

Whereas,

1. Foil or metallic balloons are made of plastic (nylon) sheets coated with polyethylene and metallic materials. (“Mylar” is a brand name for a specific type of polyester film)
2. Latex balloons are made from rubber tree sap with pigments, oils, curing agents, and accelerators added during the manufacturing process. Natural latex is considered “biodegradable” by the Balloon Council (A balloon industry trade organization), however, studies have shown that it takes from several months to several years for latex to “biodegrade”, which is sufficient time to pose entanglement and ingestion dangers to seabirds, sea turtles, and marine mammals;
3. Helium-filled foil/plastic balloons are typically sold with tethering, plastic valves, tie-off discs and plastic clips which also pose entanglement and ingestion dangers to seabirds, sea turtles, and marine mammals;
4. Existing California law only prohibits the release of balloons and tethering made of “electrically conductive” materials;
5. From 2008 to 2016, the Ocean Conservancy International Coastal Cleanup collected 630,000 balloons worldwide and of that amount 280,000 in the United States;
6. A Queensland study of stranded sea turtles from 2006 to 2011 found that of the 41 pieces of rubber eaten by the turtles studied, 32 pieces (78%) were identified as balloon fragments;
7. The Ocean Conservancy surveyed 270 marine debris experts (average experience of 12 years) and the survey results found that balloon marine debris ranked 3<sup>rd</sup> in the severity of impacts on seabirds, sea turtles, and marine mammals;
8. Some balloons are documented traveling long distances from the point of release, as evidenced by the recovery of a balloon in Los Angeles 49 hours after its release during the 1998 Olympics Opening Ceremony in Nagano Japan (Distance: 5,300 miles);
9. Each year, more than 75,000 helium-filled latex weather balloons (with non-biodegradable instrument boxes attached) are intentionally released into the

atmosphere throughout the United States and its territories, with only a small percentage of the balloons recovered.

Therefore, be it resolved by the Monterey Bay National Marine Sanctuary Advisory Council that:

1. The entanglement and ingestion of foil/plastic and latex balloons, their tethering materials and accessories to seabirds, sea turtles, and marine mammals should be reduced or prevented;
2. The manufacture, distribution, and sale of all helium-filled foil/plastic and latex balloons, their plastic tethering materials and accessories should be phased out and replaced with balloons with tethering and accessories manufactured from materials that minimize the risks to marine wildlife;
3. A comprehensive effort should be encouraged to develop strategies and methods to recover weather balloons (and instrument boxes) and a plan for converting weather balloons (and instrument boxes) to materials that reduce the risks to the marine environment;
4. Educational materials that highlight alternatives and explain the adverse environmental consequences of releasing helium-filled balloons should be developed and broadly distributed to organizations such as schools, colleges, churches, wedding planners, resorts, hotels, funeral homes, non-profit organizations, governmental agencies, decision makers, plastic and latex balloon manufacturers, distributors and retailers, and the general public.

#### Balloon References

Wittmer, V., Register, K & McKay, L. (2017). *Balloon Release Research in Virginia and Reducing Balloon Debris through Community-Based Social Marketing*. Virginia Coastal Zone Management Program (Virginia Department of Environmental Quality).

Trapani, C., O'Hara, K. & Register K. (2018). *Balloon Litter on Virginia's Remote Beaches: Results of Monitoring from 2013 through 2017*. Clean Virginia Waterways, Longwood University.

Wilcox, C., Mallos, N.J., et al. (2016). *Using Expert Elicitation to Estimate the Impacts of Plastic Pollution on Marine Wildlife*. CSIRO Oceans and Atmosphere Flagship, Castray Espalande, Hobart, Tasmania 7000, Australia

The Marine Debris Act: <https://marinedrbris.noaa.gov>

Balloons Blow: <https://balloonsblow.org/laws-concerning-balloons>