



SWAN Action Sheet

Banning Plastic Bags in Your Community!



Several Villages in Alaska have been fed up with plastic bags littering their communities. They decided to hunt these "snow birds" that are not part of our traditional environment. Here's how a few Villages have taken action:

1 RESEARCH VILLAGE TIPS:

Native Village of Tanana **Contact: Kathleen Peters-Zuray 366-7160**

Developing a plastic bag ban has been an on-going process over two years for the Native Village of Tanana's Environmental Department. It started with community cleanups. When they cleaned up around the dump they noticed they were picking up 70-90 plastic bags at a time. To **take action, they sent around pictures of the dump** with all the plastic bags to let people know about the problem. They **brought the issue to the Tribal and City Council's** and asked about creating a plastic bag ban in the community. The community voted to ban plastic bags and a **Tribal resolution was passed**. The **City Council** is currently working through the **plastic bag ban ordinance**.



The staff contacted Reuseablebags.com, and bought **mesh nylons bags to replace** the plastic bags. Along with the mesh bags, **they ordered buttons** to pass out that say "Plastic Bags Blow!" to promote awareness of the problem. The Tanana Environmental Department believes that **education is a big part of trying to change community habits** and has been necessary for the ban to be effective. They give kids **talks in the school** to teach about the problem. According to the staff, a plastic bag ban has definitely been **a process** for the community and **it has taken time** for community members to change their ways and start using the new bags.

Louden Tribal Council **Contact: Cindy Pilot 656-1711**

The Loudon Tribal Council **passed a resolution** prohibiting their local stores from using plastic shopping bags. To promote community acceptance of the ban, Loudon used a 1999 EPA grant to purchase \$2,000 worth of **canvas shopping bags** for people to use instead.

New Stuyahok Traditional Council **Contact: Andrew Wassille 693-3173**

To reduce the plastic bags in the community, the New Stuyahok Board got together with their local store and stopped ordering plastic bags. **Paper bags with handles** are now used instead. The paper bags are working very well for them.

Native Village of Koyuk **Contact: Albert 963-3651**

The Native Village of Koyuk **passed a resolution** banning the use of plastic bags. A grant from Alaska Conservation was obtained and two canvas bags were issued to each house-hold. The Koyuk Native Store also provided a canvas bag to customers with the store name and logo. ANICA, Inc. joined the plastic bag ban and issued a canvas bag with their name and logo to each of their customers of voting age. **A copy of Koyuk's resolution** is attached to this handout.

Arctic Village Contact: Marjorie Gemmill 587-5328

In Arctic Village they just asked the stores to start using **paper bags**, so there's no "alaska sno birds" anymore! They said it costs a little more for paper, but it's better for the environment

Native Village of Newtok Contact: Margaret Nickerson 237-2325

Plastic Bags are banned in Newtok. Some of the people there save the plastic bags and return them to the stores once the plastic bag are full. The stores clerks sure appreciate it when the bags are returned.

Native Village of Ft. Yukon Contact: Vickie Thomas 662-2581

In 2003, the City of Ft. Yukon passed a **plastic bag ban ordinance** and the Tribe passed a **resolution**. A copy of Ft. Yukon's ordinance is attached to this handout.

Native Village of Chefnak Contact: Billy Chagluak 867-8306

The Chefnak Environmental Program is currently working on banning plastic bags in the community. They carried out a community wide cleanup and will be purchasing canvas bags for the store to use.

Chevak Traditional Council Contact: Cynthia Paniyak 858-7827

Chevak started their plastic bag recycling program in 2003. People in the community currently drop off their bags at the Environmental Department but a storage place is being built which will be the new drop-off area. The plastic bags collected will be used to make **crocheted bags**. Canvas bags have been purchased (through www.reuseablebags.com) and will be distributed to the community once **kids decorate the bags**. A one page double-sided flyer was created to educate the community on their plastic bag recycling program, and this flyer was disturbed during ball games, to students at the school, and during any other big events in Chevak. They also advertised their plastic bag program over the radio. Finally, Chevak also held monthly drawings for their recycling program and prizes were **\$5 gift certificates** which could be used at the local store. A copy of **Chevak's plastic bag flyer** is attached to this handout.



2 DEVELOP AN ORDINANCE OR STORE AGREEMENTS:

Call the contacts above listed for examples, or look up "Ordinances" at: <http://www.ccthita-swan.org/main/a-z.cfm>

3 WHERE TO PURCHASE REUSABLE BAGS:

- ◆ Reuseablebags <http://www.reuseablebags.com> 1 (888) 707-3873 (recommended by Tanana)
- ◆ The Cloth Bag Company <http://www.clothbag.com> (770) 393-0058 (recommended by Skaqua TC)
- ◆ Enviro-Tote <http://www.enviro-tote.com> 1-800-TOTE BAG

CTC Environmental Department Plastic Bag Collection

We, here at the Chevak T.C. Environmental Department, collect plastic bags for a crocheting program for the students or community. We would like to start this program as soon as we have enough or more than enough plastic bags to start with. When you bring a bag of shopping bags for recycle, you will be eligible for the monthly drawing for recyclers.



A bag of shopping bags collected and brought to our Environmental Department

Ban the use of plastic shopping bags???

Some communities, here in Alaska, have successfully banned the use of plastic shopping bags. With your help and support we could make this happen. We would like to do the same. And if you don't like this thought, then start collecting your shopping bags and

bring them to us here at the CTC Environmental Department. Hope that you and your family will see this issue and agree to start using reusable bags in place of plastic shopping bags.



Reduce Reuse Recycle

Bring your plastic shopping bags to the Environmental Department here at Chevak Traditional Council

Environmental Department
P.O. BOX 140
Aurora Street
Chevak, Alaska 99563

Phone: 907-858-7827
Fax: 907-858-7812
Email: ctcenvironmental@hotmail.com



Plastic Shopping bags



Bring your plastic shopping bags to the Environmental Department here at Chevak Traditional Council

Should you use paper or plastic shopping bags??

You can find out, just read on...



Shopping Bags: **Paper or Plastic??????**

Did you know plastic grocery bags consume 40% less energy to produce 80% less solid waste than paper bags? Did you know plastic bags can take 5-10 years to decompose whereas paper bags take about a month to decompose? The debate



over whether plastic or paper bags are better for the environmental has a long history and is often rekindled each time we check out at the grocery store when we hear that familiar question: Paper or plastic? Many of us have not been able to resolve this question, but there is an alternative—read on below. There seem to be pluses and minuses on both sides of the debate. For paper bags the life cycle stages consist of timber harvesting, pulping, paper and bag making, product use and waste disposal. For plastic (polyethylene) bags, the steps involve petroleum or natural gas extraction, ethylene manufacture, ethylene polymerization, bag processing, product use and waste disposal. In all of these steps, energy is required and waste are generated.

Some more facts about these two products may help us to answer this question:

- Plastic bags were first introduced in 1977 and now account for four out of every five bags handed out at grocery stores.
- Paper sacks generate 70% more air and 50

time more water pollutants than plastic bags

- Paper bags are made from trees, which is a renewable resource. Most plastic bags are made from polyethylene, which is made from crude oil and natural gas, nonrenewable resources.
- 2000 plastic bags weigh 30 pounds, 2000 paper bags weigh 280 pounds. The latter takes up a lot more landfill (dump) space.
- It takes 91% less energy to recycle a pound of plastic than it takes to recycle a pound of paper. It takes more than four times as much energy to manufacture a paper bag as it does to manufacture a plastic bag.
- Paper is accepted in most recycling programs while the recycling rate for plastic bags is very low. Research from 2000 shows 20% of paper bags were recycled, while one percent of plastic bags were recycled.
- Current research demonstrates that paper in today's landfills does not degrade or break down at a substantially faster rate than plastic does. In fact, nothing completely degrades in modern landfills due to the lack of water, light, oxygen, and other important elements that are necessary for the degradation process to be completed.
- Incineration (burning) can decrease the quantity of plastic and paper bags. However, incineration causes air pollution and creates ashes which has to be land filled.

So, What is the Answer???

Paper or Plastic??? **NEITHER** is the answer. **Look into purchasing reusable bags or reusing your paper or plastic shopping bags at the store.** Reusing a bag meant for just one use has a big impact. A sturdy, reusable

bag needs only be used 11 times to have a lower environmental impact than using 11 disposable plastic bags.

- In New York City alone, one less grocery bag per person per year would reduce waste by five million pounds and save \$250,000 in disposal costs.
- When one ton of paper bags is reused or recycled, three cubic meters of landfill space is saved and 13-17 trees are spared! In 1997, 955,000 tons of paper bags were used in the United States.
- When one ton of plastic bags is reused or recycled, the energy equivalent of 11 barrels of oil are saved.

Many grocery stores now offer for sale sturdy cloth grocery bags. Some of these stores even give you a little discount if you bring your own bags(this is down states).

So, keep a stash of reusable bags and bring them with you to the store. When you are finished using them or may not use them please bring them to Chevak T.C.'s Environmental Department.

This information was obtained from the United States Environmental Protection Agency Website <http://www.epa.gov/cgi-bin/epaprintonly.cgi>

Bring your plastic shopping bags to the Environmental Department here at Chevak Traditional Council

Environmental Department
P.O.BOX 140
Aurora Street
Chevak, Alaska 99563

Phone: 907-858-7827
Fax: 907-858-7812
Email: ctcenvironmental@hotmail.com

**CITY OF FORT YUKON, INC.
ORDINANCE 03-04**

**AN ORDINANCE TO PURSUE METHODS TO REDUCE THE
VOLUME OF SOLID WASTE AND ENVIRONMENTALLY
APPROPRIATE WAYS TO DISPOSE THE REMAINDER**

**THE FOLLOWING REGULATIONS WILL ASSIST THE CITY IN THE
MAINTAINANCE OF THESE GOALS:**

- A. Plastic bags, used for carry out in retail businesses, shall be prohibited
- B. Aluminum cans shall be recycled. The City of Fort Yukon, Inc. will designate a center for the receiving of cans.

**This Ordinance becomes effective upon its adoption by the City Council;
local retailers have 30 days to comply.**

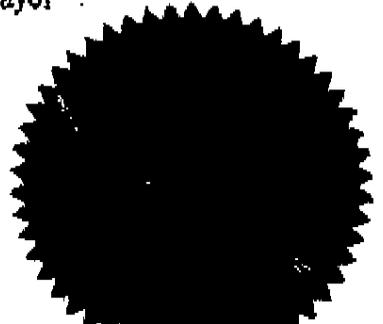
Introduction and First Reading: MAY 13, 03
Public Hearing: MAY 21, 03
Second Reading and Approval: MAY 13, 03 / JUNE 10, 03

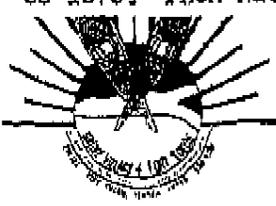
**ADOPTED BY A DULY CONSTITUTED QUORUM OF THE CITY COUNCIL OF
THE CITY OF FORT YUKON, ALASKA on this 10th day of June, 2003.**


Vickie Thomas, Mayor

Attested:


Rachel Carroll, City Clerk





Native Village of Fort Yukon

P.O. Box 126
Fort Yukon, Alaska 99740
Phone: (907) 662-2581
FAX: (907) 662-2222

Resolution 97-27

TITLE: A resolution to support a Fort Yukon Recycling Program.

WHEREAS, The tribal chiefs and council is the duly elected and authorized legal governing body of a federally recognized Indian Tribe organized as Native Village of Fort Yukon under the provisions of Section 16 (48 Stat. 984) of the Indian Reorganization Act of June 18, 1934, as amended by the Act of June 15, 1935 (49 Stat. 378), the Act of May 1, 1936 (49 Stat. 1250), and the Act of November 1, 1988 (102 Stat. 2938); and

WHEREAS, the City Landfill has been overflowing with numerous recyclable items for years; and

WHEREAS, reducing harmful chemicals, solid and hazardous wastes, toxic substances will ensure the safety and health of community members; and

WHEREAS, fewer dump sites or land fill will prevent fewer underground and surface water pollution; and

WHEREAS, the aluminum and plastic bags are recyclable items; and

WHEREAS, the NVFY Environmental Department proposes to develop a viable recycle program for the community of Fort Yukon.

NOW BE IT THEREFORE RESOLVED that the Native Village of Fort Yukon Tribal Council fully supports the development of a Recycle Program in Fort Yukon.

Passed and Approved at a regular tribal council meeting held on this 25 day of Nov., 1997 by the Native Village of Fort Yukon IRA Tribal Council.

First Chief Steven E. Ginnis: Steven Ginnis

Council Member: Clyde Williams



**NATIVE VILLAGE OF KOYUK
IRA COUNCIL**

P.O. BOX 53030 * KOYUK, ALASKA 99753-3030
PHONE: (907) 963-3651 * FAX: (907) 963-2353

**Koyuk IRA Council
Resolution #07-03-01-01**

A Resolution for the Banishment of Plastic Shopping Bags

WHEREAS, Koyuk IRA Council is the federally recognized Tribal governing body for the Tribal members of the village of Koyuk: and,

WHEREAS, the Koyuk IRA Council recognizes that a need exists to reduce the amount of material going into our landfill and keep litter from being blown out of the landfill and surrounding our village: and,

WHEREAS, we recognize that the appropriate method of doing this is by reduction of the waste stream and not allowing plastic bags from entering the waste stream: and,

WHEREAS, the Tribe sees an opportunity to work with the City of Koyuk and the local retail outlets to replace these public nuisances with reusable bags and making available biodegradable paper bags through the retailers: and,

WHEREAS, we recognize that the authority for this action lies in our ownership of our landfill and our community: and,

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, that the Koyuk IRA Council hereby authorizes the President or his designee to work with the City of Koyuk, retailer, Tribal member and general public to banish white plastic bags from our community as soon as an alternative reusable replacement can be made available, and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the Koyuk Tribal Council President or designee is hereby authorized to allocate funds through the IGAP project as an environmental education initiative to purchase reusable bags for the community.

Attachment ②

Certification

I, the undersigned, certify that the Koyuk IRA is composed of 7 (7) members, of which 5 were present. The foregoing resolution was Passed and Approved by the Koyuk IRA, of Koyuk, Alaska, this 3rd day of July 2001.

Vote: Yeas: 5 Nays: 0 Excused Absent: 2

Signed: *Oscah Amosook Jr.*

Title: President IRA Council

Attest: *Wilbur A. Amosook Jr.*
Secretary