

# CURRENTS

THE NEWSLETTER OF HEAL THE BAY VOLUME 21 NUMBER 1 SPRING 2007

## Algae: The Scourge of our Streams

2006  
SuperHealers!

Meet the Locals  
at the SMPA



# CURRENTS

**current(s)** adj or n 1: belonging to the present time 2: a movement of water in a certain direction 3: the prevailing public opinion or belief 4: the newsletter of Heal the Bay



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. We use research, education, community action and advocacy to pursue our mission.

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# Measure and Proposition Funds Accountability

In Santa Monica, Measure V (\$2.3 million annually) squeaked by with a 100+ vote margin over the two-thirds requirement. Statewide, Proposition 84 (over \$5 billion) passed by a healthy margin. There is no question that the public deeply cares about clean water and they are willing to pay for this precious resource. However, despite working hard on both successful campaigns, I'm not optimistic that these important measures will result in clean water locally and statewide unless the public and groups like Heal the Bay hold Santa Monica and California accountable for effective use of the funds.

Proposition O, the \$500 million water quality bond measure in the city of Los Angeles, is a strong example of the pressures that exist to use clean water funds for deferred maintenance projects, popular projects in various council districts, and plugging the budget gaps for personnel. As a member of the Proposition O oversight committee, I've spent hundreds of hours reviewing projects, meeting with staff, and speaking at public meetings on the merits and flaws of proposed projects, yet every meeting is a battle to make sure that Proposition O funds aren't inappropriately used for popular projects with negligible water quality benefits.

Don't get me wrong, Los Angeles has funded some incredible multiple use (runoff pollution reduction, ground-

water supply augmentation) projects like a couple of Sun Valley projects, the creation of Cesar Chavez Park, and the south L.A. Wetlands Park. In addition, the City will install over 10,000 trash excluding catch basin inserts, and will construct year-round dry weather runoff diversions for Los Angeles beaches. However, if City bureaucrats and some elected officials have their way, as much as \$100 million or more will be spent on projects, or components of projects, that will not move Los Angeles closer to water quality standards attainment.

The public must demand transparency and accountability on the use of these funds. Strict eligibility criteria that insure that polluted waters are cleaned up must be developed and adhered to. Plans must be developed with clear water quality objectives and time frames for water quality standards attainment before projects are submitted for approval. Expert oversight committees are needed to review projects and ensure that technical criteria are met. The public, including the environmental community, needs to speak out to support projects that cost effectively clean up polluted water, and we need to oppose inappropriate uses of environmental dollars for projects with minimal water quality benefits.

Proposition O is at a crossroads. Many of the previously mentioned

recommendations are finally getting implemented in the City. However, the City may allocate up to \$300 million in project funds before full implementation occurs. More importantly, Proposition O is just a small part of the story. The recommendations apply to Measure V and Proposition 84 as well. Over the last six years, the State has shown questionable judgment on bond-funding priorities for clean water projects and the conspicuous lack of a plan for effective use of clean water bond funds. This has to change for Proposition 84.

Passage of clean water funding measures is extremely difficult and time consuming. Over the past few years, we've learned that advocating for effective use of clean water funds can be more challenging than advocating for more protective clean water regulations. The time is long overdue for the public and the environmental community to hold government accountable to use our voter-approved tax dollars to meet water quality standards that protect public health and aquatic life. Heal the Bay has made that commitment and we will make the effort to get more members of the public involved on this critical issue.



Mark Gold  
Executive Director  
Heal the Bay

# Let's Celebrate Earth Day

By Meredith McCarthy

**M**ark your calendar for April 21st and join Heal the Bay as we celebrate Earth Day! For you North Bay folks we have a special restoration project from 9:00am–1:00pm in Malibu Creek State Park. You can do your part to keep the largest natural creek draining into the Santa Monica Bay clean and healthy. Join Mark Abramson and his Stream Team crew as they continue the battle against the ever-invasive hemlock and pepper weed. After the vegetation has been cleared, help the crew plant native plants to ensure a healthy riparian corridor. From PCH, turn east on Malibu Canyon Road. The park is about 5.5 miles up Malibu Canyon Road on your left (after the Tapia Water Reclamation Facility). It is approximately 1.5 miles past Piuma Road. Meet in front of the restrooms in the lower parking lot.

Down in the South Bay we will once again give Compton Creek a going over to prevent the winter's trash from making its way to the Los Angeles River

and out to the ocean through Long Beach. This is one of the most satisfying cleanups we do each year. When you look at a dumpster with 10,000 lbs of trash that is no longer heading out to sea, you know you've done your part. There is plenty of parking behind the Crystal Park Hotel and Casino at 123 E. Artesia – exit the 91 freeway at Acacia.

Breakfast is provided! The cleanup runs from 10:00am–Noon.

If you are interested in heading to the beach this Earth Day, join us in Playa del Rey from 10:00–Noon where our Nothin' but Sand crew will lead the beach cleanup. Volunteers should plan to meet in the parking lot at 62nd and Pacific, next to Ballona Creek Bridge.

The staff and volunteers at the Santa Monica Pier Aquarium will be busy as usual over Earth Day with their theme weekend on April 21st and 22nd from

12:30pm–6pm. Visitors can participate in special arts and crafts projects, lectures about pollution, Aquarium tours, face painting, Earth Day themed stories, beach cleanups and movies. These interactive activities will keep visitors of all ages entertained and educated about the marine life in the bay and will help them explore the human connection to the fragile ocean ecosystem.

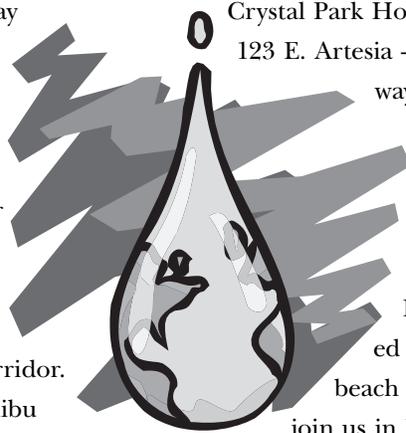
As with all our activities, all cleanup and restoration participants must sign a liability waiver (available at each cleanup).

Those under 18 must have their waiver form signed by a parent or guardian.

**Heal the Bay suggests that participants:**

- Wear long pants that can be rolled up, or shorts for hot weather;
- T-shirt and a sweater or sweatshirt;
- Closed-toed shoes that can get wet or sandy;
- Sun protection: a hat, sunglasses and sunscreen;
- Liquids (juice, water);

*Note: drinking water will be provided at all sites*



## Promoting Environmental Awareness in the Music Industry



Heal the Bay's Staff Scientist Sarah Abramson joined with blue-grass soul band The Duhks, NRDC, LA radio station Indie 103.1 FM and producer Bruce Robb of Cherokee Studios to discuss raising environmental awareness and sustainability in the music industry and among fans. Cherokee Studios, where platinum albums by David Bowie, Steely Dan and Rod Stewart were recorded, is being torn down and rebuilt as a silver LEED-certified facility with recording studios and live/work lofts at 751 N. Fairfax Ave., a project led by RE-Think Development.

*From left: Sarah Abramson of Heal the Bay, Tania Elizabeth and Leonard Podolak of the Duhks, and Cherokee Studios owner and producer Bruce Robb.*

# Make a Difference for Our Bay and Beaches

**Donate** — You may make a donation to Heal the Bay by cash, check or credit cards. We also accept stocks, bonds and all other securities.

**Become a Member** — sign up today! Call (310) 451-1500 ext. 161 or go to [www.healthebay.org](http://www.healthebay.org).

**Corporate Matching** — Check with your company to see if they have a matching gift program. You can increase or even

double the size of your gift to Heal the Bay if your company matches employee charitable donations.

**Event Sponsorship** — Heal the Bay holds many fundraising events throughout the year and has many opportunities for sponsorship. We are happy to tailor your company's participation to whatever level works best — please call (310) 451-1500 x 121 so we can explore the possibilities.

**Planned Gifts** — Consider a future gift. Planned giving is an excellent way to reduce or avoid estate inheritance taxes and help to ensure fulfillment of Heal the Bay's long-term fundraising goals. Please consult your financial or legal advisors when considering these types of gifts.

For more information on ways you can give to Heal the Bay, contact us at (310) 451-1500 ext. 121



## Heal the Bay Membership Discounts

Show your Heal the Bay membership card at the businesses listed below and save! Visit [healthebay.org/membership](http://healthebay.org/membership) for the most recent list of participating businesses.



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310 548 7562  
[www.cabrilloaq.org](http://www.cabrilloaq.org)

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**Rusty's Surf Ranch**  
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[rustyssurfanch.com](http://rustyssurfanch.com)

10% off food and beverage, not including alcohol. Dine-in only.



**Spectrum Health Clubs**  
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Free 2 week guest pass for all Heal the Bay members. Enrollment fees waived for all new Spectrum memberships, including month to month club membership—no contracts!



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# November Election Results

By Hallie Jones

**H**eal the Bay took three strong positions in the November elections — on statewide Propositions 90 and 84, and Santa Monica's Measure V. We've got good news on all three!

**Proposition 90**, which Heal the Bay strongly opposed, would have meant that any governmental action to regulate property — for public health, safety or clear public benefits — would require compensation to all landowners where property values were diminished by the action. As it relates to water quality, it means that property owners who are contributing to ocean pollution (through a leaky sewer or septic system, for example) could force the government to com-

pensate them for forcing pollution abatement. The measure failed.

**Proposition 84** is a bond measure allocating \$5.4 billion to ensure safe drinking water, local water supply reliability, flood protection, and preservation of California's natural landscapes, including parks, forests, lakes, rivers, beaches, bays, ocean and coastline. It includes tough fiscal safeguards, like strict accountability provisions, yearly independent audits and a citizen's oversight committee to make sure the funds are spent appropriately.

Prop. 84 is the first in the nation to provide dedicated funds — \$540 million — to protect the Santa Monica, San Diego, San Francisco and Monterey

bays and their watersheds, ensuring vibrant marine resources and fishing communities. Proposition 84 passed.

**Measure V**, a local measure in the City of Santa Monica, is also known as the Clean Beaches and Ocean Ballot Measure. The measure provides funds necessary to implement the Santa Monica Urban Watershed Management Plan — which was designed to clean up polluted beaches and the bay, improve flood control, augment drinking water supply, and reuse treated runoff to irrigate the city's parks and open spaces. Measure V required a two-thirds vote to pass. The race was tight at times, but Measure V ended up passing by a safe margin.

## MTV Films at the Aquarium



From left, Heal the Bay's Sarah Abramson, Juicy J, Heal the Bay's Jose Bacallao and DJ Paul at the Santa Monica Pier Aquarium.

On November 7, 2006, members of the Oscar award-winning group *Three 6 Mafia* came down to the Santa Monica Pier Aquarium to film an episode of their new MTV show called *"Adventures in Hollywood."*

## HTB Says Good-Bye and Welcome

Long-time Heal the Bay employee Sue Sattin has moved on! Our bookkeeper for over 10 years, Sue was an integral part of the foundation of Heal the Bay. We all miss her. In other staff news, aquarist Julie Wooten has left the Santa Monica Pier Aquarium to move back home to Wisconsin. Julie's dedication to the animals and mission of Heal the Bay will be much missed.

We would also like to welcome Louella Eischen to our staff. Louella joined Heal the Bay as our bookkeeper in October of 2006, and we are all looking forward to working with her.

### Thank You, Susan

Much to our dismay, Susan Cloke's term on the Regional Water Quality Control Board expired and she was not reappointed. For seven years, Susan was an exemplary Board member and Chairperson that acted with integrity in her efforts to protect the region's water quality. Susan played an instrumental role in a wide variety of critical decisions including the beach bacteria and trash TMDLs and the Los Angeles county stormwater permit. Heal the Bay is grateful for all that she has accomplished since she was appointed by Governor Gray Davis in 1999, and we wish her the best of luck in future endeavors.

# New Zealand Mudsnails Found in Malibu Creek

By Mike Grimmer and Tom Fleming

**R**ecent aquatic invertebrate surveys in the Malibu Creek watershed have confirmed the presence of the New Zealand mudsnail, an insidious exotic invasive species that could potentially wreak havoc on the watershed's native organisms.

Although the mudsnail has been found in numerous waters throughout California's Eastern Sierra, this is the first time it has been confirmed in the Malibu Creek watershed.

Recent surveys conducted by Heal the Bay, the Santa Monica Bay Restoration Commission and UCLA graduate students have confirmed the presence of the mudsnail at 16 of 45 locations throughout the watershed. In particular, the mudsnail has been found in the following locations: Medea Creek, Las Virgenes Creek, Malibu Creek, Lindero Canyon Creek, and the Medea Creek outlet into Malibou Lake.

The New Zealand mudsnail, scientifically known as *Potamopyrgus atipodarum*, is approximately one-eighth of an inch (5 millimeters) in length, but can be even smaller in size. Mudsnails spread by attaching themselves to waders, fishing gear, shoes, equipment, animals, and boats — easily “hitchhiking” to other locations. These invaders grow in large quantities and in densities up to 500,000 organisms per square yard. To make matters worse, the New Zealand mudsnail is asexual which means only one is necessary for reproduction — in fact, one single snail can produce a colony of 40 million snails in just one year.

The presence of the mudsnail in the Malibu Creek watershed is alarming and

of grave concern. Because of their massive density and quantity, the New Zealand mudsnail can out-compete and reduce the number of native aquatic invertebrates that the watershed's fish and amphibians rely on for food. This reduction in aquatic invertebrate food supply can disrupt the entire food web with drastic consequences.

In fact, impacts of the New Zealand mudsnail's presence in the watershed are already being seen: in reviewing the aquatic invertebrate survey data, the Stream Team has never seen so few native organisms in any bug sample. More studies are needed to determine the ultimate impact that the snail will have on the wildlife in the Malibu Creek watershed.

On June 20th, the Santa Monica Bay Restoration Commission (SMBRC) held an emergency snail summit with experts from around the state. Special thanks to the SMBRC and the Coastal Conservancy for their support on this research.

## **Stream Team Water Chemistry Testing Suspended**

Due to their small size and the fact that the snails can live out of the water on moist or damp equipment for as long as a month, the Heal the Bay Stream Team voluntarily suspended all monitoring activities until further notice.

Although June 2006 was the first month since November of 1998 that the Stream Team was not testing the water in the Malibu Creek Watershed, the additional water chemistry information is not worth the risk of potentially spreading the mud-



Before (top) and after (bottom) the removal of the Texas crossing.

snail further throughout the watershed.

Instead, Stream Team staff have been working to remove the Texas Crossing from Serra Retreat in Malibu. This elevated crossing prevented fish from migrating upstream, and its removal opened up just over a mile of excellent habitat. Crews began removing the Texas Crossing, which was 220 feet long and 30 feet wide, on October 4th, and completed the project on November 28th. Approximately one-third of the crossing was removed by hand using sledgehammers with feathers and wedges, to protect the stream. The remainder was removed using bobcats equipped with breaker bars. Altogether, more than 350 tons of concrete and 30 tons of steel were removed from the creek and recycled. California State Parks and their crews were instrumental in removing the Texas Crossing and restoring this part of Malibu Creek.

# 2006 SuperHealers!

**H**eal the Bay depends on all of our volunteers, and some of them go above and beyond the call of duty. We award those deserving individuals the prestigious title of SuperHealer. Each year Heal the Bay gives SuperHealer Awards to volunteers who have made a significant contribution to protecting water

quality and the ocean environment. Volunteers can become a SuperHealer only once, so it is a great honor. With so many outstanding volunteers, selecting winners is difficult. This year, we would like to honor eleven terrific people who have donated so much of their time and energy to healing the Bay.

**Speakers Bureau: Dave Weeshoff**

**Beach Programs: Bill Griffiths**

**Office Volunteer: Coco Freeman**

**Stream Team Restoration: Heather Burdick**

**Stream Team Water Chemistry: Michael Hart**

**SMPA Education: Sylvie Makara**

**SMPA Public Programs: Gabriela Jimenez**

**SMPA Aquarist: Julie Naylor**

**Communications: Christopher Hancock of RightSize Business Solutions**

**Business Award: Ogilvy & Mather**

**Board Member: Lisa Boyle**

## **Dave Weeshoff**

Dave has far surpassed the Speakers Bureau obligation of giving four speeches per year, giving an average of more than five presentations a month. Just this year Dave has spoken to nearly 40 groups, single-handedly educating more than 2,000 school children, families, and seniors about healing the Bay. He spoke to over 400 excited children at Santa Monica Beach on Coastal Cleanup Education Day and countless Cub Scouts at the Sepulveda Basin site for Coastal Cleanup Day this September.

One of the reasons that Dave does so many talks is that people who've heard him speak constantly request for him to come back and refer him to their friends. Dave's enthusiasm for conserving the Bay and his love of marine birds are contagious — his knowledge, sense of humor, and lively antics inspire audiences of all ages and backgrounds to action, from pre-K campers in Sierra Madre to senior citizens in the Palisades. And he's always striving to make his presentations even better by clipping relevant articles from newspapers and participating in Heal the Bay enrichment activities like lectures and tours. Dave has also been a mentor to new volunteers by presenting at Speakers Bureau training and welcoming newly trained speakers to sit in on his talks.

## **Bill Griffiths**

Over the past two years, Bill has been volunteering for our Nothin' but Sand beach cleanups, and this past year he became our lead captain. Being a lead captain is not an easy task. It entails picking up and returning the supplies for each cleanup, making sure the site is set-up and ready for 400+ participants, and coordinating with the other captains to make sure everything runs smoothly. Bill approaches each cleanup with enthusiasm and vigor to make each cleanup as successful as it can be. When he started out, we barely had 100 volunteers showing up for each cleanup, but now the program has reached over 400 participants at many of the cleanups. We attribute Bill's incredible attitude, friendliness and all around great-nature for the program's success.

Sadly for Heal the Bay, Bill has moved to Seattle to be closer to his grandkids. But in typical Bill style, he recruited and trained a replacement before he left, passing on the torch to insure the success of the program.

## **Coco Freeman**

*A local high school student, Coco has been volunteering at Heal the Bay every week for the past three years. She has demonstrated great commitment and responsibility in the course of her office assistance on Wednesday afternoons, and her radiant personality has been a pleasure to us all. In 2005 Coco was chosen to represent the future of Heal the Bay as part of our 20th Anniversary Bring Back the Beach Dinner theme, the Past Present and Future of Heal the Bay. If past is precedent, Coco has led us to trust that the future is in good hands! We look forward to having Coco as a part of Heal the Bay's present and future as long as we can!*

**Heather Burdick**

*Heather joined the Stream Team just over one year ago. Since that time she has donated more than 150 hours of her time to help test the waters and restore the stream side environment in the Malibu Creek Watershed. She was able to do this while going to school, being a full-time wife and mom and also donating considerable time at the Star Eco Station and school.*

**Michael Hart**

Michael began water quality training nearly two years ago and since that time has dedicated nearly 120 hours to testing water quality in Malibou Lake and throughout the Malibu Creek Watershed. Michael's interest in water quality grew out of his concern for the people and fish who depend on Malibou Lake's well-being. He convinced lake residents to both purchase a chemistry testing field kit and provide boats so that Malibou Lake could be sampled on a monthly basis with Heal the Bay. The results are now posted on the Stream Team Water Chemistry section of our website and the Lake's residents are made aware of the water quality in their monthly newsletter.

**Sylvie Makara**

Sylvie has been an integral part of the Santa Monica Pier Aquarium since she began volunteering over a year and a half ago. Beyond the countless hours Sylvie has worked teaching students during the Aquarium's field trip education programs, she has also taken on tabling events, data entry, cleaning tasks and all of this with amazing enthusiasm, a big smile, and a fantastic laugh. Most importantly Sylvie has taken on a prominent role working with the Key to the Sea program, teaching thousands of students beach ecology and pollution issues on the beach. She is a joy to work with due to her energy, and fun laid-back attitude. Sylvie is the true definition of what a SuperHealer should be!

**Julie Naylor**

Julie has been a volunteer aquarist since 2003 and has accumulated more than 700 hours. The Aquarium's Friday afternoon feeding is not complete without a little one-on-one time with the three eels and the octopus. Her care and love for the animals at the Aquarium can best be measured through her continued dedication. No matter how dirty the filter, how cold the water or how stinky the job may be, Julie always gets it done. There would be no way the Aquarist department could do what it does without her.

**Gabriela Jimenez**

**Gabby embodies all that it means to be a Heal the Bay SuperHealer. Gabby has volunteered more than 350 hours at the Aquarium since June of 2005. She is a leader on her volunteer days, taking initiative to do whatever tasks need to be done, including staffing the entrance table and all other areas, updating the big Beach Report Card with new weekly data, preparing materials for classes and events, and more! Gabby is fluent in both Spanish and French, and is therefore able to interact with multilingual visitors of diverse backgrounds. Her amazing talents in art and graphic design have aided nearly all the areas of programming at the Aquarium. She created several arts and crafts for the Micro Biologists program, including an Ocean ABCs placemat and a large seal and sea lions mural on butcher paper. She has contributed arts and crafts to theme weekends, including educational comic strips for kids to color during our Earth Month events. Gabby most recent project was the creation of a promotional brochure for the Aquarium's new Aquadoption program. In addition to all these tangible contributions, Gabby exudes a friendly, positive, engaging, enthusiastic and fun presence in the Aquarium!**

**Christopher Hancock**

You're at the computer surfing the web and decide to go to [www.healthebay.org](http://www.healthebay.org). Our website faithfully appears in your browser ready for you to use. Without knowing it, you have just benefited from the wonderful contributions of Christopher Hancock. As CEO of RightSize Business Systems, Christopher and his team provide everything needed to run Heal the Bay's website 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. This includes the computers, software, high-speed internet connection, network security, backups, and upgrades ... along with the physical office space to house it all. Since 1998, Christopher's efforts have kept Heal the Bay's website continuously available for the 50,000 people that visit us each month for news, events, the Beach Report Card, Action Alerts and more. As an avid waterman and sea kayaker, Christopher knows first-hand the importance of our mission. We are fortunate to have such an amazing supporter and friend making sure we stay connected to the world with our website.

*Continued on page 16*

# Algae: the Debated P

By Randi Parent



Photo by Steve Lee of UCLA

**F**rom the Charles River in Boston to the Los Angeles River in our own watershed, algal blooms can produce toxins and pose a significant health risk to aquatic life, and in certain concentrations, to humans and other animals.

While algae is an important component of the aquatic ecosystem, in excess amounts algae causes problems ranging from low oxygen levels that are harmful to fish and other aquatic life, to outbreaks of toxic blue-green algae that can have serious impacts on human health. The Klamath River in northern California, for example, is so impacted by this toxic alga that a splash of the water on the skin can cause irritations. Excess algae can block sunlight and create conditions that impede fishing, boating, swimming and other related water activities.

There is debate between the environmental science community and the State Water Resources Control Board, mandated to identify impaired waters, as to whether algae is a pollutant that qualifies a body of water to be targeted for water quality standards development and subsequent regulation and clean up.

Every two years, the federal Clean Water Act, section 303(d), requires the state of California to develop and submit to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency a list of polluted waters

or portions of streams, rivers, lakes and ocean waters, known as the List of Impaired Waters, or simply the 303(d) list. Total maximum daily loads (TMDLs) must be developed for any water body included on the 303(d) list so that water quality standards are attained.

Water bodies can also be removed from the list (“delisted”) when evidence shows the water quality has improved to a level that meets water quality standards.

Despite written comments from Heal the Bay’s Science and Policy Department recommending against it, the State Water Resources Control Board has removed 15 water body segments in the Los Angeles region from its impaired waters list that were listed for excess algal growth. Water board staff argued in favor of the delistings, contending, among other points, that excess algae is not a pollutant.

Waters with algae cover exceeding 30 percent in at least 10 percent of samples taken is considered to be impaired by algae according to established guidelines, Heal the Bay’s science and policy team wrote in its arguments to keep all 15 LA region sites on the list. “This guideline can be applied directly to the Los Angeles Region,” the science staff wrote. Segments of Calleguas Creek, for example, are up to 75 percent covered with algae. “In sum,” staff argued, “from both a legal and a scientific perspective, none of the proposed justifications for delisting excess algal growth hold up to scrutiny.”

The State Water Board reasoned that in the case of 11 of the sites in question, two TMDLs for nitrogen levels are already in place that will act as pollution standard limits. But nitrogen targets are based on human health standards, which are not at levels necessary to prevent algal blooms and protect aquatic life. The targets for nitrogen in the LA River, for example, are calculated to meet drinking water standards. However, Heal the Bay has collected data in Malibu Creek showing that excess algae grows in significant amounts at much lower concentrations of nitrogen.

“Many factors, such as sunlight, phosphate levels, pH, flow and others can contribute to algal growth, not just nitrogen levels,”

# ollutant

Heal the Bay wrote in its comments, pointing to data collected in the Malibu Creek watershed over a six-year period by the Stream Team showing elevated phosphate concentrations contribute to excess algal growth.

Algal growth on its own is used by many environmental managers to point to an impaired water body because it is a good indicator of adverse changes in the water. Like the proverbial canary in the coalmine, excess algae is an indicator of physical and chemical changes in streams. In fact, the EPA recognizes algae as a biological indicator of watershed health according to information from their website cited in Heal the Bay's arguments against delisting algae as a pollutant.

As well as blocking sunlight, too much algae causes low levels of dissolved oxygen, which are harmful to fish and other aquatic life. And excessive algal growth in stream substrate covers important habitat for various species, especially insects and other invertebrates.

While excessive algae growth is a problem to be addressed throughout the Los Angeles county water basin, nowhere is the problem more acute than in northern California along the Klamath River, where astronomically high levels of toxic blue-green algae, *Microcystis aeruginosa*, threaten not only aquatic life, but pose a threat to humans and domestic animals as well. The level of this toxic algae was found to be almost 500 times greater than is safe for recreational use, according to World Health Organization standards.

The water is so toxic that local, state and federal health and environmental agencies recommend avoiding contact with it. The State Water Board issued a warning more than a year ago, stating that exposure to the toxins can produce health problems ranging from mild skin conditions to permanent liver and/or kidney damage or failure, tumor growth and death. Children and animals face the greatest risk because of their size and higher rate of ingesting water during recreational activities.

The flow of the Klamath River, near the Oregon border, is controlled by a series of dams and reservoirs, which creates warm and

calm surface water and the perfect environment for the growth of large algal blooms. The level of toxicity was first discovered more than a year ago by a tribe of Native Americans who have lived along the banks of the river for thousands of years. In an agreement with the U.S. Geological Survey and the U.S. Department of Fish and Wildlife, the Karuk Tribe monitors and assesses water quality conditions along the Klamath and its tributaries. A 40-mile stretch of the Klamath is the central focus of Karuk tribal life.

In 1993, the State Water Board listed the Klamath River on its impaired waters list, but only for high nutrient loads and water temperatures – not for excessive algae growth.



Photo by Steve Lee of UCLA

State environmental groups, led by the Waterkeeper Alliance, sent data in support of adding the river to the 303(d) list; a formal request was made to the North Coast Water Quality Control Board by Klamath Riverkeeper.

Heal the Bay staff scientist Kirsten James said that “a failure by the State to list the Klamath as impaired for algae is unconscionable and literally puts human health and the river ecosystem at risk.”

While James and the rest of Heal the Bay's science and policy staff continues to fight the delisting of those 15 LA region sites, they are already preparing comments for the 2008 303(d) list.

“We just keep fighting, and eventually we'll win,” James predicted.

# Aquarium Reopening Draws a Crowd

By Vicki Wawerchak

A new roof, creative signage, local newspaper advertisements and beautiful weather brought the crowds out in November for the reopening event at the Santa Monica Pier Aquarium. The front doors opened to families waiting to peer inside the exhibits, get their hands wet in the touch tanks and “Meet the Locals.” The day’s educational activities centered on

Finished passports were turned in for a chance to win a “Meet the Locals” octopus t-shirt during an hourly raffle.

Activities included Lobster Louie’s scavenger hunt which encouraged kids to explore the exhibits to find the real Aquarium animals represented in the campaign; the Sea Star Performer station turned participants into actors,

Mussel craft station encouraged visitors to create a rock, attach an illustration of the mussel to it by adding thread, representing the steel-like byssal that mussels create to attach themselves to rocks and pilings.

Professional story teller/performance artist Diane Michelle presented stories with music and puppetry throughout the day. Michelle is the author/illustrator of two undersea themed children’s books, and donated her time Nov. 18 to entertain young and old throughout the afternoon.

Educational feeding presentations at two of our exhibits, face painting and arts and crafts projects rounded out the day, truly offering something for everyone in attendance.

Lili Boyle, daughter of our very own board member Lisa Boyle, invited her classmates to celebrate her birthday with her during the reopening event and in lieu of gifts asked that donations be made to the Aquarium. She raised more than \$600 through this generous act.

This past weekend the Aquarium welcomed over 1,100 visitors — half the number of visitors we saw during the whole month of November last year. We hope this new awareness of the facility continues to bring families and the community out to celebrate the Santa Monica Pier Aquarium and all the unique education programs that it has to offer.

We also held our Whale of a Weekend on February 10th and 11th, to celebrate the migration of the majestic gray whale.



the six ocean characters featured in the whimsical “Meet the Locals” campaign created by Ogilvy & Mather, and the event was a huge success.

Visitors received a passport for the day that encouraged them to visit a variety of stations positioned throughout the Aquarium. At the completion of each station’s activity, the passport was stamped and guests proceeded until all of the passport stamps were collected.

who could choose to bark like a sea lion, move like a sea jelly or mimic a clam opening and closing. The microscope lab was set up as the sheephead kelp forest domain and visitors interacted with staff and volunteers to learn about this habitat and the human impacts on it. The Eight Ways to Heal the Bay Octopus station challenged children to choose one conservation idea that they pledged to do at home to help the environment. The California

# Meet the Locals

By Randi Parent

There's the sarcastic fringehead, a little fish with a big mouth and an attitude to match; the ever-popular octopus, professing passion for black ink and a studio in the hills; and Louie the lobster, exuding a crusty crustacean attitude that befits his age. "Meet the Locals," the clever advertising campaign designed for the Santa Monica Pier Aquarium by Ogilvy & Mather, introduces the public to six local species through banners, print advertisements in local newspapers, and colorful exterior signage that shouts out the marine environmental education center's location.

Add in the gender-challenged California sheephead, the Zen-like mussels, whose mantra "be one with the rock" gives them a blissful expression, and last but not least the rock star of any touch tank — the sea star in all her glory — and the public is enticed and enchanted into learning about the marine life of the Santa Monica Bay.

The Ogilvy team spent hours observing the animals in our exhibits, talking with staff and becoming engrossed in the vibe they would bring to life through the six characters chosen for the campaign.

The characters are displayed atop the



pier on three- by eight-foot banners that line the pier ramp, east from just beyond the trademark neon sign, stretching to the western end of the pier. Ogilvy also created two bright banners that sit atop a flagpole in front of the Aquarium visible from the pier's upper deck, a huge blue and white sign posted above the center's front doors — all with the Aquarium's name in bold letters — and brightly colored educational barriers around the patio, each adorned with an ani-

mal of the Santa Monica Bay.

The results have been immediate: attendance during public hours is consistently higher than during the same time period a year ago.

Ogilvy has donated countless hours for this project — working on the creation of banners, barriers, the artist's illustrations and an accompanying t-shirt design. Tim Francis of PRIMARY COLORS also donated the signage material and printing work.

Meanwhile, Ogilvy has turned its attention inward, and will begin working on signage for the interior of the Aquarium next, along with brainstorming ideas for radio spots for Louie the lobster and the other five characters.

**Heal the Bay, and the Aquarium staff in particular, wish to thank the following members of the Ogilvy creative team for their outstanding contribution to the Santa Monica Pier Aquarium:**

**Dan Burrier • Matt Coonrod • Rebekah Guerra • Jenny Huang • Karen Kamberg • Somi Kim John Lopez • Caitlin McNulty • Meghann Moran • Michael Neal • Ian Porter • Keith Scharwath Elizabeth Shanklin • Haleh Shoa • Bob Strickland • Kristine Wilson**

# Development News and Announcements

By Laurie Feldman

**H**eal the Bay can not exist without the support of its members, volunteers, staff and donors. We are fortunate to have the best and brightest working within and beyond our doors and their dedication to protecting our coastal waters has made Heal the Bay the success it is today.

There are a few community leaders and businesses we would like to mention who have made a significant investment toward clean bays.

We thank **Nicholas Cage** and **Montblanc International GmbH** for their significant contribution. This donation has given Heal the Bay an opportunity to continue to grow and meet the challenges that lay ahead of us.

Environmental steward can now be added to the long list of accomplishments for **Ben Goldhirsh**. This young entrepreneur, philanthropist, movie maker, *GOOD* magazine founder, and surfer knows educating the public on the health risks associated with water quality is extremely

important. His passion led to a \$60,000 Title Sponsorship to Heal the Bay's Beach Report Card™ from the **Goldhirsh Foundation**. The Beach Report Card™ program can now start to move toward achieving a national presence to provide vital information to the public, news media and surf reports on water quality at our favorite beaches. Ben Goldhirsh is fast becoming

one of Los Angeles' most resourceful young philanthropists and his vision to help keep our coastal waters clean is greatly appreciated.

Heal the Bay would also like to thank **simplehuman™** for their additional \$25,000 sponsorship to the Beach Report Card™. All simplehuman products embody *efficient living design*, a

principle that **Frank Yang**, CEO and founder, defines in designing each product so it performs its intended task perfectly. Founded in January 2001, simplehuman™ is a leading housewares company committed to developing products that help people become more efficient at home.

A day at the beach should never make you sick and the Goldhirsh Foundation and simplehuman have ensured that this core Heal the Bay program is staying strong and making a difference.

Again, thank you to everyone who makes Heal the Bay a success!

Save the date  
Thursday  
May 31, 2007

**BRING BACK  
THE BEACH  
DINNER**

Barker Hanger  
Santa Monica, California  
Early Evening

# 2006 End of Summer Beach Report Card

By Tom Fleming and Hillary Atkin

**H**eal the Bay released its 2006 Summer Beach Report Card in October, assigning an A to F letter grade to more than 450 California beaches based on their levels of bacterial pollution from May 29, 2006 through September 30, 2006.

Excluding Long Beach and a number of beaches in the northern part of Los Angeles County, statewide water quality at California beaches this past summer was good, with 91% receiving A and B grades. In fact, most of the California coastline earned “A” grades, including San Diego, Ventura County, San Luis Obispo County, Monterey, Santa Cruz, San Mateo, San Francisco, Sonoma and Humboldt counties.

## Los Angeles County — The Worst

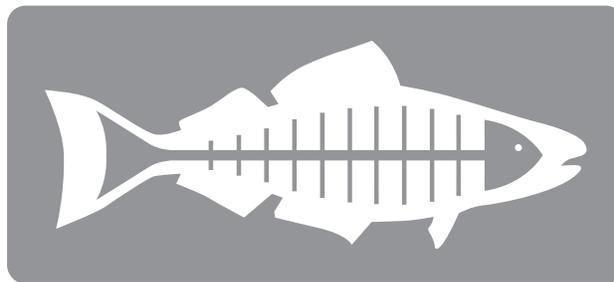
Once again, however, Los Angeles County had the worst beach water quality grades in the state with the biggest surprise of the summer the poor water quality found in Long Beach — only 3 of 25 (12%) monitoring stations received A or B grades. Last year, for the same time period, 21 of 23 (91%) of Long Beach monitoring stations received A or B grades. Long Beach normally scores fairly well during the summer months with poor water quality only after a major rain.

Avalon beaches (Catalina Island) also

continue to suffer from poor water quality. None of the five monitoring locations received good grades (A or B) either this summer or last summer.

The Santa Monica Bay beaches fared slightly better than last summer with 49 (75%) of 65 monitoring locations received an A or B grades. In particular, Will Rogers State Beach had excellent water quality and both the Pulga

## BEACH REPORT CARD



and Santa Monica Canyon (at Chautauqua) drains improved from an F to an A. Most of the beaches with poor water quality were in the northern part of the Santa Monica Bay, with the exception of Santa Monica Pier (F), Dockweiler State Beach at Ballona Creek mouth (D), Manhattan Beach at 28th Street drain (D), and Redondo Municipal Pier (F).

In addition, Heal the Bay and Santa Monica released its Santa Monica Pier Bacterial Source Identification Study on poor water quality at the Pier beach. The five week study pinpointed the sources of high fecal bacteria densities at the beach and it provided recommendations for making the beach safe for swimming.

## Other Notable Results

Beaches in Santa Barbara County saw a marked decline from last year. This summer, 6 of 20 (30%) water quality monitoring locations received fair-to-poor grades, including Jalama Beach (D), Refugio State Beach (F), Haskell’s Beach (C), Hope Ranch Beach (C), Arroyo Burro Beach (F), and East Beach at Mission Creek (C).

Orange County saw 90% of its monitored beaches receive an A grade, with surprisingly good water quality seen at multiple Doheny Beach locations this summer. Monarch Beach, also in Orange County,

improved from a grade of F last summer to a B this year. Nearly all Newport Bay beaches received excellent grades for the summer.

## Media Coverage

The end of summer Beach Report Card news conference was held on the Santa Monica Pier and generated widespread media coverage, including a half-page story the following day in the Los Angeles Times, broadcast coverage on KNBC-TV and three major news/talk radio stations in the LA marketplace, as well as a record 318 print stories across the United States through Associated Press. The extensive media coverage created even greater awareness of our efforts to keep our beaches clean as we enter into the rainy season.

# A Big Baby – The Giant Sea Bass

By José Bacallao

**I**t's hard to imagine, but not too long ago a behemoth of a fish was regularly seen roaming beneath the Santa Monica Pier. This fish was over seven feet in length and weighed more than 500 pounds – and if you come down to the Santa Monica Pier Aquarium you can see one today! Well actually, ours is still very, very young and is only two feet long and weighs only 15 pounds, but it's a beauty nonetheless.



The giant sea bass, *Stereolepis gigas*, is one of the largest bony fish you will see along the coast of southern California. This magnificent fish can be found in relatively shallow waters, 20-150 feet, and resides near rocky reefs, kelp forests and even along the sandy bottom sea floor. Records show that they can live longer than 70 years yet it is unknown exactly what their life expectancy is. As an adult, the giant sea bass will feed on a wide range of prey including octopuses, squids, rays, lobsters, flatfish and the occasionally slow, slow unsuspecting fish.

A small, young giant sea bass has many predators, like marine mammals and large fish, but as an adult its large size is a solid defense against being eaten. As a result, only a few animals, such as very large sharks and humans, are its preda-

tors. Humans are very good at catching prey and it's no surprise the giant sea bass was a favorite target for commercial and recreational anglers throughout the 20th century.

The commercial and recreational heyday of the giant sea bass fishery is over. Unfettered pressure from both fisheries severely damaged its population and its numbers declined to levels so low that in 1981, California passed a state law prohibiting the take or possession of giant sea bass. Also helpful in protecting the giant sea bass and its habitat was the passage of Proposition 132, known as "The Marine Resources Protection Act", which prohibits the use of gill nets in near shore waters. Although these measures are a step in the right direction they are still small steps and much more work is needed to ensure the successful return of this behemoth.

Another very effective and important approach in the conservation of the giant sea bass is the education of the public. At the Santa Monica Pier Aquarium we educate tens of thousands of visitors about marine conservation and now every Aquarium visitor can personally meet the beautiful giant sea bass in its temporary home, the Pier Habitat exhibit.

In the spring of 2006, talks to obtain the fish began with the Aquarist staff at the Birch Aquarium at Scripps, in La Jolla, California. They had a juvenile that they were willing to donate as long as we had the proper permits to legally possess it. Since no one can legally take or possess a giant sea bass, special permission is required from the California Department of Fish & Game – otherwise fines and

*Stereolepis gigas*

even imprisonment may result. After many weeks of letter writing, emails, phone calls and permit application amendments, the request was granted for the Santa Monica Pier Aquarium to possess one giant sea bass.

On the last Monday of August I drove to the Birch Aquarium to pick up the fish and deliver it to the Santa Monica Pier Aquarium. A great deal of coordination of people and equipment needs to happen when transporting an animal a long distance. In order to comfortably transport the fish, we rigged a large 60 gallon container with a supply line of pure oxygen, filled it with clean sea water and carefully transferred the fish from its holding tank to the transport container using a large thick plastic bag. (Using a net would have scratched its skin and torn its fins.) The container was topped with water; ice bags were added to keep the water cold, sealed to prevent leaks and sloshing and the container was secured to the truck with large tie down straps. About three hours later we arrived at the Aquarium and the fish was introduced to its new home. It was calm and comfortable and on the very next day it ate four squid, a true sign of success.

Since its arrival, the bass' hearty appetite has continued and it has grown about five inches and gained about two pounds. As the fish continues to grow, the Aquarist staff at the Aquarium will make arrangements to return the fish to the Birch Aquarium so that it can reside in a larger exhibit. Until that day though, please come down to the Aquarium and meet this rare and endangered beauty.

# Santa Monica Bans Non-Recyclable Plastic Containers

By Randi Parent

**I**n a major victory for cleaner beaches and healthier conditions for marine life in the Santa Monica Bay, the Santa Monica City Council in December banned the use of blown polystyrene, known as Styrofoam, and other non-recyclable plastics used by restaurants, grocery stores and other businesses that package “to-go” food.

In addition to Styrofoam, the definition of non-recyclable plastic includes only category #6 (the number is shown on the bottom of plastic containers, inside the recycling symbol), which is the clear, hard plastic clamshell-shaped container often used for take out meals. This is one of the largest sources of marine debris in Santa Monica Bay, and the ordinance represents another big win for the Bay and beyond, Heal the Bay’s Executive Director Dr. Mark Gold said.

The focus of the ban was to limit marine debris in the ocean and on the beach, a global problem that accounts for the death of more than two million seabirds and 100,000 marine mammals annually. Some of the most remote places on earth are littered with marine debris. Dr. Yonat Swimmer, a marine scientist from NOAA (National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration) who testified at the Santa Monica City Council hearing in favor of the ordinance, said she had witnessed adult albatrosses regurgitating plastic to their awaiting chicks in the leeward chain of the Hawaiian Islands. This distant chain was recently declared a national monument by President Bush.

While other communities have banned Styrofoam, Gold said Santa Monica’s ordi-

nance is more progressive because it banned all clear polystyrene. The ban goes into effect February 8, 2007, but businesses have been given one year to make the switch from the non-recyclable containers. City facilities and its managed concessions, as well as events permitted or sponsored by the city, must comply with the ban beginning with the Feb. 8 effective date.

The ban also contains a hardship exemption for businesses that can demonstrate they would suffer an undue economic hardship by complying with the new ordinance. Exemption decisions will be made by the city’s Director of the Environmental and Public Works Management division; that department will also be responsible for enforcement of the ordinance. The ban covers Styrofoam and #6 clear plastic plates, bowls, cups and trays. It does not include straws, cup lids or plastic utensils.

Gold testified at the December 8 Santa Monica City Council meeting on behalf of Heal the Bay and as the chair of Santa Monica’s Environmental Task Force.

“Don’t be intimidated,” Gold told the council. “We have a catastrophic marine debris problem, and a vote to ban all non-recyclable plastic is a vote for clean beaches and a healthy bay.”



*Ocean-bound debris in the Pico/Kenter storm drain.*

Close to 20 people testified in favor of the ban, including Heal the Bay staff and volunteers, concerned citizens, and one local restaurant owner, Janabai Owens of Euphoria Loves RAWvolution, a vegan restaurant on Main Street. Euphoria uses all biodegradable products for its take-out meals, and Owens urged others to do the same, noting that as the demand increases for such products the price will become more competitive as well. “Your business and your beliefs can work together.” she said.

Jim Lynch, the new president of the Santa Monica Chamber of Commerce, said local business are worried about the costs, but that he is confident “we can make this work.”

The ordinance was passed by a unanimous vote of the council.

# Thresher Shark Dissected at the Aquarium

By Randi Parent

**L**ifeguards at Topanga State Beach called the Santa Monica Pier Aquarium one Monday in November to report a dead six-foot thresher shark tumbling in the surf.

Aquarium educator Nick Fash retrieved the specimen for dissection and for harvesting portions of the animal to be used as educational tools.

The shark was an approximately year-old juvenile male



thresher shark, *Alopias vulpinus*. Threshers are found in the Pacific, Atlantic and Indian oceans, as well as in the Mediterranean and Red seas. An ancient species, their fossilized teeth have been found in million-year-old deposits in Southern California.

Thresher sharks can reach 20 feet in length and are easily identified by the unusually long upper lobes of their caudal fins (tail fins). They are an important commercial species, and one of very few sharks listed in the “good choice” category

of the Monterey Bay Aquarium’s Seafood Watch Program. Threshers receive the good choice status because they are fast-growing and less vulnerable to overfishing.

Senior Aquarist Jose Bacallao, Education Manager Tara Treiber and Fash performed the dissection, which took almost two hours to complete. Skin, spine, gill arches, fins, jaw and other body parts were saved for use in education programs and for display during public hours.

The shark was in good condition with no visible injuries other than surface abrasions from being rolled in the sand. The cause of death was undetermined. The shark’s stomach appeared to be empty; however, it showed no obvious signs of malnourishment.

The dissection was documented by Aquarium Public Programs manager Tara Crow, and distributed via email to all volunteers and staff.

Visit the Aquarium to check out the newly-preserved thresher shark displays.

## 2006 SuperHealers! *(Continued from page 7)*

### **Ogilvy & Mather**

Over the past two years, Ogilvy & Mather have been putting their enormous talent to work on advertising and marketing materials for the Santa Monica Pier Aquarium. They conceptualized, designed and executed the incredible “Meet the Locals” campaign, including the Flash website, and also designed the Aquarium’s new signs – which, if you haven’t seen, you really need to check out. Not only has Ogilvy & Mather come up with this amazing creative, they also convinced their printers to produce and install the artwork for free. That’s right. For free. We can’t thank Ogilvy & Mather, and especially Karin Hall’s good friend Dan Burrier, enough for their hard work, wonderful creativity, and dedication to Heal the Bay.

### **Lisa Boyle**

*Lisa’s energy and enthusiasm for Heal the Bay is worthy of several SuperHealer awards a year. A former Heal the Bay staff member and new Board member, Lisa’s efforts this year for our annual “Bring Back the Beach” dinner and for several Aquarium projects have made us all wonder when she sleeps. As a co-chair for the 2006 Dinner Committee, she helped by bringing in sponsors, a multitude of auction items and an inspiring passion for whatever task was at hand. We’re so grateful to have had her help this past year and we look forward to our plans for 2007!*

# Thank You

The following list represents gifts from September 1, 2006 to November 30, 2006. \*In-kind donation.

## Special Thanks

Nicolas Cage Foundation/Montblanc International GmbH

### \$25,000+

The Flora Family Foundation  
Ford Motor Company  
Ogilvy & Mather\*  
PRIMARY COLOR\*  
City of Santa Monica  
SIMA Environmental Fund  
Thomas & Janet Unterman

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California Coastal Commission  
City of Los Angeles  
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Dr. Aliza Lifshitz & Carl Kravetz  
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Borka & Jeff Mosaic  
MTV Networks  
Security Traders Association of  
Los Angeles  
Nancy & Bruce Newberg

Allison & Kevin O'Malley  
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Nancy & Martin Short  
Chelsea Shure & Andrew Lientz

Sidney Stern Memorial Trust  
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Janine Smith  
Mindy & John Strauss  
Alena Tabora & David Scher  
Catherine Tarr & Brian Cox  
Venice Artists Forum  
Jack Weiss  
Weston Solutions  
John & Gail Wirth  
Elizabeth & Steven Zaillian  
Carolyn Ziel

### \$500 – \$999

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Paula Wagner & Rick Nicita  
Deborah & Snuffy Walden  
Royce & Leslie Wilson  
John Wiseman  
Karen & Richard Wolfen  
Kristen Woods  
Leslie & Kenneth Yates  
Suzanne Zimmer

### Aquadooption

Aquadoptions at Heal the Bay's Santa Monica Pier Aquarium are a great way to express a special connection with the marine life of Santa Monica Bay. Aquadoptions have been acquired for the following:

Beck Adler	Maximo Daigdigan
West Adler	Clara Liao
Zoe Alamillo	Sofia Mauro
Lili Boyle	Alyssa Smith

### In Honor Of

A wonderful way to commemorate a special occasion, milestone or birthday for friends or family is to make a donation to Heal the Bay in their honor. The following people have been honored recently:

Helen & Mike Blair  
Dan Brookman  
Sam & Jaime Brown  
Zane Burrows  
Jorge Delgado  
Julia Louis-Dreyfus  
Colette Fletcher-Hoppe

Dottie Green  
Andre & Bailly Jones  
Madison Kiper  
Harmony Lucas  
Michelle Manzo  
Robbie Marcovic  
J.T. Mindlin

Richard Perez  
Norma & Charlie Piccaro  
Ingo Rademacher  
Brett Rice  
Loren Segan  
Ruth Seroussi & Mike Newhouse  
Renna Taher

Marcy Tameji  
Leslie & Terry Tamminen  
The Willows Community  
School Teachers  
Lisa & Eric Yondorf

### In Memory Of

Donations have been made to Heal the Bay in memory of the following people who have recently passed away. We at Heal the Bay extend our sympathies to the family and friends of:

Kevin Downey	Lillian Klapper
Abe DuCaine	Evelyn Leve
John Ferguson	Adelle Shapiro
Dorothy Heywood	

**SURE,  
I HAVE SOME  
GENDER  
ISSUES.  
THAT'S WHY  
I PICKED  
A BLUE  
STATE.**



**The California Sheephead**  
*This fish begins life as a female  
 and after several years  
 can transform into a male.*  
[meetthelocals.org](http://meetthelocals.org)



The Aquarium is located beach level at the Santa Monica Pier. 310-313-6143



Heal the Bay.

Heal the Bay  
 1444 9th Street  
 Santa Monica CA 90401

Address Service Requested

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