

PRESS RELEASE

NOAA/Office of National Marine Sanctuaries
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Reserve Advisory Council Passes Resolution Supporting Fee on Single-Use Plastic and Paper Grocery Bags

The Reserve Advisory Council (RAC) for NOAA's Northwestern Hawaiian Islands Coral Reef Ecosystem Reserve has approved a resolution supporting a fee on single-use plastic and paper grocery bags. The council believes a fee on single-use plastic and paper bags would reduce marine plastic pollution and litter throughout the islands while also promoting the use of reusable bags.

"Plastic bags are deadly to wildlife and eventually deadly to us," said Linda Paul, Vice Chair of the Reserve Advisory Council. "We need to stop using plastic bags."

The council approved the bag fee resolution in November as it focused on the issue of marine debris, a primary threat to the Monument and Hawai'i. The council heard a presentation on marine debris – both short and long term effects – and current issues including the potential impact of marine debris from last year's Japan earthquake and tsunami. A final version of the bag fee resolution was approved last month.

The council believes a fee on single-use plastic and paper grocery bags would result in reduce marine plastic pollution and litter throughout the islands and encourage the use of reusable bags. Approximately 500 million single-use bags are used in Hawai'i each year, nearly 385 bags per each state resident.

The Reserve Advisory Council is an advisory body to the Northwestern Hawaiian Islands Coral Reef Ecosystem Reserve (now part of the Papahānaumokuākea Marine National Monument and World Heritage site) and NOAA's Office of National Marine Sanctuaries. The Council is composed of 25 members representing broad stakeholder constituencies, including Native Hawaiian, research, conservation, commercial and recreational fishing, ocean-related tourism, education, and state and federal agencies.

The next Advisory Council meeting will be on February 9 at the Monument offices, 6600 Kalanianaʻole Highway, Suite 300, Honolulu, HI 96825. The meeting is open to the public.

A copy of the resolution will be available at www.papahanaumokuakea.gov or by calling Wesley Byers (808) 694-3920.

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