



PRESS RELEASE

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NEW JERSEY BEACHES BENEFIT FROM STATEWIDE BEACH SWEEPS

Thousands of Volunteers Mobilize to Clean Up NJ Beaches and Waterways

Coastal New Jersey – Today, nearly 4,000 volunteers hit the beaches to participate in Clean Ocean Action's 30th Annual Spring Beach Sweeps at over 70 sites from Essex County to Cape May County. Volunteers removed and catalogued each piece of debris, helping to document ongoing pollution issues. Spirited crowds were reported up and down the coast.

The first Beach Sweep started in 1985 with only 75 volunteers in Sandy Hook. This year we had 1000 volunteers at Sandy Hook alone. For three decades volunteers make their way to the coast, bays, and waterways, twice a year, to clean up debris. Dedicated volunteers traveled from all over New Jersey as well as New York, Connecticut, Pennsylvania, Delaware and Maryland to participate in the Beach Sweeps this year. Many volunteers came from school and church groups, family teams, local businesses, corporate and grassroots organizations, and more. All with personal ties to the Shore and some with decades of Sweeps participation.

"It is astonishing to see what the Beach Sweeps have become after 30 years. From 70 volunteers in Sandy Hook in 1985 to nearly 4,000 volunteers in 2015. The volunteers continue to be dedicated and fill with enthusiasm to get their hands dirty and get to work cleaning up our coastal areas and waterways," said **Cindy Zipf, Executive Director of Clean Ocean Action.**

"There is a real sense of Jersey Pride at every location with communities, businesses, and organizations getting together to personally prevent debris from entering our ocean. The goal is for there not to be a need for Beach Sweeps. Until then, devoted volunteers will continue to be out there collecting and tallying debris, which we will use to promote policies and encourage change."

The data recorded today will be combined with data collected in the fall at the October 24th Beach Sweeps, then analyzed and presented in an annual report produced by Clean Ocean Action. The Beach Sweeps annual report identifies pollution problems and educates citizens on the quantities and types of marine debris. Legislators will receive the cumulative data and use it to implement stricter litter bans and enforce laws to protect the marine environment.

"As a lifelong resident of the Jersey Shore I know what a precious resource our beaches are, not just to those of us who live here, but to attract visitors as well," **says Assemblywoman Casagrande, R-District 11.** "I commend Clean Ocean Action for their tireless efforts in the fight for clean water and clean beaches. Both are vital to our state and local economy, and the wonderful quality of life we have come to enjoy in Monmouth County."

"Our pristine beaches in Atlantic County are the heart of our region's tourism. I'm proud to support Clean Ocean Action for their hard work in continuing to bring to light the need to preserve our environment and care for our ocean. I'd like to thank the 30 years' worth of Beach Sweeps volunteers and I hope this fantastic program continues for 30 more," **said Assemblyman Vince Mazzeo, who attended the Brigantine Beach Sweep location.**

"Our beautiful beaches are at the cornerstone of our region's environment and economy. I'd like to thank the volunteers for their work beautifying the Missouri Avenue beach as well as Clean Ocean Action for celebrating its 30th year conducting Beach Sweeps," **Senator Jim Whelan, who attended the Atlantic City Beach Sweep location.**

"For 30 years, the Beach Sweeps has been a part of the New Jersey community bringing volunteers from all over the tri-state area to clean up the New Jersey environment," **said Catie Tobin, Marine Science Education Coordinator for Clean Ocean Action.** "Enabling volunteers to become citizen scientists throughout the cleanup turns this one day of service into a lifetime of data. Clean Ocean Action may organize the cleanup and compile the data, but it is truly the Beach Captains and the volunteers that are the heart and soul of this program."

Clean Ocean Action Beach Captains, lead volunteers who direct the entire group of participants at each Beach Sweeps location, are essential to the program's success. They are the heart and soul of Beach Sweeps.

"I am honored to have had the opportunity to work with Clean Ocean Action over the past year. This is my last beach sweep in which I will have such a leadership role, but it has inspired me to continue my involvement in Clean Ocean Action in the future," **said Erin O'Neil, volunteer and student at the Marine Academy of Science and Technology.** "I look forward to future beach sweeps and getting to clean the beaches, which will provide a new perspective for me. I hope to continue to be an advocate for a marine debris-free environment in the years to come as well as inspire others to do the same.

Selected totals from Sandy Hook included: 6265 food/candy wrappers, 8289 plastic pieces, 3126 straws/stirrers, 2301 foam pieces, 1339 store/shopping bags, and 1680 beverage/soda bottles.

"Participating in the Beach Sweeps with children is an amazing way to show and teach respect and love. We show our love for each other by being together and we show our respect for the Earth by helping to keep it clean. Our communities grow stronger. Ideal Beach in North Middletown looks forward to uniting for COA's Beach Sweeps each spring and fall. Its reward is pride in ourselves and our neighborhood. It gives me an opportunity as Beach Captain to share what I've learned along the way and to show my love and respect to all who come to clean our great little beach," **said Lisa Cordova, Beach Captain for Ideal Beach in Middletown.**

In addition to logging standard debris counts for various plastics, glass and lumber items, Sweeps participants also logged the strange objects that make their way to the beach from various nonpoint sources. Some of the ridiculous items catalogued today included a yoga mat,

underwear, dog dentures, teddy bear, a Valentine's Day stuffed heart, tire, seahorse, and sand hit by lighting glass.

With gratitude, Clean Ocean Action thanks Aveda and Bank of America for their 2015 Beach Sweeps **Statewide Sponsorship**. The Spring Beach Sweeps are made possible by support from many generous sponsors.

"Wakefern Food Corp/ShopRite is pleased with our 15+ year partnership with Clean Ocean Action (COA). As an environmentally and community oriented business, ShopRite respects when an organization can bring about effective change by involving more and more community member volunteers each year. The COA Beach Sweeps event brings about the improvement of an important ecological habitat, and when groups of like-minded people come together to solve a problem or improve their environment, they can make a difference and accomplish what an individual could not do alone. We are proud to be a part of it!" **Suzanne Forbes, Corporate Communications, Environmental Affairs Administrator, Wakefern Food Corporation.**

The 2014 Clean Ocean Action Beach Sweeps Annual Report can be downloaded here at cleanoceanaction.org.

Clean Ocean Action's mission is 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 convince public officials to enact and enforce measures which will clean up and protect the Atlantic Ocean.

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