

September 10, 2024

Tobacco Free Florida in Santa Rosa County to Participate in an Annual Coastal Cleanup Event



Event will focus on volunteering to address environmental health threats posed by litter of toxic cigarette butts

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Navarre, Fla. – Tobacco Free Florida, a bureau of the Florida Department of Health, is participating across the state in an annual Coastal Cleanup Event, taking place Saturday, September 21, 2024.

In Santa Rosa County, volunteers are invited to meet at Navarre Beach parking lot, 8649 Gulf Blvd, at 8:30 a.m. The cleanup will continue until 11 a.m. Supplies and water will be provided.

In Santa Rosa County, members of the local Students Working Against Tobacco (SWAT) chapter will join the Tobacco Free Florida Santa Rosa County personnel to participate in the beach cleanup. SWAT is Florida's statewide youth organization working to mobilize, educate, and equip Florida youth to deglamorize the tobacco industry. Supporting an event like this is part of Tobacco Free Florida's ongoing commitment to supporting Florida tobacco awareness, prevention, and cessation at the local, county, and state levels.

"Many people mistakenly believe cigarettes are biodegradable, and they may not think of the damages to our beaches and parks they are doing with this waste," said **Laura Corbin, bureau chief for Tobacco Free Florida**. "We know cigarettes are harmful to anyone who uses them, but this cleanup is to bring attention to the fact that they also hurt our beautiful beaches, parks, and other shared spaces."

Cigarette butts are by far the most commonly littered item worldwide.¹ Improperly discarded cigarette butts can degrade into thousands of microplastic fibers, release chemical compounds dangerous to human health, and be deadly to animal and marine life if swallowed.² The site of a cigarette butt can also be a visual trigger for those trying to quit smoking, potentially leading to a slip-up or relapse.³ Removing discarded cigarette butts from public areas can help support cessation.

Since July 2022, more than 75 municipalities across 41 counties have passed ordinances restricting smoking and/or the use of tobacco products in Florida's parks and beaches.

Anyone interested in finding out more about the Santa Rosa County event can contact Vince Nguyen at 850-564-2256 or email at Vince.Nguyen@flhealth.gov.

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About Tobacco Free Florida

The Florida Department of Health's Tobacco Free Florida campaign is a statewide cessation and prevention campaign funded by Florida's tobacco settlement fund. Since the program began in 2007, more than 295,000 Floridians have successfully quit using one of Tobacco Free Florida's free tools and services. There are now approximately 451,000 fewer adult smokers in Florida than there were 10 years ago, and the state has saved \$17.7 billion in health care costs. To learn more about Tobacco Free Florida's Quit Your Way services, visit TobaccoFreeFlorida.com or follow the campaign on Facebook at Facebook.com/TobaccoFreeFlorida or on X at X.com/tobaccofreefla.

¹ Castaldi, G., Cecere, G. & Zoli, M. "Smoke on the beach": on the use of economic vs behavioral policies to reduce environmental pollution by cigarette littering. *Econ Polit* **38**, 1025–1048 (2021). <https://doi.org/10.1007/s40888-020-00205-5>

² NOAA Marine Debris Program. (n.d.) No butts about it: Cigarettes are the most common debris¹. NOAA Marine Debris Blog. Retrieved August 12, 2024, from <https://blog.marinedebris.noaa.gov/no-butts-about-it-cigarettes-are-most-common-debris>

³ National Cancer Institute. (n.d.). Handling nicotine withdrawal and triggers when you decide to quit tobacco. National Institutes of Health. <https://www.cancer.gov/about-cancer/causes-prevention/risk/tobacco/withdrawal-fact-sheet>