

Conservation Corner

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We thank everyone who stopped by our Make & Take Workshop last Saturday during the Pocahontas Art Walk. Hopefully everyone gained a new appreciation for the time and effort represented by something as simple as a woven wheat knot or tied straw star. As I'm sure many of you are aware, straws of another sort have been in the news lately, and not as symbols and decorations for the upcoming Christmas Season. I believe the last week in November is a good time to pause and consider some of our consumer and lifestyle habits. Anytime is a good time to cut back on single-use plastic products, including drinking straws, and "refuse, rethink, reuse."

Recently, a nationwide movement to help reduce the sources of plastic pollution in our nation's waters has been spearheaded by 22 aquariums. Their campaign kicked off with #NoStrawNovember in which people who don't need them were asked to refuse plastic straws for the month. After all, a straw is used so fleetingly, only to spend hundreds of years in the environment, and they're not even really necessary.

A recent AP article, "To Cut Back on Single-Use Plastics, 'Refuse, Rethink, Reuse'" by Katherine Roth, reminded me of just how much plastic we Americans use each and every day. We rationalize our plastic usage in the name of convenience, or is it really laziness? After all, plastic is versatile, lightweight, and cheap, what could go wrong? And while plastics do have important uses in our economy, the bulk of plastic waste comes from things designed to be used exactly once, and often for only a few minutes, to the global tune of 407 million tons a year.

But we recycle most of our plastics, right? Wrong. Experts estimate that of all the plastics ever made, only 9 percent has been recycled. And sanitation experts say downcycling would be closer to the truth than recycling. Glass and metal can be recycled and made into something of the same quality, but plastics degrade as they go along, just delaying their ultimate journey to the landfill.

When leading Earth Day programs, I often encourage students to Reduce, Reuse, Recycle, and Recover. Now, perhaps, I should encourage them to simply rethink and then refuse single-use plastics. Think ahead and bring items from home like shopping bags or eating utensils that you could use instead of plastics. Think of small, simple ways like switching to reusable glass or metal containers, metal utensils, compostable produce bags, and compostable or washable straws that will help lessen the impact single-use plastics have on our environment. Lastly, think of the consequences of single-use plastics and the future of Planet Earth.

**U.S. CONSUMPTION = ENOUGH STRAWS
TO WRAP AROUND THE
EARTH'S CIRCUMFERENCE
2.5 TIMES A DAY!**



In closing, everyone is invited to Conservation's annual Come & Go Wreath Workshop. Join us anytime from 9:00 a.m. – 6:00 p.m. on Thursday, Dec. 6, at the Nature Center to create a wreath or swag from the wonderful art store of nature. Snacks and wreath supplies will be provided. Sorry, no plastic straws.