

# THIS WEEK IN “LITTERLAND”

[litterpreventionprogram.com](http://litterpreventionprogram.com)

December 12, 2021

## Walmart to end bags in April

Attention Walmart shoppers: bring your own bags. By Earth Day 2022 Walmart Canada will eliminate plastic shopping bags in its 400-plus stores. The phase-out will begin in February, the retailer announced Wednesday, pledging a package of measures. It will stop wrapping its banana bunches and peppers in plastic wrap and will change from plastic to paper straws, will improve recycling content in its baked goods packaging and will wean polystyrene from its sausage trays. From a diversion standpoint, the savings each year will amount to three-quarters of a billion fewer plastic bags, about 35 million fewer plastic straws, 205,000 lbs. less of plastic wrap, 420,000 lbs. less expanded polystyrene and 925,000 lbs. less of new plastic, the company calculates. As well reducing plastic proliferation through these measures, Walmart's actions should benefit litter prevention since these items will no longer be available to be let loose in the environment by inconsiderate, careless or thoughtless people.



Above, in 2014 Walmart Canada joined with SCJohnson, makers of Ziploc bags, to put plastic and film recycling bins in its stores. Now the giant retailer is scrapping plastic bags entirely.

### **Chronology:**

**2014** Walmart and SCJohnson launch a pilot program in Canada to capture consumer film and plastic. In September a *Litterland* investigation found holes in the program.  
**2016** February, Walmart implements a five-cent plastic bag fee.  
**2019** January, Walmart says it will eliminate about one billion bags by 2025, will replace single use plastic straws with paper by 2020.  
**2020** January, Sobeys' becomes the first Canadian grocery chain to stop using plastic bags in its 255 stores.

## Face mask contamination a documented hazard

Researchers at University of Portsmouth have concluded that failure of governments to mandate proper face mask disposal when masking began has caused a plastic mask pollution crisis. They recorded a staggering 84-fold, pandemic-induced increase in face mask litter from March to October 2020. “Despite millions of people being told to use face masks, little guidance was given on how to dispose of them or recycle them safely,” said the university's Prof. Steve Fletcher. Mask litter blocks sewers and can trap and harm wildlife. It sullies the environment and leaches chemicals. The study's authors advocate PPE litter prevention legislation. Meanwhile, the UN agricultural agency says the level of plastic in agricultural soils poses harm to global food security, human health and the environment. The Food and Agricultural Organization reports more microplastics in soil than in the oceans. See the FAO [call to action](#).

### **DID YOU KNOW?**

Canada's ban on certain single use plastic items, slated to take effect at the end of December, has been postponed until “sometime in 2022” with draft regulations expected to be shared in the coming weeks for public comment, [an official said](#).

### **HEADLINE LITTER GRABBERS (DEC 5 - DEC 12)**

Some of what made our News Reel this week

#### **Cash for offered for good tips about dumpers (12/8)**

Pinal County, Arizona has introduced a \$500 reward for any tip that lead to the laying of a dumping charge.

#### **French dumping habit racks up the tonnage (12/9)**

France, which declared [war on litter](#) earlier this year, got a close look at its enemy thanks to figures from NGO Gestes Propres (Clean/Right Actions) -- one million tonnes of illegally strewn rubbish in 2020, double the amount littered and dumped in 2018.

#### **Hitting litterers where it hurts: fines go up (12/9)**

Plymouth, UK, an identifiably litter intolerant place, will increase littering fines to £150 from £100 on January 1.

#### **Alarming mess threatens mountain tourism (12/10)**

Himalayan tourism imperiled by mountain waste and climate change made sustainable tourism the focus of this year's International Mountain Day on December 11.

A [recent survey](#) for the United Nations Environment Programme of 1,750 mountaineers from 74 countries found 99.7 per cent of them witnessed litter and waste during a typical mountain trip.

#### **Used masks became useful in litter fight**

Royal Cornwall Hospital in Truro repurposed its single-use masks by having them melted down and refashioned as litter grabbers which were then distributed to students in schools and colleges.