

Area of Focus PLASTICS

Current Status

- The use of fossil fuels in the production of plastic contributes to global warming.
- Plastics harm the environment, birds, wildlife, and people.
- Plastic wastes equivalent to one garbage truckful are being dumped into our oceans EVERY minute!
- It's predicted that by 2050 the mass of plastic in the world's oceans will exceed the mass of all fish.
- Plastics are one of the main products of fracking.
- Of the 40 million tons of plastic waste generated in the US in 2021, only 5–6% (~2 million tons) was recycled. About 85% went to landfills, and 10% was incinerated. In 2018 the rate of recycling was 8.7%.
- Beverage containers make up 40-60% of the roadside litter in states without *bottle bill deposit laws.
- There is much confusion about what can and cannot be recycled; only certain classes of plastic products can currently be recycled in Tucson's blue bins.
- Most plastics last forever and never decompose.

What is the ideal scenario, and what are the limiters?

- Ideally, the use of plastics would be reduced through legislation banning the use of plastic bottles and bags, introducing container deposits, and requiring that less plastic packaging be used.
- Currently, there is no incentive for large-scale users of plastics, such as restaurants, bars, grocery stores, and packaging facilities to reduce or recycle their plastics, and they incur a cost to do so.

Our Club's Public Message on this Area of Focus

- Think before you buy anything that is contained in plastic, as there is very little of it that can currently be recycled or reused.

Actions Our Club Can Take

- Lobby our city officials and state legislature to establish policies and enact legislation to reduce the use of plastics.
- Join the Ward 6 Plastic Waste Diversion Pilot Program to reuse plastics that cannot currently be recycled, by creating construction blocks from them. Sign up at byfusion.com/pilot-program.
- Educate Tucsonans on ways to help them reduce their use of plastics, for example, by bringing their own bags to the grocery store, and containers for restaurant leftovers or takeout food.
- Raise awareness of the plastics problem by involving other Rotarians and the media.
- Challenge our own members to try to eliminate the use of plastics and report their experiences.
- Share ways of successfully reducing the use of plastics.

Resources

- ***Bottle Bill Resource Guide:**
bottlebill.org/index.php/current-and-proposed-laws/usa/additional-links
- **GreenMatters:** greenmatters.com
- youtu.be/xKTgMogqBxs [video of plastic bricks being made in Kenya]
- forbes.com/sites/grrlscientist/2018/04/23/five-ways-that-plastics-harm-the-environment-and-one-way-they-may-help/?sh=9a8ef1c67a04