

# Green's Piece

## HEAL THE BAY'S REPUTATION

for clout and success is now international. We are no longer just a local environmental group working on local ocean water-quality issues, but a model for organizing to effect change.

This reputation manifested itself in three speaking invitations I received during the past eight months. The Save Georgia Strait Alliance of British Columbia and the Puget Sound Campaign asked me to speak at conferences in February and June. I also gave a presentation in July at the Coast '91 Conference in Long Beach. In all three cases, I was asked to tell the *Heal the Bay* story: how we developed strong working relationships with our local elected officials, established a truly extraordinary track record on the issues, and became the most important local environmental group in the Los Angeles area.

Preparing for these speeches forced me to think through the reasons for our success. Here are the most important lessons learned by *Heal the Bay*, all of which I was happy to share:

1. Build visibility, create credibility and develop clout through quality public relations and media work. Drop everything when a reporter calls. All kinds of community exposure are important, and so is the quality of graphics and literature.
2. Maintain credibility, especially with the press. Never talk about an issue without being fully prepared. Don't be hesitant to say you don't know when asked a question outside of your range of knowledge.
3. Use experienced leadership from the beginning -- leaders with a clear understanding of how government functions, where and how to get information, and how use to it.
4. Once you have the government's attention, stop criticizing and present a positive program. It is preferable to

work cooperatively as long as progress is being made.

5. Remember that the regulatory process is slow and cumbersome. The earlier you inject yourselves in the process, the better. Help write the regulations and then see that they are enforced.

6. Find talented volunteers, develop them and put them to the best use possible. Strive to create an atmosphere of appreciation, encouragement, fun and inclusion. Make sure that everyone enjoys the work at hand, because successful environmental groups are built by volunteers.

7. Keep public educational materials simple and direct. Few people have time to read. The best way to reach the public is through television and radio, or very simple brochures.

8. Remember that success ultimately depends on whom we elect to public office. Encourage your members to get involved in election politics. Or, at the minimum, learn who the League of Conservation Voters or the Sierra Club endorses and why. You need elected officials who share your values and will fight for them.

*--Dorothy Green*

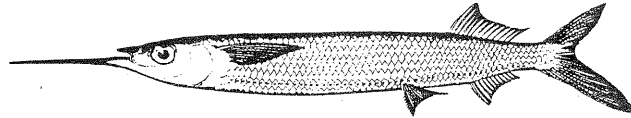


Photo by Elizabeth Coombs

*Heal the Bay's* Education Director Brenda Goeden and budding marine biologists examine organisms collected from Santa Monica Bay by the crew of *La Mer*, the City of L.A.'s ocean monitoring vessel. On July 13, a team of biologists from the city's Environmental Monitoring Division, led by Dr. John Dorsey, took 20 *Heal the Bay* members on a three-hour cruise of Santa Monica Bay. The scientists discussed many of the creatures captured in the trawl nets, and demonstrated other routine monitoring tests including an electronic probe of the water column and a benthic chemistry sample, which is used to detect 122 different pollutants. All the organisms collected in the trawl were put back into the bay.