

Food Service Packaging

The issues related to pollution from single-use plastics are complex and lack a straightforward solution. These items, especially food ware such as cups, lids, straws, utensils, takeout containers, and bags, often end up as litter where they pollute marine environments. They persist in the environment and in living organisms for much longer than they are in use, break down into microscopic pieces, get mistaken for food by wildlife, and then work their way up the food chain.

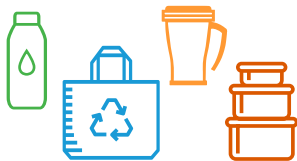
Estimates show that more than 80% of ocean plastic worldwide originates from land-based sources, and only 9% of all plastics are ever captured for recycling or recovery. A Bay Area litter study identified that **food and beverage packaging comprises a majority of the litter in our region.**

Since most recycling processing facilities cannot properly sort and capture small, odd-shaped items such as utensils, straws, bags, and lids, **recycling is not an effective solution for these plastic food service items.** Many of these commonly littered items never make it to a recycling bin, and even then, heavy food contamination presents an additional challenge.

StopWaste and Local Jurisdiction Actions

StopWaste emphasizes voluntary waste reduction and choosing reusables whenever possible. Our countywide Reusable Bag Law has reduced the number of bags used and flowing into the storm water system since 2013. Several cities in Alameda County have passed ordinances requiring straws by request, and others are considering new policies targeting all takeout food ware.

Future work must address the source of the problem and slow down the production of plastic waste. Recommended actions include:



Promote Reusable Alternatives

Continuing and/or expanding efforts to reduce single-use plastics to minimize litter and pollution.



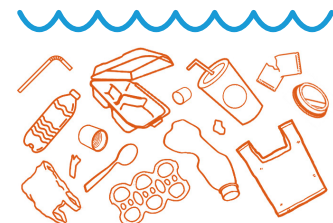
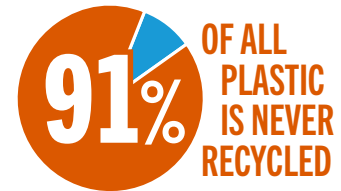
Dispose Properly

Maximize recycling or composting of food service ware; keeping contaminants out of the recycling and compost.



Reduce Toxics in Packaging

Working with partners to eliminate the use of harmful fluorinated compounds as moisture/grease barriers in fiber-based packaging.



8 MILLION TONS of plastic waste ends up in the ocean every year.



For additional ways to minimize packaging waste, visit: www.StopWaste.org/packaging-waste