



Defending the
Sea Since 1984

CLEAN OCEAN ADVOCATE

F E B R U A R Y 2 0 2 6

Despite National Security Concerns, Empire Wind 1 Construction Returns

Contact: *Madison Wurst, Advocate@CleanOceanAction.org*

On December 22, the Trump administration suspended construction activities at Empire Wind 1, 19 miles off the coast of Long Branch, New Jersey. The Department of the Interior issued the order to Empire Wind and four other offshore wind projects on the East Coast, due to “the rapid evolution of relevant adversary technologies and the resulting direct impacts to national security.”

Additional concerns include impacts to maritime safety and navigation (National Academies). The Department of Energy also determined wind turbines may act as an aviation hazard due to interference with radar, reducing detection sensitivity, obscuring potential targets, and generating false targets.

The Department suspended construction for 90 days while completing investigations on these impacts. Both Equinor, Empire Wind’s parent company, and New York state filed lawsuits against the federal administration in response.

A federal judge subsequently granted the company a preliminary injunction on the suspension order. **This allows for construction to resume** while the lawsuit plays out. Equinor, permitted to continue construction, immediately **installed an offshore substation last week**, although it is unclear if they ever stopped construction. **Learn more at CleanOceanAction.org.**

*Sleipnir, a crane vessel that Equinor used to help install Empire Wind 1's offshore substation
(Photo: Hoek Van Holland)*

Protecting NJ Waterways: Road Salt Monitoring Is Back

Contact: *Dr. Swarna Muthukrishnan, Science@CleanOceanAction.org*

For the sixth year, COA is collaborating with New Jersey Watershed Watch to monitor the impacts of deicing applications to the quality of waterways in the Two Rivers Watershed. Road salt can wash into waterways, **damaging freshwater ecosystems and harming wildlife**. This winter road salt monitoring will be conducted between January and March by COA’s trained community scientists. These volunteers will monitor chloride levels of fifteen upstream, non-tidal water bodies and the data will be submitted to the statewide data portal. Past monitoring shows that chloride levels in these waterways often exceed New Jersey’s water quality standards, which highlights the need for **responsible road salt use and better management practices**.



“Skip the Stuff” is Now State Law!

Contact: Meg Sulzberg, BeachSweeps@CleanOceanAction.org

Plastic utensils are often provided to customers with takeout orders by default, often in excess. Many of these single-use plastics are found littering communities. Over the past decade, COA’s Beach Sweeps volunteers have **removed more than 36,000** plastic forks, spoons, and knives from NJ beaches.

Over the past 2 years, COA has been working with several environmental groups, led by Clean Water Action, to push a bill reducing this source of single-use plastic pollution. The past year, COA’s Plastic-Free Sea Coordinator Meg Sulzberg and Student Environmental Advocates and Leaders (SEAL) high school student Landon Hoberman testified in favor of the “Skip the Stuff” bill (S3195/A5157) to require restaurants to provide **single use items** — such as plastic utensils and condiment packets — **only upon customer request**. Governor Phil Murphy **signed the bill into law** on January 20, his last day in office.

For more information about the bill and sponsors, visit Clean Ocean Action’s website.

This marks a major stride toward **tackling single-use waste, reducing plastic pollution, and saving businesses money!**



COA’s Plastic-Free Sea Coordinator Meg Sulzberg (right) and Clean Water Action’s Marta Young (left) testify on January 9, 2026

Calling Middle Schools for Student Summit!

Contact: Kristen Grazioso, Education@CleanOceanAction.org

Teachers, are you looking for a field trip that your students will talk about after they get back to class? COA’s Student Summit is a **free, hands-on beachside experience** that brings marine science and environmental education to life for middle schoolers in Grades 5–8!

Applications are now being accepted for middle schools in northern and central New Jersey for the Spring Student Summit!

Date: May 27 & 28, 2026

Time: 8:45 AM – 12:30 PM

Place: Gateway National Recreation Area, Sandy Hook

Students trade desks for sand dunes as they explore real-world science through interactive activities that fulfill Next Generation Science Standards and expand education beyond the classroom.



Schools are only responsible for transportation and lunches. A refundable \$100 deposit helps ensure participation.

Apply by April 15, 2026 at CleanOceanAction.org’s website or by scanning the QR code.

BEACH SWEEPS
EST. 1985



Join the Sweeps!

Interested in fighting plastic pollution with us? Participate in COA’s Spring Beach Sweeps on **April 11, 2026**.

Registration opens on Valentine’s Day.

Show your love for the ocean and sign up at CleanOceanAction.org or with the QR code above after registration opens on February 14!



Meet Mermaid Aria to “Shell-ebrate” COA’s 42nd Birthday!

Contact: Kristen Grazioso, Education@CleanOceanAction.org

Join COA in celebrating our birthday at a fun event for the whole family! Waves of Wonder: Bubbly Brunch & Marine Carnival takes place at **West Long Branch Community Center on Sunday, February 22 from 10 AM to 1 PM.**

Enjoy a brunch buffet, delicious beverages (adult, caffeinated, and kid-friendly), live music, “touch tank,” and tons of marine-themed crafts, games, and activities for kids. Meet and get a photo with a mermaid! Bring the whole crew, invite your friends, and celebrate the ocean with us. You “shore” don’t want to miss it!

Scan the QR code or go to CleanOceanAction.org/wavesofwonder to purchase your tickets and marine carnival activity packets, or support through sponsorship, underwriting, and in-kind donation opportunities!

(@Mermaid.Ariadne / Photo: Jo Arlow Photography)



- **Adults:** \$60 (includes one adult beverage ticket)
- **Kids (under 12):** \$15
- **Discounted Marine Carnival Activity Ticket packet** (save time and money at event): \$25



Donate in Tribute of a Clean Ocean!

COA extends a special thanks to supporters who acknowledged, honored, and memorialized family and friends by donating to COA. In 2025, nearly \$17,000 was donated to honor birthdays, anniversaries, graduations, or other celebrations, and remembering lost loved ones.

Donations made in tribute or in memorial power COA’s internship program to inspire students interested in ocean advocacy and environmental professions.

To make a tribute or in memorial donation, visit CleanOceanAction.org/donate, scan the QR code, or call the office at 732-872-0111.

Contact COA

Office: (732) 872-0111

Ocean Policy & Advocacy: Madison Wurst - Advocate@CleanOceanAction.org
Water Quality: Dr. Swarna Muthukrishnan - Science@CleanOceanAction.org
Education & Volunteer Programs: Kristen Grazioso - Education@CleanOceanAction.org
Beach Sweeps & Marine Debris: Meg Sulzberg - BeachSweeps@CleanOceanAction.org
Communications & Marketing: Evan Leong - Communications@CleanOceanAction.org
Business & Operations: Kari Martin - Business@CleanOceanAction.org
Administration: Suzanne Power - Projects@CleanOceanAction.org
Executive Director: Cindy Zipf - Zipf@CleanOceanAction.org



Clean Ocean Action
49 Avenel Blvd.
Long Branch, NJ 07740
www.CleanOceanAction.org
732-872-0111
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FEBRUARY 2026: Dive in for the latest!



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Our Ocean Tributes