

## **PRESS RELEASE**

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Contacts:

Melissa Mertz, COAST Intern, Clean Ocean Action, (732) 872-0111

Cindy Zipf, Executive Director, Clean Ocean Action, (732) 872-0111

Nicole Dallara, Press Inquiries, Clean Ocean Action, (732) 872-0111

### **Plastic Plague of Sea Challenged**

#### **Group Unveils 12-Steps to Kick Your Plastic Habit**

**Asbury Park, NJ** - Today, Clean Ocean Action (COA) launched a guide to help citizens reduce use of plastics, which has become a chronic and lethal pollution problem in the ocean. Called "12-Steps to Kick Your Plastic Habit," the campaign links the near-daily use of single use plastic disposables to an addiction, warranting recognition of the overuse and commitment to withdrawal. The 12-Steps will be highlighted during this summer through the 25<sup>th</sup> Annual COAST campaign. The Clean Ocean Action Shore Tips (COAST) is an annual public awareness program that engages trained volunteers to inform beach-goers about how they can help the ocean.

"This year, the goal of COAST is to equip people with an understanding of the magnitude of the plastic plague that we are facing and how we can integrate a cleaner and healthier lifestyle through avoiding plastic products," said **Melissa Mertz, this summer's C.O.A.S.T. Intern**. "The world is addicted to plastics, but the '12-Steps' guide will help citizens through the process of reducing their contribution to plastic waste."

The data from the 2014 annual report from Clean Ocean Action's Beach Sweeps affirms that the plastics problem is growing. It is the number one category of debris collected and is nearly 69% of all items. Moreover, of the 242,209 plastic items (including foam), 96% were single use, and only 8% could be recycled. Plastic is not only unsightly, it is lethal to marine life through ingestion and entanglement. Of great concern is that every piece of plastic that gets into the sea, is there forever, breaking down into smaller and smaller bits and ultimately micro-plastics.

"In such a short time, plastic has become a plague in almost every habitat on the planet. As a petroleum product, plastics also have a wholly chemical lifecycle – from extraction and production to disposal – contamination is in its wake. While some uses of plastic are valuable, the overuse of plastic disposables is wreaking havoc, especially in the ocean where it is entangling and harming marine life. While people are responsible, we are also the solution," said **Cindy Zipf, Executive Director**.

The C.O.A.S.T. campaign is tackling this issue at the source—breaking the addiction. A program guide that consists of “12 Steps to Kick Your Plastic Habit” will be featured on every table, which guides the public through the process of reducing individual plastic usage and waste.

Legislation is also needed. The guide calls on citizens to avoid microbeads, a plastic product that is found in many types of cosmetic products. Congressman Frank Pallone, Jr. has recently introduced legislation that would prohibit the sale or distribution of personal care products that contain synthetic plastic microbeads.

**Congressman Pallone** explains, “We have a responsibility to stop the unnecessary and dangerous pollution caused by microbeads in personal care products. Many people buying products containing these tiny plastic particles are unaware of their damaging effects and that they are found in products specifically designed to be washed down shower drains. My bill, the Microbead-Free Waters Act, will phase out the use of these particles and transition to non-synthetic alternatives. The time is now to pass this bipartisan bill and protect U.S. waters before it’s too late. I thank Clean Ocean Action for helping to promote and explain the need for my legislation.”

Local business owners are also leading the way in reducing plastic waste, including **Marilyn Schlossbach, Chef and business owner of the Marilyn Schlossbach Group**. “This spring, I implemented a by-request-only straw policy at my five Jersey Shore restaurants so as not to add to the approximately 500 million straws that are used daily in our country,” she commented. “When we all increase our awareness of unnecessary waste and adapt our daily habits to reflect positive environmental changes, the impact can be massive. My staff and I proudly maintain our ‘offer first’ straw policy knowing we are mitigating waste and lessening our venue’s environmental impact.”

**Background:** C.O.A.S.T. is an annual summer outreach campaign that raises awareness among beachgoers and coastal citizens about current ocean pollution and industrialization issues. The C.O.A.S.T. campaign organizes volunteers to set up and staff information and action tables at beach locations and festivals in Monmouth and Ocean Counties on weekends in July and August. Volunteers at the tables will reach hundreds of beachgoers this summer with information on important ocean pollution issues. If you would like to volunteer, please contact Melissa Mertz at [coast@cleanoceanaction.org](mailto:coast@cleanoceanaction.org).

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