## Don't Trash El Cajon!

Trash is a major component of pollution entering the streams and rivers in our watershed. Every year thousands of pounds of trash and debris are removed from Forester Creek and other drainages tributary to the San Diego River in the El Cajon area. Most trash enters our local creeks, and ultimately the San Diego River via the storm drain system. By taking a few simple steps, such as throwing all trash into the proper receptacles, or holding onto trash until a receptacle can be found, everyone can greatly reduce the amount of trash clogging our waterways.
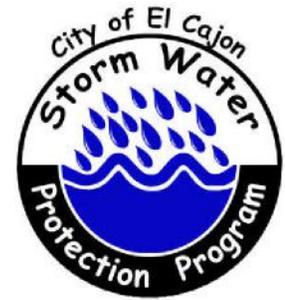
Cigarette butts are the most littered item found in the United States and around the world, and El Cajon is no exception. Due to smoking bans inside public places in California and other states, over 99 percent of cigarettes are now smoked outside. A direct increase in the effects to the environment has been seen. Cigarette butts thrown onto streets, parking lots and sidewalks get washed into storm drains, which flow to creeks, rivers, and eventually to our beaches and ocean. Once submerged in water, toxic chemicals from cigarette smoke found in cigarette filters are released, threatening water quality and marine life. Cigarette butts thrown into the environment have also been linked to fires and are especially dangerous during dry weather.

The Surfrider Foundation, I Love a Clean San Diego, the American Heart Association, California Highway Patrol (CHP), and several other organizations have gotten together to crack down on cigarette butts in the environment. Through a program called "Hold On To Your Butt" (see more details at https://sandiego.surfrider.org/programs/hold-on-to-your-butt, people can call 1-800-NOSMOKE and report drivers throwing cigarette butts out their vehicle windows. The CHP responds by sending a warning letter to the offender. With the help of concerned citizens and programs like these the amount of trash entering our watershed's streams and rivers can be reduced.