



THE CHALLENGE OF TRASH AND MICROPLASTICS IN THE LA RIVER

State of the LA River Watershed Symposium

Breakout Session 1

Facilitation by Emily Parker, Heal the Bay

ABOUT ME



Emily Parker, she/her

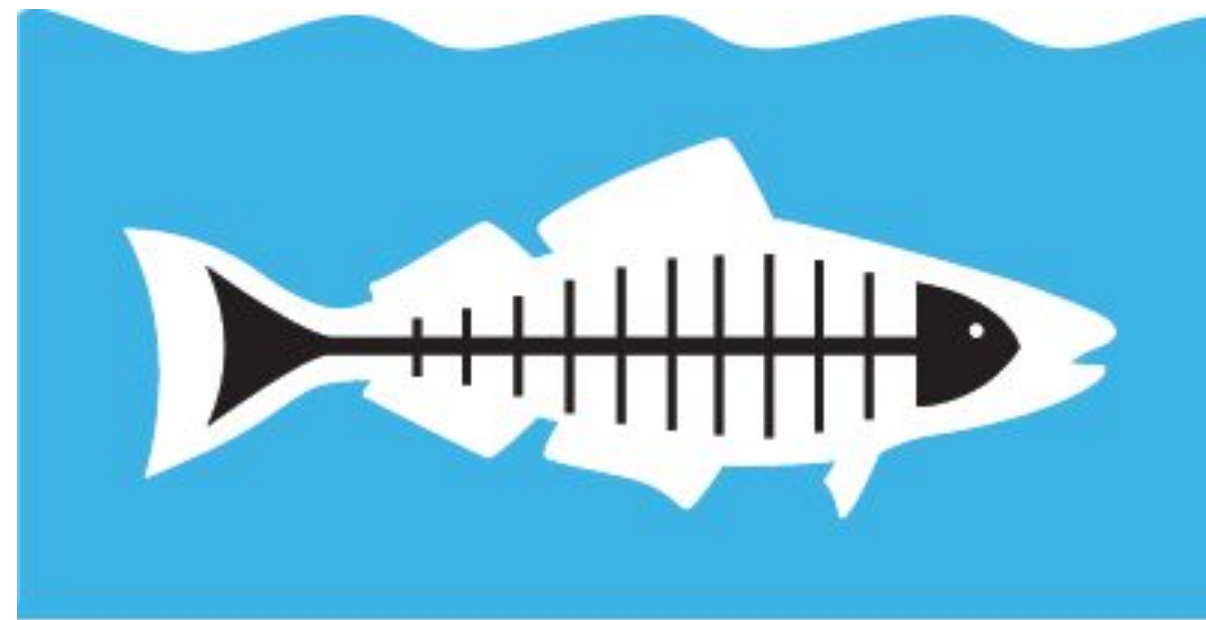
Marine scientist with over a decade of experience working on ocean conservation issues and specializing in policies to reduce plastic pollution, both on land and at sea.

Coastal and Marine Scientist at Heal the Bay and the co-founder and co-chair of the Reusable LA Coalition.



PANEL

- The Plastic Problem: An Overview
- Jessica Blickley: Student Microplastic Monitoring
- Andrew Gray: Microplastics Research Methods
- Shelly Walther: Microplastics Playbook
- Scott Coffin: Microplastics Regulations
- Rita Kampalath: LA County Plastic Reduction



Heal the Bay

Mission: Heal the Bay is dedicated to making the coastal waters and watersheds of greater Los Angeles healthy, safe, and clean.

HEAL THE BAY'S STORY




Dorothy Green: Bullhorn Advocacy

Untreated sewage in Santa Monica Bay prompted advocacy for better water quality protections for both healthier communities and ecosystems

Science, Education, Advocacy, and Community Action

The perfect blend, honed over 40 years, to achieve our mission, which now goes far beyond water quality



HEAL THE BAY'S PLASTIC FIGHTING PROGRAMS

Beach Cleanups

**Policies and
Regulations**

**Community
Outreach and
Education**

THE ISSUE WITH PLASTIC

Pollution Problem from Extraction to Disposal

Plastic is a fossil fuel product.

Starting in the 1950's, single-use plastic has slowly become ubiquitous and impossible to avoid.

Plastics cause pollution before they hit the watershed from extraction, refining, manufacturing, disposal.

According to Heal the Bay cleanup data, plastic is by far the most common material found in and around the LA River watershed.

Plastic has now been found just about everywhere: in soil, salt, drinking water, clouds, and throughout the human body.

MICROPLASTICS

What are they?

Small pieces of plastic that measure less than 5mm in length but can measure much smaller - as small as 2 microns

Where are they coming from?

Microplastics have two sources: they either start small e.g. microbeads in cosmetics or nurdles (pre-production plastic pellets) or they become small through the degradation of macroplastics





What's the concern with Microplastics?

Microplastics easily end up in the food chain, ingested by animals as small as plankton and ending up back on our plates as seafood, salt, and water.

They are small enough to be aerosolized and were recently found in clouds - they are ubiquitous in the environment and our bodies.

Microplastics can absorb other pollutants in the environment around them, making them even more of a public health risk than their larger counterparts.

PLASTIC IN THE LA RIVER WATERSHED

Sources and Movement

Plastic pollution in the LA River Watershed is predominantly entering the environment through the storm drain system. Most stormwater flows untreated through streets, into catch basins, and eventually into streams, rivers, and the ocean,

Cleanup

Catch systems and removal devices like nets, booms, and machines like trash wheels and the Interceptor

Manual cleanups by volunteers and local government

Cleanup is not a holistic solution and will never solve the issue of pollution in our watershed and any others



SOLUTIONS

Upstream

Downstream
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SOLUTIONS

What should LA do to keep plastics out of the LA River Watershed?

Upstream Measures

Plastic bottle policies • Foodware policies • Textile policies • Plastic bag and film policies • Bioplastics policy • Extended Producer Responsibility • Outreach and Education • Microplastic regulations • TMDL

Downstream Measures

Composting and Recycling facilities and infrastructure • Foodware and linen washing • Bottle refilling stations • Trash capture and cleanup • Stormwater capture and recycling • Safe Clean Water Program implementation

REUSABLE LA

30+ Organizations and Businesses
100+ Individual Members

Solutions Together: It takes a Village

Over a decade ago, folks came together around the issue of plastic bags. It took years, but California passed the first bag ban of its kind.

Bags became straws, straws became polystyrene, onward until the new goal became holistic and comprehensive plastic reduction policies and programs

Reusable LA is a coalition of organizations working to reduce plastic pollution in Los Angeles to safeguard our public health, communities, and environment. We complete this mission through legislative advocacy, outreach, and community engagement..



THE VISION

A thriving culture of reuse and refill in Los Angeles to reduce waste from single-use plastic products and packaging as a model for communities to replicate.

THANK YOU!

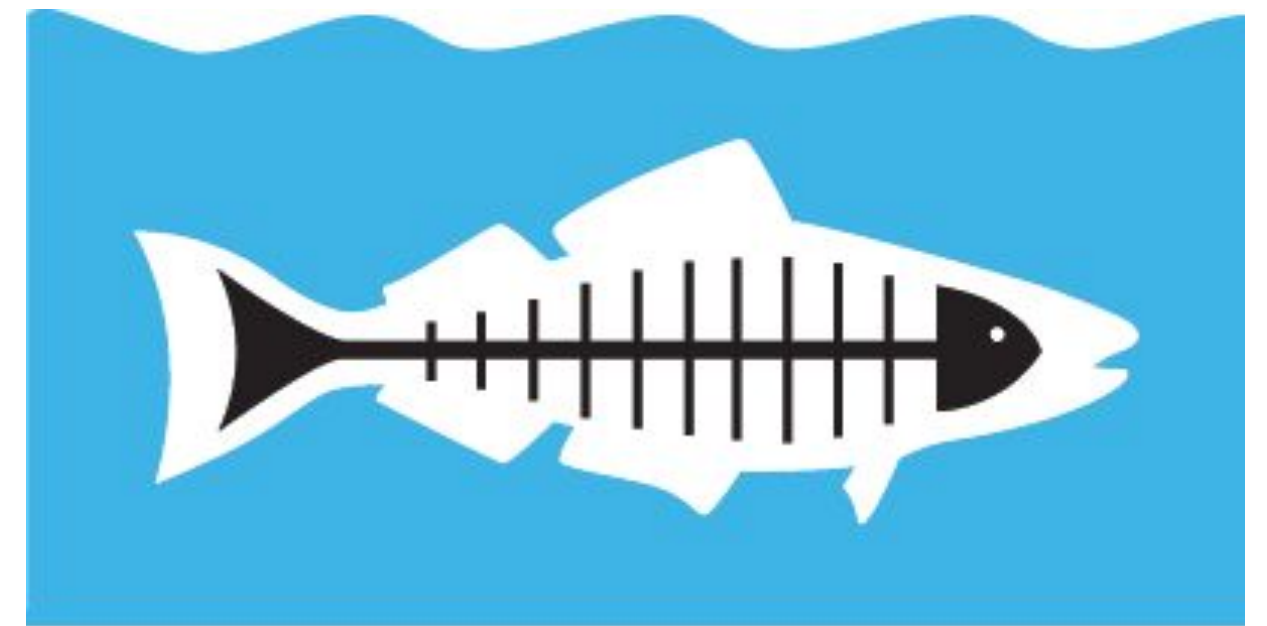
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