EPS Foam Ban Campaign: Organizing Strategies, Challenges & Successes
UH Manoa Fall 2012 - Spring 2013

Proposal for 1st Annual Sustainability Summit, April 11-12, 2013

In past years at UH Manoa, students on campus and organizations including the Sierra Club, Sustainable Coastlines, and Surfrider Foundation, have attempted to tackle the issue of EPS foam (styrofoam) being used at foodservice vendors. In the past few semesters, with a new chancellor, a more receptive administration, and a new sustainability policy developed for the Manoa campus, the new campaign was launched to ban EPS foam use.

In the Fall Semester of 2012, Surfrider Foundation Student Chapter at UH Manoa identified EPS foam use at on-campus dining locations as its top issue. Students began to organize and strategize our campaign to call for a ban on EPS foam products at all on-campus dining locations. Below describes the process of our campaign from its initiation to its current status and explains organizing strategies used.

We drafted petition language as follows:

- As students & faculty of the University of Hawaii at Manoa, we are urging Bale, India Cafe, Jamba Juice, Panda Express, and L & L Hawaiian BBQ, and Sodexo to end the use of styrofoam, or expanded polystyrene "EPS" on our campus. Polystyrene requires petroleum to make, never breaks down in the environment, and is not accepted by public recycling programs. On top of the detrimental environmental effects, these products are made with styrene, which was added to the U.S. Department of Health & Human Services' list of suspected human carcinogens in 2011.
- The Sodexo company at UH Manoa has already adopted policies to provide bio-compostable containers, utensils, and plates at most dining locations. The Sustainability Courtyard has prohibited use of EPS at its food trucks: Da Spot & Govinda's. Bale uses compostable sugar cane bowls. These plant-based products are safe for our health and environment and are available, accessible, and affordable. For the welfare of the environment and the health of the students and faculty, we, the undersigned, call upon these companies to take responsibility by ending the use of EPS foam and replacing them with compostable products.

(The petition includes a “pledge” column for signers to initial to indicate commitment to reduce their purchases of products that come in EPS foam and/or to ask vendors for an alternative, eco-friendly product)

(Petition signers could also star next to their name to get updates from Surfrider Foundation UH)

To reach out to administrators:
A leader of the Surfrider UH club attended the campus-wide conversation focused on sustainability on January 28th to inform administration of EPS foam campaign & to ask its position on banning foam from campus foodservice products
  o Chancellor Tom Apple & Susan Hippensteele (Manoa Strategic Planning Team) responded positively & pledged to support our campaign

An online petition was posted at: http://signon.org/sign/univ-of-hawaii-ban-the
  • Received about 300 signatures in the span of 8 days

So far, we have collected over 1,000 signatures since the launch of our petition this Spring Semester. Over 700 signatures on our paper petitions and 320 signatures on our online petitions have been collected. Our methods for collecting signatures:
  • Having leaders & members ask professors to present our campaign in classes and passing around petitions for students to sign.
  • Tabling at campus center every Monday & Thursday from 1030-230 to represent Surfrider Foundation UH. Leaders of club talked to students, faculty, and staff about our campaign to collect signatures.
  • Talking to friends and community members
  • Spreading the word through e-mail blasts & social media

Reaching out to UH Manoa & the community

  • Surfrider UH hosted a table at campus center every Monday & Thursday from 1030-230 since the beginning of the Spring semester until the end of February to talk to passing students, faculty, and staff about our campaign to spread the word and get petitions
  • On February 1, a Surfrider UH representative reached out through an interview with KTUH (radio station) to talk about our tabling and the progress & goals of the EPS foam campaign
  • Surfrider UH reached out to Kaleo (school paper) about our EPS foam ban campaign. As a result, “The War on Styrofoam” made the front page in the February 11 issue.
     o http://www.kaleo.org/news/the-war-on-styrofoam/article_4a587600-73f8-11e2-97a2-0019bb30f31a.html?

On February 11, Chancellor Tom Apple responded to online petition signers with the following message:

“I strongly support your petition to ban the use of EPS Foam (Styrofoam) on campus and welcome your support as we move towards making this a reality.

UHM Campus Services has committed to include language to prohibit Styrofoam in all future food services contract negotiations. Further, they have committed to work with
all the current vendors who are under existing contracts to see what can be done to achieve a Styrofoam free environment PRIOR to the end of their existing contracts. We also have the full support of the UHM Sustainability Council - who will be a good partner as we communicate our commitment to sustainable practices.

Thank you for your commitment!

Tom

To get faculty & sustainability groups involved:

- Representative(s) of Surfrider UH attend monthly Manoa Sustainability Council (MSC) meetings to get input & learn about campus-wide efforts
- Stephen Meder of MSC, in particular, supported our efforts & became the connection for the Strategic Planning Team and the Chancellor’s office
- Philip Johnson, professor at UH, connected us to his Interdisciplinary Studies (IS) students to get involved with their project to draft a single-use plastic ban on-campus by the end of Spring Semester
  - Representatives of Surfrider UH attended a meeting in February to connect with those students & continue to maintain contact with them to assist with their research & campaign
- From the MSC, we formed a Sustainability Working Group to strategize on the wording of our foam ban policy & to discuss future campaigns to increase sustainability (encouraging compostable foodservice products, banning plastic bags and other single-use plastics, etc.)
- Surfrider UH & the MSC connects with Student Organic Farm Training (SOFT) to help with farm workdays, get updates about composting efforts on campus, and to work together on new initiatives (currently in contact with “Real Food Challenge” to get UH Manoa active on having more sustainable, local food available on campus)

To directly connect with foodservice vendors:

- Surfrider UH leaders & IS 499 students, along with Ari Patz of Styrophobia meet with Donna Ojiri (Sodexo’s General Manager for UH Manoa) & Marc Nakamoto (Sodexo’s Hawaii Coordinator) once a month to discuss challenges & strategize ideas on spreading the word on campaigns & educating campus on the importance of sustainability
- IS 499 students have made contact with vendors through their research on what kinds of products are used at the specific vendor. This helped to identify which vendors need the most improvement & which are on track with our sustainability goals.
- Owner of “The Curb” on campus attended our March MSC meeting to explain the challenges of using eco products as a small, local business.
Challenges & Solutions:

- Outreach
  - Printing costs hindered us from being able to print & post around campus efficiently. We applied for funding with ASUH which we will hear back from in March, which could resolve this challenge.
  - Flyer drafting & finalizing was delayed as the semester picked up
  - Wasting paper was a dilemma when it came to flyers - we plan to print our new informational flyers on scrap paper
  - Reaching out to the 20,000 students @ UH Manoa to talk about our campaign and get support still proves to be difficult. With our partnership with Sodexo, we will draft informational slides to be displayed at the cafeteria on why our campus is going foam-free & to educate the population on the health & environmental dangers of foam foodservice products.

Current Status of Campaign:

- A proposal was submitted to UH Manoa’s Strategic Planning Team on February 28th after being written and edited by Robert Perkinson (American Studies), Ari Patz (Styrophobia), Stuart Coleman (Surfrider Foundation - Hawaii Chapters), Leilei Shih (Sierra Club/Surfrider), and Doorae Shin (Surfrider UH)
  - The text of the proposal was as follows:

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UH Manoa Commitment to the Use of Sustainable Food-Service Products
February 28, 2013 DRAFT statement

Draft based on consultations with the UH Sustainability Council, Sierra Club Hawaii Chapter, Surfrider Foundation, and Sustainable Coastlines

In the interest of trash reduction, public health, marine life protection, and environmental sustainability, the University of Hawaii at Manoa is committed to undertaking a transition to the use of more responsible food service products. As a first step, the University hereby prohibits the purchase and use of disposable expanded polystyrene (EPS) foam food-service products on campus. This prohibition will apply to new (or renewed) food service contracts. Vendors operating under existing contracts will be encouraged to phase out EPS foam products use as soon as possible. In addition, university personnel are advised not to purchase disposable EPS foam food products with university funds and not to use such products at campus events.

Alternatives
Numerous alternatives to EPS foam food-service products exist. Vendors and university personnel are instructed to replace EPS foam products with the most sustainable practical
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alternatives. Preference should be given to:
1. Products that are reusable;
2. Products that are non-toxic and certified compostable;
3. Products that can be recycled in Hawai‘i.
Single-use biodegradable plastic products should not be considered viable alternatives.

**Exceptions**
In rare cases, food vendors or university entities can apply for exceptions to the prohibition on EPS foam products. Exceptions can be granted by the Chancellor in consultation with Auxiliary Enterprises and the UH Sustainability Council. Exceptions should be granted for one year, should apply only to specific products, and should be approved (or renewed) only after a vendor runs a pilot project using favored alternatives and only after demonstrating that no feasible, more ecologically friendly alternative to EPS foam exists for the use in question.

- After a return of a watered-down policy, members of the sustainability taskforce sent the policy back to administrators with the proposed revisions for policy to be more like its original form.
- On April 2nd, we received the policy with final revisions & it was happily approved by the taskforce. Here is the final policy which is currently under one more approval process prior to implementation!

**POLICY FORMAT**
Prepared by: OVCAFO - Draft
Revision #3
Date: April 2, 2013

UNIVERSITY OF HAWAI‘I AT MĀNOA

**POLICY TITLE:** SUSTAINABLE FOOD-SERVICE PRODUCTS

**4. POLICY STATEMENT:**

The University of Hawai‘i at Mānoa (UHM) seeks to advance environmental stewardship and sustainability on our campus which embody approaches that reduce life cycle costs, restore or maintain the functioning of natural systems, and enhance human well-being. As part of this broader effort and to address trash reduction, public health, marine life protection, and environmental sustainability, UHM will transition to the use of more responsible food service products on campus.

**2. PURPOSE:**
This policy aims to eliminate the purchase and use of disposable expanded polystyrene (EPS) foam food-service products on campus.

3. APPLICABILITY/SCOPE:

This policy applies to the entire campus community and is especially relevant to units handling food services and contract vendors doing business with UHM.

4. DEFINITIONS:

1. Compostable = All materials in the product will break down into usable compost in a safe and timely manner without leaving any toxic residue.
2. Contract vendors = Service provider having a contract with UHM who is subject to the control and direction of the University for which services are rendered.
3. Expanded polystyrene (EPS) foam = A rigid and tough closed-cell foam, in the form of beads commonly known as packaging “peanuts.” Thermoplastic petrochemical materials utilizing styrene.
4. EPS foam food service products = Carry-out food packaging including trays, plates, bowls and cups.

5. IMPLEMENTATION:

1. Vendors negotiating new contracts will be prohibited from using EPS foam food-service products.
2. Vendors operating under existing contracts are encouraged to phase out EPS foam products use as soon as possible. Contracts with current vendors will not be renewed unless said vendors commit to eliminate the use of all EPS food service products.
3. University personnel are advised not to purchase disposable EPS foam food products with university funds and not to use such products at campus events.
4. Favored Alternatives to EPS foam - Preference should be given to:
   1. Products that are reusable;
   2. Products that are non-toxic and certified compostable;
   3. Products that can be recycled in Hawai‘i.

5. Single-use biodegradable plastic products should not be considered a viable alternative.
6. Exceptions may be granted by the Chancellor or designee in consultation with appropriate campus groups, including Campus Services, OVCS, and UHM Sustainability Council. Exceptions are allowed under the following guidelines:
1. Up to one (1) year;
2. Applies to specific food items that cannot be properly held by available sustainable alternatives, including hot products for the safety of customers.
3. Shall be approved or renewed only after a vendor runs a pilot project using favored alternatives and only after demonstrating that no feasible, ecologically sustainable alternative to EPS foam exists for the required use.

6. REFERENCES:

1. UHM Sustainability Council Resolution Supporting a Campus-Wide Ban on POLYSTERENE/STYROFOAM™ (PDF)
3. Hawai‘i 2013 Senate Bill 619 Expanded Polystyrene foam Disposable Food Service Containers – Measure Deferred February 7, 2013 (PDF)

7. HISTORY:

None.

Future Steps & New Campaigns:

- As policy ban on EPS foam is in final stages of implementation, and UH Manoa is looking to move towards compostable products, those involved in the MSC, the Sustainability Working Group, and in student-lead organizations hope to tackle the following issues:
  - Encouraging the use of reusable products (a washing station for campus is being looked into)
  - Banning the use of plastic bags on campus before the county law goes into effect in 2015
  - Improving UH Manoa’s recycling program
  - Encouraging local & sustainably-sourced foods in our cafeterias (Doorae and Jeana from SOFT are currently in contact with “Real Food Challenge” to begin to make positive switches to local, organic food at our campus cafeterias through vendors, especially Sodexo)