

Heal the Bay

spring  
2011

the magazine of Heal the Bay

volume 25 number 4

healthebay.org

# currents

## small things add up



### do something this earth month

**INSIDE**

Art at the Aquarium • Malibu Restoration • Earth Month Events

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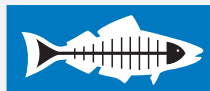
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COVER: DANA ROEBER MURRAY; ISTOCK

**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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Heal the Bay

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# PITCHING IN

A visit from the Dodgers reminds President Mark Gold about the joys of volunteering

Unlike many environmental groups, the key to Heal the Bay's success has always been the leadership and participation of incredible volunteers. Since founding president Dorothy Green held court with volunteers monthly in her Westwood living room in 1985, they've led the way for Heal the Bay. Even I got my start at Heal the Bay as a science and policy volunteer working on urban runoff and sewage pollution.

Since then, so many of our projects have been spearheaded by passionate and determined volunteers. Dedicated supporters are responsible for our fishbones logo, our ad campaigns, the design of the Beach Report Card®, thousands of beach and river cleanups and even filling the hearing rooms for MPAs. The bay would be a very different place if it weren't for our volunteers.

Some of my most rewarding moments at Heal the Bay have been watching volunteers in action. On a recent chilly, overcast morning, a crowd of 300 volunteers came out to clean the beach at the Santa Monica Pier alongside their Los Angeles Dodgers heroes, past and present.

Nearly every volunteer was dressed in Dodger gear and some came three hours early to meet Matt Kemp, Rafael Furcal, Steve Garvey, Fernando Valenzuela, Derrel Thomas, Charlie Steiner, Sweet Lou Johnson, Shawn Green, Gabe Kapler, Tony Gwynn Jr. and Jay Gibbons. Despite the drizzle, everyone had a great time cleaning the beach, getting autographs and listening to the players tell stories of their exploits on the baseball diamond. A couple of hours volunteering at the beach made me feel like a kid again and brought back a lifetime of great memories for me and hundreds of other fans.

About eight years ago, I remember dragging my oldest son Zack to his first Compton Creek cleanup. He was in awe of the amount of garbage and debris in the creek and the efforts of the rubber boot-clad volunteers to clean up the modern-day Augean stables. I think that day in Compton Creek had an enormous impact on him as a volunteer. He went from cleaning up beaches to volunteering at our aquarium (over 500 hours as a high school student) to helping to create and implement Santa Monica High School's "Teach and Test" weekly beach water quality monitoring program to testifying for plastic bag bans and MPAs as the President of Samohi's Heal the Bay Surfrider Club. Volunteering has truly shaped Zack's life at a very young age.

In 1990, I remember watching 4,000 parents and children marching on Santa Monica Beach for our right to clean water at Heal the Bay's Children's March. That was truly an inspiration, but no more inspiring than watching



From L to R, Charlie Steiner, Fernando Valenzuela, Mark Gold, Jay Gibbons, Matt Kemp, Rafael Furcal

Tiger Kang and his troop of a thousand plus, brightly-clad Pacific Asian Volunteer Assn. helpers descend upon a dirty stretch of the L.A. River.

Or watching hundreds of Whittier College Poets cleaning up the Coyote Creek tributary to the San Gabriel River. Or watching volunteers remove a full acre of iceplant to allow the gorgeous yellow blooms of the native Coreopsis to emerge at the Point Dume headlands.

Or viewing for the first time the volunteer-created "Majestic Plastic Bag" mockumentary that recently made it all the way to The Sundance Film Festival and has been viewed nearly 1.5 million times on YouTube!

All of these moments make me realize how lucky our coastal waters and watersheds are to have the attention of our volunteers. And how lucky I've been to work with so many tireless, inspired people that work so hard for a healthy bay and healthy neighborhoods because they understand that giving back improves everyone's quality of life. It feels good to protect what you love, be it the beach or our inland waterways.

Thanks to Earth Day, April is Heal the Bay's biggest volunteer month of the year. Please join us and volunteer for one or more Earth Month events. Check out page three for more information.

To read more of Mark's observations about regional environmental news, visit his blog, Spouting Off, at [spoutingoff.wordpress.com](http://spoutingoff.wordpress.com). [CONNECT](#)

# ActionPlan

A sampling of new initiatives set for the coming months

## SCIENCE

### Malibu Creek Watershed

In 2011, Heal the Bay will release the State of the Malibu Creek Watershed Report in collaboration with the Santa Monica Bay Restoration Commission. This 10 year analysis includes information on trends in water and habitat quality, and plant and animal life in the Malibu Creek Watershed. This watershed includes some of the last natural streams and less developed areas in Los Angeles County, and empties in Malibu Lagoon and world-famous Surfrider Beach.

### Marine Protected Areas

With the adoption of Southern California marine protected areas (MPAs) in 2010, Heal the Bay will focus this year on

education about the new MPAs to ocean users. We'll also help monitor human use of areas within and outside the new MPAs in L.A. County. For more information about our MPA plans this year, check out page nine.



### Stream Watch

In 2011, Heal the Bay will launch our new Stream Watch program. The program will utilize trained staff and community-based volunteers who will serve as the eyes of the Malibu Creek Watershed by assessing and documenting ecosystem impairments, like habitat destruction. This dedicated field presence will enable us to identify small problems before they escalate.

## EDUCATION

### Santa Monica Pier Aquarium

Our Santa Monica Pier Aquarium is developing new curriculum for high school groups in 2011 to meet the needs of the regions' older students. Programs will range from a study of sustainable practices for everyday life, to careers in ocean science. Visitors can look forward to a new exhibit in our main gallery by the close of 2011.



### Classroom Enrichment

Heal the Bay's educational efforts will continue to expand through curriculum, field experiences, professional development, and new programs. This year we'll focus our efforts on three areas — our high school Creek Education Programs, National Geographic Teacher Literacy Guides and professional development, and building a unique multi-visit learning experience by combining our Speakers Bureau and our Key to the Sea, K-5 hands-on curriculum.

## COMMUNITY ACTION

### Beyond Local

In 2011, Heal the Bay will launch our Beyond Local Workshops, which will train individuals to take action in their local communities to improve the environment. The eight-week training session will draw from Heal the Bay's varied outreach programs, like Speakers Bureau and Beach Captain trainings, to provide workshop participants with a more hands-on experience and enable them to become Heal the Bay leaders.



Volunteers clean the future site of the WAYS Reading and Fitness Park

### WAYS Reading & Fitness Park

Heal the Bay and its South L.A. community partner, Wisdom Academy for Young Scientists, with the support of Councilwoman Jan Perry, will coordinate the construction of the WAYS Reading & Fitness Park. The park will be the cutting edge of green technology, and will capture, filter and infiltrate urban runoff. For more information on the park, check out page five.

### Vermont Median

In 2011, Heal the Bay and its community partner, Association of Communities United of South L.A. (ACUSLA), will coordinate with County Board Supervisor Mark Ridley-Thomas to develop a much needed green space for the local community along Manchester and Vermont Avenue. This greening project will represent the first phase of similar efforts along the Vermont corridor that will seek not only to provide recreational spaces for local residents, but will also feature proven technologies to fight urban runoff pollution.

## ADVOCACY

### Low Impact Development

Low Impact Development (LID) is green urban design aimed at lessening runoff volume and pollution. This year, the final LID ordinance in the City of L.A. will be adopted. The City of Long Beach will also adopt an LID ordinance. We'll be advocating for a National Redevelopment Policy, which will include LID components and strong LID requirements during the L.A. stormwater permit development process. The L.A. County Stormwater Permit is a key regulatory tool for keeping polluted runoff out of our rivers and creeks and off of our beaches.

### Statewide Policy on Toxic Waters

Heal the Bay will advocate for a strong statewide policy on toxicity. Toxicity tests determine if certain aquatic life dies or is impacted when exposed to the water being tested. Unfortunately, throughout the state, many water bodies struggle with toxicity. After many years of asking the State Board to issue the policy, it finally released a draft in 2010. We are hopeful that the policy will be passed in 2011.

# CELEBRATE EARTH MONTH

Lots of ways to paint the town green with Heal the Bay this April

Heal the Bay celebrates each Earth Day in a big way — by turning it into a whole month. For the entire month of April, we embody the catch phrase "Earth Day is every day." Our month is chockfull of great events for all ages: cleanups, tablings, events and more. We welcome volunteers to join us in April to get their hands dirty, meet a few new friends and learn all about the Santa Monica Bay and how to help it. **Here are some of our upcoming opportunities:**

## Come to Our Aquarium

April 16-17

Come to The Santa Monica Pier Aquarium's Earth Weekend. We'll offer free admission to anyone who cleans the beach that weekend.

Cleanups will be ongoing during 11am — 6pm both days on the beach around the Santa Monica Pier. Meet in front of the aquarium at 1600 Ocean Front Walk, beach level beneath the carousel building to receive supplies and a safety talk prior to cleaning the beach. Inside the aquarium, face painting, story times, scavenger hunts, craft projects, films and more will be taking place. Visitors can check out marine life off the west end of the pier at the wildlife observation station. Aquarium naturalists will be on-hand to answer your questions.

### SANTA MONICA PIER AQUARIUM

1600 Ocean Front Walk  
Santa Monica, 90401



## Come Clean the River

April 30

On April 30 we'll be helping out our friends at the Pacific American Volunteer Association (PAVA) and Friends of the Los Angeles River (FoLAR) from 9am to noon at the Great L.A. River Cleanup. Come out and help us win the inaugural Urban River Challenge! Friends of the Los Angeles River is taking on Friends of the Chicago River to see who can bring out the most volunteers.

### RIO DE LOS ANGELES STATE PARK

1555 N. San Fernando Rd, Los Angeles, 90065

## Join Us at the Beach

April 16

Nothin' But Sand cleanups are hands-on opportunities for volunteers to directly improve the condition of Santa Monica Bay beaches while enjoying the great outdoors. We'll have Nothin' But Sand Beach cleanups at two locations from 10am to noon on April 16:

### WILL ROGERS STATE BEACH

17700 Pacific coast Highway at Temescal Canyon (\$1 parking)

### TORRANCE BEACH

387 Paseo de la Playa, Torrance, CA 90501 (\$6 parking)



This year, SoCal Honda is a proud sponsor of Heal the Bay's Earth Month.



# Military Hero

Meet Bill Hansen ... Marine vet, reusable-bag entrepreneur and inspiration to us all

By JIM CRAGG

Marine Corps veteran William Hansen, dressed sharply and with a keen energy in his eyes, stepped up in front of the Green Vets L.A. program leadership. Bill, in suit and tie, handed the staff printouts of a marketing plan that he was proposing. The eco-warrior's idea was to spread the word about reusable cloth shopping bags sewn by his fellow vets to companies and government agencies throughout California. He offered a great proposal, but everyone in the room felt excited for a bigger reason – Bill's leadership.



Bill weds long-time girlfriend Carla on Valentine's Day

Josephine Miller recognized the importance of reusable bags being sewn locally. (When you based production nearby, transport pollution in our oceans is minimized and production energy pollution can be monitored.) Thus, we created jobs locally, starting with this group of veterans, many of whom were in and out of homelessness.

And so Bill, who had been wounded in many ways, stood in front of the senior staff of Green Vets LA. His plan was sound, but Bill's health pre-empted our implementation. Stricken with pancreatic cancer, Bill

After serving in the Marine Corps, Bill went through some hard times and eventually saw jail time. Fortunately, he found his way back to Uncle Sam for help.

Bill served as an original member of Green Veterans Los Angeles, a nonprofit vocational rehabilitation sewing program operating on the grounds of the West Los Angeles Veterans Administration Hospital. The program aimed to give the hundreds of veterans living on the hospital grounds both job training and improved self-worth to aid them in leaving government support and rejoining the work force.

Bill had begun as a sewing machine operator and having been both inspired by the program, and having inspired his teammates, he set his sights on spreading the word in the community by marketing the green initiative.

The project started out with six patients and a desire to help those who served and sacrificed for their community. As a reserve Army major, a disabled veteran and local businessman, I decided to found the program after being touched by the population of veterans on the West L.A. campus who needed job training and more. Many felt abandoned by their government and society. I thought about a cure for this sense of abandonment within a group of people who once volunteered to serve their nation.

Motivated to work with the City of Santa Monica's Office of Sustainability, I focused the vets' efforts on sewing these bags to help the environment. City staffer Jo-

sephine Miller recognized the importance of reusable bags being sewn locally. (When you based production nearby, transport pollution in our oceans is minimized and production energy pollution can be monitored.) Thus, we created jobs locally, starting with this group of veterans, many of whom were in and out of homelessness.

Like any military squad, the Green Vets team has supported Bill in the hospital. One of Bill's wishes has been to marry his long-time girlfriend. Donating a cake and photographer, the team helped arrange a wedding this winter in the VA Hospital chapel.

With tears and smiles, the Green Veterans LA team bore witness to the wedding of Bill and his girlfriend Carla on Valentine's Day. Josephine Miller, representing the city of Santa Monica, attended and paid respect for Bill's service to the community. Bill received the news from his hospital bed about the success Heal the Bay had been having in getting local municipalities to ban plastic bags. He heard about the bags he had envisioned now being offered by Heal the Bay to its most important donors.

A conversation Bill and I had in his hospital room during his cancer treatments speaks volumes about his ongoing courage and strength. At a moment when most people would lament their fate and complain about their struggle with pain, Bill set forth his plan to beat the illness. He would get back to Green Vets LA, and re-start his marketing plan with the Santa Monica Bag Ban and Heal the Bay's campaign.

I promised him his position as soon as he could get back on his feet.



## A PARK THAT RECYCLES

Reg Mata on how building a much-needed green space in South L.A. can help protect your local beach

In my work as a Heal the Bay community organizer, I've had the good fortune of enjoying some key victories in our ongoing struggle to make L.A. inner city neighborhoods healthier for people and the ocean. Perhaps the sweetest victory so far has been California State Parks recently approving a \$1.3 million grant to build the WAYS Reading & Fitness Park in South L.A., which will recycle water to irrigate its surrounding landscape. It will be, in a sense, a self-sustaining park that will help conserve one of our most precious resources — water.

The project is the latest chapter in a journey that started over two years ago when I met Kendra Okonkwo, the founder and executive director of Wisdom Academy for Young Scientists (WAYS), a charter elementary school. The two of us met at a Watts task force meeting on gangs. It was here that both the social and environmental issues of the inner-city crossed paths. Our partnership began under a new program that Heal the Bay piloted with a grant from the California Coastal Conservancy. Mrs. Okonkwo and I had no idea what to expect from our collaboration, but we never imagined that we would be embarking on a project of this scope and caliber.

We settled on a location on a quiet traffic median behind the school that was surrounded by homes. Illegal dumpers had littered the area with garbage. For the folks of Wisdom Academy, taking this space back was a really positive step and so together we started taking design workshops.

The sessions were facilitated by architect Steve Cancian of Shared Spaces, the firm that we contracted to get input from the surrounding community.

We dreamt together, and as a community, produced a rudimentary design that evolved from a small budget of around \$7,000 paid for by a City of Los Angeles Community Beautification Grant to an impressive budget of \$1.3 million.

The Liberty Hill Foundation stepped up as well to support our community organizing work. In many ways, our effort was seen as a gamble because of its unusual community organizing tactics. The project is now a perfect example of a plan rising from the ground up, and of the community becoming part of the park.

All of Heal the Bay's work has not gone unnoticed by City of L.A. officials. Councilwoman Jan Perry has now become aggressively involved with the project, championing access to the site. We are building momentum, and now, with the Los Angeles Conservation Corps joining forces with us to complete construction of the first phase of this project this summer, its realization is starting to become tangible.

There is much work to do, of course, and the second phase of the park's construction will take several years to complete; but for now, we should all take a moment and celebrate this momentous victory. A victory that you helped make possible through your support of Heal the Bay!

# PlayTime

Team up with Heal the Bay's athletic events



The Santa Monica Pier Paddleboard Race Ocean Festival and Waterman's History Day is coming up on June 11. Join us for paddleboard races, dory competitions, outrigger canoes, live music and more. There will be a "museum for the day" on the pier deck that will feature historic surfboards, paddleboards and lifeguard equipment.

Participation in the race is limited and early registration is encouraged. For more information visit [www.pierpaddle.com](http://www.pierpaddle.com). Heal the Bay receives a portion of the net proceeds from the event.



## Chivas

This Earth Month, Heal the Bay and the City of Los Angeles have joined forces with Chivas USA for an amazing school recycling program. The school that fills up the most recycling bins wins unbelievable prizes—like two tickets for a Chivas USA home game for every student, teacher and staff member for the winning school. Chivas will announce the winners at our April 16th cleanup at Torrance Beach.



**Beth Ryan** started volunteering with us back in 1999, when she joined the Stream Team. Since then, she has helped out with an

uncountable number of cleanups, restorations and events. Beth is running this year's Santa Monica Classic for Heal the Bay. We recently asked Beth what motivated her to run.

"So, my New Year's resolution was to incorporate more 'me' time into my life, and try to relax more. I blocked out specific weekends just for myself. Unfortunately, that only lasted through February when, out of

## Santa Monica Classic

Registration is now open for the 2011 Santa Monica Classic. The Classic is a 5K and a 10K and a portion of net proceeds benefit Heal the Bay. Race day is Sunday, May 15. You can register online now at [active.com](http://active.com) or e-mail [smc@lamarathon.com](mailto:smc@lamarathon.com) or call 310.271.7200.

boredom, I had to modify my resolution. Now, those weekends are filled with charity runs. I'm doing two runs a month until June, when I begin my swim training for the Nautica Malibu Triathlon. I ran the SM Classic in 2010 and had a won-

derful time. I am not a great runner, and the atmosphere was perfect for me. It is such a good feeling to be surrounded by people who share the same passion for Heal the Bay and the great work that they are doing." Go Beth!

# THE BUSINESS OF GOING GREEN

Our supporters discuss the importance of eco-friendly business



**ERIC SCHIFFER** has been Chief Executive Officer of 99c Only Stores® since 2005. He received his MBA from Harvard Business School and an engineering degree from Duke University. Eric and his spouse Karen have four children and reside in Los Angeles. He's very active in his local community with several charities.

**Q: How did 99c Only Stores® first get involved with Heal the Bay?**

**A:** 99c Only Stores® is based in Los Angeles and our founding family has been financial supporters of Heal the Bay for many years. We are now in our second year of sponsoring Nothin' But Sand beach clean-ups and have participated in "A Day Without a Bag" since it began. We even introduced a beautiful reusable shopping bag in our stores promoting Heal the Bay.

**Q: What are the environmental issues that matter most to 99c Only Stores®? How do they tie in with Heal the Bay's work?**

**A:** Reducing our carbon footprint and overall waste is important to us and that reflects part of Heal the Bay's mission too. To reduce truck fuel usage we utilize innovative transportation logistic processes. If a customer has three items or less, we ask them if they need a bag before automatically offering one. Plus, we keep reusable shopping bags visible near the front of the store.

Our buyers are always on the look-out for opportunities to stock green or organic products for customers throughout the year and they work with our suppliers to reduce the amount of packaging our products come in. We recycle cardboard boxes and plastic shrink-wrap after use and we provide recycling bins for bottles and aluminum cans throughout our Store Support Center and store break rooms. We replaced the lighting in our existing stores and warehouses with energy efficient lighting and/or timers and we've incorporated skylights into our newer stores. We also donate truckloads and truckloads of good product to food banks and local charities.

**Q: Do you have any advice for other businesses trying to go green?**

**A:** Take a look at how your business operates from the ground up and ask yourself if certain processes are the best ones. Ask your people who are on the front lines what their ideas are. Plus, some of the changes, especially eliminating waste, can also save you money!

**Q: Can you tell me about any other eco-initiatives that 99c Only Stores® works on?**

**A:** We hope by 2012 to offer a whole line of environmentally friendly products under a new brand called Eco-Cents!

**MIKE SULLIVAN** from LAcAR GUY grew up in Malibu, surfing, diving and eating out of the ocean. In his words, "It was just what we did."



**Q: How do you support Heal the Bay?**

**A:** Back in the early 90s, we gave away a new VW Beetle to help support HtB. We now support annually, and this year, we signed a three-year commitment to support the Beach Report Card program, that iconic little grading system that lets us know we are making water-quality progress. We also bring our crews from all the dealerships to do a beach cleanup and we've even hosted a Heal the Bay board meeting at Lexus Santa Monica. We educate our 700+ employees with "HtB Tips" in our monthly green e-newsletter and soon, we are excited to be hosting Earth Day Lunch & Learn with Heal the Bay's Speakers Bureau.

**Q: What are you working on now to become more green?**

**A:** We are designing both of our new Toyota stores to be LEED certified. In May, we launch a new, stunning plug-in hybrid sports car called FISKER. We are the largest hybrid dealer in the world and Toyota Santa Monica is the number one Prius dealership in the world. In November 2010, Senator Pavley's office presented the vice president of Toyota Santa Monica, Bill Rinker, with the coveted Environmental Sustainability Award. We use LED lighting that cut our wattage output by 82%. We installed Dyson hand dryers in restrooms and we have a "zero waste" Christmas BBQ. We are able to divert more than 90% of the waste generated from the event from landfills by recycling and composting. Oh yeah, my house is solar paneled and in May, with my FISKER and Prius plug-in, I will also be DRIVING off the grid!

# SeaArt

The Santa Monica Pier Aquarium has a lot of drawing power ... literally.



An artist sketches the touch tanks at the recent Artist Night at the Santa Monica Pier Aquarium

The connection between art and the marine world is hard to deny at our Santa Monica Pier Aquarium. The intense neon orange and blue of the Spanish shawl nudibranchs, the symmetry of a sea star, the sculpted beauty of a gracefully floating strand of giant kelp all serve as powerful muses.

Many people think of science and art as two separate things, but at the Aquarium, the concepts are intertwined whenever possible. "I think it's great we're able to offer a venue showing how science and art coexist," says Vicki Wawerchak, our facility's director. "We're very fortunate to have the space and also the talent of both our volunteers and the local community."

The Aquarium has been working to showcase this talent. We recently hosted our second annual underwater photography contest. The entries beautifully highlight myriad marine animals and underwater seascapes that underscore the importance of our new marine protected areas (MPAs). (To find out more about MPAs, check out page 11.) You can check out the winning entries on Heal the Bay's Flickr pages online.

And in a true collaboration of art and science, the Aquarium is using a wall in our Dorothy Green Room to display art installations, offering a different artist each month the opportunity to present selections of marine-related work. The exhibits by volunteers and friends of the Aquarium have highlighted creatures from Alaska to Tahiti and have spanned the mediums of photography, pen and ink, digitally created imagery and watercolor.

## ModelCitizens

Educator Aaron Kind and the animals of our Aquarium take up art modeling

Being a talented artist, whose works have hung on my mother's refrigerator and graced a few bathroom stalls, I was pretty excited to host the Santa Monica Pier Aquarium's first Artist Night this past February. The event reached out to the local artists in the community, and by keeping the RSVP list to a minimum, the Aquarium had plenty of room for the artists to set up.

The Aquarium's local species were the models for the night; moray eels, octopus, sharks and moon jellies took center stage for the evening's festivities. Photographers, painters and even a couple of digital sculptors attended the two-hour event. For the first hour, the Aquarium lights were dimmed to help photographers reduce glare from the tanks for their shots.

For the second hour, the lights were brought back up and sea stars, sea urchins and other denizens of the deep were placed in bins so painters and sketchers could get an up close look. A little bit of '60s beachy rock 'n' roll set the mood for the artists and models alike. After talking with the participants (the ones without the fins), the Aquarium staff is planning to set another artist night coming up soon. "Tonight is about artists hanging out with other artists," I overheard one woman say, and I was excited to offer this great community with a venue to do just that. For further information on upcoming events, visit [www.healthebay.org/smpa](http://www.healthebay.org/smpa) and join the Aquarium on Facebook to check out pictures from the night. [CONNECT](#)



## MPA Watch

Turn your beach walk into community service hours with our new volunteer program

At long last, we have a new set of marine protected areas (MPAs) in Southern California. The final map of adopted MPAs creates 36 new MPAs encompassing about 187 square miles of state waters. (Want to see the final map? Visit [www.dfg.ca.gov/mlpa](http://www.dfg.ca.gov/mlpa).)

Ocean supporters came out in force at the final meeting, with over 100 public comments given (most from the conservation community)! The public process for the south coast began way back in July 2008 and more than 12,000 written public comments were submitted through the process to help inform recommendations on MPAs.

Now, the California Department of Fish and Game will be responsible for implementing our local MPAs through enforcement, education, monitoring and research activities. Implementation is anticipated to go officially into effect in mid 2011 after appropriate filings with the Office of Administrative Law and the Secretary of State.

### Volunteer Requirements:

- Must enjoy long walks on the beach
- Attend one class and field training
- Ability to pause and appreciate a breaching whale or dolphin playing in the surf while performing a survey
- Willingness to spend time at the beach in order to complete a minimum of four surveys a month
- Be able to resist temptation to jump in the water to go surfing at Point Dume until after completing a survey
- Enthusiasm for contributing to science without having to wear a white lab coat
- Must be 15 years or older

To bolster public awareness and to track uses of the new MPAs, Heal the Bay has just launched a brand-new USC Sea Grant-funded volunteer program called MPA Watch. By walking along the beach in Malibu and visually surveying ocean users in one-hour sessions, this program is a great way to combine your love of the beach with collecting valuable scientific data. Volunteers are trained to monitor coastal and marine resource use.

The data volunteers collect will provide important information to help us understand how people are using these new marine protected areas. The data will also help inform MPA management.

Heal the Bay held our first volunteer trainings for this pilot program in March, but it's not too late to get involved. You can still become a local ocean steward as an MPA Watch volunteer. Contact staff scientist Dana Roeber Murray at [dmurray@healthebay.org](mailto:dmurray@healthebay.org) if you want to know more about this fun, new volunteer program.

# Malibu Lagoon:

Misinformation surrounds the restoration of a treasured sanctuary

In highly urbanized Southern California, we've lost much of our wetland habitat and our remaining lagoons are often highly degraded. Malibu Lagoon is one of the few remaining tidal lagoons in the region and marks critical habitat for the federally endangered tidewater goby and southern steelhead trout, as well as a diversity of wetland shorebirds. But, Malibu Lagoon is in trouble. It is being clogged by sediments, has severely low dissolved oxygen levels, and is not in its natural state.

Heal the Bay cherishes the beautiful Malibu coast and understands that Malibu Lagoon is an essential part of a healthy environment. Many people have worked for decades to protect the lagoon and improve water quality throughout the Malibu Creek watershed. The area has also been heavily studied by experts at many of the state's leading universities.

It's clear that Malibu Lagoon is less vibrant and diverse, especially under the surface of the water, than other lagoons in Southern California, such as Bolsa Chica in Huntington Beach or the Carpinteria Salt Marsh. Fortunately, the California Coastal Commission late last year approved carefully developed plans to restore the Lagoon and improve circulation. The State Park restoration, guided by science and input from top wetlands ecologists throughout the state, is expected to begin this summer. Heal the Bay helped develop the plan from 2002-05 but will not be an active participant in the actual restoration.

Despite this transparent process, a small but vocal contingent of community members has raised concerns about the restoration project.

Here we address some of the common misconceptions about the lagoon restoration:

**MYTH:** *Malibu Lagoon is a thriving, healthy environment*

**FACT:** Since the early 1900s, increased human activity has degraded Malibu Lagoon. Caltrans and others used the lagoon for landfill in the 1950s and 1960s. By the late 1970s the site was completely filled and housed two baseball fields. The wetland area historically extended throughout the Civic Center and Malibu Colony region, but the lagoon's size has been greatly diminished by urban development along the coast. Decades of soil dumping have destroyed much of the lagoon's natural function.

**MYTH:** *Lagoon water should be still and have little circulation*

**FACT:** In a healthy lagoon system, tides and river flows would remove built-up sediments and flush them out to sea, especially on high tides or during rainstorms when the river runs high. This natural circulation creates an oxygenated system for aquatic life to breathe. Because of the human disturbance at Malibu Lagoon over the years, there is not enough water flow or flushing in the western part of the lagoon. With too little flushing, fine sediments accumulate. They hold extra nutrients that cause excessive algal growth, which depletes oxygen in the water, stressing and threat-

ening aquatic life. Oxygen levels in Malibu Lagoon have measured close to zero because of these problems. Better water flow in the western portion of the lagoon will reduce this stress on plants and aquatic animals, helping them to thrive.

**MYTH:** *Previous restoration activities have worked, and the lagoon is functioning naturally*

**FACT:** The restoration conducted by State Parks in 1983 involved removing some of the soils previously dumped in the lagoon and creating the three lagoon channels. However, that restoration did not plan well for water movement. Now, 30 years later, fine sediments are filling those channels and choking the lagoon. The recently approved restoration plan will remove more of the dumped soils that never should have been placed there, and redirect the tidal channels so that water can flush through them in a more natural way, the lagoon will be cleansed regularly by tides and creek flows. If the restoration is not conducted, the western portion of the lagoon may fill completely with sediment.

**MYTH:** *There is abundant native animal and plant life in the Malibu Lagoon*

**FACT:** Although the bird life at the lagoon is diverse and abundant, the creatures that

live in the water -- the fish, crabs, shrimp, clams and other invertebrates -- are severely threatened by the unhealthy conditions in the western lagoon. Low oxygen levels will continue to drive bottom-dwelling creatures away, meaning less food for birds and other wildlife. The State Water Board and EPA have determined that the invertebrate ecology and water quality (nutrients, dissolved oxygen, fecal bacteria) are impaired and must be cleaned up.

**MYTH:** *This restoration can be effective without machinery*

**FACT:** Using machinery allows the work to be done all at once, during one season. This is important to allow the lagoon to recover. In nature, occasional events such as storms and floods help to "clean out" a system like the lagoon, and the plants and animals that live there quickly re-establish themselves in the new, refreshed environment. Introduced sediment from past human activities is still affecting the lagoon, and dissolved oxygen is often too low for fish survival. Acclaimed wetland ecologists helped design the Malibu Lagoon restoration project to ensure success. Other wetlands restoration projects in California, such as Bolsa Chica and Carpinteria Salt Marsh, have involved the use of heavy machinery to address sediment and circulation issues. These systems are now

# MYTH vs. FACT



healthier than they were before the restoration projects.

**MYTH:** *It's the other problems in the watershed that need to be addressed*

**FACT:** Several issues impact the Malibu Creek Watershed, from upstream development, to circulation problems in the Malibu Lagoon. Heal the Bay's Stream Team has conducted comprehensive monitoring throughout the watershed for over 10 years. With this data, we have successfully called for the dry weather discharge prohibition for Tapia Wastewater Treatment Plant during summer months (April 15-October 15) to help protect surfers and swimmers at Surfrider Beach, worked towards stronger wastewater and septic controls in the lower watershed and Civic Center area, and worked with communities throughout the watershed to reduce pollution associated with runoff. We've removed several stream barriers in the watershed to allow for fish passage and partnered with wildlife agencies to help reintroduce the tidewater goby to Malibu Lagoon. Heal the Bay will continue to work throughout the watershed to improve habitat and water quality.

**MYTH:** *The restoration plan was completed behind closed doors without public input. Stakeholders were allowed to attend, but not speak.*

**FACT:** The Malibu Lagoon restoration project is the culmination of nearly two

decades of scientific research and public concern. In a stakeholder driven process, 85 members participated in the Malibu Lagoon Task Force, part of the greater Malibu Creek Watershed Advisory Council. The planning work, including extensive environmental review of numerous restoration alternatives through public workshops and the EIR process, was done in the mid 2000s, but now permits and state funding are finally in place to move forward with the project.

**MYTH:** *Heal the Bay is profiting off of funds supporting the Malibu Lagoon restoration*

**FACT:** Heal the Bay received funding from the state in 2002 to convene the Malibu Lagoon restoration project stakeholder group and develop the restoration plan. Similar to contract work conducted for any project conducted by an entity, we were funded to develop the restoration plan in consultation with wetland ecologists and stakeholders, which was completed in 2005. We have not received any funding to work on the project since then. The lead groups on the actual restoration activities are the Santa Monica Bay Restoration Commission and State Parks.

**MYTH:** *The project will threaten sensitive and endangered species that live in the lagoon*

**FACT:** Top-notch ecologists helped design the lagoon restoration plan. Con-

ducting the restoration during summer (June 1 to October 15) is the most protective time frame for the fish and animals. This timing was selected very carefully in consultation with National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) fisheries and the United States Fish and Wildlife Service to best safeguard lagoon wildlife. Furthermore, significant protections are built into the restoration plan for wildlife. Biologists will survey work areas and will carefully move any fish and wildlife that they find. They will place them in other areas of the lagoon where they will be safe from any impacts. They will count and record any breeding or nesting birds, which will probably move to other areas of the lagoon on their own and will not be touched. No work will occur near any nesting or breeding sites, to protect birds and chicks.

**MYTH:** *This project eliminates beach and lagoon access for beach goers and naturalists*

**FACT:** While the current bridge system will be removed to reduce further sediment build up in the lagoon, the existing perimeter path will be enhanced for easier access and educational signage. The path will give better access to people of all ages, including a bird blind for wildlife viewing, interactive tide gauge, and amphitheater to help facilitate educating groups. This path also maintains access to the beach for surfers and beachgoers.

CONNECT

Want to learn more? Visit: [www.healthebay.org/blogs-news/facts-about-malibu-lagoon-restoration](http://www.healthebay.org/blogs-news/facts-about-malibu-lagoon-restoration).

# Thank You

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## IN HONOR OF

A wonderful way to make a holiday gift, 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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Lynn Anderson  
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Ethan Beane  
Norm Bellante  
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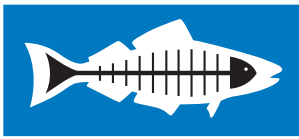
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Lynn Duffy Walton  
Don Watson  
Janey Williams

## IN MEMORY OF

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

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Victor Beasley  
Robert Carvel  
Mike Coash  
Joe Crocker  
Lee Miller  
John B. Eshelman  
Owen Furey  
Marc George  
Lloyd Gordon  
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Heal the Bay

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\*Santa Monica Classic Run for the Bay:  
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[www.santamonicaclassic.com](http://www.santamonicaclassic.com)

\*Santa Monica Pier Paddleboard Race, Ocean Festival and Waterman's History Day:  
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[www.facebook.com/pierpaddle](http://www.facebook.com/pierpaddle)

For the latest Heal the Bay events, including benefit parties, volunteer trainings and education opportunities, go to [www.healthebay.org](http://www.healthebay.org) or [www.facebook.com/healthebayfans](http://www.facebook.com/healthebayfans).