

Committee: Environment and Ecology

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Discourage the Use of Plastic Bags

WHEREAS, seeing the destruction disposable plastic bags cause to wildlife, ecosystems and human health both in Missouri and downstream; and

WHEREAS, plastic bags are blown by the wind out of trashcans, garbage trucks and landfills, and often not stopping until they reach streams, rivers or the ocean; and

WHEREAS, the true impact of a plastic bag lasts generations, even though their practical life is limited to one or two uses; and

WHEREAS, once in our waterways, bags soak up toxins in the water such as mercury. They do not biodegrade, instead breaking apart into smaller pieces that are consumed by wildlife. The breakdown of plastics releases toxins which then build up in the food chain; and

WHEREAS, American Plastics Council has found it takes hundreds of years for some bags to decompose and in the process toxic particles leach into the water and soil carrying them; creating potential health hazards for both wildlife and humans; and

WHEREAS, since their introduction in 1970 between 500 billion and a trillion plastic bags are consumed each year, and millions of these end up outside of landfills; and

WHEREAS, studies have shown toxic plastic particles derived from plastic bags and litter breaking down in our waterways; cause infertility, poisoning, and genetic disruption in aquatic wildlife; the UN has noted concerns that these problems may carry up the food chain to impact human health in similar ways when contaminated food is ingested in high enough quantities. (Plastics, the environment and human health: current consensus and future trends, Thompson, Moore, et al.) (UNEP Frontiers 2016 Report, Emerging Issues of Environmental Concern);

WHEREAS, plastic bags make up a significant portion of the waste found in and around creeks and streams; and

WHEREAS, plastic accumulates in Missouri streams before the waste feeds into the ocean via the Mississippi River; and

WHEREAS, reducing the use of plastic bags would preserve our energy resources and help curb our fossil fuel emissions and consumption nationwide; and

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WHEREAS, the Alice Ferguson Foundation, which hosts stream cleanups in and around Washington D.C., reported a 50% drop in plastic bag litter the first year after a bag fee went into effect; and

WHEREAS, stores can reduce costs by eliminating the use of plastic bags, benefitting consumers through lower prices; and

WHEREAS, Americans recycle less than 2% of these plastic bags each year. Taxpayers end up paying the bills to clean up streams, parks, and highways to the tune of millions of dollars annually (North Carolina Department of Public Safety); now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED that the Conservation Federation of Missouri assembled at the Capitol Plaza Hotel, Jefferson City, MO, this 12th day of March, 2017, asks the Missouri Municipal League and the Council of Mayors to promote alternative, sustainable solutions and thereby reduce plastic bag use through education, community programs and business incentives.