



COUNTY OF SANTA CRUZ

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NEWS RELEASE



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LANDMARK VOTE PROHIBITS SALE OF FILTERED TOBACCO PRODUCTS

Voting unanimously, the Santa Cruz County Board of Supervisors on Tuesday approved an ordinance that bans the sale of filtered cigarettes in unincorporated areas of the county.

The historic vote is the latest measure by Santa Cruz County to protect the environment and human health by restricting the use of plastics. The ordinance was developed by the Board's Tobacco Waste Ad Hoc Subcommittee and supported by a broad coalition of environmental, health, educational and other groups and stakeholders.

"This is a momentous day that builds on the work our community has been doing for generations to protect our environment and establish Santa Cruz County as a global leader in the environmental movement," Board of Supervisors Chair Justin Cummings said. "While the County is the first to take this step, by no means will we be the last. We look forward to working with local cities and other jurisdictions to protect our coast, our environment and our people."

Once implemented, the ordinance would prohibit the sale of filtered cigarettes but does not prohibit the sale of unfiltered cigarettes or cigars, loose-leaf and chewing tobacco, unflavored vape pens or other tobacco products. The ordinance will go into effect January 1, 2027 or when two other local jurisdictions pass similar prohibitions, whichever is later.

"Cigarette butts are the most littered item on the planet, they provide absolutely no health benefit to smokers, and they are poisonous to the environment. Let's ban this toxic trash," Supervisor Manu Koenig said. "This is a day for all Santa Cruz County residents to celebrate, and our hope is that this will be a catalyst for change throughout California and the rest of the country."

Santa Cruz County has long been an environmental leader, from being one of the first counties in the nation to implement curbside recycling to local ordinances banning

single-use plastic bags, prohibiting the use of expanded polystyrene to-go containers, banning single-use plastic shampoo bottles in visitor accommodations, requiring to-go cups and single-use food service wares be certified compostable, banning plastic straws and stir sticks, and prohibiting the sale of plastic water bottles at County facilities, among other measures.

Cigarette filters are the top item collected during local beach cleanups and have no health benefits for smokers. Furthermore, they degrade into microplastics which are harmful to human health and the environment, including marine life and ecosystems.

The Tobacco Waste Ad Hoc Subcommittee has been coordinating with other local jurisdictions, two of which have followed the County by declaring tobacco waste a threat to public health and the environment.