

Date: January 9, 2024

Honorable Mayor and Council Members:

Author and title: Carmen Lopez, Sustainability Program Analyst I; Erin Brewster, Sustainability Program Manager

Title: Introduction of Single-Use Plastic Bottle and Paper Carton Ordinance

Jen Callaway, Town Manager

Recommended Action:

- (1) Introduce Ordinance 2024-01 adopting Chapter 6.05 of the Truckee Municipal Code regarding Single-Use Plastic Bottles and Paper Cartons.
- (2) Find the adoption of the ordinance exempt from CEQA pursuant to CEQA guidelines sections 15061(b)(3), 15307, and 15308.

Discussion:

I. Background

In 2019, Town Council directed staff to explore solutions for litter and waste in our community, after local students and environmental advocates showed strong support for waste reduction policies. After a community engagement process, staff presented policy options to Town Council on February 11, 2020, and Council directed staff to form a stakeholder working group to help develop a single use foodware reduction ordinance and implementation plan (see Attachment 1). This stakeholder working group was convened to develop specific policy recommendations for Council, ultimately resulting in the Single-Use Foodware Ordinance that was adopted on November 8, 2022. At the first reading of the Town's Single-Use Foodware Ordinance on October 25, 2022, Council members indicated there was interest in exploring a plastic water bottle ban, following South Lake Tahoe's adoption of a similar ordinance. Due to the complexity of policy options and potential impacts of such a ban, it was determined this item should be explored separately from the Foodware Ordinance and exploration of a single-use water bottle ban was added as a potential new item to the Council Priorities Work Plan on November 8, 2022.

Town staff collected community input on potential single-use bottle regulations via a survey, community workshop, and a stakeholder advisory committee. The online community survey was distributed to residents, visitors, and businesses in Truckee through email newsletters, social media, the Truckee Chamber of Commerce, the Truckee Downtown Merchants Association, and Visit Truckee-Tahoe. The community workshop took place on February 8, 2023 at the Community Rec Center where attendees watched a brief presentation on the community engagement process and policy options and provided their feedback. Staff also convened a group of community stakeholders to provide additional opportunities for input from business representatives and other key local stakeholders. This stakeholder group included representatives from local businesses, special events, healthcare, emergency operations, and education.

As a result of the community engagement process described above, Town staff created the following single-use policy recommendations which were presented to and approved by Town Council on May 23, 2023 (see Attachment 2):

1. Develop a comprehensive outreach and incentive program to support a reduction in use of single-use bottles, promote a shift to reusable water bottles, and incentivize installation of additional refill stations in the community.
2. Develop an ordinance for Council consideration prohibiting the sale and commercial distribution of water packaged in single-use plastic bottles or paper cartons less than one gallon in volume.
3. Include exemptions for emergencies, social services, healthcare, and other situations that may impact health and safety.
4. Report back to Council at least one year after the effective date on implementation of the ordinance and outreach campaign, including impacts on residents and businesses.
5. Investigate options to expand the ordinance to include other beverages in single-use plastic packaging and provide recommendations to Council for future consideration.

The proposed ordinance (Attachment 3) was developed based on the direction received from Council in May 2023, input received through the community engagement process and aligns with the Truckee 2040 General Plan. Specifically, Truckee 2040 Conservation and Open Space Element Action 10.B to Pursue Single-Use Plastic Reduction and Climate Action Plan Element Actions CAP-10.A to Reduce Single-Use Items and CAP-10.C to consider implementing an Ordinance to Discourage Single-Use Items.

COS-10.B

Pursue Single-Use Plastic Reduction

Investigate townwide reduction of single-use plastic sales and use, including water bottles and other single-use beverage containers.

Responsibility: Keep Truckee Green

Time Frame: Midterm

Actions

CAP-10.A

Reduce Single-Use Items

Work with residents and businesses, specifically restaurants, to reduce and eliminate single-use items and adopt guidelines encouraging reusable foodware in-house. Consider updating the guidelines to include methods for reducing or eliminating single-use items at events.

Responsibility: Assistant to the Town Manager

Time Frame: Short term

II. Environmental Impacts of Single-Use Beverage Packaging

Single-use packaging, particularly plastics, comprises a significant percentage of waste and litter in California. The Town has already taken steps to reduce the environmental impact of these items through the Single-Use Foodware Reduction Ordinance, which went into full effect January 1 of this year. However, there are many types of single-use packaging not covered by this ordinance, including single-use plastic bottles. The League to Save Lake Tahoe reports that plastic bottles are among the top five types of litter found in the neighboring Tahoe Basin and South Lake Tahoe.¹ There is evidence that water contributes more to littered plastic bottles than any other beverage type; a staff audit of litter samples collected during Truckee Day 2023 found over half of littered single-use plastic bottles were water bottles.

In developing the recommendations presented to Council in May, staff researched the lifecycle environmental impacts of alternative types of single-use beverage packaging to understand the potential consequences of consumers and businesses switching to alternative materials. The meta-analysis of lifecycle studies from the United National Environmental Programme between plastic bottles vs. cartons, plastic bottles vs. glass bottles, and plastic bottles vs. aluminum cans shows switching to reusable bottles rather than switching to alternative single-use packaging has the greatest environmental impact.² Accordingly, the ultimate goal of this ordinance and the supporting incentive and outreach campaigns would be to develop a culture of reuse and decrease overall use of single-use packaging rather than simply switch to alternative single-use packaging materials. Additional details about the environmental impacts of single-use packaging can be found in the staff report from May 2023 (Attachment 2).

III. Plastic Bottle Bans in Other Jurisdictions

The City of South Lake Tahoe adopted an ordinance on October 4, 2022, that prohibits the distribution of plastic water bottles at city facilities and events beginning April 22, 2023, and the sale of single-use

¹ [The League to Save Lake Tahoe](#)

² [UN Environment Programme Life Cycle Initiative](#)

plastic water bottles under a gallon in size by all vendors beginning April 22, 2024. Exemptions include emergencies and other situations that the city manager deems necessary to use single-use plastic water bottles to protect the public health, safety, and welfare if no reasonable alternative is available.

The Town of Mammoth Lakes introduced a similar ordinance on December 20, 2023. If adopted, the ordinance would prohibit the sale and distribution of single-use plastic water bottles 500ml (approximately 16.9 fl oz) or less by the Town of Mammoth Lakes beginning January 1, 2025. It would also prohibit the sale and distribution of single-use plastic water bottles by commercial vendors beginning January 1, 2026. The Mammoth Lakes ordinance contains similar exemptions in cases of emergency or other situations to protect the public health, safety, and welfare if there are not reasonable alternatives. The Mammoth Lakes Town Council will consider adoption of this ordinance on January 3, 2024.

Additionally, several jurisdictions in Massachusetts have adopted similar bans on the sale of single-use plastic water bottles, beginning with the Town of Concord in 2012. Several jurisdictions on Martha's Vineyard also prohibit the sale of soft drinks in single-use plastic bottles. A full list of single-use plastic bottle ordinances researched by Town Staff can be found in Attachment 3.

IV. Proposed Truckee Ordinance

The proposed ordinance (Attachment 3) would prohibit the sale and commercial distribution of non-carbonated, non-flavored water packaged in single-use plastic water bottles or single-use paper cartons less than one gallon in volume. During the stakeholder working group and community meetings, participants recommended the Town include paper cartons in any proposed ordinance, as these materials are not recyclable in Truckee or many areas. Other alternative single-use packaging for water, such as aluminum cans or glass bottles, is much more readily recyclable. A volume threshold of one gallon was chosen for consistency with regulations adopted in South Lake Tahoe. This will reduce confusion for retailers with stores in both jurisdictions as well as support consistency in regional messaging about single-use water bottles for residents and visitors. While most existing single-use bottle ordinances cover only the retail sale of bottles, the proposed ordinance would also apply to commercial distribution. This would also prohibit the distribution of water in single-use plastic bottles and single-use paper cartons at no cost by hotels, special events, and other commercial entities.

The proposed effective date for this ordinance is April 22, 2025 (Earth Day 2025), which would be approximately 15 months after adoption. This timeline will allow sufficient time for businesses to adapt to the new regulations and for Town staff to develop appropriate resources and supportive programs for residents, businesses, and special event operators. In May, staff recommended a long implementation timeline of up to 18 months between adoption and effective date, similar to the implementation timeline of South Lake Tahoe's ordinance. While staff's current recommendation of April 2025 is shorter than originally recommended, this timing will ensure that the ordinance takes effect during a slower time of year for businesses prior to the peak summer season.

Based on the recommendations approved by Council in May 2023, the proposed ordinance includes several exemptions to protect the health and safety of community members. This includes exemptions for emergencies to ensure any regulations do not impede the Town's ability to source adequate water in an emergency. Additional exemptions apply to patient care at healthcare facilities, as well as organizations providing social services who may distribute single-use water bottles to protect the health and safety of community members.

The proposed ordinance also contains exemptions for both the Truckee Donner Recreation and Parks District and the Tahoe Truckee Unified School District. These exemptions are intended to clarify existing limits of the Town's regulatory authority in this area, as the ordinance would not be enforceable on TDRPD or TTUSD facilities regardless of the inclusion of this exemption. However, Town staff have met with TDRPD to discuss the proposed ordinance and opportunities for collaboration on single-use bottle reduction efforts. TDRPD has already eliminated single-use plastic water bottles from two of their concessions (the Community Swimming Pool and West End Beach) and is exploring options to

implement this change at their remaining concessions, as well as expanding access to bottle filling stations at their facilities. TDRPD staff have expressed interest in working with the Town to align with any adopted restrictions on single-use plastic bottles and paper cartons to help create unified practices within Truckee.

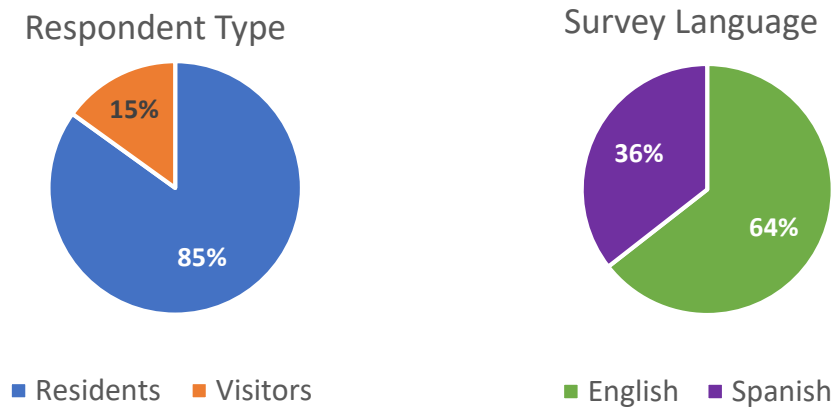
Similarly, TTUSD has taken steps to reduce the use of single-use items in Truckee schools. Water bottle filling stations have been installed at Truckee schools and the district office. In their food service operations, they have also removed individual condiment packets and straws, introduced reusable trays and silverware at elementary schools, and switched to bulk milk dispensers and reusable cups at several schools to eliminate waste from single-use milk cartons. Many of these measures were implemented with the support of the Sierra Watershed Educational Partnership, which receives funding from the Town to support environmental education and waste reduction programs in Truckee schools.

V. Community Survey Results

In February 2023, staff conducted online surveys, as well as in-person intercept surveys to understand the single-use plastic water bottle usage among Truckee residents, visitors, and business owners. While there were only a small number of Spanish-language survey responses, results suggested potential differences between English-speaking and Spanish-speaking respondents for certain questions, such as how often they used single-use plastic water bottles. Staff wanted to conduct a second survey to further investigate these questions and understand if additional support and outreach to the Spanish-speaking community or other demographic groups may be needed should a ban on single-use plastic water bottles be adopted.

A follow-up intercept survey was conducted by Town staff in front of Raley’s O-N-E Market, Grocery Outlet, Mi Pueblito, and Safeway in November 2023. People entering and exiting these stores could take the survey in either English or Spanish. Flyers with QR codes to take the survey were also distributed through Sierra Community House. Of the 166 people who took the survey, most were Truckee residents, and more than a third were Spanish-speaking. Key results from this survey can be found below.

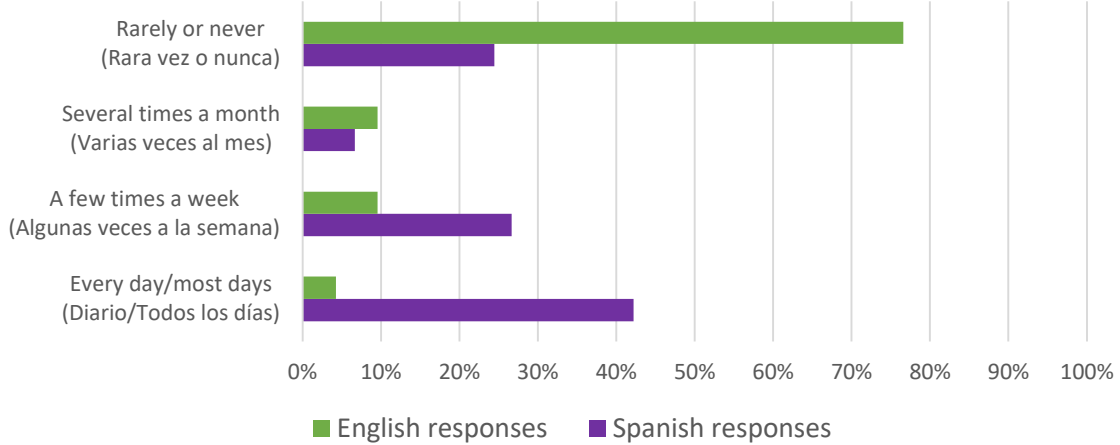
Chart 1: Survey Respondent Demographics



The follow-up survey did show differences between the English and Spanish survey results, primarily in frequency of single-use plastic water bottle use. Most English-speaking respondents reported rarely or never using single-use plastic water bottles while most Spanish-speaking respondents reported using single-use plastic water bottles at least a few times a week. These differences can be seen in Chart 2.

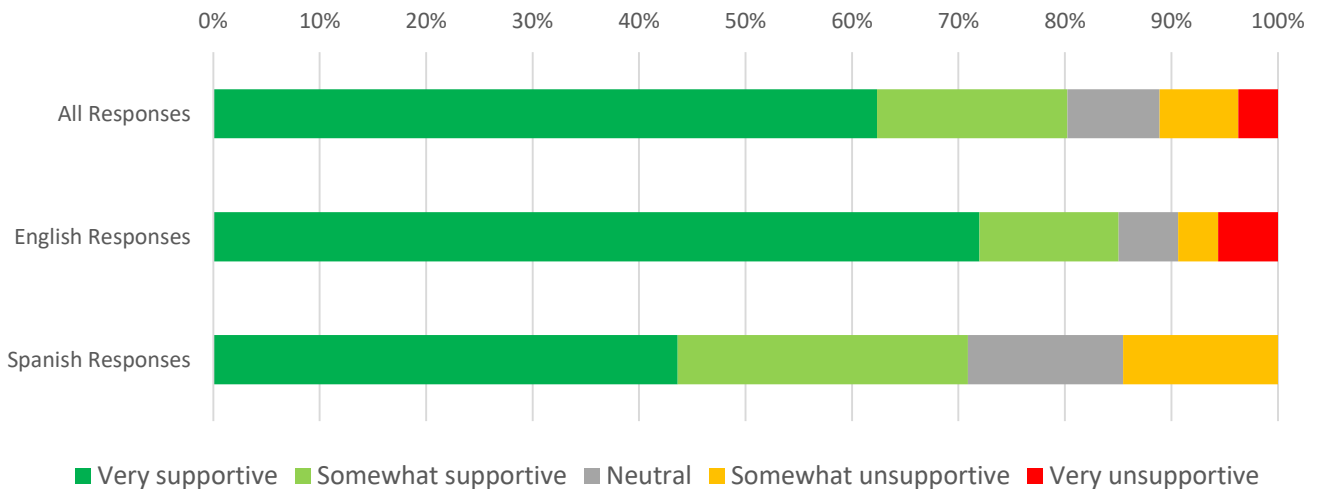
Chart 2. Use of Single-Use Plastic Water Bottles Among Truckee Residents

How often do you use single-use plastic water bottles?
¿Qué tan seguido utiliza botellas de agua de plástico de un solo uso?



Support for a potential ban of the sale of single-use plastic water bottles under a gallon in size was also lower among Spanish-speaking respondents, though a majority were still supportive of a ban. Overall, more than 80% of residents surveyed were supportive of a ban on single-use plastic water bottles under a gallon in size.

Chart 4. Support for a Ban on the Sale of Single-Use Plastic Water Bottles <1 gallon



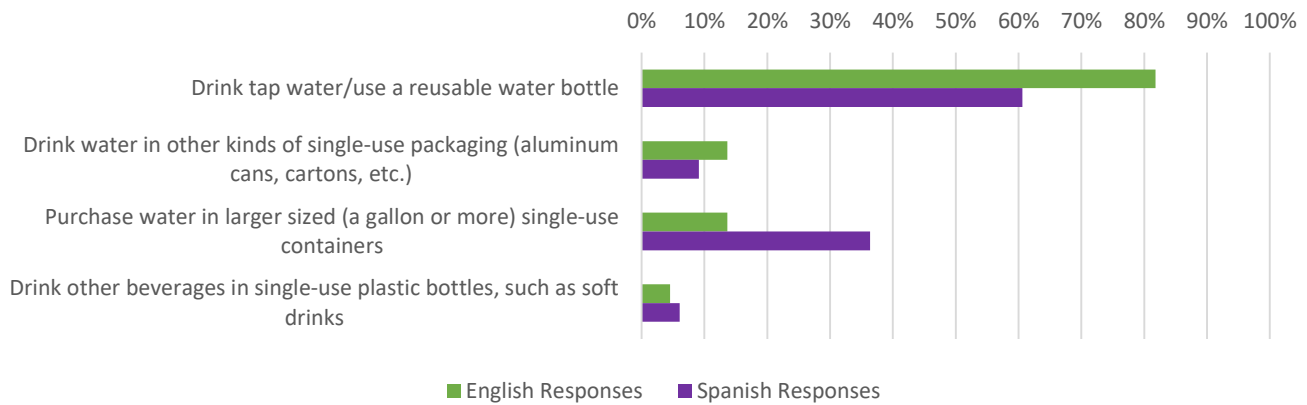
Other than convenience, respondents indicated that one of the reasons they used single-use water bottles was that they did not like the taste of tap water. Spanish-language respondents were less likely to choose single-use water bottles out of convenience, and more likely to choose them due to dislike of tap water taste than English-language respondents. Spanish-language respondents also expressed higher levels of concern over the quality or safety of tap water, indicating a need to address these concerns through any outreach campaign developed by the Town.

Survey results also indicated that the proposed ordinance is likely to have the desired result of increasing use of reusable water bottles, and unlikely to have many undesired health impacts from residents switching to other, less healthy beverages in plastic bottles. More than a third of Spanish-language respondents indicated they would likely buy water in single-use containers in larger sizes (a gallon or more) if smaller bottles were not available, compared to only 14% of English-language respondents. Based on staff observation and conversations with respondents, many Spanish-language survey

respondents were working in fields such as construction where tap water may not readily be available at work, which could account for part of this difference.

Chart 5

If you did not have access to smaller-volume single-use plastic water bottles, what would you be most likely to do? (Select all that apply)



While only a small sample size of Truckee visitors was obtained, it is worth noting that many visitors surveyed said that they brought a reusable water bottle with them on their visit. This suggests potential to support and further encourage a culture of reuse among visitors to Truckee as well as residents.

Complete survey results are provided in Attachment 3. Note: Certain pages of the survey were omitted to protect personal information of respondents such as emails and phone numbers. While the survey samples are not intended to be statistically valid, they do provide good insight into consumer behavior and habits. This insight is helpful to understand how to best develop educational materials and an outreach campaign that will have the most success at fostering behavior change. Truckee 2040 Climate Action Plan Element CAP-10.C to consider implementing an ordinance to discourage single-use items, speaks specifically to having a focus on equitable application. The Survey results help to inform equity and paths for the Town to have equitable application.

CAP-10.C

Ordinance to Discourage Single-Use Items

Consider implementing an ordinance that makes use of charges, incentives, and requirements to facilitate behavioral change on use of disposable foodware and other single-use items, with a focus on equitable application.

Responsibility: Assistant to the Town Manager

Time Frame: Short term

VI. Community Single-Use Bottle Reduction Campaign

One of the recommendations approved by Council in May was to develop a comprehensive outreach and incentive program to support a reduction in use of single-use bottles, promote a shift to reusable water bottles, and incentivize installation of additional refill stations in the community. Staff have been working to implement these programs ahead of any potential ordinance. On November 14th, 2023 a water bottle filling station grant program was approved by Town Council. The goal of the program is to promote a culture of reuse and the reduction of single-use plastic water bottles by making free tap water more accessible to the public in Truckee. Staff are currently advertising the water filling station grant program to businesses and have already received applications for 8 new water bottle filling stations.

Based on the survey results, staff will explore additional programs to improve access to filtered water in both public spaces and at home and to ensure residents and visitors have reusable water bottles. To support the Water Bottle Filling Station Grant Program and to make the transition easier for Truckee residents and visitors should Council adopt the proposed ordinance, Town staff are collaborating on a regional water bottle filling station map with the Tahoe Water Suppliers Association’s (TWSA) Drink Tahoe Tap campaign so that filling stations throughout Truckee and the Tahoe Basin can be easily

located by both residents and visitors. Staff also plan to purchase mobile water bottle filling stations that will be made available for special events in Truckee beginning in spring 2024.

Staff are currently working with Take Care Tahoe and the TWSA to strategize on leveraging the success of the Drink Tahoe Tap brand for a similar “Drink Truckee Tap” campaign. This would allow the Town to adapt some of the existing Take Care collateral rather than create an entirely new brand and messaging, creating a unified regional effort that still distinguishes between the two different water sources. Staff will work with the TDPUD to also create messaging about tap water quality and safety to address concerns expressed by survey respondents. Keep Truckee Green also recently launched the “Mountain Mindset” brand that centers more broadly on promoting a culture of reuse and environmental consciousness, which will include some messaging specifically around reusable/refillable water bottles.

To reach visitors, Town staff will work with both Take Care Tahoe and Visit Truckee-Tahoe to create an outreach campaign targeted at visitors to promote reusable water bottle use. Staff will work with short-term rental owners and hotels to provide messaging to guests about tap water quality and safety and promote use of reusable bottles, especially in advance of their stay. Staff will also promote the water filling station grant program to hotels to help improve visitor access to filtered tap water.

The Town also works with Sierra Watershed Educational Partnership (SWEP) to support environmental education and waste reduction in Truckee schools. Reduction of single-use items, including water bottles, has been a key focus of SWEP’s programs from the elementary school to high school level. Their efforts to address this source of waste and litter include:

- “Trashion Shows” that display student-made outfits made from single-use plastic items and other litter, with student commentary designed to empower audience members to make choices every day that can have a positive impact on the environment.
- Weekly club meetings where students evaluate certain topics, have guest speakers, and then work as a group to determine goals. Single-use water bottle use has been a main topic at these meetings.
- Truckee High School students worked with Raley’s ONE Market to evaluate the environmental impacts of store products including single-use water bottles.
- Green Teams & Eco Action (elementary and middle school students) include “Problem with Plastics” lessons and student projects to implement reusable cutlery, trays, and cups along with other zero waste measures.
- Science Festival stations that include “Beach Detectives” displays about microplastics from sources like single-use water bottles and “Is This Your Trash?” boards about plastic litter in our watersheds.
- Field work including litter surveys that provide material for environmental education.

Staff plan to continue working with SWEP to provide these educational programs for Truckee students as a core part of the Town’s waste and litter reduction efforts.

VII. Next Steps

If adopted, Town staff will develop an outreach plan for residents, visitors, businesses, and special events to ensure that they are informed about details about the proposed prohibition of the sale of single-use plastic water bottles. This may include fact sheets, special event vendor guidance, and a list of products available in alternative compliant packaging. Staff will also work with the Truckee Chamber of Commerce and the Truckee Downtown Merchants Association (TDMA) to ensure that businesses are aware of the regulations, as well as conducting in-person outreach to affected businesses. These efforts will be in addition to the general single-use bottle reduction campaign described in the pervious section.

Town staff will report back to Council approximately one year after the effective date of the adopted ordinance. This will provide Town Council with an opportunity to review the effectiveness of any adopted regulations, success of the outreach and incentive program campaign, and discuss impacts on residents,

businesses, and visitors. It will also provide an opportunity to consider any recommended changes to the ordinance or outreach programs. Town staff will also investigate options to expand the ordinance to include other beverages in single-use plastic packaging and present recommendations to Council along with the one-year report.

VIII. Environmental Clearance

Pursuant to California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) Guidelines Section 15061(b)(3), the adoption of this ordinance does not have potential for causing a significant effect on the environment and is therefore not subject to the CEQA guidelines. The proposed ordinance seeks to protect the environment and natural resources by reducing the use of single-use plastic bottles and single-use paper cartons. As such, the ordinance is further exempt under CEQA Guidelines Sections 15307 and 15308, which exempt actions taken by regulatory agencies to assure the maintenance, restoration, or enhancement of natural resource or the environment.

Priority:

<input type="checkbox"/> Enhanced Communication	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Climate and Greenhouse Gas Reduction	<input type="checkbox"/> Housing
<input type="checkbox"/> Infrastructure Investment	<input type="checkbox"/> Emergency and Wildfire Preparedness	<input type="checkbox"/> Core Service



Fiscal Impact: It is anticipated that adoption of this ordinance will require at least 0.6 FTE in staff time for implementation, including development of supporting programs and outreach, through FY 24-25. Pending other Council priorities, this can be supported through existing staffing levels. Funding will be needed for development of educational materials about the adopted ordinance for residents, visitors, businesses, and special events managers. The FY 23-24 budget included \$16,500 in CIP 2309 to support single-use bottle reduction programs, including outreach materials encouraging voluntary reduction of single-use items, a filling station grant program, purchase of refill stations for special events, and development of a regional refill station map. As discussed in the November 14, 2023, approval of the filling station grant program, staff also plan to leverage any unused funds from the foodware ordinance grant program to supplement the filling station program in FY 23-24.

The current FY 23-24 funding does not include development of outreach collateral or other materials to support ordinance implementation, which will be included in the proposed FY 24-25 budget. Based on the results of the community engagement process, staff are also developing additional proposed supportive programs to help residents and visitors reduce their reliance on single-use water bottles and will include additional anticipated costs in the FY 24-25 budget proposal. This may include giveaways of reusable water bottles and/or programs to increase access to filtered water in public spaces and at home.

While the majority of costs and staff time needed to support implementation of the ordinance and supporting programs will likely occur in FY 23-24 and 24-25, adoption of this ordinance will require some ongoing staff time to support education and enforcement efforts as long as the ordinance remains in effect.

Public Communication: In addition to the agenda posting and two notices published in the Sierra Sun, staff publicized this public hearing via the following channels:

- Social media posts
- Keep Truckee Green newsletter
- Emails to local businesses, Truckee Chamber, Visit Truckee-Tahoe, and Truckee Downtown Merchants Association
- Email to water bottle stakeholder working group and single-use foodware stakeholder working group members

Public communication and engagement to develop the proposed ordinance and other recommendations to Council include two community surveys, two meetings of a stakeholder working group, and a

community workshop. Staff promoted these engagement opportunities and the May 2023 Council recommendations on single-use bottle reduction via flyers, business phone calls and emails, social media, and email newsletters (from Keep Truckee Green, the Town of Truckee, Truckee Downtown Merchants Association, Visit Truckee-Tahoe, and the Truckee Chamber of Commerce).

Attachments:

1. Discussion of Solid Waste Foodware Report and Draft Policy Recommendations February 11, 2020 Staff Report: <https://portal.laserfiche.com/Portal/DocView.aspx?id=59428276&repo=r-6a91ddbc>
2. Single-Use Water Bottle Policy Recommendations May 25, 2023, Staff Report, available at: <https://portal.laserfiche.com/Portal/DocView.aspx?id=59653242&repo=r-6a91ddbc>
3. Ordinance 2024-01
4. List of Existing Single-Use Plastic Water Bottle Ordinances
5. November 2023 Complete Survey Results