

# Ban the Bag Eliminate Single-Use Retail Plastic Bags

They've done it in China, Chile, India, Germany, Australia, Bulgaria, Syria and most recently in Italy. More than 24 countries, and numerous regions around the world, are banning the single-use retail plastic bag.

The Florida Keys rely on the stewardship of residents and visitors to protect this significant ecological area and its marine and wildlife. Yet our roads, waterways and shores are littered with plastic.

Dead birds with stomachs full of plastic that could not be digested tell part of the story. In other cases, plastic breaks down into tiny toxic particles that never biodegrade, polluting our soil and water. Birds and fish mistake the particles for food, or they become entangled in plastic and die of suffocation or other complications.

In Nov. 2009, Florida

Department of Environmental Protection recommended the legislature adopt a gradual phasing out of single-use retail bags to begin in July 2011 with a five cent charge on all paper and plastic single-use bags at all retail establishments. The DEP recommended a "five year progressive phase-out utilizing public education, graduated fees and finally a total ban upon all single-use retail bags from all retail establishments in the state."

But the Florida Legislature, influenced by the petrochemical industry, instead adopted a law (Section 403.7033, Florida Statute) to prevent any Florida community from banning retail bags or even imposing fees on plastic bags at retail stores.

Until this law is changed,

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education and activism are the best tools we have.

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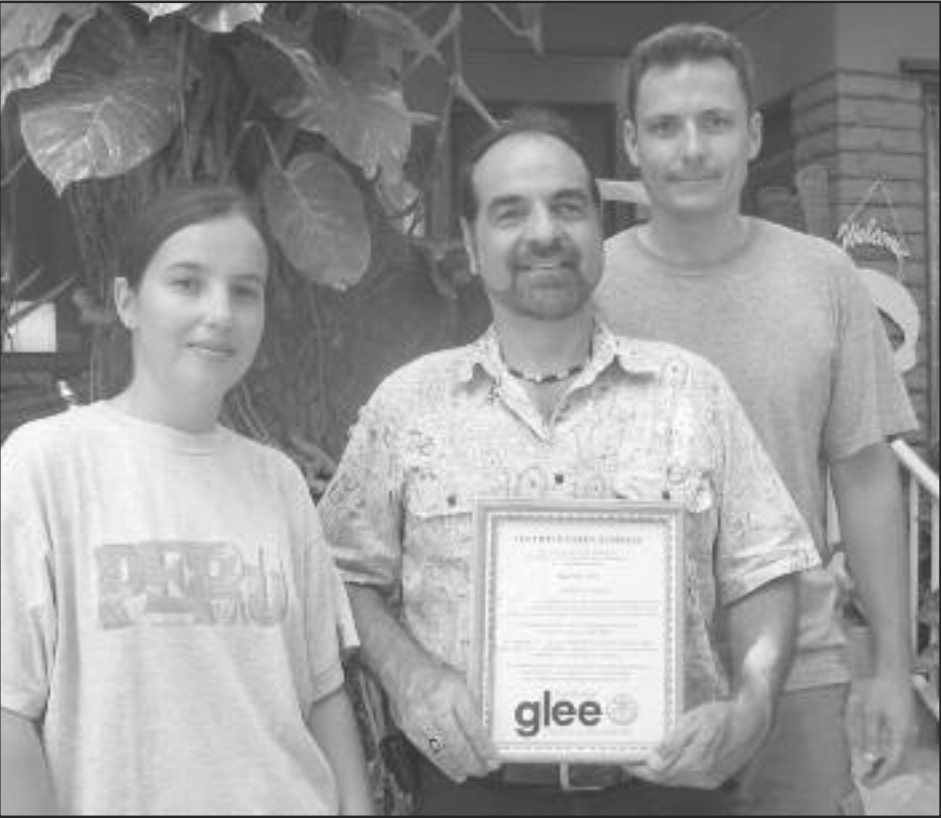
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# Largo Lodge Earns Green Business Certification



Largo Lodge of Key Largo has become the first lodging property in the Upper Keys to become certified in the Green Living & Energy Education (GLEE) Green Business Program. Located at 101740 Overseas Highway, the property features nine units that range from suites with kitchenettes, sitting room and screened porch to single rooms with bath. Largo Lodge offers a sustainable haven and tropical environment on the Gulf Bay with access to a beach, wild bird watching area, dock and kayaks.

"This GLEE certification is our first step in taking years of effort to be green to a new level. We hope to earn the Florida DEP Green Lodging certification eventually. The information we got from GLEE helped us realize all that we have done," said Neil Boyce, Largo Lodge manager and owner. "It was a real learning experience to list all we have accomplished, see how it impacts the

business and our environment and also consider what we might do in the future." Future upgrades include replacing older appliances with Energy Star units and expanding the mulch and plant nursery for additional landscaping.

Largo Lodge minimizes their water use for the lush landscaping with drip irrigation and mist emitters. Heavy mulch made from trimmings on the property and drought resistant plant selection are also considered. The landscaping is designed to shade rooms, reducing energy needs for cooling. The main building, which includes the office, has good cross ventilation and a breeze from the bay, shaded windows and porches and ceiling fans. It does not have air conditioning and feels comfortable year-round.

Each guest is educated on water conservation and recycling when checking in. There is a Linen Changing

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\$1400. Largo Lodge has also reduced waste and hauling expenses, going from ten solid waste receptacles to just five, with much of the waste diverted to recycling which saves resources. For more information about GLEE's Green Business Program, go to www.keysGLEE.com or write to info@keysglee.com.