

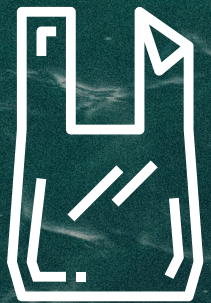
Plastic Bags: The Problem

Plastic bags were developed and promoted by the oil and gas industry and by the late 1970s were consistently offered by stores (Clapp and Swanston). The appeal of plastic bags is that they are lightweight, disposable, and cheap. However, their thin and light nature makes them easily blow away from landfills and into oceans (VanDoren).

3 main issues with plastic bag production and use:

The United States uses 100 billion plastic bags per year (Bubar), with 1 in 200 bags worldwide being recycled (Plastic Bag Consumption)

Plastic bags are a part of a "throw away" culture surrounding, leading to their short life span (Brannan).



It is estimated that 12 million barrels of oil are required to produce plastic bags (Clapp and Swanston)

Oil is not only a nonrenewable resource, adding to the unsustainable nature of plastic bag consumption, its use contributes to greenhouse gases being released in the atmosphere.



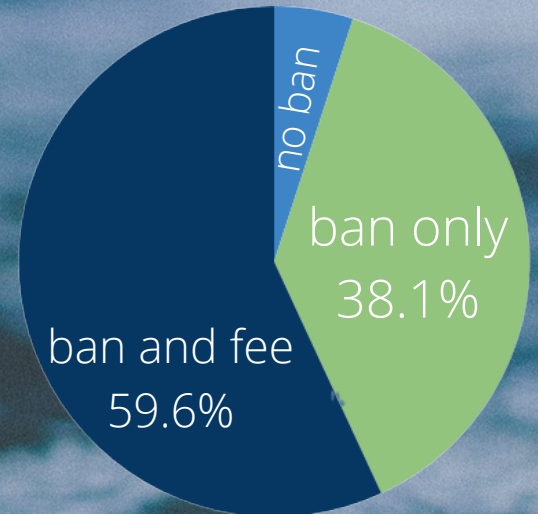
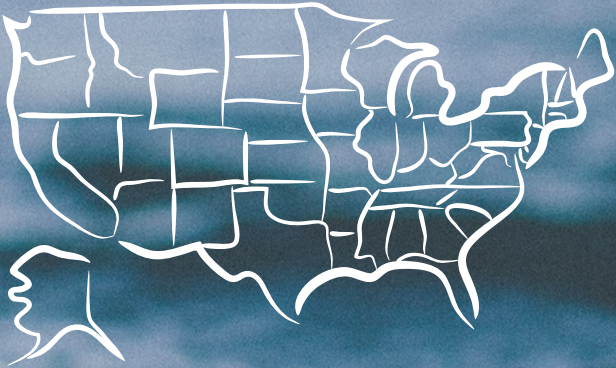
Plastic bags can take up to 1000 years to break down (Clapp and Swanston)

and when they do they only break into smaller pieces, which can easily be consumed by wildlife (Clapp and Swanston).



Current Policies

As of 2017 there were 271 local governments with plastic bag ordinances (Wagner)



95% of which are a ban on single-use plastic bags; 56.9% of these bans also include a mandatory **fee** on paper and/or reusable bags (Wagner)



A fee allows consumers in a pinch to pay for a paper or reusable bag in order to encourage bringing their own. Introducing a ban in tandem with a tax can ease the transition and make the effort more effective (Larsen)

Currently there are **no statewide policies** in place, despite the successes of local regulations. These local initiatives are attempting to change consumer and producer behavior and implementing more widespread policies would help the national transition away from single use plastic bags.

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