

Waste Wise

Reduce ■ Reuse ■ Recycle

A Public Service Of Tillamook County Solid Waste • March 2019



DEAR MS. WASTEWISE:

Dear Ms. Wastewise:

Why should I care if plastic bags are banned? – “Baggy Ben”

Dear “Baggy Ben”: To clarify, it is the banning of “single-use carry out” plastic bags, which we know as the plastic grocery checkout bags. This does not include meat, fish,

bait or produce bags. At least sixteen Oregon cities have already adopted the ban, three are in Tillamook County.

Do you enjoy the rivers, ocean, fresh water and salt water fishing, forest, trails, scenic byways, cheese and ice cream (yum)? All of these are the livelihood of our beautiful county.

Per the August 2018 edition of Waste Wise article “The Wrap on Plastics” 80% of plastic is not recycled. According to the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), more than 100 billion plastic bags are used in the United States yearly. This averages to 306 bags a year per person in the U.S. That means that in Tillamook County, we used well over 771,000 bags a year, each of which is used for (on average) only 10-12 minutes. And that doesn’t include what our tourists contribute!

There is a large problem with plastic bags impacting our waterways and air. Plastic bags are light weight and easily float or fly and are frequently visible in trees, on the roadside, on the river banks and on the beach. Fresh water and marine life mistake plastic debris for food where it creates illness, low birth rates, and frequently death. If the plastic consumed doesn’t kill them and they end up on our table as food, we too, consume the plastic. When any plastic is burned, it doesn’t matter how far away you are, logically if you can smell the smoke you are breathing in the toxic chemicals.

The plastic that makes it to the landfill isn’t gone. It will be there forever. It doesn’t decompose and will remain plastic no matter how small it breaks down, finding its way into our water systems, soil and eventually our food chain.

Plastic does make our life easier and can have important purposes. But plastics like carry out plastic bags are a quick convenience but not a necessity. There are many alternatives.

With the information that continuously comes to light on the over abundance of plastics and the impact on our waterways, ocean, county coastline, marine life and human life, I would hope it would be easy to see that we need to stop using plastics and that banning single-use carry out plastic bags is a good start.

Dear Ms. Wastewise:

My sister told me that my facial apricot scrub has plastic beads, is she correct? - “Faciality”

Dear “Faciality”: If your facial scrub was purchased prior to January 1, 2018 your sister may be right.

• In December 2015 the United States passed the Microbead-Free Waters Act of 2015 law.

• Beginning July 1, 2017 manufacturing of rinse-off cosmetics that intentionally added plastic microbeads was banned.

• Beginning January 1, 2018, the sale and distribution of these cosmetics was banned.

Microbeads were used in exfoliating face and body products and toothpaste. When rinsed off the microbeads flow down the drain into the waterways. Companies were marketing apricot scrub in a way to make the buyer think the product had ground up apricot pits when in fact it was an apricot scent with microbeads as the scrub. Remember the pretty little blue pellets in the toothpaste? Those were microbeads. Face scrubs, body scrubs and toothpaste are just a few products that were banned; imagine how many more are out there. Be leery of skin products that contain “poly” in the prefix of an ingredient.

**Ms. Wastewise is provided by
Master Recycler Georgeanne Zedrick**

TILLAMOOK COUNTY SOLID WASTE WELCOMES NEW MASTER RECYCLERS!

Please help us in congratulating our three newest Master Recyclers!

Traci Bean, Elinor Shanklin, and Glenda Morris have just completed the 20-hour Master Recycler course making them the newest members of the volunteer group.

“We have a lot planned for the group in the year to come,” states Sue Owens, Coordinator of the Master Recycler program, “this is a very energetic and dynamic group. It’s fun to work with them.”

More information on the Master Recycler program can be found on the Solid Waste website at <http://www.co.tillamook.or.us/gov/SolidWaste/MasterRecycler.htm> or by contacting Owens at (503) 815-3975.



Meet the newest Master Recyclers:
Left to right: Traci Bean, Elinor Shanklin, and Glenda Morris.

STUFFED SALMON, BUT SKIP THE #2 HIGH-DENSITY POLYETHYLENE PLEASE...

Ever take a bite out of your delicious steak, fish, or hamburger and wonder where it came from or what it ate? Probably not. Most of us prefer not to think of things like that as we eat them. But, from what I am learning, it might be something we should do.

Let’s talk about fish for example. Depending on the kind of fish, they typically eat things like seaweed, smaller fish, plankton and the like. But, did you know that experts are finding more and more plastic in their diets? Yes indeed. When you take a bite out of that fish on your plate, you are more than likely getting some plastic as well.

According to a 2015 article in EcoWatch, researchers have found plastic in salmon, whales, mussels and oysters. Yum. Fish don’t shop, so where are they getting the plastic they are eating? People, where else!

Every day, consumers discard tons of plastics and even when it’s tossed away, plastic doesn’t decompose. It stays around for a very long time, thousands of years, essentially forever. I’m sure everyone who has traveled on any road has seen plastic litter. Plastic bags get caught in the trees, fences, grass and waterways. Plastic bottles and jugs are scattered everywhere as well. Because it is so light weight, it easily travels in the wind and in our waterways. This is the plastic that is so detrimental to our ecosystem.

It may never decompose, but plastic will break down into smaller pieces where birds, fish and wildlife commonly mistake it for food. Its lack of nutritional value and excess of chemicals is detrimental to the life span and health of those that consume it. It is also not good for those continuing up the food chain. Contaminated little fish are eaten by larger fish who are eaten by even larger fish, who eventually end up on our plate where guess what? We cook it up, sprinkle it with seasonings and eat it with gusto.

Greenpeace estimates that eight million tons of plastics are finding their way to our oceans each year, becoming appetizers for our ocean life. Essentially, we are feeding the fish a plate of gourmet plastic. The size, bright colors and way it appears when it floats looks like a smorgasbord to fish, birds and other sea life. Not only does plastic look appetizing to fish and other creatures, scientists are finding that it smells good to them as well.

And, to make a sad story sadder, according to an article in the Washington Post and the BBC news, fish LIKE plastic! In his article in the BBC News, Matt

McGrath states “fish eat plastic like teens eat fast food...”. I don’t know about you, but that scares me. I’ve seen teenagers go for the fast food. And what makes it worse is that plastic is not any better for fish than fast food is for teens. The good news is that we don’t typically eat our teens.

The point of this article is that we are eating not only that fish on our plate, but what it has consumed as well and it’s time to start paying attention to it. It’s not good for the fish and it’s not good for us. How can we hope that what we are eating ate won’t affect what we eat?

We can become conscientious shoppers. Avoid buying things in plastic to begin with. I know, sometimes it can’t be avoided, but if you can, skip the food in plastic containers.

Shop naked. Yeah, you read me right. Don’t use a bag for your fruits and veggies, leave them naked. They’ll love the newfound freedom and so will you.

Ask for paper bags instead of plastic at the checkout line, or better yet, choose to reuse by using a durable shopping bag. They are inexpensive to purchase or frequently free, and they last for many, many repeated uses.

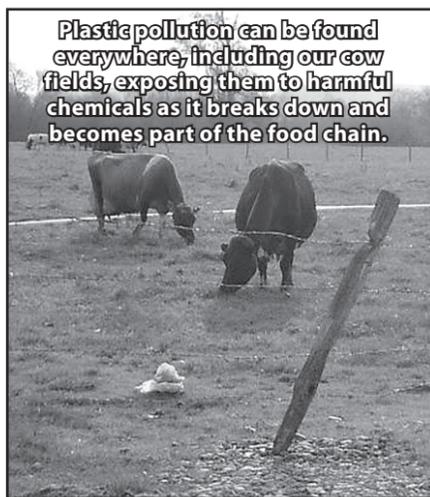
Don’t be offended or feel like the government is telling us what to do when they suggest things like bag bans. The government tells us to drive the speed limit, wear seat belts, and don’t text and drive all for our own protection, safety and overall well-being. Banning the plastic bag is just a way to do the same.

The information in this article is barely scratching the surface of this topic. If you want to know more, do some research. Get on the internet and talk to local experts. Be prepared to lose your appetite.

But, on the bright side, if you are what you eat then I want to be one of those curvy pomegranate juice bottles.

Remember, as consumers, we vote with our money. If you don’t want to live, breath and eat plastic, stop buying and using it.

This article contributed by Sue Owens, Tillamook County Solid Waste Outreach & Education Specialist



Plastic pollution can be found everywhere, including our cow fields, exposing them to harmful chemicals as it breaks down and becomes part of the food chain.



Plastics get caught in our trees and shrubs creating eyesores to locals and tourists.



Plastics get caught in our waterways where it can be carried indefinitely by wind, currents and tides, creating hazardous traps or eventually becoming unhealthy food for the fish and wildlife that feed there.

For more information, call the Tillamook County Solid Waste Department at 503-815-3975 email recycle@co.tillamook.or.us or see us online at www.tillamook.or.us/gov/solidwaste

