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Press Release

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### **Seattle Takes Major Step Towards Reducing Plastics Pollution Pushing farther than other cities to-date**

Grassroots community and environmental groups applaud the City of Seattle's action today. With passage of two forward-reaching ordinances today with 6-1 and 7-0 votes, Seattle City Council confirmed Seattle's green stature. As part of the city's zero-waste strategy, initiated June 2007, the city will ban foamed polystyrene food containers (i.e., to-go containers) and require a 'green fee' (20 cents charge for paper or plastic bags at grocery, convenience and drug stores checkout lines – take-home bags, not the veggie/fruit bags) starting January 1, 2009.

These two bills put Seattle in a "first-in-the-nation" status by being:

- First in the US to implement a bag fee on both disposable plastic and paper bags. Several cities have plastic bag bans but none have fees in place. The Seattle ordinance follows the example of Ireland's "Plastax" and several other European countries.
- First in the US to require *compostable-only* alternatives for to-go food service products phased in by July 2010. San Francisco and Oakland – the most stringent to-date - only require either biodegradable/compostable or recyclable alternatives. Furthermore, Seattle is the first in the nation to require compostable plastic ware (forks, spoons, knives) and compostable meat food trays. By July 2010, both types of products must be compostable.

The bills were enacted to help reduce greenhouse gases and reduce waste in landfills. "The great thing about these bills is that it stops greenhouse gases at their source," said Scott Otterson, Sierra Club. "They are simply not produced because people will reuse resources instead of consuming new ones."

"The planet is smiling today. No more frivolous plastic bag waste clogging her arteries for 1,000 years. No more deforestation in the name of disposability. Thank you Seattle!" said Dan Lundquist of Bring Your Own Bag (BYOB) Campaign.

"The green fee challenges a throwaway lifestyle" continues Liz Tatchell, also of BYOB.

"Reducing the number of single use bags not only preserves our oceans and forests, but gets us thinking about the broader picture of sustainable living."

In addition, pollution in waterways, ranging from local lakes and creeks, to Puget Sound to the trash patch in the North Pacific Gyre, was a motivating factor for the bills. "People who walk on our beaches, around our lakes, or boat on Puget Sound know that plastics are no joke," said Heather Trim, Toxics Program Manager for People For Puget Sound. "Bits of styrofoam and other plastics are in our waterways. These bills will reduce our plastics pollution."

Citizens in Seattle have a strong sustainability ethic. Grassroots activists found huge support for these bills.

Ellie Rose, activist with Foam-Free Seattle said, "Seattle leads the nation by addressing these disposable products. The endless waste created by our reliance one-use disposable paper and plastic is now going to be reversed. I am fantastically proud of Seattle's "Emerald" civic leadership."

Over the past two years, the effort in Seattle has been collaborative between community groups, city staff, the mayor and city council members and business. "The city has done a great job of working with the community on the ban and bag fee. It's nice to feel some ownership over this important legislation," said Sarah Nason with Foam-Free Seattle.

The groups that worked on this issue in Seattle include:

BYOB (Bring Your Own Bag)    Foam Free Seattle    People For Puget Sound    Sierra Club  
Surfrider Foundation    CoolMoms    WA Toxics Coalition    Earth Ministry  
Seattle Audubon    Seattle Rainforest Action Group    Phinney Eco-Village    Phinney-Greenwood  
Climate Action Now    Sustainable Ballard    Sustainable Crown Hill  
Sustainable West Seattle    BALLE Seattle    WA PIRG    WA Physicians for Social Responsibility  
King County Conservation Voters

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