



21 September 2022

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To: Encinitas Mayor and City Council

Support for Item 10A: Consideration of a recommendation from the Environmental Commission to develop and consider the adoption of an ordinance limiting public smoking areas within the city limits.

Honorable Mayor and City Council,

Surfrider Foundation's San Diego County Chapter (Surfrider) appreciates the opportunity to provide comments in support of Item #10A - *Consideration of a recommendation from the Environmental Commission to develop and consider the adoption of an ordinance limiting public smoking areas within the city limits*. Surfrider Foundation is a nonprofit environmental organization that engages a vast volunteer network of ocean users to protect our world's ocean, waves, and beaches. Our San Diego County Chapter represents thousands of ocean recreation users — from dedicated surfers to occasional beachgoers — as well as the coastal communities and economies that rely on them throughout the region.

Surfrider supports the concept that a prohibition on smoking in public spaces would result in a measurable decrease in tobacco product waste (TPW) along our treasured coastline. The [Agenda Report](#) for this Item correctly points out that single-use plastic cigarette butts are the no.1 most collected items at cleanups, both locally and worldwide. Here in San Diego County, cigarette butts have topped our annual beach cleanup lists every year since we began tracking cleanup data in 2006. In most years, cigarette butts account for a staggering 20-25% of every item Surfrider volunteers pick up at the community beach cleanups we host.

Butt pollution is especially concerning not only because of its high frequency and the general complacency around it from smokers and non-smokers alike, but because butts are made from plastic - which does not readily biodegrade in the marine environment -



and are also full of toxic chemicals by the time they're discarded. After all, the purpose of a filter is exactly that - to trap tar and chemicals from tobacco smoke. If we care about the health of marine wildlife, not to mention the millions of beachgoers who enjoy the coastal recreation that our beaches provide - then we must act to reduce TPW along our coast.

Certain actions have already been taken to reduce the impacts of smoking at our parks and beaches. Smoking is effectively banned at every single beach in Encinitas *and* San Diego County, including our State Beaches thanks to passage of SB 8 in 2019¹. Certainly some people smoke on our beaches regardless of the law. However, it's especially worth noting that a large percentage of TPW makes its way to our coast from upstream locations in our watershed. Due to their small size and virtual weightlessness, discarded cigarette butts very easily *hitch a ride* to our beaches from all over the county via storm drains, rivers and creeks. Butts discarded in and around the City of Encinitas are no exception.

For this reason and the others stated in the Agenda Report, Surfrider agrees that the consideration of a citywide prohibition on smoking in public places would be an effective means to mitigating tobacco product waste along our coast.

In addition to a public smoking prohibition, Surfrider would also ask that both the Environmental Commission and City Council support additional followup action to hold Big Tobacco accountable for the trillions of wasteful, unnecessary single-use plastic filters they attach to their products in order to sell more cigarettes. Cigarette filters provide no proven health benefit to smokers and are little more than a marketing ploy; indeed, U.S. Surgeon Generals have held this opinion since 1959². While bills to restrict the sale of single-use filtered cigarettes have been introduced in the California State Legislature for several years running, none have gained traction and we fear this trend

¹ <https://openstates.org/ca/bills/20192020/SB8/>

²

<https://www.nytimes.com/1959/11/27/archives/cigarette-filter-held-ineffective-surgeon-general-says-tips-and.html>



may continue. Meanwhile the cities of Beverly Hills and Manhattan Beach have passed citywide bans on the sale of tobacco products, showing that local municipalities can lead the way if the state fails to act. However, Surfrider would be more apt to actively support a ban on the sale of *single-use filtered* tobacco products since from a coastal conservation perspective, butts are the main issue.

In conclusion, Surfrider San Diego supports the reasoning that a reduction of smoking in public places will lead to a reduction in associated tobacco product waste. Furthermore, we know that a potential future ban on the sale of filtered cigarettes, on its own, would not stop people from smoking them within city limits. Therefore, we support the Environmental Commission's recommendation for City staff to draft a public smoking ordinance as an important marine debris mitigation strategy and respectfully ask for the City Council's support. The residents and visitors of Encinitas deserve to enjoy public spaces - *and especially our beaches!* - that are not marred by tobacco product waste. Thank you for the opportunity to provide public comment on this important matter.

For our Ocean, Waves and Beaches,

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