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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE 17-54
June 22, 2017
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“Don’t Trash Our Waters” Anti-litter Campaign Launches in Coney Island



New Public Awareness Campaign Aims to Reduce Litter, Improve Health of New York City’s Waterbodies, and Protect Marine Life

Photos are Available on [DEP’s Flickr Page](#)

DEP Will Give Free Tickets to First 1,000 People to Visit New York Aquarium on June 24

New York City Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) Acting Commissioner Vincent Sapienza today announced the launch of Don’t Trash Our Waters, a public awareness campaign aimed at reducing litter and improving the health of New York City’s waterbodies. Trash discarded on city streets and sidewalks can wash down catch basins and end up in our surrounding waterbodies—threatening marine wildlife, putting human health at risk, negatively impacting recreational activities such as swimming, fishing and boating, and costing New York City taxpayers millions of dollars to clean up. To combat this issue, and in partnership with the New York Aquarium, The New York City Department of Sanitation, and NYC Parks, informational posters imploring New Yorkers to properly dispose of their garbage will be displayed this summer at various locations in Brooklyn’s iconic Coney Island, which will serve as a pilot site for the program.

More Information

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“One of the easiest and most direct ways New Yorkers can get involved to help our marine ecosystem thrive is to make sure that trash ends up where it belongs—in a litter basket or a recycling bin,” said **DEP Acting Commissioner Vincent Sapienza**. “New York City boasts 520 miles of waterfront and DEP has worked tirelessly to make our harbor water the cleanest it has been in over a century, but we can’t do it alone. Spread the word and Don’t Trash Our Waters!”

Bright, eye-catching illustrations—featuring a dolphin, a seal, a turtle, a whale and an oyster—have been placed at the New York Aquarium, along the boardwalk, at comfort stations, on bus shelters, in subway stations, and on Sanitation trucks and street sweepers around the city. These posters carry a simple message, reminding New Yorkers to do their part and properly dispose of their garbage. To help spread the message, DEP will be giving away free tickets to the first 1,000 people to visit the New York Aquarium on Saturday, June 24.

“At the Wildlife Conservation Society’s New York Aquarium, we have launched the 30-Day Plastics Challenge to reduce use of single-use disposable plastics and to bring attention to the fact that, by some estimates, a staggering 5 trillion pieces of plastic are currently floating in the world’s oceans,” said **Jon Forrest Dohlin, WCS Vice President and Director of the New York Aquarium**. “We applaud NYC DEP and its campaign encouraging New Yorkers to help keep our waterways free of trash. Reducing the use of disposable plastics may be the single most important thing the public can do to save marine wildlife whether here in New York waters or on the other side of the globe. We urge everyone to do their part to make our oceans plastics-free.”

“Summer is here and the City is coming alive with lots of fun and vibrant outdoor activities. As such, I encourage all New Yorkers and visitors to help in keeping our waterways clean by not trashing our streets and beaches,” said **Sanitation Commissioner Kathryn Garcia**. “Throughout the City, there are 25,000 litter baskets and thousands of recycling bins in which to dispose of light trash, soda cans, and water bottles. It’s a big job, but if everyone pitches in, this summer can be litter free and our beaches can be clean, healthy, and ready for summer fun.”

“New York City’s beaches are some of our city’s greatest assets, and they’ve never been better, as proven by the millions of visitors who enjoy them. Keeping the beaches and waterbodies clean and free of litter is a vital part of caring for our city,” said **NYC Parks Commissioner Mitchell J. Silver, FAICP**. “And care is the difference that will bring our public spaces from being simply resources, to being emotional touchstones for the communities they serve. NYC Parks is proud to work with our partners from DEP to bring needed attention to the link between litter in the ocean and harm to some of our most precious underwater wildlife. Together, we can all chip in to maintain and enjoy a healthy, beautiful environment.”

“The Don’t Trash Our Waters message is a simple, but critical one, and we applaud the City’s efforts,” said **Catherine McCabe, EPA Acting Regional Administrator**. “Garbage on our streets ends up in our sewers which, in turn, can end up in the harbor and ocean where it impacts people’s health, wildlife and recreation. If every New Yorker committed to not tossing trash on our streets, our waterways would benefit greatly.”

“Enjoying our city’s abundant coastal treasures is a big part of any New York summer season. I encourage all New Yorkers to take pride in our natural resources and share in the responsibility of keeping our streets, our beaches, and our marine ecosystem clean and pollutant-free,” said **Council Member Mark Treyger, Chair of the Council’s Committee on Recovery and Resiliency**. “I commend DEP for working to protect our waterways.”

“Thank you to NYC DEP for bringing attention to keeping our waters clean and to protecting our wildlife along the shore,” said **Brooklyn Community Board 13 District Manager Eddie Mark**. “As a waterfront community, we need to make our residents, businesses and beachgoers aware that whatever trash falls into the sewers could eventually make its way into the ocean. Please do your part in

keeping our waters clean.”

Trash that ends up in the water can have a wide range of negative impacts—from the injury or death of marine wildlife that accidentally ingest garbage or become entangled in litter, to humans being exposed to pathogens and toxins when trash floats by where they boat, swim or fish.

NYC Litter Stats:

- DEP inspects and cleans approximately 148,000 catch basins throughout the city and utilizes a fleet of skimmer boats, along with booms surrounding 23 major sewer outfalls which are used to capture debris including wood, plastic, metal, rubber, and glass.
- DSNY removes 1.7 million pounds of debris from New York City's 6,000 miles of roadway each week and maintains 25,000 litter baskets.
- Each summer day, NYC Parks picks up approximately 120 tons of garbage left behind at beaches, ballfields, picnic areas and other green spaces.
- Marine wildlife, including New York’s native turtles, fish and sea birds, can become entangled in trash debris or mistake it for food, slowly killing them over time.

Even with the City’s dedication to combating litter, everyone must do their part to make our city a clean and healthy place to live for all New Yorkers—including the marine wildlife that resides in the harbor and surrounding waterways. Always make sure to use litter baskets, and use them the right way. Garbage scatters easily when pedestrians throw trash on the sidewalk, drivers toss litter onto the street, or residents improperly discard of household waste. The issue is far-reaching and a small, careless action can have a big, negative impact.

New York City is launching this campaign in connection with its [MS4 Program](#) which aims to manage urban sources of stormwater runoff to protect and improve water quality. When it rains, stormwater that flows over streets and other impervious surfaces, can sweep up pollutants such as oils, chemicals, pathogens and sediments. For areas of the City served by the MS4 (municipal separate storm sewer system), the pollution carried by stormwater runoff is discharged directly into the City’s waterways, which can have a negative impact on water quality and recreational uses. To address this, the City is currently developing a comprehensive plan to prevent multiple types of pollution from entering our waterways.

For more information about this campaign, please visit [nyc.gov/trashfreewaters](#). For more information on how you can reduce your footprint further, visit [nyc.gov/zerowaste](#) and take the pledge.

DEP manages New York City’s water supply, providing more than one billion gallons of water each day to more than nine million residents, including eight million in New York City. The water is delivered from a watershed that extends more than 125 miles from the city, comprising 19 reservoirs and three controlled lakes. Approximately 7,000 miles of water mains, tunnels and aqueducts bring water to homes and businesses throughout the five boroughs, and 7,500 miles of sewer lines and 96 pump stations take wastewater to 14 in-city treatment plants. DEP has nearly 6,000 employees, including almost 1,000 in the upstate watershed. In addition, DEP has a robust capital program, with a planned \$20.7 billion in investments over the next 10 years that will create up to 3,000 construction-related jobs per year. For more information, visit [nyc.gov/dep](#), like us on [Facebook](#), or follow us on [Twitter](#).

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