

**PRESS RELEASE**



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**2015 Celebrating 30 years of Citizen Action to Improve Jersey Shore**  
*Clean Ocean Action 2014 Annual Beach Sweeps Report Released*  
*Results Show Problems Remain, but Jersey Pride Endures*

**Sandy Hook, NJ**— For thirty years, Clean Ocean Action (COA) has been scouring the beaches of New Jersey for marine debris, which then gets compiled into annual reports showing the type and amount of debris collected. Last year nearly 7,000 volunteers took to the beaches and bays collecting and recording what they found. The findings are compiled in the 2014 Beach Sweeps Annual Report, highlighting the Dirty Dozen, Roster of the Ridiculous, and the totals for over 90 items of marine debris collected by volunteers last year. Clean Ocean Action Beach Sweeps started at Sandy Hook in 1985 with 75 volunteers and has become New Jersey’s largest environmental event, with thousands of citizens search and clean nearly the entire coastline and bay beaches.

“Thousands of volunteers have taken part and millions of pieces of debris have been picked up, over the course of three decades, during our Beach Sweep events. Dedicated citizens comb the beaches each and every year continually finding marine debris. It has become such a successful event because the attendees and the public get to see their hard-work in numbers through our Annual Report.,” stated **Cindy Zipf, Executive Director of Clean Ocean Action**. “The Beach Sweeps are not just about cleaning our beaches, but are about the data collected throughout the years. This data has helped to enact policies and create stringent litter laws, as well as encourage research on the sources of pollution. However, even after 30 years of cleanups, volunteers continue to pick up thousands of pieces of trash every year. Protecting our beaches should not just be on Beach Sweep day, but should be instilled in us every day. The Jersey Shore is a treasure to all of us and it is our duty to keep it free of debris.”

In 2014, close to 7,000 volunteers collected, tallied, and removed over 315,000 pieces of debris from New Jersey’s shoreline during Clean Ocean Action’s 29th Annual Beach Sweeps. The majority of the debris removed was disposable plastics. Plastic, including foam, represents 76.9% of the total waste found. The evidence is clear: disposable plastic items continue to litter beaches, threaten marine life, and impact water quality.

Each year, volunteers look forward to participating in the Beach Sweeps as a way to get involved,” explained **Catie Tobin, Marine Science Education Coordinator for Clean Ocean Action**, “but the goal is to continue the conversation into their homes.” “Cleanup events are great; however they are reactive efforts. We are cleaning debris once it gets in the environment and has a chance to impact our water quality, fish, and wildlife,” continued **Tobin**. “Prevention is the solution.”

### **Sources and Solutions**

Pollution continues to flow in from many land point and non-point sources in the New York City and New Jersey metropolitan area.

“Debris ends up on our beaches and in our ocean due to littering or improper disposal by people enjoying those beaches,” explained Tobin. “However, debris can also be carried during storm events over impervious surfaces, like roads and parking lots; and enter storm drains which discharge to the ocean.”

Over the past four years, small plastic pieces have consistently placed in the top two types of items found during Clean Ocean Action’s Beach Sweeps. In 2014, plastic pieces ranked number one.

“It is important to think about how one piece of plastic becomes many. It goes in the ocean as one problem and creates many more problems as it breaks down,” continued Tobin. “Plastic in the marine environment never truly goes away. Instead, it breaks into smaller and smaller pieces through wave action and sunlight.”

Because of this growing threat to the marine environment, Clean Ocean Action launched a microplastics (less than 5mm) research project in 2014 in order to investigate the presence and abundance of microplastics, as well as the potential impacts to marine mammals and the New Jersey coast.

### **Call to Action**

Clean Ocean Action (COA) invites citizens and organizations to participate in the 30th Annual Spring Beach Sweeps on Saturday, April 25th, at over 70 sites along the Jersey Shore.

“In 1985 to swim or not to swim was a valid question. That inspired me to join Clean Ocean Action’s Beach Sweeps and do my part to keep our Oceans free of debris. Now 30 years later, thanks to Clean Ocean Action, I no longer have to ask myself that question,” said **Mike Bruno, former Beach Captain for Clean Ocean Action**.

“One of the most significant aspects of Beach Sweeps, for personal growth, is to be witness to my young children learning about and caring for our environment. They spread awareness through play with their friends and we grow as a community,” said **Lisa Cordova**.

“Beach Sweeps offers a unique opportunity for Bank of America volunteers to be a part of the solution, cleaning our beaches today and planning for a better Jersey Shore tomorrow,” said

**Bob Doherty, New Jersey president, Bank of America.** “The program has been instrumental in educating the community about the prevention of pollution and ways to positively influence our environment.”

“Since 2008, Comcast has supported Clean Ocean Action and their mission. Each year the beach sweeps bring communities together up and down the Jersey Shore. We’re so proud to partner once again with COA for our 14<sup>th</sup> annual Comcast Cares Day,” **Kimberly Smith – Regional Director, Community Investment for Comcast Cable.**

“Our efforts in removing the marine debris from the environment are the first steps to a clean ocean. Beach Sweep makes an impact on the New Jersey marine environment, but we only account for a fraction of the world. I hope that our actions become inspiration for others to make it a worldwide effort. It's going to take a lifetime of dedication and I'm honored to be working with Clean Ocean Action to do so,” **Erin O'Neill , Marine Academy of Science and Technology Beach Sweep Student Coordinator.**

2015 Statewide Beach Sweeps Sponsors include: Bank of America, Wakefern ShopRite, and AVEDA.

A complete list of site locations and details can found on the registration page of the Clean Ocean Action website. Volunteers should bring gloves, dress for the weather, apply sunscreen, and wear closed-toed, hard-soled shoes.

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