



## MAIN OFFICE

Ashland Nature Center  
P.O. Box 700, Hockessin, DE 19707  
302.239.2334 • fax 302.239.2473  
DNSinfo@DelNature.org • www.DelNature.org

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TO: Representative Heffernan, Chair of House Natural Resources Committee  
Members of the House Natural Resources Committee

FROM: Laura Miller, Advocacy Coordinator, Delaware Nature Society  
Anne Harper, Executive Director, Delaware Nature Society

DATE: May 8, 2018

SUBJECT: House Bill 130

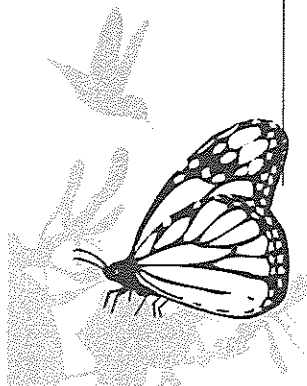
Delaware Nature Society is a member supported environmental non-profit with more than 6,500 supporters statewide that connects people to the natural world through education, advocacy, and conservation. We participate in river cleanups such as the Red Clay Cleanup, where tons of trash are collected every year. Plastic objects are a common feature in the litter found in our waterways and along roadsides. Plastic pollution is a hazard to our environment, wildlife, and public health; therefore, we support House Bill 130 in order to reduce the use of single-use plastic carry out bags.

### Plastic Hazards

As stated in House Bill 130, less than ten percent of single-use plastic bags are recycled or reused across the country. If not recycled properly these bags can clog the recycling system, slowing or stopping function at the facility, reducing efficiency, and increasing expense. When left to deteriorate in nature, these bags take hundreds of years to break down and release harmful chemicals and toxins, such as bisphenol A (BPA) into the water and soil during decomposition (American Chemical Society, 2010).

As plastic deteriorates, products such as carry out bags break down into particles smaller than 5 millimeters known as microplastics. These toxic particles have been found in finfish and shellfish tissues, indicating that they are a threat to wildlife via ingestion and a threat to humans by entering the food chain (NY/NJ Baykeeper, 2016).

Delaware Nature Society not only supports the legislation's restriction of single-use plastic carryout bags, but also its encouraged use of reusable bags which will reduce litter and waste going to landfills. Additionally, we commend the continued inclusion of at-store recycling programs for plastic bags and film still given out under certain circumstances.



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### **Hazardous Plastic Alternatives**

House Bill 130 is a necessary first step in a statewide effort to reduce waste and plastic usage. To further our positive impact on our environment, Delaware Nature Society urges legislators to consider next the harm of plastic bag alternatives such as paper bags and polystyrene foam (Styrofoam) containers.

- Paper bag manufacturing requires that we cut down trees and use harmful chemicals to process that wood. This method leads to air and water pollution and an increase in greenhouse gas emissions.
- Polystyrene foam, colloquially known as Styrofoam, is a common eyesore littered across the state that persists in the environment and increases the risk of plastic ingestion by wildlife. Like other plastic products, polystyrene foam breaks down into small plastic pieces making them easier for wildlife to ingest accidentally. In the 2017 International Coastal Cleanup over 500,000 foam take-out/away containers were collected from shores and over 2.3 million foam pieces were removed (Ocean Conservancy, International Coastal Cleanup 2018 Report).

### **Conclusion**

By 2025, our oceans are expected to contain one metric ton of plastic for every 3 metric tons of fish, and by 2050 more plastic than fish by weight (World Economic Forum, 2016). In order to reduce litter and pollution to our environment and food chain, behavioral changes are necessary. House Bill 130 is an essential first step at curbing hazardous behaviors and our dependence on single-use plastics.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment.