



This article was printed from the Green Guide section of the *Chico News & Review*, originally published January 21, 2010.

This article may be read online at:

<http://www.newsreview.com/chico/content?oid=1358265>

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Printed on 2010-01-21.

Big-box bag ban

Three-month experiment prepares customers to bring their own bags

Three North State **Walmart** stores have banned free plastic bags at the checkout stand, following a three-month experiment encouraging customers to bring their own reusable bags.

Walmart began a trial in October at two stores in the **Sacramento** area and one in **Ukiah**, in communities where customers had already shown an interest in environmental issues, according to the *Sacramento Bee*. Shoppers were initially encouraged to bring their own sacks or to purchase the store's 15-cent, lightweight polypropylene fabric bags, or a larger model for 50 cents. Meanwhile, store employees were retrained to fit more items into each bag.

In early January, the three stores banned free bags altogether, while another 52 locations throughout the North State put the bags on sale. Whether free bags will be discontinued in the future at those stores will depend on how customers respond to the ban.

Plastic bags have become a target by environmentalists in the last few years. The single-use bags are blamed for fouling the ocean and clogging sewers.