they have several copies of the film “Bag It” that residents can borrow to show for their neighbors, churches, or community groups.



In exchange for answering the survey, residents will receive a free, reusable, recycled content shopping bag. Participating gives leaders valuable information about residents’ views on plastic bags in our community.

My education from Thurston County Solid Waste includes a new step that I’m adding to my routine. I’m going to wash my bags since like kitchen sponges, towels, and surfaces, reusable bags can hold bacteria.

Thurston County Solid Waste’s B.Y.O.B (Bring Your Own Bag) Reminders

- Write ‘bring shopping bags’ as the first time on your grocery list.
- Keep a bag at the office, in your purse, or in your briefcase.
- Hang the bags on your front door knob, or place them with your car keys.
- Make yourself a colorful door hanger for the house.
- Put the bags back in your car right after you empty them.
- Keep your bags in the front seat of your car so you can see them.
- Place a ‘grab the bags’ sticky note on your dash or car door handle.
- Give your little ones the job of remembering the bags when you go shopping.
- Charge yourself a dollar every time you forget your bags. Donate the money to charity.

To learn more about Thurston County Solid Waste and reducing material consumption, visit their [website](#) or follow the agency on [Facebook](#).

Thurston County Solid Waste also maintains an amazing list of items that can be donated or recycled in Thurston County. Visit [Where Do I Take My...?](#) to get some great alternatives to the garbage can and land fill.

Still have more questions? Call 360.867.2491 or send an email to thurstonsolidwaste@co.thurston.wa.us.

All photos provided by Thurston County Solid Waste.

Related posts:

1. [Thurston County Food Bank – Working To End Hunger In Our Community](#)
2. [Free WasteMobile Hazardous Waste Collection Event \(4/30 – 5/1\)](#)
3. [Olympia’s Annual Spring Recycle Days : Press Release](#)
4. [Bag It! The Cost of Lunch](#)
5. [Thurston County: Recycle Your Christmas Tree FREE!](#)

Appendix H

SPECIAL EVENTS

Date	Name	City	# of surveys
05/19/2012	Community Cleanup on street	Bucoda	12
06/06/2012	Green Drinks at Spar	Olympia	9
06/09/2012	Sea Cinema at Capitol Theater	Olympia	21
07/07/2012	South Sound BBQ Festival at Cabel	Lacey	191
07/14/2012	Community Market	Lacey	254
07/21/2012	Movies in the Park	Bucoda	2
07/21/2012	Family Day	Yelm	114
07/22/2012	Farmer's Market	Yelm	30
07/28/2012	Family Fun Day	Rochester	0
07/28-29/2012	Mushroom Fest	Lacey	318
07/28/2012	Oregon Trail Days	Tenino	19
8/1-5/2012	Fair	Lacey	487
08/07/2012	National Night Out	Tumwater	44
08/10/2012	Olympia Farmer's Market	Olympia	7
08/11/2012	Community Market	Lacey	90
08/16/2012	Nisqually Tribe Health Fair	Olympia	68
08/18/2012	Inspiration Home Show	Olympia	4
08/24/2012	Rainier Round Up	Rainier	11
09/04/2012	Tumwater Farmer's Market	Tumwater	27
09/08/2012	Lacey Community Market	Lacey	90
9/15&16/2012	Home and Garden Show	Lacey	114
09/29/2012	LOTT Presentation	Olympia	24

PRESENTATIONS

Date	Organization	Location
05/16/2012	Lacey Sunrise Lions	Hawks Prarie Rest.
05/30/2012	Synergy	Evergreen College
07/03/2012	Yelm Rotary	Jody's Restaurant
07/12/2012	EETAC Meeting	Olympia
07/24/2012	Kiwanians	Lacey
09/05/2012	Rochester Chamber	Rochester School Adm
09/19/2012	Panorama	Lacey
09/17/2012	PEO	Lacey
2/19//2013	Tumwater Chamber	River's Edge Restaurant

STORE FRONT CUSTOMER SURVEYS

Date	Store	City	# of surveys
07/03/2012	Ralph's Thriftway	Olympia	13
07/10/2012	Bailey's IGA	Rochester	25
07/13/2012	Westgate Maill	Olympia	12
07/17/2012	Liberty Market	Bucoda	13
07/18/2012	Whistle Stop IGA Market	Tenino	4
07/24/2012	Bayview Market	Olympia	11
07/26/2012	Rainier Texaco	Rainier	6
08/13/2012	Olympia Food Bank	Olympia	40

COMMUNITY MEETINGS (ALL WERE 6:00-8:00 PM)

Date	City	Address	Attendees
08/21/2012	Rochester	9937 Highway 12 SW	6
08/22/2012	Yelm	302 Yelm St. SE	2
08/29/2012	Bucoda	110 N. Main St.	1
08/30/2012	Tenino	149 Hodgden St. S	0
09/05/2012	Rainier	102 Rochester St. W	0
09/06/2012	Tumwater	311 Israel Rd SW	1
09/12/2012	Lacey	420 College St. SE	4
09/19/2012	Olympia	601 4th Ave. E	10



THURSTON COUNTY
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Thurston Solid Waste News

May / June 2012

Recycle foam at the Waste and Recovery Center (WARC)

County residents can now recycle polystyrene (often called Styrofoam™) blocks and food containers at the WARC, located at 2418 Hogum Bay Road NE in Hawks Prairie. Foam plates, cups, and molded blocks have a special bin in the recycle area.

Before recycling your foam:

- Make sure it has a number six recycle symbol.
- Rinse all food containers.
- Remove all straws and lids. Put them in the trash.
- Put all foam in clear plastic bags. We provide bags at the WARC.
- Put shape/molded foam and food containers in separate bags.

You can also recycle these items at DART Container Corp., located at 600 Israel Road in Tumwater.

The WARC and DART **do not** accept packing peanuts. For peanut drop-off sites, visit www.loosefillpackaging.com or call the peanut hotline at 1-800-828-2214.

The recycle area at the WARC is free and available for residents only. Businesses must take foam to DART Container Corp. Call 352-7045 to schedule large deliveries.



Free recycling presentations

If your service club, youth group, or business is looking for more information on recycling and waste prevention, we can help! We offer free presentations designed to fit your needs.

Contact us for more information or to schedule a presentation.

- Service clubs and community organizations contact Loni Hanka at 754-4398 or hankal@co.thurston.wa.us.
- Business, nonprofits, and government organizations contact Emily Orme at 867-2086 or ormee@co.thurston.wa.us.
- Schools, scouts, and youth groups contact Colleen Minion at 786-5629 or minionc@co.thurston.wa.us.

Single-use plastic bags

Based on national averages, Thurston County residents use between 90 and 125 million plastic shopping bags each year! While convenient, bags do create problems.

Plastic bags are light weight and travel easily through the environment. They affect marine and land animals and become a clean-up burden for governments.

In Thurston County, you cannot put plastic bags in your commingled curbside cart because they tangle in the equipment at the sorting facility. Shutting down equipment and removing these tangles costs the sorting facility \$1,000 per day. This means the cost of the recycling system increases.

Although many grocery stores now have collection bins for bags, recycling rates are actually dropping. That means more bags wind up in the trash.

Thurston County Solid Waste wants to discuss this issue with the citizens, cities, retailers, and community groups to identify possible solutions.

Visit www.ThurstonSolidWaste.org/Plastics for a schedule of community events and studies and reports about bags. You can also learn what actions other jurisdictions are taking to address this problem. Visit this page to sign up for updates on this issue.



B.Y.O.Bag reminders

Remembering to bring your reusable bags when you shop is like learning any new habit - you can do it with time and practice.

- Make "bring shopping bags" the first item on your grocery list.
- Keep a bag at the office, in your purse, or in your briefcase.
- Hang the bags on your front door knob, or place them with your car keys.
- Make yourself a colorful door hanger for the house.
- Put the bags back in your car right after you empty them.
- Keep your bags in the front seat of your car so you can see them.
- Place a "grab the bags" sticky note on your dash or car door handle.
- Give your little ones the job of remembering the bags when you go shopping.
- Charge yourself a dollar every time you forget your bags. Donate the money to charity.

Tell us how you remember your bags! Email ThurstonSolidWaste@co.thurston.wa.us.



Join the conversation online!



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Thurston Solid Waste News

July / August 2012

Sensitive document shredding

If you're like most folks, securing your private information is a top priority. That means you have probably saved up a bag of bills, credit card offers, and other mail with sensitive information.

Good news! Local banks, credit unions, and other businesses hold community shredding events throughout the year. The website for the Washington State Attorney General's Office lists these upcoming shred events:

Saturday, July 28

10 a.m. - 1 p.m.

Washington State Employees Credit Union
400 Union Ave. SE, Olympia



Saturday, August 25

10 a.m. - 1 p.m.

Columbia Bank
655 Golf Club Pl. SE, Lacey

Most events are free or ask for a small donation for charity. The events generally allow you to bring up to two or three grocery bags of documents. For more information or to see a full list shred events around the state, visit www.atg.wa.gov/shredathon.aspx.

LeMay offers shredding services at its office at 2910 Hogum Bay Rd. NE in Lacey. The cost is \$7.50 per standard banker box of documents. Bring this insert and receive \$1.00 off per box! Call LeMay Mobile Shredding at (360) 486-8605 for more information.

Plastic shopping bag resources

Solid Waste has purchased DVDs of the documentary *Bag It* and will be arranging for as many public screenings as possible. *Bag It* explores the impact of plastic bags on the environment and human bodies.

If you would like to arrange a screening for your church, neighborhood, or community group, please contact Loni Hanka at (360) 867-2282 or hankal@co.thurston.wa.us.

Solid Waste staff may be available to attend your screening to answer questions and discuss some of the issues related to bags. You can watch the movie at home through services like Netflix and Amazon.

Visit www.ThurstonSolidWaste.org for more information about the Thurston County plastic bag project:

- See our community meetings schedule.
- Sign up for our list serve.
- Take our survey to tell us what you think of plastic bags.



Summer recycling

As you check chores off your summer to-do list, you may notice stuff piling up around your home. Head to the Waste and Recovery Center (WARC) at Hawks Prairie for one-stop disposal of many different items. Summer hours are 7 a.m. to 6 p.m. on weekdays and 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. on weekends. You can also visit www.WhereDoITakeMy.org to find other places that reuse or recycle nearly 150 items!

Yard waste

No summer chore list is complete without a bit of yard work. Take your grass clippings, branches, and fir cones to the yard waste area at the WARC.

You must dispose of noxious weeds, ivy, scotch broom, and blackberries as garbage. For questions about weeds, contact the Noxious Weed Control Agency at (360) 786-5576.

Scrap lumber

The yard waste area at the WARC also accepts **untreated** lumber, plywood, and particle board. The yard waste area does **not** accept wood that has been painted, stained, or glued to laminate.



Pesticides and other chemicals

Take leftover fertilizers, pesticides, spa chemicals, and other household hazardous waste to the WARC's HazoHouse. Disposal is free for residents. The site is open Fri. - Tues. from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m.



Propane tanks

After a busy weekend of camping or barbecuing, take propane containers to HazoHouse.

No tanks larger than 20 lbs. (standard BBQ tanks). Limit three containers per day per customer.

Paint and solvents

Take **oil based** paints and stains, paint solvents, and thinners to HazoHouse.

HazoHouse **does not** accept latex paint. Dry out leftover latex paint by adding kitty litter, shredded paper, or a chemical paint solidifier. When the paint is dry, put the can in the trash with the lid off.

Metal barbecues

Have an old rusty barbecue that no longer works? Take it to the scrap metal pile at the WARC. Normal garbage rates apply.



Join the conversation online!



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Thurston Solid Waste News

September / October 2012

Solid Waste wants to work with you!

Solid Waste has volunteer opportunities for adults and students looking for one-time or regular volunteer hours. Our volunteers work with the public to improve waste prevention and recycling. No experience necessary! Visit www.ThurstonSolidWaste.org and click "volunteers" for upcoming opportunities and to apply.

Internships

Solid Waste offers internships to students hoping to gain hands-on experience educating the public and learning the ins and outs of waste prevention. Contact Brian Stafki at (360) 867-2284 or stafkib@co.thurston.wa.us for more information.

Senior culminating projects

Do you need volunteer hours or ideas for your senior culminating project? Solid Waste staff can work with you to develop ideas and plan your project. Student projects can include:

- Giving recycling presentations.
- Promoting waste reduction with recycled art.
- Starting a cell phone or print cartridge collection program at school, a church, or a local business.
- Improving recycling or starting a composting program at school.
- Promoting reuse by organizing a clothing, book, or game exchange.
- Distributing informational material.



If you already have your own great idea for a waste prevention or recycling project, we can get you started on the right path!

Contact Carrie Ziegler at (360) 867-2285 or zieglec@co.thurston.wa.us for more information.



Let us know what you think!

It's not too late to let us know your opinion on plastic bags. Visit www.ThurstonSolidWaste.org/Plastics to take our survey now!

Remember to bring your ID to the WARC

Starting September 1, 2012, folks using the paid disposal areas at the Waste and Recovery Center (WARC) at Hawks Prairie must present valid identification. This applies to anyone going through the tollhouse to dispose of garbage or yard waste. This does not apply to visitors using HazoHouse or the recycle center.

This measure will help identify visitors that leave without paying for disposal. It will also help prevent payment fraud and ensure the safety of the WARC's staff and visitors.

Proof of identification options:

- **Option A:** Valid driver's license.
- **Option B:** Vehicle registration or current utility billing.

PLUS

Valid photo ID, such as a military ID, work ID, credit card with photo, or Costco card.



Prevent waste this holiday season

It's hard to believe, but the holidays are just around the corner! Solid Waste wants to help you minimize waste this year.

We can show you how to host a waste-free party, choose greener gifts, and recycle your tree after the holidays.

Visit www.ThurstonSolidWaste.org/Holidays in November to learn more!



Thurston County Solid Waste
9605 Tilley Road SW
Olympia, WA 98512
(360) 867-2491

www.ThurstonSolidWaste.org



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REDUCE REUSE RECYCLE