



News Release

For immediate release:

Ocean City Partners Team Up to Encourage Source Reduction by Launching 'Protect Our Sand & Sea' Program

Ocean City, Maryland – (July 23, 2019): The Ocean City Green Team, which includes members from the Town of Ocean City, Maryland Coastal Bays Program (MCBP), Ocean City Surf Club and Surfrider Foundation, have created an optional and eco-friendly source reduction program to encourage businesses to voluntarily commit to make greener choices. In addition, the Green Team is collaborating on a cigarette-butt recycling program to further promote source reduction.

After a year of planning and preparation, the “Protect Our Sand & Seas” pledge was launched in March and officially began collecting signatures. Now, only a few months and a few dozen signatures later, the Green Team celebrated an official kick-off at Macky’s Bayside Bar & Grill on Tuesday, July 23. “Last year, with the very successful start of Strawless Summer, we saw the community demonstrate support for campaigns aimed at protecting our sand and seas,” commented Mayor Rick Meehan. “This summer, we turned to our environmental advisory committee [the Green Team] and challenged them to take source reduction to the next level for 2019 and that is exactly what they’ve done.”

The *Protect Our Sand and Sea* campaign is an initiative to reduce the plastic waste stream in Ocean City and has been developed as the next step to reducing plastic distribution from businesses. The campaign consists of several source reduction pledges. Businesses can choose to participate in any one of the five pledges.

Thanks to multiple sources of funding secured by MCBP and the Town of Ocean City, those that participate will receive free social media promotion, newspaper advertisements and marketing tools including recognition plaques and stickers. Funding sources include NOAA, DNR, EPA, and Keep Maryland Beautiful.

“Our goal is to engage restaurants in Ocean City to identify practices and products that will help reduce their use of single-use plastics, particularly straws, take-out containers and cups,” explains MCBP’s Development and Marketing Coordinator Sandi Smith. “We understand there can be an increased cost to area businesses willing to take these pledges and are hoping the rewards will be worth the investment. It’s a process to change purchasing decisions and the goal is to educate businesses and customers to support those that are making efforts to reduce plastic use in our environment.”

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Another environmentally friendly program launched this year is a responsible cigarette butt disposal and recycling program. Thanks to a grant from Keep America Beautiful Cigarette Litter Prevention Program (CLPP) and the Worcester County Health Department Prevention Services, any business willing to take the pledge to commit to recycling cigarette butts can receive a free butt hut and signage.

The CLPP is the only national program to change behavior around cigarette butt litter. CLPP educates and empowers smokers to achieve proper disposal using proven strategies for reducing the number one littered item on the planet.

“Most cigarette butts are not biodegradable and can remain in the environment for over a decade,” Smith continued. “Cigarette butts taken from these huts, as well as the huts provided by the City, will be sent to TerraCycle to be recycled. One of the items made from recycled cigarette butts are park benches. Thanks to grant funding, several benches will be ordered and distributed throughout the Town in September.”

TerraCycle has collected hundreds of millions of cigarette butts globally. Additionally, through its various recycling programs, it has engaged over 200 million people across 21 countries to collect and recycle more than seven billion pieces of waste that were otherwise non-recyclable.

“With this program, Ocean City is addressing the environmental fallout of cigarette waste pollution,” said Tom Szaky, the founder of Terracycle. “This includes reducing toxic chemicals leaching into soil, the contamination of rivers and streams, sustained damage to marine and terrestrial ecosystems and the City is also making sustainability a priority by recycling and simultaneously preserving the area’s natural beauty.”

Pledges can be found on www.mdcoastalbays.org or for more information contact Sandi Smith at sandis@mdcoastalbays.org or by calling 410-213-2297 ext 106.