Defending the Sea Since 1984

CLEAN OCEAN ADVOCATE

OCTOBER 2026

Sold-Out Fall Gala "Harvest Hope for the Ocean" Celebrates Ocean Wavemakers



L to R: Maria Maher, Honoree Christoher Maher, and COA Executive Director Cindy Zipf



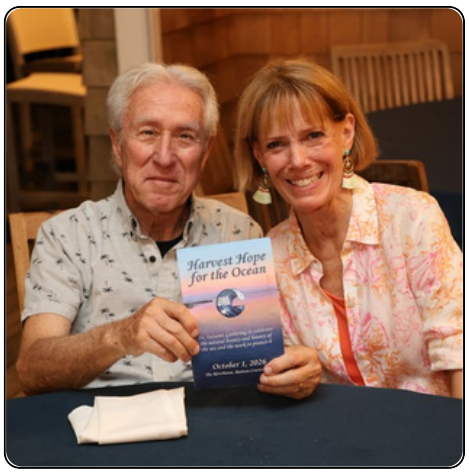
L to R: Anna Garofalo, Honoree Joey Garofalo, COA Board of Trustees member Mel Daly, Esq., and Cindy Zipf



Honorees Marine Academy of Science & Technlogy past and present staff, L to R: Francis Haddad, Barbara Lamp, Dr. Paul Christopher, Kathryn Trinidad, Principal Earl Moore. Mae Skrba, Clare Ng, Susan Feiring, Wendy Green, and John Valente

On Thursday, October 1, Clean Ocean Action (COA) welcomed a sold-out crowd to the "Harvest Hope for the Ocean" gala at The Riverhouse at Rumson Country Club, where guests celebrated against a breathtaking sunset backdrop overlooking the Shrewsbury River. The evening featured lively music from The Haven, fresh offerings from the Lusty Lobster raw bar, gourmet appetizers and dinner stations, a packed silent auction, and raffle, all set against sweeping waterfront views to benefit a clean and healthy ocean. COA extends a sea of gratitude to our 2026 Honorees for their commitment to the ocean and quality of life along the Jersey Shore.

- Community Leadership & Empowerment Award: **Christopher Maher**, *Chief Executive Officer of OceanFirst Bank and Chairman of the OceanFirst Foundation*
- Next Generation Outstanding Leadership Award: **Joey Garofalo**, *Owner/Event Director of Beacon Events and Secretary of COA's Board of Trustees*
- Legacy Partner of Leadership & Learning Award: **The Marine Academy of Science & Technology (MAST)** - Principal Earl Moore, teachers, and students



Tom and Patti Gilmour are all smiles at the gala!



Jersey Shore favorites, The Haven, rocked the night with beachy tunes!



Jersey Shore Dream Team realtors L to R: Rich Covey and Susan Moroney

Story continues on Page 2

Waves of thanks to our sea-rrific committee, led by Honorary Event Co-chairs, **Hon. Thomas Arnone**, Monmouth County Commissioner Director, and **Valerie Montecalvo**, President of Bayshore Recycling and COA Treasurer, Event Co-chairs **George Destafney** and **Matthew LaMura**. Further, COA extends tides of appreciation to our sponsors and underwriters, who made this night possible. COA thanks **The Haven, Doug and Debi Douty, Liz Daphnew** — and our dedicated volunteers, **Tina Grazioso, Nina Hallard, Deby Ives, Wendy Kaplan, Lynn Leahy** and **Cyndy Salz** for helping bring this dream night to life!

All photos by Tom Zapcic photography. Scan the QR code to view the full photo gallery!



Members of COA staff, L to R: Meg Sulzberg, Chariclia Karavanas, Kristen Grazioso, Joe Ahart, Madison Wurst, and Kari Martin



L to R: Grace Hanlon, Honorary Event Co-Chair Hon. Tom Arnone, Carolyn Burtnick



L to R: Event Co-Chairs George Destafney and Matthew LaMura



Governor Sherrill: The Health of the Bay and Ocean Are in Your Hands



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

On September 8, 2026, the United States Court of Appeals for the Third Circuit voided the water quality certification that the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection (NJDEP) granted for the harmful Northeast Supply Enhancement Project (NESE) methane gas project. COA maintains that because the court found the permit unlawful, NESE cannot lawfully construct in Raritan Bay.

The Tidelands Resource Council (TRC) granted a Tidelands Utility License, in part, because Transco held a valid Water Quality Certificate. Recently, COA sent letters to the Attorney General's office and the TRC to explain that the License is based on an invalid permit.

However, TRC did not revoke the license, stating that ongoing litigation will determine what happens next. COA will now file a brief against the Tidelands Utility License granted to Transco. Now, Transco is applying for a new water quality certification, and responsibility falls on Governor Sherrill's NJDEP to deny it.

Be a voice for the Bay! Tell Gov. Sherrill to deny future water quality certification applications for the NESE pipeline!

1. Call Governor Sherrill's Office at (609) 292-6000.
2. Send an email to Governor Sherrill's Office by filling out the form at tinyurl.com/EmailGovSherrill.
3. Tag Governor Sherrill on social media with your message to stop NESE:
   Instagram: @govsherrillnj
   Facebook: @GovMikieSherrill
   X: @GovSherrillNJ

More Rain? More Poo-llution! Summer 2026 Beach Water Quality Data Review

Contact: Swarna Muthukrishnan, Science@CleanOceanAction.org; Joe Ahart, Programs@CleanOceanAction.org

Under the federal "BEACH Act," coastal states test designated swimming waters for pathogens (i.e., bacteria) or "poo-llution" during the summer beach season. NJDEP's 2026 data show bacteria levels rose compared to 2025, with heavier rainfall at Jersey Shore beaches. They were measured at designated bathing beaches through NJDEP's Cooperative Coastal Monitoring Program (CCMP) and at non-designated beaches tested through the Environmental Coastal Monitoring (ECM) Program. Some of the results from the 2026 summer season include:

- There were 94 water quality advisories and nine beach closures for beaches monitored under CCMP (Figure 1)
- For non-designated beaches monitored under ECM, 78 water quality advisories were issued for 2026 (Figure 3)
- Data trends for the past five years (2022-2026) show an increased number of advisories/closures for both ECM and CCMP and reiterates the need to conduct more testing to find pollution sources (Figures 2 and 4)

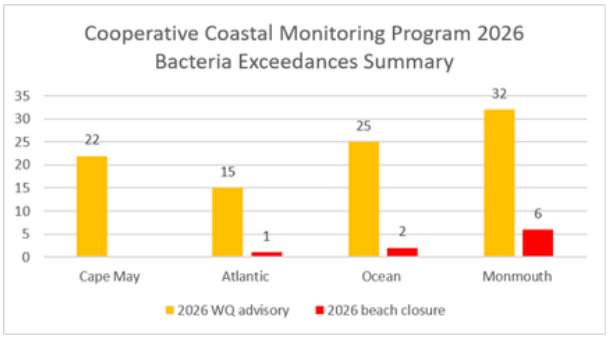


Figure 1. CCMP 2026 (217 beaches including ocean, bay, and river sites). Monmouth County had the most advisories/closures. n = 94

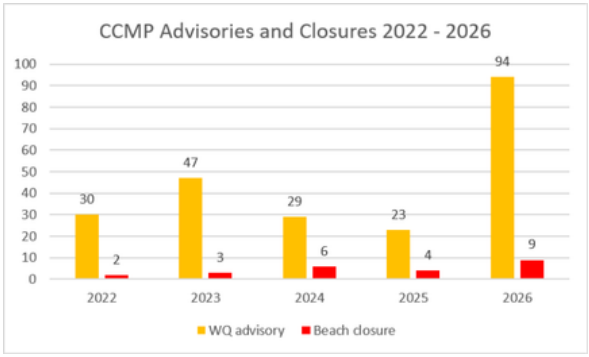


Figure 2. CCMP 2022-2026; advisories and closures of coastal "bathing beaches" due to elevated bacteria

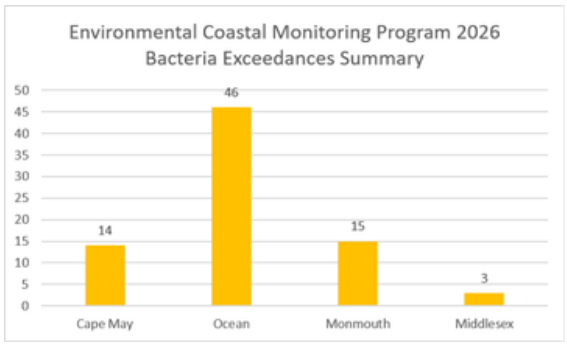


Figure 3. ECM 2026 Results Summary of bacteria at 52 NJ bay and river stations. n = 78

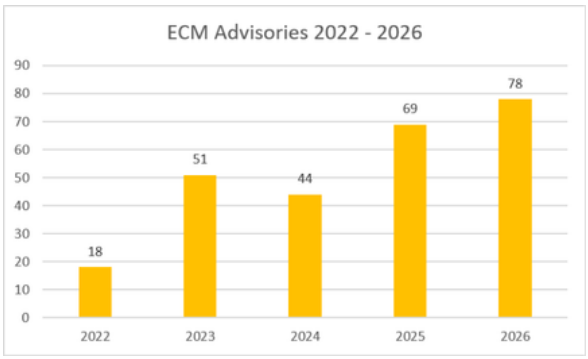


Figure 4. ECM 2022-2026: Advisories indicating elevated bacteria in NJ coastal "bathing beaches."

Next Steps: Since implementation in 2001, the BEACH testing programs have resulted in major improvements, but they must be expanded. COA's campaign, Simple Ways to Save Swimmers from Sewage, advocates for expanding sampling locations, sampling after rainstorms, and extending the program season into October. To see the list and data, scan the QR code or visit njbeaches.org.

Act Today: Support Legislation Reducing Plastic Pollution!

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

Take action now: the New Jersey Legislature will be considering several proposed bills focused on reducing plastic pollution this fall session, and you can take action to support them!

Notably, **NJ State Senator Bob Smith's Protect Our Health from Plastics Act (S4656)** would phase out 50% of plastic packaging materials within ten years, prohibit the use of certain toxic substances in plasticpackaging, and prohibit chemical recycling from being counted as waste reduction in the state.

Scan the QR code to join COA in the fight against plastic pollution!

Lend a Hand for NJ Beaches!

Contact: Meg Sulzberg, BeachSweeps@CleanOceanAction.org

COA's Fall Beach Sweeps will take place **Saturday, October 24th**, from **9:00 AM to 12:30 PM at over 80 sites across New Jersey**, and it is your last chance to pre-register online! You can still register in-person on the day of the Sweeps at your chosen site.

Volunteers of all ages will gather to remove harmful debris and catalog marine litter, gathering critical data that helps protect wildlife and ocean ecosystems and reduce pollution statewide.



Beach Sweeps is a day of fun for all, including small humans and furry friends!

Volunteers can now register for Fall Beach Sweeps in English, Spanish, or Portuguese! Additionally, the Beach Sweeps data card is available all three languages. If Spanish or Portuguese is your preferred language, simply ask your Beach Captain for a translated copy when you arrive at your cleanup site.



Register on our website in your preferred language:

~ **English:** CleanOceanAction.org/register
~ **Español:** CleanOceanAction.org/registro
~ **Português:** CleanOceanAction.org/cadastro

Interested in learning more about how you contributed to this statewide community science effort? The 2025 Beach Sweeps Annual Report, featuring last year's debris data, trends, and key findings, is now available in print. **To request a print copy, email Meg Sulzberg!**

Statewide Sponsors

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Countywide Sponsors

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Additional support provided by Enterprise Mobility Foundation

Over 180 Students Explore Coastal Science at Free Cape May Student Summit

Contact: Kristen Grazioso, Education@CleanOceanAction.org



Almost 200 students took learning outside the classroom for a free experience!

On October 8, more than 180 South Jersey students in grades 5–8 gathered for COA's Cape May Student Summit to enjoy a day of hands-on environmental learning, exploration, and discovery! Students rotated through five field experiences led by local environmental experts and organizations, with support from students from Lower Cape May Regional (LCMR) High School.

Activities included learning about birds during Things with Wings with **Kristal Stahler from the Nature Center of Cape May**, exploring Marine Mammals and More with **Hailey Ross from the Cape May Whale Watch and Research Center,** investigating Water Quality with **COA Education Ambassador Deby Ives**, and examining microscopic life in the Plankton Lab led by **LCMR's Travis Davis!**

The day also featured six interactive roundtable stations led by LCMR students, including lessons and activities about horseshoe crabs, marine invertebrates, nonpoint source pollution, stormwater solutions, marine debris, and terrapins. By connecting classroom learning with real-world environmental science, students were able to gain hands-on knowledge and understanding of the ecosystems that make NJ's coast and ocean so special!

COA thanks LCMR high school, Nature Center of Cape May, and our sponsors at the Insurance Industry Charitable Foundation (IICF) for helping make this inspiring day possible! Keep an eye out for our next newsletter to see highlights from the Island Beach State Park Student Summit!

Students Become Ocean Advocates at 2nd Annual Sea Bright Day

Contact: Kristen Grazioso, Education@CleanOceanAction.org

COA thanks the Borough of Sea Bright for inviting us to participate in the 2nd Annual Sea Bright Day on September 19! The event was a day of community, fun, and celebration of the Jersey Shore and all things Sea Bright!

Representing COA at the event were Student Environmental Advocates & Leaders (SEAL) students **Jazmin Whitmeyer** and **Maggie Ngo,** who shared information about COA's programs, advocacy efforts, and ways community members can get involved in protecting New Jersey's coastal environment. Waves of thanks, Jazmin and Maggie, and thank you to everyone who stopped by our table to learn more about protecting our ocean, beaches, and waterways!

Interested in participating in advocacy and outreach? Email Kristen!



Second-year SEAL Students and Red Bank Regional High School seniors Jazmin Whitmeyer (left) and Maggie Ngo (right) at Sea Bright day!

Calling South Jersey Shore Enthusiasts!

Contact: Chariclia Karavanas, Outreach@CleanOceanAction.org



COA has a program for everyone, including residents of New Jersey's southern counties! COA hosts many annual programs throughout the region and exhibits at numerous community events. Want the scoop on COA's programs, events, and volunteer opportunities in South Jersey?

Learn how you can get involved and make a splash for a clean ocean and beaches! **Scan the QR code (left) to join our new South Jersey e-mail list or email our South Jersey Program Coordinator, Chariclia.**

Visit COA at the New Jersey League of Municipalities Conference (Exhibit #139)!

Contact: Madison Wurst, Advocate@CleanOceanAction.org



Waterways connect our communities and us all! Learn more about Clean Ocean Action and join the efforts to ensure our waterways are clean and safe and the ocean is protected from pollution and harmful industrial activities. Stop by Exhibit Space #139 to speak with our science, policy, advocacy, outreach, and education staff about our programs and initiatives as well as the latest issues, actions, and campaigns related to water quality problems and sources of pollution upstream and downstream to the ocean.

"SEA" you there:
Time: November 17-18, 2026
Place: Atlantic City Convention Center, Exhibit Space #139

Scan here to learn more about the conference

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



Recap of Harvest Hope for the Ocean

Take Action: NESE and Plastic Pollution Bills!
More rainfall? More poo-llution! See the data.
Last Chance: Register for Beach Sweeps!
Learn about our upcoming events!

OCTOBER 2026: Dive in for the latest updates!

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:

Ruth Blaser
Peter Cauterucci
Michele Ferro Jasionowski
Carol Anne Ross
Karen Shatto
Drew Thompson
Brian A. Unger
Rob Watson

In Honor of:

Jojo LaRosa

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