



*Why the 28th of August?* **Ans:** That's the date when Kenya Gazette notice, championed by Cabinet Secretary Judi Wakhungu, comes into effect. It explicitly bans the use, manufacture and importation of plastic bags.

*What is the Kenya Gazette?* **Ans:** It's an official weekly publication of the government of Kenya that contains notices of new legislation, notices required to be published by law or policy, and other announcements for public information.

*Why are plastic bottles included in the Karura ban?* **Ans:** Because they make up most of the plastic rubbish polluting the forest, and indeed the whole world, something like a million bottles produced every minute, tens of billions each year. The pile of bottles in the banner photo above was collected by FKF in a typical five-day period.

*So what do we carry our water in?* **Ans:** Get yourself a re-usable trail bottle made out of high-grade, multi-use plastic or aluminum. During the initial weeks of the ban, FKF will provide at cost trail bottles for sale at the gate for KES 100/=. You can buy one, pour your water or soda into it, and leave the old PET plastic water bottle in a bin at the gate. If you don't have or want to buy a bottle, then you'll have to drink your drink at the gate before your walk.

*But aren't PET bottles recyclable?* **Ans:** Yes, the typical 'PolyEthelene Terephthalate' soda and water bottles can be recycled, but that requires a collection, transport and processing regime. The ones careless visitors toss along Karura trails would persist there for 400 years, or until an FKF staff member picks up after the visitor. No more!

*We have booked a picnic; how do we carry our stuff?* **Ans:** If you have arranged and paid for a picnic at one of five picnic sites in the forest, then please bring your pre-prepared snacks in a cloth or other non-plastic container. If you are caught short at the gate during this transition phase, FKF is offering locally-made baskets for sale at KES 100/=. Eventually, we hope to have branded cloth or sisal bags for sale.

*We are booking for a large event; can we bring crates of bottled beverages for the occasion?* **Ans:** Yes, but only for that event, and only if you take all your rubbish out with you. Else you may forfeit your deposit.

*Will you ban black garbage bags as well — they are single-use plastic?* **Ans:** The National Environment Management Authority has dealt with the matter for us. NEMA granted an exemption for 'garbage bin liners' if the bags are clearly labeled with the printed name of the manufacturer and the rubbish service provider. TakaTaka Solutions Ltd, which provide Karura a CSR service of free rubbish removal and recycling, is complying with the NEMA requirements.

*What about the bio-degradable bags that some supermarkets are offering, why can't we use those?* **Ans:** Two reasons. First, they are almost indistinguishable from non-degradable bags, and there is no way that gate staff would be able to decide which is which. Secondly, and most important, even those new-polymer bags take two years to degrade, so it still means that FKF would have to be picking up after those visitors who continue to toss their empty bags on the trail.

*Why don't you just provide more rubbish bins?* **Ans:** FKF is already using staff time and vehicle fuel to collect huge amounts of rubbish from some 50 bins around the forest every day. The FKF mission is to restore the Karura Forest ecosystem to its original state to provide ecosystem services — water catchment, air purification, biodiversity conservation, eco-friendly recreation — for all. Why should rubbish collection be an FKF job at all? Think about it: if a visitor manages to carry a bottle, a bag and a food wrapper *into* the forest when those items are *full*, why in the world can't the visitor carry them *out* when they are *empty*? It's not more bins that are needed, it's more awareness-raising throughout the land. We hope that Judi Wakhungu's bold initiative will give a positive jolt to Kenyans at large.

