



Polystyrene Foam in the Lake Champlain Basin: Insights from 2025 Business Survey

Polystyrene foam is lightweight, does not biodegrade, crumbles easily into small pieces that are difficult to cleanup, and can negatively impact wildlife and enter waterways. As such, the **Lake Champlain Basin Marine Debris Coalition** (Coalition) educates lakeshore businesses, property owners, and recreational users about the impacts of foam marine debris with a goal to limit its presence in the lake as litter.

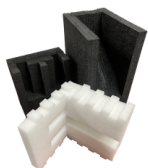
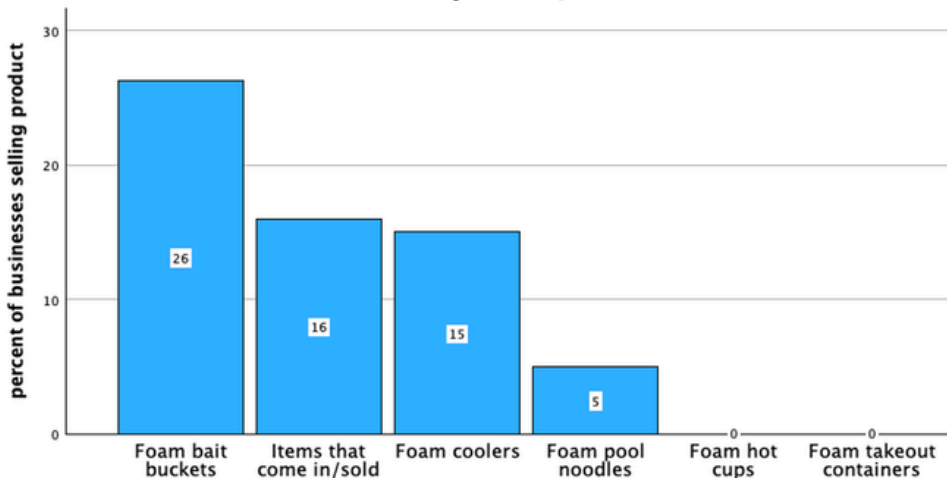
In the summer/fall of 2025, the Coalition surveyed Lake Champlain businesses near the lakefront to understand their use of polystyrene foam and gauge their interest in and opportunity to switch to non-foam alternatives. Through in-person and email survey methods, 66 nearshore businesses were surveyed and **20** responded. This document summarizes key results and take-aways.

RESPONDENTS

- 30% restaurants/general stores
- 25% fishing/bait shops
- 10% boat rentals/recreation
- 5% convenience stores/gas stations
- Remaining percent: “other” including a cafe, diving center, sports equipment store, charter service, and a shoreline excavation/construction/transportation business.

RESULTS

“Does your business sell or distribute any of the following foam products?” (n=18)



Foam products type



“About what percent of sales are foam products?” (n=17)

10 businesses (58%) indicated 0% of sales were foam



Seven businesses (41%) gave very small percentages (0.1-5%) or said very little

Of the seven:

- 4 fishing/bait shops
- 1 restaurant/general store
- 1 diving center & 1 shoreline construction



“What makes it challenging for you to use alternatives to foam products?” (n=13)

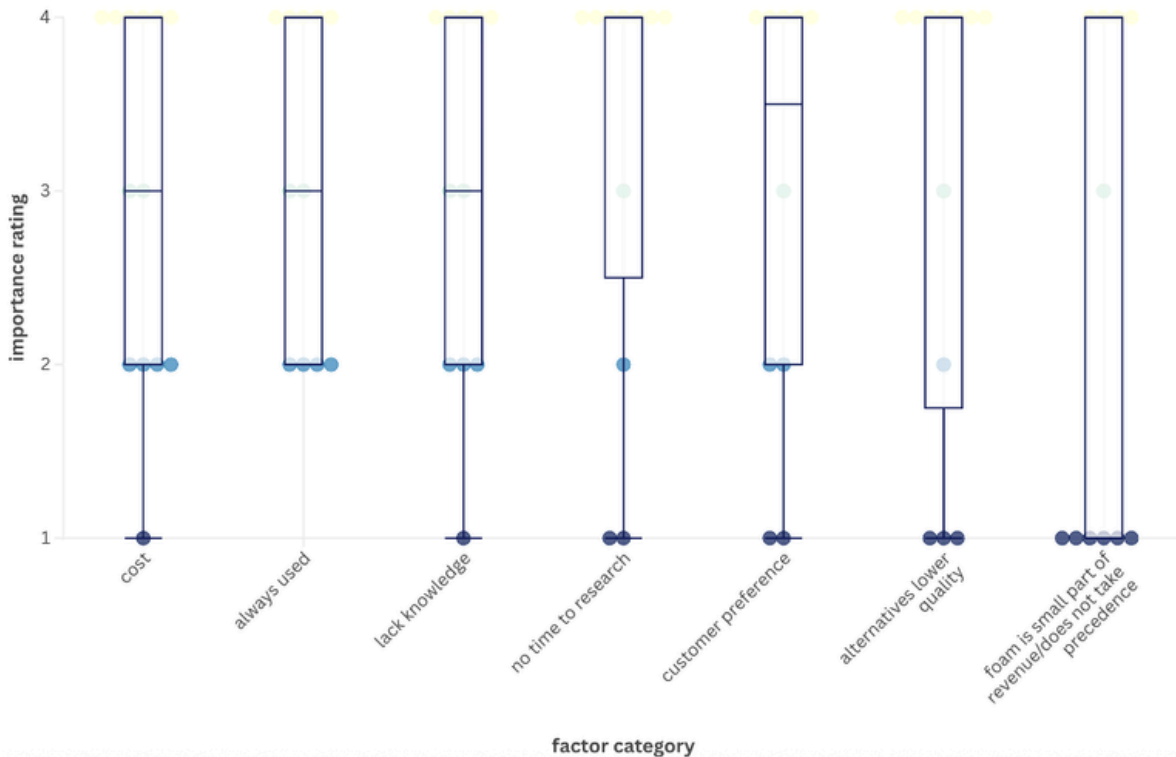
The most common answer related to the **availability of non-foam alternatives**, specifically businesses were interested in distributor and wholesale options. (n=5)



RESULTS CONTINUED

“How important are each of the following in your decision to sell or distribute foam products rather than those made with alternative products?”

importance rating very important-1  4 -not important



Main point: Foam products make up very little of revenue and other responsibilities take precedence. (55% said this was a **very important** factor.)

TAKE-AWAYS

Foam is not a significant fraction of sales for surveyed businesses.



The LCBMDC should consider:

- Directing outreach to fishing and bait shops
 - These are the main type of businesses selling foam.
- Working with distributors and wholesalers
 - A challenge to businesses is limited available alternatives.
- Offering education to consumers
 - Building awareness of non-foam options can help change demand.

FURTHER ACTION

The LCBMDC should research alternatives to foam products currently being used by businesses.

- Example: Foam bait coolers might be replaced by biodegradable RECOOL coolers or soft-sided coolers.



- Alternatives such as these could be offered to businesses on a trial-run to motivate the switch

SUPPORT AND THANKS

We would like to express our gratitude to survey participants and those who support this effort!

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