

**CALIFORNIA COASTAL COMMISSION**

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# W-7

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To: Commissioners and Alternates

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RE: Public Education Program Update

At the Coastal Commission meeting of December 14, 2005, the staff of the Public Education Program will update the Commission on program activities and accomplishments for the past two years. This memo provides a summary of these activities and accomplishments.

In 2004 and 2005, 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 2004-2005**

### **Programs for the General Public**

- Coastal Cleanup Day. In 2004, California Coastal Cleanup Day had record participation with 50,753 volunteers, as well as a record amount of debris collected, 912,147 pounds total, bringing the Cleanup program over the 10 million pound mark for the history of the event. The 2005 event broke the 2004 record for debris with 970,748 pounds collected, and was geographically the largest cleanup California has ever held, with over 750 sites spread through 45 counties. Albertsons and Sav-on Drugs signed on as the new presenting sponsor, and have committed to becoming engaged in year-round education to encourage stewardship and reduce marine debris. With the assistance of Goodby-Silverstein, the Commission launched a new marketing campaign for Coastal Cleanup Day: the “Non-native species of the California Coast”.
- Coastweeks. The Coastal Commission is the California coordinator of Coastweeks, which is organized nationally by the Coastal States Organization. For three weeks (kicked off by Coastal Cleanup Day on the third Saturday in September) Californians are encouraged to take part in activities that celebrate our coast and water resources, such as volunteer

restoration days, beach hikes, ocean festivals, and scientific lectures. The Commission creates an online calendar of these events, of which there were 168 in 2005.

- Community-based Restoration and Education. Launched in 2001 at Upper Newport Bay, to date this program has constructed a native plant nursery on-site, and 5,262 volunteers have grown and planted 2,220 native plants and restored 10.6 acres of coastal habitat. In 2004, the program published a high school curriculum, called *Our Wetlands, Our World*. Aligned to the State Science Content Standards, the curriculum focuses on the ecology of Upper Newport Bay; the effects of urbanization, invasive species and loss of biodiversity; and the importance of restoration and stewardship.
- Coastal Stewards. Another opportunity for Californians to care for their coast is by taking the "Coastal Stewardship Pledge" on our website. The pledge presents a wide-ranging list of specific actions individuals can take to help protect the coast. After a person "takes the pledge" and follows through on their promise, they receive a Coastal Steward tote bag. In 2005, the Commission expanded its outreach by launching the Coastal Steward Partners program, which engages other coastal/marine organizations to publicize the Pledge. We also created a non-internet version of the program, and are working on a version specifically for classrooms.
- Seafood Watch. In 2004, the Commission became a regional partner with the Monterey Bay Aquarium in its Seafood Watch Campaign. The Commission distributed over 10,000 Seafood Watch pocket guides per year in 2004 and 2005. The pocket guide is a convenient reference for making sustainable seafood choices.
- Coastal Photography Contest. In 2005, the Commission held its seventh annual photography contest. A panel of judges selected four prize-winning photographs. The winning photographs, along with 11 honorable mentions, are featured on the Coastal Commission's website.

### **Programs for Schools and Educators**

- Waves Wetlands and Watershed. Between February 2003 and December 2005, we distributed 6,050 hard copies of our science activity guide, *Waves, Wetlands, and Watersheds*, and held 33 teacher workshops throughout the state. (This is in addition to 5,000 copies produced and distributed by the City of Los Angeles, and educator workshops held by other organizations that included *Waves, Wetlands, and Watersheds* as a component.) The book can also be printed from our website and Spanish translations of the student handouts are available.
- Marine, Coastal and Watershed Resource Directory. The Public Education Program maintains an online "Marine, Coastal, and Watershed Resource Directory" of approximately 400 organizations involved in coastal and watershed issues in California. This directory is available to members of the public seeking information, volunteer opportunities, or educational resources. The directory is one of the ways the Commission encourages Californians to become involved with the coast at a local level.
- Coastal Art and Poetry Contest. The Coastal Art & Poetry Contest is open annually to California students in kindergarten through 12th grade. Four winners in art and four in poetry are selected in several grade categories, and numerous honorable mentions are identified. The contest received 2,554 entries in 2005, a 48% increase over 2004. This year, winners and honorable mentions were displayed at the Aquarium of the Pacific, the Laguna Beach Wyland Gallery, and at the San Francisco Bay Model. Some of the children's artwork is currently on display at CCC's main office and several district offices.
- Kids Adopt-A-Beach Cleanup. This program completed its 11th year in 2005. The program includes a school assembly or classroom presentation in which students learn about how trash in neighborhoods ends up in the ocean and becomes marine debris. The students then

participate in a beach cleanup on Ocean Day, May 22. In 2004 and 2005, more than 6,000 students each year participated in the cleanup at seven locations. The students came from underserved elementary schools in San Diego, Orange, Los Angeles, Tulare, Fresno, San Francisco, and Humboldt Counties. The cleanup culminates in the students “taking a stand in the sand” to form an aerial art image with their bodies, which is then photographed from a helicopter. In 2004, the message was “Keep Oceans Alive.” In 2005, the message was “Restore Balance.”

### **Programs for Specific Audiences**

- Boating Clean and Green Campaign. 2004/2005 saw the establishment of strong partnerships with the California Department of Boating and Waterways and Contra Costa County. The Keep the Delta Clean Program builds on the previous efforts of the Boating Clean and Green Campaign, taking it to the next level by directly installing needed pollution prevention services at key marinas.
- Plastic Debris: Rivers to Sea. In 2004 and 2005, the Commission participated in a partnership with the Algalita Marine Research Foundation on the Plastic Debris: Rivers to Sea Project. The project focuses the land-based sources of marine debris, and includes monitoring, education, and technical assistance. It culminated in an international conference in September 2005. Miriam Gordon, the project coordinator, is doing a separate presentation to the Commission on this project at the December 14, 2005 Commission meeting.
- Beach Wheelchairs. The Commission’s beach wheelchair program aims to ensure that these chairs, which have wide, balloon tires that are able to move across soft sand, are widely available. To this end, the Commission has awarded over \$75,000 to a variety of jurisdictions up and down the coast for the purchase of beach wheelchairs. The Commission also maintains a webpage that includes a map showing the location of beaches with beach wheelchairs available for use by the public.

### **Whale Tail Grants Program**

The Whale Tail Grants program has grown considerably over the last few years from \$130,000 in 1999 to \$778,000 in 2005. This program targets underserved populations for coastal and marine education programs. To date, the program has awarded a total of over \$3,000,000 in grants to various organizations.

### **Whale Tail License Funds**

As of October 2005, more than 131,000 California drivers had purchased the Commission’s Whale Tail License Plate, and sales and renewal fees had raised over \$24 million for environmental programs – over \$8 million to the California Beach and Coastal Enhancement Account (CBCEA) and more than \$16 million to the Environmental License Plate Fund (ELPF). The CBCEA funds the Commission’s public education programs, including grants to nonprofits and government agencies; and projects of the State Coastal Conservancy. The ELPF funds a variety of state environmental programs.