** A Sustainable Choice: Single Use Plastics**

**What can be done about Single Use Plastics?**

Plastics have great qualities, but it’s hard to justify using something once and tossing it away, especially when that “something” will last hundreds of years in our environment. Each of us in the U.S. discards an estimated five pounds of plastic bags each year; total plastics discard per person is approximately 218 pounds annually. Plastic waste clogs stormwater infrastructure. Increasingly, plastic bags and containers are made from fracked natural gas, a heavily polluting industry. Few plastics are recyclable, primarily the #1 and #2’s, and even then, they can be recycled only a couple of times because, unlike glass or metal, plastics degrade. Just 5-6% of all plastics are recycled; microplastics emerge; wildlife, oceans, human bodies suffer. Microplastics work like sponges and absorb other pollutants, so that the food chain is affected. At the current rate, it’s estimated that by 2050 there will be more plastic in the ocean than fish. Even our rain now contains microplastics.

Oil companies are increasing plastics production to offset expected decline of fossil fuel demand. Shell Oil in 2022 opened a huge plant in western Pennsylvania with the expectation it will produce 30 years of single-use plastics. The Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) projects that global plastic use and waste will nearly triple by 2060 with only a meager increase in plastic recycling, resulting in a doubling of global plastic pollution.

**What can I, you, we all do to curb the upward tide of plastics in our society**?

1. We can avoid purchasing items that are contained in plastic:
2. select the peanut butter in a glass jar and the unwrapped fruits and vegetables; perhaps make your own hummus, bread, and yogurt. A typical challenge: what to do with the plastic that frequently surrounds the lids? [ see (\*) in #2b].
3. Purchase bulk foods, using your own container (Weaver’s Way carries bulk products).
4. We can properly recycle the plastics that we purchase.
5. Follow the guidelines provided by your recycling provider.
6. Plastic “films” (low-density polyethylene) you can put into grocery store “plastic bag collection bins”. (These plastics might be used to produce yard furniture):

• Bread bags

• Ice bags

• Produce bags

• Plastic overwrap from things like paper towels, toilet paper, water bottle cases

• Bubble wrap; bubble mailers; air pillows (deflated)

• Tyvek mailers

• Dry cleaning bags

• Ziploc bags

• Newspaper bags

*[The above must be CLEAN and DRY. DO NOT deposit chip bags, frozen food bags, six-ring packs, prewashed salad mix bags]*

1. We can encourage initiatives towards re-usable containers or bags.
2. Ban the use of single use plastic (SUP) bags, utensils, and straws in our communities. Twenty-six communities in Pennsylvania have enacted ordinances prohibiting “SUPs”, including Montgomery Township, Ambler and Doylestown Boroughs, and Upper and Lower Merion Townships. These ordinances combined will prevent an estimated 880 million single use plastic bags (4800 tons) from entering our waste stream each year.
3. Try to buy durable, non-synthetic clothing. Mend your clothing; wear it as long as you can! Textile waste is a big component of microplastics.
4. Here are some organizations that are working on these challenges:
5. Philly Unwrapped, a local coalition committed to bringing together the food business community and sustainability movement around the issue of single-use packaging waste.
6. Circular Philadelphia works to transform Philadelphia’s linear economy to an efficient and resilient circular economy. [**https://circularphiladelphia.org/**](https://circularphiladelphia.org/)
7. Greenscreen Certification is the highest standard for chemical hazard assessment to help move our society toward the use of greener and inherently safer chemicals. [**https://www.greenscreenchemicals.org/assess/about-greenscreen-for-safer-chemicals**](https://www.greenscreenchemicals.org/assess/about-greenscreen-for-safer-chemicals)
8. FABSCRAP endeavors to end commercial textile waste and maximize the value of unused fabric. [**https://fabscrap.org/**](https://fabscrap.org/)
9. Retrievr recycles unwanted electronics, shoes, and clothing right from your door. [**https://retrievr.com/**](https://retrievr.com/)
10. Upstream Solutions works to accelerate a “transition from the throw-away economy to one that is regenerative, circular and equitable by normalizing reuse, growing and supporting the reuse industry, and creating an enabling policy environment.”

A very informative YouTube: “Single Use Plastic Education” with Faran Savitz (of Penn Environment) and Alisa Shargorodsky (of Echo Systems), was very informative: [**https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4BR1WoklVic**](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4BR1WoklVic)

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