

# Welcome to the Community!

National Estuarine Research Reserve System  
A Primer for New Employees



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**Office for Coastal Management**  
*[coast.noaa.gov/nerrs](http://coast.noaa.gov/nerrs)*



# *Yes,* WELCOME TO THE RESEARCH RESERVE COMMUNITY!

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As a new research reserve employee, friend, or volunteer, you've become part of the community that has made the reserve system what it is today – the premier resource for estuarine science and learning. To help you get started, we thought you might benefit from an overview of the administrative workings of the reserve system. We cover only the basics here, since the best way to learn the details is through experience and conversation.

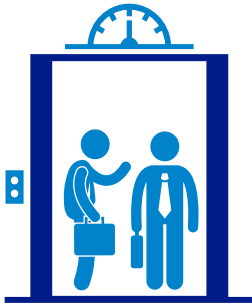
While we try to provide a good overview, there is one area that is hard to convey on paper: the heart and soul of the places and people associated with the system. We all know estuaries are special places and ours are representative of the many amazing types across our nation. Each possesses special habitats and cultures, and our work supports the continued health of coastal ecosystems, economies, and communities. The passion, dedication, and innovation of the people of the research reserves inspire me on a daily basis.

Some research reserves contain hundreds of acres, while others have hundreds of thousands. Some sites employ a handful of staff, and others have dozens. Regardless, each works as a team to protect their ecosystems and support their local communities. We also work together across the system, bringing our diversity of knowledge and experiences together, making the whole much greater than the sum of its parts. Often people ask how the reserve system works so well within a framework that includes 30 different state agencies. The answer is our collaborative commitment to the mission.

The positive and meaningful work we do is wide ranging and hard to put into words. We protect and restore the vital habitats that provide invaluable ecosystem services. We provide scientific information and experiential learning experiences to community leaders, citizens, and children. We provide spaces for recreational opportunities that bring fun and peace, as well as inspire future generations to protect these special resources.

Welcome to our community and thank you in advance for all of your contributions to the research reserve system. I look forward to meeting you, and please feel free to reach out to me or anyone on our NOAA team with questions or ideas for taking us into the future

Erica Seiden  
Program Manager  
Ecosystems and National Estuarine Research Reserve System Program



## GETTING DOWN TO BUSINESS

# NATIONAL ESTUARINE RESEARCH RESERVE SYSTEM

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## Who, What, and Why

The reserve system comprises 30 reserves, over 1.4 million acres of protected lands and waters, and hundreds of people who care for and study these places. Each site represents the unique attributes of estuary types in their region, allowing our reserves to therefore share information across the nation with those who have similar systems and communities.

The system was established by the Coastal Zone Management Act of 1972. The reserves operate through a partnership program between NOAA and the coastal states. NOAA and the states work collaboratively to develop priorities and programs that are responsive to community needs. Alongside NOAA and the states is the National Estuarine Research Reserve Association, or NERRA, our non-profit that supports outreach, educates the public and Congress, and advocates for funding and the work we do. NERRA also leads the Friends and Foundation Network which is composed of individual reserve's nonprofit friends and foundation groups.

We aim to engage a wide diversity of people and knowledge to address the system's priority issues of climate and environmental change, water quality and quantity, and habitat protection. Each reserve also conducts stewardship, research, education, and training programs to inform stewardship and increase the effective management of these special places.

## Mission and Vision

The system's vision is stated as 'resilient estuaries and coastal watersheds where human and natural communities thrive.' To meet this vision, the research reserves constantly strive forward under this mission statement: 'to practice and promote stewardship of coasts and estuaries through innovative research, education, and training using a place-based system of protected areas.'

## Pillars of Communication

**We are places.** Research reserves ensure the protection of representative estuaries across the nation as places dedicated to estuarine science, education, and stewardship.

**We do work that is locally relevant.** Each reserve in the national system is a community hub for integrated approaches that bring together science, stewardship, and education to effect positive change in their community's most pressing coastal issues.

**We have a national impact.** We work together as a system to deliver science and education programs with local, regional, national, and international impact.

**We study how estuaries work and how they are changing.** Our science, data, and maps are applied to inform decisions critical to maintaining healthy estuaries, watersheds, and coastal communities. Our monitoring programs make us sentinels for estuarine change across the nation.



## THE NUTS AND BOLTS OF OUR EXISTENCE **THE PEOPLE WHO MAKE IT WORK**

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This program is founded on a partnership that extends to every aspect of our operation — locally, regionally, and nationally. NOAA, the states, and NERAA (National Estuarine Research Reserve Association) work hand in hand to guide and nurture the system and its work.

Each reserve has a multi-disciplinary staff that serve core functions of management, stewardship, research, education, and technical service to communities. NOAA's Office for Coastal Management also has a cadre of multi-disciplinary staff to support these functions, lead collaborative program development and evaluation, and enable coordination within regions and across reserves. And finally, NERRA has a staff to lead the Friends and Foundation Network and support the work of the system. There is a strong tie among all of these staff, who work to row in the same direction and support each other.

Helping to guide our system into the future is the strategic committee, a body of twelve representatives from the system who come together to update the systems' strategic plan, make recommendations for national products, and create opportunities to vision forward. Additionally, the system employs a multitude of topic specific workgroups bringing staff from across reserves and functions together to guide actions forward. The system aims to cross pollinate in as many ways as possible!

General roles for NOAA, the states, and NERRA are summarized below.

### **NOAA**

#### **Program Coordinators**

- Provide leadership to galvanize and enable strategic visioning
- Provide coordination and support for key functions of research, education, stewardship, management, and technical service and training
- Collaboratively develop program guidance, coordinate advisory bodies to support program adaptation, and oversee funding

#### **Reserve Liaisons**

- Provide support and connection to resources for reserve program implementation
- Support development of management plans, conduct program evaluations, administer cooperative funding agreements, and support technical service
- Connect reserves to NOAA resources and share lessons learned across reserve system

#### **Subject Matter and Program Liaisons**

- Provide leadership and support for Bipartisan Infrastructure Law and Inflation Reduction Act
- Support key functions and programs such as communications, geospatial, and learning services programs, as well as product development
- Lead initiatives to improve diversity, equity, inclusion, justice and access, as well as human dimensions



## States

### Reserve Program Coordinators and Staff

- Work collaboratively to implement research, education, stewardship, and training programs to meet the needs of diverse communities
- Share local innovations with other reserves
- Lead conservation and restoration efforts to protect the reserve's integrity and longevity

### Fellows: Davidson, Coastal Management, and Digital Coast

- Margaret A. Davidson Fellows conduct multi-disciplinary research projects and support reserve activities using their expertise
- Digital Coast Fellows support specific reserve system projects on priority issues
- Coastal Management Fellows support coastal management projects within states and offer transferable information across the system

## National Estuarine Research Reserve Association and the Friends and Foundation Network

### NERRA

- Advocates for reserve system programs and funding to Congress
- Leads the Friends and Foundation Network and coordinates communication across reserve friend groups
- Educates a wide variety of audiences about the value of the system and its impacts

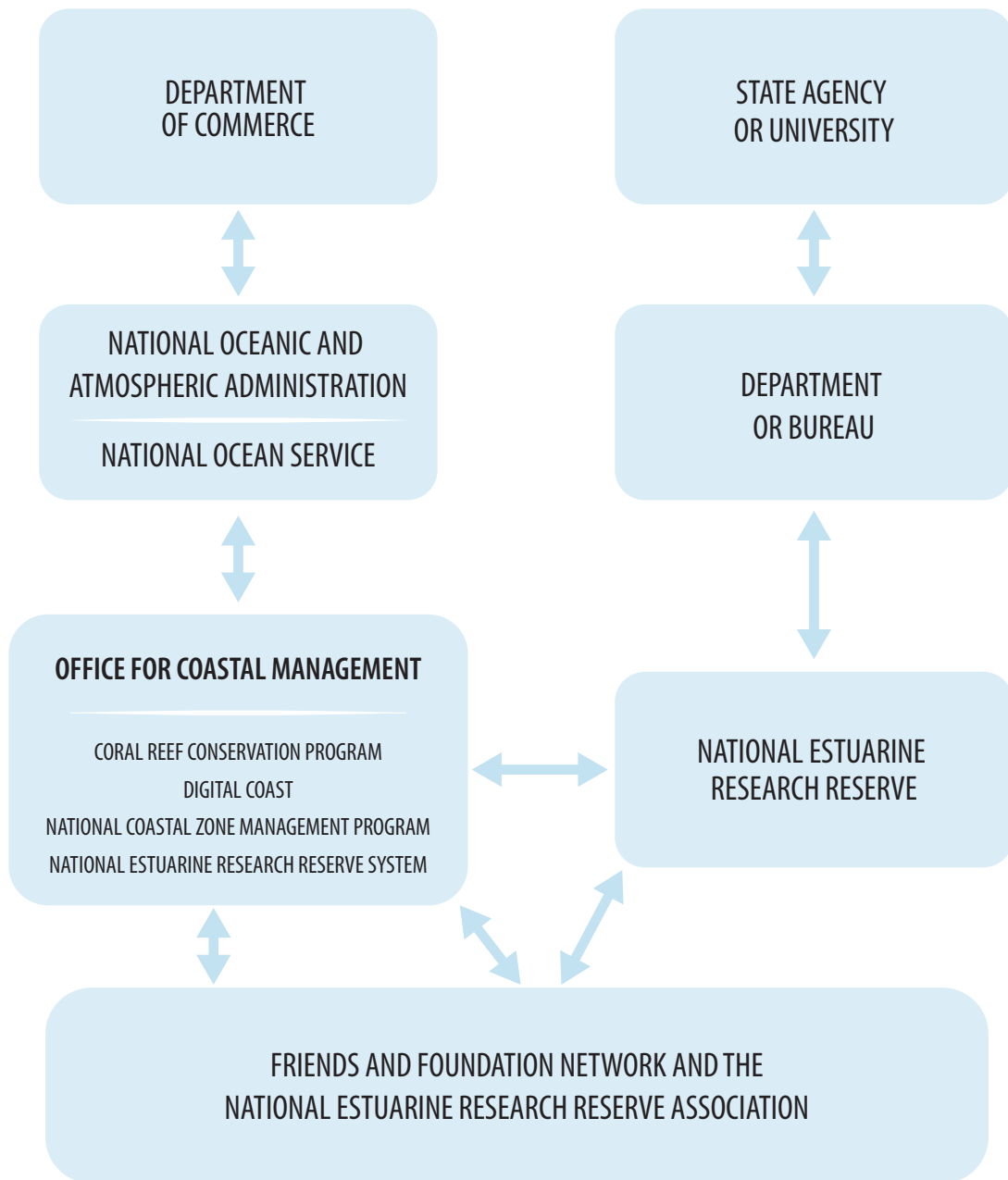
### Friends and Foundation Network

- Supports project work at the reserves
- Advocates for the program locally and nationally
- Educates local community members about their reserve

FOR THOSE WHO LIKE ORG CHARTS  
**ORGANIZATIONAL CHARTS**

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To see the full organizational chart for these organizations, visit their websites.





## THE DOLLARS AND SENSE OF IT ALL NOAA FUNDING

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Under the Coastal Zone Management Act, Congress annually provides appropriations to support the National Estuarine Research Reserve System through two funding lines.

- Operations, research, and facilities (ORF)
- Procurement, acquisition, and construction (PAC)

### **Operations, Research, and Facilities**

This funding line is dedicated to supporting the annual operation of the system. NERRA advocates for funding to Congress, NOAA develops guidance and executes funding, and the states develop annual cooperative agreements that guide funding implementation. These funds are awarded noncompetitively and the states are required to match 30 percent of the total award. Funding goes toward individual reserves as well as competitive research programs, the development of new reserves, support functions for the system, and NERRA. Typical allocations are shown below.

- Operations for 30 reserves
- Margaret A. Davidson Fellowship Program
- Science Collaborative Program
- Centralized Data Management Office
- National Estuarine Research Reserve Association
- Support of new reserve designations
- National products and program support

### **Procurement, Acquisition, and Construction**

This funding line supports reserve facility and campus infrastructure needs, small scale restoration projects, green infrastructure projects, and land acquisition used to expand reserve sites. Funding may be used for small scale projects such as docks, boardwalks, and exhibits, as well as large projects that include research labs and headquarters facilities. Reserves compete for these funds; projects selected are identified in reserve management plans. States also provide matching funds for these projects: 30 percent for construction and 50 percent for land acquisition. NOAA has also been able to use this funding line to support equipment purchases for monitoring programs and operational needs.

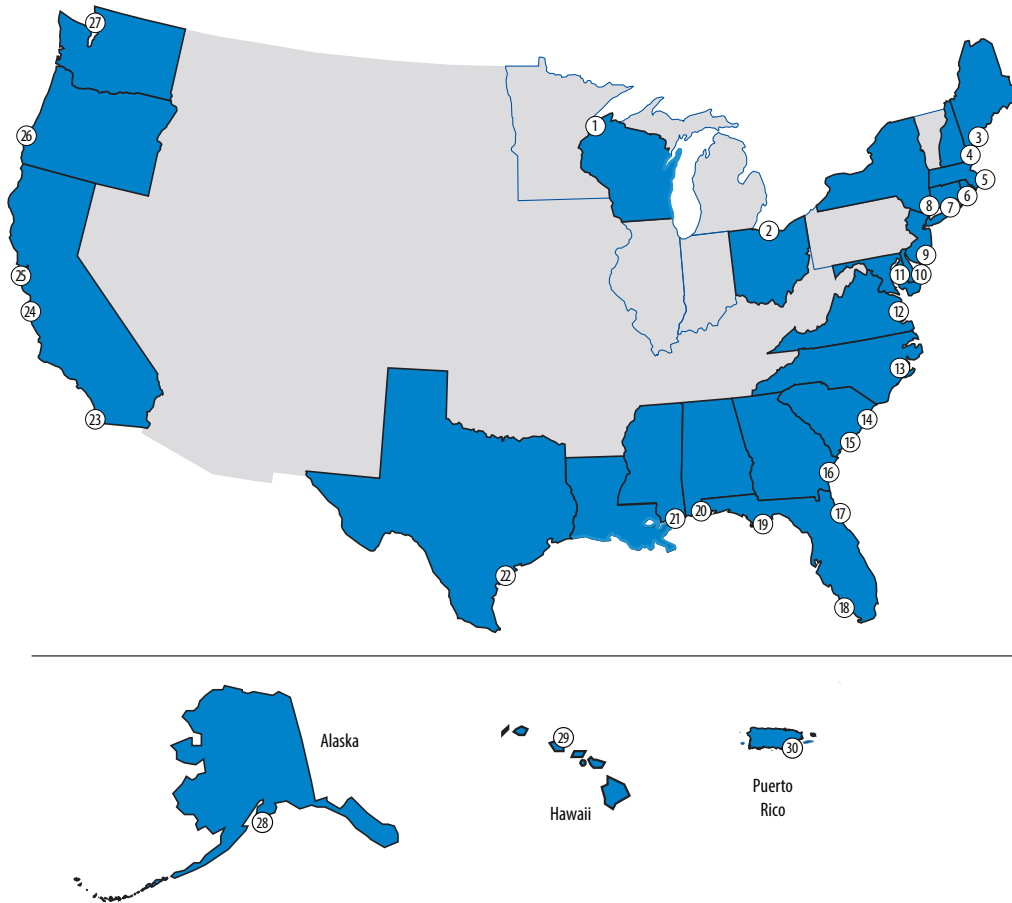
### **Bipartisan Infrastructure Law and Inflation Reduction Act**

Under this legislation, NOAA provides non-competitive and competitive funding for climate resilience activities, restoration, and land acquisition.





# THE NATIONAL ESTUARINE RESEARCH RESERVE SYSTEM



- Great Lakes
  - 1. Lake Superior, Wisconsin
  - 2. Old Woman Creek, Ohio
- Northeast
  - 3. Wells, Maine
  - 4. Great Bay, New Hampshire
  - 5. Waquoit Bay, Massachusetts
  - 6. Narragansett Bay, Rhode Island
  - 7. Connecticut
- Mid-Atlantic
  - 8. Hudson River, New York
  - 9. Jacques Cousteau, New Jersey
  - 10. Delaware
  - 11. Chesapeake Bay, Maryland
  - 12. Chesapeake Bay, Virginia
- Southeast
  - 13. North Carolina
  - 14. North Inlet-Winyah Bay, South Carolina
  - 15. ACE Basin, South Carolina
  - 16. Sapelo Island, Georgia
  - 17. Guana Tolomato Matanzas, Florida
- Gulf of Mexico
  - 18. Rookery Bay, Florida
  - 19. Apalachicola, Florida
  - 20. Weeks Bay, Alabama
  - 21. Grand Bay, Mississippi
  - 22. Mission-Aransas, Texas
- West
  - 23. Tijuana River, California
  - 24. Elkhorn Slough, California
  - 25. San Francisco Bay, California
  - 26. South Slough, Oregon
  - 27. Padilla Bay, Washington
  - 28. Kachemak Bay, Alaska
- Pacific
  - 29. He'eia, Hawai'i
- Caribbean
  - 30. Jobos Bay, Puerto Rico

**PROPOSED**  
Bay of Green Bay, Wisconsin  
Atchafalaya, Louisiana  
U.S. Virgin Islands

## How are research reserve sites chosen?

A biogeographic classification scheme based on regional variations in the nation's coastal zone was developed to ensure that the National Estuarine Research Reserve System includes at least one site from each region. This approach, which is outlined in the program's regulations, is used to ensure that sites reflect the wide range of estuarine types within the United States. This representation lets the work accomplished to be more readily shared with communities with similar systems.



## AND FINALLY WAYS TO LEARN MORE

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### Program Resources

NOAA Office for Coastal Management – [coast.noaa.gov](http://coast.noaa.gov)

Reserve System – [coast.noaa.gov/nerrs](http://coast.noaa.gov/nerrs)

Reserve System Intranet – [sites.google.com/a/noaa.gov/nos-nerrs-intranet](https://sites.google.com/a/noaa.gov/nos-nerrs-intranet)

Estuaries Education – [coast.noaa.gov/estuaries](http://coast.noaa.gov/estuaries)

Science Collaborative – [nerrssciencecollaborative.org](http://nerrssciencecollaborative.org)

Centralized Data Management Office – [cdmo.baruch.sc.edu](http://cdmo.baruch.sc.edu)

Data Mysteries – [cdmo.baruch.sc.edu/noaa-nerrs-education/#/](http://cdmo.baruch.sc.edu/noaa-nerrs-education/#/)

Margaret A. Davidson Graduate Fellowship – [coast.noaa.gov/nerrs/research/davidson-fellowship.html](http://coast.noaa.gov/nerrs/research/davidson-fellowship.html)

National Estuarine Research Reserve Association – [nerra.org](http://nerra.org)

NERRA Friends and Foundations Network – [nerra.org/friends-foundations](http://nerra.org/friends-foundations)

### Listserve and Lists for Updates

- NERRSALL Listserve – [nerrsall@csc.noaa.gov](mailto:nerrsall@csc.noaa.gov) (To join, subscribe at [nerrsall-subscribe@csc.noaa.gov](mailto:nerrsall-subscribe@csc.noaa.gov))
- Manager listserve – [ocm.nerrsmanagers@noaa.gov](mailto:ocm.nerrsmanagers@noaa.gov) (To join, email [erica.seiden@noaa.gov](mailto:erica.seiden@noaa.gov))
- Coastal Training Program Coordinator Listserve – [NERRS-CTP@csc.noaa.gov](mailto:NERRS-CTP@csc.noaa.gov)  
(To join, subscribe at [nerrs-ctp-subscribe@csc.noaa.gov](mailto:nerrs-ctp-subscribe@csc.noaa.gov))
- Education Coordinator Listserve [nerrseducators@csc.noaa.gov](mailto:nerrseducators@csc.noaa.gov)  
(To join, subscribe at [csc.noaa.gov/mailman/listinfo/nerrseducators](http://csc.noaa.gov/mailman/listinfo/nerrseducators))
- Research Coordinator listserve – [nerrs-research@csc.noaa.gov](mailto:nerrs-research@csc.noaa.gov) (To join, subscribe at [csc.noaa.gov/mailman/listinfo/nerrs-research](http://csc.noaa.gov/mailman/listinfo/nerrs-research))
- System-wide Monitoring Program (SWMP) Technicians and Coordinators Listserve – [NERRTECH@listserv.sc.edu](mailto:NERRTECH@listserv.sc.edu) (For communications about technical issues related to SWMP data and equipment; to join, email [melissa@baruch.sc.edu](mailto:melissa@baruch.sc.edu) or [chris.kinkade@noaa.gov](mailto:chris.kinkade@noaa.gov))
- Stewardship Coordinator and GIS Updates – see “Stewardship” tab of the NERRS Intranet directory.  
(To join, email [elaine.vaudreuil@noaa.gov](mailto:elaine.vaudreuil@noaa.gov))
- NERRS Science Collaborative Updates – <https://nerrssciencecollaborative.us10.list-manage.com/subscribe?u=3b99b296b7a36cc34c49bf712&id=34d696be7b>

### Cooperative Agreements and Performance Metrics

eRA Commons – <https://public.era.nih.gov/commonsplus/home.era>

eRA Training – [commerce.gov/ocio/programs/gems/applicant-and-grantee-training](http://commerce.gov/ocio/programs/gems/applicant-and-grantee-training)

CAMMP – [coast.noaa.gov/cammp](http://coast.noaa.gov/cammp)

Federal Grants Submissions – [grants.gov](http://grants.gov)

NERRS Performance Measure Database – [NSDesk.ServiceNowservices.com/nerrs](http://NSDesk.ServiceNowservices.com/nerrs)

Research and Monitoring database – [coast.noaa.gov/nerrsresearch/Account/Login?ReturnUrl=/nerrsresearch](http://coast.noaa.gov/nerrsresearch/Account/Login?ReturnUrl=/nerrsresearch)

Education performance metrics database – [noaaedeval.knack.com/unified-data-call#nerrs](http://noaaedeval.knack.com/unified-data-call#nerrs)

### Social Media

- NERRA Facebook – [facebook.com/estuaries](https://facebook.com/estuaries)
- NERRA Twitter and Instagram – [@estuaries4life](https://twitter.com/estuaries4life)
- NOAA Digital Coast Facebook – [facebook.com/NOAADigitalCoast](https://facebook.com/NOAADigitalCoast)
- NOAA Digital Coast Twitter – [@NOAADigCoast](https://twitter.com/NOAADigCoast)

## COMMON ACRONYMS

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APA – American Planning Association  
CTP – Coastal Training Program  
BIL – Bipartisan Infrastructure Law  
CCVATCH – Climate Change Vulnerability Assessment Tool for Coastal Habitats  
CRRC – Climate Resilience Regional Challenge  
CZMA – Coastal Zone Management Act  
DEIJA – Diversity Equity Inclusion Justice and Accessibility  
EA – Environmental Assessment  
GIS – Geographic Information System  
HMC – Habitat Mapping and Change  
IRA – Inflation Reduction Act  
KEEP – K-12 Estuary Education Program  
MADF – Margaret A. Davidson Fellowship  
NSC – NERRS Science Collaborative  
NERRA – National Estuarine Research Reserve Association  
NERRS – National Estuarine Research Reserve System  
NOAA – National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration  
OCM – Office for Coastal Management  
SWMP – System-wide Monitoring Program  
TA – technical assistance  
TOTE – Teachers on the Estuary  
WLWL – Wetlands and Water Levels (formerly SSAM1 – Sentinel Site Application Module)



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**OFFICE FOR COASTAL MANAGEMENT**

*[coast.noaa.gov](https://coast.noaa.gov)*

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