



COUNTY OF LOS ANGELES SINGLE USE BAG REDUCTION AND RECYCLING PROGRAM

DRAFT PROGRAM COMPONENTS

JULY 1, 2008



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COUNTY OF LOS ANGELES
SINGLE-USE BAG REDUCTION AND RECYCLING PROGRAM
SUMMARY OF KEY PROGRAM COMPONENTS

According to research done by the Los Angeles County Department of Public Works, each year approximately 6 billion plastic carryout bags are consumed in Los Angeles County, equivalent to 600 bags per person per year*. Plastic bag litter makes up as much as 25 percent of the litter stream and significantly impacts our communities and the environment*. In Los Angeles County alone, local and State governments spend tens of millions of dollars each year on prevention, cleanup, and enforcement activities to reduce litter*. Although plastic carryout bags are inexpensive and have other useful qualities, they have had the propensity to become litter, thus overshadowing these benefits. Communities throughout the State and around the world are grappling with this issue, and searching for ways to reduce the impact that littered plastic and paper bags have on their quality of life.

Although paper carryout bags have a higher recycling rate than plastic carryout bags (21 percent nationally), approximately 117,000 tons of paper carryout bags are disposed by residents Countywide each year, comprising approximately 1 percent of the total 12 million tons of solid waste disposed each year*. Paper bags are less likely to become litter and will biodegrade in the marine environment; however, single-use paper carryout bags still are negative contributors to the environment given the substantial amount of energy used, trees felled, and pollution created in their manufacture.

For these reasons, on January 22, 2008, the Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors adopted the Single-Use Bag Reduction and Recycling Program, a comprehensive strategy designed to reduce the litter and other environmental impacts of single use carryout bags. The Program aligns supermarkets, retailers, environmental groups, the plastic bag industry, local government, and the public to reduce the consumption of paper and plastic bags while increasing the use of reusable bags, promoting at-store recycling of plastic bags, and educating consumers regarding the need to reduce litter. As a part of the Program, the Board of Supervisors established two aggressive benchmarks for reducing plastic bag use and increasing recycling, using total consumption for Fiscal Year 2007-08 as a baseline:

- 30 percent disposal reduction by July 1, 2010
- 65 percent disposal reduction by July 1, 2013

Failure to achieve these goals triggers action to establish a County Ordinance to ban the use of plastic bags at affected stores.

Program Partners

- *The County of Los Angeles and Participating Cities* -- The County is the facilitator of this Program and will be working with all participating stores to provide

* All references are to the Plastic Bag Staff Report to the Los Angeles County Supervisors, available for download at www.OurWebsite.org

technical assistance in implementing this Program. The County will utilize its vast public outreach program to promote this program to County residents, as well as provide specific store outreach assistance.

- *The County Working Group* -- An inclusive group comprised of representatives of the California Grocers Association, American Chemistry Council, Progressive Bag Alliance, local government, and environmental organizations; stakeholders developed this Program through a highly collaborative process. Stakeholders will continue to work together to ensure smooth implementation of this Program.
- *Large Grocery Stores and Retail Stores with Pharmacies* -- Each store is encouraged to implement this Program in an effort to reduce single-use carryout paper and plastic bags and promote the use of reusable bags Countywide.

Program Components

To guide participants in implementing the Program, stakeholders came together to develop the following:

Store Operations

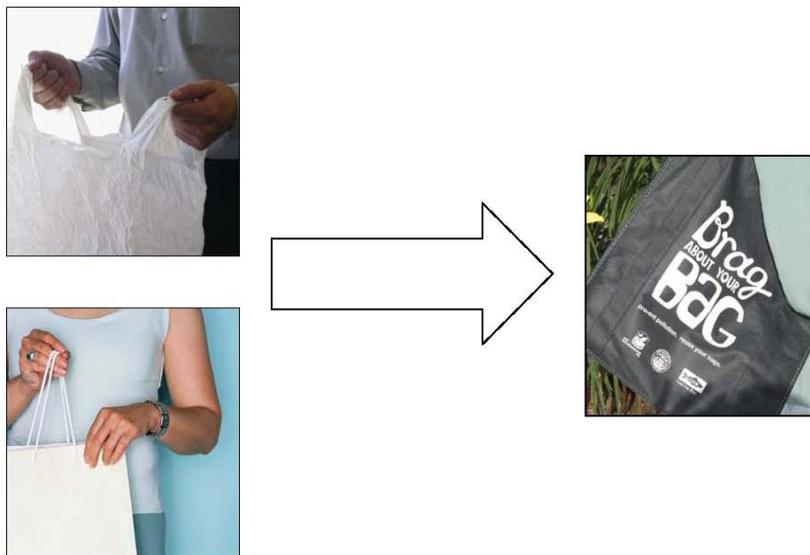
- *Definition of Large Supermarkets and Retail Stores* -- These definitions identify which stores will participate in the Program. The Program establishes three discrete categories of stores that can participate in the Program at different levels.
- *Store-Specific Program Options* -- The Program identifies a menu of options for stores to implement on site. Stores are also encouraged to share ideas and implement additional efforts that they develop independently.

Public Education and Outreach

- *Public Education Efforts and Ongoing Communication* -- The Program will develop educational materials that promote reusable bags and at-store recycling with a consistent message, and work with County departmental recycling coordinators to ensure distribution of promotional materials to employees and at facilities, events, or other appropriate opportunities. The Program will also establish a framework to communicate and collaborate with the 88 Cities in Los Angeles County and other stakeholders to create a Countywide coordinated and consistent antilitter campaign.
- *Environmental Message* -- An environmental awareness message imprinted on each plastic carryout bag distributed by large supermarkets and retail stores will reinforce the efforts of the Program. This message will describe the negative impacts littered plastic bags have on the environment, and the need to use reusable bags.
- *Store Participation and Recognition* -- The Program establishes minimum participation expectations, including participation levels and minimum program implementation at each store. In addition, this provides a mechanism to recognize large supermarkets and retail stores as well as other stakeholders who have shown a commitment to participating in the Program.

Technical Components

- Reporting and Measurement Methodology -- The Program establishes a methodology for accurately measuring the disposal rate of plastic bags, and tracks that rate over time, in order to evaluate the success of the County bag disposal reduction goals. This methodology will measure the reduction in consumption of plastic bags, increased at-store recycling of plastic bags, and plastic bags recovered at recycling facilities, on a semi-annual basis, while fully protecting confidential industry information.
- Hot Spots and Anti-Littering Campaign -- The Program will identify “hot spots” in the County where plastic bag litter is acute, based on existing studies, and establish additional litter prevention programs (including best management practices and a framework for measuring litter reduction in these hot spots). This will help to ensure that that Program is successful in addressing the litter impact of single use bags.
- Recycled Content and Recycling Markets for All Bags -- The Program will develop strategies to reduce the consumption and disposal and increase the recycling of all single use bags and maximize the post-consumer recycled content of all bags provided to the public in order to help develop markets for recyclable materials and decrease use of raw materials. In addition, the Program will work to phase out the purchase and use of single use plastic bags at County departments and facilities, and maximize the recycled content of paper bags, meeting a minimum 40 percent recycled content.



**Our Aim Is To Transition From Problematic
Single-Use Carryout Bags To Versatile Reusable Bags**



SINGLE-USE BAG REDUCTION AND RECYCLING PROGRAM

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Store Operations

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STORES SUBJECT TO THE PROGRAM

BACKGROUND

As one of its first tasks, the County Working Group identified the supermarkets and retail stores that would be subject to the program or phased into the program at a later date.

STORE CATEGORIES

The Working Group has prepared the following three discrete categories of definitions for stores that will be incorporated now or in the future in the County's Single Use Bag Reduction and Recycling Program.

Category 1

Under AB 2449, "large supermarkets and retail stores" are as defined as stores that fall under either of the following two categories:

- **Large Supermarket** -- a full-line, self-service, retail store with gross annual sales of \$2 million or more and which sells a line of dry groceries, canned goods, or nonfood items and some perishable goods.
- **Retail store** -- has over 10,000 square feet of retail space that generates sales tax and has a licensed pharmacy.

Category 2

Defined as "convenience stores and other appropriate franchise stores whose cumulative square footage exceeds 10,000 square feet."

Category 3

All stores not included in Categories 1 or 2 that provide single use carryout plastic bags to the public, including small family owned neighborhood stores.

STORE-SPECIFIC PROGRAM OPTIONS AND PARTICIPATION

BACKGROUND

As part of the Single-Use Bag Reduction and Recycling Program, each large supermarket and retail store (as defined) is responsible for developing and implementing store-specific programs from a menu of options below. Within each of the following three key categories (numbered **1-3** below), the County Working Group has identified major action items (shown below in **green**). Each store would be responsible for developing a program that addresses each of the **green** action items by selecting one or more of the choices suggested. Stores would be expected to meet at a minimum the “Bronze” level of participation, as shown on the table on page 13.

Acknowledging the County’s culturally diverse population, store-specific programs implemented by the stores should be community-specific, focusing on the store’s customer demographics, while still addressing Program goals. County staff is available to assist stores in developing their programs and promoting them through the County’s public education resources. Additional resources and electronic copies of this packet are available on our website: www.OurWebsite.org.

1. Retraining of Store Personnel (Management, Baggers, Clerks, etc.)

- Develop a staff training plan that highlights the negative impacts bag litter has on the environment and supports the goals of the Program. Choices include:**
 - i. Fact sheets for employee guidance
 - ii. Informational DVDs
 - iii. Employee workshops
 - iv. Incentives for participation
 - v. Adjust existing training programs to integrate bag information
- Promote the purchase and use of reusable bags and encourage smart bagging techniques. Choices include:**
 - i. For each transaction, asking the customer if they brought their reusable bags today
 - ii. Encouraging customers to purchase reusable bags at stores
 - iii. Placing a sign at the store front reminding customers to bring their reusable bags
 - iv. Implementing smart bagging techniques, including:
 - 1. Eliminating unnecessary double-bagging
 - 2. Eliminating unnecessary bagging of single items or bulky items
 - v. For stores with a per bag discount, announcing to customers how much they’ve saved on their bill by bringing a reusable bag
 - vi. Increasing the variety of reusable bags offered for sale

- Encourage customers to recycle their bags at the store. Choices include:
 - i. Placing plastic bag recycling bins in a visible, accessible location
 - ii. Incorporating signs that highlight the purpose of the bins
 - iii. Incorporating messages in public education efforts (see #3 below) that encourage/remind residents to bring clean bags back to the store for recycling

2. Incentives To Reduce Single-Use Bag Consumption

- Establish a customer rewards program or otherwise encourage the use of reusable bags and at-store recycling. Choices include:
 - i. Each time customers bring a reusable bag and/or bring bags back to stores:
 - 1. Provide club card reward/gift points (if applicable);
 - 2. Provide a small discount on purchases; or
 - 3. Donate profits from reusable bag sales/use/recycling revenue to charities and schools to support related causes (litter prevention, wildlife protection, etc.)
 - ii. Giving a free reusable bag to customers who spend a certain amount on groceries
- Establish financial incentives to reduce plastic bag usage. Choices include:
 - i. Providing a credit for each reusable bag used
 - ii. Charging a per-bag fee for each plastic bag provided to customers

3. Public Education/Awareness

- Within the store, choices include:
 - i. Sell reusable bags in multiple locations
 - ii. Make reusable bag displays more prominent, located near checkout
 - iii. Run PSAs on monitors at check-out stands, if applicable
 - iv. Display environmental message on shopping carts
 - v. Environmental awareness photo gallery/display in front of store
 - vi. Posters/banners in parking lots or at store front
 - vii. Environmental message on single-use paper and reusable bags
 - viii. Have employees wear button with environmental message
- Within the community, choices include:
 - i. Participate in reusable bag promotions
 - ii. Provide in-kind contributions at reusable bag events
 - iii. Inform the public about the program on the store's website
 - iv. Sponsor school-based education programs
 - v. Create a kids' coloring contest that emphasizes recycling plastic bags and using reusable shopping bags
 - vi. Provide a link to the County's website, www.OurWebsite.org, from your store's website

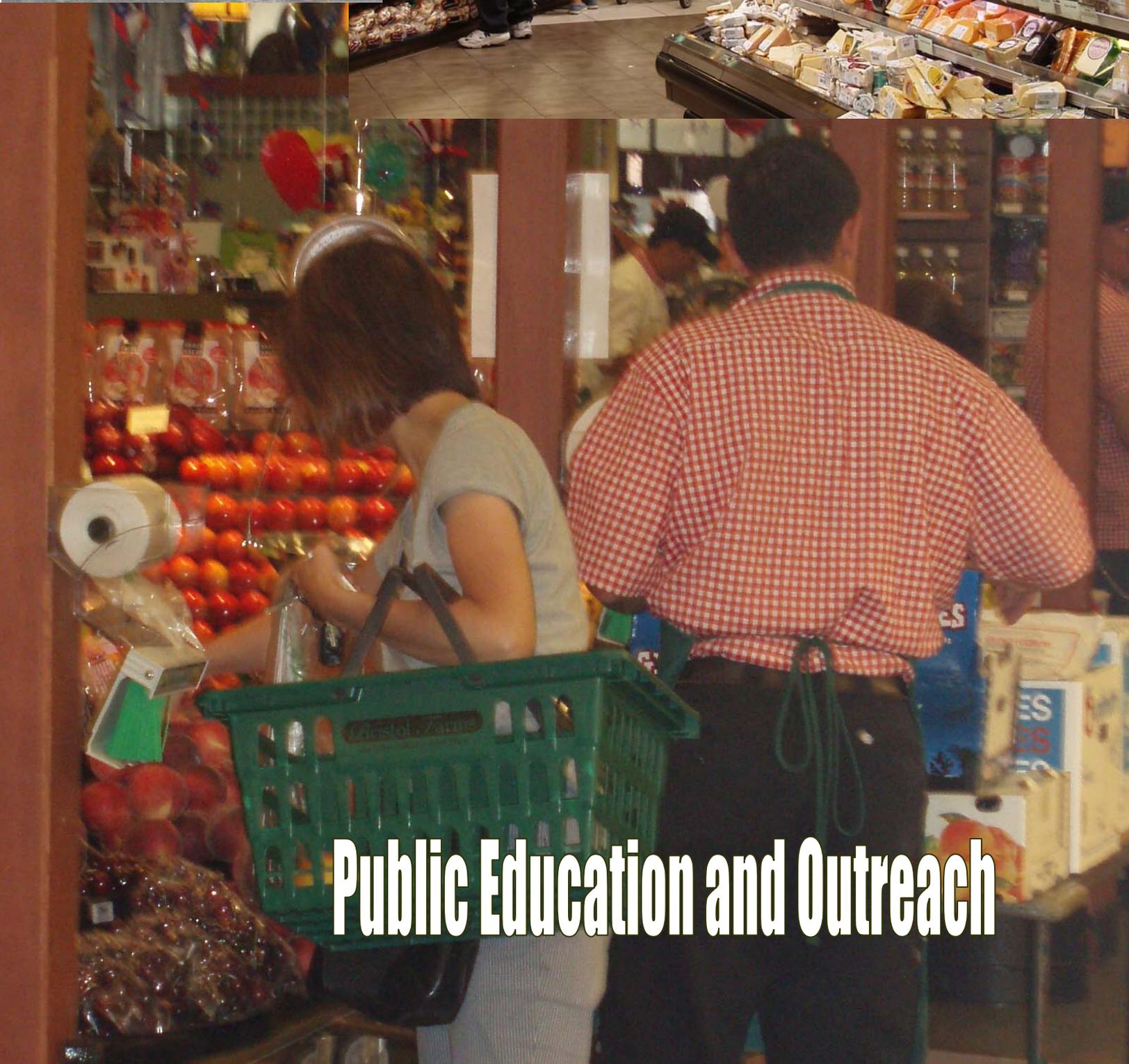
Environmental Message

- i. Imprint on each distributed plastic carryout bag an environmental message describing the negative impacts littered plastic carryout bags have on the environment and wildlife, and the need to use reusable bags. Acceptable messages are found on page 18

LEVELS OF PARTICIPATION AND RELATED RECOGNITION

Below is a table that identifies the various categories of store-specific programs that could be considered minimum levels of participation (e.g. Bronze) or exceptional levels of participation (e.g. Gold). Stores who implement additional programs will be recognized on the Program website, and all stores meeting the Gold level would be recognized by the Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors, and provided a plaque and certificate to display within their stores.

MENU OF OPTIONS	LEVEL OF PARTICIPATION		
	Gold Store	Silver Store	Bronze Store
<i>Retraining of Supermarket Staff (management, baggers, clerks, etc.)</i>			
Develop a staff training plan that: a) Highlights the negative impacts of plastic bag litter b) Supports Program goals	3 or more	2	2
Promote the purchase/use of reusable bags and encourage smart bagging techniques	3 or more	2	1
Encourage customers to recycle bags at store	3 or more	2	1
<i>Incentives for Residents to: (a) use reusable bags, (b) bring plastic bags back to the store for recycling, etc.</i>			
Establish customer rewards program	2 or more	1	1
Establish financial incentives	2 or more	2	1
<i>Public Education / Awareness</i>			
Promote reusable bag usage and plastic bag recycling within the store	3 or more	2	1
Promote reusable bag usage and plastic bag recycling within the community	3 or more	2	1



Public Education and Outreach

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PUBLIC EDUCATION AND OUTREACH EFFORTS

BACKGROUND

Public education and outreach are critical to successfully changing consumer behavior. To bolster the County's Single Use Bag Reduction and Recycling Program, the County Working Group has developed a comprehensive public education and outreach campaign through a collaborative effort. The campaign includes the following:

- Production of educational materials that promote reusable bags and at-store recycling with a consistent message
- Distribution of promotional materials to employees, County departmental recycling coordinators, and at facilities, events, or other appropriate opportunities
- Communication and collaboration with the 88 Cities in Los Angeles County and local Councils of Government to maintain a coordinated anti-litter campaign
- Distribution of reusable bags for large-scale giveaways

In order to increase awareness of this issue in an area that is already saturated with other recycling messages, the County's public education will be informative, engaging, and community-specific. They will also address the diversity of cultures and languages of Los Angeles County residents. The comprehensive Public Education and Outreach campaign is being launched concurrently with the Program.

PUBLIC EDUCATION CAMPAIGN

COUNTYWIDE PUBLIC EDUCATION CAMPAIGN

- Develop branding, which includes an environmental slogan and logo, that can be applied to various media and incorporated into educational and outreach materials. County staff also evaluated existing public education materials, such as those developed by the American Chemistry Council (www.PlasticBagRecycling.org), and has incorporated them into this packet.
- Develop a public education plan that focuses on children and schools. This includes:
 - i. Creating a Program mascot to appear at school assemblies and community events
 - ii. Developing an educational, interactive bag litter presentation that can be shown during school assemblies
 - iii. Incorporating and utilizing environmental clubs in schools
 - iv. Holding coloring contests in partnership with local supermarkets
 - v. Holding artwork/essay contests for grade-school children, where winners (along with their teachers) are honored by the Board of Supervisors
 - vi. Developing an illustrated activity book that encourages families to reduce their plastic bag usage and use reusable bags instead
 - vii. Developing environmental awareness curriculum and programs for public schools

- ☑ Raise awareness among consumers of the impacts plastic bags have on the environment and encourage usage of reusable bags. This could include:
 - i. Posters to hang in and at front of stores
 - ii. Posters and flyers which promote common message
 - iii. Banners to hang in store parking lots and throughout major streets
 - iv. Billboards to place along major streets and on buses
 - v. Advertisements to place in local newspapers and magazines
 - vi. Advertisements to place in bus shelters
 - vii. Public service announcements/commercials to air on local television and cable networks and radio stations
 - viii. Press releases to send to local media outlets
 - ix. Educational outreach material in multiple languages
 - x. Brochures/handouts to distribute at stores and public outreach events
 - xi. Decals that consumers can hang/stick in their vehicles
 - xii. Displays and Program fliers promoting the Program at County libraries
 - xiii. Educate the public when taking plastic bags back to stores for recycling, promoting the “Bag in Bag” concept

REUSABLE BAG PROMOTIONS

- ☑ Sponsor plastic bag collection events where consumers can exchange a certain number of unwanted plastic bags for a reusable bag.
- ☑ Distribute free reusable bags and educational material at environmental outreach events. For example, the County participates in dozens of events Countywide each year to promote environmental awareness.



RECOGNITION PROGRAM

The County has developed a recognition plan which, in addition to stores, will also provide a mechanism to recognize other businesses, individuals, educators, organizations, and local governments who have made significant advances in promoting the adoption of reusable bags, increasing recycling of plastic bags, and reducing the use of plastic carryout bags.

As part of its recognition efforts, the County of Los Angeles will highlight outstanding contributors with an award, in coordination with the Green Leadership Awards program. Award winners would be promoted through local media, including the County's WWW.OURWEBSITE.ORG website, and honored by the Board of Supervisors. Page 13 includes a summary table that identifies the various categories of store-specific programs that could be considered minimum levels of participation (e.g. Bronze) or exceptional levels of participation (e.g. Gold). Stores who implement additional programs will be recognized on the Program website, and all stores meeting the Gold level would be recognized by the Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors, and provided a plaque and certificate to display within their stores. Below are the categories of the Plastic Bag Recognition Plan.

LARGE SUPERMARKETS/RETAIL STORES (as defined)

Nominees would be evaluated based on their level of participation, creativity, largest reduction in plastic bag usage, and/or other categories. Participation will be measured according to the number of options implemented as part of the store-specific recycling/outreach program (see draft table below). The awardees would be selected by the County Working Group.

EDUCATORS

Educators may be nominated through a brief essay explaining how the educator has demonstrated exemplary leadership in recycling and reducing plastic bag usage. The awardees will be selected by the County Working Group.

BUSINESSES/INDIVIDUALS

Businesses and individuals may be nominated by others through a brief application explaining how they have demonstrated outstanding leadership in recycling and reducing the amount of plastic bags consumed by the public either through point-of-sales or by raising awareness among consumers of the impact plastic bags have on the environment. The awardees will be selected by the County Working Group.

ENVIRONMENTAL MESSAGE

To advance a unified approach to the Program, the County Working Group developed an environmental awareness message to describe the negative impacts littered carryout bags have on the environment and wildlife, and the need to use reusable bags as a better alternative. This environmental awareness message should be imprinted on each plastic carryout bag distributed by large supermarkets and retail stores, and can also be

utilized in other outreach materials. To provide more flexibility, the Working Group developed four different messages, which may be rotated throughout the year:

- It's Not Just a Bag Issue. It's a BIG Issue. Bring A Reusable Bag Next Time.
- Plastics Last Forever. Protect The Environment By Using Reusable Bags.
- Do You Really Need This Bag? Bring A Reusable Bag Next Time.
- Do Your Part. Recycle This Bag.

WEBSITE -- WWW.OURWEBSITE.ORG

County staff has developed a dedicated website for the Single-Use Bag Reduction and Recycling Program. The website is designed to serve as a convenient, valuable and comprehensive resource that raises awareness of the necessity of reusable bags, provides information regarding the environmental impacts of plastic bag litter, and discusses the benefits of using reusable bags in a manner that is user-friendly and visually engaging. The website includes information about upcoming stakeholder meetings, draft working documents, news articles, upcoming environmental awareness events, and other pertinent information. Stores, non-profits, and public agencies are encouraged to provide a link to this website from their websites to make this resource available to their customers and constituents.



Technical Components

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DISPOSAL REDUCTION RATE METHODOLOGY

BACKGROUND

As directed by the County of Los Angeles Board of Supervisors, the County Working Group established the following disposal rate measurement methodology to evaluate the success of the County goals. The methodology must measure the reduction in consumption of plastic bags, increased at-store recycling of plastic bags, and plastic bags recovered at recycling facilities, on a semi-annual basis, while fully protecting confidential industry information. The County also established a framework by which the data submitted is confirmed to be accurate and verifiable on a regular basis.

The County Goals are to reduce the disposal rate of plastic bags by:

- a. A minimum of 30%, using FY 2007-08 as the baseline, by July 1, 2010.
- b. A minimum of 65%, using FY 2007-08 as the baseline, by July 1, 2013.

Failure to achieve these goals triggers action to establish a County Ordinance to ban the use of plastic bags at affected stores.

PROPOSED DISPOSAL REDUCTION RATE METHODOLOGY

In response to these requirements, staff has developed the following disposal reduction rate methodology, which includes the following three components:

- 1) the reduction in consumption of plastic carryout bags;
- 2) the total number of bags recycled at-stores; and
- 3) total number of bags recycled via curbside recycling programs.

Disposal Reduction Rate =

$$\frac{(\text{Base Year Consumption}^{\dagger} - \text{Reporting Year Consumption}^{\ddagger}) +$$

$$\text{Base Year Consumption}}$$

$$\frac{\text{Plastic Bags Recycled At Stores During Reporting Year} +$$

$$\text{Base Year Consumption}}$$

$$\frac{\text{Plastic Bags Recycled via Curbside Collection Programs During Reporting Year}}{\text{Base Year Consumption}}$$

[†] Base Year Consumption is the amount of plastic bags generated in Fiscal Year 2007-08, based on data reported to the California Integrated Waste Management Board as required by AB 2449.

[‡] Reporting Year Consumption is the amount of plastic bags generated during a specified fiscal year, based on data reported to the California Integrated Waste Management Board as required by AB 2449.

Example:

Base Year: Large supermarkets and retail stores (Proposed Category 1) consumed 600 million plastic bags during the base year.

Reporting Year: Large supermarkets and retail stores (Proposed Category 1) consumed 400 million plastic bags, collected 100 million plastic bags at stores and recycled 1 million plastic bags via curbside collection program during the reporting year.

Calculation:

$$= \frac{(600M - 400M)}{600M} + \frac{100M}{600M} + \frac{1M}{600M}$$
$$= \frac{301M}{600M}$$
$$= 0.5017 \times 100$$
$$= \mathbf{50.2\%}$$

ADDITIONAL DISPOSAL REDUCTION RATE METHODOLOGY FACTORS

The County Working Group acknowledges that other factors may affect the Disposal Reduction Rate and/or have ancillary impacts. The County Working Group will take into consideration factors such as reuse of plastic bags, recyclable content of plastic bags, and other economic factors.



PLASTIC BAG LITTER HOT SPOTS AND LITTER PREVENTION PROGRAM

BACKGROUND

Because plastic bag litter makes up a significant component of the litter stream, the County Working Group set out to identify ‘hot spots’ where plastic bag litter is acute, based on existing studies, and establish additional litter prevention programs. The intent is to ensure that the Program is successful in reducing the litter impact of single use bags, by identifying key areas and focusing litter reduction efforts in those areas to augment the Program.

STRATEGIES FOR IDENTIFYING LITTER “HOT SPOTS”

To aid in mitigating areas most affected by litter, “hot spots” in County unincorporated areas with a high concentration of litter are identified and mapped:

- The City of Los Angeles’ Methodology on High Trash Generation Areas is the basis for identifying “hot spots”
- Agencies and interested parties can provide additional relevant data based on information such as, but not limited to, the following:
 - Catch basin/storm drain locations
 - Trash or plastic bag quantities collected from different clean up points
 - Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL) data
 - Solid waste collection infrastructure, including trash bins, collection trucks, and facilities that don’t implement “total containment”
- Maps of litter “hot spots” and litter indicators would be mapped
- Data would be gathered over time to measure results

IMPLEMENTING LITTER PREVENTION PROGRAMS

The County Working Group has developed additional litter prevention programs for implementation and a framework for measuring litter reduction. These litter prevention programs include:

- Expanding public education and outreach on plastic bag recycling and reuse
- Incorporating plastic bags into existing litter prevention programs, such as:
 - Illegal dumping prevention program
 - Curbside recycling program
 - Household Hazardous and Electronic Waste collection program
 - Permanent waste collection sites (e.g. AVECC)
 - Waste tire collection events
 - Free dump day events
 - Recycling Market Development Zone (RMDZ) program for market development
 - Other waste reduction and diversion programs
 - Additional bag collection stations at places like recycling centers, schools, public facilities, etc.
 - Anti-litter public educational programs at stores

**MAXIMIZE RECYCLED CONTENT OF ALL BAGS
AND PROMOTE BAG RECYCLING MARKETS**

BACKGROUND

The County Working Group developed strategies to reduce the consumption and disposal and increase the recycling of **all** single use bags and maximize the post-consumer recycled content of all bags provided to the public in order to help develop markets for recyclable materials and decrease use of raw materials.

STRATEGIES

In order to achieve these objectives, a variety of strategies will be employed. The County Working Group has developed the following strategies:

- Development of markets for single-use paper and plastic bags recycled in unincorporated areas of Los Angeles County
 - Provide information and incentives to manufacturers and stores for maximizing their use of recycled content bags
 - Establish incentive programs to foster development of industries that would use collected single-use plastic and paper bags in their productions and operations (e.g. using the RMDZ Program)
- Maximization of the post-consumer recycled content of single-use paper bags in Los Angeles County to decrease use of raw materials
 - Promulgate legislation and laws that would require making of single-use paper bags with post consumer recycled content.
 - Require procurement of single-use paper bags made of post consumer recycled contents in government and other large scale procurement programs.
 - Educate manufacturers and producers on use of single-use plastic bags for manufacturing products with post consumer recycled content.