

**CALENDAR ITEM  
69**

**06/01/09**

**M. De Bernardo**

**CALIFORNIA STATE LANDS COMMISSION**

Consider a resolution proposed by the Controller supporting legislation that would reduce litter and marine debris by imposing a fee on single-use carryout bags.

**CALIFORNIA STATE  
LANDS COMMISSION**

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(REVISED)

**RESOLUTION BY THE CALIFORNIA STATE LANDS COMMISSION  
SUPPORTING LEGISLATION THAT WOULD SIGNIFICANTLY REDUCE LITTER  
AND MARINE DEBRIS AND ENCOURAGE THE USE OF REUSABLE SHOPPING  
BAGS BY TAKING MEASURES SUCH AS PLACING A FEE ON SINGLE-USE  
SHOPPING BAGS**

**WHEREAS**, the picturesque California coast, with its diverse climates, wildlife, beaches and cliffs, provides over 300 million domestic and international visitors each year with unforgettable experiences, including swimming, surfing, boating, fishing, whale watching, hiking and other activities; and

**WHEREAS**, according to a 2007 Forbes Traveler magazine study, two of the “world’s most visited attractions” are linked to California’s coast, with Fisherman’s Wharf/Golden Gate National Recreation Area attracting 13 million visitors annually, with more visitors than the Vatican, the Statue of Liberty and the Grand Canyon combined, and Sea World California also attracting another 4.26 million visitors annually; and

**WHEREAS**, California’s coastal beauty is dependent on its rich but sensitive ocean habitat, which consists of one of the most productive marine ecosystems on earth and supports several endangered and threatened species, including the bald eagle, the brown pelican, the blue and humpback whale, the California sea otter, and various salmon species; and

**WHEREAS**, the California State Lands Commission (Commission) has exclusive jurisdiction over all ungranted tide and submerged lands owned by the state, and of the beds of navigable rivers, streams, lakes, bays, estuaries, inlets, and straits; and

**WHEREAS**, the Commission serves the people of California by providing stewardship of the lands, waterways, and resources entrusted to its care through economic development, protection, preservation, and restoration; and

**WHEREAS**, litter and marine debris pollute California’s beaches, ocean, and other waterways, harm the state’s multi-billion dollar ocean-dependent tourism economy, and burden the state with the cost of clean-up and disposal; and

**WHEREAS**, 60 to 80 percent of all marine debris and 90 percent of all floating marine debris is plastic, which according to the United Nations Environment Programme kills more than one million seabirds and more than 100,000 marine mammals a year through ingestion, starvation, suffocation, infection, drowning, and entanglement; and

**WHEREAS**, plastic bags contribute in large part to the "Great Pacific Garbage Patch," which is a mass of garbage, approximately 80 percent plastic, floating in the Pacific Ocean between California and Hawaii that is formed through the movement of the Northern Pacific Gyre and estimated to be twice the size of Texas and up to 100 feet deep; and

**WHEREAS**, Californians use over 19 billion plastic bags annually, creating over 147,000 tons of waste, much of which makes its way to the state's waterways due to the light weight and expansive nature of the bags; and

**WHEREAS**, the use of paper bags is an environmentally ineffective alternative to plastic bags, with impacts including deforestation, air pollution, and excessive energy consumption; and

**WHEREAS**, in 2002, Ireland instituted a fee equivalent to 25 cents per bag to reduce the environmental problems caused by plastic bags, which, according to Ireland's Department of Environment, Heritage, and Local Government, resulted in more than a 90 percent decrease in the amount of single-use plastic bags used by consumers and a 95 percent decrease in plastic bag litter, which has been maintained each year since 2002; and

**WHEREAS**, single-use bag laws are in place in countries such as China, Denmark, Australia, Bangladesh, the United Kingdom, Somaliland, France, Rwanda, and Italy, and are either being implemented or considered by major U.S. cities such as New York City and Washington, D.C., and several local governments in California including the cities of Palo Alto, Manhattan Beach, San Jose, Morgan Hill, Mountain View, Santa Monica, San Diego, Oakland, Malibu, Santa Monica, Los Angeles, Berkeley, Eureka, Foster City, and the counties of Humboldt and Santa Clara; and

**WHEREAS**, in 2006, recognizing the environmental problems associated with single-use bags, Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger signed Assembly Bill 2449 into law, creating a statewide plastic bag recycling program that requires every retail establishment that provides its customers with plastic bags to have an in-store plastic bag recycling program and a public awareness program promoting bag recycling; and

**WHEREAS**, despite the recycling requirements mandated by Assembly Bill 2449, the California Integrated Waste Management Board found that less than 5 percent of plastic carry-out bags are recycled annually; and

**WHEREAS**, on November 20, 2008, the California Ocean Protection Council adopted an implementation strategy that included a legislative recommendation to charge consumers a fee on all single-use plastic and paper carryout bags as an incentive for consumers to switch to reusable bags; and

**WHEREAS**, Assembly Bill 87 (Davis) and Assembly Bill 68 (Brownley) would place a 25-cent fee on single-use carryout bags in California to reduce the volume of plastic bags that end up becoming litter or marine debris; and

**WHEREAS**, both measures would provide an exemption for customers participating in the State Department of Social Services Food Stamp Program and the California Special Supplemental Food Program for Women, Infants, and Children, so as not to place an undue burden on low income individuals; and

**WHEREAS**, the Commission believes that based on examples such as the single-use bag program in Ireland, Californians will be able to implement a nominal fee on single-use bags and utilize reusable bags, thereby decreasing a major litter and marine debris problem in the state; therefore, be it

**RESOLVED BY THE CALIFORNIA STATE LANDS COMMISSION** that it supports legislation that would significantly reduce litter and marine debris and encourage the use of reusable shopping bags by taking measures such as placing a fee on single-use shopping bags as currently proposed by Assembly Bill 87 (Davis) and Assembly Bill 68 (Brownley); and

**RESOLVED**, that the Commission's Executive Officer transmit copies of this resolution to the Governor of California and to each member of the California State Senate and Assembly.