

The Case for Banning Expanded Polystyrene (EPS) Foam Food Containers



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Overview

The Big Picture: EPS Foam bans in a larger context

Environmental impact of EPS Foam

Issues around recycling EPS foam

The success of current EPS foam bans in Maryland

The Plastic Revolution - Gone Rogue

The rapid rise of plastics

A world without plastics seems unimaginable today, yet their large-scale production and use only dates back to around 1950.

Global plastic production estimates

1950
2M
METRIC TONS



2017
8.3B
METRIC TONS



2050
34B
PROJECTED METRIC TONS



UC SANTA BARBARA in partnership with the UNIVERSITY OF GEORGIA

I JUST WANT TO SAY ONE WORD TO YOU...

PLASTICS



EPS Foam is a major component of beach and ocean litter....

- 80% of ocean plastic pollution originates on land.
- Foam containers are easily blown over long distances Where they breaks down into increasingly smaller pieces.
- EPS foam litter is very difficult to recover: Tiny pieces mix into Beach sands and float with Plankton on the ocean surface.



Plastic litter, including EPS Foam, is especially harmful to wildlife....



70-100% of North Pacific sea birds are affected by eating plastic. This albatross starved to death because it ate too much plastic trash.



- Marine litter harms over 700 marine animal species
- Seabirds are particularly vulnerable – in some populations nearly 100% have ingested plastic

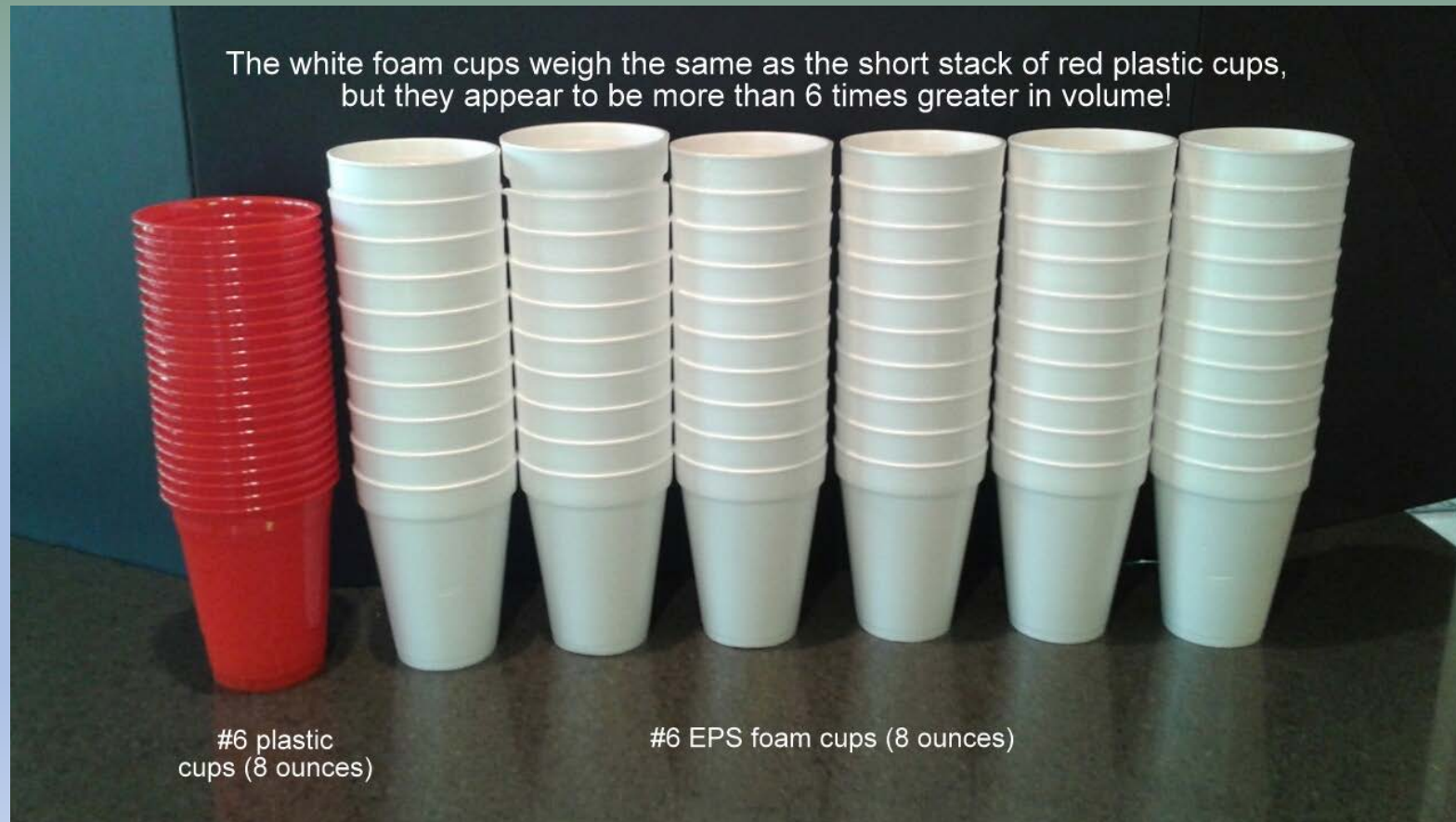
EPS Foam Food Containers are not Recyclable

- Used food service foam is not recyclable unless it's very clean
- Breaks into pieces in single stream collection, contaminating other materials
- It's Expensive to transport
- There's no market for the collected material



EPS takes up valuable space in landfills

EPS is lightweight but high in volume



Two drop-off centers in Carroll County take primarily block foam packaging



Dart distribution center,
Hampstead



Northern Landfill, Westminster



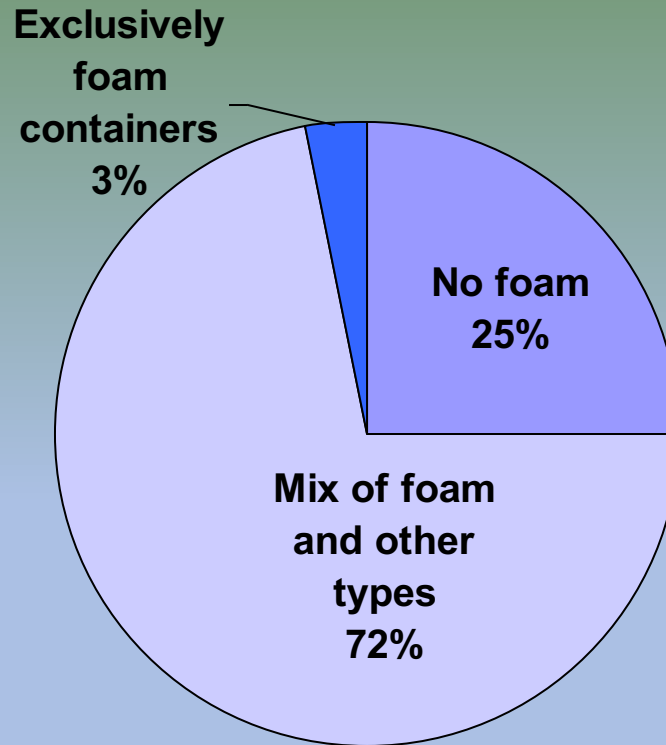
Collection and processing is done by Dart, not the county..

Bans on EPS food containers are already working in Maryland!

- Montgomery and Prince George's County bans became effective in 2016
 - Prohibits use of foam by all businesses that sell food
 - Prohibits the sale of foam containers
 - Foam meat/fish trays and products packaged outside counties are exempt
 - Complaint-driven and public health inspector enforcement; in Prince George's, first time warning, second time \$250, third \$1000/day.



Affordable alternatives are widely available and in use



Prince George's County, March 2015
(random sample of 186 restaurants
county-wide)

Major chains have switched to alternatives where bans exist, and some are completely eliminating EPS foam from all locations everywhere

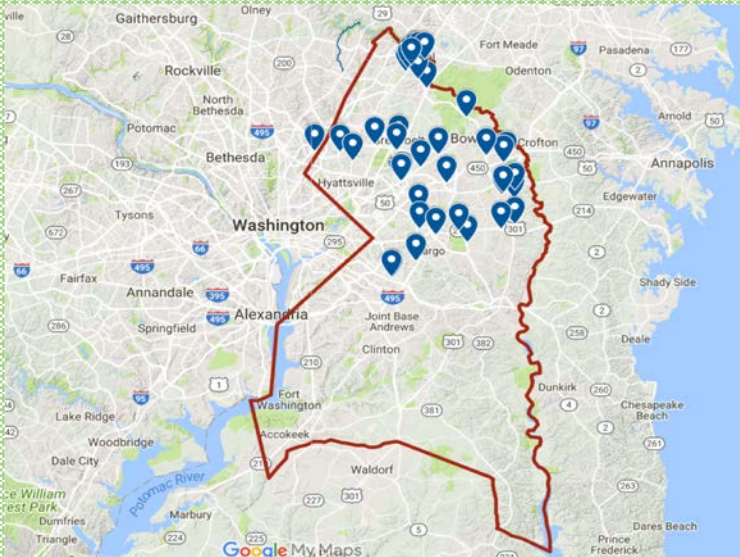
These alternatives are already in use in other Maryland counties...

Why not in Carroll County?



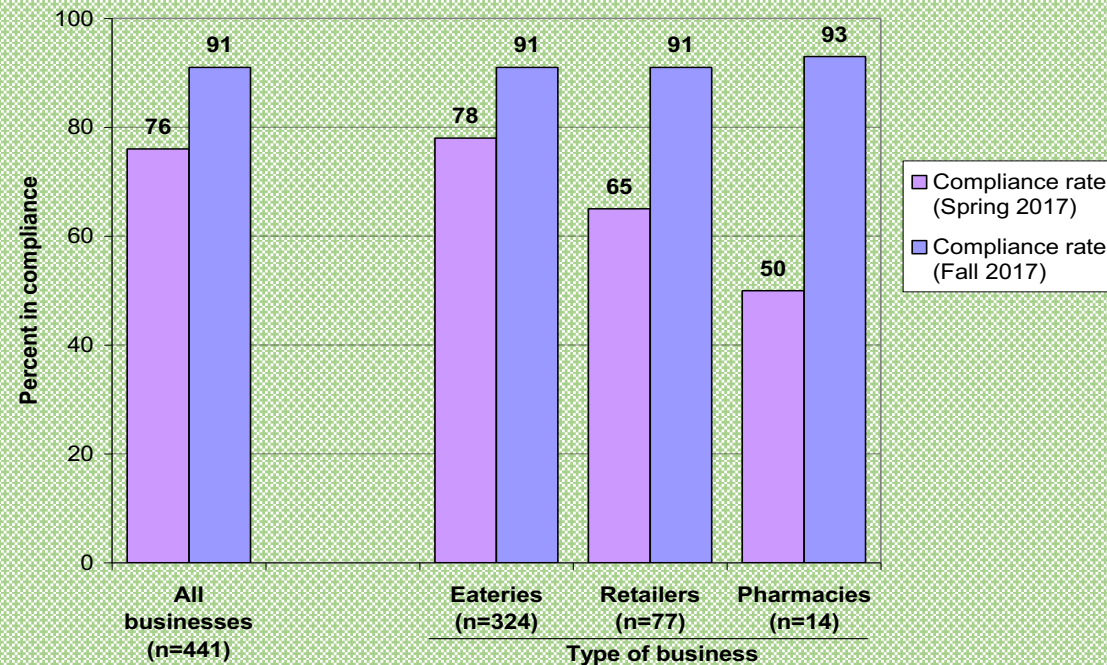
Compliance rates are excellent!

Prince George's County



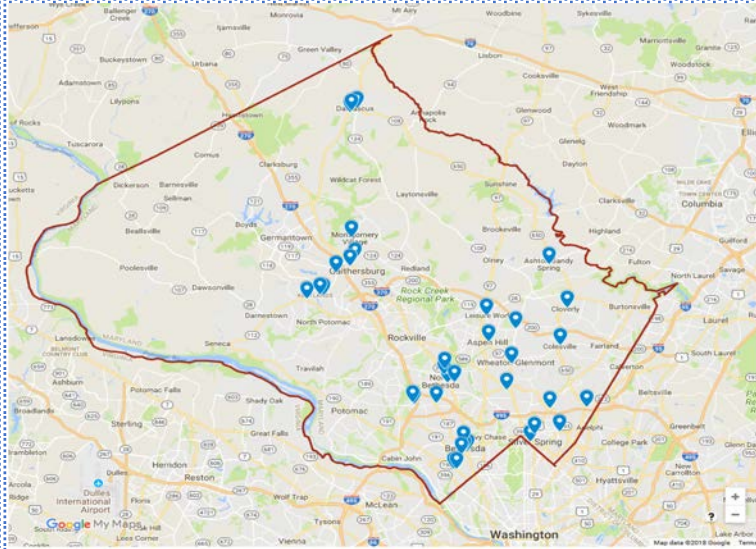
Source: PGSC Monitoring of 465 businesses in 45 shopping centers, 2017

Compliance rose to over 90% after face-to-face education of businesses by Sierra Club volunteers.



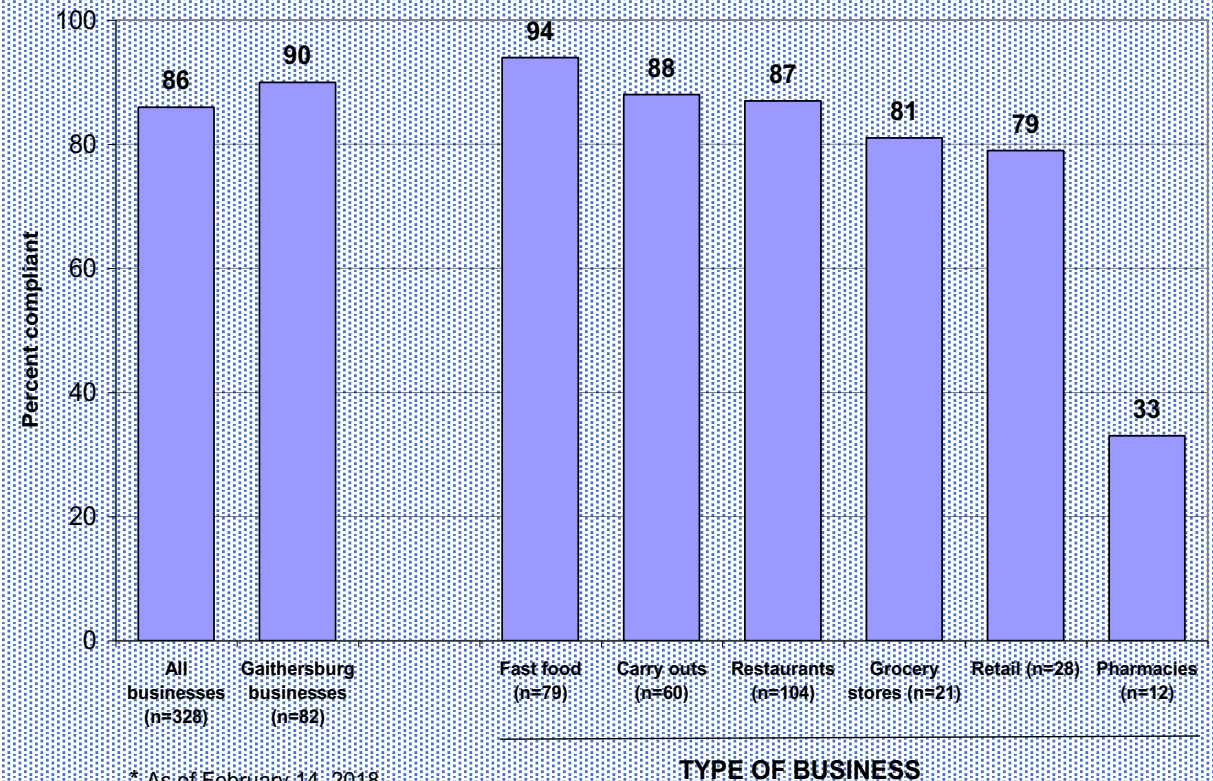
Compliance rates are high!

Montgomery County



Source: Montgomery Sierra Club monitoring of 328 businesses in 38 shopping centers, Jan-Feb 2018

Compliance by Montgomery businesses and those in Gaithersburg (separate bar) is about 90% at first visit, though pharmacies are less aware.



* As of February 14, 2018

Lessons & Recommendations

- (a) Retail sales, and institutions such as hospitals and schools, should be included with all food service businesses
- (b) ban packing peanuts
- (c) A well-planned and executed education campaign is essential before and after adoption
- (d) Penalties should be substantial enough to discourage non-compliance
- (e) Consistency with bans in nearby jurisdictions is pro-business
- (f) EPS food service ban should be integrated into an overall Zero Waste plan, with expanded recycling and composting of other container types

