

Heal the Bay

summer
2008

the newsletter of Heal the Bay

volume 22 number 2

healthebay.org

currents

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For
Coastal
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Educating the next eco-generation

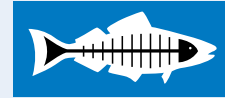
SCHOOL

currents

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COVER PHOTOGRAPHY: NATALIE BURDICK

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.

GRAPHIC DESIGN • MICHAEL KELLNER • KellnerDesign • <http://web.mac.com/kellnerdesign>
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Youth Is Served

You can learn a lot by teaching children to be good environmental stewards,
says president Mark Gold.

Opening up the newspaper or visiting a few environmental websites can lead to an overwhelming sense of depression. The San Francisco Bay-delta ecosystem is on the verge of collapse. Over a billion people don't have access to clean water on a regular basis. The rate of species loss globally is comparable to the Cretaceous-Tertiary mass extinction event that led to the end of the dinosaurs. Climate change is leading to glacier and polar ice cap melting at a pace beyond those predicted by the least conservative of scientific models. China is adding a coal-fired power plant every two weeks and its pace of air and water pollution is unprecedented. Fisheries around the world have declined dramatically and the scourge of marine debris wreaks havoc on even the most remote parts of the world's oceans. All are environmental tragedies grabbed from today's headlines. All leave one with a sense of helplessness in our fight for a cleaner, healthier environment.

Before you put down the newsletter and start watching "American Idol" reruns, take a good hard look at your son, daughter, little sister or brother, or a neighborhood kid. My generation and the two generations before mine are responsible for the majority of environmental degradation on the planet. In the generation of children today lays the best hope for solutions to our most devastating problems. Teaching our children about environmental problems, their causes and the solutions to these problems has never been a higher priority.

When my sons are plugged in to "Warcraft" on their computer or my daughter is watching "High School Musical 2" for the 37th time, it can be challenging to maintain faith in our environmental future.

Heal the Bay does this every day through our aquarium educational programs, Speakers Bureau, Key to the Sea program, and our efforts in the Compton Creek watershed. As you know, we've partnered with the State of California and National Geographic in trying to make the Education and the Environment Initiative a success. The curricula development phase and in school field testing should be completed within a year. Soon after, we hope to see envi-



ronmental education in every grade of public school across all disciplines.

When my sons are plugged in to "Warcraft" on their computer or my daughter is watching "High School Musical 2" for the 37th time, it can be challenging to maintain faith in our environmental future. However, as any parent can attest to, they certainly can have their moments. Just last week, my oldest son Zack was volunteering at the aquarium touch tanks while my daughter Natalie was enthralled by his demonstration of the sliminess of a sea hare and the

ability of a kelp gas bladder to squirt large volumes of cold salt water on the unsuspecting. Biodiversity appreciation moments like this give me hope.

Watching Jake stop complaining about being dragged to another Heal the Bay event while he examines the flotsam, jetsam and residue of urban decay at a Compton Creek cleanup gives me hope. Seeing Zack testify passionately at Santa Monica City Council for a plastic bag ban gives me hope. I know. My three kids don't make much of a sample size. Multiply by thousands and you start making a difference. The Pacific Asian Volunteer Assn. and Anahuak Youth Soccer Assn. brought out thousands of students from all over the region for a recent Los Angeles River clean up with Heal the Bay. The changing face of environmental restoration and protection in Los Angeles is reason for hope locally. Multiply by millions and there's reason for hope worldwide. Advocacy, science and legislation are some of our most important tools in the fight for a healthy environment, but no tool is more important than comprehensive environmental education because it leads to the next generation of environmental leaders, stewards, innovators, problem solvers, and the long needed, first generation of green consumers. Please let us know how we can help educate those young people close to you.

— Mark Gold, President, Heal the Bay

Mixed Greens

KITSCHY AND CATCHY

Question: Where does all the litter, motor oil, dog poop and fertilizer go once it hits the streets?

Answer: The Bay. And to bring attention to this pollution issue, Heal the Bay has been donated some incredible, creative and humorous artwork!

Artists Dave McMacken, Owen Richardson and Steve Vance generously donated their quirky artwork featuring storm drain Zombies, Blobs and The Thing. The art was then charitably printed onto posters and postcards by Costello Brothers and Freedom Graphics. The entire project was set up by our friends at the Venice office of DDB Needham, one of our pro bono advertising agencies. Kevin McCarthy, Nancy Hesterberg and Aubri Gibson commissioned the art and secured the printing for us. The posters are being distributed to educators and kids that enroll in our various programs. You may also see them pop up in bus shelters and construction sites around town this summer.



campaign that has been running at lifeguard towers throughout Los Angeles County. The spots warn beachgoers that there could be something ICKY in the water and that they need to check our Beach Report Card for the latest water quality grades. Each billboard features the code for that particular beach, allowing users to access grades instantaneously on the spot. Saatchi's Tom Richards, Jason Riley and Todd Miller designed the compelling creative.

Paper vs. Pixel

The Currents staff occasionally is asked why Heal the Bay, an environmental organization, uses so much paper to communicate with its audience. We also get questions about the inks and post-consumer content of the paper stock. We are sensitive to these issues and try to reduce our footprint by finding local vendors who employ more sustainable business practices. Still, some have suggested we could do some good by getting rid of the paper and going all digital.

We are in the midst of an information revolution. Readers expect to find whatever content they want digitally, when they want, on whatever device they want. Still, there are many traditionalists who prefer getting information in print. Publications are tactile, portable and easy to scan. And there are no passwords to remember, nor browser issues to struggle with.

That said, we continue to invest significant time and resources into our digital products. We are putting the final touches on a redesigned Beach Report Card section of our website, adding improved functionality and an enhanced user experience. You can also access the latest grades on any mobile device via a text messaging service. We've also launched a series of e-newsletters targeted to our various member segments. Our webmaster Tom Fleming is diligent about adding fresh news and timely information throughout the week.

We've done some informal members surveys that indicate many feel very strongly about continuing to receive printed publications from Heal the Bay, while others feel just as strongly that they want to reduce the amount of paper coming into their homes. Ultimately, we'd like you to help guide us through this media transition. If you'd like to receive Currents as a digital PDF file, please send us a note at info@healthebay.org. Or if you just want to chime in on any of our other communications efforts, let us know how you feel. You can always reach me at 1 800 HEAL BAY. Thanks for your support.

— Matthew King
Communications Director



Drop your gas bills and your carbon footprint—get in the carpool!

Sure, you've spent the summer feeding them organic fruit salads, taking family bike trips to the farmer's market, and participating in beach clean-ups, but as kids head back to school, how can you make sure your little ones stay eco-friendly?

LUNCH BUNCH

The birthplace of tater tots and fish sticks, school cafeterias have never been known for top-notch nutrition. Thankfully, fried fare isn't the only on-site option anymore. The Edible Schoolyard Project (www.edibleschoolyard.org) at Berkeley's Martin Luther King Jr. Middle School has been teaching students to harvest and cook organic produce from an on-campus garden since 1994. Visit www.kidsgardening.com to get your school onboard.

Bagging the Bag

Start the year off right and lose the brown bag. Whether paper or plastic, these lunch containers create needless waste. As do single-serve snack packs, plastic wrap, and plastic utensils. Try cloth napkins, real forks and spoons, and reusable containers. Check out www.localharvest.org to see where to buy locally grown produce, meats, and dairy products, and start creating a sustainable feast.

Gettin' Schooled

GREEN YOUR RIDE

In a perfect world, every child would walk, bike, skate or scooter to school. If driving is unavoidable, carpooling can help minimize your family's eco-footprint (not to mention your gas bill).

Follow these pointers to ensure a smooth ride:

Go Local

Partner with parents who live in your neighborhood on driving duties.

Play Fair

Choose a fixed schedule and make sure fuel costs are evenly divided.

Be Prepared

Exchange cell, work, and home phone numbers and develop a contingency plan in case of illness or mechanical problems.

Cut the Engine

Turn off your car while waiting to pick-up passengers; any time spent idling the engine wastes gas and raises your carbon emissions.

Be Courteous

Make sure your kids are ready to go when the driver shows up. When it's your turn behind the wheel, be on time, drive safe and remember basic etiquette.

LIFE LESSONS

Julie Du Bois lives by actor-activist Martin Sheen's words: "Nothing ever gets done unless it's done by a fanatic." The mother and her small wrangled team of parents and teachers have made the students at CHIME Institute's Arnold Schwarzenegger Elementary School in Woodland Hills fanatical about the environment and civic leadership. They have even won an LAUSD recycling award in the process.

Du Bois first approached her daughter's teachers about starting an eco-project about two years ago. Now, all 38 fourth graders at CHIME are involved in weekly eco-chats where a volunteer parent comes in and covers a variety of green issues.

These visits are all part of what Du Bois has dubbed the Green Team, a recycling program run by the fourth graders themselves. Every week, four different students don their green aprons and set out to gather and sort through the entire school's recyclables. She then takes the items to the recycling center and returns all the money earned to the fourth graders, who decide at the end of the school year where to donate their money. This year, Heal the Bay is proud to be one of the Green Team's lucky recipients.

That's far from where the program ends though. The fourth graders have sought out environmentally geared field trips. They are in pursuit of the right water filters to place in classrooms to end the plastic bottle addiction. The team and the entire school now donate and recycle their text books to areas affected by disaster or poverty.

A Green Team website is being launched to provide the students with extra information regarding the eco-chats. The team is even working on an "Eco Market," where they would run a "store-front" with eco-driven guidelines in order to learn everything from



Du Bois with some of her "Green Team" sorting school recycling.

percentages to making sound business decisions. The students are designing products made from recycled materials and reinvesting the money in their green business.

Du Bois has visited every classroom in the school to explain the Green Team program. Why does she do it?

"They get that we have the power to make things better and their enthusiasm and energy is remarkable."

And what inspires her to do more?

"It's so important and the kids love it so much," she says.

"When I had parents come to me and tell me how they were personally delighted to see their child so excited about something and that their child was teaching them how to buy things and what not to buy, I was moved beyond words," she says.

Making Waves

A committed network of HtB volunteers, vendors and staff throw the party of the year.

You may know we do cleanups almost every week and talk to school kids, business groups and community leaders. You know our science and policy team works around the clock and that we table at myriad community events, from the KROQ Weenie Roast to the SPLASH Festival at UCLA's Fowler Museum. You've been to the Aquarium and you know all about our Stream Team. But did you know we also throw the beach ball of the year?

More than 1,200 guests helped make this year's gala dinner, themed "Making Waves," our biggest party yet. This year's bash celebrated environmental stewards whose thoughts, words and actions show that every individual is capable of affecting positive change. This year's honorees were Don Corsini, president and general manager of KCBS2/KCAL9; H. David Nahai, CEO and general manager of Los Angeles Department of Water

and Power; and Tom Unterman, founder of Rustic Canyon Partners and past chair of Heal the Bay's board of directors.

Heal the Bay focused on making Bring Back the Beach 2008 a sustainable event through reducing, reusing and recycling. Based on our first-ever guidelines for producing an eco-friendly event, we worked with the amazing Homerun Entertainment team, led by board members Jennifer and Barry Gribbon, Patina Restaurant Group, Kunde Estate Winery and select vendors to reduce waste and to source materials locally. As a special party favor, this year's guests each received an exclusive MaCher-designed,

100% organic cotton, reusable gift bag. Now, the next time they are asked "paper or plastic" they can reply "neither, I bring my own."

A highlight of the evening was the live auction bidding



Honoree Tom Unterman accepts his award with Boardmember Julia Louis-Dreyfus and HtB President Mark Gold.

More than 1,200 guests helped make this year's gala Heal the Bay's biggest and best yet.





Leon Mobley and Da Lion perform at the Bring back the Beach gala dinner.



Eric Peterson from Ford Motor Company and HtB Boardmember Amy Smart in front of the donated Ford Escape Hybrid.

for a 2008 Ford Escape Hybrid, donated by long-time Heal the Bay supporter Ford Motor Company. The extensively-redesigned 2008 model, valued at \$32,000, is the best-selling and most environmentally focused SUV available. The Ford Escape Hybrid's seating surfaces use 100% post-industrial materials, saving 600,000 gallons of water, 1.8 million pounds of carbon dioxide equivalents and 7 million kilowatt hours of electricity in comparison to virgin fibers. This year's donation marks the fifth consecutive year that Ford has generously sponsored Heal the Bay's Bring Back the Beach with its star auction item.

This year's Live Auction also included experiences, ranging from KCBS2/KCAL9's President's Center Court

Luxury Suite at Staples Center and a walk-on role for the popular sitcom "SCRUBS," to action training from Gunmetal, and an exclusive helicopter ride from Angel City Air. In addition, longtime Heal the Bay supporter the Four Seasons not only donated another stay at the luxurious Four Seasons Maui, but included a stay at its new Four Seasons Westlake Village, with spa treatments from the California Health & Longevity Institute.

Other highlights from the evening included several limited edition art works from Catherine Opie's "Santa Monica Bay" series and Chris Jordan's "Running the Numbers" series, highlighting on the one hand the beauty of the ocean we work to safeguard, and on the other, the large-scale blight from plastic-based marine debris.

Once again, thanks to the support and generosity of Heal the Bay's members, sponsors, volunteers, dinner committee and honorees, Bring Back the Beach has generated the critical funds required to support Heal the Bay's ongoing science, education, community action and advocacy work in the coming year.



Thanks to the kind support of Chris Jordan and the Paul Kopeikian Gallery, the important photographic work "Plastic Bags" is available to Heal the Bay members. Only five prints are available. Visit <http://www.healthebay.org/plasticbags> to view the image. Contact John Seiber at 310 451 1500 or jseiber@healthebay.org for inquiries.



SCARY SMART

Meet Alec Richker, our volunteer... monster.

Alec Richker first walked into the Santa Monica Pier Aquarium on a sixth-grade field trip. By eighth grade, at age 13, Alec had convinced public programs manager Tara Crow that he was ready to be a full-fledged volunteer.

That took some doing, considering that volunteers now have to be 15 years old to qualify. "I started out doing eight-hour shifts on the weekends," Alec recalls. "My voice would be gone by the end of the day."

Now a wizened 18-year-old freshly graduated from Santa Monica High School and preparing to begin college in chilly Vermont, Alec recently reflected on his years of service to Heal the Bay.

During his first month as a volunteer, Alec remembers talking with three young men who asked him if he was working at the Aquarium. "I told them yes, and they asked me, 'Are you on probation for something?'"

To Alec though, his time as a volunteer has been anything but a mandated chore. "One of the best parts of volunteering is going through that door that says 'Staff Only.'"

"I'll really miss talking to the kids, being able to talk to someone from India, then someone from Russia – it's like a little EPCOT Center right under the pier," Alec says. "The sea life attracts people from all over. It's a universal, unifying interest."

Always the tease, Alec says he'll also miss telling some wide-eyed kindergartner, "watch out for that crab — he's a man eater."

Alec's mischievous streak was put to good use this year, when he was asked to take on the persona of the Bag Monster, a stint that catapulted him into YouTube stardom.

The Bag Monster is a brainchild of the reusable bag company ChicoBag, a partner of Heal the Bay that created the anti-hero costumes to publicize the environmental problems caused by single-use plastic bags. The Bag Monster was a familiar site and campaign tool in San Francisco

leading up to its vote to ban plastic bags.

Alec first wore the 500-bag costume (meant to represent a Californian's average annual bag usage) for the Aquarium's Whale of a Weekend event, where he roamed the Santa Monica Pier.

About a week later, Alec's off-the-cuff testimony as the Bag Monster before the Santa Monica City Council landed him on the Internet. Heal the Bay staff and volunteers packed the council's chambers to support a plastic bag ban for the city. Slipping into character, Bag Monster Alec signed in with the city clerk to testify, and a star was born. The fire marshal was reluctant to let him in in costume but, "When I told him that I needed to go in because I was going to speak he seemed surprised."


He asked the city council not to kick him out of the city. "I'll cease to exist if you ban me," he told the council. "I have a family — bag brothers, bag sisters ... so what if I kill a million seabirds? There's got to be another million out there."

When a council member ribbed the Bag Monster, commenting that he probably had a hard time getting a date, Alec didn't miss a beat.

"Yeah, those reusable bags get all the hot dates," he shot back as the room erupted in laughter.

As the Bag Monster, Alec hasn't any trouble attracting the attention of beautiful women, though. He parried good-naturedly with Heal the Bay board member Amy Smart onstage at the Green Apple Music Festival as part of Earth Day celebrations on the Santa Monica Pier. And he recently accompanied board member Julia Louis Dreyfus on the "blue carpet" at this year's Bring Back the Beach dinner at Barker Hangar.

"It's so much fun being the bag monster," he admits.

Alec is excited about beginning college next fall, at a well regarded small liberal arts school. "And who knows, maybe I'll be the first Middlebury Bag Monster?" 

The Beach Report Card

Ocean water quality is improving during dry months,
but wet weather grades are still lagging.

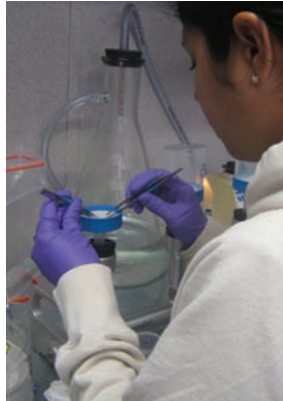
Our 2007-08 Beach Report Card is out! California reveled in its best dry-weather beach water quality on record in 2007-08. To take the guess work out of finding a healthy beach to swim at, we assign A-to-F letter grades to 517 beaches along the California coast, based on levels of weekly bacterial pollution reported from April 2007 to March 2008. During the high-traffic summer beach going season, 93% of beaches statewide received A or B grades. This means very good to excellent water quality for you and your family. That figure marks an 8% improvement from the previous summer.

Southern California's record low rainfall last winter led to enhanced water quality by limiting the amount of polluted urban runoff that reaches the ocean via storm drain systems. Only 29 of the beaches (7%) monitored annually statewide received D or F grades in this year's report.

Nonetheless, there continues to be a great divide between water quality in dry weather vs. wet weather. This year, 46% of monitoring locations statewide received fair-to-poor grades during wet weather.

This growing disparity between improving dry grades and lagging wet grades indicates that cities and counties have made strides to mitigate dry weather pollution but are still grappling with stormwater runoff and the harmful effects it has on coastal water quality.

"The Report Card is great news for the millions of people that visit California's beaches each year," said Heal the Bay President Mark Gold. "But it also demonstrates that



stormwater pollution was as bad this winter as it was a decade ago. Local governments have a long way to go before making beaches safe year-round."

Los Angeles County received dramatically improved annual marks, with 71% of its beaches receiving a yearlong A or B grade, compared to 57% last year. Yet the county still had the worst overall water quality in the state, mostly due to severe water quality issues at numerous Long Beach locations.

However, 92% of Santa Monica Bay beaches (from Leo Carillo to Palos Verdes) received A or B grades during dry weather months, a dramatic improvement from the last two years.

One of the reasons that Los Angeles County lags in water quality is the fact that its monitoring agencies collect samples directly in front of flowing stormdrains and creeks. Monitoring at these "point zero" locations, where polluted runoff often pools, is the best way to ensure that health risks to swimmers are captured in water quality data. Despite Los Angeles' point-zero policy, many of the most polluted beaches in the state do not sit near storm drains: Avalon Harbor, Cabrillo Beach and several sites in Long Beach. Unfortunately, there is no standardized monitoring protocol among counties, with many measuring dozens of yards from outfalls. These discrepancies make it hard to make comparisons among certain beaches.

Remember that you can get updated grades for more than 500 beaches each week on our website, or via our on-demand text messaging service.



The Top 10 Beach Bummers

Twenty four beaches statewide received an "F" grade in dry weather during the 2007-2008 Beach Report Card. The 10 worst "Beach Bummers" in California (starting with the worst) are:

1. **Avalon Harbor Beach on Catalina Island**
2. **Santa Monica Municipal Pier**
3. **Poche Beach**
4. **North Beach**
5. **Marie Canyon Drain at Puerco Beach**
6. **Cabrillo Beach harborside**
7. **City of Long Beach — multiple locations**
8. **Campbell Cove State Park Beach**
9. **Clam Beach County Park near Strawberry Creek**
10. **Pismo Beach Pier**

Speaking of beach bummers, last summer, Heal the Bay joined the Southern California Coastal Water Research Project, UC Berkeley, the Orange County Sanitation Districts and others in the initiation of a three-year health effects study on swimmers at runoff contaminated beaches. We'll be working at chronically polluted Doheny Beach in Dana Point and Avalon Beach on Catalina Island. This epidemiological study is the most comprehensive health effects study ever taken in terms of the number of microbes being analyzed. Over a dozen microbes will face up to 30 analytical techniques. Researchers from around the country will analyze water samples from these two beaches.

This summer, Heal the Bay will also be conducting a beach survey that will focus on finding out if the beach going public has a grasp of beach water quality issues and notification procedures. The survey will take place at the busy summer beach hub, the Santa Monica Pier. Beach surveyors will be roaming the beach north and south of the pier every weekend through Labor Day weekend.

SUMMER STUDIES



UP A CREEK

The recharged Stream Team tackles trash and mudsnails in Malibu Creek Watershed

Sloshing knee deep in the middle of Medea Creek in the Santa Monica Mountains on a recent afternoon seemed like a good idea for several reasons.

First, it had to be 110 degrees the day I joined Heal the Bay's Stream Team to clean up the creek that runs through Paramount Ranch in Agoura Hills.

But more importantly, the unit was preparing for the National Geographic Society's "Bio Blitz" species census, which catalogs creatures in 10 springtime locations around the country.

Stream Team manager Joyce Sisson plunged in ahead of me, and we were soon on our way collecting more trash than fauna. It didn't take long to gather a myriad assortment of plastic items, bottles, caps, wrappers, sporting equipment and backyard barbeque utensils.

A stuffed gray rat and a boomerang vied for most bizarre collected item, but a large rubber ball with a handle

marked my most treasured find. Through the wonders of the Internet, I later identified the object as a Jolly Ball, a horse toy that retails for \$20 and is recommended to "alleviate stall boredom."

The river bed was littered with evidence of the amount of trash that flows down stream when the creek swells during the wet months. The city of Agoura Hills constructed concrete-lined storm channels that funnel runoff and debris directly to Medea Creek, which feeds into Malibu Lake, then the Lagoon, and finally, the Santa Monica Bay.

Besides the refreshing cool down, wading the stream seemed to reduce the number of annoying flying insects that had been plaguing me all afternoon. I had already spent more than an hour cleaning along the banks of the creek. About a dozen of us spread out amongst the tangle of dead wood and a thick covering of invasive pepperweed and non-native periwinkle. The large stands of mug

wort are native and, according to Sisson, a good antidote to another native species, poison oak.

Since 1998, the Stream Team, a small but growing team of Heal the Bay staffers augmented by volunteers, has mapped 70 miles of streams of the Malibu Creek Watershed. The team collects water samples to identify areas of poor water quality and locate sources of the pollution. The data collected has helped establish tougher water quality standards locally and has led to standards implementation in other watersheds around the state.

"We spent years mapping the streams of the watershed. Now we're concentrating on fixing the problems," says Sisson.

Restoring these creeks and streams begins with the type of campaign that I joined. In comparison to a beach cleanup, I gathered surprisingly very few cigarette butts, but Styrofoam could be found everywhere. After removing manmade debris, the team focuses on the removal of invasive vegetation and the planting of native species.

Stream Team work was suspended in early 2007 because of another type of invasive species – the New Zealand mudsnail.

This tiny snail, no bigger than a pinhead, can produce a colony of 40 million organisms in a year's time. At this amazing rate, the snail takes over the habitat that supports the native wildlife of the stream, out-competing the insects that depend on the same type of vegetation for their diets and throwing off the entire food chain.

The snail was first discovered in Medea Creek in November 2006 and it still resides there. Kevin Jontz, Stream Team's restoration monitoring specialist, turned over a rock along the edge of the creek to show me an example of the little pest.

There is talk of introducing a type of toad that will eat the mudsnail, but Sisson mentions this with trepidation. "Who knows what else it will eat?" she asks.

While the mudsnail is still present, Stream Team's restoration work has resumed with a strict protocol to prevent passing the snail from one creek to another. The team has a set of gear used only in creeks where snails have been found. After a cleanup, restoration or water sampling, the team's equipment is washed and stored in a freezer (extreme cold and extreme heat are the only methods found to kill this invader).

"We're definitely not passing the snail from one location to another," Sisson assures.

With renewed funding from a California Coastal Conservancy grant, Stream Team is back in business.

The team includes Jontz, who works on the restoration aspects of the program, and Heather Burdick, who helps with water chemistry in the lab and field. As with many Heal the Bay programs, volunteers are the backbone of this work. Restoration projects attract anywhere from 10 to 100 volunteers.

"If we had to pay for all this work, probably 90% of the grant would be spent on salaries," Sisson says.

The water chemistry typically happens the first Sunday of the month, with restoration projects scheduled for the second Saturday of the month. No special skills or equipment are necessary, just a desire



Clockwise from opposite: Randi and team spend a sunny afternoon cleaning up Medea Creek; young volunteers spend time planting natives; Heal the Bay staff and volunteers get together after a long day of restoration.

for a day of camaraderie and messy, somewhat strenuous fun.

The reward is immediate, offering the satisfaction of having a positive impact on the environment by restoring a stream or creek to its natural beauty.

"It's a really fun way for people to do their part to protect the environment. You get your hands dirty in a beautiful setting and you make a real difference," Sisson says.

Potential volunteers should visit our website calendar for exact dates and locations:

www.healthebay.org/streamteam



Education Specialist Aaron Kind out on the beach during a teacher workshop.

Pacific Pedagogy

The Key to the Sea program celebrates a decade of hands-on marine education

Ocean lover Asma Mahdi joined Heal the Bay last fall as an Aquarium Education Intern. As luck would have it, she literally got thrown into the deep end on her first day.

Even though she can't swim, she found herself waist deep in water underneath the Santa Monica Pier helping Aquarium staff participating in Key to the Sea activities. The program provides educators with environmental curricula and brings students to Southland shores for a day of hands-on learning and fun.

Earlier this year Asma and SMPA education specialist Aaron Kind headed out under the pilings in search of sand crabs when Aaron spotted a particularly alluring ochre star on one of the pilings. Asma went to fetch it and quickly ending up soaking wet and in chest deep water.

"I turned around to give Aaron the stink eye and I saw him hysterically laughing," Asma says. Aaron called for reinforcements and SMPA education manager Tara Trieber ultimately snagged the coveted sea star.

"Aaron called it my Naturalist Initiation," Asma recalls with a laugh.

Key to the Sea launched in 1999 to help proactive educators bring added excitement to their environmental lesson plans. Young people learn to make the connection between stormwater and ocean pollution and how they can make a difference. The program has grown to serve about 10,000 students annually.

Teachers must first attend a training session. First-timers take home an impressive goodie bag, filled with games and materials to conduct their own standards-aligned ex-

periments in the classroom. "Veteran" teachers can take refresher workshops to learn new strategies for implementing environmental education in their classrooms. A trip to either the Santa Monica Pier Aquarium or to one of our partner aquaria is the finale of the elementary school program.

"I love to go each year," says third grade teacher Carol Wright, "I've taught for 33 years now and this is my first choice for a field trip."

This year, Key to the Sea has undergone a curriculum revamp. Curriculum is now standards aligned and reflects the changing nature of environmental threats to Santa Monica Bay. Our education team has created specially modified student worksheets that are accessible to all learning styles and ages for the upcoming school year. We even redesigned the program's logo.

Hands-on, minds-on learning has been a hallmark of Key to the Sea. Once the kids hit the beach, they do everything from using binoculars and bird guides to digging for sand crabs.

"About 90% of my students had never seen or visited a beach. It opened their eyes to a whole new world," says second grade teacher Giannina Duarte.

So what makes a simple trip to the beach so important?

This kind of direct experience with the natural environment early in life is essential to caring about the environment as an adult, says education manager Catie Boarts.

"Seeing a student's face light up the first time they touch a sand crab is indescribable. Most of all, we know we are making a difference by creating future stewards of the marine environment," she says.



AROUND THE WORLD IN 30 DAYS

Proving that our volunteer opportunities come in all shapes and sizes, Heal the Bay reached out to a record 30,000 people this Earth Month through eco events, community outreach tabling, Speakers Bureau presentations, cleanups and even a concert—150 events in all!



programs



Clockwise from top: Volunteers clean up Compton Creek; the touch tanks at the Santa Monica Pier Aquarium during the Earth Weekend event; kids of all ages learn about sharks at the Aquarium's Earth Weekend; Inland neighborhood cleanups are also a part of Earth Month; young volunteers pitch in at a Sun Valley cleanup.

POLLUTION SOLUTION

A new interactive SMPA exhibit links urban living directly to the health of the Bay

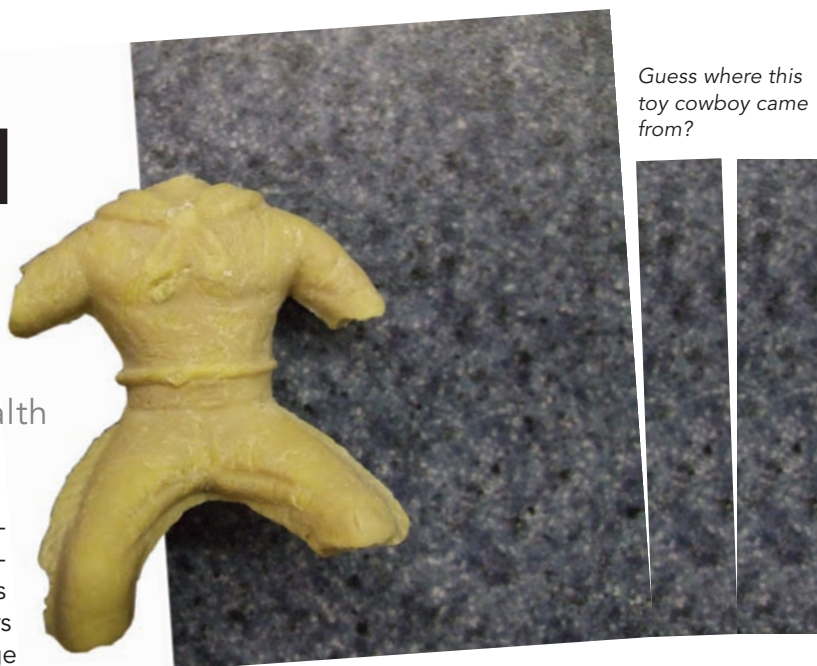
Where's my watershed? What's a watershed? Questions all good Heal the Bayers get asked a lot. As anyone who has worked a tabling event knows, most members of the general public have little if any knowledge about the workings of a watershed and the impact pollution inland has on Santa Monica Bay and its marine life. Well, the connection between urban living and the ocean environment is about to become a little clearer. The Santa Monica Pier Aquarium has a new pollution corner exhibit. A three-dimensional, interactive exhibit along the wall will depict scenes of the watershed from the city, to the shore and ultimately, into the open ocean, thus illustrating the human impact on the environment along the way.

A new 180-gallon sea jelly kreisel will represent the open ocean, filled with majestic moon jellies. The moon jellies were born and raised at the Aquarium. For the past year, a small nursery tank has displayed the young jellies. Now they will live in a kreisel, a cylindrical tank specially designed to protect the fragile structure of a jelly. The new tank was designed through collaboration between SMPA aquarist Jose Bacallao and designer Water Dog Products.

Visitors will also find an eerily similar form floating in a tank alongside the jelly kreisel, drifting close to the surface of the water with long tendril-like strands extending downward out in the open ocean. This creature would be observed from below by sea turtles and the ocean sunfish looking for a tasty meal of sea jellies. But rather than a nutritious snack, a case of mistaken identity turns a popped balloon into a death sentence for sea jelly predators. Tying directly into Heal the Bay's single use plastic bag ban efforts at the state and local levels, the balloon exhibit will demonstrate how marine debris' animal mimicry often results in the death of the marine life that mistakenly ingests the floating plastic.

The albatross is another example of a pollution affected species that will be highlighted in the exhibit. When albatross chicks get ready to leave the nest, they regurgitate a tangle of indigestible material called a bolus. The bolus should contain a combination of fish parts, squid beaks and crustacean shells — the leftover scraps of months of food fed to them by their parents. The new pollution exhibit includes a black-footed albatross bolus and the contents of the stomach of a Laysan albatross. Both were acquired by the Aquarium through Cynthia Vanderlip, the manager of the Kure Atoll Wildlife Sanctuary on Hawaii.

The sample bolus includes large amounts of monofila-



Guess where this toy cowboy came from?

ment fishing line, which Vanderlip says is common. The young Laysan albatross most likely died from plastic ingestion, Vanderlip says.

And as SMPA public programs manager Tara Crow sorted through the stomach contents for display, she found one piece of plastic that was more distinct than the others: a yellow plastic cowboy figurine. The cowboy, at an inch and half long, was headless and missing hands and both feet; one leg was cut off at the knees. Crow did a bit of research and dated the figurine to somewhere between the 1960s and '70s. Our plastic cowboy is the perfect example of how long plastic items can float around the ocean before being swallowed by an albatross, which then feeds it to its young.

The exhibit is currently under construction, and is part of a complete renovation of the corner of the main gallery that includes the aquarists' food prep area.

In an effort to lessen the impact on the environment, recycled materials are being used wherever possible, and an energy efficient water heater and water conservation faucets are being installed.

The California Coastal Conservancy funds this project through a capital expenditures grant awarded to the Aquarium.



Is Your Meal Fishy?

Find out! Get the lowdown on the many angles of sustainable seafood next month courtesy of the Santa Monica Pier Aquarium. The Aquarium's lecture series, sponsored by Heal the Bay and the Center for Ocean Sciences Education Excellence, will be held on Thursday evening, Aug. 21, with a talk on the topic of sustainable seafood at the Santa Monica Public Library's Martin Luther King Auditorium. Details are available at: www.usc.edu/org/cosee-west.

The Aquarium's summer theme weekend, Aug. 23-24, will also focus on sustainable seafood through presentations, demonstrations and many fun, hands-on activities for all ages. Visit www.healthebay.org/smpa for additional information.

Shallow Observations

Aquarist José Bacallao hides out in the long grass hunting for pregnant male pipefish

It's been an exciting and busy spring here at the Santa Monica Pier Aquarium. We lifted the curtains off our new Kids' Corner Tank exhibit, which showcases six new unique organisms and habitats of the Santa Monica Bay — all displayed at a child's eye level.

Planning and construction of a new exhibit usually includes collecting new organisms. The process typically begins with long brainstorming meetings with other staff to gather thoughts about what animals would improve education programs and visitor experience. The wish list can get very long very quickly.

Every staffer has a favorite animal and a favorite habitat. And everyone has a strong opinion about what organisms should be displayed. Of all the animals we targeted for collection that are currently on display, my favorite is the bay pipefish, *Sygnathus leptorhynchus*.

The bay pipefish is a small fish related to the sea horse family, *Sygnathidae*. It grows to about one foot in length but is as skinny as a pencil. As with other Sygnathids, the male pipefish carries the developing eggs in a pouch along the abdomen. The baby pipefish are born live several weeks later.

The tidal wetland habitat where the bay pipefish is typically found is very fragile and unfortunately very threatened by development and pollution.

The tidal wetlands of Southern California are all but gone, but there are a few areas left where we find the bay pipefish flourishing. Within this habitat a very unique flowering plant called surf grass is found. Surf grass, *Phyllospadix*, is a marine plant and the bay pipefish adults and young find food and refuge within these blades of grasses. The pipefish can camouflage very effectively along these blades, avoiding predators while slurping up tiny crustaceans.

Collecting these pipefish is either remarkably easy or remarkably difficult. All it takes is a bunch of people willing to get muddy

and wet, one large minnow net, waders, buckets ... and lots of patience. Just like other methods of scientific collection, seining for pipefish, small fish and other organisms in tidal wetlands takes some planning. We monitor the weather and pick a day that has a favorable tide because seining is usually more successful during the lowest tide.

One of the great aspects of the aquarium community is the support and collaboration among the different centers. So, we arranged a joint collection trip with the SEA Lab in Redondo Beach and the Ocean Institute in Dana Point.

To collect pipefish, two people (netters) walk through the water carefully pulling the seine net through the water. As the seine travels through the water, the net scoops up fish and invertebrates in its path. After pulling the net parallel to the shore in chest high water for about five minutes, a distance of about 150 feet, the net is quickly turned towards the shore.

Waiting on the shore is the support staff, eager to gently pick the animals off the net and into waiting buckets and coolers. As the 'pickers' remove the newly caught animals, the 'netters' keep the net off the ground so that the collected animals don't get hurt. This process is repeated as many times as needed to collect the desired amount.

After each pass, animals that are not needed are returned to the water. Returned fish swim away, snails and crabs crawl away but clams need to be properly restored into the sediment so that they can survive from predators. We collected about 20 pipefish, arrow gobies and grass shrimp. All animals were then transported to the Aquarium where they live

today. Since we collected the bay pipefish we have had some babies born and currently have five pregnant males. Pay us a visit to wish them well.



Bacallao is the senior aquarist at Heal the Bay's Santa Monica Pier Aquarium



A TRASHY EXPERIENCE

Mark your calendars. Join us for a massive Coastal Cleanup Day on Sept. 20

Last September, 11,000 Southland volunteers came together on Coastal Cleanup Day and removed 40 tons of debris from Los Angeles area watersheds. That was nearly 10,000 more pounds of trash removed than in 2006. This **September 20**, we want to make the effort bigger and better, so we need all our members to spread the word and to participate.

California Coastal Cleanup Day is part of International Coastal Cleanup Day, known affectionately as the "largest volunteer day on the planet." Every state and 70 countries partake in the cleanup



worldwide. California's involvement in the event accounts for one-seventh of the entire world's participation!

We have opportunities for every kind of volunteer, whether you live inland or by the beach. No special training, just a good attitude. We even have cleanup sites specifically for divers and kayakers if you're feeling particularly adventurous. Coastal Cleanup Day is a day of education and community action. So, come out, do some good and learn about how to make changes to help the Bay. Contact Eveline Bravo at ebravo@healthebay.org

to get involved! Visit www.healthebay.org/ccd for up to the minute information.



QUICK STATS

- Last year, 5,512 pounds of debris picked up were actually recyclable
- 2008 will be the 24th year of California Coastal Cleanup Day
- Cigarette butts are by far the most commonly found item of trash
- Last year we found more than 2,000 used or partially filled spray paint cans at one site
- Nearly half of the trash collected last year in LA County came from only 10 inland sites

QUICK STATS

Staff Updates



KEVIN JONTZ is back. With the rebirth of Stream Team, Kevin rejoins us as the team's Restoration and Monitoring Specialist. During his first run with Heal the Bay, Kevin helped in the removal of two steelhead trout spawning barriers. He was also part of restoration projects in Malibu Creek State Park and at UCLA and assisted in conducting water chemistry and macro invertebrate monitoring. He will now be tackling restoration work on the streams and creeks of the Santa Monica Mountains. Kevin grew up in South Pasadena and became interested in environmental work while earning his degree in environmental science from Humboldt State University.



SONIA DIAZ was born in Chicago, but grew up in Southern California, where she cultivated a deep sense of appreciation for both nature and political activism. As a child, Sonia remembers her parents taking her to the beach and tidepools and wanting to become a marine biologist when she grew up. She also recalls her politically active parents taking her to the voting booth when she was barely old enough to walk. After graduating with a

B.A. in sociology from the University of Chicago in 2002, Sonia returned to San Diego to work as an editor for Cambridge Information Group, editing and writing journal abstracts for social science journals. In the evenings and weekends she organized rallies, voter registration drives, and campaigns for various candidates and elected officials. In 2006, Sonia was the recipient of the Senate Fellowship, a select program to expose college graduates and career professionals to the California legislative process. Sonia worked as a legislative aide to state Sen. Sheila Kuehl in Sacramento, staffing her legislation on environmental issues and health care. She now joins Heal the Bay as our Legislative Associate, with the responsibility to help develop and move Heal the Bay's legislative agenda forward.



SYLVIE MAKARA, our new Executive Assistant, is no stranger to Heal the Bay either. Since relocating to California in 2005 from Ottawa, Sylvie has volunteered almost 1,000 public and education hours, mainly with the Santa Monica Pier Aquarium beach naturalist for the Key to the Sea program. She has also lent her time to Speaker's Bureau, tabling and special events such as Coastal Cleanup weekend. These efforts made Sylvie a proud recipient of Heal the Bay's 2006 Super Healer award.

Sylvie brings with her over 18 years of varied administrative experience as well as an unabashed enthusiasm and love of nature and the environment. She is thrilled to join the dedicated staff at Heal the Bay.



the team

TALKING TRASH

Our friends at the Algalita Marine Research Foundation have set sail to Hawaii on a boat made up of 15,000 plastic bottles and an old Cessna 310. The big idea? To spread the word about all the plastic debris littering our ocean. The ship, affectionately named "Junk," is carrying on board a large message-filled bottle. Letters written by students and individuals all over the country are meant to be delivered to state and local legislators. While at sea, Junk's crew will collect ocean surface samples and report their findings on Junk's blog junkraft.blogspot.com

Calls to Action

Here's where Heal the Bay needs your help now:

- Be a part of the biggest volunteer day on the planet-Coastal Cleanup Day, September 20th.
- Both Heal the Bay-supported bills addressing plastic bag litter (AB 2058) and lost and abandoned fishing gear (SB 899) will be up for full floor vote before the California Legislature in August. Urge your state legislator to support them!

To find your state representative go to:
www.leginfo.ca.gov/yourleg.html

For more information please call 310.451.1500
For Aquarium 310.393.6149

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AQUADOPTION

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:

Canterbury Elementary School 4th Grade Class
Canterbury Elementary Room 59
Liam Sellahew

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:

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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:

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