



PRESS RELEASE

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[Click here for 2024 Beach Sweeps Report link](#)

Contacts:

Meg Sulzberg, Plastic Free Sea Coordinator, beachsweeps@cleanoceanaction.org, 732-872-0111

Kayla Weidner, Marketing and Events Director, communications@cleanoceanaction.org, 732-872-0111

Cindy Zipf, Executive Director, zipf@CleanOceanAction.org, 732-872-0111

COA's 2024 "Dirty Dozen" and "Roster of the Ridiculous"

[CLICK HERE to view and download the 2024 Beach Sweeps Report](#) (also attached)

Shows Evidence for More Reductions Needed of Single Use Plastic

Celebrate 40 Years of Beach Sweeps on Saturday, April 12

Long Branch, NJ – Ever wondered where that lost AirPods, an entire gallon of maple syrup, or even a piece of your car key went? Clean Ocean Action (COA) Beach Sweeps volunteers uncovered these oddities and much more among a staggering **276,899** items found along New Jersey's beaches, according to the 2024 Beach Sweeps Report released today. The report, unveiled each spring, showcases the findings from the previous year's cleanup events and serves as a call to action for volunteers to join the upcoming Spring Beach Sweeps on April 12.

"As the new Plastic-Free Sea Coordinator, I am excited to see the incredible impact that our communities can have in preserving New Jersey's beautiful shores. The data from the 2024 Beach Sweeps highlights the urgent need for action, and I encourage everyone to join us on April 12 for this important event. Together, we can make a real difference in reducing plastic pollution and protecting our oceans for future generations," said Meg Sulzberg, Plastic-Free Sea Coordinator, Clean Ocean Action.

The 2024 Beach Sweeps Report documents the items collected by **6,835** volunteers at over **80** locations in just 6 hours during the 2024 Spring and Fall Beach Sweeps. The report includes data highlights and trends (pg. 5), showcases the twelve most commonly collected items ("The Dirty Dozen", pg. 7), features the most absurd finds in "The Roster of the Ridiculous" (pg. 10), and emphasizes the significance of the Beach Sweeps data in "Data in Action" (pg. 4).

Since 1985, a total of **176,510** Beach Sweeps volunteers have clocked in **1,003,119** hours to remove **8,768,132** pieces of trash from beaches and parks across the state of New Jersey!

COA's Beach Sweeps, a bi-annual event held each April and October, is New Jersey's largest grassroots environmental cleanup and citizen science initiative. The cleanup spans the entire state, from Englewood to Cape May, with additional sites along the Delaware River.



*Fall 2024 Beach Sweeps
Volunteers in Stone Harbor*

*“The Borough of Sea Bright is proud to partner with Clean Ocean Action for their 40th Anniversary Beach Sweep by hosting our inaugural **Spring Clean Sea Bright**—a community-wide cleanup effort. As a town situated between the Shrewsbury River and the Atlantic Ocean, we recognize the vital need to protect our waterways. Litter in our downtown area doesn’t just affect our streets—it directly impacts the health and sustainability of our rivers and oceans. This initiative is a powerful opportunity to educate, inspire action, and bring our community together in a shared commitment to environmental stewardship,” said **Mayor Kelly of Sea Bright**.*

DATA DRIVES ACTION

Data is the cornerstone of the Beach Sweeps program. The data collected by Beach Sweeps volunteers offers concrete evidence of the scale and severity of the marine debris issue, which can be used to urge elected officials to pass and enforce laws and policies aimed at reducing its sources.

*“The hard work of our remarkable Beach Sweeps volunteers and captains shows, unfortunately, that people tend to be litterbugs. The more single use items that become available and are used, the more they wash up on our beaches. However, when we pass laws and ordinances and implement restrictions on these items, we see less on the beaches,” said **Cindy Zipf, COA Executive Director**. “These trends can be seen over time.”*

The data collected during Beach Sweeps is compiled into annual reports that have been used for over two decades to highlight the urgent need for change in how waste is managed and litter reduced. For example, Beach Sweeps data has provided clear evidence of the rising prevalence of single-use plastic items such as plastic shopping bags, straws, and foam containers. This data has helped raise awareness of the ongoing environmental impact of these items, showing the need for shifts in both consumer behavior and waste management practices. The efforts to curb these wasteful practices have resulted in significant reductions in plastic and foam items along New Jersey’s beaches, illustrating the power of community-driven action and the importance of continued focus on sustainable habits.

*“This Saturday at all the Spring Beach Sweeps sites, volunteers will be provided opportunities to learn about the Packaging Product Stewardship Act S.3998/A.5009 and to take action to reduce plastics and packaging,” said **Toni Groet, South Jersey Coordinator**. “By informing themselves, signing petitions, and making calls to elected officials, volunteers can take their action to the next level to help reduce pollution.”*

Highlights of the Results



The Bucket Brigade’s Youngest Member

With nearly 100 specific items tallied, each Beach Sweeps provides a snapshot of what is found on New Jersey’s beaches. Here are some data highlights from the 2024 Beach Sweeps:

- 6,835 volunteers collected a total of 276, 899 items

- 83.02% of debris collected was made of plastic.
- Dog poop bags remained steady at 0.39%, totaling 1,067 bags in 2024.
- After not appearing on the list since 2008, Metal Beverage Cans popped up in 2023 at #10. It remains on the list for 2024 but dropped to #11.
- In 2024, the total percentage of plastic food and shopping bags reached its lowest-ever recorded level, accounting for just 1.02% of the total debris collected. During the fall, this percentage was lower (0.89%), with only 1,067 bags found on the beaches.
- The “Roster of the Ridiculous” lists hundreds of items, including a meat thermometer, fake eyelashes, and over 10 feet of copper wire.

Over time, the items tracked in COA’s data card have evolved to reflect changing patterns in litter. In the 2021 Beach Sweeps report, COA updated the data card to address the rising prevalence of certain items, adding new “Ocean Offenders”—particularly plastic items that have become more commonly found on New Jersey’s beaches. These items have been closely monitored, and the data shows some notable shifts since their inclusion in 2021:

- **Dental Floss Picks**, added in 2021, increased from 0.43% to 0.72% in 2024, totaling 1,991 pieces.
- **Disposable Masks** decreased dramatically from 0.61% in 2021 to 0.12% in 2024.
- **Reusable Masks** dropped from 0.10% to 0.01%.
- **Disposable Gloves** saw a slight decline from 0.26% to 0.22%.

Ocean Wavemakers

Each year, thousands of individuals—from families and school groups to solo participants—come together to remove debris, gather valuable data, and help protect the environment. In 2024, there were 167 Beach Captains and Junior Beach Captains who played a pivotal role in these efforts. Their dedication not only contributes to cleaner shorelines but also helps raise awareness about the importance of keeping our oceans free from litter. By taking part in these cleanups, volunteers directly contribute to reducing marine pollution and are a critical part of COA's mission to safeguard our oceans for future generations.



Keyport Beach Co-Captains Mike and Lynn, with their Junior Beach Captain Ryan

Beach Captains are the backbone of the Beach Sweeps program, offering leadership and organization at each cleanup site. These dedicated volunteers are responsible for managing and directing the groups of volunteers, ensuring the cleanup runs smoothly and efficiently. They provide support, encourage teamwork, and oversee the data collection process, making sure each piece of debris is recorded accurately. Thanks to the hard work and commitment of the Beach Captains, the Beach Sweeps have continued to grow in scope and impact, with more beaches being covered and larger amounts of debris removed each year. Their leadership is indispensable in making the program a success, inspiring others to join the effort and make a lasting difference for the ocean.

Waves of Thanks to Beach Sweeps Sponsors

Beach Sweeps would not be possible without the generous support of its sponsors, whose commitment to environmental protection helps make the event a success each year. These sponsors, ranging from local businesses to national organizations, provide crucial financial and in-kind support that allows Clean Ocean Action to mobilize thousands of volunteers, coordinate cleanups across numerous beach sites, and raise awareness about the importance of marine conservation. Their dedication to sustainability and community involvement helps to amplify the impact of Beach Sweeps, ensuring that New Jersey's beaches remain clean and safe for both people and wildlife. With the help of sponsors, COA can continue to expand the program, engage more volunteers, and drive positive change for the ocean and the environment.

“At Vantage Apparel, sustainability is at the core of what we do. Through our Earthwise Collection and our commitment to 1% for the Planet, we’re dedicated to making a positive environmental impact. The Clean Ocean Action Beach Sweep aligns perfectly with our mission to protect and preserve our natural resources. As an Ecovadis-certified company, we are continuously enhancing our sustainability practices, and we encourage everyone to join us in keeping our beaches clean for future generations,” said Rob Watson, CEO, Vantage Apparel.



Vantage Apparel: Proud state sponsor of the Beach Sweeps for their second year!

“While the opportunity in front of us is enormous, so is the impact we can have when we work together. Last year Clean Ocean Action and its volunteers collected thousands of items of trash from New Jersey’s shoreline in a single day. Rolling up our sleeves means cleaner, safer beaches, and our team will be back again this year,” said Alberto Garofalo, president, Bank of America New Jersey.

Call to Action: Volunteers Needed on April 12



ShopRite: Proud sponsor of the Beach Sweeps for 30 years!



Bank of America: Proud sponsor of the Beach Sweeps for 25 years!

Clean Ocean Action invites volunteers to celebrate the 40th anniversary of Beach Sweeps in 2025 on April 12, 2025, from 9am-12:30pm. Volunteers can register individually to sweep at 80 locations along the coast at CleanOceanAction.org. In celebration of this milestone, COA launched Bucketman!



“BucketMan was brought to life to inspire volunteers to bring their own reusable buckets to Beach Sweeps—and to remind everyone that being a hero for the sea can start with one simple action. Swapping a plastic bag for a bucket may seem small, but when we all do it together, it makes a huge difference, reinforcing the deeper message of sustainability behind Beach Sweeps. He’s a mas cot with a mission (and a pretty cool cape)!” said Kayla Weidner, Marketing & Events Director and creator of BucketMan.

To help COA reduce the use of plastic trash bags, volunteers are asked to bring their own repurposed bucket, bag, or other receptacle for trash collection; volunteers should also wear gloves and closed-toe, hard-soled shoes. Beach Sweeps is a rain or shine event. Interested volunteers are encouraged to pre-register [here](https://CleanOceanAction.org). For Beach Sweeps details, sites, and Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) go to CleanOceanAction.org.

2025 Statewide Sponsors



2025 County Sponsors



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