



## *August eNewsletter*

### **IMPROVING REGIONAL EFFORTS TO REDUCE AGRICULTURAL POLLUTION**

Contaminated runoff from farms and the over-application of fertilizers is the primary source of water pollution on the Central Coast. Excessive nutrients and fertilizers can cause toxic algae blooms that harm wildlife and impair drinking water sources. Channelkeeper is working to change that by improving the safeguards in place to protect our rivers, coastal areas, and water supplies from agricultural pollution.

One regulatory framework that we're currently working to improve is the "Ag Waiver," the set of requirements that farmers must abide by to protect water quality.

The Los Angeles Regional Water Quality Control Board established the Ag Waiver program in 2005. It applies to all farming in Ventura and Los Angeles Counties. Despite the program's existence and the work of many farmers to improve water quality through practices such as irrigation efficiency, nitrogen management, and treatment systems, a large number of agricultural operations continue to pollute waterways and water quality standards are not currently being met.

In the first ten years of its existence the Los Angeles Ag Waiver program was

largely ineffective because it lacked firm deadlines and enforcement mechanisms. Without these elements, there is little incentive for farmers to participate and adequately invest in farm improvements. Without accountability, our waterways continue to be polluted.

In 2016, Channelkeeper worked with the Los Angeles Regional Board to update its Ag Waiver to include firm timelines and enforcement mechanisms. Many of the deadlines are now approaching and farmers throughout Ventura and Los Angeles Counties will be required, for the first time in history, to test their runoff for pollutants and demonstrate that they are achieving water quality standards. We believe that this accountability is crucial for protecting water quality. The agricultural industry, however, is strongly opposed to these monitoring requirements, and the Los Angeles Regional Board is considering back-sliding to accommodate the industry through its upcoming update to the Ag Waiver program.

Channelkeeper is meeting with the Los Angeles Regional Board and the Ventura County Farm Bureau to discuss elements of the updated Ag Waiver and additional ways to encourage farm-scale investments in water quality. Our main priorities are to ensure that existing timelines remain in place and that farms are accountable for the pollution they discharge. The Los Angeles Regional Board expects to adopt an updated Ag Waiver by the end of 2022.

Throughout the process, we will keep you apprised of public comment periods and opportunities to express your support for protecting clean water.

---



## **ANOTHER STEP FORWARD TO PROTECT VENTURA RIVER FLOWS**

For twenty years, Santa Barbara Channelkeeper has advocated on the Ventura River's behalf to end over-pumping, restore flows, and ensure the river's health and ecological richness.

In 2020, Santa Barbara Channelkeeper and the City of Ventura entered into an interim settlement agreement establishing operational protocols that trigger a phased shutdown of water pumping at the City's Foster Park Well Facility when river flows drop below certain thresholds. This action is critical to prevent the river from becoming completely dewatered in its lower reach, damaging wildlife habitats and public trust resources. Our agreement also contained a provision to revisit and possibly amend the operational protocols should flow measurements reveal that the phased shutdown (vs a full, immediate shutdown) was not effective in eliminating further reductions in stream flow.



Last August, the City implemented the operational protocols based on City flow- measurements. Though the actions resulted in the rebound of flows in the lower parts of the river through the dry season (a major victory for the environment), flow-monitoring indicated that the phased shutdown approach needed to be revisited.

Our agreement was based on an assumption by the City that at a certain flow threshold it could continue to pump water from one of its primary sources without further reducing flows. However, last August, when the final source was shut down, a significant rebound in flow occurred, indicating that the City's assumption was incorrect. It was, in fact, essential to curtail all pumping. Accordingly, Channelkeeper recently revisited the pumping protocols with the City and secured a commitment from the City of Ventura to initiate a full, immediate shutdown when minimum flow thresholds are reached.

While representing a small change in pumping operations for the City of Ventura, every drop of water counts for this severely impacted ecosystem, and we are proud to announce this significant advancement for the Ventura River ecosystem.

---



## **FEDERAL GOVERNMENT EXPLORING AQUACULTURE EXPANSION IN THE SANTA BARBARA CHANNEL**

In response to a Trump-era Executive Order, federal agencies have begun steps to identify locations as potential sites for commercial aquaculture operations. The Santa Barbara Channel—along with areas in the Gulf of Mexico and waters off Marina del Rey, California—was selected by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration as one of the first areas to assess for future aquaculture development.



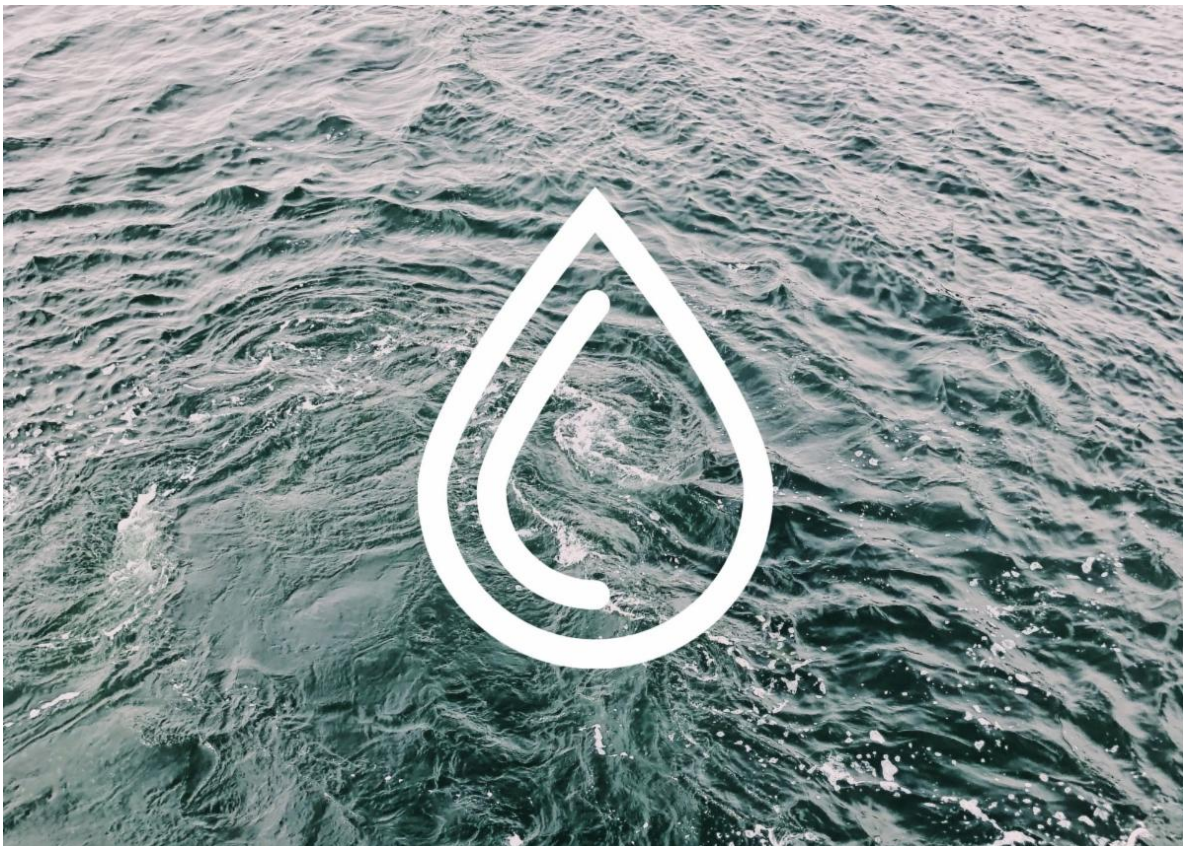
Currently, the Channel has two active aquaculture projects along the coastline. The federal government's plans could lead to additional proposed projects in the Channel, including offshore finfish aquaculture.

Certain types of aquaculture projects, such as those for shellfish and seaweed, generally may have benefits that outweigh the drawbacks. However, offshore aquaculture operations for finfish (such as tuna or tilapia) present significant risks to the environment. These include, but are not limited to:

- water quality impairment from dead fish, fecal waste, and antibiotics;
- spread of disease that can impact populations of wild fish caught by commercial, recreational, and subsistence fishermen;
- escape of farmed fish into the natural environment, risking the genetic integrity of wild populations; and
- depletion of small fish populations that are used as feed for farmed fish and thus, less available for wild fish, birds, and marine life.

In addition, there isn't a permit program in place to regulate aquaculture operations in federal waters or strong standards to protect the marine environment from the impacts of finfish aquaculture.

Channelkeeper is actively monitoring efforts to permit aquaculture operations in the Channel. Earlier this summer, we joined a coalition of ocean-conservation groups in submitting comments to NOAA to urge the agency to comprehensively research the ecological, social and economic risks and benefits of new aquaculture projects in the Channel. In addition, we advocated for a robust regulatory framework to be put in place that includes standards and compliance measures to minimize environmental impacts on both water quality and marine life. Stay tuned for opportunities to engage in the public comment process.



## AUGUST IS NATIONAL WATER QUALITY MONTH

National Water Quality Month is an initiative of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency to promote awareness around the value of our water resources and what we can do to protect them. It aims to inspire conversations and learning around actions that each of us can take in our own households and communities to ensure that we all have access to safe, clean drinking water for generations to come.

Protecting water quality in the Santa Barbara Channel is at the core of Channelkeeper's work to ensure that our community has access to clean, drinkable, swimmable, fishable water. To that effect, Channelkeeper monitors and advocates to protect water quality in the Santa Barbara Channel and surrounding watersheds.

Our team gathers and shares water quality data to help decision-makers protect and restore local waterways and to foster wider community awareness and involvement in protecting water quality. We collect plankton samples to monitor harmful algal blooms, we respond to community member complaints of pollution, and investigate discharges of polluted water to storm drains, creeks, and beaches.

And you can help us keep local waters clean! [Report](#) possible sources of pollution or [volunteer](#) with the Watershed Brigade to remove trash from beaches, creeks, rivers, and urban areas.

---



## PLASTIC POLLUTION SOLUTIONS WEBINAR

Plastic pollution is a mounting global concern, and it has significant impacts locally, which is why reducing single-use plastic continues to be a major focus



of Channelkeeper's work. In July, we were honored to participate in an informative webinar hosted by the Community Environmental Council (CEC) about plastics recycling, reduction, and policy, focusing on local and state efforts to reduce waste.

Channelkeeper's Penny Owens presented alongside the CEC's Director of Climate Education and Leadership Kathy King, and National Stewardship Action Council Executive Director Heidi Sanborn, who discussed the passage of [SB54](#) and outlined what it will mean for packaging and recycling in California.

Click below to watch the webinar.

[Webinar Recording](#)



### LEVEL-UP YOUR PLASTIC ADVOCACY

Many of us have said no to plastic packaging and found plastic-free alternatives to common household items. But what can we do beyond recycling and limiting our own dependence on single-use plastics? How do we level up our individual actions? We've outlined a few ways to channel your positive energy into effective plastic-fighting advocacy campaigns that build upon your everyday efforts.

[Read Blog](#)



### EXPLORING THE KELP FOREST WITH LOCAL STUDENTS

This summer, we had a great time out on the water during Seafari Cruises with students from the Santa Barbara School of Squash and People's Self-Help Housing. Not only were we able to see an abundance of wildlife above the water's surface, but once we dropped anchor at Mohawk Reef, our staff divers shared a live video feed so that everyone on the boat could see the kelp forest creatures beneath the water. We observed sea stars, urchin, señoritas, opal eye, nudibranchs, kelp bass, California spiny lobster, and more.

Students learned about marine habitats in the Santa Barbara Channel, how pollution, overfishing, climate change, and ocean acidification are threatening them, and what they can do to help protect these important aquatic environments. They also collected a plankton sample and learned about the importance of these tiny creatures within marine ecosystems.







**WATERSHED BRIGADE AUGUST EVENT  
FOSTER PARK CLEANUP  
August 20th  
9:00 to 11:00 a.m.  
Foster Park, Ventura**

Foster Park is a popular community space along the Ventura River with grassy picnic areas and a spectacular swimming hole. Its popularity as a gathering place means that lots of trash can be left behind. From beverage containers to balloons and wrappers, this trash can end up in the river and make its way into the ocean.

This month's Watershed Brigade event will focus on cleaning up this beautiful spot along the river. On August 20<sup>th</sup>, we plan to meet at 9:00 am at the park's entrance gate. We will clear the area of trash and be finished by 11:00 am.

We hope you'll join us! Sign up below! We'll bring buckets and trash grabbers so you just need to show up with your hat, water, and sunscreen!

[Sign up](#)

*Foster Park is located at 438 Casitas Vista Road in Ventura.  
From Highway 33, exit Casitas Vista/Santa Ana Road*

---



# JACK JOHNSON

## 2022 SUMMER TOUR



### DOUBLE YOUR CONTRIBUTION AND ENTER TO WIN CONCERT TICKETS

As part of Jack Johnson's 2022 concert tour, the Johnson Ohana Foundation is matching donations contributed to Channelkeeper through October 15, 2022 (up to \$2,500).

The Jack Johnson All At Once non-profit program selected Santa Barbara Channelkeeper to participate in their campaign to promote sustainable and equitable food systems. You can make a donation using the link below.

In addition, if you donate between now and September 1st, you will be entered in a drawing to win a pair of tickets to Jack Johnson's October 5th show at the Santa Barbara Bowl. For every \$10 you donate, you will receive one entry into the ticket giveaway.

We're grateful for your support and would like to thank the Johnson Ohana Foundation for its generosity.



### **BECOME AN MPA WATCH VOLUNTEER!**

Channelkeeper's MPA Watch program conducts surveys of human use activities in our local marine protected areas (MPAs) at Campus Point MPA (IV/Goleta), Naples MPA, and Kashtayit MPA (Gaviota State Beach). The data collected helps to inform MPA monitoring and enforcement efforts. Surveys involve walking a designated transect along the beach at the MPAs mentioned above and recording all human use activities observed on the beach or just offshore. Volunteers are asked to conduct just 3 surveys per month.

The summer volunteer training workshop will take place virtually on Wednesday, August 17<sup>th</sup> from 5:30 to 6:30 pm. Following the online workshop, there will be several opportunities to join a one-hour field training session at Campus Point in the Campus Point MPA. Click below for more info or to sign up for the volunteer training workshop.

[Sign Up](#)



KEEPING WATCH FOR CLEAN WATER  
SINCE 1999



CONNECT WITH US



Santa Barbara Channelkeeper | 714 Bond Avenue, Santa Barbara, CA 93103

[Unsubscribe info@sbck.org](mailto:info@sbck.org)

[Update Profile](#) | [Constant Contact Data  
Notice](#)

Sent by [info@sbck.org](mailto:info@sbck.org) powered by



Try email marketing for free today!