

Plastic Bag Ban Ordinance Passed

The goal of the ordinance is to reduce the number of single use bags in the Thurston County waste stream by eliminating the main source of single-use plastic bags and by encouraging the use of reusable bags.



Nov
2011

The effort to create the proposed ordinance began in November of 2011 when the Solid Waste Advisory Committee (SWAC) recommended to the Thurston County Board of Commissioners that actions be taken to reduce the number of disposable shopping bags.

SWAC based their recommendation on the following:

Use of Resources – Plastic bags are generally made from non-renewable resources and are rarely recycled.

Impact on Litter & Storm Drains – Lightweight plastic bags easily become litter problems and can wash into waterways. Local governments pay for litter cleanup and stormwater management, ultimately coming from rates and taxes.

Cost to Retailers - Retailers have to purchase and store plastic bags, with overhead costs passed onto customers.

Marine Impacts - Plastic bags are among the 12 items of debris most often found in coastal cleanups. Plastic marine debris affects at least 267 species worldwide.

Cost to Solid Waste Industry - The solid waste industry is affected by plastic bags during all stages of collection and management of trash, recyclables, and compostables. This includes controlling blown litter at the landfill, plastic bag film clogging the screens at recycling facilities, and plastic bag particles being extremely difficult to screen out from composted materials.

JAN
2012

Thurston County Solid Waste staff and the SWAC subcommittee spent several months conducting a community outreach program to discuss the issues surrounding plastic bag use. Several potential solutions were developed through public input and researching what other jurisdictions have attempted. **The SWAC subcommittee and Solid Waste staff determined that the most desirable solution was to have the same ban on plastic bags that has been adopted by other municipalities in Washington State.**

SEP
2012

SWAC recommended that the city councils of Thurston County and the Thurston County Commissioners adopt a plastic bag ban. The Thurston County Board of Commissioners requested Solid Waste staff to form stakeholders group of businesses, business associations, non-profits, and residents to develop language for an ordinance.

JUL
2013

A stakeholders group completed the model ordinance in July 2013. The Board of Commissioners provided the ordinance language for consideration to all jurisdictions on August 13, 2013.

NOW
Today

Tumwater City Council and Thurston County Board of Commissioners each adopted the ordinance in September 2013. The City of Olympia adopted the ordinance in October. Lacey adopted it in February 2014. **The ordinance is scheduled to go into effect on July 1, 2014 in each of these jurisdictions.**