

## A SWEEPING TIMELINE

Clean Ocean Action's beach cleanups evolved over its 20-year history, attracting more volunteers, collecting tons of debris, and developing additional programs and resources to educate people and engage them in the solutions to ocean pollution.

- 1984** - Clean Ocean Action (COA) is formed.
- 1985** - First beach cleanup: "Debris-a-thon."
- 1988** - Storm Drain Stenciling Program starts.
- 1989** - "Assembly Resolution" supporting Beach Sweeps from New Jersey's General Assembly.
- 1990** - Cigarette filters added to the data card.
- 1991** - Beach Sweeps becomes bi-annual event & goes statewide. Database developed for Beach Sweeps. Over 1,000 volunteers participate in beach cleanup.
- 1992** - "Senate Resolution" supporting Beach Sweeps from New Jersey's Senate. "Points of Light" Award to COA for Outstanding Volunteer from US Department of Interior.
- 1993** - Storm Drain Stenciling Week is started. "Joint Legislative Resolution" supporting Beach Sweeps from NJ's Senate & General Assembly. Over 2,000 volunteers participate in beach cleanups.
- 1994** - First Annual Beach Cleanup Report released. COA participates in first International Coastal Cleanup Conference. "Joint Legislative Resolution" supporting Beach Sweeps from NJ's Senate & General Assembly. Over 3,000 volunteers participate in beach cleanup.
- 1995** - "Outstanding and Dedicated Service" Award to COA from Center for Marine Conservation (now *The Ocean Conservancy*).
- 1996** - Beach Sweeps expands to rivers, lakes, & streams. First underwater cleanup.
- 1997** - COA's website is launched. Beach Sweeps database spreadsheets on marine debris available to the world. Over 4,000 volunteers participate in beach cleanups.
- 1998** - Beach Sweeps featured in *Dive Training Magazine*. "Excellence in Service and Commitment to Community" Award to COA from Stephen & Mary Birch Foundation.
- 1999** - "Local Legacy" Award to COA from US Library of Congress. "Beach Sweeps, A Local Legacy" video is produced. Storm Drain Stenciling Week becomes bi-annual. Special 16-page Beach Sweeps report released.
- 2001** - "Outstanding Community Project" Make a Difference Day Award to COA from USA Today. Over 5,000 volunteers participate in beach cleanups.
- 2002** - Over 2 million pieces of debris removed from NJ's waterways & shoreline from 1993 through 2002.
- 2003** - New 100-item data card introduced. "Volunteer Recognition" Award to COA for Beach Sweeps from NJDEP, Division of Parks and Forestry, State Park Service.
- 2004** - Beach Sweeps sets new records for volunteers, items collected and pounds of trash removed.
- 2005** - New 106-item data card introduced. New teacher's education activity guide developed for the Beach Sweeps.



# Legacy of Volunteers

From 1993 to 2004, over **50,300** volunteers participating in Clean Ocean Action's Beach Sweeps collected nearly **2.6 million** pieces of debris and removed **697,000** pounds of trash from New Jersey's beaches and waterways. Volunteers at the cleanups started recording the items found on data cards in 1993, yielding piles of data. Earlier records of volunteer participation since the first cleanup in 1985 show that since then, nearly **60,000** volunteers have participated, resulting in an estimated **200,000** volunteer hours for the protection of the marine environment. The efforts of these volunteers have resulted in millions of pieces of debris removed from NJ's beaches. The value of this cleanup effort and data is *priceless*.

In addition to the useful information about the debris collected, Clean Ocean Action (COA) documents the tremendous time and effort given by volunteers, organizations, businesses, schools, and scouts at these cleanups. Since 1995 alone, over **1,775** groups have participated in the Sweeps. These groups include **657** environmental and civic organizations and government agencies, **677** schools, **346** Boy and Girl Scout groups, and **95** business teams. Afterall, dedicated volunteers make the cleanups successful.

## Beach Sweeps Evolution

COA's Beach Sweeps is one of the longest running cleanups of its kind in the world. The one day event has evolved into a statewide bi-annual event with supportive programs (see "Sweeping Timeline").

The first cleanup, called a "Debris-a-thon," started in 1985 at Sandy Hook with 75 volunteers. The volunteers were given different color T-shirts and each color designated a different type of item the volunteer was to collect. The T-shirts represented the major categories that items are made of: plastic, glass, metal, wood, and foam plastic. Past cleanups also were named, "Trash Attack" and "Trash Bash."

To reduce one source of marine debris, COA developed a storm drain stenciling program in 1988. The program continues to educate the public about stormwater run-off and to serve as a reminder to citizens that what is in the streets and parking lots goes into storm drains and affects animals and plant life in streams, rivers, lakes, back bays, and the ocean.

The Beach Sweeps expanded in spring 1991 by including Atlantic and Cape May Counties. That same year, COA's Anthony Totah developed a computer program to analyze the data collected during the cleanups. With the opening of the South Jersey COA office in 1993, the event went statewide for the spring and fall cleanups, and added locations along Delaware Bay.

In 1994, COA produced its first report on marine debris in NJ, which was presented at the first International Coastal Cleanup (ICC) conference in Washington, DC, organized by The Ocean Conservancy.

By 1996, the Beach Sweeps moved inland to include rivers, lakes, and streams. Divers Two, Inc., held the first underwater cleanup in Belmar. In 1997, COA launched its website, attracting more volunteers and



An early COA beach cleanup with NJ Assemblymen Azzolina and Palaia, Dery Bennett (current COA President) and Exec. Dir. Cindy Zipf, Assm. Steve Corodemus, and Christine Whitman.

educating more people about marine debris. COA made its database framework available to coordinators worldwide to help them tabulate and analyze data from their cleanups. It has been used as far away as Hawaii and the American Samoan Islands.

In 1999, the Beach Sweeps were chosen as a "Local Legacy" for the 200th year celebration of the US Library of Congress.

Because of the evolving and expanding Beach Sweeps, in 2001 the words "Waterway Cleanup" were added to include all the areas the cleanup reaches.

Through their participation, volunteers have established the program as a local legacy of information and citizen action. Over the years, beach and waterway cleanups have been conducted throughout the United States and in 127 countries around the world as part of ICC. COA was an early participant in this international effort and continues to document the tremendous effort by citizens in NJ to improve the marine environment.

### About This Report

The data in this report reflects the information collected by volunteers during COA's Beach Sweeps. It is important to note that data was collected prior to 1993, however it was not formally organized in a data base, as it was after 1993.