

RECYCLING

Plastic bags are 100% recyclable.

Across the U.S., millions of people are choosing plastic bags to take their items home from the store. These bags can be a sustainable option for our country when disposed of properly and recycled. Millions of pounds of bags are recycled each year by being brought in to local grocers for collection. Recycled plastic bags are used to make new plastic bags and building products, such as backyard decks, playground equipment, and fences.

If consumers lose their choice of plastic bags at checkout or are forced to pay for them, people would purchase thicker garbage bags, introducing even more plastic into the environment.

Facts about Recycling

- Retail plastic bags are only one small fraction of the litter problem. Solving the larger litter problem isn't about banning grocery plastic bags. The solution is to create new opportunities for recycling all plastics.
- According to the EPA, the recycling rate of polyethylene bags, sacks and wraps in 2010 was 14.7 percent, a 23.8 percent increase from the rate in 2009. Recycling of polyethylene bags, sacks and wraps has now grown in 9 out of the last 10 years. ¹
- These recycling efforts support thousands of green jobs which are put at risk by plastic bag bans and taxes.

Facts about Plastic Bags

- On a per bag basis, plastic grocery bags are the best checkout option for our environment. Plastic bags are more resource efficient, reduce landfill waste and generate fewer greenhouse gas emissions.
 - They take up a lot less space in a landfill: 1,000 plastic bags weigh 13 pounds; 1,000 paper bags weigh 114 pounds. ²
 - They generate 80 percent less waste than paper bags. ³
 - They make up a tiny fraction (less than 0.5 percent) of the U.S. municipal solid waste stream. ⁴
- American plastic bags are made from natural gas, NOT oil. In the U.S., 85 percent of the raw material used to make plastic bags is produced from natural gas. ⁵
- Recycled plastic bags are used to make new plastic bags and building products, such as backyard decks, playground equipment, and fences.

¹ "Municipal Solid Waste Generation, Recycling, and Disposal in the United States"; 2009 and 2010

² [Life Cycle Assessment for Three Types of Grocery Bags – Recyclable Plastic; Compostable, Biodegradable Plastic; and Recycled, Recyclable Paper](#); Chet Chaffee and Bernard R. Yaros, Boustead Consulting & Associates Ltd.; 2007; p. 9

³ [ibid](#); p. 54

⁴ [U.S. Environmental Protection Agency](#); 2009; p. 53.

⁵ Analysis by Chemical Market Associates, Inc.; February, 2011.