

MIAMI BEACH

Clean beach campaign progressing

The movement to keep the beach clean has won support from Miami Beach residents and government officials alike.

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When Commissioner Jerry Libbin walks along the shore in South Beach, he notices that garbage cans are no longer overflowing with scraps of food, beer bottles and pizza boxes after the weekend.

"It doesn't look like that anymore. The baskets are being emptied multiple times during the day," Libbin told the city's Beach Preservation Committee during its monthly meeting last week.

But he said there is still work to be done, noting that cigarette butts are scattered throughout the sand.

After spending two weekends with volunteers who reminded beachgoers to pick up their trash, leave glass bottles at home and extinguish their cigarette butts away from the sand, Libbin is moving into a new phase of his No Litter, No Butts campaign.

"What I believe we need to do is continue the education," he told the committee.

The commissioner has made beach cleanliness one of his key issues after his constituents pointed out the problem to him this summer.



Last week, Libbin asked the committee to support a new scheme: a campaign to create and mount colorful anti-littering signs on the beach concession stands or lifeguard stands.

One possible design: a picture of a blue dolphin next to a cola can with a headline, "Don't Throw Garbage In My House."

"I think it's a great idea," said Ana Cordero, chair of the city's Beach Preservation Committee.

"You definitely have our support."

At the same time, both beach and county officials have stepped forward to make cleanliness a priority.

Miami-Dade is responsible for picking up the trash east of the sand dunes while



CITY OF MIAMI BEACH

DELIVERING THE MESSAGE: Above, volunteers reach out to people to remind them not to litter on the beach. It is part of No Litter, No Butts campaign by Miami Beach City Commissioner Jerry Libbin. Above left, Miami Beach has bought 3,000 disposable ashtrays that city officials will give to beachgoers.

Miami Beach takes care of litter on its parks, sidewalks and streets.

Starting this weekend, Miami Beach's code compliance officers will ride around the beach on ATVs and hand out courtesy warnings to litterbugs who leave behind trash, bring glass bottles and use the sand as their ash tray.

They will continue giving out biodegradable paper bags, which list Miami Beach's litter laws, to beachgoers.

Next weekend, code compliance officers will begin fining people who violate the city's anti-litter laws.

The first offense carries a \$50 fine, the second \$100, the third \$500.

"People generally have no awareness that they can get fined," Libbin said.

On top of that, Miami Beach bought 3,000 disposable ashtrays, as large as a coin purse.

Within the next 30 to 45

days, city employees will give them to smokers as a promotional item, said City Manager Jorge Gonzalez.

"It's an effort to make people aware about leaving cigarette butts in the sand," he said.

Environmentalists say it takes anywhere from six to 12 years for butts to decompose.

And next Monday, Miami-Dade officials will examine sand sifters from five companies, Libbin said.

The county intends to buy another machine to comb the sand for cigarette butts and small pieces of trash.

In September, Miami-Dade County Manager George Burgess increased the county's beach maintenance budget by at least \$521,000 after a local documentary filmmaker posted videos on YouTube showing a trashy beach at sunrise.

The funds cover a new sand sifter and more maintenance workers.

All these new efforts have not been lost on local residents, who have seen the beach become cleaner.

"We have been waiting for this," said Frank Del Vecchio, an activist, who lives on Third Street and Ocean Drive.

"People want members of the public and the government to come forward and keep the beaches clean."