

MEETING NOTES
SINGLE USE BAG REDUCTION AND RECYCLING PROGRAM

Working Group Meeting

Wednesday, March 18, 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 2:10 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, and Rogelio Gamiño 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, and Ruben Morla from California Verde magazine. Those who attended via conference call were: Rick Crandall with Albertsons, Nick Morell with Los Angeles County Sanitation Districts, Darrell Costello with Roplast Industries, and Samantha Martinez with Plastics Foodservice Packaging Group of the American Chemistry Council.

II. News and Updates

a. Recent Articles

Ms. Frias reported on some recent articles related to single use bags that were posted on the Program website:

- On March 17, 2009, an article in Mercury News was published regarding the passing of an ordinance by the Palo Alto City Council to ban plastic bags at supermarkets, effective September 18, 2009. The ban will help reduce the stream of litter in local creeks and San Francisco Bay, and encourage the use of reusable shopping bags.
- In the student newspaper of the Southern Illinois University Carbondale, called the Daily Egyptian, an article was published on a bag-collecting project for students to exchange 20 plastic bags for an eco-friendly reusable bag.
- The San Francisco Gate published an article on the 7 million pounds of debris collected during the International Coastal Cleanup of the Ocean Conservancy last September. As part of this cleanup, 1,377,141 plastic bags were collected. Plastic bags were found to be the second most common type of debris collected.
- In the Downey Patriot an article was written about Supervisor Gloria Molina's "A Green Bag for a Green Earth" Campaign.

b. Legislative Updates

Mr. Gamiño provided an update on the following proposed legislative bills:

- Assembly Bill 1141 would extend the preemption provisions of AB2449 from 2013 to 2017; prohibit local government from imposing a fee on paper bags and from banning or restricting plastic and paper bags; redefine reusable bags to include lighter weight plastic bags; establish a 50% recycling benchmark by 2014; increase the recycled content of plastic bags, provided market conditions allow sufficient supply/quality of materials; require manufacturers to pay into a \$25 million fund for litter abatement. Funds remaining after State administrative costs would be allocated to local governments (on a per capita basis) and state agencies, based on guidance from a special advisory panel.
- Senate Bill 228 would require manufacturers of marine degradable or compostable plastic bags meet specific standards to insure bags are readily and easily identifiable from other plastic bags. “Readily and easily identifiable” would be defined as being a uniform color of green, labeled “compostable” and marked with a certification label of the Biodegradable Plastics Institute.
- Senate Bill 531 would establish the Single use Carryout Bag Responsibility Act and would require, on and after July 1, 2011, suppliers of plastic and paper single use carryout bags to remit a Single use Carryout Responsibility Fee of \$0.001 for each single use bag supplied directly to a store.

III. Program Status

a. Checklists Received

Ms. Nguyen provided an update on the checklists received. During site visits staff discovered 15 additional stores in the County unincorporated areas.

To date, a total of 96 checklists have been received of which 91 were completed as part of the store site visits and 5 arrived by mail or fax. Of the 96 checklists, 47 are from Category 1 stores and 49 do not qualify due to various circumstances such as stores going out of business, or stores not qualifying as a retail store with over 10,000 square feet with a pharmacy, or stores not being a full-line, self-service retail store selling a line of dry groceries, canned goods, or non-food items and some perishable goods.

Nearly 75 percent of the checklists from qualifying Category 1 stores indicated that they have already implemented reusable bag sales near checkout stands, and 65 percent have placed recycling bins for plastic bags at the stores. Additionally, 55 percent do not have any outreach programs to make customers aware of single use bag litter and to encourage them to use reusable bags.

b. Cities Participation

Ms. Gemeniano provided an update on city participation. Some supermarkets expressed interest in the Program, such as, Stater Brothers and Fresh & Easy in the city of Azusa and Albertsons in the city of Lomita. These stores have already provided reusable bags for sale and recycling bins for collecting plastic bags.

Nearly half of the partner cities have distributed the Program Resource Packets to area stores. Some cities received store feedback through completed checklists, and are conducting store site visits to confirm store listings and to help managers understand and implement the Program.

Many of our partner cities have made reusable bags available to their residents at event giveaways or through local stores. They also promote the Program through their city websites and newsletters. The city of Glendale plans to conduct Public Service Announcements and develop DVDs on the topic of single use bags. The city of Azusa placed ads on their bus shelter panels, and plans to do additional outreach regarding reusable bags in their upcoming recycling programs brochure.

The updated city participation table will be available on the Program website.

c. Website Update

Ms. Frias provided an update on the program website.

In addition to posting new articles and legislative updates, pictures and a description of Supervisor Gloria Molina's, "A Green Bag for a Green Earth" campaign were added which can be found by clicking on a link on the Events page.

An updated list of events that Public Works is planning to attend will also be posted on the website. Many of these events will take place during the month of April in conjunction with Earth Day.

IV. Subcommittee Developments

a. Store Operations Subcommittee

Ms. Thompson announced that the Program brochure will be distributed at approximately 70 Albertsons stores throughout Los Angeles County during the month of April. Mr. Crandall, Director of Environmental Stewardship of Albertsons, added that Albertsons will also have tables with displays and contests to promote reusable bags and provide Program information to shoppers during April. Albertsons is also developing an environmental message to be placed in their weekly newsletter advertisements.

In conjunction with Albertsons' activities Ms. Park suggested that stores also provide employee training to ask customers if they brought their reusable bags.

b. Public Education Subcommittee

Community Outreach

Public Works attended four community events since the last Working Group meeting to raise Program awareness and distribute reusable bags. On January 31st, staff participated in Supervisor Ridley-Thomas' Budget Summit Meeting in Hawthorne and distributed approximately 300 bags. At Supervisor Yaroslavsky's Budget Summit Meeting in Venice on February 26th, the majority of attendees declined the reusable bags claiming they already owned many. On February 28th staff attended an E-waste/Clothing Collection event in Azusa hosted by Waste Management, and also an Environmental Education Fair in Arcadia on March 14th.

Ms. Thompson reported that she attended the January 27, 2009 meeting of the Florence-Firestone Community Enhancement Team and gave a Program presentation and answered questions. Some notable remarks made by community members regarding the topic included:

- Many consumers are not aware that plastic bags could be recycled. Therefore, more outreach should be done to promote it.
- The County could work together with stores to have reusable bag giveaways.
- A local 99-Cent Store charges a 3-cents per bag fee. The community member refused to take a bag and carried his purchases instead.
- Littering commonly occurs after community events. Therefore, anti-litter outreach should be done at community events.

Public Works will also attend the Florence-Firestone Community Visioning Workshop on Saturday, March 28. Reusable bags and Program brochures will be distributed.

Public Works also plans to attend 11 other events during the month of April to outreach to communities. Event details will be available on Public Works Environmental Programs' Earth Day site as well as on the Program website.

School Programs

Ms. Frias presented updates on recent school programs.

As part of Supervisor Gloria Molina's "A Green Bag for a Green Earth" campaign, Public Works' "Brag About Your Bag[®]" crew performed a skit about the four R's: Reduce, Reuse, Recycle and Rethink, at four elementary schools in the Florence-Firestone community. As part of the campaign, Heal the Bay introduced their "Bag Monster" and discussed some of the harmful aspects of litter from plastic bags in the ocean.

The school assemblies were organized by Supervisor Molina's office to encourage the use of reusable bags. Each student was given a reusable bag, and would get a sticker on their card each time they take their bag to participating local grocery stores. Students who collect the highest numbers of stickers could win prizes, such as a Disney goodie bag, Dodger tickets, a bicycle, or an opportunity to meet the Dodgers.

Supervisor Molina plans to conduct additional school assemblies in the fall.

Outreach Materials

Ms. Nguyen provided an update on the current outreach materials. In addition to the Program brochure Public Works is looking into posting a Program article, similar in content to the brochure, in a Spanish magazine publication.

c. Technical Advisory Subcommittee

Ms. Gemeniano provided an update on the data collected for the disposal reduction rate. The California Integrated Waste Management Board's At-Store Recycling Program 2007 report includes weights of plastic bags purchased and plastic bags recycled, during the period July 1, 2007 to December 31, 2007. Data includes both individual stores as well as entities providing aggregate quantities from multiple stores. Through coordination with the American Chemistry Council, we received a letter from the Plastic Recycling Corporation of California identifying a total aggregated weight of plastic bags recycled in 2007 from residential curbside recycling programs in the County. The ACC is working with their consultant to find the quantity attributable to the unincorporated County areas. Further backup documentation to verify this data is being requested.

The plastic bag disposal reduction rate is based on three components: consumption, recycling from at-store programs, and recycling from residential curbside programs. The base year consumption will be based on fiscal year 2007-08 data. According to the Waste Board the deadline to submit the 2008 annual reports is April 1, 2009.

V. Open Discussion on Program

Mr. Gamiño shared that staff is currently contacting various cities and organizations in the County to support the County sponsored legislation.

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 and Internal Services Department are looking into developing a list of alternatives to polystyrene food containers, such as cups, trays, and plates, to be used at County departments.

A study is currently being conducted by a consultant to gather information on current usages across County departments. Factors being considered are functionality, safety, cost, and environmental compatibility of food container materials. The consultant study

is anticipated to be completed in May 2009, and the findings will be shared with the Working Group.

In addition to developing alternatives, the recycling of polystyrene food containers generated from County facilities is also being considered. The Sheriff's Department is finalizing their operational plans, which includes determining collection sites and transportation. After completion of the operational plan it is anticipated that a contract would be put out for bid through the County's Internal Services Department.

VII. Next Meeting

Ms. Thompson announced that the next meeting for the subcommittees will be held on Wednesday, April 15, 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.