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Duluth Business Introduces Pass-Through Charge on Single Use Carryout Bags

To Address Ecological Concerns and Support Community Values Yarn Harbor Ends Free Single Use Bag Give Away

(Duluth, MN) The Bag it Duluth - For The Love of Place Zero Waste Campaign commends Yarn Harbor for its new store policy which goes into effect Mother's Day, Sunday, May 13th. The policy introduces a five-cent pass-through charge on any single use carryout bag provided to customers. An educational woodcut will be available for customers at checkout (see attachment).

"Our decision to adopt a pass through charge is designed to make our customers aware of the total ecological and societal costs of single use bags and is consistent with policy in Chicago, Washington, D.C, California, and the United Kingdom where businesses continue to flourish and thrive," stated Kathy Thomas, Yarn Harbor Owner. "The overwhelmingly positive feedback we have received from our customers about our decision to adopt a pass through charge on single use bags makes it is clear that Duluth shoppers are informed, have a deep concern for our community, and are ready for other businesses to follow our example."

"As a grassroots environmental organization that has worked for decades to protect the natural resources of Duluth and greater Minnesota, we are thrilled that on the eve of Minnesota's fishing opener Yarn Harbor's has adopted a pass through charge on single use bags. It is an approach which changes behavior and reduces ecological impacts to our waters and fisheries," exclaimed Rich Staffon, President W. J. McCabe Chapter, Izaak Walton League of America.

Both paper and plastic single use bags create waste, cause greenhouse gas emissions, and produce air and water pollution. A report by the San Diego based Equinox Center estimates that a greater than 50% reduction in bag related global warming emissions could be achieved through a switch from single use bags to reusable carryout bags. The 2018 World Economic Forum (WEF) Global Risks report called out environmental dangers as one its four biggest concerns.

"Climate change and plastic pollution are accelerating a culture shift in which single use products and a disposable mindset are now outdated," stated Jamie Harvie, Bag it Duluth Coordinator. "While some businesses have adopted incentive programs in which shoppers are rewarded for bringing their reusable bags, research show that these do not work, so it is inspiring to see Yarn Harbor adopt a pass through charge, an approach that actually shifts behavior and saves businesses money. We are hopeful that Yarn Harbor's decision to adopt a pass through charge on single use bags will embolden other businesses to follow their lead so that we might co-create a culture of zero waste and ideally position Duluth at the center of a new circular economy."

According to a [World Economic Forum \(WEF\) report](#), “From linear to circular—Accelerating a proven concept”, a circular economy is an industrial system that is restorative or regenerative by intention and design. It replaces the end-of-life concept with restoration, shifts towards the use of renewable energy, eliminates the use of toxic chemicals, which impair reuse and return to the biosphere, and aims for the elimination of waste through the superior design of materials, products, systems and business models. According to the WEF carbon emissions could be cut by almost 70 percent by 2030 if a key set of circular economy policy measures were adopted.

Conservatively, citizens of Duluth use approximately 38 million single use carry out bags per year, worth an estimated one million dollars, at a cost to an average grocery store of \$60,000 annually. The amount of money spent by retailers on single use bags every year could instead purchase 10 reusable bags for every citizen in Duluth, reduce clean up, and landfill costs.

This April, the College of St. Scholastica Student Senate adopted a resolution “Building a Sustainable CSS” which calls on the CSS Administration to phase-out the use of single use plastic carryout bags, adopt a fee on all other carryout bags and to phase-out the provision of single use plastic straws. If adopted by CSS Administration it would not only save money but also prevent the distribution of approximately 135,000 single use plastic bags annually from the CSS Saints Store.

In December, Goodwill discontinued distribution of free carryout bags providing an estimated annual savings of \$25,000 for their mission to create employment and reduced an estimated 800,000 single use plastic bags from entering the waste stream.

The Bag it Duluth Campaign is motivated in part by climate change science, and recent studies showing significant plastic contamination in Lake Superior and the Great Lakes. It is a call to action for the City of Duluth to follow the lead of more than 160 cities and states across the United States and enact common sense legislation to promote reusable bags, environmentally friendly packaging and other zero waste strategies.

The Bag it Duluth Campaign is supported by more than 70 organizations representing faith, community, schools and business including the Whole Foods Co-op, Pilgrim Congregational Church, Loll Designs, Ski Hut, Blackwood's Restaurant Group, Duluth Grill, Continental Bike and Ski, Congdon Park Wellness Committee, Duluth Community Garden Program, University of Minnesota Duluth Office of Sustainability, UMD Stores and more.

Bag it Duluth hosts screenings of the award winning film Bag it and collects reusable bags for donation.

[References on the impacts](#) of single use bags, frequently answered questions and contact information is available at the Bag it Duluth website www.bagitduluth.org and Bag it Duluth Facebook page <https://www.facebook.com/BagItDuluth/>

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Consumer Education Image at Yarn Harbor Check Out