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## Letters to the editor: Sept. 9, 2009

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Ban poly

Editor:

When I participate in clean-ups in Pacifica as part of the Pacifica Beach Coalition, much of the litter I find is polystyrene. These "foam" containers never decompose into soil or water. They just blow in the wind and break into smaller pieces which sometimes get eaten by birds and fish.

Other cities have banned poly food containers, and none repealed their ban. Many responsible restaurants here already use compostible paper-based containers, and the others should follow their lead.

The City Council should not pass a voluntary ban, because that would do nothing. Merchants have had ample lead time now to use up their inventory, so it's time to act.

Let's make Pacifica even more scenic by stopping a major source of visual pollution. If Pacifica wants to attract tourists, they should see the natural beauty they came for, not litter.

Amy Parkko

Pacific Manor

Council targets litter

Editor:

Styrofoam food and drink containers used by some restaurants may become a thing of the past under a proposed new Pacifica ordinance to reduce litter.

Last year, the City Council held a public hearing on banning polystyrene cups, plates and clamshell food containers used for take-out food. Chamber of Commerce President Don Eagleston held several meetings with restaurant owners, managers, citizens, and council members to discuss the types of styrofoam, its environmental effects, and alternative packaging. Now that the issue has been vetted with the public, the Council is set to act this month.

Polystyrene is controversial because it never decomposes in the soil or water. It breaks into smaller pieces, blows around in the wind and ends up in the ocean. Marine mammals, shore birds and fish are killed after ingesting bits of Styrofoam, said City Councilmember Mary Ann Nihart. Our council must be a part of the solution to stop pollution, she added.

Pacifica prides itself on its scenic beauty, said Lynn Adams of the Pacifica Beach Coalition. Our economy depends on visitors who come to enjoy our beaches and magnificent coastal views. That's why many local businesses have already stopped using styrofoam.

Adams added that toxic chemicals leach from styrofoam into food and drinks causing cancer in humans, and that manufacturing poly increases air pollution and global warming. It is time for us to do the right thing and to ban styrofoam in our coastal town of Pacifica, she added.

Adams urged Pacificans to contact the council in support of the ban. Each year the Pacifica Beach Coalition assembles hundreds of people to pick up litter of all sorts in Pacificas beaches, streets and creeks.

Many municipalities have already banned styrofoam, including Millbrae and South San Francisco. Assemblymember Jerry Hill of San Mateo also has legislation to ban some poly containers.

Bill Collins

Pacifica

Make change happen

Editor:

I am a believer in solving problems by conversation where possible. I (and I am sure many others) have convinced business owners to use recyclable packaging. It has been long enough and there are enough talky environmentalists in this town that I would dare say that every business owner has had a chance to hear about it many times and had time to act upon it. I am guessing that it is now time to insist. Some kind of survivable fine is probably appropriate by now. Change happens.

Dan B. Underhill

Sharp Park

Ban styrofoam

Editor:

Pacifica is fortunate to have a strong volunteer group, the Pacifica Beach Coalition. People from all over the Bay Area contact the PBC when they want to come and help the ocean. As people who are intimately familiar with the kinds of trash found on the beach, the PBC is supporting a citywide ban on styrofoam. Across the continent, on the Atlantic seashore, another small beachfront community has quite a bit of heft when it comes to celebrities. But, it has a great deal of humility in its treatment of the ocean and endangered species. Daytona, Florida, home of the Daytona 500 has a countywide ban from shining exterior lights on the beaches which would confuse emerging baby sea turtles from their life-saving escape to the ocean. Each hotel room has a flyer about the sea turtles and a request that guests close their curtains at night. Hotel guests talked about the emerging sea turtles. Daytona like any other city continues to balance its economic and environmental decisions, but as far as the sea turtles, these small actions by an entire community have resulted in clean beaches free from light pollution, glass and trash. It was impressive to see the massive hotels darkened in the moonlight while I walked barefoot on a pristine beach, listening and enjoying the iridescent waves. It's good for business and it's good for how a community views itself as caretakers of the helpless baby sea turtles. The shopkeepers and hotel staff seemed proud about its efforts to help the sea turtles, knowing that they always come ashore and will continue to do so under their watch. As a seaside community, Pacifica has an opportunity to capitalize on its image of being good stewards of the ocean. With a strong, city-oriented volunteer group, the Pacifica Beach Coalition, Pacifica has the potential for creating a strong ocean conservancy image. Everyone should support a citywide ban on styrofoam. It sends a good message about our coastal selves to the rest of the world.

Lou Sian

Pacific Manor