

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

**Working Group Meeting**

Thursday, February 25, 2010, 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 am. Mr. Suk Chong of Public Works welcomed the Working Group, and introductions were made among attendees and phone participants.

Those in attendance were as follows: Suk Chong, Nilda Gemeniano, Luke Mitchell, Stacy Harvey, and Rogelio Gamiño with County of Los Angeles Department of Public Works (Public Works); Pat Smith with Earth Share, and Laurie Hansen with California Film Extruders and Converters Association. Those in attendance via conference call were: Hillary Gordon with Sierra Club, Chandler Hadraba with California Film Extruders and Converters Association, Samantha Martinez and Jennifer Forkish representing the American Chemistry Council, Stephen Joseph representing Save The Plastic Bag Coalition, Patrick Rita with Paper Bag Council, Burt Kumagawa with County of Los Angeles Chief Executive Office, Rebecca Nelson with City of Malibu, Linda McClure with City of Covina, Andrea Harbin with Creative Environmental Solutions, and Rodney Cyr with The Environmental Coalition.

**II. News and Updates**

a) Recent News

Mr. Harvey reported on recent news articles relating to single use bags.

- Three Wal-Mart stores in Northern California stopped offering free plastic bags at checkout stands.
- The Urban Village Farmers Market is encouraging vendors to stop using plastic bags. Each vendor decided how they would reduce their use of plastic bags.
- Woolworths supermarkets on the Gold Coast of Australia have stopped offering plastic bags at all its express checkout lanes.

Regarding Manhattan Beach's efforts to ban plastic bags, the court ruling on February 20, 2009 to reject the city's ban for lack of an EIR was upheld by the state appellate court on January 27, 2010.

A Master Environmental Assessment (MEA) is being prepared by ICF International for Green Cities of California. The MEA is a literature search of the impact plastic bags has on the environment. The MEA is not an EIR. It does not reach conclusions or propose either mitigation measures or alternatives.

b) Website Updates

Mr. Mitchell reported on recent updates to the Program website. A link to the City of Glendale's public service announcement (PSA) about single use bags and reusable bags has been added to the *About the Program* page. The PSA mentions single use plastic bag waste and recycling statistics.

The map depicting locations of participating Category 1 stores in unincorporated County areas has been updated based on staff store visits. Three more articles have been added to the *News Articles* page. The statuses of legislative bills, held in committee have been updated on the *Legislative Updates* page.

c) Legislative Updates

Mr. Gamiño reported on recent updates of legislative bills relating to single use bags. AB 68, which is sponsored by Heal the Bay, and AB 87, which is sponsored by the County, died in Committee approximately January 22, 2010. AB 1998 was introduced to the state assembly. It would impose a 25-cent fee on paper bags, and disallow large stores from distributing plastic bags. Public Works staff is monitoring Senate Bill 228 and Assembly Bill 903 which would require bag manufacturers to make compostable bags easier to identify.

Ms. Hansen added that SB 228 is co-sponsored by the City/County of San Francisco for the purpose of preventing compostable bags from penetrating and causing problems in the recycling stream, as well as keeping normal plastic bags out of the compostable material.

d) Environmental Impact Report Update

Ms. Gemeniano provided an update on the development of the Environmental Impact Report (EIR) on proposed ordinances to ban plastic carryout bags. On January 21, 2010, Public Works updated the County Integrated Waste Management Task Force about County efforts in reducing single use carryout bags, which resulted in the development of this voluntary Single Use Bag Reduction and Recycling Program. To prepare for the EIR, public scoping meetings were held, which presented project goals, location, and scope. The draft EIR will be available for

public review for 45 days by this spring. Comments may be submitted in person or in writing.

### **III. Store Operations and Data Gathering**

Ms. Gemeniano reported on store operations and data gathered as a result of the Program. Public Works staff has made phone calls to participating Category 1 stores to review their progress in implementing bagging techniques, placing recycling bins in accessible locations, and encouraging shoppers to bring back their used plastic bags to recycle at stores. Through these calls, it was found that many stores still need help with their public environmental awareness program.

Public Works staff has also had difficulty obtaining plastic bag purchasing and recycling data from stores, and have been redirected by store locations to their corporate offices. Data from the corporate offices has yet to be received. The Progressive Bag Affiliates has provided the total amount of plastic bags recycled from curbside programs in 2008 from the entire Los Angeles County. Public Works will work with them to obtain the amount for unincorporated areas only.

Public Works is continuing its efforts in collecting data from multiple sources, including store locations, corporate offices, and the Department of Resources Recycling and Recovery, to help determine the disposal rate which will be compared against the benchmarks established by the County Board of Supervisors.

### **IV. Public Education and Outreach**

Mr. Mitchell reported on recent public education and outreach efforts of the Program. The Brag About Your Bag<sup>®</sup> Crew is preparing to participate in the East Los Angeles phase of Supervisor Gloria Molina's reusable bag campaign to take place in March. A reusable bag educational flyer was included in the utility bill statement sent out to residents of the City of Azusa. County Public Works is scheduled to attend seven community events throughout March and April to educate residents on the County's environmental programs, where they will be disseminating free outreach materials such as reusable bags.

Ms Gordon recommended further encouraging the use of reusable bags, such as signage and plastic bag trade-in programs, at locations where people are recycling plastic bags.

### **V. Update on Expanded Polystyrene Efforts**

Ms. Gemeniano discussed that Public Works has been working with various County departments to assist in the transition from expanded polystyrene food

container products to alternatives. The schedule to begin a recycling contract at one County department is currently being confirmed with the proposed vendor.

**VI. Next Steps**

Public Works will request assistance from stores to obtain plastic bag data to determine a plastic bag disposal reduction rate and evaluate the effectiveness of this voluntary Program. Public Works appreciates the assistance from Working Group members to develop outreach materials to encourage and remind residents to bring their reusable bags with them into the store when they shop. An email notice will be sent out regarding the next scheduled stakeholders' meeting.