

# SINGLE-USE PLASTICS FACTSHEET

## Contra Costa County Climate Leaders

A project of Generation Green - a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization

Find Links to Other Local Government Policy Opportunities at

[www.cccclimateleaders.org](http://www.cccclimateleaders.org)



### WHAT?

City policies to regulate the use of petroleum based single use plastics or switching to compostable alternatives will significantly reduce plastic litter, thereby decreasing adverse effects on the environment and protecting wildlife who become entangled in or ingest plastics. Human health is protected by limiting the consumption of microplastics through both food and water. Reducing plastics will lessen the clogging of infrastructure and lower the economic and environmental costs that are associated with managing waste. Furthermore, reducing the use of single-use plastics will reduce greenhouse gas emissions involved in both the use and the production of them, and is therefore a crucial step in our fight against climate change.

#### State of California

- ✓ In 2018, California AB1884 required full-service restaurants only provide single-use plastic straws upon consumer request.
- ✓ June 30<sup>th</sup>, 2020, California passed [SB54](#) with three standards to be met by 2032:
  - all packaging in the state is required to be either recyclable or compostable,
  - plastic packaging production must be cut by 25%,
  - and 65% of all single-use plastic packaging must be recycled.
  - The bill also requires plastic manufacturers to, over the next ten years, pay \$5 billion into a fund allocated to mitigating the effects of plastic pollution, primarily in low-income communities.
- ✓ [AB 1276](#) effective January 1<sup>st</sup>, 2022, stipulates that food facilities must require consumers to request single-use foodware accessories prior to providing those items: all utensils, forks, spoons, knives, straws, stirrers, splash sticks, cocktail sticks, condiment cups, and packages.
  - Cities had until June 1<sup>st</sup>, 2022 [to authorize an enforcement agency](#) to enforce this law
  - Meanwhile, Many cities are Climate Leaders, and have already passed regulations, and many cities are passing regulations that are more restrictive than AB 1276.
- ✓ These bills extend on existing bans on [plastic grocery bags](#), [straws](#), and [plastic water bottles](#).

### WHY?

- **Climate Emergency:** If we continue as we currently are, plastics will account for 20% of oil consumption by 2050, oil is a fossil fuel that contributes greatly to global warming. [Studies](#) estimate that extraction and transportation of fossil fuels emits 12.5-13.5 million metric tons of greenhouse gases.
- **Unsustainable:** [Studies](#) show the use of plastic has increased twentyfold in the past half-century and is expected to double again in the next 20 years. The cost associated with handling the waste, and the greenhouse gas emissions from its production, is \$40 billion annually.
- **Ocean pollution:** [Scientists predict](#) that by 2050, there will be more plastic in the ocean than fish. Approximately 80% of marine litter is plastic.
- **Landfills:** Every year, more than 300,000 tons of plastic are [estimated](#) to end up in landfills.
- **Harmful to Economy:** [Economic studies](#) estimate that single-use means that 95% of the value of plastic items, or about \$80 billion to \$120 billion worldwide, is lost or thrown away revenue each year.



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- **High Toxicity Levels:** About 4% of the world's oil and gas production is used as raw materials in plastics, and another 3-4% is used for energy to produce plastics. Communities near waste incinerators are exposed to toxins such as dioxins and mercury which can lead to severe known health risks, including asthma and cancers.
- **Not being recycled:** Both the United States rate and global rate for recycling plastics lies at 9%. According to [CalRecycle](http://CalRecycle), the majority of recyclable materials in California are exported to China.

### WHO?

The State of California is now regulating and requiring all food facilities and plastic manufacturers to adhere to certain regulations. Meanwhile, Local City Governments are often stricter than the state regulators and are taking the lead. Working with environmental groups such as Clean Water Action, Californians Against Waste, Northern California Recycling Association, Safe SF Bay, Clean Bay Project, and Surfrider.

### HOW?

Packaging from industry will soon be changing, because of a law signed last month, requiring a reduction in plastic packaging and transition to more sustainable packaging. We can see compliance with reusable alternatives made of metal, silicone, glass, and bamboo. When reusables are not an option, disposable alternatives include foodware made from starch, wheat, bamboo, seaweed, wood pulp, hay or recycled products. A local city ordinance typically involves only providing foodware upon request of the customer. Policies may also include charging take-out fees for disposable items and giving credit to customers who bring in their own reusable items. Exemptions can be provided for a business that can prove that this causes undue hardship.

- [Steps and resources to help pass a local ordinance on single-use foodware](#)
- [How to pass a disposable free dining ordinance](#)
- [Sample policies to prevent plastic pollution](#)

### WHERE?

There are a number of cities who have passed extensive local policies in addition to state-wide policies

- ✓ [Alameda](#) states that the straws-on-request must be replaced with compostable fiber (paper/bamboo) straws. When a reusable packaging option is not available, compostable, fiber-based packaging must be provided.
- ✓ [Berkeley](#) requires that only reusable foodware be used for dine-in services. All disposable foodware must be certified compostable, free of intentionally added fluorinated chemicals, and provided upon request only. Additionally, the town mandates a \$.25 fee for every single-use beverage cup provided.
- ✓ [Carmel-by-the-Sea](#) requires all disposable food service ware including straws, stir sticks, cups, lids and to-go utensils to be certified compostable. It applies to restaurants, grocery stores, delis, farmers markets, food trucks, special events, and any other event where prepared food is sold for carryout or packaged for convenience.



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- ✓ [El Cerrito](#) prohibits Styrofoam take-out containers and prohibits plastic foodware including bowls, plates, trays, cartons, cups, straws, stirrer, lids, utensils, and other items designed for one-time use. It requires the accessibility of reusable, recyclable, and compostable alternatives for foodware.
- ✓ [Los Angeles](#) recently adopted an ordinance for unincorporated parts of the County that not only complies with AB 1276, but also bans polystyrene products such as cooler, plates and cups.
- ✓ [Malibu](#) bans the distribution of single-use plastic straws, stirrers, and cutlery items in all retail stores and restaurants. Non-plastic alternatives must be provided upon request.
- ✓ [Oakland](#) requires that food service ware be biodegradable and compostable, and that beverage straws be provided upon request only. This extends to all Oakland food vendors selling prepared food—including restaurants, delis, fast-food establishments, vendors at fairs and food trucks.
- ✓ [Richmond](#) asserts that retail and lodging establishments cannot use, sell or distribute plastic foodware. They must use utensils and lids that are recyclable or compostable; they cannot use polystyrene.
- ✓ [San Francisco](#) Sets limits on single-use plastic foodware accessories such as plastic beverage plugs, cocktail sticks, stirrers, toothpicks. Prohibits single-use plastic straws. Additionally, clarifies that foodware sold in San Francisco must be certified by the Biodegradable Products Institute (BPI).
- ✓ [Santa Cruz](#) Requires food providers to only give straws, lids, and cutlery and to-go condiment packages upon request. And bans plastic cutlery; stir sticks and hot beverage lids. Food service providers are encouraged to charge a take-out fee of \$.25 and provide a \$.25 credit for customers who bring their own reusable containers.
- ✓ [Santa Monica](#) requires that food establishments distribute food and beverages with marine degradable food service ware. They also include plates, trays, bowls, containers, cups and cup lids.

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