



October 31, 2018

Contra Costa County Transportation, Water, and Infrastructure Committee  
30 Muir Road  
Martinez, CA 94553

Dear Chair Mitchoff and Vice Chair Andersen:

On behalf of thousands of Save the Bay supporters in Contra Costa County and around the Bay Area, I urge you to move forward with a ban on the distribution and sale of expanded polystyrene products as soon as possible. Many local jurisdictions have enacted similar or more stringent bans, including Alameda County, Concord, El Cerrito, and Lafayette. In fact, in California alone, there are currently 117 local ordinances banning the sale and/or use of expanded polystyrene. We urge you to join these cities, including those within your county, in taking strong action against this polluting and unsustainable material.

Polystyrene, specifically polystyrene foam, is one of the biggest culprits in clogging municipal storm drains and is a major litter item that is suffocating our creeks, wetlands, and the Bay. Polystyrene never biodegrades; it will remain in the environment for thousands of years, harming wildlife and polluting our shores. Because polystyrene foam is lightweight, it easily blows into storm drains and waterways, where it readily breaks apart and is often ingested by fish, birds and other wildlife.

Polystyrene foam has no appreciable recycling market. Less than one half of one percent of polystyrene food service packaging – and less than one percent of all polystyrene – is actually recycled in California. The rest ends up in landfills and as litter in our streets and waterways.

The dramatic increase in alternative food ware is being driven by consumer demand. While the quality of alternative food ware is increasing, the cost is steadily decreasing; complying with a ban could cost as little as \$150 per year, according to San Mateo County. Currently, hundreds of Bay Area restaurants and businesses are complying with polystyrene bans – if they can do it, Contra Costa businesses can also adapt.

Finally, Contra Costa County, like many other Bay Area cities and counties, are required to achieve ambitious stormwater pollution reductions under the Municipal Regional Stormwater Permit. By 2022, the county must reduce the amount of trash in its stormwater by 100 percent; an 80 reduction must be achieved by 2019. Contra Costa can take a strong step toward meeting these goals by eliminating commonly littered products, such as polystyrene food ware.

Now is the time to stop plastic pollution in our Bay and waterways. Save The Bay respectfully urges Contra Costa County to ban expanded polystyrene products. We look forward to working with you on this issue.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'David Lewis'. The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

David Lewis  
Executive Director