

## SETTLEMENT AND RELEASE AGREEMENT

### 1. INTRODUCTION

#### 1.1. Ecological Alliance, LLC and Lowe's Home Centers, LLC

This Settlement Agreement is entered into by and between Ecological Alliance, LLC ("Ecological"), on the one hand, and Lowe's Home Centers, LLC ("Lowe's"), on the other hand, with Ecological and Lowe's collectively referred to as the "Parties."

#### 1.2. General Allegations

Ecological alleges that Lowe's manufactured and distributed and offered for sale in the State of California tow chains with pouches containing Di(2-ethylhexyl)phthalate ("DEHP"), and that such sales have not included warnings pursuant to the Safe Drinking Water and Toxic Enforcement Act of 1986, California Health & Safety Code sections 25249.6 *et seq.* ("Proposition 65"). California has identified and listed DEHP under Proposition 65 as a chemical known to the State of California to cause cancer, birth defects or other reproductive harm.

#### 1.3. Product Description

The products that are covered by this Settlement Agreement are defined as tow chains with pouches containing DEHP that Lowe's has sold, offered for sale or distributed in California, including, but not limited to, Blue Hawk tow chain item number 1329452. All such items shall be referred to herein as the "Products."

#### 1.4. Notice of Violation

On August 7, 2020, Ecological served Lowe's and the requisite public enforcement agencies eligible to initiate Proposition 65 actions on behalf of the People of the State of California with a document entitled "60-Day Notice of Violation" ("Notice") that provided

Lowe's and such public enforcers with notice that Lowe's was allegedly in violation of California Health & Safety Code section 25249.6 for failing to warn consumers and customers that the Products exposed users in California to DEHP. To the best of the Parties' knowledge, no public enforcer has commenced or is diligently prosecuting the allegations set forth in the Notice.

**1.5. No Admission**

The Parties enter into this Settlement Agreement to settle disputed claims between them as set forth herein and in the Notice concerning Lowe's' compliance with Proposition 65.

Lowe's denies the material factual and legal allegations contained in Ecological's Notice and maintains that all products that it has sold, offered for sale or distributed in or has manufactured for sale and distribution in California, including the Products, have been and are in compliance with Proposition 65 or any other statutory, regulatory, common law or equitable doctrine.

Nothing in this Settlement Agreement shall be construed as an admission by Lowe's of any fact, finding, issue of law, or violation of law; nor shall compliance with this Settlement Agreement constitute or be construed as an admission by Lowe's of any fact, finding, conclusion, issue of law, or violation of law, such being specifically denied by Lowe's on its behalf. However, nothing in this section shall diminish or otherwise affect the obligations, responsibilities, and duties of Lowe's under this Settlement Agreement.

**1.6. Effective Date**

For purposes of this Settlement Agreement, the term "Effective Date" shall mean the date this Settlement Agreement is fully executed.

## **2. INJUNCTIVE RELIEF: COMPLIANT PRODUCTS**

As of the Effective Date, Lowe's shall sale, offer for sale, or distribute and/or manufacture, import, or otherwise source for authorized sale in California only Products that are "Compliant Products." For purposes of this Settlement Agreement, "Compliant Products" are defined as either (a) Reformulated Products, as defined pursuant to Section 2.1 below, or (b) those Products labeled with a clear and reasonable warning in compliance with Proposition 65 warning pursuant to Section 2.2 below. Products that were manufactured prior to the Effective Date, supplied to third parties by Lowe's prior to the Effective Date, or otherwise already in the stream of commerce shall be deemed exempted from the requirements of this Section 2 and shall be permitted to be sold through as previously manufactured, packaged and labeled.

### **2.1. Reformulation Standards**

"Reformulated Products" are defined as those Products containing DEHP in concentrations less than or equal to 0.1 percent (1,000 parts per million) when analyzed pursuant to a scientifically reliable application of U.S. Environmental Protection Agency testing methodologies 3580A and 8270C or any other scientifically reliable methodology utilized by federal or state agencies for the purpose of determining the DEHP content in a solid substance.

### **2.2. Warning Language**

Whenever a clear and reasonable warning is required for Products offered for sale in California, Lowe's shall provide Proposition 65 warnings on the Product's label or in a manner that is otherwise in compliance with Proposition 65 regulations at the time as follows:

- (a) The parties agree that any of the following warnings shall constitute a warning in full compliance with this Section:

(1) **WARNING:** This product can expose you to chemicals including DEHP, which is known to the State of California to cause cancer and birth defects or other reproductive harm. For more information go to [www.P65Warnings.ca.gov](http://www.P65Warnings.ca.gov).

(2) **WARNING:** Cancer and Reproductive Harm – [www.P65Warnings.ca.gov](http://www.P65Warnings.ca.gov).

(b) If Lowe's uses either of the above warning statements identified in subsection 2.2(a) to effectuate its compliance, it shall also include a symbol consisting of a black exclamation point in a yellow equilateral triangle with a bold black outline. Where the sign, label or shelf tag for the Products is not printed using the color yellow, the symbol may be printed in black and white. The symbol shall be placed to the left of the text of the warning, in a size no smaller than the height of the word "WARNING."

(c) The parties agree that the specifications for warnings, set forth in subsection 2.2(a) above comply with Proposition 65 and its regulations and with the terms of this Settlement Agreement. The Parties recognize that these are not the exclusive methods of providing a warning under Proposition 65 and its implementing regulations.

(d) If Proposition 65 warnings for DEHP should no longer be required, Lowe's shall have no further obligations pursuant to this Settlement Agreement. If modifications or amendments to Proposition 65 or its regulations after the Effective Date are inconsistent with, or provide warning specifications or options different from, the specifications in this Settlement Agreement, Lowe's may

modify the content and delivery methods of its warnings to conform to the modified or amended provisions of Proposition 65 or its regulations.

**3. PENALTIES PURSUANT TO HEALTH & SAFETY CODE SECTION 25249.7(b)**

In settlement of all the claims referred to in this Settlement Agreement, Lowe's shall pay a total of \$500 in civil penalties in accordance with this Section. The penalty payment will be allocated in accordance with California Health & Safety Code section 25249.12(c)(1) & (d), with 75% of the funds remitted to the California Office of Environmental Health Hazard Assessment ("OEHHA") and the remaining 25% of the penalty remitted to Ecological. Ecological's counsel shall be responsible for timely delivering OEHHA's and Ecological's portions of the penalty payment made by Lowe's under this Settlement Agreement in accordance with California Health & Safety Code section 25249.12 and the terms of this Section 3.

**4. REIMBURSEMENT OF FEES AND COSTS**

The Parties reached an accord on the compensation due to Ecological and its counsel under the private attorney general doctrine and principles of contract law. Under these legal principles, Lowe's shall reimburse Ecological's counsel for fees and costs, incurred as a result of investigating and preparing the Notice. Lowe's shall pay Ecological's counsel \$12,000 for all attorneys' fees, expert and investigation fees, and related costs associated with this matter and the Notice.

**5. PAYMENT INFORMATION**

On or before November 23, 2020, Lowe's shall make a total payment of Twelve Thousand Five Hundred Dollars (\$12,500) for the civil penalties and attorney's fees / costs set forth in Sections 3 and 4 above by check to Plaintiff's counsel Custodio & Dubey LLP to be sent to the following address:

Custodio & Dubey LLP  
448 S. Hill Street, Suite 615  
Los Angeles, CA 90013

Other than this payment, each side is to bear its own attorneys' fees and costs.

**6. RELEASE OF ALL CLAIMS**

**6.1. Release of Lowe's, Downstream Customers and Upstream Vendors**

In further consideration of the promises and agreements herein contained, and for the payments to be made pursuant to Sections 3 and 4 above, Ecological, on behalf of itself, its past and current agents, representatives, attorneys, successors and/or assignees, hereby waives all rights to institute or participate in, directly or indirectly, any form of legal action and releases all claims relating to the Products, including, without limitation, all actions, and causes of action, in law or in equity, suits, liabilities, demands, obligations, damages, costs, fines, penalties, losses or expenses (including, but not limited to, investigation fees, expert fees and attorneys' fees) of any nature whatsoever, whether known or unknown, fixed or contingent (collectively "Claims"), against (a) Lowe's, and its owners, parent companies, corporate affiliates, subsidiaries, and their respective officers, directors, insurers, attorneys, predecessors, successors, assigns, representatives, shareholders, agents, employees, independent contractors, and manufacturers, and sister, parent and related entities. (collectively "Releasees") and (b) all entities to whom Lowe's directly or indirectly provides, distributes, or sells the Products including each of Lowe's' downstream distributors, wholesalers, vendors (including but not limited to AC Group, Ltd.), licensors, licensees, auctioneers, retailers, franchisees, dealers, shareholders, cooperative members, customers, owners, purchasers, users (collectively, "Releases").

Ecological also, on behalf of itself, its past and current agents, representatives, attorneys, successors, and/or assignees and *not* in its representative capacity, provides a general release herein which shall be effective as a full and final accord and satisfaction, as a bar to all actions, causes of action, obligations, costs, expenses, attorneys' fees, damages, losses, claims, liabilities and demands of any nature, character or kind, known or unknown, suspected or unsuspected, against Lowe's and the Releasees. Ecological acknowledges that it is familiar with California Civil Code section 1542, which provides as follows:

A general release does not extend to claims that the creditor or releasing party does not know or suspect to exist in his or her favor at the time of executing the release and that, if known by him or her, would have materially affected his or her settlement with the debtor or released party.

Ecological, in its capacity only, and on behalf of itself, its past and current agents, representatives, attorneys, successors, and/or assignees expressly waives and relinquishes any and all rights and benefits which it may have under, or which may be conferred on it by the provisions of California Civil Code section 1542 as well as under any other state or federal statute or common law principle of similar effect, to the fullest extent that it may lawfully waive such rights or benefits pertaining to the released matters.

#### **6.2. Lowe's' Release of Ecological**

Lowe's waives any and all claims against Ecological, its attorneys and other representatives, for any and all actions taken or statements made by Ecological and its attorneys and other representatives, whether in the course of investigating claims or otherwise seeking enforcement of Proposition 65 against it in this matter, and/or with respect to the Products.

**7. GOVERNING LAW**

The terms of this Settlement Agreement shall be governed by the laws of the State of California and apply within the State of California. In the event that Proposition 65 is repealed or is otherwise rendered inapplicable by reason of law generally, or as to the Products, then Lowe's shall have no further obligations pursuant to this Settlement Agreement.

**8. NOTICES**

Unless specified herein, all correspondence and notices required to be provided pursuant to this Settlement Agreement shall be in writing and personally delivered or sent by: (i) first-class, (registered or certified mail) return receipt requested; or (ii) overnight courier on any party by the other party at the following addresses:

For Lowe's:	Stephanie Forman, Esq. Gabriel J. Padilla, Esq. Tharpe & Howell, LLP 15250 Ventura Boulevard Ninth Floor Sherman Oaks, CA 91403
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For Ecological:	Vineet Dubey, Esq. Custodio & Dubey LLP 448 S. Hill St., Suite 615 Los Angeles, CA 90013
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Any party, from time to time, may specify in writing to the other party a change of address to which all notices and other communications shall be sent.

**9. COUNTERPARTS; FACSIMILE/E-SIGNATURES**

This Settlement Agreement may be executed in counterparts and by facsimile or e-signatures, each of which shall be deemed an original, and all of which, when taken together, shall constitute one and the same document.



10. **COMPLIANCE WITH HEALTH & SAFETY CODE SECTION 25249.7(f)**

Ecological agrees to comply with the reporting form requirements referenced in California Health & Safety Code § 25249.7(f).

11. **ENTIRE AGREEMENT**


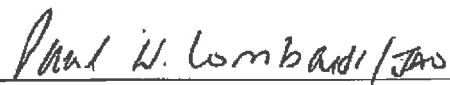
This Settlement Agreement contains the sole and entire agreement and understanding of the Parties with respect to the entire subject matter hereof, and all related prior discussions, negotiations, commitments and understandings. No other agreements, oral or otherwise, exist to bind either of the Parties.

12. **MODIFICATION**

This Settlement Agreement may be modified only by a written agreement signed by the Parties.

13. **AUTHORIZATION**

The undersigned are authorized to execute this Settlement Agreement on behalf of their respective Parties and have read, understood and agree to all of the terms and conditions of this Settlement Agreement.

<p style="text-align: center;"><b>AGREED TO:</b></p> <p>Date: November <u>4</u>, 2020</p> <p>By: </p> <p>On Behalf of Ecological Alliance, LLC</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>AGREED TO:</b></p> <p>Date: November <u>9</u>, 2020</p> <p>By: </p> <p>On Behalf of Lowe's Home Centers, LLC</p>
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