



For Immediate Release

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Samohi Students Teach Middle School Students about Water Quality





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As part of the Surfrider Foundation Teach & Test Mentorship Program, Santa Monica High School students hosted an ocean water quality testing workshop for Lincoln Middle School and SMASH students this past Saturday. The main focus of the program was to engage students in a hands-on research project and to teach them about how to keep our local beaches clean. Santa Monica High School students took the middle school students through their weekly routine of water quality testing. The first part of the day was spent at the beach teaching the younger students how to fill out a habitat assessment data sheet and collect ocean water samples. Back at the laboratory, each student got to process his or her own sample using marine biology equipment. Throughout the day, the high school students also taught and played Jeopardy review games with the younger students about how to improve water quality and rethink their daily actions and products, like using reusable stainless steel water bottles instead of plastic ones.

The middle school students obtained water quality results for three sites. The two ocean sites, Santa Monica Pier and Bay St. (in front of the Pico-Kenter Storm Drain) were found to have good water quality despite the rain the day before sampling. Average bacteria levels at these sites were < 11.6 and < 18.7 Enterococci/100 mL, respectively. In contrast, the bacteria level in the pool of water on the sand at the mouth of the Pico-Kenter Storm Drain was 1420.3. The EPA recommends people do not enter the water when the level exceeds 104. Thus, the urban runoff pooled on the sand around the storm drain was highly polluted, while the ocean sites were relatively clean. Prior to testing, the students predicted ocean water quality was going to be highly polluted because of the rain, so the students refuted their hypothesis. It is possible that the rains were not heavy enough for the urban runoff, laden with bacteria, to completely breach the sand bar, flow into the ocean, and lower the water quality.

Santa Monica High School students were very pleased with how the mentorship program went. After taking part in Teach & Test, Clint Nicholson from SMASH Middle School said, "Everyone has an impact on the ocean," and "Chip" also from SMASH asked, "If we don't change the world who will?" Celina Stilphen, Heal the Bay Surfrider Club co-president, noted, "It was great to be teaching and encouraging the future leaders of tomorrow. The middle school students seemed inspired by the work we have been doing with Teach & Test." Zack Gold, the other co-president explained, "Teaching kids about the issues of marine debris and poor water quality encourages them to make differences in their daily routines and benefit the community."

Teach & Test Contacts:

Celina Stilphen (student) Senior at Santa Monica High School celinastilphen@yahoo.com
Lindsey Jurca Surfrider Foundation Education Chair, Surfrider Foundation, West Los Angeles Malibu Chapter 310-490-6887 education@surfriderwlam.org
Benjamin Kay Santa Monica High School Teacher, Environmental Coach, Marine Scientist (310) 395-3204 x127 bkay@smmusd.org