

CLEANING UP OUR COAST

While the weather hasn't exactly turned crisp and cool yet, we are at the edge of autumn here in Cambria. Sycamores are yellowing, Japanese maples are turning red. The beaches are quieter—just a few people looking for moonstones and shells. Fall marks the end of the calendar year, but it's also time to prepare—children starting school, young adults going off to college, planning for the new fiscal year, families raking up leaves and clearing out the spent garden beds.

And once again, it's time to clean up our coasts! On September 16, 112 countries around the world will engage in Coastal Clean-Up Day 2017. Coastal clean-ups have been taking place since the mid-1970s. By 2016, half a million people were picking up 18,400,000 tons of trash from 14,997 miles of beaches worldwide, an area that would stretch more than half-way around the world. This is an epic effort.

Greenspace, will join with the Environmental Center of San Luis Obispo (ECOSLO), to clean our local beaches, readying them for winter storms and making sure that summer's plastic flotsam doesn't get into the marine food chain.



The Bidwells at Coastal Clean-Up Day 2016 Photo: Dave Bidwell

From 9 a.m. to 12 noon on Saturday the 16th, Greenspace volunteers, coordinated by Board member Dave Bidwell, will fan out along the length of Moonstone Beach to gather the remnants of summer picnics, sand castle building, sunset watching, etc. as part of this international effort

We participate in Coastal Clean-Up Day to maintain the scenic beauty for which our coast is so justly famous, and because it's community-building to clean up the beaches we share. But even more importantly, we work to ensure that damaging materials such as plastics, mylar, cigarette butts, nylon rope, etc. do not enter the marine environment and harm healthy ecosystems and individual marine creatures.

How much plastic is in our oceans? Studies by the World Economic Forum indicate that about 8,000,000 metric tons enter the oceans each year. "Where this plastic ends up and what form it takes is a mystery," according to the WEF website. "Most of our waste consists of everyday items such as bottles, wrappers, straws or bags. Yet the vast majority of debris found floating far offshore is much smaller: it's broken-down fragments smaller than your pinky fingernail, termed microplastic."

These microplastics are a dangerous source of pollution. As they break down into tiny beads, they are easily ingested even at the bottom of the marine food chain. We know that a wide variety of animals eat plastic, mistaking it for edible seaweed or aquatic life. The indigestible plastic settles in the stomach and eventually causes the animal to starve. More than half of all whales are believed to ingest plastic. Albatross, gulls, condors and many shore birds have been spotted feeding it to their young. Larger plastic wastes present a serious entanglement hazard for whales, seals and sea lions, large fish, ocean migratory birds and sea turtles.

Comprehensive studies of plastic accumulation in near-shore waters and ocean floors have yet to be

completed. Several studies near Monterey Bay's beaches "found that small pieces of styrofoam and fragmented plastics were the two most common types of litter. Both items are persistent in the environment and a hazard for animals foraging in nearshore habitats." (Arthur et al. 2009, Donnelly-Greenane et al. 2014, Nevins et al. 2014, NOAA-MDP 2014). Larger plastic wastes present a serious entanglement hazard for whales, seals and sea lions, large fish, ocean migratory birds and sea turtles.

Beach cleaning makes a significant difference. Last year, the ECOSLO clean-up countywide resulted in the disposal or recycling of 6,500 pounds of trash. Among these "rescued" items were 17,259 cigarette butts (always the most common form of trash and quite dangerous to sea birds), 5,193 pieces of plastic, 5,170 food wrappers (usually plastic or mylar) 2,141 pieces of plastic, 1,416 pieces of styrofoam, 1,342 plastic to-go containers, 1,111 plastic straws and the same number of plastic utensils. In addition, 1,255 metal bottle caps and 1,197 beverage cans were picked up.

"It's amazing just how much waste we find each year...; it shows that we need to change the public's mentality," says Rashid Al Shamsi, Acting Curator of Sharjah Aquarium in the United Arab Emirates. "Today's global beach clean-up is about educating the next generation.... Our hope is that they take away with them an understanding of how harmful all this waste is to the marine environment, and spread the word by talking to their friends and families."



Coastal Clean-up at Moonstone Beach

Photo: Greenspace

Coastal Clean-Up is a concrete way that we can make sure we have "boots on the ground" to leave a cleaner world, not only for the coming generations of human beings, but also for the plants and animals who will inhabit our seas and keep them healthy.

Directions to the Sept 16 clean-up: Head up or down Highway One to the light at Windsor. Turn west toward Shamel Park, then turn right immediately onto Moonstone Drive. Go about ¼ mile to the left turn into the Moonstone Beach Parking lot. We will have sign-up tables and provide gloves, bags and tongs for trash pick-up. See you at 9 a.m.! Call the office, 805/927-2866 for more information. –CG

MEMBERSHIP HAS ITS BENEFITS

In this busy fall season, the Board and Staff of Greenspace pauses to acknowledge how much our membership does for the organization and our programs throughout the year.

You volunteer to help out with event ticket sales, staff event food and beverage tables, engage with your friends about environmental issues, donate to our major land purchase programs, buy our Monterey pine seedlings to landscape your homes, act as docents for our school programs, plant trees, clean up beaches, attend Speakers Series events, help send out this newsletter, and speak out on critical environmental issues. And we are grateful.

Would you do one more thing for Greenspace? If you received a membership renewal letter a few weeks ago, would you reread it? As you read, think about what Greenspace has done for Cambria over the past 29 years. The pocket parks and open spaces saved, the creek restoration projects completed, the plans for forest management and Santa Rosa Creek management, the Chinese Temple and the archeological site protections, the children who know their natural place more deeply.

Then, please renew your membership. Next year is Greenspace's 30th anniversary. It would be great to count you among those who make our work possible and celebrate with us. Please consider renewing at a higher level, to ensure that we will be able to pursue our mission (see below) for another thirty, sixty or ninety years.

Thanks for your support!

info@greenspacecambria.org



The North Coast area of San Luis Obispo County is a national treasure. Greenspace will protect and enhance its ecological systems, cultural resources and marine habitats through land acquisition, education and advocacy.