



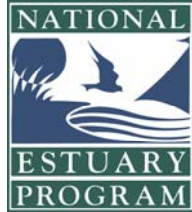
National Estuary Program

Overview

Estuary—a place where freshwater from a river mixes with saltwater from the ocean. Estuaries are often called a bay, sound, lagoon, inlet, or harbor.

Estuaries contain many important habitats such as wetlands, mud flats, rocky shores, and seagrass beds.

Estuaries serve as nursery and spawning areas. Almost 80% of the commercial and recreational fish we catch depend on estuaries for part or all of their lives.



The National Estuary Program (NEP) is a very successful community-based program designed to restore and maintain the ecological integrity of estuaries of national significance. There are 28 NEPs, each with a Director and staff, working with their local stakeholders to improve the health of their coastal waters and watersheds.

Established under the 1987 Clean Water Act Amendments, the NEP is a unique voluntary program that operates through partnerships among EPA and other Federal, State, and local organizations; industry; academia; environmental and business groups; and community residents. Each NEP works using an inclusive collaborative decision-making process to deliver on-the-ground action making the NEP an important model for protection and management of coastal and non-coastal watersheds.

How does the NEP Protect Estuaries?

The flexible and collaborative nature of the NEP has allowed the local Estuary Programs to develop many innovative approaches to address problems. These approaches are uniquely tailored to local environmental conditions, and to the needs of local communities and constituencies. At the same time, the national structure provided by the NEP has facilitated the sharing of successful management approaches, technologies, and ideas.

Together with their partners, each NEP creates and implements a plan with specific actions designed to improve water quality, habitat, and living resources. NEPs employ available regulatory tools to address point and nonpoint source pollution, as well as innovative restoration and protection methods and techniques to address habitat loss and degradation.

Actions in each plan could include supporting improved local comprehensive planning and better building codes to protect water resources, monitoring water quality, restoring wetlands and other critical habitats, holding a workshop to inform homeowners about failing septic systems, or providing technical assistance to communities regarding stormwater management.



For more information contact:

Coastal Management Branch
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Office of Wetlands, Oceans and Watersheds

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NEP Websites

Albemarle-Pamlico Sounds

<http://www.apnep.org>

Barataria-Terrebonne

<http://www.btneep.org>

Barnegat Bay

<http://www.bbep.org>

Buzzards Bay

<http://www.buzzardsbay.org>

Casco Bay

<http://www.cascobay.usm.maine.edu>

Charlotte Harbor

<http://www.chnep.org>

Coastal Bend Bays and Estuaries

<http://www.cbbep.org>

Delaware Estuary

<http://www.delawareestuary.org>

Delaware Inland Bays

<http://www.inlandbays.org>

Galveston Bay

<http://www.gbep.state.tx.us>

Indian River Lagoon

<http://www.sjrwmd.com/programs/outreach/irlnep/index.html>

Long Island Sound

<http://www.longislandsoundstudy.net>

Lower Columbia River Estuary

<http://www.lcrep.org>

Maryland Coastal Bays

<http://www.mdcoastalbays.org>

Massachusetts Bays

<http://www.mass.gov/envir/massbays>

Mobile Bay

<http://www.mobilebaynep.com>

Morro Bay

<http://www.mbnep.org>

Narragansett Bay

<http://www.nbep.org>

New Hampshire Estuaries

<http://www.nhep.unh.edu>

New York-New Jersey Harbor

<http://www.seagrant.sunysb.edu/hep>

Peconic Estuary Program

<http://www.peconicestuary.org>

Puget Sound

<http://www.psat.wa.gov>

San Francisco Estuary

<http://sfep.abag.ca.gov/sfep.html>

San Juan Bay

<http://www.estuario.org>

Santa Monica Bay

<http://www.santamonibay.org>

Sarasota Bay

<http://www.sarasotabay.org>

Tampa Bay

<http://www.tbep.org>

Tillamook Bay

<http://www.tbnep.org>

What has the NEP accomplished?

The 28 National Estuary Programs are demonstrating success in improving environmental conditions, securing and leveraging funds, and improving public education and citizen participation through outreach efforts. All this has been done in close partnership with many Federal, State and local entities.

Environmental Results

The NEPs have protected or restored over 1 million acres of habitat since 2000, through activities such as land acquisition, installation of fish passages, repair of tide-gates, enhancement of shellfish beds, and removal of invasive plants. The types of habitats protected and restored include tidal wetlands, forests, meadows, and streambanks, among many others.



Reaching and Involving the Public



Informing and educating the public about estuaries, and including them in the decision-making process, is a strong underpinning of the NEP and essential to the continued improvement of these vital resources. Each NEP has engaged community members through a variety of means such as: 1) public meetings to define problems and design actions, 2) hands-on involvement in volunteer water quality monitoring or restoration, or 3) holding "State of the Estuary" conferences to provide information on progress being made by the NEP to improve conditions in the estuary.

Leveraging Funds

By developing strategic alliances, the NEPs have leveraged approximately \$16.50 for every \$1 of EPA funding. As a result, nearly \$1.11 billion through individual, private, local, State and Federal partnerships over the past few years (2003-2006) has been generated.

These additional resources have been used primarily for wastewater treatment and land acquisition projects.



Photos courtesy of Karen Young, Donna Edgar, Nancy Laurson, the Peconic Estuary Program, and the Lower Columbia River Estuary Partnership

Log onto <http://www.epa.gov/owow/estuaries> for more information