

Have a Plastic-Free July

By now, you probably don't need to be told about plastic pollution, but here are some specifics anyway:

A recent study by the San Francisco Estuary Institute found that stormwater is the primary source of microplastics in California's coastal waters.

A chemical found in car tires has been found to be the culprit in the die-off of half the salmon in Puget Sound.

If plastics were a country, it would be the 5th largest emitter of greenhouse gasses. Plastics are on track to exceed coal fired power emissions by 2030.

No pollutant is more insidious and pervasive than plastic. For that reason, the Sierra Club's [Grassroots Network Single Use Plastic Plus Subteam](#) and Sierra Club California's [Zero Waste Committee](#) are focusing their attentions on the second half of the state legislative session, where we will be seeing increasingly intensive battles.

Here's a run-down of the bills the Sierra Club needs to pass to beat back the plastic tide, along with some encouragement for how you can lead by example in your daily life.

1. [AB 1628 \(McKinnor\)](#) Microfiber Filtration. This would require that all new washing machines sold for residential, commercial, and state contain a microfiber filtration system. Microfibers from synthetic textile are one of the most dangerous forms of microplastic. Buy clothing that is made of 100% natural fibers, and check out the laundry tips in [Angeles Chapter's article](#).
2. [SB 499 \(Menjivar\)](#) School Extreme Heat Action Plan and [AB 1423 \(Schiavo\)](#) Artificial Turf with PFAS. This would address heat islands and toxics related to plastic grass. Please educate your friends and local governments with Sierra Club California's resolution [opposing all use of synthetic turf](#).
3. [SB 728 \(Limón\)](#) Plastic Gift Cards. This would ban the manufacture and sale of plastic gift cards before 2026. Please choose e-gift cards.
4. [SB 252 \(Gonzalez, Stern, Wiener\)](#) Fossil Fuel Divestment (a two-year bill as of June 27, 2023). This would prohibit the California Public Employees Retirement System (CalPERS) and the California State Teachers' Retirement System (CalSTRS) from investing in fossil fuel companies and require that they divest any current investments by 2031. Since plastic is a fossil fuel product, and source reduction is a vital part of plastic reduction, please ask your [local government](#) to divest from the fossil fuel industry.

5. [SB 378 \(Gonzalez\)](#). This would ban the use of styrofoam containers and coolers in state parks and beaches. It became a two-year bill. For the rest of the year, we need to diligently seek more support by asking the [Cities and Counties](#) that have banned the distribution of single-use plastic foodware to extend their bans by prohibiting the use in open space. If you're participating in any cleanup events, please tell everyone about this.

More you can do

Bring your own cups to coffee shops and events. Some coffee shops including Starbucks give customers a [10 cents discount](#) for bringing their own cups. (*Our success: [AB 619](#) (Chiu, 2019) bring your own cups and containers.*)

Skip the stuff, such as utensils, condiment packets and other foodware accessories, when ordering takeout to eat at home, tell the restaurant or the ordering service that you skip them to save them money. This seemingly little stuff has been on the [top 10](#) items found in litter cleanups. And this type of consumption has [a really big impact on climate change](#), per the University of California. {*Our successes: [AB 1884](#) (Calderon, 2018) plastic straws on request, and [AB 1276](#) (Carrillo, 2021) foodware accessories on request.*}

Buy items that are not packaged such as flour and rice in bulk bins, or in non-plastic containers such as jam and condiments in glass jars. Avoid fortune cookies, granola bars and other individually wrapped items.

Avoid single-use decorations, such as balloons - see [the problems with balloons and support for bans](#).

Return used plastic plant pots and trays to the nursery so they can reuse them.

Take your bubble wrap and air pillows to the nearest UPS store for reuse. (They don't reuse Styrofoam materials such as peanuts.)

Feedback apps

[Yelp](#) has added sustainability attributes to its "amenities" list for eating establishments. If you leave a review, please comment on positive sustainability practices the establishment follows. We sometimes forget the value of leaving positive feedback. It demonstrates our concern for sustainability in restaurant practices and shows that we are watching.

[Remark](#) makes it easy to email the manager of a business with respectful comments on sustainability practices you would like them to follow or thank them for good practices.