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Trash Free Assateague Project Takes Unique Stand Against Littering And Plastics

Advocating For A Back To Basics Lifestyle For More Sustainable Communities

BERLIN, MARYLAND Assateague Coastal Trust's latest project, Trash Free Assateague (TFA), is gaining attention as other local and international campaigns for a plastic free world grow in number. The difference between TFA and other campaigns, says the project founder Billy Weiland, is the focus that is being given to the root of the problem. "What we need to focus on is our own individual lifestyle habits. Each of us needs to acknowledge how our daily lives influence the environment around us, and we all need to make a conscious effort to live more sustainably on this planet."

Weiland makes it clear that in a world with ever increasing population and demand for resources, modern day convenience, like single-use plastic products, have made it easy for a plastic addiction to develop. "We are all, to some extent, a part of the plastic and waste crisis beginning to unfold throughout the world. Though it is the corporate economies that continue to produce the many environmentally harmful chemicals that go into their products, we as individuals are feeding the fire by our continual demand for these products. Aside of environmental education and developing a better, more connected relationship with Nature, I believe the simple solution is frugality, and being able to separate wants from needs. Adopting a more rooted, sustainable lifestyle, and getting back to the basics would alleviate many of the world's problems. Economic, political, social, and plastic too."

The options available to consumers is also an issue, Weiland states, referring to the often expensive green alternatives among consumer products. "In today's society, going green is hip, and the business world has taken advantage of this, selling products at prices often much more expensive than those that might not be as environmentally friendly. The majority of the population simply can't afford to make the more environmentally conscious purchases, or the options just aren't there, and therefore problems like the excessive use of harmful one time use plastics continues to grow."

Despite the difficulty associated with affordable, and accessible green products, Weiland believes a major contributor to the problem is a lack of awareness and environmental ethic among the majority of society. "As a society, I feel we have become increasingly disconnected from our natural

environments.” This disconnect, Weiland says, led him to the development of the Trash Free Assateague project and Assateague Coastal Trust’s online journal, *The Marsh*. “These beach clean ups are more than just gathering volunteers to sweep the streets and sand of litter. They reside as a 'words-to-action' means of bringing awareness to a problem much larger than the plastic and waste crisis. Through TFA and our online journal, *The Marsh*, I want the image of Assateague Coastal Trust to be one of encouragement. I want to motivate as many as I can to get back and give back to the land.” Perhaps we can all start with addressing the littering and plastic problem.

Last week the Trash Free Assateague project held three beach clean-up events in six days, removing a total of 119 pounds of trash from 6 streets in Ocean City and various parts of Assateague Island National Seashore. At every Trash Free Assateague event, a brief program is presented that aims to educate about the problems associated with plastics, encourage sustainable living practices, and motivate those in attendance to develop a stronger, more connected relationship with their environment.

Those interested in speaking with Billy Weiland about Trash Free Assateague, or *The Marsh* may email him at billy@actforbays.org.

For the latest Trash Free Assateague news, upcoming events, and event recaps, visit www.actforbays.org/trash-free-assateague.html

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The Assateague Coastal Trust’s mission is to promote and encourage the protection of the health, productivity, and sustainability of the coastal bays watershed of Delmarva through advocacy, education and conservation.

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