



Zero Waste Sonoma Board votes to co-sponsor SB 1066: The Marine Flare Producer Responsibility Act

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Zero Waste Sonoma (ZWS) is proud to join the National Stewardship Action Council (NSAC) as co-sponsor of Senator Catherine Blakespear's SB 1066: The Marine Flare Producer Responsibility Act. SB 1066 will establish Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) for pyrotechnic marine flares, a first of its kind in the U.S.

"Boaters love the water and want to protect it from pollution," Sen. Blakespear said. "Properly disposing of unwanted marine flares, which can contain toxic perchlorate and expire approximately every three years, should be as convenient as it is to purchase them. SB 1066 establishes a way to do that."

An estimated 174,000 outdated flares are generated each year by recreational vessels in California. While considered household hazardous waste (HHW) at EOL, most HHW facilities in California are unable to accept unwanted marine flares due to their not having permits or equipment to safely handle explosives, as well as the exorbitant costs to properly manage them since they must be shipped out-of-state for proper disposal.

"Historically, the costs to manage unwanted marine flares have been socialized by every ratepayer, whether they own and operate a boat or not," said Courtney Scott, Household Hazardous Waste Program Manager for Zero Waste Sonoma. "In 2023, it cost an estimated \$185 to properly dispose of one unwanted marine flare, which can be purchased new for approximately \$13."

Sonoma County resident Matthew Schuessler shared, "My boating experience includes numerous bodies of water in our State, both fresh and salt, across all types and sizes of vessels, spread over five decades... Unfortunately, there is no single agency or organization handling the disposal of unwanted/expired flares in the U.S. There are also unclear requirements at the state level about how flares should be disposed of properly."

SB 1066 will require producers of marine flares to fund and operate a convenient collection system to manage expired or unwanted flares, shifting the costs of managing this product from our cities and counties - and ultimately local ratepayers - to the producers/users. Managing HHW is one of the core responsibilities of ZWS, which has one of the most comprehensive HHW programs in the country. Sonoma County is also home to 76 miles of Pacific coastline and has a large recreational boater population. Despite these facts, there are no disposal options in Sonoma County for expired marine flares.

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