

MEETING NOTES
SINGLE USE BAG REDUCTION AND RECYCLING PROGRAM

Working Group Meeting

Wednesday, January 21, 2009, 2:00 p.m.

County of Los Angeles Department of Public Works, Conference Room D

I. Introductions

The meeting was called to order at 2:06 p.m. Ms. Emiko Thompson of Public Works welcomed the Working Group, and introductions were made among attendees and phone participants.

Those in attendance were as follows: Emiko Thompson, Nilda Gemeniano, Christine Frias, Angie Nguyen, Rogelio Gamino, and Natalie Jimenez with County of Los Angeles Department of Public Works, Dorothea Park and Burt Kumagawa with County of Los Angeles Chief Executive Office, Ritu Sehgal with County of Los Angeles Internal Services Department, Rick Crandall with Albertsons, Andrea Jolly with Creative Environmental Solutions, Matthew Dodson with California Grocers Association, Laurie Hansen with California Film Extruders & Converters Association, and Ruben Morla from California Verde magazine. Those who attended via conference call were: Nick Morell with Sanitation Districts of Los Angeles County, Chris Mastro with County of Los Angeles Department of Public Health, Shari Jackson with Progressive Bag Affiliates of the American Chemistry Council, and Samantha Martinez with Plastics Foodservice Packaging Group of the American Chemistry Council.

II. News and Updates

Ms. Frias reported on recent articles relating to single use bags:

- On January 15, 2009, an article was published in *The San Antonio Business Journal* about H.E Butt Grocery Company supporting new legislation filed by Texas Senator Leticia Van de Putte. The legislation requires businesses to maintain plastic bag recycling bins at retail stores.
- On January 12, 2009, an article was published in the *Toronto Star* about large chain grocery stores in Canada charging customers 5 cents for each plastic bag, and pledging a portion of the collected fees would be donated to charity.
- On January 20, 2009, an article in *Discover Magazine* was published regarding the ban of plastic bags in New Delhi and the consequences of fines or imprisonment to any person or groups caught with a plastic bag. The ban applies to the use, sale, and storage of plastic bags, since the city had been generating 10 million plastic bags each day.
- On January 20, 2009, *Earth 911* published an article concerning designers in Los Angeles who designed wearable dresses made out of recycled plastic bags exhibited by the boutique EM & Co.

The articles will be posted on the Program website.

Mr. Gamino provided an update on two proposed legislative bills (AB 68 and AB 87). AB 87 is being sponsored by Los Angeles County. Both bills would implement a fee on paper and plastic single use bags, and entail the following:

- Requiring stores to implement a point-of-sale 25-cent minimum fee for each paper and plastic single use bag. The fee would not be subject to state sales tax.
- Establishing a Bag Pollution Fund with the State Board of Equalization. Stores would be required to remit the single use carryout bag fee to the State Board of Equalization for administration of the funds.
- Allowing stores to retain 5-cents of the fee per single use bag for their costs in implementing waste reduction and public education measures.

The differences between AB 68 and AB 87 are as follows:

AB 68 Assembly Member Brownley	AB 87 Assembly Member Davis
Effective July 1, 2011	Effective July 1, 2010
Allows recycling requirements of AB 2449 to expire	Amends AB 2449, retaining the recycling requirements of AB 2449
Allows stores to retain up to 10-cents of the fee per green carryout bag provided	Allows stores to retain up to 7-cents of the fee per green carryout bag provided
80% of the funds collected by the state would be available for grants to local government	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 92% of funds collected by the state would be available for grants to local government • 3% of the funds collected would be utilized for administration, collection, enforcement, and auditing. • 5% of the funds collected will be utilized by the state to develop and implement programs to encourage and support mitigating the environmental effects of single-use carryout bags.

III. Program Status

a. Checklists Received

Ms. Nguyen provided an update on the checklists received. To date, 24 checklists have been received. About half of the stores indicated that they already display signs reminding customers to bring their reusable bags when shopping. Many have already placed recycle bins for plastic bags at visible and accessible locations, and sell reusable bags near checkout stands. The checklists also show that some stores provide training to staff regarding reusable bags, give credits or reward points to customers for reusable bags, and display

environmental messages. One store in Valencia gives away reusable bags to customers who purchase a certain amount of groceries. The checklists also indicate that none of the stores provide employees with buttons that display any environmental messages.

b. Cities Participation

Ms. Gemeniano provided an update on city participation. A handout was distributed listing some of the activities by the partner cities. It was reported that the city council of Pomona signed a resolution to join the Program on November 17, 2008. To date, 171 stores in Los Angeles County have received the Program Resource Packet, covering the unincorporated County areas and the cities of Azusa, Bell, Glendale, Lomita, and Santa Fe Springs. The city of Azusa sent Resource Packets to all local stores who provide plastic carryout bags to their customers. The city also plans to conduct reusable bag giveaways in conjunction with the opening of a Fresh & Easy grocery store next month.

c. Website Update

Ms. Frias provided an update on the program website. The store checklist is available online for stores to submit their checklist electronically. The legislative page is now live, and includes recent legislation related to the program as well as a link to Assembly Bill No. 2449. An announcement was also placed in the "Getting Involved" page concerning the Board of Supervisors adopting a resolution proclaiming the 3rd Thursday of December each year as "A Day Without a Bag" throughout Los Angeles County. On the "Resources" page, a link to the "Plastic Retail Grocery Bags Fact Sheet" by Keep California Beautiful and a link to Roplast Industry's "Bring Back Bag" reusable plastic bag concept were added. A link to the California Integrated Waste Management Board At-Store Recycling Program was also added to the "Resources" page. More than ten articles have also been added to both the archive and "News Articles" page.

Mr. Kumagawa suggested that the City Participation handout also be made available on the program website for everyone to view.

IV. Subcommittee Developments

a. Store Operations Subcommittee

Ms. Thompson reported on the store site visits conducted by in-house staff. Public Works staff had the opportunity to explain the program in detail to store managers, and offer suggestions to promote reusable bag sales and usage, as well as encourage customers to recycle their plastic bags. Many managers took interest in the program, and accepted the free outreach materials for plastic bag recycling provided by the American Chemistry Council. Store site visits will continue to be conducted and updates provided. Mr. Dodson added that we should be able to visit more stores as the holiday season has ended.

Mr. Crandall shared his experiences in leading the environmental stewardship efforts of Albertsons. The company has recently developed ways to help customers get involved with reducing usage and increasing recycling of plastic

carryout bags. Recently, the company participated in reusable bag giveaways at community and school events. Albertson was the first store that brought reusable bags into the market. Many different bag designs were offered in the past with modest sales. Albertsons continues to improve their program by designing different types of bags for various functions. Mr. Crandall displayed a wide variety of Albertsons' reusable bags as samples and offered them to the attendees of the meeting.

b. Public Education Subcommittee

Ms. Thompson reported on recent activities relating to the Public Education Subcommittee. In the previous Working Group meeting, Ms. Park suggested reaching out to community groups. Ms. Thompson will attend the Florence-Firestone Community Enhancement Team (FFCET) meeting on Tuesday, January 27, 2009. The FFCET is comprised of government and community representatives working together to address issues such as community aesthetics, trash, and litter. Ms. Thompson will make a Program presentation and discuss how the Program may impact their community.

On January 31, and February 7, 2009, the Los Angeles Unified School District will be holding the Academic Decathlon. Public Works staff will attend and distribute reusable bags, brochures and other environmental program outreach materials to high school students, coaches, and parents attending the event.

On February 4, 2009, Public Works and Heal the Bay will participate in Supervisor Gloria Molina's campaign to educate elementary school students about the environmental impacts of single use bags. There will be school assemblies for grades three through five, and Public Works' segment will emphasize solutions to minimize the environmental impacts of single use bag litter, through reusable bags and recycling.

Ms. Park suggested that Public Works also participate in Supervisor Ridley-Thomas' Budget Summit and distribute outreach materials.

Mr. Morla shared an article from the December 2008-January 2009 edition of the California Verde magazine. The article gave specific reasons for using reusable bags, and offered ways to recycle single use bags.

A draft tri-fold program brochure was distributed for stakeholder review. Mr. Morrell suggested removing the words "at landfills" under "Plastic Bag Tips." Ms. Hansen suggested adding "paper" next to "plastic bags." Ms Park suggested replacing the picture of the farm animal with a more applicable urban photograph depicting litter. The brochure will be made available on the Program website for further stakeholder review and comments.

c. Technical Advisory Subcommittee

Mr. Crandall provided data on the number of plastic bags that Albertsons stores purchased and recycled in 2007. Public Works will work with Mr. Crandall to analyze the data and evaluate its applicability to Program data.

Ms. Thompson reported on her communications with Mr. Patrick Rita, who represents the Paper Bag Council. Ms. Thompson relayed that Mr. Rita intends to provide information about the manufacturing process of recycled content paper bags; the post-consumer recycled content of paper bags; issues with the validation of recycled content; regulations on recycled content blend paper bag manufacturing; and the paper bag recycling process.

V. Open Discussion on Program

Ms. Jolly presented biodegradable bags made by Creative Environmental Solutions. Ms. Hansen with California Film Extruders & Converters Association noted that the California Retail Law recently passed on January 1st prohibits placing messages on plastic bags claiming they are biodegradable unless it meets specified ASTM standards. Ms. Jolly was asked to provide additional technical information during an upcoming subcommittee meeting at her discretion.

Mr. Dodson shared news about a program by a non-profit organization in West Los Angeles involving veterans creating reusable bags out of recycled cloth materials.

VI. Update on Expanded Polystyrene Study at County Facilities

Ms. Thompson provided an update on the County's activities regarding expanded polystyrene (EPS) food containers at County departments. Public Works, along with Internal Services Department (ISD) and County Counsel, will investigate the feasibility of replacing food container products made from EPS, such as foam cups, plates, and take-out boxes, with alternatives.

A study is being done by a consultant considering factors such as functionality, safety, cost, and environmental compatibility of food containers made from EPS and from alternative materials. Data will be gathered from County facilities to establish a consumption baseline. A product function analysis will then be conducted to identify critical function requirements such as hot meals for inmates or cold drinks at the cafeteria. A prioritized list of alternative products will then be developed. A life-cycle environmental assessment (LCA) will be conducted on the baseline products using current department consumption data. Additional LCAs will be conducted for proposed priority alternative products, and compared against the baseline LCA. Upon completion of the consultant study in May 2009, the findings will be shared with the Working Group.

Concurrent with efforts to develop alternatives to EPS food container products, the viability of recycling EPS food containers generated from County facilities is also being investigated. The Sheriff's Department is looking into recycling their EPS food trays and product packaging in coordination with Packaging Development Resources. Updates on this effort will also be provided.

VII. Next Meeting

Ms. Thompson announced that the next meeting for the subcommittees will be on Wednesday, February 18, 2009, at the Public Works' Annex Building, 3rd Floor Large Conference Room. The Store Operations Subcommittee will meet at 9 a.m., followed by the Public Education Subcommittee at 10 a.m., and the Technical Advisory Subcommittee at 11 a.m. Ms. Thompson closed the meeting by thanking the attendees.