



## OCEAN PROTECTION COUNCIL ISSUES ACTION PLAN

### *State panel urges fee on plastic bags, bans on cigarettes and polystyrene*

Santa Monica, CA (Thursday, November 20, 2008) – Environmental group Heal the Bay hailed a series of recommendations issued today by the state Ocean Protection Council to reduce the scourge of marine debris in California's seas and beaches.

The report lays out an ambitious action plan for eliminating plastic bags, polystyrene food packaging, cigarette butts and other harmful detritus from entering the Pacific Ocean statewide. The council, whose voting members include such state leaders as State Controller John Chiang and Cal/EPA chief Linda Adams, is specifically requesting state and local legislators to:

- Place consumer fees statewide on the use of single-use plastic and paper bags
- Ban smoking on all state beaches and install cigarette butt receptacles at transition points to reduce the amount of cigarette litter
- Prohibit the use of polystyrene take-out food packaging and expanded polystyrene (EPS)
- Compel manufacturers to redesign single-use packaging to reduce their likelihood of becoming marine debris, e.g. leashed or tethered bottle caps, lids and straws

The plan also seeks the reduction of toxic substances in plastic packaging, the assessment of consumer fees on commonly littered items, an increase in fines to deter would-be litterers, and the establishment of a broader base of regional partners in the Pacific region to reduce marine debris.

The growing amount of trash in our oceans is choking marine life, regional economies and quality of life along California shorelines. An estimated 3.5 million tons of plastic debris sit off the California coast, harming hundreds of animal species that can mistake plastic items as food.

Local municipalities spend tens of millions of dollars each year to collect and dispose of plastic debris that wind up in local watersheds. The visual blight caused by tons of carelessly discarded plastic bottles and food packaging also hurts the state's \$43 billion beach tourism economy.

"We expect this report to be a significant boost to the environmental community's ongoing fight to rid our seas of unsightly and harmful trash," said Dr. Mark Gold, president of Heal the Bay. "Our organization will continue to use our resources to help turn this plan into a reality that all Californians can be proud of."

Under the umbrella of the Pacific Protection Initiative, Heal the Bay has worked successfully over the past two years with a number of municipal leaders and state legislators to enact legislation that significantly curbs the amount of manmade debris entering our taxed seas.

Manufacturers of nurdles – the preproduction pellets that are the building blocks of most plastic products – are now required by law to eliminate harmful discharge of these materials, under a state law passed last year with Heal the Bay's sponsorship.

Heal the Bay has consulted extensively with such municipalities as Santa Monica and Manhattan Beach as they have drafted or adopted strict ordinances that limit the use of disposable plastic bags. The group plans to focus again on marine debris issue in the upcoming state legislative session, using the OPC action plan as a roadmap for further action.

**About Heal the Bay**

Heal the Bay is a nonprofit environmental organization dedicated to making Southern California coastal waters and watersheds, including Santa Monica Bay, safe, healthy and clean for people and marine life.

**About the OPC**

Established under a 2004 state law, the Ocean Protection Council coordinates activities of ocean-related state agencies to improve the effectiveness of state efforts to protect ocean resources within existing fiscal limitations.

For background on the report please visit <http://www.resources.ca.gov/copc/>

**Contact:** Kirsten James, Heal the Bay, (310) 451-1500, x 162; cell (310) 713-3091