



Fall 2011



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Environmental Action: Closing a Recycling Loophole

by Katie O'Sullivan



Photograph Courtesy of Katie O'Sullivan

It's time to update the Bottle Bill.

The 1982 Bottle Bill is the most successful litter prevention and recycling program in Massachusetts history. Each year, about 80% of bottles and cans that require a 5-cent deposit are recycled compared to a mere 25% of non-deposit containers.

The problem is that non-deposit containers are thrown away – into the trash, in our forests, on roads, on our beaches and in our waterways – in huge quantities. Non-deposit empties would fill Fenway Park to the roof, every year.

Why is this so? Because the current bill included only carbonated beverages.

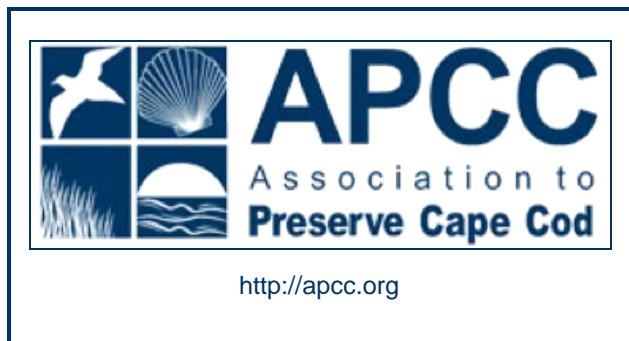


Photograph Courtesy of Katie O'Sullivan

Changes in consumer preferences over the last 29 years mean the Bottle Bill now contains a "loophole." Bottled water, flavored waters, ice teas, juices, and sports drinks are simply not covered. Non-carbonated beverages now account for one third of the market.

There is currently a revised Bottle Bill in the State House, titled "H.890/S.1650 An Act Updating the Bottle Bill". It closes the loophole on non-carbonated beverages and re-establishes the "Clean Environment Fund" to help fund programs to increase recycling even more. The proposal even allows small stores to be exempted from redeeming empties, and provides a modest raise to redemption centers.

The beverage industry doesn't want to see this bill made into law, and are lobbying hard against it. They've created an insanely profitable bottled water industry that they don't want tampered with (see the [CapeWomenOnline article](#) about bottled water in our Summer 2010 issue.)



This year, a coalition of groups, including our local [Association to Preserve Cape Cod](#) (APCC), wants to place this issue on the November 2012 ballot giving the people of Massachusetts a direct vote on the matter.

Currently, APCC is looking for volunteers to gather petition signatures in public places between September 15 and the end of October. With public opinion polls showing that more than 75% of Massachusetts voters are in favor of updating the Bottle Bill to close the loophole, chances of success are very good.

APCC is the region's leading nonprofit environmental organization, working for the adoption of laws, policies and programs that protect and enhance Cape Cod's natural resources and quality of life. A grass roots advocacy organization, APCC relies on the generous support of its members for the vast majority of its funding.

To volunteer your time to help with the effort to update the Bottle Bill, contact APCC via email at info@apcc.org or call us at (508) 362-4226 (or toll free (877) 955-4142) to provide us with your contact information and let us know how many hours you can volunteer.

If you have general questions about the Bottle Bill, visit the Bottle Bill's website at <http://www.bottlebill.org/legislation/usa/massachusetts.htm>. To keep up to date on the coalition's efforts to update the existing Bottle Bill, check out "Bottle Bill's" Facebook page at <http://www.facebook.com/BottleBill>



[Katie O'Sullivan](#) lives on Cape Cod with her family. In addition to being the Editor of this magazine, she is a freelance writer, copy editor and published author.

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For updates on her kids latest adventures or the antics of her oversized Saint Bernard puppy, visit her [blog](#)