

Bag Reduction for Litter Reduction



Alice Ferguson Foundation and Anacostia Watershed Society

Trash Free Potomac Watershed Initiative

Seeks to address the trash problem with a watershed-wide approach that will benefit the entire region



Potomac Watershed Trash Treaty

Potomac Watershed Trash Summit Potomac River Watershed Cleanup

Policy AND a Market-Based Incentive

In 2009, Anacostia River Cleanup and Protection Act passed.

Results from 2010 Opinion Survey:

- 75% of District residents use fewer disposable bags
- Majority of businesses say bag use is down 50%
- 78% of businesses reported neutral or positive impact
- Businesses would like to see more information for customers and on how the fee is being used





Methodology

- Conducted by OpinionWorks, Annapolis-based public opinion research organization
- Part of a larger survey and focus group for development the Regional Litter Prevention Campaign
- In-Depth Citywide Telephone Survey- 600 residents balanced across all wards, genders, income levels, education attainment, & ethnicities
- Business survey of 51 on-site managers of businesses that are responsible for implementing the bag fee
- Surveyed businesses in all wards of the city, large and small, locally-owned and chains, and cross various sectors that are subject to the law.

Anecdotal Evidence of Bag Reduction

Anacostia Riverkeeper: Less plastic bags in the Watt's Branch Bandalong trap in the District as compared to the Bandalong at the Prince George's County border*

Anacostia Watershed Society: Recording less plastic bags in Nash Run Trash Trap*



Alice Ferguson Foundation: Cleanup volunteers reporting many less bags in District and Montgomery County

*Final numbers have not been reported but initial estimates will be included in the updated MWCOG Plastic Bag report.

Upcoming Research

- Responded to DDOE's RFA to conduct further bag reduction assessments
- Will include public opinion surveys, business interviews, and additional assessment techniques
- Working with OpinionWorks again



Beyond the District and Montgomery County

Need Collaboration with neighboring jurisdictions formed the **Trash Free Maryland Alliance and the Trash Free Virginia Alliance**

Coalitions of businesses and environmental, community, faith, youth, and other groups from across the states

Our members agree to work to reduce litter and to support policies to that end.



Trash Free
MARYLAND



Trash Free
VIRGINIA



Cheverly

ARE BAGS REALLY FREE?

- **Cost to the retailer passed on to shoppers**
 - Plastic bag = 2 cents; paper bag = 5 cents
 - Average consumer pays \$37.50 per year in hidden bag cost
- **Cost of trash & recycling system**
- **Cost of litter cleanup**
 - Montgomery County - \$3 million/year
 - Prince George's County - \$2.5 million/year
 - Plus storm drain cleaning, water treatment, etc.
- **Fines for pollution violations**



WHAT IS A BAG FEE?

Encourage use of reusable bags
Reduce litter

- **A 5-cent fee on disposable plastic and paper bags distributed at checkout**
- **1 cent is given back to the store**
- **Remainder is directed to:**
 - Restoration efforts
 - Free reusable bags to needy residents
 - Outreach & education



LAY OF THE LAND

- **Statewide MD** bag fee (failed, 2009-2012)
- **Statewide VA** bag fee or ban (failed, 2010-2012)
- **Annapolis** bag ban (failed, 2007)
- **Baltimore** bag reduction program (enacted, 2010)
- **Chestertown** bag ban (enacted, 2012)
- **Montgomery County** bag fee (enacted, 2012)
- **Prince George's County** authorization for bag fee (failed, 2011-2012)



COMMON OPPOSITION

- But I reuse my grocery bags!/I don't litter!
 - **Still entering the waste stream (still costing money)**
- It weakens the recycling infrastructure.
 - **Current recycling infrastructure cannot handle our plastic consumption (8B pounds of bags per year!)**
- A fee hurts low-income residents.
 - **Proceeds pay for free bags to those in need**
- Bacteria, lead in reusable bags.
 - **We all wash and reuse dishes, clothing, etc.**



Questions?

Laura Chamberlin
Program Manager

Alice Ferguson Foundation

lchamberlin@fergusonfoundation.org

202-973-8203

Julie Lawson

Communications & Campaigns Manager
Anacostia Watershed Society

jlawson@anacostiaws.org

301-699-6204 x117



CLEAN LAND.
SAFE WATER.
HEALTHY LIVES.



Trash Free
VIRGINIA



Trash Free
MARYLAND



ANACOSTIA
WATERSHED
SOCIETY