

Date: 4/19/13

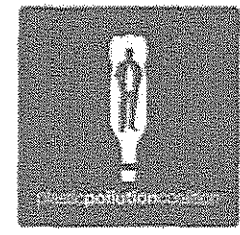
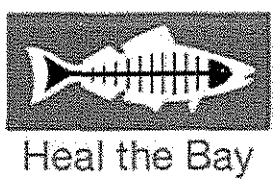
Submitted in RULES Committee

Council File No: 13-002-558

Item No.: 12

*Item #12*

~~Communication~~ *Communication from the public*



April 18, 2013

The Honorable Wesley Chesbro, Chair  
Assembly Natural Resources Committee  
State Capitol, Room 2141  
Sacramento, CA 95814  
VIA FAX

**AB 1337 (Allen) - OPPOSE**

Dear Assembly Member Chesbro and Members of the Committee:

On behalf of the organizations listed below, we regret to inform you that we strongly oppose Assembly Bill (AB) 1337 (Allen). AB 1337 would prohibit cities, counties and public agencies from adopting, implementing or enforcing an ordinance, resolution, regulation or rule that bans single-use plastic bags and imposes a fee, tax, or other charge for single-use paper bags. Without offering an

alternative, AB 1337 would roll back years of progress that 72 local California jurisdictions have made to reduce the economic waste and environmental impacts that single-use carryout bags create.

Billions of single-use plastic bags are used in California every year.<sup>1</sup> Despite both voluntary and statewide efforts to implement recycling programs, the statewide recycling rate for plastic bags remains around five percent;<sup>2</sup> the majority of single-use plastic bags – even if reused once or twice by consumers – end up in our landfills or as part of the litter stream, polluting our inland and coastal communities.

Marine plastic pollution imposes substantial costs on taxpayers and local governments through cleanup efforts and lost tourism revenue. A 2012 report by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency found California's coastal cities and counties spend about \$420 million each year to combat litter and curtail marine debris.<sup>3</sup> Single-use plastic bags have been a large contributor to marine debris on our beaches and inland creeks. For example, volunteers participating in the 2011 International Coastal Cleanup in California recovered 64,085 plastic bags during the one day event.<sup>4</sup> Plastic debris, including plastic bags, lasts for hundreds of years in our environment and may never biodegrade in the ocean. As a result, it poses a persistent threat to wildlife. A 2012 study by the Convention on Biological Diversity found that 663 marine species have been impacted by marine plastic litter through entanglement and ingestion.<sup>5</sup>

Dozens of local governments, including the County of Los Angeles, San Jose, San Luis Obispo County, the City and County of San Francisco, Glendale, and Long Beach have already adopted single-use bag ordinances.<sup>6</sup> Many of these ordinances have changed consumer behavior and have resulted in an increased use of reusable bags, a more sustainable alternative to single-use bags. For example, Los Angeles County announced that its ordinance which bans plastic carryout bags and charges for paper carryout bags, and became fully effective in 2012; has resulted in a 94% reduction in overall single-use bag usage (both plastic and paper).<sup>7</sup> Furthermore, single-use bag ordinances are effective in reducing plastic pollution. Since January 2012, the City of San Jose has prohibited distribution of all single-use bags except for recycled content paper bags, which consumers must purchase for 10 cents. San Jose's

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<sup>1</sup> "Shopping? Take Reusable Bags!" CalRecycle. 23 Nov. 2011. Web. 28 Mar. 2013. <<http://www.calrecycle.ca.gov/publiced/holidays/ReusableBags.htm>>.

<sup>2</sup> County of Los Angeles. Dept. of Public Works. *Los Angeles County Plastic Bag Study: Staff Report to the Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors*. Aug. 2007: 2. Print.

<sup>3</sup> U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. Region 9. *The Cost to West Coast Communities of Dealing with Trash, Reducing Marine Debris*. Sept. 2012. Web. 28 Mar. 2013. <<http://www.epa.gov/region9/marine-debris/pdf/WestCoastCommsCost-MngMarineDebris.pdf>>. California spends approximately \$25 million annually to landfill discarded plastic bag waste. See "Shopping? Take Reusable Bags!" CalRecycle. 23 Nov. 2011. Web. 28 Mar. 2013. <<http://www.calrecycle.ca.gov/publiced/holidays/ReusableBags.htm>>. These cleanup costs do not reflect the energy costs associated with producing single-use bags, or the negative socio-economic, public health and environmental costs associated with single-use bag litter.

<sup>4</sup> "The Ocean Trash Index." Ocean Conservancy. Web. 28 Mar. 2013. <<http://www.oceanconservancy.org/our-work/marine-debris/2012-icc-data-pdf.pdf>>.

<sup>5</sup> Secretariat of the Convention Biological Diversity. *Impacts of Marine Debris on Biodiversity: Current Status and Potential Solutions*. 2012: 9. Web. 28 Mar. 2013. <<http://www.cbd.int/doc/publications/cbd-ts-67-en.pdf>>.

<sup>6</sup> 51 ordinances covering 72 California jurisdictions have been adopted. "Plastic Bags: Local Ordinances." Californians Against Waste. Web 28 Mar. 2013.

<[http://www.cawrecycles.org/issues/plastic\\_campaign/plastic\\_bags/local](http://www.cawrecycles.org/issues/plastic_campaign/plastic_bags/local)>.

<sup>7</sup> "About the Bag Website." Los Angeles County. Web. 28 Mar. 2013.

<<http://dpw.lacounty.gov/epd/aboutthebag/index.cfm>>.

2012 litter surveys indicate that plastic bag litter has been reduced “approximately 89 percent in the storm drain system . . . when compared to [pre-ordinance] data . . .”<sup>8</sup>

California has a critical role to play in preventing plastic marine debris, including plastic bags, from entering the environment. However, AB 1337 inappropriately ties the hands of municipalities trying to create effective policies for their communities without offering an alternative policy to address the significant economic and environmental issues associated with single-use carryout bag waste. Therefore, the undersigned urge your “no” vote on AB1337.

Sincerely,

Kirsten James  
Science and Policy Director, Water Quality  
Heal the Bay

Leslie Mintz Tamminen  
Ocean Program Director  
Seventh Generation Advisors

Stiv Wilson  
Policy Director  
The 5 Gyres Institute

Sean Bothwell  
Staff Attorney  
California Coastkeeper Alliance

Bill Allayaud  
California Director of Government Affairs  
Environmental Working Group

Brad Hunt  
Program Manager  
Save Our Shores

Angela T. Howe  
Legal Director  
Surfrider Foundation

Nathan Weaver  
Oceans Advocate  
Environment California

Emily Utter  
Policy Director  
Bag It!

Daniella Dimitrova Russo  
Co-founder and Executive Director  
Plastic Pollution Coalition

Christopher Chin  
Executive Director  
The Center for Oceanic Awareness, Research, and Education (COARE)

Aseem Das  
CEO and Founder  
World Centric

Miriam Gordon  
California State Director  
Clean Water Action/Clean Water Fund

cc: Assembly Member Allen (via fax)

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<sup>8</sup> Kerrie Romanow, City of San Jose, memorandum to Transportation & Environment Com. re: *Bring Your Own Bag Ordinance Implementation Results and Actions to Reduce EPS Foam Food Ware*, 20 Nov. 2012. Web. 28 Mar. 2013. <[http://www3.sanjoseca.gov/clerk/CommitteeAgenda/TE/20121203/TE20121203\\_d5.pdf](http://www3.sanjoseca.gov/clerk/CommitteeAgenda/TE/20121203/TE20121203_d5.pdf)>.