

PRESS RELEASE

California Coastal Cleanup Day 2005 Saturday, September 17th



Coastal Cleanup Comes Of Age

Saturday, September 17th, will mark the 21st anniversary of California Coastal Cleanup Day. While 47 California counties took part last year, with close to 51,000 total volunteers, the Coastal Commission is still hoping to achieve participation by all 58 counties in 2005. This statewide cleanup is part of a much larger national and international effort—International Coastal Cleanup—which focuses on educating people about the harmful effects of careless dumping and

environmental pollution on coastal beaches, as well as on lakes, streams and other inland waterways.

The California cleanup began with a primary focus on coastal areas, with heavily-polluted urban beaches the main target. Over the years, it has spread inland, with the growing realization that manmade debris, mostly generated on land, finds its way into all types of waterways. Because Lake Tahoe is such an environmentally-sensitive area heavily impacted by visitors during the summer months, this end-of-summer cleanup is especially important.

The Clean Tahoe Program is once again the Coastal Cleanup Coordinator here at the Lake. In 2004, almost 80 Coastal Cleanup volunteers covered over 17 miles of beaches and waterways and collected nearly 100 pounds of recyclables and just over 1,500 pounds of trash. The type and amount of debris was tracked on data forms provided by the Coastal Commission. As in past years, cigarette butts led the list, followed by plastic pieces, and then glass. A varied array of unexpected items showed up too, including a wheel from a steam engine train buried in the sand, a manhole cover, a live crawfish trapped in a bottle and a set of fake nails. Items found on past cleanups include a men's restroom sign and a silver-beaded watch found underwater by divers still working.

The cleanup is a great educational experience for adults and children alike, as participants learn first-hand how many different types of debris find their way to the rivers and lakeshore from inland sources. Paper, plastic, cigarette butts, oil and gas on city streets are all washed by rain and snow into storm drains and eventually into the Lake or nearby streams. Amazingly, errant golf balls from the Lake Tahoe Country Club continue to find their way down the Truckee River into Lake Tahoe. Not only is this avoidable manmade pollution an eyesore, it's extremely harmful to aquatic wildlife. Liquids can poison their environment. Solids can be mistaken as food and eaten, or create entanglements that trap and eventually kill them.

Local residents again have the opportunity to make a positive difference by taking part in California Coastal Cleanup Day on Saturday, September 17th. The cleanup begins at 9 a.m. and lasts until noon. It's a small amount of time to give to be part of a worldwide environmental campaign. Some of the areas cleaned last year by volunteer groups included Regan Beach, El Dorado Beach, the Truckee River Marsh at Cove East, Sawmill Pond, Blackwood Meadows and the Truckee River at Highway 50. Dive teams removed underwater debris from the Lake Tahoe shoreline stretching from Tahoe Keys to the Estates.

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The Cleanup works this way: groups of volunteers led by Beach Captains clean their selected area from 9 a.m. until noon. Both children and adults can take part, as long as children always work with adult supervision. All necessary supplies for the cleanup, such as trash collection bags, gloves, pencils, and charting forms are provided by the Coastal Commission. Volunteers carefully note the type and amount of debris collected, which later helps statewide, national, and international environmental groups determine what the major pollutants are and where the trash is coming from, in order to refine their efforts to correct the problem.

After the cleanup, Beach Captains phone in the debris collection tally to Clean Tahoe. The data is later entered into national and international environmental databases. In a few months, county coordinators receive results of the year's cleanup so they can compare the types and amount of debris collected in their local area with that collected both in other California counties and worldwide.

Now in its twenty-first year, California Coastal Cleanup Day clearly isn't just for the coast. The Lake Tahoe Basin portion of El Dorado County has been taking part for over a decade. Local residents have always realized that here at the Lake, we have a spectacular alpine environment to protect—and our sparkling clean waters are an important part of what makes this place so special.

As local coordinator, the Clean Tahoe Program is hoping that again in 2005, Lake Tahoe volunteers will choose to spend three hours of quality time to keep our lake and waterways clean and beautiful.

If you are an individual, family, business, or community-service group interested in becoming part of the Lake Tahoe cleanup on Saturday, September 17th, either as volunteers or Beach Captains, call the **Clean Tahoe Program** at 530.544.4210, or e-mail us at cleantahoe@sbcglobal.net.