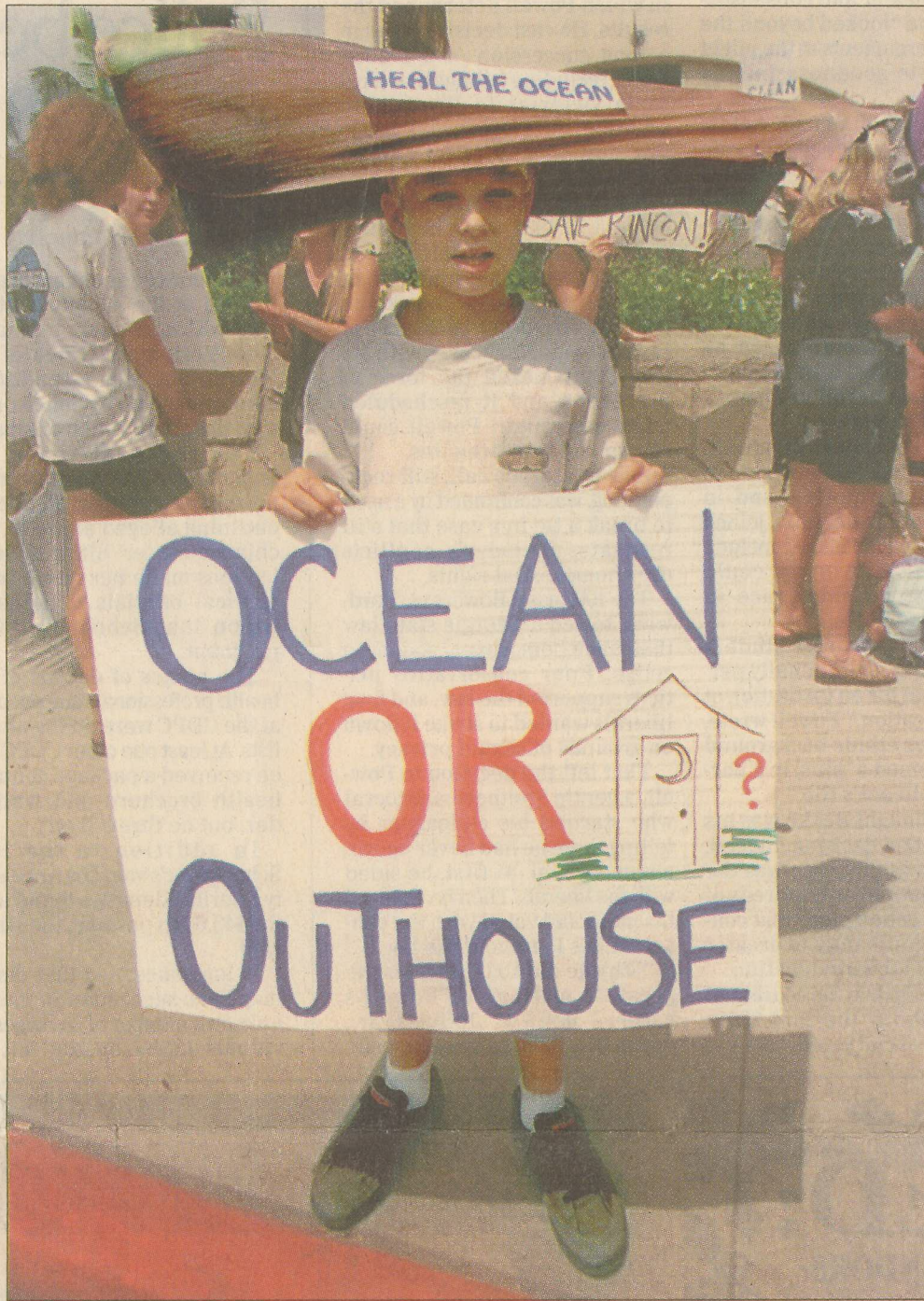


SANTA BARBARA

News-Press

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RALLYING FOR CLEAN SEAS



RAFAEL MALDONADO/NEWS-PRESS

Jared Wheeler, 10, was among those calling for a cleanup of Santa Barbara's coastal waters.

Riding a new wave

Beach closures spur anti-pollution drive

By MARK VAN DE KAMP
NEWS-PRESS STAFF WRITER

Jeff Young normally would let his children frolic in the ocean during the hot days of summer.

But this year local coastal waters are too polluted, the Santa Barbaran said.

"It's a sad day in paradise when I have to think twice about letting my kids go to the beach," he said.

Because of bacteria spilled from creeks, lifelong surfer Wayne Babcock of Carpinteria said he and his friends get ear infections and skin rashes.

Hoping to disinfect their skin, sometimes they pour a homemade solution of peroxide, bleach and water from jugs over their heads

before leaving the beach.

The two men were among more than 100 surfers and ocean lovers of all ages who whistled and cheered at a Tuesday rally in downtown Santa Barbara, as a new group called Heal The Ocean vowed to fight the pollution.

The rally was the first large public demonstration about ocean pollution. While coastal water pollution has been a problem for many years, it has gained more attention in 1998 because of extensive beach closures. Many residents think local government officials have not done enough.

"It has really touched a nerve with the public this year. People are realizing we have

SEE ENVIRONMENT ON A12

Group kicks off drive to rid ocean of contamination

ENVIRONMENT

Continued from Page A1

violated the ocean," said Hillary Hauser, one of the group's founders.

"Using the ocean as a dump is a disgrace and we're going to stop it."

The new nonprofit, public action group is vowing to swiftly cut off all obvious sources of contamination, which constantly close local beaches due to unsafe bacteria levels.

Heal The Ocean's five-point plan goes beyond the county's weekly ocean water quality monitoring and its ongoing study to hunt for pollution sources in several coastal creeks.

Using state-of-the-art DNA testing to trace exactly where pollution is coming from, and what it consists of, is one approach Heal The Ocean plans to use in Rincon Creek. Such analyses can determine whether fecal coliform comes from animals or humans, and whether it is linked to sewage or septic systems, Hauser said.

The DNA study could provide empirical evidence to some residents' claims that faulty septic systems are leaching pollutants into Rincon

Creek.

The group says it will raise money to pay for this testing, and already has the financial commitment of a Montecito couple to help defray such costs.

Treated wastewater discharged into the ocean is another of the group's targets. The group expects to push for full tertiary treatment of all

sewage. That means effluent gets extra processing to render it suitable for agricultural use. The city of Santa Barbara and sewage districts in Carpinteria, Goleta and Montecito would be responsible for any additional treatment.

"Our platform is the ocean gets our very best technology and nothing less," Hauser said.

"We are insisting on 100 percent tertiary treatment."

Heal The Ocean also wants to get storm water treated before it runs

F.Y.I.

Heal The Ocean's principal organizers are journalist Hillary Hauser, who covered marine issues for the News-Press from 1981 to 1986; attorney Jeff Young; Eldon Shiffman, an investment officer; and Ruston Slager, a surfer.

The group's mailing address is P.O. Box 4818, Santa Barbara 93140. Its telephone number is 969-2951.

tion in the creek that drains the canyon where the Tajiguas Landfill is located, near Gaviota.

News of the group's formation and goals are supported by Matt Moore, who owns Rincon Designs surf shop in Carpinteria.

"The ocean water has gotten steadily worse over the years and it's gross now as more people live here," Moore said. "As a kid, surfing here was great. The water was clean. In the mid-'70s, it started smelling like the water in my mom's washing

into the sea. Failure to treat it violates the Clean Water Act of 1972, Hauser said.

And before the Santa Barbara Harbor is dredged — with that sand pumped to East Beach — the group wants the harbor bottom tested for pollution.

It also intends to join other groups in monitoring any pollu-



RAFAEL MALDONADO/NEWS-PRESS

About 100 people rallied outside the county Administration Building to press for new measures in the battle against ocean pollution.

machine. This summer, kids were hanging out in my shop instead of in the water. They were so upset. The beaches were closed by pollution."

Ocean pollution is becoming a campaign issue heading toward the November elections. Politicians are quick to jump on the bandwagon.

County Supervisors Naomi Schwartz, Jeanne Graffy and Gail Marshall were at the rally. So were

Susan Rose, who faces Graffy in the November election, and Chris Mitchum, a Republican running for the 35th Assembly District seat in November.

Graffy's 2nd District includes Arroyo Burro Beach, which has been repeatedly closed because of high bacterial readings. She wants the county to prepare a list of solutions to creek contamination. Stud-

ies to find the source of those pollutants are now under way. Her request goes before the supervisors next Tuesday.

Greg Ray is among those frustrated with the ocean problems. He lives to surf, but he hasn't waded into the ocean off Rincon Point for six months.

"I can't afford to get sick," the La Conchita man said.