

P3 POLLUTION PREVENTION POST

FALL 2008

YOUR NEWS & INFORMATION SOURCE ABOUT : RECYCLING, POLLUTION PREVENTION, LESS TOXIC PRODUCTS

ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH
SAN MATEO COUNTY



FlowstoBay.org Makeover

The San Mateo Countywide Water Pollution Prevention Program (SMCWPPP) was established in 1990 to reduce the pollution carried by stormwater into local creeks, the San Francisco Bay, and the Pacific Ocean.

In July 2008, the program's website was redesigned with the user in mind. Whether you are a community member, business, or municipal worker, you can find the information you are looking for to reduce pollution & keep our waterways clean!

You'll find:

- Watershed Map: Locate the watershed you live in!
- Less Toxic Pest Control
- Bay Friendly Gardening Practices
- Automobile Care to reduce pollution
- Toxics in household items
- Litter Reduction
- California Coastal Cleanup Day
- Report a Water Pollution Incident
- Best Management Practices for Businesses
- Information for Teachers and Students
- Kids Activities
- Current Community Events
- Community Action Grants

Go to www.flowstobay.org to find ways to reduce pollution & keep our waterways clean!

24th Annual California Coastal Cleanup Day

Saturday, September 20, 2008
9am to noon

Did you know that 80% of the trash that ends up in waterways comes from land-based sources? These include schools, restaurants, stores, homes, and industry. Whenever we leave trash behind – as we walk, drive, work, or picnic outdoors – we endanger marine animals and the environment they live in.

The birds, mammals and fish need our help. We spend all year playing in their backyard – let's spend a few hours cleaning it up. By picking up cigarette butts, plastic bags, tires, bottles, and other items, we prevent the litter from making its way to the bay and ocean via storm drains and waterways. Controlling litter at its source – properly disposing of & recycling solid waste – protects the environment and reduces cleanup and maintenance costs in our communities. [continued on page 2](#)



The Technology Turnover – are Old TV's Worthless?

To get ready for the switch to all-digital broadcasting in February 2009, many Americans are buying new HD televisions (high definition or digital) and junking their old ones. But do they need to? **A pre-HD (called analog) television will still work fine, with the help of either of two solutions:**

1. For homes with cable or satellite service, no changes should be needed – your service company will change the signal for you.
2. For homes using an antenna, without a cable or satellite service, an older TV will work with a converter box. Converter boxes cost between \$40 and \$70; and every household in the US is offered up to two \$40 coupons for them, from the Federal Communications Commission.

For more information and to order coupons, [continued on page 2](#)

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The Technology Turnover

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visit www.dtv2009.gov, or call 1-888-DTV-2009.

However, some consumers who like the newest technology may buy a new HD TV instead of making what they have work. This trend creates a buyer's market in used TV's in perfectly good condition; so if your old set is dying, now is a good time to purchase a used TV for the good of your bank account and the environment. Thrift stores, free exchanges on the internet (such as www.freecycle.org) and internet classifieds (such as www.craigslist.org) are all good sources.

Analog TVs that don't find a good home can be taken to an increasing number of retail stores for free recycling. Local stores accepting them can be found at www.earth911.org. In California, electronic appliances can't be put into the landfill (or ever just dumped illegally outdoors); and there are financial incentives for electronics recycling. These rules play an important role in keeping the large quantities of toxics and heavy metals in old televisions from contaminating our water and soil.

All the recent media about the HD switch-over in February 2009 can be confusing. But if you follow the three R's, your choices are clear.

- **Reduce:** consider how many TV's you really need and want in your home.
- **Reuse:** consider keeping your current TV, or replacing it with a good used set. If you will trade it in, can someone else use the old one?
- **Recycle:** if you must, take your old TV to a recycling center or retail store that will accept it for its value in materials.

By knowing your options and making good choices, you can help reduce pollution.



California Coastal Cleanup Day

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Coastal Cleanup Day is a volunteer event focused on cleaning up the marine environment. As the single largest one-day cleanup event in the world, International Coastal Cleanup Day has seen some impressive results in terms of the number of volunteers and the amount of debris cleaned up. Last year alone, San Mateo County residents picked up over 24,000 pounds of trash and recyclables from local beaches, creeks, and the bay. Funded by the California Coastal Commission and big sponsors like Whole Foods, we hope to make an even bigger difference in 2008!

You can help!

On Saturday, September 20th, 2008 join your friends, family, students, service groups, and neighbors to take care of your local environment, show community support, learn about the impacts of litter, and have fun!

FREE RE-USABLE WATER BOTTLES

Come to Coastal Cleanup Day on Saturday, September 20! Site captains will give away a limited amount of stainless steel water bottles to volunteers at their sites, while supplies last.



The San Mateo Countywide Water Pollution Prevention Program coordinates the California Coastal Cleanup Day in San Mateo County. All you have to do is pick a local cleanup location from our online list, show up, and cleanup! All materials will be handed out when you arrive at 9am. The cleanup event runs until noon. Remember to wear sunscreen and a hat, and bring a reusable water bottle. For directions and other information, visit www.flowstobay.org or contact Ana Clayton at 650.372.6214.

For groups of 10 or more, please RSVP to Ana Clayton 650.372.6214.

THE PLASTIC WATER BOTTLE PEST

For many people, unloading the week's groceries includes hauling a case or two of bottled water into the house. Over the past 10 years, there has been an upsurge in bottled water use in the United States, fueled by health concerns, the desire for convenience, and good old advertising.

Americans buy 28 billion water bottles a year, according to the Container Recycling Institute. Yes, that's 28 billion! And the environmental consequences of bottled water are equally dramatic. We need to look closely at our drinking water choices and their impacts, from 'mining'

local water supplies to manufacturing and transport of the bottles, to human health effects and bottle disposal issues.

Bottled vs. Tap

People choose bottled water because it is perceived to be safer and of higher quality than tap water, and as a healthy alternative to soda or other sugary drinks. Americans are willing to spend from 240 to over 10,000 times more per gallon for bottled water than for tap water.¹ Whether bottled water is better than tap water, and justifies its expense, remains under debate.

Tap water is highly regulated and tested for public safety by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). The Safe Drinking Water Act authorizes the EPA to enforce health standards for drinking water and requires public notification of water system violations and annual reports to consumers on contaminants found in drinking water. In addition, it includes provisions to protect underground water sources and requires disinfection of surface water

supplies. The U.S. has one of the safest water supplies in the world.

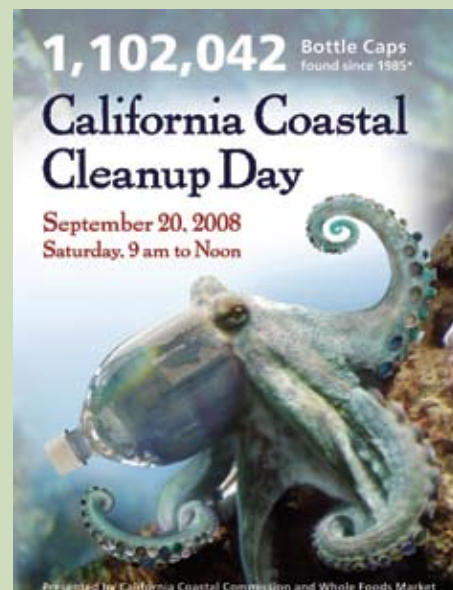
Bottled water falls under the regulatory authority of the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) which uses EPA's tap water standards to determine safety. However, just because water comes out of a bottle, it is not necessarily any cleaner or safer than water from the tap. In fact, an estimated 25 percent or more of bottled water is really just tap water in a bottle -- sometimes further treated, sometimes not. In addition, the FDA exempts from testing waters that are packaged and sold within the same state, which accounts for 60 to 70 percent of all bottled water sold in the United States.¹ As consumers, we should not assume that bottled water is safer than tap water.

In addition to the quality of bottled water, there are increasing concerns about the health effects of drinking water that has been stored in petroleum-based plastics. Studies continue on exposures to harmful chemicals from plastics leaching into liquids stored in the bottle. While these issues continue to be under investigation, we as consumers can choose to drink from containers made of glass, steel, and lead-free ceramics

Plastic Bottles and the Environment

Plastic bottles can be recycled and turned into items like carpeting or clothing -- but only a small percentage are. According to a report released by the California Department of Conservation, more than 1 billion water bottles wind up in the trash in California each year. Over 80% of plastic bottles produced are simply thrown away in our landfills or end up as litter on our streets and in rivers, lakes, and the ocean.

Plastic is not biodegradable, but goes through a process called photodegradation, breaking down into smaller and smaller pieces. This same



plastic water bottle, which is convenient for us to purchase and use, can become a deadly food product for a bird or fish if disposed of improperly. Plastic pollution is bad for animals and the environment. In addition to polluting our waterways or taking up space in our landfills if not recycled, plastic bottles have other environmental costs. A great deal of petroleum is used to manufacture and transport these handy containers.

Let's continue to drink water since it is healthy for us, but stop and think about how often you use plastic water bottles. Make a change, try a reusable bottle. Why use oil in making and transporting the bottles, deal with the waste they create, and pay extra for water available right at your faucet?

Resources:

- EPA Ground Water & Drinking Water www.epa.gov/safewater
- Think Outside the Bottle www.thinkoutsidethebottle.org
- Inside the Bottle www.insidethebottle.org

¹ Bottled Water "Pure Drink or Pure Hype?", Natural Resources Defense Council, 1999, www.nrdc.org/water/drinking/bw/bwinx.asp

Take it Back: Recycle Where You Shop!

The list of household products you can't put into the trash always seems to be growing. Some of those items (cleaning chemicals, paints, fertilizers and pesticides, pool chemicals, etc) must go to a household hazardous waste collection site www.smhealth.org/hhw. But for a variety of items – including household batteries and fluorescent lights – other convenient choices for consumers are quickly increasing.

Most single family home residents in the County can now place their household batteries on top of the recycling bin, properly bagged. But not everyone has this service, including apartment and condo dwellers; so some retailers are offering take-back (a drop box in their store) as a free service to their customers. In addition, California law requires stores that sell rechargeable batteries to take them back.

Fluorescent lights are trickier, since the chance of breaking those makes it difficult to collect them curbside with your home recycling bin items. A few retailers, such as Home Depot and IKEA, will take back compact fluorescent lights (CFLs) for free. But many retailers have been held back by cost concerns.

Now the County has a voluntary program for retailers selling household batteries or fluorescent lights that is both easy and virtually free to them. They simply set up collection containers, accept the lights or batteries from residents, and bring them to the County's Household Hazardous Waste Program on an as-needed basis, by appointment. To get more information and to sign-up, a retailer should contact Sarah Pratt at (650) 372-6245 or spratt@co.sanmateo.ca.us.

To watch the list of participating stores grow, and find the convenient options in your area, check the database in the www.recycleworks.org Resources – Recycle Now section. Or visit www.earth911.org for locations beyond (and including) San Mateo County.



ASK YOUR LOCAL SHOP TO TAKE IT BACK

The County's new program for stores that sell household batteries and fluorescent lights is so simple and inexpensive that your local store will want to know about it.

Send them to our website, www.flowstobay.org or have them email us at pollutionprevention@co.sanmateo.ca.us for more information. Providing this free service to customers is a great way to increase business.

Don't Throw Out that Oil Filter – Recycle It!

Californians who change their own motor oil buy more than 14 million oil filters each year. Too many of these end up in landfills instead of being recycled. Used oil filters can be dismantled into their component parts for reuse – turning the steel, paper, oil and plastic into new products or fuel sources.

How to Recycle Oil Filters

To recycle oil filters along with your used oil, bring your filter in a leak-proof container (such as a resealable plastic bag) to one of San Mateo County's Used Oil Collection Centers. There are 52 free oil and filter drop-off locations in San Mateo County. Find one near you by visiting www.flowstobay.org in the community section or by calling 1-800-CLEANUP.

Recycling steel and oil from filters will

conserve renewable resources and landfill space as well as preventing oil from contaminating land and water. Recycling is FREE.

What Happens to Recycled Oil Filters

When recycled oil filters are dismantled, every part of the filter is put to good use.

- The steel filter base is recycled as heavy clean scrap metal.
- The outside canister is shredded and recycled as light clean steel scrap.
- The paper filter is pressed free of oil and burned to generate electric power.
- The seals and O-rings are sold to a plastics recycler.
- The used oil from the entire process is collected by a certified oil collection

center and processed into heavy lubricants or bunker fuel.

Get a Free Oil Filter at a County Used Oil Filter Exchange Event!

Bring your used oil filter in for recycling during the Used Oil Program's quarterly Oil Filter Exchange Events and receive a **FREE** oil filter!

Check www.flowstobay.org "Calendar of Events" for details on date, location, and time of the next Filter Exchange Event, or email us at pollutionprevention@co.sanmateo.ca.us for more information.

