



Spring 2023

Vol. 28

Est. 2019

Let's Talk Trash



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With an unusually mild winter behind us, attentions are turning from winter readiness to spring cleaning. At the New Jersey Department of Transportation (NJDOT), that means the start of our annual statewide anti-litter campaign. Each year at this time, NJDOT dedicates resources for debris, litter, and vegetation removal to improve the appearance and safety of our roadways. In this newsletter,

I would like to share how we work to address this problem and attempt to resolve one of the most forward-facing issues we are tasked with as a Department.

Litter is a hot topic for many reasons. Not only is it an eyesore, but it also endangers our wildlife, pollutes our waterways, and decreases property values. Larger debris that ends up in the roadway presents a hazard to both motorists and the crews who have to retrieve it. What's more, litter impacts how others perceive our state. Clean highways send a message to residents, visitors, and businesses thinking about relocating to our state, that New Jersey is committed to maintaining a high quality of life for everyone who lives, travels, and works here.

One of the challenges with litter is that it cannot be dealt with proactively. While we wish we could get ahead of it, we can only send resources to address litter after it is already a noticeable problem. Controlling litter on and around our roadways is much like playing a game of Whack-a-Mole ... only a lot less fun. It's hard to predict when and where a litter hotspot will appear and as soon as you knock out one, more pop up. Nevertheless, NJDOT is committed to keeping our highway system as clean as possible, and there are four main ways in which we do this.



Pictured: Litter pick up along I-295 ramp.

NJDOT Highway Operations Crews: Our Highway Operations Technicians work very hard to remove litter from the highway as part of their ongoing maintenance responsibilities. In addition to deploying NJDOT crews to manually pick up litter along state roads, our Department has five specialized Road Rake machines that can be towed behind our trucks to collect large amounts of debris safely and efficiently.



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Pictured: Litter pick up before and after along I-295 ramp.

Inmate Details: In partnership with NJDOT, the New Jersey Department of Corrections (DOC) oversees carefully screened inmates to pick up litter along our interstate highways and major state roads. The inmates who volunteer for this program perform a great service to our state. With recent changes to the program, we do not have the number of volunteers that we used to, but inmate litter details continue to help with our cleanup efforts.



Adopt-A-Highway:

One of NJDOT's most recognizable environmental initiatives is the comprehensive, statewide Adopt-A-Highway volunteer

program run in partnership with the New Jersey Clean Communities Council. Participating community groups and organizations are allocated a stretch of highway that has been determined to be safe for volunteers. Groups are provided safety gear and litter removal equipment to clean up their designated section of highway about four times a year. You have probably seen some of NJDOT's Adopt-A-Highway signs acknowledging these important community volunteers.

If your organization is interested in adopting a section of state highway, you can visit www.njclean.org to fill out an application or contact the Clean Communities Council at 609-989-5900 or njccc@njclean.org.

Sponsor A Highway: This program offers businesses and individuals the opportunity to help beautify New Jersey's roadways through sponsorships. Sponsors can arrange for private, state-approved contractors to perform highway maintenance services in their name. In return, a sign with each sponsor's name and logo is placed at the

beginning of their designated highway section. For more information on the [Sponsor A Highway Program](#), visit our website.

While these programs help to mitigate the issue of litter, the best way to keep our roadways clean is to prevent trash from ending up there in the first place. This spring, NJDOT will run its public awareness anti-litter campaign, "Don't Trash our Garden State," for the third year. Look for New Jersey specific anti-litter messaging online, on digital billboards, and even in the skies at the Jersey Shore this summer.



TRASH PICKED UP BETWEEN JULY 2022 AND APRIL 2023

NJDOT Crews: 5,378 tons
 Inmate Details: 1,183 tons
 Adopt-A-Highway Program: 17 tons
 Sponsor-A-Highway Program: 133 tons

Finally, since this is an issue that affects all of us, I invite local governments, civic groups, and stakeholders to help amplify our anti-litter message throughout your own networks and communities.

I often hear people talk about their "Jersey Pride," whether they are a native New Jerseyan or a transplant to the Garden State. At NJDOT, we share that pride and are committed to showing it every day in the work we do ... even if that means talking a little trash.

Thank you for taking the time to read this. If you have questions about any of the information shared or know someone who would like to receive our newsletters, please feel free to contact NJDOT's **Office of Community Relations at 609-963-1982.**



Pictured: Bags of litter will find their way to proper disposal.