

Looking Forward

Hands Across The Sand for the planet



By Mark James Miller, May 25, 2018

Avila Beach was a poignant location for the Hands Across the Sand event on May 19, hosted by the San Luis Obispo Chapter of the Surfrider Foundation.

Brad Snook, the chapter chair, reminded those gathered that in the 1990s an oil spill due to a ruptured underground pipeline had so polluted the ground below Avila Beach that an astonishing 6,700 truckloads of contaminated soil had to be removed, and replaced by clean sand from the Guadalupe Dunes.

Hands Across the Sand events took place in 12 states and in countries as far away as Australia. The purpose was the same — to take a stand by joining hands with all those who want to end our dependence on fossil fuels and fight for clean energy as we go into the future. This brings the efforts of a group like Surfriders into sharper focus.

“The ocean and the beach belong to all of us,” Brad said, “and it is up to all of us to preserve them.”

He and the other volunteers at Surfriders are striving to protect our beaches through support of sustainable energy, saying no to plastics and fossil fuels, working toward making local restaurants ocean-friendly and informing the public of some uncomfortable facts:

Californians use over 330 million pounds of styrofoam containers every year. Americans use 500 million drinking straws every day. Californians use 24 billion plastic bags each year, and Americans toss out enough disposable

cups, forks and spoons each year to circle the equator 300 times. The statistics can become as mind-numbing as they are unpleasant.

And yet they must be faced. We live in a time when a significant number of American citizens and politicians deny that climate change is real and tell us that pollution of our environment is not a problem. As former Republican Rep. Michelle Bachman said, “There isn't even one study that can be produced that shows that carbon dioxide is a harmful gas.”

For the record, carbon dioxide is a greenhouse gas and a direct cause of global warming.

Barely a week ago a Republican congressman from Alabama opined that sea levels are rising due to “rocks tumbling into the ocean.” Then there is the head of the Environmental Protection Agency, Scott Pruitt, who asks if global warming is “necessarily a bad thing.”

Brad has a degree in meteorology from San Jose State, but it was his dedication to surfing that brought about his activism with Surfriders. Like the original founders of the organization, he became concerned about the growing pollution of our coastline and our oceans worldwide. He has been involved with SLO Surfriders for seven years.

Surfriders began in 1984 when a group of surfers in Malibu decided to form an organization to oppose pollution of our beaches and oceans. It now boasts 84 chapters worldwide, including affiliates in Europe, the UK, Australia, Japan and Brazil. Each chapter is “dedicated to the protection and enjoyment of the world’s ocean, waves and beaches through a powerful activist network.”

Surfriders next event, International Surfing Day, takes place June 16, and has had a million participants over the past decade. More than 200 such events will take place in more than 30 countries worldwide, all with the same purpose, to help protect and preserve the ocean and its natural beauty.

The SLO Surfriders hold their meetings on the second Tuesday of each month at 6 p.m., at iFixit, 1330 Monterey St. in San Luis Obispo. You can also find out more about Surfriders by visiting their website, www.slosurfrider.org, or their Facebook page, www.facebook.com/SurfriderSLO/.

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