U.S. Department of the Interior

2023 U.S. Geological Survey

Sustainable Procurement Plan

June 2023

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1. Executive Summary

The U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) recognizes plastic waste is a priority environmental problem, as less than 10 percent of all the plastic ever produced has been recycled, and recycling rates are not increasing. To offset this problem, the USGS will develop a Sustainable Procurement Plan to eliminate the use of single use plastic products bureau wide, using a phased approach to eliminate all products that do not have an exemption. For areas with exemptions, the USGS will explore alternatives whenever feasible. The USGS will use the existing Environmental Management System to develop and implement the USGS Sustainable Procurement Plan to achieve this goal.

2. Schedules and Annual Targets Addressing the Reduction of Procurement, Sale, And Distribution of Single-Use Plastic Products

The USGS will undertake the following actions over the next ten years. Responsibility for tracking the actions and targets will reside with the Office of Administration, Office of Management Services.

2023 - 2024: Data Collection and Awareness Campaign

- Identify the single use plastic stream into the bureau through:
  - A review of contracts and procurement mechanisms for supplies.
  - A review of contract and procurement mechanisms for services (example janitorial services) to reduce single use plastics in follow-on awards. For existing contracts, explore cost of contract modification, if that would result in reduction in the use of single use plastics.
  - Data collection from Cost Centers identifying single use plastic supplies.
  - Recommendations will be drafted for implementation bureau wide.

- Develop USGS plan of action for the future elimination of single use plastics (including evaluating and finalizing the draft goals outlined in section 4).

2025 -2026

- Continue Awareness Campaign and Education
- Evaluate opportunities and challenges to eliminating single use plastics.

2027-2029

- For single use plastic purchases, that do not have an exemption, initiate a waiver process to authorize purchasing.
- Determine the year for the USGS to eliminate single use plastics where exemptions do not exist.

2032

- Single use plastic is phased out at the USGS where an exemption does not exist.

3. Updates to Acquisition and Procurement Policies and Practices

The USGS Office of Acquisition and Grants (OAG) will begin incorporating the requirements of DOI Acquisition, Arts, and Asset Policy (DOI-AAAP) 0181, Sustainable Operations, throughout FY 23 and beyond. Actions will include:

- Updating OAG policy documents to be in compliance with AAAP-0181.
- Providing on-going training to OAG staff issuing contracts on AAAP-0181, sustainable operations in general, and reduction of use of single-use plastic products. Training will take place during monthly staff meetings, AOP Update releases, and also through training offered to program offices (COR Intensives).
- As applicable, Contracting Officers will begin incorporating the requirements of AAAP-0181 in their contracts via modification and into all contracts and solicitations. Contracts most likely to be affected will be those for utilities, construction, vending, landscaping, material disposal, and per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS) abatement.
- As appropriate, Contracting Officers will continue to purchase products that contain recycled content, are biobased, or are energy and water efficient, in accordance with relevant statutory requirements; and, to the maximum extent practicable, purchase sustainable products and services identified or recommended by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA).
- Reducing emissions, promoting environmental stewardship, supporting resilient supply chains, driving innovation, and incentivizing markets for sustainable products and services by prioritizing products that can be reused, refurbished, or recycled; maximizing environmental benefits and cost savings through use of full lifecycle cost methodologies.

- Training bureau charge card holders to make purchases in keeping with the requirements of AAAP-0181.

OAG will also incorporate any other regulations, plans, Executive Orders, and/or policies regarding green acquisition issued by the FAR Council, OMB, Congress, DOI and bureau leadership.

4. Data collection methods, metrics, and reporting requirements to reflect the specific approaches proposed to phase out single-use plastics by the end of 2032

The USGS has implemented an Environmental Management System (EMS) to manage key environmental aspects within USGS. The same can be used to manage the environmental aspect associated with the use of single use plastics by developing objectives and targets, known as an Eco Action Plan, for the reduction in the use of single use plastics.

Data on the parameters associated with the baseline condition (type, purpose, quantity used, quantity brought in from outside for use, and inventory) will be collected on an annual basis. Data collection method will include annual data call to the cost centers, survey/inspection, review of purchase orders, and review of solid waste data.

The matrices used to evaluate the process to phase out single-use plastics by the end of 2032 will be percent reduction in use and inventory of single use plastics. These matrices will be prepared for each cost center, as the USGS functional area where they are used (facility, laboratory and field work, concession and vending machine, plastics brought in from outside and used).

Reporting documented percent reduction will be generated for each center and functional areas and used to track the overall bureau progress and shared with DOI on annual basis. Similar information is provided to DOI for Solid Waste Management on annual basis.

To guarantee progress in data collection, evaluation, and reporting it is important to clearly define roles and responsibilities between the Office of Management Services (managing the overall program), the Office of Acquisitions and Grants, and individual Cost Centers (providing information needed and taking appropriate action to reduce the usage of single use plastics).

Potential target schedule for phasing out single use plastic products by 2032 (These goals will be evaluated with USGS management for incorporation/revision in the final USGS Sustainable Procurement Plan due in June 2023):

2023Collect and evaluate baseline data, analysis, and implementation of alternatives to single use plastics, develop program to improve public awareness (Plan and Do steps).

2024: Goal 20% reduction from baseline, Assess the progress and make appropriate adjustment to steps taken to achieve the goal (Check and Act steps). These steps will continue in the following years.

2025: Goal 30% reduction from baseline.2026: Goal 40% reduction from baseline.

2027: Goal 55% reduction from baseline.

2028: Goal 70% reduction from baseline.

2029: Goal 85% reduction from baseline.

2032: Goal 100% reduction from baseline.

5. Analysis of Alternatives to Single-Use Plastic Products

The USGS will need to conduct a baseline study to determine available alternatives to single-use plastic products, such as compostable or biodegradable materials, or 100 percent recyclable or 100 percent recycled materials (with a circular economy plan) as defined in section 2 of the Save Our Seas 2.0 Act (Public Law 116-224).

Based on the findings of the baseline study, it will be important to evaluate what are the most appropriate alternatives that will be beneficial in addressing the specific need that has been identified. Once appropriateness of possible actions has been assessed, the USGS can develop a short list of possible suitable alternatives.

Before selecting the most appropriate option that would address the needs identified in the baseline assessment, a key step is to study the sustainable development impacts of the short-listed choices. Eco-friendly and fit-for purpose alternatives should provide the same or better properties of the items that are currently used.

Environmentally preferable alternatives to single-use plastic products have been developed in recent years and are readily available. Some of the available alternatives are as follows,

- Single use plastic bag: Bags made of paper, bioplastics, and composite; Reusable cloth or thicker plastic bag.
- Single use plastic bottle: Bottles made of bioplastics, glass, and aluminum, and laminated cartons; Reusable bottles made of glass, aluminum, or stainless steel.
- Single-use plastic in food packaging, beverage cups, tableware, and other products: These materials made of paper, bioplastics, glass, and composite; Reusable dinnerware and other products.

6. Opportunities to Shift Public Behavior to Reduce Single-Use Plastic Products

The USGS will develop an approach to identify opportunities to shift public behavior to reduce single-use plastic products, such as installing additional water fountains and reusable water bottle filling stations.

Acceptance from the broadest range of stakeholders is of utmost importance, and can be ensured through calls for early inputs, policy discussion meetings, and wide-reaching awareness campaigns. The most common stakeholder groups that might be engaged from the onset include USGS staff grouped by type of activities that they be involved in ad contractors. Special attention should be paid to mapping the main stakeholder groups that will be affected by the new policy. Being able to present evidence-based options (informed by a thorough baseline study) can help support the policy chosen and ensure successful results.

Any resistance to the change that may be there is likely to decrease if stakeholders are aware of the social, environmental, and economic impacts of mismanaged single-use plastics. These can be communicated through a variety of methods, ranging from:

- Educational program using DOI Learn
- Seminars
- Extensive awareness-raising campaigns (posting on USGS site Need to Know to provide information on key facts and events, USGS OMS SharePoint Site, posting in key locations within the buildings).
- Development and distribution of information material.
- Showcasing and/or distributing alternative options to single-use plastics (reusable bags, reusable bottles, etc.).

Each campaign should have a clear and simple message, relevant for a wide range of stakeholders. The messaging should clarify why a certain instrument has been chosen and what will be the benefits.

7. Single-Use Plastic Short-Term Exemptions, If No Alternatives Currently Exist

Reduction in the use of single use plastics may be limited in the situation where the USGS has an existing contract. Existing awards may need to be modified, as appropriate, to require reduction of the use of single use plastics in accordance with DOI policy and Federal Acquisition Regulations.

8. Single-Use Plastic Exemptions for Medical, Public Safety, Public Health, Or Scientific Items

There are several laboratories which are using single use plastic for sampling bottles and field sampling supplies, including personal protective equipment (PPE), field equipment, field instrument. As scientific items, the exemption applies to these items. However, one of the Science Centers was awarded funds from DOI's Recycling Fund to manage single

use plastics used in sampling by sending them to a facility where they can be used to recover raw material (circular plan). Although such plastics may be exempt from the requirements, the USGS will look into feasible options with a circular economy plan.

9. Funding Requests

As discussed in the previous section, the USGS has secured funds for management of single use plastics from the DOI's Recycling Fund and whenever opportunities arise, will try to seek additional funds to meet USGS goal to reduce use of single use plastics. Based on the plan to achieve reduction in the use of single use plastics there may be need for additional funds (such as for installing additional water fountains and reusable water bottle filling stations). Funds for these initiatives will be requested in annual budget exercises.