

Environmental Education Keeps Oil Off The Water

By David Goldstein

Last weekend in Oxnard's Plaza Park, at the first local Earth Day event of the month, city of Oxnard staff distributed free collection containers for used motor oil. Targeting residents who change their own car's oil, the program was intended to reduce spilling and illegal dumping of used oil by making collection and recycling easier. Staff instructed residents to take their full containers to one of several certified used oil collection centers.

Proper disposal of used oil and filters is easy, and certified centers pay a recycling incentive of forty cents per gallon, but only upon request. More than 80 auto parts stores and automotive service centers in Ventura County operate as State Certified Used Oil Collection Centers and accept oil from the public.

Use 5 gallon (or smaller) containers with a secure lid when recycling your used oil. Some centers will accept up to 20 gallons per day from residents. Do not mix used oil with any other fluids; centers cannot accept contaminated oil. Do not leave used oil at collection centers after business hours. Many centers also accept used oil filters, which should be drained for 24 hours and placed in a leak-proof container (e.g. plastic bag or coffee can).

Used oil is a hazardous waste due to the heavy metals and other toxins it contains and improper disposal can contaminate groundwater.

Motor oil from boats presents similar dangers to marine life but different challenges for collection. Working with private contractors at the Channel Islands Harbor and the Ventura Harbor, local public sector staff manage an array of programs to help boaters prevent motor oil, oil filters, and bilge pads from contaminating the ocean.

For example, at the Ventura Harbor, the city of Ventura uses grant funding from the California Department of Resources Recycling and Recovery (CalRecycle) to provide services for Dave's Marine Fuel Service on Anchors Way Drive. Like the 11 other oil recycling facilities working with the city through funding from CalRecycle to handle motor oil from cars, Dave's Marine collects oil, filters, bilge pads and other absorbent materials from boaters. The used oil collected is actually less valuable than the cost of collection. Partly because of the labor involved, and also because of the low world price of oil, Asbury Environmental Services receives \$35 per trip to collect from Dave's Marine. The economics of this recycling initiative are possible because of a fee system established through California legislation. Every time a motorist pays for an oil change, the service center charges a fee and remits those funds to CalRecycle, which sends a portion of the money back to those local cities and counties administering programs such as the one at the Ventura Harbor.

Even though the economics of motor oil recovery can become viable through fee-based legislation, any recycling program depends on the cooperation of the public. Even with small incentives and convenience, people changing the oil in their vehicle or boat must be willing to take advantage of recycling programs. As a first step, the public must be aware of motor oil recycling opportunities.

To promote motor oil recycling among drivers, cities and the county advertise, send mailings, use social media, and distribute containers. For oil collection at the harbors, a specialized outreach is being organized.

California State Parks Division of Boating and Waterways, Coastal Commission Boating Clean and Green Program, and The Bay Foundation invite boaters to become volunteer Dockwalkers. Using boater education and distribution of boater kits (including oil absorbents), Dockwalkers visit marinas, boat launch ramps, boat shows and events to help boaters keep an “eye on the environment.”

To volunteer, contact Vivian Matuk, (415) 904-6905.

A training for prospective Dockwalkers will be **Saturday, April 25**, 10:00 a.m. to 12:45 p.m., at Ventura West Marina, 1198 Navigator Drive Ventura, CA 93001.

On the net:

www.BoatingCleanandGreen.com

Find the used motor oil collection centers center near you:

<http://www.calrecycle.ca.gov/UsedOil/Reports/CenterSearch/Default.aspx?lang=en-US>

David Goldstein is an Environmental Resources Analyst in the Ventura County Public Works Agency.