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State Joins Forces with Non-Profit Groups to Find Solutions to Ocean Waste and Toxicity of Plastics

September 22, 2009 *California Department of Toxic Substances Control*

SAUSALITO, Calif. - Frustrated by the growing mounds of trash found in our oceans, and the threat to jobs in fishing industries and tourism, the California Department of Toxic Substances Control (DTSC) and other environmental officials say its time for radical solutions. With the Project Kaisei sailing vessel as a picturesque backdrop, DTSC Acting Director Maziar Movassaghi called for unified action to fight ocean pollution. The Kaisei vessel recently returned from a four-week journey to the North Pacific Gyre (Garbage Patch).

"We need a radical revolutionary approach to this problem highlighted by Project Kaisei," Movassaghi said. "And the good news is that the solution to ocean pollution is at our fingertips. If we make everyday products in a safer way, with safer alternative chemicals and processes, there will ultimately be less pollution in the environment, especially the marine environment. That is what green chemistry is about."

Movassaghi also announced the formation of separate partnerships with several non-profit groups to fight ocean pollution and work toward finding ways to reduce toxics going into the marine environment. This is a core principle of the California Green Chemistry Initiative that DTSC is spearheading.

The groups joining DTSC are: Project Kaisei, the Ocean Protection Council, the Watershed Project, the California Product Stewardship Council and Algalita.

"These partnerships will allow us to expand our knowledge to better design less-toxic products that will ultimately minimize potential threats to our oceans, marine life, and human health." DTSC Acting Director Maziar Movassaghi noted.

DTSC and its partners will work to slow the accumulation of plastic waste in the ocean and other marine debris. They will also work to develop sustainable alternatives to plastic packaging, research the toxic impacts of existing plastic and investigate ways to shorten the environmental lifecycle of plastic waste.

"The Watershed Project embraces the reality that marine debris and the growing amount of plastics in our ocean must be addressed in the context of a cradle-to-cradle approach said Linda Hunter, Executive Director of The Watershed Project. Manufacturers, municipalities and citizens need to work together to take responsibility for the tsunami of trash that we create every day."

"Only though partnerships and close communication with manufacturing and industry groups can California expeditiously achieve cradle-to cradle systems for product waste," added Heidi Sanborn, Executive Director of the California Product Stewardship Council.

Plastic marine debris has been on the increase. Plastics are petroleum-based products that do not easily biodegrade. Rather, they simply break down into smaller and smaller pieces. Vast amounts end up in our oceans each year carried by the wind, dumped off ships and through urban runoff into waterways that end at sea.

"The ocean is the final resting place for all of our waste," explained Marieta Francis, Executive Director of the Algalita Marine Research Foundation. The ocean is downhill from everywhere.

"We all know that plastics last. There is no 'away' when we throw plastics away. Every piece of plastic ever made is still on the planet, said Mary Crowley, President of the Ocean Voyages Institute & Project Kaisei Founder As a citizen of the ocean world, we need to create changes, both individually and as communities, countries and companies, making

international and national laws that preserve our oceans. Now is the time!

For more about on DTSCs partners for this effort, see below:

California Product Stewardship Council:This group is dedicated to reducing the amount of packaging that goes into products, and holding the producers responsible for the packaging they use.

The Watershed Project: It focuses on pollution flowing from creeks and river into San Francisco Bay. It is based in Contra Costa County.

The Ocean Protection Council: It works to ensure California maintains healthy, resilient and productive ocean and coastal ecosystems

The Algalita Marine Research Foundation: Based in Long Beach, this group is dedicated to the protection of the marine environment and its watersheds through research, education and restoration.

Project Kaisei: A team of innovators, scientists, environmentalists, ocean lovers, sailors and sports enthusiasts who have come together to study marine debris in the Pacific Ocean.

Click here to see a video of how green chemistry can help prevent ocean pollution

http://www.dtsc.ca.gov/PollutionPrevention/GreenTechnology/Ocean-Trash-Video.cfm

For more information on this partnership and DTSCs pollution prevention and green chemistry efforts, visit DTSCs Web site at www.dtsc.ca.gov

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