

Camden County Bans Single Use Plastics in County Facilities and County-Sponsored Events

- Why did the Camden County Board of Freeholders pass this ban?
 - Plastic is the most prevalent type of marine debris found in our oceans. By the year 2050, scientists estimate there will be more plastic in our oceans by weight than that of all the fish.
 - Plastic debris can come in all shapes and sizes, but those that are less than five millimeters in length (or about the size of a sesame seed) are called microplastics.
 - Single-use plastics break down into microplastics, which fish and other marine life ingest, mistaking it for food. As a result, the seafood we harvest from our waters likely has microplastics in it, so we are also ingesting those plastics. Plastics also release toxins into the soil and water in the process of breaking down. Since plastic isn't biodegradable, most of it ends up in landfills, or as litter on the landscape and in waterways.
 - In addition, plastic is not only made from petroleum, but producing it typically requires a lot of fossil fuel-derived energy. The fact that Americans throw away some 100 billion plastic grocery bags each year means we are drilling for and importing millions of barrels worth of oil and natural gas for a convenient way to carry home groceries.
- What are we banning?
 - Single-use plastic grocery-type bags
 - Plastic straws, stirrers, utensils, and plates
 - Polystyrene (Styrofoam) cups and containers
 - Bottled beverages in single-serve plastic containers (1 liter or less) - aluminum, cardboard and glass containers are acceptable
 - Condiment packages
- What will be replacing single-use plastics?
 - The Freeholders endorse re-usable products where possible. However, when single-use items are required, products must be compostable. Compostable means an item is made solely of organic substances which break down into natural materials that are safe for humans and the environment.
 - For now, many compostable products will be part of the waste stream and not recyclable, but the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection is working on programs that will allow us to compost these products in the near future. However, they are still considered safe if they wind up in the environment or waterways.

Note: The ban goes into effect on January 1, 2020. However, it will take time to fully roll out all the new replacement products. This does not prevent County employees from using and/or bringing in single use plastics from home for personal use. However, we strongly encourage employees to choose reusable items and/or those that are environmentally friendly.