

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

**Working Group Meeting**

Wednesday, September 17, 2008, 2:00 p.m.

County of Los Angeles Department of Public Works, Small Dining Room

**I. Introductions**

The meeting was called to order at 2:10 PM. 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, Emiko Thompson, Iwen Tseng, Nilda Gemeniano, and Hossam Banna with County of Los Angeles Department of Public Works, Matthew Dodson with California Grocers Association, Alina Morshidian with City of Glendale, Diana Dixon-Davis with 31<sup>st</sup> District PTSA, Marcus Eriksen and Anna Cummins with Algalita Marine Research Foundation, Laurie Hansen with California Film Extruders and Converters Association, Dorothea Park and Burt Kumagawa with County of Los Angeles Chief Executive Office, Nick Morell with Sanitation Districts of Los Angeles County, and Josiah Jones and Lisa Foster with 1 Bag at a Time. Those who attended via conference call were: Jennifer Forkish and Tim Shestek with American Chemistry Council, Chris Mastro with County of Los Angeles Department of Public Health, Jacy Bolden with the City of Encinitas, and Shera Jackson with Progressive Bag Alliance.

**II. News and Updates**

Mr. Skye reported that there were a number of new developments since the last time the Working Group met:

- Seattle adopted a \$0.20 fee on each single use plastic carryout bag, effective January 1, 2009. The measure may be placed on the ballot for referendum. Manhattan Beach passed a total ban on single use plastic bags.
- The City of Glendale joined the County's bag program.
- State legislation to impose a fee came close to passing. Efforts to pass such a bill would continue next year.
- The County's Single Use Bag Reduction and Recycling Program was officially launched, with the mailing of the Program Resource Packet to 121 large supermarkets and retail stores with pharmacies in the unincorporated County areas.

Now that the Program details are developed, this meeting signified the Program's transition to implementation of the Program, which will be led by Ms. Emiko Thompson's team from Public Works.

### **III. Program Status**

Ms. Thompson stated the Program's success was due to a collaborative effort, and that the team would shift focus to administration of the bag program. The program was launched in mid-August, with Program Resource Packets sent to 121 Category 1 stores in unincorporated County areas and additional copies sent to all participating cities.

Ms. Thompson reported that the following nine cities are partners in the program: Azusa, Bell, Glendale, Hermosa Beach, Lomita, Pico Rivera, Redondo Beach, Santa Fe Springs and Signal Hill.

Ms. Diana Dixon-Davis asked if the City of Los Angeles was participating in the County's Single Use Bag program. Mr. Skye responded that the City of Los Angeles had its own program and had not officially joined the County's Program. The City of Los Angeles adopted a citywide ban on single use plastic bags, which would go in effect in 2010, unless a state wide legislative fee is adopted. Since legislation stalled this year the ban may become effective; staff will monitor the situation and maintain contact with the City.

Ms. Thompson explained the meeting handout, which included the joint County-California Grocers' Association letter, Program Resource Packet and the Store Participation Checklist. The packet was mailed on August 21, 2008, and Public Works has begun to receive responses. The checklists completed so far indicated that no extensive recycling programs were currently in place at those stores, however, respondents indicated their willingness to incorporate many of the ideas. Ms. Thompson further explained that one of the important next steps was to actively engage the stores. The Working Group was encouraged to come up with methods and ideas on how to engage the stores, such as through phone calls, field visits, or working with the California Grocers' Association (CGA) and other stakeholders.

Mr. Nick Morell asked what the obligation was after the stores received the packet. Ms. Thompson indicated that the program was voluntary; however CGA had committed to work with us to implement the guidelines detailed in the packet. She reminded the group that the common goal was to help the stores reach the reduction benchmarks. Mr. Skye also noted there was a two-fold incentive for stores to participate. One was that stores implementing the Program would be recognized through the County's outreach efforts. The second incentive was to avoid an all out ban by the Board of Supervisors for unincorporated County areas, which depends on stores meeting the reduction benchmarks.

Ms. Alina Morshidian asked how benchmarks would be measured. Mr. Skye responded that stores were required to report the number of bags they used and collected for recycling to the state, according to AB 2449. The data would be evaluated for the

unincorporated areas and participating cities as a whole to measure the benchmarks, not on a store by store basis, since the industry data was confidential. Mr. Hossam Banna also responded that the technical subcommittee would come up with recommendations.

Ms. Jennifer Forkish asked when data would be available. Mr. Skye responded that the data was not available yet, but would be compiled by the California Integrated Waste Management Board (Waste Board). The information, which will be broken down by jurisdiction, will be obtained as soon as it is made available.

A concern was brought up regarding packets being made available in other languages. Mr. Skye responded that the Grocers' Association indicated that store managers, who were recipients of the packet, were generally accustomed to English, and that this should not present a barrier to receiving responses.

Ms. Diana Dixon-Davis asked about the lawsuit filed against the County. Mr. Skye noted that because the lawsuit was pending, County staff would not be able to discuss any details regarding the lawsuit. He confirmed the public information that the "Save The Plastic Bag" coalition, made up of plastic bag manufacturers, had filed a lawsuit asking for the County's voluntary program to be suspended, arguing that an Environmental Impact Report was needed prior to the Board of Supervisors action. Staff will notify the Working Group upon final resolution of the issue.

Mr. Skye pointed out the contact information sheet in the handout, where additional questions or comments could be directed. Ms. Thompson stated that the contact information will also be made available online.

Ms. Thompson stated that the City of Pomona is interested in joining the Program, and Public Works plans to make a presentation to the City Council on October 6.

#### **IV. Subcommittee Updates**

It was reported that the combined population of participating partner cities was approaching 2 million, and coupled with the City of LA and other cities that have their own program, the majority of the County of Los Angeles was acting to reduce the impact of plastic bags. Long Beach and Pasadena (the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> largest populated cities in the County) have also shown interest in joining the program or otherwise taking action on this issue.

Ms. Thompson referred to the draft handout summary of Alternative 5 responsibilities taken from the January 22, 2008 Board Action for the Program. Ms. Thompson requested that any comments regarding this draft version be submitted. Some program components

would require attention sooner than others, such as a more immediate need to engage the stores. She suggested assigning tentative duties and due dates.

Mr. Matthew Dodson of CGA announced that he was new to the CGA, but was willing to participate in the Store Operations Subcommittee. Mr. Banna asked for subcommittee volunteers, and inquired about selecting subcommittee chairpersons. Mr. Banna answered that a list of volunteers would be compiled, and from that list, subcommittee chairpersons could be elected.

Mr. Skye stated that the Program packet was a collaborative effort, including the toolkit attachment provided by the American Chemistry Council. The Program website and slogan have been completed, but other educational materials remain to be developed. Mr. Marcus Eriksen expressed interest in joining the Public Education and Outreach Subcommittee, and offered to develop materials. Mr. Skye stated that all educational resources would be made available to participating cities for duplication.

Ms. Diana Dixon-Davis stated that website queries for the term “plastic bag” did not return the program’s website. Mr. Banna stated that in order to avoid query errors, to type in 888cleanla.com or bragaboutyourbag.com directly into the address bar. Ms. Thompson stated that searchable capabilities would be enhanced through work with technical staff.

## **V. Next Steps**

Ms. Nilda Gemeniano emphasized the importance of the Working Group to reach out to the 121 stores to which packets were sent. This outreach effort should include encouraging stores to be proactive in their program participation. When working with stores, AB 2449 compliance should also be reinforced. This would allow us to get feedback on their progress in meeting benchmarks and goals. She also mentioned that further expansion of the program, to include other agencies, schools, and libraries for example, must be a priority.

Ms. Iwen Tseng discussed technical component development. This area focuses on enhancing the disposal reduction methodology formula by incorporating appropriate factors, such as changes in economics, population and bag reuse. Experts, students, or statisticians could be sought out to enhance data collection and/or the methodology. Mr. Banna noted that the baseline for the methodology had been established in the packet.

Ms. Thompson announced the Store Operations Subcommittee would meet in two weeks. One week after that meeting, the Public Education Subcommittee would meet. The Technical Advisory Subcommittee would meet one week after that. The next Working Group meeting would be set for mid-November.

Mr. Skye asked if there were any AB 2449 stores that were not members of the CGA. Mr. Matt Dodson indicated that pharmacies were not members of the CGA and most, if not all, of the grocers are part of the CGA. Ms. Jennifer Forkish stated that the Mexican-American Grocers' Association and the Asian-American Grocers' Association may not be members of the CGA. Both of these associations will be contacted. Mr. Skye stated that he did not believe that 99-cent stores were affected by AB 2449, but they had been willing participants in "A Day Without a Bag" campaign. Ms. Jennifer Forkish suggested contacting the California Retailers Association for specific retailer membership.

Ms. Lisa Foster asked if "A Day Without a Bag" would be held this year. Mr. Banna stated that Public Works would be interested in participating in the event, if held. Mr. Skye stated that the last "A Day Without a Bag" event was successful.

Alina Morshidian asked how to obtain a list of stores affected by AB 2449 within the city's jurisdiction. Mr. Hossam Banna replied that the subcommittees may be able to assist with obtaining such information, as well as the Waste Board.

Ms. Laurie Hansen asked if non-attendees can be volunteered for subcommittees. Mr. Banna stated that this was encouraged, since there are no membership requirements for volunteering in a subcommittee.

Ms. Anna Cummins asked if a budget had been designated for purchasing reusable bags to be used as promotions. Mr. Banna replied that LA County has an ongoing budget for such promotions, and had participated in many outreach events already. Public Works will be hosting at the Los Angeles County Fair and all were welcome to attend. Reusable bags are distributed at this and other such events. Planning for other promotions would be addressed for specific events as they occur.

Ms. Thompson announced that the "Brag About Your Bag" slogan became a registered trademark of the Program by the U.S. Patent and Trademark Office.

Mr. Banna requested that subcommittees be formed and listings of members be submitted by next week. Ms. Thompson closed the meeting by thanking the attendees.

## Single Use Bag Reduction and Recycling Program

### Public Works Contact Information

**Hossam Banna** (Program Manager)

Senior Civil Engineer

(626) 458-5167

[HBANNA@dpw.lacounty.gov](mailto:HBANNA@dpw.lacounty.gov)

**Emiko Thompson** (Program Manager)

Civil Engineer

(626) 458-3521

[ETHOMP@dpw.lacounty.gov](mailto:ETHOMP@dpw.lacounty.gov)

**Nilda Gemeniano** (Program Administrator)

Associate Civil Engineer

(626) 458-5184

[NGEMENIA@dpw.lacounty.gov](mailto:NGEMENIA@dpw.lacounty.gov)

**Iwen Tseng** (Program Assistant)

Civil Engineering Assistant

(626) 458-2543

[ITSENG@dpw.lacounty.gov](mailto:ITSENG@dpw.lacounty.gov)

For more information on the Program, please visit our website at

[www.BragAboutYourBag.org](http://www.BragAboutYourBag.org)