

Clear Waterways Organization (CWO)

JUNE 26, 2014 REPORT: CHARCOAL/ASH FROM BEACH FIRES

CWO has been dismantling and filtering out beach fire rings in order to preserve the beauty and cleanliness of the beach. The reasons behind cleaning up fire pits are: the visual quality of the beach when covered with black charcoal, dirty looking fire mounds with nails and broken glass in some of them. Water quality is affected because ash raises the pH of water (excess phosphorus), clouds the ocean (sedimentation), and in addition, charcoal also clouds the water and releases metals (chemical reactions of burning wood). Beach fires need to be extinguished with water because sand used to extinguish a fire insulates and keeps the charcoals live presenting a danger.

According to the Santa Barbara County ordinance, beach fires are allowed if they are small, and used for cooking. It would be a great help if the wood is clean, not containing nails from the burning of wood pallets . Broken glass in the fire rings is present from some careless people who use the privilege and then abuse our beaches.

CWO, would like to find a solution to help eliminate the re-occurring pollution from beach fires. Some suggestions are: bring a fire pit liner or portable barbeque to trap the charcoal and ash, bring a bucket to properly extinguish the fire, and hike it out and dispose of the charcoal and ash properly. Another idea would be to provide ash and charcoal disposal receptacles.

CWO, will provide updates and notification on this issue of adopting some practical and responsible solutions to an overwhelming amount of charcoal and ash on our beaches.