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Ban the Bag Awareness March in Santa Monica

By Team Marine

(www.teammarine.org, <http://www.teammarine.blogspot.com>)

Santa Monica High School 601 Pico Blvd. Santa Monica, CA 90405

Student Contacts:

Raquel Shapiro: raquel.shapiro@gmail.com (310) 402-1070

Zack Gold: zackj.gold@gmail.com (310) 795-0020

Kou Collins: koucollins@gmail.com (310) 383-0029

Jessica Thorson: thorson.jessica@gmail.com (310) 622-5745

Teacher Contact:

Benjamin Kay bkay@smmusd.org (310) 395-3204 x71127



On Tuesday October 26, 2010, Team Marine and the Heal The Bay Surfrider Club students will stage their 6th friendly community march to raise awareness about the dangers of plastic bag pollution and the reusable bag solution. The march will begin at Santa Monica High School and continue into downtown Santa Monica between 4-7pm. Students will walk along major city streets, including Pico Blvd., Ocean Ave., 3rd St., Wilshire Blvd., and Lincoln Blvd. Other students and local residents are invited to participate. The march will conclude at Santa Monica High School.

According to recent reports, 100 billion single-use plastic bags are used each year in the USA, 6 billion in LA County alone. Plastic bags are difficult and costly to recycle and most end up in landfills, where they take an estimated 300+ years to break down and contaminate the soil. In the ocean, plastic bags leach toxic chemicals into the water and are accidentally ingested by turtles, whales, sea birds, and other marine life, which often die as a result. Plastic bags also take an enormous amount of energy to manufacture, which adds excess greenhouse gases to the atmosphere. Lastly, taxpayers pay lots of money to clean up these bags from waterways, city streets, and beaches.

Over two years ago, Santa Monica City Council drafted an ordinance to ban single-use plastic bags, but the ban was postponed because (1) the plastic bag industry threatened to sue the city, and (2) the city wanted to prepare an environmental impact report (EIR) to shield itself from future lawsuits from the plastic bag industry. With the EIR now finished, city council was to vote on the issue this month Oct. 26th, but for unclear reasons, the vote date was just pushed back again, the day still to be announced.

Team Marine and the Heal the Bay Surfrider Club promote many solutions to the plastic pollution issue, including banning single-use plastic products, like water bottles and grocery store bags, refusing to purchase disposable plastic products, switching to reusable products like bamboo utensils and stainless-steel canteens, pushing plastic bottle companies to leach caps to their bottles, installing screens and other advanced plastic filtration devices in curbside catch basins, increasing fines for littering, increasing storm water reclamation projects, educating youth at all grade levels about conservation and proper waste disposal, and manufacturing all necessary single-use items from bio-degradable materials.