



Protecting and Restoring the Santa Barbara Channel and its Watersheds

714 Bond Avenue • Santa Barbara, CA 93103 • Tel (805) 563 3377 • Fax (805) 687-5635 • www.sbck.org

July 23, 2010

Santa Barbara County Board of Supervisors
105 East Anapamu Street
Santa Barbara, CA 93101

RE: Request for Resolution or Letter in Support of AB 1998 (Brownley) - Single-Use Bag Reduction Act

Dear Supervisors:

Santa Barbara Channelkeeper respectfully requests that the County of Santa Barbara pass a resolution in support of the Single-Use Bag Reduction Act (Assembly Bill 1998) or submit a letter expressing your support for the bill to Senator Strickland as well as to the Senate Committee on Appropriations (ideally before the first week of August, which is when they will meet to consider the bill). This legislation will go a long way towards cleaning up a major source of litter on Santa Barbara County's beaches and streets and in our creeks and storm drain system, thereby saving the County money by reducing litter removal costs while also improving our environment and aesthetics.

AB 1998 would ban plastic single-use carryout bags at supermarkets, retail pharmacies, and convenience stores throughout the state and require such stores place a nominal fee on single-use paper bags.

Plastic bag pollution has significant environmental and economic impacts on both coastal and inland communities throughout the state. Californians use an estimated 19 billion single-use plastic bags every year. The state spends an estimated \$25 million annually to clean up and landfill these littered bags, which does not include the over \$300 million that local governments spend to clean littered streets and waterways.

We can no longer recycle our way out of this problem. Despite efforts to expand recycling programs, *less than 5%* of single-use plastic bags are currently being recycled. The rest of these bags end up in our landfills or as litter, clogging storm drain systems and making their way to our waterways and ocean. It is estimated that 60–80% of all marine debris and 90% of floating debris is plastic. Plastic 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. Over 267 species worldwide have been impacted by plastic litter, including plastic bags.

Paper bags are not a viable alternative to plastic bags. Paper bag production contributes to deforestation,

greenhouse gas emissions, and waterborne wastes from the pulping and paper making process. Even compostable plastic bags made of plant-based sources have not proven to degrade in the ocean. Instead, they require industrial composting facilities, and only a small number of cities currently support the infrastructure to collect and dispose of compostable bags properly.

San Francisco, Malibu, Fairfax, and Palo Alto have banned plastic bags, and at least 20 more cities in California are considering this approach. Rather than taking a piecemeal city-by-city approach, AB 1998 will create one uniform policy for addressing all types of single-use bags to encourage consumers to use reusable bags, the most sustainable alternative. Several counties also support AB 1998, including Los Angeles, Marin, Monterey, and San Francisco counties, and we hope that Santa Barbara County will join them.

California has a critical role to play in eliminating plastic bag waste and preventing the proliferation of plastic pollution in our communities. The passage of AB 1998 will go a long way towards reducing this significant environmental problem, which is harmful to marine life and costs the state and local municipalities millions of dollars each year to clean up.

Thank you for your consideration of this request. We look forward to your joining us in supporting this landmark legislation by passing a resolution or sending a letter expressing your support to the Senate Appropriations Committee and Senator Strickland in the coming two weeks.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "K Redmond", is placed within a light gray rectangular box.

Kira Redmond
Executive Director, Santa Barbara Channelkeeper