



Dear San Juan County Business,

Our community is known for its environmental ethic and stewardship policy. San Juan County Solid Waste and Marine Resources Committee, along with partners Friends of San Juans, Orcas Recycling Services, and the Lopez Solid Waste District would like businesses in our county to take another important step toward sustainability and join “The Last Straw” campaign. Businesses who take the pledge will be asked to reduce plastic waste by replacing plastic straws and utensils with compostable options. Regional cities participating in similar initiatives include Seattle and Vancouver.

In the U.S. alone, people discard 500 million straws every day, or more than 180 billion a year (*strawlessocean.org*)—that’s about 1,500 tons of plastic sent to landfills and into the oceans every day. When plastics enter our environment they break-down and appear in fish, in birds, in marine mammals, and in our own food. Plastic straws and utensils don’t biodegrade. They’re difficult to recycle. They leach toxic chemicals into the ground and they can end up in our oceans. Getting rid of these single-use plastic items can save money while reducing environmental impacts.

80% to 90% of marine debris is plastic, and as much as 80% of that comes from plastics discarded on land (*thelastplasticstraw.org*). Researchers estimate almost 9 million tons of plastic garbage enters the oceans from land every year. Plastic straws are among the top 10 litter items picked up during beach cleanups, with thousands picked up every year (*oceanconservancy.org/trash-free-seas/international-coastal-cleanup*).

Take action:

- Eliminate the use of single-use plastic straws and utensils;
- Choose compostable alternatives to plastic straws, utensils and stir sticks; and
- Only provide these alternatives upon request (this is where businesses can usually make up the cost difference between plastic and compostable straws).
- When is this going into effect? This is a voluntary program. You can start any time when you are ready to re-order single-use straws and utensils.



Plastic straws found on Jackson Beach by Spring Street International School students.

Benefits for your business:

- Free, on-site, training for your staff;
- Free outreach materials to display in your business;
- Free window sticker to acknowledge your business as a Last Straw participant; and
- Recognition on the campaign website, in social media and the press, which will increase the visibility of your business.

Resources:

- Paper straws are best because they actually degrade if they end up in the marine environment. Aardvark paper straws are the most recommended by businesses who have made the switch. They claim that their straws are \$0.01 each more expensive than plastic when ordered in the same quantities. They have a variety of styles, colors and sizes: aardvarkstraws.com. Sysco carries them.
- Other compostable paper or plastic straw examples: cedar-grove.com/compostable/accepted-items/straws.
- Compostable utensil examples: cedar-grove.com/compostable/accepted-items/utensils

We hope you will join us and be part of a larger collective of community members and businesses who are making choices that will make a big difference for the health of our marine environment. Please contact Katie Fleming (360-378-3979 or katie@sanjuans.org) or Mark Herrenkohl (360-370-0534 or markh@sanjuanco.com) if you have any questions. Visit laststraw-sanjuans.org for more information and to see the businesses who are already participating.

Thank you!

