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## **PRESS RELEASE**

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**Attachment:** Agenda/Members of COZ Legislative Committee

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### **SHORE CONGRESSMEN ANNOUNCE INTRODUCTION OF “The NJ/NY Clean Ocean Zone” Bill *Legislation to Permanently Protect Waters off NJ and NJ from Pollution***

**Seaside Park, NJ** – Today, US Representatives Jim Saxton (NJ-R-3) and Frank Pallone, Jr. (D-6) were joined by nearly 75 citizens and representatives of organizations and businesses on the boardwalk to celebrate the announcement of the introduction of “The New Jersey/New York Clean Ocean Zone” Bill. The bi-state federal bill will permanently protect the waters off the coast from polluting activities.

“This is a fight we can never give up,” said **Rep. Jim Saxton**, the Vice Chairman of the Fisheries and Oceans Subcommittee in the US House of Representatives. “The Jersey Shore should not be the dumping ground for tainted dredged materials. The ocean anywhere should not be a dumping ground for land-based pollutants. This bill is a comprehensive plan for recovery and improvement of the NY/NJ Bight after years of abuse. I’m pleased to work with Clean Ocean Action and my colleague Frank Pallone to introduce a bill that would create a ‘Clean Ocean Zone.’”

“We’ve come a long way since the days in 1987 and 1988 when we had countless beach closures, but taking our clean beaches for granted would be a serious mistake,” said **Rep. Frank Pallone**. “That’s why we need to write ocean and beach protections into federal law so they can’t be undone by some future Administration.”

“Thanks to the vigilance of thousands of citizens over the years, ocean water quality has improved, yet threats remain and the ocean is still vulnerable,” said **Cindy Zipf, Executive Director of Clean Ocean Action**.

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“It is time for legislation to lock-in the tremendous path of progress in ocean protection and lock-out environmentally harmful activities. The COZ is a unique tool that will achieve this and is a natural outgrowth of the years of work to improve and protect the waters off the NJ/NY waters,” **Zipf** added.

A project of Clean Ocean Action over the past few years, the COZ is a cooperative initiative among organizations and citizens to improve and protect the NY/NJ Bight. The bill will reduce pollution, protect marine ecosystems, and support marine resources. Of the ten actions the bill takes, specifically, it will prohibit new ocean dumpsites, oil and gas exploration and drilling, and the permanent extraction of natural non-renewable resources, including sand and gravel.

A committee comprised of groups from New York and New Jersey representing various interests including recreational and commercial fishing, diving, surfing, and environmental, as well as legal counsel, developed the COZ bill.

“The key to healthier fish is a clean ocean,” said **James Lovgren, Fishermen’s Dock Cooperative of Pt. Pleasant**, and member of the COZ Legislative Committee. “Ocean water quality has come a long way in the past 20 years and now we need to take steps – like the Clean Ocean Zone – to ensure the health of fish in the future and to safeguard the commercial fishing industry.”

“We hope this legislation will lead the way to an era of health for our ocean – an era that will be appreciated by all ocean inhabitants, enthusiasts, and visitors,” said **Richard Lee, Board of Directors, Surfers’ Environmental Alliance** and member of the COZ Legislative Committee.

“We need to keep up the full court press to protect the ocean as the issues change over the years,” said **Willie deCamp, Jr., President of Save Barnegat Bay** and member of the COZ Legislative Committee.

“The public has fought hard for years to protect the coastal waters of New Jersey and New York. We are seeing renewed effort to industrialize the ocean and expose it to new pollution,” said **Tim Dillingham, Executive Director, American Littoral Society** and member of the COZ Legislative Committee. “The Clean Ocean Zone will give us an important tool to fight back against those who would exploit our coast.”

“The COZ is the key legislation needed for the protection of these traditional and historical recreational fishing grounds,” said **Jessica Knox, Deputy Director of Government Affairs and Marine Policy, Recreational Fishing Alliance (RFA)**. Jim Donofrio represented RFA on the COZ Legislative Committee.

### ***Introduction of Bill and Legislative Campaign Launched***

US Representatives Saxton and Pallone announced that the bill would be introduced in the US House of Representatives during the session on Monday, July 24. Reps. Saxton and Pallone are original lead co-sponsors of the bill. At press time, original co-sponsors of the bill are Reps. Robert Andrews (D-1), Chris Smith (R-4) Steven Rothman (D-9), Donald Payne (D-10), and Rush Holt (D-12). Also at press time, original co-sponsors of the COZ bill in New York are Reps. Tim Bishop (D-1) and Major Owens (D-11).

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“We have a bi-partisan group of lawmakers who understand the environmental, recreational, and economic value of the NY/NJ Bight,” **said Keith Rella, COA Policy Advocate.** “We will build on this and fight for the bight until the ‘Clean Ocean Zone’ is clearly marked on every map.”

As the COZ legislation moves ahead, citizens will be asked to contact their US Representatives and urge them to support the COZ bill. Citizens will be able to follow the “migration” or journey of the bill through the legislative process by using Clean Ocean Action’s “Fish-o-Meter.” The fish-o-meter is a chart in the form of a fish that will be filled-in as steps are completed in the process, as the COZ Bill becomes federal law.

“The wave of support for the Clean Ocean Zone is strong,” said **Kari Jermansen, Outreach Director for Clean Ocean Action.** “To date, the COZ is supported by nearly 100 organizations, over 35 municipalities, and more than 15,000 citizens. It is time for our legislators to support this bold and important next step to protect the ocean.”

### ***Background***

The New York/New Jersey Bight is an ecologically rich area and is host to many industries and activities that depend on clean and healthy waters. The NY/NJ Bight is defined as the waters from Montauk Point, New York, to Cape May, New Jersey, offshore to the outer edge of the Continental Shelf (out to 100 miles), and consists of over 19,000 square miles of Atlantic Ocean.

The physical, hydrodynamic, and biological characteristics of the NY/NJ Bight are unique in the world as more than 300 species of fish, nearly 350 species of birds, 7 species of sea turtles, and many marine mammals, such as 10 species of whales and several species of seals and porpoises, frequent this region. The NY/NJ Bight also sustains the economy of the region through its bounty of natural resources and intrinsic values for millions of people through tourism.

The NY/NJ Bight has suffered from decades of ocean dumping and pollution from a number of sources. As recent as the 1980s and 1990s, the waters off the New York and New Jersey coasts were known as the “Ocean Dumping Capitol of the World” due to eight ocean dumpsites, had beaches littered with garbage, medical waste, and sludge balls, and suffered from water quality so poor that it was unsafe for swimming. These activities all caused an ecological and economic crisis. The NY/NJ Bight continues to be vulnerable to sources of pollution and threats to habitat on a permit-by-permit basis. Current laws and regulations are insufficient to protect the vast value of this ocean region and its living marine resources from polluting and habitat destructive activities.

For more information, maps of the COZ, and a list of groups supporting the COZ, visit [www.CleanOceanZone.org](http://www.CleanOceanZone.org).

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