

### **Top Facts - Consumption**

- Each year, an estimated 500 billion to 1 trillion plastic bags are consumed worldwide. That comes out to over one million per minute. Billions end up as litter each year.
- According to the EPA, over 380 billion plastic bags, sacks and wraps are consumed in the U.S. each year.
- According to The Wall Street Journal, the U.S. goes through 100 billion plastic shopping bags annually. (Estimated cost to retailers is \$4 billion)
- According to the American Forest and Paper Association, in 1999 the U.S. alone used 10 billion paper grocery bags, requiring 14 million trees to be cut down.
- According to the industry publication Modern Plastics, Taiwan consumes 20 billion bags a year—900 per person.
- According to Australia's Department of Environment, Australians consume 6.9 billion plastic bags each year—326 per person. An estimated .7% or 49,600,000 end up as litter each year.

### **Top Facts - Environmental Impact**

- Hundreds of thousands of sea turtles, whales and other marine mammals die every year from eating discarded plastic bags mistaken for food.
- Plastic bags don't biodegrade, they photodegrade—breaking down into smaller and smaller toxic bits contaminating soil and waterways and entering the food web when animals accidentally ingest.
- Windblown plastic bags are so prevalent in Africa that a cottage industry has sprung up harvesting bags and using them to weave hats, and even bags. According to the BBC, one group harvests 30,000 per month.
- According to David Barnes, a marine scientist with the British Antarctic Survey, plastic bags have gone "from being rare in the late 80s and early 90s to being almost everywhere from Spitsbergen 78° North [latitude] to Falklands 51° South [latitude]."
- Plastic bags are among the 12 items of debris most often found in coastal cleanups, according to the nonprofit Center for Marine Conservation.

### **Top Facts - Solutions**

- In 2001, Ireland consumed 1.2 billion plastic bags, or 316 per person. An extremely successful plastic bag consumption tax, or PlasTax, introduced in 2002 reduced consumption by 90%. Approximately 18,000,000 liters of oil have been saved due to this reduced production. Governments around the world are considering implementing similar measures.
- Each high quality reusable shopping bag you use has the potential to eliminate hundreds, if not thousands, of plastic bags over its lifetime.