



Upstream: An Overview of the Reuse Movement

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“We’re never going to be able to recycle or compost our way to a sustainable future. We have to work upstream to redesign the systems generating all the waste in the first place.”

- Upstream Founder, Bill Sheehan, Ph.D.



We heart reuse

We can't create a good quality of life for 7.5B people and growing on a "one-way throw-away" model.



70%

of litter on streets and in waterways is disposable food & beverage packaging



We Can't Recycle and Compost Our Way Out

Recyclable- *myth*

- Most recovered materials down-cycled- doesn't turn off the tap
- Foodware too dirty to recycle
- Recyclable better for the environment only 56% of the time

Compostable- *myth*

- Only 14 of 182 compost facilities in CA process compostable plastic- but it creates a contaminated product
- Food packaging lowers compost quality
- Compostables in landfill = 30X more GHG impact than when composted

Will Banning Plastic Solve the Problem?

150 MMT of plastic in our oceans as of 2015*

and the problem is growing

Are single-use plastic bans the right solution?



*Ocean Conservancy and McKinsey Center for Business and Environment, *Stemming the Tide: Land-based strategies for a plastic-free ocean* (2015). Cited in Ellen MacArthur Foundation, *The New Plastics Economy* (2016).



The problem isn't just plastic... it's "single-use" itself

Bio-based plastic

- Corn, sugar, starch, or other crops
- Don't degrade quickly enough; not all designed to biodegrade; contaminant in compost
- Fossil fuels used to grow and process - agriculture impacts (water pollution)

Aluminum

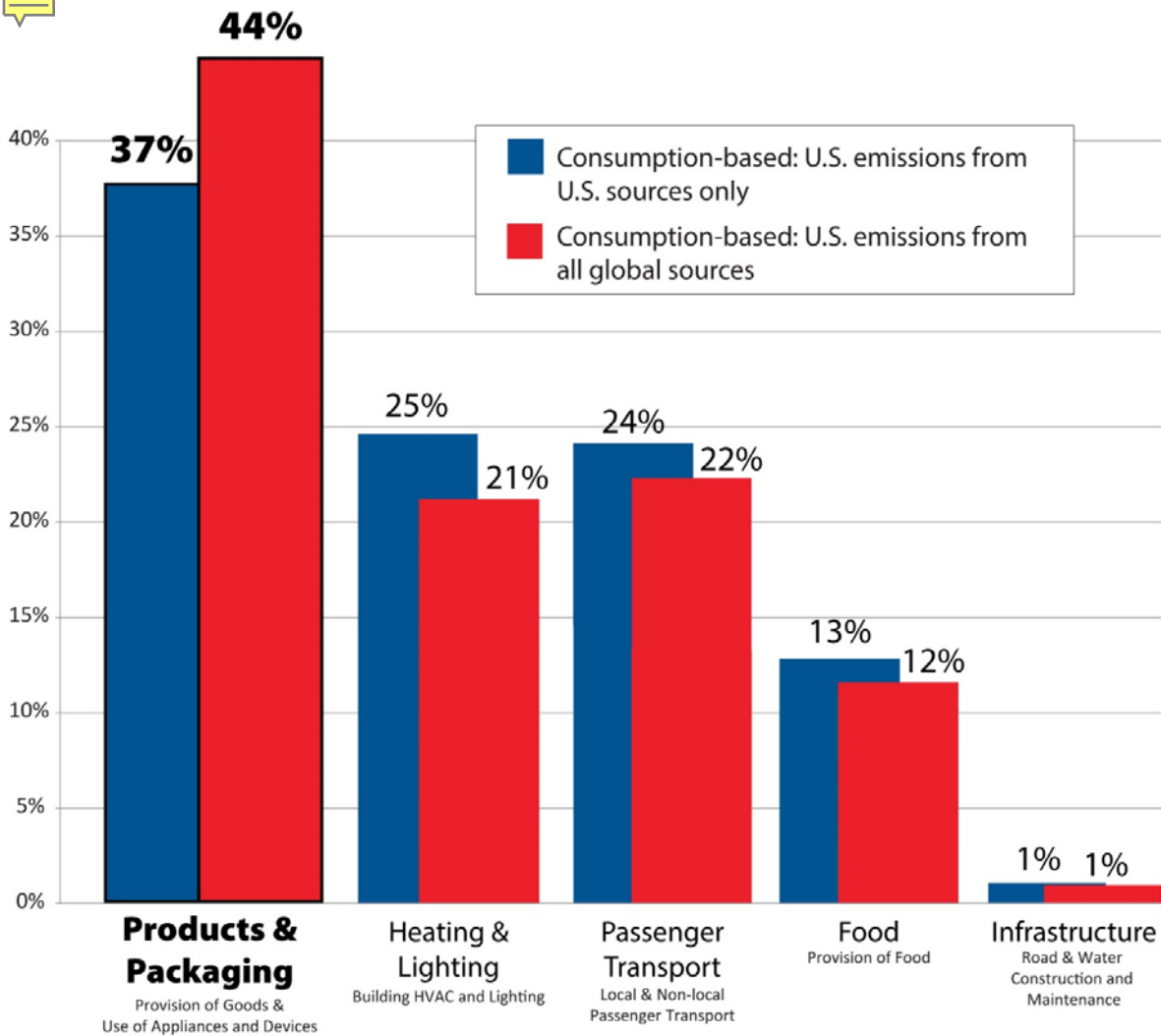
- Average recycled content 73%
- Virgin aluminum = 5 x more carbon than recycled
- Bauxite mining releases perfluorocarbons 9,200 times more harmful than CO₂

Paper

- Over 1/2 of paper produced = packaging (**3 billion trees per year**)
- Toxic chemicals
- Greater GHG emissions compared to plastic

Wood / Bamboo

- Impacts from monoculture
- Biodiversity loss, heavy soil erosion, and sedimentation and eutrophication



Greenhouse gas emissions from products

Today's "one-way throw-away" food service model



High climate and energy impacts, water use and natural resource extraction.

Nearly **1 trillion disposable food-service packaging items**, which equals **9 million tons**.

\$6 billion spent by businesses and communities on solid waste costs from disposables



Single-use foodware and packaging suppliers



\$24 billion spent by restaurants on disposables



Recycling facility

Compost facility

20 billion pieces of litter from food-service disposables



Tomorrow's new reuse economy for food service

86% of disposables avoided
- reducing climate and energy impacts, water use and natural resource extraction.

193,000 jobs created in new reuse economy.
Jobs are created regionally in collection, washing, logistics, delivery, etc.

841 million disposable food packaging items avoided and **7.5 million tons** of materials averted annually.

Reuse service providers

\$5 billion saved by food service businesses from no longer procuring disposables for on-site dining.

\$5.1 billion saved by businesses and communities from avoided solid waste costs from no longer using disposables

17 billion pieces of litter prevented through new reuse systems





Upstream & the Reuse Movement



Upstream Reuse Networks

National Reuse Network (NRN)

- Activists, nonprofit organizations, and innovators
- National collaboration and learning hub
- 396 members from across North America

Government Reuse Forum (GRF)

- State and local government staff and elected officials
- National collaboration and learning hub
- 227 members from across North America



Reusable Community Coalitions



Reusable Sonoma

Serving Sonoma County, CA. For more information, contact Sloane Pagel at sloane.pagel@sonoma-county.org



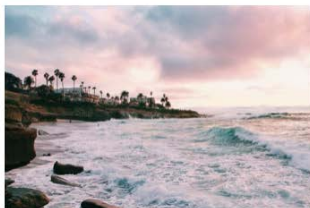
Reusable Reno

Serving greater Reno, NV. To get involved or for more information, contact Lakshmi Albright at lakshmialbright@gmail.com.



Reusable Seattle

Serving Seattle, WA. To get involved or for more information, contact Amy Larkin at alarkin@naturemeansbusiness.com.



ReusableSD

Serving San Diego, CA. For more information or to get involved, contact Tanya Torres at tanya.torres@noaa.gov



Reusable Burbank

Serving Burbank, CA. For more information or to get involved, contact Tamala Takahashi at tamala.takahashi@gmail.com



Reusable Marin

AKA Plastic Free Marin. Serving Marin County, CA. For more information or to get involved, contact Susan Hopp at susan.hopp@presidioedu.org



Upstream Policy Work



Imagine a city where...

- All restaurants serve on real plates, cutlery and cups.
- To-go coffee is provided in returnable reusable cups.
- Take-out and delivery is provided in reusable to-go containers that are easily returned.
- At public venues, water is provided in reusable bottles.
- At the ballpark, everyone is drinking beer and soda out of real cups.
- You can get groceries, cleaning, and personal care products delivered to your home in reusable containers- or in reusable containers at the store.



And in this city...

- Thousands of people are employed in delivery, pick-up, cleaning, stocking logistics.
- Litter and solid waste costs are down
- Community pride is up.
- None of these innovations required you to bring your own anything.
- **Community leaders** and **policymakers** worked to create the conditions for this thriving reuse economy.



Wash services

We pick up, wash, and sanitize your stuff



Perfect for local makers, food producers, small businesses, and schools!

GreenToGo is proud to be permitted by Durham County Health Dept. since 2017

Job announcement

GreenToGo Operations Coordinator



Dont Waste Durham is growing its awesome team!



Do you want to make meaningful, positive environmental impact? If yes, then being a GreenToGo Operations Coordinator might be for you!

Visit dontwastedurham.org for more info



Policy Shift: Waste Management to Waste Prevention

- Decades of focus on diversion from landfill
- Reduce and reuse must be stand-alone policy goals
- To be effective, they need specific enforceable metrics



Two Main Policy Approaches

1. **REDUCE** - *eliminate the unnecessary stuff*
1. **REUSE** - *make reuse and refill the norm*





Strategy #1 – Reduce as Much as Possible

- 1. Ban single-use products where it leads to a reuse option:**
 - **Plastic bags** → **reusable bags**
(CA, Conn, DE, HI, ME, NY, OR, VT)
 - **Hotel toiletries** → **bulk dispensers**
(NY State, CA; Co. of Santa Cruz, CA; Bellingham, WA)
 - **Beverage bottles** → **refill stations**
All legislation to date bans plastic bottles



Strategy #1 – Reduce as Much as Possible

2. Enact accessories on request laws

upstreamolutions.org/skip-the-stuff

56 policies to date including 2 states (CA and WA)



Strategy #2: Transition the Rest to Reusable/Refillable

- 1. Sector-wide targets for reusable packaging- built into bottle bills & EPR**
- 1. Only reusable foodware for on-site dining-
CITIES: Berkeley was FIRST.** Arcata, CA; Bellingham, WA; Culver City, CA; Fairfax, CA; Palm Springs, CA; San Anselmo, CA; Santa Rosa, CA; Quezon City, Philippines; **COUNTRIES:** Chile, France, Taiwan
- 1. Consumer charges for throw-away cups and containers:** Arcata, Berkeley, Fairfax, San Anselmo, Santa Cruz City & Co., Vancouver, B.C.
- 1. Reuse at government events** (San Francisco) **and workplaces** (Scotland, Dublin, Cork) **and in procurement**

McDonald's conversion to reuse in Berkeley





**Strategy #3- Hold Producers Accountable-
EPR for packaging -**

Strategy #4: Use a Justice and Equity Lens

**Strategy #5- Provide Economic Support and
Incentives for Businesses**

**Strategy #6- Add Precautions for Disposable
Foodware**

**6.1 - Only recyclable or compostable that can be
managed locally**

**6.2 - Ban Priority Classes of Chemicals in Foodware
and specific plastics**

Strategy #7- Ensure reusables are non-toxic





Important Links

- [Reuse Policy Playbook](#)
- [Reuse Wins Report](#)
- [National Reuse Network \(NRN\) Sign up](#)
- [Government Reuse Forum \(GRF\) Sign up](#)
- [#SkipTheStuff Campaign and model policy](#)
- [Reusable Community Coalition Sign up](#)
- [Upstream Email Listserv](#)



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