



California Project WET Gazette

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There Is No Away!

Our drought deciduous buckeye trees have finally turned brown and have begun to shed their leaves, an event that usually occurs on the edge of the Sacramento- San Joaquin Valley by the end of June. The strange weather year has made it hard to believe another California summer is rapidly coming to a close, but the withered grasses are revealing once more the tell-tale signs of Fall in the form of the annual debris of the summer season- trash thrown from vehicles, clandestinely dumped on the side of the road, allowed to blow across the landscape or dragged by critters from unsecured sources. Out of sight; out of mind seems to be an unconscious mantra in California not only for the production of the natural resources we purchase and consume, who cares if a portion of the waste stream gets diverted once in awhile, just so long as it is away from our own backyard. But a closer look around one's own home and streets will probably reveal a scene that looks like the end of a *'Mad Men'* picnic and an understanding of the title of this article and one of the new Project WET activities - *'There Is No Away.'*

Californians contribute an average of 4.5 pounds of discarded material to the waste stream every day. (<http://www.calrecycle.ca.gov/NewsRoom/2011/06/June/11.htm>) Two-thirds of this trash flow ends up in landfills, but the rest flows elsewhere- and that elsewhere is often the across lands and into the waters we use to grow our food, to recreate and to drink. The bag that occasionally gets away from us in the parking lot, garbage that blew down the street from the overturned can in the last storm or the 'stuff' that blew out of the pick-up bed on the way home from work adds up quickly when multiplied by 37.2 million Californians. This material is not magically re-adsorbed by the environment the moment it leaves our sight, but is still out there floating over or laying on the landscape.

In 1984, Oregon resident Judie Neilson had had enough with the amount of plastic debris she saw littering the Oregon coast and organized the first Coastal Cleanup Day. Her efforts turned out over 2,800 volunteers on the beaches of Oregon. California emulated Judie's efforts with its first statewide Coastal Cleanup Day the following year. By 1993, California Coastal Cleanup Day was recognized by the Guinness Book of World Records as the "largest garbage collection" ever organized, with 50,405 volunteers. In 2010, 82,504 Coastal Cleanup Day volunteers collected a total of 1,224,663 pounds of debris - 1,030,263 pounds of trash and another 194,401 pounds of recyclable materials- from our waterways.

Coastal Cleanup Day events are no longer restricted to the coast, but have spread inland since most of the marine debris found on our beaches begins as upstream urban trash or street litter. This effort to "stop trash where it starts" has spawned many regional volunteer efforts to clean-up the local watersheds in which each of us lives, under the umbrella of Coastal Cleanup Day. One example is the Great Sierra River Cleanup. In September 2010, the 4,034 volunteers in this event removed 140 tons- 280,000 pounds- of trash and another 3,480 pounds of recyclable materials from Sierra Nevada

waterways, the primary surface water source for California farms, cities and a diverse array of natural ecosystems.

The intent of this piece is to encourage awareness of our personal role- this issue is the cumulative result of our combined daily actions and the solution begins with greater personal vigilance. September is a wonderful time to start! Project WET has several activities to help you and your students study the link between personal choices - *'Dilemma Derby'*, (p: 377); *'Sum of the Parts'* (p: 267) and the flow of our waste streams to our waterways- *'A- Maze-ing Water'* (p: 219); *'Rainy-Day Hike'* (p: 186). All but one of these activities has been updated for inclusion in Project WET Guide 2.0, where one will also find activities titled *'Stormwater'* and the title activity of this article. Check out the *'Websites of Interest'* to learn more about the impacts of the trash we generate and actions we can take to reduce our personal contributions. But above of all- enjoy a wonderful Fall season!

WEBSITES OF INTEREST

California Coastal Commission

<http://www.coastal.ca.gov/publiced/pendx.html>

The California Coastal Commission's Public Education Program works to increase public knowledge of coastal and marine resources and to engage the public in coastal protection and restoration activities. We offer a variety of conservation, education and community involvement programs. Click on the links above to learn more. There is bound to be a program just right for you, so get involved!

NOAA Marine Debris Program

<http://marinedebris.noaa.gov/about/welcome.html>

The NOAA Marine Debris Program (MDP) supports national and international efforts to research, prevent and reduce the impacts of marine debris. Marine debris is one of the most widespread pollution problems facing the world's oceans and waterways. Learn more about the issue and arm yourself with the most accurate information at: <http://marinedebris.noaa.gov/marinedebris101/mdinfo.html>. Find links to videos created in coordination with the NOAA Marine Debris Program to highlight and raise awareness about the problem of marine debris at: <http://marinedebris.noaa.gov/outreach/video.html>

Not So Great After All

<http://news.discovery.com/earth/ocean-garbage-patch-exaggerated-110112.html>

A well publicized collection of garbage in the Pacific Ocean is not nearly as dramatic as many reports suggest. Instead of mounds and towers, most plastic in the sea is tiny and widely dispersed. The truth may be worse than the actual hype when it comes to threats toward wildlife and the environment.

Algalita Marine Research Foundation

<http://www.algalita.org/research/index.html>

Algalita is expanding our research on marine plastic to include all five major gyres worldwide. We are confident our research will lead the way to a new era of consciousness regarding the issue of plastic marine pollution. Part of our current research is focusing on a better understanding of the magnitude of our plastic "footprint", including the effects of fish ingestion of plastic on human health.

Trash Control

http://www.waterboards.ca.gov/water_issues/programs/trash/

The State Water Resources Control Board's staff is developing a draft statewide policy for trash control in California's waterways. A proposed Statewide Policy for Trash Control in Waters of the State, known as the draft "Trash Policy," will identify trash as a separate pollutant and establish methods to control trash pollution in waterways, statewide. Studies have determined that trash in and along waterways like streams, rivers, lakes, and the ocean, adversely affects beneficial uses, including but not limited to threats to aquatic life, wildlife and human health.

Serve Outside September (S.O.S.)

http://www.childrenandnature.org/pdfs/NSN_ToolKit.pdf

Because of the Natural Service Network (NSN), empty lots became native gardens; trails were mapped, created and improved; plants were inventoried; watersheds were cleaned; and ladybugs and butterflies were raised and released. To build on this energy, the children and Nature Network (C&NN) has designated the month of September as Serve Outside September (S.O.S.). Please join us this year!

Become a Coastal Steward!

http://www.coastal.ca.gov/publiced/steward/pledge_form.html

If you care about the coast, become a Coastal Steward by pledging to improve our environment. We've compiled a list of ideas—there's something for everyone, whether you're 10 or 100 years old! This list includes ideas for reducing waste and pollution, conserving water and other resources, and becoming active in your community—all of which can help to protect and preserve our coastal and marine resources. If you'd like more information after reading the instructions below, please email coast4u@coastal.ca.gov or call (800) Coast-4U.

Schoolyard Habitat Project Guide

<http://www.fws.gov/cno>

Teachers and Educators – the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's School-yard Habitat Program is proud to announce the availability of the brand new Schoolyard Habitat Project Guide. This is not a book about why schoolyard projects are important; but a guide on how to make the best one suited for your site. This is your roadmap for transforming your school grounds into a destination that will engage the entire school community. To request a hard copy, please email your request to: R8SchoolYardHabitat@fws.gov.

If you would like more information on Project WET please contact Brian Brown, California Project WET Coordinator at: projectwet@watereducation.org or (916) 444-6240.

Check our website www.watereducation.org and/or contact us for updates.