



OPC Litter Prevention in Manhattan Beach

Introduction

The California Ocean Protection Council (OPC) is a cabinet-level body that spans across multiple government agencies responsible for ocean and coastal jurisdictions, and it aims to provide the best available science to support policy and legislation. The OPC is primarily concerned with the protection, restoration, and management of coastal and ocean ecosystems, and supporting sustainable uses of California's coasts. In 2018, the OPC, along with the California Sea Grant, and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), released a report titled, *Ocean Litter Prevention Strategy: Addressing Marine Debris from Source to Sea*. It is intended to advise local, regional, and state governments along with other stakeholders how address persistent litter in our oceans, which is becoming more and more of a pressing issue. The report is comprised of goals for both land-based and ocean-based litter, priority actions, and implementation strategies.

The City of Manhattan Beach makes it a priority to keep our beaches and our ocean clean from litter, especially litter made from plastic. The City embarked to reduce plastic pollution in 2008 with one of the first plastic bag bans in the nation. In 2013, the City also banned polystyrene materials from being used in the city. Most recently in 2018, City Council passed an ordinance prohibiting plastic straws and utensils, pairing it with an "upon-request" policy, which mandates that customers must ask for non-plastic straws and utensils before receiving them. OPC's Litter Prevention Strategy includes some goals that Manhattan Beach has already proudly achieved. However, the report also includes objectives that the City can incorporate into the Plastic Free MB campaign, which aims to reduce plastic pollution in Manhattan Beach, and includes the policies mentioned previously.

Goals

As stated previously, the OPC Litter Prevention Strategy laid out a set of goals for both land and ocean-based litter. Manhattan Beach has and will continue to place primary focus on land-based ocean litter, since it makes up the majority of pollution found on our coasts. While ocean-based litter is an important issue to address, most of it originates from fishing boats, and is harder to for the City to address and regulate. The following is a summation of the goals listed in the report that Manhattan Beach has achieved and will continue to strive for.

Goal One

Goal one aims to, *"Protect marine ecosystems and the communities that rely on them by promoting policies to prevent litter from reaching the ocean."*

Sub-Goal One

The first sub-goal is, “Prohibit or discourage common ocean litter items in public institutions, retail, and food service establishments through government policies or mandates”

Manhattan Beach has proudly pursued these objectives, especially over the past ten years. In 2008, the City banned plastic bags from retail and grocery stores, as well as from pharmacies. Implementation did not take place until 2012 due to a lawsuit brought forth by the Save the Plastic Bag Coalition. The California Supreme Court unanimously upheld the City’s ban in 2011. The City then followed with a polystyrene ban in 2013, which outlawed polystyrene food containers, lids, straws, and other food serviceware. Shortly after this, the City removed the exemption for polystyrene ice coolers. In 2018, the City banned plastic straws and utensils from restaurants and grocery stores. All straws and utensils must be made from non-plastic alternatives, and bioplastics (PLA #7) are also not allowed. If customers need a single-use non-plastic straw or utensil, they must ask for it. This “upon-request” policy is meant to help businesses manage the small extra cost of using non-plastic alternatives, and to prevent more unnecessary waste (plastic or otherwise). Common substitutes include straws made from paper, and many customers forgo straws altogether when sitting down at a restaurant. Plastic utensils can be replaced with disposable bamboo, or residents can use reusable stainless steel sets. In addition to the straw and utensil ban, the City also extended the polystyrene ordinance to include packing materials and produce trays.

Although the City has made great progress, there still is more to do. When the recent plastic pollution ordinance was brought to City Council, then Mayor Pro Tem Napolitano asked City Staff to come back with additional items to add to the ordinance. The City is now exploring the possibility of regulating latex and mylar balloons, polystyrene meat trays, and plastic water bottles.

Sub-Goal Two

Sub-goal two aims to, “Incentivize institutions, businesses, and events to transition away from common ocean litter items.” The City is committed to helping its businesses move away from plastic and other common waste items. City Council appreciates and has recognized the Manhattan Beach businesses that have pursued MB Green Business Certification, which shows that businesses make a conscious effort to reduce their environmental footprint. In the future, the City could offer incentives for businesses using non-plastic alternatives that go above and beyond the requirements of the City’s laws. These may include awards, extra certification, etc. When the City banned polystyrene, the “Bring Your Own Campaign” was launched to encourage residents to bring their own containers, cups, lids, and mugs out to eat, and some businesses offered financial incentives. Overall, customers bringing their own supplies and utensils is financially beneficial for the business.

Goal Two

Goal two urges cities to “*Improve waste management and interception of litter on land before it enters the ocean.*” The City is proud of Waste Management’s comprehensive recycling program, which includes paper and plastic recycling and food waste composting.

Sub-Goal One

Sub-goal one states, “Improve waste management in public places.” Manhattan Beach has many recycling bins placed throughout the City. Over the summer of 2018, staff designed and installed waste stations in high-use areas such as the Pier and Downtown Manhattan Beach with adequate

labeling of what waste goes in each bin to help residents properly dispose of their trash. These efforts will improve littering and increase diversion from the landfill.

Goal Three

Goal three strives to, “*Generate behavior change by educating and engaging communities and individuals to reduce ocean litter.*” With each of our plastic ordinances, the City has conducted an extensive outreach and education campaign to promote awareness about single-use plastic litter in the ocean. Before the latest straw and utensil ban, the City launched the “Strawless Saturday” campaign to urge residents and businesses to go without straws to help the environment. After the ordinance was passed, the City has continued in its efforts to spread awareness about the dangers of plastic pollution, such as tabling at community events and spreading informational sheets. The City plans to continue educating residents and encouraging behavior change.

Goal Four

Goal four aims to, “*Reduce the sources of ocean-based debris and maximize the efficiency of ocean-based debris cleanup.*” As previously stated, the City’s main focus is on land-based debris. However, the City has aimed to reduce fishing gear litter in order to protect marine life. In 2014, a white shark that was hooked off the Manhattan Beach Pier bit a swimmer. In response to this, the City worked with the Roundhouse Aquarium and the environmental non-profit Heal the Bay to spread awareness about safe fishing practices and disposal of gear. Manhattan Beach is committed to keeping the Pier, beaches, and the water safe from improperly disposed-of fishing gear. The City is pursuing installation of derelict fishing line receptacles on the pier to provide anglers with a way to dispose of their plastic fishing line, rather than having it potentially go into the sea.

Conclusion

The City of Manhattan Beach has strived to be a leader in environmental efforts, and as a coastal city, we place high value on eliminating litter that could potentially end up in our oceans and our beaches. The Ocean Protection Council has produced their Litter Prevention Strategy, and the City is proud to have achieved many accomplishments that are aligned with the report. The City will take into account the goals and suggestions presented by the OPC, and will continue to try and keep Manhattan Beach clean, beautiful, and free from litter.

