

# Rise Above Plastics

## Single Use Plastic Check-Out Bags in Victoria



Since our inception in 1984, the Surfrider Foundation has evolved into one of the largest non-profit grassroots organizations dedicated to the **protection of the ocean, waves and beaches through a powerful activist network**. Worldwide there are more than 250, 000 supporters of Surfrider and our various programs and campaigns.

Locally, Surfrider (Vancouver Island Chapter) aims to reduce, and eventually eliminate single-use plastic check-out bags.

### What you need to know about check-out bags:

- Single use plastic bags, such as those commonly used at the grocery store, make up a significant portion of marine debris.
  - Plastics now comprise one of the biggest threats to marine environments.
- Biodegradable plastic bags are not currently a feasible alternative because of the lack of commercial composting facilities necessary to recycle them.
- Paper bags and biodegradable plastic bags arguably have less harmful impacts on the environment, but also have disadvantages.
- Reusable bags are the preferred alternative.
- 2.86-billion bags used annually in Canada- 200 for every one of us.

### What Surfrider is doing:

- Reaching out to local businesses to:
  - Find out who has already voluntarily removed single-use plastic check-out bags.
  - Provide support to those who want to voluntarily remove single-use plastic check-out bags.
- Educating consumers through a Bring Your Own Bag (BYOB) campaign to promote the use of reusable bags.
- Working with local government on a bylaw enforcing a plastic bag ban.

### What you can do:

1. Take the Rise Above Plastic Pledge:
  - a. Use cloth shopping bags. For each reusable bag you use, it's estimated that another 400 plastic bags will be kept from being used.
  - b. Forget bottled water and carry a reusable canteen. Every reusable water bottle will keep another 167 plastic bottles from entering the environment.
  - c. Bring a reusable mug when you go to your local coffee shop.
  - d. Skip the straw, which are one of the top 10 items found on beaches.
  - e. And, of course, Recycle!
2. Voluntarily eliminate single-use plastic check-out bags in your store.
3. Encourage other retailers to also eliminate single-use plastic check-out bags.
4. Participate in International Plastic Bag Free day on July 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2015.
5. Come support us at the July 9<sup>th</sup> Council Meeting.

For more info contact: [chair@vancouverisland.surfrider.org](mailto:chair@vancouverisland.surfrider.org)

Visit our website: [vancouverisland.surfrider.org](http://vancouverisland.surfrider.org)

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# Single-use Plastic Bags: What is right for Victoria?

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Protecting Oceans, Waves and Beaches since 1984

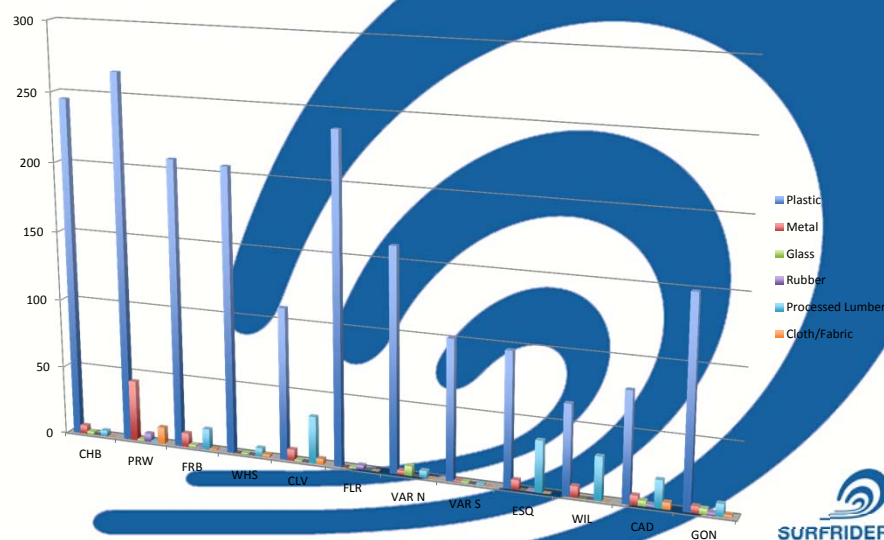


Mission – The protection and enjoyment of oceans, waves and beaches through a powerful activist network...we protect where we play!

- Over 250,000 members
- 18 affiliates around the world
- 84 chapters in the US
- 3 in Canada



## Combing the Coast: Data Collection



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## What about a Bag Ban?

### United States

- State of Hawaii – 2015
- State of California - 2014
  - 100+ cities in California prior to the state ban (including LA, San Francisco, San Jose)
- Seattle – 2012
- Portland - 2011
- Many other small coastal cities (e.g., Bellingham)

### Canada

- Leaf Rapids
- Thompson Rivers
- Fort McMurray



Map: Earth Policy Institute

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## What are local businesses, residents and Surfrider doing?



We pledge to reduce the amount of plastic waste we generate on a daily basis.

**1,200+ Signatures!**

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## Why do businesses have them?

1. They're convenient
  - Plastic check-out bags were introduced by retailers in the 1970s as they were lighter and took up less space than their paper alternative.
2. They're cheap
  - Plastic check-out bags are cheaper bag for bag than paper or other bag alternatives...for retailers.
3. Their competitors have them

## Why do consumers use them?

1. They're free.
  - Retailers cover the cost.
2. They're convenient.
  - They aren't expected to have their own.
  - They're always offered.
3. They think can easily be recycled.
  - There are more soft-plastic collection facilities

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## Are plastic bags worth it?

Benefit	Cost to the environment
They're cheap for retailers.	Every year, an estimated 1,000,000 seabirds and 100,000 marine mammals die from ingestion of or entanglement in plastic.
They're convenient for consumers.	Every piece of plastic that was ever produced is still in the environment today.
They can be recycled.	Only a fraction of plastic bags actually get recycled. Most plastic bags distributed in North America end up getting shipped to Asia for sorting.
They're available everywhere.	In parts of the ocean there is now more plastic than plankton.

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## Where do plastic bags go?



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## What are the next steps?

**Surfrider** – continue to educate businesses and residents on single-use plastic bag alternatives.

**Local Businesses** – voluntarily removing single-use plastic bags and providing alternatives.

**Residents** – taking the Plastic Pledge and signing the petition in support of a bag ban.

**Victoria City Council** – Champion this change and support local businesses who want to remove single use plastic bags from their inventory.

– Consider taking the same approach that other coastal cities have taken (e.g., bag ban).

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