

## Brunswick Beaches Gearing Up For Annual Big Sweep

BY DOUG RUTTER

Hundreds of area residents and visitors are expected to descend on the beaches of Brunswick County next Saturday, Sept. 21.

They won't be swimming, sunning or playing volleyball. They'll be pitching in as volunteers in Big Sweep '91, a statewide litter cleanup that focuses on coastal shorelines as well as inland rivers and lakes.

"We'll be picking up everything that doesn't move and sweeping the whole area clean," said Hayden O'Neil, who is coordinating the effort at Ocean Isle Beach.

The cleanups are scheduled to follow the summer tourist season, when many visitors to the South Brunswick Islands left more than their footprints in the sand.

However, the purpose of the Big Sweep is more than an annual cleaning of the beaches and waterways. It is intended to raise public awareness about the harmful effects of litter on humans and wildlife.

Data cards filled out by volunteers help identify the most common types of litter and allow sponsors such as UNC Sea Grant and Keep America Beautiful to aim educational efforts at the groups that litter the most. Last year, cigarette butts were at or near the top of the list of litter found on most North Carolina shores.

In Brunswick County, this will be the first year for an official cleanup at Bird Island, an undeveloped island located east of Sunset Beach.

Cleanups are planned also at Sunset Beach, Ocean Isle Beach, Holden Beach, Long Beach, Yaupon Beach, Caswell Beach, Southport and Bald Head Island.

### Sunset Beach

Sunset Beach Coordinator Clete Waldmiller said volunteers will meet next Saturday at 9 a.m. in the new public parking area on Lot 1-A.

Waldmiller said the beach doesn't appear to have as much litter on it this year as in previous years. Visitors seem to be using new trash cans that have been placed on the strand.

*"We'll be picking up everything that doesn't move and sweeping the whole area clean."*

—Hayden O'Neil, Ocean Isle Beach



WALTER AND ANN HOLT of Carolina Shores, Calabash, pick up litter at Sunset Beach during Big Sweep '90. They were among 230 volunteers who helped clean up the South Brunswick Islands beaches last year.

"I rode the beach last week on a bike with my granddaughter and it looks pretty good," he said.

Most of the debris that needs to be cleaned up is around the fishing pier and near the east end of the beach.

Waldmiller said volunteers will be invited to his house after the cleanup for hot dogs and refreshments.

### Ocean Isle Beach

In conjunction with the Big Sweep, the Ocean Isle Beach Property Owners Association will sponsor their annual "Trash Bash" next Saturday morning.

O'Neil said volunteers will meet at 8:30 a.m. at the Museum of Coastal Carolina, located on East Third Street, and divide into 12 groups that will cover the entire island.

Volunteers will receive free "Trash Bash" T-shirts and a free lunch at the fire station following the cleanup.

Area merchants have donated about 60 prizes that volunteers can win by picking up special slips of paper that will be placed in different locations on Ocean Isle Beach.

### Holden Beach

Due to erosion problems, Holden Beach will hold a private beach cleanup this year during the Big Sweep.

Coordinator Margaret Vasco said Holden Beach Beautification Committee members will conduct the cleanup and keep track of items collected.

"The east end of the beach is completely gone with erosion," she said. "The rest of it seems to be pretty clean."

### Bird Island

The Shallotte River Power Squadron also plans a cleanup of its own at Bird Island.

Spokesman Gus Ulrich said squadron members plan to take their boats to the small island next Saturday morning and primarily clean the area near Little River Inlet where boats anchor.

"I don't think it's going to be a real big job," Ulrich

said. "I don't expect there will be as much litter there as the other beaches."

### Big Sweep History

Big Sweep started out as Beach Sweep in 1987 when about 1,000 volunteer picked up 14 tons of trash along the state's beaches.

The annual program was expanded to include inland lakes and streams in 1989 and has grown to become the nation's largest statewide waterway trash pickup.

Last year, more than 10,000 volunteers turned out at

150 sites across North Carolina and bagged almost 165 tons of debris.

Local cleanups were canceled in 1989 because of Hurricane Hugo, but resumed last year with about 230 people turning out despite gray skies and drizzly weather.

Other Big Sweep coordinators in Brunswick County for this year's cleanup include Kelly Beeso, Long Beach, 278-5518; Joseph Broyles, Yaupon Beach, 278-9404; and Kelly Cook, Bald Head Island, 457-7350.

For more information on Big Sweep, contact regional coordinator Nancy Pritchett at 762-0965 or call the toll free hotline, 1-800-27-SWEEP.



IRENE SNYDER of Greensboro checks her data card following the 1988 cleanup at Holden Beach. The data cards help identify the worst types of beach litter.

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