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conservationists calling attention to balloon releases Christopher De Los Santos Nov 22, 2023 🗪 0

EDITOR'S PICK

Listen to this article now Powered by Trinity Audio 00:00 he Texas Farm Bureau is poised to side with environmentalists in calling for laws against littering to explicitly apply to helium balloon releases.

> approved a resolution proposed by Jimmy Reed, president of the nearby Anderson County Farm Bureau, to "support promoting and passing stronger anti-littering laws

When the Farm Bureau's policy committee met in Waco a few weeks ago, members

regarding balloon releases and plastic bag litter." The resolution will next be presented along with many others to the membership delegates at the Texas Farm Bureau annual meeting next month. Farmers and ranchers have concerns about how Mylar, latex and rubber balloons, as well as plastic bags from grocery and convenience stores, harm their livestock and crops, and conservationists have similar concerns about the harm to plants and

wildlife, including birds and aquatic and marine life. Some stores that sell balloons also share the concerns with where the products they sell can end up. People are also reading... Statewide Texas high school football playoff scores and pairings 2023

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bags blow across their property.

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flow into the wetlands. She sees streamers and plastic confetti there. Schell is

Lake Waco Wetlands coordinator Nora Schell said she sees similar items blow and

Reed, who has a ranch in Anderson County, said in a phone interview that he and

other farmers and ranchers in his county see the remnants of balloons and plastic

"We all know that what goes up must come down and sometimes what looks really

concerned that plastic trash, streamers and balloons may harm all types of plants and

pretty floating up into the sky can be harmful to livestock and wildlife when it bursts and falls back to earth," Reed said of helium balloon releases. Reed knows people who release helium balloons in groups often do so for celebrations or memorials, and he does not want to take away from the events. Nevertheless he

and other Farm Bureau members are concerned. "These balloons, when they fall back to the ground, they can do harm to livestock and wildlife," Reed said. "Just like we have litter laws, we think it's important to have the same law for balloons."

He said the balloons are made from materials very similar to what plastic grocery bags

"I've been seeing this for the last 20 years," Reed said. "I and other ranchers and farmers find balloons in fencing, in crops, in bushes and in the weeds. Cattle will eat it, especially young calves."

Reed said calves have died from eating trash, made of materials similar to the grocery

It is not only on land that balloon remnants and other plastic refuse cause problems,

bags and balloons, that blows off the highways.

but also in waterways, lakes and oceans.

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Listen now and subscribe: Apple Podcasts | Google Podcasts | Spotify | RSS Feed | Omny Studio Maddalena Bearzi, president of the Ocean Conservation Society in Marina Del Ray, California, said latex balloons are the most common type found in the stomachs of dead marine animals.

Bearzi, who holds a Ph.D. in biology from the University of California, Los Angeles

and has studied the ecology of marine mammals since 1990, said even though some

balloons are labeled biodegradable, there is no such thing.

animals," Bearzi said.

of them in the trash.

plants to animals, she said.

life." Bearzi said latex balloons are made from rubber treated with various chemicals to aid manufacturing and prevent their decomposition.

"The plastics in mylar balloons never biodegrade," she said by email. "They only break

down into smaller and smaller particles called microplastics, which can hurt marine

"Latex balloons are also not considered eco-friendly and pose a serious risk to marine

Microplastics contain contaminants that affect all forms of life in the water, from

Jennifer Svacina, co-owners of JJ's Balloons in Waco, 1412 N. Valley Mills Drive, have most of their business in inflatable art displays, not balloons for releases. Most of the balloons they sell are not free floating,

Logan said. He and Svacina inflate the balloons with air

Svacina said when she and Logan sell foil balloons, they

tell their customers not to release them, but to dispose

WATCH NOW: Jennifer Svacina of JJ's Balloons talks about her business

and attach them to an arch or another structure.

Mindful of concerns about the impact of balloons on land and water, Jeff Logan and

"For those balloons we sell that are helium filled, mostly they're made from biodegradable (labeled) materials," Logan said.

Christopher De Los Santos, Tribune-Herald

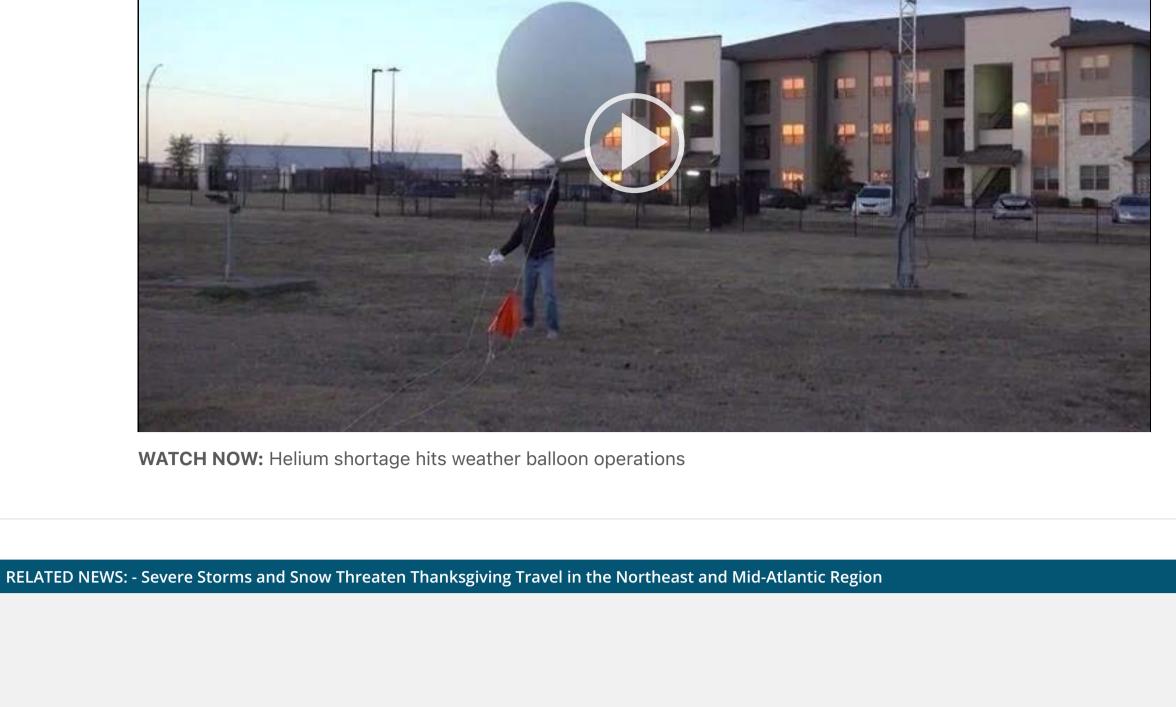
Jennifer Svacina, co-owner of JJ's Balloons in

in the trash, not to release them.

Waco, said most of the store's business comes from

inflatable art displays, but when selling helium-filled

foil balloons, she tells customers to dispose of them



The Economy Industry

By Christopher De Los Santos

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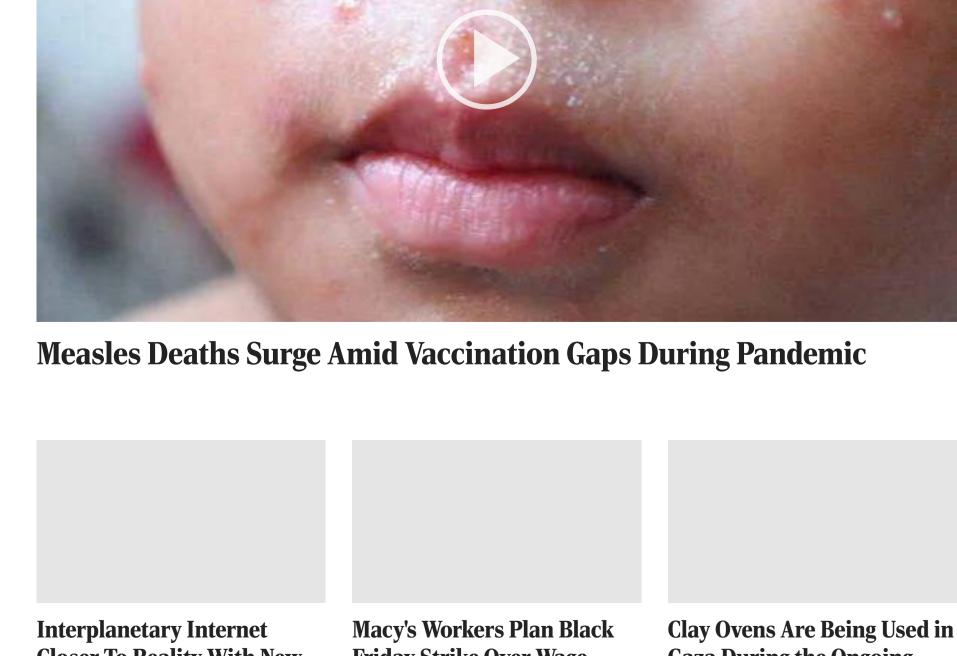
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