Defending the Sea Since 1984

CLEAN OCEAN ADVOCATE

NOVEMBER 2026

4000+ Volunteers Made Waves of Change at Fall Beach Sweeps!

Contact: Meg Sulzberg, BeachSweeps@CleanOceanAction.org; Ericka Nimbley, Campaign@CleanOceanAction.org

At 75 sites, over 4,000 volunteers gathered for Clean Ocean Action (COA)'s **2026 Fall Beach Sweeps**, uniting communities, businesses, student organizations, and civic groups to protect New Jersey's coast and ocean.

Volunteers documented every piece of debris collected, from bottle caps to stranger items such as half of a refrigerator and an ankle monitor. Some highlights include:

- In Neptune City, **NJ Assemblywomen Margie Donlon** and **Luanne Peterpaul** joined local volunteers on the beach, teaming up to support the Beach Sweeps
- **Mayor Peterson** led Sweeps at the Seaside Park site
- Four generations of Beach Sweepers, pictured below, attended Sandy Hook!



Perhaps the craziest find of the day was this ankle monitor at Sandy Hook!



Mayor Peterson (top) and the Erler Family with their pooch Pumpkin at Seaside Park

COA thanks the **Beach Captains and Junior Beach Captains** for leading each site, as well as the **town officials, parks organizations, and departments of public works** for their Beach Sweeps support and participation. COA is grateful for the event sponsors (below), who provide funding for the program and engage employee volunteer teams statewide.

While the statewide results are being compiled, students from **Marine Academy of Science and Technology (MAST)**, tallied up the numbers from Gateway National Recreation Area at Sandy Hook, where 217 volunteers recorded 13,181 pieces of trash. Single-use items topped the list of items collected: 3,225 plastic bottle caps, nearly 2,000 food wrappers, and over 1,400 plastic straws. Some of the more ridiculous items found included rail road ties, a toy clown head, and the above mentioned ankle monitor.

Help reduce the plastic pollution plague! Become daily ocean stewards through COA's "Clean Beach Advocate" program, which empowers citizens to drive plastic-reduction policies in their own municipalities. Email Ericka Nimbley to learn more.

Missed the Beach Sweeps, but want to support the program? ***Scan the QR code to donate.***

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Additional support provided by Enterprise Mobility Foundation





Four generations of Beach Sweepers at Sandy Hook!

L to R: Rosie, Hannah and Ginger Tatem, with COA Executive Director Cindy Zipf. Ginger attended one of the first Sweeps!

L to R: Carol and Bob Kanner, who have been Sweeping since the late 1980s, with Ginger Tatem

Help us improve the program! Scan the QR code or visit the link below to take a 2-minute survey about your Beach Sweeps experience!

Visit ***CleanOceanAction.org/survey***

New NJDEP Study to Help Address Microplastics Issues

Contact: Ericka Nimbley, Campaign@CleanOceanAction.org; Meg Sulzberg, BeachSweeps@CleanOceanAction.org

As research by leading scientists and doctors continues to reveal the harms microplastics can cause to both the environment and human health, New Jersey has a law that could establish the state as a leader in reducing human and ecosystem health impacts from micro- and nanoplastics.

A U.S. study found that people could be ingesting more than 4,000 microplastic particles through their tap water systems every year. As a result, the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection (NJDEP) is contributing to the research by performing a comprehensive study on microplastics in drinking water and the marine environment. The study is due to be released in January 2027.

The study stems from Public Law 2023, c.318, signed in January 2024. This directs NJDEP to take action by assessing microplastic removal technologies, researching health and ecological impacts, and most notably, requiring a definition of microplastics be established for drinking water, as well as determining systems for removal. Through this study, NJ can step up as the lead in the nation for targeting and removing microplastics from drinking water. Public comments and engagement are also a requirement of the law. COA is working with other groups to rally public input for this essential report. If you would like to know more and get involved, contact Ericka Nimbley.

Another Step Forward in COA's NESE Lawsuit

Contact: Madison Wurst, Advocate@CleanOceanAction.org;
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On October 30, COA's attorney, Andrew Provence, Esq., filed an Appellate Brief outlining the legal arguments against the Tidelands Resource Council's decision to issue Transco a utility license to build the NESE pipeline in NJ's underwater lands. The strong brief sets the stage to not only find the TRC license illegal, but to call on NJGovernor Sherrill to rescind the license. COA is grateful to Andrew Provence, our ocean's fearless defender.

Scan the QR Code to read the brief.



COA's attorney Andrew Provence, Esq.,

Midterm Elections & Protecting the Ocean

Contact: Madison Wurst, Advocate@CleanOceanAction.org; Ericka Nimbley, Campaign@CleanOceanAction.org



Midterm elections results in big changes in the U.S. Congress

The 2026 midterm elections have passed and big changes have occurred in the U.S. Congress. Newly elected representatives will need to be informed about ocean protection priorities. The ocean is our greatest natural defense against climate change, supports incredible biodiversity, and sustains countless economic livelihoods. President Trump's administration has repeatedly weakened environmental protections in favor of industrial development and exploitation. From carbon injection in the seafloor, strip-mining the ocean for critical minerals, confined animal fish lots in the ocean, crippling and undermining science, expanding industrialization of the ocean, and cutting federal funding for programs to protect marine ecosystems, wildlife, and ocean health, Congress must work to reverse recent harms to ocean.

COA hopes members of Congress will strongly defend the ocean. In the coming months, COA will be sharing the top actions Congress can take to protect the ocean in 2027 and beyond. Stay tuned for future newsletter articles and COA's social media for details and actions.

Find your current member of Congress: Visit house.gov and senate.gov
Scan the QR code (right) to see national election results for Congressional races:

A SEA-rrific Fall Day for Another COA Student Summit!

Contact: Kristen Grazioso, Education@CleanOceanAction.org





From surprise to smiles, students experienced an ocean of emotions at the Student Summit!

On October 15, over 300 students and chaperones from 13 middle schools (grades 5-8) participated in the Student Summit at Island Beach State Park – enjoying a day of sunny skies, blustery sea breezes, and outdoor learning about the marine ecosystem. Each student attended one of these exciting field trips: bayside seining, marine mammal stranding, mollusk and crustacean scavenger hunt, water quality testing, shell identification, beach profiling, fishing, phytoplankton lab, microplastics investigation, and Beach Sweeps and marine debris pollution.

These trips were taught by field leaders from Barnegat Bay Partnership, Jacques Cousteau National Estuarine Research Reserve, Jenkinson's Aquarium, New Logic Marine Science Camp, Project Terrapin, and Save Our Whales.

Students also participated in guided roundtable lessons, taught by 75 local high school students from the Marine Academy of Technology and Environmental Science (MATES).

Waves of thanks to MATES students and staff, field leaders, and the participating schools for helping make the Summit possible, and to the staff and crew of Island Beach State Park for the perfect location for the outdoor classroom-for-the-day!

Special thanks to the Insurance Industry Charitable Foundation (IICF), the John Ben Snow Memorial Trust, and Eloise and John Pound for supporting COA's education and stewardship leadership programs, including the Student Summits.

SEAL Kicks Off Its Seventh Year with a Trip to the NJ State House!

Contact: Kristen Grazioso, Education@CleanOceanAction.org

COA's Student Environmental Advocates and Leaders (SEAL) Program began its seventh year, welcoming 32 new students and 20 returning students who care deeply about environmental issues and taking action.



First-year SEAL students met Gov. Sherrill (center) during their NJ State House tour!

SEAL students learn about good governance and how public policy changes are made. Throughout the free program, students learn how to identify problems, assess facts, hear from experts, and participate in field trips. Throughout the 7-month program, students apply skills and lessons learned to the real world, addressing an environmental issue through student-led community projects.

COA's first-year SEAL students had an exciting visit to the New Jersey State House in Trenton, with a behind-the-scenes look at how state government works, and even met Governor Sherrill! Students also talked with MBI's Scot Mackey about how young voices can make waves in shaping policy and creating meaningful change. Students explored the importance of advocacy, civic engagement, lobbying, and learning how decisions made at the state level can impact our environment!

The SEAL program is inspiring and transformative; students learn to turn their worry about the future of the environment into a super-power of confidence and leadership, and how to work with others to make a difference. Stay tuned to see how this class of SEALs starts the ripple effect of environmental advocacy!

Waves of Thanks, "Harvest Hope for the Ocean" Volunteers and Committee Members!



Some members of the dedicated gala committee, pictured after the first meeting



The beautiful table centerpieces were designed and set up by (L to R) Cyndy Salz, Lynn Leahey, COA South Jersey Program Coordinator Chariclia Karavanas, and Lee Hobbs



Committee member Susan Moroney donated decorative pumpkins and gourds to follow the "harvest" theme

The success of COA's Gala, "Harvest Hope for the Ocean," was possible due to the generosity, dedication, and hard work of the many individuals who helped bring it all together! Held on October 1 at The Riverhouse at Rumson Country Club, this sold-out celebration brought together 200+ ocean advocates for a beachy evening celebrating the wavemakers who make life along the Jersey Shore so special. Behind the scenes, our volunteer Gala Committee members contributed countless hours to make the event a success.

A special thank-you to Gala Committee members and volunteers:

- **Brian Boms, Mel Daly, Cynthia Fair, Wendy Kaplan, Crystal Komar, Shari O'Connor, and Patty Whelan** for gathering silent auction donations to make the night a success;
- **Jill Hewitt** for going above and beyond to secure approximately half of the event's sponsorships, as well as helping with auction donations, ticket sales, and event promotion;
- **Wendy Kaplan** for collecting, organizing, and setting up the many generous silent auction donations;
- **Tina Grazioso, Nina Hallard, and Deby Ives** for helping sell 50/50 raffle tickets throughout the evening;
- **Susan and Rich Moroney of The Jersey Shore Dream Team** for donating and organizing decorative items, such as gourds and pumpkins, and helping to promote ticket sales;
- **Cyndy Salz, Lynn Leahey, and Lee Hobbs** for coordinating and setting up the beautiful table decorations that helped bring the evening together.

Clean Ocean Action is especially grateful to **George Destafney** and **Jill Hewitt** of OceanFirst Bank for their tremendous leadership garnering gala support and playing pivotal roles in achieving success.

Oceans of thanks to our sponsors and underwriters, including:

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A "Swell" Day for the Surf Open 2026!



Keira Soleau *won the Jr. Women's Division! Scan the QR code for more photos / Photo: Steve Schrenk*



The weather and waves were perfect at Seven Presidents Oceanfront Park in Long Branch, NJ! / Photo: Michael McKenna

Oceans of thanks to the surfers, advocates, and sponsors who joined COA for our 8th Annual Surf Open! Mother Nature never ceases to amaze! After several postponements, the weather and waves on October 24 were epic! Contest Director **Tyler Thompson** and cohorts sure know how to pick 'em!

Scan the QR code to see this year's Surf Open winners

Held at Seven Presidents Oceanfront Park in Long Branch, the Surf Open brought together surfers of all ages and skill levels for a day of competition, community spirit, and a shared commitment to a clean ocean! From 6-and-a-half-year-old groms to 70-year old legends, talented surfers took to the waves to showcase their skills and celebrate the ocean and surfing community. Congratulations to this year's competitors and winners!



Gina and Bryan Zinski, *owners of Summa Love Surf Camp & Surf Open sponsor, with their daughter* ***Sadie****, an 8-year-old competitor*

Beyond the competition, the Surf Open brings surfers, families, spectators, ocean advocates, and community members together to make "waves" to protect the ocean. The kids activities were especially fun! Every registration, sponsorship, and contribution helped support COA's efforts for a clean and heathy ocean.

This event was possible due to the support of dozens of volunteers who helped from dawn to dark, judges who braved the cold weather, and the expertise of Contest Director **Tyler Thompson.** A special thanks to **Mary-Beth Thompson** for the countless hours of preparation and planning for the successful event!

Waves of thanks to our judges! In addition to those pictured below, **Rol Wolson, Jon Smyth, Chris de Gersdorf, Basil Henning, Joe Sedlak,** and co-host emcee **Max Berry** judged competitors all day. COA is grateful to the many sponsors, donors, spectators, and participants who also helped make the day a sea of success!



Standing L to R: ***Rick Jones****, competitor* ***Gary Finnegan****, head judge* ***Joe Schluter****, judge* ***Steve Walker****. Sitting L to R: Contest Director* ***Tyler Thompson****, judges* ***Tom Eadon****,* ***Steve Schrenk, Mark Thompson***

SURF OPEN 2026

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NOVEMBER 2026: Dive in for the latest updates!

- 4,000+ Clean the Coast at Fall Beach Sweeps!
- Midterm Elections & Protecting the Ocean
- A "Swell" Day for the Surf Open!
- SEAL Students Meet Gov. Sherrill... and more!

Follow us!

Our Ocean Tributes

Is there someone or something special to celebrate — an occasion or success? Someone to honor or remember? Consider donating to Clean Ocean Action as a tribute, which funds our internship program. Make a tribute donation at CleanOceanAction.org/donate, or by scanning the QR code.

In Memory of:

Carole M. Adams
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Drew Thompson
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In Honor of:

Adam Sacks' Bar-Mitzvah



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Consider Leaving a Legacy Gift to Clean Ocean Action

Nothing impacts the quality of life along the Jersey Shore as much as the ocean, rivers, and local waterways throughout our region. You can make an impact on the future of these critical resources by making a planned gift or bequest to Clean Ocean Action. Using assets, including life insurance, an IRA rollover, will or trust, ongoing support can be provided for generations to come. Please consider making a legacy gift and join others who wish to help ensure that our mission to protect the ocean continues. If you have any questions or would like any additional information, please call the office at 732-872-0111.