



## RECYCLING

*Plastic bags are 100% recyclable.*

Across the U.S., millions of people are choosing plastic bags to take their items home from the store. These bags, along with plastic sacks and wraps, can be a sustainable option for our country when disposed of and recycled properly.

Millions of pounds of bags are recycled each year through recycling collection points at local retailers. These plastic bags, sacks and wraps are used to make a number of new products, such as: new plastic bags, building products, backyard decks, playground equipment, and fences.

Along with their reuse in new materials, if consumers lose their choice of plastic bags at checkout or are forced to pay for them, people would be purchasing thicker garbage bags, introducing even more plastic into the environment.

### Facts about Recycling

- Retail plastic bags are only a small fraction of litter. Solving the larger litter problem isn't about banning grocery plastic bags. The solution is to create new opportunities for recycling all plastic film.
- Recycling of polyethylene bags, sacks and wraps has now grown in nine out of the last ten years.<sup>1</sup> According to the EPA, the recycling rate of polyethylene bags, sacks and wraps in 2010 was 14.7 percent, a 23.8 percent increase from the rate in 2009.
- These recycling efforts support thousands of green jobs which will be damaged with plastic bag bans and taxes.

### Facts about Plastic Bags

- On a per bag basis, plastic grocery bags are the best checkout option for our environment. Plastic bags are more resource efficient, reduce landfill waste and generate fewer greenhouse gas emissions.
  - They take up a lot less space in a landfill: 1,000 plastic bags weigh 13 pounds; 1,000 paper bags weigh 114 pounds.<sup>2</sup>
  - They generate 80 percent less waste than paper bags.<sup>3</sup>
  - They make up a tiny fraction (less than 0.5 percent) of the U.S. municipal solid waste stream.<sup>4</sup>
- American plastic bags are made from natural gas, NOT oil. In the U.S., 85 percent of the raw material used to make plastic bags is produced from natural gas.<sup>5</sup>
- Recycled plastic bags are used to make new plastic bags and building products, such as backyard decks, playground equipment, and fences.

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<sup>1</sup> "Municipal Solid Waste Generation, Recycling, and Disposal in the United States"; 2009 and 2010

<sup>2</sup> [Life Cycle Assessment for Three Types of Grocery Bags – Recyclable Plastic; Compostable, Biodegradable Plastic; and Recycled, Recyclable Paper](#); Chet Chaffee and Bernard R. Yaros, Boustead Consulting & Associates Ltd.; 2007; p. 9

<sup>3</sup> [ibid](#); p. 54

<sup>4</sup> [U.S. Environmental Protection Agency](#); 2009; p. 53.

<sup>5</sup> Analysis by Chemical Market Associates, Inc.; February, 2011.

- There's no such thing as "a single-use" plastic bag. Nine out of 10 Americans reuse their plastic bags for household purposes such as storage, waste disposal, and packing material.

### **How Plastic Bag Recycling Works**

- Plastic bags, sacks, and wraps can and are being recycled every day. For instance, Hilex Poly, which runs the largest closed loop recycling facility in the U.S., runs a Bag-2-Bag program that promotes plastic bag recycling by working with grocery stores and retailers to make the process easier for consumers.
  - Hilex Poly has worked with retailers to establish more than 30,000 plastic bag recycling points across the United States over the past four years.
  - In 2011, Hilex Poly recycled between 35 to 38 million pounds of post-consumer plastic bags, sacks and wraps.