



TOMPKINS COUNTY  
ENVIRONMENTAL MANAGEMENT COUNCIL

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Resolution No. 02-2018

**RESOLUTION RECOMMENDING THAT THE TOMPKINS COUNTY  
LEGISLATURE ENACT A LOCAL LAW TO PROTECT AND ENHANCE THE NATURAL  
ENVIRONMENT BY BANNING THE DISTRIBUTION OF SINGLE-USE CARRY-OUT  
PLASTIC BAGS IN RETAIL STORES**

**WHEREAS**, more than 100 billion single-use plastic bags are used and disposed of annually in America, which equals about 307 bags per person per year (1), and

**WHEREAS**, even though a 2009 New York State law requires large businesses to provide consumers with plastic bag recycling receptacles, less than one percent of plastic bags are recycled (2), and

**WHEREAS**, improper disposal results in plastic bags becoming litter on our streets, parks, and beaches, clogging our storm drains and sewers, and degrading into our soils and waterways, and

**WHEREAS**, plastic bags that are blown or washed into our rivers, waterfalls, and lakes may threaten the lives of avian and marine species through entanglement, choking, or by toxicity, and

**WHEREAS**, plastic bags that are landfilled take about 1,000 years to biodegrade (3), while those that remain in the environment as litter photo-degrade in about a year into micro particles that may be consumed by wildlife thus diminishing and contaminating a part of our food chain (4), and

**WHEREAS**, a 2018 study found that 93% of bottled water, from 11 major brands sold across the world, contains particles of plastic (5), and

**WHEREAS**, plastic bags must be screened out of yard waste collections, have contaminated food scrap composting facilities, and have jammed the mechanical parts of recycling balers and sewage treatment systems, and

**WHEREAS**, the impacts of plastic bag use and pollution have ignited a global movement to dramatically reduce the amount of disposable plastic bags distributed, and

Sources:

- 1- [Earthday Network](https://www.earthday.org/2018/03/29/fact-sheet-single-use-plastics/#_ftn6) [https://www.earthday.org/2018/03/29/fact-sheet-single-use-plastics/#\\_ftn6](https://www.earthday.org/2018/03/29/fact-sheet-single-use-plastics/#_ftn6)
- 2- [NY DEC](https://www.dec.ny.gov/chemical/50058.html) <https://www.dec.ny.gov/chemical/50058.html>
- 3- [Waste Management Northwest](http://www.wmnorthwest.com/guidelines/plasticvspaper.htm) <http://www.wmnorthwest.com/guidelines/plasticvspaper.htm>
- 4- [NOAA Sea Grant](https://seagrant.noaa.gov/News/Article/ArtMID/1660/ArticleID/251/The-Global-Plastic-Breakdown-How-Microplastics-Are-Shredding-Ocean-Health) <https://seagrant.noaa.gov/News/Article/ArtMID/1660/ArticleID/251/The-Global-Plastic-Breakdown-How-Microplastics-Are-Shredding-Ocean-Health>
- 5- [CBC news](https://orbmedia.org/stories/plus-plastic/) <https://orbmedia.org/stories/plus-plastic/>
- 6- [BagLaws.org](http://www.baglaws.com/legislation.php?state=New+York) <http://www.baglaws.com/legislation.php?state=New+York>

**WHEREAS**, the state of California and Puerto Rico, along with more than 200 cities, towns, and counties across the United States, and more than 15 municipalities in New York State have legislation limiting the free distribution of single use plastic bags (6), and

**WHEREAS**, the Tompkins County Environmental Management Council recognizes that a change in bag policy will entail a large societal shift and is committed to finding solutions, such as distribution of free reusable bags to people who utilize WIC, SNAP, and Ithaca Free Clinic services, so that the law will not cause a hardship to community members who are low-income, elderly, or have disabilities, and

**WHEREAS**, the Tompkins County Environmental Management Council is committed to protecting our natural environment and the public health and welfare of our County's residents, now therefore be it

**RESOLVED**, that the Tompkins County Environmental Management Council recommends that the County Legislature enact a local law with their legal authority pursuant to New York State Municipal Home Rule Law (Sec.10(1)(ii)(a)(11)), banning the distribution of single-use carry-out plastic bags in retail stores as an efficient and cost effective measure to address the issues of plastic litter, soil and water pollution, and microplastic contamination, and further

**RESOLVED**, that the EMC recommends that retailers be required to charge a \$0.10 fee, which they may retain, for recyclable paper bags provided for carry-out purposes, and further

**RESOLVED**, that a copy of this resolution be sent to the members of the Tompkins County Planning, Development, and Environmental Quality Committee, Chair of the Legislature Martha Robertson, Commissioner of the Tompkins County Department of Planning and Sustainability Katie Borgella, Tompkins County Administrator Jason Molino, Director of Tompkins County Department of Recycling and Materials Management Barbara Eckstrom, President of Tompkins County Area Development Heather McDaniel, Director of Downtown Ithaca Alliance Gary Ferguson, President of the Tompkins County Chamber of Commerce Jennifer Tavares, and NY State Assemblywoman Barbara Lifton.

**Resolution Adopted Date:** September 13, 2018

**Vote: Ayes:** 10      **Nays:** 0      **Abstentions:** 0

Sources:

- 1- [Earthday Network](https://www.earthday.org/2018/03/29/fact-sheet-single-use-plastics/#_ftn6) [https://www.earthday.org/2018/03/29/fact-sheet-single-use-plastics/#\\_ftn6](https://www.earthday.org/2018/03/29/fact-sheet-single-use-plastics/#_ftn6)
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- 4- [NOAA Sea Grant](https://seagrant.noaa.gov/News/Article/ArtMID/1660/ArticleID/251/The-Global-Plastic-Breakdown-How-Microplastics-Are-Shredding-Ocean-Health) <https://seagrant.noaa.gov/News/Article/ArtMID/1660/ArticleID/251/The-Global-Plastic-Breakdown-How-Microplastics-Are-Shredding-Ocean-Health>
- 5- [CBC news](https://orbmedia.org/stories/plus-plastic/) <https://orbmedia.org/stories/plus-plastic/>
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- 2- [NY DEC](https://www.dec.ny.gov/chemical/50058.html) <https://www.dec.ny.gov/chemical/50058.html>
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- 4- [NOAA Sea Grant](https://seagrant.noaa.gov/News/Article/ArtMID/1660/ArticleID/251/The-Global-Plastic-Breakdown-How-Microplastics-Are-Shredding-Ocean-Health) <https://seagrant.noaa.gov/News/Article/ArtMID/1660/ArticleID/251/The-Global-Plastic-Breakdown-How-Microplastics-Are-Shredding-Ocean-Health>
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