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LABEL

CLEAN OCEAN ADVOCATE
OCTOBER 2023



SAVE THE DATE

October 26
SEAL 2023-2024 Kickoff
October 21
Beach Sweeps

RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

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49 Avenue Blvd.
Long Branch, NJ 07740
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CLEAN OCEAN ADVOCATE

Defending the Sea Since 1984

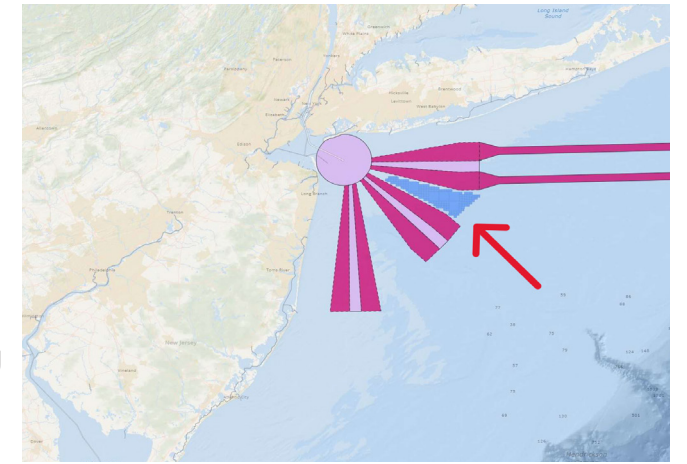
October 2023

POLICY

Kari Martin, Advocacy Campaign Manager, Citizens@CleanOceanAction.org

Fossil Fuel Giants' Wind Empire is Growing with Largest Offshore Wind Power Plant

The federal government continues to recklessly move forward on offshore wind (OSW), while the industry seems financially at risk. On September 15, the largest proposed offshore wind power plant owned by two fossil fuel giants moved a step closer to approval. The U.S. Government released the Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS) for the Empire Wind 1 and 2 projects proposed by Equinor, a Norwegian Company formerly called StatOil, and British Petroleum (BP). The combined projects are the largest to date with 174 monopiles, 15-megawatt (MW) turbines untried in US waters, and over 375 miles of cables releasing heat and electromagnetic fields. The project location is the gateway to the NY/NJ Harbor Estuary, an already ecologically critical and vulnerable area for marine life. It is also the gateway to the busiest port on the eastern seaboard creating navigational hazards for thousands of ships, including chemical and oil tankers, entering the #1 port on the East Coast.



Empire Wind Project in blue area (between pink shipping lanes)
Image Credit: Mid-Atlantic Ocean Data Portal

COA's evaluation of the projects' Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) found it was woefully inadequate in identifying impacts, threats, and technological challenges, as well as failing to include cumulative impacts from the many of proposed OSW projects in the region. COA is reviewing the FEIS; unfortunately, there is no formal public comment period. The director of the Bureau of Ocean Energy Management (BOEM) is expected to make a final Record of Decision (ROD) imminently.

How YOU Can Help!

Call elected officials to raise concerns about impacts from Empire Wind 1 & 2.

- To find your officials, go to: <https://www.USA.Gov/Elected-Officials>
- Go to CleanOceanAction.org for links to the FEIS and COA's comments on Empire Wind's DEIS.

TRIBUTES

In Memory of:

Peter Cauterucci
 Matteo Liam Coffey
 Walter Frattin "The Duke"
 Michele Ferro Jasionowski
 Edward Lloyd
 Carol Anne Ross
 Terri Rowett
 Drew Thompson

In Honor of:

Doug Douty and
 Lusty Lobster
 Amish Patel

Volunteer with Clean Ocean Action!

COA has a variety of SEA-rific and exciting opportunities to get involved from tabling at events to becoming a volunteer Community Scientist! Find the best fit for you and complete a volunteer form today at:

CleanOceanAction.org/Help-Your-Ocean/Volunteer-Opportunities

New Poll: Public Opinion One Year After NJ's Plastic Bag Law

Monmouth University released poll results of 814 New Jerseyans regarding the law banning plastic bags and foam plastic containers and limiting plastic straws and paper bags. COA is proud of NJ for being a national leader with this law.

The poll results show New Jerseyans are moving in the right direction. According to the poll, nearly 90 percent of the respondents bring their own bags to stores for shopping. Also, around 75 percent have a reasonable number of bags to keep and use for their shopping use. This poll is encouraging within the demographics polled, but it also raises some questions and the need for evaluations regarding underserved communities. This poll is a reminder for the need to continue providing education on this law and access to relevant resources at all economic and social levels across the state.

COA is working with community groups to identify and work on solutions to reduce the use of and impacts from plastics.



WOTUS Going On? Feds Roll Back Clean Water Act Wetlands Protections

The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and US Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) issued a Final Rule on September 8 conforming their Clean Water Act (CWA) regulations to the Supreme Court's recent decision in Sackett v. EPA, which redefined 'waters of the United States' (WOTUS) to exclude many wetlands.



A vernal pool in Blair Creek Preserve
Photo Credit: Mary Jasch

Only WOTUS receive CWA protections. Sackett v. EPA is the latest in a series of court cases attempting to settle the definition of WOTUS. Before Sackett, the USACE and EPA used two legal definitions in their regulations: wetlands or tributaries with a "continuous surface connection," or a "significant nexus" to a navigable water qualified as WOTUS. Continuous surface connection means the water bodies are physically connected, and "significant nexus" means the wetland affects the water quality of the navigable water, which is determined using various water-related and ecological factors.

In Sackett v. EPA, the Court decided wetlands and tributaries can be WOTUS only if they have a continuous surface connection to a navigable water body, so EPA and USACE removed the significant nexus test from their regulations. Now, the CWA only protects tributaries and wetlands distinctly connected to navigable waters, meaning even an artificial structure could exclude water bodies from CWA protections.

This decision and regulation change allows ecologically important wetlands to be developed, causing habitat loss, increased vulnerability to flooding, and accumulation of pollutants in navigable waters, especially in states that border New Jersey but do not have as robust state-level wetlands protections. It is imperative that federal, state, and local policymakers create new, more expansive protections for wetlands and intermittent streams to account for downstream pollution.

Want to take action? Contact your representatives and let them know you support strong wetland protections and do not agree with the roll-back to these ecologically vital waterbodies.

- To contact your elected officials, go to: <https://www.U.S.A.gov/Elected-Officials>

SCIENCE

Swarna Muthukrishnan, Water Quality Research Director, Science@CleanOceanAction.org
Caitlyn Czajkowski, Community Science Program Fellow, Programs@CleanOceanAction.org
Kaylee DiPasquale, Community Science Program Coordinator, Programs@CleanOceanAction.org

Rally for the Two Rivers: Water Quality Update in Collaborative Effort with NJDEP

Since re-launching the weekly bacteria monitoring program in mid-July 2023, twelve weekly sampling events have been completed in twenty-one sites in the Navesink River Watershed thanks to the support of our dedicated volunteers! The sampling events occurred both under standard environmental conditions and following heavy rain events in the area (0.5 - 0.91 in). Preliminary results from these investigations indicated extremely high levels of bacteria in samples collected from the Marine Park location.

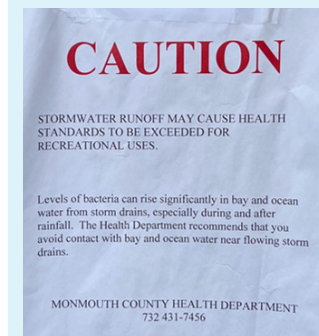


WATER QUALITY WARNING:
HUMAN FECAL "POO-LUTION" FOUND IN NAVESINK RIVER/MARINE PARK

Red Bank Borough's Department of Public Works (DPW) is actively tracking down the likely sources of this human fecal "poo-lution" with support from the NJDEP, and COA was in attendance during these trackdown efforts in the second and third week of September. COA is confident that these issues are temporary and will be identified and fixed.

COA, in consultation with NJDEP, Monmouth County Health Department, and Red Bank DPW took a rare action to issue a critical citizen Water Quality Alert for the Navesink River in the Marine Park area to protect public health and safety.

The Monmouth County Health Department has posted signs in the Marine Park area advising users that the stormwater outfall may cause health standards in the nearby waters to be exceeded for recreational use.



EDUCATION

Kristen Grazioso, Education Coordinator, Education@CleanOceanAction.org
Kira Cruz, Debris Free Sea Coordinator, BeachSweeps@CleanOceanAction.org

Sea.Hear.Now

On September 16 and 17, Clean Ocean Action was most grateful to be invited to participate and share the ocean news at the highly anticipated, sold-out summer concert of the shore—Sea.Hear.Now! Over 35,000 attendees enjoyed the fun of music, art, the ocean, and more while also getting involved in key issues. Next to the festival's Park Stage, COA was alongside other non-profits in Charity Row! At the tent, COA displayed art made from marine debris by local artists Lisa Bagwell and Stella Ryan where concert-goers took photos.

Thank you, Sea.Hear.Now, for supporting local non-profits and being a space for ocean-minded people of all ages! Also, thanks to Surfrider Foundation volunteers who worked to remove litter and keep beaches clean. Looking forward to next year!



Marine debris murals by Stella Ryan and marine debris animals by Lisa Bagwell at Sea.Hear.Now

COA Wraps Up Another Successful SEASON of Corporate Beach Sweeps!

Corporations of all sizes *shorely* had a blast this summer team building while making beaches safe for wildlife and people by removing litter from the amazing beaches of Gateway National Recreation Area, Sandy Hook. They also engaged in fun interactive presentations to learn more about the sources of the litter and solutions they can implement at home and the office. With the end of a great 2023 Corporate Beach Sweeps season, COA is proud to reveal the impact and highlights of the program.



Visual Lease software team showing their pride and passion for keeping beaches clean!

The beaches welcomed 19 corporations with 549 employees removing 27,000 pieces of debris! From lip gloss tubes to matchbox cars, a Dreidel, a twin-size mattress and a box fan –there was no telling what would be found during each cleanup! COA extends an immense WAVES OF THANKS to each corporation who showed their continued support of the Corporate Beach Sweeps program. Stay tuned for the announcement of the opening for the 2024 Corporate Beach Sweep schedule coming soon!

Juliana Lucas - A True-Blue Ocean Advocate!

It is so refreshing to meet young people who have a passion for ocean protection and being involved with volunteer work! Meet incredible COA volunteer, Juliana Lucas! Her list of highlights is inspiring. She has helped educate hundreds of people by staffing tables at local events! This month, she attended Monmouth University Community Day (pictured) and Long Branch Day, where she spoke with passersby about COA's programs and ways to get involved! Not only does Juliana volunteer, but she also is interested in joining this year's SEAL Program and being a Junior Beach Captain! Juliana attends Trinity Hall High School as a senior and enjoys being involved in her community. Thank you, Juliana, for being a true-blue ocean advocate! Clean Ocean Action is so grateful for your support!



Volunteer Juliana Lucas (right) hosting COA's info table at Monmouth University Community Day



BEACH SWEEPS

Saturday, October 21, 2023 9 am - 12:30 pm (rain or shine)

Volunteers of all ages needed at 70+ NJ locations!

Beach Sweeps Checklist:

- Bring your own bucket and work gloves for trash collection
- Dress for the weather and wear hard-soled shoes
- Invite family, friends, neighbors, & colleagues!

Scan here
to register



Statewide Sponsors:



Countywide Sponsors:



Additional support provided by Enterprise Holdings Foundation



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COA CREW NEWS

WELCOME Kaylee DiPasquale, Community Science Program Coordinator!

Kaylee has a mantra: "Everything I needed to know in life, I learned in the ocean." She is most passionate about protecting the biodiversity and health of the ocean. So, it is no surprise she found her way to COA, and we could not be more thrilled! She holds a BA from Rider University with a concentration in Marine Science. Kaylee is also passionate about education, working for Monmouth County Park System doing outreach, and most recently was teaching Oceanography at Brookdale Community College. With these experiences and background, Kaylee is like a fish in water in her new position working to enhance and expand COA's Rally for the Waterways program.

"Ever since I was a kid, I have had a strong connection to the ocean. Growing up and seeing the negative ways that anthropogenic [human] activity has affected our marine life has made me eager to pursue a career in ocean conservation. Only with healthy oceans can we ensure the thriving biodiversity of our marine life, a cause I am most passionate about," says Kaylee.



Kaylee DiPasquale
Community Science Program Coordinator

Caitlyn Czajkowski Off to Washington, DC.



Caitlyn site scoping for water sampling!

As mentioned in July, Caitlyn was filling a fellowship role at COA as the Community Science Program Fellow as she awaited placement in the prestigious Knauss Fellowship program, an outstanding achievement! The Sea Grant affiliated program is a national appointment and is highly competitive. She will join 85 others from 62 universities in 26 coastal states. Caitlyn will set sail to begin the onboarding of the intense program at the end of October. In the meantime, she is training Kaylee to ensure a smooth transition. Congratulations and waves of thanks, Caitlyn! Smooth sailing as you navigate the challenges of marine and coastal policy management.

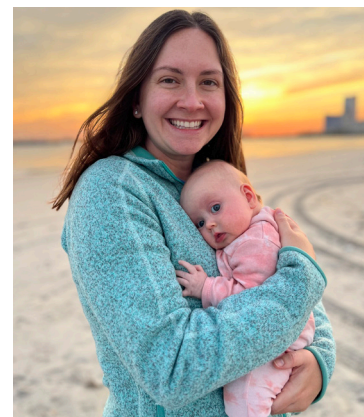
Meet COA's Policy Attorney, Erika Bosack!

In July, Erika Bosack began working part-time remotely from Delaware while finishing a clerkship. She has now moved to New Jersey and is working full-time. She received her J.D. from William and Mary Law School with a concentration in Environmental Law, and a BA from College of William and Mary with a minor in Environmental Science & Policy. Erika has always aspired to be a lawyer defending the environment. To that end, she has worked for the Animal Legal Defense Fund, US Department of Justice Environment and Natural Resources Division. Erika's work was honored to be published in the William & Mary Environmental Law and Policy Review and for the Virginia Coastal Policy Center. She has also had papers published on renewable energy and mitigation funding. Now officially established with the COA Crew, she is on the case to defend the ocean!



Erika Bosack
Policy Attorney

Welcome Back, Toni Groet!



Toni Groet and her newborn daughter

Toni Groet had a remarkable and busy summer taking time off welcoming her daughter into the world. She is now back to work ensuring the ocean is clean and healthy for her child and all to enjoy! As South Jersey Coordinator, Toni brings all COA programs to the region, all the while applying her experience in marine mammal and sea turtle stranding and protection. She is currently also conducting research on offshore wind.

Interested in getting involved with COA in the South Jersey region?
Email Toni Groet at Outreach@CleanOceanAction.org or call (732) 872-0111.