

Contra Costa County Board of Supervisors

October 8, 2019

Findings in support of the adoption of Ordinance No. 2019 - 25 regulating polystyrene-based food service ware in unincorporated Contra Costa County.

Findings:

The Board of Supervisors finds and determines as follows:

- (a) Polystyrene, often referred to by the trademark “Styrofoam”, is a petroleum-based, lightweight plastic material commonly used as food service ware by retail food vendors operating in unincorporated Contra Costa County. Polystyrene has become a problematic environmental pollutant because it is non-biodegradable and nearly non-reusable. It can take hundreds of years for polystyrene to break down even in landfills.
- (b) The County and the Contra Costa County Flood Control and Water Conservation District spend approximately \$750,000 annually to remove litter from waterways and sensitive environmental areas within the County. Polystyrene single-use food service ware constitutes a significant portion of that litter.
- (c) Prohibiting the use of polystyrene food service ware and requiring the use of recyclable and reusable food service ware will advance the County’s interests in protecting its waterways, environment, and taxpayers from the negative environmental and financial impacts associated with polystyrene food service ware. This ordinance also is intended to assist the County with meeting its trash reduction requirements under its regional stormwater permit issued by the regional water quality control board. By enacting this ordinance, the County joins the following cities within Contra Costa County that have enacted some type of ban on the use and/or sale of polystyrene: Concord, El Cerrito, Hercules, Lafayette, Martinez, Pinole, Pittsburg, Richmond, San Pablo, and Walnut Creek.
- (d) Food service vendors and businesses may have existing inventories of polystyrene food service ware, and they may need time to purchase environmentally friendly food service ware. For those reasons, the prohibition against the sale and use of polystyrene food service ware will be effective May 1, 2020.