



CRUISING CLUB OF AMERICA

ENVIRONMENT OF THE SEA NOTES

November, 2007

1. The Great Pacific Garbage Patch. The San Francisco Chronicle carried a front page article on October 30 reporting on a giant mass of floating plastic and marine debris located about 1,000 miles west of San Francisco and 1,000 miles north of the Hawaiian Islands. One researcher, Charles Moore, who has been studying the patch for 10 years, believes that it is twice as big as the State of Texas, weighs 3 million tons and may be as much as 300 feet deep. The trash collects in an area known as the North Pacific Gyre due to a clockwise trade wind. Moore feels that the patch is too far from land to conduct any meaningful clean-up operation. NOAA is studying the matter to see if it can come up with a feasible plan to remove the plastic. There is widespread agreement that the only way to reduce marine debris is to cut it off at its source, which is on land. More information about the Garbage Patch can be found at www.algalita.org. An interactive map showing some of the worst trash problems on San Francisco Bay is available at www.savesfbay.org/baytrash.
2. National Marine Debris Monitoring Program. On November 2, the Ocean Conservancy released key findings from a landmark five year study which was funded by the Environmental Protection Agency and carried out by 600 volunteers who monitored ocean debris in 21 coastal states, islands and territories. Overall findings were that marine debris trash coming from both ocean and land-based activities increased by more than 5% each year and that marine debris continues to be a national problem, with Hawaii being the only location to show a significant decrease in such debris. The full study may be found at www.oceanconservancy.org/nmdmp.
3. White House Initiative on Marine Debris. Also on November 2, the White House unveiled a new initiative to address marine debris. The plan calls for an increase in public/private partnerships on cleanups, enhanced public education on debris prevention and an emphasis on international cooperation to end the dumping of marine debris. First Lady Laura Bush has been a champion of marine debris prevention since she visited the Northwestern Hawaiian Islands National Marine Monument and saw the extent of the problem.
4. The Law of the Sea Treaty. On October 31, the Senate Foreign Relations Committee voted 17-4 in favor of ratifying the U.N. Convention of the Law of the Sea. The treaty will now go before the full Senate, where a two-thirds vote is

needed to win final approval. The treaty is 25 years old and more than 150 nations have adopted it. President Bush supports ratification, as does the U.S. Navy, the oil and gas industry, the fishing industry and numerous environmental groups. Inevitably, there are also those who oppose it. The treaty deals with navigation, exclusive economic zones, continental shelf jurisdiction, deep sea-bed mining and the settlement of disputes. Significantly, it addresses marine pollution, the management of fisheries and the conservation of marine mammals and migratory species.

5. Massachusetts Senate Approves Comprehensive Ocean Management Bill. The Massachusetts Senate has approved the Massachusetts Ocean Act which seeks to end uncoordinated decisions by state agencies which threaten the health of the state's ocean waters. The bill was the result of several years of consultation and coordination among scientists, fishermen, environmentalists and the marine trade industries. The bill now goes to the House of Representatives. If passed into law, Massachusetts would become the first state to adopt a comprehensive ocean management plan. The bill would establish clear authority over ocean resources in a single agency, create an ocean management plan advised by a 16 member, broad-based commission and ensure that decisions about the ocean are guided by the best available science.
6. Coastal Monitoring Project Launched. The International Seakeepers Society, an organization which promotes synergy among citizens, governments, educational institutions and corporations to restore and protect the oceans, and the Scripps Institution of Oceanography have launched a three-year, \$1 million research and development program to create instrumentation that can be networked to provide high-quality, standardized, near-shore oceanographic data to scientists and resource managers around the world.
7. Suit To Force Scrapping of Mothball Fleet. Three San Francisco-based environmental groups, the National Resources Defense Council, Arc Ecology and BayKeeper, have filed suit in federal court to force the U.S. Maritime Administration to dispose of most of the ships in the so-called "mothball" fleet in Suisin Bay. The suit claims that these ships have ceased being useful for transportation and are now just "floating junkyards full of toxic materials" which are polluting San Francisco Bay and its tributaries. The Maritime Administration has said that it wants to scrap most of these ships, but that it is caught in a dispute with other governmental agencies.
8. Whale Tail License Plates. The California Coastal Commission is sponsoring a new Whale Tail license plate which gives drivers a way to help protect and restore the resources of California's coast and ocean. Proceeds support the annual Coastal Cleanup Day, the Adopt-A-Beach program, marine education at the local level and beach access and restoration programs. Whale Tail license plates may be ordered on-line at www.ecoplates.com. The plates cost \$50 over the usual registration fee, with a \$40 annual renewal fee.

9. Green Boat Supplies. Check out the web-site www.greenboatstuff.com. The company sells a wide variety of environmentally friendly boating supplies.
10. La Nina May Be Coming. In September scientists with NOAA's Climate Prediction Center said that while it couldn't officially be called La Nina yet, a pattern of periodic cooling of ocean temperatures in the central and east-central equatorial Pacific seems to be developing. With such a pattern, seasonal forecasters expect wetter than normal conditions in the Pacific Northwest and drier than normal conditions in the southwestern U.S.
11. A Tale of A Controversial Effort To Save The Seas. Under the title "Neptune's Navy", the November 5 issue of The New Yorker carries a lengthy and very interesting account of the efforts of Paul Watson to protect the world's marine life. Watson formed the Sea Shepherd Conservation Society thirty years ago. Employing two ships he has used sometimes radical techniques in an attempt to stop whaling and the clubbing of baby seals. He opposes the Law of The Sea Convention because it may interfere with his agenda. Watson has many supporters, including celebrities, who idolize him and not a few detractors as well, including officials in Denmark, Iceland, Norway, Japan, Canada and Costa Rica and, surprisingly, Greenpeace.
12. Ocean Champions Insight Study. Ocean Champions, a bi-partisan political organization supporting ocean conservation, has launched a new qualitative insight study to help it understand the values, attitudes and information needs of its supporters and individuals with conservation interests regarding ocean health. The study will include an online component, which is accessible at www.oceanchampions.org. This organization sees itself as a line of communication between ocean enthusiasts and lawmakers.

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