



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE
National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration
NATIONAL OCEAN SERVICE
Monterey Bay National Marine Sanctuary
99 Pacific Street, Bldg 455a
Monterey, CA 93940

March 15, 2024

Superintendent Statement from Monterey Bay National Marine Sanctuary

Report and Do Not Disturb Cotton Bales Washed Up on Local Beaches

Monterey Bay National Marine Sanctuary is asking the public to report and not disturb any cotton bales that have washed up recently on local beaches. The bales are believed to be from a container ship that, according to the U.S. Coast Guard, lost 24 containers on February 6, 2024, approximately 15 miles west of the sanctuary offshore of Monterey Bay.

On March 4, cotton bales and empty wine barrels were reported washing up on San Luis Obispo County beaches between Cayucas and San Simeon. These items were confirmed to be from the same freighter on February 6.

The cotton bales are reported to weigh 500 lbs (dry weight) and are covered in blue plastic. When the cotton is released from a bale, it can cover sensitive flora and fauna in the intertidal and on the shoreline. Contractors have been hired to professionally remove the debris.

Since March 4, more cotton bales have been reported on the California shoreline from Big Sur Coast to Point Sal, including the Northern Channel Islands. The affected area includes Monterey Bay and Channel Islands national marine sanctuaries and the proposed Chumash Heritage National Marine Sanctuary.

The public is advised not to disturb any of the cotton bales. Do not remove any part of the plastic or cotton. It is best that the bales remain covered and banded until cleanup contractors can safely remove them from a beach. Do not remove any loose cotton from the beach or rocky intertidal areas, as that may cause damage to marine organisms.

Please report any sighted cotton bales to RM@gallaghermarine.com

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Lisa Wooninck".

Lisa Wooninck, Ph.D.
Superintendent

