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# Delta steps up efforts to cut plastic waste

By **Rick Lundstrom** on October, 24 2018 | Catering



Delta Air Lines announced today it is continuing the removal of a variety of single-use plastic items, including stir sticks, wrappers, utensils and straws from its aircraft and Delta Sky Clubs.

In April, Delta removed plastic wrap from international Main Cabin and is expected to eliminate more than 300,000 pounds in plastic waste annually – that's more than the weight of two 757 aircraft.

Delta's has eliminated plastic wrapping from Delta One Tumi amenity kits, and reduced Styrofoam in the cafeterias at Delta's Atlanta headquarters in favor of compostable and/or reusable alternatives. Delta's Minneapolis office campus eliminated Styrofoam completely in 2015.

Straws and stir sticks have been replaced in Delta Sky Clubs with bamboo drink stirrers and birch stir sticks, and the airline will eliminate red plastic straws and stir sticks in favor of the same alternatives starting in mid-2019. Together, the changes will eliminate more than 183 million plastic straws and stir sticks from Delta's aircraft and clubs. Compostable straws will be available in clubs upon request.

Delta Sky Clubs are moving toward compostable alternatives for service ware. Delta has partnered with the airports in Seattle and Minneapolis/St. Paul to help manage the clubs' compostable waste, and the airline is now identifying the best ways to expand composting at all 51 airports that feature its clubs.

Additionally, Delta has formed a Youth Advisory Council to help guide the airline's efforts to minimize the use of single-use plastics and support other sustainability initiatives. Initial members include Georgia natives Carter and Olivia Ries, who founded [One More Generation](#), and California resident Shelby O'Neil, who founded [Jr Ocean Guardians](#). Emma Kavanaugh, founder and president of a [Surfrider Youth Club](#) at St. Thomas Aquinas High School in Florida will join the trio as an initial member, while a partnership with the [Captain Planet Foundation](#) will seek additional members through an application process launching in November that seeks diversity in geographic location and eco-passions. The Council will complement the airline's employee-led "GreenUp" group that connects with Delta employees to find meaningful ways for the airline to positively impact the environment.

Delta's move to reduce unnecessary single-use plastics is part of its sustainability strategy that drove a route analysis to better align the amount of food, beverage and other items on board with customer demand, resulting in significant reductions in waste and emissions. Delta is the first U.S. airline to offer carbon offsets to passengers and the only airline to voluntarily cap carbon emissions at 2012 levels by purchasing carbon offsets – more than 2.5 million in 2017 alone, and almost 9 million carbon offsets since it started.

Delta recycles aluminum cans, plastic bottles and cups, newspapers and magazines from aircraft and has recycled more than 3 million pounds of aluminum from onboard waste over 10 years. The funds from that program and recycling oil and scrap metal in Tech Ops have been used to construct 12 of the 264 homes Delta has built with Habitat for Humanity globally.