

July 2018 Council Action of the Month-Say *no to the single-use plastic straw!*

Banning single-use plastic straws is a hot topic right now and for good reason. Plastic straws are especially egregious because most of us don't even need them in the first place.

Single-use plastic straws are recyclable but, the recycling machines that we use in the U.S. do not capture small items like straws very well. Straws typically fall through the cracks of recycling sorters and end up in the trash. Like most other single-use plastic, plastic straws too often end up littering nature and floating in our waterways and oceans harming wildlife.

A few years ago, a poor turtle became the unfortunate poster child of the no plastic straw movement when the world watched a marine biologist pull a plastic straw that was embedded in the turtle's nose out with tweezers. The video was hard to watch. There was blood and it looked quite painful. If you have not seen the video and you need some inspiration to quit using plastic straws, you can [watch the video here](#).

Seattle just became the first U.S. city to ban plastic straws. The ban took effect on July 1st, 2018 prohibiting restaurants, delis, coffee shops, food trucks, cafeterias and grocery stores from providing the item to customers unless requested. Upon request, these businesses are allowed to provide a *compostable* straw to customers. We'd love to see TN do what Seattle just did but until then, we are asking you to personally say *no to the plastic straw!* It's our July *Council Action of the Month!*

We understand that sometimes straws are necessary. For those times there are many alternatives to single-use plastic that we can recommend.

- *All-natural straws*- Originally, straws were actually made from straw. There are companies making all-natural straws again. Do a quick internet search and you will find them.
- *Paper straws*-This is a good option if you are having an event where you might need many low-cost straws. Paper straws are available online and in many chain stores.
- *Compostable plastic straws* - Compostable plastics don't biodegrade very fast unless they are exposed to ultraviolet light or hit a temperature of 122 degrees Fahrenheit. So, only choose this option if you are sure your compostable straws will be composted in a compost pile that will meet those conditions.

- *Reusable Bamboo, Stainless Steel, or Glass Straws*- These can replace the single-use plastic straw for those of you who need or prefer to use a straw. Some of these reusable straws even come with carrying cases and cleaning brushes. You can travel with these reusable straws, clean them and use them over and over again. A quick internet search will yield many options.

With so many *superior* alternatives to plastic, there really is no excuse at this point for using a single-use plastic straw. So, this month we want you to say no to the plastic straw for good by politely refusing a plastic straw when you go out to eat or take food to go. Please let the staff know, multiple times if you have to, that a straw is *not needed*.

If you have the time, ask the manager if they would be willing to change their protocol to only serve straws to guests upon request. You can explain that it will not only save them money but, it will be better for the environment as well. Take it a step further and ask the manager to switch to paper or all-natural straws for those who need them.

This July it's time to say no to the plastic straw and inspire others to do the same!!

Were you inspired by or did you participate in our [June Action of the Month](#)? [Take our short survey to tell us why or why not](#). Do you have an idea for a future Council Action of the Month? Email us at tec@tectn.org with your suggestion.