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The beach in Eilat on Monday.

Sasi Horesh

Eilat and Herzliya move toward banning plastic on beaches

Almog Ben Zikri and Zafir Rinat

Two Israeli cities are moving toward banning disposable plastics on their respective beaches, the first such measures in Israel. A European Union ban on many single-use plastic items takes effect in 2021.

Herzliya Mayor Moshe Fadlon said last week that he would submit to the city council within a year a ban on bringing single-use items including plastic bags, dishes and cutlery to the beach of the Tel Aviv suburb. If passed, city inspectors would be authorized to issue tickets carrying a fine.

The proposed ban is part of a broad initiative to make Herzliya plastic-free by encouraging schools and other public institutions to stop using single-use items.

On Sunday, Eilat announced a similar plan to protect its Red Sea beaches. In the first stage, beachside businesses will be coached in avoid the use of single-use plastics. A ban on disposables at the beach will be introduced at a later date.

The resort city also plans a

campaign to raise the awareness of residents and tourists regarding the damage plastics cause to the coral reefs, fish and other marine animals.

The city council will meet on Wednesday to amend the bylaws, which will then need to be approved by the Interior Ministry. Plastic water bottles will be exempt from the ban. City inspectors will first issue warnings and only later will they impose fines.

Plastic makes up 90 percent of marine waste with at least 58 percent of the waste coming from beachgoers, data from the Environmental Protection Ministry shows.

Six months ago, the ministry issued a call for proposals to study plastic waste in the Mediterranean Sea and the Gulf of Aqaba. A number of proposals were submitted and are under review.

The ministry also seeks to determine how much of the plastic that washes up on Israel's shores comes from other countries and how much from domestic sources including runoff from streams and rivers.