



# COUNTY OF SANTA CRUZ

701 OCEAN STREET, SANTA CRUZ, CA 95060-4073

(831) 454-2000 WWW.SANTACRUZCOUNTY.US

CARLOS J. PALACIOS, COUNTY EXECUTIVE OFFICER

## NEWS RELEASE



**Date:** September 22, 2025

**Contact:** Jason Hoppin

Jason.Hoppin@santacruzcountyca.gov

### **FILTERED CIGARETTE SALES BAN TO GO INTO EFFECT IN 2027**

In October 2024, the Santa Cruz County Board of Supervisors voted to ban the sale of filtered cigarettes and cigars on January 1, 2027, contingent on two other county jurisdictions passing similar measures. This year, two cities approved bans – the City of Santa Cruz on June 24<sup>th</sup>, and the City of Capitola on September 11<sup>th</sup> – and the ordinance will now become law in both cities and in unincorporated areas.

It is the first filtered cigarette sales ban to go into effect in the world, marking a significant step forward in protecting public health, preserving our natural environment, and ensuring cohesive policy alignment throughout the region.

Cigarette butts are the single-most common form of litter on earth, with 4.5 trillion butts discarded annually. However, they have no proven health benefit to smokers. These ordinances are intended to help protect and enhance Santa Cruz County's world-renowned environment. Together, they will help:

- Reduce tobacco filter pollution, thereby protecting marine and terrestrial ecosystems.
- Lower cleanup costs for community volunteers, local agencies, and taxpayers.
- Support businesses that rely on a clean, healthy environment and the Santa Cruz region's reputation as an environmental leader.

Through the County's Tobacco Waste Subcommittee, County and city staff, non-profits and community leaders worked collaboratively to contribute valuable insights and to address a range of challenges, helping shape a practical, forward-looking ordinance. The County extends its sincere appreciation for the work that both the City of Santa Cruz and City of Capitola put into advancing this first-of-its-kind regional policy.

"Santa Cruz County is always at the forefront of making change. This policy adds to the legacy of our community standing up to big corporations to protect the health of our residents and our environment," Supervisors Justin Cummings said. "This is just

the beginning, and we look forward to supporting other communities who wish to join our effort.”

“Cigarette butts are toxic, they’re useless and they’re everywhere. As the guardians of Monterey Bay, we’re standing up and telling Big Tobacco, this ends NOW. We invite communities worldwide to join us,” Supervisor Manu Koenig said.

To support implementation in the unincorporated area and the cities of Santa Cruz and Capitola, Santa Cruz County Public Health’s Tobacco Education and Prevention Program will assist with outreach materials for retailers and community members to educate them on the new policy and timelines for implementation, technical assistance with product transitions, and support for enforcement personnel.

While this represents a change, the broader economic and environmental benefits are clear. The County’s previous experience implementing groundbreaking legislation – including curtailing the use of plastics through restrictions on single-use plastic bags, toiletries, and utensils and a prohibition on Styrofoam sales -- showed no lasting negative economic impacts.

The County and City of Santa Cruz will begin enforcement of their sales bans on January 1, 2027. The City of Capitola will begin on July 1, 2027.