

PRESS RELEASE



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Clean Ocean Action 2012 Annual Beach Sweeps Report Released

A Citizen Call to Action for April 27, 2013

Sandy Hook, NJ----Clean Ocean Action (COA) released the 2012 Beach Sweeps Report today, highlighting the Dirty Dozen, Roster of the Ridiculous, and the totals for over 90 items of marine debris collected by volunteers last year. To view the Beach Sweeps Report online, visit www.cleanoceanaction.org.

In 2012, 6,926 volunteers collected, tallied, and removed over 350,000 pieces of debris from NJ's shoreline during Clean Ocean Action's 27th Annual Beach Sweeps. The majority of the debris removed was disposable plastics—items designed to be used once and thrown away. Plastic, including foam, represents 82.7% of the total waste found. It is clear: disposable plastic items continue to litter beaches, threaten marine life, and impact water quality.

The Beach Sweeps has become New Jersey's largest environmental event with thousands of citizens combing nearly all 127 miles ocean coastline and bay beaches. The spring event coincides with Earth Month to provide citizens with an educational, hands-on, meaningful, rewarding activity to make a real difference.

During these 28 years, over 100,000 citizens have collected over 5 million items, tabulated data, and created a legacy of information that is used to fight for better anti-litter programs and educate people about the harms caused by marine debris to the economy and wildlife.

Key to the program's success is the Beach Captains that lead each of the Beach Sweeps locations. These dedicated volunteers manage the activities.

"Unfortunately, many of our Beach Captains were affected by Superstorm Sandy and were not able to return the volunteer collected data from the Fall Beach Sweeps. The numbers reflected in this year's report, especially from the fall, should be considered conservative," commented **Tavia Danch, Clean Ocean Action Program Manager**. "On a brighter note, COA volunteers were able to remove nearly 148,000 pieces of debris before Sandy hit our coasts," added Danch.

"Beach Sweeps has become a tradition for the tall and the small to give back to their ocean, take a stand against litter, and rid the shores of marine debris. Over the years the list of items has changed and shifted, however what remains constant is the Jersey Pride people have for the real Jersey Shore and their commitment to

improve the environment,” said **Cindy Zipf, Executive Director of Clean Ocean Action**. “This year is like no other. Our beaches have been profoundly altered by Superstorm Sandy. Dunes and dune grasses are gone. Large debris has piled up along the shorelines and is in our waterways. How these may impact Beach Sweeps may provide some interesting and valuable insights,” added Zipf.

“Beach Sweeps allows people who don't visit beaches often to enjoy all that they have to offer. Volunteers can see marine life, like the turtles that pop up often near the Highlands Bridge, and see historical places like Sandy Hook,” remarked **Peter Donnelly, Middle School Student & Beach Sweeps Volunteer Beach Captain**.

“Once at my beach, Union Beach, I dug out a huge anchor almost the same size as me,” he exclaimed.

Sources and Solutions

Pollution continues to flow in from many non-point sources on land and combined sewer outfalls in the New York City and New Jersey metropolitan area.

“Pollution comes from many diverse sources, including old stormwater and combined sewer systems,” said **Heather Saffert, Clean Ocean Action Staff Scientist**. “Buildings and pavement prevent water from going into the ground. Traditional stormwater systems move water away quickly – increasing erosion, flooding, and pollution. NJ ranks first in the country for stormwater infrastructure needs. We need to protect and restore waterways, upgrade old combined sewer systems, and invest in stormwater methods that slow down, treat, and infiltrate water,” stated Saffert.

Call to Action

Clean Ocean Action (COA) invites citizens and organizations to participate in the 28th Annual Spring Beach Sweeps on Saturday, April 27, at over 60 sites along the Jersey Shore.

“This year, Beach Sweeps has been folded into Clean Ocean Action’s *Wave of Action For The Shore* program, a monthly volunteer initiative started in December 2012 to help the people, businesses, habitats and waterways of New York and New Jersey affected by Superstorm Sandy. Since December, *Wave of Action* has seen over 100 volunteer projects in New York and New Jersey with 5,500 registered volunteers,” remarked **Lindsay McNamara, Clean Ocean Action Program and Communications Associate**. “Beach Sweeps will be the first *Wave of Action* where data will be collected, a vital addition which will help inform citizens and elected officials of pollution problems after Superstorm Sandy,” said McNamara.

“This year's Beach Sweep is particularly important as Sea Bright prepares to open for the summer season. Our businesses are working hard to be open for the summer, and all the Borough departments are preparing the town to be ready for the traditional start of the summer on Memorial Day weekend,” remarked **Frank Lawrence, Sea Bright Volunteer Coordinator**. “The volunteers who help clean up our beaches will bring us one step closer to recovery from the devastation of Superstorm Sandy,” he added.

To view the Beach Sweeps Report online visit, www.cleanoceanaction.org. For a complete list of site locations and details, please visit www.cleanoceanaction.org.

All volunteers must register through www.cleanoceanaction.org. Volunteers should bring gloves, dress for the weather, apply sunscreen, and wear closed-toed, hard-soled shoes.

Consider Taking your Beach Sweeping to the Next Level

Collect donations for your volunteer efforts and raise funds for COA's ocean protection work. Raise \$100 and receive Clean Ocean Action's popular ChicoBag made from recycled plastic bottles. Teams can join the effort at <http://www.crowdrise.com/BeachSweeps>.