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The Center for Oceanic Awareness, Research, & Education

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PLASTIC BAG GIANTS DROP SUIT AGAINST CHICOBAG

Hilex Poly drops its lawsuit against reusable bag manufacturer

San Francisco, California – 13 September 2011 -- The Center for Oceanic Awareness, Research, and Education (COARE), celebrates the decision of three large plastic bag manufacturers to drop their lawsuit against ChicoBag, a small reusable bag manufacturer in Chico, California.

The plastic bag giants, which have also sued municipalities over bag bans or fees, had initiated the suit against ChicoBag alleging that the company's "Learn the Facts" page, (which contains widely accepted third party statistics regarding the impact of single-use plastic bags on the environment) was false and misleading, and had resulted in 'irreparable harm' to their companies.

Since its inception, COARE has been actively addressing plastic pollution and attempts to reduce single-use plastic consumption in the U.S. and worldwide. Annually, U.S. consumers use 100 billion plastic bags, all of which are derived from fossil fuels. In California alone, consumers use more than 19 billion plastic grocery and merchandise bags each year.

The lawsuit against ChicoBag was filed in South Carolina, a state that has no anti-SLAPP laws. A SLAPP suit (Strategic Lawsuit Against Public Participation) is intended to censor, intimidate, and silence critics by burdening them with the cost of a legal defense until they abandon their criticism or opposition.

ChicoBag Founder and President Andy Keller presented Hilex Poly with more than 25,000 petition signatures collected by COARE, Care2, Surfrider Foundation, Heal the Bay, and a number of other grassroots organizations, urging them to drop the case.

In a victory for plastic bag foes and environmentally conscious consumers, the terms of the settlement will likely help the public to be better informed about the real impacts of single-use plastic bags.

"Consumers need to move away from the single-use and disposable mentality", said Christopher Chin, COARE's Executive Director. "This agreement allows us and our colleagues to continue to share the truth about single-use bags."

In a surprising departure from the plastic bag industry's standard axiom "Bags don't litter, people do", Hilex Poly acknowledged the fact that single-use bags can become windblown litter despite proper disposal.

"Ultimately, I hope this settlement will encourage Hilex Poly and the rest of the plastic bag industry to refrain from filing any future frivolous lawsuits, stop attacking reusable bags, and instead invest their dollars into reducing unnecessary single-use bag consumption and litter, while developing solutions to meet the growing consumer demand for more sustainable products", said Keller.

As part of the Clean Seas Coalition, COARE has worked with a number of organizations to support evolving legislation such as AB1998, the Los Angeles County bag ban, the San José ban, the County of Santa Clara, and many others. Through its "Enough with the plastic already!" campaign, COARE seeks to reduce the amount of oceanbound waste by helping people become more aware of how their habits affect the world around them. COARE raises public awareness of some very commonly overlooked sources of trash, and encourages people everywhere to examine their choices.

About COARE

The Center for Oceanic Awareness, Research, and Education, Inc. (COARE) is a tax-exempt nonprofit organization based in the San Francisco Bay Area. Its purpose is to study our oceans and increase public awareness of the earth's marine environment through educational programs and outreach. COARE seeks to enlighten people, young and old, to the plight of the oceans, to change the way they think and act, and to encourage them to create positive and lasting change. For more information about COARE, and the Shark Safe certification program, visit <http://www.coare.org>.

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