



alumni

# LICENSE TO CLEAN

ENGINEERING ALUMNUS  
**RAMY GINDI**  
 OVERSEES INNOVATIVE OCEAN CLEANUP

By MELANIE JOHNSON

For the past two years, residents in Marina del Rey have spotted a vessel emblazoned with the number 007 gliding across Ballona Creek.

It's a fitting number for the vessel, which is on a mission to keep trash out of the Pacific Ocean. **Ramy Gindi** ('98, civil engineering), principal engineer at Los Angeles County Public Works, oversees the **Ballona Creek Trash Interceptor** project, a two-year pilot to help keep the waterways free of debris.

Since October 2022, the interceptor has collected more than 124 tons of trash – from construction railings to wooden pallets to more than 50,000 plastic bottles. A floating boom system placed in the creek funnels the trash into the vessel's mouth and a conveyor belt siphons the trash into the interceptor.

"Our education campaign has been working well, however we are still seeing trash get into the flood control channels and ending up on our beaches," Gindi says. "We thought it was time to start thinking about new and innovative solutions. The county decided to work with a company out of the Netherlands."

That company is **The Ocean Cleanup**, a nonprofit organization focused on developing technologies to rid oceans worldwide of plastic. Under the direction of the Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors, the county formed a public-private partnership with Ocean Cleanup to pilot the trash interceptor in Ballona Creek.

"It's groundbreaking technology, but also eye opening in the amount of trash we let go out into the ocean. We can do better," he says.

## BUILDING A CAREER

The Ballona Creek interceptor is just one of the many projects Gindi oversees at Public Works, where he has worked for 26 years. He started with Public Works as an intern between his junior and senior years at Cal Poly Pomona. He stayed on after graduation, working on water resources-related projects such as drinking water, wells, tanks, pipelines and pump stations.

Gindi later transitioned to reviewing the design of projects, overseeing 80 engineers and architects working on projects varying from bridges to roadways to water infrastructure for flood control. The Public Works department, which has around 3,600 employees, is responsible for planning, designing, building and maintaining public infrastructure across the county.

"Working for a public agency gives you the opportunity to serve the public," he says. "Being able to listen

to residents and learn about neighborhoods gives us the opportunity to better serve the community. To me, that's what public service is all about, being able to give back to the community."

Gindi, who also has a master's in civil engineering from Cal State Long Beach, credits his accountant father and high school teacher mother with influencing him to forge a career in public service.

He also lauds Cal Poly Pomona for giving him a solid educational foundation on which he could build a career. The hands-on opportunities allowed Gindi to apply technical applications to real-world problems, but it wasn't just the engineering classes he found beneficial.

"Cal Poly Pomona gave me a well-rounded education," he says. "You're not just a civil engineer. From your English classes to chemistry classes to mechanical engineering and computer science classes, you learn. It allows you to be well rounded enough to know that you need to continue to learn throughout your career. At Cal Poly Pomona, you learn how to learn."

WATCH A VIDEO  
 See the Ballona Creek Trash interceptor in action

