



MEMORANDUM

DATE: January 27, 2012

TO: Honorable Mayor and
Council Members

FROM: Nancy Petersen 
Interim Director
Environmental Services

**SUBJECT: City of Tucson - Plastic Bag Recycling Ordinance
Second Annual Report October 1, 2010 - September 30, 2011**

This memo provides the plastic bag recycling results for the second year of the program. On March 24, 2009, Mayor and Council adopted City Ordinance 10642 establishing plastic bag recycling requirements for retail establishments. A copy of the ordinance can be viewed on the City of Tucson Environmental Services website.

Since the program inception, Environmental Service (ES) has worked closely with the Arizona Food Marketing Alliance (AFMA) and Arizona Retailers Association (ARA) to promote plastic bag recycling and establish a self reporting process for each organization's members. AFMA gathered information and reported for the grocery stores (Fry's, Safeway, Bashas, Walmart, etc.) and ARA did the same for retail stores that also sell food products (Target, Walgreens, etc.) While plastic bags are the focus of the recycling effort, other thin film plastic products such as sandwich bags, shrink wrap, dry cleaning bags, etc. are also accepted and recycled through this program. ES has no mechanism to confirm the numbers self reported by the associations.

During the reporting period of October 1, 2010 through September 30, 2011, AFMA and ARA stores within the city limits of Tucson reported over 674 tons of plastic bags and other thin film products were recycled. Using the American Chemistry Council (ACC) standard of 132,000 plastic bags per ton, this is the equivalent of over 89 million plastic bags. This more than doubles our initial year collection of 41 million bags. The ACC estimates that Americans use approximately 300 plastic bags per person per year. Using Tucson's 2010 Census Data population of 520,116, the equivalent of 57% of Tucson's plastic bag usage was collected and recycled.

Additional efforts in the second year included:

- In April of 2011, the Southern Arizona Tucson Green Chamber of Commerce (SAGC) announced its support of the plastic bag recycling program. Working closely with representatives from the City of Tucson and the AFMA's Bag Central program (<http://www.bagcentralstation.com/>), SAGC distributes literature and educates its members and the public on how and where to recycle plastic bags.

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- The Community Food Bank and the Food City grocery store food chain teamed up again to collect and recycle plastic bags during the 2011 "Food from Letter Carriers' Drive." The one day collection event was once again hugely successful. Food City provided for the collection and transportation of approximately 84,000 plastic and paper bags to a recycling center. This tops last year's collection of 47,000 bags.
- Susan G. Komen Race for the Cure and Safeway partnered to support plastic bag collection and film recycling. Over three and a half cubic yards (slightly less than last year) of bags and film plastic were collected during the race event on April 11, 2011 and transported by Safeway to a recycling center.
- ES continued to financially support educational efforts through Tucson Clean and Beautiful and the Environmental Educational Exchange. Successful educational programs such as the elementary/middle school based "To Good to Throw Away" and adult targeted "Master Recycling Program" were enhanced to include sections on plastic bag and film recycling.

In the coming year, ES will continue to work with both AFMA and ARA to improve the visibility of the plastic bag recycling program and to develop a consistent approach at the various stores where the collection points are and how they are signed. If you have any questions regarding the information in this memo, please contact Francis LaSala at 837-4055.

NP/FL/lu

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