



Clean Ocean Action

Ocean Advocacy Since 1984
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Sometimes in the waves of change, we find our true direction.

– *unknown*

Winter 2022 – 2023

Dear Friends,

Good Tidings! ...from the grand, shared waters of the New Jersey/New York Coast—one of the last remaining wild and industry-free ocean realms in the nation. Rich and teeming with marine life, it is a wonder and is essential to our beachy quality of life...but is at grave risk.

First, the good news...ocean life here is thriving! This summer we all delighted in seeing pods of whales and dolphins offshore or stood in the deep clear ocean water seeing our toes and watching marine life swim or scurry by. Did you know a new island is growing off the coast of NJ called Horseshoe Island? It's only 2 years old, and already providing habitat for countless birds! Undeniably, the ocean is always full of surprises, and also provides joy, solace, food, jobs, fun, mystery, life, and the very air we breathe. This remarkable marine ecosystem with many estuaries and bays, is what makes this region special.



And remember, all these gifts are provided free of charge!

All we need to do is leave the ocean be and keep it from harm.

Considering all the ocean provides to our soul, quality of life and economy it is imperative to protect and sustain this precious ecosystem.

To that end, thanks to your support, COA made some significant progress!

- In April, COA's 2021 Beach Sweeps Report highlighted over 10,000 volunteers who removed 513,605 items (a record) including 82.3% plastic. Since 1985, volunteers removed over 8 million pieces of litter!
- Thanks to the law that COA championed, since May over 4 BILLION (yes with a "B") single use plastic bags have been eliminated-in just 6 months; and another law was passed to increase plastic recycling!
- COA was tapped to Chair the NJ Plastic Advisory Council by the Governor which is tasked to identify next steps to reduce additional sources of single use plastic waste.
- With COA's new in-house laboratory, sources of pollution in Deal Lake, Barnegat Bay, and the Two Rivers area are being tracked down with community partners and at less cost to municipalities.
- Education soared this year! Demand for environmental outdoor and indoor programs surged, with 2,500 people small and tall, participating.
- The Student Environmental Advocates and Leaders (S.E.A.L) program for high schoolers grew by 30% and the Class of 2023 is the most diverse and enthusiastic group yet!
- COA's winning strategies are highly respected and in demand, with speaking requests from national, regional and local media, and organizations.
- According to Charity Navigator, a leading nonprofit rating agency, COA is **#1 nationally in the Ocean and Coastal Waters category for Leadership & Adaptability and Accountability & Finance.**

Yet, not all news is good...challenges and threats continue to grow, 95% of NJ's waterways fail to meet Clean Water Act standards...and nearly all drain into the ocean.

- The US is the #1 producer of plastic waste in the world, ranks as high as 3rd in coastal nations for litter¹ and marine litter is expected to increase dramatically.
- Microplastics have contaminated every ecosystem and food chain; they are in the air we breathe, the water we drink, the food we eat, and as a result, are now found in humans.
- The United Nations reports **the number one threat to our natural environment is land and sea abuse.**

Which leads to the most serious risk -- Reckless Ocean Industrial Exploitation.

Alarming, forces are at play to industrialize the ocean at an astonishing scale, calling it a new "blue ocean economy," and it includes using the ocean for massive waste disposal, energy production, fish factories, and mechanized carbon sequestration.

Just off the Jersey Shore, proposals for offshore wind have doubled within a year. Nearly two million acres of the sea (almost the size of Yellowstone National Park) are planned for 25 massive facilities by 2030, with thousands of turbines as tall as the Chrysler Building and thousands of miles of cables. The speed, scope, and scale of this industrialization are unprecedented in the world and will dramatically alter the ecosystem. To date, there is little

¹ <https://www.science.org/doi/10.1126/sciadv.abd0288>

meaningful commitment to reduce impacts to marine life as evidenced by insufficient ecological baseline assessment, no responsible pilot study, and fast-track processes that ignore public concerns. For example, a NJ law was passed to prohibit coastal towns from limiting impacts to their communities from wind development.

For millennia marine life has evolved with a silent, endless open sea. Changes of this magnitude will wreak havoc for marine life by creating chaotic undersea urban landscapes with no time to evolve. Offshore wind may hold promise to reduce climate change, but a healthy ocean is our planet's number one ally in reducing CO2 emissions. COA is on the case researching and evaluating impacts and identifying alternatives and solutions to ensure ocean protection.

COA is proactively confronting all these challenges and more with our outstanding professional team:

- ◆ **Supporting Responsible and Reasonable Offshore Wind** by working to create a network to ensure the race to industrialize the ocean does not harm marine life and the ocean's ability to reduce climate change, along with identifying alternatives, and demanding a pilot study to understand true costs and benefits.
- ◆ **Reducing Plastic Pollution** by leading a regional network of prominent organizations in proactive and protective actions to reduce plastic pollution by drafting legislation, defending existing laws, and chairing the NJ Plastic Advisory Council.
- ◆ **Creating Pathways for Change** by inspiring people to get involved and share what they know. Programs for success include Beach Sweeps, Rally for the Waterways, Student Environmental Advocates and Leaders (SEAL), Shore Community Leaders, Eco-Fest, internships, and mentorships.
- ◆ **Reducing Pollution** to make waterways safe for families and fish with our model "Find-it and Fix-it" programs to engage citizen volunteer scientists to help track down and eliminate sources of pollution.
- ◆ **Remain Vigilant** using our signature watch-dog techniques and maintaining an ever-ready coalition to oppose efforts for expansion of harmful fossil fuel, sources of waste, and polluted run-off into the sea.

While the threats to the ocean are daunting, **together** we have the power to solve these problems.



Protecting the ocean is our top and only priority. Clean Ocean Action is laser-focused on the health of the ocean, which helps protect all of us from climate change.

You are the essential element for success as you hold the power that when united, leads to victory.

Whether with your time, voices, dollars, and/or dedication, your support is at the heart of success. You value the ocean and its many remarkable gifts, and you trust Clean Ocean Action's unique ocean-first, alliance-based, no-blame-game approach to meet challenges and opportunities. Our time-tested successful strategy is implemented by our small yet mighty team, including a PhD, an attorney, and professionals in science, policy, and education for maximum impact; new this year are a South Jersey Coordinator and a Debris Free Sea Coordinator.

In short, Clean Ocean Action is not just our name, it is our mission. These above highlights just skim the surface of COA's many issues, programs, and actions.

However, the path forward is formidable. Only your true-blue support and dedication empowers and sustains COA's intense and complex work to ensure a healthy vibrant ocean for today and tomorrow.

Please answer the call of the ocean and support Clean Ocean Action.

Together, ever onward,

Handwritten signature of Cindy Zipf in blue ink.

Cindy Zipf
Executive Director

*P.S. Your support is in good hands. Clean Ocean Action is proud to have the **highest ratings** from the nation's largest, most respected nonprofit assessment organizations, specifically:*

- ✓ **Charity Navigator:** Four-star Rating for 12 years
- ✓ **Candid (previously GuideStar):** Platinum Level