



# California Department of Public Health **TOBACCO CONTROL PROGRAM**

## **Environmental Impact of Tobacco Fact Sheet**

### **Toxicity**

- Cigarette butts are toxic.
- Cigarette butts release the same toxic chemicals found in cigarettes, such as arsenic and nicotine, into the environment.
- Cigarette butts are a threat to our aquatic ecosystems.
- Cigarette butts are poisonous when ingested by children or wildlife.

### **Magnitude**

- Every year, 5.6 trillion cigarettes are consumed worldwide.
- More than 360 billion cigarettes are consumed in the United States annually, leading to 135 million pounds of discarded butts.
- The Ocean Conservancy reported that cigarettes/cigarette filters represent 28 percent of total debris items collected worldwide, making it by far the most prevalent item found.

### **Impact**

- Discarded cigarette butts are non-biodegradable waste.
- Cigarette filters are made from cellulose acetate, a plastic which is technically biodegradable. In practice, cellulose acetate is resistant to biodegradation and can persist in the environment, even under ideal conditions for biodegradability.
- Cigarette butts are the number one litter item found on beaches and roadsides, and a major litter item at parks.
- Cigarette butts make up 34 percent of the total litter collected in California.
- Cigarette waste is a significant contributor to storm drain trash.
- Discarded cigarette butts have been linked to wildfires, which result in the destruction of wildlife, vegetation and structures.
- California public agencies spend in excess of \$41 million annually on litter clean up.