



July 2015 E-Newsletter

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Did You Know?

Refugio Oil Spill Update

Santa Barbara Channelkeeper has been on the front lines of the response to the devastating Refugio Oil Spill since the moment it hit our shores on May 19th. The spill has taken and will continue to take a terrible toll on the environment, wildlife, the local economy, and our community. To date, 195 birds and 106



mammals have died from oiling, Refugio and El Capitan beaches have been closed to campers and beach-goers, 138 square miles of fishing grounds were closed for six weeks, and businesses that offer ocean recreation or depend on coastal tourism have been negatively affected.

Channelkeeper has been working tirelessly to investigate the circumstances behind the spill, bird-dog the response, monitor the environmental impacts, and advocate for policy reforms to ensure that a disaster like this can't happen again. We've been advocating for strict enforcement against Plains All American Pipeline and for stronger regulations to improve oil spill prevention and response. We testified at the Santa Barbara County Board of Supervisors hearing on the spill on May 26 and at the Joint State Senate and Assembly oversight hearing on June 26, and have been a lead supporter of several spill prevention and response bills recently introduced in the California legislature (SB 295-Jackson, AB 864-Williams, SB 788-McGuire, and SB 414-Jackson).

We've also been monitoring the environmental impacts of the spill on local beaches and on and under the surface of the Santa Barbara Channel, including at the nearby Naples Marine Protected Area (MPA). The impacts of oil spills can take a long time to manifest, and scientists will be working for years to assess the full extent of the environmental damage from the Refugio spill. That said, our recent dive at the pinnacle reef at the Naples MPA, which we documented in [this video](#), offers reassurance and renewed incentive to get out and explore Santa Barbara's MPAs. See below for info on an upcoming opportunity to SCUBA dive at the Naples MPA!

Santa Barbara Moves Ahead with Desalination Reactivation

On June 16th, the Santa Barbara

Report Tar Balls

Tar balls continue to wash up on beaches in Santa Barbara, Ventura, LA and Orange counties, and Channelkeeper is collecting, compiling and submitting citizen reports to the Unified Command to inform further clean-up. Please click [here](#) to report any observations of unusually extensive oil on beaches or on the water, and we'll make sure it gets into the right hands.



Download the Waterkeeper Swim Guide app for real-time water quality data at local beaches

Visit Website



City Council voted unanimously to award \$3.8 million in contracts for the final design phase of the desalination plant reactivation, and to approve an addendum to the 1991 and 1994 Environmental



Impact Reports (EIRs) - which were completed when the plant was originally built - in support of the reactivation. After reviewing proposals from two different firms, the City selected IDE Americas to receive the contract to design, build and operate the desal plant. Based on their proposal, the capital cost to turn the plant back on has increased to \$53.7 million, significantly higher than the most recent estimate of \$40 million.

Beyond the extremely high price tag, Channelkeeper is concerned about the City's decision to move forward with a simple addendum to the 20+ year-old EIRs rather than conducting additional environmental review as required by the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA). We testified at the June 16th City Council hearing that the outdated EIRs failed to adequately examine, analyze and mitigate the significant impacts that the plant's open ocean intake will have on marine life. We also highlighted that subsurface intakes, which virtually eliminate marine life mortality, are more advanced and feasible today than they were 25 years ago and should thus be re-examined through additional environmental review pursuant to CEQA. While the City is preparing a study to assess the feasibility of a subsurface intake in response to our concerns, this study will not be complete until 2017, and City Council went ahead and approved the reactivation without additional environmental review. They expect to award the remainder of the contract later this month, despite mounting evidence of a strong El Niño this winter.

Santa Barbara County Supervisors to Consider Plastic Bag Ban Ordinance

Since the statewide plastic bag ban is on hold until the November 2016 election thanks to the plastic bag industry's ballot initiative to try and overturn it, Channelkeeper and the Community Environmental Council have resumed our advocacy for local bag ban ordinances. We are pleased that the County of Santa Barbara has scheduled the first reading of a single-use bag ordinance for July 21st.



Similar to the City of Santa Barbara's bag ordinance, the county's proposed ordinance would ban plastic carryout bags at grocery stores, convenience stores, liquor stores, and pharmacies in the unincorporated areas of Santa Barbara County, but would still allow for produce bags as well as plastic bags at restaurants and non-grocery retail stores. It would also require regulated stores to charge a 10-cent fee for paper bags in order to incentivize the use of reusable bags. Residents of unincorporated SB County, please join Channelkeeper in supporting this ordinance by [contacting your Supervisor](#) or attending

the hearing on July 21st to testify in support. Meanwhile, please remember to use reusable bags for all your shopping needs!

County Exploring Drug Take-Back Program Community Meetings July 14 and July 16

Santa Barbara County Supervisor Doreen Farr is spearheading the exploration of a county ordinance for safe drug disposal. Currently, about 1,800 pharmaceuticals are approved for prescription use in the US, and when improperly disposed of (i.e. flushed down the toilet), they can contaminate water supplies and cause harm to fish and the environment.



The proposed ordinance would be modeled after Alameda County's drug buy-back ordinance, the first in the nation to require drug manufacturers to pay disposal costs for consumers' unused medications. This producer responsibility approach, where drug producers are responsible for the waste management of their products, is similar to successful mattress and paint disposal programs. In June, the Board of Supervisors voted unanimously to conduct public outreach about the issue and proposed ordinance and report back later this fall. Please consider attending one of two community meetings being hosted by the County on Tuesday, July 14th, 6pm at the County Public Health Auditorium, 300 N. San Antonio Road, or Thursday, July 16th, 6pm at the Santa Maria Public Library, 421 S. McClelland Street.

Stream Team June 13 & 14



Stream Team is Channelkeeper's volunteer-based water quality monitoring program. Every month, volunteers join Channelkeeper staff to test for common water quality parameters at numerous sites in the Ventura River and Goleta Valley watersheds. Come join us to help protect our local waterways. Stream Team in Ventura will meet at 9am on Saturday, July 11th, and Goleta

Stream Team will meet at 10am on Sunday, July 12th. For more information, visit our [website](#), [email](#) us or call 805.563.3377 ext. 5.

Celebrate Swimmable Waters

Channelkeeper works to protect the Santa Barbara Channel and its watersheds so they're clean and safe for everyone to enjoy. In 2013, the California Legislature passed a resolution (coauthored by our local reps Senator Hannah Beth Jackson and Assemblymember Das Williams) to officially commemorate July 25th as "Swimmable California Day," recognizing Californians' right to waters



that are clean and safe for swimming. For the second year in a row, Waterkeeper organizations across the globe will be celebrating swimmable water from July 31 to August 2. Click [here](#) to learn more about Waterkeeper's #swimmablewater photo contest and how you can enter to win a GoPro. Locally, join Channelkeeper as we celebrate swimmable water on Thursday, July 30th at 6:30 pm for an ocean swim with our friends at [Reef & Run](#) at the Cabrillo Bathhouse at East Beach. There will be three swim race lengths of 500m, 1k and 1 mile. Post-race there will be hot showers, live music and festivities for athletes and families alike. Here's to clean, swimmable water!

Discounted Naples MPA Dive Trip - Saturday, August 8th

Join Truth Aquatics and Santa Barbara Channelkeeper on a special limited-time discounted trip to the Naples Marine Protected Area (MPA). Experience the breathtaking beauty of this stunning stretch of coastline as we cruise up from the Santa Barbara Harbor and anchor at Naples Reef, just offshore of the Gaviota Coast. This small offshore pinnacle reef provides impressively complex habitat and has some of the most diverse and productive sea life in all of Southern California. Dive in and experience the diversity of marine life that makes the Naples MPA so unique.



Channelkeeper is subsidizing this trip as part of our effort to promote local businesses that provide opportunities to visit and learn about Santa Barbara's coastal MPAs. To reserve your spot today, call Truth Aquatics at 805.962.1127. The trip is \$75 per person (including meals and air fills). Dive gear and snorkeling rentals are available at your own expense.

Become a Channelkeeper Member!

Your support for Channelkeeper's efforts is needed now more than ever. Become a member of the Channelkeeper crew today with your tax-deductible donation. You'll be investing in clean water and healthy communities along the Santa Barbara Channel today and for future generations. With your membership, you will



receive our regular newsletters, news updates and action alerts, invitations to special Channelkeeper events and fun volunteer opportunities, and a free Channelkeeper sticker. All new donors contributing \$50 or more can also receive a Channelkeeper t-shirt, and for donations of \$250 or more, bi-annual issues of *Waterkeeper* magazine. Sign up today by calling 805.563.3377 ext. 2, [emailing](#) us, or clicking [here](#).

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