

# ReNews



## Keep Your Watershed Beautiful and Trash Free

Trash — cigarette filters and cigar tips, beverage bottles and cans, straws, six pack rings, packaging and plastic bags — the litany of litter is as varied as the available products. When mishandled, either thoughtlessly or deliberately, these products can end up as litter in our environment. In turn, the litter and pollution from parking lots, streets, and freeways can wind up in the storm drains that flow directly into our creeks, bay, and ocean. All of the varied litter shares a common origin: people! At a critical decision point, someone, somewhere, mishandled it. The good news is that litter, while pervasive, is one of the

### What you can do to reduce the amount of trash you dispose of:

- Buy reusable items rather than disposable. This can include reusable lunchboxes, plates, cups, eating utensils, and food containers.
- Avoid using single-use plastics.
- Reuse items several times before throwing them away.
- Recycle plastics, glass, metals, and paper, and buy recycled.
- Choose items that have the least packaging.
- Compost kitchen and yard waste.
- Use rechargeable batteries and recycle them when their useful life is over.
- Use a reusable bag to carry groceries and other items.
- Use cloth napkins, dishtowels, and handkerchiefs instead of paper ones.

most solvable pollution problems in our environment.

### Trash In Urban Runoff

Eighty percent of the trash that ends up in waterways comes from land-based sources: pedestrians, motorists, beach visitors, industry, and garbage management. Before you allow anything to blow away, fall onto the ground, or enter a storm drain, stop to think, "Am I about to pollute my environment?" Trash is a significant pollutant in urban runoff and storm water. It contributes to visual pollution, detracts from the pleasure of outdoor experiences and poses a threat to wildlife and human health (choking hazards to wildlife and bacteria to humans). Controlling litter at its source - properly disposing & recycling solid waste, improves the environment and reduces cleanup and maintenance costs in our communities.

### Major Sources of debris

The list of trash items is long, but their content is overwhelmingly comprised of plastic. Over the past 30 to 40 years, plastics have replaced organic materials as the primary material in solid waste. Every year, volunteers who participate in the International Coastal Cleanup collect data on the amount and type of trash picked up. Years of data collected by The Ocean Conservancy shows that anywhere from sixty to eighty percent of what volunteers remove is plastic. Durable and slow to degrade, items like beverage bottles, packing straps, tarps, and synthetic fishing line create a debris source with staying power. Many of these items are highly buoyant,



Cig Egret

allowing them to travel in currents for thousands of miles, endangering marine ecosystems and wildlife along the way.

Every year Coastal Cleanup Day takes place on the third Saturday of September — the end of the summer season, the start of the school year, and before the winter storms. It is the perfect time to clean up our creeks and shorelines before trash from inland waterways is washed out to sea to become marine debris.

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## 22nd Annual California Coastal Cleanup Day Saturday, September 16, 2006 • 9 a.m. to noon



Cola Bass

California Coastal Cleanup Day is a volunteer event focused on the marine environment. On this day, 50,000 volunteers turn out to over 700 cleanup sites statewide. Since the program started in 1985, nearly 700,000 Californians have removed more than 10 million pounds of debris from our state's shorelines and coast.

The California Coastal Commission works with volunteers and local agencies throughout the state to make the event a success. In addition to the 1,100 miles of coastline, almost 1,000 miles of inland waterways are cleaned. This helps to keep the debris that ends up in our stormdrains and watersheds from making it to the ocean where it endangers wildlife and the environment. For more information about the cleanup or for the recent report *Eliminating Land-based Discharges Of Marine Debris In California* go to [www.coast4u.org](http://www.coast4u.org).

### You can participate in a cleanup!

Coastal Cleanup Day is a great way for families, students, service groups, and neighbors to join together, take care of the environment, show community support, learn about the impacts of litter, and have fun!

The Countywide Stormwater Pollution Prevention Program is helping to coordinate the California Coastal Cleanup in San Mateo County. Go to one of the twenty-seven San Mateo County clean-up locations listed below on September 16 between 9 a.m. and 12 p.m. For directions to the locations and more information go to [www.flowstobay.org](http://www.flowstobay.org), or contact Sarah Pratt at (650) 599-1325.

CITY	LOCATION	CONTACT
Belmont	Belmont Creek	Kathleen Phalen (650) 595-7469 <a href="mailto:kphalen@belmont.gov">kphalen@belmont.gov</a>
Brisbane	Brisbane Lagoon	Russ Carmick (415) 508-2143 <a href="mailto:rcarmick@ci.brisbane.ca.us">rcarmick@ci.brisbane.ca.us</a>
Burlingame	Burlingame Bayfront	Donna Allen (650) 342-3727 <a href="mailto:Donna.Allen@veoliawaterna.com">Donna.Allen@veoliawaterna.com</a>
Daly City	Thornton State Beach	David & Shelly Sondergold (650) 756-4530 <a href="mailto:dsonder@mindspring.com">dsonder@mindspring.com</a>
East Palo Alto	San Francisquito Creek	Ryan Navratil (650) 961-1035 x310 <a href="mailto:Ryan@SanFrancisquito.org">Ryan@SanFrancisquito.org</a> <a href="http://www.SanFrancisquito.org">www.SanFrancisquito.org</a>
El Granada	Mirada Surf	Ranger Sarah Lenz (650) 728-3584 <a href="mailto:Slenz@co.sanmateo.ca.us">Slenz@co.sanmateo.ca.us</a>
Half Moon Bay	Pillar Point Harbor	John Draper (650) 726-5727 <a href="mailto:Jdraper@smharbor.com">Jdraper@smharbor.com</a>
	San Gregorio State Beach	Niel Panton (650) 726-2499 <a href="mailto:Sgerc@sanmateo.org">Sgerc@sanmateo.org</a>
	Roosevelt / Dunes State Beach	James Nothhelfer (650) 726-8804 <a href="mailto:jnothhelfer@parks.ca.gov">jnothhelfer@parks.ca.gov</a>
	Venice State Beach	
	Pistachio Beach	
	Francis State Beach	Jenine Beecher (650) 508-2330 <a href="mailto:jbeeche@rei.com">jbeeche@rei.com</a>
	Poplar Beach	Jennifer Bueno (650) 404-3423 <a href="mailto:jbueno@kpmg.com">jbueno@kpmg.com</a>
Millbrae	Mills Creek	Catherine L. Allin (650) 259-2397 <a href="mailto:callin@ci.millbrae.ca.us">callin@ci.millbrae.ca.us</a>
Pacifica	Esplanade Beach	Lynn Adams (650) 355-1668 <a href="mailto:Lynn4promos@aol.com">Lynn4promos@aol.com</a>
	Pacifica State Beach/ Linda Mar	
	South Esplanade Beach	
	Sharp Park Beach	
	Rockaway Beach	
	Calera Creek	Jeff Moroso (650) 738-8092 <a href="mailto:jeff@morosoconstruction.com">jeff@morosoconstruction.com</a>
	San Pedro Creek Watershed	Matt Graul (510) 589-4122 <a href="mailto:mgraul@sfsu.edu">mgraul@sfsu.edu</a> <a href="http://www.pedrocreek.org">www.pedrocreek.org</a>
Pescadero	Pescadero State Beach	Gregory Bahr, (650) 879-0299, <a href="mailto:Gbahr@sjcoe.net">Gbahr@sjcoe.net</a>
Redwood City	Bair Island	Jocelyn Gretz (510) 452-9261 <a href="mailto:jgretz@savesfbay.org">jgretz@savesfbay.org</a> <a href="http://www.saveSFbay.org">www.saveSFbay.org</a>
	Cordilleras Creek	Barbara Patterson (650) 594-1164 <a href="mailto:babaloupat@yahoo.com">babaloupat@yahoo.com</a> <a href="http://www.CordillerasCreek.org">www.CordillerasCreek.org</a>
San Carlos	Pulgas Creek and Brittain Creek	Barbara Patterson (650) 594-1164 <a href="mailto:babaloupat@yahoo.com">babaloupat@yahoo.com</a> <a href="http://www.CordillerasCreek.org">www.CordillerasCreek.org</a>
San Mateo	San Mateo Bayfront & San Mateo Creek	Vern Bessey (650) 522-7342 <a href="mailto:vbessey@cityofsanmateo.org">vbessey@cityofsanmateo.org</a>
South San Francisco	South San Francisco Bayfront	Gus Vellis (650) 875-6973 <a href="mailto:gus.vellis@ssf.net">gus.vellis@ssf.net</a> <a href="http://www.ssf.net">www.ssf.net</a>



## ALTERNATIVES CORNER

### Paper or Plastic? Neither — Choose to Reuse.

Next time you are asked the question “paper or plastic?” at the store, ask yourself the question, “What is the ultimate resting place of this bag?” You might discover the answer that plastic grocery bags are notorious for traveling on the wind, filling landfills, clogging storm drains and waterways, harming marine animals and littering roadsides. Close to 90 billion bags are used in the United States, that’s about 300 per person annually!<sup>1</sup>

Although plastic bags take less energy to produce and deliver than paper, they are made from non-renewable natural resources. The production of plastic bags requires petroleum and often natural gas: resources that increase our dependency on oil.

Additionally, prospecting and drilling for these resources contributes to the destruction of fragile habitats and ecosystems around the world.<sup>2</sup> Plastics are hazardous to produce; the pollution from plastic production is harmful to the environment. Finally, plastic does not biodegrade, but photo degrades, breaking up into smaller and smaller bits of plastic in the environment. The fact that plastics are not biodegradable means that the plastic bags in circulation and future production of plastic bags will stay with us for a long time in our environment — streets, creeks, fields, bays and oceans.

#### Environmental Impacts

First introduced in the 1970s, plastic bags now account for four out of every five bags handed out at the grocery store. The success of the plastic bag has meant a dramatic increase in the amount of sacks found floating in the oceans and effecting wildlife there and on land.

Plastic bags look like jellyfish to feeding turtles. Seabirds can mistake the small plastic pellets or “nurdles” that plastic materials are made from, for plankton or fish eggs. Plastic sheeting has been found in the stomachs of dolphins and whales.



#### Take the Pledge

The San Mateo Countywide Stormwater Pollution Prevention Program and RecycleWorks.org are partnering to distribute a reusable bag made from 100 percent recycled bottles.

Contact Sarah Pratt at 599-1325 or [spratt@co.sanmateo.ca.us](mailto:spratt@co.sanmateo.ca.us) or go to [flowstobay.org](http://flowstobay.org) to take the pledge to reduce your use of disposable plastic bags and get your free reusable bag while supplies last.

Recent studies suggest that vast quantities of microscopic plastics are building up in our oceans. Researchers from the Algalita Marine Research Foundation in Long Beach, California, found that the mass of plastic fragments in parts of the central Pacific Ocean is six times greater than that of resident plankton. [www.algalita.org](http://www.algalita.org)

Scientists who study plastics in the environment have discovered that plastics floating in the ocean can accumulate and absorb toxic chemicals that are present from other sources. (R. Thompson et al, 2004) These hydrophobic (this means water fearing, hydro= water, phobic= fear) chemicals cling to plastic, since it is made from similar compounds. Two such toxic chemicals include the PCBs (polychlorinated biphenyls) and DDE (dichlorodiphenyldichloroethylene), a byproduct of DDT. These agents are known

endocrine disruptors—chemicals that interfere with the reproductive, developmental, and immune systems of animals and humans. When a fish, bird or other sea animal eats the plastic, they ingest the toxic chemicals. These chemicals are affecting

many species and will eventually make their way up the food chain to humans.

#### Recycling a Viable Option?

Plastic bags have a low recycling value in comparison to other plastics like soda and milk bottles. Most plastic bags are not made back into plastic bags, but are used to make plastic lumber. Many bags collected for recycling never get recycled. Many times they are shipped overseas where they are incinerated for their fuel content under lax environmental laws.

With a one to three percent recycling rate for bags, even if recycling increased dramatically, it would not solve other significant issues, such as the use of non-renewable resources and toxic chemicals in their production, or the glut of bags that end up littering our environment. Recycling falls far short of solving this issue.

#### Be the Solution — Choose to Reuse

Consumers can make a huge impact by making the simple choice of reusing bags. Many grocery outlets are now selling low cost reusable bags at the checkout. Stores also give a monetary incentive (from \$.03 to \$.05 per bag) for each bag of groceries customers take away in their own bag. Remembering to bring your own bags may be a challenge at first, but creating a new habit becomes easy with time. Reduce your use of disposable plastic. The Benefits are in the Bag!

## Getting to Know Your Car

### Oil Recycling and Fuel Efficiency

Driving your car has become an effortless task. It is as easy as turning on your ignition and putting the pedal to the metal. But as a complex machine, many people have yet to read their owners manuals. Knowing your owners manual will allow you to drive and maintain your car more efficiently, which will save you money and spare the environment.

When you read your owner's manual, you will learn that an oil change is not needed every 3,000 miles! Many cars can safely operate up to 5,000 to 6,000 miles without an oil change. This means that up to half as much used oil and used oil filters have to be recycled. Unfortunately only sixty percent of used motor oil gets recycled and less than ten percent of used oil filters are recycled. This means that a lot of oil is getting into the environment. A drained used oil filter can still contain up to 5-ounces of oil. The filters that are not recycled end up contaminating California's landfills with millions of gallons of used oil each year.

Your owner's manual will also tell you the manufacturer's recommended tire pressure. Keeping your tires inflated will require less energy to roll and allow less



frequent fill-ups at the pump. According to the U.S. Department of Energy, you can improve your fuel economy by about 3.3 percent if you keep your tires inflated properly.

By getting to know your car and reading your owner's manual you can find out the proper tire pressure for your vehicle and the accurate number of miles your car can safely travel before changing your oil. This will save you the cost of extra oil changes and additional visits to the gas station, while also helping to protect the environment.

With regular maintenance of your car comes a responsibility to know how and where to properly recycle used motor oil and vehicle fluids. The next time you change your oil, take the last step and bring your oil and filter to a used oil collection center to recycle them free of charge. To find a collection center call 1-800-CLEANUP or go to [www.earth911.org](http://www.earth911.org).



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