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All Cities In On County-Wide Plastic Bag Ban

The ordinance goes into effect on Jan. 1, 2013

By [Patch Staff](#) | [Email the author](#) | March 13, 2012



Starting next year, every store selling packaged foods in Alameda County will no longer provide its customers with single-use bags.

The Alameda County Waste Management Authority (Stopwaste.org) announced Tuesday that none of Alameda County's 14 cities chose to overrule the ban. Local jurisdictions were given until March 2 to opt out of the ordinance.

"We're proud to have led this historic countywide effort," said Gary Wolff, StopWaste.Org Executive Director in a press release. "The ordinance will not only reduce waste to landfills and protect waterways, but also save money for local governments by reducing litter."

The ordinance prohibiting single-use bags go into effect on Jan. 1, 2013.

Recycled-content paper and reusable bags could be provided by retailers, but only at a minimum cost of \$0.10 per bag to customers, the press release states. But that cost will rise to \$0.25 per bag on Jan. 2, 2015 if the county board finds that the \$0.10 charge does not efficiently discourage single-use bags.

The Alameda County Waste Management Authority passed the ordinance on Jan. 25 with reason to believe that restricting the distribution of single-use bags could lower pollution.

More from the press release:

Alameda County waterways threatened by trash and plastic pollution

In 2007, the San Francisco Regional Water Quality Control Board declared five waterways in Alameda County – Strawberry Creek and Cordonices Creek in Berkeley, Sausal Creek and Damon Slough in Oakland, and San Leandro Creek in San Leandro – so polluted with trash that they violate the federal Clean Water Act. As part of Coastal Cleanup Day, volunteers reported removing almost 4,500 plastic bags from Alameda County creeks and shorelines in 2010. Also in 2010, per new regulations outlined in the Water Board's municipal storm water permit, Alameda County jurisdictions identified 72 "trash hot spots" that are now required to be cleaned up. Further, several Alameda County waterways, including Damon Slough, repeatedly make Save The Bay's annual list of Bay Trash Hot Spots.

Plastic trash solutions

Tough policies and regulations are needed to reduce plastic trash flowing to the Bay and ocean. Smartly crafted ban or charge policies, such as the one passed in Alameda County, are proven ways to create a mass switch to reusable bags to clean up our communities and San Francisco Bay. Washington D.C.'s five cent charge on bags has resulted in an estimated 80 percent decrease in plastic and paper bag distribution, and 66 percent fewer plastic bags found in the Anacostia River.

Alameda County cities currently spend millions to clean up litter in our creeks and storm drains – and plastic bags consistently make up a large portion of this trash. This single-use bag ordinance will also help reduce the number of bags going to landfill and decrease the problems caused by plastic bags at recycling processing centers, such as jammed machinery, work flow stoppages, and threatened worker safety.

In the absence of a statewide bill banning plastic bags, local efforts are more important than ever, placing Alameda County in the spotlight as cities and counties across the state and the country consider their own single-use bag ordinances.