



White Salmon Checkout Bag Ordinance—Supporting Information

In July, Community Upcycle spoke to the City Council about the importance of a Checkout Bag Ordinance in White Salmon. A town of this size is estimated to use almost 1 million plastic checkout bags annually. These bags are not recyclable here, and they harm both the environment and our recycling systems. For more detail about the issues, please review the presentation given to WSCC at communityupcycle.org/resources.html.

Support from Businesses

28 White Salmon businesses, including Harvest Market, support the ordinance. This represents the vast majority of downtown storefront businesses.¹

Support for the Ban + Charge Model

In addition to banning the traditional plastic checkout bags, the ordinance stipulates a required minimum 10¢ charge for a recycled paper or reusable plastic (2.25+ mil) bag. The charge has been proven to be a critical component of this effective approach: it encourages reuse, and avoids the transfer of the environmental burden to paper or thicker plastic.

- Portland tried a ban *without* a charge in 2011: Reusable checkout bag use increased over 300%, which is great, but the use of paper checkout bags increased almost 500%.²
- By contrast, California's statewide ordinance (ban plus a 10¢ charge) resulted in customers bringing their own bags for 84% of transactions. Paper bag use dropped 61%.³
- This model is supported by the WA Food Industry Assoc. (which includes Harvest Market and Rosauers).⁴
- 33 WA municipalities ban plastic bags; over 75% of those mandate a fee on recycled paper/reusable plastic bags.
- Bag credits alone don't work. Studies of a bag fee vs. bag credit show the credit has virtually no effect while fees decreased demand for disposable bags by over 50%.⁵
- By setting a minimum charge for these bags, the ordinance encourages reusable bag use, sets a level playing field among retailers, and still allows retailer discretion to charge more.

The 10¢ Charge Is Not a Tax

Customers who choose to purchase a carryout bag pay the retailer 10¢ for the bag. The retailer keeps the money to help compensate for the cost of the bag. Standard retail sales tax applies to the transaction, which amounts to ¼ of a cent per bag. Sales using a voucher or electronic benefits card are excluded from the charge.

¹ An endorsement letter signed by local businesses, and a separate endorsement from Harvest Market have been submitted to the council.

² *Promoting Reusable Checkout Bags in Portland One-Year Report*, October 3, 2012, Portland Bureau of Planning & Sustainability.

³ SB 270 Report to the Legislature: CalRecycle (2019)

⁴ WFIA 2019 Priority Issues. <http://www.wa-food-ind.org/priority-issues>

⁵ *Can Small Incentives Have Large Effects? The Impact of Taxes versus Bonuses on Disposable Bag Use*. American Economic Journal: Economic Policy 2018, 10(4): 1–35.



Promotes, supports, and protects businesses in the food, beverage, and convenience industry

Bingen City Council
1112 N. Ash
Bingen, WA 98605

RE: Plastic Bag Ban

On behalf of Washington Food Industry Association (WFIA) and our food, beverage and convenience industry members, we encourage you to vote yes on the plastic bag ban.

Since 1899, the Washington Food Industry Association (WFIA) proudly supports the independent food industry and their suppliers in Washington. WFIA is a non-profit, statewide trade association comprised of independent supermarkets, convenience stores, and our suppliers.

Throughout Washington state, local jurisdictions have been passing ordinance banning plastic bags to combat the environmental problems plastic bags present. Our association is part of the coalition who is working these local ordinances in order to ensure consistency and uniformity in the many different cities and counties who are passing these ordinances.

At this point in time, a fee of \$0.10 is needed due to the high cost of the larger paper carry out bags. These fees encourage the use of reusable bags by consumers, but they also help our stores recuperate the cost difference between plastic film bags and paper carryout bags to help us avoid increasing food costs to accommodate the significant price difference. Single-use plastic bags cost 2.2 cents per bag for our grocers. By contrast, a paper bag cost 11.62 cents per bag with handles, while a paper bag without handles is 10.6 cents per bag.

However, a fee is not enough. There needs to be an alternative to the paper bag, such as the 2.25 mil bag mentioned in the ordinance. The supply for paper bags is simply not available at this time. Our stores are waiting anywhere between twelve weeks and six months for paper bags – with no logo and no customization. There are only four major paper producers in the United States, and no company is adding machinery to create more paper bags. An alternative to paper bags is needed to meet the demand of consumers.

Concerns about the environmental consequences of plastic bags are valid. However, we need to limit the burden that the plastic bag ban would have on all businesses and individuals in your community.

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The Washington Food Industry Association promotes, supports, and protects businesses in the food, beverage, and convenience industry.

PLASTIC BAG BAN

WFIA POSITION: WFIA supports a statewide plastic bag ban as long as there is a pass-through charge of \$0.10 per paper bag and an option for a 2.25 mil bag. Additionally, the technical specifications of the bags must be industry standards.

BACKGROUND: Single-use plastic bags emerged as a popular bag choice in the 1970s. The popularity of single-use bags can be traced to their convenience, lightweight construction, affordability, and opportunity for reuse, among other reasons. However, concerns have been raised about the environmental consequences they pose. In response, many local city or county governments throughout Washington State have chosen to ban single-use plastic bags, which includes pass-through charges on single-use paper bags to encourage the use of reusable bags. The grocery and convenience store industry has worked with these governments and proponents of the bag bans to ensure these methods, and requirements to accommodate the bag bans, are consistent.

A pass-through charge of \$0.10 is needed to help supplement the cost difference between plastic film bags and paper or 2.25 mil plastic reusable bags. Currently, paper bags cost around \$0.10 to \$0.12 to buy from manufacturers, while plastic film bags cost \$0.02 to buy from manufacturers. Businesses need to be able to recuperate associated costs. Although it is hopeful that consumers will transition to reusable bags, it is not guaranteed. The pass-through charge will offset the cost increase to retailers, so they do not have to pass the cost on to customers or risk going out of business.

At this point, the paper bag supply cannot meet paper bag demand. The demand for paper bags is so high that many of our stores run out of paper bags. With more bans being implemented throughout the country, it is important that there is an alternative to paper bags for customers to use. The 2.25 mil plastic reusable bag is an acceptable alternative as it is reusable, and it can be recycled unlike the plastic film bags. An alternative to paper bags is needed to meet the demand of consumers.

For more information contact:

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PLASTIC BAG BAN – BAG COSTS

WFIA grocery and convenience store members pay more than 10 cents for carry out paper bags. The following are the prices provided by Bunzl Inc., an international distribution and service group. They are a primary distributor of bags for our stores throughout Washington State.

Large Customers – paper bags

1/7th Handle Carryout Bag

900 Bales Per Month

Cost per Bag: 11.62 Cents per Bag

Medium Customers – paper bags

1/6th Handle Carryout Bag

50 Bales per Month

Cost per Bag: 12.5 Cents per Bag

1/6th No Handle Carryout Bag

30 Bales Per Month

Cost per Bag: 10.6 Cents per Bag

Small Customers – paper bags

Small Customer:

1/7th Handle Carryout Bag

236 Bales Per Month

Cost per Bag: 11.9 Cents per Bag

Average Customer – non-paper bags

Average Plastic Film T-Sack

400 Bales per Month

Cost per Bag: 2.2 Cents per Bag

Reusable Plastic T-Sack 2.25 mil

70 Cases per Month

Cost per Bag: 8.6 Cents per Bag

Compostable T-Sack

Cost per Bag: 11-12 Cents per Bag

Without the fee, converting plastic bags to paper bags is a huge cost. For example, Rosauers Supermarkets has 14 stores in Washington State. They would pay an additional \$840,625 by switching to paper bags only. As such, we ask you to support the 10-cent fee, as independent grocery and convenience stores need the fee as a way to recuperate the cost difference between paper and plastic bags.