



Contact:
Amanda Leesburg
404-687-0400 (cell)
amanda@leesburgpr.com

PLASTICS BAN LIST TO LAUNCH

Report identifies California's most dangerous plastics, including plastic bags, which the state may vote to ban.

Los Angeles, CA (November 3, 2016)—Today, four non-profit conservation organizations—The 5 Gyres Institute, Clean Production Action, Surfrider Foundation, and UPSTREAM—launched the **Plastics BAN (Better Alternatives Now) List, which identifies the most harmful plastic products sold in California and readily-available alternatives.**

The report is the first compilation of four datasets detailing the types of plastic pollution found in the state's environment; it determines the top 15 offenders, which include food wrappers and containers, plastic bottle caps, and plastic bags. The report supports Proposition 67, which, if passed on Election Day, would effectively ban the use of plastic bags in the state.

"The Plastics BAN List is yet another important report detailing the hazards and high cost to society and nature of single-use plastics," said Los Angeles City Councilmember Paul Koretz, author of the city's own plastic bag ban. "We need to rethink and redesign products and their use to stop wasting our increasingly fragile planet. Voting yes on 67, no on 65 and shopping with reusable bags statewide is an excellent next step."

"Annually, eight million tons of plastic escapes collection systems to end up in the ocean, where it contributes to the 5.25 trillion particles of plastic smog that choke our marine ecosystems," said Anna Cummins, Co-Founder and Global Strategy Director of 5 Gyres. "Even more worrying is the prediction that there will be more plastic than fish in the sea by 2050 if we don't solve this problem. Eliminating single-use disposable plastics must be a priority."

The BAN list also incorporates for the first time an overview of the toxic threats posed by single use plastic products. "Most plastic products are made with highly hazardous chemicals but their toxic lifecycle doesn't stop there. We now know plastic debris floating in the oceans are accumulating toxic pollutants from the surrounding air and water creating an ongoing delivery system of toxins to ocean life," added Bev Thorpe, Consulting Program Manager for Networks and Advocacy at Clean Production Action.

The report highlights the near total lack of brand identity in the pollution datasets and notes that Extended Producer Responsibility programs for product waste are rare in the United States, while states like California spend nearly \$500 million dollars annually to address problems posed by litter and plastic pollution—costs which are borne by taxpayers. The groups are calling on producers to invest in new material design, take financial responsibility for infrastructure costs and drastically reduce the use of single-use disposable plastic.

“Recycling on its own is not the answer,” said Chad Nelsen, Executive Director of Surfrider. “Nearly all of the 15 items on the BAN List have no economic value in today’s recycling systems. California needs to lead by passing Prop 67 to ban the use of plastic bags, which would be an important step in phasing out the use of single-use-disposable plastic products in our economy.”

The report details the functional and material alternatives that could replace the use of current single-use disposable products. “The good news is that there are safer, more sustainable alternatives to nearly every one of the most harmful plastic products,” concluded Matt Prindiville, Executive Director of Upstream. “What we need now is for industry and government to take action and phase out the worst offenders in favor of better alternatives.”

The Plastics BAN List report will launch at a Blue Drinks event in Los Angeles on November 3rd where practical alternatives to the top offenders will be displayed, such as reusable stainless steel cups, mugs and lids, bamboo utensils and reusable bags. **As of November 3rd the Plastics BAN List will be available for download from websites of each partner organization.**

SUMMARY OF CONCLUSIONS

- 1. Most of the worst offenders are designed for “on-the-go” applications, which are more likely to end up as pollution in the environment.** Virtually all of the products on the BAN List are “to-go” products like takeout containers, coffee lids, beverage bottles and straws.
- 2. More recycling will not solve plastic pollution.** Nearly all of the 15 products on the BAN List have no economic value in today’s recycling systems. They are literally “designed for the dump” and are often contaminants in recycling systems, either damaging equipment and causing costly repairs when they enter recycling facilities (like plastic bags) or ending up as a net cost for recyclers to unload at a loss (like polystyrene) rather than as profitable materials.
- 3. Many of the BAN List products are manufactured with toxic chemicals, and none of the plastics used are examples of green chemistry.** Many of the products are made from polystyrene, a probable human carcinogen. Other plastics contain harmful additives like PET, which uses a toxic heavy metal – antimony – as a catalyst in the production process. None of the products are manufactured according to green chemistry principles.
- 4. Better alternatives to BAN List products are available today for nearly every single harmful plastic use.** When we conducted an assessment of functional replacements and material substitutions for the harmful plastic products, we found that safer, more sustainable alternatives were widely available today. We do not need to wait for technological “fixes” to solve plastic pollution. We can start by moving to better alternatives now that deliver the same product or service without the harm.
- 5. More data needs to be collected on pollution in the environment and the identity of responsible producers. Data collection methods should be standardized.** We discovered that different entities collected pollution data in different ways. For example, one institution might lump all plastic cups together, while another might differentiate

between hard plastic cups and foam cups. It's important for the scientific community to standardize pollution research methods and categories and to increase monitoring of plastic in the environment and to identify the product producers for transparent discussions on producer responsibility.

6. The BAN List is a good place to start for voluntary action by industry and regulatory action by government. If we want to solve plastic pollution – especially in California - we can start with voluntary and regulatory action to replace the worst offenders with better alternatives now. The BAN List methodology can be applied and replicated in other jurisdictions to come up with similar target lists for action.

ABOUT THE PARTNER ORGANIZATIONS

The nonprofit 5 Gyres Institute has been fighting plastic ocean pollution since 2009. Beginning in 2010, 5 Gyres began a series of scientific firsts by researching plastic in all five subtropical gyres, as well as the Great Lakes and Antarctica. In 2014, the organization convened eight scientists around the world to publish the first global estimate of plastic pollution in our ocean: 5.25 trillion particles weighing in at 270,000 tons of “plastic smog” worldwide. 5 Gyres’ paper on plastic microbead pollution in the Great Lakes inspired a two-year collaborative campaign that culminated in a federal ban on microbeads, which President Obama signed into law in 2015. In August, 5 Gyres embarked on its 17th expedition—this time to research microplastics and nanoplastics in the Arctic Circle. www.5gyres.org

Clean Production Action believes we can reverse our current production of toxic products and hazardous waste. TO achieve such systemic change we collaborate to design and deliver strategic solutions for green chemicals, sustainable materials and environmentally preferable products. Our GreenScreen® for Safer Chemicals has become an essential tool for global companies to reduce their chemical footprint while our BizNGO Working Group produces pragmatic strategies to identify the barriers and solutions for safer design. In particular, our Plastics Scorecard and the Principles of Sustainable Plastics offer roadmaps to halt the proliferation of harmful polymers in commerce. www.cleanproduction.org

The Surfrider Foundation is a non-profit grassroots organization dedicated to the protection and enjoyment of our world's oceans, waves and beaches through a powerful activist network. Founded in 1984 by a handful of visionary surfers in Malibu, California, the Surfrider Foundation now maintains over 250,000 supporters, activists and members worldwide. www.surfrider.org

UPSTREAM works with non-profit, government and business leaders to solve the environmental problems caused by products and packaging. We leverage strategies and campaigns that impact these problems at the source. We believe the most equitable solutions are found upstream with the companies that design, produce and profit from environmentally harmful products. Today, our focus is on developing sustainable packaging systems and preventing plastic pollution in the environment. www.upstreampolicy.org

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