



April 22, 2022

Delivered via Email

To: Carlsbad Sustainable Materials Management Division

Re: Support for Proposed Plastic Bag, Bottle, and Balloon Restrictions

To the Members of the Sustainable Materials Management Division,

The Surfrider Foundation is a nonprofit grassroots organization dedicated to the protection and enjoyment of our world's ocean, waves, and beaches, for all people, through a powerful activist network. Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the proposed plastic bag, plastic bottle, and balloon release restriction ordinances that you've drafted for consideration by the City Council.

Surfrider supports all three ordinances and would like to extend our gratitude to you for drafting them. We agree that all three ordinances will effectively protect wildlife, conserve natural resources, reduce greenhouse gas emissions, divert waste from landfills, improve the cleanliness of the city and its public spaces, and align with the goals of Carlsbad's Sustainable Materials Implementation and Climate Action Plans.

We are especially pleased with the plastic bag ban.

California's statewide single-use plastic bag ban has been very effective in reducing plastic bag pollution along our beaches, coastline, and in our waterways. While not every Californian supported the 2016 ballot initiative, it passed with a healthy majority — especially in coastal communities — and it's safe to say that six years later, Californians are accustomed to bringing bags to the grocery store.

Therefore, the time is right to add additional restrictions on single-use plastic bags, with very little foreseeable resistance from Carlsbad residents and businesses. Despite the CA bag ban's success, its loopholes are many, and pollution from single-use plastic bags is still rampant in our environment. In 2019, Surfrider volunteers removed over 10,000 plastic bags and plastic bag fragments from San Diego County beaches.

The draft plastic bag ban closes many of the loopholes in the state bag law. We are especially pleased with your staff's inclusion of retail establishments and food service vendors - if grocery stores, pharmacies, and convenience stores can do away with plastic bags, so can these businesses, especially since your staff has included a similar \$.10 pass-thru fee to help them cover the additional costs of paper and/or reusable bags.



We are impressed and grateful for your staff's attention to detail re: the composition of allowable bags. Unlike state law, which qualifies certain thicker plastic bags as reusable, the city ordinance requires shopping bags to be reusable or compostable. Additionally, we fully support the inclusion of plastic produce bags in the ordinance. Reusable and compostable alternatives exist and are plentiful.

The plastic bottle ban at city events is a great step in the right direction.

Surfrider fully supports the replacement of wasteful single-use plastic bottles with reusable containers, or at the very least, with compostable alternatives to throwaway plastic. We agree with your logic that city facilities and events are a great place to begin a citywide - and ultimately societal - shift away from single-use plastic beverage bottles. We appreciate the expansive definition employed for city-affiliated events, as well, as it will include even permitted, private events that take place on public property.

If enacted by the City Council, the plastic bottle ban will reduce plastic pollution and signify to city residents and visitors that the City of Carlsbad puts priority on the protection of its precious environmental and coastal resources. As you know, pollution from plastic bottles and their caps is rampant; in 2019, Surfrider volunteers removed 15,511 plastic bottles and caps from San Diego County beaches.

We support the ban on intentional balloon releases, but would ultimately like to see a stronger stance on balloons.

Surfrider supports a citywide ban on intentional balloon releases and believes it will serve as a welcome addendum to California's current balloon law, which prohibits release of electrically conductive balloons (i.e. mylar) and also requires them to be weighted when sold full of a lighter-than-air gas (i.e. helium).

However, even those in the balloon industry have acknowledged that the California balloon law is ineffective. From BallonHQ.com, "I also live in California and see other companies like chain stores and even CBA's (certified balloon artists) breaking this law... unfortunately, there isn't any authority around when the crime is being committed." While the law is well-intentioned, it is relatively unknown and has no enforcement budget. Therefore, it is easily ignored by California residents and businesses.

While your draft balloon ordinance improves upon the CA balloon law by prohibiting intentional releases of *all* balloons, the fact remains that it will be difficult to enforce and almost impossible to measure in terms of effectiveness. More effective would be an outright prohibition on the sale, use, and release of balloons filled with a gas lighter than air. The City of Encinitas took this step



recently, with overwhelming support from the public (including North County residents outside of Encinitas). Over 200 comments in support were sent to the Encinitas Environmental Commission in the ordinance's early stages; one commissioner commented that this was the most letters of support they'd ever received on any single issue. Additionally, almost 8,000 San Diegans have signed our friend Sicco Rood's [Change.org petition](#) to ban helium balloons in San Diego County.

We understand that Carlsbad and Encinitas are unique and have different demographics and styles of governance. However, we would encourage Carlsbad to ultimately consider a similar ban as Encinitas on lighter than air balloons. The majority of found balloons are likely unintentional releases, just like the majority of plastic pollution we find along our coastline and in our ocean is not *intentionally* littered. Our experience is that regardless of their political affiliations, few issues unite coastal enthusiasts as much as our shared contempt for balloons and the needless death they cause to precious marine wildlife. Carlsbad is a city of people who absolutely LOVE our ocean, waves, and beaches.

These draft ordinances, along with the recent foam/plastic foodware ban, exemplify true environmental leadership around the issue of plastic pollution.

Thank you for addressing the plastic pollution crisis affecting our ocean, beaches, and planet with the urgency it requires. We greatly appreciate your attention to detail and the inclusion of comprehensive single-use plastic reduction ordinances as part of Carlsbad's Sustainable Materials Management Implementation Plan.

It is well known that plastic pollution from single-use plastics pose a significant threat to our ocean, beaches, and planet. They are toxic, do not biodegrade, and enter our ocean from all over Carlsbad and beyond. Additionally, plastic is made from petroleum and causes pollution at every stage of its production. What was hardly noticeable to Carlsbad residents and visitors 20-30 years ago is now ubiquitous on our streets, in our parks, and worst of all, along our coast. Plastic pollution is everywhere we look.

To secure a livable planet for future generations, we must do everything in our power to reduce and divert waste. Thank you for including single-use plastic reduction as a key element of the City's sustainability roadmap. We look forward to encouraging the City Council to adopt all three ordinances so that Carlsbad can continue to lead by example in waste reduction, sustainability, and the protection of our beautiful coastline.

Sincerely,



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