



Plastic bag bans hold hidden costs

By Don Loepp

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The new report on plastic film and bag recycling is encouraging, but it's not going to end the debate on grocery bag taxes and bans.

Plastics News' Mike Verespej reported today that film and bag recycling in the United States jumped 14 percent in 2010 to 971.8 million pounds -- the first annual increase of more than 3 percent since 2006.

But Mark Murray, executive director of the Sacramento, Calif.-based Californians Against Waste, still feels that bag recycling has been a "failure."

Is recycling the last word on the bag issue? The [National Center for Policy Analysis](#) doesn't think so.

Today our sister publication *Waste & Recycling News* posted a column by [H. Sterling Burnett](#), a senior fellow at [NCPA](#), arguing that plastic bag bans hold hidden costs, and result in "little or no benefit for the environment."

"Contrary to the myth propagated by environmental lobbyists and other plastic bag opponents, plastic bags are rarely single-use items," [Burnett writes](#). "Rather, long after plastic bags transport the groceries, people find a variety of ways to reuse them. They are used as lunch bags, car litter bags, to line bathroom trash bins, to collect dog waste and to seal soiled diapers. Other uses include carrying donation items to goodwill, transporting laundry to the cleaners and securing items in the garage and attic. Some people carry bags on walks to pick up stray trash.

"Without them, we will likely buy more trash bags and baggies to compensate. In stores that ban plastic grocery bags, shoppers have become creative, using thin plastic bags from the fresh vegetable sections of stores to carry out groceries -- double- and triple-lining them to make them work. Now that's a waste nightmare and a sheer waste of resources."