

SPRING NEWSLETTER 2022

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On the cover: In May, volunteers and members of the commercial fishing community worked together to remove lobster traps from Black Rock Beach in Goleta.



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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

Dear Channelkeeper Family,

Plastic pollution has received significant attention in recent months. Last December, the National Academy of Sciences published a thorough report on the extent of the U.S. contribution to the global "cycle" of plastic – from generation, waste pathways, and the fate of plastic waste in the ocean. In March, the United Nations approved a resolution to work towards a legally binding international agreement to control plastic pollution.

Many facts about plastic waste were part of the accompanying news cycles. Although we've heard many of these facts before, they are still hard to fully comprehend.

Fifty percent of the plastic produced is designed for a single use, after which it is thrown away.

Eight million metric tons of plastic waste enter the world's oceans every year; this equates to a garbage truck tipping one full load of plastic waste into the ocean every minute. The UN reports this figure could triple by 2040.

The U.S. is a major contributor to the problem. It is estimated that we generate up to 130 kg/year—or 286 pounds—of plastic waste per capita each year.

California communities spend more than \$428 million annually to reduce and clean up plastic waste. Several localities in our state have passed ordinances to ban plastic straws, grocery bags, and Styrofoam takeout containers.

On November 8, 2022, Californians will have another opportunity to address the impact of plastic pollution. The 2022 ballot will include an initiative that if approved, would be a first-in-the nation measure to reduce single-use plastic pollution. The initiative would:

- Require single-use plastic packaging and foodware be recyclable, reusable, or compostable by 2030.
- Require plastic producers reduce single-use plastic packaging and foodware by no less than twenty-five percent by 2030.
- Charge a fee of no more than one penny per package to plastic producers of single-use plastic products to support recycling programs, habitat restoration, and community cleanups.

Over the next few months, be on the lookout for more information from us about plastic pollution. If you are interested in becoming more involved in plastic-related community actions, I encourage you to review the Watershed Brigade story in this newsletter and join this impressive group of dedicated individuals.

Best, Ted

POSITIVE ACTION FOR THE ENVIRONMENT Watershed Brigade





While addressing big environmental issues like plastic pollution, contaminated waterways, and climate change can feel overwhelming, local action is an antidote, and volunteers with Channelkeeper's Watershed Brigade are taking immediate, positive action for the environment.

Every day, community members, friends, families, co-workers, and neighbors are taking important steps to reduce the flow of plastic and trash into the ocean by picking up bottle caps, foam bits, discarded drink bottles, cigarette butts, and so much more. Watershed Brigade volunteers head out individually and in groups to clean up streets, creeks, neighborhoods, beaches, and parks.

"When I see trash on the beach and it may be seconds away from being washed into the ocean, I feel a sense of urgency," explains Watershed Brigade volunteer Sue Sadler-Paré. "We know what's going on with the climate crisis and ocean pollution, and it's not going to get better if we don't take action. By cleaning up trash, I feel like I'm part of the solution." The group continues to prove that collective individual action can have a big impact. Since its launch in May 2020, 888 Watershed Brigade volunteers have conducted 642 cleanups and removed 12,797 pounds of trash from our environment.

Connecting with other volunteers at group cleanups or via social media makes this work fun too. By participating, volunteers build connections within our community while ensuring that local neighborhoods, streets, creeks, and beaches are cleared of trash pollution. We hope you'll join us, either at the next monthly event or by sharing your cleanup experiences online.

To be a part of this movement, grab some cleanup supplies and visit our webpage (sbck.org/brigade), join our Facebook group (Channelkeeper's Watershed Brigade), or follow us on Instagram (@watershedbrigade).





888 Volunteers Engaged

*Cumulative statistics since May 2020.



464 Sites Cleaned

COMMUNITY COLLABORATION Working Together to Protect Our Watershed

Heaps of metal, contorted by the Alisal Fire and rusted in the months since, marked the places along Refugio Canyon where homes and other structures once stood. The remote location, coupled with the absence of disaster relief funding, has made it nearly impossible for property owners to clean up individually. Meanwhile, the proximity of these sites to Refugio Creek has made it imperative to clear debris to prevent pollutants from contaminating local streams, in addition to the ground and air.

Thirteen structures were burned when the Alisal Fire claimed 17,000 acres in November of 2021. In the months since, Channelkeeper has worked with local organizations to manage stormwater runoff and clear debris from burned homes and structures in Refugio Canyon as part of the Alisal Fire Assistance Project.

In April, Channelkeeper staff joined forces with the Santa Barbara Bucket Brigade and Habitat for Humanity to remove debris from a burned site in Refugio Canyon. We gathered small pieces of metal and carried it by wheelbarrow to a dumpster for safe removal. We loaded larger burned items, such as bicycles, chairs, and mowers into a utility vehicle that carried the debris to the dumpster. In December, before the arrival of winter rains, our team dug trenches and installed forty-five straw



wattles, tubes of compressed straw purchased by Heal the Ocean, to prevent fire-related pollutants from being carried to waterways.

Channelkeeper is pleased to partner with these organizations to help lend a hand—part of our ongoing work to support our community and keep local watersheds clean and healthy.

LEGAL SETTLEMENT Cleaning Up Utility Pole Storage Facilities

Utility poles are treated with a wood preservative called pentachlorophenol (PCP), which contains chemicals called dioxins and furans. PCP poses cancer risks and is toxic to wildlife. In February, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency ordered a phase out of PCP usage for wood treatment over the next few years.

Southern California Edison operates twenty-seven utility pole storage facilities across its service area. Water samples from these facilities demonstrated that significant levels of these chemicals entered waterways during storm events.

In June of 2020, Channelkeeper and the Ecological Rights Foundation took legal action against Southern California Edison over the lack of appropriate water quality protections at utility pole storage sites. In November of 2021, the parties reached a settlement agreement under which Southern California Edison



has agreed to clean up utility pole storage facilities.

Over the course of the next seven years, Edison will cover all areas where treated wood is stored or processed or it will contain, filter, or treat storm runoff from its properties to meet water quality targets. Edison will also monitor stormwater to show that its methods are effective in preventing pollutants from running off its facilities. This settlement agreement represents a major clean water win.

STREAM TEAM MONITORING Community Science Enhances Water Quality Testing

How do you assess the health of waterways across the South Coast? Enlisting a corps of capable volunteers helps! Channelkeeper's community science monitoring program, Stream Team, trains and engages volunteers to help conduct monthly water quality sampling at stream sites throughout the Goleta Valley, Carpinteria Valley, and Ventura River watersheds.

This past fall, after a pandemic-related hiatus, a new cohort of students from Cate School learned how to collect valuable water quality data so that Stream Team could resume in the Carpinteria Valley. Cate School students received a full day of training and reviewed sampling protocols, collected water quality data together, and learned how to process bacteria samples. Students follow quality assurance procedures so that the data they collect can be submitted to the State Water Resources Control Board.

In addition to increasing Channelkeeper's capacity to conduct monitoring in this area, this community partnership provides meaningful educational opportunities for the students.



"The streams are surprisingly different in character," noted Cate School student Charlie Scofield. "Not only that, but having watched over them for several years, I can remember when some flourished, had sprouts taller than myself, and when they overcame droughts. They have real stories."

STANDING UP FOR STEELHEAD Advocating for a State Endangered Species Listing

Southern California steelhead trout are an iconic species that once flourished in the streams and rivers connected to the Santa Barbara Channel. Steelhead are anadromous, meaning they spend part of their lives in the sea before going to rivers to breed. Just a few generations ago, abundant populations of steelhead in



the rivers throughout their range.

In February, Channelkeeper addressed the California Fish and Wildlife Commission to support a petition, submitted by our partners at California Trout, to list Southern California steelhead as an endangered species under

the State's own Endangered Species Act. Listing is an appropriate acknowledgment of the dire risk of extinction this species faces and the reality that additional measures are needed to improve the condition of local watersheds to support recovery. On April 21, the Commission voted unanimously that a state listing may be necessary and approved further action to research the status of Southern California steelhead. At the end of the one-year review, the Commission will decide whether or not to list the species.

local streams were popular among recreational fishermen.

Steelhead are also considered a critical indicator species signaling the greater health of local watersheds. In 1997, Southern California steelhead were listed as an endangered species by the Federal Government. Since that time, unfortunately, the species has continued to decline. Today, it's rare to see Southern California steelhead in the wild; it is estimated that only a few hundred adult steelhead return to

MARINE MONITORING Keeping a Watchful Eye on Cruise Ships

You've probably seen their immense silhouettes anchored outside the harbor. Cruise ships have returned to Santa Barbara after a two-year hiatus, with seventeen scheduled visits this spring. Channelkeeper has resumed its cruise ship monitoring program and has advocated for important policy changes to better protect local waters.

When conditions allow, members of the Channelkeeper staff, aboard our thirty-one-foot research vessel, hail ship captains via marine radio as they travel through the nodischarge zone to remind the crew of their commitment to refrain from using incinerators and discharging sewage or greywater within twelve miles of Santa Barbara and let them know that our team is watching.

In recent months, Channelkeeper also presented the Harbor Commission with several recommendations for the city's cruise ship program. Among them was a vessel speed reduction policy to protect migrating whales from shipstrike and the formation of a subcommittee to host a public process for re-evaluating the cruise ship program as it relates to the city's economic, environmental, and community goals.

On April 21, the City of Santa Barbara Harbor Commission voted unanimously to establish a subcommittee and a public process to assess the City's cruise ship program.

Every day, a typical cruise ship generates 30,000 gallons of sewage, 250,000 gallons of greywater (wastewater from galleys, showers, sinks, and laundry), 5,000 gallons of bilge water, fifteen gallons of toxic chemicals, and seven tons of solid waste, as well as air pollution equal to that of 12,000 cars.





Aligned with Channelkeeper's statement, the City of Santa Barbara Harbor Commission voted unanimously to establish a subcommittee and a public process to assess the City's cruise ship program.

"As we've looked more closely at the emissions that these ships release, even while just anchored offshore, we have started really questioning whether or not this program aligns with the City's broader climate-related goals and policies," said Benjamin Pitterle, Channelkeeper's Science and Policy Director.

Channelkeeper will urge the Subcommittee to examine the City's ability to achieve its adopted climate-related objectives, while simultaneously sponsoring a program that invites ships from an industry known to be one of the biggest sources of air pollution in Santa Barbara County to anchor offshore.

THE CLEAN WATER ACT TURNS 50 Honoring an Environmental Milestone

n 1972, nearly two-thirds of our nation's lakes, rivers, and coastal waters were severely contaminated by sewage, trash, toxic pollutants, and excessive nutrients. Citizens were alarmed that too many of our nation's waterbodies were unsafe for swimming, fishing, and providing a drinking water source.



Public outcry led to amendments to the Federal Water Pollution Control Act and ultimately, the establishment of the Clean Water Act. This Act recognized that access to clean, safe water is a critical human right and created the structure for regulating discharges of pollutants into the waters of the U.S. and for regulating water quality standards for surface waters. It also set a goal to restore and maintain clean water across the nation by 1985.

In the past fifty years, the Clean Water Act has significantly helped reduce pollution and improve water quality on the

South Coast and across the nation, but many of our water resources remain threatened by pollution and habitat loss.

Channelkeeper leverages the Clean Water Act to promote positive change and protect our watersheds and communities. Our lawsuits that addressed pollution at Halaco

Engineering Company, the Ojai Quarry, Santa Barbara County Transfer Station, and the Santa Barbara Polo and Racket Club relied upon the Clean Water Act's safeguards. Today, our water quality monitoring data informs the State of California's implementation of the Clean Water Act by helping identify water quality impairments in waterways.

As we celebrate the 50th anniversary of the Clean Water Act, we honor its legacy and look forward to continued progress in ensuring today's and future generations enjoy "swimmable, fishable, and drinkable waters."

PLATFORM DECOMMISSIONING Outlining the Options and Process

Of the twenty offshore oil platforms in the Santa Barbara Channel, eight no longer produce oil and are in the early stages of decommissioning. Plugging the wells and removing the oil infrastructure from these near end-of-life platforms is a complex process that will take place over the next ten years.

Platform Holly, which is in state waters, will be the first to undergo this process, with its wells slated to be plugged by



the end of the year. The State Lands Commission is leading this work and will begin the scoping period for the Environmental Impact Report in the middle of this year. The scoping process will outline the decommissioning options for the platform structure, such as full removal and partial removal, that will be analyzed in the Environmental Impact Report.

The other seven oil platforms to be decommissioned are located in federal waters. The U.S. Bureau of Safety and Environmental Enforcement plans to release a separate programmatic environmental document this summer.

Get ready to voice your opinions. The release of both documents will be accompanied by public comment periods. Channelkeeper will review the environmental and scientific assessment for the decommissioning scenarios proposed and will alert the community when the opportunity arises for public input.

CHANNEL ISLANDS CLEANUP Collaborating to Keep our Islands Clean

The flow of trash from the California coast and offshore sources to the Channel Islands is a growing concern today, with hundreds of pounds of marine debris accumulating on once pristine remote island beaches. In recent years, Anacapa Island's Bat Ray Cove has earned the nickname "Trash Cove." Marine debris degrades water quality in our Channel and coastal and island habitats, in addition to posing harm to aquatic wildlife.

In February, Channelkeeper staff members joined the National Marine Sanctuary Foundation, Island Packers, Channel Islands Adventure Company, United by Blue,



and a corps of volunteers for a marine debris cleanup at the Channel Islands.

Even with challenging conditions, the twenty-six-person team was able to clean up nearly 500 pounds of marine debris and plastic from two locations—Chinese Harbor at Santa Cruz Island and Bat Ray Cove at Anacapa Island filling two dumpsters upon return to the mainland.

PRESERVING MARINE AND CULTURAL RESOURCES The Proposed Chumash Heritage National Marine Sanctuary

he Chumash Heritage National Marine Sanctuary, the first tribally nominated sanctuary in the United States, is currently being considered for designation by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA). The nominated area stretches along 156 miles of coastline connecting the boundaries of Monterey Bay and Channel Islands national marine sanctuaries.

The Northern Chumash Tribal Council submitted the sanctuary nomination in July 2015 to protect the region's



important marine ecosystem, honor the cultural values of the local Indigenous communities, and protect a collection of historically significant shipwrecks and cultural sites.

The NOAA designation process has four steps. In November, NOAA entered the scoping period. During the eighty-three-day public scoping period, NOAA received 22,479 comments of which more than ninety-nine percent indicated support for the sanctuary.

Next, NOAA will prepare draft designation documents and conduct environmental reviews, which will be followed by a second public comment period for input. NOAA will then prepare a final designation document and develop a final environmental impact statement.

Channelkeeper supports the designation of the Chumash Heritage National Marine Sanctuary to enhance protections of marine resources, such as kelp forests, coastal dunes, and habitat areas for marine mammals, fish, and other wildlife along the Central Coast. Our team is recommending that the proposed sanctuary boundary extends to the Channel Islands National Marine Sanctuary, that sanctuary protections include prohibitions of offshore oil development and seismic testing, and that water quality protection areas be established to promote non-regulatory programs to address coastal pollution.

STUDENT REFLECTIONS ON THE CHANNEL Channelkeeper's 2022 Student Art Show

With its colorful array of shapes, textures, contours, and patterns, the artwork from Channelkeeper's 2022 Student Art Show opens one's eyes to wonder and leaves behind a joyful residual effect. These young artists and their vibrant creative energy mean hope for our world's future.

This year represents the 19th consecutive year Channelkeeper has sponsored the Student Art Show. Local artist Molly Gwitt juried the show, selected pieces for the show, and chose recipients for 1st, 2nd, 3rd, Environmental Ethic, Juror's Choice, and Honorable Mentions awards along with cash prizes. Selected art was on display as part of the Community Environmental Council's Earth Day Celebration at the Arlington Theater. We invite you to view the show and award-winning artwork on Channelkeeper's website.

The goal of the show is for high school students to create art celebrating the beauty and biodiversity of the Santa Barbara Channel, and for their art to inspire others in our community to join Channelkeeper in our work to protect this special place. This year's participants accomplished that goal and elevated it to a new level through their creative and heartfelt representations of what the Channel means to them.

We'd like to offer huge congratulations to all the student artists and our most sincere gratitude to the show's sponsors, Trillium Enterprise, Inc. and the Goleta City Grant Program.



A Mystery in the Water by Laila Ordinez

Things

As an aspiring marine biologist and an artist, I believe that bringing the beauty of the ocean to the public is an important step towards saving it. —Lucy London



AWARD STUDENT SCHOOL 1st Place Molly Grant San Marcos High School Adriel Amador Dos Pueblos High School 2nd Place 3rd Place Alondra Ibarra San Marcos High School **Environmental Ethic** Lucy London San Marcos High School Jurors' Choice India Longo Bishop Diego High School Honorable Mention Reese Niemela San Marcos High School Honorable Mention Michael |offe Santa Barbara High School Honorable Mention Laila Ordonez San Marcos High School

Teacher Judith Raimondi and India Longo



Molly Grant with Cormorant Nest

With this painting, I'm focusing on one of my favorite seabirds, the double crested cormorant, while also stressing the importance of knowing how our human presence can affect wildlife and wanting to find solutions to that. —Molly Grant

Still Here by Alondra Ibarra



BOARD MEMBER APPRECIATION

Channlekeeper would like to offer our heartfelt thanks to Mike Wondolowski, who served on Channelkeeper's board of directors for nine years and was board president for five years. In January, Mike stepped away from the board to devote more time to his several other interests. Mike auided the organization through community challenges, great successes, and internal transitions, and he did so with steadiness, intelligence, and passion. In addition to



his volunteer service with us, Mike has generously dedicated thousands of hours to improving the region's environment. We're profoundly grateful for his thoughtful leadership, his commitment to strengthening the organization, and his enthusiastic advocacy for water quality on the South Coast.

We're pleased to announce Channelkeeper's 2022 board officers.

Brad Newton, President Karen Telleen-Lawton, Vice-President Walt Wilson, Treasurer Kathleen Rogers, Secretary



Meet our New Board Member

Channelkeeper is honored to welcome **Robert Warner** to the board of directors. He rejoins after serving previously from 2004 to 2016. Dr. Warner is a Distinguished Research

Professor of Marine Biology and a Professor Emeritus in the Department of Ecology, Evolution, and Marine Biology at UCSB. His expertise is in coastal marine conservation. Prior to his retirement, he served as Chair of the Departments of Biological Sciences and of Ecology, Evolution, and Marine Biology at UCSB. Dr. Warner also currently serves on the Board of the Benioff Ocean Initiative.



NONPROFIT ORG. U.S. POSTAGE

PAID SANTA BARBARA, CA PERMIT #800

Keeping watch for clean water

WE'RE GROWING!



Channelkeeper is hiring a part-time program and administrative assistant to support our education and monitoring programs by performing monitoring activities, maintaining equipment and supplies, helping with data management tasks, and assisting with student field trips and classroom presentations. We are seeking a dependable, motivated, and well-organized individual who is enthusiastic about working with volunteers.

Read the full job description here: https://bit.ly/36pKRUV

VOLUNTEER WITH US!



Channelkeeper relies on the generous gift of time and support from volunteers to help achieve our mission. Join the Watershed Brigade to help keep local watersheds and beaches clean or monitor marine protected areas along our coast as an MPA Watch volunteer. https://bit.ly/38sK86l