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Area shoppers support recycling plastic bags

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ONEONTA _ Local shoppers interviewed on Tuesday approved of a state law that promotes the recycling and reuse of plastic shopping bags.

Starting Jan. 1, large retail stores such as Wal-Mart, Price Chopper and Hannaford were required to provide bins to collect plastic bags, recycle them and keep three years of records describing how many were collected, according to a news release from Gov. David Paterson.

Otsego County Conservation Association Executive Director Erik Miller said the initiative is not new for any of the larger retailers, but by centrally collecting the bags, there is more of a chance they will be recycled appropriately.

At Price Chopper, shopper Michelle Deflorio of Davenport dropped off about 50 bags at the collection point at the entrance of the store.

"It helps save on garbage while helping the environment," she said.

Price Chopper's vice president of public relations, Mona Golub, said the chain has been recycling bags and other material, including cardboard and bottles, for 16 years, because "it's the right thing to do."

The more consumers are made aware of the service, the more material will be returned, she said.

Jill Lockwood of Milford said she knows about the store program but reuses the bags for produce she sells from her farm.

"Anything that reduces waste is a good idea," she said.

At Wal-Mart, Kari Stockdale, of Oneonta, said that she was not aware that the service was available at so many locations. She has been bringing her bags to Hannaford for recycling, she said.

A representative from Wal-Mart could not be reached by phone for comment Tuesday.

A representative from Hannaford left a phone message saying that the store had a policy of recycling the bags long before the state initiative, but he could not be reached for further comment.

The state law applies to stores with more than 10,000 square feet of retail space, or those that are part of a chain with more than five stores, each with more than 5,000 square feet of retail space, according to the release.

"Even during difficult times, we must be protective stewards of our environment, and continue to find ways to keep our daily routines from impacting the long-term health of the planet," said Paterson in the release.

"By making changes in our daily lives and business practices," he continued, "we can conserve natural resources, save energy and reduce our ecological footprint."