

# One person's trash is another's cause

## DEEP DIVE

GO BENEATH THE SURFACE WITH PAUL HAEDER



I first met him near Devil's Punchbowl, screening beach debris — microplastics — during one of his weekly Otter Rock shore cleanups. On this day, 12 volunteers were genuflecting and prostrating themselves using shovels and screens to tease out the white and bright-colored particles of modern man's disposability from sand and organic detritus.

That was his role with the non-profit, Surfrider, when he used to be the Newport chapter's chair.

Scott Rosin's now on a different mission — getting all of Lincoln County's plastic out of the waste stream and pollution vectors and into our road-surfacing materials.

We've met a few times since, in addition to me being recruited by him to be a captain for one of the cleanups sponsored by SOLVE and Surfrider.

During our first farewell handshake, he handed me a 2018 book of his poetry, "Tell 'em We're Surfing — The Surf Poetry Collection."

The 71-year-old Rosin has been hanging ten and riding waves since age 12 while growing up in Torrance, California, and he has seen the Oregon Coast horizon from the tops of Doug firs as a tree man for almost a half century.

He has felled tens of thousands of trees.

Having migrated from his birthplace in Redondo Beach to the Oregon Coast Range, he's now in yet another evolution as co-founder of a recycling non-profit, Plastic Up-Cycling (converting discarded plastic into useful durable products).

He's in both a personal (two years, met her on OK Cupid) and professional partnership (she helped write the grant and spearhead Plastic Up-Cycling — founded Sept. 2019) with Katharine Valentino.

For this Deep Dive, Scott submits to unadulterated stealth probing into both his personal narrative decades before co-leading Plastic Up-Cycling with his partner Katharine, and now as a crusader for mitigating the disgusting plastic waste in our landfills, on the land and in oceans.

An alternative headline might read, "The Little Dutch Boy (Old Jewish-Scots-Irish Man) Puts Ten Fingers in the Bursting Dike!"

"Approximately eight billion tons of plastic are in our oceans now, along with unknowable megatons in our landfills and scattered throughout our environment," he said. "Today, plastic is found in almost everything we eat. Even more disturbing, the stuff floats in the air. We're all breathing it. There is growing evidence that toxins associated with plastic are responsible for human health problems such as cancers and brain, reproductive and cardiovascular damage."

### It's the Ocean, Stupid — not the economy

Scott and I swap stories about each of our own crusades fighting rampant despoilment of ecosystems and human settlements — societies that were once much more reigned-in, tamer consumer-wise and less impacting with much smaller ecological footprints.

Life on the planet today — with 7.5 billion people, many of whom want unregulated, unmitigated, unlimited consumerism — is a discombobulated shadow of its old self: increased traffic gridlock, regular water pollution warnings, stagnant air advisories, housing costs, chemical and pesticide



contamination, water restriction and more. Welcome to the party!

We're talking about the little town of Newport, not just Shanghai or San Francisco.

While Scott has proverbially risen from the ashes a few times in his life, his credo for decades has been "clean air, clean water and clean soil." He believes regulations like the clean air and water acts should be expanded, strengthened and policed more vigorously.

This inevitably puts him at odds with some of his neighbors, who are vehemently out of touch with how a democracy works: we need collective rules, regs, laws, permits "to ensure health, safety and welfare for humans and non-humans alike."

Corporations have a history of not being good neighbors.

### From sick bed to fast track

Scott's life changed when he was young, aged 11, sick and bed-ridden for months. Another time of significant emotion catalyst occurred when his mother divorced her physically and emotionally abusive aerospace engineer husband.

Juxtapositions count: After more than half a century of manual labor, some might think it unusual Scott Rosin

spent time at El Camino Community College and then San Fernando Valley State working on an English degree.

"I've been writing poetry and short stories since I was a kid."

Maybe that love of surfing, coupled with love of rhetorical and philosophical grounding enhanced his ability to see the big picture(s).

And a drive to get involved.

The systems that are interconnected to the gargantuan plastic pollution problem include the rise of fossil fuel extraction/production/use; the infusion of natural gas into the plastics industry; the marketing of a throwaway society; and the insistence on single-use plastic bags and packaging to fuel capitalism.

However, this concept of "better living through chemistry" (DuPont's marketing campaign starting in 1935) has created more than an unsightly mess of

waste covering the globe (even a single-use plastic bag was photographed by an ROV — remote operated vehicle — at the bottom of the Mariana Trench at a depth of 36,000 feet).

More concerning to Scott, Katharine and legions of people like me is the death of phytoplankton tied directly to microplastics suffocating them. (Phyto) plankton serves as the lungs of the ocean — releasing oxygen in the process of photosynthesis, which facilitates ocean health. It provides the mechanism wherein sunlight gets converted into food stuffs. It serves as the basic building block and food for all other marine creatures.

Easily, half of the world's oxygen comes from plankton. "The remainder is from trees and plants on land, which are also severely stressed by global climate change, massive fires and logging."

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Read on as Deep Dive continues at [www.oregoncoasttoday.com](http://www.oregoncoasttoday.com).

*Paul Haeder is a writer living and working in Lincoln County. He has two books coming out, one a short story collection, "Wide Open Eyes: Surfacing from Vietnam," and a non-fiction book, "No More Messing Around: The Good, Bad and Ugly of America's Education System."*