



# Reusable Bag Education Program

5 Points

Updated May 2018

*Updates include resubmission requirements and new spotlights*

This new action item will enable municipalities to be recognized for educating residents and businesses about the positive aspects of foregoing single-use shopping bags; facilitating voluntary bag bans and/or establishing surcharges for the use of disposable bags. This action is intended to encourage towns to find creative ways to make the public prefer the use of reusable bags. For credit, towns may choose to work with local businesses to get them to voluntarily remove single-use shopping bags from their establishments, or to impose a surcharge on such use (essentially paying for the single use bag). Towns may also pursue a public education campaign for reusable bags. In this case, information should be distributed through many avenues; including press releases, outreach events, websites, green team blogs, and targeted events such as showings of the movie, "BAG IT." The purpose of the program should not be to create adversity; but rather to encourage positive, environmentally-sound choices. The long-term goal of the program is to reduce the number of single use bags that are currently being used. Successful completion of this action can earn a municipality 5 Sustainable Jersey points toward certification.

## Who should lead and be involved with this action?

This action is best led by a committee of the town's Green Team. Members of this committee should represent those who are most passionate about the need for such an action. Other stakeholders in the project should be: a municipal representative; either an employee in the environmental field or a Councilperson who is involved in the town's Green Team efforts (or both) and as many store owners/managers as are willing to help to send this message. If there is a local Main Street organization or business association, they should be included in order to help "sell" the effort to the business community.

## Timeframe

It may take three months or more to introduce the planned action; but efforts will need to be ongoing. Planning must include researching what other towns are doing and getting information out to the public about this new program. Members of the committee should attend as many outreach events as possible once materials are available. Once the decision is made by the Green Team or other lead organization to move forward, there will likely need to be an extended process of education with elected officials and the business community that will require several targeted meetings.

## Project Costs and Resource Needs

Since this is an outreach, advocacy and educational endeavor, the committee will need materials to distribute, such as flyers, posters, possibly bags, reminder stickers, and rental or purchase of the "BAG IT" movie with the rights to show it. Possible funding sources could be: Sustainable Jersey grants, Clean Communities money (the use of reusable bags helps to keep plastic litter off the streets, out of the woods and out of our waterways), and municipal funding for sustainability projects. If funding is extremely limited, teams can still accomplish much with resources that may be available at no cost, such as reusable bags to distribute from donated sources (businesses love to "get their name out there"); the local middle school, high school or college media clubs may do cable TV Public Service Announcements (PSAs) and/or radio spots about the importance of not using single use bags, and college graphics' departments may design and print materials for the program. Check with your local library - they may already have a licensed copy of "BAG IT" (or another appropriate documentary) for you to show...and they may even have a free space in which you can show it!

## Why is it important?

It is estimated that there are over 500 BILLION plastic bags used annually throughout the world. The average American family

accumulates 60 plastic bags in only four trips to the grocery store. Single-use bags made from low-density polyethylene (LDPE) or high-density polyethylene (HDPE) may last for 1,000 years or more if landfilled. Only 5-10% of these bags are recycled, and those that do end up in the recycling stream (unless it is a targeted program) cause single stream recycling equipment to jam and delay the processing of other recyclables. A substantial quantity of these bags ends up on our roadsides, in our trees, in our storm drains and, consequently, in our waterways; where they can be devastating to marine life. Plastic bags are made from a non-renewable resource; and the manufacturing process of single-use paper bags is water-intensive. Additionally, both single-use paper and plastic bags are costly for retail stores to purchase and that cost is passed on to customers.

#### **One cloth bag saves:**

- 6 plastic bags a week
- 24 bags a month
- 288 bags a year
- 22,176 bags in an average lifetime

#### **What to do, and how to do it (“How to”)**

Below we have listed the requirements for earning points for this action. We have provided guidance and recommendations for implementing the action. You do not need to follow this guidance exactly as long as your final product meets the requirements.

In order to earn credit for this action, you will need to establish an ongoing program or series of events which should take place **from within 18 months of the June submission deadline.**

- 1) Form a committee dedicated to the purpose of raising awareness about the importance of using reusable bags. This committee should be made up of team members who are passionate about the subject, a municipal representative and local business owners.
- 2) Develop short and long range plans. These can include: public announcements through media that this program will be started; outreach to the local business owners to solicit their participation in promoting single-use bag bans or imposing bag surcharges; outreach at events – either on-site at grocery stores or at fairs, and distribution of printed materials to help the public understand why they should use reusable bags. Long range plans should include getting schools and students involved through activities such as bag design contests, creation of PSAs, science fair projects, showings of the educational version of “BAG IT,” or one of the other films that focuses on plastic waste for the residential population; periodic giveaways of reusable bags - either purchased or donated, and the purchase and distribution of “Got Your Bags?” window clings for vehicles.
- 3) Include a “bag care” component to all informational pieces. There have been studies that show that bacteria can build up in reusable bags if not cleaned on a regular basis. Encourage residents to include bags that can easily be washed in their collections.
- 4) Towns may feel that they should go one step further and either pass a resolution in support of residents using reusable bags, such as Brigantine did, or even create an ordinance that would ask local stores to charge a 5-10 cent fee for a single use bag, whether it be paper or plastic. These extended actions are NOT required to get points for this action and should only be pursued with full support and cooperation of the Town Council and the participating stores.

A sample plan to implement this action:

- Form a Green Team Committee. Include a municipal representative and prominent local store owners.
- The Green Team Committee will need to decide the scope of the planned program and whether it will strictly be limited to education and outreach on reusable bag use or if it will also involve advocacy with local businesses toward bag bans or bag surcharges.
- Begin to develop printed materials, PSAs, press releases to announce the program.
- All educational materials should contain information on:
  - The purpose of this new program - reasons why reusables are preferable.
  - The use and care of reusable bags.
  - A listing of upcoming events.
- Decide on a “kick off” event. This can be a bag give-away at local stores, a showing of the film “BAG IT” or the short film “PLASTIC BAG” by Ramin Bahrami. Send out media releases to advertise the event(s).
- If doing a reusable bag giveaway, either purchase bags or solicit local businesses for bags to hand out.
- Table at all community events. You should be prepared with information and, if possible, give bags away if residents sign a

pledge to use them.

- Purchase “Got Your Bags?” window clings for vehicles. Studies show that the biggest obstacle to these programs is that people just forget to bring their bags to stores.
- Engage your schools. Run a bag design contest in the elementary schools and a media challenge in your middle school, high school or college. A media challenge can include a cable TV PSA (that can also be shown in participating stores), a radio spot or print ads.

## What to submit to get credits/points

In order to earn points, your submission must meet the following standards:

1. Your advocacy meetings with local businesses on bans and/or surcharges and education and outreach events must take place **from within 18 months of the June submission deadline.**
2. In order to receive points for the Reusable Bag Education Action, a town must show that they have completed most or all of the suggested business advocacy outreach and educational components under “What to do and how to do it.” These are guidelines to follow; points will be awarded for creative approaches that meet the same goal. Points will not be awarded for activities that earn points in separate Sustainable Jersey actions.

Submit the following documentation to verify that the action was completed to the above standards. (Log in to the password protected webpage where you submit your online application for certification to write in the text box and upload documents).

In the text box, please provide a short narrative (300 words max) to summarize what was accomplished and the general steps taken to accomplish it, along with the timeline of events and the approximate number of residents reached through your efforts.

**REQUIRED Upload:** Sample of program outreach or educational materials, such as flyers, press releases, newspaper articles, or materials prepared as part of the activities.

**REQUIRED Upload:** Photos taken during events.

**OPTIONAL Upload:** Town Resolution of Support or Ordinance if either was done. (These are NOT required in order to earn points for this Action, and there is no shelf life requirement.)

**All REQUIRED documentation and the optional Resolution must be from within 18 months of the June submission deadline.**

### Resubmission Requirements

To resubmit for this action, provide the full resubmission requirements **from within 18 months of the June certification application deadline.**

### Approved Action Expiration Date

All actions will be set to expire 18 months from date of the educational/promotional materials and/or the date of the most recent outreach event.

**IMPORTANT NOTES:** You can upload up to six separate documents for each action. Please excerpt relevant information from large documents. Please remember that your submissions will be viewable by the public as part of your certified report.

## Spotlight: What NJ Towns are doing

### Downbeach Green Teams

#### *Longport Borough*

The Borough of Longport initiated a reusable bag campaign in February 2015 and passed a resolution supporting the use of reusable bags. In July 2015 the borough hosted a "Bag It" film showing and sent letters to the local business community inviting them to the event. In November 2015 Longport became the first municipality in New Jersey to adopt an **ordinance** placing a fee on single-use carry out bags. Sustainable Longport will also be providing reusable bags at its farmers market beginning June 2016. By raising awareness and passing legislation, Longport hopes to reduce the amount of single-use bags used in the borough. By decreasing dependence on single-use bags, the borough also hopes to reduce the amount found littering its storm drains and the neighboring bay and ocean.

- [Press Release](#)
- [Resolution](#)
- [News Article](#)
- [New Jersey League of Municipalities Article](#)
- [Online Article](#)

#### *Margate City*

Margate, in partnership with Ventnor and Longport, started its carry-out bag reduction initiative in March 2015. The kick-off event was a screening of the award-winning film, Bag-It, for all Absecon Island businesses. This extremely successful event was attended by more than 65 people, including freeholders, assemblymen, local officials and freeholders, and of course, businesses. A second film screening was held in Ventnor on April 9, again the target audience was the business community. Despite poor weather conditions, the turnout was again strong. Working in partnership with Surfrider Foundation and neighboring communities has allowed for significant progress in short time. Other outreach initiatives included letters to the editor, posters in libraries, beach badge envelopes in Margate, Ventnor and Longport being imprinted with a plastic bag message and canvassing of the business districts to be sure they are on board. The education effort is an ongoing one. The success that the Downbeach group has experienced in Longport has given momentum to efforts in Ventnor where it seems likely an ordinance which places a fee on carry-out bags will be introduced after the May 10, 2016 election. Sustainable Margate/Sustainable Downbeach, continues its work on Absecon Island to educate residents and businesses on the importance of plastic bag use and why an ordinance that places a 5 cent fee on both paper and plastic bags is important for our coastal communities. On May 11, 2017, Sustainable Downbeach and Surfrider Foundation made a presentation to the Ventnor City commissioners and mayor on the benefits of a potential bag fee ordinance. Both organizations are continuing to meet with city officials and discuss the best way to move forward with this initiative.

- [Reusable Bag](#)
- [Promotional Materials](#)
- [News Article](#)

#### *Ventnor City*

The City of Ventnor created a BYOB (Bring Your Own Bag) program to educate residents and visitors about the importance of reducing plastic bags in the community. The program educates about why plastic bags are detrimental to the environment to make people understand that this is an important choice for reducing litter and saving wildlife. The City kicked-off the program with a showing of the movie "Bag It" that documents the hazards of plastic bag use. Prior to its own showing, Ventnor partnered with Margate and Longport in a screening in Margate to stress the importance of the whole Absecon Island taking part in this initiative.

- [Bag It Screening Flyer](#)
- [Downbeach News](#)
- [News Current](#)
- [Website Movie Screening Outreach](#)
- [Reusable Bag Education Flyer](#)

#### **Galloway Township**

Go Green Galloway, Galloway's Task Force for a Sustainable Galloway has had an extremely active Reusable Bag Educational Program for several years. They have held numerous "Bag It" days where they have given away a total of 6,000 bags, mostly donated from local businesses. They have held a public screening of the film "BAG IT" as part of their ongoing Environmental Film Series. They have purchased the educational version of the same film to show in the school system as part of their "KIDS GO GREEN IN GALLOWAY" program. The team has also tabled at an average of 5 community events each year with information about reusable bags and sometimes has used the bags as game prizes. With the purchase of "Got Your Bags?" window clings, they are attempting to eliminate the "I left them at home" syndrome.

- [Reusable Bag Resolution](#)
- [Outreach Materials](#)
- [Bag Giveaway](#)

## Hoboken City

The Hoboken Green Team formed a subcommittee to lead a Reusable Bag Education Program, with the specific goal of reducing single-use bags in Hoboken. A Plastic Bag Survey was conducted, and the results supported further action by the City to reduce plastic bag use. Community education for the reusable bag education campaign began with a kickoff event featuring a bag giveaway and movie screening of Plastic Paradise. Over 700 reusable bags were distributed towards our goal of 1,500. Reusable bags were subsequently given away at the Green Team Wellness Wednesdays events at the Hoboken Public Library, workshops in the Green Team sustainability and resiliency event series, and at local shelters. Educational content was provided as a quarter page flyer in each bag, and is featured on The Hoboken Green Team [website](#). Moving forward, the Green Team will continue to exhibit at community events such as the Hoboken Green Fair and Arts & Music Festival. The Green Team will expand youth education in partnership with local schools; select local business for pilot programs; add components to educational pieces for bag care and plastic bag alternatives; create high impact "Got your bag" vehicle window clings; and study best practices/case studies for local ordinances to either ban or charge for plastic bags. Additional information can be found [here](#).

## Upper Township

The Upper Township Green Team partnered with the Upper Twp. Business Association (UTBA) and their Bring Your Own Bag (BYOBag) Campaign for the past two years. The campaign is a community-wide education project to nudge residents toward the habit of using reusable bags. The [BYOBag poster(<http://sj-site-persistent-prod.s3.amazonaws.com/fileadmin/cicbase/documents/2017/5/10/1494429798404.pdf>)] is displayed at all Green Team tabling and the flier is distributed as well. In 2016 the Township approved a resolution encouraging the use of reusable cloth type shopping bags as opposed to single use plastic bags. During the Upper Twp. Farmers Market in 2015 and 2016, reusable bags were given out at the Green Team information table, provided by local businesses and the UTBA.

- [Cloth Shopping Bag Resolution](#)
- [Photos](#)

## Resources

### Films for Public Screenings:

#### **BAG IT; BAG IT Educational version New Day Films**

An educational and entertaining film about the effects of our plastic world. Available to purchase or rent. A shorter version, appropriate for school screenings, is also available. <https://www.newday.com/film/bag-it>

#### **PLASTIC BAG by Ramin Bahrami Independent Television Service**

An 18 minute award-winning short film about a forlorn plastic bag that struggles with its immortality

<http://futurestates.tv/episodes/plastic-bag>

#### **MIDWAY by Chris Jordan**

##### **Midway Films**

A disturbing film about the Pacific garbage patch and its effects on the birds of Midway Island.

[www.midwayfilm.com](http://www.midwayfilm.com)

### Sample Flyer:

**New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection:** <http://www.nj.gov/dep/aqes/images/RecyclingAds.pdf>

### Sample Pledge:

**Hoosier Environmental Council**, Indianapolis, Indiana

[Pledge form and sample letters](#) for legislators and store managers.

### *Pledge(s) to Use Reusable Bags*

### Conserving Now

<http://www.conservingnow.com/sign-our-pledge>

**Surfrider Foundation**

<https://www.surfrider.org/mission>

**Reusable Bag Education Programs in U.S.:**

**Carpinteria Beautiful**, Carpinteria, California.

Gives out "Remember Me" decals for vehicles and has a great video IT'S IN THE BAG" on their [website](#).

**Pajarito Environmental Education Center**, Los Alamos, New Mexico:

Campaign for a Plastic Bag Free Los Alamos - Los Alamos Chamber of Commerce offers a Reusable Shopping Bag Fundraising Program

<http://www.chamberorganizer.com/losalamoschamber/docs/Reusable%20Shopping%20Bag%20Fundraising%20Opportunity.pdf>

**Wilton Go Green**, Wilton, Connecticut:

BYO Bag Campaign

<http://wiltongogreen.org/byobag-reusable-bag-educational-initiative>

**The Best Source for Reusable Bag Care Tips:**

**University of Hawaii Cooperative Extension Service**

[http://www.ctahr.hawaii.edu/new/resources/GRUB\\_flyer.pdf](http://www.ctahr.hawaii.edu/new/resources/GRUB_flyer.pdf)

**Reuse Reward System:**

**MY ECO:** Launched in Massachusetts; coming to NJ in 2014 Through partnerships with retailers, MY ECO will provide an incentive and reward in the form of donations to local schools when shoppers use their own bags.

[www.getmyeco.com](http://www.getmyeco.com)

**Legislation:** There are several proposed bills that focus on restricting the use of single use bags: A2821, A-3787, A-5988, A-1199 For descriptions and details: <http://legiscan.com>

**SOURCES FOR REUSABLE BAGS:**

A Google search will bring up hundreds of sites for customized reusable bags. Such as:

**Chico Bags:** Foldable, washable nylon bags

[www.Chicobag.com/custom-chicobags](http://www.Chicobag.com/custom-chicobags)

**Quality Concepts:** Foldable, washable nylon bags

[www.qualityconcepts.com](http://www.qualityconcepts.com)

[www.bagmakers.com](http://www.bagmakers.com)

**Bagmakers (Western Textile Manufacturing):** Organic cotton canvas washable bags (All types of bags)

[www.reusablebagsdirect.com](http://www.reusablebagsdirect.com)