



Memorandum

MONTEREY REGIONAL WASTE MANAGEMENT DISTRICT

Reviewed by JMM
General Manager

Date 9/14/09

DATE: September 11, 2009
 TO: General Manager
 FROM: Public Education and Recycling Manager
 SUBJECT: Report on Public Education, Recycling and Litter Activities

Coastal Cleanup Day is September 19th

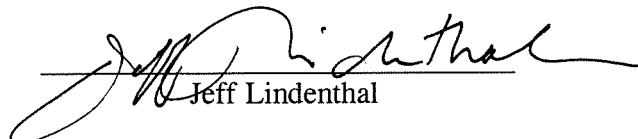
Last year, 1,700 volunteers collected more than 12,000 lbs of trash and recyclable materials on Monterey County beaches. This year, the District is sponsoring the cleanup at Fort Ord Dunes State Beach. This is one of 20 beach areas to be cleaned up on Coastal Cleanup Day on September 19th between 9:00 a.m. and noon. Please plan to join us at Fort Ord Dunes State Beach or volunteer at one of the other cleanup locations. Locally, cleanup activities are being coordinated by State Parks staff. See their website for additional information and a list of all clean-up locations: http://www.parks.ca.gov/default.asp?page_id=24587. To help support the cleanup effort, the District is donating 250 reusable tote bags to be made available to volunteers at several beach cleanup locations.

Mayors' Ocean Summit

West Marine in Castroville, along with several local non-profit organizations, hosted a Mayors' Ocean Summit on August 28th (see attached article from the *Monterey County Weekly*). The forum included a talk by Walter Robb, Chief Operating Officer of Whole Foods, who discussed the aggressive steps his company has taken to reduce waste and improve their environmental performance, including eliminating plastic grocery bags and switching to biodegradable packaging for take-out food. Much of the discussion addressed the increasing consumption of plastic in contrast to the low recycling rates. A couple of statistics presented that portray the plastic consumption problem included: 1,000 bottles of water are consumed each second world-wide, and 50 billion pounds of plastic coded #1 (PET) and #2 (HDPE) are generated each year, yet only 2 billion pounds are recovered. Several speakers commented on the need to further implement the ban on polystyrene take-out food packaging in Monterey County, which all Santa Cruz County jurisdictions have adopted.

Strategic Planning Impact

4b Program focus on public awareness, increased diversion of organics and commercial wastes, proper management of hazardous & prohibited materials, litter abatement, & sustainability.


 Jeff Lindenthal

Attachment

O:\j\Jeff's MRWMD Files\Board Memos\Board Memos 2009\September 2009\9-11-09 Litter & Recycling Report.doc

Printed from the Monterey County Weekly website: <http://www.montereycountyweekly.com/archives/2009/2009-Sep-10/local-politicians-tackle-single-use-polystyrene-and-plastic-bags>

Take-Out Message

Local politicians tackle single-use polystyrene and plastic bags.

Posted September 10, 2009 12:00 AM

By Kera Abraham

Plastic comprises up to 90 percent of floating marine debris. Most of it blows from land to sea, where it breaks down into tiny pieces animals mistake for food. The problem comes back to us as seafood, which is often contaminated with toxic plastic components.

More than 20 local politicians joined seven environmental groups at West Marine in Watsonville recently for the Mayors Ocean Summit, an event focused on reducing the use of disposable plastic bags and polystyrene (Styrofoam) packaging in coastal cities.

"We don't want to change as a people, and that's the problem," says Jim Ayers, vice president of Oceana. "We want someone to tell us we can keep doing what we're doing, and it's OK. And that's a lie."

U.S. Rep. Sam Farr (D-Carmel) and Assemblyman Bill Monning (D-Monterey) mingled with a dozen Central Coast mayors, including Sue McCloud of Carmel, Dan Cort of Pacific Grove, Ralph Rubio of Seaside and Chuck Della Sala of Monterey.

The organizers – Oceana, West Marine, The Ocean Conservancy, Monterey Bay Aquarium, Sea Studios Foundation, Surfrider Foundation and Save Our Shores – closed the event to the press, except for a short schmooze session at the end.

McCloud, who chairs the regional Litter Task Force, says the marine debris problem shouldn't surprise Monterey Peninsula officials. "A lot of stuff was just old hat to me, in the sense that we've been working on this," she says. "With the Aquarium being here, it's just second nature."

Cort, an Oceana advisory board member, says he'll continue to push a plastic bag ban after his Aug. 31 resignation as PG mayor.

In Monterey County, the cities of Carmel, Pacific Grove and Monterey have banned take-out polystyrene. The unincorporated county may soon join them: A draft polystyrene ban is in the works and will likely land before the Supervisors this winter, according to John Ramirez of Monterey County Environmental Health.

No local jurisdictions have taken up a plastic bag ban – largely because they're up against a well-funded bully.

The American Chemistry Council, representing plastics manufacturers, has poured millions of dollars into efforts to block, stall and reverse local laws restricting plastic bags and polystyrene. The industry has sued at least five cities that have attempted plastic bag bans, arguing that they must first prepare an environmental impact report.

"Plastic bags are a really horrible problem, but we're getting a lot of pushback from the ACC," Cort says. "How are we ever going to deal with these environmental issues when everyone's threatening lawsuits?"

In response, the state Ocean Protection Council moved to create a "master environmental assessment" that allows cities to adopt plastic bag bans without the specter of a lawsuit. When the state budget crunch put the kibosh on that effort, Green Cities California, a coalition of jurisdictions, stepped in. The group aims to make an MEA available to cities by next spring.

There's momentum in the state Legislature, too. A current law prevents municipalities from charging customers for plastic bags at big grocery stores, but two proposed bills (AB 68 and AB 87) could roll back that law and allow for a \$0.25 fee. AB 1358 would ban polystyrene take-out containers at restaurants.

All three bills stalled out this session but may be resurrected in January, Monning says. In addition to the chemical lobby's opposition, the bill's supporters face resistance from most Republicans, and from some Dems who worry the fee would be a hardship for low-income Californians.

Whole Foods CEO Walter Robb, who spoke at the summit, says the private sector has a role to play. His company has already eliminated plastic bags at the check stand, replacing them with 100 percent recycled paper, and switched to carryout containers made from sugarcane pulp. (Plastic bags are still dispensed in the produce and bulk sections.)

"This idea that financial success and environmental sustainability are separate is an illusion," Robb says. "The only way to pierce that illusion is through courageous acts of leadership."

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