



May 15, 2015

To: Senate Education Committee  
Subject: HB 2762, requiring school districts to eliminate polystyrene foam food service ware

Dear Committee:

I urge you to pass HB 2762. I was involved in the effort in 1989 to ban polystyrene foam food containers in the City of Portland. That ordinance exempted schools, and it took 15 more years before foam trays were eliminated in Portland's elementary school cafeterias. The primary cost was for an extra hour of labor to wash the trays.

The primary reason for the City of Portland ban was that polystyrene foam does not degrade, contributes to litter, can break into small pieces, and when eaten by birds and other wildlife can cause death by starvation.

Now we know more. Much of the styrofoam ends up in ocean gyres, where it joins giant masses of plastic, that continue to fragment. Dead condors have been found on Pacific islands with plastic filling their guts. During storms, the tiny fragments of plastic wash up onto Oregon beaches, mixing with sand, drift wood, and beach grass. The Portland Eco-School Network held a beach clean-up at Fort Stevens Park in February and were overwhelmed by the amount of plastic.

We also know that styrene may leach into food. Styrene, considered a possible human carcinogen by the World Health Organization's International Agency for Research on Cancer, may also disrupt hormones or affect reproduction.

However, there is a more important reason to remove styrofoam from school cafeterias. Parents try to teach their children a conservation ethic in their homes and do not want these values to be negated at school. The use of single-serving, non-biodegradable plastic trays teaches children that throw-away habits and waste of resources is acceptable.

Schools should be a model of best practices. It's time to eliminate polystyrene foam trays and food service ware.

Yours truly,

Jeanne Roy, Co-Director  
Center for Earth Leadership