



PRESS RELEASE

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Record Litter Released in COA's 2021 Beach Sweeps Report, Plus "Dirty Dozen" and "Roster of the Ridiculous" Announced

*New Spanish Data Card Unveiled for 2022 Spring Beach Sweeps on
Saturday, April 9*

[CLICK HERE to view and download the 2021 Beach Sweeps Report \(also attached.\)](#)

Long Branch, NJ – Looking for your TV remote, car keys, \$20, dentures, or air pods? Clean Ocean Action (COA) Beach Sweeps volunteers found them and more on the beaches of New Jersey, including a record number of 513,605 items, according to its 2021 Beach Sweeps Report released today. The premiere of the report occurs each Spring to rally more volunteers to attend the upcoming Spring Beach Sweeps on April 9, and to highlight the data that is collected during the event.

"Last year, over 10,000 volunteers welcomed the opportunity to gather safely, get outside, and give back by participating in the Beach Sweeps. As always, their hard work and diligent data collection provided COA with interesting insights about litter at the Jersey Shore, but thanks to the new and improved data card, we were able to track new items for the first time, including personal protective equipment, dental floss picks, e-cigarette waste, and more. This is the first step toward identifying solutions to prevent these latest 'ocean offenders' from littering our beaches," **said Alison Jones, Watershed Program Manager.**



Young volunteers gear-up before cleaning-up at Ideal Beach in Middletown

These highlights were unveiled with the release of the 2021 Beach Sweeps data today, documenting the results collected at 70 locations in just 6 hours during last year’s biannual 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 impact of the data (pg. 3).

COA’s Beach Sweeps, held every April and October, is New Jersey’s largest volunteer-driven, citizen science and environmental event with 70 site locations in 2021. The site locations are from Perth Amboy to Cape May with additional sites along the Delaware River and in Northern NJ. Over the years, 157,863 volunteers have contributed 947,178 volunteer hours to remove and record debris from NJ’s beaches and waterways.

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. 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 data was instrumental in getting the NJ Single Use Plastic Waste Reduction Act passed. The bulk of this law goes into effect on May 4, 2022, which bans all plastic bags from stores and foam plastic (e.g., Styrofoam) food containers. In addition, the 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. Next, COA is setting its sights on banning balloon releases.

“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.”

Data: Legacy of Action to Reduce Marine Debris

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.



Marine Academy of Science and Technology (MAST) teachers Liza Baskin and Claire Ng compile data collected by hundreds of volunteers at Sandy Hook

With nearly 100 specific items tallied, each Beach Sweeps provides a snapshot of what is found on New Jersey's beaches. Prior to last year's Beach Sweeps, 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 confirms how pervasive they have already become in the marine environment:

- Cotton swab sticks: 274
- Dental floss picks: 2,172
- Disposable wipes: 1,523
- Dog waste bags: 1,667
- E-cigarette cartridges/caps/pens: 3,686
- Plastic food takeout containers: 2,020
- Disposable face masks: 3,080
- Reusable face masks: 538
- Disposable gloves: 1,310

The overall data also reflects the prevalence of plastic; 82.32% of debris collected was plastic, including foam. In fact, several plastic items reached record numbers: 69,454 plastic bottle caps/lids and 58,589 food/candy wrappers/bags far exceeded past totals. These record numbers resulted in a surprising update to the "Dirty Dozen," the top twelve most commonly collected items. For the first time in nearly a decade, plastic pieces fell to number two, as plastic bottle caps/lids moved up to the number one spot. On a positive note, plastic beverage bottles, cigar tips, glass pieces, and plastic

store/shopping bags all fell in the rankings, suggesting that the prevalence of these littered items may be on the decline.

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.



Avon-by-the-Sea Beach Captains Troy and Angela Romanowski, with Junior Beach Captains Caroline Nolan and Julia Rubinstein

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 36 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.

"We are thrilled to sponsor Clean Ocean Action's Statewide Beach Sweeps to help bring communities together and protect our ecological habitats," said Don Cummins, President, Brother International Corporation. "Clean Ocean Action's efforts to reduce plastic pollution and help sustain marine life are vital for the entire state and we are proud to play a part in it! As part of our continued commitment to Clean Ocean Action and social responsibility, we look forward to our own employees participating in beach cleanup events this Summer!"

“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.”*



Volunteers fuel up before hitting the beaches at Sandy Hook with breakfast provided by long-time sponsor Wakefern ShopRite

Call to Action: Volunteers Needed on April 9

Clean Ocean Action is calling for volunteers to flock to beaches on Saturday, April 9, 2022, 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 75 locations along the coast, found at the event’s [locations page](#). Plus, COA’s Beach Sweeps data card (la forma de datos) is now available in Spanish!

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 must pre-register at CleanOceanAction.org.

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