



*Protecting our land, air and water
to preserve our way of life in harmony with all species.*

Our Earth, Our Home ... Let's Protect It by Changing Simple Habits “BYOB – Bring Your Own Bag!” in March

At Environmental Protection & Natural Resources, EPNR, we are making Earth Day last all year long. To celebrate, we have added an eagle soaring over Red Mountain to our logo. The eagle symbolizes that we share a fragile and vulnerable habitat with the Desert Nesting Bald Eagle, an environment that is constantly being impacted. Like the eagle, however, we can rise above this challenge and do our part to help protect our home and the environment.

Because protecting the environment is everyone's responsibility, we've launched a Clean & Green Campaign to celebrate Earth Year. Every month, in this column, we are showing you how you can change one habit that can make a real and positive difference for our land, our air and our water. At the end of the 12 months, you will have adopted 12 new healthy environmental habits to help protect your home.

Since their introduction almost thirty years ago trillions of plastic bags have been consumed. Add to this huge sum all the disposable paper bags used globally, and the numbers get even more staggering. (Reusablebags.com) That is why during the month of March, we ask you to please BYOB - “Bring Your Own Bag” by following these simple steps:

Make it a habit to BYOB - bring your own bag!!

- Buy and use your own bags every time you go to the store. Keep canvas shopping bags in your car at all times. Some chain grocery stores (Fry's, Whole Foods) offer a cash back incentive per bag (.05 cents) for using a canvas bag.
- Just say “no” to your grocery bagger. Tell him or her that you won't need a bag if you are only buying a few items.
- Remember to recycle your plastic bags at your grocery store recycling bin. Bins are generally located in the front of the grocery store.
- Re-use your plastic bags.

Why is it important to Bring Your Own Bag?

FACT: An estimated 100 billion plastic bags are thrown away every year in the United States. We carry home 80% of groceries in plastic. Only about 2% of our plastic bags are recycled. (“Getting Drastic about Plastic,” Arizona Republic, August 22, 2008)

FACT: Plastic bags take 1,000 years to break down in a landfill. (Environmental Protection Agency)

FACT: Plastic bags are typically made from oil, a non-renewable resource. In the U.S. alone, 12 million barrels of oil are required to produce enough plastic bags to meet our needs. (www.care2.com)

FACT: Petroleum-based products are not biodegradable and don't decompose over time. The bags break down into small toxic particles that contaminate the soil and water. (Environmental Protection Agency)

FACT: Plastic bags kill animals. Every year, more than 1 million birds and 100,000 marine mammals and sea turtles die from eating or getting entangled in plastic. (Environmental Protection Agency)

FACT: Plastic bags pollute the water and land. Worldwide, an estimated 4 billion bags each year end up as litter, floating above freeways and clogging waterways. (Environmental Protection Agency)

FACT: Are paper bags better? Every year, the U.S. consumes 10 billion paper grocery bags, requiring 14 million trees. (American Forest and Paper Association) Producing paper bags requires more energy and creates more air and water pollution than producing plastic bags. Recycling paper is much more energy intensive than recycling plastic. (www.treehugger.com)



Tips for reusing plastic bags

1. Save money by using plastic bags as trash can liners.
2. Use plastic bags to protect Christmas decorations while storing.
3. Keep plastic bags in diaper bag for soiled clothing.
4. When traveling use plastic bags in your suitcase for dirty clothes.
5. Reuse as packing material. (Source: betterbudgeting.com)

Please visit the websites below to find more ways to reuse plastic grocery bags:

<http://www.betterbudgeting.com/articles/frugality/plasticgrocerybag.htm>

<http://www.bellaonline.com/articles/art35668.asp>

<http://www.realsimple.com/realsimple/content/0,21770,1088458,00.html>

<http://www.greenecoservices.com/28-ways-to-re-use-plastic-bags-make-money/>

To know more about the Clean & Green Campaign or to be part of the Healthy Habits Team, contact the EPNR Hotline at 480-362-7500 or by email EPNR@SRPMIC-nsn.gov