Environmental Health Coalition Honors Leaders of San Diego Bay Victories

Hundreds of environmental supporters joined A Clean Bay Victory celebration on May 22

SAN DIEGO, June 1, 2012 – On Tuesday, May 22, Environmental Health Coalition (EHC), an organization that combats environmental health issues in San Diego/Tijuana communities, honored three individuals and one organization that led efforts over the past 32 years to improve San Diego Bay. A Clean Bay Victory packed The Berkeley event space at the Maritime Museum as attendees from all over San Diego and Tijuana regions raised $38,000 to support EHC in honor of the environmental champions.

More than 320 individuals attended EHC's 2012 Awards Celebration. At the event, former Councilmember Donna Frye launched EHC's Sustainability Circle to secure monthly contributions from donors who support EHC’s environmental justice work. The true highlight of Tuesday's event included awards presented to:

Marco Gonzalez, an ally in the Clean Bay Campaign. Ashok Israni, CEO of Pacifica Companies, presented Gonzalez with an award for his tireless advocacy and legal leadership. San Diego Coastkeeper, an ally in the Clean Bay Campaign. City Councilmember David Alvarez presented the award to the nonprofit for serving as a strong and critical partner with EHC in the fight to preserve San Diego Bay since 1995.

Dan McKirnan, EHC boardmember. Congressman Bob Filner awarded McKirnan for his commitment to the environmental protection and service as a founding member of the Clean Bay Campaign. Laura Hunter, Clean Bay Campaign director. Former City Councilmember Donna Frye honored Hunter with the Donna Frye Spirit of Justice Award for over two decades of dedicated work on the Clean Bay efforts for Environmental Health Coalition.

In the 1900s, San Diego Bay supported great biodiversity in its shallow open water, salt marshes and mud flats. Currently, more than a third of San Diego County live within five miles of the bay. After years of neglect and poor planning, industries polluted the bay with more than 20 types of pollutants, endangered surrounding communities with 36 types of air contaminants and destroyed 90 percent of the bay's mud flats and 78 percent of its salt marshes.

Each awardee played an integral role in the community-wide efforts that resulted in major environmental victories for San Diego Bay, and ultimately, can lead to a reversal of these trends. Key victories include the decommissioning of the South Bay Power Plant, the adaptation of the Chula Vista Bayfront Master Plan and the cleanup of toxic pollution at the bottom of San Diego Bay.
The VIP reception opened the A Clean Bay Victory event at the Star of the Sea Event Center along the harbor in downtown San Diego. The Berkeley Ferry Boat at the Maritime Museum of San Diego hosted the main event, where guests enjoyed catering from Wild Thyme.

Pacifica Companies, Unified Port of San Diego, The Wild Thyme Company and Bruce and Betsy Gill were proud sponsors of the celebrations. For more information on the event and EHC, please visit http://www.environmentalhealth.org.

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