

**CITY OF REDONDO BEACH**  
**WATER QUALITY TASK FORCE**  
**EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**



## Introduction

Heal the Bay's Annual Beach Report Card, dated May 25, 2005, detailed results of the low rating of water quality at the Redondo Beach Municipal Pier. This report, as well as the repetitive red tides that negatively impact marine ecology, led many community members to volunteer their efforts and expertise to help find a way to mitigate this sensitive environmental issue, thus preserving the quality of our most precious natural resource – our harbor and beaches.

On July 19, 2005, the City Council adopted Resolution CC-0507-82 authorizing Mayor Mike Gin and Council Member Chris Cagle to institute a Water Quality Task Force. Through invitations and volunteering of community members, a 15-member Water Quality Task Force was formed. The first meeting was held on August 31, 2005 to set up the guidelines and goals. Five objectives were set and subcommittees assigned to each:

- Provide recommendations to the City Council for action toward solving current immediate problems found in the harbor and waterfront area.
- Provide recommendations to the City Council for a long term Clean Harbor and Waterfront plan.
- Provide recommendations to the City Council for a Community Outreach public education program.
- Identify funding opportunities.
- Provide recommendations to the City Council for establishing a long term harbor volunteer program with procedures for dealing with emergency issues such as red tides.



The 15-member task force represented a diverse spectrum of the community and included members of the boating populous, waterfront business owners, the Visitor's Bureau, schools, youth groups, the environmental community, and the general public. The City was fortunate to have citizens with backgrounds that specifically related to the issues being discussed – including a wastewater treatment biology specialist, biology teacher, and marine biology expert. In addition to the volunteers available to participate in the task force, Redondo Beach has a wonderful resident marine institute (the S.E.A. lab) with staff possessing the technical expertise required to better inform and guide the task force members. The Water Quality Task Force was given one year to fulfill its tasks. The entire task force met monthly.

## Facing the Problem

Redondo Beach residents, businesses, and visitors expect the City to maintain the health and appearance of the waters along the Pier and Harbor areas, even though it might be beyond the City's control. The City of Redondo Beach has high intensity urban uses amid a very rich aquatic life in our Harbor and Pier area. While fish, seal lions, birds, and other sea life enjoy the coastal area, they also contribute natural pollutants which compound water quality problems. Both natural causes and urban runoff contribute to red tide conditions. Infected plankton cause a lack of oxygen in the water which renders fish helpless, making them more susceptible to predators. They then infect the predators, thus broadening the circle of destruction. Local fish suffocate and die, and if consumed by marine life or humans, wreak further havoc.



Red Tides severely impacted the ability of the community to enjoy the harbor. Businesses faced financial decline as the pollution spread across the shore. Revenue losses were estimated as high as 25% per occurrence of the red tide. As evidenced by the accompanying photographs, an immediate course of action needed to be executed to mitigate the negative consequences felt by the excessive quantities of decomposing sea life. One of the ways the Water Quality Task Force (WQTF) recommended dealing with red tides in the future is to have a volunteer task force, poised and ready to take swift clean-up actions when a red tide hits again.

### Heal the Bay's 2005 California Summer Beach Report Card®

#### Los Angeles County - Grades

Analysis | Grades

2005 Summer Totals  
Los Angeles, CA

Chart: Dry Weather Grades - Quantity

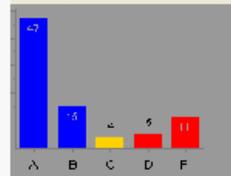


Table: Dry Weather Grades - Qty & %

Grade	Quantity	Percent
A	47	57.3%
B	15	18.3%
C	4	4.9%
D	5	6.1%
F	11	13.4%
Total	82	100%

2005 California Summer Beach Report Card® Los Angeles County		
Beach Locations - north to south <small>*ns = No sample taken or available</small>	Weather	
	Dry Summer	Wet Summer
<a href="#">Herondo Street storm drain - in front of drain</a>	B	ns
<a href="#">Redondo Municipal Pier - 100 yards south</a>	F	ns
<a href="#">Redondo Beach- projection of Topaz St., north of jetty</a>	A	ns
<a href="#">Redondo Beach at Avenue I drain</a>	A+	ns

## Results and Lessons learned:

On June 28, 2006, the WQTF assembled their final Recommendations Report which includes recommendations for twenty immediate activities and twelve long range actions to improve Redondo Beach water quality, along with recommendations for a community education and outreach program, as well as a harbor emergency response volunteer program. The task force included these key messages in their report:

- Even if only some of the recommendations are implemented, Redondo Beach will become a lead agency in maintaining water quality in the South Bay.
- With limited participants and a constrained time frame, the Water Quality Task Force accomplished significantly more than the original objectives.
- Based on results of the research, the water quality issues are more complicated than originally anticipated. There are many natural elements such as currents, tides, and wildlife that are beyond municipal or human control that significantly impact water quality.
- Implementing some of the recommendations will require a commitment of resources beyond that which is currently allocated from the City's revenue resources to address this issue.

City Council Members and staff from the City Manager and City Engineer's offices made the following observations about the task force:

- Water quality is a new science, so there is much to learn. Involving the scientific communities by facilitating practical application scenarios for new theories and technologies proved an effective partnership. Councilman Chris Cagle's presentation at a red tide symposium at Pepperdine University resulted in an offer from the University of Southern California to conduct a pilot program of monitor buoys to study the onset of red tides.
- Water quality is everyone's business. Involving the entire community in developing the water quality program provided an educated force that will "own" the issue and drive change in the community. A group of volunteers was poised and ready to respond immediately during the most recent red tide. Reaching out to involve other communities strengthened regional programs that will have long-term local impact.
- It all adds up. Some of the recommendations in the action plan include large items such as harbor aeration, while others involve small things like "doggie poles" to assist people with picking up dog waste. By creating one comprehensive list of priorities, we can now plan and focus on water quality results. "We're also in a better position to accept any funding that comes along," said Councilman Chris Cagle. The City has already obtained \$350,000 in Clean Beach monies (Prop. 40) and a \$788,400 grant from the State of California Water Resource Control Board to divert water runoff from park lands to irrigation, instead of it emptying into the ocean.

# Water task force tries to fix "F" grades

by Mark McDermott

Redondo Beach is known for its stunning coastal geography. Most of what is cherished about the city - such as its harbor and pier areas, its role in surfing history and scenic ocean views - is related to the city's perch alongside the southernmost end of Santa Monica Bay.

But in recent years, the city has gained some measure of ill-repute for other coastal related matters, such as high bacteria counts in the waters near its beaches and red tides that have resulted in massive fish kills in its harbor.

The water by the city's most popular beach, just south of the pier, has repeatedly received "F" grades on the Heal the Bay Annual Beach Report Cards, intended to assess the risk of adverse health effects for beachgoers. For the last two years, that location made the report's "Beach Bummers" list for LA County.

Then last year, the city suffered through its worst mass fish kills in recent memory when a toxic algae bloom known as "red tide" hit the harbor area twice in four months. The first red tide, which began in late May and lasted until early July, resulted in thousands of dead fish rotting in harbor waters for two full months.

It was, Mayor Mike Gin said, a wake-up call for the city.

"That was the tipping factor, I think," Gin said. "But we also wanted to examine

ways we could really improve overall water quality," Gin recalled.

"In the first round [of red tide], we didn't deal with it effectively and it took two months to recover from it," Councilman Chris Cagle said. "During that time, at least one business closed because it smelled so bad people didn't want to go down there."

Last July, Cagle and Gin addressed the issue of how to deal with red tides more effectively by convening a task force. At the same time, they decided to tackle other water-related issues, specifically the failing water grades south of the pier.

Thus was born the Water Quality Task Force. The 15-member group was given one year to establish a list of recommendations. It will conduct a joint meeting with the City Council next week to make those recommendations.

"It is really just, for the first time, going around identifying things we could do right away and bringing it all together on one list that can be managed by the city," Cagle said. "The city works good with a list."

The recommendations are big and small. Among the actions called for is the establishment of Clean Waterfront Plan, the installation of a pilot aeration system in the harbor as well as other methods to improve water circulation, the use of harbor "trash skimmers" to collect floatable debris, parking lot "debris catchers," new

programs to insure trash bins leaks are immediately replaced and trash truck leaks are easily reportable, a water quality hotline for the public to report concerns, new "doggie poles" with waste bags to better insure animal waste is collected, enhanced source point testing to try and identify sources of water pollution, and several new "Best Management Practices" programs that would be implemented throughout the city.

Anne Dalkey, a biologist who served as the chair of the subcommittee that made longterm recommendations, said that ultimately what the task force learned is that everyone needs to be made more aware of their impact on water quality.

"I guess the bottom line, which is what our subcommittee realized early on, is that in order to have clean water quality in our harbor area, along the pier, and along the beaches, it must include the entire community," she said. "It even extends beyond the borders of just Redondo Beach. It's a comprehensive way we approach our lifestyle. Everything we put in the water impacts the water quality...If we can take whatever steps possible to minimize those impacts, we all benefit. We have better water to swim in and better fish to eat."

Alex Bannerman, who chaired the subcommittee charged with making recom-

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mendations for more immediate actions, said that there is a common theme that emerges in everything from how waterfront restaurants steam clean to the use of "doggie poles."

"It's all about awareness," he said. "Many of these may be simple things, but it really does all add up."

The task force has already had an impact. Last September, the harbor was hit, unusually, with its second red tide of the year. The chair of the subcommittee charged with investigating the city's response to red tides and other water emergencies, Don Mueller, was able to put together a team of 40 volunteers to quickly clean up several tons of dead fish. The response prevented the red tide from lingering. What had taken two months earlier in the year was dealt with in less than a week.

Cagle, meanwhile, made contacts that would prove valuable. He gave a presentation about the city's water problems and its efforts to address them at a red tide symposium at Pepperdine University and at a Clean Beach symposium in Dana Point. The Pepperdine presentation resulted in the offer of a USC pilot program that would install monitor buoys to study the onset of red tides; the Dana Point presentation resulted in a \$788,000 state grant.

It turned out the city was eligible for Prop. 40 "Clean Beach Initiative" funds that it hadn't realized were available. The city had obtained \$350,000 in Clean Beach monies associated with Prop. 13 for improvements to the pier - such as the installation of a sink with a waste disposal for fisherman and new sewer lines - but didn't realize that more funding was available.

At Dana Point, Cagle met Laura Peters, a senior engineer with the State Water Resources Control Board, the body that was administering the grant. Out of that meeting came the \$788,400 grant that will be used to divert water from the 101-acre Alta Vista Park - at the top of the watershed that feeds into the storm drain that empties south of the pier - and reuse the water to irrigate the park.

Peters said that the project is the kind of diverse, watershed-wide approach that the Water Board hopes can show dramatic improvements. The first round of funding, she said, tackled many of the easier fixes.

"All the low-hanging fruit has already been picked," she said. "Now people really have to scratch their heads and come up with some innovative approaches...We really want to make sure the projects tapping into these funds have an impact on improving water quality."

But one of the reasons the city was eligible for this grant also points to the challenges it faces: the beach south of the pier was on the Water Board's shortlist of "most impaired beaches." Just last week, in fact, Heal the Bay singled out the south of the pier beach as one of the six "worst repeat offenders" in LA County for high levels of fecal bacteria. The organization has been urging the Los Angeles Regional Water Quality Control Board to more vigorously enforce storm water runoff standards that are included in the Clean Water Act. Non-compliance could result in fines of up to \$1,000 a day.

James Alamillo, Heal the Bay's report card manager, said he recognized that Redondo has a unique challenge in that the beach is right next to a busy pier. He said that while the beaches near both the

Redondo and the Santa Monica piers have become "poster children" for poor water quality, those two cities have also been among the most proactive in trying to come up with solutions.

"They are both unique in LA county," Alamillo said. "You look at all the piers in LA County, and those two are the only ones that have the combination of restaurants and visitor serving activities such as fishing or amusement facilities... They both have a lot of sources to contend with when trying to isolate or clean up a problem area."

Among other things, all the food on the pier attracts a lot of birds, who in turn contribute a lot of fecal matter to the waters below.

Mike Shay, a senior engineer with the city who oversees many of its water quality issues, said that the regional water board has contacted the city regarding bacterial exceedences south of the pier. But he said the city would not be subject to enforcement actions relating to its storm drains for a simple reason - "during the summer, the storm drain south of the pier runs dry."

Shay also noted that the issue of testing is not black and white. Redondo has a testing operation that conducts weekly tests with three other cities - Hermosa, Manhattan, and Torrance - and its results have differed from those done by the county. Shay said that the same test can vary greatly from hour to hour.

"It's kind of hit and miss," he said.

Shay said that, according to data the city has collected, the water quality south of the pier has actually been much better this summer than it has been over the last four summers. Cagle also indicated that Heal the Bay's criticisms may have been

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overstated. He noted that the four weeks between June 19 and July 19, the pier location received two "A" grades, a "B" and a "C." In the three since, it has received "F's."

"Just because you take a sample in one particular period doesn't mean the water is bad all day long," Cagle said. "It might just be a negative result for that thirty minute period."

City Manager Bill Workman said that one thing that has clearly emerged as the city tries to cope with its water problems is that nothing is crystal clear.

"I believe everyone who worked on the task force found the issue is much more complex than anyone ever dreamed," he said. "When we went into this, I think people may have had certain preconceived notions...but at some point, we all came to a realization. Wow, this is a very complicated issue, with not a lot of easy solutions."

The joint meeting with the Water Quality Task Force and the City Council takes place this Tuesday at 6:30 p.m. in the upstairs meeting room in the Main Library. *ER*

## Community Partnership

The Water Quality Task Force (WQTF) was a truly collaborative partnership. The City Council, in recognizing the immediate concerns affecting our most precious natural resource – our harbor and beaches – empowered the citizenry to embrace the task force and be more intimately involved in a community issue than ever before. The citizen response was overwhelming. Beyond the diverse representation of participants from the



boating populous, waterfront business owners, the Visitor's Bureau, schools, youth groups, the environmental community, and the general public, the City was fortunate to have citizens with backgrounds that specifically related to the issues being discussed – including a wastewater treatment biology specialist, biology teacher, and marine biology expert members.

The task force was given the freedom to seek out educational specialists to further broaden knowledge of the problems at hand and the methods available for mitigation. Although no outside consultant was engaged for assistance with this task force, outreach researchers and other specialists made educational presentations to the task force. With such complicated topics to be addressed, the task force brought in a number of presenters to help impart a better understanding of the issues. Those presenters included: environmental specialists from the University of Southern California; private water quality laboratory specialists from Enfact Solutions, Inc.; representatives of the Santa Monica Bay Restoration Commission; plastics environmental impact researchers from the Algalita Foundation; and expert advise on water quality concerns across the South Bay by our own internal Civil Engineers. Cutting edge water quality testing procedures, which included DNA and RNA testing, were discussed as possible recommendations for the report.

The inclusion of both the Youth Council and our “Leader for a Day” programs further illustrated the willingness of the task force to be open-minded and creative in seeking feedback and solutions from within the affected community. The Chamber of Commerce’s 2006 Leader for a Day program focused on water quality issues. Participants studied relevant issues with teachers and City staff for weeks before meeting in a public forum to discuss their final recommendations. The recommendations from these youth leaders were forwarded to the WQTF and incorporated into the final recommendations report.



Beyond the immediate concerns that affect Redondo Beach in particular, the task force and community at large recognize that to be truly effective, all cities in the region must band together and focus as much public attention and funding as possible toward mitigating poor water quality. Toward that end, the Water Quality Task Force looked to the City of Santa Monica for a benchmark model of public outreach and educational programs. It is through this spirit of cooperation that real change becomes possible. The City of Santa Monica was most generous in sharing their ideas and experience in how to implement awareness programs. Throughout this process, the task force was pleasantly surprised by how readily a variety of agencies were in agreeing to assist in the development of their recommendations. The very existence of the task compelled a chain reaction of change in the broader community. Grants totaling over \$700,000 that might never have reached Redondo Beach suddenly became available for funding.

The one year sunset of the WQTF reflected the urgency of the problems and the need for swift planning of solutions. The definitive time frame helped bring people together with a sense of urgency and commitment. Each subcommittee was held to a timeline for reporting back to the full task force. The final presentation of the task force report went before a joint meeting of the City Council, Harbor Commission, and Water Quality Task Force, on August 29, 2006, thus completing the mission of the WQTF.



*Aerial View of the Redondo Beach Pier*

## Management Philosophy

The Water Quality Task Force is an example of the active involvement of citizens in the day-to-day happenings of the City of Redondo Beach. The Mayor and City Council favor transparency and open government, and approach community needs with a sense of partnership, actively encouraging people to become part of the solution to problems that affect us all.

The City's Mission Statement reads:

*The City of Redondo Beach is committed to providing the finest services to enhance the quality of life for those who live, work, visit, and play in our community.*

City of Redondo Beach leadership and staff maintain the highest standards in achieving our mission and maintaining our values. Those values influenced the creation of the Water Quality Task Force (WQTF) and are reflected in the completed Recommendations Report:

- Openness and Honesty
- Integrity and Ethics
- Accountability
- Outstanding Customer Service
- Teamwork
- Ethics
- Fiscal Responsibility



*King Harbor, Redondo Beach*