

KATHY WARD

From: Janine McCusker <janinemccusker@gmail.com>
Sent: Tuesday, February 07, 2012 11:23 AM
To: KATHY WARD
Subject: letter in support of plastic bag and styrofoam ban

I am Janine McCusker, Dana point resident. Since moving here in 1964 I have watched our beautiful beach community become littered with plastic refuse. I see it on the beaches, in the ocean, San Juan Creek, caught in trees, fences, empty lots, open spaces. Despite clean up efforts, They are everywhere. Our society has become a "throw away society", but really, where is AWAY?

I always thought that plastic bags were "recyclable". We get them from the store, line a trash can or two, stow them away, fill up bag after bag of bags, finally throw them in the recycle bin. The garbage company picks it up, and recycles it into another product, right?

I wanted to see for myself, what really does happen to our Recyclables after we throw them away? Yesterday, I drove to the local recycling plant . On my way, I counted over 200 plastic bags, along with 5 large collection bags, full of plastic refuse stuck in bushes along the scenic highway in the 1 mile stretch between Antonio parkway and CR& R facility.

I found that the facility is only an intermediary transfer point for "recyclable waste", which is reloaded into giant semi trucks and transported again, 40 miles to The main Stanton sorting facility, where dirty and clean plastic bags are crushed into dirty stinking bundles, too labor and cost intensive for us to handle, then bought by another company and exported by freighter to poor Asian countries. This information was confirmed there by 3 sources.

Surely if the public really new the consequences of plastic, they would ask, "what can I do"? When asked the question Paper or Plastic, why can't the answer be, Neither! Reusable containers is the only answer. Get out of the habit of single use ultra thin plastic, and Styrofoam containers. When they say "recyclable", they mean this dirty nasty cost intensive process, which could be completely bypassed by consumers refusing containers designed to be discarded minutes after they are put into our hands. They don't make anything locally out of this refuse, they sell it and ship it overseas! Us consumers and retailers need to realize the true cost of plastic bags, which is more like 17 cents per bag, I'm told, which includes waste cleanup and damage to the environment.

Dana Point is a beach city, the ocean and beautiful surrounding area is why we live here. Coastal towns all over the nation are always at the forefront of environmental change. Things wash down inland waterways, blow across land until it reaches our ocean. Inlanders come and trash our beaches on 4th of July, we see the effects first hand. All over the world, coastal cities have instituted these bans very successfully, I have friends and family in China and Cape Town, telling me that these bans work, and as a result, people start to change their habits. I try to remember to bring my own bags to the grocery store, sometimes I forget, but I am trying to change my habit of using these bags.

I have visited the areas where these bans are in place, San Francisco, Seattle, Maui and always ask store clerks, "how is this working for you". They always reply with a positive answer and state that customers get used to the change quickly and feel that they are contributing to the health of the environment. I got a 10 cent rebate on my receipt from whole foods for each reusable bag I brought. I liked that. We are supposed to be an educated, sophisticated society, are we to fall behind third world countries like India and Bangladesh, who have voted in these bans?

There are many alternatives for business owners in this area. I am also speaking on behalf of Mrs. Barrie Boehne, from Infinity Surboards here in Dana Point, who is out of town this week. She said that she still uses the Reusable bags she bought in France, when she shops at the grocery store here and would not mind having reusable bags for sale at her store with the infinity logo on it for free advertising. Large Businesses like Costco, Sam's Club, Trader Joes, Whole Foods, have never offered plastic bags. Nor does Walmarts in certain cities, (Maui county, Marin county, Mendocino county) Even the local Food Banks ask their clients who live on the most extreme limited budget, to bring their own bags. Do like Trader joes, print up your store name on these reusable bags and you will have free advertisement. I must see 50% of shoppers at trader joes with their own bags.

Everyone knows our whole planet is being choked by plastic waste. For the public, the first, easiest and most doable step to help, is to stop the use of ultra thin plastic bags and Styrofoam. Lifespan of a ultra thin plastic bag is 450 years. 500 billion ultra thin bags are being made annually. They call Styrofoam "the gift that lasts for ever", whose lifespan is thousands of years.

Achim Steiner executive director of the UN Environmental program Says and I quote: "single use plastic bags which choke marine life should be banned or phased out rapidly everywhere. There is simply zero justification for manufacturing them anywhere anymore".

Again, When we are asked Paper or Plastic, why cant the answer be "neither". Bring your own bags like the Europeans always have. Institute this ban on single use ultra thin plastic bags and Styrofoam and get this town on the right path.