

# Board votes yes to plastic bag ban in San Luis Obispo County

Posted: Jan 11, 2012 7:06 PM by **Nancy Chen**

*Updated: Jan 12, 2012 8:13 AM*

Plastic bags will be banned in San Luis Obispo County effective October 1st after a controversial vote by the county's Integrated Waste Management Authority board Wednesday night.

Thirteen people sit on the board, comprised of the county's Board of Supervisors, representatives from seven cities and one representative of the community service districts.

A super-majority vote was called, which meant eight board members had to vote in favor of the proposal, instead of the usual seven; the final vote was eight to five, the least amount of votes necessary to pass the ban.

The ban will apply to single-use plastic bags at supermarkets, pharmacies, convenience stores and big-box stores as part of an effort to get shoppers to start bringing in reusable bags.

The board voted after three-and-a-half hours of public testimony and an hour of comments from each member; the hearing grew emotional at times as the proposal's advocates and critics, including those from special-interest groups, addressed the room.

A group called "Save the Plastic Bag," based in San Francisco, says it will now file a lawsuit against the county within thirty days to overturn the vote.

Bill Worrell, the manager of the county's integrated waste management, says the group has sued other communities who have adopted the ordinance statewide but has essentially lost those lawsuits.

San Luis Obispo County is now the 15th community in the state to pass a ban. About 130 million plastic bags are used each year in the county alone, and only three percent of that is recycled.

With the ban, if shoppers do forget to bring their reusable bags, they can buy a paper bag for ten cents, which will go to grocery stores to cover the cost of the paper bags. Not all plastic bags will be banned under the ordinance; smaller stores under ten thousand square feet will still be allowed to use them.