Defending the Sea Since 1984

CLEAN OCEAN ADVOCATE

MAY 2026

In Loving Memory of Eugene "Gene" Geer — Ocean Hero

Contact: Suzanne Power, Office@CleanOceanAction.org

Gene Geer's love for the ocean was matched only by his concern for its protection

An avid underwater diver off the Jersey Shore in the 1970s, Gene Geer's love for the ocean was matched only by his concern for its protection. After witnessing repeated fish kills, he became alarmed by the pollution threatening coastal waters.

As a member of the American Littoral Society (ALS), Gene joined a courageous group of divers who worked with the NJ Council of Diving Clubs to enter highly polluted waters off the Jersey Shore. Together, they collected samples and documented the devastating impacts on marine life. Gene led ALS' dive team, helping to document fish populations. Their work was captured in annual reports that, for decades, provided an invaluable snapshot of fish species abundance and overall ocean conditions.

Gene's deep passion for science and marine life led him to become a founding father of Clean Ocean Action (COA), a spin-off organization from ALS dedicated to ending ocean dumping and pollution. His leadership on the Board of Trustees, along with his wisdom and steady guidance, was instrumental in building the coalition into a strong, enduring voice for the ocean.

Gene celebrates the end of ocean dumping sewage sludge in 1992

Gene volunteered countless hours — sharing knowledge, participating in events, testifying at hearings, and educating officials. His commitment was unwavering, and he was joined in this journey by his wife, Panse, whose support and partnership strengthened his work and legacy.

A celebration of Gene Geer will take place on June 13, 12-4pm. Please call Suzanne at COA for details and to RSVP.

Gene's lifelong, visionary devotion and guidance, dedication, and passion were vital in helping to make ocean waters healthy. He is a true-blue ocean hero.

32 Billion Bags Less! Celebrating the Get Past Plastic Law's 4 Year Anniversary

Contact: Meg Sulzberg, BeachSweeps@CleanOceanAction.org

"Get Past Plastic:" Scan the QR code

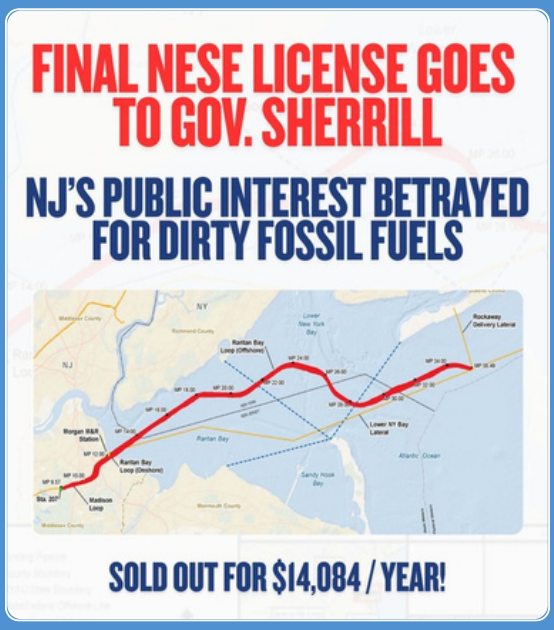
May 4, 2026, marked the fourth anniversary of New Jersey's Get Past Plastic Law. The law bans single-use plastic shopping bags and polystyrene foam food service products statewide. The law also requires plastic straws and stirrers available only upon customer request.

The law's impact is significant. State officials estimate more than **32.4 billion fewer plastic bags** are now in circulation. This has led to cleaner communities and less environmental plastic contamination. Data from Beach Sweeps helped support this landmark legislation and COA continues to track its impact. Encouragingly, plastic bags and plastic straws/stirrers have remained consistently below levels when the law went into effect. Data from 2025 show a slight uptick in polystyrene foam items, emphasizing an opportunity to strengthen enforcement and maintain progress. For information about the Get Past Plastics law, scan the QR code.

NJ State Gives OK to NESE Pipeline, Company to Pay ONLY Paltry Sum

Contact: Madison Wurst, Advocate@CleanOceanAction.org

With only 7 of the 11 members in attendance (2 members had to recuse, while 2 others were traveling), the Tidelands Resource Council (TRC) held a meeting to review Transco's Northeast Supply Enhancement (NESE) pipeline project on May 6. Over 150 people attended the over 3-hour virtual meeting, and with credit to TRC, all wishing to speak had the opportunity to.



Only two people spoke in favor of NESE — the NJ Business and Industry Association and NJ Chemistry Council — and an overwhelming 43 people were opposed. Those opposing the massive methane gas project detailed the harmful impacts to public health, the environment, and maritime economy, and highlighted the project's meritless resurrection was at the demand of President Trump. This, in combination with the previously submitted legal and technical submissions, created a robust record of NESE's failing to meet the legal standard for a TRC utility license.

In stark contrast to the facts and mandate, all attending TRC members voted to approve the utility license for NESE. The vote seemed predetermined. Adding insult to injury, Transco is a $7 billion corporation, and for the abuse of these NJ underwater lands, the company will pay only $14,085 annually. The TRC failed to meet its charge to protect NJ's public interest and future use of underwater lands.

All focus is now on Governor Mikie Sherrill for final review. Call the Governor's office at 609-292-6000 and tell her to stand up to President Trump and protect NJ by pulling the plug on NESE. Go to CleanOceanAction.org or follow COA's social media for more information and updates.

New Jersey Plays National Role Defending Endangered Species Act

Contact: Madison Wurst, Advocate@CleanOceanAction.org

Though safeguards are necessary for the survival of North Atlantic right whales, many in Congress hope to weaken these protections

In a particularly galling afront to environmental stewardship, on Earth Day, April 22, the U.S. House of Representatives was set to vote on a bill that would gut the Endangered Species Act (ESA) — a law which COA often laments is currently not strong enough, as evidenced by the difficulty protecting the North Atlantic right whale from expansive ocean industrialization.

The ESA Amendments Act of 2025 (H.R. 1897) introduced by Rep. Westerman (R-Arkansas), would undermine scientific standards, make it difficult to list species needing protection, increase allowable "takings" (harming or killing) of protected species, reduce protection of critical habitat, and weaken judicial oversight. The vote was going to be very close and a national call for bi-partisan protection was launched. COA used a social media blitz to urge people to contact NJ's Representatives, and people responded in force!

With just hours before a vote – there was no confirmed support for the bill! The bad bill did not have the votes to pass, and it was pulled from the floor vote! Thanks to the power of the people — especially all who made calls!

While good news, the battle is not over yet. The bill still lurks and could be posted again. Help protect the ESA: email Madison Wurst to learn how you can make a difference. Follow COA's social media for the latest updates.

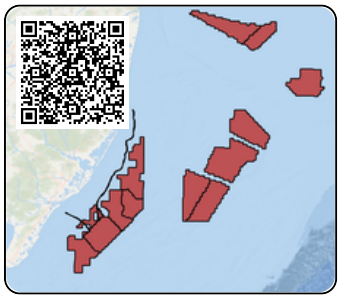
Status of NY/NJ Offshore Wind Projects

Contact: Madison Wurst, Advocate@CleanOceanAction.org

The status of offshore wind (OSW) projects has changed with the Trump Administration's opposition, resulting in numerous actions, policies, and lawsuits. The project updates off the NJ/NY coast include:

- Empire Wind 1 (OCS-A 0512): construction ongoing by Equinor with 54 monopiles installed in seafloor; awaiting turbine installation vessel; lawsuit pending (COA is a lead plaintiff); Equinor terminated NY Empire Wind 2 in 2024 to re-bid when economics improve.
- Vineyard Mid-Atlantic (OCS-A 0544): lease active Nov. 2025; BOEM cancelled Environmental Impact Study (EIS); ongoing consultations with NY/NJ.
- Bluepoint Wind (OCS-A 0537): lease cancelled; investment redirected to liquefied natural gas (LNG).
- Attentive Energy (OCS-A 0538): lease cancelled; investment redirected to oil/gas and LNG.
- Community Offshore Wind (OCS-A 0539): lease active Oct. 2025; stakeholder engagement activities in progress.
- Invenergy Wind Offshore (OCS-A 0542): lease active Oct. 2025; stakeholder engagement activities in progress.
- Atlantic Shores Bight (OCS-A 0541): lease active as of Oct. 2025; stakeholder engagement activities in progress.
- Atlantic Shores Projects 1 & 2 (OCS-A 0499 & 0570): NJ cancelled project upon developer request due to federal opposition.
- Ocean Wind 1 & 2 (OCS-A 0498 & 0532): cancelled by Ørsted in 2023.

Related changes to infrastructure have occurred in the region. On April 22, the New Jersey Board of Public Utilities delayed OSW power transmission infrastructure, and cancelled Atlantic Shores' projects with Board President Christine Guhl-Sadovy, saying, "Today's action is a direct response to a shift in federal policy under the current administration, which has created significant uncertainty and potential for offshore wind project delays."



This map shows the updated offshore wind projects off the NJ/NY coast. Scan QR code to view in detail

600 Runners Sell Out 11th Annual Run the Hook Supporting COA

Contact: Evan Leong, Communications@CleanOceanAction.org

On Mother's Day, runners and their families participated in Beacon Events' 11th Annual Run the Hook 5k/10K, supporting Clean Ocean Action to protect Mother Ocean. The sold-out race united 600 runners from across the state at Gateway National Recreation Area - Sandy Hook.

Runners of all ages celebrated moms and enjoyed a cool foggy community atmosphere. As is tradition, every adult finisher received a reusable glass to toast the coast, and every child finisher received a flower to give to share with Mom. Children were also invited to make shell necklaces or paint a shell for Mom, staffed by COA's SEAL students.

COA Board of Trustees Secretary and Beacon Events owner, Joey Garofalo, founded the event. Joey oversees everything from event planning and community outreach to marketing efforts, with the support of family and friends.

"Year 11 of Run the Hook delivered another sold out crowd of ocean-loving runners and supporters of COA's mission," Joey said. "Endless thanks to everyone who spent Mother's Day with us for Mother Ocean!"

COA extends waves of thanks to Joey and his family, as well as the runners, volunteers, families, and supporters who made Run the Hook a sea of success for a clean ocean.

A sold-out crowd of runners ran the Hook for Mother Ocean!

Waves of thanks to Joey and his family (left). The Hanlon/McCaig family celebrated Mother's Day at Run the Hook (right)

Savor the Shore... To Save Our Shore

Contact: Kari Martin, Business@CleanOceanAction.org

"Savor the Shore" returns for the 2026 summer season, celebrating the connection between a clean ocean and a strong Jersey Shore economy. From Memorial Day through Labor Day, participating restaurants, bars, and eateries will show their commitment to protecting the coast that supports local businesses, tourism, and summer traditions.

With a one-time donation, businesses receive promotion and recognition during the summer season, including social media and website features and positive community exposure. Participating businesses will be revealed throughout the season on COA's social media and website. COA encourages residents and visitors alike to support these Savor the Shore businesses because a healthy ocean helps marine life and our coastal communities thrive. Businesses interested in participating should contact Kari Martin. Join us in turning meals, drinks, and summer nights into momentum for a clean ocean!

Shore Team Building Opportunity: Book Today!

Contact: Meg Sulzberg, BeachSweeps@CleanOceanAction.org

The Brother team participated in two Corporate Sweeps in 2025!

Give your business team a day of purpose and impact at Gateway National Recreation Area - Sandy Hook with COA's "Corporate Beach Sweeps" program. This half-day program blends community science with meaningful team building as employees learn about environmental stewardship, ocean health, and the dangers of litter and marine debris for wildlife and coastal communities.

Corporate *teams* will participate in educational challenges to warm up and then head to the beach for a "Beach Sweep" where partners will collect and record debris, collaborate in small groups, and enjoy friendly competition along the way. In 2025, volunteers from 21 companies removed 29,849 pieces of litter.

Each participating business receives a personalized impact report with data and photos, plus recognition in COA's annual Corporate Beach Sweeps Report. The fee-based programs run on select weekdays from June through mid-September, include lunch and all supplies, and are tailored to group size and needs. Strengthen your team, support a cleaner ocean, and inspire employees to become everyday environmental stewards during a memorable day at the beach! To book a program or to learn more, contact Meg Sulzberg.

Staten Island Student Summit Makes a Splash!

Contact: Kristen Grazioso, Education@CleanOceanAction.org

This year's 7th Annual Staten Island Student Summit was a splash at Gateway National Recreation Area, Great Kills. Students participated in a series of hands-on lessons and mini field excursions, led by educators from local environmental groups: Billion Oyster Project, NYC H2O, NY/NJ Baykeeper, New York City Parks, Staten Island Sports Divers, and our partners from the Great Kills NPS and the Natural Resource Protective Organization (NRPA).

Jessica Hartman, from Staten Island Zoo, introduced students to various marine creatures

Borough President Vito Fossella welcomed the students to the event, and the Staten Island Zoo provided an interactive presentation with live critters including a box turtle and corn snake!

Waves of thanks to Great Kills National Recreation Area, the Natural Resources Protective Association (NRPA), and our sponsors the Insurance Industry Charitable Foundation (IICF)!

Come to Eco-Fest on June 6!

Contact: Kristen Grazioso, Education@CleanOceanAction.org

At Clean Ocean Action, Earth Month is every month, but springtime weather makes April and May the perfect season to get outside and celebrate Mother Earth. April brought a wave of festivities, with COA volunteers hosting outreach tables at more than a dozen eco-events and connecting residents of all ages.

Join the fun on Saturday, June 6, for the **8th Annual Rally for the Rivers Eco-Fest**, a free, family-friendly event at beautiful Victory Park in Rumson. Stop by anytime from 9 AM to 12:30 PM!

Enjoy river seining, live music, gardening demos, "Adopt a Worm," face painting, and hands-on activities from nearly 20 local groups and muncipalities across the Two Rivers area.

Attendees receive a free Eco-Fest activity passport to fill with stamps throughout the event and unlock deals and sweet treats from local businesses... Did someone say free ice cream? Stop by and complete your passport! Whether you are bringing kids, meeting friends, or looking for a free and fun way to welcome summer, there will be something for everyone at Eco-Fest!

Rally for the Two Rivers Welcomes New Community Scientists

COA's Community Science & Outreach Coordinator,Joe Ahart, led two water sampling trainings at Jackson Woods Park in Long Branch, NJ

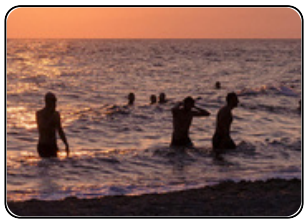
Contact: Joe Ahart, Programs@CleanOceanAction.org

COA welcomed new community scientists aboard the Rally for the Rally for the Two Rivers program! During April and May, interested volunteers from all over Monmouth County joined COA at two training sessions to learn how they can help protect their local watersheds.

Check COA's social media for future training sessions if you are interested in becoming a community scientist or visit cleanoceanaction.org/volunteer to be notified for more community science opportunities.

Spring Beaches Officially Open Soon. Are They Safe?

Contact: Dr. Swarna Muthukrishnan, Science@CleanOceanAction.org



Follow COA on social media for updates about the water quality along the shore!

The weather is getting warmer, and with beaches officially opening soon for swimming, the NJ Department of Environmental Protection (NJDEP) started the 2026 Cooperative Coastal Monitoring Program (CCMP) and Environmental Coastal Monitoring (ECM) Program to monitor for bacteria.

This year, the CCMP will collect samples from 229 official (lifeguarded) swimming beaches, along with 39 ECM sites. These tests analyze water samples for the presence of water pollution, namely, *Enterococci*, which is a type of bacteria in animal and human feces. NJDEP's data is used to determine if recreational waters pose potential health risks to the public. Swimming in or contact with bacteria-polluted waters can cause respiratory infections, and gastrointestinal illnesses in humans. If Enterococcus levels are above NJDEP's State standard (104 cfu/100 ml), beach advisories or closings may be issued. Details about the CCMP can be found at njbeaches.org.

COA will provide updates on the beach monitoring results, advisories, and closings along the coast. Follow COA on social media for updates.

Clean Ocean Action
49 Avenel Blvd.
Long Branch, NJ 07740
www.CleanOceanAction.org
732-872-0111
RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

LABEL

Save the Dates!

June 6 - Rally for the Two Rivers: EcoFest
(Victory Park, Rumson, 9am-12:30pm)
Family-friendly education festival celebrating the Shrewsbury and Navesink Rivers!

June 8 - World Ocean Day
Celebrate the role the ocean plays in our lives. Check COA's social media for an ocean-inspired action for the day!

MAY 2026: Dive in for the latest!

Follow us!

Our Ocean Tributes

Is there someone or something special to celebrate — a special occasion or success? Is there someone to honor or remember? Consider donating to Clean Ocean Action as a tribute, which funds COA's internship program to inspire new ocean advocates. Make a tribute donation by visiting CleanOceanAction.org/donate, or scanning the QR code below.

In Memory of:

Ruth Blaser
Peter Cauterucci
John R. Fiore
Gene Geer
Michele Ferro Jasionowski
Joan and Mac MacDonald
Carol Anne Ross
Drew Thompson
Brandon Jordan

In Honor of:

Emmett DeBree
Ken Dorfman
Cindy Zipf