

CALIFORNIA COASTAL COMMISSION

45 FREMONT STREET, SUITE 2000
SAN FRANCISCO, CA 94105-2219
VOICE (415) 904-5200
FAX (415) 904-5400
TDD (415) 597-5885



*Contacts: Judi Shils, Media Director (415) 939-1232 cell
Eben Schwartz, Marine Debris Program Manager (415) 904-5210 office, (415) 816-2506 cell*

**California Coastal Commission Aims to Snuff Out Cigarette Litter
at 32nd Annual California Coastal Cleanup Day**

August 17th -- Californians will have the opportunity to help stop the millions of cigarette butts, plastic bags, food wrappers, and plastic pollution of all types that litter California's beaches and inland waterways from reaching our ocean.

The California Coastal Commission is proud to announce that the 32nd Annual California Coastal Cleanup Day will take place on Saturday, September 17th from 9 a.m. to 12 p.m. in most locations. The cleanup is expected to draw tens of thousands of volunteers who -- at more than 850 locations throughout California -- will help remove tons of trash accumulating on California's beaches and inland shorelines.

The Coastal Commission announced the launch of this year's cleanup with the release of new promotional artwork and a campaign designed to highlight the importance of the effort. This year's campaign focuses exclusively on cigarette butts, which are the most common item found each Coastal Cleanup Day. The campaign posters and postcards draw a direct connection between the cigarette butts littering our beaches and inland waterways and where they may have been flicked. The new campaign shows discarded cigarette filters lying on beaches or along creeks, with phrases calling attention to where the litter started: "Flicked along Highway 5," "Flicked in Union Square," or "Flicked along L Street." The goal is to show how cigarette butts can wash from city streets and highways out through creeks and stormwater systems to eventually end up in our ocean. The pro-bono campaign was created for Coastal Cleanup Day by San Francisco-based advertising agency Gyro LLC.

"Most people have understood for some time the damage cigarettes can do to human health," said Eben Schwartz, the commission's marine debris program manager. "What we are trying to shed more light on is the incredible harm cigarette filters cause in our environment as well."

Cigarette filters are made of cellulose acetate, a non-biodegradable plastic. Once released into the environment, these filters slowly break apart into smaller and smaller plastic pieces, never completely disappearing from the environment. During this process, they release some of the 4,000 chemicals created when a cigarette is smoked, 43 of which are known carcinogens. One study conducted by researchers at San Diego State University found that used cigarette filters are toxic enough to kill half the fish exposed to it in one liter of water.

These toxins make the filters dangerous for pets, wildlife, and young children as well. In 2013, American poison control centers received 5,876 reports of poisoning by the ingestion of cigarettes or cigarette butts, and 93 percent of these poisonings were in children age 5 or younger. With close to 5 trillion cigarette butts being littered each year, this pernicious form of waste provides ample opportunity to cause serious damage.

“Everyone could be doing more to help with this problem,” said Commission Chair Steve Kinsey. “Cigarette manufacturers could be doing more to take responsibility for the products they're selling; businesses and local governments could be doing more to ensure that there are enough receptacles in the right places; and smokers could be doing more to make sure that they are disposing of their cigarettes responsibly. And all of us can help get this incredibly harmful and dangerous waste out of our environment on this upcoming Coastal Cleanup Day.”

Throughout the month leading up to the cleanup, the Coastal Commission and hundreds of non-profit and local government organizations around the state will highlight the many ways in which cigarette filters can harm our environment through print and on social platforms. The goal will be to educate Californians about the issue, and to encourage them to lend a hand in removing cigarette butts and other forms of plastic debris littering our coast.

Californians have continued to show their willingness to do their part by coming to Coastal Cleanup Day each year. In 2015, more than 68,300 volunteers turned out for the event, ridding California of more than 1.1 million pounds of trash. Over the 31 year history of the cleanup, almost 1.4 million volunteers have removed over 22 million pounds of trash – all during the annual 3-hour event.

There are over 850 cleanup locations on Coastal Cleanup Day and this year, Californians will have an even easier time finding one. The commission has produced an interactive map of cleanup locations in every corner of the state, which is available at www.coastalcleanupday.org. Participating in the cleanup is a way for members of the public to celebrate 40 years of coastal protection in California. This year is the 40th anniversary of the California Coastal Act, the landmark law that established the California Coastal Commission.

“Public access to the coast and public involvement are cornerstones of the Coastal Act,” said Commissioner Martha McClure. “What better way to celebrate that than with an event that brings together citizens from all walks of life to help make a tangible difference to our coast and ocean?”

For those who cannot attend Coastal Cleanup Day on September 17th, the Coastal Commission maintains a calendar of events taking place during the three weeks following the Cleanup, known as COASTWEEKS. For more information on the Cleanup, please visit www.coastalcleanupday.org. Follow us on Facebook at facebook.com/CaliforniaCoast and on Twitter at twitter.com/TheCACoast.

California Coastal Cleanup Day event is presented by the California Coastal Commission with lead sponsorship from Crystal Geyser Natural Alpine Spring Water by CG Roxane. Additional support comes from NOAA, CalOES, Oracle, Rubio's, Union Bank, the Whale Tail[®] Specialty License Plate, and See's Candies.

California Coastal Cleanup Day 2016 is supported by the California Coastal Commission, California State Parks Foundation, and Ocean Conservancy. This event is made possible by the hard work of hundreds of local non-profits and government agencies throughout the state and tens of thousands of volunteers annually.

The Commission is committed to protecting and enhancing California's coast and ocean for present and future generations. It does so through careful planning and regulation of environmentally-sustainable development, strong public participation, education, and effective intergovernmental coordination. The Coastal Cleanup Day Program is part of its effort to raise public awareness of marine and coastal resources and promote coastal stewardship.

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