

CALIFORNIA COASTAL COMMISSION

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DATE: March 29, 2022

TO: Coastal Commission and Interested Public

FROM: John Ainsworth, Executive Director
Sarah Christie, Legislative Director

SUBJECT: RESOLUTION: SINGLE USE PLASTIC-FREE COASTAL COMMISSION MEETINGS

I. BACKGROUND

Marine pollution is a global problem that endangers aquatic habitats and wildlife, impacts human health and safety, and costs local and national economies millions of dollars in wasted resources and lost revenue. Single-use plastic pollution is a particularly harmful form of marine pollution. Upon disposal, these plastics remain in the marine environment indefinitely, breaking into smaller pieces that are increasingly difficult to clean up. Plastic pollution harms aquatic wildlife when it is ingested and facilitates transportation of organisms that disrupt marine biodiversity. According to the Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity, which is the first global agreement to cover all aspects of biological diversity, over 800 marine and coastal species are adversely impacted by marine debris. Plastic pollution also presents a danger to public health by increasing the pathogens and chemicals in waterways, lowering water quality. Such effects also damage coastal economies and require significant resources to address.

The California Coastal Commission has a strong tradition of policies and programs aimed at decreasing marine pollution in furtherance of its mission to protect and enhance California's coast and ocean for present and future generations. As the primary sponsor of California Coastal Cleanup Day every September, the Commission has coordinated 1.7 million volunteers in the removal of over 26 million pounds of trash from California's oceans, beaches, and waterways. The Commission has also supported a number of legislative efforts to reduce the sale and use of plastic bags and

microbeads and other items. Single-use-plastic-free commission meetings present an opportunity for the Commission to heighten awareness of the danger that plastic pollution poses to the coast and to the public, and to demonstrate its commitment to addressing this problem.

II. RECOMMENDED ACTION

Staff recommends that the Commission adopt the following motion:

RECOMMENDED MOTION: I move that the Commission adopt the attached resolution to take measurable steps to make all future Commission meetings plastic free, consistent with public health guidelines, and reduce the Commission's contribution to the flow of plastics to our coast and ocean.

RESOLUTION BY THE CALIFORNIA COASTAL COMMISSION FOR SINGLE-USE-PLASTIC-FREE COMMISSION MEETINGS

Whereas: The California Coastal Commission was established by the People of California through initiative statute in 1972 and made permanent in 1976 by the California Legislature as the state's principal coastal management agency with diverse responsibilities, including but not limited to, "... protect[ing] regional, state and national interests in ensuring the maintenance of the long-term productivity and economic vitality of coastal resources necessary for the well-being of the people of the state...;" and

Whereas: The California Coastal Act mandates under section 30230 that "[m]arine resources shall be maintained, enhanced, and where feasible, restored;" and

Whereas: Plastic pollution poses a significant threat to the health of California's marine and coastal environment, and to the public's enjoyment of that environment; and

Whereas: Over 18 billion pounds of plastic, most of which is single-use disposable plastic from food and beverage packaging, enters the world's oceans each year; and

Whereas: If current practices continue, the amount of plastic entering the world's oceans could reach 53 million metric tons per year, roughly half the total weight of fish removed from the ocean annually; and

Whereas: In its role as statewide coordinator for California Coastal Cleanup Day, the Coastal Commission has facilitated the removal of 26 million pounds (13,000 tons) of refuse and debris from California's beaches and waterways; and

Whereas: Under current projections, plastic production in the United States is expected to grow by as much as 40% in the next two decades. If this trend continues, the plastic sector could account for as much as 20% of the world's oil consumption by 2050; and

Whereas: In 2016, the U.S. generated 42 million metric tons of plastic waste, more than any other country. At a per capita waste generation rate of 130 kg per year, the U.S. generates between 2-8 times the amount of plastic waste than most other countries; and

Whereas: As recently as 2012, it was estimated that the cost of combatting trash in California equaled \$13 per resident, which equates to California spending over \$605 million each year to prevent trash from entering the ocean; and

Whereas: A recent NOAA study found that reducing marine debris by as little as 25% would save residents of Orange County \$32 million over the three summer months; and

Whereas: In 2019, the production and incineration of plastic worldwide produced more than 850 million metric tons of greenhouse gases, equivalent to the emissions from 189 five-hundred-megawatt coal power plants; and

Whereas: Programs such as the environmental group, Surfrider’s “Ocean Friendly Restaurants Program” and Clean Water Action’s “ReThink Disposable,” among others, demonstrate the economic feasibility and benefits to the food service industry from moving away from single use disposables, and shows that there are readily available sustainable alternatives to single-use disposable plastic food and beverage packaging from restaurants and other vendors across the state; and

Whereas: The California Coastal Commission plays a leading role in combatting marine debris throughout California, and serves as an ambassador to the coast by travelling monthly to communities around the state every month to discuss and act on matters of coastal protection, and should lead by example by as well;

Therefore, Be it Resolved: That the California Coastal Commission will no longer use, provide or make available any single-use plastic items at its public meeting venues; and

Be it Further Resolved: That Commissioners and staff commit to bringing personal water bottles, coffee cups and utensils to all public meetings of the Coastal Commission; and

Be it Further Resolved: That the California Coastal Commission will make every effort to work with vendors associated with public meetings to ensure that food and beverages are delivered and served in reusable or compostable food and beverage containers; and

Be it Further Resolved: That the Commission will take all practicable steps to eliminate single use plastic items from its district offices and public events.

Donne Brownsey, Chair, California Coastal Commission

Date