

## Regional Monitoring Data Leads to Ban of Plastic Bags in the City of Los Angeles

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Based in large part data collected under a regional monitoring program conducted by the Stormwater Monitoring Coalition (SMC), the Los Angeles City Council voted 13-1 on May 23, 2012 to phase out single-use plastic bags over the next 16 months. The plastic bag ban will begin later this year once a four-month environmental impact report of the bag ban is complete and the council adopts an ordinance.

The SMC study started in 2009, and involves 14 regulated, regulatory and research entities located in southern California, including the Los Angeles, Santa Ana and San Diego Water Boards. Sampling sites are usually sampled and analyzed for biological community characteristics, chemical parameters, aquatic toxicity, and physical habitat condition. The study is based on a probabilistic design and sampling locations are randomly selected throughout southern California. The sampling locations represent a proportion of the entire water body with statistical confidence. With a probabilistic approach, conditions at sites that are not sampled can be estimated. Therefore, the trash assessment represents several hundred stream miles of southern California.

In 2011, trash assessments were added as a parameter to the SMC study. Dr. Ted von Bitner, supervisor of monitoring programs for Orange County Public Works, led this effort. The San Diego Water Board participated in this regional trash assessment. The results from the trash assessment showed that plastic bags were the most prevalent trash item present in Southern California's streams; 390 plastic bags were found in 7,700 feet of stream length. Trash assessments will continue in 2012. Updates will be provided in future Executive Officer reports.