



OVER 9,000 GALLONS OF TRASH FOUND IN PINOLE CREEK, THREATENING LOCAL ECOSYSTEM

Single-use food trash and cigarettes are to blame, according to a new report from local activists and environmental scientists

PINOLE, CALIFORNIA, OCTOBER 29, 2022 — A months-long community-led study has quantified the concerning amount of garbage in Pinole Creek, which runs for 11 miles from its headwaters in Briones Regional Park into San Pablo Bay. Conducted by a coalition of community organizations led by [Friends of Pinole Creek Watershed](#) (FOPCW), Pinole Valley High School [Earth Team](#) interns, and the [Contra Costa Resource Conservation District](#) (CCRCD), with support from the science nonprofit [American Geophysical Union's Thriving Earth Exchange](#), the study estimated that there were 9,200 gallons of litter in Pinole Creek in the fall of 2021 — enough to fill 264 standard trash bins. Now, activists are calling on local government and fellow residents to clean up the Creek and prevent further pollution.

“The health of Pinole Creek impacts the health of the entire riparian system as well as the experience of people who live in the community,” said Ann Moriarty, one of the project leads. “If there’s trash in the Creek, there’s trash in San Pablo Bay and, ultimately, the ocean.”

Beyond serving as a popular hiking and walking destination for residents and visitors along the San Francisco Bay Trail, Pinole Creek is a unique East Bay habitat for the threatened anadromous steelhead trout and several populations of native California fish. In 2017, the construction of a fish passage under Interstate 80 cleared the way for steelhead migration into the upper watershed. But trash has remained a thorny issue. In recent years, FOPCW members had noticed an increase in littering, but it was unclear how much trash was actually in the creek and where it was coming from.

Seeking answers, FOPCW teamed up with Thriving Earth Exchange Community Scientist Dr. Win Cowger to use the newly-minted California Trash Monitoring Methods and Assessments Playbook developed by the San Francisco Estuary Institute. As the first community to utilize the Playbook, volunteers spent over 380 hours collecting and analyzing trash at 23 randomized sites along the main stem of the Creek. They discovered that the vast majority of garbage in the Creek comes

from single-use plastic food packaging, including bags, cups and containers, as well as cigarettes.

The community volunteers have asked the City of Pinole to consider a number of measures to address the problem, including adding high-capacity solar trash cans in high-litter zones and enhancing the City's existing styrofoam food packaging ordinance. Community involvement will also be essential to achieve a trash-free Pinole Creek. To that end, FOPCW is implementing a Pinole Creek Allies campaign. As part of that, the organization will host the first of a series of monthly community clean-ups on October 29, 2022.

"The data shows that we are actually quite close to having a completely clean creek," said Moriarty. "But to get there, we need everyone to come together and become Pinole Creek Allies!"

To learn more about Friends of the Pinole Creek Watershed and sign up for email announcements, please visit www.friendsofpinolecreek.org.

About Pinole Creek Allies Monthly Cleanup Kickoff Event

When: Saturday, October 29, 2022; 10am-12pm

Where: Pinole Creek Watershed; meet behind the Pinole Public Library, 2935 Pinole Valley Road

About Friends of Pinole Creek Watershed

The Pinole Creek Watershed unifies a diverse community that is actively involved in its stewardship. Our goals are to increase awareness and to provide quality educational opportunities for the general public to study the value of this natural resource and to accumulate and afford financial support for these goals. We will promote and support the identification, assessment and monitoring and contribute to the restoration planning process of Pinole Creek, its watershed and wetlands. To learn more, please visit www.friendsofpinolecreek.org.

Media Contact:

Ann Moriarty

anniebmoriarty@gmail.com

510-672-4567

