

DRAFT
Notes from Rhode Island Litter Task Force Meeting
February 15, 2006

Participants: T. Getz, E. Stone, L. Ruggeri, A. Miller, M. Costa

The January meeting notes were accepted.

Maria Costa of DEM was introduced to the group. She will be assisting the Litter Task Force with administrative assistance concerning meeting notices and drafting meeting minutes etc.

Legislative Update:

Elizabeth will contact Maria with legislative meeting updates to send to members via email.

Litter Tax – Elizabeth provided Bill Numbers for legislation that re-institutes the litter tax being directed to anti-litter activities: House 6911, Senate 2670 and legislation consumers to receive a rebate of \$.03 per bag when they bring their own bag. Bill Numbers: House 7001, Senate 2669.

Tom distributed some information from Anita SanAntonio concerning plastic bag recycling. She provided web links for a radio ad and the RIRRC activities in this area.

(http://www.rirrc.org/documents/RIRR_Bags_Day-RDWG-6016.mp3)
<http://www.rirrc.org/microsite/whatkindofplasticbags.html>

Tom mentioned Caroline Karp indicated students from Brown would be available to possibly do a research project on litter issues. Tom distributed information concerning Grocery Bag research that was provided by July Lewis, from Audubon Society Rhode Island. (Attachment A) The logic of the \$.03 rebate was based on the rebate offered by Whole Foods in Providence. In addition, according to the information from July Lewis, paper bags cost about three cents versus plastic which costs about a penny.

Smoking on Beaches –

Tom stated that Jef Fornaro hasn't heard anything yet from Rep. Peter Lewis but has heard from Senator Rhoda Perry in support of the smoking on beaches and litter tax. Jef also indicated Rep. Tom Winfield of Smithfield will support both bills.

Tom informed us that Eugenia indicated the Ocean Conservancy has statistics from 2003-2004 pertaining to cigarette butts. She suggested we contact Sonya Besteiro at sbesteiro@oceanconservancy.org for this information. Rhode Island General Law allows municipalities to establish

designated smoking areas at beaches. There are designated areas at Barrington Beach for smoking and Warren Beach has a Smoking ban.

Tom indicated that he wants to redesign the Litter Task Force web page. Content has grown and it needs to be reorganized.

Other Updates

Bottled Water

Tom distributed information from Greg Gerritt concerning bottled water containers. (Attachment B) The bottom line to the article is there is a lot of empty bottles being generated by bottled water and this was not a factor when Rhode Island laws that dealt with litter were developed. Tom suggested that this would be a good topic for Caroline Karp students to do research on bottled water container use / litter.

Richmond Welcome Center

Tom indicated he discussed the letter from the Litter Task Force that was sent to EDC with staff from that agency. He mentioned there there is a possibility that a member from EDC will attend a future meeting to discuss their efforts in recycling / anti litter initiatives.

Route 295 – Baseline data was generated for the January 2005- December 2005 time-period. Information is available concerning the number of crews and amount of bags collected. Lynn visited the center on February 2, 2006 and saw trash everywhere. There was discussion about having State Police being paid to conduct anti-litter details and give out tickets for litter violations.

Lynn mentioned she had anti-litter signs at McDonalds in Richmond. Every year signs are put up during tourist season but are not enforced like it should be.

Next meeting will be March 15, 2006 and will be held in the Fester Conference Room in room 425

Attachment A Grocery Bag Policy Research

Grocery Bag Policy Research

According to the San Francisco Chronicle (1/24/05 and 1/25/05), plastic bags cost grocery stores about one cent a piece or less, while paper costs about 3 cents a piece. Similar numbers are reported by National Geographic.*

Stop & Shop does not apparently have a general policy of giving a credit to customers who bring their own bags. An email we sent to Consumer Relations has yet to receive a reply. However, polling several individual Stop & Shop markets got a varied response. Out of four Rhode Island Stop& Shop branches, two had never heard of such a policy, one said they used to have the policy but no longer follow it since they have implemented plastic bag recycling, and one (in Bristol, RI) said they give a credit to those who bring in canvas bags but not those who re-use plastic or paper bags. They said each store sets its own policy.

We received a response from Shaw's Customer Care Representative, saying that they used to have a bag credit policy. The purpose was "to increase our customers' awareness of recycling as a method of solid waste management and to encourage customer participation in one type of recycling activity." But since "most communities now have established comprehensive recycling programs", they feel the program has served its purpose. They now only offer plastic bag recycling and do not offer credit for bag reuse.

July Lewis
Policy Assistant
Audubon Society of Rhode Island

**Articles giving cost per bag:*

[http://www.sfgate.com/cgi-](http://www.sfgate.com/cgi-bin/article.cgi?file=/chronicle/archive/2005/01/24/EDGT0ARQLT1.DTL)

[bin/article.cgi?file=/chronicle/archive/2005/01/24/EDGT0ARQLT1.DTL](http://www.sfgate.com/cgi-bin/article.cgi?file=/chronicle/archive/2005/01/24/EDGT0ARQLT1.DTL)

<http://www.sfgate.com/cgi-bin/article.cgi?f=/c/a/2005/01/25/BUGCJAVPAI1.DTL>

http://news.nationalgeographic.com/news/2003/09/0902_030902_plasticbags.html

Attachment B – Bottled Water (From Greg Gerritt)

BOTTLED WATER: POURING RESOURCES DOWN THE DRAIN

<http://www.earth-policy.org/Updates/2006/Update51.htm>

By Emily Arnold

The global consumption of bottled water reached 154 billion liters (41 billion gallons) in 2004, up 57 percent from the 98 billion liters consumed five years earlier. Even in areas where tap water is safe to drink, demand for bottled water is increasing—producing unnecessary garbage and consuming vast quantities of energy. Although in the industrial world bottled water is often no healthier than tap water, it can cost up to 10,000 times more. At as much as \$2.50 per liter (\$10 per gallon), bottled water costs more than gasoline.

The United States is the world's leading consumer of bottled water, with Americans drinking 26 billion liters in 2004, or approximately one 8-ounce glass per person every day. Mexico has the second highest consumption, at 18 billion liters. China and Brazil follow, at close to 12 billion liters each. Ranking fifth and sixth in consumption are Italy and Germany, using just over 10 billion liters of bottled water each. (See data at www.earthpolicy.org/Updates/2006/Update51_data.htm.)

Italians drink the most bottled water per person, at nearly 184 liters in 2004—more than two glasses a day. Mexico and the United Arab Emirates consume 169 and 164 liters per person. Belgium and France follow close behind, with per capita consumption near 145 liters annually. Spain ranks sixth, at 137 liters each year.

Some of the largest increases in bottled water consumption have occurred in developing countries. Of the top 15 per capita consumers of bottled water, Lebanon, the United Arab Emirates, and Mexico have the fastest growth rates, with consumption per person increasing by 44-50 percent between 1999 and 2004. While per capita rates in India and China are not as high, total consumption in these populous countries has risen swiftly—tripling in India and more than doubling in China in that five-year period. And there is great potential for further growth. If everyone in China drank 100 8-ounce glasses of bottled water a year (slightly more than one fourth the amount consumed by the average American in 2004), China would go through some 31 billion liters of bottled water, quickly becoming the world's leading consumer.

In contrast to tap water, which is distributed through an energy-efficient infrastructure, transporting bottled water long distances involves burning massive quantities of fossil fuels. Nearly a quarter of all bottled water crosses national borders to reach consumers, transported by boat, train, and truck. In 2004, for example, Nord Water of Finland bottled and shipped 1.4 million bottles of Finnish tap water 4,300 kilometers (2,700 miles) from its bottling plant in Helsinki to Saudi Arabia.

Saudi Arabia can afford to import the water it needs, but bottled water is not just sold to water-scarce countries. While some 94 percent of the bottled water sold in the United

States is produced domestically, Americans also import water shipped some 9,000 kilometers from Fiji and other faraway places to satisfy the demand for chic and exotic bottled water.

Fossil fuels are also used in the packaging of water. The most commonly used plastic for making water bottles is polyethylene terephthalate (PET), which is derived from crude oil. Making bottles to meet Americans' demand for bottled water requires more than 1.5 million barrels of oil annually, enough to fuel some 100,000 U.S. cars for a year. Worldwide, some 2.7 million tons of plastic are used to bottle water each year.

After the water has been consumed, the plastic bottle must be disposed of. According to the Container Recycling Institute, 86 percent of plastic water bottles used in the United States become garbage or litter. Incinerating used bottles produces toxic byproducts such as chlorine gas and ash containing heavy metals. Buried water bottles can take up to 1,000 years to biodegrade. Almost 40 percent of the PET bottles that were deposited for recycling in the United States in 2004 were actually exported, sometimes to as far away as China-adding to the resources used by this product.

In addition to the strains bottled water puts on our ecosystem through its production and transport, the rapid growth in this industry means that water extraction is concentrated in communities where bottling plants are located. In India, for example, water extraction by Coca-Cola for Dasani bottled water and other drinks has caused water shortages for over 50 villages. Similar problems have been reported in Texas and in the Great Lakes region of North America, where farmers, fishers, and others who depend on water for their livelihoods are suffering from concentrated water extraction as water tables drop quickly.

Studies show that consumers associate bottled water with healthy living. But bottled water is not guaranteed to be any healthier than tap water. In fact, roughly 40 percent of bottled water begins as tap water; often the only difference is added minerals that have no marked health benefit. The French Senate even advises people who drink bottled mineral water to change brands frequently because the added minerals are helpful in small amounts but may be dangerous in higher doses.

The French Senate also noted that small, localized problems with tap water can cause a widespread loss of confidence in municipal supplies. In fact, in a number of places, including Europe and the United States, there are more regulations governing the quality of tap water than bottled water. U.S. water quality standards set by the Environmental Protection Agency for tap water, for instance, are more stringent than the Food and Drug Administration's standards for bottled water.

There is no question that clean, affordable drinking water is essential to the health of our global community. But bottled water is not the answer in the developed world, nor does it solve problems for the 1.1 billion people who lack a secure water supply. Improving and expanding existing water treatment and sanitation systems is more likely to provide safe and sustainable sources of water over the long term. In villages, rainwater harvesting and digging new wells can create more affordable sources of water.

The United Nations Millennium Development Goal for environmental sustainability calls for halving the proportion of people lacking sustainable access to safe drinking water by 2015. Meeting this goal would require doubling the \$15 billion a year that the world currently spends on water supply and sanitation. While this amount may seem large, it pales in comparison to the estimated \$100 billion spent each year on bottled water.

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Additional data and information sources at www.earthpolicy.org or contact [jlarsen\(at\)earthpolicy.org](mailto:jlarsen@earthpolicy.org)