



Embargoed Release

For Release August 30, 2024

MEDIA CONTACTS:

Don Benczkowski, Program Coordinator, Lake Erie Region
Keep Pennsylvania Beautiful
814-434-4178 (m)
coastmanerie@verizon.net

Mathew Greene, Parks Operation Manager 2
PA Department of Conservation and Natural Resources
(814) 833-7424
magreene@pa.gov

Presque Isle State Park Implements Enhanced Litter Prevention Strategies

*~ Keep Pennsylvania Beautiful, PA Department of Conservation and Natural Resources
Collaborate to keep Presque Isle State Park clean and beautiful ~*

Presque Isle State Park is taking meaningful steps to combat litter and preserve the natural beauty of its beaches and trails. The park has introduced a series of initiatives aimed at reducing litter and promoting environmental stewardship. In 2023, with funding from the PA Department of Environmental Protection's Coastal Resources Management Program, the PA Department of Conservation and Natural Resources and Keep Pennsylvania Beautiful collaborated to implement a pilot program applying litter prevention strategies at beaches 6 and 8 at Presque Isle State Park to prevent litter from making its way into Lake Erie waters. Strategies include:

- Informational posters placed on dumpsters, encouraging their use,
- Kiosks housing informational posters and free paper litter bags,
- Picnic tables, stenciled with messages, encouraging proper disposal of trash, and
- Volunteer Ambassadors to interact with visitors and educate them on the hazards of litter and resources available to them.

The strategies have thus far proven successful in ensuring that trash is disposed of properly. The Department of Conservation and Natural Resources provides trash dumpsters for public use, but in most cases the general public has been educated that dumpsters are off-limits to them. Now, the park bins are clearly marked to encourage proper disposal of waste.

Volunteer-stewards also regularly monitor litter levels and inform beach goers that trash bags are available and can be deposited in the dumpsters provided. They encourage beach goers to take ownership of specific beach areas to keep them clean and beautiful for all visitors. The litter bags are made of paper so as to minimize any unintentional impacts to the park. Visitors to the park also come from all over the world and may not speak English. To make the educational materials as inclusive as possible, they were translated into Spanish, Nepali, and Arabic which were determined to be the most commonly spoken languages in Erie besides English.

As a result of this pilot project, expansion to additional beaches will be evaluated.

“It’s partnerships like this that expand our abilities as a state agency to protect our National Natural Landmark. With Keep PA Beautiful’s assistance and dedicated local volunteers, Presque Isle State Park can provide a level of resource protection we could not on our own,” said Mathew Greene, Parks Operation Manager 2, PA Department of Conservation and Natural Resources.

“Keep Pennsylvania Beautiful is grateful for this collaborative effort to keep this natural resource clean and beautiful. Not only does trash adversely affect water quality, it harms wildlife, the local economy and tourism. By embracing enhanced litter prevention strategies, we can all contribute to the natural beauty and safety of Presque Isle State Park,” said Don Benczkowski, Program Coordinator, Lake Erie Region for Keep Pennsylvania Beautiful.

For a number of reasons, it is important to keep litter off of Presque Isle beaches. Not only is Lake Erie a popular vacation destination, according to the Great Lakes Guide, it is also the most biologically diverse of all the Great Lakes due to its warm, shallow waters. The Lake Erie Watershed provides drinking water for 12 million people and supports a variety of industries and is most susceptible to agricultural practices. It is also home to one of the world’s largest and most valuable freshwater commercial and sport fisheries.

Keep Pennsylvania Beautiful, Erie residents and volunteers will also be mobilizing as part of the Ocean Conservancy’s International Coastal Cleanup, the world’s largest volunteer initiative to keep trash from reaching our waterways and oceans. Cleanups will be held in various locations along Lake Erie on Saturday, September 21, 2024 from 9 am to noon. All are welcome to participate. For more information and to register to participate, contact Audrey Knight, Erie County Recycling and Sustainability Coordinator at aknight@eriecountypa.gov or 814-451-7326. Keep Pennsylvania Beautiful will report results to the Ocean Conservancy who will analyze litter trends and sources.

###

About Keep Pennsylvania Beautiful

Keep Pennsylvania Beautiful’s vision is a clean and beautiful Pennsylvania. Since 1990, Keep Pennsylvania Beautiful has worked with hundreds of thousands of volunteers across the state to pick up nearly 158 million pounds of trash from Pennsylvania’s roadways, waterways, greenways, vacant lots, forestlands and other community spaces. Keep Pennsylvania Beautiful’s core programming focuses on litter and illegal dump prevention, cleanup, community greening, and proper waste handling and sustainable practices. Keep Pennsylvania Beautiful works with many partnering organizations on the state and grassroots level to accomplish our

goal of a clean and beautiful Pennsylvania. Keep Pennsylvania Beautiful is the state affiliate of Keep America Beautiful, Inc., the nation's largest volunteer-based community action and education organization. To learn more about Keep Pennsylvania Beautiful, visit www.keppabeautiful.org.