

Extend public smoking ban to beaches, parks

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The New Jersey Legislature can protect our environment, tourism economy, and public health by banning smoking in parks and beaches. Cigarettes are on the top of the list when it comes to litter on our streets, beaches, and waterways. At a New Jersey Sierra Club beach cleanup, in one day volunteers picked up more than 500 cigarettes. These cigarettes are not only an eyesore, but can be ingested by animals, marine life or even children playing in the sand putting our public health at risk.

People should be able to enjoy a day at the beach and not have to deal with second-hand smoke. Towns have already put in place laws and ordinances dealing with smoking including Seaside Park which smoking is banned on all beaches and boardwalks. Long Branch and Sunset Beach in Cape May County are also smoke-free. Smoking is banned on the boardwalk in Belmar, and on sections of its beaches. A stateside ban will benefit our environment, tourism, and public health.

Having smoke-free beaches will encourage tourism, while protecting both health and the environment. Cigarettes are a major source of litter and pollution, while also being a threat to public safety. It also could be dangerous with some people failing to completely put out their cigarette butts leading to people stepping on them, or even causing boardwalk fires. Careless smokers in parks have also caused damage to picnic areas, historic buildings, and even forest fires.

We are spending hundreds of millions of dollars rebuilding after Sandy and we do not need cigarettes to litter or cause problems on our new beaches. This ban will make our beaches cleaner and greener while also making our beach experiences more enjoyable for all.

Jeff Tittel