

# Coastal cleanup support continues to increase

## Public becoming more aware of need to keep beaches free of litter

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■ Staff Writer

(Sept. 1, 2006) An ice skate, exercise bike, a washing machine, toilet plunger, auto parts, a urinal, garbage bags full of trash and 15,351 cigarette butts all have something in common.

According to John Hughes, Secretary of the Delaware Department of Natural Resources & Environmental Control, they were all found on the beaches and coastal areas during the 2005 annual Coastal Cleanup.

"There is a yearning among people to do something active in support of our environment and this is an occasion where they actually get to do it," Hughes said.

Over the years, Hughes said, progress has been made. There are more people using the beaches, but he thinks trash left behind is less because people are more careful.

"People actually point to other people saying, 'Hey are you going to leave that? Pick that up.' I think people are more careful and this sort of program is just right. It fits perfectly into what we are all about here on coastal Delaware and coastal Maryland."

The 2006 Cleanup began last week with a news conference to inform people about the upcoming beach-cleaning events in Maryland, Delaware, Virginia and southern New Jersey. There will be approximately 75 locations cleaned this year, most of them on Saturday, Sept. 16. Other cleanups will be held in late September through early October. Commemorative T-shirts will be given to all volunteers who help with the cleanup.

This is the 20th year for the Cleanup and the 16th consecutive year Delmarva Power is the primary corporate sponsor.

Delmarva Power representative Matt Likovich agreed with Hughes and thinks people are more careful and concerned.

Likovich said he has tracked the data over the years and remembers more than 60,000 pounds of trash was collected some years. Last year about 2,500 volunteers collected more than 34,000 pounds of trash.

"I think that people are getting the message and we're hoping to instill that environmental message in young children."

He said the Cleanup effort has three key parts: it's good for the environment, it's a good community activity and it's an educational vehicle because it teaches people about the dangers of pollution and the need to recycle.

Ocean City Mayor Rick Meehan said the resort has gone to great measures to keep the beaches clean.

The beaches are cleaned every night

with beach tractors and there is a dune patrol that cleans dunes in specific areas, he said. Many condominium and property owners have adopted dunes and take care of them, Meehan added.

"It's amazing how many bags of trash you get out of a block of dune area," he said.

The town also works with the Surfrider Foundation, which recently finished stenciling "Leave Only Your Footprints" on the beach trash cans.

"We certainly need people to become involved, become aware and take part in this project to keep the beaches safe and clean not just for us, but for the aquatic life as well," Meehan said.

Nancy Howard is in charge of the Ocean City Cleanup, which is on Saturday, Sept. 16. For more information about the Ocean City event, call 410-524-1881.

Joyce Ponsell of Assateague Coastal Trust is the organizer of the Assateague Island cleanup on Sept. 16. She said more help is needed in Maryland. On Assateague, Ponsell said she is looking for volunteers with four-wheel drive vehicles to transport volunteers up and down the beach. Those that are interested can call 410-629-1539.

In Maryland last year, she said, picnic items constituted 39 percent of the debris picked up, while plastic water bottles made up 22.5 percent of what was collected.

"If just those items alone were taken



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Delmarva Power representative Matt Likovich speaks at a press conference at the 146th Street beach last Thursday about the 2006 Coastal Cleanup initiative.

off the beach, we'd be in better shape," she said.

Ponsell said cleaning the beaches is a great family activity and a good way to teach children a simple lesson.

"If you teach the kids to clean up when they are toddlers, maybe, just maybe, in their teen years they will retain that philosophy in helping keep our ocean and beaches clean," she said.