



Connecting Creek and Community, [www.ballonacreek.org](http://www.ballonacreek.org)

## **Polystyrene Ban in Culver City**

### **A Proposal to Ban Non-recyclable Polystyrene Take-out Single-use Food Service Containers in Culver City**



Polystyrene accumulates at the net on Ballona Creek at Lincoln Ave.

## **INTRODUCTION**

Ballona Creek Renaissance (BCR) is recommending a ban on the use of polystyrene in Culver City as it has witnessed first hand the large quantities of polystyrene debris floating to the ocean during its creek cleanups over the last decade. Polystyrene easily blows in the wind, then gets caught in vegetation and floats down the local streams. It contributes to making Ballona Creek the # 1 polluter of Santa Monica Bay.

While polystyrene take-out containers are inexpensive to manufacture, and inexpensive for restaurants to purchase, they are damaging to humans - they leach a carcinogen (styrene) into food and beverages when heated; and are harmful to animals when mistaken for food.

This is not a new idea: the Culver City Unified School District and Fiesta La Ballona have already successfully banned polystyrene containers.

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- B. WHAT IS POLYSTYRENE?**
- C. WHICH FOOD SERVICE CONTAINERS ARE AFFECTED?**

- D. WHO WOULD FALL UNDER THE MANDATE?
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**A. WHAT WOULD BE BANNED?**

Non-recyclable polystyrene take-out disposable food service containers

**B. WHAT IS POLYSTYRENE?**

Polystyrene comes in two basic forms:

- a) Expanded Polystyrene (EPS) which is used for cheap, disposable food-ware (cups, plates, clamshells) and shipping packaging.
- b) Solid Polystyrene is used for disposable cutlery, plastic models, cd cases, and more.



Popularly known as Styrofoam™ (a trademarked term), “**Polystyrene**” is defined as expanded polystyrene which is a thermoplastic petrochemical material utilizing a styrene monomer and processed by any number of techniques including, but not limited to, fusion of polymer spheres (expandable bead polystyrene), injection molding, form molding, and extrusion-blow molding (extruded foam polystyrene). The term “polystyrene” also includes clear or solid polystyrene, which is known as “oriented polystyrene”. The plastic recycling symbol for polystyrene is #6 and is not recyclable in Culver City.

**C. WHICH FOOD SERVICE CONTAINERS WOULD THIS BAN APPLY TO?**

“**Disposable Food Service Containers**” which means single-use disposable products used in the restaurant and food service industry for serving or transporting prepared, ready-to-consume food or beverages. This includes but is not limited to plates, cups, bowls, trays and hinged or lidded containers. This does not include single-use disposable items such as straws, or cup lids, nor does it include single-use disposable packaging for unprepared foods. For utensils, we would like to recommend that they be required to be made of compostable materials in anticipation of the new State Bill AB1826 composting requirements.

**D. WHO WOULD FALL UNDER THE MANDATE?**

- Restaurants
- Fast Food Establishments
- Catering Food Services
- Food Trucks
- Grocery Stores
- City Facilities

- Hotels/Motels
- City-sponsored Events

**E. HOW TO IMPLEMENT THE BAN?**

It is recommended to base our ordinance on Santa Monica Ordinance #2216 with the addition of a requirement to have utensils made of compostable materials, since State Bill AB1826 requires the City to provide composting of organic materials. A campaign to notify affected business may be needed. We suggest incorporating inspections into existing business inspections or reviews. The general public can also provide information to the City. See attached SM Ordinance for details and definitions.

**F. HAVE OTHER CITIES ADOPTED A POLYSTYRENE BAN?**

- Yes - California has the most cities of any state that ban polystyrene; currently more than 70.
- Locally: Hermosa Beach, Laguna Beach, Newport Beach (ordinance available upon request), Santa Monica, Calabasas, Huntington Beach, Dana Point, Malibu, Manhattan Beach, San Clemente (ordinance available upon request), West Hollywood have all adopted full or partial bans, and Pasadena is in the process of creating a ban.
- LA City and County, Orange County, Ventura County have government facility bans.  
(Sources: Groundswell.org and Surfrider.org)

**G. DO WE NEED AN EIR?**

The City of Santa Monica passed their ordinance in 2007 without an Environmental Impact Report. There is a general rule exemption because "there is no foreseen environmental impact" in banning polystyrene. CEQA Sect. Guidelines 15061(b)(3)

**H. HOW MUCH DOES THIS COST TO THE BUSINESS AND/OR CONSUMER?**

Eco-friendly alternatives to polystyrene containers tend to be more costly. Informal surveys conducted by BCR members show that businesses no longer using polystyrene have found reasonable alternatives with a minimal effect on their bottom line. Price varies upon size and type of food service container. For example for a similar clamshell container: Polystyrene: \$.07 - Alternatives \$.17 - \$.43. Many local restaurants and grocery stores already use recyclable containers.

**I. WHAT ARE POLYSTYRENE ALTERNATIVES?**

Reusable, recyclable or compostable materials are encouraged. These include paper, cardboard, recyclable plastics, aluminum, and vegetable-based materials using corn, soy or sugar cane

**J. WHY IS THE BAN GOOD FOR CULVER CITY?**

- Helps Culver City to continue its leadership role in reducing the amount of trash and plastic debris contaminating our neighborhoods, waterways and ocean, and pave the way for other municipalities who share responsibility in pollution control;

- Helps the City to comply with the Regional Clean Water Quality requirements and targeted TMDL (Total Maximum Daily Load) levels of trash and a variety of pollutants, many of which are trash-borne;
- Helps reduce Culver City's costs associated with maintaining and cleaning streets, catch-basin inserts, the creek bike path, and more;
- Reduces the amount of non-recyclable waste going to landfills;
- Diminishes trash flying around the neighborhoods and clogging our storm drains;
- Helps reduce the quantity of local and ocean pollution and contributes to the health and well-being of the environment we share, much like the plastic bag ban, which has significantly reduced the amount of bags floating down the creek; and
- Fosters the collaborative approach that Culver City already enjoys with other municipalities and organizations, the Culver City Unified School District, Ballona Creek Renaissance, and the Culver City High School BCR Club.



BCR Culver City High School Club- February 2015 clean up at Centinela  
(Photo Courtesy of Blake Hottle)

#### **K. WHO SUPPORTS THE BAN?**

- Surfrider Foundation
- Heal the Bay
- 5 Gyres

#### **Support pending:**

- Sierra Club

- Environment California
- LA Waterkeeper
- 350.org
- The Bay Foundation
- Los Angeles Chapter of the League of Conservation Voters
- Baldwin Hills Conservancy
- Culver City School District
- Grades of Green
- Culver City Garden Club

## L. WHO IS BCR?

Ballona Creek Renaissance (BCR) is a Culver City-based 501(c)(3) non-profit environmental organization. Its mission is to renew Ballona Creek and its watershed. BCR works with stakeholders to connect community and the creek through cleaning, greening, teaching, community arts and more.

BCR conducts frequent creek cleanups at the Centinela Avenue bike path entrance where the inland water and incoming tide meet. This is a special place for fish, birds and plants. Volunteers of all ages include school groups, local businesses and other organizations. BCR also hosts one of the sites at Overland Ave in Culver City for Annual Coastal Clean-Up Day.

BCR offers volunteer habitat restoration opportunities along the creek and in the adjoining Baldwin Hills. These involve planting natives and removing invasive non-native plants. BCR artists, community members and students also created three colorful murals along the creek bike path. Most recently the artist-led volunteer restoration of the “Rivers of the World” mural at Duquesne Avenue was done with the support of the City of Culver City.

In all, BCR provides education to help people understand the “how” and the “why” of watershed health and how it connects to our lives. Other BCR tools used to engage and educate include online and print media, event booths, public speaking, classroom visits, bike rides and school field trips.

Attachments: City of Santa Monica Ordinance #2216

**Ballona Creek Renaissance**  
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