

From the Desk of
Representative
Janeen Sollman



On behalf of Surfrider Foundation's thousands of members and supporters in Oregon, please find our strong support of HB 2509, Oregon's Sustainable Shopping Initiative. Our support is joined by the Association of Oregon Recyclers, Oregon League of Conservation Voters (OLCV) in coordination with the Oregon Conservation Network (OCN), a coalition of 34 not-for-profit organizations throughout the state, united to advocate for pro-conservation legislation and to fight policies that threaten our state's natural legacy.

This Sustainable Shopping Initiative (HB 2509) eliminates plastic checkout bags, reduces plastic pollution and encourages an Oregon ethos for shopping with reusable bags. Plastic bags start out as fossil fuels and end up as deadly waste in landfills, the terrestrial environment and the ocean. In recycling and waste management, plastic bags represent significant costs from shutdowns and on the job injuries as they foul sorting screens at these facilities. Now 17 cities in Oregon have passed local plastic bag ordinances, joining hundreds of cities around the nation which have also advanced plastic bag policies. Over a dozen additional municipalities have also committed interest and support for statewide legislation. 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. Birds often

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

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From the Desk of
Representative
Carla C. Piluso

mistake shredded plastic bags for food, filling their stomachs with toxic debris. For hungry sea turtles, it's nearly impossible to distinguish between jellyfish and floating plastic shopping bags. Fish eat thousands of tons of plastic a year, transferring it up the food chain to bigger fish and marine mammals. Despite all of this, plastic bags are in almost every American home because retail giants continue to use offer them for nearly every purchase made in their stores.

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.

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,

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(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 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))