

MEETING NOTES
SINGLE USE BAG REDUCTION AND RECYCLING PROGRAM

Public Education Subcommittee Meeting

Wednesday, February 18, 2009, 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 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; and Rodney Cyr with The Environmental Coalition. Nick Morell of the Los Angeles County Sanitation Districts attended via conference call.

II. Program Status and Development

a. Recent Public Outreach Activities

School Assemblies

During the month of February 2009, the “Brag About Your Bag[®]” crew from Public Works’ Environmental Programs Division joined Supervisor Gloria Molina, Heal the Bay, and Fox Sports en Español, and visited several elementary schools in the unincorporated Florence-Firestone area to educate 3rd through 5th graders about the environmental impacts of single use bag litter.

Heal the Bay and the “Bag Monster” touched upon the harmful aspects of plastic bag litter on the marine environment. Public Works’ “Brag About Your Bag[®]” crew followed with an animated skit about the four “R’s,” – Reduce, Reuse, Recycle, and Rethink.

To motivate students and their families the Supervisor announced that students will get stickers each time they take their reusable bags to participating stores. Students who accumulate the highest number of stickers on their “Reduce, Reuse, Recycle” Prize Cards will receive prizes, such as Disney goodie bags, Dodger tickets, a bicycle, or an opportunity to meet the Dodgers.

The Supervisor will be conducting additional school assemblies during the fall in the East Los Angeles area.

Florence-Firestone Community Enhancement Team

Ms. Thompson reported that she attended the January 27, 2009, meeting of the Florence-Firestone Community Enhancement Team at Washington Park. The team meets monthly and is comprised of community members and government representatives who collectively discuss issues of community interest and well-being.

Ms. Thompson conducted a presentation on the Single Use Bag Reduction and Recycling Program, and answered questions. Some of the notable remarks made by community members regarding the topic of single use bags included:

- Many consumers are not aware that plastic bags could be recycled. Therefore, more outreach should be done to promote it.
- Many local stores do not sell reusable bags. Perhaps the County can select three small stores in the area at which reusable bags can be given away to help the stores and to reach out to the community.
- When taking reusable bags to stores, health issues should be considered. Some material used for bags can carry insects into stores.
- At a local 99-Cent Store where there is a 3-cents per bag fee charge, a community member refused to take a bag and carried his purchases instead.
- Littering commonly occurs after community events. Therefore, outreach should be done at community events to disseminate anti-litter messages.

Academic Decathlon Event

Public Works staff attended the Academic Decathlon event at the University of Southern California Galen Center on February 7, 2009. Staff reached out to nearly 300 high school students, parents, and teachers who learned about the Program and received “Brag about Your Bag” reusable bags.

The Program brochure was also distributed as well as information about some of the other environmental programs administered by Public Works, such as the Household Hazardous Waste roundup events, Waste Tire collections, and Smart Gardening workshops.

Mr. Cyr suggested contacting local libraries since they can also help reach out to communities.

b. Upcoming Activities

Public Works will participate in many community events during the month of April in conjunction with Earth Day, where reusable bags and Program information will be distributed. Events information will continue to be updated on the Events page of the Program website.

c. Outreach Materials

Ms. Thompson described some of the latest updates on the Program brochure:

- Some verbiage was revised. For example, “Set a Good Example for your Community” was added to the front cover; and on the back, “Plastic Bag Tips” was edited to “Single Use Bag Tips”.

- Some of the previous photos were replaced with new ones depicting a shopper using reusable bags, and some plastic bags near a catch basin.
- Aesthetic changes, such as shifting text and graphics, were also made.

The brochure will be distributed at about seventy Albertsons stores throughout Los Angeles County. Ms. Frias suggested that the brochure be placed next to the reusable bags stand.

III. Open Discussion on Program

Ms. Thompson reported that Mr. Crandall of Albertsons is planning to add environmental messages on their weekly printed advertisements.

Mr. Morell announced that the Sanitation Districts will also be conducting an Earth Day Event on April 18, 2009.

IV. Next Steps

The next Working Group meeting will be held on Wednesday, March 18, 2009, at 2:00 p.m., in Conference Room D of the Department of Public Works' headquarters.