

Another BANTastic Month

This month:

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Hello fellow ocean lovers!

February was an exciting month for us. We'd like to extend a warm welcome to the more than 200 new subscribers who recently joined our mailing list!

🌀 Our World-Underwater

This was our second year at the Our World-Underwater (OW-U) Show in Chicago, and it was a wonderful event. We had a great time connecting with a number of colleagues there, and also made some fantastic new connections. We did not hold any seminars this year, but will likely make at least one or two presentations during next year's show.

We were also pleased to unveil some fantastic new display materials designed by Byron Reaves. These new displays not only look great, but because of their portability, they will allow us to save a great deal on future shipping costs. We're thankful for Byron's contribution, and we also want to give many sincere thanks to Kelly R., a devoted volunteer who helped staff the COARE booth throughout the weekend.



COARE's booth at OW-U featuring new displays.

🌀 Shark Days

Like last year, the Monterey Bay Aquarium held a special weekend-long celebration of shark awareness and conservation called "Shark Days", and they invited us to participate.



Young aquarium visitors showing keen interest in shark conservation

The event's attractions included special shark and bat ray feedings, behind-the-scenes shark stories from Aquarium experts, and an appearance by our friend Jim Toomey — the artist behind the popular syndicated cartoon *Sherman's Lagoon*.

Many special thanks to Sara, Danny, and Chris W., the volunteers who helped staff our table there, helping us extend our message to the 12,040 people who attended the Aquarium that weekend.

☉ California fin ban

We're thrilled to announce that on Monday, 14 February, California State Assemblymembers Paul Fong (D-Cupertino) and Jared Huffman (D-San Rafael) introduced a bill to the State Assembly to prohibit the sale, trade, possession, or distribution of shark fins in California. California is one of the largest sources of demand for shark fin outside Asia and is a major entry for shark fin distribution in the United States. This bill would represent a significant step towards reducing pressure on rapidly declining shark populations. In addition, this bill complements recent legislative bans adopted by both the State of Hawai'i and the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands.

COARE was proud to participate in the press event held at the California Academy of Sciences announcing this historic legislation, and continues to work in support of this legislation.

It is early in the legislative process, but it is not too early to help. California Senator Leland Yee has come out in opposition to this bill, claiming it is "an attack on Asian culture". To the contrary, the bill finds broad support among Asian communities and groups, and was, in fact, co-authored by a Chinese-American. The biggest argument against the bill is the alleged cultural bias, so it's especially important for Asian-Americans to voice their support of this bill to let our lawmakers know that the claim of cultural bias is not a valid one.

Please visit www.coare.org/act/ab376/ to see how you can help.



Assemblymember Paul Fong with official supporters of AB 376

☉ Washington fin ban

On 07 February 2011, Washington State Senate Bill 5688 to ban the sale, purchase, trade, or preparation for consumption (cooking) of shark fins or shark fin derivative products was introduced to the Legislature. The Bill was referred to the Natural Resources & Marine Waters Committee, where a public hearing was held quickly just a week later (the same day that California's legislation was introduced—14 February).

The bill was amended slightly, a week later, to restrict the scope of the bill to limit only commercial endeavors. Although this is a February newsletter, we can't help but share the good news that just yesterday (07 March), this Bill passed the Senate by an overwhelmingly positive 47-0 vote. The bill now moves to the State's House of Representatives for consideration.

☉ Oregon fin ban

Reminiscent of the West Coast Governor's Agreement on Ocean Health (US Western States of California, Oregon, and Washington), signed back in 2006, we're pleased to report that both Oregon and Washington have introduced similar legislation to restrict the sale, trade, distribution, and in some cases, the possession of shark fins.

Oregon House Bill 2838 was introduced by Representative Brad Witt (D-Clatskanie) in January, and was referred to the Agriculture and Natural Resources Committee, where it is being considered further.

☺ Oregon bag ban

Oregon is now attempting what California failed to do last year; they are considering a statewide ban on single-use plastic bags. If you live in Oregon, please support SB 536 and visit this action alert site run by our colleagues at Surfrider: action.surfrider.org

If you have friends and family in Oregon, please pass it on to them as well.

☺ SF Ocean Film Festival

Now in its eighth year, the San Francisco Ocean Film Festival returns to Theater 39 at Pier 39, Adjacent to the Aquarium of the Bay.

The opening night filmmaker's reception will be held this Wednesday (09 March), and the regular programs begin Thursday evening and run through Sunday (10-13 March).

Following the Sharks & Vanishing Marine Life program (Program 7, Saturday, 1:00pm), Our Executive Director, Christopher Chin, will be hosting and moderating the panel discussion, "Sharks, Fins, and Sustainability", at 3:15pm in the Farallon Room at the Aquarium of the Bay. The discussion is open to Sharks & Vanishing Marine Life film program ticket holders and festival pass holders.

To learn more about the San Francisco Ocean Film Festival and to purchase tickets, visit: www.oceanfilmfest.org/films

☺ Guam fin ban

Along with the news of the CNMI (Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands) Fin Ban, we reported last month that Guam introduced similar legislation in the form of Bill #44-31, continuing the trend of resource protection in the Pacific.

That legislation moved through the Guam legislature quickly, and we're pleased to share that it passed unanimously on 24 February 2011. Guam's governor is expected to sign the Bill shortly.

☺ More bag news

In the meantime, other States such as Maryland, New York, and Washington have all introduced legislation to ban plastic bags and/or impose fees on single-use bags.

We reported last month that Marin County in California was among the counties that joined the wave of municipalities banning single-use plastic bags. However, the "Save the Plastic Bag Coalition", has filed suit against the county claiming that they failed to produce an Environmental Impact Report (EIR) and that one should be required according to the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA). Marin is claiming a categorical exemption to the CEQA requirements, and is confident it will prevail.

In other litigious news, our friends at ChicoBag have been targeted by the plastic industry for their role in helping support plastic bag bans. In a classic David versus Goliath situation, ChicoBag, a small California reusable bag maker run by our friend Andy Keller, has been sued in South Carolina by HILEX POLY COMPANY, LLC, SUPERBAG OPERATING, LTD., and ADVANCE POLYBAG, INC., (large plastic bag manufacturers) under a federal "false advertising" business statute for statements about plastic pollution, and for Andy's involvement in banning plastic bags. Since ChicoBags are sold in many states, the corporations chose a state that does not provide anti-bullying protection like California's anti-SLAPP (Strategic Lawsuit Against Public Participation) statutes. Such lawsuits are generally without merit, and are designed to silence, intimidate, or exhaust the other party's resources and put them out of business.

If you're thinking about getting (or gifting) a new reusable bag, consider a ChicoBag, and help support the good guys.