

CALIFORNIA COASTAL COMMISSION

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To: Commissioners and Alternates

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RE: 2008 Public Education Program Update

At the Coastal Commission meeting of December 10, 2008, the staff of the Public Education Program will update the Commission on program activities and accomplishments for the past year. This memo provides a summary of these activities and accomplishments.

In 2008, the Public Education Program continued to carry out its mission to *“protect and restore California’s coast and ocean by teaching, inspiring, and empowering the public to take environmentally positive action.”* Working collaboratively with a wide-range of non-profits, government entities, educational institutions, citizen groups and businesses, the Program continued to work on expanding its reach to involve Californians of all ages, ethnicities, and income levels, whether they live along the coast or inland.

The Program emphasizes “experiential learning” – providing opportunities for both school children and the public at large to experience the coast and ocean first hand. The Program provided educational resources, grants, and technical support to local programs and teachers to cultivate public education efforts on marine debris, ocean pollution, habitat restoration and other marine and coastal topics.

Program Activities and Accomplishments 2008

Programs for the General Public

- Over the past several years, the Commission has expanded outreach, and significantly expanded participation in the **annual Coastal Cleanup Day** event. One focus has been to recruit participants from inland areas to clean creeks, rivers and lakes. These volunteers help to illustrate one of the event’s messages – that we are all connected to the coast and ocean by our rivers, streams and storm drains. In 2008, 26,541 inland volunteers cleaned inland rivers and waterways, removing over 1 million pounds of debris. These volunteers combined with volunteers in coastal areas to achieve record turnouts for the Cleanup Program over the past two years – a total of 73,403 volunteers participated in the effort

statewide in 2008, a 20% jump over the event's previous record for volunteer turnout set in 2007, and a 44% jump over the 2006 participation level.

- **The Coastal Cleanup Day Program** has enlisted strong corporate partners that have greatly assisted our outreach efforts. We continued our partnership with Whole Foods Market this year and established a new partnership with Crystal Geysler. Whole Foods helped spread the word about the Cleanup via signage and other promotions in its markets in northern California. Whole Foods also dedicated a "5% Day" in September, donating 5% of a day's sales to support the Cleanup effort.
- In 2008, the **Coastal Cleanup Day Program** surveyed Cleanup participants to gain information about our volunteers e.g. how they heard about the event, whether participating in the event raised their awareness, and how they expect the experience to affect future behavior regarding the environment. We are in the process of analyzing the results, which will be used in planning the 2009 event.
- The Coastal Commission serves as the California coordinator for **Coastweeks**. California celebrates Coastweeks starting on the third Saturday in September (Coastal Cleanup Day) and over the following three weeks. The Commission creates an online calendar of events throughout the state that are connected to the ocean, coast, waterways, or water in general. The public can access the events by date or by the county in which they take place. In 2008, our on-line calendar listed over 200 events.
- The Commission continued its work on the **Community-Based Restoration and Education Program** (CBREP) at Upper Newport Bay, begun in 2001. To date, 10,400 volunteers have planted 14,900 native plants (half of which have been propagated in an on-site native plant nursery) and removed 49 tons of invasive plant material (not including material left on site). In the process, volunteers have restored over twelve acres of coastal salt marsh, riparian, and coastal sage scrub habitats. The program created and installed interpretive panels at the Upper Newport Bay to introduce the community to the value of native plants and the threat of invasive plants. The CBREP continued to distribute its high school curriculum, called "**Our Wetlands, Our World**". The curriculum is aligned to the State Science Content Standards, and focuses on the history and ecology of Upper Newport Bay; the effects of urbanization, invasive species and loss of biodiversity; and the importance of restoration and stewardship. In 2008, we developed activity kits to allow teachers to borrow materials needed for each activity, and to support use of the curriculum in the classroom and at the Upper Newport Bay.
- In 2008, the Coastal Commission published "**Digging In: A Guide to Community-based Habitat Restoration.**" Based on our experience at Upper Newport Bay, this 164-page guide describes how individuals and organizations can become involved in helping to improve and restore coastal wetlands and other coastal habitat in their communities. The Guide explains the basic steps of information gathering, site selection, project implementation, monitoring, maintenance, and working with volunteers. It includes tips on battling non-natives, as well as propagating and installing native plants. The guide is available for free on the web and in hard copy. Also in 2008, we began a series of workshops to introduce the Guide and give participants the tools they need to get the most from the Guide. To date, staff has held workshops at the Back Bay Science Center at the Upper Newport Bay, at the Agua

Hedionda Lagoon Center in San Diego, and at the Fitz Wetlands Educational Resource Center in Watsonville. More workshops are planned for 2009.

- The **Coastal Stewardship Pledge** is an online program that encourages Californians to make a commitment to taking specific personal actions to protect our coast and ocean. Once they have followed through on their commitment, they receive a certificate of participation and a free canvas tote bag. The goal is to encourage people to consider the health of the coastal environment in all their choices throughout the day. The Pledge can be reached through the Commission's Public Education website at www.coastforyou.org. In 2008, we printed and distributed 20,000 bookmarks featuring a coastal scene on one side and several tips from the Pledge on the other side, directing people to access the full pledge online.
- For the past six years, the Commission has been a regional partner with the Monterey Bay Aquarium in its **Seafood Watch Campaign**. The Commission distributed over 20,000 Seafood Watch pocket guides in 2008. The pocket guide is a convenient reference for making sustainable seafood choices, and we have increased the number that we distribute (in both English and Spanish) each year of our participation.
- In 2008, the Commission held its tenth **annual coastal photography contest**. A panel of judges selected three prize-winning photographs from nearly 450 entries. The winning photographs, along with 14 honorable mentions, are featured on the Coastal Commission's website. The Commission has used many of the winning photographs in publications and other educational pieces.

Programs for Schools and Educators

- **Waves, Wetlands and Watersheds, a science activity guide for teachers** that the Commission developed in 2003 addresses issues such as endangered species, marine debris, coastal geology, water use, and water quality. The guide is aligned to the California State Science Content Standards for third through eighth grades, and includes Community Action lessons adaptable for all ages up to and beyond grade 12. Copies of *Waves* are available free to California educators. The book can also be downloaded from our website, as can Spanish translations of the student handouts. Staff periodically conducts teacher workshops throughout the state on the *Waves* guide. Between its publication date in 2003 and October 2008, more than 13,500 hard copies of the book had been distributed (including 5,000 printed and distributed by the City of Los Angeles). The Coastal Commission has held a total of 52 workshops, directly reaching more than 1,200 educators. Activities from the book have also been adapted for numerous other publications and audiences, and *Waves* has been incorporated into many educator workshops held by other organizations.
- The California Coastal Commission has maintained an on-line "**Marine, Coastal and Watershed Resource Directory**" since 2001. The Directory contains detailed information on organizations that address the California coast and its watersheds. Included in each entry is the mission statement of the organization; contact information; a link to the organization's website; and descriptions of educational materials, programs, internships and volunteer opportunities offered. The directory is one of the ways the Commission

encourages Californians to become involved with the coast at a local level. More than 400 organizations are included.

- **The Commission's Coastal Art & Poetry Contest** is open annually to California students in kindergarten through 12th grade. By encouraging youth to reflect on the beauty and spirit of California's beaches and ocean, we hope to inspire a greater sense of stewardship for these natural places. Each year, four winners each in art and poetry are selected in several grade categories, and around 30 honorable mentions are recognized. Between 2005 and 2008, 7,817 entries were received from students from throughout California. Following each contest, the winning and honorably mentioned pieces are exhibited at venues up and down the coast. The contest has been exhibited at the Moorpark Art Festival, the Sanchez Art Center in Pacifica, Coyote Point Museum in San Mateo, the Muth Interpretive Center in Newport Beach, and Cabrillo Marine Aquarium in San Pedro. Some of the children's artwork is currently on display at the Commission's main office and district offices. Artwork from the Coastal Art & Poetry Contest is used in many Commission publications and throughout the Commission's website.
- **The Kids' Ocean Day Adopt-A-Beach Cleanup** program was held in seven locations in 2008 – San Diego, Orange County, Los Angeles, Morro Bay (students bused from Tulare County), Monterey (students bused from Fresno), San Francisco, and Humboldt. In all of the locations, the emphasis of this program is on bringing the program to students in underserved schools. The Program includes a school assembly on marine debris and other ocean threats as well as the beach cleanup event. Over 7,000 students participated in the 2008 event, and many more saw the assembly. Photos of the aerial art images created in the sand by the students at the event can be viewed at www.oceanday.net.

Programs for Specific Audiences and Multi-agency Efforts

- The Commission's **Boating Clean and Green Campaign**, a partnership with the Department of Boating and Waterways, has continued to educate boaters and provide technical assistance to marinas and local governments to increase availability of environmental services for boaters. In 2008, the program continued its statewide boater education, developing and distributing over 10,000 boater kits and conducting 12 statewide Dockwalker volunteer trainings where more than 250 new volunteers were trained to conduct face-to-face boater education about clean and safe boating practices. The program also developed educational materials to promote clean and safe boating practices throughout the state. New resources include a booklet titled "The Environmental Boating Laws Every Recreational Boater Should Know", and a statewide list of locations where boaters and the general public can properly dispose of expired flares. In partnership with the Boat US Foundation, in 2008 the Boating Program launched an effort to set up 42 monofilament fishing line recycling stations in areas with the highest recreational fishing activity throughout the state.
- In response to the impact of aquatic invasive species in California waterways, **the Boating program**, in partnership with the Sea Grant extension program, the US Fish and Wildlife Services, and California Department Fish and Game, is conducting a series of invasive species workshops throughout the state to promote practices to prevent the spread of these species. We have held four workshops with more than 130 participants to date.

- In 2008, the **Boating Program** began a two-year partnership with the Santa Monica Bay Restoration Foundation. One of the main components of this project will be to install pollution prevention services at marinas in southern California, including two oil absorbent exchange centers in Long Beach – at the Alamitos Bay Marina fuel dock and the Shoreline fuel dock. The program will also improve the existing City of Los Angeles oil absorbent collection centers at the San Pedro and Wilmington marinas.
- The Commission staff continued its work as Chair of the **Ocean Protection Council's (OPC) Marine Debris Steering Committee**. In 2008, the Steering Committee focused on creating an Implementation Strategy for the OPC's marine debris resolution, adopted in February 2007. The resolution called for a variety of far-reaching steps to achieve the reduction and elimination of marine debris from California's waterways and ocean. The Implementation Strategy was considered and approved by the Ocean Protection Council at the November, 2008 meeting.
- Commission staff is chairing the Marine Debris Action Team for the **West Coast Governors' Agreement on Ocean Health**, signed by the Governors of California, Oregon and Washington in September, 2006. The Marine Debris Action Team will be seeking ways in which the three states can work together to solve common marine debris problems. Commission staff is also co-chair of the Ocean Awareness and Literacy Action Team, which is developing a plan to better integrate marine science and ocean literacy principles into state science curricula, and to foster increased ocean awareness generally. In 2008, the teams met in Seattle to develop implementation plans.

General Outreach

- The Commission maintains a **web site** for its public education programs at www.coastforyou.org. The site describes all of the programs, contests, and resources that we offer to the public, including a Spanish language web page. We added a global warming classroom activity for kindergarten aligned to state content standards in 2008. A second related lesson is in development. We also added a new climate change website that describes potential repercussions for the coast and what can be done.
- Each year, we attend a number of **environmental fairs and events**, where we staff an educational booth, hand out materials, and talk to attendees. In 2008, we attended 12 fairs, reaching over 8,000 people. We also created a new Public Education brochure.

Whale Tail Grants Program

As of June 2008, the Whale Tail Grants Program has awarded \$5.2 million in grants to 330 different projects. The Whale Tail Grants fund schools, nonprofit organizations, and local governments to conduct a wide variety of coastal and marine education projects. The program targets children and the general public with an emphasis on reaching underserved communities. In Fiscal Year 2007/2008, the Commission awarded \$711,000 to 39 different projects.

Whale Tail License Plate Funds

As of October 2008, more than 177,000 California drivers had purchased the Commission's Whale Tail License Plate, and sales and renewal fees had raised nearly \$45 million for environmental programs - \$13.2 million to the California Beach and Coastal Enhancement Account (CBCEA) and \$31 million to the Environmental License Plate Fund (ELPF). Each year, the legislature appropriates funds from the CBCEA to the Coastal Commission to carry out Coastal Cleanup Day, Adopt-A-Beach, and other coastal and marine education programs, including grants to nonprofits and local agencies. The CBCEA also funds projects of the State Coastal Conservancy. The ELPF funds a variety of state environmental programs. In 2008, we launched a contest to find a new design for the whale tail license plate. Entries are due in January 2009.