



NEWS RELEASE

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

Coastkeeper releases Debris Survey in conjunction with Beach Cleanup *Corporate volunteers to pick up trash at Huntington Beach this Sunday*

COSTA MESA, Calif. – If a recent study is any indication, most of the trash found on our beaches comes from farther inland and as much as 82 percent of it is plastic, which can be particularly harmful to marine life, Orange County Coastkeeper announced Thursday.

In conjunction with a corporate beach cleanup the nonprofit is planning this Sunday, Coastkeeper released the results of an ongoing, seven-year study of the trash collected from a 200-meter stretch of beach near Pelican Point in Crystal Cove State Park. The “Orange County Marine Debris Survey” was set up to monitor and track coastal pollution in Southern California, in order to better identify the source of that trash and how best to eradicate it.

Coastkeeper works with local businesses and community organizations throughout the year to help coordinate cleanups and other projects that benefit the environment. The beach survey project was conducted in partnership with VQ Orthocare of Irvine from January 2003 to April 2010. Sunday’s cleanup will include more than 60 volunteers from PIMCO, who will collect trash along Huntington State Beach.

“For us, raising awareness is just as important as the cleanup itself,” explained Coastkeeper’s Education Director Briana Madden. “If people leave our events knowing how trash from their city can reach the beach, they might change simple behaviors like switching to a reusable water bottle or bringing their own bags to the store.”

During the seven-year Marine Debris Survey, volunteers with VQ Orthocare went out once or twice a month to identify more than 5,500 pieces of trash in the survey area. Pelican Point was randomly selected among beaches in Southern California that are not subjected to mechanical beach cleanup.

Three different types of marine debris were monitored over the course of the study:

- Land-based debris, which is blown, dumped or washed into the ocean and onto the beach from storm drains and local waterways
- Ocean-based debris, which is produced by sea vessels, platforms and/or fishing activity
- General-source debris, which can be either land-based or ocean-based in origin

Land-based debris was the most prevalent, according to the survey, followed by general-source debris. The most common types of debris found included plastic bags, plastic bottles, balloons and straws, which constituted 82 percent of the total debris collected. All of these items pose a major threat to the wildlife that inhabit the area, as marine species frequently confuse debris for food. Plastic is especially problematic as it cannot be digested and causes creatures to starve.

Debris of public health concern found in the survey site included syringes, condoms, and metal beverage cans. Syringes and condoms can harbor various viruses that can lead to diseases such as HIV and hepatitis. Metal beverage cans may slice skin, leading to infection.

Since the most prevalent source of marine debris found at Crystal Cove is land-based debris, it is also the most preventable in our community. According to Coastkeeper, prevention starts at home by reducing, reusing, and recycling waste. Balloons should not be released and straws and other easily lost items need to be properly disposed of. Keeping streets, sidewalks, parking lots and storm drains free of trash helps to prevent debris from reaching the ocean. Please call 1-877-89SPILL to report pollution.

About Sunday's Cleanup: Coastkeeper teams up with businesses and organizations to help broaden the scope of what we do. From 9 a.m. to 11 a.m. on July 25, Coastkeeper will partner with PIMCO to help clean Huntington State Beach. For more information, call Briana Madden at (714) 356-6956.

About Orange County Coastkeeper: Orange County Coastkeeper is a non-profit organization founded in 1999 to protect and preserve our region's marine habitats and watersheds through education, advocacy, restoration, research and enforcement. For information on Coastkeeper and the Orange County Marine Debris Study, visit <http://www.coastkeeper.org/marine-debris/> or call Ray Hiemstra at (714) 904-3671.

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