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## **Delaware Environmental Groups Unite to End Cigarette Waste in State Parks**

The Surfrider Foundation Delaware Chapter and Plastic Free Delaware are combining efforts this summer to raise public awareness about the environmental hazards of cigarette butts and to mitigate cigarette litter in the Delaware Department of National Resources and Environmental Control's Cape Henlopen, Delaware Seashore, and Fenwick Island state parks.

"To help conserve and restore Delaware's fragile ecosystem, we intend to alleviate cigarette litter by increasing awareness of the environmental dangers of discarding cigarette butts and inspiring smokers to properly dispose of their cigarette waste," said Surfrider Delaware Chair, Brian Moran.

Recently, the Keep Delaware Beautiful campaign supplied DNREC's Delaware State Parks with cigarette butt receptacles that support the parks' Carry In, Carry Out trash policy and the Keep DE Litter Free initiative, which was launched by Governor John Carney in 2019.

"There really is no excuse to litter, yet cigarette butts and other trash continue to be found throughout Delaware, including on our beautiful beaches," said DNREC's Division of Parks and Recreation Director, Ray Bivens, "We are thankful to the Surfrider Foundation and Plastic Free Delaware for helping to spread the Keep DE Litter Free message and further raise awareness about the impact that litter has on our environment."

"Many people believe that filters are made of cotton and that they will decompose when left in the environment," says Dee Durham, Chair, Plastic Free Delaware, "in fact, they are made of plastic—plasticized cellulose acetate—which does not biodegrade or compost."

Cigarette butts break down into smaller pieces over the course of 10 years, but they are never truly gone. They also leach chemicals which pollute our waterways and pose a significant risk to birds and other wildlife which may mistakenly swallow them. In addition, plasticized cellulose acetate is combustible and may not start a fire, but discarded cigarette butts could intensify an existing one, and pose a threat to anyone barefoot on our beaches.

To help park visitors dispose of cigarette waste properly, DNREC's newly installed cigarette waste receptacles were placed at key locations in the beach parks. Volunteers from the partner organizations will distribute educational brochures and free personal pocket ashtrays on select weekends to park visitors and are available at several locations in Sussex County. Please visit <https://delaware.surfrider.org/hold-onto-your-butts/> for more information about the Hold On To Your Butt campaign.

The Surfrider Foundation Delaware Chapter and Plastic Free Delaware share the mission to halt plastic pollution from entering the ocean and harming wildlife by stopping it at the source.

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