

**KATHY WARD**

---

**From:** Sue Vang <suevang@cawrecycles.org>  
**Sent:** Tuesday, February 07, 2012 2:50 PM  
**To:** KATHY WARD  
**Subject:** Agenda Items 11 & 12: Distribution of Expanded Polystyrene Food Serviceware and Single-Use Plastic Carryout Bags - SUPPORT  
**Attachments:** CAWletter\_DanaPoint\_bags\_eps.pdf

Dear Ms. Ward,

On behalf of Californians Against Waste—r cognized as one of the nation's leading non-profit environmental research and advocacy organizations focusing on resource conservation and pollution prevention through waste reduction and recycling—I respectfully submit a letter in support of Agenda Items 11 & 12: Distribution of Expanded Polystyrene Food Serviceware and Single-Use Plastic Carryout Bags.

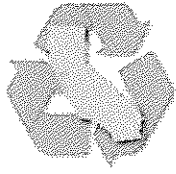
Thank you for your assistance.

Sincerely,

**Sue Vang**  
Policy Associate | Californians Against Waste  
921 11th Street, Suite 420 | Sacramento, CA 95814  
(p) 916-443-5422 | (f) 916-443-3912  
[www.cawrecycles.org](http://www.cawrecycles.org)

Get updates and support us on [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#), or [Causes!](#)

Agenda Item No. 11 1/2  
2/7/12



# Californians Against Waste

Conserving Resources. Preventing Pollution. Protecting the Environment.

February 7, 2012

Mayor Lara Anderson  
City of Dana Point  
33282 Golden Lantern  
Dana Point, California

**Re: Agenda Items 11 & 12: Distribution of Expanded Polystyrene Food Serviceware and Single-Use Plastic Carryout Bags - SUPPORT**

Dear Mayor Anderson,

Californians Against Waste (CAW) strongly urges the City of Dana Point to take action against two costly, environmentally damaging, and easily preventable sources of litter and pollution: single-use plastic bags and disposable food serviceware made from expanded polystyrene (eps) foam and other non-recyclable, non-compostable plastics. Light and aerodynamic, these two are uniquely litter-prone even when properly disposed of, and pose a serious threat to the riparian and marine environment and wildlife. Even when they are no longer visible to the naked eye, plastic bags and eps containers are still not fully gone but instead have photo-degraded into tiny particles that adsorb toxins and contaminate our food chain and water and soil quality.

Beach cleanup studies show plastic bags and polystyrene are two of the most common forms of litter. Plastic marine debris pollution has killed thousands of marine birds, sea turtles and other species and threatens California's multi-billion dollar ocean-based economy.

Recycling of these problem materials are not an option. Despite decades of promises from the plastic industry for a comprehensive recycling infrastructure, no widespread recycling scheme for polystyrene has ever been successfully implemented over the long term. Along with limited recycling opportunities, food contamination issues and the lightweight quality of the material make it difficult to successfully recycle expanded polystyrene.

CAW has worked with retailers, bag manufacturers, and local governments in an effort to try to manage single-use plastic bags through recycling. We sponsored AB 2449 (Levine), which provides in-store recycling for plastic bags. Despite establishing the state's largest collection infrastructure for any single material, efforts to manage single-use plastic bags through recycling have failed. The 2009 recycling rate was only 3%. Recent efforts to enact a statewide ban of plastic bags with AB 1998 (Brownley) failed to pass Senate on the last day of session. Municipalities, who are primarily responsible for the clean-up of plastic litter, should not wait for state action.

After reading the draft ordinance on single-use bags, we do have some recommended changes. We would strongly recommend a mandatory minimum price requirement on both single-use paper and reusable bags. Reusable bags are the environmentally superior choice to single-use bags, and local jurisdictions with a minimum price requirement on bags have seen a major shift in consumer behavior away from single-use bags. In Washington DC, a charge on single-use bags reduced bag distribution from 22.5 million to 3.3 million in its first month. In addition to the environmental benefits of reduced bag waste, the 10 cent minimum price requirement also helps retailers offset their distribution costs.

Free distribution of reusable bags should be prohibited or restricted to certain outreach periods. Based on the experience in San Francisco, where some retailers purchased inexpensive reusable bags that barely met the minimum plastic thickness requirement and distributed them freely, other jurisdictions such as Santa Clara County and Alameda County have written in language to prevent this loophole in their ordinances.

We are also concerned that the reusable bag definition is a little weaker than what we've seen for others including

Los Angeles County, which requires reusable bags to be able to withstand at least 125 uses carrying 22 lbs over 175 feet. While universally accepted standards for reusable bags unfortunately still don't exist, we think this type of language provides some standard for reusability and reduces the chance that a reusable bag becomes just a slightly thicker and glorified "single-use bag".

Plastic marine pollution is a global problem with local solutions. The phase out of single-use plastic bags and eps and other unsustainable food containers is a proven and responsible solution for combating waste and the environmental and financial costs of single-use plastic litter. CAW thanks the City of Dana Point for your environmental leadership and urges you to continue your tradition of leadership by prioritizing ordinances restricting plastic bags and eps takeout containers.

Sincerely,



Sue Vang  
Policy Associate

cc: Council Member Bartlett; Council Member Brough; Council Member Schoeffel; Council Member Weinberg