



LOS ANGELES COUNTY APPROVES BAN ON PLASTIC BAGS

L.A. becomes biggest municipality in U.S. to enact curbs on single-use bags

SANTA MONICA, CA (Tuesday, Nov. 16, 2010) – Sending a powerful message nationally that the plastic pollution plague can be abated, the Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors today approved a ban on the distribution of single-use plastic shopping bags at grocery stores, convenience stores and pharmacies in unincorporated areas of the county beginning next July.

With the vote, the county becomes the largest municipality in the nation to ban plastic bags and is expected to soon trigger similar actions by other local governments throughout the state, including the cities of Los Angeles and San Jose.

In a phased rollout beginning next July, plastic carryout bags would no longer be available in supermarkets, large retail pharmacies, liquor stores and food marts in unincorporated areas of the county, which encompass some 1 million residents and 65% of the county.

The measure seeks to end the environmental and fiscal waste created by the use of 6 billion single-use plastic shopping bags each year in Los Angeles County alone.

California municipalities spend nearly \$25 million each year just to collect and dispose of plastic bag waste. Less than 5% of plastic grocery bags are recycled each year statewide, so the remainder clogs precious landfill, litters public spaces and harms animal life when the bags infiltrate waterways.

The county decided to enact the ban after the plastic bag industry failed to meet voluntary reduction targets set in 2008.

Environmental group Heal the Bay has led the legislative fight to enact a bag ban for more than five years as part of its ongoing efforts to tackle plastic pollution in California seas and neighborhoods.

“The supervisors’ leadership today will spur other local communities to take meaningful action to break our addiction to single-use shopping bags,” said Mark Gold, president of Heal the Bay. “The plastics industry knows the writing is on the wall.”

Retailers will still be able to distribute paper bags, so long as they contain at least 40% post-consumer content. Shoppers who forget their reusable bags have the option of purchasing paper bags at checkout for 10 cents each. Heavy-duty reusable bags are convenient, environmentally friendly alternatives that have been embraced by hundreds of millions of consumers around the world.

Los Angeles County joins a long list of governments that have enacted progressive curbs on single-use plastic bags, including China, Bangladesh, San Francisco and Mexico City.

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About Heal the Bay

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. We use research, education, community action and advocacy to pursue our mission.