

CALIFORNIA COASTAL COMMISSION

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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42nd annual California Coastal Cleanup Day draws tens of thousands

Presented by the California Coastal Commission

Results with approximately 40% of cleanup sites reporting

San Francisco – Tens of thousands of Californians turned out Saturday to take part in the 42nd annual California Coastal Cleanup Day — the state's largest annual volunteer event. Participants scoured more than 750 cleanup sites, removing hundreds of thousands of pounds of trash before it could be washed out to sea during the rainy season.

With 40% of the cleanup sites reporting,

the statewide count stands at 24,835 volunteers.

**Those volunteers picked up 185,003 pounds of trash
and an additional 7,051 pounds of recyclable materials,
for a total of 192,054 pounds or 96 tons.**

The Coastal Commission estimates that over 50,000 volunteers will have participated when the final results are in.

Volunteers gathered at beaches, shorelines and inland waterways, cleaning up locations in all of California's 58 counties, across the state's entire coastline and as far inland as Lake Tahoe. California's event is part of the International Coastal Cleanup, organized by the Ocean Conservancy.

Volunteers are especially important this year as a potentially historic El Niño takes aim at the state. The increased rainfall expected from El Niño can wash plastic pollution from creeks and streams into the ocean. Coastal Cleanup Day provides an opportunity to prevent even greater harm to the coast and the wildlife that calls it home. That opportunity to take action to protect the coast and inland waterways took on extra meaning this year as the coastal commission celebrates the 50th anniversary of the [California Coastal Act](#).

“Coastal Cleanup Day is always a great day for our coast, but this year proved even more significant” said Executive Director Kate Huckelbridge. “As we celebrate the Coastal Act, this year’s cleanup helped to highlight the volunteers and coastal advocates who will carry the legacy of the Coastal Act forward into the next 50 years of protecting and preserving our coast and ocean.”

The Coastal Commission organizes the event with help from hundreds of governments and nonprofit agencies throughout the state. About 1.8 million volunteers have helped remove more than 13,500 tons of trash since the event’s launch in 1985. The most **common items** include cigarette filters, food wrappers, plastic straws, and other utensils.

Most Unusual Items:

In addition to searching for trash, volunteers also found a number of “unusual” items during this year’s cleanup. **The winners of the 2026 Most Unusual Item contest are:**

Coastal California: A volunteer along Virgin Creek in Mendocino County found a cancelled check for eight dollars from 1990.

Inland California: A volunteer on Sherman Island in Rio Vista found a safe with the back removed.

Pictures of both winners are available. The winning volunteers will receive a \$100 prize from the Coastal Cleanup Day Program.

In addition to in-person cleanups, the Coastal Commission continues to encourage volunteers to run self-guided cleanups throughout neighborhoods across the state. These cleanups serve the same purpose as the Cleanup Day events that took place Saturday, preventing trash from ever having the opportunity to reach our coast. To date, 513 Californians have conducted a neighborhood cleanup, removing over 4,883 pounds of trash during 215 cleanups.

Coastal Cleanup Day could not happen without the support of public and corporate partners that help fund the event and often provide additional benefits. Presenting Sponsor Niagara Cares provides the backbone of funding that makes the cleanup possible, as well as volunteer support at multiple sites. Longtime sponsor Oracle provides volunteer support. Nordic Naturals helped promote the cleanup and even ran a nationwide contest to help turn out volunteers. Along with more than 60 nonprofit and local government organizations that help organize and run the cleanups around the state, the program’s strong team of partners helped make the 2026 cleanup another huge success.

Volunteers can go to www.coastalcleanupday.org to fill out the Coastal Cleanup Survey and be entered into a drawing for a fabulous Coastal Cleanup Day prize package. To stay involved with the cleanup efforts throughout the year, please visit the Adopt-A-Beach page on the same website.

California Coastal Cleanup Day event is presented by the California Coastal Commission and Niagara Cares, with support from Oracle, Nordic Naturals, Klean Kanteen, Longboard Vineyards, the Whale Tail® Specialty License Plate, the Protect our Coast and Oceans Fund, GreenPolly, and the California State Parks Foundation. This year’s artwork was generously donated by [Phyllis Shafer](#).

The Coastal Commission is committed to protecting and enhancing California’s coast and ocean for present and future generations. It does so through careful planning and regulation of environmentally sustainable development, strong public participation, education and effective

intergovernmental coordination. The Coastal Cleanup Day Program is part of its effort to raise public awareness of marine and coastal resources and promote coastal stewardship.