

Plastic Bags in Flagstaff

JANUARY 13, 2014

Presentation Outline

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Definitions

Plastic Bag – Disposable carryout plastic bags distributed at point of sale.

Recycling – process of reclaiming materials from used products using them manufacturing of new products:

Downcycling – materials that lose viability in the process of recycling, can only be used in a degraded form for components other than their original use.

Upcycling – recycled materials being used in the manufacturing of products with equal or better material properties.

Plastic Bag Ban – Outlaws all single-use plastic bags, either places fee on paper or leaves it up to the retailer.

Single-Use Bag Fee – Places a fee on all single-use bags (plastic and paper).

Plastic Bag Fee – Places a fee on all single-use plastic bags, sets standards for paper.



Background

Estimated 10.2 million plastic carryout bags are distributed in Flagstaff annually.

May 2012: City Council requested an official recommendation from the Sustainability Commission on how to address plastic bag problems facing Flagstaff and municipal operations.

November 2012: Sustainability Commission submits letter to City Council that more research is needed before they make a recommendation.

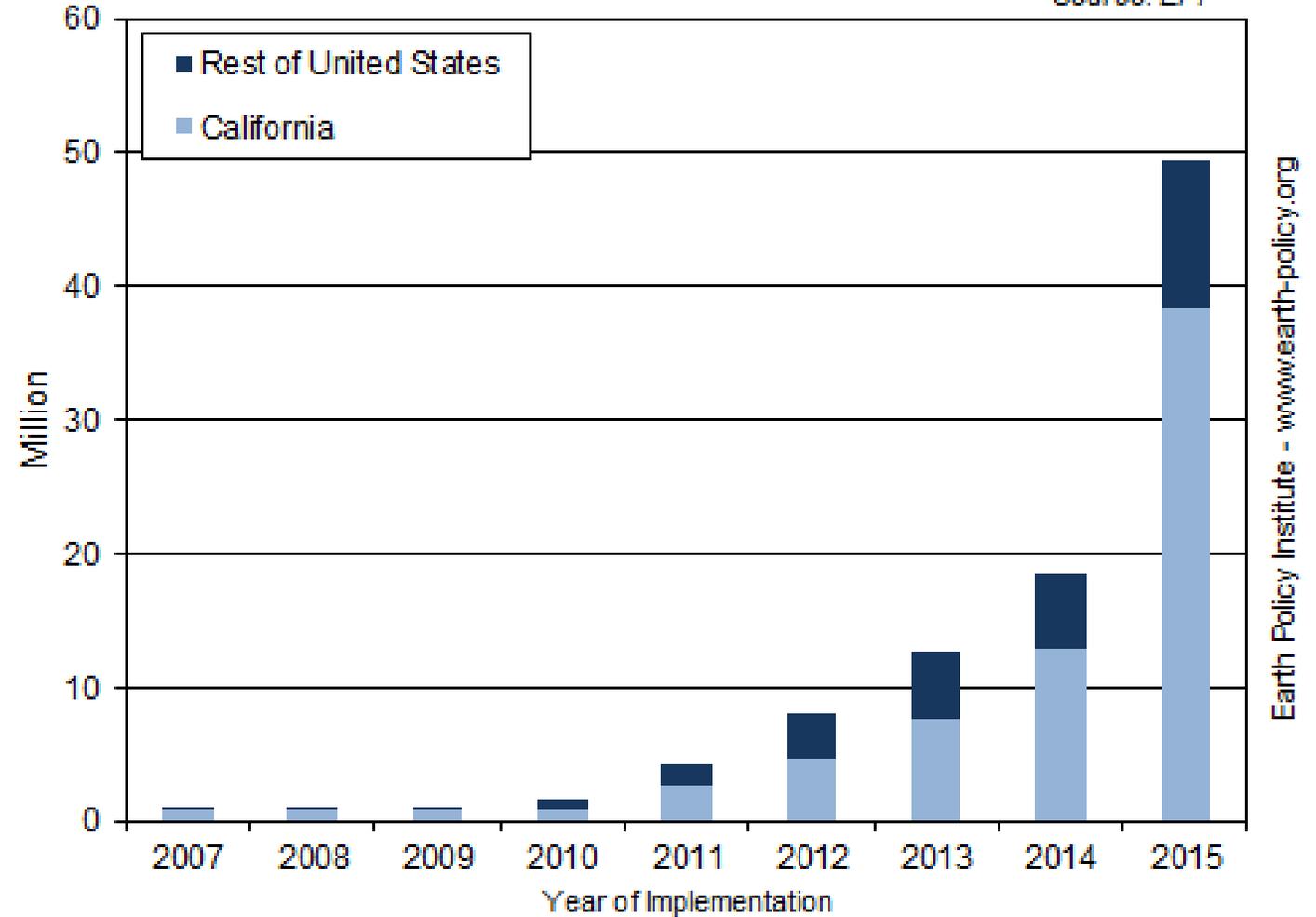
January 2013: Citizen Survey asked two separate questions about plastic bags:

- 59% of respondents said they would support a ban
- 44% of respondents said they would support a fee

Fees, Taxes and Bans in the United States

Population Under Plastic Bag Bans and Charges in the United States, 2007-2015

Source: EPI



Earth Policy Institute - www.earth-policy.org

Note: 2014 and 2015 are partial years accounting for measures passed as of September 30, 2014.

What Are Plastic Bag Fees, Taxes and Bans?

Existing laws are based on the unique circumstances and priorities of each community or state.

- Zero waste goals
- Litter/aesthetics
- Marine life health
- Ecological footprint
- Clean up costs
- Sewers and drains
- Wildlife health
- Leadership
- Human health
- Landfill
- Ocean health
- Production
- Recycling problems
- Consumer behavior
- Creeks and rivers
- Consumption
- Carbon footprint
- Watershed protection

Examples of Laws

BISBEE, ARIZONA POP: 5,500

Action: Plastic bag ban at point of sale and \$0.05 fee on paper bag

Affected: Retail establishments

Fee revenue: Retailer keeps a %, remainder to the City to purchase reusable bags and support programming

Motivation: Litter, visual blight, sanitation costs, and ecological footprint

BOULDER, COLORADO POP: 102,000

Action: Plastic and paper bag fee at point of sale \$0.10, paper bags 40% recycled content and 100% recyclable

Affected: Food retailers

Fee revenue: Retailer keeps \$0.04, remainder to the City to purchase reusable bags and administrative costs

Motivation: Reduce consumption, environmental impacts, and management costs

Examples of Laws

CORVALLIS, OREGON POP: 55,000

Action: Plastic bag ban at point of sale on bags less than 2.25 mils thick, \$0.05 fee on paper bag, paper bags 40% recycled content and 100% recyclable

Affected: Retail establishments

Fee revenue: Retailer keeps 100%

Motivation: Decrease waste

DALLAS, TEXAS POP: 1,241,162

Action: Plastic and paper bag fee at point of sale \$0.05, paper bags 40% recycled content and 100% recyclable, reusable bags must be at least 4.0 mils thick

Affected: Retail establishments

Fee revenue: Retailer keeps 10%, 90% to the City for enforcement and education programs

Motivation: Litter and watershed protection

Examples of Laws

SANTA FE, NEW MEXICO POP: 69,000

Action: Plastic bag ban at point of sale, fee on paper bags established by retail establishment, paper bags 40% recycled content

Affected: Retail establishments

Fee revenue: Retailers' choice

Motivation: Conserve resources, reduce waste, litter, pollution and public health

S. LAKE TAHOE, CALIFORNIA POP: 21,000

Action: Bans plastic bags and paper bags which fall below 40% recycled content

Affected: Retail establishments, restaurants excluded

Fee revenue: Retailers' choice

Motivation: Zero waste policies

Examples of Impacts of Laws

Boulder, Colorado – In six months plastic and paper bag use declined 68% and generated \$137,000 for programming.

Breckenridge, Colorado – In six months plastic bag use declined 50%.

Eugene, Oregon – In six months 60% of retailers stated more customers were bringing their own bags.

Los Angeles, California – In two years a sustained 90% reduction in plastic bag use at large retailers.

San Jose, California – In eleven months litter decreased 89% in the storm drains, 60% in rivers and 59% in streets.

Seattle, Washington – In six months 49% of retailers report a decline in plastic bag use.

Thurston County, Washington – In eight months a 53% decrease in plastic bags in the waste stream.

Examples of Alternatives to Bans

CHICAGO, ILLINOIS POP: 2.7 MILLION

Action: Plastic bag recycling ordinance

Affected: Retail establishments that provide plastic bags

Requirements: Every plastic bag must display “Please reuse or recycle at participating store”, provide a bin for recycling, make reusable bags available, recycle/reuse any plastic bags collected, and submit annual report providing weight, location and cost for recycling

STATE OF DELAWARE POP: 897,934

Action: At Store Recycling Program

Affected: Retail establishments, restaurants excluded

Requirements: Stores must establish at-store plastic bag recycling, all bags to display a recycling message, and stores to retain records of collection and recycling

Examples of Alternatives to Bans

STATE MAINE POP: 1.3 MILLION

Action: Recycling Plastic Bags

Affected: Retail establishments

Requirements: Retailers may only provide costumers with plastic bags if there is a receptacle to collect used bags within 20 feet of the entrance and all collected bags are recycled

NORTH CAROLINA OUTER BANKS

Action: Plastic Bag Use

Affected: Retail establishments

Requirements: Retailers must display signage “County discourages the use of plastic and paper bags to protect our environment for excess litter and greenhouse gases. We would appreciate our customers using reusable bags, but if you are not able to, a 100% recycled paper bag will be furnished for your use”

Voluntary Programs Have Mixed Results

Aspen, Colorado 2008 - 2012 – Voluntary programs resulted in a small increase in reusable bag use. Ban passed in 2012.

Australia 2003 - 2005 – A 45% reduction in bags distributed, but a recycling rate of 14% fell short of the 50% target.

Flagstaff, Arizona – Bag Central Station

Los Angeles County, California 2008 – 2010 – “Brag About Your Bag” was not successful in achieving 30% disposal reduction by July 2010. Ban passed in 2011.

Ontario, Canada 2007 – A 58% reduction bags distributed, exceeding its 50% target.

Quebec, Canada 2010 – Plastic Bag Reduction program achieved a 52% reduction across the retail sector.

Santa Clara, California 2009 – “Got Bags” program saw a 2% increase in reusable bags.

Community Discussion – Questions Asked

Why don't we just promote recycling plastic bags?

Since 2008 the Sustainability Program has been promoting Bag Central Station and providing reusable bags to the community. Plastic bags are very difficult to recycle due to high contamination and limited aftermarkets for the material. The Material Recovery Facility is not equipped to process plastic bags.

Why don't we include plastic bags in residential recycling?

Staff examined the feasibility of implementing a voluntary curbside plastic bag recycling program. According to Solid Waste and the Material Recovery Facility it would cost approximately \$1.5 million to initiate the program (expand the processing facility, upgrade equipment, purchase vehicle, purchase residential receptacles and staff). The program would not be able to pay for itself.

Plastic Bags in Flagstaff

An estimated 10 million plastic carry-out bags are distributed annually at major retailers in Flagstaff.

How should the embedded costs of these bags be managed?

Plastic Bags in Flagstaff

In 2008 Sustainability Commission and Sustainability Program conducted informal plastic bag survey:

- Of the 2,000+ participants 86% agreed that plastic bags were the main component of litter

In 2008 Sustainability Commission and Sustainability Program partner with the Arizona Food and Marketing Association (AFMA) to bring Bag Central Station, a voluntary recycling program to Flagstaff:

- 9 participating grocery stores in Flagstaff
- Inconsistent participation
- Limited data from stores and AFMA
- City of Phoenix 20% reduction in plastic bags at Material Recovery Facility
- No reported impact at Flagstaff's landfill or Material Recovery Facility following initial implementation

Plastic Bags in Flagstaff: Cinder Lake Landfill

Landfill staff estimate that 80% of all wind blown litter that gets past litter fences consists of plastic bags.

The landfill spends approximately \$66,700 annually to address litter.

In FY 13, 3,785 bags of wind blown litter were collected costing the City \$17.62 per bag.



Plastic Bags in Flagstaff: Material Recovery Facility

Material Recovery Facility shuts down recycling equipment up to two hours per day to remove plastic bags. A loss of \$200 per day / \$62,400 annually.



Community Discussion – Questions Asked

What about the impact to low income community members?

Most communities that passed laws with single use fees do not apply to anyone who participates in federal or state food assistance programs. Fees can be allocated to provide free bags to the community.

The Sustainability Program is establishing free reusable bag distribution centers at select locations throughout the community.

What about tourists?

Tourist communities with bans or fees have not reported negative impacts. Free reusable bag distribution centers will also target the tourist sector.

Sustainability Commission's Recommendation for a Plastic Bag Ban

Sustainability Commission voted 5-2 in favor of a plastic bag ban at all retail establishments in Flagstaff to address litter.

The intent is to protect, conserve and enhance Flagstaff's natural beauty and reduce costly negative impacts of plastic bags.

- Difficult to manage.
- Have negative implications on aesthetics, solid waste and stormwater.
- Contribute to unsightly litter on streets, sidewalks and waterways.
- Very few are effectively reused, recycled or properly disposed of.

Allows for the retailer to determine if they want to place a fee on paper bags.

Sustainability Commission's Recommendation for a Plastic Bag Ban

Exempt single-use bags:

Laundry dry cleaning bags, door-hanger bags, newspaper bags, or packages of multiple bags intended for use as garbage, pet waste or yard waste;

Bags provided by pharmacists or veterinarians for medicine;

Bags used by a consumer inside a retail establishment to contain:

- Bulk items;
- Contain or wrap frozen foods, meat, or fish;
- Contain or wrap flowers;
- Contain unwrapped prepared foods or bakery goods.

Questions for Council to Consider

How should the embedded costs of plastic bags be managed?

What does the City Council want to address?

- Litter
- Reducing consumption
- Environmental impacts
- Stormwater
- Cost of management
- Landfill
- Recycling logistical challenges
- Consumer behavior
- Lack of viable recycling markets

Considerations

If the Council wants to take action there are a number of options to consider:

Action: Plastic bag ban / Plastic bag fee / Single-use plastic and paper bag fee

Affected: Retail establishments / grocery stores / retailer by square footage / retailer by annual sales

Fee revenue: 100% to City / split to City and retailer / Retailers' choice

Fee distribution: Provide free reusable bags / cover administrative cost / education programs

Questions?
