**Sustainable Restaurants**

**Time:** 10 minutes with 2 optional activity extensions

**Supplies**: PowerPoint, paper and pen

**Background:**

As of 2015, it is estimated that there are over 5 trillion pieces of plastic floating in the ocean. Most of these pieces are single-use plastics, meaning we use them one time and discard them. These plastic pieces come from wrappers, bottles, bags, and other waste items we often don’t think about. Fortunately, many restaurants and businesses are making changes to help curb the amount of plastic waste produced and, ultimately, entering our landfills and waterways.

Surfrider’s Ocean Friendly Restaurants Program helps restaurants start using environmentally friendly practices to reduce waste. This national program provides guidelines and resources to restaurants that want to make the environment a priority. These practices include:

* Phasing out single use plastics
* Using only reusable tableware when guests are dining in
* Following proper recycling guidelines
* Not using any Styrofoam- options for take-out should be paper or aluminum based
* Not offering plastics bags or utensils with take-out orders (unless requested)
* Not offering straws (unless requested)
* Not selling drinks in plastic bottles
* Offering discounts for people who bring in their own cups, mugs, or bottles
* Offering vegan and vegetarian options
* Offering only Best Choice of Good Alternative seafood
* Making efforts to conserve water, save energy, and mitigate pollution

In addition to the products, utensils, and take-out items restaurants choose to use to be more sustainable, they can also think about the kinds of foods they serve, and whether or not they were sustainably sourced. The Monterey Bay Aquarium maintains a Seafood Watch website and guide to help restaurants make good choices about the seafood they offer. The website states that about a third of fish populations are overfished, meaning they are being caught at a faster rate than they are able to reproduce and replenish their population. This can lead to ecosystem and food chain collapse and have drastic effects on other species in the ocean. To prevent this, laws are in place to limit the capture of certain species, however these laws are not always well enforced. To help mitigate the issues of overfishing, consumers can become educated about which fish are caught responsibly by utilizing the Seafood Watch guide.

**Sources:**

<http://beachapedia.org/Plastic_Pollution_Facts_and_Figures>

<https://www.surfrider.org/programs/ocean-friendly-restaurants>

<https://www.seafoodwatch.org/ocean-issues/wild-seafood>

<https://www.seafoodwatch.org/consumers>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?time_continue=108&v=7lTvMDB0aCg&feature=emb_logo>

https://www.sdcoastkeeper.org/blog/marine-conservation/how-to-find-sustainable-seafood-in-san-diego

**Goal**: Students will have a better understanding of the importance and methods surrounding sustainable restaurant practices. Through the optional activities, students will learn how to choose a sustainably sourced seafood meal and/or become familiar with Ocean Friendly Restaurants in San Diego County.

**PowerPoint** (10 minutes)

*Slide 1:* Raise your hand if you’d be more likely to order food from a restaurant if you knew they exhibited sustainable practices. Raise your hand if you’ve ever gone out of your way to research a restaurant’s/company’s environmental practices. What do you think are the big environmental impacts from the restaurant industry? *Students may type answers in the chat or be unmuted.*

*Slide 2:* As many of us know, plastic waste poses a huge problem to our environment. It is estimated that over 5 trillion pieces of plastic are floating in the ocean. Of all the plastic that has ever been produced, about 79% has ended up in landfills or the environment, while 9% has been recycled, and the other 12% has been incinerated. Why do you think the percentage recycled is so small? *Students may be unmuted to answer.* Many small plastic products can’t be recycled due to their size, like straws or plastic silverware. About 63 billion straws are used every year in the US, and none of those can be recycled!

*Slide 3:* Restaurants can make a difference by carefully thinking about the amount of waste they produce. What kinds of waste do you think come from daily operations at a restaurant (food waste, water waste, plastic/packaging)? *Students may type answers in the chat or be unmuted.* Besides food waste, restaurants create plastic waste through take out containers, straws, and wrappers. Much of this waste cannot be or does not get recycled. For example, water bottles sold at restaurants and stores have little chance to be recycled. Only 31.1% of bottles produced in 2015 ended up being properly recycled. Restaurants, even small ones, also use a lot of water—about 5,800 gallons per day.

*Slide 4:* The Surfrider Foundation’s Ocean Friendly Restaurants (OFR) Program helps restaurants start more environmentally friendly practices. By joining the OFR program, a restaurant receives discounts on sustainable products, affiliation with a prominent environmental non-profit, and the ability to promote themselves as a certified ocean friendly restaurant. The restaurant must follow certain guidelines to participate in the program, including phasing out single-use plastics and Styrofoam products, using only reusable tableware for guests dining in, ceasing to offer plastic bags and utensils with takeout orders (unless requested by the customer), ceasing to offer plastic straws, and only providing paper straws upon request. This map shows all restaurants in San Diego County currently listed as Ocean Friendly Restaurants.

*Poll questions:*

* *How would you feel about a restaurant you’re visiting enforcing these practices? A) Inconvenienced B) Happy C) Neutral/Indifferent*
* *Would you be likely to visit this restaurant again, keeping these practices in mind? A) Yes B) No C) Depends on how good the food is*

*Slide 5:* The pictures on the left are of a few of the restaurants that are following these criteria. Participating restaurants must also choose at least two of the following practices: ceasing to sell drinks in plastic bottles, offering discounts to customers who bring in personal mugs or containers, offering vegan and vegetarian options, and making efforts to conserve water, save energy, and mitigate pollution. Can you think of any other practices restaurants could employ to help the environment? What are some challenges in encouraging restaurants to participate? *Students may type answers in the chat or be unmuted.*

By buying from businesses with sustainable practices, you are reinforcing environmentally friendly habits and showing companies that you support those values. Not only can you make sure that, as a consumer, you aren’t creating more waste than necessary, you can make sure the food you are consuming comes from sustainable sources.

*Slide 6:* Here a few examples of local restaurants and businesses that are sourcing their food sustainably.

Soul Much Cookies partners with chefs to collect extra grain and produce scraps from restaurants and juice bars. They use this rescued food to make cookies!

Point Loma Seafoods serves sustainably caught seafood, some of which is caught locally by San Diego fishermen.

*Slides 7-9 correspond with the Monterey Bay Aquarium Seafood Watch activity.*

**Activity Option 1:** (10 minutes)

Using the Monterey Bay Aquarium Seafood Watch website and guide (linked below), students will answer the trivia questions included at the end of the PowerPoint (slide 9) to better understand how to order sustainable seafood. Class time may be used to complete this activity, or the students may work on answering the questions outside of class then come back and debrief.

*Slide 7:* You can do your part by choosing sustainable seafood, which means picking seafood that has been fished or farmed in a way that has a lower impact on the environment. Sometimes, how the fish is caught destroys ocean habitats, or fish farms use harmful chemicals that may pollute other parts of the ocean. Knowing what kinds of fish are safely caught and which farms use environmentally friendly practices can help us make informed choices about the kinds of seafood we eat. What other things might determine whether or not seafood is deemed sustainable? *Students may type answers in the chat or be unmuted.*

*Slide 8:* It can be overwhelming to keep track of what is and isn’t sustainable, especially as practices change from year to year, so the Monterey Bay Aquarium Seafood Watch program helps consumers determine which fish are sustainably caught or farmed. By assessing factors such as population size or pollution issues, scientists put together Seafood Watch guides so that we can wisely determine what kinds of seafood to consume.

Link to Monterey Bay Seafood Watch: <https://www.seafoodwatch.org/>

Link to guide: <https://www.seafoodwatch.org/-/m/sfw/pdf/guides/mba-seafoodwatch-west-coast-guide.pdf?la=en>

**Activity Option 2:** (10 minutes) Students will use the Surfrider Foundation’s Ocean Friendly Restaurant finder to locate the sustainable restaurant closest to them. Students should determine what practices made the restaurant ocean friendly and be prepared to share. Class time may be used to complete this activity, or the students may work on answering the questions outside of class then come back and debrief.

Link to Restaurant Finder: <https://www.surfrider.org/programs/ocean-friendly-restaurants>