Ecology Department Removing Some Tsunami Debris Trash Bins

Local News

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Olympia, WA - The Washington Department of Ecology (Ecology) is removing some trash bins placed near state beach access points to address increased amounts of marine debris along coastal beaches in Grays Harbor and Pacific counties thanks to a recent decrease in the amount of debris reported in those areas.Debris washing ashore has decreased partly due to seasonal weather patterns. Increases in debris are expected later in fall and winter when weather patterns shift.With assistance from volunteers and Washington State Parks, Ecology is continuing to monitor marine debris along coastal beaches. Drop boxes can quickly be redeployed, generally within 24 hours if more debris begins arriving on our shores. Ecology also will continue to support seasonal cleanup events.Trash bins will remain in place in the cities of Ocean Shores and Ocean Park and at Grayland State Park.

Ecology Southwest Region Waste 2 Resources Manager Peter Lyon said: “We want to ensure we are stretching our dollars as far as we can. In June, when the boxes were placed along beaches, a southwest wind pattern directed more debris ashore in those areas than we are seeing now. When weather patterns shift again in the fall, we are likely to see higher amounts of debris again. So we want to conserve our resources in case that happens.”Earlier this year, Ecology set aside $100,000 from its litter account to address marine debris issues. Funds have been used to supply trash bins and litter bags in support of local communities and volunteer efforts to keep beaches clean. Thus far, about $7,500 from the fund has been spent.Placing four trash bins on hold will save about $1,000 per month.Lyon said: “Also, when marine debris was not fully filling one trash bin, the hauler reported to Ecology that someone put their household garbage in it. We’d like to remind people that these trash bins have been made available specifically to keep our beaches clean for everyone to enjoy and are not for personal use.”In June, Ecology deployed the Washington Conservation Corps (WCC) to clean up increased amounts of marine debris along 57 miles of coastal beaches in southwest Washington. Three crews removed debris June 25 to 28 from Cape Disappointment north to Moclips, collecting enough material to fill the beds of 70 pickup trucks. Besides Styrofoam, pieces of plastic and other debris, crew members also encountered refrigerators, large crates and containers, buoys, ropes and household garbage.Each six-person crew costs $4,476 per week to deploy. The deployment cost did not come out of the $100,000 set aside from the litter account. State agencies are shouldering many current costs for addressing marine debris.WCC crews do not usually remove marine debris. Removal of non-hazardous marine debris is usually handled by the many dedicated volunteer groups that organize regular beach clean-up projects in Washington. Under state and federal statutes, no local, tribal, state or federal agency has the authority, responsibility or funding to pick up marine debris along beaches.Most small marine debris items are not considered hazardous. Whenever possible, people are encouraged to pick these items up and properly dispose of them.Anyone encountering oil or hazardous materials like fuel tanks, gas cylinders, chemical totes and other containers with unknown fluids on Washington beaches should immediately report it by calling 1-855-WACOAST (1-855-922-6278) and pressing “1.”The Washington State Marine Debris Task Force – a group of state agencies led by the state Military Department’s Emergency Management Division – has established a marine

debris information listserv for Washington residents and coastal visitors. People can join by going to http://www.ecy.wa.gov/maillist.html and choosing “marine/tsunami debris.”**More about marine debris, including potential tsunami debris:**· The reported increase in debris on our marine beaches has included plastic bottles and floats, Styrofoam, pieces of lumber, crates and other small moveable objects.· Washington has launched a toll-free reporting and information line – 1-855-WACOAST (1-855-922-6278) – for citizens who spot marine debris, including potential tsunami debris, on our marine beaches. More at http://www.ecy.wa.gov/news/2012/itn01_debris.html.· NOAA remains the best source for information about Japan tsunami marine debris including modeling, protocols to follow for handling marine debris and frequently asked questions. Go to http://marinedebris.noaa.gov/tsunamidebris/· NOAA is actively collecting information about tsunami debris and asks the public to report debris sightings to DisasterDebris@noaa.gov. Please include the time, date, location and, if possible, photos in such reports.· State Health Department radiation experts do not expect to find any debris with elevated radiation levels. More information at www.doh.wa.gov/Emergencies/Eme ... ate/TsunamiDebrisFAQ.aspx· According to state Fish and Wildlife, finding marine debris with invasive species will be rare and most likely limited to large marine structures such as boats, docks, navigation aids and breakwaters that spent a long time in their native waters. Such objects will likely require heavy equipment to remove. People may find organisms attached to smaller debris items – sometimes in heavy accumulations – but these will be common open ocean species such as pelagic gooseneck barnacles. Go to www.wdfw.wa.gov/tsunami/.· Don’t burn driftwood. Salt residue from ocean waters stays in pores of the wood, even after it’s dry. According to Ecology, when burned the chlorine reacts with the wood to form toxic compounds called dioxins that are released in the smoke. Such compounds can affect the immune system. If a beach fire is permitted, bring seasoned, non-driftwood, and enjoy.· Stripping the beach of its driftwood depletes needed coastal habitat. State Parks asks people who want to clean debris from beaches to focus on small, non-natural items such as Styrofoam and plastic. Leave wood and kelp because these are an important part of the beach ecosystem.· According to state law, it is illegal to burn garbage, and construction and demolition debris. More at http://apps.leg.wa.gov/RCW/default.aspx?cite=70.94.6512