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ACR-182 The Great Pacific Garbage Patch. (2023-2024)

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Assembly Concurrent Resolution No. 182

CHAPTER 180

Relative to ocean pollution.

[Filed with Secretary of State August 26, 2024.]

LEGISLATIVE COUNSEL'S DIGEST

ACR 182, Dixon. The Great Pacific Garbage Patch.

This measure would provide for the promotion and encouragement of solutions and resources for keeping the oceans and coastlines healthy and eliminating the Great Pacific Garbage Patch.

Fiscal Committee: no

WHEREAS, The Great Pacific Garbage Patch (Patch) is a collection of marine debris in the North Pacific Ocean and it is the largest of the five offshore plastic accumulation zones in the world's oceans; and

WHEREAS, The Patch, also known as the Pacific trash vortex, consists of two distinct collections of spinning debris bounded by the North Pacific Subtropical Gyre: the Western Garbage Patch, located near Japan, and the Eastern Garbage Patch, located between Hawaii and California; and

WHEREAS, The Patch contains approximately 1,800,000,000,000 plastic pieces, has a total mass of about 100,000 tons, and covers over 617,000 square miles, which is an area twice the size of Texas; and

WHEREAS, Nonbiodegradable debris accumulates in the Patch, including, but not limited to, plastics that break down into pieces called microplastics, which are too small to see without magnification; and

WHEREAS, The presence of the Patch is causing extensive environmental, ecological, and economic impacts; and

WHEREAS, Loggerhead sea turtles often eat plastic bags after mistaking them for jellyfish, and albatross mistake resin pellets for fish eggs and feed them to their chicks, which then die of starvation or ruptured organs; and

WHEREAS, Sea turtles caught in fisheries operating within and around the Patch can have up to 74 percent, by dry weight, of their diets composed of ocean plastics and Laysan albatross chicks from Kure Atoll and Oahu Island have around 45 percent of their wet mass composed of plastics; and

WHEREAS, Eighty-four percent of the Patch's plastics and microplastics contain at least one persistent bioaccumulative toxic (PBT) chemical, such as bisphenol A (BPA), which leaches out when certain plastics break down through photodegradation, negatively impacting seawater; and

WHEREAS, PBTs, BPAs, polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs), and other chemicals have entered our food supply through a process called bioaccumulation, where animals feeding on plastic ingest chemicals, and the chemicals are then passed up the food chain to humans, exposing animals and humans to the maleffects of the chemicals; and

WHEREAS, Marine plastic is estimated to have an annual economic cost of \$6,000,000,000 to \$19,000,000,000, stemming from impacts on tourism, cleanups, fisheries, and aquaculture, but not including the costs associated with the impacts on human health and the marine ecosystem; and

WHEREAS, The Patch's microplastic mass concentration is increasing exponentially, with an estimated 1,150,000 to 2,410,000 tons of plastic entering the world's oceans each year from rivers; and

WHEREAS, Intercepting plastic in rivers is more cost effective than removing plastics once they are in the ocean waters; and

WHEREAS, Technology and innovation provide the best solutions to creatively capture plastic and trash that flow from rivers to the ocean; and

WHEREAS, The Department of Public Works for the County of Los Angeles has developed a pilot project to test in Marina del Rey a fully automated, solar powered trash collection device designed to capture floating plastic, trash, and litter before they reach the ocean; and

WHEREAS, In 2023, the State of California approved funding for the Newport Bay Pollution Control Project, which will remove human-made pollutants before they enter the Pacific Ocean; and

WHEREAS, Efforts to eliminate the Patch address the pressing need to safeguard our oceans and coastlines for future generations; and

WHEREAS, Central to these efforts is combating the pervasive threat posed by millions of tons of plastic pollution that inundates our oceans annually and that predominantly enter the oceans from rivers; and

WHEREAS, At the forefront of this crisis lies the Eastern Garbage Patch, situated between Hawaii and California; and

WHEREAS, It is imperative that concerted action be taken to mitigate the detrimental impacts of plastic pollution on marine ecosystems, emphasizing the urgent need for comprehensive strategies, better technologies, and resources to protect and preserve our oceans and coastlines for posterity; now, therefore, be it

Resolved by the Assembly of the State of California, the Senate thereof concurring, That the Legislature promote and encourage solutions and resources for keeping the oceans and coastlines healthy and eliminating the Great Pacific Garbage Patch; and be it further

Resolved, That the Chief Clerk of the Assembly transmit copies of this resolution to the author for appropriate distribution.