

Fireworks leave devastation on the beach

July 20, 2021



Now that the 4th of July has passed and the revelers have all gone home, the toxic remains of their fireworks are strewn all over the high tide marks at all of the beaches in Del Norte County. These pictures do not do justice to the extent of the problem created by those responsible. There are Styrofoam pellets from mortars and rockets collecting on the sand. They float in the water and can be mistaken for food by the shore birds and ultimately the sea life in the harbor. They will never biodegrade in our lifetimes.

There are also remains of bottle rockets and mortars. They contain toxic materials and are polluting the bay - exposing sea life to the dangers of ingestion.

Red plastic balls from mortars are also found in the thousands at the high tide marks. They, too, will never biodegrade.

So, what is the solution? It's incumbent upon by those individuals that could care less about the fragile ecosystems to be responsible for hauling away their toxic leftovers.

In 2019, a coordinated beach clean up was done by volunteers the day after the 4th. I remember seeing red ribbons from exploded ordinances - half buried in the sand at South Beach that we tried to rake out - but it was futile; there was just too much of the debris and it ultimately floated out into the bay.

We also found unexploded fireworks that pose a danger for beach goers. In fact, most of these fireworks are illegal and are bought out of state where they are legal to possess.

There is the gravity of the problem; but it is doubtful that those who purchased them will stop in the future, as law enforcement has their hands tied due to the extent of illegal fireworks ignited in the County every year at our beaches.

So, this week I will be on the beaches cleaning up the debris the best I can. Is there a chance that those responsible will join me? I doubt it. They will be back in force next year, polluting one of our most precious resources- our ocean and its beautiful and fragile ecosystems.