



Clean Ocean Action
18 Hartshorne Drive, Suite 2
Highlands, NJ 07732
732-872-0111
www.CleanOceanAction.org

For Immediate Release

October 7, 2016

Amanda Wheeler, Education & Volunteer Coordinator

Lauren E. Brajer, Communication & Program Coordinator

732-872-0111 or 973-580-1575 (cell)

Island Beach State Park Hosts Classroom for a Day *Summit Inspires Student Marine Scientists*

Seaside, NJ – Over 300 5th - 8th-grade students from schools throughout NJ joined scientists and volunteer educators at Island Beach State Park for Clean Ocean Action's (COA) 28th annual Fall Student Summit on Thursday, October 6th. Students participated in hands-on roundtable activities and interactive field trips, with the beaches, trails and marshes of Island Beach State Park as the classroom setting for the day.

"It is important for COA to educate students because they are the future. The Student Summit is an opportunity to take environmental education out of the classroom and into nature for the day," **said Cindy Zipf, Executive Director of Clean Ocean Action.** "The Summit brings the classroom to life. Hands-on learning inspires students to explore their natural world. There is no substitute for a child holding a horseshoe crab and understanding that the creature's survival is in their hands."

Students participated in hands-on learning-table activities which included: live horseshoe crabs, seashell identification, marine debris impacts, invertebrates, a demonstration in nonpoint source pollution and climate change.

"During the Summit, the marine ecosystem is the classroom and the students are the scientists," **stated Gianna Fischer, DW Bennett Fellow for Ocean Advocacy at Clean Ocean Action.** "The Summit inspires students with a sense of personal stewardship necessary for protecting the environment in the future."

Field activities included teaching students to use seine nets to collect and identify common marine species of Barnegat Bay and a beach profiling activity highlighting the importance of dunes in protecting coastal habitat. These activities and round-table events were taught by Ocean County Technical and Vocational **School's Marine Academy of Technology and Environmental Studies (MATES)** Students who act as peer educators at COA's Student Summits.

Amanda Wheeler, COA's Volunteer & Education Coordinator orchestrated this year's event noting, "There is nothing that compares to a beautiful day in Island Beach State Park! During this year's Fall Summit participants spent the morning as marine scientists sharing and discovering the amazing ocean and bay environment offered right

here in New Jersey.” As a retired teacher and avid environmentalist, Amanda added an experienced touch to the Summit, “COA hopes that the students who came to the Summit left with a greater appreciation of our natural resources and a greater desire to protect and respect them.”

Clean Ocean Action would like to thank David Werner, MATES Science Instructor and his students for inspiring younger students, Dr. John Wnek and the Student Leaders of Project Terrapin for their informative and fun presentation on terrapins. Additional thanks to everyone at Island Beach State Park and Jenkinson’s Aquarium. This program would not be possible without everyone’s continued support.

About COA’s Student Summits:

For 28 years, Clean Ocean Action’s Summits have reached over 16,000 students in New Jersey, expanding learning beyond the classroom. The Summit program presents students with an interdisciplinary marine and environmental education experience which complements the NJ Student Learning Standards for Science.

For more information about Student Summit or additional COA educational programs, visit www.CleanOceanAction.org or call COA’s Main Office at (732) 872-0111.

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