



Santa Barbara **CHANNELKEEPER®**

Keeping watch for clean water

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Santa Barbara CHANNELKEEPER®

*Our mission is to protect and restore the
Santa Barbara Channel and its watersheds
through science-based advocacy,
education, field work and enforcement*

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FROM THE HELM

Thankfully, the much-anticipated El Niño has finally arrived, and the rain and snow it has brought to California over the past few months has provided some welcome relief from the crippling drought. It hasn't reached the "Godzilla" proportions that some predicted – at least not yet – but no matter how much precipitation it ultimately brings, we must not forget the important lessons this drought has taught us about how to better live within our water means.

We've made some good progress toward that end. The Governor mandated a 25% reduction in urban water use, and local governments enacted mandatory measures and businesses and individuals stepped up their conservation to achieve it. California voters approved a \$7 billion water bond that includes large pots of money for urban and agricultural conservation, water recycling, and groundwater sustainability and clean-up projects. The Legislature passed a landmark law that lays the groundwork for achieving sustainable groundwater management statewide. And a mountain of useful research has been done to assess the costs, benefits and feasibility of a wide variety of water supply and demand management options. That research has shown that California has enormous untapped potential to reduce demand and increase supply - while also enhancing the environment – by further improving the efficiency of urban and agricultural water use, capturing rainwater, and recycling and reusing water. Tapping that potential would likely obviate the need for expensive and environmentally harmful options like importing water from the Delta and desalinating seawater.

We mustn't let one wet winter send us back to our water-wasteful ways and erase the progress we've made. We must build upon it and continue to become water wiser. Even if this El Niño ends the current drought, another will surely come, but we can be better prepared and more resilient - by using water more efficiently and responsibly, investing in stormwater capture and recycled water, and protecting and restoring our streams and aquifers. Channelkeeper will continue to support and promote these strategies through our education, advocacy and enforcement efforts to help keep us moving down the path toward a more sustainable water future. We know you will too, and we appreciate your support!



KIRA REDMOND | Executive Director

CHANNELKEEPER LAUNCHES EL NIÑO PORTAL

Channelkeeper's website is now your go-to source for information about El Niño. Our newly-launched El Niño web portal provides information on what El Niño is, how to prepare for storms, current news, surf reports, reservoir status, and links to live webcams, current rainfall, and storm trackers.

Check it out at www.sbck.org/ElNino



Work Continues in the Wake of the Oil Spill

Ever since the Plains All American oil spill blackened our shores last May, Santa Barbara Channelkeeper has been on the front lines of the spill response and recovery effort. Using our unique set of skills and resources, we've worked to investigate the circumstances behind the spill, monitor its impacts on the environment, keep the public informed, coordinate with government officials and other non-profit organizations, and advocate for policy reforms to help prevent a disaster like this from happening again.

On December 8th, Channelkeeper and the Environmental Defense Center (EDC) filed a lawsuit against the federal government for refusing to disclose information about inspections and oversight of oil pipelines in southern California, including the Plains All American Pipeline 901, which ruptured and caused the oil spill. Shortly after the spill, Channelkeeper and EDC had requested such information from the Pipeline and Hazardous Materials Safety Administration (PHMSA) through the Freedom of Information Act, which requires federal agencies to provide requested information within 20 working days. To date, PHMSA has still not provided any records in response. Our lawsuit aims to shed light on what went wrong on Line 901 and to increase the transparency of federal oversight over the many oil pipelines that criss-cross our region.

Channelkeeper has also served as a lead advocate for stronger policies to better prevent spills in the future. Together with State Senator Hannah Beth Jackson, Assemblymember Das Williams, and other environmental



groups, we successfully secured the passage of three state bills that will improve oil spill prevention and response, increase safety inspections of pipelines, and require pipelines in environmentally sensitive areas to use automatic shutoffs and other "best available" technology. In addition, we reviewed and submitted comments on a proposal by PHMSA to strengthen federal regulations governing the safety of hazardous liquid pipelines, expressing support for the proposed changes and recommending some additional improvements to further strengthen the regulations.

Given our deep involvement in the spill response effort and our unique role as both a monitoring and advocacy organization, Channelkeeper was one of a small number of non-profit organizations invited by spill response agencies to participate in "lessons learned" debriefing sessions

to provide recommendations on ways to improve future response performance. Key changes to emergency response protocols will likely be made locally, statewide, and even nationwide as important lessons are learned in the spill's aftermath.

Channelkeeper is also tracking the Natural Resource Damage Assessment (NRDA) process now being undertaken by state and federal agencies to quantify the injuries to the environment and its public uses caused by the spill. The process will ultimately determine the amount of money Plains must pay to mitigate the damage caused and what restoration projects that money should support to restore the impacted resources. Channelkeeper will weigh in as this process as it unfolds and will support and possibly propose appropriate projects to restore the injured resources.

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Uphold California's Plastic Bag Ban

In September 2014, the California Legislature enacted Senate Bill 270, making California the first state in the nation to adopt a law to ban plastic bags at grocery retailers statewide. Unfortunately, however, the plastic bag industry is spending big money to fight the law. Last year, they spent \$3.1 million (almost all from out-of-state sources) to collect signatures to place a referendum on the November 2016 ballot asking California voters to overturn the ban. They are expected to spend another \$35 million to sway voters in the next few months before the election. Channelkeeper is working closely with other environmental groups across the state to educate and encourage voters to support the ban.

This November, please vote YES to uphold California's plastic bag ban.

While 146 municipalities across the state have already enacted local plastic bag bans - which will remain in effect regardless of the referendum's outcome - Californians still use approximately 13.8 billion plastic bags per year. It takes time to form new habits, but using reusable bags whenever you shop is an easy way to reduce your environmental footprint and help stem the tide of plastics that are polluting our oceans.



Photo by Betsy Cramer

Locally, large grocery stores and pharmacies in unincorporated areas of Santa Barbara County will no longer distribute single-use plastic carryout bags beginning on March 22nd. This November, let's make all of California plastic bag-free!

Work Continues in the Wake of the Oil Spill

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Finally, in an effort to help our community understand and engage on issues related to the spill and oil development in our region more broadly, Channelkeeper has organized a series of six free public lectures addressing oil spill preparedness, spill impact monitoring, ways to volunteer during a spill, natural seeps, and other related topics. Our "After the Spill" speaker series, which we are co-hosting with the Santa Barbara Museum of Natural History, is being moderated by Karl Hutterer and features presentations from various government officials, scientists and other experts as well as time for questions and answers. See page 12 of this newsletter for remaining dates, topics and location.

New Rules to Curb Ag Pollution in Ventura County



Agriculture remains one of the most significant sources of pollution to our nation's rivers, coastal waters, and groundwater supplies. Channelkeeper has worked for many years to curb agricultural pollution on California's Central Coast, and we won a major victory last year when the State Superior Court ruled in our favor on a lawsuit Channelkeeper and our allies filed in 2013 challenging the adequacy of regulations adopted by the State Water Board to control polluted discharges from irrigated agricultural in our region.

The Court's ruling agreed with our arguments that the Central Coast

"Ag Order" fails to comply with State law and is not in the public interest because it will not lead to quantifiable improvements in water quality or even arrest the continued degradation of the region's waters caused by agriculture. The Court ordered the State Water Board to create new rules to better protect surface and ground water from agricultural pollution.

Our legal victory is having a ripple effect throughout California, with regulatory agencies using that decision as a basis for revising regulations for agricultural pollution in other regions, including in Ventura County and the Ventura River watershed. Channelkeeper, in

partnership with Ventura Coastkeeper, is providing detailed input to a new regulatory program being developed to control wastewater discharges from agricultural lands in that area.

We're working to ensure that the Ventura Ag Order meets the higher bar set by the Court's 2015 ruling, including making sure that farmers have firm deadlines to meet water quality standards and establishing a monitoring framework by which farmers in heavily polluted areas must verify that their strategies to reduce pollution are actually working. The new rules could spur widespread improvements in agricultural practices throughout Ventura County.

Channelkeeper Advocates to Protect Our Coast from Oil Trains

In early February, Channelkeeper joined several other environmental groups, local governments, school districts, and emergency responders' unions to urge the San Luis Obispo (SLO) County Planning Commission to deny a proposal by Phillips 66 to modify the existing rail spur at its Santa Maria Refinery to allow heavy crude oil to be transported there by train for refinement. This would allow up to five oil trains (each carrying 80 rail cars and more than two million gallons of oil) per week to travel along the coast, passing through or near residential areas, schools, endangered species habitat, public beaches, marine protected areas, and tourist destinations.

The Environmental Impact Report for the project identified numerous unavoidable adverse environmental impacts, including catastrophic damage to wetlands, creeks and other sensitive habitats, tourism, and public health and safety in the event of a derailment. Based on these findings, County staff recommended that the Planning Commission deny the project. The Commission will hear additional public testimony on February 25th and will make a decision thereafter.

Channelkeeper Develops New Tar Ball Monitoring Program



As soon as we learned that the Plains All American Pipeline had ruptured and was spewing oil, Channelkeeper was out on our boat, up in airplanes, and on the affected beaches bird-dogging the response effort, monitoring the extent of the spill, and photo- and video-documenting impacts on the water, shoreline and wildlife. Now that the immediate threat has passed and the official clean-up is largely complete, we've developed a new monitoring program that builds on lessons learned from the Plains spill and will help inform the identification and clean-up of future spills.

The existence of profuse natural seeps in the Santa Barbara Channel confounded the response to the Plains oil spill, with the ability to differentiate tar balls attributable to the spill from those attributable to natural seeps

emerging as a key challenge. To date, there has been no systematic effort to document what constitutes "normal" tar ball coverage on local beaches caused by seeps. However, this information is fundamental to decisions that spill response agencies must make about whether or not to mobilize clean-up efforts, because they do not have a mandate to clean up oil emanating from natural seeps.

To fill this data gap, Channelkeeper has developed a new tar ball monitoring program to collect standardized data on tar ball coverage, size, and characteristics on 16 beaches from Ventura to Gaviota on a quarterly basis. Our data will serve to establish a baseline that can be used to differentiate spill oil from seep oil as well as to help identify new spills in the future. Our survey methodology was developed

in consultation with the Department of Fish and Wildlife (DFW) in order to ensure that our data will be useful to spill response agencies.

We will analyze, summarize, and submit our data to DFW to facilitate and improve future oil spill detection, response and clean-up efforts, and will also alert them if we suspect that weathered oil from the Plains spill has washed ashore in the wake of winter storms.

Channelkeeper has already completed our first three tar ball monitoring events. In addition, we've also continued to participate as a non-governmental monitor in the Unified Command's follow-up tar ball fingerprinting efforts, which seek to identify whether oil from the Plains spill was mobilized and reached local beaches after the recent storm events.

MARINE PROTECTED AREAS



Photo by Stacey Janik on a Naples dive trip subsidized by Channelkeeper

Fostering MPA Stewardship

The Santa Barbara Channel is blessed with a network of 18 Marine Protected Areas (MPAs) which offer safe havens for marine life both at the Channel Islands and along the mainland coast. They also offer opportunities for world-class ocean recreation, and Channelkeeper is working hard to foster awareness, enjoyment and stewardship of these special places in our community.

One recent highlight of this work is our mentorship of an Eagle Scout project to promote MPA stewardship. Last September, more than 30 boy scouts took a dive and snorkel trip to the Naples MPA, where they collected extensive photo and video content for a website being designed to highlight the biological and recreational value of the Naples MPA. The Scouts also succeeded in securing approval by the Boy Scouts of America for two new official merit badges related to MPAs!

MPAs Work!

A decade of marine protection continues to show positive effects on sea life in the Channel Islands MPA network. A new 10-year study released by UCSB's Partnership for Interdisciplinary Studies of Coastal Oceans (PISCO) has concluded that animals targeted by fishermen are bigger and more abundant inside MPAs. The report also highlights evidence that the MPAs are NOT contributing to overfishing in other areas – a claim often made by opponents of MPAs.

MPA Web Portal

Check out Channelkeeper's awesome new MPA web portal at www.sbck.org/MPA. It has videos, maps and information on recreational opportunities, public access, and special characteristics of several local MPAs. These underwater parks are spectacular spots for swimming, kayaking, diving, snorkeling and tidepooling! Explore on your own or contact one of the local businesses we link to who offer MPA excursions.

Keeping Our Waterways Clean!

Every year, Channelkeeper rallies hundreds of volunteers to help us clean up trash from local beaches and creeks. Over the past five years, we've hosted 64 clean-ups, engaging 1,029 volunteers to remove 4,630 pounds of trash from local waterways! In 2015 alone, Channelkeeper hosted 15 clean-up events at West Beach (our adopted beach), East Beach, Goleta Beach, Santa Cruz Island, and several creeks in Goleta. With the help of 384 volunteers, we picked up more than 3,200 pounds of trash and prevented it from polluting the Santa Barbara Channel. Channelkeeper sincerely thanks the Santa Barbara Adventure Company, Island Packers, Cox, Procore, lynda.com, Levi's and Citrix, as well as several local youth groups, whose employees and members got their hands dirty to help us keep our waterways clean.

Channelkeeper invites you to join us at a future clean-up event, and also challenges you to find ways to decrease your use of disposable items, which often unintentionally end up as litter on our streets, creeks and beaches. Please visit our website at www.sbck.org for dates and locations of future clean-ups.

Rein the Rain!

The current drought has forced our community to face some difficult challenges and choices about how to meet our water supply needs. Reducing our demand for water through increased conservation is the cheapest and most environmentally friendly drought response measure available, so Channelkeeper has been working to promote heightened conservation through a combination of outreach, education, advocacy, and dissemination of simple, practical tools to help people conserve. Our community has done a good job with water conservation in this drought and even before it, but we can and must do more.

Given that outdoor residential irrigation makes up at least 50% of water use in Santa Barbara, one tool we've been working to promote is the rain barrel. Rain barrels are a multi-benefit water conservation tool that promotes water reuse while also reducing stormwater runoff, the number one source of water pollution in our area. The barrels collect and store rainwater from rooftops—which



would otherwise pour directly off the roof or flow through roof gutter downspouts and become stormwater runoff—to use later for watering plants and gardens. They are simple to install and work in a wide variety of settings, giving people who want to make a difference an easy way to conserve water, save money and prevent pollution at the same time. They are also a great introduction to other water harvesting features such as cisterns, rain gardens and bioswales.

Last year, we forged an exciting partnership with Figueroa Mountain Brewery (FMB) to repurpose oak barrels previously used in the beer-

making process and convert them into rain barrels. FMB has donated 26 barrels to date, and Channelkeeper quickly distributed them all, along with simple rain barrel conversion kits and assistance with installation, to water-conscious citizens in our community.

In the coming months, Channelkeeper will be reaching out to other local brewers and wine-makers to secure more of these beautiful 60-gallon oak barrels, which we will have available for sale for \$100 (including the conversion kit). We already have a waiting list, but email us at penny@sbck.org to reserve one today!

Educating the Next Generation of Environmental Stewards

A core component of Channelkeeper's work is to educate our community, including youth, about the impacts of human activities on water quality and the environment and ways that individuals can be part of the solution to pollution. Channelkeeper's long-standing Clean Water Environmental Stewardship Training (CWEST) youth education project works in partnership with several other organizations and schools to provide local students with hands-on environmental science education and enrichment opportunities which foster environmental awareness and stewardship while also building critical science and math skills. We have reached 28,000 kids through our CWEST programs to date!

One element of Channelkeeper's CWEST project is our Marine Science Education Curriculum, which provides a series of hands-on lessons and experiments throughout the year at several local schools, teaching kids about ecology, oceanography, watersheds and marine habitats in the Santa Barbara Channel.

Channelkeeper has also been partnering with the Santa Barbara Museum of Natural History since 2006 to deliver an interactive watershed awareness curriculum to local youth, which has included field trips to upstream and downstream sites in the Mission Creek watershed as well as a kayaking excursion around the Santa Barbara Harbor – a highlight of the school year for many of the 5th graders who participated.

Channelkeeper partners with several other organizations as well to bring watershed awareness curricula to local students. We're working with Ventura Hillside Conservancy and Once Upon a Watershed to teach stu-



dents how to measure water quality as part of field trips where they learn firsthand about the Ventura River watershed. We've also partnered with the University of California Sea Grant since 2008 to provide water quality training for teachers and students through the Research and Education for Students and Teachers supporting the Ormond Beach Restoration (RESTOR) Program. Ormond Beach is adjacent to the hazardous waste site which spurred Channelkeeper's first lawsuit, where Halaco Engineering Co. operated a metal smelting factory that polluted the neighboring wetland and surface and ground water for more than 40 years. Our students are always outraged when they learn

about Halaco's egregious pollution and see firsthand the 26-acre, 40-foot high mountain of toxic slag they left behind. (It has been declared a Superfund site and is awaiting a clean-up plan from the US EPA.)

Channelkeeper is honored to work with these great partners to provide meaningful, hands-on educational programs that inspire young people to care about the environment by getting them outside to explore their watershed and experiment with nature. By fostering scientific inquiry and environmental stewardship in today's youth, we are helping to develop and empower tomorrow's environmental leaders, and that is very humbling and important work!

Changes to the Channelkeeper Team

Channelkeeper is thrilled to welcome two fabulous new individuals to our Board of Directors, Jack Stapelmann and Carla Tomson!

Jack Stapelmann just re-joined our team after serving on our Board from 2001-2012, and then on our Advisory Council from 2012-2015. Jack has been passionate about and involved with the ocean all his life and has built numerous boats, including an America's Cup defender.

Carla Tomson is a creative design director who has held senior positions with several leading companies and co-founded two successful sportswear apparel brands. Carla cares deeply about environmental and social issues and believes in the power of each individual to make a positive impact, which she exemplifies through her active involvement in many non-profit organizations.

Channelkeeper would like to express our deep gratitude to Sean Hecht, David Powdrell, Kalia Rork and Dan Waldman, who recently stepped down from our Board of Directors.



Jack Stapelmann



Carla Tomson

We also bid a sad but fond farewell to Tim Robinson, who served as President of our Board for the past three years and has been involved with Channelkeeper since he began volunteering for our Stream Team Program in 2000. These five individuals contributed a great deal of time, energy, enthusiasm, and hard work to our team, and they will be missed!



LEFT TO RIGHT: Sean Hecht, David Powdrell, Tim Robinson, Kalia Rork, Dan Waldman

Channelkeeper Chairs California Coastkeeper Alliance Board

Santa Barbara Channelkeeper is one of 12 Waterkeeper organizations in California, and we all work together as members of the California Coastkeeper Alliance (CCKA). CCKA was founded in 1999 with the belief that clean water and a healthy ocean and coast are vital to California's economy, public health and way of life. CCKA's mission is to unite the 12 local Waterkeeper organizations to fight for swimmable, fishable and drinkable waters for California communities and ecosystems. Its mighty staff of three does an amazing job representing the Waterkeepers' common interests in a wide range of water policy issues at the state level.

CCKA's Board of Directors is made up of the leaders of each of the 12 California Waterkeeper organizations. Kira Redmond, Santa Barbara Channelkeeper's Executive Director, has served on the Board's Executive Committee for the past several years, and was recently elected to serve as the President of the Board. She also serves on the Board's Development Committee and Blue Business Council Committee, which is building a growing network of business partners who care about and are actively engaged in helping us protect clean and plentiful water in California.

Join us at the 16th Annual Blue Water Ball



Photo by Erin Fienblatt

Santa Barbara Channelkeeper's 16th annual Blue Water Ball fundraising gala will take place on Saturday, April 16, 2016 from 5-9:30 pm at the beautiful rotunda in Deckers' LEED-certified headquarters in Goleta. Please join us for a celebratory evening of fine food, local wines, an awesome silent auction, dancing, and an inspiring keynote address by acclaimed waterman and author Christian Beamish.

Christian is a Carpinteria resident, surfboard shaper, big wave rider, and boat builder who's been lauded for his board design and big wave riding at Mavericks. He's also an accomplished writer, contributing pieces to several surf and adventure publications including *The Surfer's Journal*, *Deep, Surfer Magazine*, and Patagonia's *The Cleanest Line* and authoring his own book, *The Voyage of the Cormorant*, which chronicles his solitary quest for surf along the coast of Baja in the boat he built in his garage. As a special treat, that boat, *The Cormorant*, pictured left, will be on display at the event, and Christian will share tales of his deep relationship with our coast that will fascinate and inspire all in attendance.

Current Channelkeeper members will receive a mailed invitation to the event in March. Sponsorship opportunities are still available, and these key partners will receive event tickets, extensive recognition, advertising and the satisfaction that comes from contributing to a healthy ocean.

Tickets to the event are \$200 each. For more information or to donate an auction item, become a sponsor, or reserve your tickets or table today (we WILL sell out!), email morgan@sbck.org or call 805.563.3377 ext. 2 today. We look forward to seeing you there!

13th Annual Student Art Show Celebrating the Santa Barbara Channel

For the thirteenth year in a row, Channelkeeper is hosting our ocean-themed juried student art show, "What the Channel Means to Me." The goal of the show, which is open to high school students from Carpinteria to Goleta, is to inspire local youth to create art that celebrates the natural beauty and diversity of the Santa Barbara Channel, and for their art to inspire others in our community. This year, art students from San Marcos, Dos Pueblos and Santa Barbara High Schools submitted more than 300 pieces to this year's show. Our juror, Westmont College Professor Emeritus Tony Askew, will select 45 pieces to be in the show, as well as the prize winners.

Senator Hannah Beth Jackson will present the winners with awards and cash prizes – made possible by our sponsors, Trillium Enterprises and the Montecito Rotary Club Foundation – at the opening exhibit on Thursday, March 3rd from 5-8 pm at the Jodi House Gallery (625 Chapala Street in Santa Barbara). The show will remain



2015 Channelkeeper Student Art Show Winners

on display there through March, and the winning pieces will also be featured at Channelkeeper's Blue Water Ball on April 16th. The students have produced some incredible works of art, so come check them out!

Upcoming Events

After the Spill Speaker Series

Please join us for the final three sessions of our "After the Spill" speaker series, which will be held at Farrand Hall in the Santa Barbara Museum of Natural History from 6-8pm. Admission is free. Dates and topics are as follows:

March 2: Do Your Part: Volunteering During an Oil Spill

March 16: The Truth about Seeps: Natural and Anthropogenic Sources of Oil in the Santa Barbara Channel

March 30: Moving Beyond Oil: Sustainable Energy and Transportation in SB County



Stream Team

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 monitor and protect our local waterways. We host sampling events in Ventura on Saturdays at 9 am and in Goleta on Sundays at 10 am. Upcoming dates are March 5 & 6, April 2 & 3, May 14 & 15, June 4 & 5, July 9 & 10, and August 6 & 7. Email jennad@sbck.org or call 805.563.3377 ext. 5 for more information.

Volunteer for MPA Watch

Are you into marine conservation AND long walks on the beach? Learn how to collect valuable data on our local Marine Protected Areas (MPAs) while walking along the beautiful beaches of Campus Point, Naples and Gaviota through Channelkeeper's MPA Watch program. MPA Watch is a citizen science initiative to monitor human uses of coastal MPAs and collect data to help inform the management, enforcement and science of California's MPAs. Our next MPA Watch volunteer training workshop will take place on April 7 at UCSB. Email penny@sbck.org for more information and future training opportunities.

