

**Participating Organizations**

- Alliance for a Living Ocean
- American Littoral Society
- Asbury Park Fishing Club
- Atlantic Highlands Arts Council
- Bayside Regional Watershed Council
- Bayside Salwater Flyrodders
- Belford Seafood Co-op
- Belmar Fishing Club
- Beneath The Sea
- Bergen Save the Watershed Action Network
- Berkeley Shores Homeowners Civic Association
- Cape May Environmental Commission
- Central Jersey Anglers
- Citizens Conservation Council of Ocean County
- Clean Air Campaign, NY
- Clean Water Action
- Coalition Against Toxics
- Coalition for Peace & Justice/Unplug Salem
- Coastal Jersey Parrot Head Club
- Communication Workers of America, Local 1075
- Concerned Businesses of COA
- Concerned Citizens of Bensonhurst
- Concerned Citizens of COA
- Concerned Citizens of Montauk
- Eastern Monmouth Chamber of Commerce
- Environment NJ
- Fishermen's Conservation Association, NJ Chapter
- Fishermen's Conservation Association, NY Chapter
- Fishermen's Dock Cooperative, Pt. Pleasant
- Food and Water Watch, NJ
- Friends of Island Beach State Park
- Friends of Liberty State Park, NJ
- Friends of the Boardwalk, NJ
- Garden Club of Allenhurst
- Garden Club of Bay Head and Mantoloking/Seaweeders
- Garden Club of Brielle/Bayberry
- Garden Club of Englewood
- Garden Club of Fair Haven
- Garden Club of Long Beach Island
- Garden Club of RFD Middletown
- Garden Club of Morristown
- Garden Club of Navasink
- Garden Club of New Jersey
- Garden Club of New Vernon
- Garden Club of Oceanport
- Garden Club of Princeton
- Garden Club of Ridgewood
- Garden Club of Rumson
- Garden Club of Sea Girt/Holly
- Garden Club of Short Hills
- Garden Club of Shrewsbury
- Garden Club of Spring Lake
- Garden Club of Terra Nova
- Garden Club of Washington Valley
- Great Egg Harbor Watershed Association
- Green Party of Monmouth County
- Green Party of New Jersey
- Highlands Business Partnership
- Hudson River Fishermen's Association
- Jersey Shore Captains Association
- Jersey Shore Parrot Head Club
- Jersey Shore Partnership
- Junior League of Monmouth County
- Keyport Environmental Commission
- Kiwanis Club of Shadow Lake Village
- Leonardo Party & Pleasure Boat Association
- Mantoloking Environmental Commission
- Marine Trades Association of NJ
- Monmouth Conservation Foundation
- Monmouth County Association of Realtors
- Monmouth County Audubon Society
- National Coalition for Marine Conservation
- Natural Resources Protective Association, NY
- NJ Beach Buggy Association
- NJ Environmental Lobby
- NJ Friends of Clearwater
- NJ Marine Education Association
- Nottingham Hunting & Fishing Club, NJ
- NYC Sea Gypsies
- NY Marine Education Association
- NY/NJ Baykeeper
- Ocean Wreck Divers, NJ
- PaddleOut.org
- Piscataway Saltwater Sportsmen Club
- Raritan Riverkeeper
- Religious on Water
- Rotary Club of Point Pleasant
- Rotary District #7540—Interact
- Saltwater Anglers of Bergen County
- Sandy Hook Bay Anglers
- Save Barnegat Bay
- Save the Bay, NJ
- SEAS Monmouth
- Shark Research Institute
- Shark River Cleanup Coalition
- Shark River Surf Anglers
- Sierra Club, NJ Shore Chapter
- Sisters of Charity, Maris Stella
- South Monmouth Board of Realtors
- Staten Island Tuna Club
- Strathmere Fishing & Environmental Club
- Sunrise Rod & Gun Club
- Surfers' Environmental Alliance
- Surfrider Foundation, Jersey Shore Chapter
- Surfrider Foundation, South Jersey Chapter
- TACK 1, MA
- Unitarian Universalist Congregation/Monm. Cnty.
- United Boatmen of NY/NJ
- Viking Village
- WATERSPIRIT
- Women's Club of Brick Township
- Women's Club of Keyport
- Women's Club of Long Branch
- Women's Club of Merchantville
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- Zen Society, NJ



*Ocean Advocacy  
Since 1984*

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**Testimony on S 864 by Peter Blair Esq., Policy Attorney of  
Clean Ocean Action, before the New Jersey Senate  
Environment and Energy Committee, in Trenton Annex  
January 30, 2020**

Thank you. My name is Peter Blair; I am an attorney with Clean Ocean Action.

I would also like to thank the committee and Senator Smith for your leadership on this issue. Holding a hearing on this bill so early in the session shows your continued dedication to seeing New Jersey become a leader in the fight against plastic pollution.

I want to begin by focusing on a key aspect of the bill, the definition of reusable bag. Currently, the law correctly bans all film plastic bags, and leaves no wiggle room for thicker single-use plastic bags. This cannot be changed. New Jersey must not make the same mistakes which others have.

Under California's statewide ban for instance, the definition of reusable bags does allow for thicker plastic. As a result, there has been a dramatic increase in the use of these thicker plastic bags, which, to be clear, though defined as reusable, are not. These bags are uniformly treated as single-use, and it is easy to understand why. These bags look identical to the single-use bags that consumers have used for decades. Simply making them thicker and slapping the word reusable on them is not enough to change consumer behavior. When consumers see these bags they will see what they have used their entire life. It's no surprise they treat them the same way. What allowing for that loophole did was create even more environmental harm. The exact harm the legislation tried to regulate. Now they have thicker bags in their landfills, in their storm drains, in their waterways, and in our ocean. These bags will take even longer to break down, and when they finally do, they will release more microplastics than the bags which were so rightfully banned. In short, thicker plastic will add insult to injury. The definition of reusable bag S.864 should not be changed.

I now want to talk about what one of the main purposes of this bill is, which is an answer to what Senator Smith has rightfully called a public health crisis. While the environmental harms we have created from our plastic pollution has been painfully clear for decades, we are only just beginning to understand the

extent to which microplastics have entered the food chain, and the public health impacts resulting from human consumption.

Research is showing microplastics are found just about everywhere. This is not an exaggeration. According to the US Geological Survey, microplastics are found in 12% of freshwater fish in the United States. They are also found at a rate of 112,000 particles for every square mile of water in the Great Lakes, and 1,285 particles for every square foot of river sediment. Microplastics have even been found in our drinking water. An investigation commissioned by the Orb Media group, found microplastics in 83% of the tap water samples tested worldwide. The United States had the highest rate of contamination—94% of water samples. Microplastics have even been found in rainwater.

Thus, it is painfully clear that we are not only ingesting these small plastic particles, but that we are doing so on what is essentially a daily basis. The scientific community is continuing to publish new information about the health effects of microplastics, but we are sadly behind the ball on this. However, what we do know should cause serious alarm. For instance, it is suspected that, due to their small size, microplastics can enter our bloodstream, our lymphatic systems, and our livers, which could cause serious negative health impacts. Studies of birds have shown that ingesting plastic disrupts iron absorption, stresses the liver, and even goes so far as to reshape parts of the small intestine. Moreover, there is increasing scientific consensus that microplastics are acting as carriers for toxic bacteria and chemicals, thereby, providing a new source of human ingestion of these harmful, and often carcinogenic, compounds.

More and more information is being published. This legislation will reduce microplastics by phasing out some of the most common single-use plastic items that are making their way into our waterways and ocean which eventually break down into these tiny particles.

The time to act is now. Again, this legislation is extremely reasonable in what it requires, and it would provide needed environmental and public health benefits. Thank you.

#### **Citations and Further Reading:**

- Justin Gardiner, California Banned Plastic Bags. So Why Do Stores Keep Using Them?, Available at <https://www.sfchronicle.com/politics/article/California-banned-plastic-bags-So-why-do-stores-14872852.php>
- United States Geological Service - Microplastics in our Nations Waterways. Available at: <https://owi.usgs.gov/vizlab/microplastics/>
- Bakir, Rowland, and Thompson, *Transportation of Persistent Organic Pollutants by Microplastics in Estuarine Conditions*, University of Plymouth. Available at: <https://core.ac.uk/download/pdf/29588679.pdf>
- Alimba and Faggio, *Microplastics in the Marine Environment: Current Trends in Environmental Pollution and Mechanisms of Toxicological Profile*. Available at <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/30877952>

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**Testimony on S 864 by Cindy Zipf, Executive Director of  
Clean Ocean Action, before the New Jersey Senate  
Environment and Energy Committee, in Trenton Annex  
January 30, 2020**

Thank you, Mr. Chairmen and members of the Committee, for the opportunity to speak on this important topic. My name is Cindy Zipf, and I am the Executive Director of Clean Ocean Action. I start by thanking Senator Smith for his leadership on this critical environmental and public health issue, and for acting on this bill so quickly. COA is also grateful to the Committee and the Senate for passing this bill at the end of the previous session.

For the last thirty-five years, Clean Ocean Action has been at the forefront of combatting the plastic plague our ever-increasing single-use plastic consumption has created. In that time, we have seen the harm and death that these needless and easily replaceable items have caused on the marine ecosystem. Many of the facts and testimony on the environmental crisis plastic pollution has created is not new information. For over thirty years, numerous studies and news articles have documented the growing environmental harm caused by single-use plastic pollution. This problem has been talked about for decades, as evidenced by the articles in your packet, and yet little has been done, until recently.

After years of inaction, we are finally seeing progress around the world, and throughout the United States. Currently eight states have taken action in one way or another. Worldwide we have seen progressive legislation from the European Union, New Zealand, Canada, South Korea and many, many more.

Most recently, leadership can be seen here in New Jersey in local municipalities where 55 municipalities have passed ordinances that take action against the exact single-use items identified in S. 864. This number is growing every month.

As a state, New Jersey is falling behind as an environmental leader. The Garden State, the state that prides itself on its shore has failed act despite overwhelming evidence, and the reasonableness of S.864. At its core this bill asks consumers for three things: One, to bring your own reusable bag. Bags which the government is willing to give away for free for the first two months the legislation is in effect. Two, if you need a straw, ask. Three, replace Styrofoam containers. That's it.

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These are not burdensome requirements to help save marine life and protect public health. It is a reasonable request and a good start. COA submits for your consideration two fact sheets which list some of the numerous international, US cities and states, and New Jersey municipalities that have taken legislative action. As you will see, S. 864 falls as a moderate approach internationally, and is a strong representation of the many ordinances being passed in NJ.

Just a reminder, the number of single-use plastic items found on New Jersey beaches alone outlines the need for action. Through our beach sweeps program Clean Ocean Action has attempted to create a snapshot of the volume of marine debris and single-use plastic along our coast. According to our 2018 Annual Beach Sweep Report, volunteers picked up 454,365 items of trash from New Jersey beaches, of which 81.77% was plastic. While our 2019 Annual Report will not be published until April, we do have a sneak preview. In 2019 volunteers picked up:

- (1) 20,069 Plastic Bags
- (2) 35, 124 Plastic Straws
- (3) 6,067 Foam food products such as cups and take out containers
- (4) 25,630 foam pieces.

Importantly, these numbers are just what volunteers were able to collect in two short three-hour-sessions. The true number is much higher. Our single-use plastic consumption has come at a great cost to the marine environment. We can and must do better. The time for action is long overdue. COA urges swift passage of S.864 by this committee and the Senate. Let’s put this bill on the Governor’s desk for Earth Day 2020.

<b>Clean Ocean Action Beach Sweeps Data</b>			
<b>Item</b>	<b>2017</b>	<b>2018</b>	<b>2019</b>
<b>Plastic Bags</b>	<b>17,892</b>	<b>21,527</b>	<b>20,069</b>
<b>Plastic Straws</b>	<b>31,167</b>	<b>36,156</b>	<b>35,124</b>
<b>Foam Food Products (cups, take-out containers, plates)</b>	<b>5,137</b>	<b>5,569</b>	<b>6,067</b>
<b>Foam Pieces</b>	<b>21,117</b>	<b>24,127</b>	<b>25,630</b>