



# CENTRAL CONTRA COSTA SOLID WASTE AUTHORITY

June 21, 2010

MEMBER  
AGENCIES

*Central Contra Costa  
County*

Senator Joe Simitian, Chair  
Senate Environmental Quality Committee  
California State Capitol  
Sacramento, CA 95814

*Town of Danville*

**RE: AB 1998 (Brownley) Plastic Bag Ban – Support**

*City of Lafayette*

Dear Senator Simitian:

*Town of Moraga*

*City of Orinda*

*City of Walnut Creek*

The Central Contra Costa Solid Waste Authority is a regional governmental agency that manages the garbage and recycling programs for Danville, Lafayette, Moraga, Orinda, Walnut Creek and surrounding unincorporated Contra Costa County. Our agency supports Assembly Bill 1998 by Assembly Member Julia Brownley, which will reduce plastic litter pollution by phasing out plastic carryout bags.

California retailers distribute roughly 19 billion single-use plastic bags annually, less than 10% of which are ever recycled. Light and aerodynamic, plastic bags are a primary and easily-preventable source of urban litter. Even when initially properly disposed, plastic bags can become inadvertent litter, blowing from trash cans, garbage trucks and disposal facilities. And urban litter is a primary source of oceanic plastic pollution, which has killed thousands of marine birds, sea turtles and other sensitive species and threatens California's multi-billion dollar ocean-based economy.

Plastic litter is a serious and costly problem for communities and the environment. Plastic bags essentially never biodegrade. Instead, plastic bags break into small pieces by exposure to sunlight, attracting ambient toxins and potentially overwhelming the local plankton food chain. In the North Pacific Gyre there is already up to 46 times more plastic than plankton.

There is no free bag. Californians are paying twice for single-use carryout bags—whether they use them or not. Consumers pay up to \$40 per household per year in higher grocery costs to offset the cost of the more than 1500 single use bags distributed to the average household by retailers annually. And California taxpayers pay a second time, to cover the more than \$40 million in costs generated by local government for the clean-up and disposal of those billions of bags.

The economic and environmental costs of non-degradable single-use plastic bags simply outweigh any short-term benefit. AB 1998 will reduce plastic litter pollution and the costs associated with it by phasing out plastic bags at the checkout stands of grocery stores, pharmacies and convenience stores. The bill also sets a minimum sales price for recycled-content paper bags in order to encourage reusable bag use.

We urge your support of AB 1998 when it is heard in committee.

Sincerely,

Victoria Smith  
CCCSWA Board Chair

cc: Assembly Member Julia Brownley

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