

Lori Stegmann
Multnomah County Commissioner
Representing East County, District 4



House Environment & Natural Resource Committee
Oregon State Capitol
900 Court Street NE
Salem, OR 97301

Chair Helm and Members of the Committee,

Single-use plastics are one of the major contributors of waste and litter on earth. Multnomah County's Office of Sustainability has outlined its intentions to reduce single-use plastics and other waste through action 10A of the Climate Action Plan (CAP). Initially launched in 1993, this collaboration between Multnomah County and the City of Portland's Bureau of Planning and Sustainability aims to reduce carbon emissions by 40 percent in 2030, and 80 percent in 2050 (as compared to 1990 levels). The most recent 2015 Climate Action Plan identifies plastic as solid waste. And highlights the need to increase awareness and participation in targeted waste-prevention practices. It also points out the need to increase research and strategies to reduce use of paper, plastics and other materials.

Our Columbia River is among the top ten largest river systems in the US. This 85-mile long portion of the river adjacent to us provides easy access for plastic litter to enter and pollute the Columbia and its tributaries. With the Pacific Ocean being the final destination for debris and pollution that kills over 100,000 sea turtles, birds, and mammals each year according to Environment Oregon. Currently they report that 100 million tons of plastic debris and other waste are floating in the Pacific Ocean. Limiting single-use plastic bags from entering our waste stream will result in less pollution in our natural areas, our rivers and our oceans.

While Portland has had a single-use plastic bag ban since 2011, cities in East Multnomah County have had a difficult time implementing a single-use plastic bag ban. Some East County cities have multiple retail stores, while others have few. Efforts to address this issue on a multi-city level in the summer of 2018 were stalled as each city explored various avenues. One common theme that arose from this work was a desire to have a unified single-use plastic bag ban that would be easier to implement and enforce. Having a statewide single-use plastic bag ban would improve this process and streamline the implementation, especially for small businesses with multiple locations.

Replacing the patchwork of ordinances with a single statewide ordinance will make a significant impact on the amount of waste produced within Multnomah County and the State of Oregon. It will make single-use plastic reduction simpler for businesses to understand and implement. It will enable consumers to have a better basic understanding of single-use plastic policies both within and outside of their city. If passed, this single-use plastic bag ban before you today will be a major step towards reducing solid waste in Multnomah County and the State of Oregon.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Lori Stegmann".

Commissioner Lori Stegmann, Multnomah County District 4