

Single Use Bag Management Programs

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Introduction

- Plastic bag management has become a marquee environmental issue
- The Washington area one of the national focal points

Overview

- Environmental Impacts
- Proposed Solutions
- Disagreements
- Programs around the U.S.
- Programs around the World

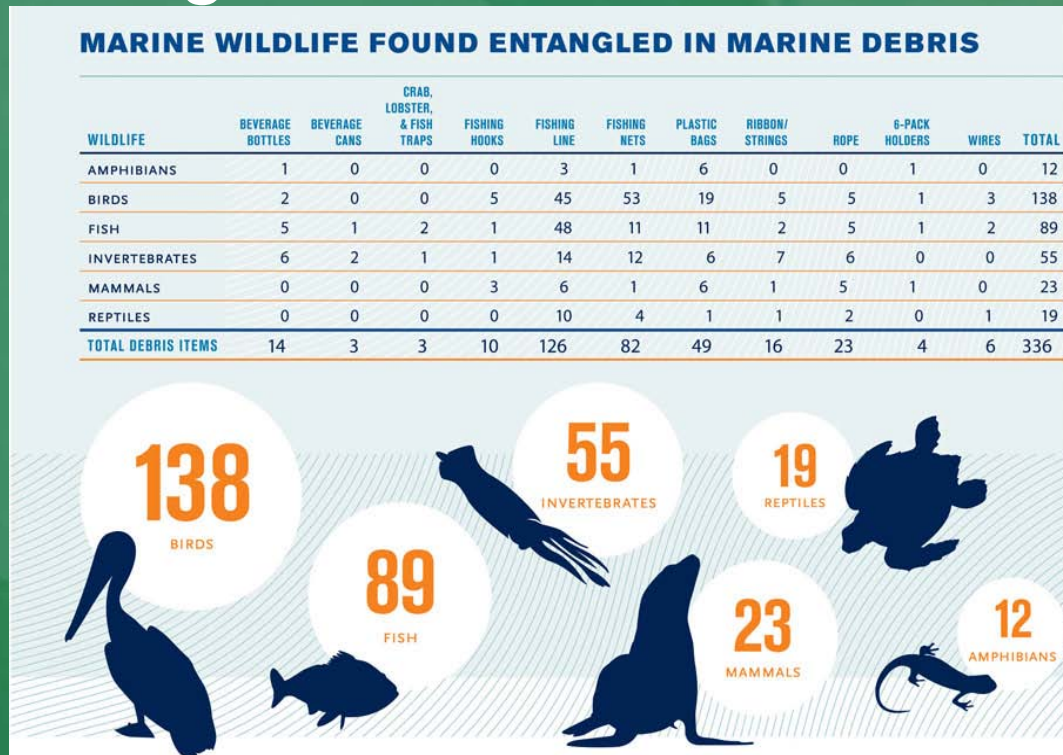
Why Are Bags a Problem?



- Aesthetic and environmental impacts
 - Non-renewable resource
 - Bio-based plastics are still not biodegradable
 - Impacts on marine and bird life
 - Litter: 60-80% of trash in the oceans is plastic debris

Pollution Impacts

- Marine wildlife entanglements: 3rd most common
- Clean up costs
- Most visible
- Storm drains
- Vessel damage



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Proposed Solutions

- Experience Around the Country and World
 - Establish Recycling Bins at Large Stores
 - Curbside Collection of Plastic Bags
 - Bans
 - Fees on Bag use
 - Bans/Fees if use does not decrease by target %

Legislation Components

- Address plastic and/or paper bags
- Some ban plastic bags
- Some require all bags to be recyclable
- Some impose a fee on each bag distributed
- Some impose a recycled-content requirement for bags

Local Action

- Recycling of Bags
- COG Board Resolution 2009
- District of Columbia Bag Fee 2010
- Montgomery County Bag Fee 2012
- Chestertown, MD Bag Ban 2012
- Attempted Fee Legislation in Prince George's County, Virginia, and Maryland

Bag Programs in the U.S.

- Much activity on U.S. West Coast in cities with water frontage
- ~70 communities nationwide with ban
- California
 - 17 municipalities with paper bag fee
 - 23 municipalities with plastic bag ban
- District of Columbia & Montgomery County, MD

Bag Programs in the U.S.- Recycling

- State-wide mandatory recycling (CA, DE, NY, RI)
- Voluntary recycling laws
- Illinois
 - Plastic Bag Recycling Act
- Arizona
 - Arizona Food Marketing Alliance
 - Bag Central Station
- Trex Company, Inc.

Bag Programs in the U.S. - Disputes

- History of political and legal disputes over imposition of bans and fees
 - Seattle initial fee defeated on referendum
 - California – environmental impact reports
 - Fairbanks, AK- voters overturned fee in favor of recycling program
- Disputes involve
 - Environmentalists, plastic bag manufacturers, farmers, tax concerns, retailers

Bag Programs in the U.S. - San Francisco

- Ban on plastic bags at large supermarkets and chain pharmacies 12/1/2007
- By 10/1/2012: Ban expands to all retailers
 - Recyclable paper bags and reusable bags \$0.10
 - Compostable plastic bags also \$0.10
- Zero Waste Coordinators report full compliance

Bag Programs in the U.S. - Seattle

- Implemented 20-cent bag fee Aug. 2009
- Strong lobbying from plastics supporters
 - Outspending opponents 15-1
- Bag fee overturned by referendum vote (58%-42%)
- Combination ban/fee passes Dec. 2011
 - Ban on single-use plastic, five cent fee for paper bags
 - Effective July 1, 2012

Bag Programs in the U.S. - Los Angeles

- Los Angeles County (unincorporated)-7/1/2011
 - Combination: Ban on plastic/ten-cent fee on paper
- City of Los Angeles-5/23/2012
 - Largest city in U.S. to pass a ban
 - Ban on plastic/ten-cent fee for paper
 - Effective date pending

Bag Programs in the U.S. - Carpinteria, CA

- Carpinteria is the first community to adopt a ban on both plastic and paper
- Scheduled to affect all retailers 7/11/2012



(Lara Cooper / Noozhawk file photo)

- City Council approved a revision of the law, limiting the ban to large retail establishments

Bag Programs Around the World

- Africa
 - South Africa (2003)
- Asia
 - Bangladesh (2002)
- Europe
 - Italy (2011)



Photo By Stephen Wandera

Bag Programs Around the World - Ireland

- Plastic bag levy introduced March 2002
- Initially €0.15 tax per plastic bag
- Environment Fund
- Drop from 328 to 21 plastic bags per capita per year
- 2006 census- 32 bags per capita
- Levy increased- €0.22

Bag Programs Around the World - Toronto

- The City imposed fee of 5-cents per plastic bag June 1, 2009
 - Major grocery chains reported reduction between 70 and 75 percent
- City Council rescinded bag fee effective July 1, 2012
- Ban on plastic bags effective Jan. 1, 2013
 - Passed -last minute motion
 - Investigations on the legality of a ban

Observations

- The DC area has become a national test bed for bag fee programs
- Recycling vs. fees vs. bans all have trade-offs in effectiveness and political acceptability
- The role of paper bags is often ignored in discussions; treated differently in each law
- More data is still needed on the impact on litter of the various approaches

Contact

- COG will be issuing and updated version of its 2009 Plastic Bag Report

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