



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

## **L.A. CITY COUNCIL OKs BAN ON SINGLE-USE PACKAGING**

*Votes to support tough limits on Styrofoam and plastic shopping bags*

SANTA MONICA, Calif. (July 22, 2008) – Marking an important victory for the Southland environment and economy, the Los Angeles City Council today unanimously approved staff recommendations that would significantly reduce the amount of harmful single-use plastic packaging that enters the waste-stream each year.

The council voted 13-0 to support the Los Angeles City Bureau of Sanitation's recommendation to adopt a citywide policy that would forbid the use of plastic carryout bags at all supermarkets and retail establishments by 2010 unless the state has imposed a minimum 25-cent per-bag fee on their use. Councilmembers also endorsed a ban on Styrofoam® food service products from city events and facilities, most notably at the bustling LAX airport.

In a bid to encourage consumers to bring more environmentally friendly reusable shopping bags, the recommendation also urges lawmakers to impose a point-of-sale fee on all other single-use bags, such as paper or compostable bags. Fees deter consumer use of plastic bags and cover clean-up costs incurred by the city.

“As the leaders of America's second-largest city, the council today sent a very powerful message to the nation that elected officials across the political spectrum can work together to better the environment,” said Kirsten James, director of water quality for local environmental group Heal the Bay. “This measure saves both taxpayer dollars and our natural resources.”

Heal the Bay has waged an aggressive battle against the use of expanded polystyrene (EPS), commonly known as Styrofoam, and one-time plastic bags. The Santa Monica group worked closely with city staff to make practical recommendations on the policy.

Styrofoam and plastic bags clog overtaxed landfills, squander energy and threaten marine life. EPS can take hundreds of years to break down and blights our public spaces. EPS disintegrates into small bits and pieces that marine animals easily mistake for food. Plastic bags choke storm drains and increase flood risks.

California taxpayers spend more than \$25 million a year to collect and dispose of the 19 billion one-use plastic shopping bags distributed annually. Consumers in Los Angeles use more than 2 billion single use plastic bags each year.

While paper bags are largely biodegradable and do not foul the marine environment to a great extent, the bags come with an environmental price tag. Their creation emits global warming gases, pollutes

watersheds and requires significant amounts of raw materials. Californians dispose of nearly 400 tons of paper bags annually. Less than 20% of paper and 5% of plastic bags are recycled.

The council also voted to support AB 2058, a measure authored by Assemblymembers Lloyd Levine, Julia Brownley and Mike Davis that would set a 25-cent fee on single-use bags at large groceries and pharmacies statewide if plastic bag diversion and reduction benchmarks are not met.

If that bill fails to pass this year, a citywide ban on plastic bags would kick in 2010. Meanwhile, city facilities and departments must immediately begin to phase out EPS food packaging products.

At least 19 cities and counties in California have taken action to reduce the amount of expanded polystyrene food packaging used in their community. The cities of Paris and San Francisco lead the list of enlightened municipalities that have recently taken action to limit plastic bags. Regionally, Malibu and Manhattan Beach most recently enacted aggressive bans on single-use plastics bags.

Heal the Bay is a nonprofit environmental organization dedicated to making Southern California coastal waters and watersheds, including Santa Monica Bay, safe, healthy and clean for people and aquatic life. Environment California is a statewide, citizen-based environmental advocacy organization.

**Contacts:** Matthew King, Heal the Bay, (310) 451-1500, x 137  
Kirsten James, Heal the Bay, (310) 713-3091