



Public Health Division  
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# County of Santa Cruz

## HEALTH SERVICES AGENCY

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## Press Release

<b>For Release:</b> Immediately	<b>Contact:</b> Tara Leonard, MPH
<b>Date:</b> August 15, 2018	<b>Phone:</b> (831) 454-5412

### August 26 Cowell Beach Cleanup Focuses on Tobacco Butts

SANTA CRUZ COUNTY – Are you sick of seeing cigarette butts littering our local streets and beaches? Cigarette butts are the #1 litter item on Santa Cruz County beaches, where they pose a threat to children, pets and wildlife. On Sunday, August 26, the public is invited to a unique beach cleanup and photography event with a focus on cleaning them up – for good.

Co-sponsored by Save Our Shores and the Santa Cruz County Tobacco Education Coalition, the event is designed to raise awareness about toxic tobacco litter and possible solutions. Participants will replace each cigarette butt they collect with a large wooden or foam core replica, to show local policy makers just how BIG a problem tobacco waste really is. The replacement butts were designed by community members during a family art night at the Museum of Art and History in June.

“Many people don’t realize that cigarette filters, or butts, are made from cellulose acetate, a plastic that takes decades to decompose,” said Coalition Co-Chair, Rachel Kippen. “Filters provide no proven health benefit to smokers but create a lasting environmental threat when they are inappropriately discarded, which the majority of them are.”

According to Ocean Conservancy 2,412,151 cigarette butts were picked up worldwide during the 2017 International Coastal Cleanup, more than any other item including bottle caps, food wrappers, plastics bags or straws. But cigarette butts aren’t just litter. They’re toxic waste, containing dangerous chemicals such as arsenic, lead and nicotine—the same chemicals found in secondhand smoke. And just like with secondhand smoke, the most effective prevention strategy is comprehensive public policy.

“This is a great opportunity for folks to spend a fun morning at the beach while learning about a critical environmental issue,” said Tara Leonard, a Health Educator with the Santa Cruz County Tobacco Education and Prevention Program. “Come out, make a difference for all the creatures who make Monterey Bay their home, and learn about possible policy solutions to keep these butts off our beaches!”

**What:** Beach Cleanup and Photography Event

**When:** Sunday, August 26 at 9 a.m..

**Where:** Cowell Beach in Santa Cruz on Westcliff Drive

**More Information:** [www.saveourshores.org](http://www.saveourshores.org)



Public Health  
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Santa Cruz County