

# The District's Bag Fee and Foam Ban

**MWCOG Recycling Committee**

January 28, 2016



# Outline

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- Environmental impacts of plastic pollution
- Bag fee
- Foam ban



# Environmental impacts

In a 2008 study, foam and plastic bags were two of the most common types of trash in the Anacostia River.



Foam litter in River Terrace Park wetland, 2014 (Photo by Matt Robinson, DOEE).



# Microplastics

Small plastic particles in the environment.



Two types of microplastics -

1. *Primary*: Plastics that are purposefully manufactured to be of a microscopic size.
2. *Secondary*: Derived from the breakdown of larger plastic debris.





# Why are microplastics an issue?

Bioaccumulate  
through the food  
chain.

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Unable to be  
filtered by  
wastewater  
treatment plants.



# Microplastics

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“By 2050, the ocean is expected to contain more plastic than fish by weight.” – *Fortune Magazine*

“...Roughly 800 trillion microbeads are discharged into waterways or collected in sewage sludge each day in the U.S. A single bottle of face wash may contain 1.4 million particles alone.” – *Co.EXIST*

“The tiny plastic particles polluting our seas are not only orally ingested by marine creatures, but also enter their systems through their gills...when microplastics are drawn in through this method they take over six times longer to leave the body compared with standard digestion” – *University of Exeter*

# Primary microplastics

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A federal ban requires companies to phase out microbeads by 2017.





# Secondary microplastics



We can reduce secondary microplastics in our waterways by preventing trash pollution.





# Bag fee

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Starting **January 1, 2010**,  
District businesses that sell  
food must charge 5-cent fee  
for disposable bags.



# Bag fee results

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Significant reductions in bag use

- **72%** reduction in bags found in Anacostia River
- **60%** reduction in household bag use
- **80%** of residents are using fewer bags at least some of the time

Over **\$12,000,000** raised for environmental protection projects, such as trash traps.



# Foam ban

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Starting **January 1, 2016**, foam food containers are banned in the District.





# Foam ban

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There are two phases to the law:

- **January 1, 2016:** Foam food containers are banned.
- **January 1, 2017:** Only recyclable or compostable food service ware products may be used.



# Banned materials

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**Foam** is commonly referred to as **Styrofoam™** or **expanded polystyrene**.



# Who is regulated?

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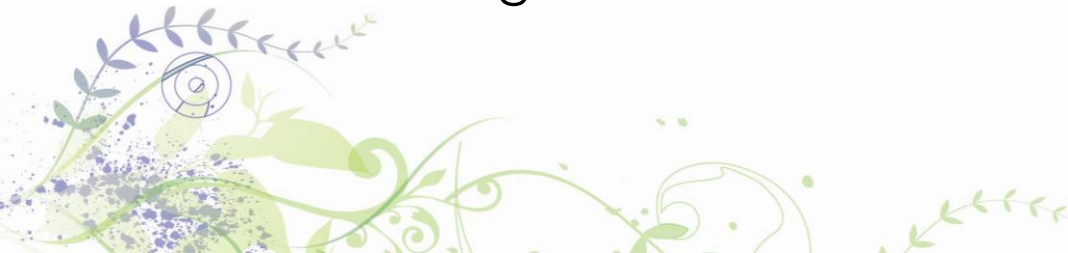
Any business or organization that sells or provides food or beverages.





# Regulated entities

- Restaurants
- Supermarkets
- Delis
- Bars
- Cafeterias
- Caterers
- Coffee shops
- Food trucks and street vendors
- Bakeries
- Carryouts
- Farmer's markets
- Faith-based organizations that serve food
- Non-profit organizations that serve food
- Government agencies



# Compliant products



# Outreach

- Three mailings to regulated entities
- Door-to-door canvassing
- Conversations with stakeholders
- Video campaign
- Print ads
- Social media campaign (@FoamFreeDC)
- Website with vendor list
- Tip line





# Phase 2

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By January 1, 2017, disposable food service ware shall be **compostable or recyclable**.

DOEE is working to create a common-sense definition that reflects industry practice.

ETA for draft regulations: Spring 2016



# Thank You

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# Questions & Comments

