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Firework Teams give back to the ocean; make a difference

By *Pacifica Beach Coalition* | *Pacifica Tribune*

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The Pacific Gyre, (the growing mass of plastic in the middle of the Pacific Ocean), was spared 190 pounds and thousands of bits of plastic trash recently thanks to more than 120 volunteers who showed up en masse to make a difference for the ocean from the non-profits booths who sold fireworks. The Rockaway Beaches and business area has rarely looked cleaner and Linda Mar beach was in tip top shape following their efforts. Pacificans familiar with mass cleanups might have thought it was Earth Day in late July and August.

In a compromise decision proposed by the Firework Task force and adopted by City Council the non profits selling fireworks would give back to the ocean by cleaning up on the 5th of July and by also providing 10 volunteer hours per group to clean up at either Linda Mar State beach on Saturday, July 20, or Rockaway Beach on Aug. 3.

It was quite a busy day at Linda Mar Beach on July 20th as people from near and far gathered for a host of activities. The air horns started early in the morning with the Kahuna Kapuna Surf Contest, a fundraiser for Pacifica's Environmental Family. Private and group surfing classes also began among the crowds as the Pacifica Beach Coalition readied for their Third Saturday Cleanup, this time joined by Public Works and community partners from the Firework booths pitching in to continue clearing the beach of trash and fireworks debris. Ten volunteers with the PBC and 35 people from community groups hit the sand, collecting more than 55 pounds of trash and 15 pounds of recyclables until the beach was cleaned from south of the creek to high on the bike path.

Trash this time included more than 100 pieces of fireworks debris, much consisting of bottle rocket sticks and sparkler canisters.

"Interestingly and importantly, simply moving sand aside kept revealing more and more firework debris that had been buried," said Jim Fithian, longtime Linda Mar site captain and PBC member; "there is much more to be revealed. We'll all continue to scour the beaches together in the near future to keep these harmful objects and other trash from entering the ocean".

At the Rockaway cleanup volunteers combed both beaches, the rocks and seawall, the parking lots, streets, bike path up to Linda Mar, the big hillside up to Highway 1, the drainage areas, Farmers Market area and anywhere litter may have been hiding. In the end they had collected 2100 cigarette butts, 60 pieces of fireworks, a sleeping bag, youth QuickSilver sweatshirt, fishing line, wrappers, bags, and way too many little plastic pieces to count.

The cold foggy morning couldn't dampen the enthusiasm or detour the fun that the many volunteer teams had with each other at Rockaway. In an hour or two every crook and cranny of the beach and business area had been cleaned and everyone felt good keeping debris out of the ocean and away from the Pacific Gyre. If every piece collected did indeed save a fish, a bird, or a wildlife, then cumulatively these teams saved thousands of animals.

Special thanks go to the Terra Nova Boosters Club, Terra Nova High School Football Program, Pacifica Athletic Youth Services (Tiger Sharks), Pacifica Girls Softball League, Pacifica United Soccer League, Pacifica Youth Basketball, Pacifica 4-H Boosters, Pacifica Women of the Moose, Pacifica Spindrift Players, Youths In Action, Del Mar Chapter Order of Eastern Star, American Legion POST 239, Ocean Shore PTO, Pacifica School District Music Boosters, Parents and children of Cub Scout Pack 254. Thank you also to Police Chief Jim Tasa and the Firework Task Force who came up with this compromise and to Public Works for all the work they do to clean our city and for staffing the cleanups. Also thanks to Pacifica Beach Coalition members for meeting, greeting,

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leading the cleanups, and making them educational and fun for all.

"While there is no way every firework debris from the fourth of July could possibly be retrieved from the hiding places in the sand or even from all of the streets and storm drains in just a few cleanups," said Lynn Adams, president of the Pacifica Beach Coalition, "everyone worked very hard to make a difference for the environment. I think we all learned a little more about litter. Perhaps continued daily stewardship on the part of these volunteers and the people they influence will reduce the impact of litter over time and help the gyre at the same time."

-- Pacifica Beach Coalition

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