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GOT YOUR BAGS, MAINE? TO LAUNCH IN AUGUSTA ON MONDAY

AUGUSTA - A coalition of business leaders, grocery and retail associations, government officials, and environmental advocates will announce their campaign to encourage increased reusable bag use with the launch of *Got Your Bags, Maine?* in the State House Hall of Flags at 10:00 a.m. Monday, November 9, 2009. The campaign is a public education and outreach effort aimed at encouraging Mainers to increase the usage of reusable bags for shopping and decrease the use of single use paper and plastic bags.

At the encouragement of legislative leadership, a growing member group is taking action. The main goal of the group is to reduce the usage of paper and plastic single use checkout bags by 33% by 2012. At present, the group includes Maine Grocers Association, Maine Merchants Association, Hannaford Supermarkets, Rite Aid, Wal-Mart, the Natural Resources Council of Maine, Maine Chamber of Commerce, representatives from the Maine State Planning Office and the Maine Department of Environmental Protection, as well as a growing number of Maine grocers and retailers.

A similar program in California works exceptionally well in reducing the number of plastic shopping bag consumption and by working with businesses, showing them how to make these conversions and increasing their recycling efforts, we are ensuring maximum participation.

Representative Jane Knapp (R-Gorham) added, "This is an incredibly exciting opportunity, especially considering how effective this style of a campaign has proven it to be. We look forward to making this work here in Maine."

Got Your Bags, Maine? has developed a toolkit of best practices that retailers can deploy in order to meet the reduction goals. The campaign will be promoted via the web, traditional and social media. The intention is for retailers and grocers statewide to sign on to promote how they are using reusable bags and to track progress.

Curtis Picard, Executive Director, Maine Merchants Association, stated, "We think our members will warmly embrace this program. It is good for Maine retailers and great for Maine. We look

forward to making the task of reduction easier by providing easy suggestions for participating retailers and tips that consumers can use. It is an ambitious goal, but achievable."

Shelley Doak, Executive Director, Maine Grocers Association, remarked, "Maine grocers and retailers recognize their leadership role in promoting the use of reusable bags and the responsible reuse of disposable check out bags. We are proud to be part of this unique coalition that seeks to build upon the good work already underway. We challenge Maine consumers to support the coalition's goal by reusing disposable check out bags, recycling plastic bags, and using reusable bags!"

"This is truly an example of businesses, government and non-profit organizations working together to solve an environmental problem," said Matt Prindiville, Clean Production Project Director with the Natural Resources Council of Maine. "Now, we need our fellow Mainers to get involved and remember to bring their reusable bag when they shop."

Complete information can be found at www.gotyourbagsmaine.com and the campaign can be followed on Twitter @GotYourBagsME.

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For grassroots information or to join the Got Your Bags, Maine? coalition, please contact Alex Steed at 207-939-6188 or alexsteed@gmail.com