

RHODE ISLAND TASKFORCE TO TACKLE PLASTICS

RECOMMENDATIONS TO THE GOVERNOR



February 14th, 2019





Executive Summary

Plastic pollution is dangerous to the health of our oceans and ocean species, contributes to climate change, and is a major component of unsightly litter both on our lands and in our waters. Plastic material that enters the marine environment breaks down into smaller pieces called microplastics, which can be ingested by marine life, putting Rhode Island’s fishing industries and aquatic ecosystems at risk. Plastic products like plastic bags and thin plastic films are the predominant contaminant of recycling loads in Rhode Island, contributing to tons of valuable recyclable materials having to be diverted to the central landfill. Before making it to the landfill, plastic single-use disposables – including plastic bags, beverage containers, six-pack rings, and straws – are a significant contributor to litter along Rhode Island’s shorelines and throughout Rhode Island’s communities.

Through an Executive Order in July 2018, Governor Raimondo established that developing stronger policies to reduce the use of plastics and single-use disposables is a top goal of her administration and charged a new body, the Taskforce to Tackle Plastics (Taskforce), with providing recommendations to do so. The Governor directed that recommendations should include ideas to encourage the financial and market factors necessary to support reduction and recycling of plastics and to develop non-regulatory recognition and incentive programs, as well as potential legislation and / or regulations, to eliminate the sources of plastic pollution. In addition, the recommendations should support and build upon existing, successful recycling programs – including an initiative the Governor launched in May 2018 to partner with marinas to prevent plastics pollution – while also educating Rhode Islanders on the importance of and means to reducing and recycling plastics. Governor Raimondo also recognized that, given the geography and size of the state, Rhode Island can be a leader in innovation related to reducing and eliminating plastics

pollution, demonstrating results that could be scaled to different locations around the world.

It is important to note that “plastic” is not a single material, but a large class of different types of materials. What they have in common is that they are plastic, which means they are soft and easy to turn into many different forms during manufacturing. Plastics are mostly synthetic materials, made from polymers, which are long molecules built around chains of carbon atoms (typically along with hydrogen, oxygen, sulfur, and nitrogen). The building blocks for these polymers are produced from petrochemicals and refining processes, which take crude oil extracted from the ground as their main input. The refining process separates the components of that oil through various physical and chemical processes. The end result of the process is polymers, which are then blended to make plastics with specific properties. Thus, the environmental footprint of the end-to-end plastic process includes the petroleum extraction processes, the refining processes, the transportation of materials, and the final manufacturing step.

The Taskforce recognizes that plastic pollution in our oceans and our communities is a serious and growing problem that must be addressed, and that litter (including plastic materials) on our coastlines and land should be eliminated. The agreed-upon approach to plastic pollution, and in particular single-use plastics, is: (1) eliminate plastic products, in favor of reusable products, (2) if elimination is impractical or impossible, use readily recyclable plastics and maximize the opportunities to properly recycle those plastics, and (3) if elimination and recycling is impractical or impossible, ensure the proper collection and disposal of the remaining material through the appropriate systems and incentives.

The Taskforce recognizes that plastic materials must be considered in terms of their impacts on people, including health impacts and other quality of life

factors, and that those impacts have a disproportionate effect on vulnerable populations. There is growing evidence of the presence of microplastics throughout our oceans, and in the waters of Narragansett Bay. Microplastics are ingested by small marine life, enter the food chain, and are eventually consumed by humans. Although the impacts of ingesting these materials is not yet completely known, some plastics have been shown to be endocrine disruptors, which are chemicals that may interfere with the body's endocrine system and produce adverse developmental, reproductive, neurological, and immune effects in both humans and wildlife.

Economic impacts are also critical, both in terms of individuals and businesses. Plastic single-use items are used by many Rhode Island residents and businesses, and Rhode Island businesses who have taken leadership to reduce reliance on single-use plastics have had to contend with the prices of plastic alternatives, the costs associated with changing business processes, and the always-competitive ecosystem in which they operate. The administrative and cost burden of implementing new policies related to plastics materials and single-use items falls largely on businesses, and any new policies must consider any unintended consequences.

The Taskforce also recognizes that its work will not be effective in isolation. Plastic is one of multiple classes of materials used for single-use disposables, and the Taskforce's efforts should be viewed as a step toward a holistic approach to sustainable management of resources and waste. Other, alternative materials that are less detrimental to people and the environment must also be considered and developed; one component of the Taskforce's work was considering innovative techniques to recycle plastic objects and cutting-edge scientific research that may lead to new products.

Given the backdrop of plastic pollution's impact on Rhode Island's environment, health, and quality of life, as well as its interlockings with economics for individuals, businesses, and other single-use disposables, the Taskforce focused its work on taking the first step in a longer process to address pollution, single-use disposables, and recycling in Rhode Island. To that end, the Taskforce recommends a set of recommendations for immediate implementation (i.e., within the next year) that span four major themes:

- 1. Encourage and facilitate voluntary reduction of single-use plastics by Rhode Island entities, including the State and businesses across sectors. Such an effort includes establishing best practices (e.g., examples of plastics alternatives), creating a recognition program for entities that reduce use of single-use plastics, and piloting programs within State government to eliminate single-use plastics.*
- 2. the number of single-use bags in Rhode Island by establishing a ban on single-use plastic check-out bags and a fee on single-use paper check-out bags and pairing that change with increased availability of free reusable bags, especially for vulnerable populations. Such a policy enacted legislatively could lay the foundation for policies on other types of single-use disposables to be established consistently across the state.*
- 3. Increase awareness of plastic pollution and recycling and its implications through educational initiatives that meet target audiences in their daily lives, in meaningful ways. Such an effort may include a Governor-level public service campaign related to recycling.*
- 4. Support innovation related, but not limited, to single-use disposables, that draws on the strengths of Rhode Island by involving businesses and academic organizations. An example of such an effort is a collaboration between marine businesses, a waste processor, state agencies, and a cement producer to address fiberglass recycling capabilities.*

The Taskforce paired their immediate recommendations with recommendations for the short term (1-3 years) and long term (3-5 years) that build on the same themes but should be further developed through a next iteration of work similar to the Taskforce's. The short- and long-term recommendations include pursuing additional legislative solutions; further embedding educational and voluntary efforts within existing programs; launching new campaigns, programs, and platforms; and exploring opportunities for innovation around different products, including packaging. While the Taskforce did not complete a comprehensive strategic plan or a study of plastic and its impacts in Rhode Island through its work to date, the goal of the Taskforce's work was to catalyze new collaboration and tangible results that can serve as a foundation for the future.



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Introduction

Plastic pollution affects our communities, our ocean, and our marine life, and reducing the use of plastic materials will have an important positive impact on the health and quality of life for Rhode Islanders as well as Rhode Island’s lands and waters. To that end, Governor Raimondo signed an Executive Order on July 16th, 2018 that recognized the importance of addressing plastic pollution and plastic materials in Rhode Island and established the Taskforce to Tackle Plastics (Taskforce) to provide recommendations to do so. The Executive Order built upon the initiative of the Rhode Island businesses that have voluntarily removed single-use plastics from their operations and are prioritizing recycling; of Rhode Island cities and towns that have advanced action on the issue of plastic pollution; and of residents that have advocated for such action.

This report is responsive to the Executive Order by providing recommendations to address plastic pollution, single-use disposables, and recycling in Rhode Island. This report is not, however, a comprehensive strategic plan or a study of plastic and its impacts in Rhode Island. Given the short timeframe of the Taskforce and the focus on developing actionable recommendations, the Taskforce recommends 24 actions across the immediate term (the next six to twelve months), the short term (the next one to three years), and the longer term (the next three to five years); the Taskforce recognizes that work needs to continue on this important issue.

As directed by the Executive Order, the Taskforce members were selected as representatives of a broad set of stakeholders, including environmentalists, business representatives, municipal representatives, and academics. This report would not be possible without the hard work and dedication of the Taskforce’s

co-chairs: Johnathan Berard of Clean Water Action and Dale Venturini of Rhode Island Hospitality Association, who volunteered their time and leadership to the Taskforce. The Taskforce’s Co-Chairs would like to thank the Taskforce members for their active participation, all of whom served as volunteers and gave their personal time or that of their affiliated organizations to attend meetings, deliberating on recommendations and providing their input and

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perspective throughout the process. In particular, five of the Taskforce members chaired working groups, providing additional time and leadership and ensuring that the Taskforce resulted in actionable recommendations: Tim Brennan of Two Little Fish (Lead By Example); Johnathan Berard of Clean Water Action and Carolyn Murray of The Rhode Island Beverage Association (Legislative Solutions); Dave McLaughlin of Clean Ocean Access (Education); and Dennis Nixon of Rhode Island Sea Grant (Innovation).

In addition to the members of the Taskforce who were appointed by the Governor, there are many organizations and individuals that attended meetings and contributed to the work of the Taskforce, including representatives from the plastics industry who came to meetings to collaborate. Finally, the Taskforce wishes to recognize the many staff members from the Department of Environmental Management (DEM), the Resource Recovery Corporation (RRC), and the Governor’s Office who have supported the Taskforce activities over the past few months, as well as an intern to the Department of Environmental Management, Tyler Hertzwig from Salve Regina University, who supported the Lead By Example work.

The Taskforce met six times between October and February, as follows. Rhode Island College and Save The Bay graciously hosted the Taskforce members for two of their meetings, and the Taskforce would like to thank them for their hospitality.

The Taskforce structured its work around four working groups, each focused on a different topic: Lead By Example, Legislative Solutions, Education, and Innovation. Each working group met over the course of four months, presented in all but the first Taskforce meeting, and developed recommendations for consideration by the Taskforce; accordingly,

MEETING DAY / MEETING TIME/ LOCATION

OCTOBER 5TH, 2018: 1:00-2:30
DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL MANAGEMENT

NOVEMBER 14TH, 2018: 9:00-10:30
RHODE ISLAND COLLEGE

DECEMBER 14TH, 2018: 9:00-10:30
DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL MANAGEMENT

JANUARY 9TH, 2019: 11:00-12:30
SAVE THE BAY

FEBRUARY 5TH, 2019: 1:00-2:30
DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL MANAGEMENT

FEBRUARY 14TH, 2019: 10:00-11:30
DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL MANAGEMENT

this report reflects recommendations across the four working groups. In the initial meetings of the Taskforce, there were also presentations related to the current usage of plastic materials in Rhode Island (inclusive of impacts, laws, and programs).

Across all of the working groups and the Taskforce conversations, it was clear that the timeframe of the Taskforce limited the scope of what the Taskforce could address. Many of the recommendations in this report represent a first step on a positive path or an initial idea that will require significant effort and support to implement successfully. Therefore, the Taskforce recommends extending its work, with an updated format.

IMMEDIATE RECOMMENDATION

(6 TO 12 MONTHS)

0.1. Extend the work of the Taskforce or a similar group for a longer time period to allow the group to build on its work to date through a thoughtful, updated process that drives meaningful change over the next one to three years.

The extended work would further develop and prioritize the short-term and long-term recommendations proposed in this report as well as address topics that were not addressed fully given the Taskforce’s timeline (e.g., enforcement, the role economics play in consumer choice, systemic approaches and their potential unintended consequences). In addition, the extended work would give time to shape recommendations into a more comprehensive strategy. The exact form and composition of the group that will continue this work should be crafted in consideration of the large amount of time the Taskforce has requested of its members – and, in particular, its leaders – and the many perspectives that should contribute to ongoing work.

The rest of this report is structured in line with the working groups, with one section and multiple recommendations dedicated to each of the four topics. A full list of recommendations can be found in the appendix.



Section 1: Lead By Example

PURPOSE

The Lead by Example working group sought to investigate and evaluate best practices undertaken by Rhode Island businesses and organizations to minimize and eliminate the use of single use plastics in their operations. Once these best practices were identified, the working group hoped to develop effective methods to encourage broader adoption. The group sought to build off existing program models designed to encourage environmentally sustainable practices and behaviors in the hospitality sector, the organization of public events and festivals, and operations in the office environment. The group also sought to improve awareness of these programs and look at incentives to encourage adoption of these practices, specifically recognition through a well-publicized annual awards program. The group believes that State government is well situated to lead by example and demonstrate the feasibility and benefits of eliminating single-use plastics, complementing the efforts of business and organization participants.

PROCESS

The chair of the Lead by Example working group was Tim Brennan, owner of Two Little Fishes Restaurant in Westerly, RI. The group met three times between November 2018 and January 2019. The working group efforts were supplemented by the work of a student intern from Salve Regina University, who investigated the cost and availability of non-plastics alternatives. The main agenda items for the meetings were:

Meeting 1:

The group was organized, discussed the mission, and scoped out the process it would follow. The chair, Mr. Brennan, presented the actions taken and experiences of the Two Little Fishes restaurant. Ann Battersby from DEM's Office of Customer and Technical Assistance presented an overview of the Green Hospitality program that was developed jointly by the RI Hospitality Association and DEM.

Meeting 2:

Presentations were made on large events recently held in Rhode Island that were recognized as models for green, sustainable practices. Representatives from Sail Newport and 11th Hour Racing presented the sustainability models used on that event, which was recently recognized by EPA Region I with an Environmental Merit Award. Nicole Wilkinson from CVS presented the green and sustainable practices employed at the Crave RI festival and the CVS Charity Classic golf tournament.

Meeting 3:

The group reviewed the results of an on-line survey of existing practices. The format and content of the final working group report was discussed. In addition, James Murphy from RI College discussed the efforts undertaken at RIC to eliminate single-use plastics.

Discussions in the working group meetings were dynamic and productive, and the emphasis on voluntary participation and recognition facilitated agreement on many approaches and issues. The broad range of interests and experiences of the participants in the working group fueled the dialogue. The working group meetings were open to the public, and the number of participants ranged from around 10 to 30. The chairman of the workgroup considered input and suggestions from all participants, and that feedback is represented in the findings and recommendations of this report.

The working group effort was supplemented by a student intern project that researched the on-line availability and price range of non-plastic alternatives to common products, including straws, cups, utensils, and take out containers. This work was important in that it verified the availability of these products and documented the price ranges from on-line distributors. Although not comprehensive given the time frame of the assignment, the work provided valuable initial research in this area and directly supported working group Chair Brennan.

The group also created and posted an on-line survey to collect information on the best practices already adopted by Rhode Island businesses and organizations eliminating the use of single use plastics. The results of this survey can be found in Appendix 3.

KEY BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Most of the dialogue in the working group was based on expanding the voluntary certification programs already offered by DEM. The programs are based on guidelines for undertaking green and sustainable practices, a checklist and certification process to evaluate and document actions and accomplishments, and a recognition program.

The foundational program element is a workbook that includes background, technical information and guidance. A checklist is provided that tracks

the elements in the workbook allowing the owner to document actions and progress. The checklist includes a certification to attest to the accuracy of the contents. The certified checklist is submitted to DEM and scored against a set of benchmarks and targets. If the score meets established, known thresholds, then the submitter is recognized for their success with a certificate along with public recognition.

This program model was expanded as a pilot for action on plastics in the Zero Plastic Marina partnership. This program was created jointly by the RI Marine Trades Association and DEM to start addressing the issue of plastics pollution in our oceans and on our coastlines. The program was launched by Governor Raimondo, along with signing on to the Clean Seas Pledge (making Rhode Island the first State to sign on), at the Ocean Summit held as part of the North American stopover of the Volvo Ocean Race in May 2018.

Members of the working group noted that the existence of these programs is not well known. The group agreed that while the approach could be effective for encouraging the elimination of single use plastics, it needed enhanced communication and marketing to spread the word of its existence. Furthermore, the benefits of participation need to be clearly defined and communicated as well. Since many of the benefits are related to marketing and promotion of the participating entities, a more robust recognition program would provide a stronger incentive for participation.

As noted above, each meeting featured presenters about successful participants in the existing voluntary certification programs, their efforts to eliminate single use plastics, and how those efforts could be counted and recognized in both a new certification program targeted specifically at the elimination of single use plastics and/or an expansion of the criteria in existing green certification programs to recognize those efforts. The group actively discussed how these programs could be created and some of the elements that were important for inclusion.

RECOMMENDATIONS

IMMEDIATE TERM RECOMMENDATIONS (6-12 MONTHS)

- 1.1. *Develop standards and options related to management and reduction of plastics, including*
 - a. Create a glossary of key terms for effective decision-making on management of plastics, including definitions of recyclability, compostability, and biodegradability.
 - b. Provide enhanced guidance on the management of recyclable, compostable, and biodegradable plastics in the context of existing recycling and composting programs.
 - c. Develop an on-line resource outlining alternatives to commonly used plastic products showing examples of available replacements, with emphasis on replacements offered by RI based companies.
- 1.2. *Update and relaunch the Green Hospitality Program for companies in the hospitality sector and develop a new targeted certification program for organizers of public events and festivals and offices to provide guidance and recognition for the elimination of single use plastics.*
 - a. Further evaluate the sustainability reports from the Volvo Ocean Race and the CVS Charity Classic events to identify key factors in the success of those events in eliminating single use plastics.
- 1.3. *Develop a robust and well-publicized recognition program for participants in all certification programs.*
- 1.4. *Create a Governor's challenge to State agencies requiring agencies to establish a pilot program to eliminate single use plastics in one operation or facility under their purview, with the scope to be defined in collaboration with the Department of Administration and with the goal of phasing out single-use plastics as feasible. As part of this effort,*

- a. Identify high-impact products on specific State Master Price Agreements (MPA) as replacements for single-use plastics and highlight those products in the MPA user guides.
- b. Launch a State employee campaign to reduce use of single-use plastics.

SHORT TERM RECOMMENDATIONS (1-3 YEARS)

- 1.5. *Incorporate the elements of the targeted certification program on the elimination of plastics into the broader certification programs for green and sustainable actions.*
- 1.6. *Provide enhanced technical assistance and guidance for businesses and organizations interested in taking action in certification programs.*
- 1.7. *Facilitate a summit meeting of representatives for all State agencies to share experiences and accomplishments of their pilot programs for elimination of single use plastics.*
- 1.8. *Develop model solicitation language for vendors requiring the minimization or elimination of single use plastics as part of the evaluation process.*

OTHER PERSPECTIVES

In line with the effort to encourage State agencies, businesses, and events to phase-out single-use plastics as feasible, the State could explore opportunities to support and incentivize local government to do the same. In line with the State leading through reducing use of single-use plastics, the State could explore opportunities to lead through overall waste reduction and use of recyclable materials, where appropriate. Additionally, the State could explore how uniforms worn by State employees could transition to natural fibers where practical (because polyester fibers are a form of plastics).



Section 2: Legislative Solutions

PURPOSE

The legislative working group sought to develop a legislative solution to address single-use plastics pollution in a way that would be both effective and practical. Given the plethora of issues related to plastics that could be addressed through legislation, the limited timeframe of the working group, and the growing momentum surrounding plastics bags, the working group focused its efforts on plastic bag legislation. The group hopes to have established a foundation of collaborative policy development – inclusive of businesses, environmentalists, municipalities, environmental justice advocates, the General Assembly, and State agencies – that can be applied to future legislative efforts of this type; to that end, the group also developed a list of additional legislative policies to explore, given more time.

PROCESS

The legislative working group was co-chaired by Johnathan Berard of Clean Water Action and Carolyn Murray of The Rhode Island Beverage Association. The group met four times between November 2018 and January 2019, with the following focuses.

Meeting 1:

the group established its purpose and process and brainstormed a list of potential topics related to plastics that could be addressed legislatively.

Meeting 2:

the group discussed plastic bag bans at a high level, including their impact on businesses and

the environment, and developed a list of policy decisions inherent in any plastic bag legislation.

Meeting 3:

the group discussed the first half of those policy decisions, including distribution prohibitions, fees, use of fees, business exclusions, interaction with municipal laws, and implementation timeline.

Meeting 4:

the group discussed the remaining policy decisions, including impact on vulnerable populations and definitions and exemptions for plastic, paper, and reusable bags.

The discussions in each meeting were supported by the perspectives of those in attendance (whose affiliations spanned the General Assembly, manufacturing, distribution/warehouse, hospitality, environmental advocacy, environmental justice advocacy, municipalities, and State agencies). In addition, meetings three and four were supported by specific examples of plastic bag legislation introduced in different places. The working group strove to arrive at a solution that makes sense for Rhode Island and builds off learnings from previous efforts both in Rhode Island and elsewhere in the United States.

The working group meetings were open to the public and facilitated as group discussions. While the attendees were asked to raise their hands in support or dissent of different ideas to make sure those who did not have a chance to speak up still got to express their perspective, no decisions were made through voting. The chairs of the working group, in collaboration with the Taskforce planning

committee, considered all the input from the working group and Taskforce in their development of this report. All recommendations were presented to the larger Taskforce.

The working group chairs developed targeted case examples related to each decision point for plastics legislation that was discussed in meetings three and four. Based on those conversations, the chairs developed specific legislative language related to plastic bags (appended to this report).

KEY BACKGROUND INFORMATION

California was the first state to enact a statewide ban on single use plastic bags (in 2014), and Hawaii has a de facto statewide ban on single use plastic bags, based on prohibitions in its populous counties. The District of Columbia enacted a fee on all single use paper and plastic bags in 2009. Several cities also have single use plastic bag bans, including: Austin, Texas; Boston, Massachusetts; Chicago, Illinois; Los Angeles, California; San Francisco, California; and Seattle, Washington¹.

In Rhode Island, statewide bans on plastic bags have been introduced in recent legislative sessions, led by Senators Miller, Sosnowski, Ruggerio, Coyne, and Lombardo and Representatives McEntee, Handy, Regunberg, Fogarty, and Tanzi. The bill introduced in the 2018 legislative session prohibited the use of plastic checkout bags at large retail sales establishments² as well as the use of polystyrene disposable food containers at all retail sales establishments. Also in Rhode Island, ten municipalities prohibit the use of plastic bags by retailers, including Barrington, Block Island, Bristol, Jamestown, Middletown, Newport, North Kingston, Portsmouth, South Kingston, and Warren. As of February 2019, Barrington also banned non-recyclable plastic and foam cups, to-go containers, and utensils in restaurants and coffee shops³.

It is important to note that paper bags (and even reusable bags) are not free from environmental impacts; both generate pollutants through production and require resources to manufacture, and paper bags can still end up in landfills. The goal

of a plastic bag policy is not to switch from one type of single-use disposable bag (plastic) to another (paper), but rather to reduce use of disposables overall. As discussed below, prohibiting plastics and placing a fee on paper is intended to reduce overall use of disposables by encouraging consumers to change their behavior.

It is also important to note that the cost of paper bags is significantly higher than the cost of plastic bags, and businesses will also face higher costs associated with transporting, storing and handling paper bags.

RECOMMENDATIONS

IMMEDIATE RECOMMENDATIONS (6-12 MONTHS)

- 2.1. *Pursue plastic bag legislation, with the following characteristics. These characteristics are translated into specific legislative language in the appended model legislation.*
 - a. Distribution prohibition on single use plastic bags paired with a fee on paper bags, in retail settings. The goal of this policy is to both reduce plastics (and its associated litter and impacts) and reduce use of single-use disposables overall.
 - b. Fee on paper bags set at 5 cents per bag across all retail settings. The goal of this fee size is to (1) catalyze behavior change while not being overly burdensome on vulnerable populations and (2) create uniformity across business types.
 - c. Fees collected to be retained by the entity that collected it (i.e., the businesses). The goal of this use of funds is to partially subsidize the higher cost per bag of paper bags (as compared to plastic) for businesses.
 - d. No exclusions for businesses. The goal of this policy is to change behavior, regardless of the business at which one shops, and create uniformity for the business community.
 - e. No exclusions for municipalities (i.e., the state law overrides local ordinances on plastic and paper bags). The goal of the lack of exclusions is to create certainty and consistency for businesses related to this policy.

¹ <http://www.ncsl.org/research/environment-and-natural-resources/plastic-bag-legislation.aspx>

² <http://webserver.rilin.state.ri.us/BillText/BillText18/HouseText18/H7851.pdf>

³ <https://www.ecori.org/government/2019/2/5/barrington-bans-several-single-use-plastics>

- f. date to be within a year of promulgation of regulations authorized in the bill, but no later than January 1st, 2021. The goal of the implementation timeline is to create a practical timeline that also ensures action.
- g. Definition of plastic bags tied to checkout bags in retailers, with exclusions for bags sold in packages that contain multiple bags (e.g., garbage bags), bags that touch food or plants directly (e.g., produce, nuts, meats, prepared foods, baked goods, flowers), and bags for newspapers, door hangers, and dry-cleaning. Appended model legislation includes details on each exclusion. The goal of this definition is to create clarity on the aim of the policy and help ensure food safety.
- h. Allowable paper bags required to be 100% recyclable and contain 40% post-consumer paper and be labeled to that effect. The goal of this definition is to promote recycling.
- i. Definition of reusable bags includes the requirement to be designed for reuse and a durability requirement. The goal of this definition is to practically distinguish reusable bags from single use bags.
- j. Enforcement to be consistent across municipalities and tied to statutorily-established fees. The goal of this provision is to ensure the law will be implemented effectively and in a uniform manner.

2.2. Pair the plastic bag legislation with a State-led program to distribute reusable bags to vulnerable populations, leveraging existing community organizations, looking for opportunities for sustainable funding, beginning before the bag ban takes effect, and continuing on an on-going basis. The goal of this recommendation is to ensure the policy does not create an undue burden on environmental justice communities, seniors, low-income communities, and other vulnerable populations.

SHORT TERM RECOMMENDATIONS (1-3 YEARS)

2.3. Explore the pros and cons of further legislation to address single-use disposables and surrounding systemic challenges through a similarly collaborative process. With a timeline of at least a year, consider disposables more broadly than only plastics as well as the sequencing or joining of policies that will best encourage systemic change that will be effective and practical. The working group brainstormed a list of potential concepts beyond plastic bags that could be addressed through legislation, as follows. In addition to this list, the Taskforce recommends exploring legislation that would bolster the implementation efforts of the other working groups.

- a. Availability of recycling across settings. Legislation to this effect could be developed by first examining how recycling is accessed by people today and how to fill any gaps.
- b. Bottles and bottle caps. A bottle bill could add a small fee to consumers at the point of sale of bottles and allow the consumer to “redeem” that fee upon recycling the bottle at certain locations. A “connect-the-cap” bill could require that bottle caps remain connected to bottles.
- c. Extended producer responsibility for plastic packaging. Extended producer responsibility generally shifts the waste management cost or activities from governments to producers.
- d. Food containers (e.g., polystyrene). Legislation that addresses polystyrene would ban or disincentivize the use of single-use items made from polystyrene, at least in certain settings (e.g., food takeout).
- e. Recycled plastics requirements. Legislation to this effect would require a minimum percentage of recycled materials in certain products in certain settings.
- f. Straws. Legislation that addresses straws could require businesses to provide plastic straws only if specifically requested by a customer. Note that such legislation has been introduced in the 2019 Rhode Island legislative session.

OTHER PERSPECTIVES

Several working group attendees and Taskforce members expressed a desire to tackle more than plastic bags in the legislative working group – a desire to tackle additional single-use plastics disposables, single-use disposables of other materials, and / or systems beyond single-use disposables. The recommendations address this desire by focusing on creating a process that could be replicated for other topic areas and including recommendation 2.3 to consider further legislation to address single-use disposables and surrounding systemic challenges. Given the limited timeframe of the working group, the goal to produce something concrete, the overarching mission of the Taskforce to focus on plastics, and the growing momentum surrounding plastics bags, the working group focused its efforts in meetings two, three, and four on plastic bag legislation. That being said, there was still a desire to do more on a more accelerated timeline.

Working group attendees also raised that it is important to think about solutions more broadly than just legislatively. By and large, that consideration was addressed by the broader Taskforce structure. The legislative working group was one of four working groups, and their efforts and recommendations were considered jointly by the Taskforce on a regular basis. The Taskforce did, however, include recommendation 2.2, which is a non-legislative recommendation, because members felt it critical to pair plastic bag legislation with a program to support vulnerable populations throughout the adoption and implementation of such a policy.

On the specific characteristics of plastic bag legislation, working group attendees and Taskforce members engaged in productive debate. The characteristics reflected in immediate recommendation #1 and the appended legislative language do not represent consensus; alternate view points by characteristic are as follows.

Some attendees would have preferred a prohibition on both paper and plastic checkout bags; others would have preferred no prohibition, but a fee on both. The ban on both paper and plastic is attractive as a more drastic reduction of single-use disposables that cause pollutants when made. Ultimately, the recommendation reflects a compromise – a ban on plastic and a fee on paper. Attendees proposed 10 cents, as well as a fee that increased with inflation, as an alternative to the 5 cent fee. The working group also discussed alternative uses of funds, with all or a portion of the funds coming to the State, potentially

to support enforcement of the policy, distribution of reusable bags to vulnerable populations, or reporting and other administrative functions. Due to the administrative burden of sharing the fee, the nature of restricted receipt accounts, and the cost difference for businesses between plastic and paper bags, this report recommends all of the fee remain with the businesses. However, the Taskforce paired that recommendation with a recommendation that the State establish a program to provide reusable bags to those who need them. The working group discussed excluding certain populations (e.g., seniors, those on SNAP) from the paper bag fee. The group also noted that the cost to businesses of providing check out bags is part of the cost of doing business (i.e., included in the overhead costs of running certain types of businesses) and making the fee explicit at checkout gives individuals a choice to pay or not to pay. In addition, the working group discussed that different businesses models (e.g., convenience stores vs. supermarkets) have different customer use cases and that different sized businesses have different cost structures as it relates to providing bags. Some Taskforce members advocated for modeling a State plastic bag bill on successful local models and noted that any enforcement responsibility should be supported by funding. Some Taskforce members wanted the State to assume all enforcement activities, while others wanted the municipalities to have authority, as long as their actions were uniform across the state.

Some Taskforce members prioritized uniformity to create a stable environment for businesses, while others prioritized allowing space for local leaders to create more stringent requirements. Multiple potential definitions for reusable bags were considered, and some Taskforce members advocated for excluding polyester from the definition, because it is a form of plastic, and others for requirements of stitched handles.

Several of the discussions reflected here highlight the importance of economic impacts – both on businesses and on customers. The working group also noted that the emergence of municipal bag laws helped prepare the State for a statewide ban, and that the recommendation that new State law supersede municipal laws on this topic should not be seen as a discouragement of municipal leadership. Participants noted the importance of uniformity, and some proposed uniformity beyond just checkout bags, because of the negative economic impact on businesses from needing to comply with varied ordinances in different municipalities.



Section 3: Education

PURPOSE

The education working group sought to identify whom plastics education should focus on and how they can be communicated to effectively. Ideas don't yield purposeful actions and actions don't yield desired results except through persuasion. Before trying to persuade an audience, however, and even before identifying an audience and developing a winning message, one must answer the question, "Who are you?" The Governor's Executive Order – which created the Taskforce and made manifest the importance of tackling plastics – already answered this. The other questions that the education working group addressed over the past three months are just as essential:

- *Who needs to know about plastic pollution?*
- *How will they find out?*
- *Why should they care?*

PROCESS

The education working group focused on identifying the best ways to educate the public about the responsible use of plastics, litter prevention, and reducing, reusing, and recycling plastics. The group focused on short-term initiatives (i.e., achievable in about a year) that are no-cost or low-cost, could be piggybacked onto existing, related programs, and that are backed with clear, direct implementation plans. The components of such plans include: educational goal/message, target audience, delivery mechanism, milestones and timelines, lead entity, expected costs, and metrics for success.

The education working group was chaired by Dave McLaughlin of Clean Ocean Access. The group met four times between November 2018 and January 2019. At its first meeting, the education working group brainstormed and prioritized potential initiatives. After much discussion, participants settled on three top initiatives and agreed that the group would meet three more times, devoting one meeting to explore each potential initiative in detail. The three potential initiatives were as follows.

- 1. An education campaign to reduce single-use plastics, focused on businesses*
- 2. A school-based (K-12) environmental and plastics awareness program*
- 3. A unified, statewide anti-littering campaign*

The working group agreed that whenever possible, it should try to align with and leverage existing, complementary state efforts aimed at minimizing litter (e.g., The RI Hospitality Association and DEM partnership on Green Hospitality).

Participants in the working group meetings included representatives from environmental organizations, community organizations, education organizations, State agencies, businesses, and business associations as well as constituents. Representatives from the Department of Environmental Management, the Resource Recovery Corporation, and the Rhode Island Department of Education provided background information and additional considerations on existing programs and structures, as relevant to the discussions.

KEY BACKGROUND INFORMATION

For almost half a century, “Woodsy Owl” has been America’s original and official environmental icon. Woodsy has been an anti-pollution symbol and taught us to “Give a hoot; don’t pollute!” Since his creation in 1971, Woodsy has helped teachers and parents inspire children to care actively for the environment. Like his good friend Smokey Bear, Woodsy Owl is part of the United State Department of Agriculture (USDA) Forest Service and a protected symbol under Public Law 93-318. Since the mid-1970s, the USDA has had a licensing program allowing qualifying partners to use Woodsy’s image and costume; DEM has permission to use Woodsy’s image in Rhode Island. According to the USDA: “The objectives of the licensing program are to (1) assist in carrying Woodsy Owl’s conservation and anti-pollution message to the public; (2) maintain the integrity of the Woodsy Owl image as America’s icon for the conservation of the environment; and (3) ensure that all products licensed to carry Woodsy Owl’s name and message maintain standards of high quality and good taste.” In Rhode Island, DEM’s Division of Forest Environment is the US Forest Service’s partner agency with permission to use Woodsy Owl’s image.

RECOMMENDATIONS

IMMEDIATE TERM RECOMMENDATIONS (6 TO 12 MONTHS)

- 3.1. *Become the first Governor to be an ambassador in RRC’s award-winning public service announcement PSA campaign “Let’s recycle RIght!®” which will re-launch in the spring of 2019.*
- 3.2. *Coordinate with the RI Department of Revenue (DOR) to incorporate business-friendly information on plastics into the litter control permit process, in order to raise awareness of the goals and actions of the Taskforce.*

SHORT TERM RECOMMENDATIONS (1 TO 3 YEARS)

- 3.3. *Launch an education campaign to reduce plastics in the hospitality industry. This campaign would focus specifically on minimizing plastics, whereas the RI Hospitality Association and DEM Green Hospitality protocol has a broader environmental sustainability theme.*
 - a. This recommendation is intended to support the recommendations in the Lead By Example section of this report.
- 3.4. *Launch a statewide school-based (K-12) environmental and plastics awareness video contest. The school submitting the winning video would be eligible to win the installation of a water bottle filling station through the generosity of the Greenlove foundation.*
- 3.5. *Launch a unified, statewide anti-littering campaign led by Woodsy Owl that would build enthusiasm for Woodsy’s message and, by the end of the program, culminate in appearances by Woodsy to a school in each of Rhode Island’s 39 communities.*

LONG TERM RECOMMENDATIONS (3 TO 5 YEARS)

- 3.6. *Assemble school administrators, teachers, environmental educators, and other key stakeholders to share best practices on incorporating litter-prevention training into K-12 education.*
- 3.7. *Create a platform for colleges and universities to study plastics, plastic pollution, and the effectiveness of initiatives championed by the Taskforce.*
 - a. Institutions could contribute original work based on their educational niches (e.g., the health of Narragansett Bay, innovative ways to make environmental teaching personal, meaningful, and exciting).
- 3.8. *Broaden the scope of Woodsy’s messages to highlight the themes of conserving natural resources and preventing environmental degradation.*
 - a. Examples: Woodsy wants people to live more responsibly. Woodsy doesn’t like trees being cut down to make paper bags.

OTHER PERSPECTIVES

Some working group participants encouraged the working group to place its discussions and possible solutions/initiatives in the context of other kinds of pollution as well as to focus on the impacts of litter beyond its appearance. In the context of educating the public, it is important to recognize that every material type – including but not limited to plastic – has a full life cycle and associated impacts. Organizations must take care not to focus only on the waste/litter aspect of these products and materials, but also recognize that these materials have impacts on energy use, pollution, greenhouse gas emissions, land use, water use, and toxicity, among other things. Working group participants agreed widely on identifying single-use, disposable plastic items that can easily be substituted for durable, reusable ones, but noted that durable reusables need to be used many times to accrue the relative benefits as compared to single-use disposables.

The working group participants also noted that it is important to include all constituencies in outreach and driving toward solutions, while being mindful

of and sensitive to environmental justice concerns, including connecting educational messages to human health impacts.

In its first meeting, the education working group brainstormed several ideas that were not ultimately developed into recommendations, including engaging with restaurants to reduce plastic waste; using the Roger Williams Zoo as a venue for public outreach; using Earth Day as a recognized means to disseminate messages; crafting positive messages that help to influence a “new norm”; using existing efforts – websites, listservs, newsletters – to leverage stakeholder roles, expertise, and goodwill; publicizing the financial impact of different actions; and leveraging local recycling centers. Some Taskforce members encouraged a greater emphasis on the specifics of recycling opportunities – when, where, and how to recycle materials in specific towns – through public service announcements (e.g., “Did you know that you can return plastic bags to grocery stores for recycling?”). Additionally, the recommendations in this section should be supported by exploring funding opportunities to finance further education and tapping into local talent that can help ensure campaigns effectively reach their target audiences.



Section 4: Innovation

PURPOSE

The innovation working group sought to identify the efforts, ideas, and policies that offer strong potential to advance the reduction of plastics and plastic waste. The group's primary goal is to identify strategies to reduce reliance on single-use plastics and eliminate common sources of marine debris. Such strategies are likely to require innovative changes to preexisting infrastructure and institutions across a spectrum of waste management practices in Rhode Island. Solutions that qualify as innovative must invoke new methods, ideas, or products and apply to the direct resolution of a pressing challenge.

Rhode Island is inherently inventive; its compact, insulated nature supports collaboration between industries and communication among networks of stakeholder groups. The innovations brought forward for consideration by the innovation working group range from recycling pilot programming to alternative material products. Each prospective innovation reflects actions along timelines that vary from immediate (next 12 months), to short term (1 to 3 years) and long-term (3 to 5 years). All provide seeds that can grow and a rooted foundation for the reduction, reuse, or recycling of plastics.

PROCESS

The innovation working group solicited prospective proposals and recommendations from members of the Governor's Taskforce, as well as members of outside organizations, businesses and the broader public. Submissions made to the

working group included inventive solutions that encouraged local action.

Dennis Nixon of Rhode Island Sea Grant chaired the innovation working group, and meetings were held on 12/4/18 and 1/14/19 at the University of Rhode Island Bay Campus and RI DEM Headquarters, respectively. Summary materials were presented regarding current efforts and strategies that are directed toward the reduction, reuse, and recycling of plastics in Rhode Island. Participants who provided resources and working support include representatives of: RI DEM, RI Sea Grant, the RI Resource Recovery Corporation, the University of RI, Brown University, the RI Marine Trades Association, the Conservation Law Foundation, the American Chemistry Council, Environmental Packaging International, the City of Providence, and the Town of Barrington. The presentations provided during those two meetings stimulated and informed a larger conversation within the innovation working group.

The innovation working group utilized its meetings to facilitate discussion on the recommendations submitted by participants, as well as the connection of waste innovations to the broader objectives of the Governor's Taskforce. Presentations included Keith Christman, the Managing Director of Plastic Markets for the American Chemistry Council, and Victor Bell, President of Environmental Packaging International. Mr. Bell and Mr. Christman offered strategic assessments on the mitigation and reduction of plastic waste, based on their experiences with similar efforts internationally. Their presentations offered an important perspective on the current trends in plastic waste management strategies that have been applied by government agencies and corporations alike.

KEY BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Rhode Island exists at an intersection between mounting waste management challenges and a commitment to preserving the natural health of our Ocean State. Placing global challenges within a local context has revealed opportunities to develop solutions in a unique or creative manner. In addition to marine waste solutions, a land-based focus is vital. The U.S. EPA has estimated that 80 percent of plastic pollution that collects in the marine environment originates from land-based waste sources¹. Comprehensive improvement in the manner that Rhode Islanders utilize and dispose of plastics will require a coordinated approach by state and local agencies and private businesses. Successful strategies must also be practical and consider the unique variables that characterize everyday life in our communities. Targeted incremental steps and policies will be necessary to advance a framework that will begin to fundamentally alter our relationship to plastic materials.

The following background information is specific to topics addressed through the innovation working group recommendations.

Fiberglass boats that have reached end-of-life status are a common sight in the yards of residents in coastal communities. On average, more than 200,000 boats reach this status each year across the United States.² The traditional solution has been to crush and dispose of the boats in landfills. Sometimes the boats are abandoned in harbors or estuaries. Both landfilling and abandonment present environmental hazards. A sustainable solution for recycling fiberglass boats is essential. Such a solution can also benefit Rhode Island's composite material manufacturers. RI Sea Grant and the RI Marine Trades Association has led research on the development of a solution for the reuse of composite materials. The research has identified end-of-life fiberglass boats and other suitable composites as an alternative fuel source and alternative raw material substitute in the industrial production of cement. The capability of large cement-producing kilns to "co-process" composite materials like fiberglass

creates an opportunity to offset the environmental footprint of an energy-intensive manufacturing process by reducing air pollution and plastic-based waste generation. In 2018, private financial support and organizational resources from State agencies helped to establish a Rhode Island based pilot program to evaluate these perceived benefits. The pilot has developed a collaboration of marine businesses, a waste processor, State agencies and a major cement producer. Led by the RI Marine Trades Association, the collaboration is engaged in applied experimentation and advanced research to identify best management practices for the collection of vessel-derived fiberglass and assess the long-term feasibility of an expanded statewide composites recycling stream.

An expansion of platforms that organize, distribute, and manage reusable food containers has helped to reduce plastic waste in a variety of settings. Durable, sustainably designed packaging allows retailers and service providers of all kinds to create a circular shopping experience that embraces extended producer responsibility and helps reshape consumer behaviors related to single-use items. Hospitals and schools generally report a reduction in food service cost and waste generation after transitioning to reusable containers. Companies such as Rhode Island-based "OZZI" have partnered with national food management service agencies to expand these transitions across institutions, while others such as "Terracycle LOOP" have focused on working alongside global brands to develop reusable packaging alternatives for their products.

The MacArthur Foundation's New Plastics Economy initiative is a global campaign designed to commit packaging producers, brands, retailers, recyclers, NGOs, and governments to a target of 100 percent reusable, recyclable or compostable plastic packaging by 2025³. The commitment has already gathered 250 signatories and is supported by the UN Environment Program. Those who pledge to participate will promote the elimination of problematic packaging, build awareness around innovations for material reduction, and actively expand the volume of plastics recycled.

¹ www.epa.gov/trash-free-waters/toxicological-threats-plastic [epa.gov].

² <https://www.nmma.org/statistics/publications/statistical-abstract>

³ <https://www.ellenmacarthurfoundation.org/assets/downloads/Global-Commitment-Documents-to-download-on-website-2.pdf>

RECOMMENDATIONS

IMMEDIATE TERM RECOMMENDATIONS (6 TO 12 MONTHS)

4.1. Support innovation for development and expansion of fiberglass recycling capabilities. A 2018 pilot established a collaboration of marine businesses, a waste processor, state agencies, and a major cement producer to engage in applied experimentation and advanced research to identify best management practices for the collection of vessel-derived fiberglass and assess the long-term feasibility of an expanded statewide deposit composites recycling stream. Initial testing has proven positive, and if interest in the reuse of fiberglass in U.S. cement production is supported by further experimentation in 2019, formalizing the process beyond the pilot project will require expanded support from State agencies. This includes:

- a. Support to divert end-of-life boats away from traditional landfill disposal and toward collection for local pre-processing and ultimate utilization by qualified cement production kilns.
- b. Support to review and verify businesses in the marine trades, manufacturing, and waste management industry sectors to act as certified participants in a statewide fiberglass material collection network.
- c. Evaluation of the current Abandoned & Derelict Vessel Disposal Fund and its supporting legislation to determine the availability of funding to recycle end-of-life fiberglass boats.
- d. Examination of potential funding and investment sources that could support the adoption of a fiberglass recycling stream in Rhode Island utilizing state-owned infrastructure and equipment.

SHORT TERM RECOMMENDATIONS (1 TO 3 YEARS)

4.2. Investigate opportunities for reusable packaging systems in Rhode Island. An expansion of platforms that organize, distribute, and manage reusable food containers has helped to reduce plastic waste in a variety of settings. Such efforts could be supported, incentivized and promoted by the relevant state authority as a plastic reduction priority.

4.3. Participate in MacArthur Foundation “New Plastics Economy” initiative.

- a. Rhode Island would be the first U.S. state to sign the commitment that now represents 20 percent of all plastic packaging producers worldwide. Incorporating the goals of the New Plastics Economy into new plastic reduction efforts introduced by the Governor’s Taskforce can allow for Rhode Island to share documented progress toward international goals and further build a foundation for national leadership in sustainable action.

4.4. Explore investment and expansion for plastic film / wrap recycling.

- a. Increased investment in infrastructure to support the collection and recycling of plastic film or wrap materials is essential to concordant waste reduction efforts with similar products such as bags. The proliferation of authority under a statewide plastic bag ban could include requirements for retailers to include plastic films and wraps in their collection processes.
- b. Businesses participating in national efforts such as the Wrap Recycling Action Program have found difficulty in building the public awareness necessary to grow collection opportunities and divert these materials from curbside streams.

OTHER PERSPECTIVES

The innovation working group recognized that legislation designed to promote the reduction of specific plastic products can encourage innovation and shifts in management systems. To that end, the innovation working group discussed the power of a comprehensive suite of statewide legislative actions, including plastic bag bans, polystyrene bans, bottle bills, extended producer responsibility, and a restricted receipt account to support enforcement actions. The plastic bag legislative idea is incorporated into the legislative solutions section of this report, as recommendation 2.1. The remaining ideas are captured in the legislative solutions section of this report, as short-term recommendation 2.3.

Some Taskforce members noted that boat owner or producer responsibility policies could be used to address fiberglass boats.

Appendix 1: Executive Order



State of Rhode Island and Providence Plantations

Gina M. Raimondo
Governor

SECRETARY OF STATE
2018 JUL 16 PM 2:10

EXECUTIVE ORDER

18-06

July 16, 2018

TACKLING PLASTICS

WHEREAS, plastic pollution is dangerous to the health of our oceans and ocean species, contributes to climate change, is a major component of unsightly litter both on our lands and in our waters, and as such is one of the most important issues facing Rhode Island;

WHEREAS, developing stronger plastics reduction policies at the state level, designed to reduce the use of plastics and single-use disposables, is a top goal of my administration;

WHEREAS, addressing plastics will have an important impact on the health and quality of our lands and waters, including our 400 miles of coastline;

WHEREAS, plastics that enter the marine environment break down through wave action and sunlight into smaller pieces called microplastics, which can be ingested by marine life, putting Rhode Island's fishing industries and aquatic ecosystems at risk;

WHEREAS, studies have shown that 75-80% of marine debris is plastic material and that most of it is from shoreline litter and disposal, and products of particular concern include single-use shopping bags, single-use beverage containers, six-pack rings, straws, and balloons;

WHEREAS, plastic bags and thin plastic films are the predominant contaminant of recycling loads in Rhode Island, causing equipment failures at the State's Materials Recycling Facility that drive up the cost of recycling and contributing to tons of valuable recycle materials having to be diverted to the central landfill;

July 16, 2018

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WHEREAS, Rhode Island can and should be a leader on reducing and eventually eliminating plastics pollution, and with the geography and size of the state, an initiative here could demonstrate innovation and results that could be scaled up or down to different locations across the globe;

WHEREAS, I launched a Zero Plastics Initiative in May 2018 to partner with our marinas to prevent plastics pollution, increase public awareness of the issues, and begin efforts to remove plastics from Narragansett Bay and our coastlines, and I signed the Clean Seas Pledge in a commitment to reduce my use of plastics;

WHEREAS, the Rhode Island Department of Environmental Management (DEM) serves as the chief steward of Rhode Island's natural resources and has the mission of protecting, restoring, and promoting our environment, and the Rhode Island Resource Recovery Corporation is committed to providing safe, environmentally compliant, clean and affordable recycling services for Rhode Islanders;

WHEREAS, plastic bags and other single-use disposable items are used by many Rhode Island residents and businesses, and we must consider the impact of any new policies on all Rhode Islanders, including our low-income communities and small businesses; and

WHEREAS, it is critical to collaboratively develop the best approach to addressing the use, reuse, and clean-up of single-use disposable plastics in Rhode Island;

NOW, THEREFORE, I, Gina M. Raimondo, by virtue of the authority vested in me as Governor of the State of Rhode Island and Providence Plantations, do hereby order and direct the following:

1. There is hereby established the Task Force to Tackle Plastics ("Task Force") that shall advise the Governor.
2. The members and chair(s) of the Task Force shall be appointed by the Governor and shall serve at the pleasure of the Governor. The membership shall include, but not be limited to, representatives from:
 - i. Environmental groups;
 - ii. Marinas;
 - iii. Relevant industries (e.g., retail, food service);
 - iv. Municipalities;
 - v. Elected officials; and
 - vi. State agencies

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3. The Task Force shall be organized and begin its work no later than September 17, 2018.
4. The Task Force shall provide recommendations to the Governor addressing the use, reuse, and clean-up of plastics in Rhode Island on or about February 18, 2019.
5. These recommendations shall include, but not be limited to:
 - i. Encouraging the financial and market factors necessary to support reduction in and recycling of plastics;
 - ii. Developing non-regulatory recognition and incentive programs, as well as potential legislation and/or regulations, and other measures to eliminate the sources of plastic pollution;
 - iii. Supporting and building upon the Zero Plastics Initiative and our existing, successful recycling programs; and
 - iv. Educating Rhode Islanders on the importance of and means to reducing and recycling plastics.

This Executive Order shall take effect immediately. Once the Task Force submits its recommendations to the Governor, it shall terminate its work.

So Ordered:



Gina M. Raimondo
Governor

Dated: July 16, 2018

Appendix 2: Summary of Recommendations

There are 24 recommendations across the introduction and four sections, as follows. The section number corresponds to the first number of the recommendation, as follows:

- *0.X are recommendations from the Introduction.*
- *1.X are recommendations from the Lead By Example section.*
- *2.X are recommendations from the Legislative Solutions section.*
- *3.X are recommendations from the Education section.*
- *4.X are recommendations from the Innovation section.*

IMMEDIATE TERM RECOMMENDATIONS (6-12 MONTHS)

- 0.1. Extend the work of the Taskforce for a longer time period to allow the group to build on its work to date through a thoughtful, updated process that drives meaningful change over the next one to three years.*
- 1.1. Develop standards and options related to management and reduction of plastics.*
- 1.2. Update and relaunch the Green Hospitality Program for companies in the hospitality sector and develop a new targeted certification program for organizers of public events and festivals and offices to provide guidance and recognition for the elimination of single use plastics.*
- 1.3. Develop a robust and well-publicized recognition program for participants in all certification programs.*
- 1.4. Create a Governor's challenge to State agencies requiring agencies to establish a pilot program to eliminate single use plastics in one operation or facility under*

their purview, with the scope to be defined in collaboration with the Department of Administration and with the goal of phasing out single-use plastics as feasible.

- 2.1. Pursue plastic bag legislation, with the following characteristics. These characteristics are translated into specific legislative language in the appended model legislation.*
- 2.2. Pair the plastic bag legislation with a State-led program to distribute reusable bags to vulnerable populations, leveraging existing community organizations, looking for opportunities for sustainable funding, beginning before the bag ban takes effect, and continuing on an on-going basis. The goal of this recommendation is to ensure the policy does not create an undue burden on environmental justice communities, seniors, low-income communities, and other vulnerable populations.*
- 3.1. Become the first Governor to be an ambassador in RRC's award-winning public service announcement PSA campaign "Let's recycle RIght!®" which will re-launch in the spring of 2019.*
- 3.2. Coordinate with the RI Division of Revenue (DOR) to incorporate business-friendly information on plastics into the litter control permit process, in order to raise awareness of the goals and actions of the Taskforce.*
- 4.1. Support innovation for development and expansion of fiberglass recycling capabilities. A 2018 pilot established a collaboration of marine businesses, a waste processor, state agencies, and a major cement producer to engage in applied experimentation and advanced research to identify best management practices for the collection*

of vessel-derived fiberglass and assess the long-term feasibility of an expanded statewide deposit composites recycling stream. Initial testing has proven positive, and if interest in the reuse of fiberglass in U.S. cement production is supported by further experimentation in 2019, formalizing the process beyond the pilot project will require expanded support from State agencies.

SHORT TERM RECOMMENDATIONS (1-3 YEARS)

- 1.5. Incorporate the elements of the targeted certification program on the elimination of plastics into the broader certification programs for green and sustainable actions.*
- 1.6. Provide enhanced technical assistance and guidance for businesses and organizations interested in taking action in certification programs.*
- 1.7. Facilitate a summit meeting of representatives for all State agencies to share experiences and accomplishments of their pilot programs for elimination of single use plastics.*
- 1.8. Develop model solicitation language for vendors requiring the minimization or elimination of single use plastics as part of the evaluation process.*
- 2.3. Explore the pros and cons of further legislation to address single-use disposables and surrounding systemic challenges through a similarly collaborative process. With a timeline of at least a year, consider disposables more broadly than only plastics as well as the sequencing or joining of policies that will best encourage systemic change that will be effective and practical. The working group brainstormed a list of potential concepts beyond plastic bags that could be addressed through legislation, as follows. In addition to this list, the Taskforce recommends exploring legislation that would bolster the implementation efforts of the other working groups.*
- 3.3. Launch an education campaign to reduce plastics in the hospitality industry. This*

campaign would focus specifically on minimizing plastics, whereas the RI Hospitality Association and DEM Green Hospitality protocol has a broader environmental sustainability theme.

- 3.4. Launch a statewide school-based (K-12) environmental and plastics awareness video contest. The school submitting the winning video would be eligible to win the installation of a water bottle filling station through the generosity of the Greenlove foundation.*
- 3.5. Launch a unified, statewide anti-littering campaign led by Woodsy Owl that would build enthusiasm for Woodsy's message and, by the end of the program, culminate in appearances by Woodsy to a school in each of RI's 39 communities.*
- 4.2. Investigate opportunities for reusable packaging systems in Rhode Island. An expansion of platforms that organize, distribute, and manage reusable food containers has helped to reduce plastic waste in a variety of settings. Such efforts could be supported, incentivized and promoted by the relevant state authority as a plastic reduction priority.*
- 4.3. Participate in MacArthur Foundation "New Plastics Economy" initiative.*
- 4.4. Explore investment and expansion for plastic film / wrap recycling.*

LONG TERM RECOMMENDATIONS (3 TO 5 YEARS)

- 3.6. Assemble school administrators, teachers, environmental educators, and other key stakeholders to share best practices on incorporating litter-prevention training into K-12 education.*
- 3.7. Create a platform for colleges and universities to study plastics, plastic pollution, and the effectiveness of initiatives championed by the Taskforce.*
- 3.8. Broaden the scope of Woodsy's messages to highlight the themes of conserving natural resources and preventing environmental degradation*

Appendix 3: Lead By Example Survey Results

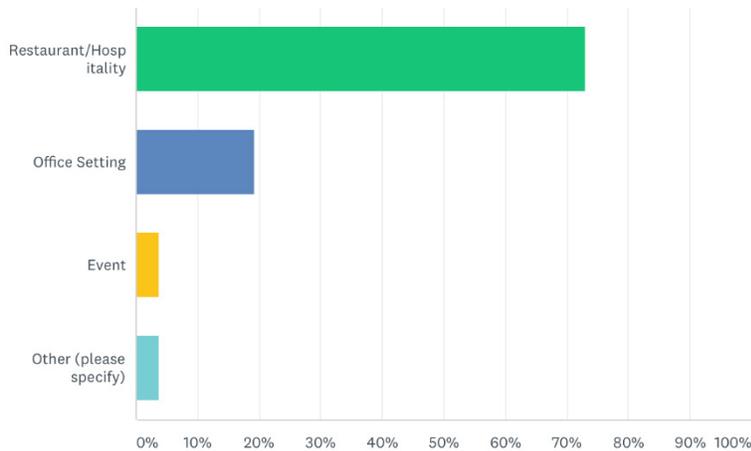
The Lead By Example working group created and posted an on-line survey through Survey Monkey to collect information on the best practices already adopted by Rhode Island companies eliminating the use of single use plastics. Participation in the survey was promoted through e-mail notices to the Taskforce, as well as communication and promotion in the hospitality sector through e-mails from the

RI Hospitality Association. The survey contained ten questions and was active for approximately one month. Twenty-six responses were received.

Of the 26 respondents, 19 (or 73%) were from the hospitality sector; 5 represented office operations (19%); 1 was from an event sponsor (4%); and 1 represented “other.” A graphic representing the respondents is shown below:

In what environment(s) did you take action to eliminate, or limit, single use plastics?

Answered: 26 Skipped: 0



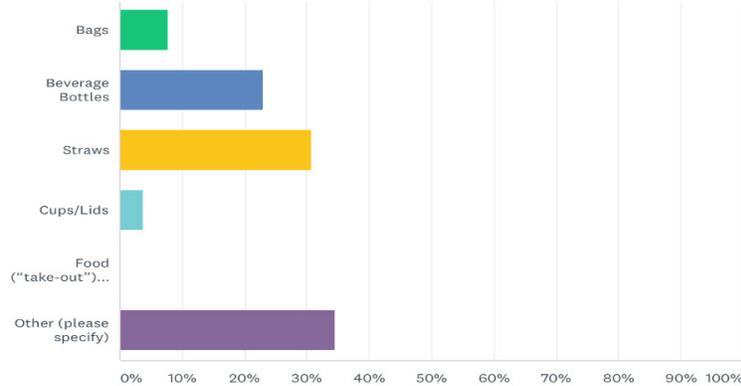
ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES
Restaurant/Hospitality	73.08% 19
Office Setting	19.23% 5
Event	3.85% 1
Other (please specify)	3.85% 1
TOTAL	26

Of the actions taken by the respondents, the highest percentage reported that they eliminated straws (31%), followed by single-use beverage bottles

(23%), bags (8%), and cups/lids (4%). This is shown in the following graphic:

What types of single use plastics were the focus of your efforts?

Answered: 26 Skipped: 0



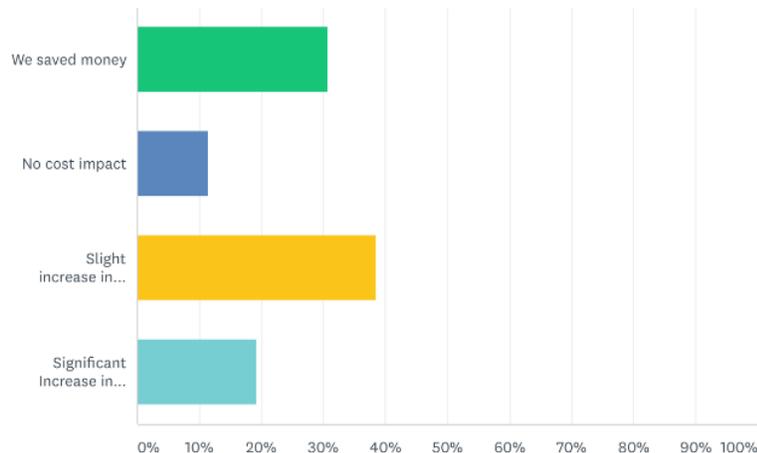
ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
▼ Bags	7.69%	2
▼ Beverage Bottles	23.08%	6
▼ Straws	30.77%	8
▼ Cups/Lids	3.85%	1
▼ Food ("take-out") Containers	0.00%	0
▼ Other (please specify)	Responses 34.62%	9
TOTAL		26

Finally, the survey requested feedback on the economic impact from taking the actions. The largest percentage (38%) reported a slight increase in cost. This was followed by 31% who reported they saved

money (decreased costs) by their actions. Another 19% reported a significant increase in cost while the remainder reported no cost impact (12%). The results are shown in the following graph:

In your experience, what was the cost impact of your efforts? (Choose One)

Answered: 26 Skipped: 0



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
▼ We saved money	30.77%	8
▼ No cost impact	11.54%	3
▼ Slight increase in cost	38.46%	10
▼ Significant Increase in cost	19.23%	5
TOTAL		26

Appendix 4: Model Plastic Bag Legislative Language

It is enacted by the General Assembly as follows:

SECTION 1. Title 23 of the General Laws entitled “HEALTH AND SAFETY” is hereby amended by adding thereto the following chapter:

CHAPTER 19.17 PLASTIC WASTE REDUCTION ACT

23-19.17-1 Plastic Waste Reduction Act Findings and Definitions.

A. Findings.

1. Plastic pollution is dangerous to the health of our oceans and ocean species, contributes to climate change, and is a major component of unsightly litter both on our lands and in our waters;
2. Plastics that enter the marine environment break down through wave action and sunlight into smaller pieces called microplastics, which can be ingested by marine life, putting Rhode Island’s fishing industries and aquatic ecosystems at risks;
3. It is critical to protect the natural environment and the health of its citizens and visitors;
4. Plastic bags and thin plastic films are the predominant contaminant of recycling loads in Rhode Island;
5. The use of single-use plastic bags has severe environmental impacts on a local and global scale, including pollution of our waters, harm to marine and wildlife, greenhouse gas emissions, and litter;
6. Single-use plastic bags can litter the environment, block storm drains, and endanger wildlife;
7. Rhode Island residents and our natural resources bear costs associated with the effects of single-use carryout bags on the solid waste stream, drainage, litter, and wildlife;
8. Limiting the distribution of single-use carryout bags by stores is appropriate to incentivize the use of reusable bags;
9. It is in the best interests of the health, safety and welfare of citizens and visitors of Rhode Island to protect our environment and our natural resources by reducing the distribution of single-use carryout bags and incentivizing the use of reusable bags.

B. Definitions. As used in this chapter, the following terms shall have the following meanings:

1. “Department” means the Department of Environmental Management.
2. “Single-use plastic checkout bag” means a carryout bag that is provided to the customer at the point of sale for the purpose of transporting groceries or

other retail goods, and is made from compostable or non-compostable plastic and not specifically designed and manufactured for multiple re-use.

The term “single-use plastic checkout bag” does not include the following types of bags which are excluded from the single-use plastic bag distribution prohibition:

- i. Bags used by customers inside a business to package loose items, such as fruits, vegetables, nuts, ground coffee, grains, candies, or small hardware items;
- ii. Bags used to contain or wrap frozen foods, meat or fish, flowers or potted plants, or other items to contain dampness or prevent contamination of other goods;
- iii. Bags used to contain unwrapped prepared foods or bakery goods;
- iv. Newspaper bags for home newspaper delivery;
- v. Door-hanger bags;
- vi. Laundry, dry cleaning, or garment bags, including bags provided by hotels to guests to contain wet or dirty clothing;
- vii. Bags sold in packages containing multiple bags intended for household or commercial use to contain foods and for garbage, pet waste, or yard waste;
- viii. Bags used to contain live animals, such as fish or insects sold in pet stores;
- ix. Bags provided to transport partially-consumed bottles of wine.

3. “Recyclable paper bag” means a paper bag that is one hundred percent (100%) recyclable including the handles, contains at least forty percent (40%) post-consumer paper content, and displays the words “Recyclable” and the percentage of post-consumer paper content in a visible manner on the outside of the bag.

The term “recyclable paper bag” does not include the following type of bag which is excluded from the recyclable paper bag fee charge requirement:

- i. Paper carryout bags at restaurants.
4. “Retail sales establishment” means any licensed enterprise whereby the sale or transfer to a customer of goods in exchange for payment occurs in a retail store, flea market, or restaurant or other food service establishment. Retail sales establishments do not include farmers’ markets, bazaars or festivals operated by nonprofit or religious institutions, yard sales, tag sales, or other sales by residents at their homes.
5. “Reusable bag” means a bag with handles that is specifically designed and manufactured for 125 or more reuses, and is made primarily of washable cloth, other durable woven or nonwoven fabric, polyester, polypropylene, or other durable plastic with a minimum thickness of four (4.0) mils.

23-19.17-2. Prohibition of single-use plastic bag distribution.

- A. On and after the date this Act takes effect, retail sales establishments are prohibited from making available any single-use plastic checkout bag or any paper checkout bag that is not a recyclable paper bag or a paper carryout bag at restaurants.
- B. To further promote the use of reusable shopping bags and reduce the quantity of single-use carryout bags entering the waste stream, retailers are authorized

and encouraged to make reusable carryout bags available to the public, targeting such programs to reach low-income households to the greatest degree possible.

23-19.17-3. Recyclable paper bag fee requirements.

- A. On and after the date this Act takes effect, the retail sales establishment shall collect from customers, at the time of purchase, a recyclable paper bag fee of five cents (\$0.05) for each recyclable paper bag provided to a customer.
- B. Any charge by a retail sales establishment for a recyclable paper bag shall be separately stated on a receipt provided to the customer at the time of sale and shall be identified as the “checkout bag charge” thereon.
- C. All fees collected pursuant to this section shall be retained by the retail sales establishment.

23-19.17-4. Enforcement and penalty.

- A. Responsibility and jurisdiction for enforcement shall be with municipalities and the Department.
- B. Violation of any section of this Chapter shall subject a Retail Sales Establishment to penalties as set forth in this Chapter.
- C. Penalties for violation of this Chapter shall be as follows:
 - i. One hundred dollars (\$100.00) for the first violation in a calendar year;
 - ii. Two hundred dollars (\$200.00) for the second violation in a calendar year;
 - iii. Five hundred dollars (\$500.00) for the third and any subsequent violation in a calendar year.
- D. All penalties collected by municipalities pursuant to this Section shall be retained by the municipality.

23-19.17-5. Uniformity.

- A. This chapter is a matter of statewide interest and concern and is applicable uniformly throughout the state. Accordingly, this chapter occupies the whole field of regulation of reusable bags, single-use bags, and recycled paper bags, as defined in this chapter, provided by a retail sales establishment, as defined in this chapter, and shall supersede any and all state and local laws, regulations, and ordinances in this field.

SECTION 2. This act shall take effect within one year from the date of promulgation of regulations by the Department as authorized in this Act, or on January 1st, 2021, whichever occurs first.



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