

ECO-CYCLE SUPPORTS A FEE ON
ALL SINGLE-USE CHECKOUT BAGS,
PAPER AND PLASTIC...



BECAUSE DISPOSABLE IS NEVER A GOOD CHOICE.

**SPEAK UP FOR ZERO WASTE AND LEND YOUR SUPPORT FOR A BAG FEE AT
THESE PUBLIC MEETINGS:**

Bag Use in Boulder Public Meeting

Monday April 23, 2012

5:30 - 7:30 p.m.

Creekside Room, West Boulder Senior Center

909 Arapahoe Ave.

Environmental Advisory Board Meeting

Thursday, April 26, 2012

Council Chambers, 1777 Broadway

6 to 8 p.m.

City Council Meeting

Tuesday, May 15, 2012

Council Chambers, 1777 Broadway

6 p.m.

KEEP READING TO LEARN MORE ABOUT OUR POSITION.



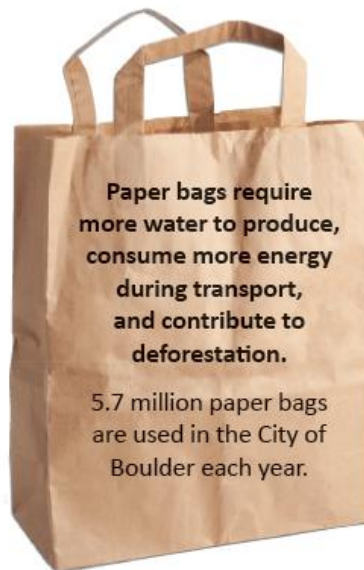
SUMMARY

Eco-Cycle strongly supports the idea of charging a small fee (10 cents) for single-use bags (both paper and plastic) distributed at the cash register in grocery stores and other large food-related stores. This fee will help Boulder significantly cut down on the estimated 46 million single-use bags distributed locally each year, plus:

- It's a perfect example of "polluter pays," a concept promoted by the U.S. EPA, the European Union, and other national policy bodies that a "polluter" must pay more than a non-polluter.
- No one needs to ever pay the single-use bag fee if they don't want to. Instead, they can bring their own reusable bags. There is a choice!
- The fee approach protects individual freedoms to use a single-use bag if you want.
- Judging from successes in other communities, the fee approach will reduce checkout bag use by at least 50%.
- In the future, a ban on certain bags may be appropriate, but Eco-Cycle sees the "polluter fee" approach as the first step.

Paper or plastic? Neither one is a good choice.

Both paper and plastic bags have negative environmental impacts. Plastic bags are made from non-renewable natural gas, are more easily littered, will not biodegrade, and pose a threat to wildlife and ecosystems. Paper bags require more water to produce, consume more energy during transport, and contribute to deforestation. Reusable bags help reduce these environmental impacts throughout the life of the bag.



Voluntary efforts are not enough.

Voluntary efforts and education campaigns to reduce disposable bags use in Boulder have made some progress but not nearly enough—**Eco-Cycle estimates our community continues to use 46 million disposable bags each year.** And more education will not lead to large decreases in bag use. The city of

Seattle, WA, another very environmentally-minded community, estimated enhanced education around the use of disposable bags would only reduce bag use by 5%. To help meet our community's environmental goals, we need to substantially reduce the number of disposable bags used, and a fee on disposable checkout bags is the best way to make this happen.

Why we need City Council to take action.

Boulder City Council has an admirable history of showing leadership on environmental and community issues, such as open space, bike paths and Zero Waste. Disposable bags are the most high profile symbol of the disposable, destructive consumption that's directly at odds with Boulder's vision for sustainability. Citizens have been clamoring for action against disposable bags for years and the time for action is now. A bag fee would also raise revenue to fund the city's Zero Waste action plan, without pulling funding from other valuable city programs.

A bag fee is better than a ban.

Placing a small fee on the use of any disposable bag, paper or plastic, sends a clear message that one type of bag is not better than the other, and that the larger problem is the use of disposable packaging. While a ban on one type of bag results in a large number of users just switching over to another type of bag, a fee results in a more substantial, longer-lasting reduction in total disposable bag use.



A ban on plastic bags would increase the use of paper bags, leading to more clearcutting and deforestation. A fee on paper and plastic bags would reduce all types of bags.

Repurposing disposable bags is only a small part of the solution.

Disposable paper and plastic bags can be reused for a variety of purposes—trash can liners, dog poop scoopers, lunch sacks, etc.—and this is probably quite common throughout Boulder and Boulder County. Yet in Boulder County in 2009, there were still more than 120 million plastic bags thrown away. This shows that even though some disposable bags are reused, there are still far too many ending up as trash and litter. Because disposable checkout bags will no longer be given away for free, there will be fewer of them available, and people will need to purchase other types of bags, such as trash bags, for these other purposes. However, the purchase of other types of bags is only expected to increase 3-7%, while disposable checkout bag usage may decrease 50-80%. This means the bag fee still meets its goal of substantially decreasing the use of disposable bags.

It's your choice whether you pay the fee.

The disposable bag fee is something you may never have pay no matter how much you shop in Boulder, if you provide your own reusable bags or skip a bag. It is all a matter of choice, whether you choose to use reusable bags or choose to pay the fee.

There's a cost to doing nothing.

Boulder residents are paying for the litter and pollution caused by disposable bags in several ways. Our tax dollars pay for litter cleanup on our streets, at our parks and open space, and along our creeks, and disposable bags are an abundant source of litter. Disposable bags contaminate the recycling center and add to processing costs, as well as at our local composting facilities. There are also indeterminable costs of paper and plastic bags such as the time spent by private businesses and residents cleaning up these bags as litter, impacts to stormwater systems and local waterways from clogging, stress upon local wildlife and ecosystems, and aesthetic damage from bag litter.

Ultimately, our consumption of disposable bags is contributing to our planetary problems of resource destruction, air and water pollution, and the plague of plastic particles in our oceans. Rather than forcing these costs upon the entire community, wouldn't it be fairer to have the polluters—the ones who choose to use these bags—pay for these costs?



Plastic bags jam the equipment at the Boulder County Recycling Center, just one of the costs the community pays for disposable bag use.

Other communities are joining the fight against disposable bags.

Nearly 100 communities have banned or taxed single-use checkout bags, including the countries of Ireland, Taiwan, Bangladesh, Israel, Rwanda, Ethiopia, China, France and Italy. Here in the U.S., more than 55 cities and 12 counties have enacted fees or bans against single-use bags. In Washington D.C., a five-cent fee on disposable bags has reduced their use by 80% and the money raised helps to clean up the Anacostia River. In Colorado, the towns of Aspen, Carbondale and Telluride have banned plastic checkout bags and placed a fee on paper checkout bags.

Better recycling efforts won't fix the problem.

The American Chemical Council, through its Progressive Bag Affiliates division, has fought against several proposed plastic bag taxes and bans, arguing that American consumers simply need more opportunities to recycle these bags after use. Their efforts to place more recycling containers at local retail locations have only marginally increased bag recycling and will not deliver a substantial decrease in the number of bags both used and disposed in our community.

Recycling is only one solution to the amount of waste produced by our community. While recycling saves energy, reduces greenhouse gas emissions, avoids air and water pollution, and reduces our consumption of natural resources, a better solution is to not create waste in the first place. Avoiding waste by choosing reusable products over cheap, disposable alternatives— like disposable paper and plastic checkout bags—creates far greater environmental benefits than using and recycling a product or packaging.

Bags can still be used for other purposes.

Bags can be used to wrap food to prevent contamination or to protect products from moisture, and this can still continue with a bag fee in place. The disposable bag fee would apply only to paper and plastic checkout bags. It does not apply to produce bags, bulk food bags, bags for bakery goods, prescription drug bags, newspaper bags, door-hanger bags, dry cleaning bags or trash bags.

This fee supports small and local businesses.

Retailers and businesses keep a small portion of the fee to help offset the costs of tracking disposable bag usage.

The burden will not fall on low-income populations.

Part of the money raised by the disposable bag fee will be used to provide free reusable bags to low-income populations.



Many communities have distributed free reusable bags to low-income populations when starting a bag fee program.