

Hueneme Pilot

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J Street Drain cleanup to track Ormond trash flow

Coastkeepers, Wishtoyo volunteers remove debris

By Loran Lewis

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Hoping to make their case on the need for more oversight of the J Street Drain maintenance, a group of volunteers set out to clean the drainage ditch and present the evidence to local governmental leaders.

“Our purpose is to clean up the trash and prevent it from washing into Ormond Beach and the wetlands and degrading the wildlife habitats,” explained Jason Weiner, associate director and staff attorney for the Ventura Coastkeepers. “This is a place of significant community importance, and it’s our desire to have a pristine environment in our own back yard.”

Weiner said the community needs to take ownership of watersheds such as the drain. “By cleaning the trash and taking ownership, we’re improving our community.”

The J Street Drain is a concrete-lined channel along the center median of J Street along the boundary of Oxnard and Port Hueneme that runs between Redwood Street and the Ormond Lagoon.

About two dozen volunteers showed up for the effort, collecting the debris, bagging it and marking the each entry.

“We’re trying to protect the natural features of the lagoon and wetlands,” Trevor Smith, conservation chair of the Los Padres Chapter of the Sierra Club, said of his involvement. “All of this trash will get washed into the lagoon.”

Addressing the group before providing a Chumash blessing, Mati Waiya told the volunteers, “The reason we are here is because our government agencies lack the funds or the ability or the commitment to do the work they should be doing. It takes a continuous effort to remind the government of what it should be doing.”

Waiya, a Chumash ceremonial elder and executive director of the Wishtoyo Foundation, said the organization is “about protecting the environment, teaching the history of our culture and educating.”

He said the impact of the trash on the ecosystem makes it critical for the community to get involved.

Luhni Isha, cultural director of the foundation, said state local and federal governments needed to address the problem.

“So much time is spent on politics and not enough is spent on what sustains us, and what sustains us is water.”

The data cards that detail the trash collected will be used to identify the major sources of pollution and pursue environmental legislation. Among the

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Above: Volunteers make their way through a tunnel in the J Street Drain beneath Hueneme Road during a cleanup of the drain. Left: Mati Waiya shows a bullet found during the cleanup.



usual assortment of wrappers and plastic bottles, the volunteers also found items such as a basketball and a live bullet.

Ventura Coastkeepers is associated with the Wishtoyo Foundation. For more information, go to www.wishtoyo.org.