



PRESS RELEASE

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Ventura Coastkeeper's Stream Team Scores a Victory for Ventura County's Residents and their Environment: The Regional Board Places 6 Reaches of Calleguas Creek on California's 303(d) Impaired Waterbody List for Trash Pollution

303(d) Trash Listings from Ventura Coastkeeper's Monitoring and Advocacy Efforts Calls Ventura County Public Officials and Residents Into Action, and Sets the Stage for Stronger Pollution Permits

Simi Valley, Calif. – By unanimous vote this afternoon, the Los Angeles Regional Water Quality Control Board voted to add Six Reaches of Calleguas Creek and its tributaries to California's 303(d) list of polluted waterbodies for trash impairments. The reaches include 1.) Calleguas Creek just before it drains into Mugu Lagoon, which is an Area of Special Biological Significance; 2.) Calleguas Creek in Camarillo near Channel Islands University; 3) a reach of Conejo Creek in Camarillo; 4. & 5.) two reaches of Conjeo Creek in Thousand Oaks; and 6.) Arroyo Simi in Simi Valley. Data to support the Board's decision to add these 6 reaches was supplied by Ventura Coastkeeper's ("VCK's") Stream Team's monitoring and reporting efforts.

Why Trash is Harmful: Trash in waterways causes significant water quality problems. Small and large floatables can inhibit the growth of aquatic vegetation, decreasing spawning areas and habitats for fish and other living organisms. Wildlife living in rivers and in riparian areas can be harmed by ingesting or becoming entangled in floating trash. Except for large items such as shopping carts, settleables are not always obvious to the eye. They include glass, cigarette butts, rubber, construction debris and more. Settleables can be a problem for bottom feeders and can contribute to sediment contamination. Some debris (e.g. cigarette butts, diapers, medical and household waste, and chemicals) are a source of bacteria and toxic substances. Floating debris that is not trapped and removed will eventually end up on the beaches or in the open ocean, repelling visitors away from our beaches, degrading coastal waters, and contributing to patches of trash suspended in the open ocean that are estimated to be as large as Texas.

Trash 303(d) Listing as a Powerful Tool to Rid Calleguas Creek of Litter: Thirty-five years after the creation of the Clean Water Act, the Calleguas Creek watershed and its coastal waters continue to be littered with trash. Now that these reaches are on the 303(d) list as impaired for trash, VCK and all of Ventura County's residents have a powerful and visible tool they can use to work with their municipalities to get programs and best management practices in place to clean up their waterbodies and prevent trash from entering and impairing their rivers, streams, and coastal waters.

Jason Weiner, the Ventura Coastkeeper's Associate Director and Staff Attorney, emphasizes that:

“A 303(d) listing is such a powerful tool for citizens concerned about the health of their waterbodies because a listing is proof that their waters are polluted - public officials have a hard time denying or ignoring the problem and its hard to find communities that want to live around polluted waterbodies, especially waterbodies publically labeled as human health hazards. Thus, not only can a 303(d) listing be utilized to mandate government action, but it can be utilized to call to local communities into action to clean up and take better care of their waterbodies and surrounding environment.”

As such, Wishtoyo, and its Ventura Coastkeeper Program is calling all of Ventura County’s residents into action to report water pollution to Ventura Coastkeeper’s Pollution Hotline (805) 658-1120 x 5 and to volunteer with its beach clean up crews, river clean up crews, and Stream Team that regularly monitor and sample 27 sites in the Santa Clara River Watershed, Calleguas Creek Watershed, and the Ormond Beach Watershed for pollution impairments. As stated by Mati Waiya, Wishtoyo’s Executive Director and Chumash Ceremonial Elder, “it’s a deep honor to take care of and watch over a watershed for the health and wellbeing of one’s community and communities beyond.”

What is the 303(d) List: Section 303(d) of the Clean Water Act requires states to identify all seriously polluted, or "impaired," water bodies every two years. The states put each polluted waterbody and its associated contaminants on what they call the "303(d) list." For waterbodies placed on the 303(d) List of Water Quality Limited Segments, states are required to develop Total Maximum Daily Loads (TMDLs) for the pollutant(s) that are causing water quality standards impairment. Once TMDLs are established, the state can restrict the total amount of the pollutant that is allowed to be discharged into a waterbody by assigning waste load allocations via permits to the different dischargers of pollution in the watershed. Once a waterbody is placed on the 303(d) List of Water Quality Limited Segments, it remains on the list until water quality standards are attained.

About The Wishtoyo Foundation and its Ventura Coastkeeper Program: Founded in 1997, Wishtoyo is a 501(c)(3) non profit grassroots organization with over 700 members consisting of Ventura County’s diverse residents and Chumash Native Americans. Wishtoyo’s mission is to preserve and protect Chumash culture, the culture of all of Ventura County’s diverse communities, and the environment that our current and future generations depend upon. Wishtoyo shares traditional Chumash Native American beliefs, cultural practices, songs, dances, stories, and values with the public in its Chumash Discovery Village and through educational programs in schools to promote environmental awareness and natural resources stewardship. In 2000, Wishtoyo founded its Ventura Coastkeeper Program (VCK). VCK’s mission is to protect, preserve, and restore the ecological integrity and water quality of Ventura County's inland and coastal waterbodies for all beings in the County’s diverse community through outreach and education, restoration projects, advocacy, litigation, and community organizing and empowerment.

About the Ventura Coastkeeper Stream Team: VCK’s citizen led Stream Team routinely monitors Ventura County’s public waters for pollution; collects, measures, and analyzes water quality from strategically chosen sampling points to pinpoint pollution sources and to inform VCK’s advocacy, restoration, and legal efforts to protect Ventura County’s waterbodies; and organizes beach and river clean ups. VCK conducts its monitoring using its Volunteer Water Monitoring Quality Assurance Project Plan (QAPP), that is certified and approved by the Los Angeles Regional Water Quality Control Board.

Volunteers Wanted: VCK’s Stream is looking for dedicated volunteers to lead and participate in its monitoring, sampling, clean up, and community mobilizing efforts. If you are interested in volunteering or mobilizing your community to improve its wellbeing related to waterbody quality, email jweiner.venturacoastkeeper@wishtoyo.org. Training will be provided.