



## PRESS RELEASE

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## **Thousands of Volunteers Gather at Over 80 NJ Beaches and Waterways for Clean Ocean Action's 39<sup>th</sup> Spring Beach Sweeps**

### ***Cleanups a "Sweeping" Success; Strong Turnout at Sites for New Jersey's Largest Volunteer Environmental Event***

**New Jersey, Statewide** – True-blue ocean advocates took to shorelines and waterways across the state today to remove harmful litter and collect impactful data at the 2024 Clean Ocean Action Spring Beach Sweeps. Braving brisk winds and some light, cold rain showers, volunteers arrived at a Beach Sweeps-record high 81 locations with buckets in hand, ready to clean beaches and “give back” to the ocean. Volunteers, from near and far, were enthusiastic and hardworking, and many were participating while representing organizations, civic groups, businesses, and scout groups, and schools.

*“What a day! Every day leading-up to the Beach Sweeps with planning and prep is well worth it to know the impact each person is making for the state of New Jersey as well as for the environment during this event! The feeling is indescribable right now. From the tall to the small, Beach Sweeps continues to bring communities together each SEASON. I feel honored to be a part of the Clean Ocean Action team. Today we celebrate the ocean and all she offers. Thanks to our volunteers, she is extra happy and grateful today – as am I!”* said **Kira Cruz, Clean Ocean Action's Debris Free Sea Coordinator and coordinator of the Beach Sweeps.**

In Mother Nature's usual stormy spring fashion, heavy rainfall, gale winds and flooding prefaced the days before the event, adding to trash and debris on beaches and in



*Buckets in hand, an estimated 400 volunteers were ready to sweep at Sandy Hook*



*University Academy Charter High School excited to Sweep Sandy Hook*

waterways that eventually lead to the ocean. The dedicated volunteers of Clean Ocean Action’s (COA) Beach Sweeps removed an estimated tens of thousands of items from beaches/waterways ranging from Essex County to Cape May County. At Beach Sweeps, the volunteers write down and tally the items collected and removed from beaches on data cards with over 100 items listed. After all data cards are collected, with the help of COA’s Beach Captains and Junior Beach Captains, the data is tallied and compiled for the Annual Report.

*“With such a blustery, cold day, we are blown away by the remarkable tenacity and dedication of the Beach Sweeps volunteers to help protect and improve the beaches and ocean which bring them such joy. We especially salute our heroic Beach Captains,” said Cindy Zipf, COA Executive Director.*

**Today’s Highlights & Participation at a Glance**

Some highlights from some of the many Beach Sweeps sites include:

- Strong turnouts throughout the state, including an estimated 400 volunteers at Sandy Hook.
- A large group of students from Newark swept the beach clean with dozens of volunteers in Keyport.
- Scout groups joined at many sites to help their communities.
- High schools brought sports teams, environmental clubs, honor societies, and staff and students to sites up and down the coast.
- Community groups, including women’s clubs and civic groups, gathered at beaches to participate in the Beach Sweeps.



*Students from Newark swept the beach clean in Keyport*



*(Above) Absegami High School science supervisors, teachers and students with beach captain Michelle at the Atlantic City site  
(Below) Volunteers gathered for a group picture before the Sweeps*

*(Bottom left) Boy Scout Troup 47 volunteered at Ideal Beach in Middletown*

*(Bottom Right) Girl Scouts from Toms River troop at Island Beach State Park*



**“Roster of the Ridiculous”**

The “Roster of the Ridiculous” is a part of COA’s data analysis of the Beach Sweeps, and a staple section in COA’s Beach Sweeps reports. The Roster of the Ridiculous highlights some of the most ridiculous items found by volunteers during the biannual cleanup event. Some of the ridiculous items found during the spring Sweeps included a sneaker, old statue, a toy piggy, a crab trap.



(L to R) An old statue and crab trap with buoy found at Sandy Hook, and an entangled mess of gear and nets and other debris found in Mantoloking



The Callazo Family from Jersey City removed many items including a little toy piggy

(Below) A volunteer in Ocean Grove found one sneaker



**Cheers to Volunteers and Municipal Support**

Volunteer Beach Captain and Junior Beach Captains help promote and coordinate the local Beach Sweeps sites and spend time training and learning about the ins and outs of a successful Sweep. This spring, COA broke its own 2023 record for the number of Junior Beach Captains with 40 young volunteers helping to promote the 2024 Beach Sweeps at local sites, gathering assistance, and supporting Beach Captains for a successful event. Some other volunteer and municipal support highlights include:

- Beach Captain for Lavallette, Anita Zalom, is celebrating her 30<sup>th</sup> year as a volunteer.
- Atlantic City S. Albany Ave site Beach Captain couple Ashley and Shawn are getting married next week but insisted on committing their Saturday prior to their wedding leading Beach Sweeps for their community.
- Perth Amboy’s debut as a Beach Sweeps site hosted a great turnout with a special guest (see below)!



Beach Captains and Junior Captains greet volunteers with cheers and smiles, and lead communities during the Beach Sweeps, making the experience memorable, personable, and providing guidance to ensure trash is properly disposed, data cards are correctly completed and collected, and volunteers are supported.

*“COA is incredibly grateful for the Beach Captains’ commitment and shared passion for a clean, healthy ocean, and for the tremendous support provided at the local level in municipalities that contributes to a successful Sweep”* added **COA’s Kira Cruz.**

Long-time Beach Captain Mike Palmisano stands among the trash collected at Keyport



In municipalities statewide, the Beach Sweeps are supported by NJ Clean Communities Coordinators, Public Works Department staff, Environmental Commission, Green Team, and Recreation Department staff, as well as Council members and Mayors who help promote the event, organize logistics, and in some cases, serve as volunteer Beach Captains.

### ***Students from Marine Academy of Science & Technology Organize & Rally at Sandy Hook***

For years, students from the Marine Academy of Science and Technology (MAST) help COA set up and manage registration and hundreds of volunteers at the Sandy Hook Beach Sweeps location.



*Beach Sweeps and municipal officials and employees, perfect together! Berkeley Township helping volunteers at a Sweep site along Barnegat Bay*



*Students from the Marine Academy of Science & Technology (MAST) at Sandy Hook*

*“I am very excited to bring the MAST students to join the volunteers from all over NJ to participate in the 39th Annual Beach Sweeps. Environmental stewardship isn’t just about cleaning the beaches but building community and the Beach Sweeps exemplify this every year,” said **Liza Baskin, Marine Science Instructor at Marine Academy of Science and Technology (MAST).***

*love getting to know each of them – what drives them, their future aspirations, and more. The successful magic of the Beach Sweeps at Sandy Hook would not be possible without them! I’d also like to personally thank Liza Baskin for her continued support and being a role model for the MAST students. She is such a delight to work side by side with! I look forward to many more Sweeps with the students and Liza,” added **COA’s Kira Cruz.***

*“There are no words to describe how impactful the MAST students and staff are! Their passion and excitement truly show during the Beach Sweeps at Sandy Hook. This mighty team of students continues to inspire me, and I*

### ***Students from Marine Academy of Technology & Environmental Science Support as Junior Beach Captains***

In Ocean County, teachers and students from the Marine Academy of Technology and Environmental Science (MATES) have led Beach Sweeps locations for many years. Today, MATES students and staff supported Beach Sweeps as Beach Captains and Jr. Beach Captains for the Grant Avenue Beach site in Seaside Heights.

*“The Marine Academy of Technology and Environmental Science has been a part of Clean Ocean Action’s Beach Sweeps program for close to 30 years,” said **Dr. John Wnek, Supervisor of Science and Research at MATES and Research Coordinator for Project Terrapin.** “This program brings awareness to the issue of ocean pollution and provides our students with a way to take action and make a positive impact. It also provides a way to quantify debris that ends up on our beaches. Over the decades, there has been greater involvement in this program, and some of our students develop leadership and better communication skills while serving as Junior Beach Captains.”*



*Students from the Marine Academy of Technology and Environmental Science (MATES) at Seaside Heights*

“COA is extremely grateful to have the support from the students and staff at MATES! Getting high school students involved in a leadership capacity with Beach Sweeps is just one of the amazing ways this program connects students to the very real impacts of plastic pollution on our beaches. By giving kids an outlet to work with and educate their community about a problem, they’re also gaining the ability to help solve it,” said **Toni Groet**, COA’s South Jersey Program Coordinator.

### “Waves of Thanks” to Beach Sweeps Sponsors

For over 39 years, Clean Ocean Action has organized grassroots, volunteer Beach Sweeps across the state of New Jersey. Dedicated businesses and organizations have provided vital funding for COA to organize, implement, and expand the Sweeps.

**The 2024 Spring Beach Sweeps Statewide Sponsors were:** *Bank of America, Hackensack Meridian Health, Wakefern Food Corp. and ShopRite and Vantage Apparel.*

“A great time was had by all at this year’s Beach Sweeps event up and down NJ’s coastline,” said **Alberto Garofalo, president of Bank of America New Jersey.** “Our team spent the day removing debris and picking up trash to help combat ocean pollution. This spring and summer, people will find NJ beaches cleaner and more enjoyable thanks to the hard work of Clean Ocean Action and its volunteers.”

“Hackensack Meridian Health is proud to be a statewide sponsor of the Clean Ocean Action Beach Sweeps,” said **Kyle Tafuri, VP of Sustainability, Hackensack Meridian Health.** “As a healthcare provider, we are committed to protecting the health of our communities, and that includes the health of our environment. The Clean Ocean Action Beach Sweeps are a great way to get people involved in keeping our beaches clean and healthy, and we are proud to support this important initiative.”

“Protecting our waterways helps promote the health and stability of our ecosystems and is critical to conserving species, habitats, and water quality for future generations. We are proud to support Clean Ocean Action as a statewide sponsor for Beach Sweeps and join in their efforts to protect our waterways and the environment,” said **Claire Rossie, Sustainability and Corporate Social Responsibility Manager at Wakefern Food Corp. and ShopRite.**

“Vantage Apparel is proud to partner with Clean Ocean Action, reflecting our unwavering commitment to environmental stewardship,” said **Rob Watson, Chief Executive Officer at Vantage Apparel.** “Together, we harness our collective passion to unite the community for the noble cause of preserving our oceans. Through collaboration and action, we strive to make a lasting impact, ensuring a cleaner, healthier planet for generations to come.”

“Beach Sweeps would not be possible without the unwavering support from our dedicated Sponsors and Volunteers,” said **Jocelyn Graham, Development Director for Clean Ocean Action.** “Their contributions significantly enhance COA’s efforts for this community-based statewide event. We are thrilled to have reached our 39<sup>th</sup> year of Beach Sweeps and look forward to continuing to grow this event for our future generations!”



### STATEWIDE SPONSORS:



**BANK OF AMERICA**



**Hackensack  
Meridian Health**



### COUNTY SPONSORS:



**The 2024 Spring Beach Sweeps Countywide Sponsors were:** *Kearny Bank Foundation (Monmouth County), Bayshore Recycling Corporation (Montecalvo & Bayshore Family of Companies) (Monmouth County), Target (Monmouth County)*

**The 2024 Spring Beach Sweeps Site Sponsors were:** *Baine Contracting (Pt. Pleasant: Maryland Ave, Church & Dwight Co., Inc. (Seaside Park: Grant Ave.), Crum & Forster (Long Branch: Brighton Ave), Enterprise Mobility Foundation (Keyport: Cedar Street Park), Jenkinson's Aquarium (Pt. Pleasant: Jenkinson's), Manasquan Bank (Manasquan: Main St Beach), Memorial Sloan Kettering (Middletown: Bayshore Waterfront Park), Monmouth Ocean Regional Realtors (Asbury Park: Convention Hall), Republic Services (Asbury Park: 1st Ave Beach), ServPro of Aberdeen/Holmdel (Aberdeen: Cliffwood Beach), Stratus Tech (Asbury Park: Convention Hall)*

### **Data & Volunteers Make a Difference**

The data collected by volunteers at today's Beach Sweeps will be submitted to Clean Ocean Action's office and compiled further by staff. The data will be combined with the 2024 Fall Beach Sweeps and analyzed. A report will be released in early Spring 2025 detailing the results, top finds, key highlights, "Dirty Dozen," and "Roster of the Ridiculous" items of 2024. Previous years of reports can be found at [CleanOceanAction.org](https://CleanOceanAction.org) under "Beach Sweeps." The [2023 Beach Sweeps Annual Report](#), released April 4, 2024, revealed the latest Beach Sweeps data from 2023. With nearly 100 specific items tallied on the data card, each Beach Sweeps provides a snapshot of what is found on New Jersey's beaches.

*"Collecting data is the key to the Beach Sweeps program. This essential task can be tedious and time consuming, so it is a testament of true-blue ocean devotion by volunteers. Importantly, the data collected by volunteers provides hard evidence about the scope and magnitude of the marine debris problem, which organizations, such as Clean Ocean Action, and people can use to convince elected officials to pass and enforce laws and policies to reduce the sources of the debris,"* said **Kari Martin, Advocacy Campaign Manager.**

At the Beach Sweeps today, COA informed volunteers about the debris on beaches and impacts of litter on wildlife and communities and engaged volunteers in efforts to ensure the Get Past Plastic law, which bans plastic shopping bags and foam plastic containers and service ware and limits plastic straws to customer request only -- is being followed. Volunteers were encouraged to first educate businesses that are not in compliance with the statewide law, and then subsequently report violations to the NJ Department of Environmental Protection (NJDEP).



*Students from Eisenhower Middle School and their teacher from Freehold sort through trash removed from the beach in Ocean Grove*

By the end of the Beach Sweeps today, volunteers, Beach Captains, Junior Beach Captains, and municipalities were already looking toward the next scheduled event. Clean Ocean Action's Fall Beach Sweeps will be held on Saturday, October 19, 2024. Details for the next Beach Sweeps, as well as more information about the statewide event, can found at [CleanOceanAction.org](https://CleanOceanAction.org).

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*Clean Ocean Action is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization with a mission to improve the degraded water quality of the marine waters off the New Jersey/New York coast. Clean Ocean Action will identify the sources of pollution and mount an attack on each by using research, public education and citizen action to enact and enforce measures which will clean up and protect the Atlantic Ocean.*