

THE LAST BEACH CLEANUP

Jan Dell | Founder and Independent Engineer

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Berkeley Zero Waste Commission

The Last Beach Cleanup urges the Berkeley Zero Waste Commission to stop accepting worthless plastic waste in the City's recycling system and stop exporting all plastic waste.

As a Cal Berkeley graduate (Master of Science in Chemical Engineering) with 35 years of experience working on environmental issues in 45 countries, I'm going to be frank. The City of Berkeley's acceptance of many worthless plastic waste items as "recyclable" makes the city one of the worst greenwashers in the state and entire country. Furthermore, export of plastic waste to Mexico, Asia, and other countries is waste imperialism and harmful to the receiving countries.

I urge the City of Berkeley to take two immediate actions:

- 1) **Accept only plastic waste items that have proven U.S. domestic buyers for recycling into new products.** As detailed below, only PET #1 and HDPE #2 bottles and jugs should be accepted. [Cities in San Luis Obispo County](#) are showing true environmental leadership by only accepting PET #1 and HDPE #2 bottles and jugs.
- 2) **Stop exporting all plastic waste outside of the United States.** If there isn't a domestic buyer for the plastic waste, then it isn't "recyclable."



#breakfreefromplastic RETH:NK PLASTIC

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Berkeley's Accepted Plastic Items that are Not Recyclable in California or the United States

Acceptance of worthless plastic waste in recycling systems causes many harms:

- it greenwashes bad plastics as reclaimable,
- it fools consumers into thinking that bad plastics are responsible purchases,
- it blocks progress on adoption of reusable and refillable systems,
- it blocks innovation and market demand for truly recyclable and compostable products, and
- it creates costly and dangerous contamination in material recovery facilities (MRFs).

[Berkeley is currently accepting the following items](#), as shown in Figure 1.

Figure 1: Berkeley's Plastic Recycling Acceptance List



There are no U.S. West Coast plastic waste recyclers who have ever bought or who are currently buying the following items for domestic reprocessing:

- Plastic cups (including PET#1, PP#5 and PS#6)
- Plastic clamshells (including PET#1, PVC#3, PP#5, and PS#6)
- Plastic tubs (including PP#5)

These items should be removed from the recycling acceptance list. It should be noted that there has never been a U.S. domestic market for any type of plastic cup or clamshell. While there is one polypropylene tub reprocessor, but the company is located 2,400 miles away in Alabama and has

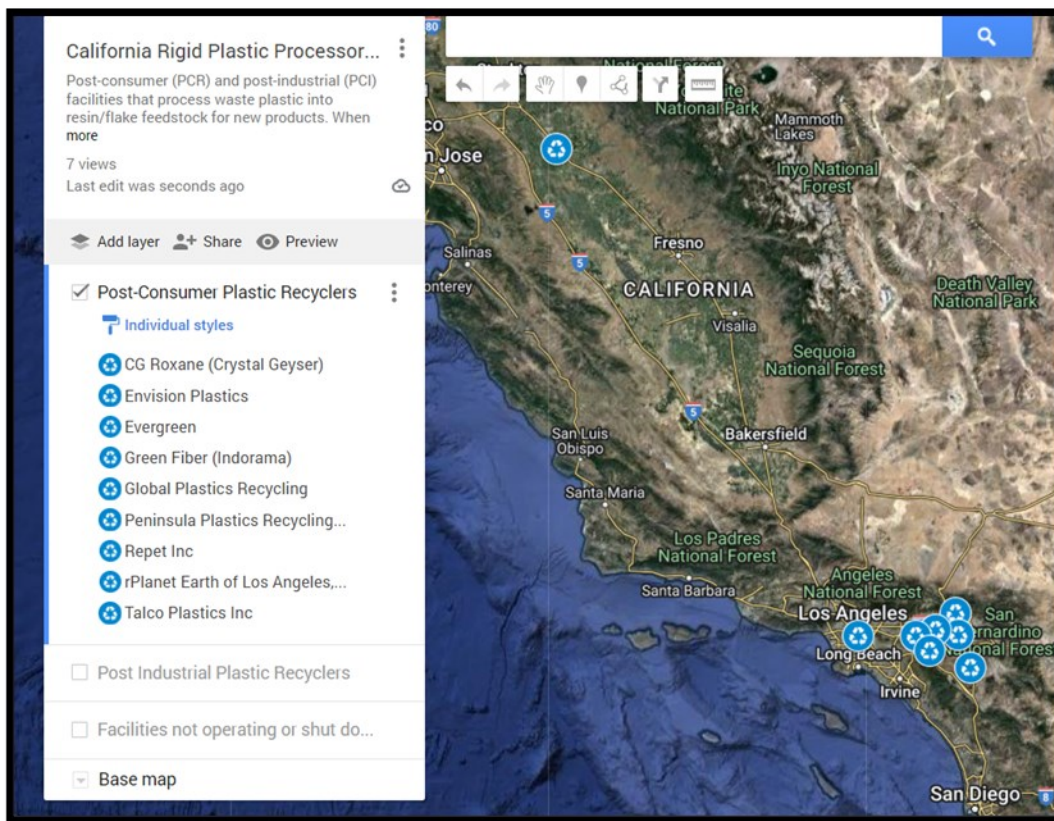
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limited capacity. The trucking cost to ship plastic waste from California to Alabama is prohibitively high and also causes high carbon emissions.

Only PET #1 and HDPE # Bottles and Jugs are Recyclable in California

The [California Statewide Recycling Commission's 2021 Report to the State Legislature](#) stated that only PET#1 and HDPE#2 bottles and jugs (without harmful shrink sleeves) can be recycled in California. [The Last Beach Cleanup's survey of the plastic reprocessors](#) in California proves that no California plastic waste reprocessors are buying plastic cups, clamshells or tubs and recycling them into new products. For rigid containers, California only has nine plastic reprocessors. They only reprocess post-consumer PET#1 and HDPE#2 bottles and jugs.

Figure 2: Map of California's Rigid Post-Consumer Plastic Waste Processors



Only PET#1 and HDPE#2 Bottles and Jugs are Recyclable in the United States

In 2020, Greenpeace USA released "[Circular Claims Fall Flat](#)". The results of a comprehensive survey of the nation's 367 material recovery facilities (MRFs), revealed that only PET #1 and HDPE #2 plastic bottles and jugs may legitimately be labeled as recyclable by consumer goods companies and retailers. The survey found that common plastic pollution items, including plastic tubs, cups, lids, plates, bowls, and trays are (1) not accepted for recycling by most MRFs and (2) there are no plastic reprocessors who

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want to buy bales of plastic food service items and recycle them. The plastic food service items may not be labeled as recyclable according to Federal Trade Commission (FTC) Green Guide requirements for products and labeling.

The Many Harms Caused by Plastic Waste Exports

Plastic waste has been exported for decades and California has been the worst offender (see Figure 3). Without documented traceability of the final fate of the plastic waste, bales collected from California municipal recycling systems were shipped to buyers in foreign countries, many of whose operations had no worker age and wage protections, no health and safety standards, few environmental regulations, and no guarantee that the plastic waste would be recycled. As shown in Figure 4 for 2021, California exported 65.4 million kg to Non-OECD Countries (12,303 TEU shipping containers) and 40.5 million kg to Mexico (7,622 TEU shipping containers). Figure 5 shows that California is increasing plastic waste exports to Latin America.

Figure 3: California is the Leader in Plastic Waste Exports to Countries with Poor Waste Management

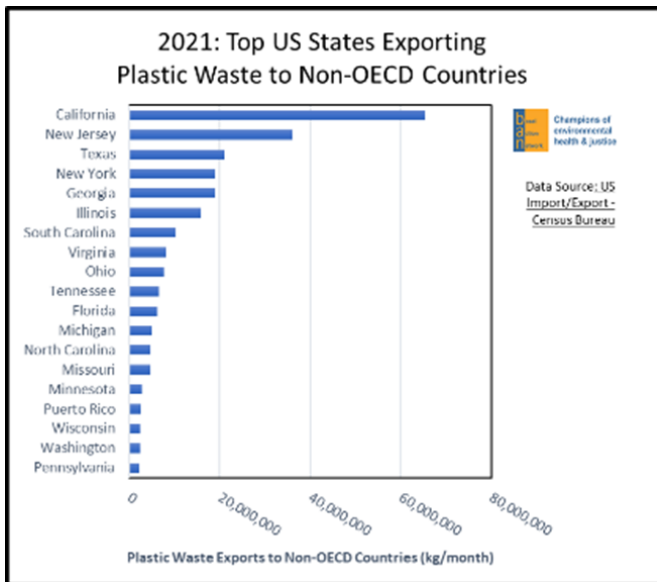


Figure 4: Destination of 2021 California Plastic Waste Exports

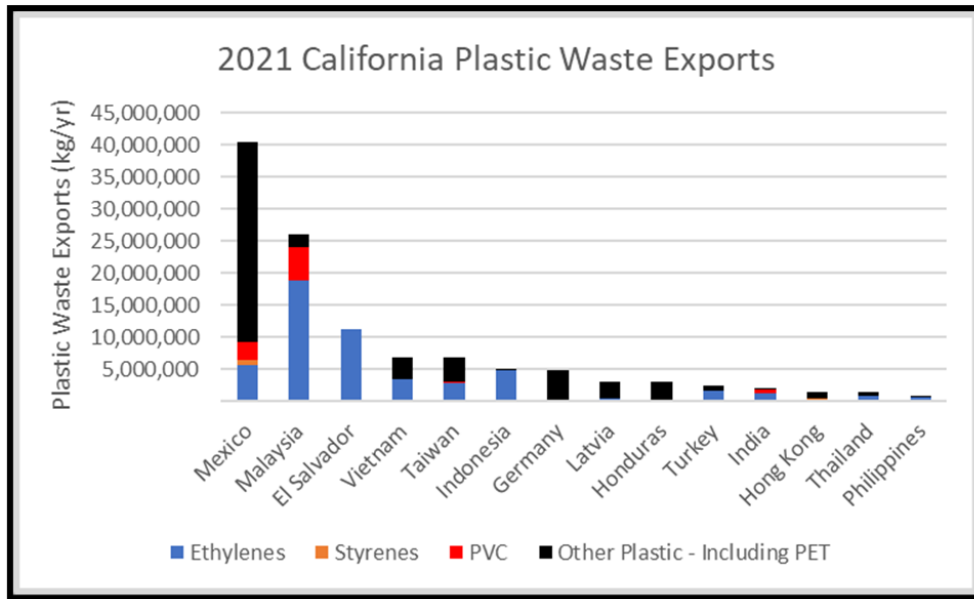
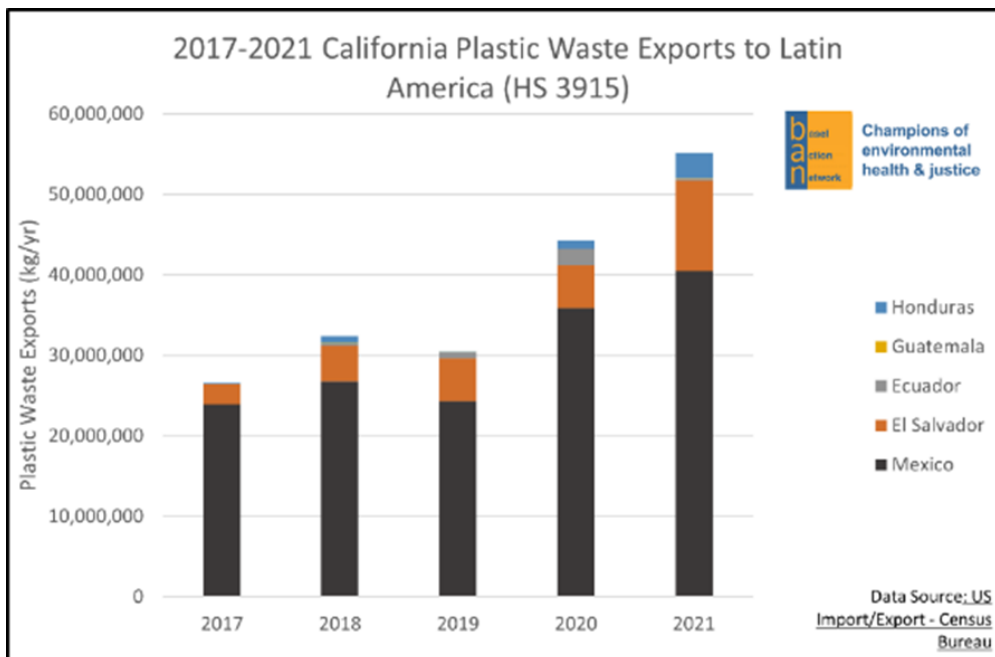


Figure 5: California is Flooding Latin America with Plastic Waste




GAIA’s report “[Discarded: Communities on the Frontlines of the Global Plastic Crisis](#)” exposed that plastic waste exports have created pollution and social harms in receiving countries. [More than one hundred other investigations](#) over the past several years have also documented the harms and shown that plastic wastes have been crudely processed in unsafe facilities.

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As shown in Figure 6, [GAIA and a large group of Latin America NGOs](#) called for the end of plastic waste exports to Latin America and The Caribbean region.

Figure 6: Latin America NGOs Demand End to Plastic Waste Exports



Public Statement

Latin America is not a garbage dump. We reject the cross border trade of plastic waste in Global South territories.

Sign [here](#) to support this statement

According to recent research by GAIA member organizations in Mexico, Ecuador, Argentina, and Chile, plastic waste exports from the United States to some Latin American countries increased by more than 100% in 2020, at the height of the pandemic.

For this reason, the organizations that make up the Global Alliance for Incinerator Alternatives (GAIA) in Latin America and the Caribbean declare their rejection and state of alert before this threat. This threat makes our region an emergent destination for global plastic waste after China stopped this type of import in 2018 to protect its territory from contamination.

Globally, there is growing concern about the shipment of plastic waste from significant powerhouses such as the United States, the largest exporter of plastic waste, to nations with weak legislation and controls. Because of this situation, we view with concern that:

According to the U.S. international free trade database, USA Trade Online, between January and August 2020, 44,173 tons of plastic waste arrived from the United States to 15 Latin American countries. That meant the shipment of approximately 35 containers per day of plastic waste to the region. Despite the regulations and the initial governmental actions, the state in which thousands of tons of plastic waste enter through ports and borders is still unknown in the analyzed countries. Its primary origin is the United States, which is not a signatory to the Basel Convention.

Signatory organizations:

- Acción Ecológica, Ecuador
- Acción Ecológica y Academia Mexicana de Derecho Ambiental
- Agrupación Aitúe de Huillínco, Chile
- Alianza Basura Cero Chile
- Amika, Czech Republic.
- Asociación Ecológica Santo Tomás, Mexico.
- Ban SUP, USA.
- C-CUBED, Nigeria
- CAAN Glens Falls, USA.
- Cafeteria Cultura, USA.
- Climate Reality Project Philippines, Philippines.
- Colectivo VientoSur, Chile.
- Community Research, USA.
- CREPD, Cameroon.
- CT Coalition for E.J. USA.
- Digital Data Standards LLC, USA.
- Comunidades de East Yard por la Justicia Ambiental, USA.
- Ecoton, USA.
- Ecoviable, Colombia.
- Evestico Ltd, United Kingdom.
- FoCo Trash Mob, USA.
- Fronteras Comunes, Mexico.
- Fundación Basura, Chile.
- Fundación El Árbol, Chile.
- Fundación Lengua, Chile.
- Galena Green Team, USA.
- Gili Eco Trust, Indonesia.
- Greenpeace Finland.
- Apoyo a la Justicia en Salud y Medio Ambiente (HEJSupport), internacional.
- Alianza para la Prevención de Residuos de Humusz, Hungría.
- ICA Agro SpA, Chile.

- INTA, Argentina.
- JAI Justicia Ambiental, Mozambique.
- Just Goods, USA.
- Fundación Ambiental KY, USA.
- Futuros locales, USA.
- Love Plant Nourish de Ike & Eli's Organic Farm, LLC, USA.
- Mingas por el mar, Ecuador.
- Observatorio de Aves del Río Missouri, USA.
- Mesa de Justicia Ambiental MN BIPOC, USA.
- Nipe Fagio, Tanzania.
- Club Ambiental PCC, Trinidad and Tobago.
- Plastic Free Society, France.
- Plastic Oceans International
- Coalición contra la contaminación plástica, USA.
- Plataforma Antiincineración de Montcada, Spain.
- Public Environmental Centre for Sustainable Development, Bulgaria.
- Purge Plastic, United Kingdom.
- Red de Acción por los Derechos Ambientales RADA, Chile.
- SAISOCA, Venezuela.
- Sea Hugger, USA.
- Six Senses Hotels Resorts Spas, Thailand.
- StopPlastics, Canada.
- Iniciativa de desarrollo ambiental sostenible, Nigeria.
- Sustainable Mill Valley, USA.
- Taller de Comunicación Ambiental (Rosario), Argentina.
- Taller Ecologista, Argentina.
- TECHshare - Technik, Bildung, Solidarität, Switzerland.
- The Last Beach Cleanup, USA.
- The Last Plastic Straw, USA.
- The Ocean Project, USA.
- UANL, Mexico.
- UDD, Chile.
- Universidad Santo Tomás, Colombia.

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I urge you to take these two actions immediately: stop accepting worthless plastic waste and stop exporting plastic waste to other countries.

Regards,

Jan Dell

Jan Dell
Founder and Independent Engineer
The Last Beach Cleanup

The Last Beach Cleanup volunteers lead catalytic initiatives to move from awareness on plastic pollution to widescale action and achievement. We collaborate with diverse stakeholders who share the goal of ending plastic pollution: local and national governments, nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), socially responsible investors (SRIs), individuals and others. Founded by an independent engineer, The Last Beach Cleanup focuses on **bringing the facts to the forefront** to promote proven and practical solutions to plastic pollution. We do root cause analysis, design tactical solutions, and we keep counting to measure progress. We evaluate proposed solutions for economic practicality at scale in real world conditions. The Last Beach Cleanup is a California-based nonprofit 501(c)3 organization and is independent of influence by commercial interests.

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