

# Litterbugs Still Foul Roads, Local Waters

Despite Awareness Campaigns, Many Still Tossing Out Trash, Survey Finds

Californians know they shouldn't trash their roadways, but many still admit doing it despite efforts by Caltrans and other groups to educate the public about how roadside garbage pollutes area waters.

As part of the "Protect Every Drop" campaign, more than 300 California drivers were surveyed in June on their highway and water pollution awareness, attitudes and behaviors. While 84 percent of those surveyed said they know there is a connection between highway pollution and water quality, only 53 percent said they never litter on highways, and just 43 percent said they never pour automotive fluids in the trash or on the ground.

Caltrans, the State Water Resources Control Board and the California Stormwater Quality Association are steering the Protect Every Drop campaign's public relations, advertising and community outreach programs, urging Californians to:

- properly dispose of trash, recyclables and pet waste;
- cover truckloads to keep debris from flying out;
- maintain vehicles and tires to reduce pollution; and
- properly dispose of cigarette butts.

Each year, Caltrans spends millions of dollars on sweeping, litter pick-up, installing trash and recycling bins at rest stops, and broadening its reach with partnerships. But litter still lines many of California highways and eventually winds up in waterways used for fishing, swimming and household consumption.

Rain and wind can carry litter and pollution from vehicles and roadways into storm drain systems. Polluted water then flows into connecting city or county storm drain systems, or to streams, rivers and lakes — and eventually to bays and the ocean.

Caltrans owns and operates the state transportation system, which includes 50,000-plus lane miles



*Despite awareness campaigns, Caltrans still fights an uphill battle against roadside trash. Caltrans spent more than \$67 million in 2016 keep garbage from reaching storm drains and waterways.*

and thousands of storm drains. To keep garbage from reaching its drainage system, the Department spent more than \$67 million in 2016 to remove 142,000 cubic yards of debris from California's highways.

Caltrans maintains many partnerships, including one with the state Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation to give parolees work responsibilities as they help remove highway litter. Businesses and volunteers help combat litter through the Adopt-A-Highway Program, and in early 2017, Caltrans started a Veterans Outreach Program to employ those who served our country. This new program proved instrumental in clearing Solano County storm drains during the record-setting rainfall last winter, and keeping flooding to a minimum.

Caltrans' Protect Every Drop campaign continues to play an important role in preventing stormwater pollution by informing and educating the public. The campaign has partnered with organizations with similar goals, such as Keep California Beautiful, Splash, and the North Coast Stormwater Coalition. **MIM**



**Protect  
Every Drop**<sup>SM</sup>

*Source: Ana Serrano, Caltrans Senior Stormwater Engineer, and 2017 Caltrans Stormwater Awareness, Attitudes & Behaviors Study*