



# Zero Waste Washington Spring Quarterly Enewsletter

April 17, 2020

## Legislative session results: zero waste successes

Since our last newsletter, our collective landscape has changed dramatically in Washington and across the world. In spite of this, we do have good news to report. In the last days of session, legislators voted out six zero waste bills. Governor Inslee was likely to sign all of them, but due to the need to significantly reduce the state budget in light of our current COVID-19 crisis, he partially vetoed two, he vetoed two and he signed two into law.

### Reusable Bag Bill (SB5323) signed into law!

Wonderful partners working for years on plastic pollution and bag ordinances, along with prime sponsor Senator Mona Das and Representatives Strom Peterson, Jared Mead and Joe Fitzgibbon, pushed the reusable bag bill across the finish line. It was a real nail biter during the last few weeks as the stakeholders were in deep negotiations with interested parties.



On March 25<sup>th</sup>, Washington became the 9<sup>th</sup> state with a statewide law limiting plastic bag use. The law goes into effect on January 1, 2021. Thin plastic carry-home bags will be banned at all retail establishments. If consumers forget to bring their own bag, they can get a paper bag or a thicker (2.25 mil), reusable film plastic bag for an 8-cent pass-through charge, which rises to 12 cents in 2026 (when the thickness of the reusable film bag rises to 4 mil). This pass-through charge is important because it motivates people to bring their own bags and also helps stores cover the cost of providing bags.



The new law builds on 39 local ordinances across the state. Thirteen were passed in 2019!

Many cities and counties have temporarily hit the “pause” button on enforcement of these ordinances due to concerns about protecting grocery staff, and course, we agree that it is paramount to protect worker safety in this time.

We look forward to the day when we all can go back to taking our own bags to the grocery store. The current situation is temporary. Unfortunately, a stigma is being put especially on reusable bags, without any scientific support (any item that is touched by someone who has the virus would be potentially a risk, including items purchased in the store itself).

Important health codes and guidelines that address contamination are important to follow, including wearing gloves and masks.

## Other zero waste bills that became law

- **Non-flushable wipes** (ESHB 2565). Led by the City of Seattle, this new law signed by the governor requires that non-flushable wipes include large labels that make it clear that they cannot be flushed down the toilet. Consumers are super confused and think that all wipes are flushable. The *non-flushable wipes* are made largely from plastic, causing more plastic to reach the environment. (The *flushable wipes*, though made from a cellulose-type material, unfortunately, do not actually fall apart in the sewage system either, which can also leads to clogs.) A sewage overflow in Golden Gardens in Seattle last summer was attributed to wipes. This bill, championed by Representatives Joe Fitzgibbon, is an excellent first step and we hope that another state will take it even further and address the content of the flushable wipes themselves.
- **Solar panel recycling** (ESHB 2645). This bill, led by Representatives Norma Smith and Sharon Shewmake, fixes loopholes in the existing producer stewardship program for solar modules. The 2017 law only applies to solar panels that are associated with buildings. Major arrays such as solar farms were not included in the original bill. This new law, signed by the governor, fixes that and a few other technical problems. In addition, because of concerns by the solar industry, this law delays program implementation by 2 years. The governor vetoed the part of the bill that would have established a task force to study potential additional adjustments to the program (as this component had a fiscal impact).
- **Compost use** (ESHB 2713). This bill, led by Cedar Grove and prime sponsored by Representative Amy Walen, encourages local governments to determine if compost can be utilized in their projects, and, if so, encourages them to purchase compost (with a priority for local compost). The governor vetoed the portion of this bill that would have provided grants to farmers to use compost but left intact the policy piece. Compost is important to help restore soil health and to reduce food waste. In Washington, we want to help improve the financial value of compost by increasing the *use* of compost.



## Two bills vetoed

In the end, the governor vetoed 147 separate expenditure items with financial impacts, in order to reduce the state budget by nearly \$445 million from the General Fund over the next three years — \$235 million in the current budget and \$210 million in the next biennium. Included were vetoes on two great bills. We will work to bring these back next year:

- **Recycled content in beverage containers** (ESHB 2722). Championed by Rep. Jared Mead, this bill would have been the first in the nation to require that beverage containers have minimum post-consumer recycled plastic content, starting with 10% content in 2021. By 2030, containers would have been required to have 50% recycled content.
- **Industrial waste coordination** (SB 6430). This bill, led by Senator Sharon Brown, would have authorized the Department of Commerce to create an industrial waste coordination program, provide technical assistance and make loans or grants for development of projects that encourage industries to cooperatively use waste heat and materials of adjacent industrial facilities.

## Rocky road ahead provides opportunities

As you know, the economic hit from the coronavirus crisis is going to require significant state budget cuts. As we rebuild, it is a golden opportunity to reconsider waste systems and reset some basic assumptions. We look forward to working with you as the next years unfold. Please send your ideas!

*Thank you all for your help in moving bills forward during this session. We are looking forward to opportunities in 2020 and beyond as we continue to advocate for a cleaner, safer, more sustainable Washington. If you have any questions, please contact Heather at [heather@zerowastewashington.org](mailto:heather@zerowastewashington.org).*

## Staying zero waste during the virus crisis

With the COVID-19 pandemic spreading across the globe, the demand for single-use items like bottled water, face masks, hand sanitizer and cleaning wipes has risen. This does not mean that you can't continue to practice zero waste in your lives.

## The World Peace Sign Project

Send a message in a zero-waste way. The world could use some more peace, don't you think? Zero Waste Washington board member, Steve Gilbert, invites you to create or find more peace in your world in the form of Peace Signs. Peace Signs are easy and fun to create with chalk, stones, mud, pinecones, paint, fabric, or almost anything.

Build one in your backyard or paint one on your window. Steve's goal is to build a collection of pictures of Peace Signs from around the world. Send a picture of your Peace Sign to [sgilbert@innd.org](mailto:sgilbert@innd.org) and Steve will post evidence of your commitment to peace on the website [www.worldpeacesigns.org](http://www.worldpeacesigns.org). If possible, please include information on location, date, material, and a brief note about the peace sign. Thanks for your love of peace.



# Give new life to your old electronic items, saving them from an e-waste death

The internet is alive with stories of people who turned old “dead” computers into streaming devices and using old cell phones for new uses. It is fairly easy to strip down your old devices and download new software so you can use them for targeted uses. For example, you can turn an old android into a webcam or a standalone music player (<https://www.technewsworld.com/story/86601.html>). Another idea is to turn a creaky old computer into a chromebook for a student (<https://www.cnet.com/how-to/how-to-turn-your-old-slow-laptop-into-an-awesome-chromebook-for-your-kids/>). These are surprisingly easy ways to use your old items.



## Bag your own

As companies like Starbucks have suspended their reusable cup program, switching to paper cups, and some grocery stores have reverted back to providing single-use plastic bags, you can still take zero waste steps. When you go to the grocery, try bringing the items in your cart outdoors or back to your car, to load them into your own bags. See demonstration by Katie Fleming of Friends of San Juans (photo to the left).

When bringing food to your neighbor, use a glass container. They can sanitize the outside before use and return the container to you later. It's harder to take that extra step right now, but everything we do to limit items going to the landfill makes a difference.

Bring your own Growler: Many local breweries will still let you bring a growler for filling. It's zero waste and supports local businesses.

## Medical waste

As we continue the fight through this pandemic, there has been an increased awareness of the large amount of medical waste produced both before and during COVID-19. Wuhan, China has seen a six times increase in medical waste from 44 tons a day to almost 270 tons. Their medical waste recently reached such a high level that a new medical waste plant had to be built.

According to Healthcare Medical Waste, medical waste was generated by U.S. healthcare facilities at a rate of 6 million tons per day before COVID-19. During the crisis even more is being generated by healthcare facilities and by individuals as well. We are now seeing disposable masks discarded along the street or in parks. After the crisis is over, we hope that we can review the system to determine ways that reusable items can be safely used and ways to significantly reduce the overall amount of medical waste.



**Masks are super important!** The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) [recommends](#) wearing a face mask to help slow the spread of the virus. A great zero waste approach is to make cloth masks, which can be washed in your laundry. Kudos to all of the wonderful

volunteers around the state who are busy sewing masks for their family, neighbors, friends, medical staff and other front-line workers (i.e., those who don't need the super protection of the N95 masks). Beyond cloth face coverings like bandannas and repurposed cotton shirts there are roughly three types of homemade masks. Optionally, you can add filter materials (e.g., vacuum bags, microfiber cloth, non-chemical wipes) into pockets in the mask. Here is a link to patterns and more info: [Here](#)



Photo: Powell River Peak

## Stretch out the green thumb

The Pacific NW is going to have amazing landscapes and flowers next year with all of the weeding and yardwork going on right now. There is so much pent-up energy directed at cooking, yardwork and firing up hobbies!

It is a great time to create windowsill mini-gardens or to revamp your yard. For propagating seeds, you can reuse materials such as toilet paper rolls (there are lots of those!) and egg cartons. You can make a mini-hothouse at your window with plastic salad containers to grow fabulous heat-loving peppers, tomatoes, and

eggplants. Instead of going Cadillac with a fancy greenhouse, how about using old windows, bricks and lumber from your garage or storeroom.

And consider planting a "victory" garden that will feed you and your friends through the fall with herbs, vegetables, and fruit. Start from seed or buy starts from your local grocery store or farmer's market.

## Skip the plastic bottles: your tap water is virus-free

Grocery and big-box stores are selling out of cases of single-use plastic bottles. Why? In part, because people are concerned that the coronavirus might impact water.



According to EPA, the COVID-19 virus has not been detected in drinking-water supplies and the risk is low. We can continue to use and drink water from the tap as usual.

EPA also encourages the public to help keep household plumbing and the wastewater infrastructure operating properly by only flushing toilet paper. Wipes should be disposed of in the trash, not the toilet.

<https://www.epa.gov/coronavirus/coronavirus-and-drinking-water-and-wastewater>

## Reduce food waste

Did you know that apples do best in the fridge and pears on the counter? A critical reason that food goes to waste is improper storage. Now might be a good time to revamp your storage techniques in your pantry and fridge. Here is a nice resource on food

storage: <https://www.seattle.gov/utilities/environment-and-conservation/my-home/reduce-food-waste/food-storage>

As farmers markets come back to life in the coming months, you might want to try canning, fermenting, drying and other ways to extend the time you can enjoy produce purchased now, during peak growing season at lower cost.

Many of our local farms are hurting right now because a large source of their income is from sales to restaurants. Look for their direct sales or join a CSA (Community Supported Agriculture) to get a weekly box of local produce. Your farmers need you!



## So, you are running out of toilet paper...

Maybe it is time to convert your toilet with a bidet or spray attachment. There are huge swatches of the world where it is considered MUCH more hygienic to use a quick spray rather than a quick wipe. You can save trees (and the water needed to make the toilet paper) with low flow options.

## Cleanser caution

There is a rush on cleaning supplies, understandably. This is the time, however, to be sure to use products that kill the virus but don't include chemicals that can cause asthma and other impacts. The Western States Pediatric Environmental Health Specialty Unit has provided a factsheet which includes a link to EPA's list of safer (and still effective) products. [http://wspehsu.ucsf.edu/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/safer\\_disinfect\\_fxsh\\_t\\_0405.pdf](http://wspehsu.ucsf.edu/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/safer_disinfect_fxsh_t_0405.pdf)

## Support the vote.... and vote with your dollars

- Be sure to complete your census response and encourage or support others as well. The number of people counted in Washington will make a big difference in our political landscape in coming years.
- Buy stamps now (to use later) – the postal service is in serious financial trouble. Especially at risk is service to rural and remote areas. A systematic change is likely – please email our federal delegation to ask them to address this issue. In the meantime, buy stamps to inject some cash.
- Recognizing that many people are suffering disproportionately during this crisis, please donate to groups that are helping provide food, housing and other assistance.
- And finally, if you are able, spend your stimulus check locally and in ways to help people in need.

## Don't buy what you don't need – the ultimate zero waste action

Finally, take advantage of what you have around your home. Can you use an old rag instead of wipes? Experts say that plain old soap and water effectively kills the coronavirus and should be the first line of defense. How about coming up with creative recipes that use up some of those cans of beans or soup you have hiding in the back corner of your pantry? Is it a good time to repurpose old things, like using worn out sheets and towels to make napkins and produce bags?

*If you have other zero waste ideas for these crisis times, please send them and we will post them on the Zero Waste Washington Facebook page. We are all in this together! Stay home, stay safe.*

# Earth Day – April 22 and *Story of Plastic* screening – April 27

In honor of the 50th Anniversary of Earth Day, we are partnering with **Earth Day Northwest 2020**. Earth Day Northwest 2020 is calling on individuals and communities throughout the region to look forward to the future. In the spirit of being the change we wish to see, the **Next 5** campaign is soliciting visions of positive change for the next five years. Also on Earth Day, view the new film *The Story of Plastic* on the Discovery Channel, or stream it later and join into a participatory discussion panel on April 27.

## Earth Day Northwest 2020

From now through April 22nd, visit [earthdaynw2020.org/voicescarry](http://earthdaynw2020.org/voicescarry) to share a message about the future you hope to see and actions you're taking to make it a reality. Then on April 22 (Earth Day), check out their website for 72 hours of livestreaming on Earth Day Network, and a new song "Voices Carry" by Hollis Wong-Wear (@wongweezy).



## *The Story of Plastic* screening opportunities

For those of you who missed our sold-out pre-screening of *The Story of Plastic* at the Seattle Aquarium in January, you're in luck! The newly released feature-length documentary is an exposé of **big plastic** and **big oil**, revealing the real causes of the plastic pollution crisis.



You have multiple opportunities to view the film:

- **The Discovery Channel** airs the film on Earth Day, April 22nd at 2pm PST.
- **Zero Waste Washington** is partnering with **Sustainable Ballard** and the **Meaningful Movies Project** to provide a free virtual screening (that you can view on your own time!) along with

a **panel discussion on the evening of April 27th (6:30-7:30 pm)**. Panelists from Zero Waste Washington, Puget Soundkeeper Alliance, the Seattle Aquarium, and the Surfrider Foundation will discuss what our state is already doing and how you can help combat the crisis at the local level and beyond.

Only 100 participants can be accommodated, please RSVP to hold your spot. RSVP here: <https://sustainableballard.wildapricot.org/event-3818227>

## GiveBIG for zero waste

In response to the effects of Covid-19, this year's state-wide GiveBIG campaign has combined with GivingTuesdayNow to better support nonprofits in their critical work. Zero Waste Washington's work to protect the health of our planet and all of its communities is more important than ever, and we ask that you show your support by scheduling a donation now!

2020 marks the 10th anniversary of GiveBIG, and in response to the COVID-19 pandemic there are two important changes for you to know about:

- GiveBIG will now take place over the course of two days – Tuesday, May 5 through Wednesday, May 6
- You can schedule your GiveBIG gift ahead of time by [linking here](#)



Thank you so much for your GiveBIG gift for Zero Waste Washington and other nonprofits working to help the earth and humanity.

## Spring Cleaning? Hang onto your leftover paint!

*By Kami Bruner, Waste Reduction Project Coordinator*

Cooped up and feeling that spring cleaning urge? Though you might be tempted to do a thorough sweep right now, by all means, go for it! But please save your leftover paint for just a few more months.





## Here's why

Thanks to the tireless efforts of our many partners and leadership by Representative Strom Peterson, you'll soon be able to take your leftover paint to a paint retailer, hardware store or municipal drop-off location near you for recycling for no charge.

Until now, most drop-off sites have charged a fee for providing paint recycling/disposal. But the Paint Stewardship bill (HB 1652), passed during the 2019 legislative session, will be going into effect this November. In partnership with the nonprofit [PaintCare.org](https://www.paintcare.org), the new bill creates a recycling program for both latex and oil-based paints.

## How it will work

Not only will this measure benefit households with residual paint piling up in closets, garages, and sheds; it's a boon for your spruce-up projects! When a gallon is dropped off at a participating vendor, the following will happen, depending on the type of paint:

- **Latex paints (and stains):** [Green Sheen](https://www.green-sheen.com), a Colorado-based company with operations in Kent, will blend your paint with other returns and offer the results in a broad new palette of colors.
- **Oil-based paints:** these will either be offered for direct reuse as-is or, if unable to be reused, will be disposed of in accordance with hazardous waste regulations.

Customers will then be able to pick up gallons of the repurposed paint at reuse stores like Habitat for Humanity for about **half the price** of a typical new gallon!

New paint sold in Washington will a small fee that pays for the PaintCare program, and covers all costs including recycling and disposal of the paint as well as oversight expenses incurred by Washington's Department of Ecology.

## Your support is welcome!

Zero Waste Washington cannot do this work without you. Thank you for your generous support. Together we are paving the way for a zero-waste future in Washington.

And thank you for all that you do in your own lives and in the community to help create a zero-waste future. Actions each of us takes every day help reduce the amount of waste going into the trash! Send us your success stories! We'd love to hear them and maybe even include them in a future newsletter.

Donate [here](#)

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