Resolution supporting a California Statewide producer responsibility program to minimize marine plastic pollution and to help advance San Francisco Zero Waste Goals.

WHEREAS, The health of San Francisco and California's waterways, public spaces, coast and ocean is increasingly threatened by the persistent influx of plastic pollution that harms the environment and economy; and,

WHEREAS, The vast majority of litter in California's coast and ocean comes from land-based sources, and it is well documented from more than 25 years of coastal cleanup data that up to 90 percent of floating marine litter is plastic; and,

WHEREAS, A 2012 study by the Convention on Biological Diversity found that 663 marine species have been impacted by marine litter through entanglement and ingestion—a two-thirds increase in impacted species from a similar study in 1998; and,

WHEREAS, Research by the Algalita Marine Research Foundation shows that persistent organic pollutants in the marine environment attach to the surface of plastic debris, and floating plastics have been found to accumulate pollutants and transport them through ocean currents, and marine life that ingests plastics coated with pollutants absorb these pollutants, and,

WHEREAS, In 2012, the US Environmental Protection Agency Region 9 estimated west coast cities and counties spend approximately $520 million each and every year to combat litter and curtail marine debris; and,

WHEREAS, The global production and consumption of plastic—especially single use plastic products—is on the rise; and,
WHEREAS, Existing federal and state laws designed to combat marine litter are failing to keep plastic pollution from entering the ocean and harming marine wildlife and coastal economies; and,

WHEREAS, Of the many plastic materials that pollute the ocean, single-use plastic items are some of the worst offenders, for example, a bay area litter audit in 2010-2011 found that 2/3rds of the litter entering the bay was single-use food and beverage packaging.; and

WHEREAS, A new approach is needed in California to reduce the impacts of single-use plastic products on San Francisco and California’s environment and economy; and

WHEREAS, The San Francisco Department of Environment is committed to the tenets of producer responsibility as essential to reaching San Francisco’s Zero Waste goals; now, therefore be it,

RESOLVED, That the San Francisco Commission on the Environment strongly supports statewide legislation to create a Marine Plastic Pollution Producer Responsibility Program (“Program”); and, be it,

FURTHER RESOLVED, That the San Francisco Commission on the Environment urges the State Legislative Committee to urge the California Legislature to pass statewide legislation to develop the Program to include specific, aggressive, and enforceable marine plastic pollution reduction and landfill reduction goals, targets and compliance dates; and, be it,

FURTHER RESOLVED, That the Commission urges the State Legislative Committee to urge the California Legislature to pass statewide legislation to develop the Program to effectively define and cover the items most commonly found as pollution, particularly plastic packaging; and be it,

FURTHER RESOLVED, That the Commission urges the State Legislative Committee to urge the California Legislature to pass statewide legislation to develop the Program to shift
a fair share of the financial burden of managing single-use plastic products and plastic
packaging at the end of its useful life to producers of the products, thereby substantially
reducing financial burden for implementation of marine plastic pollution prevention
infrastructure and activities on local governments, taxpayers, and regional water districts, and
supporting California's economy; and be it,

                  FURTHER RESOLVED, That the Commission urges the Program to include provision
for ongoing monitoring to show impacts of the Program such as the measurable reduction of
plastic pollution in the marine environment and to better understand the sources, pathways,
and impacts of marine plastic pollution; and be it,

                  FURTHER RESOLVED, That the Commission urges the State Legislative Committee
to urge the California Legislature to pass statewide legislation to develop a Program that does
not preempt state or local plastic bag laws, the California Beverage Container Recycling and
Litter Reduction Act, or other demonstrably effective laws related to reduction or recycling of
the most prevalent items found in marine plastic pollution; and be it,

                  FURTHER RESOLVED, That the Commission urges the State Legislative Committee
to urge the California Legislature to pass statewide legislation to develop a Program that does
not permit use of high temperature material destruction technologies (often called “waste-to-
energy” or “conversion technology”) activities in achieving stated goals.

I hereby certify that this Resolution was adopted at the Commission on the
Environment’s Meeting on May 28, 2013.

Monica Fish, Commission Secretary
VOTE:       Approved (4-0) 3 Absent
AYES:       Commissioners Arce, Gravanis, Stephenson and Wald
NOES:       None
ABSENT:     Commissioners Josefowitz, King, and Mok