



DATE: December 14, 2023

TO: Programs & Administration Committee
Planning Committee/Recycling Board

FROM: Justin Lehrer, Operations Manager

SUBJECT: Reusable Foodware Project Update

SUMMARY

StopWaste's Reusable Foodware project focuses on developing policy, infrastructure, and capacity for greater adoption of reusable foodware systems in Alameda County. In March 2023, the WMA accepted the model Disposable Food Service Ware Reduction and Reuse Ordinance and directed staff to share it and related resources with member agencies that are considering adopting policies that promote the transition from single-use disposable foodware to reusable foodware. Since then, several cities have taken steps toward developing their own foodware ordinances. At the December 14 Programs & Administration Committee and Recycling Board meetings, staff will provide an update on recent local policy development, pilot projects, and other program activities.

DISCUSSION

Single-use foodware items like plastic and paper cups, plates, and utensils are prevalent in daily life. They serve a very short useful life of just minutes, while their impact on human health and the environment is significant and long lasting. Replacing single-use foodware with durable reusable alternatives is essential to preventing the waste and litter that disposables create, as well as the GHG emissions associated with resource extraction, production, and distribution of these items. Staff works to address and develop structural solutions to some of these issues through technical assistance to businesses and grant funding to develop more robust reuse infrastructure in Alameda County. As directed by the Board, staff has also been supporting member agencies as they consider policy options for addressing single-use waste.

The model foodware ordinance developed earlier this year, available on our [website](#), has been a useful tool for advancing reusable foodware policy, and has been shared with local government staff throughout the Bay Area, the West Coast, and many communities across the country.

In Alameda County, the City of Oakland built upon StopWaste's model ordinance to develop their own Reusable Foodware and Plastic Litter Reduction Ordinance, currently under consideration by the City Council. This ordinance, potentially the 2nd reuse-oriented foodware ordinance in the

county, would require prepared food and beverage vendors to provide reusable foodware to guests dining in and allow guests to bring in their own reusable foodware containers and cups for to-go orders. The ordinance also bans bioplastics (any plastic derived from biological substances rather than from petroleum, many, but not all, types of which are compostable) for takeout and phases in reusables requirements for large venues and special events held in the city. Staff have supported the City of Oakland's efforts throughout this process, participating in stakeholder outreach and providing subject-matter expertise. Four additional member agencies are now in the early stages of developing a policy and conducting research and stakeholder outreach. Staff is available to work with our member agencies to support these efforts and help develop impactful reuse policy. Staff will continue to monitor and engage in existing and pending state legislation with potential implications for reusable systems, including SB 54, AB 1276 ("accessories upon request"), and others.

In order to maximize the positive impact of any foodware policy, there must be cost-effective and convenient access to reusable foodware systems for both businesses and consumers. Our project activities continue to include free technical assistance and mini-grants to help businesses make the switch from single-use to reusable foodware. We have also continued to fund pilot projects that increase local capacity for reusable foodware and address some of the challenges faced by this industry. Recently funded projects include reuse within school districts, community colleges, business districts, meal programs for seniors and food-insecure individuals, venues and special events. The project team is now exploring outreach and education strategies that support our foodware grantee projects through research, marketing, and facilitating partnerships. The confluence of policy and the above strategies foster more "norming" of reusables in the community and help magnify the impact of efforts to shift away from disposables.

RECOMMENDATION

This item is for information only.