

Beachy Clean

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It's a deal that would literally have the town getting paid to have someone clean its beaches.

Southold has accepted the services of Coastal Steward for a townwide beach cleanup program. The Port Jefferson-based environmental restoration group will recruit sponsors, along with volunteers to tidy the beaches, then give 10 percent of the sponsorship money to the town.

"We're anxious to have him help us get started," Southold Town Supervisor Scott Russell said of Dave Johnson, executive director of the not-for-profit group. "Beaches are a never-ending problem. Beaches have a tendency to collect debris. It's not like one cleanup gets the job done."

Mr. Johnson said sponsors typically pay \$1,000 for up to a half-mile of beach. In return, they receive a certificate of recognition, a tax deduction and a sign posted on the beach if the owner allows it, he said.

"It's a situation where everyone benefits," Mr. Johnson said. "The town would have a new source of income, the volunteers benefit by getting community service credits, the beach gets clean and the sponsors get the exposure and acknowledgment."

Town Board member Al Krupski agreed that the program would likely be an all-around success, and was particularly impressed by the involvement of student volunteers in Coastal Steward's existing beach cleanup efforts.

Mr. Russell noted the possibility of the town getting some revenue from the sponsor-a-beach program, but he said the main benefit would be the cleaner beaches.

"We have plenty of [beach] properties that need attention," Mr. Russell said. "And any time I hear the word cleanup and no cost, it's an attractive option."

One area in need of tidying up is Goldsmith's Inlet in Peconic, the supervisor said.

"A lot of our beaches are already taken care of by ad hoc community associations," he said. "We don't want to step on their toes. What we're looking for are those areas that don't get the attention they need. And we have plenty of properties that fit that description."

Mr. Johnson bragged about the thoroughness of his beach cleanup efforts.

"A lot of them do it themselves, but historically, they don't do as impactful of a beach cleanup as I do," he said. "We do everything we can to get anything that's man-made off the beach."

"Besides the candy wrappers, the cigarettes and plastic and glass bottles, we've removed boats, derelict poles from docks ... and a lot of wood."

Mr. Johnson, who noted that he has similar beach cleanup agreements in the works with East Hampton and Brookhaven towns, said Coastal Steward cleanup efforts have picked up 32.4 tons of garbage from Long Island beaches so far this year. Items found range from such oddities as a protective cup from a jockstrap to items as dangerous as needle syringes, Mr. Johnson said.

"While the program is giving municipalities a new source of revenue, the number one reason we're doing this is to improve the quality of the environment," Mr. Johnson said. "The less stressed out they are, the better the organisms living near the beach will do."

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