



SANTA MONICA APPROVES BAN ON PLASTIC BAGS

Local Momentum Continues to Curb the Environmentally Harmful Product

SANTA MONICA, CA (Tuesday, January 25, 2011) – Marking one of the most aggressive actions on single-use bags nationwide, the Santa Monica City Council tonight approved a ban on the distribution of single-use plastic shopping bags at most retail outlets in the city beginning in September.

Sending a powerful message that the plastic pollution plague can be abated, the vote furthers the recent momentum for enacting local bag measures throughout California. Today Marin County's Board of Supervisors also moved forward on a ban. The votes follow on the heels of similar measures to curb harmful and wasteful bags in Los Angeles County and the City of San Jose in the last 90 days.

In a rollout beginning in September, plastic carryout bags will no longer be available at any retailers in Santa Monica, except restaurants providing food and liquids for takeout. Grocery stores and pharmacies would only 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 at least 10 cents each. In addition, patrons at the popular Santa Monica Farmer's Markets will no longer be provided single-use plastic or paper bags.

The measure seeks to end the environmental and fiscal waste created by the use of approximately 26 million single-use plastic shopping bags each year in the City of Santa Monica alone. Instead, customers will be encouraged to use heavy-duty reusable bags, environmentally friendly alternatives that have been embraced by hundreds of millions of consumers around the world.

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.

Santa Monica was first scheduled to hear the item over two years ago but postponed the vote after an industry group threatened to sue the City if it did not conduct a full environmental review of the ordinance. The full environmental review was subsequently completed by the City.

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 organization next turns its attention to the City of Calabasas, which is scheduled to vote on its own bag measure Feb. 1.

“The Santa Monica Council’s leadership today shows that local governments are going to address this critical issue despite threats from industry and state inaction,” said Mark Gold, president of Heal the Bay. “The plastics industry knows the writing is on the wall.”

Santa Monica joins a long list of governments that have enacted progressive curbs on single-use plastic bags, including China, Italy, 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.