
The Hidden Costs of Plastic Shopping Bags in California

In Groceries: \$237.3 million each year in increased groceries prices for Californian shoppers

- Single-use bags are not free--Californians use nearly 14 billion single-use plastic bags each year. At a cost of one to two cents each, retailers are spending over \$237 million annually to provide the so called "free bags" to their customers.
- They cover this cost by raising the price of groceries and other products for all of us.

In Street and Stormwater Cleanups: \$34.4 million in stormwater management, street cleanings, and litter prevention

- Under federal Stormwater Permits, jurisdictions will have to comply with costly Total Maximum Daily Load requirements. Los Angeles County alone spends \$18 million each year to collect litter from stormwater systems (19-25% attributed to plastic bags) while San Jose will spend roughly \$1.2 million for plastic bags in its trash reduction plan. That's an average cost of 79 cents per capita, or \$29.5 million total for our state.
- At an average of 13 cents per capita for litter management and prevention activities (based on San Jose, San Francisco, LA County, and Austin estimates), Californians may spend nearly \$5 million each year on plastic bag litter abatement and cleanups.

In Recycling and Composting Costs: \$37 million each year for recycling contamination in facilities

- Single-use plastic bags have a tendency to get stuck in recycling and sorting machinery and can degrade the quality of baled recyclables and compost piles.
- Before adopting a bag ban in 2011, the City of San Jose spent \$1 million annually to repair processing machines, or \$1.04 per capita. Averaged with other costs to manage bags at recycling facilities in CA and TX, plastic bags can cost up to \$37 million each year.
- In composting facilities, plastic bags that don't break down are a contaminant. Based on San Jose costs, residents with access to compost facilities pay an additional 13 cents per capita to remove these contaminants.

In Disposal Related Fees: \$18.4 million for collection/disposal, and nearly \$7 million for landfill maintenance costs in California

- Plastic bag collection and disposal costs Californians up to an estimated \$18.4 million each year.
- When plastic bags end up in landfills, these aerodynamic bags continue to be an expensive nuisance, blowing around facilities and escaping into nearby properties. Landfills pay for ten foot high fences to keep the bags from escaping into neighboring properties.
- Landfills also spend an average of 23 cents per disposal ton to physically collect and manage the bags. With over 30 million tons disposed in CA landfills, an estimated \$6.9 million is subsidized by ratepayers through increased utility fees.



Total cost to California taxpayers (not including impacts of plastic bags to our 43 billion dollar ocean-based economy): Over \$334 million dollars each year!!! That's an enormous sum that is easily avoidable.

Read about our Campaign to End Single-Use Plastic Bags at: <http://www.cawrecycles.org/issues/plasticbagcampaign>.

