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## **CITY OF TYBEE ISLAND**

PRESS RELEASE:  
For immediate release

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### **Helping to Leave Only Footprints on Tybee's Beaches**

Tybee Island, GA – (May 10, 2010) Tybee has gained a lot of positive recognition in the last year. Most recently, Disney's Touchstone Pictures released *The Last Song* with Miley Cyrus and Greg Kinnear, which used mainly Tybee Island locales and showed the endangered loggerhead sea turtles who nest on its beaches. Travel+Leisure Magazine gave Tybee a 'best affordable beach' accolade, and TripAdvisor.com just put Tybee in its Top Ten Vacation Rental Hot Spots. The Island was voted the country's #1 Healthiest Beach last year by Health Magazine, and Georgia and regional magazines consistently rate the island as one of the best beach and vacation destinations. All this recognition will likely mean a welcome influx of new visitors this year, but along with the tide of sun-seekers also comes responsibility for keeping alive the character of the island that earned this recognition in the last 12 months, in order to provide an appropriate welcome and to ensure a number of those visitors will return in the future. The City of Tybee Island's Department of Public Works labors diligently, year-round, to keep Tybee's beaches clean, with help from conscientious visitors who keep their litter contained while on the beach and left in trash bins when they leave.

One of the most critical and welcoming aspects of the island and nearby marsh is its visual beauty and clean swimming areas. The Tybee City Council recently made some changes to improve enforcement and compliance with the local littering ordinances.

If you are on the beach, your litter **MUST** be placed **in a bag or receptacle** or you will be fined \$100, even if that litter has not blown away from your site! Fines increase for second offenders!

For anyone who has spent time on the beach, it's obvious that strong winds along the shoreline present a challenge in controlling trash. A moment's inattention can send beach umbrellas and chairs hurrying down the beach. Lighter fare, such as shopping sacks, Styrofoam eating utensils, napkins, or aluminum cans can be far down the beach before one is even aware that the items are gone; if items are scattered all over your site, it is simply harder to keep control of your litter.

**P.O. Box 2749 – 403 Butler Avenue, Tybee Island, Georgia 31328-2749**  
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**[www.cityoftybee.org](http://www.cityoftybee.org)**



For this reason, trash on the beach must be kept in an appropriate container at all times. (See pictures for illustration of appropriate and inappropriate containment.)

Once you have lost control of your litter, one of two things will most likely happen. Unrecovered litter will likely be sampled by wildlife, whether sea gulls, otters, dolphins, sea turtles, or more exotic species like whales, when that litter is swept to sea. While food is not likely to be harmful, many plastic and other inedible items can end up entangling, poisoning, or otherwise harming and killing wildlife that tries to swim through or ingest it.

In the alternative, to try to keep that scenario from happening, and just to make sure everyone has a chance to enjoy a clean beach, the City's Department of Public Works sends out a crew of three to ten workers every morning, year round, for periods ranging from three to six hours. Utilizing an 7-ton trailer and tractor, a front loader, and a pickup truck, these crews pick up and haul off anywhere between six and 35 tons of waste from the beach and cross-over areas *every single morning*, which ultimately added up to at least 1200 tons of waste removed from the beaches alone in the last year, removed with over 2500 hours of labor, at a cost to the City of well over \$500,000. Another 3600 tons of waste were hauled to the landfill from other sources on the island.

Travelling with the crew, a couple of interesting observations can be made. First of all, and thankfully, the vast majority of beach litter is actually put in trash containers near the dune cross-over walks. Visitors are also becoming more conscious about recycling, filling up the recycling bins there, and resorting to the regular trash bins for bottles and cans only when the recycling bins are full. Frustratingly, however, the bits of debris left on the sand are spread everywhere, with a can here, a bottle 20 feet away, a towel 10 feet from there – while the items that were deposited in the barrels are handled in less than five minutes, the crew can spend as much as 20 minutes working to pick up those individual items at each of the 23 cross-overs to the beaches.

The purpose of the added fines and increased enforcement is to try to make us all better stewards of our lovely island and its wildlife, and to preserve City revenues for expenses that are not so easily controlled by visitors and residents. The beach patrols would like nothing better than to issue no citations for littering! If everyone is responsible for their own waste, no one will see a ticket or have a run-in with them, and the DPW staff can better spend their time and budgets on improving City infrastructure.

Mayor Jason Buelterman provides an excellent summary, addressing each of these points: "Tybee is making a concerted effort this year to protect our beach from those who choose to leave their trash behind. We are adding more trash cans, have started collecting trash earlier in the season, and are raising awareness of the problems that littering causes. Not only does litter make our beach less attractive, it also can lead to significant environmental problems, including, but not limited to, the loss of some of our most treasured fish and wildlife. As part of our efforts to keep our beach and surrounding areas clean and litter free, the City plans on stepping up enforcement of our littering ordinance this year but would like nothing more than for our visitors to leave only their footprints behind!"

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## SIDEBARS:

*Tybee City Ordinance, Section 12-1, states in part:*

**Placement of litter.** *It shall be unlawful to throw, place, deposit, sweep or scatter, or cause to be thrown, placed, deposited, swept, or scattered, any paper, food, cigarette butts, bottles, cans, trash, fruit peelings or other refuse upon the beaches or structures erected thereon. **Beach goers must have their trash in a container at all times.***

And,

**Penalty for litter.** *The fine for the offense of violating subsection (a)(2) of this section prohibiting litter on the beach, shall be not less than \$100.00 plus applicable court fees and not less than \$200.00 [...] plus applicable court fees for any subsequent offense occurring within a 12-month period of a preceding offense.*

- Tybee's Department of Public Works sends work crews out to the beach every single morning to pick up trash from the previous day at a minimum cost of anywhere from \$800 to \$2300 per day.
- A fast food meal's leftovers: Plastic shopping bag = .5 lb; Styrofoam cup, plate, napkin, spork, wrapping paper = .5 lb. Total: 1 lb.
- A moderate summer day will see 8,000 visitors to the beach; a heavy day can bring 10,000 to 17,000 visitors
- If each one were to leave behind their lunch trash, that's 4 TONS of trash that has to be picked up and removed by truck! Heavy days see even more per person left than the 8.5 tons you might expect – an astounding 25 to 35 tons of trash may be removed after a special event.
- Costs of removal include labor at \$25 per hour, equipment depreciation rated at \$125 per hour, hauling charges of \$157 for 6 tons, and tipping fees at the landfill of \$42 per ton. That's over \$1000 to clean up after a light day!

## Pictures:

**In fiscal 2009, the City of Tybee Island spent over \$500,000 removing trash from its nearly four miles of beaches.**



**It's clear why crews must clean up the beach every day.**



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Fines and rules are prominently displayed at public cross-overs to the beaches.



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**As this trash is not in any containers, it would result in a ticket and a fine!**



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**While on the beach, pack your used items immediately to avoid receiving a ticket.**



About Tybee Island, GA.: The City of Tybee Island, Georgia is on the outermost barrier island off the Savannah area coast. With a wild bird sanctuary, over three miles of ocean beaches, and salt marshes on the back river, outdoor recreation activities abound for visitors to the island. As a key defense point to the important Savannah port, Tybee's Fort Screven, Tybee Fort Theater, Fort Pulaski, and the Tybee Island and Cockspur Lighthouses combine with the unique architectures of the island's raised cottages to form a rich backdrop for history buffs. Attracting a strong artistic community, there are several local supporting art galleries. Keeping the island interesting year round are several arts festivals, the Annual Pirate Fest, the Beach Bum Parade, St Patrick's Day celebrations, the Hot Rod Run, the Beach Bash, and the Christmas Parade, as well as fireworks display, ,on Independence and New Year's Days, off the Parker Pier and Pavilion. The Marine Science Center cooperates with Georgia's DNR to protect threatened sea turtle species by searching for nests, protecting their eggs, and making sure hatchlings make it to sea. For visitor information, stop by <http://www.tybeevisit.com/>, and to find more about the City of Tybee Island, visit our web site at <http://www.cityoftybee.org/>. You can also find 'City of Tybee Island' on Facebook and CityofTybee on Twitter.

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City of Tybee Island press releases are available for download from the City's web site at <http://www.cityoftybee.org/PressReleases.aspx>.

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