

Can the Trash! Clean Beach Poster Contest

2020 CSAC Challenge Awards

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Category: Agriculture, Environment and Natural Resources

Overview - Can the Trash! is an environmental messaging campaign created to educate youth about the significant problem of runoff pollution and its effect on the health of the County's beaches and ocean waters. It uses creative content to teach elementary school students how trash and other pollutants improperly disposed of in their neighborhoods end up as a source of coastal pollution.

Challenge – A substantial amount of the trash seen on the beaches and in waterways is generated inland — a result of garbage that has been improperly disposed of. Storm drains designed to move water away from neighborhood streets to prevent flooding empty both onto the beaches and into the ocean bringing trash during the rainy season.

Solution – *Can the Trash!* raises awareness of the problem of polluted stormwater and encourages youth to be good environmental stewards. Targeting elementary school students, it aims to teach kids how trash and toxins from across all neighborhoods make their way into the streets' storm drains, then into our natural watersheds, ultimately reaching the ocean waters and beaches. Through *Can the Trash!*, students learn how to take action in their daily lives to reduce ocean pollution.

Innovation – The Clean Beach Poster Contest meaningfully engages students by enlisting their help to convey environmental messages to over 50 million visitors to our County beaches, where the winning student artwork is displayed on the Department’s beach trash barrels.

Results – In its second-year cycle, poster contest submissions increased to 357 from 77 unique participating schools/organizations. The campaign's reach and the impact can also be noted from the increased participation in the family Coastal Cleanup Day event. In 2018, the event welcomed about 200 volunteers who collected 138 lbs. of trash. At the 2019 Coastal Cleanup Day kick-off, there were over 400 people in attendance, comprised of families, youth groups and schools. Together they prevented 261 lbs. of trash from reaching the ocean.

Replicability – The program/concept can be replicated by any local jurisdiction that is responsible for maintaining beaches or as a means to reduce the solid waste from the storm drains.

Project or Program Contact –

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Optional Submission – <https://beaches.lacounty.gov/postercontest/>