

## Spring Cleaning: Albertsons moves to eliminate plastic, paper bags

By LYZ HOFFMAN -- APRIL 2, 2011

In honor of spring cleaning, the **Carpinteria Albertsons** will be [purging plastic and paper](#).

Starting on April 27, the grocery store will no longer be bagging groceries in plastic or paper bags, instead [using only the reusable bags](#) customers bring in or can purchase at the store.

The store will offer customers four different-priced reusable bags, ranging from **30 cents to \$2.49 per bag**, said store director Ahmed Jahadhmy. And, as the switch nears, the store will be giving out free bags to help low-income households, Jahadhmy said.

“We’ve tried to alleviate people’s concerns,” Jahadhmy said. “It’s a conscientious decision,” said Jahadhmy, of the switch to reusable bags. “We’re going to walk the walk and talk the talk.”

The switch, a decision Jahadhmy said was made by the store’s corporate division about eight months ago, has received “great support,” he said. The Carpinteria store is one of only two stores in the state (the other store is an Albertsons near San Diego) to implement such a program.

The ban is the latest example of the growing awareness of how plastic and paper bags are harmful to the environment. Several communities across California are examining the issue and considering bans on the bags.

The Santa Barbara City Council voted unanimously to have its Ordinance Committee meet mid-April to discuss and develop an anti-plastic-bag ordinance, which would then have to be approved by the Council. The city of Santa Monica and the county of Los Angeles have both banned plastic bags.

Titled ‘Going Bagless,’ the move to solely reusable bags in Carpinteria, Jahadhmy said, will save more than one million bags a year in Carpinteria alone.

“We live in such a beautiful area,” said Jahadhmy. “We’re taking a stand [against waste].”

Citing the Santa Barbara area’s “strong support of environmental policies,” Jahadhmy said that this particular Albertsons – of the 215 statewide – was chosen for the program “because of the community.”

“It’s a tremendous honor for us, for the city, for the citizens of Carpinteria,” said Jahadhmy said.

Robert Myers, a customer and Carpinteria resident, has mixed feelings about the switch. “It’s a good idea, but I don’t like having to spend money on my own bag,” he said. “I don’t have a problem with it, but more effort should be put into people than plastic bags.”

His concerns aside, Myers insists he will still shop at the store. “I guess I have to buy a bag,” he said.

That’s for the best, assured Kira Redmond, the executive director of Santa Barbara Channelkeeper, an environmental group that protects local waterways.

“Plastic bags have an extreme impact on the marine environment,” she said. “Reusable bags don’t end

up in a landfill, or worse, in the ocean. One reusable bag can replace hundreds of disposable bags.”

Environmental groups, including Santa Barbara Channelkeeper, have been lobbying to pass laws banning plastic bags for quite some time, Redmond said. Channelkeeper in particular has been working with several local grocery stores to promote reusable bag use.

And while she laments that the process overall has been “difficult and slow-moving,” Redmond applauded Albertsons’s initiative.

“Albertsons doing this on their own is a huge gesture,” she said. “Hopefully, the experience will be positive. We’re hoping that other stores will follow the Carpinteria Albertsons’s example.”

The Santa Barbara City Council is also considering banning plastic bags. On February 1, the Council voted unanimously to have its Ordinance Committee meet mid-April to discuss and develop an anti-plastic-bag ordinance, which would then have to be approved by the Council. The city of Santa Monica and the county of Los Angeles have both banned plastic bags.

One Albertsons customer, a female five-year resident of Carpinteria who asked not to be named, feels “stuck between a rock and a hard place” about the change. “I want plastic [bags] eliminated, but not paper [bags],” she said. “I’m still going to shop here. I’m just going to have to get the [reusable] bags with everyone else.”

Jahadhmy said that the store will offer customers four different-priced reusable bags, ranging from 30 cents to \$2.49 per bag. And, as the switch nears, the store will be giving out free bags to help low-income households, Jahadhmy said.

“We’ve tried to alleviate people’s concerns,” he said.

Ron Gouger, a store regular and 21-year Carpinteria resident, has no problem with the purge. “I converted [to reusable bags] a long time ago,” he said. “If everybody recycled plastic, we wouldn’t have a problem.”