

MEETING NOTES
SINGLE USE BAG REDUCTION AND RECYCLING PROGRAM

Working Group Meeting

Wednesday, September 16, 2009, 10:00 a.m.
Department of Public Works, Annex Building 1st Floor Conference Room

I. Introductions

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

II. News and Updates

a) Recent Articles

Ms. SantaMaría reported on recent news and articles related to single use bags:

- In Chesham, United Kingdom, according to *This is Local London*, September 12 was declared National Plastic Bag Free Day, with events held to highlight the damage plastic bags cause to the environment.
- In Canada, McMaster University is among the first campuses in Canada to ban plastic bags, reported The Hamilton Spectator.
- In a recently published article by Discovery Channel, according to a new study, plastic in the oceans can break down in as little as a year, leaching chemical compounds into the water that may harm the health of animals and possibly even people.
- Another article published by the *San Francisco Chronicle* discussed a study of thousands of tons of plastic debris winding up in the oceans every year, and ending up in the swirling currents of the Great Pacific Garbage Patch.

Mr. Skye also mentioned that an article regarding Mexico City's phase out of plastic bags will also be posted.

b) Website Updates

Ms. Gemeniano reported that the website is being updated and will soon feature the new program brochure that includes a reminder that reusable bags are washable. Staff will work on adding a page to the website that will display pictures of facility cleanups.

c) Legislative Updates

Mr. Rogelio Gamiño provided an update on SB 228, which will require compostable bags to be easily identifiable by the text printed on the bag. This bill is currently held in a suspense file. However the exact language of SB 228 was added to AB 903. AB 903 subsequently was held in suspense on August 17, and as of August 27, it has been held in submission.

Mr. Skye reported that staff is continuing to monitor SB 531, as it has significant differences from the County-sponsored bill AB 87.

d) Environmental Impact Report Update

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 an initial study is completed next month and circulated for public comment. Public scoping meetings will be held for this item. Information will also be distributed through the Program's electronic newsletter.

III. Program Status

a) Cities Participation

Ms. Gemeniano updated the Working Group on cities that are interested in participating in the Program's public education campaign at the end of the year. These cities include: Azusa, Glendale, Lomita, Pico Rivera, Santa Fe Springs and West Covina.

The City of Pico Rivera distributes free recycled-content reusable bags with the Program brochure at certain city-sponsored events and also promotes the program through other city department events as well as advertisement on the city's cable channel. They plan to distribute city reusable bags for campaign events in their city stores, and will promote the campaign on their cable channel and during city-sponsored events. The City of West Covina is also willing to promote and run campaign events in their city.

Ms. Gemeniano provided an updated chart showing the participation of Program Partner Cities, which includes the number of stores by category and activities conducted by the cities for the Program. The updated table of city participation will be posted on the website.

b) Category 2/3 Stores Outreach

Ms. Gemeniano informed the Working Group members that staff is concluding store visits for Category 1 stores (supermarkets and large drugstores).

In regards to Category 2 and 3 store outreach efforts, Ms. Gemeniano shared that there may be items on the Store Participation Checklist that may not be applicable to Category 2 and 3 stores. By program definition, Category 2 stores encompass convenience stores and other appropriate franchise stores with a total area of greater than or equal to 10,000 square feet; and Category 3 stores are the rest of the stores, not defined as Category 1 or 2, that use single use carryout bags for their purchases.

Staff requested for recommendations on tailoring the Store Participation Checklist to be applied to Category 2 and 3 stores. As part of the Program outreach to Category 2 and 3 stores, it was also recommended that focus groups be developed to target these smaller stores. The training materials that result from the Category 1 focus groups may be applied. Focus groups for Category 2 and 3 stores will discuss customer incentives and public education/awareness ideas specifically targeted to their needs and resources.

Assistance is requested from Working Group members to assist in reaching out to the small business community, such as through ethnic-based business associations, which may help in reaching out to the smaller Category 2 and 3 stores.

c) Public Education Campaign

Ms. Jimenez informed the Working Group that Public Works staff is set to launch a countywide campaign that will run from November 15 to December 17, 2009. It coincides with Keep America Beautiful and the National Recycling Coalition's "America Recycles Day" on November 15 and with Heal The Bay's "Day Without A Bag" on December 17, 2009. Staff has partnered with Earth Share of California, Heal the Bay, Albertsons, Ralphs/Food4Less, Top Valu/Valu Plus, and How's Market.

Staff is also working on obtaining advertising. San Gabriel Valley Tribune will run a campaign ad on September 24, 2009. A radio ad is pending ISD approval. A campaign ad will also be featured in the County Chief Executive Office's "Community Connections", a newsletter which serves the unincorporated County areas. A campaign kickoff and press conference is tentatively planned for the Board of Supervisors meeting on November 10, 2009.

Ms. Jimenez requested for stakeholder comments on the updated logo to be printed on the campaign's reusable bags. Ms. Jimenez can be reached at (626) 458-3530.

III. Update on Expanded Polystyrene Efforts

a) Study of Alternative Food Containers

Mr. Skye reported that the outside consultant, Responsible Purchasing Network (RPN), further evaluated County use of EPS and recommended ways in which County operations could utilize alternative products. Their report validated the findings and recommendations of the internal staff report, and focused on using the “hierarchy” that was developed from the staff report. The hierarchy takes into account environmental impacts that are attributed to disposable food containers, which includes greenhouse-gas emissions, litter impact, and water quality impact. According to the consultant’s study, reusable products are the best option, followed by alternatives products such as those that are compostable and recyclable. Also considered was the impact of implementing an EPS recycling program for those operations that cannot use alternatives.

RPN verified departmental EPS usage by container type, and hired a life-cycle scientist to conduct greenhouse gas emission life cycle assessments on the EPS products and identified alternative products. RPN considered other impacts and conducted an independent assessment of the hierarchy of alternatives. Their draft final report with recommendations, LCA report, and food container purchasing guide was sent out for stakeholder comment. Mr. Skye requested comments by Wednesday, September 23. These three items along with the original staff report and set of recommendations will be submitted to the County Board of Supervisors.

Staff was asked if a composting program would be part of the County’s plan if compostable products are used. Mr. Skye replied that it was the intent to look at each department on a case by case basis, and implement appropriate recycling or composting infrastructure to the maximum extent feasible.

b) Recycling in Sheriff’s Department

Mr. Skye provided an update on staff efforts to develop a recycling infrastructure for the Sheriff’s department and possibly other County departments. Due to nonresponsive bids, timing, and other factors, the County did not get sufficient responses. ISD is currently in the process of reissuing the bid with some adjustments to the scope, with the most significant change being a bidders’ conference to ensure bid responsiveness.

IV. Next Steps

We will keep stakeholders posted on Program deliverables, such as those for the EIR, EPS Recycling contract, and efforts in phasing out EPS Food Containers at County operations.