



We're Drowning in Trash

A sea of trash----an ocean flotilla of over four million tons of trash, the size of the entire United States is growing in the becalmed heart of the North Pacific subtropical Ocean “gyre”, a giant clockwise circuit of currents that revolves between Asia and North America, 800 miles west of San Francisco.

This plastic trash and other floatables discarded by people from the U.S. and other Pacific rim countries includes; plastic bags (yes, the kind your favorite market, department store, packs your purchases in), as well as many of the contents in those bags----beverage containers, take-out boxes, condoms, tampon tubes, dental floss, cigarette butts, utensils foam containers, pellets and just about anything you buy that is made of oil based plastic.

All are discarded on beaches, roadsides, streams, rivers, sewers, where they ultimately end up in the ocean.

The plastic photo-degrades in sunlight breaking down into minute, toxic poison pills that accumulate in the ocean’s food chain. They spread over millions of miles, flowing through the ocean water column moving up the food chain through plankton, protozoa, crustaceans, shrimp and fish.

They kill or maim hundreds of thousands of birds and marine mammals. They show up in the fish and seafood you eat.

You are the end of the food chain. Chances are your lovely dinner could contain plastic toxins.

RIGHT NOW--- we have the opportunity to stop the dangerous fallout of tossing plastic .

“You’re gonna reap just what you sow”
---old gospel song

WHAT YOU CAN DO. . .

- Support a Washington state bill or initiative for a 5-cent redemption on each recycled plastic, glass bottle and can. Pattern it after Oregon's successful recycling system
- Support expanding statewide, the new Seattle 20-cent fee for each plastic or paper bag used when making purchases
- Support a state-wide ban on oil based, foam take-out containers
- Be willing to get petitions going, form groups, write letters to the editor, enlist members of clubs, churches, schools, organizations you belong to

A growing number of countries, cities and retail stores have banned or are considering banning or using biodegradable plastics.

Cities

Paris
Portland, OR
San Francisco
Los Angeles
Seattle

Countries

Canada Bangladesh Ireland
China Denmark Israel
Botswana Western India Kenya
South Africa Taiwan
Tanzania Singapore

Companies

Whole Foods
(270 stores)
Trader Joe's
(300 stores)

Calculations—hidden costs----San Francisco supermarkets

•Recycling contamination costs	1.4 cents per bag
•Composting contamination costs	.8 cents per bag
•Collection & disposal costs	7.2 cents per bag
•City street cleaning costs	5.2 cents per bag
•City liability for closing filled landfills	<u>2.4 cents per bag</u>
TOTAL	17.4 cents per bag

More facts

- American family of 4 uses 1,500 plastic shopping bags each year.
- Worldwide, people use an estimated 500 billion to 1 trillion plastic bags each year.
- In 2002, Ireland imposed a .15 cent tax per plastic bag. It has increased to .33 cents per bag, reducing the use of plastic bags by 90%.
- The European Union requires plastic bag manufacturers to take bags back and recycle them.

The greater value

- Help alleviate our oil dependence. All plastic bags, containers, products, packaging are made from oil.
- Save marine life. All manner of marine life is saved from discarded plastic that kills, maims, destroys ours and the world's salt and fresh water habitat.

What can I do

- Write or email all your local, state and national government officials and agencies.
- Put together community groups who support the ban and actively lobby for change.
- Learn about the devastation caused by plastic in the environment at: www.healthbag.org
www.mindfully.org/plastic/sanfranciscobag.html google: northpacific subtropical ocean gyre

MAKE A DIFFERENCE. IF NOT YOU----WHO?