



"Reduce – Reuse – Recycle"

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Making Every Day Earth Day

When you visit or live in a place as stunning and rich in natural resources as Monterey County, it makes perfect sense to want to keep it clean and healthy. The concept of making every day Earth Day is not reserved for environmental activists or people who drive hybrids; it's an idea that we can all adopt and explore in hundreds of little ways, or in big sweeping gestures. As the song goes, "everything counts in large amounts," and good or bad, when enough people do a little thing it makes a big difference.

The Bad: The little cigarette butts, bottle caps, and gum wrappers that people mindlessly flick to the curb – or perhaps consciously justify "it's just a little litter" – all adds up to a tremendous local pollution problem. Clean community advocate Save Our Shores has identified cigarette butts as the single most littered item in the world, and has collected more than 578,500 of them at local beach and river cleanups since 2007. They arrive not only by direct deposit at the beaches, but by wind, rain and runoff that carries them through storm drains and out to creeks and rivers that flow to the Bay, releasing toxins into the water along the way. And that's just one type of litter.

The Good: Every little bit of trash we place in a trashcan or recycle bin, every piece of litter we pick up, and every time we prevent litter we also make a big difference. That adds up to cleaner communities, with fewer health and safety hazards. It doesn't take a lot of effort to do the right thing, and our local cities are doing their part to make trashcans and cigarette butt receptacles available in public spaces.

Organizations throughout the Salinas Valley are embracing the "Every day is Earth Day" mindset this year, scheduling cleanup events beyond Earth Day so more people can take action, and to keep the issues in the spotlight throughout the year. Salinas Valley Recycles kicks off the Countywide cleanup season with the City of Salinas and County of Monterey on Saturday April 16 from 8am-Noon with their annual Natividad Creek Cleanup. Last year, over 40 volunteers collected approximately 1.5 tons of garbage out of the creek, including shopping carts, tires, even a car seat!

Visit the Events page at SalinasValleyRecycles.org to find more information about cleanup events and how to participate. The County's Environmental Health Bureau also has resources to assist those who want to organize their own cleanup events, so you can make any day Earth Day for a place that needs help. Report littered cigarette butts and litter thrown from cars through the online forms at www.KeepMontereyCountyClean.org. Wishing you a happy Earth Day, every day!

