



# BEACH SWEEPS

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## **Downpours Don't Dampen Beach Sweep Volunteer Spirit**

*Clean Ocean Action's 31<sup>st</sup> Annual Beach Sweeps Attended by Thousands*

**Coastal New Jersey** —Blustery winds and downpours didn't stop over 2,000 volunteers from participating in Clean Ocean Action's (COA) 31<sup>st</sup> Annual Beach Sweeps at over 70 sites from Essex to Cape May Counties. Dedication to COA's mission of ocean advocacy was clear as the drenched volunteers scoured the beaches for debris. Today's clean-up was the final for the 2016 Beach Sweeps season. Both spring and fall data will be compiled into an Annual Report released Spring 2017.

At the Sandy Hook location, a traditional rally kicked off the morning's activities featuring speakers from Bank of America and Bayshore Family of Companies, and recognized United Teletch Financial for also providing reusable gloves, which also provided much needed warmth for volunteers' hands.

**Congressman Frank Pallone, Jr.** inspired volunteers and highlighted the importance of environmental action. "Protecting and preserving the Jersey Shore and the ocean waters is an economic issue, as well as an environmental issue. The activities that evolve around the Shore, such as fishing, boating, swimming and tourism, are key to the state's economy and provide many jobs," **said Pallone.** "I applaud Clean Ocean Action and so many volunteers for their determination to keep our beaches and one of New Jersey's treasures, Sandy Hook, safe and clean."

**Gateway National Recreational Area Superintendent Jen Nersesian** welcomed everyone and introduced **Denise Ryan, Deputy Director of the nation's National Park Service (NPS)**, who visited Sandy Hook for the first time. "Our volunteers are the measure of excellence of the National Parks Service," **said Ryan** to the over 250 Sandy Hook volunteers who braved the weather.

"This was a Fall Beach Sweeps for the record books. Our remarkable Beach Captains, who lead clean-ups at over 70 locations, succeeded in garnering fantastic turnout, especially in Middlesex and Essex Counties where sites were 'sold out' for the first time. The Beach Sweeps are an important and helpful way citizens can give back to the ocean, and show-off their Jersey Shore pride," **said Cindy Zipf, Executive Director of Clean Ocean Action.** There were also strong turnouts at the Atlantic City Albany Avenue and Long Branch Pier Village sites.

Beach Sweep Captains around the state called in with inspiring reports of dedicated volunteers who turned out despite harsh conditions. “Being a Beach Sweep Captain enables me to make a lasting contribution to my community and the environment,” said **Blake Epstein, high school student and co-captain at the Snug Harbor site**. “The data we collect and submit gives us hope; we can change what we do now and improve the future.”

“Seeing thousands of volunteers from communities across 5 states come together to improve New Jersey’s watersheds is a powerful thing,” said **Gianna Fischer, DW Bennett Fellow for Ocean Advocacy**. “Sweeps offers an opportunity for volunteers of all ages and backgrounds to come together to take action against a threat that has put a valuable shared resource in danger. Our statewide citizen science experiment helps COA collect invaluable data that will help us better understand the world’s pollution problem and support us in our goal to enact powerful policies to help better protect the ocean.”

Data results are dramatically lower due to wet data cards and challenging conditions. In fact, Beach Captains took many measures to dry out data cards, proving just how innovative COA’s Captains can be. Selected totals from the 250 Sandy Hook volunteers included: 1,017 plastic pieces, 782 caps and lids, and 772 candy and food wrappers, which are dramatically low numbers for this site.

Throughout Beach Sweeps, volunteers are encouraged to note any out-of-the-ordinary finds. COA labels these finds, “The Roster of the Ridiculous.” Some of the items catalogued today included: \$200 cash, a laundry basket, 12-inch long hair extensions, garden fencing, a large nest of netting material, a beach chair, and goggles.

Beach Sweeps is made possible thanks to the statewide sponsorship of Aveda, Bank of America, Comcast, OceanFirst Foundation, and Shoprite, as well as many local supporters.

“OceanFirst Foundation is proud to support Clean Ocean Action’s Beach Sweeps and do our part to help preserve and protect our coastal environment and the beautiful Jersey Shore beaches. They are a big part of what makes the communities special and we can’t thank Clean Ocean Action enough for caring for these natural treasures,” said **Kathy Durante, Executive Director of OceanFirst Foundation**.

The 2015 Clean Ocean Action Beach Sweeps Annual Report can be downloaded at [cleanoceanaction.org](http://cleanoceanaction.org).

Mark your calendars, spring and fall Beach Sweeps are on April 22 and October 21 of 2017.

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Caption Raritan Bay: Volunteers at Raritan Bay Waterfront Park in Middlesex County collected a truckload of unusual debris.

Caption Sandy Hook: From left to right: Clean Ocean Action’s Executive Director Cindy Zipf, US Representative Frank Pallone, NPS Deputy Director Denise Ryan, and Superintendent of Gateway National Recreation Area Jen Nersesian.

Photo credits to COA File Photo.