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BASMAA Offers Tips for Remembering Your Green Bags

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How many times have you laid out your week's worth of groceries at the check stand and then, as the speedy clerk begins to scan your items in a flurry of electronic blips and beeps, you realize that you've left your impressive collection of environmentally friendly "green" bags at home? With a potential plastic bag ban in the offing for California this year, the Bay Area Stormwater Management Agencies Association (BASMAA), wants residents to start taking action now to break the plastic bag habit.

"Putting 'bring bag' at the top of your shopping list is an easy addition," says James Scanlin of BASMAA, a consortium of municipal stormwater pollution prevention programs from around the region that includes the Contra Costa Clean Water Program.

By now, seeing a plastic bag perched on a tree branch or hugging the pavement near a storm drain is a normal sight. Often these bags find their way into storm drains, local waterways, and eventually the ocean. Plastic bags and plastic garbage represents nearly 90 percent of floating marine debris, according to the California Coastal Commission.

Photos provided

"Plastic bags are a huge environmental issue," says Scanlin. "Plastic

never breaks down. It's little bits of litter, including plastics that have added up to the immense island of garbage floating in the Pacific." According to the Earth Resource Foundation, over 100,000 marine animals die from plastic entanglement each year because they mistake plastic bags for food.

The Contra Costa Clean Water Program is offering residents free reusable bags, just for pledging not to use plastic. Take the pledge at www.cccleanwater.org/pledge.php. BASMAA offers these tips to residents to ensure they have reusables at the ready:

- Keep a rolled up or Chico-style bag in your purse to have handy for quick shopping trips.
- Leave reusable bags by the front door near keys, cell phones and other must-have items.
- Place some in the trunk or on the front passenger seat of your car so they're easily available when running errands.
- Just say no! If buying a small item, just refuse a plastic bag from the store clerk.



The Clean Water Program is now offering free reusable bags. Photos provided

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