

350 Frank H. Ogawa Plaza, Suite 900
Oakland, CA 94612-2016

t. 510.452.9261

f. 510.452.9266

saveSFbay.org

March 25, 2009

Sam Schuchat
Ocean Protection Council Secretary
Ocean Protection Council
1330 Broadway, Suite 1300
Oakland, CA 94612

Re: Support for the Completion of a Master Environmental Assessment (MEA) on single-use (plastic and paper) and reusable bags.

Dear Secretary Schuchat and Members of the California Ocean Protection Council:

Save The Bay supports the recommended action to complete a Master Environmental Assessment (MEA) on single-use (plastic and paper) and reusable bags. This MEA will provide critical background information for California municipalities to complete Environmental Impact Reports (EIR) necessary for the development of new ordinances to place restrictions on usage of single-use bags.

Californians use an estimated 14 billion plastic bags annually, with less than 5% of them recycled. At last year's Coastal Cleanup Day, in the Bay Area alone, 25,000 bags were pulled out of the Bay in just a few hours.

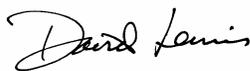
Estuaries like San Francisco Bay, the largest on the west coast, are critical nurseries for many ocean species. Wetlands – sheltered from wind, waves, and turbulence – provide plentiful food and protection for juvenile salmon, crabs, seals, water birds and raptors. Plastic marine debris kills thousands of animals around the world each year, and threatens California marine life. It is vital to significantly reduce the amount of plastic marine debris choking the Bay, including single use plastic bags.

Many California cities, including San Jose, Oakland, and Palo Alto in the Bay Area, are developing or have passed ordinances intended to minimize or eliminate single-use bags through the adoption of bans and/or fees. However, a ruling issued February 20, 2009, in Los Angeles County on a challenge under CEQA to a municipal plastic bag ban now requires that municipality to complete an EIR before it can implement its ban.

Other cities considering similar ordinances will likely be required to do the same in order to avoid the same result. Completion of an MEA on single-use bags will greatly simplify the EIR process for these cities, allowing them to incorporate the MEA into their individual EIRs, saving staff time and scarce funds.

Creating the MEA on single use bags is an important step to achieving the OPC's Ocean Litter Implementation Strategy and its call for a prohibition on single-use products such as plastic bags. Thank you for your leadership on this issue.

Sincerely,



David Lewis
Executive Director

