



PRESS RELEASE

Press Availability:

Video via Zoom, by email, by phone

Contacts:

Kira Cruz, Debris Free Sea Coordinator, beachsweeps@cleanoceanaction.org, 732-872-0111

Kiana Miranda, Public Relations & Communications Coordinator,

communications@cleanoceanaction.org, 732-872-0111

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

COA's 2022 Beach Sweeps Report Highlights "Single Use Waste Reduction Act" Appears to be Working "Dirty Dozen" and "Roster of the Ridiculous" – The Usual Unusual

Plus, No Fooling — Call to Action Beach Sweeps Saturday, April 1
[CLICK HERE to view and download the 2022 Beach Sweeps Report](#) (also attached.)

Long Branch, NJ – Looking for your giant 3-foot teddy bear, rearview mirror, or polar bear figurine grandma bought you last Christmas? Clean Ocean Action (COA) Beach Sweeps volunteers found these and so much more among 376,969 items on the beaches of New Jersey, according to its 2022 Beach Sweeps Report released today. The report's premiere occurs each Spring to highlight the data collected in the previous year's beach cleanup event and to rally volunteers to attend the upcoming Spring Beach Sweeps on April 1.

"As the newest Debris Free Sea Coordinator, the data results encourage optimism as we continue following the Single Use Waste Reduction Act! The data collected has shown an immense decline in debris specifically following this law. Beach Sweeps volunteers are crucial to the role of debris assessment. It is truly inspiring to SEA how many citizens are dedicated to enhancing the cleanliness and livelihood of our beaches. I am eager to see how else we can create positive change in our state." said Kira Cruz, Debris Free Sea Coordinator, Clean Ocean Action.

The 2022 Beach Sweeps Report documents the items collected by 8,148 volunteers at 74 locations in just 6 hours during the 2022 Spring and Fall Beach Sweeps. The report includes data highlights and trends (pg. 4), the twelve most commonly collected items ("The Dirty Dozen", pg. 7), the most outrageous finds ("The Roster of the Ridiculous", pg. 5), as well as the Beach Sweeps data importance and in action (pg. 3).



Spring 2022 Beach Sweeps Volunteers in Keyport

COA's Beach Sweeps, held every April and October, is New Jersey's largest volunteer-driven, citizen science and environmental event. The site locations are from Perth Amboy to Cape May with additional sites along the Delaware River and in Northern NJ. Over the years of Beach Sweeps, 166,011 volunteers have contributed 971,622 volunteer hours to remove and record debris from NJ's beaches and waterways.

*“If you want to change the world, people power is the answer,” said **Cindy Zipf, Executive Director, Clean Ocean Action.** “The Beach Sweeps is proof positive of that fact. We are grateful and inspired by the dedication and true-blue spirit of volunteers, especially Beach Sweep Captains who are the heart and soul of these successful events.”*

DATA MEANS ACTION

Collecting data is key to the Beach Sweeps program. The essential task can be tedious and time consuming, so it is a testament of true-blue ocean devotion by volunteers. Importantly, the data collected by Beach Sweeps volunteers provides hard evidence about the scope and magnitude of the marine debris problem, which people can use to convince elected officials to pass and enforce laws and policies to reduce the sources.

*“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.”*

The data is compiled into annual reports that have been used for over two decades as evidence of the need for strong policies and behavior changes to reduce litter and wasteful practices. For example, the Beach Sweeps data was used to provide evidence of soaring numbers of single-use plastic items, including plastic shopping bags, straws, and foam plastic containers for the recent New Jersey law, which COA calls the Single-Use Waste Reduction Act (SUWRA). The law, which was fully effective on May 4, 2022, bans all plastic bags from stores, paper bags from large stores, foam plastic (e.g., Styrofoam) food containers, and limits plastic straws upon

request. In the first 5 months of the law coming into effect, the New Jersey Food Council estimated that 3.44 billion plastic bags and 68 million paper bags were eliminated from the waste stream. In addition, the Beach Sweeps data was used to support passage of the NJ Recycled Content law which incentivizes recycling by creating a market for recycled materials, including plastic. These laws make New Jersey stand out as a national leader in reusing waste and preventing litter, as well as protecting public health and marine life.

Highlights of the Results



MAST Student volunteers prepping for the 2022 Beach Sweeps at Sandy Hook

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 2022 Beach Sweeps:

- 8,148 volunteers collected a total of 376,969 items
- 82.34% of debris collected was plastic including foam plastic.
- Plastic pieces dominated the 2022 "Dirty Dozen" -- the top 12 items collected -- ranking #1 with 53,869 pieces and making-up 14.29% of the total debris collected for the year.
- Plastic bottle caps/lids came in a close second place on the Dirty Dozen list, with a count of 52,512 items collected.
- Plastic cap rings made the "Dirty Dozen" list for the first time in over 10 years, totaling 7,520 pieces collected, which is down from 2021's recording of 9,072 pieces.
- The "Roster of the Ridiculous" lists hundreds of items, including a lawn mower, stone countertop, and a mop.

The data from 2022 also shows straws, bags, and foam declined. The law COA calls the Single Use Waste Reduction Act (P.L. 202, c.117) went into full effect in May 2022. Items affected by the law saw an encouraging downward trend including the following highlights:

- Plastic Shopping Bags make history leaving the Dirty Dozen list for the 1st time since 2007 ranking at #14.
- Straws/Stirrers fall to #6 on the Dirty Dozen list for the first time since 2016; decreasing 39% from 2021.
- Foam Takeout Containers decreased by 29% from Spring to Fall 2022; an overall decrease by 38% from 2021-2022.

Over time, items are added and removed from the COA data card. In the 2021 Beach Sweeps report, COA updated the data card to reflect changes in litter, removing several wood, metal, and glass items while adding new plastic items, dubbed the “Ocean Offenders.” These items were documented for the first time in 2021, and the data shows they have already decreased in numbers compared to 2021’s data:

- Dog Waste Bags decreased by 20.52%
- E-Cigarette Cartridges, etc. decreased by 31.88%
- Plastic Food Takeout decreased by 16.39%
- Dental Floss Picks decreased by 16.30%
- Disposable Wipes decreased by 40.58%
- Disposable Face Masks decreased by 39.90%
- Reusable Face Masks decreased by 52.97%
- Disposable Gloves decreased by 29.39%

Since 1985, a total of 166,011 Beach Sweeps volunteers have clocked in 971,622 hours to remove 8,315,027 pieces of trash from beaches and parks across the state of New Jersey!

Ocean Wavemakers

The success of the Beach Sweeps is possible thanks to the dedication and support of all the wonderful volunteers -- from the small to the tall -- who enjoy giving back to the ocean which gives them so much joy. 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.



Atlantic City Missouri Ave Beach Captain, Michelle ready for volunteers to arrive

COA’s volunteer Beach Captains direct the masses of volunteers at each site. These Captains lead the cleanup effort and are an indispensable part to which Clean Ocean Action owes the overall success of the program. Thanks to the commitment of the Beach Captain volunteers, the program continues to grow its impact each year, expanding to more beaches, inspiring, and educating new volunteers, and removing continuously greater amounts of debris from the marine environment.

Waves of Thanks to Our Beach Sweeps Sponsors

For 38 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. Clean Ocean Action is grateful for the support of the sponsors and is inspired by all that they do to support our communities.

“Kearny Bank’s long-standing commitment to assisting and working alongside its neighbors also extends to the physical environment they call ‘home,’” explains Craig Montanaro, President and CEO of Kearny Bank. “The Jersey Shore at Sandy Hook is undoubtedly a delicate, threatened ecosystem. As a member of the area community, with 13 branches in Monmouth and Ocean counties, it’s both our pleasure and responsibility to participate in this Clean Ocean Action effort. I know I speak for all our employee volunteers when I say we’re delighted to help,” he added.

“Beach Sweeps is Vantage’s favorite volunteer event. As a NJ company, our associates are passionate about keeping our beaches and waterways clean and safe. Working with Clean Ocean Action to help protect the ocean and marine life, is a local activity with worldwide benefits,” said Ira Neaman, President of Vantage Apparel.



2022 and 2023 Beach Sweeps Monmouth County Sponsor Bayshore Recycling

Call to Action: Volunteers Needed on April 1

Clean Ocean Action is calling for volunteers to flock to beaches on Saturday, April 1, 2023, from 9am-12:30pm, to give the beaches a good clean sweep before the summer, just as many marine species return to the shore. Volunteers can sign-up to sweep at a record high 76 locations along the coast, found on our Beach Sweeps [locations page](#).

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. Interested volunteers are encouraged to pre-register [here](#) or at CleanOceanAction.org.

###