



## **LONG BEACH APPROVES BAN ON PLASTIC BAGS**

*State's 7<sup>th</sup> biggest municipality joins growing list of cities aiming to curb waste*

SANTA MONICA, CA (Tuesday, May 18, 2011) – The Long Beach City Council tonight approved a ban on the distribution of single-use plastic shopping bags at grocery stores, convenience stores, pharmacies and farmers' markets in the City beginning in August.

With the vote, Long Beach becomes the largest city in Los Angeles County to ban plastic bags and is expected to motivate similar actions by other local governments throughout the region, including the City of Los Angeles and City of Pasadena.

In a phased rollout beginning in August, plastic carryout bags will no longer be available in supermarkets, large retail pharmacies, liquor stores, food marts and farmers' markets in the city, which encompasses nearly 500,000 residents.

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.

Long Beach is disproportionally plagued by plastic pollution, as it sits at the terminus of the Los Angeles River. Long Beach spends approximately \$2.2 million per year in maintenance costs associated with marine debris such as plastic bags. Suja Lowenthal, Vice Mayor of Long Beach, introduced and championed the bag ordinance and is a board member of Heal the Bay.

"Long Beach has taken control of its own destiny by banning plastic bags from its litter stream and setting an example for cities along the Los Angeles River," said Vice Mayor Lowenthal.

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.

"Today Long Beach took a stand against both environmental pollution and fiscal waste," said Kirsten James, Water Quality Director of Heal the Bay. "This action is yet another signal to the plastics industry that cities are fed up with paying the huge price tag of cleaning up plastic pollution.

Long Beach's action marks the 11th municipality in California to ban plastic carryout bags. Many others are poised to follow suit. Stakeholders continue to look to Sacramento legislators to move forward a uniform, statewide approach to curb plastic bag pollution.



Retailers in Long Beach 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.

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

### **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.

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