

**SINGLE-USE BAG REDUCTION AND RECYCLING PROGRAM
WORKING GROUP MEETING**

Meeting Notes from March 19, 2008

Kenneth Hahn Hall of Administration
500 W. Temple St. Los Angeles, CA 90012
Conference Room 743

I. CALL TO ORDER

Meeting was called to order at 2:06 p.m.

II. INTRODUCTIONS, OVERVIEW OF PROCESS

Mr. Fred Rubin welcomed the Working Group and members (including phone participants) introduced themselves. Mr. Rubin indicated that Working Group meetings will be held every third Wednesday of the month at 2:00 p.m. at the Kenneth Hahn Hall of Administration, Room 743, with the next meeting scheduled for April 16, 2008.

Mr. Paul Alva also welcomed the Working Group and stressed the collaborative and inclusive process of the meetings, where participation and feedback from the diverse stakeholders is greatly appreciated.

III. PLASTIC BAG NEWS AND UPDATES

Mr. Alva directed the Working Group to a compilation of news articles taken from national and international sources regarding plastic bags. He noted that Whole Foods Market intends to phase out plastic bags next month, and that the City of Santa Monica had instructed its City Attorney to develop an ordinance banning the use of plastic bags within city boundaries, and is investigating imposing a per bag fee for paper bags.

It was noted that the Coalition to Support Plastic Bag Recycling had filed a lawsuit against the City of Oakland, alleging that their plastic bag ban did not follow the review process required for public agencies under the California Environmental Quality Act. The City of Santa Monica was closely following the lawsuit and would review the outcome in developing its plastic bag ordinance.

Ms. Truc Moore of County Counsel stated that she had been informed by plaintiff's counsel in the Oakland case that the judge would be rendering a legal opinion by May 2008, at the latest. Mr. Alva added that, depending

on the judge's verdict, the County of Los Angeles would be monitoring the results as it determines the most effective path to take in developing its ordinance.

Mr. Alva stated that California Assembly Natural Resources Committee will be considering Assembly Bills 2058 and 2829 (copies of these bills, as introduced, were provided as handouts) on April 7, 2008. The Working Group was informed that the California Integrated Waste Management Board (CIWMB) is pursuing permanent regulations to carry out AB 2449, and looking for feedback on these permanent regulations.

The Working Group was also informed that a 5-signature letter from the Board of Supervisors was sent to every Mayor and City Manager in Los Angeles County to encourage adoption of a similar program by cities. Mr. Alva also stressed that the County is looking forward to receiving feedback from the cities, and that staff would be available for presentations and consultation on the matter.

IV. Definition of "Large Supermarkets and Retail Stores"

Mr. Coby Skye presented staff's recommendation to divide stores into three distinct categories:

1. Since a reporting infrastructure is already in place and data would be available for the County's use, stores under Category 1 would be large supermarkets and retail stores as defined by AB 2449.
2. Stores under Category 2 would include convenience stores and other franchise stores whose cumulative square footage exceeds 10,000 feet. The Working Group will consider ways to incorporate these stores into the overall Program by July 1, 2009, and to establish a framework for doing so by July 1, 2008.
3. Category 3 would encompass all other grocery and retail stores that provide plastic carryout bags to the public, including small family-owned neighborhood stores.

Action Items

- Working Group to provide comments to County Department of Public Works (DPW) staff on draft definitions and ideas about how to incorporate Category 2 and 3 stores into the overall program by April 4, 2008.
- DPW staff to contact local chambers of commerce and the National Association of Convenience Stores for comments.

V. Reporting and Measurement Methodology

Mr. Skye stated that the reporting and measurement methodology relies on data available under AB 2449. Currently, the first reporting forms are due by May 15, 2008 or 45 days after the reporting forms are posted on the CIWMB's website. However, as indicated to the Working Group, the County would collect data more frequently and on a jurisdictional basis for the County and participating cities.

When asked whether the measurement methodology would incorporate reused plastic bags (e.g., as trash can liners), Mr. Skye answered that a baseline of reused bags would first need to be established, then tracked. Mr. Skye stated that it may be cumbersome to track these numbers by jurisdiction, but that any suggestions on establishing a methodology to do so would be greatly appreciated.

In addressing a question on how plastic bags collected at curbside would be counted within the proposed reporting and measurement methodology, Mr. Skye indicated the need to receive data from Material Recovery Facility operators for cities that already have curbside recycling programs.

Mr. Alva mentioned that plastic bags collected by cities through curbside programs are not always recycled. He commented that it is important to keep encouraging residents to take their clean plastic bags to supermarkets for recycling since the markets for these bags are strong. A number of participants suggested that the County should help expand the number of locations that collect plastic bags and include those locations in the calculation. An example cited was Wal-Mart, which pays schools to collect plastic bags for recycling.

Action Items

- Staff to continue evaluating the measurement methodology.
- Stakeholders to provide comments to DPW staff by April 4, 2008.

VI. Store-Specific Program Options (Updated Annually)

Mr. Skye stated that large supermarkets and retail stores, as part of the Single-Use Bag Reduction and Recycling Program, are responsible for developing and implementing store-specific programs which focus on three key components: (1) retraining of store personnel, (2) providing incentives to reduce the consumption of single use plastic bags, and (3) establishing a general public education and awareness campaign.

Mr. Skye presented a number of staff recommendations for each component and urged the Working Group to develop additional elements or options to be added to the Program.

Specific Suggestions from the Working Group:

- Ms. Diana Dixon-Davis suggested creating a kids' coloring contest that emphasizes recycling plastic bags and using reusable shopping bags, which would be a low-cost activity that stores could participate in
- Placing signs at store entrances
- Ensuring that baggers ask if customers have brought their reusable bags (effective way for stores to show support for the Program).
- Requesting that stores donate profits received from recycling plastic bags at store recycling centers to an anti-litter/wildlife preservation campaign, which the store could promote as part of its green efforts.
- Requesting that stores report problems that they encounter and the methods they utilize when encouraging customers to use reusable shopping bags.

In addition to in-store programs, a suggestion was also made to utilize the County's in-house public information systems and resources in promoting the programs.

A representative from Mothers of the Earth commented that public education would also need to be community-specific.

Action Item

- Stakeholders to evaluate store-specific program options and provide any additional suggestions to DPW staff by April 4, 2008.

VII. Environmental Message On Plastic Bags

Mr. Skye provided a brief background on efforts to include an environmental message on plastic bags. He stated that there are a number of ways in which the County will explore imprinting of an environmental message on plastic bags:

1. through Working Group participation
2. by County ordinance
3. through State legislation

Each alternative could strive to remind consumers of the negative impacts of plastic bags and that reusable bags are a better alternative and a great way to reducing the number of bags used. The message may be

structured in two parts; the first part could be used to draw attention to the issue and the second part could address details of the issue.

A comment was made that the environmental message should be direct and should emphasize the need to use reusable bags, while standing out from other messages that may already be imprinted on plastic bags.

A representative from a plastic bag manufacturer provided an example of the environmental message already imprinted on her bags, which involves recycling arrows and something similar to the following message: REDUCE (and bring your own reusable bag next time), REUSE (this bag several times or for some other purpose), RECYCLE (this bag at the market or at curbside).

Specific Suggestions from the Working Group:

- Include rotating messages or facts on plastic bags, though feasibility and practicality (cost-benefit) of such an effort was questioned.
- Focus the message on the negative impacts that plastic bags have on the environment/wildlife since AB 2449 already requires that a “recycling” message be imprinted on bags.
- Research limitations (e.g., legal, technical) that could apply to the County’s environmental message.

Action Item

- Stakeholders to evaluate environmental messages and provide input and additional suggestions to DPW staff by April 4, 2008.

VIII. Public Education Efforts and Ongoing Communication

Mr. Alva and Mr. Skye briefly described the public education component, which the Working Group is required to develop as part of the Program. Mr. Alva stated that it is important to receive input from Working Group participants in order to develop a comprehensive and effective public education campaign.

Working Group members stressed the need for the County’s public education and outreach efforts to address ethnic, cultural, and language needs of Los Angeles County residents.

Other Suggestions from the Working Group:

1. Focus on providing a user friendly Program website.

2. Compile comprehensive website that addresses all of the County's environmental initiatives – provide a link to plastic bag site.
3. Explore a Program mascot to incorporate into the website and all educational and outreach literature.
4. Provide tailored content links (i.e., “click here if you are a student, or LA County unincorporated resident, or city resident, etc.”). Each link should contain information pertinent to that specific group. This would in turn save time and frustration of sorting through ordinances, and technical documentation.

Ms. Dixon-Davis distributed her ideas for an educational/publicity campaign.

A suggestion was also made to involve Sustainable Works (used by City of Santa Monica), green business outreach efforts, and Reuse People in Program outreach efforts.

Action Item

- Stakeholders to evaluate public education efforts and provide input and additional suggestions to DPW staff by April 4, 2008.

IX. Remaining Issues and Next Steps

Items to consider for the next meeting: review of comments for these deliverables, as well as establishing minimum store participation levels, discussing the County's public education efforts, increasing recycled content in paper/plastic bags, providing technical assistance, and identifying “hot spots.”

Mr. Alva reminded the Working Group that comments should be submitted to DPW by April 4, 2008.

The next Working Group meeting is scheduled for April 16 at 2 p.m.