

# THE NATIONAL ESTUARINE RESEARCH RESERVE SYSTEM



Through the National Estuarine Research Reserve System, a network of 28 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](http://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.