

Rethink Consumption – Single Use Plastic & Water Use

Single use items are designed to be used once before they are discarded. This article focuses on single-use plastic like :

- plastic forks, knives and spoons
- plastic shopping bags
- plastic coffee cup lids
- plastic water bottles
- styrofoam and plastic take out containers
- plastic straws.

Single-use plastics and single use in general may represent the epitome of today's throwaway culture. The U.N. Environment reports **9%** of the world's nine billion tons of plastic produced is recycled. Most plastic terminates in landfills, oceans and waterways. Plastics do not biodegrade. Instead they eventually break down into smaller pieces of plastic called microplastics.

It is estimated that by 2050 more plastic than fish, by weight, will dominate our oceans. We can make different choices and reduce single use plastic as well as single use in general.

Solutions are complicated. Companies have created questionable biodegradable and compostable options but our valley lacks the infrastructure to treat these items as anything but trash.

More information can be found in the following video

<https://www.mailtribune.com/news/videos/green-living-an-ocean-of-plastic/>

What is happening in Ashland to reduce single use plastic?

Rogue To Go - Rogue To Go provides a reusable, standardized container customers use at any participating restaurant. Buying in at any participating eatery for \$10 is an easy way to reduce waste and support a better way to do take out! More information at www.roguetogo.com

Lend me a Plate (LMAP) - Lend Me A Plate (LMAP) is a volunteer-run program to reduce waste generated at events and gatherings by providing durable eatware instead of using of disposable products. More information at <https://somra.org/lend-me-a-plate/>

Styrofoam Ban - The use of Styrofoam for food packaging was banned in Ashland in 1991. The disposal of foam products in public landfills or as litter was declared a public nuisance. The manufacture of all types of polystyrene foam has been identified as a major contributor to the depletion of the earth's ozone layer and a long-term menace to public health.

Plastic Bag Ban - The City of Ashland approved an ordinance for the use and distribution of plastic bags for retail customers at local businesses in 2014. Plastic bags (under 4 mil thickness) for customer use at point of sale (checkout) was prohibited. Businesses are now required to charge a dime for each

paper bag used by the customer at checkout. To mitigate impacts from the use of paper bags, paper bags offered at checkout must contain at least 40% post consumer recycled content.

Straws - Ashland piloted a Straws-On-Demand program in 2018. In 2020 Oregon banned food and beverage providers from providing single use straws unless specifically requested by customers. While the elimination of straws may seem like a minuscule step toward reducing the abundance of plastic waste, the National Park Service estimates that Americans use 500 million plastic straws each day, which is enough to fill 125 school buses. For people with disabilities, straws can be essential and remain available.

What else can we do to reduce single use plastic?

- **Go reusable!** Coffee cups, cutlery and bags are easy items to choose durable. Be Prepared: Leave stash in car, in bike bag, backpack or purse with these items
- Ask for sauce to go straight on your meal and don't ask for a straw
- Avoid overpackaged food or opt for food in paper/cardboard over plastic and buy from dispensers in reusable packaging.

Rethink Consumption - Water

Our Ashland watershed is in drought. Resources that provide details about the City of Ashland water situation, and steps you can take to lower water usage include:

- 1) <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kbolpY9C9A8&t=1s> Ashland's water czar Julie Smitherman discusses Ashland water supply, and conservation programs currently available to Ashland residents.
- 2) www.ashlandsaveswater.org Get information on Water Wise landscaping and water-saving tips. Information about rebates when purchasing high-efficiency low-flow toilets, low-flow washing machines, and smart water controllers (automatic watering systems) are also included. Additionally, free sprinkler system evaluations, lawn replacement rebates, and indoor water use analysis is available. Check out free low-flow showerheads, water faucet aerators, and outdoor moisture meters.
- 3) <https://www.ashlandtidings.com/topstories/news/2021/05/05/drought-management-plan-prioritizes-tap/> Learn about City plans to address the water shortage this year.

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