

Announcer – Judie Panneton

California’s beaches are beautiful, but a closer look shows something crystal clear. Trash pollution in water is a major problem and the State and Regional Water Boards are working hard to solve it.

Trash is polluting beaches, the ocean, bays, rivers, streams, and lakes.

For humans, trash poses a safety concern because it contains harmful bacteria and viruses that make people sick.

Trash injures and kills birds and marine life and it destroys the habitat where they live.

To some fish, these tiny, plastic pellets look like food and scientists are finding more and more in their digestive tracts.

Birds and sea turtles are mistaking the litter for food, too. Some starve to death because eating plastic tricks them into thinking they’ve had enough to eat.

Most of the trash that ends up in water was first left on land.

Rain and water runoff carry the trash in to local waterways from places like streets, parks, beaches, parking lots and from uncovered and overflowing trash cans.

Studies show that most of the trash being found in water includes plastic, like bags and utensils as well as polystyrene foam containers, bottle caps, and cigarette butts.

Interview with Dominic Gregorio – environmental scientist – State Water Board

“As an environmental scientist, I’ve done a lot of work looking at trash around the state; looking at studies done by other people about trash not only in the state but around the country, and around the world. It’s much more common in urbanized areas. Studies we have done have shown it’s very abundant in places where lots of people live.”

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That’s why there are several trash problems in waterways in metropolitan areas like San Francisco, San Diego, Los Angeles, and Orange County.

Interview with Dominic Gregorio:

“The best way we control it is by preventing it from getting into the ocean, getting into the bay, getting into our lakes and rivers. We want to prevent that from happening:”

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The Los Angeles Regional Water Board became the first in the nation to require cities and other municipalities to reduce and prevent trash from going into waterways.

Interview with Deborah Smith – Los Angeles Regional Water Board

“Back in the 1990s, when the L.A. Water Board staff was doing its annual survey of the water bodies, we started noticing a real increase in the amount of trash in and along our water bodies. In particular, we noticed trash in the highly used recreation areas like the Angeles Forest where some of our population goes to recreate during the hot, summer days inland. We also noticed more trash at the beaches and more in our urban watersheds.”

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Communities have choices to comply with regulations. Some are installing devices under storm drains that trap the trash and prevent it from flowing into waterways...and they're reporting high success rates in keeping the water clean.

Interview: Deborah Smith – Los Angeles Regional Water Board

“Regulations have driven innovation in terms of technology. These new technologies are following along to make even further improvements.”

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Reducing trash in all of California's waterways is a priority of the State and nine Regional Water Boards.

Interview: Jonathan Bishop – Chief Deputy Director – State Water Board

“The reason the State Water Board does regulations is to provide a clear and consistent framework for statewide consistency. By having a regulation in place, the municipalities know what they need to do and how to go about it. With our plans and policies, we never tell people how to accomplish what we want. We just tell them what needs to be done and they figure out the most cost effective way to do it.”

Interview: Dominic Gregorio:

“We have some of the most beautiful water bodies in the state. We have beautiful coastlines, beautiful bays, beautiful lakes, beautiful rivers. People come to California to enjoy our water bodies. People that live here enjoy our water bodies. It's really important that we protect those water bodies.”

We can help too, by cleaning up after ourselves; by throwing garbage in cans and dumpsters; instead of on the ground, on beaches and in the water.

By working together, we help protect the water we drink, the water in which we swim, fish, and play,

As well as the birds, aquatic and marine life...whose lives depend on clean water.