

MEETING NOTES
SINGLE USE BAG REDUCTION AND RECYCLING PROGRAM

Store Operations Subcommittee Meeting

Tuesday, December 16, 2008, 9:00 a.m.

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

I. Introductions

The meeting was called to order at 9:00 a.m. Those in attendance were: Emiko Thompson, Nilda Gemeniano, Angie Nguyen, and Christine Frias with the County of Los Angeles Department of Public Works; Ritu Sehgal with the County of Los Angeles Internal Services Department; Burt Kumagawa with the County of Los Angeles Chief Executive Office; and Rick Crandall with Albertsons. Those who participated via conference call were: Trent Harbin with Creative Environmental Solutions; and Nick Morell with the Los Angeles County Sanitation Districts.

II. Program Status

a. Checklists Received

Ms. Thompson provided an update on the checklists received. Nineteen stores submitted their completed checklists, to date, with approximately half coming from smaller stores. The checklists indicate that many of the large stores have already placed recycling bins for plastic bags, and display reusable bags for sale. The checklists from smaller stores indicate they do not sell reusable bags nor have any programs that motivate customers to recycle their plastic bags.

The checklists also indicate that some stores give their customers credit for bringing their reusable bags. However, many stores have not provided any training materials to educate their employees and customers about the environmental impacts of litter from single use bags. Many do not charge a per-bag fee, nor do they offer free reusable bags as an incentive.

Mr. Rick Crandall, who is the Director of Environmental Stewardship for Albertsons, reported that Albertsons provides training to their employees on promoting the recycling of plastic bags as part of their mandatory training program. Mr. Crandall reported that the majority of the 72 Albertsons stores in Los Angeles County would likely not complete the program checklist unless they receive Mr. Crandall's approval. He will send an email asking the store managers to respond to the County's Program by completing and submitting the checklists.

Mr. Crandall reported that the training program for Albertsons stores is centralized and strives for consistency in training employees within the California/Nevada region. It is a 4-hour training session, and provides for timely feedback from local store employees to the corporate office.

Public Works will continue to work with Mr. Crandall and the other stores in the unincorporated areas to compile completed checklists and provide updates.

b. Cities Participation

Ms. Gemeniano provided an update on the cities participation. The City of Azusa sent resource packets to all the stores in their jurisdiction that provide plastic carryout bags. The City of Glendale sent resource packets electronically to the California Grocers Association and the National Association of Chain Drug Stores, who then disseminated them to their member stores within the City. To date, the City received feedback from six area Ralph's stores, and will follow up with the other stores within their jurisdiction. The city of Hermosa Beach created a new committee specifically to implement the program and increase participation from local stores.

Mr. Kumagawa reported that the City of Burbank reviewed the County program, and will be monitoring any upcoming state mandates concerning single use carryout bags over the coming months. Some Council members expressed interest in implementing a program that is consistent with state mandates.

c. Website Update

Ms. Frias provided an update on the program website. Approximately ten recent news articles are anticipated to be posted by the end of the week. A new link was added to the "Events" page, which directs users to locations for reusable bag giveaways in conjunction with Heal the Bay's "A Day Without A Bag" event. Announcements about the event were added to the "Getting Involved" page including the County's proclamation of the third Thursday of December each year as "A Day Without A Bag." Some links were also added to the "Resources" page, such as a link to the "Plastic Grocery Bag Fact Sheet" by Keep California Beautiful, and a link to the Reusable Plastic Bag presentation by Roplast Industries. Additionally, a link to the At-Store Recycling Program of the California Integrated Waste Management Board was also included. We are also creating a "Legislative Updates" page to include recent legislation related to the Program which will be posted on the website.

III. Program Development

a. Store Site Visits

On December 8th and 9th, two teams from Public Works conducted site visits to eight unincorporated area stores using in-house staff. One notable finding during the visit was the attractive and creative reusable bag promotion at Trader Joe's. In addition to a visually appealing display of an extensive variety of reusable bags for sale, Trader Joe's also administers a raffle program whereby customers who bring their reusable bags to the store could enter their name into a raffle to win \$10 off of their next purchase and receive a free reusable bag.

During the site visits, it was also noted that the stores used a wide variety of plastic bag recycling receptacles, ranging from cardboard boxes to more sturdy recycling bins. It was also found that one of the stores did not offer any paper bags and used only plastic carryout bags.

The visits entailed meeting and talking with each of the store managers, and discussing the County's program. Almost all of stores gladly accepted the plastic bag recycling outreach materials provided by the American Chemistry Council, which included bin signs and posters. These materials will continue to be offered to stores during future store visits to assist them with their plastic bag recycling program.

b. Components Pertaining to Store Operations

It was suggested that a neutral design on the reusable bags may be more appealing to a wider range of age and gender groups. This in turn may attract more shoppers to purchase and use them.

Customer incentive programs such as the one at Trader Joe's involving a raffle and free reusable bags should also be further developed and encouraged among other stores.

c. Status of Proposed Contractual Services

As discussed at previous stakeholder meetings, there are plans to retain consultant services to assist the County in the following program tasks: confirmation and advancement of store participation levels, including conducting follow-up site visits; production and distribution of outreach materials; and technical activities associated with the disposal reduction rate methodology. Public Works will continue to develop the scope of work, and disseminate a draft for stakeholder review upon completion.

d. Open Discussion on Program Development

Mr. Crandall shared insightful information about the various ways in which Albertsons is increasing their store training and outreach efforts to promote environmental stewardship, including reusable bag incentives. He expressed his desire to continue participating in the County's program.

IV. Next Steps

The next Working Group meeting will be held on Wednesday, January 21, 2009, at Public Works' Conference Room D.