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5 Gyres and Partners Launch First TrashBlitz, Calculating LA’s Plastic Footprint To Drive Solutions.

(Los Angeles, CA) On April 20th through May 11th, The 5 Gyres Institute and 25 partner organizations will complete the first TrashBlitz in Los Angeles, gathering data on plastic pollution across the LA Watershed to determine the top polluting items and brands. With the data, partners will participate in a Solutions Summit on May 30th, to generate a set of recommendations and an action plan for reducing the city’s plastic pollution footprint.

“While global data on plastic pollution highlights the problem, we need locally relevant data to better determine where to focus, and we need residents involved in decision making”, explains Marcus Eriksen, 5 Gyres’ Director of Research. “TrashBlitz engages communities across the city in gathering open-source, plastic pollution data in all 15 Council Districts, that will drive specific recommendations for solutions.”

TrashBlitz is a collaborative effort, involving Greenpeace, Pacoima Beautiful, Surfrider Foundation, Heal The Bay, Padres Pioneros, LA Waterkeepers, and others (full list below) as well as corporate partners, Snap, Sony, and Public School. Partners will mobilize teams of trained volunteers to collect trash data using a new, user friendly web app that matches data collection methods generated by the United Nations. The app tallies information in real time – both on plastic type – utensils, bags, Styrofoam trays etc – as well as on the associated brands.

“We want people to realize that urban and beach cleanups are also important data-collection events, that tell a story about both problems *and* solutions,” said Melissa Aguayo, Director of Advocacy, “Do we need more trash collection bins in certain neighborhoods? Is fast food packaging from a particular brand creating blight in specific areas? Are there products we are seeing consistently across the landscape?”

Once the TrashBlitz data is synthesized, participants will return for a Solutions Summit on May 30th at the Ace Hotel, to workshop a series of solutions, identifying barriers and opportunities.

In the wake of China’s National ban on US recyclables, Los Angeles joins cities across the United States in facing major challenges with solid waste. The bales of plastic packaging and other low value waste that were previously exported to China, are now stockpiling in warehouses as municipalities explore alternatives. Unfortunately, many cities are turning to either landfilling waste, or incineration.

To combat these challenges, NGOs and policymakers have teamed up in proposing new legislation both in the city of Los Angeles, and across California. At the state level, the proposed “California Circular Economy and Plastic Pollution Reduction Act”, SB 54/AB 1080 , would mandate source reduction of plastic packaging, ensure recycled content standards, and phase out problem products. Meantime, Los Angeles has taken the first step towards a feasibility study for what a circular economy around waste would look like.

“We’re hopeful that the momentum and information we can generate in Los Angeles through TrashBlitz will help support both the city’s goals towards zero-waste, as well as the statewide effort to reduce plastic pollution,” said Aguayo, “Following this example, cities globally will have the tools necessary to identify which regional solutions would be most impactful to curb plastic pollution and stop the flow of plastic from source to sea.”

Full list of partners:

Friends of the LA River

Heal the Bay

Surfrider Los Angeles

Algalita

Greenpeace

Surfrider Long Beach

Multicultural Learning Center

The Bay Foundation

Sierra Club

Loyola Marymount University

Tree People

Team Marine

Los Angeles Waterkeeper

Padres Pioneros

Pacoima Beautiful

Los Angeles Yacht Club

Climate Reality Project

Azul

LA Maritime Institute

Adventures in Waste

El Nido

Plastic Pollution Coalition

Global Green

Historic Highland Park Neighborhood Council

The 5 Gyre Institute is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization in special consultative status with the United Nations Economic and Social Council since 2017. Our mission is to empower action against the global health crisis of plastic pollution through science, education, and adventure. More information at www.5gyres.org.