

## PRESS RELEASE

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### **37<sup>th</sup> ANNUAL FALL EVENT**

**Over 3,500 Volunteers Remove Harmful Debris After Busy Summer**

**NJ's Largest Volunteer Event and Longest Running Beach Clean-up**

As a beautiful fall day dawned, thousands of volunteers with buckets in hand gathered at 76 sites along the Jersey Shore and beyond to remove harmful debris at Clean Ocean Action's (COA) 37<sup>th</sup> Annual Fall Beach Sweeps. Enthusiastic Beach Captains had recruited volunteers of all ages for their important mission-- find, remove, and tabulate harmful debris from Bergen to Cape May Counties. Each of our volunteers becomes a COA citizen scientist for the day by keeping track of the litter they collect. A day of citizen action creates a legacy of evidence to increase awareness and drive public policy.

Cleaner beaches are safer for marine life and more enjoyable for people. The all-important data becomes a hub of evidence to help COA and partners to reduce the sources of marine debris, especially plastics.



***Atlantic City's Stockton Avenue Beach Sweeps volunteers***

*"It is a fantastic day for the ocean. The amazing turnout for the Fall Sweeps is testament to the love and commitment people have for a clean ocean! Many brought buckets and all removed thousands of items, mostly plastic from the beach. The data they collected will help us continue to make progress to reduce marine debris," said Cindy Zipf, Executive Director, Clean Ocean Action.*



***Co- Beach Captain Laurel and volunteer collecting debris (including beach toys) off North Wildwood's beaches.***

Each Beach Sweeps provides a snapshot of what is found on nearly every beach from Perth Amboy to Cape May, NJ, and beyond. Over the years, this data suggests trends. Since 1984, one trend is unequivocal: single-use plastic items are on the rise. Once again, plastic looks to be the #1 culprit on our beaches.

#### **Impact of the Single Use Waste Reduction Act**

Results will be rolling in over the next couple weeks. COA is hopeful that the data will show a reduction in the number of items now banned thanks to the law that went into effect on May 4, 2022. This law now bans plastic bags, several types of foam food containers, as well as reducing access to plastic straws. It will take time to see results, and COA anticipates sharing results in the coming weeks.



***Students from Somerset County school participate in Point Pleasant Beach Sweeps while learning about different types of pollution from data card.***

*“The data collected by the thousands of dedicated volunteers up and down the coast is one part of the amazing story of the Beach Sweeps. When the data is put to work in the form of advocacy for better policies and laws to reduce pollution sources, it makes the Beach Sweeps a legacy of action that benefits communities, wildlife, the economy, and the environment,” said Kari Martin, Advocacy Campaign Manager, Clean Ocean Action. “The data has turned hours of hard work removing litter from our shorelines into meaningful and impactful state and federal laws, as well as municipal ordinances. That is a sweeping success.”*



## **Debris collected in buckets at the Spring Lake Beach Sweeps**

Beach Sweeps help reduce debris from entering waterways, where they become harmful and even lethal to aquatic life. The data from the Beach Sweeps turns a one-day event into a legacy of information to improve public awareness, change wasteful habits, enforce litter laws and improve policies to reduce sources of marine debris. Marine debris is a human caused, human solved issue.

*“It is great to see so many volunteers showing up for their beaches, especially after a storm like the one we just had. Keeping human debris and pollution out of our waterways may be only one way to protect our marine life, but it is so important and so rewarding to see everyone coming together for this cause,”* said **Toni Groet, South Jersey Coordinator, Clean Ocean Action.**



***Longport volunteers from small to tall at Beach Sweeps.***

Below are preliminary results from Sandy Hook collected by 327 volunteers, including the top five items:

- (1)** 5,173 plastic bottle caps/lids
- (2)** 4,086 plastic pieces
- (3)** 3,838 plastic food and candy wrappers
- (4)** 1,744 plastic straws/stirrers
- (5)** 1,004 foam pieces

“I am extremely grateful that I had the opportunity to help coordinate the Sandy Hook Beach Sweep along with 60 other MAST students. I want to give a big thank you to everyone who came out here to volunteer. The work that we are doing today not only reduces the amount of litter on the beach, it also promotes positive legislative change in the world of marine debris and raises awareness about these environmental issues,” said **Chelsea Delalla, Beach Sweeps Coordinator, High School Student, Marine Academy of Science and Technology (MAST).**

Throughout Beach Sweeps, volunteers are encouraged to note any out-of-the-ordinary finds. COA labels these finds as “The Roster of the Ridiculous.” Some of the items catalogued today included: a knife handle, happy meal toy, car muffler, menstrual cup, boat seat, plastic grapes, HDMI cable, and a rearview mirror.



***Junior Beach Captain Katie with sister Emmy at the Island Beach State Park Beach Sweeps.***

COA’s volunteer Beach Captains and Junior Beach Captains are there to direct groups of volunteers and individual participants at each site. These Captains lead the cleanup effort and are indispensable to the overall success of the program.



***The Brick Girl Scouts showed up in support of Beach Sweeps in Brick Township sites.***

*“It makes my heart happy to see so many people of all ages come out and clean our Ventnor beach. Seeing the children with their parents and grandparents and teachers reminds me of my favorite quote: “In the end, we will conserve only what we love, we will love only what we understand, and we will understand only what we are taught.” This is the famous quote that the Senegalese forest engineer Baba Dioum” said Jess Mumford, longtime Volunteer Beach Captain in Wildwood.*

**Made Possible By Our Beach Sweeps Sponsors**



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For over 37 years, Clean Ocean Action has organized grassroots volunteer Beach Sweeps across the state. These dedicated organizations have provided vital funding so that COA can execute and expand the Sweeps. COA also recognizes and thanks all the companies who have supported the event over the years. Clean Ocean Action is grateful for the support of the sponsors and is inspired by all that they do to support our communities.

**Valerie Montecalvo with Bayshore Recycling** stated, *“On this 10<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Super Storm Sandy, it is more important than ever to pay close attention to our environment and do everything we can to reduce storm impacts and pollution in our waterways. The information collected today helps Clean Ocean Action with their research to find the issues negatively impacting our beaches and waterways. Recycling plays an such important part in preserving our natural resources. The Montecalvo & Bayshore Family of companies are proud to be an annual sponsor and contributor to the Sandy Hook Beach Sweep. I want to thank all the volunteers for their efforts today and throughout the year.”*

*“The Clean Ocean Action Beach Sweeps play a significant role in drawing attention to and reducing the plastics in our oceans and on our coastline,”* **said Bill Henderson, Senior Vice President, Brother International Corporation.** *“As a state sponsor and participant of these events, we know how important these efforts are because there is nothing quite like seeing the*

*types of debris firsthand and getting out into the community to make a difference. We are grateful to everyone who joined the Beach Sweeps efforts as we head into Earth month.”*



Beach Sweeps Captains, COA staff, and Bank of America Representatives at Margate’s Beach Sweeps.



Liza Baskin and Claire Ng, teachers from the Marine Academy for Science and Technology, tally the data from the Sandy Hook Beach Sweeps with Claire’s daughters Amelia and Erika.

*“Bank of America is a longtime supporter of Clean Ocean Action’s Beach Sweeps, with their efforts to keep our beaches clean of harmful debris contributing to the overall wellbeing of our community,” said Alberto Garofalo, President, Bank of America New Jersey. “We can all do our part to protect our coastlines for future generations, and COA’s findings demonstrate the real impact of our everyday decisions.”*



Rowan University Environmental Action League eagerly returns for another year of Beach Sweeps.

Waves of thanks to all of our wonderful volunteers, from the small to the tall, who participated in today's Beach Sweeps! Together we can all make a difference for a cleaner ocean to be enjoyed by generations to come simply by picking up litter whenever and wherever we see it. For example, a piece of debris found on a central or northern New Jersey street can travel downstream and eventually end-up in the ocean.

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*Clean Ocean Action's mission is to improve the degraded water quality of the marine waters off the New Jersey/New York coast. Clean Ocean Action will identify the sources of pollution and mount an attack on each by using research, public education and citizen action to enact and enforce measures which will clean up and protect the Atlantic Ocean.*