

Chesbro bill seeks to fight spread of ocean garbage

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California 1st District Assemblyman Wesley Chesbro has introduced a bill seeking to require the fast food industry to reduce and recycle packaging waste.

The bill, Assembly Bill 2138, would create the “Plastic Ocean Pollution Reduction, Recycling and Composting Act,” which would require the fast food industry to only use packaging that is recyclable or compostable in the communities where it is used, according to a press release from Chesbro's office.

”Plastic ocean pollution is a persistent and growing problem,” Chesbro said in the release. “Despite international treaties prohibiting dumping plastics at sea and other international, national, state and local action, trash in the ocean is increasing. Trash that washes into our waterways and bays poses a real and pressing threat to marine life. California must take on a leadership role in protecting our oceans.”

Chesbro, who chairs the Assembly Environmental Safety and Toxic Materials Committee, recently held an investigative hearing on ocean pollution and the accumulation of toxic materials in California coastal waters. The testimony given at the hearing is the foundation of Chesbro's bill.

Single-use food packaging litter kills wildlife such as birds and endangered sea turtles, which become entangled in it or mistake it for food and try to ingest it. According to the release, more than a million sea birds, 100,000 marine mammals and countless fish have died from marine debris.

Chesbro's office points out that there are also some economic impacts to the litter, as local governments are often left with the clean-up bills.

”This legislation would reduce the cost to local governments for cleaning up the tons of plastic waste that is entering our waterways and polluting our beaches and the ocean,” Chesbro said in the release. “This bill will build recycling infrastructure that will both protect the environment and create new green jobs in California. We can lead the nation and leave a cleaner and safer ocean for the next generation.”