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Date: 9/4/12 From: Angela Howe
To: OPC Pages to Follow: 4
Fax Number: 510-286-0470
Message: Comment re: Tsunami Debris



September 4, 2012

Chair John Laird and Members
Ocean Protection Council
1330 Broadway, 13th Floor
Oakland, CA 94612

VIA Facsimile (510) 286-0470

RE: Japanese Tsunami Debris Response Need for Coordination and Collaboration

Dear Chair and State Board Members:

Dear Chair and State Board Members:

On behalf of Surfrider Foundation ("Surfrider") and our over 30,000 activists and 20 local Chapters in the state of California, we are writing today to urge you to support improved coordination and collaboration on Japanese Tsunami Marine Debris Response, agenda item #8 for the Ocean Protection Council ("OPC") September 13, 2012 meeting. Surfrider Foundation encourages you to develop a plan that commits to collaboration with grassroots non-profits and other interested NGOs to respond to this great threat to our ocean. Specifically, we encourage the OPC to support the work of the West Coast Governors Agreement Action Coordination Team on Marine Debris to respond to this relatively near term threat and thereby continue strengthen the infrastructure of the group working to prevent the destruction and impairment of our marine resources caused by marine debris.

Why this is important

The state of California needs to stand in solidarity with our West Coast neighbors to not only defend against the threat of tsunami debris, but the daily deluge of ocean litter that takes away from the value of our oceans, waves and beaches. There is a need for clean and healthy beaches to help drive the \$42 billion economic engine of the California coastal economy.¹ Ocean and beach litter can devastate local economies, and coastal communities are forced to pay millions to clean garbage off their beaches and out of storm drains, or risk flooding and tourism losses.

Beach litter, especially plastic marine pollution, can prove detrimental to marine life. Plastic pollution kills whales, seals, turtles, birds and fish every year through ingestion and entanglement. The tsunami debris obviously provides a sudden onslaught of debris in the marine community, but it is only a small fraction of the overall ocean litter that is produced every year. The tsunami produced an estimated 3 billion pounds of

¹ See National Ocean Economics Program at <http://www.oceaneconomics.org/>.

debris in the ocean; however, there are an estimated 18 billion pounds of trash entering the oceans every year.²

Surfrider Foundation Tsunami Debris Efforts

All Surfrider Foundation local grassroots Chapters conduct regular beach clean ups where they see plastic, in the form of bags, bottles, cigarette butts, and other marine litter that degrade our beaches and the marine environment and ruin the recreational experience. In light of the tsunami debris threat of a higher concentration of foreign objects and unknown impacts on our coastal ecosystem, Surfrider Foundation Chapters along the West Coast and in Hawaii have stepped up to address this new hazard. Many Surfrider Foundation Chapters in effected areas have held educational workshops on the topic of tsunami debris to educate the local community and offer them ways to engage in constructive efforts to address the problem. For instance, Surfrider Oregon teamed up with and other local NGO and government partners to host a series of twelve educational workshops up and down the coast. The Kaua'i Chapter in Hawaii and Olympic Peninsula Chapter in Washington have also held tsunami debris conferences with experts from government and academia.³

Surfrider Foundation is committed to working with partnering community groups and government agencies to distribute accurate information on tsunami debris to the public, as well as activate and engage citizens where appropriate. In Oregon, Surfrider Foundation has worked with SOLVE, Oregon Sea Grant, Oregon State Parks and Pacific States Marine Fisheries Commission Habitat Program to design a poster informing and encouraging the public to help with tsunami debris clean up. On the ground in Oregon, Surfrider Foundation and SOLVE increased their cleanup efforts by over 100% compared to last year, offering more beach clean up opportunities for volunteers. In California, the Sonoma Chapter of Surfrider Foundation is working with NOAA to prepare and monitor for potential tsunami debris washing up on California beaches. In Washington, Surfrider also joined forces with Senator Marie Cantwell's office in a press conference to support a federal legislative amendment that would help address surveillance and clean up of the debris, as well as raise awareness about the general issue of trash in our oceans.

Finally, Surfrider works to keep our supporters informed on current tsunami debris news throughout the nation. Our website offers information and engagement opportunities on the tsunami debris.⁴ We help keep our supporters informed on current tsunami debris news through our social media efforts, including Twitter Accounts @Surfrider, @RiseAbovePlstcs and @Envirosurf, as well as our SOUP enewsletter. Surfrider also partnered with Algalita Marine Research Institute and 5Gyres to support their summertime educational journey to explore tsunami debris.

A Call for Improved Regional and National Coordination

² See http://www.coastal.ca.gov/publiced/newsletter/summer12/tsunami_debris.html.

³ For instance, the Olympic Peninsula Washington Chapter partnered with Clallam County Marine Resources Committee and NOAA to host a three-day symposium on tsunami debris in Port Angeles, WA.

⁴ See e.g., <http://www.surfrider.org/coastal-blog/entry/tsunami-debris-coming-to-a-beach-near-you>.

The California Ocean Protection Council should invest agency resources to support Surfrider Foundation and our efforts for collaboration through West Coast Governors Agreement and other regional and national efforts on tsunami debris. Surfrider is working with the West Coast Governors Alliance, Pacific Coast Collaborative and NOAA on beach clean up protocol and reporting that will prove invaluable in addressing tsunami debris, but these regional and national alliances need more support to increase functionality and efficiency. As Surfrider Foundation advises in our recent OpEd, authored with NRDC:

“With the West Coast states linked so closely by nature, commerce and common problems, it simply makes sense for the states to work together to tackle challenges that arise – whether epic or everyday – for the benefit of our communities, economies and marine ecosystems.”⁵

The West Coast Governors Agreement (“WCGA”) is a tool for meaningful engagement and collaboration. The WCGA began in 2006 through an initiative of the Governors of California, Oregon and Washington to address some of the most urgent challenges facing our shared ocean. Since that time, the WCGA has made significant progress, especially in certain areas like marine debris. The WCGA Marine Debris Action Coordination Team has convened experts, NGOs, government and industry to tackle some of the most pressing questions regarding how to prevent and abate marine debris. Surfrider Foundation was fortunate enough to sit on this Action Coordination Team and help to devise a plan to address ocean-based marine debris and land-based marine debris, including a resolution for target reductions of plastic pollution.

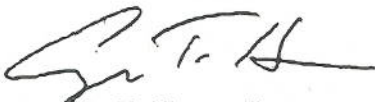
On the national level, the 2010 National Ocean Policy (“NOP”) offers means to enact coordinated ocean governance. This Executive Order is aimed at coordinating the 140 laws that currently apply to ocean governance in a disparate manner. The NOP supports regional governance actions like the West Coast Governors Agreement to coordinate interagency and local stakeholder involvement in important ocean issues, such as tsunami debris. Through the NOP and WCGA, we have a structure to help move toward safer and more effective management of our valuable coastlines – this is exactly what is needed to address the danger of tsunami debris in a timely manner.

Thank you for addressing this important topic and taking on the issue of tsunami debris and overall marine debris as a serious priority. For the above reasons, we support a highly coordinated effort to address tsunami debris based on sound infrastructure to support collaboration, such as the West Coast Governors Agreement and the National Ocean Policy. Through these structures, Surfrider Foundation has been able to engage in meaningful dialogue and actions with NOAA and state governmental agencies, as well as other community groups. The numerous NGOs that conduct beach clean ups can also be excellent, cost-effective partners in the effort to address the current tsunami debris problem and beyond this short term issue to address long term issues of marine debris

⁵ Jim Moriarty & Leila Monroe, “Cooperation Key in Dealing with Tsunami Debris”, *San Diego Union-Tribune*, June 21, 2012, available at <http://www.utsandiego.com/news/2012/jun/21/tp-cooperation-key-in-dealing-with-tsunami-debris/>.

source control and tracking. We ask that the California Ocean Protection Council continue to provide support and guidance for Californians to protect our highly treasured beaches, as well as the coastlines of our neighboring states, and our precious shared ocean.

Sincerely,



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