



# EVERGLADES COALITION

February 11, 2021

Executive Office of Governor Ron DeSantis  
400 S Monroe St  
Tallahassee, FL 32399

Sent Via Email to [GovernorRon.Desantis@eog.myflorida.com](mailto:GovernorRon.Desantis@eog.myflorida.com)

## **RE: Plastic Pollution Impacts the Everglades**

Dear Honorable Governor DeSantis:

On behalf of the Everglades Coalition, a 61-member coalition focused on restoration, preservation and protection of the Greater Everglades, we write to ask that the State of Florida take action this legislative session on dealing with the issue of plastic pollution.

The State and Federal Government to date has invested approximately 3.4 Billion in Everglades Restoration efforts to improve the Quantity, Quality, Timing and Distribution of water deliveries to our ecosystems and protect our water supply for future generations. This work as you know also benefits Florida tourism, the housing market and the fishing industry. Plastic pollution not only impacts the wildlife that this ecosystem calls home but directly impacts water quality and tourism.

Rain or overwatering flushes litter through a storm drain system or directly to canals, creeks, streams and rivers that lead to the estuaries and ultimately the ocean. After plastics enter the marine environment, they slowly photodegrade into smaller pieces that marine life can mistake for food, sometimes with fatal results. An estimated 60-80% of all marine debris and 90% of all floating debris is plastic, and the vast majority of this marine debris comes from upland sources (Fanshawe and Everand 2002). The United Nations Environment Programme estimates that 6.4 million tons of debris reaches the ocean each year, and that 8 million items are discarded into the sea every day (UNEP 2005).

A 2016 World Economic Forum study estimates that by 2050, there will be more plastic in the ocean than fish. The current ratio of plastics to fish is 1:5 (by weight).

### **Regulatory Solutions**

When education and outreach fail, public policy can step in to help protect the environment. There are two types of public policy ordinances that stand out regarding bags: banning plastic bags and placing a small fee on paper bags OR placing a small fee on both paper and plastic bags. Both of these offer an

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added incentive to the consumer to bring a reusable bag to the store. The fees could go to the retailer (for their costs) and/or the city (for a litter abatement fund), depending on the structure of the law.

Unfortunately, in 2008, Florida lawmakers passed a bill prohibiting local governments from banning, taxing or limiting plastic bags in any way until the Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) creates recommendations, and they are adopted by the Legislature.

In 2010, the DEP completed the Retail Bags Report- strategies to discourage the use of single-use paper and plastic retail bags, but the Legislature still hasn't adopted it. As such, all municipalities are once again deprived of their home rule authority to regulate the issues that impact their community locally.

To date, 32 Florida municipalities have passed resolutions calling for the regulation of single-use plastic bags. We suggest the state act to address the plastic issue this year by adopting statewide recommendations to address the plastic pollution issue, or lift the ban currently in place and allow municipalities to deal with this waste issue on their own. We cannot afford another decade of waiting for the state to take action on this issue. We are looking to you to lead and decide if this is a state or a local issue, but inaction on all fronts will not help us solve this problem.

Sincerely,



Mark Perry  
Co-Chair



Marisa Carrozzo  
Co-Chair

#### **Additional Background Information**

- Right now it's against the law for local governments to ban, tax, or limit single-use plastic bags or polystyrene foam foodware (aka "Styrofoam").
- In 2008, Florida lawmakers passed a bill **prohibiting local governments from regulating or banning plastic bags** until the DEP creates recommendations, **and** they are adopted by the Legislature.
- In 2010, the **DEP completed the Retail Bags Report**, strategies to discourage the use of single-use plastic bags.... but the **Legislature still hasn't adopted it**.
- In 2016, the Florida Legislature preempted local regulation of polystyrene foam foodware.
- Polystyrene is a petroleum based plastic product used in many disposable food containers. It is rarely recycled, frequently littered and never biodegrades
- Single-use plastic bags damage the environment, blight local communities, and cost taxpayer's money. In effort to clean up trash and recycle as much as possible, municipalities spend millions
- Keep America Beautiful estimates that **litter cleanup costs the U.S. almost \$11.5 billion each year**.
- Landfills often have added fencing and employees to control plastic bags on windy days, and plastic bags can also clog recycling machinery- adding additional costs and decreasing efficiency.
- 127 countries, 400 U.S. cities, and eight states have banned single-use plastic bags.

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Cc:

Senate President, Wilton Simpson

Speaker of the House, Chris Sprowls

Department of Environmental Protection Secretary, Noah Valenstein

Senate – Environment and Natural Resource Committee

House – Environment, Agriculture & Flooding Subcommittee

Senate – Agriculture Subcommittee

Senate – Community Affairs Committee

House – Regulatory Reform Subcommittee

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