



TOWN OF FAIRFAX

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PRESS RELEASE

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Town Moves to Ban Plastic Shopping Bags

The Town of Fairfax, California, has taken the first step to enact regulations on the use of plastic carry-out bags that businesses can provide to their customers.

The ubiquitous plastic carry out / shopping bags have come into popularity over the past decade. These plastic bags are proliferating at an alarming rate and are unfortunately detrimental to our environment. Over one million bags are used per minute worldwide, using over 12 million barrels of oil per year for their creation.

Most plastic bags do not biodegrade, but photo-degrade, which means they break down into smaller and smaller bits, the majority of which end up in our oceans and waterways. Marine life mistakes these plastic bits for food, and these highly-contaminated fragments enter our food chain and cause hormonal disruption in the fish that ingest them and then in the humans that ingest the fish.

The Town Council of Fairfax is taking a leadership approach on this issue, and plans to institute a ban on the use of non-biodegradable plastic bags by all stores, shops, eating establishments and retail food vendors in the Town of Fairfax. The ban would affect approximately 75 retail and food establishments. This initiative was brought forward by Fairfax Mayor Larry Bragman and Council Member Lew Tremaine.

The Town Council took the lead 10 years ago when it banned the use of disposable polystyrene foam containers for food take-out. Now, as the world's burden of plastic continues to grow, the Council is looking at a ban on the use of non-biodegradable plastic bags by all stores, vendors, and eating establishments. Some retail operations have already taken steps to reduce plastic pollution. Fairfax Scoop, for example, uses reusable or compostable service ware, no plastic. The Fairfax Farmers' Market recently approved a phase-out of plastic bags. Good Earth Natural Foods will be eliminating plastic bags from its produce racks starting this summer. A Marin environmental group, Green Sangha, is working with the non-profit Sustainable Fairfax to implement "Green Wednesdays" at our Farmer's Market, which has resulted in a canvas bag give-away and a bag exchange event so far.

If adopted, the ban on traditional plastic bags would take effect as of February 10, 2008. Because of the ongoing threat that compostable plastic bags pose to marine life, the permitted continued use of compostable plastic bags would terminate on July 11, 2010.

The Town wishes to encourage the use of recycled and recyclable paper bags, and ideally, the use of reusable cloth bags by patrons to our businesses.

The second reading and adoption of the proposed ordinance is schedule for the Town Council meeting of Wednesday, July 11, 2007 at 7:30 p.m. in the Fairfax Women's Club at 46 Park Road, Fairfax, CA.

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