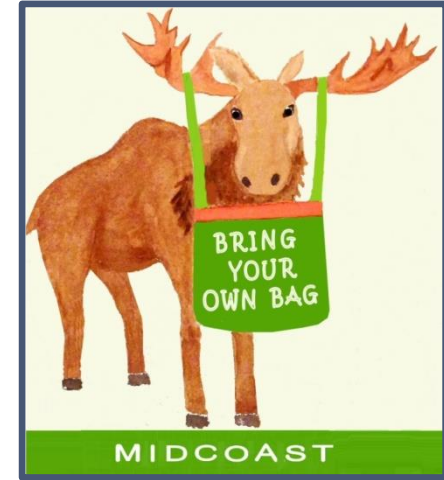


# Plastic Bag Reduction Programs: Bring Your Own Bag-MidCoast

***Marcia Harrington & Rebecca Halbbrook***

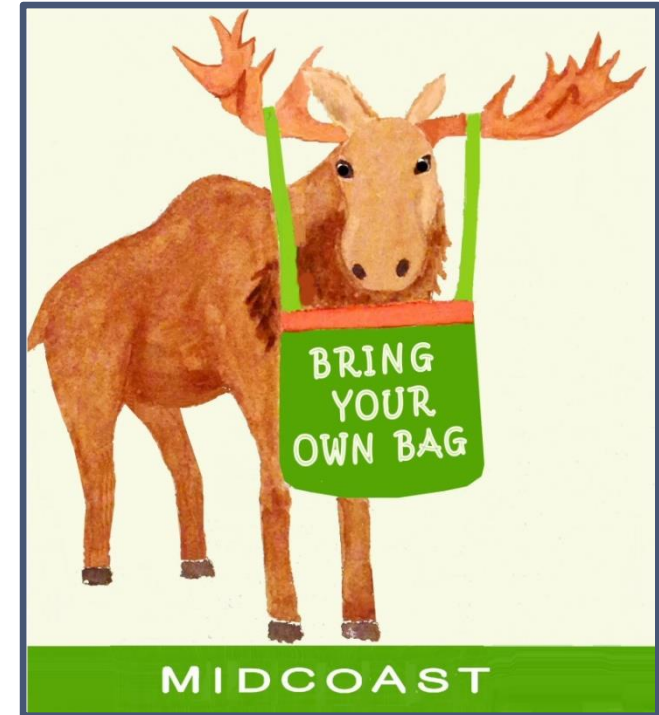
# Agenda

- Bring Your Own Bag (BYOB) – MidCoast
  - About us
  - Our proposal
  - Outreach activities
- Getting Started
- Using Sierra Club's Grassroots Organizing Advice (to promote your cause)
- 5 Things We've Learned



# Bring Your Own Bag (BYOB) – MidCoast

- Group of about 20 Brunswick and Topsham residents
- Started in January 2015
- Meet monthly, in a library room, for 1½ hours

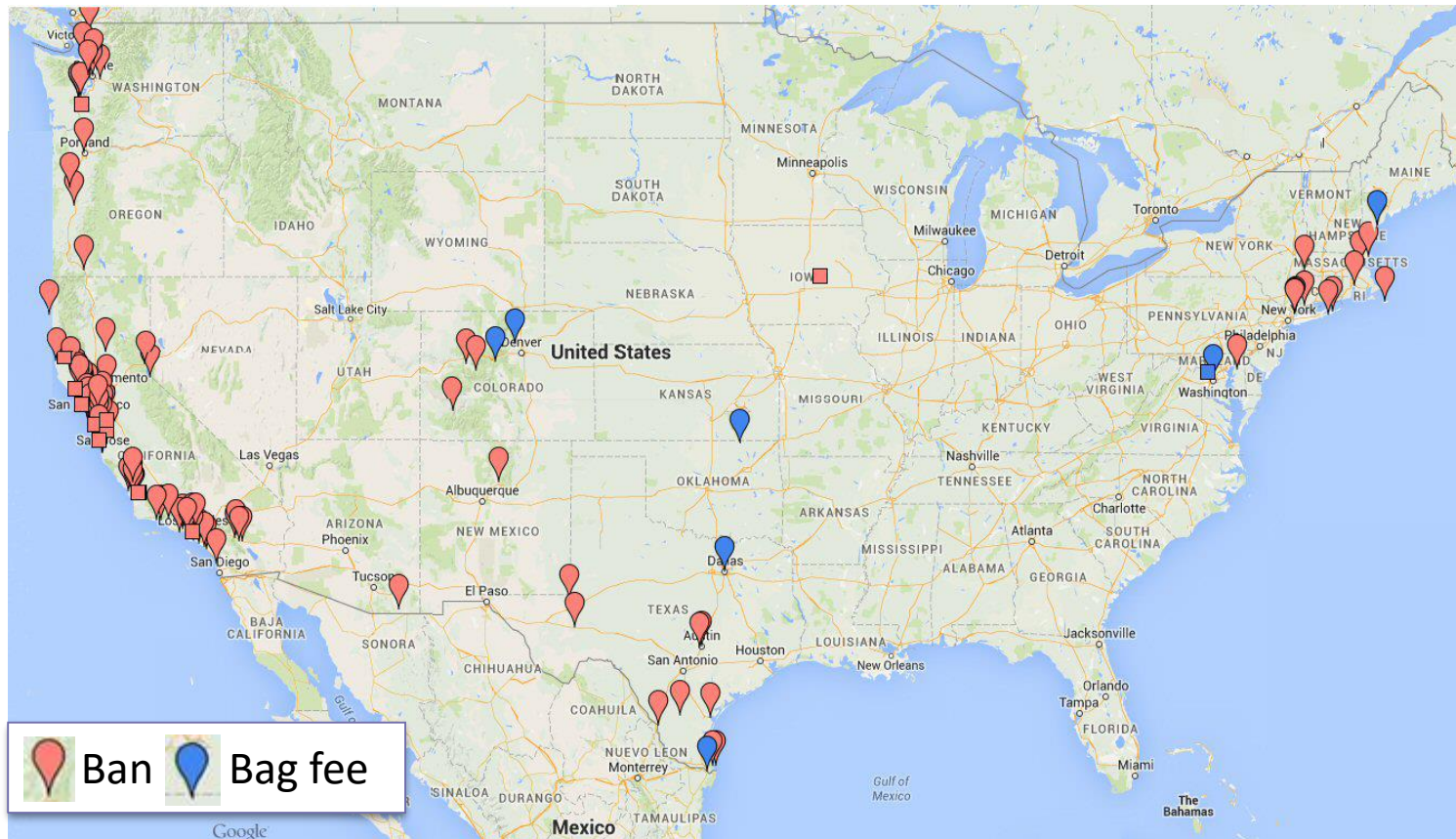


- Mission: to educate about plastics in environment & pass ordinances on *disposable bags* & *Styrofoam*



# Bag ordinances are gaining popularity

- Almost 200 U.S. jurisdictions have laws...
- And 24 countries



- Australia
- Bangladesh
- Cameroon
- Canada (6 cities)
- Chile (1 city)
- China
- Denmark
- England ←NEW
- Ethiopia
- Germany
- Haiti
- India
- Ireland
- Italy
- Ivory Coast
- Mali
- Mauritania
- Northern Ireland
- Pakistan
- Philippines
- Rwanda
- South Africa
- Tanzania
- Wales

# BYOB-MidCoast's Proposal

1. 5-cent fee on single-use plastic and paper bags\* at check-out at all retail stores
2. Ban Styrofoam for food and beverage packaging

\*Why paper bags too?





# BYOB–Outreach

- Staffed our educational booth and petition at 24 venues
- Collected 1,297 petition signatures
- Visited 42 retailers and 34 restaurants
  - Have 24 business supporters
- Done PPT presentations



# BYOB–Outreach

- Our website: [www.BringYourOwnBag.info](http://www.BringYourOwnBag.info)



The screenshot shows the homepage of the Bring Your Own Bag (BYOB) website. The header features the title "Bring Your Own Bag (BYOB)" in a large, stylized font, with the subtitle "Promoting reusable bags & containers in Midcoast Maine" below it. A navigation bar includes links for HOME, LEARN MORE, SIGN OUR PETITION, SUPPORTERS, FAQs, LOCAL PHOTO GALLERY, CONTACT US, and ABOUT US.

The main content area is titled "BYOB Midcoast Campaign". It includes a paragraph about plastic pollution, a "Sign the Petition" section with a "Sign Now" button and a progress bar showing 1,298 signatures, and a "Recent Posts" section with a post titled "BYOB Midcoast Reaches".

On the right side, there is a photo of a plastic bag with a red prohibition sign over it, and a paragraph about the durability of plastic and its impact on the environment.

**Bring Your Own Bag (BYOB)**  
*Promoting reusable bags & containers in Midcoast Maine*

HOME | LEARN MORE | SIGN OUR PETITION | SUPPORTERS | FAQs | LOCAL PHOTO GALLERY | CONTACT US | ABOUT US

**BYOB Midcoast Campaign**

There are more than **five trillion pieces of plastic** polluting our oceans. Much of the plastic litter we see is from single-use, disposable items like water bottles and bags.

Consider this: Americans use and dispose of close to **100 billion plastic bags** and **25 billion Styrofoam cups** into the bin each year. Lightweight by nature, bags and Styrofoam are easily picked up by the wind, polluting nearly every corner of our world.

Because of its durability, **plastic breaks apart but never biodegrades**. While some types of plastic are successfully recycled, bags can **shut down entire recycling plants by jamming machinery**. The EPA estimates that **no more than 12 percent of plastic bags** are recycled. Polystyrene foam ("Styrofoam") also does not biodegrade and is nearly impossible to recycle.

Large numbers of sea turtles, fish and other wildlife are perishing after mistaking plastics and pieces of Styrofoam for food or getting tangled in them. Our **health may be impacted**, too.

You can help turn the tide! Join our effort to help protect our pristine environment and the marine and tourist-based economy which Maine depends!

**We propose for Brunswick and Topsham:**

- A 5 cent fee on single-use, carry-out plastic and paper bags at all retail stores, including but not limited to grocery stores.

**Sign the Petition**

Please sign our petition in support of a plastic/paper bag fee, and a (Styrofoam) ban for Brunswick and Topsham.

**Sign Now**

1,298 signatures

**Recent Posts**

**BYOB Midcoast Reaches**



# BYOB—Successful publicity

- BYOB Press “hits”: 3 Press Herald, 5 Times Record, 6 free press, 3 TV, 2 Radio & 5 Letters-to-the-Editor





# Getting started

- Creating a grassroots group
  - If possible, find 1-3 to lead
  - Recruit others at a “friendly” event
  - Others will join over time...
- Meetings
  - Table tents and introductions
  - Plan structure for each meeting
  - Let people participate but keep to sched; end on time
  - Set ground rules for how things will be done in future



# Sierra's Grassroots Organizing Advice

1. Background research
2. Set specific goals
3. Assess strengths/weaknesses/needs
4. Strategies
5. Communications
  - a. Slogan and Elevator speech
  - b. Problem/solution
  - c. Publicity
6. Tactics and Milestones
7. Resources
  - a. Volunteers
  - b. Budget



# Background research



- We spent the first couple months doing research
- Resources to learn facts, see what others are doing
  - Sierra: <http://www.sierraclub.org/massachusetts/plastic-bags-0>
  - “NRCM Sustainable Maine Communities Toolkit”
    - [Click on Reusable Bags](#)
  - [www.BringYourOwnBag.info](http://www.BringYourOwnBag.info)
- All BYOB members asked to read the same 8 doc's!







# Set specific goals

Different ways to set up bag ordinances:

**Plastic bags and/or paper bags?**

**Fee versus ban?**

**All retail stores or just > 2% food sales?**

**Exemptions?**

> Dry cleaners, newspapers, restaurants, SNAP recipients

**Phase-in periods?**



# Communications

- Slogan

*Promoting reusable bags & containers in Midcoast Maine*

- Elevator speech

Recent news reports are showing there are thousands of tons of trash—mostly plastic—in the ocean and most of these come from single-use disposable plastic items that get used once, then tossed out. We are proposing two measures that have been tried successfully in other communities: a 5-cent fee on single-use disposable bags at check-out and a ban on Styrofoam in food packaging and beverages.

# Communications, cont.



Problems	Solutions
Isn't this government telling us what to do?	Plastic bags cost society about 17 cents because of litter, clogged sewers and jammed recycling equipment. This reflects their fair cost.
How will low-income people pay for the bag fee?	We have raised \$2,000 to pay for bags to give away ... We hope Hannaford's will give out free reusable bags for 2 weeks as they did in Portland.
What's wrong with current system of recycling plastic bags at grocery stores?	Less than 12% get recycled nationally
What if I need the bags for cat litter, dog clean-up or lining my trashcans?	There are alternatives such as reusing bread bags or composting the litter... This doesn't prevent you from buying bags.
Won't this hurt small businesses?	No. They retain the 5-cent fee.



# Communications, cont.

- Three ways to get media attention
  1. Write a Letter-to-the-Editor
  2. Issue a press release (Check Contact page)
  3. Hold a press conference
    - What is your announcement?
    - Alert the press
    - Set a rain location
    - Keep speakers to < 2 min's
    - Think about visuals
      - \* Lobster gets attention!
      - \* Supporters stand behind!
    - Pass out a press packet
    - Borrow a podium



# Resources: Volunteers

- Engaging your core members
  - Appreciate that people have different talents and try to find a way to make use of everyone
  - The more members participate, the more engaged they will be
  - Patience sometimes required
  - Take the time to express appreciation for individual contributions





# Resources: Volunteers

Finding a role for everyone

- 👤 Extroverts → ran the booth, spoke with bus owners, attended schmoozing events
- 👤 Homebodies → entered data into computer
- 👤 Writers → wrote letters-to-the-editor
- 👤 Research-types → Researched specific issues and sources for reusable bags
- 👤 Tech person → Website, blog, Twitter and Facebook
- 👤 Connectors → told us about Sierra Club grant; got us church space; connected us to booth at Peace Fair; etc.
- 👤 Creative types → Designed lobster costume, a game for our booth, stickers for the Council hearing, moose logo





# Resources: Volunteers

- Trick of trade: when people offer an idea, ask if they'll take it on

Someone should research how much plastic bags cost society!

Great idea! Would you be willing to do that?



# Resources: Budget

- Uses of funds
  - Website and hosting (\$300 for 2 years)
  - Printed materials (petitions, handouts)
  - BDA and Chamber of Commerce dues
  - Reusable bags to give away
  - Postcards w/postage for mailings...
- Sources of funds – Sierra, NRCM, individuals
  - *Borrow items if you can (e.g. podiums, projectors)*
- ROSC funnels donations so tax-deductible  
(<http://www.resourcesforsocialchange.org>)

# 5 Things We've Learned

## 1. Sometimes it's very lonely and discouraging

- That's why you want others to share the burden (and the glory)
- As a leader of your group, you need to stay positive!

## 2. Put stuff out there; some of it will come back to you

- Hard to predict what will yield, so try it all
  - *E.g. Support or important information from a surprising source*
- Be ready for unexpected
  - *E.g. Interrupter at our press event*
- Often, the minute you get discouraged is the moment things move forward
  - *There will be lots of up's and down's*





# 5 Things We've Learned

## 3. Tailor your arguments your audience

- Consumers don't want to be eating plastic
- Grandparents worried about future of planet for their grandchildren
- Fisherman might be disturbed to find plastic on their lines
- Taxpayers don't like paying for litter pick-up and clogged storm drains from plastic bags
- Animal lovers are sickened by sights of animals choking on plastic
- Boaters alarmed by garbage patches of plastic waste



# 5 Things We've Learned

## 4. The cohesiveness of your grassroots group is key!

- Pick a consistent time to meet
- Make sure meetings are a balance of information and personal affirmation. Don't be afraid to have fun!
- Remember everyone is a volunteer
- Try to find a role for everyone and be positive

## 5. Build momentum by...

- ❖ engaging more groups in community
- ❖ keeping your visibility high, and
- ❖ staying positive





*Questions?*