

# RIVERKEEPER SWEEP Help Stop Plastic Bag Pollution

Text **PLASTIC** to 21333

In February 2017, Governor Cuomo and the state Legislature killed a promising New York City law that aimed to reduce the use of plastic bags. With his signature, the Governor created a task force and promised a statewide solution. Now, the Governor supports banning the bag statewide, which is a positive step forward, but his proposal lacks a key provision to make a plastic bag ban work: a modest fee on paper. Evidence from communities across the country demonstrate that a fee on paper is necessary to foster a culture of using reusable bags<sup>1</sup>.

**Why stop the plastic bag?** Riverkeeper and Columbia University's recent research found microplastic particles prevalent in waters across the New York metro area.<sup>2</sup> Each year, nearly 23 billion single-use plastic bags are used across NYS.<sup>3</sup> Many of these lightweight bags end up on our streets and make their way into our local waterways, carried by wind, storm sewers, and shoreline littering.<sup>4</sup>



**NYS must ban the bag. Urge Governor Cuomo, your Assembly member and Senator to pass Senate Bill S7760 and Assembly bill A9953.** The legislation would ban polluting single-use plastic bags and place a 10-cent fee on paper. Key provisions in the proposed legislation include the following:

- 80 percent of the fee on paper and new reusable bags would fund the Environmental Protection Fund for education and environmental protection with priority to low/fixed-income communities;
- 20 percent would help stores defray potential costs with a maximum fee of 25 cents;
- Provisions are modeled after California's effective plastic bag law that went into effect in 2016;<sup>5</sup>
- Produce, meat, and bulk food single-use bags are exempt from this legislation. Additionally, to protect low-income New Yorkers, WIC and SNAP customers are exempt from all fees.

## WHAT YOU CAN DO TO STOP PLASTIC BAG POLLUTION:

### GATHER PETITION SIGNATURES SUPPORTING (S7760/A9953).

The Riverkeeper team is heading to Albany on June 6, 2018 to advocate for the passage of (S7760/A9953). **Help us carry the voices of New York State into our meetings by gathering petition signatures in support of this legislation.** All petitions must be mailed back to Riverkeeper, 20 Secor Road, Ossining, NY 10562 by Monday, May 28.

**DOWNLOAD PETITIONS HERE:** <https://goo.gl/Y9poih>

**Pass a local law.** Take action in your hometown in the absence of state leadership. Contact your local representatives and encourage them to take local action on plastic bag, following the lead of many communities across New York.<sup>6</sup>

**Write your newspaper.** Send a letter to the editor or op-ed to your local papers encouraging local, personal and statewide action (S7760/A9953) to address plastic bag pollution.

**Bring your own bag.** Be part of the solution. Bring a reusable bag when shopping. Purchase reusable straws, water bottles, and hot beverage cups to further reduce your impact. *Photo: Leah Rae/Riverkeeper*

<sup>1</sup>NYS Plastic Bag Task Force <https://www.dec.ny.gov/chemical/112291.html>

<sup>2</sup>Lim, S et al. *Columbia University Lemont-Doherty Earth Institute*. Distribution of Microplastics in the Estuarine Waters around the New York Metropolitan Area and Assessment of their Role as Potential Vectors of Toxic Compounds <https://www.riverkeeper.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/04/Microplastics-Poster.pdf>

<sup>3</sup>NYS Plastic Bag Task Force <https://www.dec.ny.gov/chemical/112291.html>

<sup>4</sup>Scientific Support for a Plastic Bag Reduction Law. *Scientist Action and Advocacy Network* [http://scaan.net/docs/ScAAN\\_Bags\\_report.pdf](http://scaan.net/docs/ScAAN_Bags_report.pdf)

<sup>5</sup>It's been a year since California banned single use plastic bags. The World Didn't End. *LA Times Editorial Board* <http://www.latimes.com/opinion/editorials/la-ed-plastic-bag-ban-anniversary-20171118-story.html>

<sup>6</sup>Comprehensive list of state, county and local plastic bag laws [www.baglaws.com](http://www.baglaws.com)