

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

**Working Group Meeting**

Wednesday, April 7, 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. Coby Skye of Public Works welcomed the Working Group, and introductions were made among attendees and phone participants.

Those in attendance were as follows: Suk Chong, Coby Skye, Nilda Gemeniano, Luke Mitchell, Stacy Harvey, Sevak Khatchadorian, and Gabriel Arenas with County of Los Angeles Department of Public Works (Public Works); Burt Kumagawa with County of Los Angeles Chief Executive Office, Rick Crandall with Albertsons, Lars Clutterham with City of Downey Green Task Force, and Ursula Schmidt with City of Pasadena. Those in attendance via conference call were: Hillary Gordon with Sierra Club, Susan Fernandez with California Film Extruders and Converters Association, Samantha Martinez with American Chemistry Council, Stephen Joseph representing Save the Plastic Bag Coalition, Darrell Costello from Roplast Industries, and Rodney Cyr from The Environmental Coalition.

**II. News and Updates**

a) Recent Developments

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

- The Central Contra Costa Solid Waste Authority's Board of Directors is considering banning plastic carryout bags.
- The Regional Water Quality Control Board has mandated that Bay Area cities and counties reduce trash in waterways by 40 percent over five years.
- The coalition of cities called Green Cities California has released a Master Environmental Assessment (MEA) on single use and reusable bags. The MEA may be used by cities all over the state and country to develop environmental impact reports.

b) Legislative Updates

Mr. Khatchadorian reported on recent updates of legislative bills relating to single use bags. AB 1998 was introduced February 17, 2010 and amended April 5, 2010. If enacted, it would restrict stores from providing single use carryout bags to customers at the point of purchase. It would mandate stores to make reusable bags available for purchase. The California Department of Recycling and Recovering is to submit a report to the Legislature that includes recommendations to encourage the use of reusable bags, and expand on the definition of stores that are subject to AB 1998, on or before January 1, 2015.

AB 2138 was introduced February 18, 2010 and amended April 5, 2010. If enacted, it would prohibit a food provider from distributing disposable food service packaging or a single use carryout bag unless the packaging or bag meet the criteria for either compostable or recyclable packaging after July 1, 2011 until July 1, 2013. After July 1, 2013 food providers cannot distribute disposable food service packaging or single use carryout bags to consumers unless they determine the packaging or bags are composted or recovered for recycling at a rate of 25 percent or more.

c) Website Updates

Mr. Mitchell reported on recent updates to the Program website. Ten new reusable bag giveaway events have been added to the Events page. Assembly Bill 1998, Assembly Bill 2138, and Assembly Bill 903 were added to the Legislative Updates page. A summary of the number and types of bags distributed during the Brag About Your Bag<sup>®</sup> Campaign have been added to the Types of Bags page.

**III. Outreach Activities**

Mr. Arenas reported on recent outreach activities relating to single use bags. There are ten scheduled Earth month related events which Public Works staff will be attending and distributing reusable bags. The website lists the time and place these events are scheduled. Public Works will host an Earth Day event for employees at the Alhambra Headquarters on April 20, 2010.

**IV. Program Status**

a) Store Participation

Mr. Mitchell reported on recent store participation in the Program. Two new store checklists have been received since the last Working Group meeting. Overall, the follow up surveys show that there has been a 46 percent increase in training store personnel, a 21 percent increase in

providing customer incentives, and a 30 percent increase in public education.

b) City Participation

Mr. Skye reported on recent city participation in the Program. Agoura Hills is the latest city to adopt a resolution to partner with the County's voluntary Program. Partner cities have planned many events throughout this month in celebration of Earth Day.

c) Data Gathering

Mr. Skye reported on recent data gathered as a result of the Program. The checklist is one of the tools used to gather information about how stores are participating in the Single Use Bag Reduction and Recycling Program. As staff contacts stores to encourage them to implement the Program, they are also requesting information about the amount of plastic bags the stores are recycling. Nine stores have provided plastic carryout bag purchasing data from July 2007 through December 2009. Of those nine stores, four have provided recycling data for the same period. According to limited data obtained to date, 7 percent of the plastic carryout bags are being recycled. State law requires stores to provide requested plastic bag information. In partnership with the California Grocers Association, Public Works plans to send out a letter to stores reminding them that by law they must provide the requested information at every store location.

**V. Update on Expanded Polystyrene Efforts**

Mr. Skye reported on updates of efforts to reduce use of expanded polystyrene. County Counsel is reviewing a draft Board Letter that will implement a phase-out plan of expanded polystyrene food service products in County operations. Plans to implement a recycling program with the Sheriff Department are moving forward. If successful, it can be used as a recycling model for other County departments.

**VI. Questions & Comments**

Ms. Costello objected to the lack of promotion on the Program website of reusable plastic bags such as those manufactured by her company, as they are a viable alternative for reusable bags meeting current State law. Mr. Skye explained that Public Works has a separate purchasing policy than that of the State of California, which conforms with current State law. The Environmental Impact Report being prepared for the proposed ordinances to ban plastic carryout bags in Los Angeles County would address the issue of standards for reusable bags.

## **VII. Next Steps**

Public Works is considering changing the frequency of stakeholder meetings from monthly to every other month. The schedule of public meetings for the Draft Environmental Impact Report will be posted on the website when the document is publicly released.