



Members of the Surfride Foundation Galveston Chapter made monofilament recycling bins that are installed on several rock groins on the island. The bins are monitored weekly. The fishing line is collected and the weight is reported to Sea Grant. Members of the Galveston chapter include, front row, from left, John Cowan with his dog Marlow, Kat Lilley, Virginia Greb, Janese Maricelli, Craig Eubanks, Cody Eubanks; back row, Lisa Reznicek, Bill Hulsizer, Lori Hulsizer, Jeff Seinsheimer and Jonathon Tromm.

Organized, engaged and effective probably aren't the first words that come to mind when you think about surfers, whose whole mythos is built around a laid-back attitude. But when you're talking about the Surfride Foundation, those button-down words are accurate. The foundation is among the most active activist groups around.

The 30-member Galveston chapter is the newest of five in Texas, Jeff Seinsheimer, its chairman, said. It's part of an international organization of more than 50,000 members from all walks of life operating in 80 local chapters in the United States, said Seinsheimer, who helped form the Galveston chapter four years ago.

"Our mission is the protection and enjoyment of oceans, waves and beaches," he said.

The organization at large has built a statewide reputation over the past 15 or so years for fighting intrusions against the Texas Open Beaches Act. The relatively new Galveston chapter has joined in that work and has many projects of its own.

It adopted the stretch of beach between 47th to 53rd streets for periodic cleanups and installed receptacles for monofilament fishing line on several rock groins in an effort to keep the stuff out of the environment.

The chapter is about to install fireproof cigarette butt receptacles at various spots on the beach.

"Our chapter's current focus is on our Bring The Bag Campaign, which attempts to place a ban, or at least a fee, on single-use plastic bags given to customers by retailers in Galveston," Seinsheimer said.

"We encourage people to bring reusable bags when they shop, and use biodegradable bags for pets. We are teaching folks how to make bags out of their old T-shirts, by cutting off the sleeves and sewing the bottom closed," he said.

The chapter also works to discourage single-use plastic bottles, and promotes reusable bottles as an alternative.

"We remind the public that most marine trash is actually land based," Seinsheimer said. "We promote ocean friendly gardens that have water collection

systems and native plants that require little water. We remind the public that excess fertilizer ends up in our bays."

Seinsheimer said chapter members are a diverse group united by a love for the beach, the water and the outdoors in general and by a sense of responsibility for their care.

"I call myself a waterman," he said. "I love fishing and surfing and beachcombing. I just like being outside and doing things and I want the next generations to have what I had.

"I always tell our members 'If not us, then who?' Mother Ocean can't speak for herself."

The chapter meets at 7 p.m. the first Wednesday of every month at Mod Coffeehouse, 2126 Postoffice St. in the island's downtown.

— Michael A. Smith



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