

Zero Waste Washington 2020 Year in Review



WASHINGTON STATE LEGISLATORS PASSED SIX ZERO WASTE BILLS

Legislative session started out with 12 bills. And thanks to tireless work by legislative champions supported by advocacy from Zero Waste Washington, our members, and partners, we were thrilled that six bills passed out of the legislature. Unfortunately, due to COVID-19, the governor vetoed two (recycled content and industrial symbiosis) due to cost.

✓ **Reusable Bags:** So exciting that Washington State passed the 9th bag bill in the US and one of the strongest. The bill was led by Senator Mona Das and Representative Strom Peterson and propelled by 39 local ordinances that had been supported by community members across the state. Plastic bags cause serious clogging at our recycling facilities and littering across our land and waters. This is the first of the many single-use plastic items we plan to tackle at the state level.



✓ **Solar panel recycling:** This bill, led by Representatives Norma Smith and Sharon Shewmake, fixes loopholes in the existing producer stewardship program for solar modules. The original 2017 law only applied to solar panels that are associated with buildings. Major arrays such as solar farms were not included in that bill. This new law fixes that and a few other technical problems.

✓ **Non-flushable wipes:** This first-in-the-nation law, led by the City of Seattle, requires that non-flushable wipes include large labels and icons that make it clear that they cannot be flushed down the toilet. Consumers are super confused and think that all wipes are flushable. A sewage overflow at Seattle's Golden Gardens beach last summer was attributed to wipes. This bill, championed by Representative 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.



✓ **Compost use:** Led by Cedar Grove and prime sponsored by Representative Amy Walen, this bill 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). Compost is important to help restore soil health and to reduce food waste. In Washington, we need to improve the financial value of compost by increasing its use.

BRING YOUR OWN CONTAINER ADOPTED BY THE STATE BOARD OF HEALTH

Most people don't know that it is currently illegal to bring in your own container for food. On October 13, the WA Board of Health unanimously approved an updated food safety code, which includes provisions to allow people to bring their own containers for food and beverages to restaurants and grocery stores. Due to COVID-19, the date of implementation is not till March 2022. Big thank yous to the hundreds of Washingtonians who sent in comments in support!



DUWAMISH VALLEY YOUTH PROJECT TOOK A SUCCESSFUL COVID PIVOT



In partnership with the Duwamish River Cleanup Coalition and funded by King County and the King Conservation District, we completed two projects with the Duwamish Valley Youth Corps, with more to come next year. While learning job preparedness skills and developing leadership, the students are doing litter assessments, creating videos about waste prevention and plastic pollution, doing outreach to businesses about ways to reduce single-use plastic food serviceware, and talking to decision-makers. The youth voice is powerful!

ONLINE "TOUR" OF RECYCLE BC PAVES THE WAY FOR A MAJOR RECYCLING AND PLASTIC POLLUTION BILL

In October, along with numerous partners, we sponsored an online "tour" of the Recycle BC Packaging and Paper Product Extended Producer Responsibility program. This recycling program, as well as other Canadian and EU programs, are considered models for a legislative bill we are helping develop for the 2021 legislative session here in Washington.

FIRST PACIFIC NW INNOVATION HACKATHON ATTRACTED TEAMS FROM OREGON TO BC... AND WASTE SUMMIT

With the support of a huge number of technical and academic partners, we hosted the first Pacific NW Zero Waste Hackathon, which culminated in an Innovation Zero Waste Summit in November. The hackathon included mentoring, coaching and topic-area workshops preparing student teams so that they could present their zero waste business ideas in the final competition. The **Annual Waste Summit** featured speakers talking about cool, cutting-edge projects and business start-ups ranging from insect farming to plastic nanoparticle forensics and recycling of wind turbines.

