



February 15, 2019

Representative Ken Helm
Committee on Energy and Environment, Chair
900 Court St. NE, H-490
Salem, OR 97301

Re: Sustainable Shopping Initiative: HB 2509 (Support -5)

On behalf of our entire Oregon chapter network, our greater membership and our thousands of Oregon supporters and volunteers, the Surfrider Foundation would like to express our strong support for HB 2509, a Sustainable Shopping Initiative to encourage the use of reusable bags and eliminate plastic checkout bags. Surfrider Foundation has worked through supporting development and implementation of this policy in hundreds of cities around the nation through our grassroots volunteer network of chapters. In Oregon, we've worked with over a dozen of the now 16 cities that have passed local plastic bag ordinances. As our plastic pollution crisis grows, so does the appetite of Oregon cities and residents to curb our contributions to the problem – HB 2509 is a one simple solution that can save our oceans and wildlife from irreparable harm and our municipalities and taxpayers from costly cleanup and environmental blight.

A Pollution Problem

Plastic pollution is one of the greatest environmental catastrophes of our time. Plastics are the leading form of pollution and marine litter worldwide^{1,2}. They do not biodegrade in our lifetime, but instead break down into small particles that persist in the ocean, adsorb to toxins, and enter the food chain through fish, sea birds and other marine life. Plastic bags are problematic in the litter stream because they float easily in the air and water, traveling long distances and never fully breaking down in water. By 2025, for every three tons of finfish swimming in the oceans, there could be one ton of plastic in marine waters³. Projections indicate that by 2050, the ration of fish to plastics could be 1:1⁴. For more

1. Derraik, J.G.B. "The pollution of the marine environment by plastic debris: a review." *Marine Pollution Bulletin* 44. (2002): 843.

2. Gregory, M.R., Ryan, P.G. "Pelagic plastics and other seaborne persistent synthetic debris: a review of Southern Hemisphere perspectives." *Marine Debris – Sources, Impacts and Solutions*. Ed. J.M. Coe, D.B. Rogers. New York: Springer-Verlag, 1997, pp. 4, 9-66.

3. Plastic waste inputs from land into the ocean, Jenna R. Jambeck, Roland Geyer, Chris Wilcox, Theodore R. Siegler, Miriam Perryman, Anthony Andrady, Ramani Narayan, and Kara Lavender Law, *Science* 13 February 2015: 347 (6223), 768-771.

4. 2015-2025 projection of plastics in the ocean based on an estimated stock of 150 million tonnes in 2015 (Ocean Conservancy and McKinsey Center for Business and Environment, *Stemming the Tide* (2015)), estimated annual leakage rates of plastics into the ocean by Jambeck et al. of 8 million tonnes in 2010 and 9.1 million tonnes in 2015 (J. R. Jambeck et al., *Plastic waste inputs from land into the ocean* (*Science*, 2015), taken from the middle scenario), and annual growth in leakage flows of plastics into the ocean of 5% up to 2025 (conservatively taken

citable information and research on plastic pollution in our oceans visit Surfrider Foundation's Plastic Pollution facts and figures page at:
[http://www.beachapedia.org/Plastic Pollution Facts and Figures](http://www.beachapedia.org/Plastic%20Pollution%20Facts%20and%20Figures).

A Waste Management Problem

According to Oregon waste managers and material recovery facilities, plastic bags are the number one source of mechanical failure in their sorting facilities. They are not recyclable in our traditional waste streams and removing the thousands of bags that accidentally make their way into these facilities' machinery is not only a serious worker hazard but also represents a major business cost for shutdowns, in fact Metro area material recovery facilities report up 20-30% of their labor costs associated with plastic film contamination. Plastic bags that find their way onto streets and small streams often foul city infrastructure such as storm drains and catch basins, representing costly maintenance for public works programs.

The Right Policy to Meet Plastic Reduction and Behavior Change Goals

As with any policy, plastic bag ordinances have evolved both in Oregon and more broadly across the nation to better meet intended goals, eliminate loopholes, and avoid un-intended consequences. For example, Portland's Policy in 2011 without a fee deterrence on paper bags resulted in the unintended consequence and environmental impact of increasing paper bag use by **491%**⁵. For these reasons, Surfrider Foundation and the grocery industry alike have found it critical to include the following tenets within the policy, we are pleased that HB 2509 took a thoughtful approach to addressing each of these areas.

- A pass-through fee to encourage consumer behavior shift to reusable bags and support retailers for recovering increased cost of paper. For equitability, this should include an exemption for WIC, SNAP or other state/federal assistance programs.
- A clear, strong definition of reusable bags. This definition should close potential loophole of "thicker" single use plastic bags and clearly define appropriate bag material and ability for machine washing.
- A clear and broad definition of retailers which the policy applies to. Surfrider Foundation feels that all retailers, except those potentially federally exempt such as pharmacies, should be included for a comprehensive policy.
- Exemptions should only apply to bags in-store as necessary to protect consumer health (dairy, raw meats, etc.).
- Outreach and a phased-in policy approach is important for educating businesses on compliance and allowing them the opportunity to shift their business practice.

below the 6.8% annual growth rate in ocean plastics leakage into the ocean between 2015 and 2025 as estimated in Plastic waste inputs from land into the ocean, middle scenario). 2025-2050 projections based on a plastics leakage into the ocean growth rate of 3.5% p.a., in line with long-term GDP growth estimates (International Energy Agency, World Energy Outlook 2015 (2015))

⁵ <https://www.portlandoregon.gov/bps/article/419700>

Over the past decade, we've learned what makes a strong policy and we've learned what results in unintended consequences. We've learned what types of policy actually meet the intended environmental, litter and waste management goals while also being realistic for businesses and industry-friendly. Throughout this time, the policy has thoughtfully and responsibly evolved. Through learning, adaptation and implementation of plastic bag policy at the local level, both the environmental community and the grocery industry have come to alignment around common sense policy. This policy is ready for the State of Oregon and we urge your strong support of HB 2509.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Charlie Plybon". The signature is fluid and elegant, with the first letters of the first and last names being capitalized and prominent.

Charlie Plybon
Oregon Policy Manager
Surfrider Foundation
cplybon@surfrider.org
541-961-8143