WORKSHOP · TUE, OCT 13 · 2:30-3:30 PM

Turning Reuse into Reality: Community-Driven Solutions for Waste Reduction

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After a litter audit found 68% of its litter was single-use food and beverage packaging, Truckee, California passed two ordinances aimed at cutting disposables rather than swapping them for compostables. Town staff shared how they built the rules with residents and businesses, the programs that back them up, and what enforcement really looks like.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

1. **Target all disposables, not one material.** Most carbon impact happens before use, and Truckee can't compost compostable packaging anyway. The goal was fewer disposables and a culture of reuse.
2. **The foodware ordinance has four parts.** A polystyrene foam ban, accessories by request only, reusables for dine-in, and a 25-cent fee per disposable cup and container (in effect January 2024).
3. **Build equity into fees.** WIC, EBT and Medi-Cal participants can ask for a community support exemption at the register, no proof required.
4. **Bottled water rules need tap water trust.** Since Earth Day 2025, plain water in single-use plastic bottles and cartons under a gallon isn't sold. In-person surveys showed trust and access matter, especially for Spanish speakers.
5. **Support programs drive buy-in.** A $5 Green Box takeout container, an app-based reusable cup program, free dish and water station loans, and filling station grants made the rules workable.

WHAT LOCAL OFFICIALS CAN DO

- ☐ **Run a litter audit first** to find what to target, and set baseline data so you can track results later.
- ☐ **Form a stakeholder committee** with restaurant owners, advocates, students, residents and council members to shape timeline, exemptions and support.
- ☐ **Survey in person where people shop** to reach Spanish speakers and others that online surveys miss.
- ☐ **Give businesses time and visits.** Truckee visited 63 locations before and after the bottle rule and gave about a year and a half to prepare.
- ☐ **Keep business grants simple.** Heavy data requests cut participation. Foodware grants offered $500 for dishes and up to $1,000 for a dishwasher.
- ☐ **Fund it from trash bills.** An administrative fee on residential and commercial trash bills feeds a waste reduction fund.
- ☐ **Reach visitors through tourism partners** like your visitors bureau, hotels and short-term rentals.

BY THE NUMBERS

68%
Truckee litter that was single-use food and beverage packaging

25¢
Fee per disposable cup or takeout container

23
Filling stations installed with grants, nearly $30K awarded

43
Free tap water refill spots mapped in Truckee

370 gal
Water to make 500 paper cups, vs. 53 to wash one cup 500 times

63
Businesses visited in person for the bottle ordinance

WATCH OUT FOR

- ! Complaint-based enforcement only reaches businesses people report. Chains got extra time, which created a false sense that only small local restaurants were being enforced.
- ! Getting visitors to use reusables, not just pay the fee, is still a challenge.

RESOURCES

Keep Truckee Green
Town of Truckee sustainability and solid waste division

Truckee Mountain Filtered
Town tap water campaign with posters, stickers and a refill map

Take Care Tahoe
takecaretahoe.org

Peer community
South Lake Tahoe adopted a similar bottled water ordinance a year earlier

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Summarized from the session recording and presenter slides. Figures are as presented; confirm with presenters before citing.

CONTACTS

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