

L.A., Heal the Bay team for 'Day Without a Bag'

From wire service reports
Posted: 12/18/2008 07:10:27 AM PST

Los Angeles city and county officials and representatives of Heal the Bay will hand out tens of thousands of reusable shopping bags today on the second annual "Day Without A Bag" in an effort to persuade shoppers to give up disposable plastic bags.

Mayor Antonio Villaraigosa, city Councilman Greg Smith and county Supervisor Zev Yaroslavsky will distribute the free bags outside the Northridge Fashion Center, one of more than 75 locations throughout the county where the bags will be available.

In January, the county Board of Supervisors told large grocers to lower the number of plastic bags used by 30 percent by 2010 and by 65 percent by 2013, or face an all-out ban. In July, the Los Angeles City Council ordered plastic bags to be pulled from store checkout counters by July 1, 2010.

The county's move was challenged by the Save the Plastic Bag campaign, a coalition of plastic bag manufacturers that claimed that decreasing the use of plastic bags would increase the use of paper bags, which they say are "substantially worse for the environment."

According to a county report, 6 billion plastic bags are used every year in Los Angeles County, or roughly 600 bags per person per year. About 45,000 tons of plastic bags are thrown away every year by county residents, with less than 5 percent of bags being recycled.

"Disposable bags cost our fiscally strained cities up to 17 cents per bag for disposal" and "this does not even include the

environmental costs," the environmental organization Heal the Bay says on its Web site

"Plastic bags are made from fossil fuels. Americans use over 380 billion bags every year, throwing away this precious, non-renewable resource."

Heal the Bay introduced "A Day Without A Bag" to Los Angeles County last year. The short-term goal, it says, "is to educate Southland shoppers to adopt more sustainable practices during the holidays and coming year.

"The event's long-term goal is to reduce the use of single-use plastic bags throughout California by empowering shoppers, and the community at large, to take simple and direct actions to eliminate unsightly debris and save taxpayer dollars."
