
Tompkins County Plastic Bag Ban Proposal

Presented by: EMC's Waste Reduction
Committee

Prepared for EMC 10/18/2018



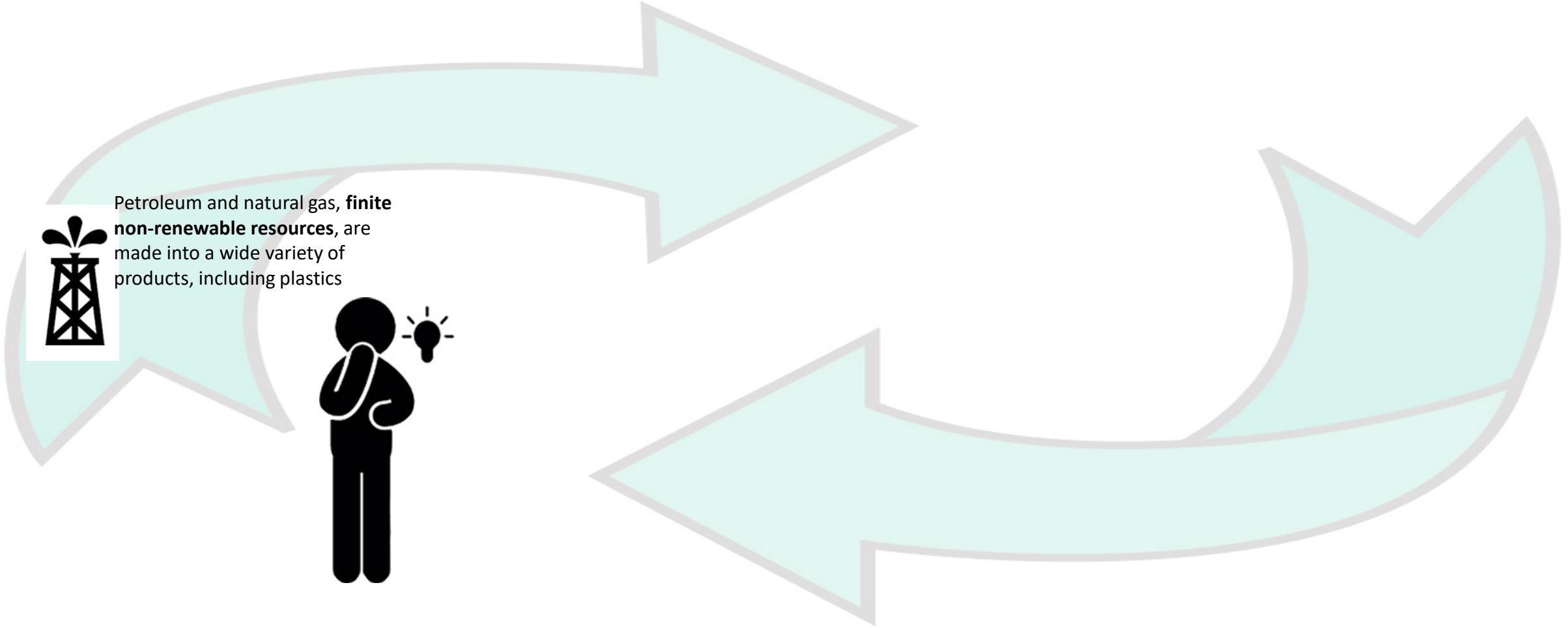
*Tompkins County
Environmental
Management
Council*



The Problem with Plastics



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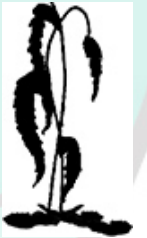


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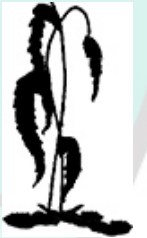


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Plastics Life Cycle

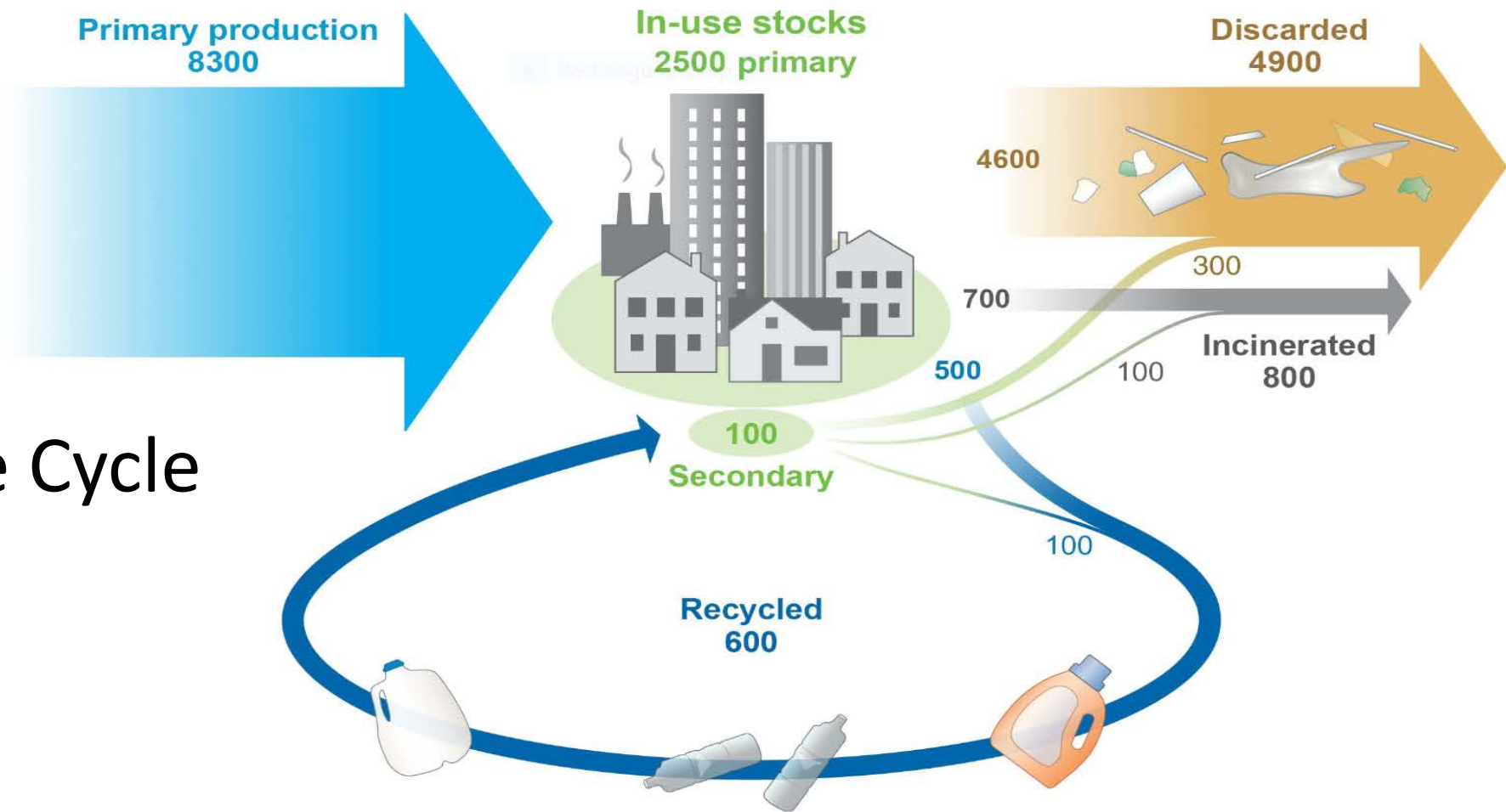


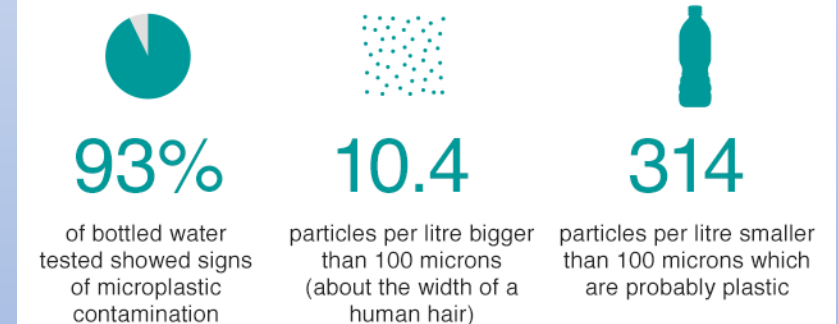
Fig. 2. Global production, use, and fate of polymer resins, synthetic fibers, and additives (1950 to 2015; in million metric tons).

Plastic Pollution = Microplastics = Toxic

- Plastic does not decompose, it degrades into microplastics
- A single plastic bottle can break up into 10,000 pieces of microplastic
- All plastics ever made are still in existence
- Microplastics absorb toxins in the environment becoming 1 million times more toxic than the water around it
- Microplastics are difficult to filter out in water treatment plants and create contaminated sludge with disposal issues
- Microplastics are found increasingly in drinking water and the food chain
- Pose threats to many types of life, including humans



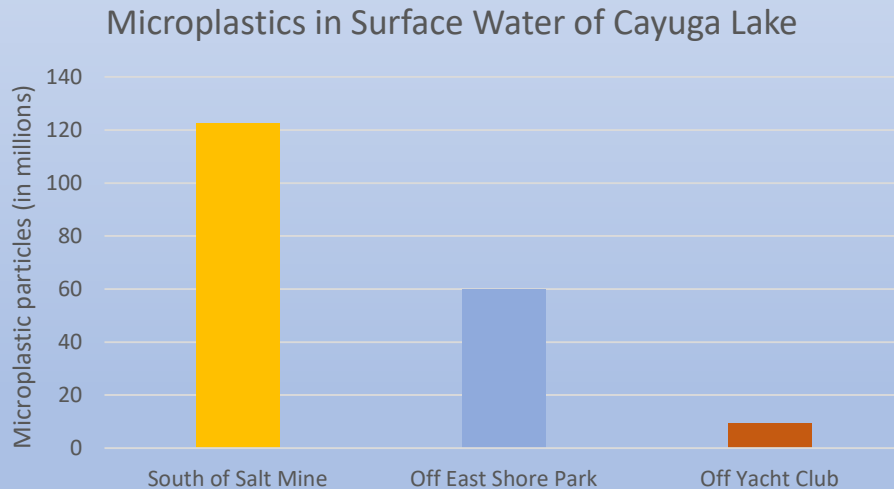
Testing for microplastics in bottled water



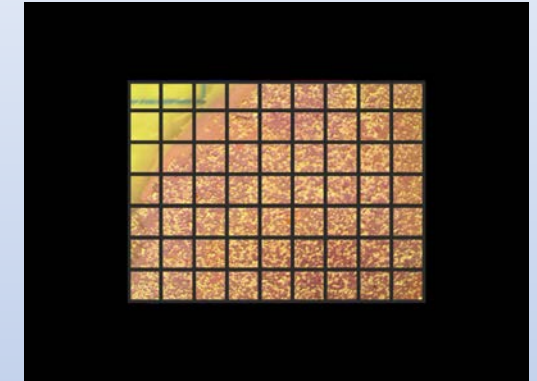
Source: Orb Media/State University of New York Fredonia

Microplastics are showing up in Cayuga Lake

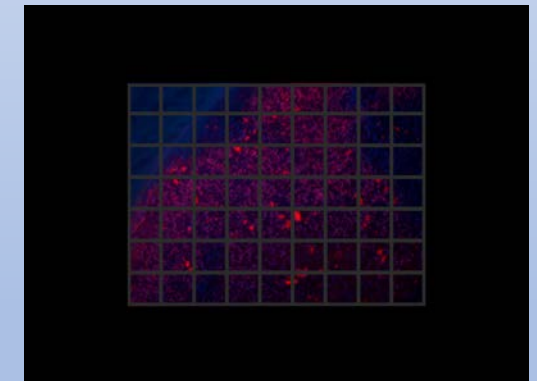
- Preliminary estimate is that there are tens of millions of microplastics particles in Cayuga Lake.
- Sampling wastewater effluent, 3 locations in lake and the Inlet for the last two summers
- Using a very fine mesh net (50 microns) and a combination of identification techniques



- Research by Ithaca College and the Ithaca Area Waste Water Treatment Facility
 - 2017-2018
- (very preliminary: based on 6 or 40 samples collected)



Sample before Staining



Sample After Nile Red Staining

Why Target Single Use Plastic Bags?

- They are intended for single use and disposal
- The average American family takes home 1,500 plastic bags per year
- According to Waste management only 1% of plastic bags are returned for recycling in the proper manner
- Plastic bags that are mistakenly recycled in the zero sort waste stream cost recycling centers thousands of dollars on a daily basis when they clog the machinery
- Plastic bags create litter problems and clog storm sewers

In Tompkins County:

1 bag per person per day
X 100,000 people (2015 census)

700,000 bags per week

OR

36.4 million bags per year



It will be easy to do without them! A great first step in controlling plastics pollution.

Plastics and Tompkins County



2013 Proposed Ban Attempt

Resolution by the EMC; tabled by PDEQ

Ban concerns:

- Did not specify exemptions
- Unclear if fee for paper bags was retained by stores or not
- Did not address efforts to accommodate lower income sectors of community
- Lack of support among stakeholders and Legislature

NY State Ban 2018

Key provisions

- Exemptions for materials other than plastic; bulk items, meat, dry cleaning, etc.
- Endorsed by Tompkins County Legislature
- Introduced by the Senate; stalled in the Assembly (as of summer recess)

NY State Proposal:

<https://www.governor.ny.gov/sites/governor.ny.gov/files/atoms/files/PlasticBagBan.pdf>

What other Communities are Doing

Statewide Bans

- California
- Hawaii

NYS Communities

Ulster County Legislature voted to approve the Bring Your Own Bag Act on 9/21/2018

East Hampton Village 2/12 ban

Hastings on Hudson, town of Greenburgh 2/15 ban

Village of Mamaroneck 1/13 ban

Town of Newcastle 1/17 ban

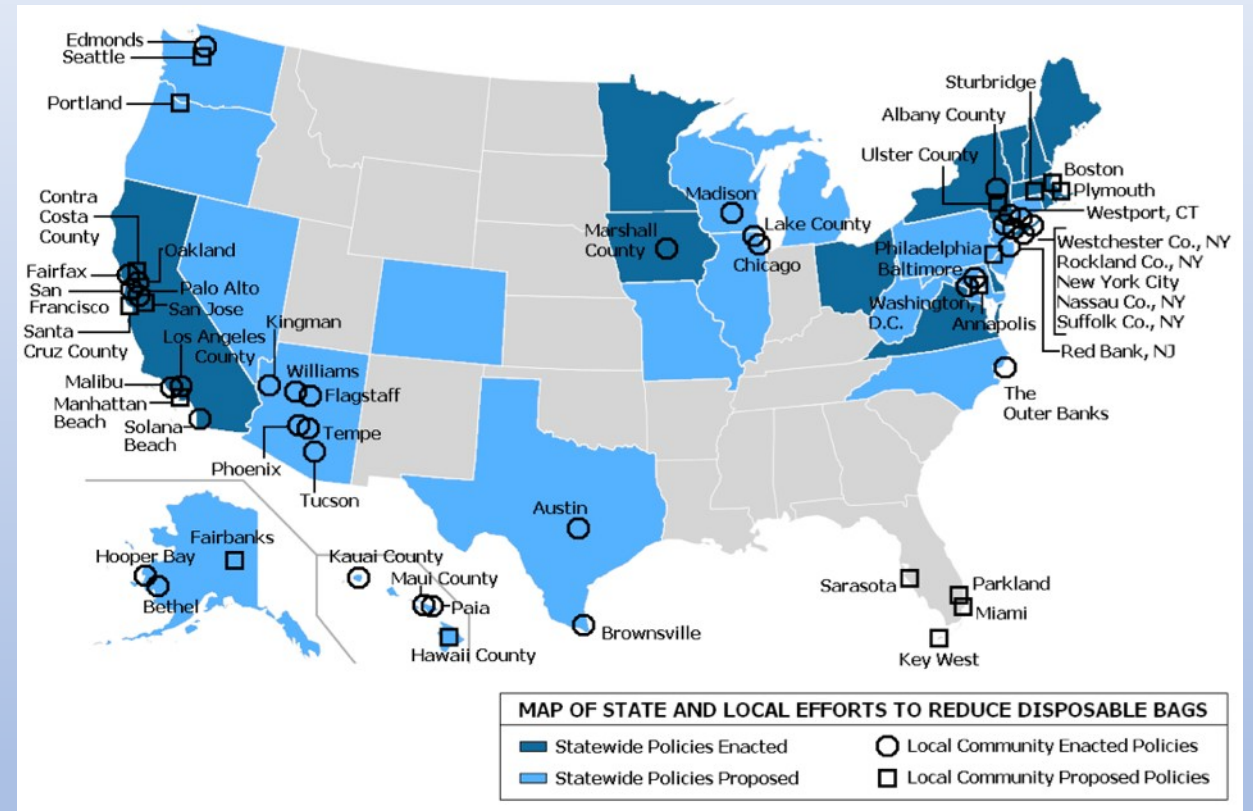
Village of New Paltz 4/15 reusable must be 2.25 mils,
paper bags - 40% postconsumer content

Patchogue 9/16 ban plastic must be 2.25mils

City of Rye 5/12ban

Village of Southampton 11/11 ban

Suffolk County 1/18, 5 cents for plastic and /or paper,
reusable 2.25 mils



The Proposed Ban

- Single-use plastic bags are proposed to be banned from retail establishments, food service establishments located in or outside grocery stores, supermarkets, convenience stores, or food marts.
- A carryout bag fee would start on a specified date, and all stores would provide paper checkout bags at the charge of 10 cents per bag to customers who request a bag at the point of sale.
- Exemptions would be as follows: dry-cleaning bags, bags provided by a pharmacy to carry prescription drugs, or thin film plastic bags without handles used to carry produce, meats, dry goods, or other non-prepackaged food.



- Our Goal for Tompkins County:
 - Join the movement to be ecologically responsible

- Enforcements and penalties would be applied to any store that violates this ordinance and shall be guilty of an infraction.
- The proposed infractions would be:
 - \$100 for first violation
 - \$200 for a second violation within the same year, and
 - \$500 for each subsequent violation within the same year
- Retailers would retain the fee that exceeds their costs to enable them to provide their customers with a free or low-cost reusable bag and/or may use that portion of the fee to support local sustainability initiatives of their choice.
- Effective Jul.1, 2018

Concerns vs. Benefits

Concerns

- Impact on Retailers – localities that banned plastic bags but did not impose a fee saw a huge increase in paper use, increasing their carbon footprint
- Impact on Lower Income Individuals
 - Seeking funding for bag program for WIC and SNAP participants
- Enforcement - Other municipalities find this not to be a major issue
- Adjustment by Visitors - Propose working with hotels on letting people know and/or bag borrowing or promo bags



Benefits

- Reduce resource use
- Reduced fossil fuel use eases global climate change
- Reduce waste to landfills given current difficulties in recycling market
- Reduce litter in the county
- Reduce hazards to wildlife
- Reduce municipal costs of storm sewer clean up

Arguments against Banning Plastic Bags

- Less energy and water to make than paper bags
 - TRUE, but we are not promoting same number of paper bags
- Take up less space in landfills than reusable bags
 - TRUE, but reusable bags do not end up in landfills at same rate
- Not made from oil
 - TRUE, but made from natural gas
- Does not decrease litter
 - NOT SURE; 0.2% decrease in one year in California (could be tons and could take more than one year due to latency effect)
- Plastics are 100% recyclable
 - TRUE, but recycling rates are low and contamination rates are high
- Hurts small businesses
 - NOT SURE: Slight increase in costs, but allowed to charge for paper bags
- Customers may choose to shop outside ban area
 - UNLIKELY, due to greater gas costs
- Reusable bags can harbour bacteria
 - TRUE, but they can be washed. Same as reusing a single use plastic bag
- People reuse single use plastic bags
 - ?, maybe once, so double use plastic bag. Half of 36 million bags a year in Tompkins County is still a lot of bags.

Info from: <http://www.bagtheban.com/>
By Novolex; the makers of single-use plastic bags

Outreach Plan if the Ban is Passed

- Press release, public service announcement
- Notice in January school tax bills
- Seek grant funding from Park Foundation for distribution of free bags at Southside, GIAC, YMCA, Catholic Charities, Tompkins Community Action, Farmers market,
- Community outreach events--Tabling at festivals, etc.



Thank You!

