

EDUCATION



(L to R) Student explores the sand for natural treasures; Kathleen Gasienica and MAST students start the day with a lecture about horseshoe crabs; and students get up-close and personal with a horseshoe crab

Students Head to the Beach for Seaside Symposium



Nearly 1000 middle school students and teachers from 35 schools in northern and central New Jersey were scientists for a day in an outside classroom at COA's Annual Spring Student Summit on May 16 and 17 at Gateway National Recreation Area (GNRA) - Sandy Hook. Students experienced hands-on marine environmental education by participating in a roundtable of six activities and twelve interactive field activities. The rain on Tuesday did not dampen the enthusiasm of students and teachers, and the sunny, warm Wednesday fueled the learning process at the beach.

Students participated in six hands-on roundtable activities, which included learning about horseshoe crabs, identifying seashells, studying invertebrates, observing a model of nonpoint source pollution, and learning the lethal effects of litter on the marine environment. COA commends and thanks the students from the Marine Academy of Science and Technology (MAST), a high school located on Sandy

Hook, who served as peer teachers at these activity workstations. Also, COA thanks the NJ Watershed Ambassadors for instructing students about pollution with the coastal Enviroscope model.

In addition, naturalists and other education professionals led students in twelve field activities. Some students got their feet wet in Sandy Hook Bay and used seine nets to collect and identify common marine species with **Kathleen Gasienica** of the Marine Sciences Consortium (MSC). Other participants learned about key bird species with **Scott Barnes** of NJ Audubon Society, and volunteer birders **Grif Littell** and **Ed Pitts**. Also, students participated in a beach cleanup with volunteer COA Beach Captain **Fran Donnelly**, tested water quality with **NJ Watershed Ambassadors** and **NJ Community Water Watch**, learned saltwater fly-fishing techniques with **Robby Barradale** and members of Bayshore Saltwater



Flyrodders, searched for clams with **Dery Bennett** of the American Littoral Society (ALS), explored historic sites with **John Lancos** of GNRA, traversed trails with **Conrad Wisniewski** of GNRA, walked the shore for mollusks and crustaceans with **Linda Cohen** of Ocean Discoveries, went on a shore scavenger hunt with **Joe Reynolds** of Monmouth County Park System, combed the beach for ocean treasures with **Jim Peck** of ALS, profiled the barrier beach with **Eileen MacHaffie** of MSC, and walked trails with **Nicole Lagado** of the Ocean Institute, Brookdale Community College.

COA's 2006 Spring Student Summit was made possible by the generous support of the **Mary Owen Borden Foundation** and **Commerce Bank**. Special thanks to the **Monte** and **Pasch** Families and the **Wrightson-Besch Foundation** for their support of this program. Also, as a sponsor, Commerce Bank provided a financial contribution as well as in-kind and volunteer support on the Summit days (see photo of group to left). Special thanks to Marie DiMari from Commerce Bank for her enthusiasm and dedication to the program.

"Commerce is committed to partnering with local organizations to improve the quality of life for residents. We want to help protect our environment, and also find fun and creative ways to keep children interested in math and science," said **Jim Kiernan**, Market Manager, Commerce Bank Shore Market.

For 18 years, COA's Summits have reached thousands of school students in New Jersey. For more information about the Student Summit program or other educational programs and materials, visit www.CleanOceanAction.org (click links for "Education Programs") or call 732-872-0111.

