

Plastic bag ban sweeps across Oregon starting Jan. 1

By ALEX CASTLE
STAFF WRITER

If you're hoping to reduce your impact on the environment in 2020, then the Oregon Legislature has a New Year's resolution for you.

Starting Jan. 1, Oregonians will no longer be able to receive single-use plastic grocery bags from stores around the state. Instead, stores must offer a paper, as long as it's made of 40% recyclable materials, or a reusable option, for at least 5 cents apiece.

The eradication of single-use plastic bags in the checkout aisle will be an adjustment for both retailers and consumers in the region as both prepare to adhere to the new law.

"I think this will be something that evolves," said Dave Meade, the owner of Columbia Harvest Foods in Umatilla. "It's something we have to watch and see what our customers like best."

Meade said his store will offer two non-paper options for customers who need to purchase a bag, one that's a reusable Harvest Foods bag



Staff photo by Ben Lonergan
Dave Meade, the store manager at Columbia Harvest Foods in Umatilla, stocks reusable bags on a display on Thursday morning. Meade is trying out several different varieties of reusable bags, in addition to paper bags, until he is able to determine what plastic bag alternative customers gravitate toward.

and another reusable plastic option that is provided by the state.

The bill's intention is to reduce the availability and one-time use of plastic bags, which often aren't recycled

and have contributed to the plastic problem plaguing the planet.

According to a report from the Environmental Protection Agency in 2016, Americans use over 380 bil-

lion plastic bags or wraps per year, which requires 12 million barrels of oil to manufacture.

"I think the new law is great," said Jamie Canale, owner and operator of Gro-

cery Outlet in Pendleton. "In the long run, I think people will see more of the positives."

Canale said Grocery Outlet will have a few options, including a 15 cent and 99 cent reusable plastic bag along with a canvas tote bag for \$2.99.

Canale said it will likely take some time for customers to develop a habit of bringing their own bags, though she noted that about 15% of her customers already bring their own reusable bags and that number has risen recently. For those still unaware of it, though, Canale said they'll be putting out signs soon and making posts on social media to remind customers.

James Davis, a manager at the Walmart in Pendleton, said they've instructed cashiers to remind customers about the eventual change and have put out signs, though he's also noticed more reusable bags being used and said there's already a "general awareness" about the change.

Walmart has already been offering other options for

several years, and as a corporation that's already dealt with regulations across the country and the state, the transition hasn't been as cumbersome.

The law — House Bill 2509 — was passed this past summer and expands on the 17 local ordinances previously regulating single-use plastic bags around the state, which already impacted roughly 40% of Oregonians.

The bill joins Oregon with California, Hawaii and New York as the only states to enact statewide bans.

For some retailers in the region, however, the transition hasn't been welcome. Brandt Koo, owner of the 11th Street Market in Hermiston, was concerned initially when the ban passed because many of his customers walk to and from the store. While it's easy to carry multiple single-use plastic bags when walking, Koo hasn't been able to find a cheap and reliable option with handles to replace them.

"They're less than worthless," Koo said of paper bag alternatives.

Police, Walmart lend Santa a hand with toy distribution

HERMISTON HERALD

Walmart Transportation Division and local law enforcement teamed up to help brighten the holiday season for kids at children's hospitals and Ronald McDonald House locations in the Portland and Seattle areas.

As part of the effort, toys were collected Dec. 7-8 at the Hermiston Walmart store. Officer Mike Ellwood of the Hermiston Police Department was active in the project — knowing firsthand the impact of such acts. His daughter, Jasmine, was diagnosed with Ewing sarcoma a couple of years ago and spent lots of time in hospital settings.

A local group hit the road Dec. 13 in Walmart trucks, police vehicles and passenger cars to make toy deliveries in the Portland area, including to Randall Children's Hospital at Legacy Emanuel. Another group



Contributed photo
Mike Ellwood of the Hermiston Police Department and Paul Wolverton of the Umatilla County Sheriff's Office were among a local group that delivered toys as part of the Holiday Toy Drive. The effort was held in conjunction with Walmart Transportation Division to provide gifts to kids in children's hospitals and Ronald McDonald Houses.

headed to the Seattle area on Dec. 18 to do the same. Ellwood expressed appreciation to everyone who donated toys for the cause

— which brought smiles to the faces of numerous children receiving medical treatment during the holiday season.

Hermiston School District staff support warming station

HERMISTON HERALD

Classified staff in the Hermiston School District helped make a difference for the Hermiston Warming Station.

The group collected a variety of items, including socks, gloves, cleaning supplies, hygiene supplies and snacks. Cathy Keeney, Oregon School Employees Association chapter president, said the group is a "strong supporter of our community" and the annual Hermiston Warming Station supply drive is one example



Diana Allison, secretary for the Hermiston Oregon School Employees Association; Rebecca Robison, vice president, and Cathy Keeney, OSEA chapter president, show off supplies collected by Hermiston School District classified staff for the Hermiston Warming Station.

of how members contribute to local organizations.

The warming station is at 1075 S. Highway 395,

Hermiston. For information about making donations or ways to help, call 541-289-2150 or search Facebook.

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