

THE PROBLEM

Single-use plastics such as plastic straws and utensils, expanded polystyrene (EPS) food packaging, and other waste pose a growing threat to our waterways and open spaces, including Long Island Sound. More than 200 species of marine life are affected by plastic pollution, and the effects can be catastrophic. Reports of whales, dolphins, and other aquatic life found entangled or with intestinal blockages due to plastic consumption have increased in recent years, indicating a growing plastic pollution problem in our oceans.

While recycling programs can help, only 9% of plastics produced in the United States are properly recycled. Some plastics, such as polystyrene, cannot be easily or cost-effectively recycled. Plastic can take hundreds of years to decompose, so state and local governments must take immediate action to reduce the amount of single-use plastics entering into our environment.

A COMPREHENSIVE SOLUTION

In 2019, the Connecticut General Assembly passed a budget measure to phase out the use of plastic checkout bags at retail establishments across the state. This included a 10-cent fee on every plastic bag distributed, transitioning to an outright ban in 2021. This is intended to promote a shift in consumer behavior away from single-use plastic bags, and towards more sustainable reusable bags. To date, at least 18 cities and towns in Connecticut have passed local ordinances that go beyond requirements of the law, prohibiting plastic checkout bags entirely in their communities. As a result, Connecticut has seen a sharp decline in plastic bag use.

As towns continue to grapple with the rising cost of recycling, many have set their sights on further reducing plastic pollution from single-use plastics, including plastic straws, stir sticks, and EPS food packaging. Connecticut can be a leader on combating plastic pollution by passing a statewide ban on polystyrene foam products, including wasteful food service packaging, school lunch trays, and packaging peanuts.



Additionally, Connecticut can pass a “soft ban” on plastic straws, stir sticks, and plastic tableware. Legislation was introduced in 2020 which would have prohibited certain restaurants from automatically providing plastic straws to customers unless requested by the patron.

MORE INFORMATION

For more information on plastic and polystyrene pollution, contact:

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