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City of Aspen Bans Plastic Bags from Grocery Stores

Press Release

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Aspen, Colorado – October 17, 2011—After much debate, Aspen City Council voted this month to ban plastic bags at two local grocery stores and impose a 20-cent fee on paper bags. The ban and fee go into effect May 1, 2012. The ultimate goal is to eliminate waste from the Aspen environment and raise awareness around excessive resource consumption. While the ordinance only affects grocers, other businesses can voluntarily opt into the program. One market outside Aspen City limits, Roxy's Market has already moved away from plastic bags.

A large majority of public comments at the council meeting was in favor of the ban on plastic and a fee for paper.

The Council has been working toward legislation aimed to reduce single-use bags for over a year and has been engaged in activities to limit plastic bag use for over three years.

The fee the City collects for the paper bags will be distributed among a few primary sources. The first is to the grocers to reimburse them for the costs incurred by implementing the new program (up to \$1000 a month for the first year and then \$100 a month thereafter), the second is to provide reusable bags to residents and visitors as funds allow and the third is to create signs and educational information to create a residential and visiting population that is savvy on the ecological issues related to plastic and paper bag use. The fee in general can

only be used for waste related projects.

Aspen is working in conjunction with the Towns of Carbondale and Basalt to create a unified, valley wide effort to reduce single use bag consumption. The three jurisdictions agreed a 20-cent fee was high enough to incentivize change while not causing a financial burden on shoppers. The goal is to help educate citizens on the role single-use items play in their lives and how to eliminate disposable products that may actually only be used for an hour or less.

Using grocer calculations and staff audits, the City will be able to track and record the reduction numbers of the bags, which will help assess the program.

After May 1, 2013, one year of the ban, City staff and Council will review the program for challenge areas and successes. If necessary, changes to the ordinance can be made.

Plastic bag ban is limited to the bags customer receive at check-out and does not include bags used for fruits, vegetables or bulk items, frozen foods, flowers, baked goods, prescription drugs, dry-cleaning or newspapers.

More information is available on wastefreeroaringfork.org. Questions can be directed to the City's Environmental Health Department, where reusable bags are also available.

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