

Environmental Group Moves to Ban Plastic Bags

Environmentalists say plastic bags take about 500 years to decompose.

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Getty Images

The days of deciding between paper or plastic at the checkout line may be ending.

About 1,800 signatures were presented to [Los Angeles](#) supervisors by Environment [California](#), an advocacy group that is urging a countywide ban on single-use plastic grocery bags.

"When you explain the problem, people get it: why use something for five minutes that will pollute the ocean for 500 years?" said [Cliff Whitlock](#), a citizen outreach director Environment California.

The Board of Supervisors has been dealing with plastic bag reduction since 2008. The county recently completed an environmental impact report that could set the stage for the board to go forward with an ordinance to ban the bags. The board is expected to vote on the issue in the next few months.

At its June 1 meeting, county supervisors approved a motion to support an Assembly bill which would ban plastic bags and require stores to sell paper bags with 40 percent recycled content at or above cost throughout the state.

Plastic bags comprise as much as 25 percent of the litter stream, said [Gina Goodhill](#) of Environment California.

"We know that plastic shopping bags constitute a major part of our urban waste stream," said [Supervisor Zev Yaroslavsky](#), who was joined by Supervisor Mark Ridley-Thomas on the steps of the Hall of Administration Wednesday to accept the signatures.

The bill -- AB 1998 -- would ban grocery stores, pharmacies, and convenience stores from handing out single-use plastic bags at the point of checkout. The bill passed out of the state Assembly last month and heads to the Senate appropriations committee in August.

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