

November 19, 2018

Preston Atkinson
Whataburger
300 Concord Plaza Dr.
San Antonio, TX 78216

Dear Mr. Atkinson,

We, the undersigned, write to ask Whataburger to stop use of polystyrene (aka Styrofoam) cups and containers in your restaurants.

Polystyrene, commonly known as styrofoam, is one of the worst and most common types of plastic. 70 million plastic foam cups are estimated to be disposed by Americans every day. Most of the waste will spend hundreds and thousands of years sitting in landfills. About one third ends up in waterways: rivers, lakes, and especially oceans. This is an eyesore, a threat to wildlife, and a burden on taxpayers, including in the ten states where Whataburger operates.

Millions of polystyrene cups end up on our roads each year.¹ Research presented at the Sixth International Marine Debris Conference this year showed Texas has more trash on its beaches than any other state in the nation.² Texas beach clean ups turn up tens of thousands of polystyrene cups every year, including many from Whataburger. Finally, while it gets less attention than the “garbage patch” in the Pacific Ocean, the Gulf of Mexico has concentrations of plastic debris just as high in as in the Pacific.³

This waste threatens our wildlife. Wildlife can mistake pieces of polystyrene for food, which can then get lodged in the intestines and cause lethal blockages.⁴ Polystyrene can also contaminate the blood of wildlife with toxins.

Finally, this waste costs our states significant amounts of money. The state of Texas and its major cities spend at least \$96 million annually to clean up litter, including polystyrene cups and containers, and illegal dumping.⁵ Louisiana spends another \$40 million.⁶

Nothing we use for a few minutes should be allowed to pollute our oceans and rivers and threaten wildlife for centuries. To reduce the amount of plastic waste that ends up in our oceans, environment, and landfills, we need to dramatically reduce the amount of polystyrene handed to consumers every day.

¹ http://www.dontmesswithtexas.org/docs/DMWT_2013_Litter_Survey.pdf

² <http://texasclimatenews.org/?p=14808>

³ https://www.nola.com/environment/index.ssf/2017/08/gulf_of_mexico_plastics_concentration.html

⁴ <https://www.bbc.com/news/magazine-33334994>

⁵ <https://elpasarheraldpost.com/wp-content/uploads/2017/03/Texans-For-Clean-Water-Litter-Cost-Study-2017.pdf>

http://ktxs.com/news/abilene/more-than-40-million-taxpayer-dollars-spent-annually-on-texas-litter-cleanup_20160517100457192

⁶ <https://keeplouisianabeautiful.org/tools-resources/research/>

We were encouraged to learn that Whataburger recognizes the problem polystyrene poses to our environment and is investigating alternatives. We urge you to join with McDonald's, Dunkin' Donuts, and many others, by committing to phase out the use of polystyrene cups and containers in your restaurants.

Sincerely,

Luke Metzger
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Environment Texas

Neil McQueen
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Texas Coastal Bend Chapter of the Surfrider Foundation

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