



Look For the FSC Label

Paul Koretz is a Los Angeles City Councilmember who represents most of the city's west side (including UCLA) and large chunks of the San Fernando Valley. And [he's got a proposal that environmentalists love](#):

Hoping to reduce the billions of grocery bags circulating throughout the city, an L.A. councilman Tuesday called for a sweeping ban on single-use paper and plastic bags.

By including paper bags in the ban, the proposal goes beyond similar measures taken recently by other California cities and counties. Although L.A. County, Santa Monica and other municipalities have banned plastic bags in recent years, most have allowed stores to sell paper ones for a small fee.

"With paper bags, you're still generating litter," said Councilman Paul Koretz, who introduced the motion proposing the ban. "We're taking the next step."

Perhaps this will get me kicked out of the cool kids club (assuming I was ever there), but I'm wondering whether this might risk a consumer backlash because it moves too quickly. If consumers suddenly find that they will have to pony up \$2-3 extra every time they visit the supermarket for bags, that could turn them off.

It might be better to phase out paper bags gradually, but in the meantime mandate that all paper bags be either 100% post-consumer content or made with paper certified by the [Forest Stewardship Council](#). FSC is perhaps the best environmental organization you've

never heard of: it approves certification of wood and wood products to ensure that not only is the wood harvested sustainably, but done so also taking into account indigenous peoples' rights (crucial in forestry) and labor standards. Accept no substitutes: unlike the [Sustainable Forestry Initiative](#) and [Programme for the Endorsement of Forestry Certification](#), which are essentially industry greenwashing groups, FSC includes industry and environmental, labor, and indigenous peoples' groups in developing its certification and auditing standards.

If the plastic bag ban were enacted now, and the paper bag ban phased in over a couple of years, it would give consumers time to adjust. It's annoying to go to the supermarket and forget your reusable bag; it will be even more annoying to forget *and* then have to shell out several bucks.