

THE NATIONAL ESTUARINE RESEARCH RESERVE SYSTEM



Through the National Estuarine Research Reserve System, a network of 29 sites, over 1.3 million acres of estuaries are protected and studied. The results benefit natural and man-made communities.

This NOAA-led effort uses a partnership approach with coastal states to manage each reserve. Active restoration and protection initiatives are ongoing, as well as monitoring programs and community-based research projects. Each reserve also provides the trainers and educators needed to bring reserve-generated data and information to local citizens and decision makers.

Visit the website at www.coast.noaa.gov to learn more.

Office for Coastal Management
National Estuarine Research Reserves

Research Reserves

- Protect estuaries
- Provide places for scientific study
- Contribute to community well-being

Get additional information on the reverse of this page.





THE BACK STORY

Why Estuaries Matter

- **Diversity.** Habitat types found in and around estuaries include shallow open waters, freshwater and salt marshes, swamps, sandy beaches, mud- and sand flats, rocky shores, oyster reefs, mangrove forests, river deltas, tidal pools, and seagrasses.
- **Healthy ecosystems.** Most marine organisms (up to two-thirds of the nation's commercial fish and shellfish) spend some part of their life cycle in the estuary or depend on this resource for food.
- **Community benefits.** Estuaries protect uplands from flooding, enhance water quality, and provide numerous commercial and recreational benefits.
- **Economic impacts.** Coastal shoreline counties provided 53 million jobs and contributed \$7.4 trillion (nearly 44 percent) of the nation's gross domestic product in 2012. Of the 32 largest cities in the world, 22 are located on estuaries.

Programs

NOAA provides federal funding and oversight while local universities and agencies run the day-to-day operations for each reserve. Each site administers programming that is most suited for the location, but the following list contains some of the initiatives common to all reserves.

- **Stewardship.** Each reserve undertakes the tasks needed to keep the site protected and functional.
- **Monitoring.** Short- and long-term monitoring data (water quality, weather, biological systems, habitat, etc.) document impacts from changing weather and surroundings.
- **Research.** The Science Collaborative, a funding program that brings the end user into the research process, develops research with local and national relevance and applicability.
- **Training.** Training professionals bring relevant monitoring and research results, and information about how to use this information, to community leaders.
- **Education.** Each reserve is a living classroom that advances estuary literacy and generates meaningful educational experiences for adults, children, and teachers. Thousands participate each year.