

CHEERS to 35 YEARS

Dear Friends of the Ocean,

On February 26, 1984, Clean Ocean Action set sail at a kickoff event at the historic Peninsula House in Sea Bright, NJ. Inspired and led by Dery Bennett of the American Littoral Society, the feisty, new, bold coalition hired me as their staff of one, who located the office in the second bedroom of my apartment above the hardware store across the street. Today, the lean, green, ocean pollution fighting machine is a mighty force for the region with a staff of ten and a cast of thousands of volunteers and supporters.

Consider some fun facts about our waters off the NJ/NY coasts then and now:

Then: With 8 ocean dumpsites, we were the “Ocean Dumping Capital of the World” and test wells were being drilled for offshore oil.

Now: We’re dumpsite and harmful industry free, and one of the few remaining ocean realms in the US to make that claim. All industrial offshore proposals have been blocked, and NJ had the first law in the nation prohibiting offshore drilling and infrastructure within state waters.

Then: A walk on the beach resulted in tar-balls stuck on your feet, and the ocean was murky at best.

Now: A walk on the beach is a tar-ball free, and a swim in the sea celebrates “see your toes” clarity.

Then: Hundreds of beaches were closed due to medical waste, raw sewage, dead and dying dolphins washing-up on the beaches making national headlines turning us into a national joke and devastating the economy.

Now: We are a premier international coastal destination with tourism generating a combined \$60 billion; millions of visitors enjoy watching whales, dolphins and other marine life offshore; and we are one of the top ranked regions for water quality in the nation.

Then: In 1985, COA held one of the nation’s first beach clean-up in NJ with 75 volunteers at Sandy Hook.

Now: The Beach Sweeps is held in over 60 locations twice a year with thousands of volunteers. All told, they have removed over 6.2 million pieces of trash thanks to 132,000 volunteers. The data has been used to pass laws to eliminate litter, including the prohibition of disposal at sea, smoking bans, and single use plastic bans which are increasing.

There are countless other programs and success stories made possible by you, the hundreds of citizens, small and tall, who stepped up to attend meetings, rallies, testify, donate, and literally became a voice for the sea. Your voices inspired and engaged elected leaders who are now some of the strongest ocean advocates in the nation.

While victories are remarkable, the battle is never over. Clean Ocean Action continues to be bound and driven by a simple true-blue truth and vision: the ocean is a shared joy of endless wonder, beauty, and bounty; its health and vibrancy are our responsibility.

We call upon the next generation to also stand tall and become the voice for the sea.

To be sure, the challenges are daunting: climate change, the plastic peril, and industrialization to name a few, but after all “they” said we would never end ocean dumping.

If the ocean provides you with joy, a living, or a banquet, this is your call to action. Only the next generation will ensure the future health and vibrancy of the ocean.

Ever onward together,



Cindy Zipf
Executive Director



Founder and President Emeritus of Clean Ocean Action Dery Bennett with Executive Director Cindy Zipf

