

Coast Day 2021 will combine best of virtual and small, in-person events

While the annual Coast Day event won't be returning to Lewes just yet, this year's plan combines online presentations with limited in-person events in all three counties, taking the coastal Delaware tradition statewide.



Also new for 2021, the day will kick off with a keynote when University of Delaware alumnus Steve Alten, author of sea creature thriller *The Meg*, will sit down for a conversation with Aaron Carlisle, assistant professor and shark expert at UD's School of Marine Science and Policy.

Coast Day is run by the Delaware Sea Grant (DESG) College Program and its home institution, UD's College of Earth, Ocean and Environment (CEOE), serving as a community open house in most years. Although restrictions on public gatherings drove Coast Day online in 2020, organizers are experimenting with a hybrid approach this year. Rather than inviting thousands to UD's Hugh R. Sharp Campus in Lewes, DESG staff will host small in-person events in all three counties the day before Coast Day, which will be Sunday, Oct. 3.

The Saturday events will include a guided paddling trip on the Broad Creek in Laurel, a tour of aquaculture facilities at Delaware State University run by DESG Marine Advisory Service specialist Dennis McIntosh, and opportunities to engage with a traveling touch tank of sea creatures at two libraries in New Castle County.

On Sunday, Coast Day proper will offer five presentations by UD faculty on their research, covering a wide variety of marine, atmospheric and social science, but unified by the theme of Coast Day 2021: Storytelling and Science.

As climate change and conservation issues have struggled to gain traction in society even as scientists have increasingly detailed research showing impacts and risks, a new appreciation for the importance of storytelling in science has emerged. That can take many forms, whether the popular fiction of a book like *The Meg* engaging the public with prehistoric sea creatures or experts finding ways to tell the story of science itself: how it has made the discoveries it has and how scientists have uncovered what we understand today about the ocean, the climate, and more.

Leading up to Coast Day weekend, DESG and CEOE will be hosting a number of activities and opportunities for people to get involved. Preparing for Alten's appearance, organizers will hold an online book club for people to read and discuss *The Meg*, as well as screenings of the movie, then preparing questions for Alten and Carlisle during the live event.

Learn more about all of the Coast Day 2021 plans and register to participate at decoastday.org. Coast Day 2021 is sponsored by the Delaware Municipal Electric Corporation.