

Dewey's beach wins Superstar status

Delaware ranks first among 30 states in water quality

By Chris Flood | Jul 08, 2014

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Photo by: Chris Flood

Dewey Beach Patrol lifeguard Nathan Jones watches over one of the cleanest beaches in America while visitors take in the summer sun. For the second straight year Dewey Beach has been named by the National Resources Defense Council as a Superstar Beach for its cleanliness. Delaware as a whole ranked first among 30 states for its cleanliness.

DEWEY BEACH — For the second year in a row Dewey Beach has been named a Superstar Beach by the National Resources Defense Council.

“As a beach resort, I always say, you can never have too much sand, too much sun and too much clean water,” said Carol Everhart, Rehoboth Beach-Dewey Beach Chamber of Commerce president. “It doesn’t get any better to be able to promote our award winning beaches.”

Dewey is one of 35 beaches the council has recognized as having one of the cleanest beaches in the country. According to the council's website, beaches on this list did not exceed the previous national standard between 2009-2012 by more than 2 percent and also did not exceed the Environmental Protection Agency's new Beach Action Value by more than 2 percent in 2013.

Dewey Beach Mayor Diane Hanson said she was thrilled the beach was recognized again for its cleanliness.

“It’s an important feature for the families coming to Dewey for their vacation,” she said.

Hanson credited the Delaware Department of Natural Resources, the Dewey Beach Patrol and town commissioners for taking a proactive approach to beach cleanliness. Banning

smoking on the beach helps a lot, she said.

Jon Devine, NRDC Water Program senior attorney, said it's "pretty darn great" for Dewey to be named a Superstar Beach again. He said the council makes the list as an option for people who want to know where clean beaches are located.

"We hope people use our report as a resource," he said.

Dewey Beach Patrol Captain Todd Fritchman said he and his crew are very proud of the beach's reputation as being one of the cleanest beaches in the country. Families with children don't want to come to a beach that's dirty, the captain said, which is why lifeguards issue tickets for littering and help clean the beach when there's time.

"We put a lot of time and effort into making sure that visitors are cleaning up after themselves," said Fritchman.

Delaware as a whole ranked first in beach water quality of 30 states, said the report, but three percent of the state's samples exceeded the council's Beach Action Value.

Of the 24 beaches tested in Delaware, 15 had no samples that exceeded the national safety threshold; seven had up to 10 percent above the threshold; and two were 10 to 20 percent above the threshold.

The beaches with the highest rates in the state sampled in 2013 were all found in Sussex County, including Rehoboth Beach at Virginia Avenue Beach (11 percent), Deauville Beach (11 percent), Slaughter Beach (8 percent), and Broadkill Beach (6 percent).

Devine said it is hard to say exactly why Dewey, and the state, continue to have good test results. He said it could be that towns in Delaware have adopted regulations that encourage good environmental practices, or it could be as simple as geography.

Fritchman said in Dewey it's a combination of the two working in the town's favor. He said the town banning smoking on the beach a couple of years ago has really helped and stormwater runoff drains into Rehoboth Bay to the west of town. Fritchman said another contributing factor is that the town's commercial activities front Route 1 and not the beach.

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