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Tens of Thousands of Volunteers Take Part in a Month of Action at the 36th Annual California Coastal Cleanup

Presented by the California Coastal Commission

Preliminary Results

San Francisco – Under the most unprecedented circumstances in the event’s history, tens of thousands of Californians took part in a month-long cleanup effort as part of the 36th Annual California Coastal Cleanup. Ordinarily held on just one day each September, the state’s largest annual volunteer event organized by the California Coastal Commission, was spread out over the entire month of September.

Volunteers answered the call to clean California’s coast from their own front door. The Commission is continuing to gather results, but already more than 10,000 people turned out at over 3,000 cleanups across the state, gathering close to 70,000 pounds of trash from neighborhoods, local parks, creeks, or other natural spaces to which they had safe and easy access. People went out individually, in pairs, and small groups, on foot, in boats, on streets and trails. Many did more than one DIY cleanup over the month and discovered an easy and satisfying way to give back to our beautiful state. Trash in California can flow easily through stormwater systems to reach the coast and ocean once the rains begin, so cleaning neighborhoods and inland areas is one way of preventing trash from polluting the coast.

“Californians cherish our coast, and they proved it yet again under some of the most trying circumstances many of us have faced,” said Jack Ainsworth, Executive Director of the California Coastal Commission. “Everything in California flows downhill to our coast, so while this year’s cleanup effort may have been unusual, it was still an important and effective way to engage in coastal stewardship.”

The Commission continues to highlight the damage that trash can cause to California’s wildlife, economy, and even human health. According to past cleanup data, 75 percent of the debris that volunteers remove is composed of plastic – most of it single-use, disposable plastic - a material that never completely biodegrades and has numerous harmful consequences in the environment. Plastic pollution can kill wildlife, leach toxins into the environment, and even introduce them into the food chain. Since up to 80 percent of the trash on the California coast originates on land, volunteers across the state helped prevent enormous amounts of trash from ever reaching the ocean, no matter where they participated.

Most Unusual Items:

Every-day debris and plastic items weren't the only things found during Coastal Cleanup Month. Volunteers also picked up a number of "unusual" items during this year's cleanup. The Winners of the 2020 Most Unusual Item contest are volunteers who found a bowling pin and a nametag that had "I had a pet cow" written on it (picture available). Both items were found in Alameda County. The winning volunteers will receive a prize package from the Coastal Commission.

Coastal Cleanup Day could not happen without the support of public and corporate partners. Sponsors help to fund the event and often provide additional benefits. Long time sponsors Crystal Geyser Natural Alpine Spring Water and Oracle provide the funding and support needed to make the cleanup effort a success. Along with the 60+ non-profit and local government organizations that help organize and run the cleanups around the state, the program's strong team of partners helped reinvent the 2020 cleanup to continue the tradition of activating Californians to protect our coast and ocean.

If you participated in the Cleanup, go to www.coastalcleanupday.org to fill out the Coastal Cleanup Survey and receive free chips and guacamole from Rubio's. You will also be entered into a drawing for some fabulous prizes. To stay involved with the cleanup efforts throughout the year, please visit the Adopt-A-Beach page on the same website or send an email to: coast4u@coastal.ca.gov.

California Coastal Cleanup Day 2020 is presented by the California Coastal Commission with lead sponsorship from Crystal Geyser Natural Alpine Spring Water by CG Roxane. Additional support comes from Oracle, Green Polly, the Whale Tail[®] Specialty License Plate, and the Protect our Coast and Oceans Fund. The artwork was created and generously donated by Mekanism.

California Coastal Cleanup Day 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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