



County of Santa Cruz

HEALTH SERVICES AGENCY

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Press Release

For Immediate Release

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ON COASTAL CLEANUP DAY, A FOCUS ON TOXIC TOBACCO BUTTS

SANTA CRUZ COUNTY – “It’s a beach, not an ashtray.” “Fish don’t smoke.” “Butts are gross.” What might local wildlife say about the nasty cigarette butts littering Santa Cruz beaches? Speak up for them on Saturday, September 23rd during a unique beach cleanup with a focus on tobacco waste.

As part of the annual Coastal Cleanup Day sponsored by Save Our Shores, the Santa Cruz County Tobacco Education Coalition (TEC) is partnering with the Santa Cruz County Office of Education’s Tobacco Use Prevention Education Program (TUPE) to raise awareness about toxic tobacco waste and possible solutions. Cleanup participants will replace each cigarette butt they collect with a personally designed, larger-than-life replica to show local policy makers and the public just how BIG a problem butts really are.

“Many people don’t realize that cigarette filters are made from cellulose acetate, a type of plastic,” said TEC Co-Chair Rachel Kippen. “Filters provide no health benefit to smokers but create a lasting environmental threat when inappropriately discarded, which most of them are! In fact, there are 4.5 trillion butts littering streets, parks, and beaches around the globe.”

But cigarette butts aren’t just litter. They’re toxic waste, containing dangerous chemicals such as arsenic, lead and nicotine, the same chemicals found in secondhand smoke. And just as with secondhand smoke, the most effective prevention strategy is comprehensive public policy.

“It’s time for the tobacco industry to take responsibility for the toxic mess they’ve created,” said Tara Leonard, Senior Health Educator with the Santa Cruz County Tobacco Education and Prevention Program. “Spend a fun morning at the beach, enjoy an art activity, and

“speak up for the creatures that make the Monterey Bay their home. Because butts aren’t just gross, they’re a public health and environmental threat.”

- What: Tobacco Waste Beach Cleanup as part of Coastal Cleanup Day
- When: Saturday, September 23 from 9 to noon
- Where: Corcoran Lagoon at 20th Avenue and East Cliff Drive
- More Information: www.saveourshoes.org

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