

## 2020 Dockwalker Program Virtual Trainings Success

This year has been a unique one, bringing many challenges. However, challenges can also bring new opportunities, which it did for the Dockwalker Program. Due to COVID-19, this year the Dockwalker partners – California State Parks, the California Coastal Commission, and The Bay Foundation – quickly redesigned the in-person trainings and transitioned to virtual trainings. We were able to offer 13 Dockwalker virtual trainings to 187 participants!



Partner Dockwalkers at one of the 2020 Virtual Trainings

Photo: Vivian Matuk (California State Parks and California Coastal Commission)

Dockwalkers are partners and environmental educators, trained to provide face-to-face boater education about clean boating practices and distribute [California Boater Kits](#). They perform these duties while visiting boating facilities, boat launch ramps, boat shows and events, and through presentations at yacht clubs, or by simply talking to boaters when the opportunity arises. Boaters receive a boater kit after completing a questionnaire and signing a pledge to adopt clean boating practices. The questionnaire helps to improve future education efforts for the Dockwalker Program. In addition, the questionnaire notes a boater's zip code; this way we can identify which areas around the state have been engaged by Dockwalkers. Due to the pandemic and urgent need to keep Dockwalkers safe, safety guidelines were established.

By summer, depending on their locations across the state, some partner Dockwalkers were able to safely meet with boaters, distribute the California Boater Kits, and share clean boating practices with them.

This year, partner Dockwalkers distributed 1,992 boater kits. Despite the challenges and limitations, these dedicated partners made this year another success.

*Dockwalkers make a difference throughout the State of California!*

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We would like to express our deepest gratitude to all Dockwalker partners and organizations that supported the Dockwalker program this year. In 2020, the program partners worked together again with the U.S. Coast Guard Auxiliary, U.S. Power Squadrons, Save Our Shores, Lake Berryessa Partnership, and many more organizations.

Visit the [Dockwalker Hall of Fame](#) to find the Dockwalkers who administered and returned the highest number of surveys and joined the ranks.

Thanks to our partners, the following awards were provided to the Hall of Fame recipients:

- Trader Joe's products
- Gift certificates to:
  - Starbucks
  - Chipotle Mexican Grill
  - Sprouts Farmers Market
- California State Parks annual passes
- Life jackets



*Dockwalker Martin Mendoza (U.S. Coast Guard Auxiliary) in action*

*Photo: The Bay Foundation*

Next year program partners will continue to offer more virtual trainings.

To learn more about the Dockwalker Program visit: [www.BoatingCleanandGreen.com](http://www.BoatingCleanandGreen.com) or contact Vivian Matuk at [vmatuk@coastal.ca.gov](mailto:vmatuk@coastal.ca.gov).

The 2021 virtual trainings schedule will be posted in January 2021.

## Boater Sewage Disposal Survey: We Need Your Input!



*Photo: John Hollenbeck*

To determine the boating communities sewage disposal norms and preferences, California State Parks Division of Boating and Waterways (DBW), San Francisco Estuary Partnership (SFEP), and The Bay Foundation (TBF) have developed an anonymous and interactive online survey. By completing this survey, boaters can use their expertise and provide us with input to improve our programs that benefit the boating community and our environment. **Completing the survey takes no more than 5 minutes** so we encourage you to complete it now: [Boater Sewage Disposal Survey](#).

## Sharing the “Road” with Marine Mammals

There are few things more majestic than seeing a whale breach while you are out sailing along the California coast. Each winter and spring, gray whales migrate near shore between Arctic feeding and Mexican breeding grounds. Especially in the spring, gray whales wander into San Francisco Bay, San Diego’s Mission Bay, and Tomales Bay, a shallow arm of the Greater Farallones National Marine Sanctuary.

Unfortunately, their journeys can be complicated by human activity. While here, they face dangers from disturbance, ship strike, disorientation, entanglement in fishing gear, stress from harassment, and skin disease.

To prevent disturbance, the Farallones National Marine Sanctuary advises watching for a whale’s blow, or exhalation, which looks like a puff of smoke. Humpback and gray whale blows are bushy and rise to about 10 feet. Be aware there may be whales nearby that you do not see!

### **Boaters, including paddleboarders and kayakers, should not:**

- Approach a whale within 300 feet (the length of a football field).
- Cut across its path.
- Make sudden speed or directional changes.
- Get between a cow and her calf. If separated, the calf could starve.



*Humpback Whale Delta/Dawn (breaching in Sacramento River)*

*Photo: S. Wilkin NOAA/OPR*

Remember to adhere to the Marine Mammal Protection Act (MMPA)/ Endangered Species Act (ESA), which states: Marine mammals – whales, dolphins, porpoise, seals, sea lions, and otters – are covered under the MMPA and some, additionally, under the ESA. Power boaters and paddlers must resist the temptation to float alongside or otherwise interfere with our whale migration or get close to any marine mammal. The MMPA details minimum distances, harassment ([Learn about what constitutes harassment here](#)) and the corresponding fines of up to \$10,000.

You can read tips for safely viewing wildlife at [respect-wildlife.org](https://www.respect-wildlife.org). A good rule of thumb is to pay attention to whether an animal is reacting to you in any way, including looking at you. If it is, you are too close. Keep a good distance and use binoculars or a zoom lens.

Entangled whales should be reported immediately to the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration Whale Entanglement Hotline: (877) SOS-WHAL/767-9425. Never attempt to free a whale yourself.

All injured marine mammals should be reported to the Marine Wildlife Rescue regional agencies. Learn more about [Pollution and Wildlife Reporting Hotlines](#).

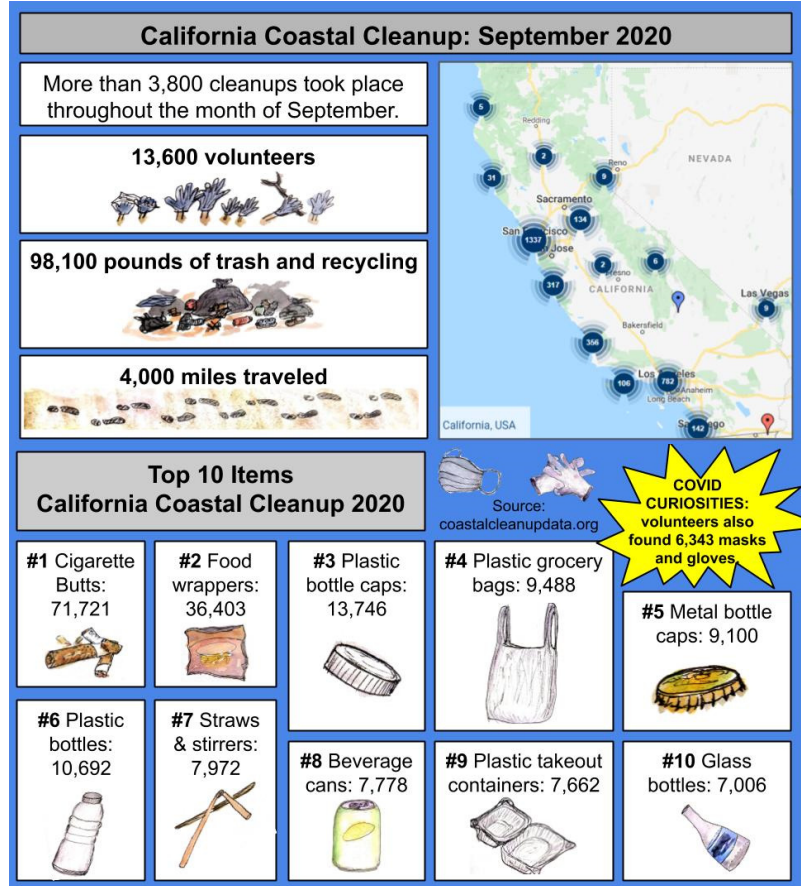
## California Coastal Cleanup During COVID-19

*Author: Eben Schwartz (Marine Debris Program Manager, California Coastal Commission)*

California's largest annual volunteer event adopted a very different model this year. Due to COVID-19 and the need to keep volunteers safe, the traditional California Coastal Cleanup DAY transformed into California Coastal Cleanup MONTH. Throughout September, volunteers were encouraged to clean California's coast starting from their own front door. Neighborhood cleanups — designed to remove trash from streets, local parks, creeks, and other natural areas — took place throughout the state with more than 13,000 participants.

Trash on our streets is ocean pollution just waiting to happen: When the rain begins, trash washes easily into storm drains and creeks, and from there, can wash out to the ocean or onto our coast. The neighborhood cleanup model was an effective method to help keep our coast free from marine debris.

As they cleaned, volunteers kept track of what they were finding using the [Clean Swell app](#). The results were impressive: As the month progressed, we watched as California led the world with more than 3,000 individual cleanup events by the end of the month — with 13,600 volunteers and 98,100 pounds of trash removed. This was more than three times the number of cleanups held in any other state or country. Other aspects of the data helped reveal the impact of the pandemic on our environment. For example, plastic grocery bags, which had been decreasing in the cleanup data set since 2010, saw a jump back into the top 10. This is likely due to the temporary suspension of the statewide plastic bag ban when the stay-at-home executive order began in March. Another interesting finding was the amount of personal protective equipment, such as gloves and masks, that were found. Volunteers removed more than 6,000 of these items, a testament to a new form of litter the pandemic has spawned.



2020 Coastal Cleanup Month Stats & Top Ten Collected Items

Photo: CA Coastal Commission

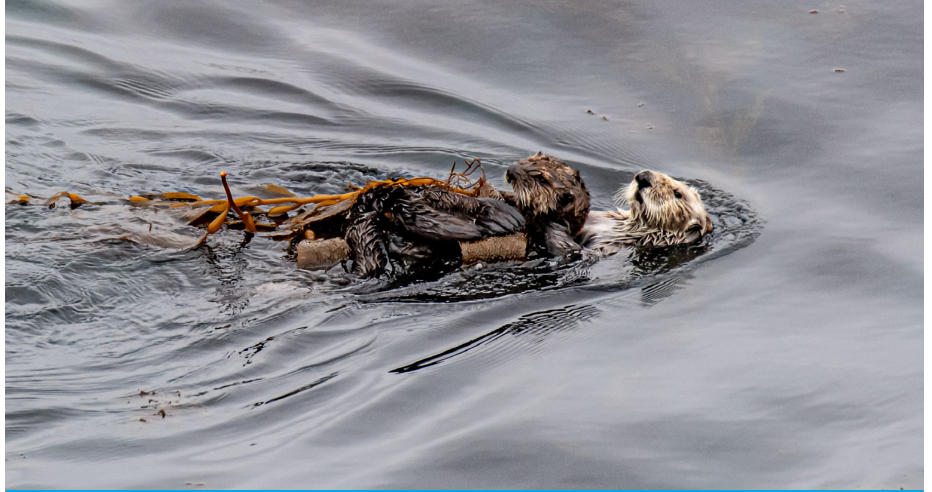
Of course, the boating community demonstrated its continued commitment to keeping our shorelines and waterways clean, as 335 volunteers and 29 vessels from 27 boating facilities and boating groups participated in the event. This community effort removed more than 3,930 pounds of trash and recyclables.

As we move into 2021 and beyond, local organizers are exploring ways to continue the neighborhood cleanup model in addition to hopefully returning to hosting large cleanup sites. The revised model allowed for many people to discover a new way to contribute to this stewardship activity. Organizers hope that continuing this cleanup model can bring more people than ever into the ongoing effort to protect our coast, ocean, and waterways.

For more information about this event, visit [coast4u.org](http://coast4u.org).

## Marine Protected Areas and Why They Matter

Marine Protected Areas (MPAs) are areas of the marine environment that have been reserved to protect marine life, marine habitats, and cultural resources. Because they are connected through the ocean, MPAs can help sustain, conserve, protect and even rebuild marine life populations, including those of economic value. They are globally recognized tools for enhancing and restoring marine life and allow for interactions between both fished and unfished species to occur in a natural setting.



*Otters swimming at Point Lobos Marine Reserve*

The three main types of MPAs — State Marine Reserve (SMR), State Marine Park (SMP), and State Marine Conservation Area (SMCA) — each have different rules about the activities that may or may not be undertaken within them. In general, SMRs do not allow any type of extractive activities, including fishing or kelp harvesting, with the exception of scientific collecting under a permit; SMPs do not allow any commercial extraction; and SMCAs restrict some types of commercial and/or recreational extraction. [View individual MPA regulations here.](#)

In 1999, when the California Marine Life Protection Act (MLPA) was passed, there were only 63 MPAs covering less than 3% of state waters. The MLPA became a high-profile initiative that led to the implementation of a network of 124 MPAs encompassing 16% of state waters within the 3-mile territorial limit.

This statewide initiative included the participation and recommendations from public, private, scientific, and local stakeholders, including recreational boaters and tribal communities from five coastal regions in California. The MLPA took 13 years to be fully implemented statewide, becoming the nation's first statewide MPA network and the largest ecologically connected MPA network in the world by 2012.

MPAs are a long-term management strategy to safeguard the health of our oceans. Now, after many years of management and monitoring, science has shown us that fisheries can benefit from MPAs. Fish in older California MPAs are [bigger](#) and [found in higher numbers](#), and fish [eggs and larvae](#) produced in MPAs can float outside of MPA boundaries in what is known as the “spillover effect.” It is believed that successful MPAs can populate surrounding waters and [impact the health and resiliency of fish populations](#) in neighboring areas.

Overall, this important and globally recognized management method for marine resources has become increasingly more important as communities grow to ensure the public can use and enjoy natural resources for generations to come.

To learn more about MPAs, where they are, specific regulations, and additional resources, please visit the [California Department of Fish and Wildlife's MPAs webpage.](#)

## Dye Tabs Help Marinas Detect Discharges



Shelter Island, San Diego

Boaters with onboard heads have options for disposing their sewage, but discharging overboard within a marina is not one of them. Not only is this practice unsanitary, it is also illegal under state and federal law (*California Health and Safety Code (CHSC) Div 14. Part 13 Section 117515 and 117525, 40 Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) 140.3(a)(1) and 33 CFR 159.7(b) and (c)*). Sewage in the waterways can lead to human and health issues from bacteria, viruses, and parasites. It can also cause excessive algae and plant growth, which limits the use of watercraft and affects marine life.

Marine sanitation devices are generally equipped with a Y-valve, or diverter valve, that allows for sewage containment onboard for later discharge at a stationary pumpout or by a mobile pumpout service. Boaters should have their Y-valve padlocked or zip-tied within the 3-mile territorial limit to prevent accidental discharges. Having the Y-valve in the locked position is particularly important in marinas and yacht harbors, which are often areas of poor flushing.

Detecting leaks within a marina can be tricky for harbormasters and marina managers. Fluorescent xanthene dye-tracing tabs can help visually spot leaks, accidental or not. Dye tabs are small tablets that can be dropped into the tank and brightly color the water where any sewage leaking from the boat is occurring. Tablets take a few minutes to disperse and should be flushed immediately to avoid staining. Xanthene tabs come in various colors and are allowable by the California Environmental Protection Agency and certified by the National Sanitation Foundation to the American National Standards Institute/National Science Foundation Standard 60 for use in potable water. Liquid dye is available as well.

Some marinas and yacht harbors have voluntary, or sometimes mandatory, programs to detect leaks. Marine sanitation devices should be regularly maintained, and every boater with an onboard head should understand how their Y-valve works. Armed with the proper tools and an understanding of the law, marinas can help boaters be good stewards of our waters.

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