

MEETING NOTES
SINGLE USE BAG REDUCTION AND RECYCLING PROGRAM

Working Group Meeting

Wednesday, May 20, 2009, 2:00 p.m.

Department of Public Works, Environmental Programs Division, Large Conference Room

I. Introductions

The meeting was called to order at 2:05 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 the County of Los Angeles Department of Public Works; Dorothea Park and Burt Kumagawa with the County of Los Angeles Chief Executive Office; Rick Crandall with Albertsons; and Andrea Harbin with Creative Environmental Solutions-Nu-Earth, Inc. Those who attended via conference call were: Darrell Costello with Roplast Industries; Kimberly Nilsson representing the Cities of Malibu, Agoura Hills, and Bell Gardens; Jacy Bolden with the City of Encinitas; Jennifer Forkish with Ek and Ek representing the American Chemistry Council (ACC); Nick Morell with the Sanitation Districts of Los Angeles County; and Samantha Martinez with Rose and Kindel representing the ACC's Plastics Foodservice Packaging Group.

II. News and Updates

a. Recent Articles

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

- MSNBC.com published an article about the findings of a necropsy report on leatherback turtles. Out of 400 turtles one-third were found to contain plastic bags, fishing lines, balloons, or wrappers, in their stomach.
- SFGate.com published an article distinguishing myths from facts regarding single use bags, as part of a campaign launched by Save the Bay for a Statewide ban, or fee, on single use bags.
- Livescience.com published an article on the ACC's campaign to manufacture plastic bags with 40 percent recycled content by 2015. The ACC plans to invest \$50 million to overhaul the manufacturing process to achieve this goal.

b. Legislative Updates

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

- Assembly Bill 87 is currently in the Appropriations Committee as a Suspense File. Bills are held in Suspense File when their enactment will have a fiscal impact of \$150,000 or more on a state-managed fund. Staff will monitor AB 87 to track whether it passes out of Suspense by May 29th and out of the Assembly Floor by June 5th. Staff is aware of 25 to 30 support letters that have been written in support of AB 87.
- Assembly Bill 1141 is no longer under consideration for becoming law. AB 1141 originally required 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.
- Senate Bill 228 is currently scheduled for hearing by the Senate Appropriations Committee on May 26th. SB 228 would require manufacturers of marine degradable or compostable plastic bags to meet specific standards to ensure bags are readily and easily distinguished from plastic bags.
- SB 531 originally required manufacturers to pay a \$0.001 per-bag fee, but has since been significantly amended. Senate Bill 531 now provides direction regarding educational materials that manufacturers currently must provide to stores regarding plastic bag recycling, reduction, and reuse. The Bill will be heard before the Senate Floor by June 5th.

Bills that do not make it out of their house of origin by June 5, 2009 will not be considered during the second half of the year.

III. Program Status

a. Cities Participation

Ms. Gemeniano provided an update regarding cities' participation.

Of the ten partner cities, seven have sent Resource Packets to all of their affected stores. Cities such as Santa Fe Springs have also begun distributing Program Brochures. As part of Earth Day, reusable bags were promoted and distributed at various city-sponsored events. The cities of Pomona and Santa Fe Springs gave away a total of 1,280 reusable bags at their events.

Staff also continued to seek support for AB87 from all cities within the County. So far five of the Program's partner cities have indicated interest in sending support letters including the City of Glendale who submitted their support letter. The updated city participation table will be available on the Program website.

Ms. Park suggested reaching out to additional cities in an effort to increase cities' participation in the Program. For example, cities that have sent in support letters for AB 87 may be interested in joining in the Program.

Mr. Crandall shared some items such as buttons, window decals, and plastic bags made of 100 percent recycled-agriculture film, which he obtained from Keep California Beautiful. Mr. Crandall reiterated that giveaways are a great way to get others onboard.

b. Website Update

Ms. Frias provided an update on the program website.

- On the "Getting Involved" page under "What You Can Do," a link to the ACC's flyer on recycling plastic bags and film was added. The flyer depicts the various types of plastic bags and film that are recyclable such as dry cleaning bags and product packaging. It also shows the types of products made from recycled plastics such as new bags and construction materials.
- The English and Spanish versions of the Program Brochure can be found on the "About the Program" and "Resources" pages.
- The Quarterly Report Number 5, dated May 6, 2009, submitted to the County of Los Angeles Board of Supervisors is available on the "Resources" page.
- Andrea Harbin's Nu-Earth presentation on May 16th at the Hawthorne Library was also added to the Program website.

IV. Subcommittee Developments

a. Store Operations Subcommittee

Mr. Crandall informed the Working Group that Albertsons sold 766,730 reusable bags in 2008. Including giveaways at store openings and community outreach events, Albertsons may have disseminated nearly one million reusable bags during that year. Mr. Crandall passed around a few different types of reusable bags recently made available in the market. One was made out of Chips Ahoy! cookie containers, and another was a collapsible basket made from recycled plastic. To target male shoppers, Albertsons sells a reusable container that resembles an open cardboard box.

As a future outreach effort staff is developing a campaign to promote reusable bags as well as enhance plastic bag recycling at stores. The campaign may involve partnerships with stores and non-profits. Staff is developing a proposal and will present it at an upcoming stakeholder meeting.

b. Public Education and Outreach Subcommittee

Community Outreach

Ms. Nguyen provided an update on Community Outreach. Since the last subcommittee meeting in April, Public Works participated in 19 additional events at which Brag About Your Bag[®] totes and program brochures were distributed. These events included:

- April 18-County Sanitation Districts' Earth Day celebration in Whittier. On the same day Public Works also joined the "Get Hip, Go Green" event held in Florence-Firestone.
- April 22-County Department of Regional Planning's Climate Conversations.
- May 2-Cinco de Mayo Celebration hosted by UniVision Radio Station at the historic LA Sports Arena.
- May 16-Supervisor Yaroslavsky's Topanga Service Fair Event.

For the upcoming Quality and Productivity Commission Leadership Conference on May 21, 2009, at the Music Center, staff will provide 250 reusable bags and Program brochures for distribution.

Anti-litter Campaign

Ms. Nguyen informed the group that staff is considering placing ads on bus shelter panels. A graphics idea would be to display a before and after scene. On the before scene, the heading could say "Pollution" and depict litter, and on the after scene, the heading could say "Solution" with a picture of a clean and beautiful environment.

c. Technical Advisory Subcommittee

Plastic Bag Recycling

Ms. Gemeniano provided an update on efforts to analyze at-store plastic bag recycling data received from the California Integrated Waste Management Board. Since store consumption and recycling data were each reported to the Waste Board as aggregate quantities for the second half of 2007, analysis by staff progresses to determine the portions attributable to the unincorporated County areas. Staff continues to seek additional information from the Waste Board.

Disposal Reduction Rate Methodology

As previously suggested other factors may also be considered for inclusion into the disposal reduction rate formula, such as reuse of plastic bags, recycled content of plastic bags, and any others. Staff reiterated that any stakeholder recommendations to modifying the formula will be reviewed, especially those supported by any studies or analyses.

V. Open Discussion on Program

Mr. Gamiño suggested that shoppers who remember to bring their reusable bags to the store should be acknowledged and complimented. Ms. Bolden agreed that thanking shoppers for bringing their bags would be a great way to motivate them to continue bringing their reusable bags. Ms. Nilsson also commented about children reminding their parents to take their reusable bags to the store, and also the value to involving the youth in this effort.

Mr. Crandall stated that 85 percent of grocery shoppers are female. Accordingly, most reusable bags currently sold by the industry are designed to attract that gender group. He suggested that we may want to target our outreach efforts to females as well.

VI. Update on Expanded Polystyrene Study at County Facilities

Ms. Thompson provided an update regarding the study on alternatives to polystyrene food container products at County departments.

The consulting firm Responsible Purchasing Network has gathered information on current polystyrene food container usages by County departments; identified predominant polystyrene food container types such as large plates, small cups, medium sized bowls, and food trays; and began identifying alternative products. Some of the proposed alternatives include: bagasse (sugar cane fiber); paper lined with PLA (polylactic acid) which comes from corn; potato starch and calcium products; 100 percent recycled paper; and other biodegradable or recyclable products. Lifecycle Assessments for the alternative products are underway and anticipated to be completed in June. The findings will then be included in a report around July.

Along with efforts to identify alternatives the County is also looking into recycling polystyrene food containers generated at County facilities. The program may commence as a pilot effort at the Sheriff's Department, and expand to other County facilities. A contract will be executed and services would entail routine collections of post-consumer polystyrene food trays and product packaging, and recycling. A Scope of Work is being finalized.

Ms. Martinez inquired about whether or not composting would be addressed in the Lifecycle Assessments of the alternative products. Mr. Crandall added that composting would be factor that warrants consideration.

VII. Next Meeting

The next meeting for the subcommittees will be held on Wednesday, June 17, 2009, at Public Works' Annex Building, 3rd floor, large conference room.