



BEACH SWEEPS

2023

Annual Report

Beachy Clean Fun Since 1985!

A day of service, a lifetime of evidence to make the ocean cleaner!



Fun for all ages!



Famous Hamlette in Ortley Beach



Reduce plastics: Bring Your Own Bucket

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“Feet on the Beach, Hands in the Sand” Since 1985: An Overview

Trash and litter find their way into our waterways from many sources and are harmful to animals that mistake it for food and/or become entangled. Litter often starts on land and is either windblown or carried by stormwater into waterways, where it ultimately flows into the sea. Some small percentage washes-up on beaches while the remainder float and sink in the sea. In addition to endangering wildlife and marine life, litter-covered beaches negatively affect tourism and the coastal economy.

In response, thousands of dedicated volunteers—the tall and the small—have mobilized for Clean Ocean Action’s (COA) Beach Sweeps every Spring and Fall for 38 years. Since launching the region’s first beach cleanup program in 1985, over 169,675 volunteers have participated, removed, and tallied 8,491,233 pieces of debris from over 75 sites in 59 municipalities and parks along the Atlantic Ocean coast, bayshores, inland rivers, streams, and the Delaware River. By removing, tallying, and learning more about litter, volunteers make beaches and waterways cleaner and safer for wildlife and people, and provide evidence of a pollution problem.



The goal of the Beach Sweeps is to reduce and eliminate sources of litter by engaging people to remove and document harmful debris, creating evidence that can be used to enact policies and identify solutions. Participants also become aware of the problems of a wasteful society and are empowered to make personal behavior changes.

COA compiles the data into an annual report that is used to advocate for legislation and ordinances to reduce sources of pollution. The annual report presents results, notes interesting finds, acknowledges Beach

Captains, sponsors, and volunteers and is a reference and resource about litter along the Jersey coast. The report also identifies trends, tracking new items and those that are becoming rare. In addition, COA gives the data a global boost by sharing Fall Beach Sweeps data annually with Ocean Conservancy’s International Coastal Cleanup (ICC).

Year after year, plastic consistently accounts for the highest proportion of collected litter. Plastic in the marine environment breaks apart into smaller and smaller pieces, making it “bite size” for many more species and ages of marine life to consume. This is a human-caused, and thus, human-solvable problem.



“Say NO to single-use plastics!”

2023 Beach Sweeps Highlights:

- Data presentation is modified due to inclement weather impacts (pg. 4)
- 3,664 volunteers removed 176,206 pieces of debris (pg. 4)
- “Get Past Plastic” Law: Item Updates (pg. 4)
- Roster of Ridiculous Photo Contest! (pg.11)
- Meet COA’s 2023 MAST Student Coordinator (pg. 11)
- “Can” You Believe It! A 2008 Dirty Dozen Returnee (pg. 7)
- Long-time Beach Captain, Leah Savia, Honored (pg. 11)

Beach Sweeps Data in Action

Reducing Sources of Marine Debris

New Jersey “Get Past Plastic” Law: A Plastic Reduction Success Story

After a collaborative effort by Clean Ocean Action (COA), our environmental colleagues, and elected officials, New Jersey’s Single-Use Waste Reduction Act, also known as the “Get Past Plastic” Law was passed in November 2020. As of November 2021, the law prohibits retailers from distributing plastic straws unless a customer requests one. As of May 2022, the law prohibits retailers from distributing plastic bags and polystyrene foam food service products.

COA’s Executive Director, Cindy Zipf, is Chair of the Plastics Advisory Council (PAC), established by the “Get Past Plastic” law. The PAC is charged with assessing the implementation of the law and making future recommendations on actions to reduce plastic waste, especially single-use plastic. The PAC represents a cross section of business, environmental, academia, and agency representatives.

The New Jersey Food Council, a trade organization of food retailers and suppliers, estimates that the “Get Past Plastics” law will eliminate 8.4 billion single-use plastic bags per year. COA’s 2022 Beach Sweeps data also showed that the law had a substantial impact on reducing litter. Plastic bags dropped off the Dirty Dozen list (the top 12 items collected) for the first time since 2007, decreasing by 37% from 2021. Straws and stirrers dropped in the ranks as well, decreasing by 39%. Foam takeout containers decreased by 38% compared to the previous year. The Beach Sweeps data from 2023 shows that the number of plastic bags, polystyrene foam food service products, and straws collected from NJ beaches is remaining at these reduced levels.

To be sure, a law works best when community members help enforce it. If you see businesses not complying with the “Get Past Plastics” law, you can take the following actions:

- **Step One:** Share the facts about the law with the business owner or manager using Dep.nj.gov/Get-Past-Plastic
- **Step Two:** If there is no change after sharing the facts and the violations continue, report businesses to the DEP by calling 1-877-WARN-DEP.

Additionally, if you have more reusable bags than you need, consider donating them to food pantries, such as the Community Foodbank of New Jersey whose website has instructions for donating reusable bags.

Other 2023 Plastic Reduction Efforts Featuring COA Beach Sweeps Data

Kira Cruz, COA’s Debris-Free Sea Coordinator, testified in favor of a New York City Council bill allowing event attendees to bring reusable aluminum and stainless-steel beverage containers into sports arenas. The testimony used Beach Sweeps data—specifically, the number of plastic bottles and caps collected from New Jersey beaches from 2017-2022—to illustrate the extent of the plastic litter problem in the region. The Local Law was enacted in January 2024!

COA is working at the federal, state, and local levels to create and support policies addressing plastic issues, such as reducing plastic packaging.

Industry-Funded “Study” on Plastic: Beware of Bias and Check Sources!

Freedonia Custom Research Group was hired by the American Recyclable Plastic Bag Alliance, an industry group that profits from single-use plastic bags, to write a report on New Jersey’s plastic bag ban. Freedonia, at best, dubiously claimed that the ban has increased carbon dioxide emissions and plastic production. This claim relied, in part, on assumption that consumers only reuse their reusable bags 2-3 times before throwing them away. Freedonia did not provide a source for this assumption. As described here on this page, the “Get Past Plastic” law is without a doubt an impressive success and model at reducing plastic bags.



2023 Data Highlights

Cumulative Results Since 1985:

- **8,491,233** pieces of trash removed
- **169,675** volunteers donated **982,614** hours



2023 Data Highlights:

- **79.16%** of debris collected was **Plastic**, including **Foam plastic**
 - The last time these items fell below **80%** was in **2015**
- “Get Past Plastic” Items Update (see insert below)

2023 Dirty Dozen Highlights:

- **Metal Beverage Cans** returned to the Dirty Dozen list at **#10** for the first time since **2008**. In 2022, metal cans were #18.
- **8** items are single-use plastics, or **67%**
- **Plastic Bottle Caps/Lids** are **#1** with 23,788 pieces collected
- **Plastic Pieces** drop two spots to **#3** from #1 in 2022
- **Other Plastics** drop five spots to **#12** from #7 in 2022

Seasonal Changes from Spring to Fall 2023: (see caveat insert)

- **91,949** items collected in Spring; **84,257** collected in Fall
- Many pieces of debris had the same number per volunteer removed between each season, including:
 - **Foam Plastic Cups** (0.31/volunteer),
 - **Foam Plastic Containers** (0.10/volunteer), and
 - **Rubber Balloons** (0.12/volunteer)
- Volunteers removed more plastic **Bottle Caps/Lids** in Fall than Spring: **5.31** caps/lids per volunteer (Spring); **7.65** (Fall).
- Plastic **Store/Shopping Bags** continue to decrease since the NJ state ban in 2022
 - **Spring**: 0.65 removed per volunteer
 - **Fall**: 0.61 removed per volunteer

2023 Items Removed Per Volunteer: A Comparison

Changes from 2022-2023:

Item:	2023	2022
Food, Candy Wrappers/Bags*	4.88	4.60
Store/Shopping Bags	0.63	0.72
Plastic Caps/Lids *	6.49	6.44
Cigarette Filters *	3.15	2.77
Total Plastics	34	34
Plastic Pieces *	4.58	6.61
Other Plastics *	1.05	1.44
Total Foam Plastics	4	4
Metal Beverage Cans *	1.12	0.64
Total Balloons	0.40	0.37
Paper Pieces *	1.19	0.89
Volunteers	48.09	46.27

*In the Dirty Dozen (see page 7)

2023 Data Caveat

The data presentation is modified due to inclement weather impacts. The number of volunteers and data collected was significantly lower overall than in previous years. Thus, data is shown as an estimate of items removed per volunteer. This allows for consistency of data sets over the seasons, across categories, and as well as the previous year (2022).



“Get Past Plastic” Law

The “Get Past Plastic” law went into effect in 2021 & 2022. The following highlights, noted per volunteer, showed interesting trends in 2023 versus 2022:

In 2022, **0.36 Foam Plastic (containers, trays, & cups)** per volunteer were removed. In 2023, **0.47** per volunteer were removed.

In 2022, **0.72 Plastic Store/Shopping Bags** per volunteer were removed. In 2023, **0.63** per volunteer were removed.

In 2022, **2.60 Plastic Straws/Stirrers** were removed per volunteer. In 2023, **2.66** per volunteer were removed.

Items as a percentage of the total of debris:

	Straws	Foam	Bags
2022	5.6	0.71	1.55
2023	0.54	0.97	1.3

Roster of the Ridiculous:

The Wackiest Finds Along the Shore & More!

Fake Finds

Corn on Cob, Fake: Flowers, Leaves, Nails, Plant Top, Rose Petals, Foam Flower, Plastic Spider

Height & Weight

10 ft of Rope, 2 ft. Heavy Tube, 35 lb Lead Pipe, 4 ft Long Patio Cushion, 4 ft piece of metal bumper, 8x10 Rug, Big Piece of Styrofoam, Big Sponge with a String, Rice Bag (50 lbs), Square Piece of Wood (12" x 12")

In the Money

A Dollar Bill, Credit Card, Gift Card, Lottery Ticket, Ring, US Quarter, Watch

The Land of Misfit Toys

Action Figure, Baby Doll, Baby Yoda, Balloon Wand, Barbie Head w/ the Hair, Boogie Board, Bouncy Ball, Bubbles, Comic Book, Doll: Arm, Head, Shirt, Finger Puppet, Foam Play Mat, Garbage Pick-Up Toy, Glow in the Dark Bracelet, Glow Stick, Jump Rope, Kick Board, Kids Shovel, Kids Sliding Board, Legos, Nerf Dart, Pack of Crayons, Page from a Coloring Book, Piece of a Kite, Pin Wheel, Pink Chalk, Plastic Tiger, Plastic (Sword, Toy Trumpet, Truck) Rubber Shark, Rubber Wheel, Sling Shot, Stuffed Shark, Tonka Truck, Toy (Axe, Brush, Car, Cupcake, Dinosaur, Duck, Fish, Gorilla, Gun, Horse, Jeep, Kitchen Set, Soldier with Tank, Turtle, Unicorn) Vintage Matchbox Car, Voodoo Doll, Water Balloon, Water Gun, Whale Play Pool, Whoopie Cushion



See Food

1/2 Bagel, Airplane Bottles, Apple Core, Bag of Cheetos, Banana Peel, Beef Jerky Bag, Beer & Soda Cans, Cantaloupe Rind, Champagne Cork, Chicken Bone, Chip Clip, Clementine, Coconut, Coffee Cup Holder, Cold Cut Bags, Cone Wrappers, Fish Oil, Food Fryer, Fortune Cookie, Fruit Package, Fruit Roll Up, Ice Bags, Ice Cream Toy, Juice Box Stirrer, Ketchup Cup, Keurig Cup, Lollipop, Milk Carton, Mini Hot Sauce Bottle Orange Peels, Pancake Mix Carton, Pet Food Can, Pineapples (6), Pizza Boxes, Tuna Fish Can, Unopened Melted Popsicle, Valentine's Day Chocolate Box

Passion for Fashion

A Whole Outfit, Baby Hat & Shoe, Bandana, Barrette, Belt, Black Croc, Boot, Boxer Briefs, Bra, Clogs, Eyelash, Fannie Pack, Fishnet Stockings, Hair: Brush, Clip, Comb, Extensions, Roller, Tie, Halloween Hair tie, Hat, Hoodie, Jacket, Jewelry, Jock Strap, Kid's Winter Coat, Lip Balm, Lip Gloss, Lipstick, Makeup Bag, Mascara Applicator, Necklace, Perfume, Scarf, Shirt, Shoe, Shoelace, Shoe Sole

Dude, Where's My Car?

AC Filter, Air Compressor, Air Freshener, Antenna, Anti-Freeze, Auto Gas Tank, Auto Parts, Bumper, Car Air Freshener, Car Battery, Car Pump, Car Scrap, Car Tire Rim, Child Car Seat, Keys, Machine Part, Motor Oil, Oil Cans (3), Piece of a Tire, Road Pieces, Scrap Metal, Tire, Tire Pressure Gauge, Tire Puncture, Tire Tubes, Truck Tire, Vintage Tube of Machine Oil, Windshield Wiper, Windshield Wiper Repair Kit, Woodwacker Engine

Home is Where the Heart is

A Gutter, A Homemade Fishing Tool, Area Rug, Blanket, Blueprints to a House, Bottle Opener, Bouquet of Flowers, Broken Picture Frames, Broom, Brush, Building Foam, Butter Knife, Candle, Cement Blocks, Ceramic Statues, Chair Arms, Chair Strap, Chapstick, Children's Toothbrush, Christmas Wreath with Large Bow, Comb, Contact Lenses, Crock Pots w/ Lids (2), Cutting Board, Deodorant, Diabetic Needle, Door (Frame, Knob, Mat) Drain Stopper, Dryer Sheet, Duct Tape, Dustpan, Eagles Banner, Ear Plugs, Earphones, Easter Cupcake Top, Easter Egg, Fencing, Flashlight, Flooring, Fluorescent Light, Full Length Mirror, Furnace Filter, Garage Door, Half a Chair, Kitchen Knife, Kitchen Sponge, Large Painters Tarp, Large Piece of Old Wood with Nails, Martini Glass, Mop, Napkin, Photograph Negative, Pillowcase, Plastic Curtain Rod, Razor, Roof Building Materials, Rosary Beads, Rubber Hose, Rug, Rusty Nail, Rusty Pipes, Scrub Brush, Seat Cushion, Shovel, Shutter, Small Propane Tank, Small Refrigerator, Suitcase, Tape, Tea Bag, Tissues, Toilet: Brush, Paper, Seat, Trash Can Lid, Tupperware

In the Yard

Brick, Broken Fence, Concrete Patio Block, Flowerpot, Garden Bucket, Garden Sign, Grill, Grill Door, Grill Grate, Hammock, Hose, Patio Cushions, Plant Label, Plant Pot, Planters Basket with Flowers still in it, Seed Paper, Sprinkler Head, Watering Can

Dead Animals

Dead (Bass, Bird, Blowfish, Cat, Fish, Rat, Seagull, Striped Bass Carcas), Fish Head, Fish with Guts and Heart Out, Petrified Puffer Fish, Sea Horse, Turtle, Washed Up Big Fish, Wings

Play Ball!

Badminton Birdie, Baseball, Baseball Bat, Basketball, Basketball Hoop, Franklin Football, Frisbee, Gold Balls (10), Golf Cart Wheel, Judo Mat, Notre Dame Football, Paddle Ball Racket, Ping Pong Ball, Plastic Bow, PVC Pipe for Soccer Goal, Rubber Balls (5), Tennis Ball, Wiffle Ball, Wiffle Ball Bat



Rock the Boat

Boat Debris, Boat Piece, Broken Plastic Deck Chair, Bulkhead, Buoy, Chum Bag, Dock Ladder, Fiberglass, Fish Nets, Fishing: Lure, Pole, Rod, Float, Foam Paddle, Huge Fishing Lure, Life Jacket Buckle & Strap, Life Preserver, Parts

Beach, Please

2017 Brigantine Beach Tag, Beach Ball, Beach Chair, Beach Umbrella, Crab Claw, Diving Flipper, Diving Mask, Driftwood, Dry Suit Cap, Dune Fence, Flip Flop, Old Coppertone Bottles, Sand Dollar, Sand Shovel, Sand Sifter, Sandals, Snorkel, Sunglasses, Suntan Lotion, Surfboard, Surf Wax, Swim Goggles, Swim Trunks, Umbrella with Pole, Woman's Bikini

For Cyclists

Bike, Handlebar, Lock, Reflector, Water Bottle, Bungee Cords, Functional Bike & Wheel, Helmet



Stranger Things

"Danger High Voltage" Metal Sign, 2019 National World Series Cup, 3D Printed Cross, American Dream Mall Wristband, Burnt Flag, Business Card, Can of Bug Spray, Cat Treat Container, CO2 Cartridges, Crab Traps (3), Crack Pipe, Dart, Dead: Bird, Fish, Frog, Rat, Sea Gull, Diaper Bag with Green Goo, Dictionary, Dirty Diaper, Dog: Chew Toy, Dish, Poop Bags, Driver's License, Drug Box, Efferdent Paste, Electric Plug, Electric Razor, Electric Tape, Electrical Wire, Fireworks, Fox Den and Nest, Glass Statue, Hand Sanitizer, Hand Warmer, Hand-Written Sign, IKEA Bag, Inhaler, Insulation, Lantern Flies, Lava Vape Stick, Leather Keychain, Lots of Dog Poop Bags, Lots of Large Railroad Rusty Nails, Metal (Bracket, Bridge Tie, Dog Cage, Flag, Fork, Hanger, Spoon), Microphone Cover, Mouth Guard, Name Tag, Ortle Ave Street Sign, Paint Roller Tray, Painted Wood Chips, Paper Confetti, Park Sign, Phone Case & Charger, Plaster Hand, Pop Up Tent, Pregnancy Test, Pumpkin, Rain Poncho, Receipt, Recycling Poster, Red Solo Cup, Reusable Bag, Router for Computer, Rubber Foam Mat, Rubber Shoe Insert, Scissors, Sign Post, Simpson's Drug Bag, Small Heart Decoration with Glitter, Small Teddy Bear, Spade, Spool, Spray Paint, Squishy Eyeballs, Steel Pipes (2), Sticker, Styrofoam Cooler, Surge Protector, Surgical Waste, Tent (Bag, Pole, Stake), Terra Cotta Tile, Tongue Depressor, Trash Lid, Trex Decking, Underwear, United Luggage Tag, Unusual Metal Parts, Urine in a Bottle, Veneer Pieces, Vintage Glass Pieces, Watermelon Vape, Women's Nair, Wooden Ladder with Fabric Attached, Wrist Band, Yarmulke, Zip Tie

2023 Results

	Items	Spring	Fall	Total	% of Total	
		Total	Total			
PLASTIC	Food, Candy Wrappers/Bags	9,493	8,390	17,883	10.15%	
	Store/Shopping Bags	1,176	1,123	2,299	1.30%	
	Dog Waste Bags	601	323	924	0.52%	
	Other Bags	1,046	559	1,605	0.91%	
	Beverages/Soda Bottles	4,102	3,663	7,765	4.41%	
	Other Bottles/Jugs	877	1,048	1,925	1.09%	
	Bottle Caps/Lids	9,640	14,148	23,788	13.50%	
	Cap Rings	1,675	1,803	3,478	1.97%	
	Cigarette Filters	5,777	5,780	11,557	6.56%	
	Lighters	292	220	512	0.29%	
	Cigarette Packaging	528	362	890	0.51%	
	Cigar Tips	1,649	2,789	4,438	2.52%	
	E-Cigarette Cartridges/Caps/Pens	635	781	1,416	0.80%	
	Bait Bags/Containers	98	113	211	0.12%	
	Line (tangle)	134	139	273	0.15%	
	Line (piece)	104	85	189	0.11%	
	Lures, Floats	116	190	306	0.17%	
	Fishing Nets	69	61	130	0.07%	
	Beverage Cups	1,716	1,296	3,012	1.71%	
	Forks, Knives, Spoons	997	1,229	2,226	1.26%	
	Food Lids	939	856	1,795	1.02%	
	Straws/Stirrers	4,161	5,601	9,762	5.54%	
	Takeout Containers	464	501	965	0.55%	
	Cotton Swab Sticks	36	24	60	0.03%	
	Dental Floss Picks	360	513	873	0.50%	
	Diapers	35	92	127	0.07%	
	Disposable Wipes	424	332	756	0.43%	
	Syringes	113	111	224	0.13%	
	Tampon Applicators	531	369	900	0.51%	
	Light Sticks	91	211	302	0.17%	
	Pens	216	197	413	0.23%	
	Plastic Pieces	9,468	7,303	16,771	9.52%	
	Ribbon/Tape (no balloon)	455	349	804	0.46%	
Rope	304	149	453	0.26%		
6-Pack Holders	41	39	80	0.05%		
Sheeting	104	42	146	0.08%		
Shotgun Shells	225	83	308	0.17%		
Strapping Bands	170	137	307	0.17%		
Toys	911	704	1,615	0.92%		
Other Plastics	1,756	2,085	3,841	2.18%		
FOAM PLASTIC	Building/Dock Material	589	306	895	0.51%	
	Cups	555	572	1,127	0.64%	
	Packaging Materials	928	480	1,408	0.80%	
	Foam Pieces	4,113	3,788	7,901	4.48%	
	Plates	105	452	557	0.32%	
	Trays	90	111	201	0.11%	
	Takeout Containers	183	190	373	0.21%	
	Other Foam Plastic	1,101	579	1,680	0.95%	
	PPE	Disposable Face Masks	357	129	486	0.28%
		Reusable Face Masks	32	12	44	0.02%
Disposable Gloves		188	238	426	0.24%	

	Items	Spring	Fall	Total	% of Total
		Total	Total		
BALLOONS & RUBBER	Balloons - Mylar/Plastic	347	278	625	0.35%
	Mylar With String/Ribbon	144	103	247	0.14%
	Balloons - Rubber/Latex	224	227	451	0.26%
	Rubber With String/Ribbon	63	89	152	0.09%
	Condoms	56	102	158	0.09%
	Rubber Bands	136	199	335	0.19%
	Reusable Gloves	100	51	151	0.09%
	Tires: Piece	65	24	89	0.05%
	Tires: Whole	16	8	24	0.01%
	Other Rubber	283	115	398	0.23%
METAL	Batteries: Car	1	3	4	0.00%
	Batteries: Other	26	18	44	0.02%
	Bottles Caps	1,305	1,437	2,742	1.56%
	Beverage Cans	2,277	1,829	4,106	2.33%
	Other Cans	93	68	161	0.09%
	Fishing: Hooks	28	31	59	0.03%
	Fishing: Sinkers	24	12	36	0.02%
	Foil	565	395	960	0.54%
	Nails	266	124	390	0.22%
	Wire	218	102	320	0.18%
PAPER	Metal Pieces	317	133	450	0.26%
	Pop Tabs	128	134	262	0.15%
	Other Metal	178	95	273	0.15%
	Beverage Cartons/Boxes	275	233	508	0.29%
	Cardboard	600	386	986	0.56%
	Cups	442	321	763	0.43%
	Newspaper/Magazines	199	58	257	0.15%
	Paper Bags	320	167	487	0.28%
	Paper Pieces	3,268	1,082	4,350	2.47%
	Plates	241	47	288	0.16%
CLOTH	Other Paper	988	204	1,192	0.68%
	Blankets/Sheets/Towels	121	76	197	0.11%
	Clothing: Specify	368	233	601	0.34%
	Shoes/Sandals	178	128	306	0.17%
	String (No Balloon)	250	179	429	0.24%
WOOD	Other Cloth	376	206	582	0.33%
	Ice Cream Spoon/Sticks	170	192	362	0.21%
	Lumber Pieces	1,954	1,092	3,046	1.73%
	Pallets	139	47	186	0.11%
	Other Wood	1,185	383	1,568	0.89%
GLASS	Beverage Bottles	1,314	1,015	2,329	1.32%
	Other Bottles/Jars	131	79	210	0.12%
	Glass Pieces	2,282	1,757	4,039	2.29%
	Other Glass	518	138	656	0.37%

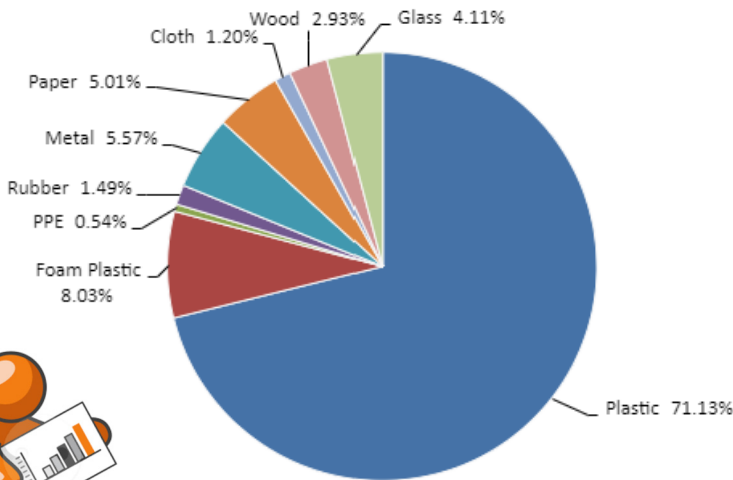
2023 Beach Sweeps	Spring	Fall	Totals
Total Items Collected	91,949	84,257	176,206
Number of Volunteers	1,815	1,849	3,664



NOTES FOR BEACH SWEEPS DATA: The Annual Beach Sweeps Report can be used to study and understand marine debris. When analyzing annually or over time for trends, it is important to note that the amount of debris collected depends on a variety of factors, such as weather, tides, participants, and accuracy.

2023 Data and Dirty Dozen

Percent Breakdown by Category/Debris Type



2023 Totals	Spring	Fall	Total	% of Total
Plastic	61,529	63,800	125,329	71.13%
Foam Plastic	7,664	6,478	14,142	8.03%
PPE	577	379	956	0.54%
Rubber	1,434	1,196	2,630	1.49%
Metal	5,426	4,381	9,807	5.57%
Paper	6,333	2,498	8,831	5.01%
Cloth	1,293	822	2,115	1.20%
Wood	3,448	1,714	5,162	2.93%
Glass	4,245	2,989	7,234	4.11%
Pieces of Debris	91,949	84,257	176,206	
Volunteers	1,815	1,849	3,664	



Dirty Dozen:

The Top Twelve Commonly Collected Items of Debris

The Dirty Dozen lists the worst offenders of marine litter: the top twelve most commonly collected items at the Beach Sweeps. Plastic, especially single-use items, dominates the list. Almost 36% of the list are Plastic Bottle Caps/Lids and Plastic Food, Candy Wrappers/Bags. Plastic shopping bags continue to decline and are not in the top 12 items collected. While Plastic Cap Rings joined this list in 2022 for the first time in many years, they quickly fell off in 2023. Metal Beverage Cans make their appearance for the first time since 2008.

- 1. Plastic Bottle Caps/Lids***
 - 2. Food, Candy Wrappers/Bags ***
 - 3. Plastic Pieces ***
 - 4. Cigarette Filters***
 - 5. Straws/Stirrers ***
 - 6. Foam Pieces ***
 - 7. Plastic Beverage Bottles ***
 - 8. Cigar Tips ***
 - 9. Paper Pieces**
 - 10. Metal Beverage Cans**
 - 11. Glass Pieces**
 - 12. Other Plastics**
- *Denotes Single-Use Plastics

↓ Due to the pandemic, 2020 data is irregular and not used for comparisons.

2023 Rank	Debris Items	2023	Change in Rank	2022	2022 Rank	2021	2021 Rank	2019 [^]	2019 Rank
1	Plastic Bottle Caps/Lids	23,788	↑	52,512	2	69,454	1	67,011	2
2	Food, Candy Wrappers/Bags	17,883	↑	37,453	3	58,589	3	50,270	3
3	Plastic Pieces	16,771	↓	53,869	1	67,628	2	95,963	1
4	Cigarette Filters	11,557	■	22,589	4	32,460	5	27,751	5
5	Straws/Stirrers	9,762	↑	21,216	6	34,801	4	35,124	4
6	Foam Pieces	7,901	↓	21,725	5	26,870	6	25,630	6
7	Plastic Beverage Bottles	7,765	↑	10,051	8	11,394	9	13,908	8
8	Cigar Tips	4,438	↑	9,554	9	11,328	10	10,703	9
9	Paper Pieces	4,350	↑	7,274	12	11,786	8	7,733	(13)*
10	Metal Beverage Cans	4,106	★	5,234	(16)*	6,550	(16)*	6,046	(16)*
11	Glass Pieces	4,039	↓	9,380	10	9,773	11	15,399	7
12	Other Plastics	3,841	↓	11,748	7	13,580	7	8,602	12
Total Dirty Dozen		116,201		262,605		354,213		364,140	
Percent of Total Debris		66%		70%		69%		73%	
Number of Volunteers		3,664		8,148		10,003		10,724	

↑ moved up in rank
 ↓ moved down in rank
 ★ new to the Dirty Dozen
 ■ no change in rank
 * did not make rank for indicated year

Ocean Wavemakers

Special thanks to our Ocean Wavemakers, who contributed time effort, resources, and donations!



Atlantic Highlands 4H Kindness Club

Beach Captains

Alejandra Contreras Suarez, Andrew Kaplan, Anita Zalom, Ann Commarato, Anthony Edge, Ashley Woodward, Beth Collis, Bonnie Peterson, Brittany McLaughlin, Bruce Chesebrough, Caitlyn Czajkowski, Carol McCallum, Casey Deacon, Cathy Smith, Charlotte Moyer, Christine Feketics, Christine Harding, Crystal DeCaro, Cynthia Parker PeKarick, Dakota Montemarano, Dakota Schaefer, Dave Finter, Dodie Reagan, Donna Player, Elizabeth Hernandez, Emily Diangson, Eric Beyer, Eric Gehring, Eric Hanan, Eugene Casazza, Geoff Woolery, Gina Zalewski, Graceanne Taylor, Greg Love, Gretchen Whitman, Jason McKairnes, Jeff Martin, Jenna Santacroce, Jessica Mumford, JJ Walsh, Joe Martin, Joe Rampine, John Roscoe, John Wnek, Joseph Pursel, Julia DeRosso, Julia Tait, Kim Bilotta, Kimberly Gallagher, Kira Cruz, Kirti Sharma, Leah Savia, Liam Keegan, Lisa Cordova, Liz Lawrence, Loretta Kelly, Lynne Kosobucki, Margot Ferricola, Maria Andrews, Marianne Grant, Mark Thompson, Mary Lenahan, Matt Schmidt, Meredith DeMarco, Michael Rohal, Michele Bellinger, Mike Palmisano, Nancy Harrivan, Natalia Cifuentes, Nick Delfico, Nicole Sherry, Pat Rogers, Peter Andruss, Phuong Nguyen, Ray LeChien, Rona Parker, Ryan Baine, Sandi Beyer, Sandy Henning, Sanura Nash-McKairnes, Sara Calvo, Scott Thompson, Sharon Manni, Sofia Hunt, Stephanie Huynh, Steve Walker, Ted Jermansen, Tim Vecchione, Tina Marie Walling, Troy Romanowski, Tyler Thompson, Vincent Palmieri

Junior Beach Captains

Abhinov Avilala, Abigail Reiber, Aiden Boccardi, Alexandra Kinsey, Anthony Burger, Ava Rubinstein, Bianca Farro, Caleigh Butler, Charlie Wesolowski, Chelsea Taylor, Christian Orem, Cleatus Oaks, Dery Martin, Gabby Delgardio, Holly Farro, Jordan Talucci, Juliana Lucas, Katy Farro, Maddy Demaree, Marian Moore, Mariana Krinfas, Mark Talucci, Matthew Thomas, Maya Abdelaal, Morgan Zylinski, Scott Huang, Sophia Koltchev, Stefan Wenzelburger

Civic Groups, Parks, & Municipal

Aberdeen Township Environmental Board, Aberdeen Township Shade Tree Advisory Board, Bradley Beach Environmental Commission, Borough of Stone Harbor, City of Ocean City Councilman Rick Zieser, Department of Public Works, Keyport Council, LCFIS Environmental Club, Mayor Lisa Crate, Seaside Park Mayor and Council, Seaside Park Public Works Department, Seaside Park Recreation Department, Stone Harbor Police Department

Organizations

Colts Neck ROTC, 4-H (Ecomaniacs), 4-H (Ocean County), Alliance for a Living Ocean, Alpha Iota Omicron Fraternity, Alpha Phi Omega Nu Theta (Rowan), Alpha Xi Delta, AMC, American Academy of Dramatic Arts, Barnicals, Buddha's Light International Association, Cleanup Crew (MMSS), Cliffside Park Cares, Crew NJ, David P Civile Foundation for Boating Safety Awareness, Delta Phi Epsilon, East Stroudsburg (Marine Science Club), Ecology Club of Ocean County College, Edison Lion's Club, EGLC (Brookdale), Ella Family Foundation, Garden State PA Peakers, Go Green Galloway, Goetz Builders Club, Grunin Performing Arts Academy, History Honor Society, Junior ROTC, Key Club, Keyport Environmental Commission, Kindness Clube/4H, Mantoloking Green Team, Master Gardeners of Middlesex County, MBIA, My Peak Challenge, NABIP-NJ, National Honor Society, National Junior Honor Society, NJ Humanist Network, NJ Mentor, Ocean 7 Condo Owners, Ocean City 4H Ecology Club, Ocean City Adopt a Beach, Ocean City Board of Realtors, Queens of Anarchy Community Group, Rancocas Valley Environmental Club, RFH Veterans Appreciation, Rotary Club, Rowan Environmental Action League, Save Barnegat Bay, Save Coastal Wildlife, COA's SEAL Program, Sigma Alpha Tau, Sigma Phi Epsilon, Stockton SAVE, Stone Harbor Property Owners Association, Strathmere Fishing and Environmental Club (SFEC), Strathmere Improvements Association (SIA), Student Littoral Society, Surf Club, Surfrider Foundation, TedEd Club (MMSS), The Wetlands Institute, Theresa's Walking Group, Trail Lite NJ 0110, Triv Green Team, Union Beach Green Team, Veterans Appreciation Club, Wetlands Institute, Woman's Club (Spring Lake), Women's Club (Brielle), Women's Club (Manasquan), Women's Club (Spring Lake)



75 Organizations

Businesses

Americold Logistics, Atlantic Physical Therapy Center, AWP Safety, Bank of America, Bloomberg, Borgata, Caesars Entertainment, Ciocca Subaru, Cisco Systems, Climb Channel Solutions, Climb Global Solutions, Compass Group, Crum & Forster, Dr. Sana, Engredion Corp, Enterprise Rent-A-Car, Eurust, Evergreen Line, Federal Credit Union, First Atlantic FCU, First Bank of Sea Isle City, Gap Inc., Gilbane Building Co., Hackensack Meridian Health, Heist Agency, Ingredion, Jersey Online Reporter, Jersey Shore University Medical Center, Johnson & Johnson, Kearny Bank, Kohls, Lawley Insurance, Manasquan Bank, Markel Group, Menlo Park Credit Union, Monmouth Ocean Regional Realtors, MOOR Real Estate, NJ Natural Gas, Ocean First Bank, Old Navy, PaddleOut.org, Pella Windows and Doors, Pure Yoga Studio, Republic Services, Ricoh, SAP, Servepro at Eatontown, Target, TATA Consultancy Services, Thompson Touch LLC, Torcorn Inc., United Airlines United Teletech Financial, Valley Bank, Vantage Apparel, Wyndham Group



56 Businesses



Alpha Tau Omega Sorority Sisters

Faith-Based Groups

Christ Our Light Church, St. Anselm Church, St. Martha's Church, St. Vincent dePaul Visitation Church, Trinity Presbyterian Church



5 Faith-Based Groups



Family at Sandy Hook during Fall Sweeps

Memorial High School, Key Club (Monroe Twp. HS), Lacey Township High School, Long Branch High School (Softball Team), Lower Cape May Regional High School, Manalapan High School, Manalapan High School (LEPS Magnet Program), Manasquan High School, Marine Academy of Science & Technology, Marine Academy of Technology and Environmental Science, Marlboro High School, Matawan Regional High School, Metuchen High School, Middletown High School (North), Middletown High School (South), Middletown High School North (Environmental Club), Monmouth Regional High School, Monroe Township High School, Monsignor Donovan High School, New Egypt High School, Newark Academy, Ocean City High School (Environmental Club), Ocean City High School (Key Club), Ocean Township High School, Old Bridge High School, Palmyra High School, Pennington School, Ranney School, Red Bank Catholic, Red Bank Regional High School, Rumson Fair Haven Regional High School, Saint John Vianney, Somerville High School (National Honor Society), South Plainfield High School, Southern Regional High School, St. John Vianney, St. Mary's, St. Rose Catholic High School, Toms River High School North, Trinity Hall, Wall High School, Wildwood High School, Williamstown High School, Winslow Township (Environmental Club)



71 High Schools

Colleges

Atlantic County Institute of Technology (Key Club), Brookdale Community College, Burlington County Institute of Technology, Middlesex County College, NJ Stars Program (Ocean County College), Ocean County College, Ramapo College, Rider University, Rowan University, Rutgers Law School (Environmental Law Society), Rutgers University, Stockton University, The College of New Jersey, Thomas Edison State University, Villanova University, William Paterson University (Lambda Tau Omega Sorority Geminate Beta Chapter)



17 Colleges

Pre/Elementary/Middle Schools

Bayview Elementary, Bernardsville Middle School, Bishop McHugh Regional Catholic School, Gill St. Bernard's School, Goetz Middle School, Hazlet Middle School, Holy Cross, Kent Place & Banyan Schools, Long Branch Middle School, Long Branch Middle School (National Jr Honor Society), Maple Place National Junior Honor Society, Margate Tighe Middle School, Marlboro Middle School, Matawan Aberdeen Middle School, Middle School of Pleasantville, NACA, Ocean Avenue School, Resurrection Catholic School, Rumson Country Day School, Southern Regional Middle School, St. Rose of Lima, Stafford Homeschoolers, Thompson Middle School, Thompson Middle School Honor Society, Union County Magnet School, Vets Elementary, White Hall Elementary School, William R. Satz Middle School, Wolf Hill Elementary School



29 Pre/Elementary/Middle Schools

High Schools

Academy of The Holy Angels, Barnegat High School, Biotech High School, Brick Memorial High School, Cape May Technical High School, Central Regional High School, Central Regional High School (Scout Club), Christian Brothers Academy, Colonia High School, Colts Neck High School, Colts Neck High School (Sea Club), Communications High School, Donovan Catholic High School, EAC Monroe, Eco Club (Wildwood High School), Environmental Club (Raritan High School), Freehold Township High School, Glassboro High School (Interact Club), Glen Ridge High School, High Tech High School, Holmdel High School, Howell High School, HW Mountz, Jackson Liberty High School, Jackson



Friendly Reminder: Stay Off the Dunes!

Boy Scouts

Boy: 19, 21, 47, 56, 73, 87, 92, 97 (Sayerville), 131, 137 (Hazlet), 246, 730 (Monroe), 83615
Cub: 39 (Lindwood), 53, 122



Eager-to-Clean Pup

Girl Scouts

Girl: 331 (Holmdel), 393, 543 (North Girl Scouts), 602 (Oceanport), 80029, 81709



22 Scouts



Asbury Park Convention Hall Jr Captains



Spring Lake Volunteer Sorts Debris

2023 Statewide Sponsors



2023 County Sponsors



2023 Site Sponsors

Appalachian Mountain Club- NY-North Jersey Chapter, Atlantic City Electric, Baine Contracting, Bank of America, Caesars Entertainment, Check Cashing Station, Church & Dwight, Cohen Water Initiative, Crum & Forster, Enterprise Holdings Foundation, Eurest, First Atlantic Federal Credit Union, Hatteras, Jenkinson's Aquarium, Manasquan Bank, Merck Employees Federal Credit Union, Pasta Life, Raritan Bay Federal Credit Union, Republic Services, ServPro Eatontown/Long Branch, Sims Metal, United Teletech Financial Federal Credit Union

Special Thanks

The following contributed important resources: Gateway National Recreation Area Sandy Hook Unit, Island Beach State Park, Marine Academy of Science & Technology, Middlesex County Parks System, Monmouth County Parks System, NJ State Park Service, NJ Clean Communities Council, Ocean Conservancy, Palisades Interstate Park Commission, & "Data Guru" Rick Jones



County Sponsor Target at Palmyra Cove



Statewide Sponsor ShopRite/Wakefern with Marine Academy of Science & Technology Students at Sandy Hook

Corporate Beach Sweeps



COA's team-building Corporate Beach Sweeps program had an excellent year in 2023 with **18** companies and **556** employees removing **29,023 pieces of debris**. 2024 Corporate Beach Sweep applications are now open! To learn more about this program, call 732-872-0111 or visit CleanOceanAction.org.

Spotlights

Roster of Ridiculous Photo Contest: A Hit!

The Roster of Ridiculous list is always amazing! In 2023, COA's Debris Free Sea Coordinator, Kira Cruz, thought it would be fun to capture these crazy finds and turn it into some friendly competition. During the Spring and Fall Sweeps, volunteers submitted photos of what they thought was the most ridiculous item found. Once all submissions were received, COA staff picked the top 5 photos for the public to vote on their favorite. The winners received a prize along with having a spotlight in the 2023 Annual Report!



Spring Winner

Lynnette Valentin and her daughters found this 1960's dinosaur during their cleanup at Palmyra Cove!

Lynnette shared, "We are motivated to help bring back the beauty of these natural places, and protect ocean life. Having children involved in the clean up helps bring home the lessons they learn in school about the need to protect our natural environments."



Fall Winner

Gianna Ripa found this entire couch in Brigantine during the Fall Sweeps! Gianna has been participating since middle school when she learned about Beach Sweeps at COA's Student Summits.

What motivates Gianna? "My care for the environment and my motivation to increase ocean education and combat the problem of ocean pollution. I intend to contribute my passion for service and the environment as much as possible!"

COA Waves Farewell to Long-Time Beach Captain Leah Savia



Leah (middle) with her two friends

Leah Savia reflects on her time as a Beach Captain for so many years: "My residency as Beach Captain for Island Beach State Park (IBSP) was an accident, and a happy one. Working at Kean Ocean as a student activities coordinator, I merely found a COA flyer, called about coordinating a student clean-up and somehow ended up as Captain Leah for the last 12 years. It remains one of the most rewarding experiences in my life. I spent all of my childhood summers in So. Seaside Park, and trekking into IBSP was regular, whether driving, biking, or walking. To contribute to keeping it clean has been nourishing and meaningful to me on every level. I will always treasure my time working with Cindy, Mary Beth, and Kari... I always felt supported and appreciated by everyone at the office, too. I will continue to contribute as a volunteer, just not as captain. The freedom to sweep other locations I love with my friends, such as Sandy Hook, Pt. Pleasant, and Seaside Heights, will keep me involved with COA and do my heart good. Jersey Shore Girl Forever!"

Spotlight: MAST Student Coordinator: Angelina Vaclavik

Each year, the Marine Academy of Science and Technology (MAST) helps coordinate the Beach Sweeps at Sandy Hook. Liza Baskin, oceanography teacher and the COA-MAST liaison, connects COA with a rising senior at MAST who is interested in serving as the "student coordinator" for the Beach Sweeps as part of their senior internship. The student coordinator is responsible for recruiting and organizing MAST volunteers who will help ensure a successful Sandy Hook Beach Sweeps.

This year, we are elated to highlight and applaud senior, Angelina (AJ) Vaclavik! AJ started interning with COA in the Fall of 2023 where she organized and packed Beach Sweeps supplies to perfection. She didn't stop there! AJ went above and beyond assisting other COA staff with numerous tasks for various programs. While we are sad to lose AJ as an outstanding intern, we cannot wait to see what the future has in store for her!



"Being MAST's Student Coordinator has taught me so much about the 'behind-the-scenes' of these Beach Sweeps. The efforts by Clean Ocean Action and community volunteers are what drive these events, and being able to work with both groups has been an amazing experience! In the fall I plan to study chemistry at Northwestern University, and hope to learn more about the environmental sciences!"



WAVE OF THANKS TO ALL OF OUR

WONDERFUL VOLUNTEERS!



- Aberdeen,
- Allenhurst, Asbury Park, Atlantic City, Atlantic Highlands, Avalon, Avon-by-the-Sea, Bay Head, Bayville, Belmar, Berkeley, Bradley Beach, Brick, Brigantine, Cape May, Deal, Englewood Cliffs, Gateway National Recreation Area-Sandy Hook Unit, Glen Ridge/Montclair, Highlands, Island Beach State Park, Keansburg, Keyport, Lavallette, Loch Arbour, Long Beach Island, Long Branch, Longport, Manasquan, Mantoloking, Margate, Middlesex County Park System, Middletown, Monmouth Beach, Monmouth County Park System, Neptune, Normandy Beach, North Wildwood, Ocean City, Ocean Gate, Ocean Grove, Ortley Beach, Oswego Lake, Palisades Interstate Park Commission, Palmyra, Point Pleasant, Point Pleasant Beach, Red Bank, Rumson, Sea Bright, Sea Girt, Sea Isle City, Seaside Heights, Seaside Park, Spring Lake, Stafford Forge Wildlife Management Area, Stone Harbor, Toms River, Tuckerton, Union Beach, Ventnor, Villas, Wildwood, Wildwood Crest

**75 Sites
in 2023**



**Save the Date for 2024 Beach Sweeps:
Saturday, April 13 & Saturday, October 19**

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