

Resolution Supporting Regional Plastic Bag Environmental Impact Study

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Chesapeake Bay and Water Resources Policy Committee

4/08/09

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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

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Scope of the Problem Locally



- Trash Treaty aims to make Potomac “trash free” by 2013
- In the Anacostia watershed
 - Plastic bags and bottles are two most common items
 - Subject to evolving TMDL regulatory requirements

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What Others Are Doing

- Nationally and Internationally
 - Establish Recycling Bins at Large Stores
 - Curbside Collection of Plastic Bags
 - Bans (e.g. San Francisco-Oakland)
 - Fees on Bag use (e.g. Ireland)
 - Bans/Fees if use does not decrease by target %

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Regional Legislative Proposals

- District of Columbia (Wells)
 - Includes ban, fee and recycled-content provisions
 - Funds from fee would pay for reusable bags for low-income, education and clean-up actions
- Maryland
 - HB 1210 (Carr) – left in committee
- Virginia
 - 4 separate bills – none passed

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Business Concerns

- In general, business does not support fee approach
 - Customer preference for plastic bags
 - Potential discrimination against low-income residents
 - Belief that bans elsewhere have not been effective in reducing litter – hard to legislate behavior
- Paper bag makers say their product is not part of the litter problem

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CBPC Recommendation

- Approve Resolution R19-09
 - General Support for Efforts to Reduce Plastic Bag Pollution
 - Trash Treaty Signatories Should Examine What Works for Them
 - Need for More Time to Assess Success in Other Areas
 - CBPC to Report Back to Board in 3 Months

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