

**MEETING NOTES**  
**SINGLE USE BAG REDUCTION AND RECYCLING PROGRAM**

**Working Group Meeting**

Wednesday, July 15, 2009, 10:00 a.m.

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

**I. Introductions**

The meeting was called to order at 10:00 a.m. Mr. Coby Skye of Public Works welcomed the Working Group, and introductions were made among attendees and phone participants.

Those in attendance were as follows: Coby Skye, Nilda Gemeniano, Angie Nguyen, Rogelio Gamiño, Natalia Jimenez, William Moreno, and Suk Chong with the County of Los Angeles Department of Public Works; Burt Kumagawa with the County of Los Angeles Chief Executive Office; Nick Morell with the Sanitation Districts of Los Angeles County; Laurie Hansen with the California Film Extruders and Converters Association; Pat Smith with Earth Share California; Meredith McCarthy with Heal the Bay; Andrea Harbin and Noreen Phillipus with Creative Environmental Solutions-Nu-Earth, Inc.; and Ruben Morla from California Verde Magazine. Those who attended via conference call were: Gail Lockhart with Mujeres de la Tierra; Susan Fernandez with the California Film Extruder and Converters Association; Judith Dunbar with the American Chemistry Council; Jennifer Forkish with Ek and Ek representing the American Chemistry Council (ACC); Samantha Martinez with Rose and Kindel representing the ACC's Plastics Foodservice Packaging Group; and Stephen Joseph with "Save The Plastic Bag" Coalition.

**II. Public Education Campaign**

a. Supermarket Events

Ms. Jimenez informed the Working Group that the Public Education Campaign is scheduled to run from November 15, 2009, "America Recycles Day", to December 17, 2009, "Day Without A Bag". Earth Share California has joined as a partner in this campaign, and partnerships with supermarkets in the region are currently being sought out.

The goals of the campaign are as follows:

- to encourage the use of reusable bags,
- to enhance recycling of plastic bags,
- and to educate the public about the Program and the impacts of litter from single use bags.

Residents will be asked to bring back a specific number of plastic bags to exchange for a reusable bag.

b. Reusable Bags

Public Works is planning to redesign the current Brag About Your Bag<sup>®</sup> reusable bag. The size and layout of the current slogan may be changed, and logos of different partners may be included, in the same way as Heal the Bay's bag reflects. Public Works will be giving away bags made out of recycled plastic drink bottles at campaign events, but also welcomes donations of reusable bags made from other material.

c. Other Outreach Materials

The American Chemistry Council has continuously supported the Program by providing outreach materials on plastic bag recycling, which have been disseminated to stores and to residents at community outreach events. They have provided posters and signs reminding customers to recycle their plastic bags, and magnets on different types of recyclable plastic and film. They have confirmed they will provide magnets for the campaign that will help residents distinguish which types of plastic and film to recycle.

Keep California Beautiful has also confirmed that they will provide outreach materials to help customers remember to take their reusable bags when shopping and bring back their used plastic bags for recycling at the store. They will provide window clings for the campaign.

In addition to ACC and KCB's outreach materials, Public Works will develop and distribute other giveaway and promotional items, such as factoids, fridge magnets to remember to bring reusable bags, Program brochures, and shopping list pads which will have "Bring A Reusable Bag" listed as the first item. The items will also be made available at community outreach events.

d. Media Support

Public Works has placed a 30-second radio advertisement about using reusable bags with La Nueva Radio Station.

e. Campaign Next Steps

Campaign partners will be invited to a future campaign planning meeting to brainstorm the details of the campaign, and to decide how the campaign will move forward.

To reach 50,000 residents in four weeks, a meeting for interested supermarkets will be held on July 29, 2009 at the Public Works building to introduce the Program and the related public education campaign.

### III. News and Updates

a. Recent Articles

Ms. Gemeniano reported on the three new articles related to single use bags which were recently posted on the News page of the Program website:

- The Philadelphia City Council approved legislation to ban non-biodegradable plastic bags instead of charging shoppers twenty-five cents for each plastic carryout bag used at stores.
- The cities of Los Angeles and Malibu have passed legislation banning plastic shopping bags. L.A.'s ban would be effective July 1, 2010, and Malibu's ban went into effect this past June 27, 2009.
- Washington D.C. has started charging five cents for disposable bags at stores in an effort to reduce pollution of the Anacostia River.

b. Legislative Updates

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

- Assembly Bills 87 and 68, which imposes a fee on single use bags, will be reconsidered in January 2010. The bills are being sponsored by the County of Los Angeles. Both bills have become two-year bills, and will be considered again in January of 2010 after being held in the Assembly Appropriations Committee.
- Senate Bill 531 provides additional guidance to manufacturers regarding educational materials to be provided to stores for reducing, reusing, and recycling plastic bags. This bill is currently in the state Assembly Committee on Natural Resources. If Senate Bill 531 passes out of the committee by August, it will be heard on the Assembly floor in the first week of September.

Ms. Hansen added that Senate Bill 228 required compostable plastic bags to be "readily and easily identifiable", and that it did not get passed due to the high implementation costs. The bill will be placed into other legislation.

#### IV. Program Status

a. Cities Participation

Ms. Gemeniano updated the Working Group on the recent public education and outreach efforts of the Program's Partner cities. The city of Redondo Beach promotes the use of reusable bags in their city newsletter, while residents of Pico Rivera may pick up a free reusable bag at their city's facilities. Ralphs stores in the city of Glendale are also providing customer incentives and community outreach, such as giving credit for using reusable bags, and providing in-kind contribution such as food and giveaways at reusable bag events. The city of Azusa has produced a recycling/conservation brochure that also promotes the use of reusable bags.

At the last Public Education and Outreach Subcommittee meeting, the city of Glendale presented their Public Service Announcement on their City's Bag Program, which they plan to air on their cable TV channel. They plan to distribute the PSA to all stores in their city. Public Works is currently working

with the city on portions of the PSA which may be applied to the County's outreach material.

To expand the reach of this voluntary Program, Public Works continues to contact additional cities in the County, such as Lakewood, Montebello, and Lynwood. The updated table of city participation will be posted on the Program's website.

b. Community Outreach

Ms. Nguyen provided an update on the Program's community outreach efforts. Since the subcommittee meetings in June, Public Works staff has distributed educational and promotional materials, including the Brag About Your Bag<sup>®</sup> reusable bags, at three community and environmentally-focused events, which included:

- The Department of Public Works hosted "Get Hip, Go Green" events in the unincorporated communities of Walnut Park on June 27, 2009 and Mesa Heights on July 11, 2009.
- City of Rancho Palos Verdes' 34th Annual Independence Day Celebration at the Point Vicente Park/Civic Center.

A Spanish-language ad has also been published in California Verde magazine (June/July edition).

**V. Update on Environmental Impact Report**

Mr. Skye updated the Working Group on the Environmental Impact Report (EIR) being prepared for the ordinance requested by the County of Los Angeles Board of Supervisors. The report will be submitted after evaluating the results of the voluntary Program.

Public Works has selected Sapphos Environmental as the consultant to prepare the environmental review. They will first complete an Initial Study to evaluate how the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) will apply to the proposed ordinance. Public Works will layout a timeframe for public hearings for the draft EIR, and keep the Working Group posted on the results and upcoming meetings. The first public hearing for the EIR is expected to be in November or December.

There is an effort to develop the statewide master environmental assessment (MEA), which may be used for procuring environmental documents on the local level. The Ocean Protection Council was originally going to implement it, but due to some funding issues, they were not able to move forward. A non-profit collective of cities is seeking funding to take over the development of the MEA.

**VI. Update on Expanded Polystyrene Programs**

Mr. Skye provided an update regarding the County's efforts to reduce the usage of expanded polystyrene (EPS) within County operations.

Public Works has continued to work with the Sheriff's Department to develop a contract for recycling EPS food containers from Sheriff's facilities. The contract may be expanded in the future to collect from other County departments that heavily use EPS products. The scope of work for the contract will be developed in the next few days.

Public Works has also retained a consultant that will conduct life cycle analyses with regard to alternatives to expanded polystyrene food containers. The result of the study should be completed in the next few weeks and will be shared with the Working Group after it is finalized. The recommendations will be used for the County's future purchasing of food containers.

## **VII. Questions and Comments**

Mr. Morell asked about Public Works' involvement with the plastic bag contamination in store recycling bins. Mr. Skye responded that Public Works staff continues to communicate with stores, and is trying to put together best practices. The American Chemistry Council designed clear recycling bins for customers to easily identify those meant for plastic bags. Closed or dark containers are usually mistaken as trash receptacles, therefore more contaminants are found in them. Staff also distributed signage to stores that will help customers easily distinguish the recycling bins from trash receptacles.

## **VIII. Next Steps**

We invite grocery stores in the Los Angeles County to attend an upcoming informational forum to learn about the Program and the public education campaign planned to be held at the end of the year. Public Works will continue to work with cities to further campaign and Program efforts.