

public comment #24 BOS recd
25-1460 9/29/25



Agenda item 24 - ordinance on polystyrene, plastic food packaging and single-use water bottles in the unincorporated portion of the Tahoe Basin

From Gavin Feiger <gavin@keptahoeblue.org>

Date Mon 9/29/2025 3:31 PM

To BOS-Clerk of the Board <edc.cob@edcgov.us>; Brooke Laine <Brooke.Laine@edcgov.us>

Cc Lisa D. Watson <Lisa.Watson@edcgov.us>; Marilee Movius <marilee@keptahoeblue.org>

 1 attachment (799 KB)

LTSLT Support for El Dorado County Plastics Ordinances - 2025.09.29.pdf;

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Hello El Dorado County Supervisors,

Please find our comments on agenda item #24 for tomorrow attached. We excitedly encourage the County to adopt an ordinance to limit plastics in Tahoe. And the Keep Tahoe Blue team is here to support with our proven successful education and outreach to businesses and the public.

Marilee and I will be there tomorrow to provide verbal comments and help answer any questions that we may have information about (our cleanups, litter data, implementation and compliance in other Tahoe area jurisdictions, etc.).

Gavin Feiger

Policy Director, League to Save Lake Tahoe

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League to Save Lake Tahoe

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September 29, 2025

El Dorado County Board of Supervisors
330 Fair Lane, Building A
Placerville, California 95667

Re: Agenda Item 24 – Recommendation to consider supporting an ordinance on polystyrene, plastic food packaging and single-use water bottles in the unincorporated portion of the Tahoe Basin

Dear Chair Turnbo and Members of the Board of Supervisors,

On behalf of the League to Save Lake Tahoe (Keep Tahoe Blue), thank you for the opportunity to comment on September 30, 2025 El Dorado County Board of Supervisors agenda item 24, regarding a potential ordinance to limit single-use plastics in the Tahoe portion of El Dorado County. Since 1957, the League has worked to protect and restore the environmental health, sustainability, and scenic beauty of the Lake Tahoe Basin. Plastic pollution is one of the most pervasive threats facing Lake Tahoe today, and local action is essential to address it.

Keep Tahoe Blue strongly supports an El Dorado County ordinance to limit the sale and distribution of polystyrene ("Styrofoam"), single-use water bottles that contain plastic, plastic single-use foodware, and disposable items for on-premises dining. The Keep Tahoe Blue team conducted preliminary outreach to potentially affected businesses in September 2025 and found overwhelming support for banning polystyrene and vast majority support for restricting single-use plastic water bottles.

Why Action is Needed

Lake Tahoe is world-renowned for its clarity, yet a 2023 *Nature* study found Tahoe had the third-highest concentration of plastic particles among 38 lakes worldwide, this is higher even than the surface waters of ocean gyres where plastic pollution accumulates.¹ Researchers from UC Davis' Tahoe Environmental Research Center (TERC) have found plastic in nearly every sand and water sample taken around the Lake.² Because wastewater is not discharged into the Lake, the primary source of this pollution is litter—particularly single-use plastic bottles, polystyrene, and other disposable foodware.

From 2014–2025, League volunteers removed over **536,500 single-use plastic items from Tahoe's environment**, including **42,300 polystyrene items, 35,200 straws and stirrers, 11,700 utensils, and 27,070 plastic bottles**. These numbers reflect only what we were able to remove—much more escapes collection, breaking down into harmful microplastics that threaten Tahoe's water quality, clarity, wildlife, and human health.

Removing plastics from our environment and communities also provides public health and economic benefits. Tahoe Tap water is world-renowned for its purity, and safer than bottled water, which has been shown to contain at least **200% more microplastics**.³ Bottled water costs consumers up to **1,000 times more** than tap water.⁴ Tourists and residents alike increasingly expect sustainable practices.

¹ Nava, V., Chandra, S., Aherne, J. *et al.* Plastic debris in lakes and reservoirs. *Nature* **619**, 317–322 (2023).

<https://doi.org/10.1038/s41586-023-06168-4>

² <https://tahoe.ucdavis.edu/microplastics>

³ <https://ntpud.org/news/microplastics-in-lake-tahoe-the-drinking-water-perspective-tahoe-tap-remains-safe-and-healthy/>

⁴ <https://www.calwater.com/help/is-bottled-water-higher-quality-than-tap-water/>

A local ordinance would strengthen El Dorado County's image as a responsible steward of Tahoe's environment and economy.

El Dorado County's Opportunity to Lead

The Tahoe portion of El Dorado County shares the same environmental vulnerabilities and community values as the City of South Lake Tahoe and the Town of Truckee. Visitors and residents alike expect consistent stewardship across jurisdictions. A plastics ordinance would:

- Reduce litter and microplastic pollution in Lake Tahoe.
- Align with regional sustainability goals and state mandates.
- Support local businesses in transitioning to reusable and compostable alternatives.
- Reinforce El Dorado County's commitment to protecting Tahoe's natural resources.

Request

Keep Tahoe blue strongly encourages the Board to:

1. Direct staff to draft an ordinance modeled on those in the City of South Lake Tahoe and Truckee, tailored to the Tahoe portion of El Dorado County.
2. Ensure the ordinance covers:
 - Ban on the sale and distribution of single-use plastic water bottles under one gallon.
 - Ban on the sale and distribution of polystyrene products.
 - Requirement that single-use foodware be provided by request only; and be compostable or recyclable.
 - Ban on disposable items for on-premises dining.
3. Pair ordinance adoption with outreach, refill station installation, and education programs (e.g., "Drink Tahoe Tap"), which the League stands ready to support.

Additionally, based on implementation of a similar ordinance in the City of South Lake Tahoe and our preliminary business outreach in El Dorado-Tahoe, we recommend a financial assistance program (e.g. grants, tax credits) to help business purchase environmentally-friendly plastic alternatives and dishwashers and glassware.

Community Support

The League is committed to supporting El Dorado County through outreach, education, and implementation. We have successfully partnered with other jurisdictions to promote refill stations, distribute reusable alternatives, and educate businesses and visitors. We stand ready to do the same in El Dorado County.

Thank you for your leadership and consideration. We look forward to working with you to Keep Tahoe Blue.

Sincerely,



Gavin Feiger
Policy Director