

Heal the Bay

fall
2010

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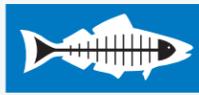
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INSIDE

A Volunteer's Story • Lobbying Lessons • Mobilizing Malibu



Heal the Bay

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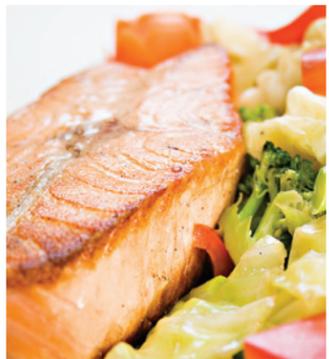
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Heal the Bay is a nonprofit environmental organization dedicated to making Southern California coastal waters and watersheds, including Santa Monica Bay, safe, healthy and clean. We use research, education, community action and advocacy to pursue our mission.

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If you like **Currents**, you can get the latest updates from us by visiting Healthebay.org on a frequent basis. (Trust us, there is a lot going on each week!) We also encourage you to sign up for our new general monthly-interest newsletter, dubbed blue. We don't want to jam already crammed inboxes, so we're careful not to spam you with unwanted pitches and fluff. We promise to create visually attractive, concise and relevant products that alert you to important news, valuable offers and involvement opportunities.

Our ultimate goal is to keep you up to date about how best to protect your local beach and how to heal your bay. We would also like to transition audiences toward more sustainable digital products. It helps save the environment and it helps save money – funds that can be funneled directly back to our award-winning, on-the-ground public programs.

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Funding the Future

A down economy forces Heal the Bay to make some tough choices, says president Mark Gold

In a year where bad news has dominated the headlines, Heal the Bay has managed to provide some great news for California's coast:

- California passed a comprehensive policy that will phase out once-through-cooling power plants that suck the life out of the oceans.
- Summer beach water quality continues to improve at many chronically polluted beaches (Santa Monica Pier getting an A on the Beach Report Card for the first time in memory).
- Ventura County and Santa Monica have new Low Impact Development stormwater regulations that require new and redevelopment to capture and use or infiltrate stormwater which reduces pollution, improves flood control and augments local groundwater supplies.
- The EPA designated the Los Angeles River as a navigable waterway, thus affording it greater protection under the Clean Water Act. And L.A. County purchased the soft bottomed section of Compton Creek, so creek restoration there is now more than just a pipe-dream.
- A record 14,000 plus volunteers came out at over 60 locations for Coastal Cleanup Day this year.
- Malibu is really turning around. There are new stormwater and wastewater treatment facilities and a sewer in Paradise Cove. The Low Impact Development stormwater treatment project at Legacy Park was just completed. The state ordered Malibu to help clean up Malibu Lagoon and Surfrider Beach by putting in place a prohibition on septic systems in the Civic Center, and the Coastal Commission unanimously approved the Malibu Lagoon Restoration plan. The future is finally looking bright for Surfrider, the lagoon and the rest of the Malibu coast.

Despite these tremendous gains, the economic crisis has not spared Heal the Bay. Government funding has practically dried up over the last three years. As a result, programs such as Title I field trips to our Santa Monica Pier Aquarium, our Speakers Bureau school education program, Coastal Cleanup Day and our Stream Team volunteer monitoring and watershed stewardship program are largely unfunded. With economic pressure on these programs, our legislative advocacy efforts, which only



receive funds from donors like you, are in severe jeopardy. Cutting back on advocacy efforts could hamper critical efforts to curb marine debris, such as banning plastic bags.

In order to make it through the recession, Heal the Bay has cut more than \$700K in expenses this fiscal year. Our goals for 2011 are as ambitious as ever. We need tough new stormwater regulations for Los Angeles. We need to move forward on plastic bag bans at the local level, because the state legislature can barely even pass a budget, let alone bold legislation. California must finalize a network of Marine Protected Areas for Southern California.

You love the beach and ocean and we can help you protect them. But now more than ever, we truly need your financial assistance to help support our efforts.

As always, Heal the Bay will find a way to move closer towards making our coastal waters and watersheds safe for people and marine life. After all, environmental protection can never afford a recession.

— Mark Gold, President, Heal the Bay

Mixed Greens



RECORD-BREAKER

More than 14,000 Los Angeles County volunteers celebrated this past Coastal Cleanup Day with Heal the Bay. Over 100,000 pounds of ocean-bound debris was removed from 101 miles county-wide from Malibu to Compton to Long Beach. Odd items found during this year's cleanup included three bowling balls — all in halves, a mummified cat and a floating bag of marshmallows. Our Coastal Cleanup Day partner, Subaru, set up test drive stations at three sites and offered a \$50 donation per test drive. At one of these station sites, the Santa Monica Pier, nearly 1,000 volunteers were surprised with a 100 person eco-themed flash mob coordinated by Flash Mob America and Heal the Bay. You can see the video at healthebay.org/flashmob.

Aquarium News

Students and their teachers hungry for lunch now have a great picnic spot just above the Aquarium on the Pier's eastern deck. Ten new ocean-themed tables with attached benches have been installed through collaboration between the Aquarium, the City of Santa Monica and the California Coastal Conservancy. The round tables with attached benches are inlaid with depictions of marine animals and raised, block lettering around the edges. The husband and wife team of Adriana and Ed Roth, who carve, paint, and maintain the carousel horses of the Pier's Carousel, were commissioned to create the furniture.

When the Aquarium's school field trip groups aren't using the furniture for picnicking, the area can also be reserved for guests of events at the Carousel. The seating will be available for the general public the remainder of the time.

Like all non-profits, Heal the Bay is feeling the effects of the economy and has had to raise admission to the Aquarium by a dollar. As of Oct. 1 the adult admission to Heal the Bay's Santa Monica Pier Aquarium increased to a minimum entry of \$3.00 per adult (with a continued suggestion donation of \$5.00 per adult). As always, kids 12 and under are free when accompanied by an adult and the group rate of 10 or more people is \$2.00 per person, regardless of age. Heal the Bay members still enjoy free admission.



Super Healer Scholar



Congratulations to Asma Mahdi, former Heal the Bay intern and Super Healer Award recipient, for being awarded the Kim Kimbell Summer Internship Fellowship Prize from UC, Santa Barbara. A second-year master's student at the Bren School of Environmental Science & Management at UC, Santa Barbara, Asma was an integral part of not only our education programs at our Santa Monica Pier Aquarium, but also our Science and Policy Department, where she worked on the Marine Life Protection Act initiative. Most recently, Asma worked on her own PSA to support banning plastic bags in California.

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Heal the Bay

LAGOON RESTORATION APPROVED
CA Coastal Commission unanimously approves Malibu Lagoon Restoration Plan. [More](#)

THE BEACH REPORT CARD®
Check Grades at Your Beach
Latest water quality for Santa Monica Municipal Pier
Dry A Wet F

SPOUTING OFF
A Real Bag Giveaway
10.19.10

AROUND THE BAY
This Video is Really Toxic!
09.13.10

TAKE ACTION
Support Strong SoCal MPAs
09.22.10

OCT 23 A Fishy Fest Celebrating Halloween & Dia de los Muertos - Day 1, Saturday

OCT 24 A Fishy Fest Celebrating Halloween & Dia de los Muertos - Day 2, Sunday

NOV 20 Nothin' But Sand Beach Cleanup

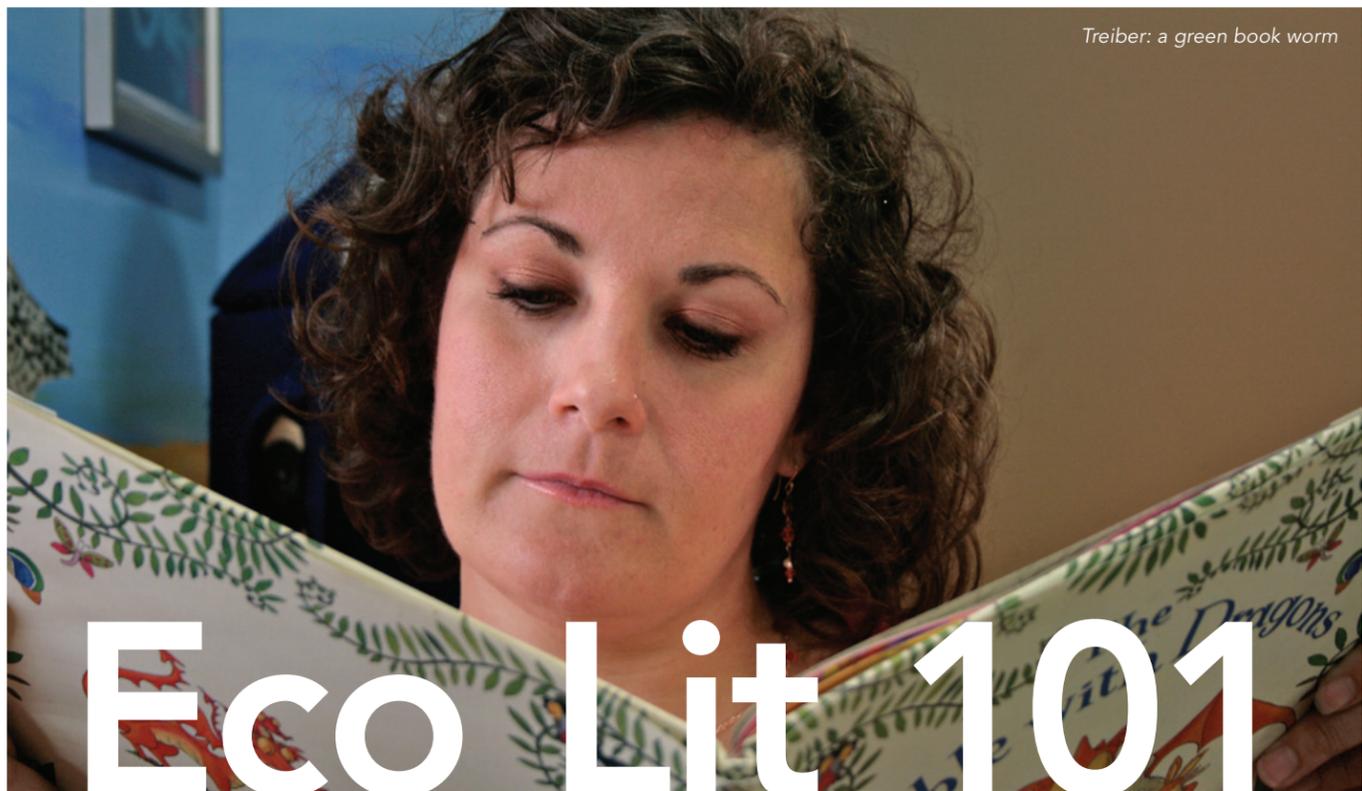
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Treiber: a green book worm



Eco Lit 101

Aquarium Education Manager Tara Treiber talks sustainability in the stacks

I have a secret. A poorly kept secret, but a secret no less: I am a bibliophile. I love books! I love to hold books, smell books, touch books and of course read books. And, I love to own them too. I know, I know... printing books is hardly a sustainable process.

A friend once told me she thought I loved to own books because I wanted to own the knowledge they contain, and I really had no comeback. I love to learn, which is probably part of why I became an educator. I wanted others to be as excited about learning as I am, and I think learning often starts with reading.

So, when I was asked to be a part of the Santa Monica Public Library's Green Prize in Sustainable Literature youth selection committee, I jumped at the opportunity. As an educator, I strive to create teaching materials that are scientifically accurate and developmentally sound, that inspire a conservation ethic and are just plain fun to use. I also try to recognize creations by others that embody my goals. The opportunity to be a part of something that acknowledges the work of others, introduces me to new books and encourages me to read more appealed to me on many levels.

As a city, Santa Monica strives to exemplify sustainability in all of its endeavors, and the library is an active part of that. The Green Prize in Sustainable Literature strives "to encourage and commend authors, illustrators and publishers who produce quality books for adults and young people that make significant contributions to, support the ideas of, and broaden public awareness of sustainability."

Every year, the youth and adult selection committees

spend January through July reading as many books as we can get our hands on that have an environmental feel to them. Some of the books we ourselves find, while publishers, community members or the authors themselves submit others. The goal is to pick books that are well written, accurate and inspiring. They should encourage a conservation ethic that is accessible and applicable to a wide variety of audiences across the cultural and economic spectrum.

In addition to the youth and adult category winners, the committee also chooses a recipient for *The Pioneer Award* every year, which goes to a person for his/her overall contribution to the green movement in an original way. Past recipients of *The Pioneer Award* include many of those writers who have been seminal influences on the lives of environmental educators: Rachel Carson, Theodor Giesel (aka Dr. Seuss) for *The Lorax*, and Jane Goodall.

If you are looking for books whose sustainable message has been vetted or just books to add to your summer reading list or your facility's library, the winners of the Green Prize in Sustainable Literature are a good place to start. Last year's winners run the gamut — from a book about disappearing honeybees to a parable about global climate change. This year's winners were to be announced in a ceremony open to everyone at the Santa Monica Public Library on Saturday, Nov. 6

If you have any questions about the Green Prize in Sustainable literature, I'll be happy to put down my book and answer them for you. 

Tara Treiber can be reached at ttreiber@healthebay.org

A Father's Tale

Speakers Bureau volunteer Noah Blaustein finds some life lessons in toxic runoff

A memory: My brother and his buddy getting picked up from high school in the early '80s to get hepatitis shots — "just in case." Earlier that morning, after a night of hard rain, they'd skateboarded in near dark down through the Temescal trailer park near Pacific Coast Highway, suited up and paddled out at the Will Rogers Jetty just as the lights on the pier began to fade.



The waves were good — big and clean, but the water stunk and had a strange viscosity to it. The waves were coming at them fast and the water was cold and they kept duck-diving until they reached the outside and could rest. Neither of them said much at first. The color of the water became more visible as the sun rose. They knew that color. They knew that smell. They were suspicious. My brother said, "Greg, what is that floating by you?" They caught the next wave in.

When they walked into their first-period biology class their teacher asked them if they'd heard about the massive sewage spill in Santa Monica Bay that morning. They began to itch. They asked to go to the nurse's office. That night my brother's skin still smelled.

This was life before Dorothy Green began Heal the Bay in the mid 1980s. There were reports of formaldehyde leaking into the ocean from a cemetery that leached into a storm drain. The storm drain at Chautauqua and PCH generated gallows humor among residents. Friends swore it glowed some nights because its bacteria levels were so high and it was so full of other pollutants.

I am now on the cusp of my forties. I have two kids. I am a lifelong surfer. My joining the Heal the Bay's Speakers Bureau has helped align my actions closer to my beliefs, to use the skills I've honed in my professional life as a writer and lecturer to effect change.

I've surfed for so long with so much trash that I've almost become inured to it. I need to do a Heal the Bay Beach Talk or cleanup sometimes just to see it again. I do not want my kids to have to wait three days to enter the water after a storm. I do not want my kids to learn my bad habit of seeing so much trash that they don't see it anymore, so used to it that they think trash is part of their natural landscape.

The best way I know to make their world different is to get involved.

And Heal the Bay is one of the few organizations that provide serious in-depth training to its members. It's great to volunteer some labor on the weekends, but if you want to truly grasp the issues affecting our environment you



Portrait of the artist as a young man

should join the Speakers Bureau. The organization trains its volunteers right alongside employees.

The training taught me to see the landscape I grew up in anew. I learned in detail about the history of Heal the Bay, the Los Angeles basin watershed system, about water policy and the science behind the long-term and short-term effects of pollution.

But more important, I learned how committed the Heal the Bay staff is to improving our quality of life and how many people, from all walks of life, are eager to get involved.

Being able to deliver a motivational talk to a classroom of kids or lead a beach cleanup talk is an honor. It's a gift, really. When I wrote commercials for a living I never knew what kind of an impact, if any, my work had. Seeing kids' smiles when they learn what they can do to help the environment and seeing the beach after a cleanup leaves no uncertainty in my mind of the value of Heal the Bay and being involved. Since training I've spoken to pharmacists, kids from Downey, a church group from Fresno and hundreds more.

When I was growing up my parents joined the Sierra Club. They seemed an anomaly. The environment remained a somewhat abstract concept, and beach cleanups virtually didn't exist. Dorothy Green and Heal the Bay changed that. I feel better knowing that the likelihood my kids will go surfing during a sewage spill has been greatly reduced. They now have several avenues to get involved and make a difference. Heal the Bay's Speakers Bureau has given their father the direction to lead the way. 

To learn more about Heal the Bay's Speakers Bureau Program, visit healthebay.org/speakers 

From the Heart

Surfer Ken Seino has special reason to celebrate a ban on septic tanks in Malibu

The California State Water Board recently voted unanimously to support the Regional Water Board's prohibition of on-site wastewater plants in the Malibu Civic Center area. Opposition to the action was strong with Malibu's City Attorney actually threatening litigation if the State Board upheld the prohibition, which aimed to prevent seepage of harmful bacteria from outmoded septic tanks. After years of back and forth with the city, the decision marked a huge victory for water quality in Malibu.

Heal the Bay has been working on improving conditions in Malibu for many years. We asked our partners to respond to the victory. Longtime surfer and Malibu Surfing Association member Ken Seino offered these thoughts about the hearing.

As a member of the Malibu Surfing Association and a surfer of Surfrider Beach since 1971, I was asked by MSA president Michael Blum to accompany the "A-Team" to Sacramento to speak before the State Water Board. This five-member team consisted of Michael; Liz Crosson, executive director of Santa Monica Baykeeper; Nancy Hastings, Surfrider Foundation's Southern California field coordinator; Mark Gold, president of Heal the Bay, and me.

Needless to say, I felt more like a mascot than a contributor on the team. These brilliant minds with august credentials and achievements gave me confidence in going up against the opposition, who would seek to discredit our environmental efforts for a clean and healthy Malibu.

Call me biased, but from the first time I surfed the place, I knew Surfrider Beach was special and, dare I say it, sacred. But the continuous human pollution from Malibu Creek eventually played Russian Roulette with me and it won. I suffered a prolonged illness from a fecal virus contracted as I surfed here and almost died from it. The disease damages the heart muscle and even causes your own immune system to weaken you. It is irreversible.

Two surfer friends of mine did die from the very same virus here. They asked me to help them fight for its restoration to the pure and holy place that the Chumash tribe ascribed it to be. So, to honor my friends and honor this place, how could I refuse?

I had heard of last-minute strategies by the city of



Seino in trim at Surfrider

Malibu to have the septic ban remanded to the L.A. Board because of its contention that the prohibition was "technically unfeasible and politically unachievable."

So I was worried as I walked into the State Water Board hearing room and sat next to my esteemed teammates. We each spoke, with Mark Gold wrapping up succinctly all of the issues at stake. We sat down, hoping and praying that our words persuaded the five-member board that would make the final decision.

The city of Malibu arrived with its own A-Team. Euphemized threats of litigation were uttered and Mark Gold was gratuitously misquoted. I hoped that the board would see through this. Other opponents spoke as well. The residents and commercial interests complained how oppressive the ban would be to them personally.

But suddenly, after the last speaker had appealed, the board called for the vote. And in a few minutes, a unanimous vote (5-0) in our favor was recorded. About 90% of the room vacated as the board moved on to other business. We sat there together silent, staring straight ahead, stunned. All these decades of activism, protest and creation of organizations to fight this breach upon the environment and public health, and now the victory had finally been achieved. Is this how it felt at Waterloo? Mark Gold got up from his chair, looked at us and said, "What, did someone die? Hey, we won!"

It didn't hit me personally until I was on the plane staring out the window as we were coming home. I thought about my own fight for this place I love, and also about Ralph Gambina and Erik Villanueva, who died from infections from surfing Malibu. They were vocal in insisting upon this ban of septic tanks in Malibu. This is what they fought for and it is finally a reality. As I stared out the window of the plane at the glistening ocean, I cried for Malibu, but this time they were tears of joy. 



ANOTHER CLEAR VICTORY

More good news from Malibu: The Coastal Commission has unanimously approved an ambitious rehabilitation project to restore oxygen-depleted Malibu Lagoon. Read all about the controversy surrounding the plan at Mark Gold's blog post at Spoutingoff.wordpress.com 

Roeber Murray at work and play



MAKING A SPLASH

Staff scientist and diver Dana Roeber Murray on the final push for Marine Protected Areas

There is nothing quite like strapping on a SCUBA tank, shimmying into a 7 mm thick wetsuit and diving below the surface of the ocean to explore California's wild marine ecosystems. Even if I'm diving for research, I am continually transported to a calming world. Leaving the stresses of urban L.A. behind, I can get lost in an undersea forest of swaying kelp, with sunlight filtering down to rocky reefs full of stunning marine wildlife.

This underwater visual feast is amplified in Marine Protected Areas (MPAs), such as those found off the northern Channel Islands. Diving in an MPA is like taking a hike in Yosemite National Park. You are experiencing wildlife in one of the world's premier reserves. Rockfish, lincod, and male California Sheephead — fish that can be difficult to find outside of MPAs — are able to grow to maturity and reproduce, just like cheetahs and elephants do in the national parks of Eastern Africa.

For these reasons and more, Heal the Bay has been working for the past three years to extend California's network of MPAs into Southern California's coastal waters and the southern Channel Islands.

California continues to lead efforts in the United States to protect our kelp forests, rocky reefs and deep canyons as a network through the Marine Life Protection Act (MLPA). Over 100 years ago, America began to protect our most special places on land by establishing national parks. Today, California is doing the same for our ocean with MPAs.

In April, the Fish and Game Commission voted to move forward with the Integrated Preferred Alternative (IPA) as the map preference for the location of South Coast MPAs. This map includes protections in Los Angeles County at Point Dume in Malibu, the southern side of Palos Verdes and Catalina Island's Farnsworth Banks, Wrigley, and Long Point.

The Fish and Game Commission process to finalize these MPAs is moving through its last steps this fall.

On Dec. 15-16, the Commission will consider the adoption of Southern California's MPAs, establishing our first network of underwater parks in the Southern California Bight. It is critical that the Commission hears public voices backing this historic effort.

Support from Heal the Bay's volunteers, members, staff and board members has been incredibly helpful in the MPA process to date and we are excited to see all our hard work pay off soon.

In a few years, MPAs will have been established long enough to allow some of the marine life that has been depleted due to fishing to rebound. Then, we can celebrate preserving our marine heritage for future generations.

I look forward to seeing you out there reveling in our ocean legacy — whether diving in a kelp forest, surfing a clean break, kayaking a rocky coastline or just feeling the warm sand beneath your toes.

Contact me at dmurray@healthebay.org for more information about attending the December meeting, or visit healthebay.org  and submit a support letter at:

» TAKE ACTION

People Power

By REFUGIO MATA

Rhonda Webb, a community leader from Compton who works closely with Heal the Bay, offered a simple but powerful truth to state legislators during a recent trip to Sacramento:

"In our community, we have gone from asking 'Why are things this way?' to 'How can we change them?'"

Webb joined a delegation of similarly spirited environmental activists who headed to the Capitol with Heal the Bay in August to ramp up support for AB 1998, a bill that aimed to ban the distribution of harmful single-use bags at major California retailers. The measure had been passed by the California State Assembly and needed to be approved by the State Senate as a next step. Based on previous at-

tempts to pass similar legislation and pressure from Big Plastic, we knew that the road for this particular bill would be a difficult one.

Unlike past efforts, an unprecedented coalition of grocers, unions, cities, counties and environmental groups had banded together to push the bill forward. Even Gov. Schwarzenegger, who had previously opposed similar legislation, supported it this time around, joining forces with Senate pro-tem Steinberg and Assembly Speaker Perez.

With past opponents on our side, our coalition of supporters had also diversified in a relatively short period of time. Thanks to Heal the Bay's *Healthy Neighborhood, Healthy Environment Project*, we were able to do quite a bit of on-the-ground grassroots mobilizing in key districts, like South Los Angeles, where we raised awareness and support for this piece of legislation.

Our South L.A. community partners held community cleanups and reusable bag giveaways months prior to the actual vote all over Compton, Watts and Southeast Los Angeles. We also organized face-to-face meet-ups. For example, partner group The Association of Communities United for South Los Angeles, met with state Sen. Curren Price and Assemblymember Isadore Hall in their individual district offices to ask for support personally.

The experience that our *Healthy Neighborhood* team



Mata, center, with Heal the Bay staff and community partners

would go through as we built momentum to generate support for banning the plastic bag was certainly eye-opening to me.

The opposition to the bill, the American Chemistry Council, had mobilized its crew of paid lobbyists to ensure that the legislation was killed on the Senate floor. But when we got our chance to meet with the senators and their staff face to face, we were no longer abstracts to them. We were real people, members of the districts they represented and we were certainly not paid lobbyists. During our meetings, we took the opportunity to let the senators know that we were tired of plastic bag pollution. Communities in South L.A. tend to be the most pol-

luted. Another community partner, Kendra Okonkwo, executive director and founder of Wisdom Academy, a charter science elementary school in South L.A., expressed her frustration at watching kids trudge through plastic trash around the school on the way to class every day.

We had heard the unsettling news that former Assembly Speaker Fabian Nuñez had been hired as a lobbyist by the American Chemistry Council to kill the bill. While becoming a lobbyist after leaving office is nothing new in our political system, finding out that Nuñez, someone who had previously received awards for support of groundbreaking environment initiatives in the past, actually joined the opposition was disconcerting.

The plastic bag bill was ultimately defeated. While our Heal the Bay staff naturally felt dispirited after the vote, it was our community partners that gave us a much needed boost. We began receiving e-mails and comments from people that had become invested in our efforts, reminding us that while the American Chemistry Council may have won this battle, we must fight on to win the war against plastic pollution. Sometimes it takes a friend to remind you of the bigger picture. Rhonda Webb from Compton wrote to me:

The trip to Sacramento marked a defining moment in my life. My mantra became "ain't gonna let nobody turn

me around, turn me around." As such, I look forward to supporting Heal the Bay's effort to reduce pollution in California's coastal waters while building strong communities. While last night proved there is much work to be done, it also proved there is an even greater opportunity for me to talk to my family, friends and community about the work we each can do individually and collectively to ensure our future is sustainable.

Mata is organizer of Heal the Bay's Spanish communications and our Healthy Neighborhoods, Healthy Environment Initiative.

Day Without A Bag



Despite widespread support by a broad coalition of environmental, local government, union and business groups, AB 1998 failed to collect sufficient votes in the Senate. The deep-pocketed American Chemistry Council spent millions on a misleading, last-minute lobbying and advertising campaign designed to blunt growing popular sentiment for curbs on plastic trash.

Heal the Bay has taken the fight to ban harmful plastic bags to the local level. We are encouraged that the city and county of Los Angeles are now poised to enact their own measures given that state legislators have failed to adopt a uniform policy to address the economic and environmental waste caused by the state's use of 19 billion bags each year.

We will be holding a summit this year to help local municipalities draft their own ordinances and learn best practices from other cities that have successfully passed legislation, such as San Francisco, Palo Alto and Malibu.

To read more about the summit, bag giveaways and other components of our fourth annual "Day Without a Bag" this Dec. 16 in L.A. County, visit healthebay.org

Inner Green



Kianna Nesbit, Education Manager with the L.A. Conservation Corps, teamed up with Heal the Bay to help students in Watts at Youth Opportunities High School connect to the environment.

How did you first start working with us?

Staff members from your Healthy Neighborhoods, Healthy Environment team invited me to some trainings and workshops highlighting the urban connection to the larger environment. Reg Mata invited our high school to apply for a grant with the Office of Community Beautification, a grant giving monies to create green spaces in urban areas. We invited parents, school staff, community members and students to participate in talks and planning sessions to identify the kind of green space that they would like to see. Reg and architect Steve Cancian gathered their ideas and created a blueprint and we submitted the application and were awarded a grant of nearly \$10,000. Since then the high school has worked with Heal the Bay on community cleanups. Some of our youth have attended environmental education trainings/workshops. Luis Alvarado, a recent graduate, actually worked for Heal the Bay as a youth leader, working on "A Day Without a Bag," and as the lead artist for the Watts Community Garden Plaza.

How does Heal the Bay fit with what you do at work and/or at home?

Working for the Conservation Corps, it is of course expected that we espouse a plan at work as well as at home that complements a viable environmental agenda. Well, Youth Opportunities High School hadn't had a consistent, static environmental education programming agenda until our relationship with Heal the Bay began. Heal the Bay has helped the high school better fit within the mission of the Los Angeles Conservation Corps.

What are your next steps?

We are working together to form a group, Generation Green. This group will complement our sister school ECO Academy's Generation Green and will endeavor to provide our students with a knowledge base and skill level that will enable them to become environmental stewards. Insight and expertise from Heal the Bay is the educational backdrop for this group's emergence.

Tipping the Scales

Farmed seafood must play a role in feeding our planet, but can it be sustainable?

By NICK FASH

From New York to L.A., you can find salmon on almost any restaurant menu. Salmon is the third most consumed seafood in America. But with this massive demand comes the need for tremendous supply that our rivers and ocean have long been unable to provide.

The population of Atlantic salmon that once numbered in the hundreds of millions is now estimated to be around 500,000. Some 40% of Pacific salmon are extinct from their historic rivers in California, Oregon, Idaho and Washington. So how are we still able to find bright orange salmon stacked high at the fish market?

Aquaculture has been practiced for thousands of years, yet a recent explosion in this type of farming has led us to now produce more fish from aquaculture than we catch from the wild. Science, technology and selective breeding have created the ability to raise a tremendous amount of salmon at a very cheap rate. Today three out of every four salmon consumed worldwide was scooped out of a fish farm located in Europe, Canada, South Africa, Chile or New Zealand.

The mad dash to produce inexpensive seafood has led to the adoption of destructive practices that have largely been hidden from the seafood eating public. Just as we raise massive quantities of livestock on land, we now do so underwater, and many of the same ills that plague our cattle, pig and chicken industries also affect large scale fish farming. Excess waste polluting the environment, disease,



CIRO BORO VIA FLICKR

escapement of farmed fish that can interfere with wild populations and the harvest of massive amounts of wild fish to produce the feed for these fish-farming operations are all problems surrounding farmed salmon.

The harmful practices being used by the salmon farming industry either went unnoticed or were written off as an inevitable cost of producing food for our planet's growing population.

At first the only people who voiced concern were those who monitored the declines of the once mighty salmon runs. They warned of elevated levels of PCBs — a harmful industrial chemical used as an insulator for transformers and electrical components — in farmed salmon. Thanks to modern information sharing and the recent trend towards healthy food for a healthy planet, the public began to

demand more sustainable options. This consumer-driven motivation trickled up and has spawned a movement to produce seafood in a more earth-friendly manner.

British Columbia has been a major battleground between farmed and wild salmon since the 1980's. Once pristine bays filled with wild Pacific salmon have now been clogged with open-net salmon farms, which pass along sea lice to wild fish and degrade the environment with the tremendous waste they produce.

Salmon aquaculture in Chile has caused devastating eutrophication effects with high nutrient levels, algal blooms and low oxygen concentrations. Through pressure from non-governmental organizations, consumers and government, certain farmed salmon producers are taking the lead to provide a better option using better science and management practices.

To alleviate some of the destructive practices mentioned above, some producers are stocking the pens with less fish, leading to reduced stress and in turn, less disease. They have developed sophisticated software and bottom sensor systems to model site topography and diurnal current patterns, allowing for farm placement in areas that better flush the waste.

By also leaving farms fallow during times when the wild salmon are passing by, the spread of disease has been reduced. Salmon are carnivorous and need large amounts of other fish to eat to grow at a rapid rate. The amount of wild fish needed in the feed to produce one pound of farmed salmon, known as feed conversion efficiency, has been drastically reduced from five pounds of wild fish to create one pound of salmon down to 1.2 pounds of wild fish per pound of salmon. This is a big step towards lowering the impact upon our wild stocks.

Major salmon producers, like Marine



The author in the wild

Harvest, have begun trial runs of inland closed containment systems that could alleviate many of the problems commonly associated with salmon farming, as these new systems are separate from the surrounding ecosystem and all the waste and disease can be monitored and dealt with sustainably.

Currently there are a number of agencies working to set-up sustainable aquaculture standards, with the World Wildlife Fund's Aquaculture Stewardship Council (ascworldwide.org) emerging as the leader. The group hopes to shape a farm-to-table accountability that will add value to a product that is farmed sustainably.

Through a rigorous certification process that meets specific sustainability requirements for each species, global aquaculture businesses will be able to reap the rewards of producing their product in a sustainable manner with the consumer being able to easily identify a sustainable fish at the market. While the standards are still being formulated for salmon, the improvements being made by some producers will hopefully become the

standard for a global industry.

The industry as a whole has a long way to go and there are still many problems to face, yet the future looks hopeful, due to educated consumers like you. By utilizing the Seafood Watch card and asking your server at restaurants and your local fishmonger where their fish comes from, you can help steer the direction of salmon farming.

Our population is growing and the wild stocks are fished to their limit, so farmed seafood has to play a role in feeding our planet. (Tilapia and catfish are two sustainable choices.) It will take a partnership among government, industry, non-governmental organizations and consumers to create a more sustainable product and an educated consumer who will seek it out. Producers and suppliers who take the lead will be rewarded for their efforts by the marketplace and this trend will hopefully spread throughout the industry as producers see the added value of doing things right. 

Nick Fash is a staff educator at the Santa Monica Pier Aquarium



Meet a Major Donor: MURAD

Tell us about Murad's philosophy of philanthropy.

Murad sees philanthropy as part of a healthy, balanced life — for our company and for our employees. By giving back to the community we are investing in our own emotional self-care, part of Dr. Murad's Inclusive Health philosophy. Through our Employee Charity Program, we encourage our employees to give back by offering one paid day off a month to perform volunteer work for their charity of choice.

What was the Heal the Bay Corporate Healer Beach Cleanup like for employees at Murad?

Eye opening! Our employees had a great time bonding as a team at the Heal the Bay cleanup. But everyone was astonished by the amount of trash on our local beach. We're headquartered in El Segundo, about a mile from the beach we cleaned, so at the end of the morning, everyone was proud to have helped a cause that does so much good so close to home.

As a group, Murad picked up 402 lbs at Dockweiler Beach, the most that any Corporate Healer group has picked up yet.

Our employees were amazed at just how much trash was on the beach. We knew that the cleanup wasn't supposed to be a competition but we're always proud to capture the flag for a good cause.

What was the feedback from the cleanup? From an educational and ocean health perspective, did the group come away learning how they can make a difference?

The cleanup was both a great reminder to people of the issues that affect our local environments and also a

great revelation that showed us all how we can actively make a difference by chipping away at the larger problem of people ignoring or just not really thinking about the environment.

What are the issues that matter most to Murad and how do they tie to the work that Heal the Bay does?

Murad is committed to helping people make the small changes they need to look and feel their best — the changes that lead to healthier lives. We think that Heal the Bay is mirroring that philosophy on a larger scale by encouraging people to make small changes that can lead to a healthier overall environment.

Want to do a Corporate Healer Beach Cleanup with us again?

Absolutely! The cleanup was a wonderful experience and we'd be eager to participate in another Heal the Bay event.

Want to sponsor your own Corporate Healer Beach Cleanup? Visit Healthebay.org/CHBC

You may be able to double or even triple your donation to Heal the Bay at no extra cost to you! Please check to see if your company has a matching gift program. Or visit Earth Share to learn about employee giving programs at www.earthshare.org

Thank You

The following list represents gifts from May 1, 2010 through August 31, 2010.

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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:

Peter Carpenter
Nora Casa
L. J. & Eva Donato
Jake & Ciel Ganay
Vivienne Gerson
Girls on the Run — Eagle Rock Child Care Center
Stephen Kay
Michael Kempster
Niklas Kempster

Rafaella Kistler
Jessica Lieban
Eva Sigjsmondi
Camren Narchi
Michael Schwiager
Marla Smith
Liam Stevenson
Bernadette Williams
Dillon Zecher

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:

Adela	Matson Lopata
Rikki & John Balk	Rachel Lotwin
The Bice Family	Len Mazzocco
David Blocker	Oliver McElroy
Greg Bratman	Meltiffako
Boyce Bugliari	Rachel Morris & Don Gittelson
Dennis Cassity	Jack Oram
Joyce Dara	Gary Peplow
Elaine DeHoyos	Jim & Jackie Peter
Mike Desso	J. Allen Radford
Ron Durgin	Vivienne Riggio
Jennifer Everhart	Ryan Schneider
Isaac-David Feinberg	Sam Simon
Bill Friedman	Sheila Sophia
Jerry Friedman	Steve Stark
Jamie Gorenberg	Travers Tobis
Jeremy & Skylar Hartman	Jeanne Tomcavage
Emma Hayes	Richard Townsend
Alexandra Iselborn	Toyota Santa Monica Customers
Sarah Johnson	Alex Walla
Baker, Kurtz & Kamm	Patrick Walsh
Jensen Klein	Joanna Yarbrough
Veronica Lewis	Patrick Yeh
Tim Long	Dillon Zecher

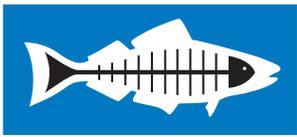
IN MEMORY OF

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:

Gary Allen	Fallen LAPD Officers
Norman Berg	C. Lowry
Philip Clousner	John Modugno
Marc George	Dusty Peak
Lloyd Gordon	Marvin Smith
Patrick Keyes	Allan Tanner
Andrew Koenig	Mark Vinson
Karly Kojimoto	Cate Walla



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