Paper or Plastic?    Neither!

When you are asked if you want a paper or plastic bag, answer neither. Use a reusable bag instead.

Get a sturdy reusable bag. And bring it to the store – to reduce waste from a paper or plastic bag. Or reuse a bag you already have. If you take a plastic bag, recycle it!

Often the waste haulers do not want plastic bags put in the curbside recycle bins. If you are not sure, contact your waste hauler and ask. If they are unable to take recyclable plastic bags, ask where you can drop off the bags for recycling.

Plastic bags are made from natural gas, a non-renewable resource; they are not made from recycled plastic. The whole process of making plastic bags is highly polluting, including with drilling for the natural gas, fracking, transporting the natural gas, and processing the gas into plastic bags.

It makes sense to use reusable bags. Plastic bags can be found drifting across the landscape and polluting water bodies. They add to the volume in landfills. The bags are not biodegradable, they photo-degrade which pollutes the environment. That is why a reusable bag makes sense.

In 2013, a study reviewed plastic bag litter after San Jose, California, banned plastic bags. The study found that the ban resulted in almost 90 percent less plastic in its storm drains and almost 60 percent less plastic in its streets. ¹

Plastic bag bans and charges for bags. Some communities are implementing laws that require businesses to charge for all bags. Other communities are even banning single-use plastic bags.² Unfortunately, the Iowa legislature passed a law that forbids cities and counties from adopting plastic bag bans.³

² Information about plastic bag bans can be found at www.ncsl.org/research/environment-and-natural-resources/plastic-bag-legislation.aspx
³ This was enacted on March 30, 2017, under bill number HF295, Iowa Code 331.301(6) and 364.3(3).
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