



**PROJECT
Pollution
PREVENTION**

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County of Los Angeles DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC WORKS • Public Relations Group

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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**150 TON PILE OF GARBAGE PROMPTS COUNTY OFFICIALS TO
“TALK TRASH” ABOUT L.A. RESIDENTS’ BEHAVIOR**

Los Angeles, Calif. – Heavy rain hit Los Angeles Saturday night, flushing 150 tons of trash *straight into the ocean!* All kinds of debris collected during the dry summer months in gutters and storm drains throughout the County travel to the ocean with the first rain – aptly referred to as the “first flush” by environmental engineers.

Pet droppings, fast food wrappers, lawn fertilizer, used motor oil, and cigarette butts are just a few of the pollutants that County residents carelessly toss into the street every day, without thinking about the damage they will do. The waste ends up in our storm drain system, and eventually in our beaches and rivers, where it endangers our health and marine life. The County’s L.A. River “trash boom,” located in Long Beach, is the last line of defense before the litter and other pollutants flow into the Pacific Ocean.

Earlier today, the County of Los Angeles Department of Public Works held a tour of the L.A. River trash boom to visually demonstrate just how much garbage L.A. residents toss into the street. Water traveling through the storm drain system is not treated, so the pollutants and sludge from gutters and storm drains end up floating in the very water that our children swim and play in.

“The volume of trash collected at the L.A. River boom is a powerful reminder that everything in the street – trash, cigarette butts, pet waste, even oil that leaks from cars – washes into the ocean after each heavy rainfall,” said Emma Ayala, Head, Public Relations Group of the County of Los Angeles Department of Public Works. “It’s a reminder to County residents that unless they want to end up swimming alongside it later, put trash where it belongs – *in a garbage can.*”

(more)

The County installed collection systems at Ballona Creek and the L.A. River to help prevent trash and debris from flowing into the ocean. These systems were designed to help mitigate the immense amount of trash before it reaches the ocean. Each year, these systems capture more than 300 tons of litter, though they do not catch everything. Tons of litter and other contaminants escape these containment systems and drift into the ocean, putting human health at risk.

“This is a problem that won’t go away unless *each and every one of us* does our part,” continued Ayala. “We all need to make a commitment to prevent stormwater pollution by taking simple steps, like using a trash can or picking up after our pets.”

County residents can implement the following tips to help prevent area flooding and reduce stormwater pollution:

- **Don’t put anything in storm drains but rainwater.** Storm drains and flood control channels carry surface runoff directly to the ocean without treatment. Make sure that runoff carries only rainwater.
- **Use a trash can.** Avoid throwing litter into the street. Trash-laden gutters increase neighborhood pollution and clog storm drains, causing street flooding and more traffic congestion.
- **Pick up after your pet.** Animal waste, when left on the ground, washes down storm drains and contaminates beaches. Picking up dog waste is a County ordinance and dog owners disregarding this law may be fined.

For additional information, Los Angeles County residents are encouraged to call the County’s toll-free environmental hotline, 1(888) CLEAN LA, or visit www.888CleanLA.com.

Reporter/Editor’s Note

Electronic photos and B-roll to support this news release are available by calling Gary Turner at (310) 550-3268.

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About the County of Los Angeles Department of Public Works

The County of Los Angeles Department of Public Works provides public works services ranging from road and flood control system maintenance, construction programs, building and safety services, traffic signals and street signs for the 130 unincorporated communities in the County. As the Principal Permittee for the State’s Municipal NPDES Permit System, LA County Public Works oversees public education and information programs designed to reach the 10 million residents of Los Angeles County with crucial messages about protecting the environment. These programs are part of a comprehensive effort to help residents understand the impact they have on the environment and the steps they can take to protect and improve it.