

## Why replace plastic grocery bags with reusable bags?

- Each year, approximately 6 billion plastic bags are consumed in Los Angeles County. This is equivalent to 600 bags per person per year.
- Approximately 150,000 tons of plastic bags are disposed by Los Angeles County residents each year.
- Disposable bags cost our cities up to 17 cents per bag for disposal.
- Plastic bags are made from petroleum. Americans use over 380 billion bags every year, throwing away millions of barrels of oil.
- 100,000 marine animals are killed annually by entanglement in marine debris such as plastic bags.



Heal the Bay

To sign the petition or for more information:  
[www.healthebay.org/ppi](http://www.healthebay.org/ppi)  
or call 800 HEAL BAY



### WE NEED YOUR HELP!

The Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors is considering a phased ban of plastic grocery bags if certain recycling levels or triggers are not met. Currently we recycle only 5%. Help fight the blight! **Go to our website and sign the petition urging the Board to Ban the Bag!** Let the Board of Supervisors know that you support the implementation of a phased ban on plastic grocery bags throughout Los Angeles County. See the back of the flyer for frequently asked questions on this important topic.

**Sign the petition today!**  
[www.healthebay.org](http://www.healthebay.org)



### Benefits of Implementing Widespread Use of Reusable Bags :

- Fewer plastic bags littering our community.
- Significant cost savings to taxpayers-less money spent on litter cleanup, enforcement, prevention.
- Fewer impacts to the marine environment (marine wildlife, such as sea turtles and whales ingest littered plastic bags, which they mistake for food).
- Fewer natural resources consumed.

# FAQ's About Plastic Grocery Bags

## Why is Heal the Bay concerned about plastic grocery bags?

- ◆ Besides fouling our public spaces with unsightly debris, plastic bags easily find their way to the marine environment through the storm drain system.
- ◆ Plastic bags kill sea animals that mistake them for food or become entangled in them.
- ◆ Some areas of the Pacific Ocean contain six times more plastic debris than zooplankton (the fundamental base of our food chain.) These tiny pieces of plastic are eaten by zooplankton and move up the food chain, potentially presenting health risks for humans.
- ◆ Plastic bags don't biodegrade, they photo degrade. The bags break down into smaller and smaller pieces of plastic, but never go away.
- ◆ See Heal the Bay's *Pacific Protection Initiative* website for more information: [www.Healthebay.org/PPI](http://www.Healthebay.org/PPI)

## How big a problem are plastic grocery bags?

- ◆ Californians use more than 19 billion plastic grocery bags and merchandise bags each year, roughly 552 bags per person. This usage generates 147,038 tons of unnecessary waste — enough to stretch around the globe over 250 times.
- ◆ Californians throw away over 600 plastic bags per second.
- ◆ California taxpayers spend \$25 million to collect and landfill plastic bag waste each year. That figure does not include external costs, e.g., resource extraction and depletion, quality of life issues, economic loss due to plastic bag litter and human health expenses.
- ◆ U.S. consumers use 100 billion plastic bags annually, which is the energy equivalent of 12 million barrels of oil.

## Is reusing plastic grocery bags the answer?

- ◆ No. While some people reuse their bags for cleaning up dog waste and as trash can liners, the overwhelming majority of people do not.
- ◆ It's a misperception that you are getting a free bag for these second conveniences. Nothing is really free. You are paying for that bag -- it's just hidden in other costs and impacts to the environment.
- ◆ Disposable bags cost our cities up to 17 cents per bag for disposal. And by our cities, we mean you, the taxpayer.

## Is recycling plastic bags the answer?

- ◆ No. Plastic grocery bags cannot be recycled into new grocery bags. Currently, less than 5% of plastic bags are recycled.
- ◆ The saying goes, "Reduce. Reuse. Recycle." We should reduce our usage first, reuse materials for as long as possible, and only then should we recycle it.
- ◆ Some argue that plastic recycling is not an efficient use of our precious energy resources.
- ◆ The focus on recycling encourages over-consumption to some degree. It allows us to think that we can throw away goods because they are recyclable.

## Is using a paper grocery bag the answer?

- ◆ No. The best choice is to always use a reusable bag. During manufacturing, both paper and plastic bags emit global warming gases; create water pollution and use raw materials and energy.
- ◆ Each high quality reusable bag can eliminate hundreds to thousands of plastic bags over its lifetime.
- ◆ Although most people are aware that paper bags are recyclable, only about 20% of them are actually recycled.

## What kind of reusable bag should I use?

- ◆ There are sources for reusable bags made from cotton, hemp, canvas and polypropylene, all made in the United States.
- ◆ A reusable grocery bag made from recycled plastic is not necessarily better than using a reusable bag made from virgin plastic. For instance, the recycling process typically involves transportation of the discarded goods from the U.S. to Asia where environmental regulations aren't as stringent. The raw materials are reprocessed to make the new material, which is shipped back to the U. S. for assembly and transport to a retailer. This entire journey uses petroleum resources and creates harmful emissions.
- ◆ Under a recent state law, grocery stores are required to sell reusable bags for a nominal fee.

## How can I remember to bring bags to the store?

- ◆ Always start your grocery list with "Bring Bags."
- ◆ Keep a collapsible bag in your purse or briefcase for those emergency runs to the stores.
- ◆ Keep your bags in your car trunk.

**For more information & fact references please visit our website  
[www.healthebay.org/ppi](http://www.healthebay.org/ppi)**

