



# STEWARDS OF OUR EARTH

A Resource brought to you by the Social Justice Committee of Holy Cross Parish

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## Environmental Action: Let Us Not Forget the Plastic Menace

“Although many are aware of the existential threat that climate change presents, there are numerous other life-threatening environmental problems we face. The use of plastics, particularly single use plastics, presents to us and the life around us one such threat. In the United States, people use **100 billion plastic bags every year**, each with an average usable life of 15 minutes and 500+ years to degrade. If each plastic bag costs one cent, that is a cost of \$1 billion a year for merchants. Plastic bags are not biodegradable and only 1% are sent to recycling centers. The other **99% end up in landfills or litter our environment**, including the waterways and oceans. Plastics in the environment are often mistaken for food, especially by marine animals and sea birds. This results in harmful effects on 700 marine species and the painful unnecessary deaths of 100,000 marine mammals....



Of the millions of bags collected with the trash, many become airborne and collect in trees, fences, and roadways near landfills. As they degrade, toxins are released into the air, water, and soils. By leaching into the soil, they eventually enter our food chain. Two of these chemical compounds, Phthalates and BPA, are suspected to cause insulin resistance, respiratory problems, and high blood pressure in children....

Roadside litter **costs Pennsylvanians \$14 million a year to clean up**. Cigarette butts and plastic make up most of that litter. A statewide plastic bag ban would be beneficial both financially and health-wise.” Take action at [sierraclub.org/plastic](https://sierraclub.org/plastic). (Lana Gulden, *Sierra Club PA Chapter Newsletter*, March 11, 2020)

Philadelphia’s ban on single use plastic bags, scheduled to take effect July 2, 2020, will be delayed until January 2021 due to the coronavirus pandemic.

### [Nina Alvarado extricating plastic bag](#)

Eight states — California, Connecticut, Delaware, Hawaii, Maine, New York, Oregon, and Vermont — have banned single use plastic bags, according to the National Conference of State Legislators. And five — Connecticut, Delaware, Maine, Oregon, and Vermont — have placed restrictions on straws and foam containers. (Frank Kummer, *Inquirer*, November 5, 2020)

New Jersey Gov. Phil Murphy just signed a law (effective May 2022) that bans retailers, fast-food restaurants, and supermarkets from providing single use plastic carryout bags, paper bags, and foam containers including cups. The change is being called one of the toughest laws of its kind in the country and hailed by local environmental groups. (Frank Kummer, *Inquirer*, November 5, 2020)

## We need to press Pennsylvania to do the same!