

Tales from Tim's Recycling Bin – A Single Solution

I was excited to hear about a campaign by a beer company that was giving out free six-packs if you collected bags of plastic litter removed from waterways. Alas the campaign was limited to areas near the oceans.

Don't they know Minnesota has Lake Superior which is like an inland ocean? Heck, we have more than 10,000 lakes – that's a lot of water. But my obsession with getting free suds is distracting us from the main point. There's plastic in our waters and it's getting worse.

What are these plastics? The number one litter item found during beach cleanups is cigarette butts. Yes, they look like paper, but they're actually a composite of paper and plastic. Then food wrappers, bottle caps, beverage bottles and rounding out the top five: plastic bags.

What do these things have in common – other than being made from plastic? These are products that are designed to be used only once and then discarded. It's a category called single-use items.

In baseball a single is a good thing. But in the environment single use is becoming a bad thing. Because we have switched from things that we reused to disposable products and packaging we have lots more waste to deal with. We can recycle some of it. But more and more of it is ending up in our ditches, our waterways and even in our wildlife. Dealing with the proliferation of plastics is the hottest topic in recycling circles. So much so that the European Union voted to ban single-use plastics by 2021.

And I'm trying to do my part by doubling down on alternatives to single-use items.

At the restaurant I now tell my server to skip the straw in my drink. I bring my reusable shopping bags to the store. For my morning coffee I brew it at home using a stainless-steel filter. These are all small steps, but they're steps. And if we *all* take a few steps, we'll end up going a long way toward protecting the environment.

Until next time, see what you can do to skip the single-use items my friends.



Skip the single-use plastic bag. Bring your reusable bags to the store.