



The RENEW Act (SB 5697)

Renewing Washington's Recycling System and Reducing Waste

Plastic pollution, declining recycling rates, and high costs for residents

Globally, 33 billion pounds of plastic enter the marine environment every year, devastating the world's oceans, ecosystems, and communities. Plastics have been found everywhere we've looked, from the deepest trenches of the ocean and most remote areas of the Washington coast, to the inland rivers in the Pacific Northwest. Plastic production has increased by 2000% since the 1960s, and continues to rise. Our landfills are overflowing, and our recycling system isn't functioning as effectively as it could with low, and even declining, recycling rates. It is frustrating to the public that when we buy products, much of the packaging is not recyclable, compostable or reusable. Because producers aren't responsible for the full life cycle of their products and excessive paper and plastic packaging, our communities and the environment continue to bear the brunt of the costs.

Modernizing our recycling system and reducing waste

During the 2022 legislative session, the Plastic Free Washington Coalition is working to pass the RENEW Act (SB 5697), which will:

- Establish an **extended producer responsibility** system that make producers of packaging and paper products responsible for the full lifecycle of their products
- Require that by 2031, 100% of the packaging and paper products made or sold into Washington is **reusable, recyclable, or compostable**
- Incentivize companies to make product packaging more sustainable through establishing a set of **graduated fees based on how readily the packaging can be reused, recycled, or composted**
- Fund **needed improvements** to Washington's recycling system
- Provide **uniform recycling access** for residents across the state
- Create a **harmonized and clear list** of what people can and can't recycle
- Set **recycling and reuse targets** that ramp up over time
- Mandate new **post-consumer recycled content requirements** for PET thermoform containers (i.e., clear containers that bakery goods or produce come in), polypropylene tubs (i.e., yogurt containers), and single-use plastic cups.

Benefits of the RENEW Act

- **ACCESS:** All Washington residents who currently have curbside garbage pickup will receive free curbside recycling collection.
- **PACKAGING DESIGN:** Incentivize producers to redesign packaging so it is reusable, recyclable, or compostable
- **REAL RECYCLING:** Ensure that more plastic, metal, glass and paper packaging will actually get recycled—preventing pollution and reducing greenhouse gas emissions.
- **INCREASE RECYCLING RATE:** Increase Washington's residential recycling by more than 40%
- **LESS CONFUSION:** Remove recycling confusion through a harmonized list of what can be recycled across the state
- **ACCURATE LABELS:** Ensure that packaging labels reflect actual recyclability in WA
- **JOB:** Create over 1,650 green jobs and a stronger, more stable recycling system

The Plastic-Free Washington/Washington Sin Plástico Coalition is a group of organizations, community leaders and businesses dedicated to protecting people, land, water, and wildlife by eliminating plastic pollution in Washington state.

The Coalition is led by Zero Waste Washington, Surfrider Foundation, Seattle Aquarium, Environment Washington, Puget Soundkeeper Alliance, Latino Community Fund, Oceana, and WashPIRG.

