



Seal Beach Pollution Solution



Girl Scout Gold Award:

Seal Beach Pollution Solution

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Did you know that trash from San Gabriel Valley residents can end up in Seal Beach? I didn't either, until I began researching the main cause behind how trash ends up on the shore in Seal Beach. A common misconception is that the 31 cities that compile the San Gabriel Valley are located too far away from Seal Beach, as well as other beaches, to have an effect on the levels of pollution. However, the exact opposite is true—the main cause of Seal Beach pollution is runoff from the San Gabriel River that funnels trash from "52 inland cities and two counties into the ocean" (OC Register).

When litter is discarded on the ground of the San Gabriel Valley, it is commonly swept into storm drains by rain and wind. Trash bags, water bottles, food packaging, Styrofoam, cigarette butts, and many other small pieces of trash that are seen as “harmless” float through storm drains and eventually reach the San Gabriel River.

Swept up in this powerful stream of water, these pollutants endure a long journey towards the end of the river, a distance of 58 miles that stretches from Mount San Antonio to Seal Beach. The end of the river, containing trash from both Los Angeles County and Orange County, directly connects to the Pacific Ocean surrounding Seal Beach. Because there are currently no mechanisms to stop these pollutants from entering the ocean from the river, this trash is released into the open water, wreaking havoc on innocent oceanic ecosystems.

The devastating effect of San Gabriel trash is even more disastrous during periods of rainstorms and high wind. According to a KTLA 5 newscast, within a “matter of 48 hours [of a storm], there has to be thousands and thousands of pounds of trash that have reaccumulated among the banks of the San Gabriel river,” absolutely ruining the beautiful and peaceful nature of Seal Beach’s shores. After a storm, there can be seemingly never-ending piles of trash lining lines the beach, creating the perfect disaster for hungry wildlife that may confuse a Walmart shopping bag for a delicious fish.

Many populations of native wildlife that make Seal Beach such a charming ecosystem are left desolate by the high levels of pollution. In recent studies presented by Condor Ferries UK, “Marine plastic pollution is found in 100% of turtles, 59% of whales, and 36% of seals.” Turtles, whales, seals, and other animals suffer from the straws, bottle caps, and cigarette butts they ingest.

When marine animals ingest trash, they are put at risk of suffocation from clogged airways, starvation from a false sense of being full, damage to the digestive system, and infection. Whether they be seabirds, seals, sea turtles, fish, or whales, pollution is slowly killing populations of animals that were once abundant.



Although there will always be trash in our world’s oceans, there are some methods to help stop the spread of pollutants into oceanic habitats. Assemblymember Diane Dixon and Seal Beach Councilmember Joe Kalmick both agree that the pollution from the San Gabriel River is a “regional crisis that needs to be dealt with” (OC Register), and government officials are taking steps to fund a mechanism that will stop river pollutants from entering the ocean.

However, the best way to stop contamination from entering Seal Beach is to stop the root of the problem at its source, which means altering how those along the San Gabriel River trail dispose of their trash. That’s why I, an Ambassador from the Glendora Girl Scout Troop 8574, am

working on a project called “Seal Beach Pollution Solution” to help spread awareness about how trash ends up on Seal Beach.

The Girl Scout Gold Award, typically completed by a high school age Girl Scout and her team of volunteers, is an 80 hour service project in which the scout must work to take on an important issue in her community. For my Gold Award project, the goal is to educate more San Gabriel Valley citizens on how their trash may be affecting beaches located miles away from them, specifically Seal Beach. I would also like to reach citizens of Seal Beach by motivating them to keep their beautiful community clean and ocean ecosystems in healthy conditions.

While the components of my project are few in number, the expected result is large in impact. My team and I have already painted four trash cans around the entrance to Seal Beach that are meant to attract beachgoers to throw away their trash. Additionally, we have replanted native vegetation around the Seal Beach parking lot that will beautify the surrounding area and encourage people to keep the beach looking pristine. Lastly, we will install a sign at the entrance to the beach that depicts “From River to Ocean, Keep Trash Out of Motion.”

Although the artistry and creativity in my project are meant to inspire both Seal Beach natives and visitors to keep the beautiful beach clean, the problem must also be addressed at its source. Therefore, if you live in the San Gabriel Valley or visit it often, you can also do your part in helping slow the spread of pollution into Seal Beach! Swapping out plastic water bottles for reusable ones, using reusable shopping bags instead of plastic ones, and avoiding straws at restaurants are all small ways that you can have a big impact on the flow of pollution!

Overall, another helpful way to cease the flow of trash is by recycling plastic materials properly! If you are out in public and need to throw away anything that is plastic, make sure to put it in the correct bin. The same applies at home—if your city does not recycle for you, make sure to separate your plastic from other trash to ensure that less plastic ends up in the ocean!

Seal Beach needs our help, and now that you know just how much your trash can affect local ecosystems, I urge you to do your part in helping reverse the damaging effects of pollution. It can start with buying a reusable water bottle instead of a multipack of plastic water bottles at your next shopping trip. No matter how small the action is, you can feel satisfied knowing you are doing your part to change the lives of ocean animals in Seal Beach that are so desperate to be free of pollutants.

