

10 TIPS FOR GOING PLASTIC-FREE



Single-use plastics do more harm than clutter our streets, beaches and ocean; plastics are also harmful and lethal to marine life through ingestion or entanglement. Plastic does not “degrade” — it becomes smaller particles that contaminate the environment and harm animals. According to the World Economic Forum, if plastic pollution continues at the current rate, there will be more plastic than fish in the ocean by 2050. Here is how you can help reduce your plastic footprint:

- 1. Refuse.** We all know the three R’s of sustainability: reduce, reuse, and recycle. However, there is a fourth “R” that is often forgotten: **REFUSE!** When you refuse a single-use plastic item like a straw or to-go container you eliminate waste and harm to our environment.
- 2. Skip the Straw!** Americans use roughly between 170-390 million plastic straws a day! If you must, bring your own—there are plenty of reusable straw options (such as glass, stainless steel, and bamboo).
- 3. BYOB².** Bring your own bag and bottle! Over one million single-use plastic bags are used globally and roughly one million plastic bottles are bought globally **every minute.**
- 4. Fork it Over!** Meals are a huge opportunity to reduce single-use plastic usage. Pack your own reusable utensils. In 2022 and in just six hours, COA’s Beach Sweep volunteers collected 3,319 plastic utensils from NJ beaches.
- 5. Operation Cleanup!** COA’s Annual Beach Sweeps is a great way to help, but you can also organize your own! Help prevent sources and remove litter in your community! Get your friends, coworkers, kids or yourself to at least pick up one bag of trash each time you’re taking a stroll, going for a run, or hanging-out in your favorite parks, community or shoreline.
- 6. Be Plastic Savvy.** There are many different types of alternatives to plastics but not all of them are as green and sustainable as you might think. Be wary of “*bio-degradable plastics*”. Though scientists are working

hard, true environmentally-safe options are not commercially available.

- 7. Know the Numbers.** Familiarize yourself with the recycling numbering system. Find the “chasing arrow” with a number on the inside. The # indicates the type of plastic. #1 (PETE) and #2 (HDPE) are the most widely recyclable. Check with your municipality to see which #'s they accept. Check out Earth911.com or Terracycle for other unique recycling options!
- 8. Shop Smart.** You have the power to make smarter buying decisions; Avoid purchasing single-serve plastic items, items with excess packaging, plastic utensils, and other “disposable” plastics.
- 9. Ban Single-use Plastics.** NJ’s Single Use Waste Reduction Act has made waves since its implementation. COA’s 2022 Annual Report highlights plastic shopping bags, plastic straws, and foam takeout containers *each* decreasing over 35% in the first year!
- 10. Join the Cause.** Support COA’s efforts to stop plastic pollution and more by volunteering at events, such as our Bi-Annual Beach Sweeps, joining our mailing lists and following COA on social media, donating, and becoming informed. To learn more visit our website!

Non-point source or “pointless” pollution is the #1 cause of coastal water pollution. This pollution has many sources, including stormwater runoff that carries litter, pet waste, fertilizers, pesticides, soil, and waste from leaky sewage systems into waterways. Every time it rains, polluted stormwater travels to the nearest storm drain or waterbody that ultimately drains to the ocean. Though people and their everyday habits are often the source of pollution, we can easily become the solution. By making small changes we can make our ocean fishable, swimmable, and healthy.

For more information and the complete 10 Tip Series visit:



www.CleanOceanAction.org

49 Avenel Blvd.

Long Branch, NJ 07740

(732) 872-0111

info@cleanoceanaction.org.

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