

## Group wants to prevent ocean drilling

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## Shore has had 16 closings this year

## Activists want stormwater-runoff plans

## Environmentalists push for coastal protection measures

By TRACY ROBINSON  
COASTAL MONMOUTH BUREAU

BELMAR -- A sighting of porpoises near the Shark River inlet was seen as a positive sign yesterday, yet challenges remain in the fight to maintain and improve ocean water quality, said politicians and environmentalists at Clean Ocean Action's Shore Tips campaign kickoff yesterday.

Preventing oil drilling off the state's coast, enacting into law regulations for allowable standards of contaminants in dredge materials, and requiring towns to have stormwater-management plans were among the goals cited by Sen. Jon S. Corzine and Rep. Frank J. Pallone Jr., both D-N.J., and state Department of Environmental Protection Commissioner Bradley Campbell, at the boardwalk press conference.

Clean Ocean Action's Shore Tips campaign -- COAST -- celebrates the ocean and focuses on the challenges that remain in order to improve and protect it, said COA Executive Director Cindy Zipf.

The program involves volunteers educating the community about ocean pollution, Zipf said.

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This summer, the focus of the campaign is the New York-New Jersey bight, an approximately 19,000-square-mile triangular area in the Atlantic between Montauk Point, N.Y., and Cape May, she said.

Mayor Kenneth E. Pringle said seeing porpoises was a good omen but there is still more to be done.

"Our beach, I think, ranks, in terms of water quality, with any beach anywhere, and we're not done yet, and that is the best thing about it," Pringle said.

Progress toward curbing ocean pollution includes a new law limiting polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs), renewal of the state Clean Communities anti-litter program and a "long overdue" stormwater-regulations proposal, said Kate Shanley, the 2003 COAST coordinator.

Remaining threats include recent discussions of offshore oil and gas drilling, Shanley said.

"They are trying to put into the latest energy bill the opportunity to go back and inventory and study whether there should be ocean drilling off the coast of New Jersey," said Corzine, calling the idea "dangerous."

"At some point somebody could come back and say, 'well, we've studied it, I think it is a good idea,' " Pallone said, noting the answer is to lobby to keep the study out of the energy bill.

Another issue important to water quality is controlling stormwater runoff, Campbell said.

Nationwide, "10 times more oil runs off of our streets and fields than was released in the Exxon Valdez oil spill," he said.

Campbell called the ocean water quality healthy, yet said the Jersey Shore has had 16 precautionary beach closings this season.

"Our beaches are safe but the closings we've had point to the fact that we need to do more to address

stormwater management," he said.

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