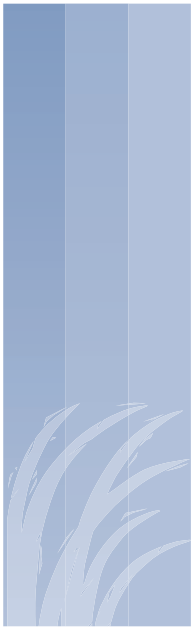
national estuarine research reserve system

The National Estuarine Research Reserve System protects more than 1.3 million acres of estuarine habitat for long-term research, monitoring, education and stewardship throughout the coastal United States.



Estuaries: Where Rivers Meet the Sea

Estuaries are partially enclosed bodies of water, such as bays, lagoons and sloughs, where freshwater from rivers mixes with salt water. These important coastal habitats are spawning grounds and nurseries for at least two-thirds of the nation's commercial fish and shellfish. Wetlands associated with estuaries buffer uplands from flooding. Estuaries also provide many recreational opportunities, such as swimming, boating, fishing and bird watching.

Protecting the Nation's Estuaries

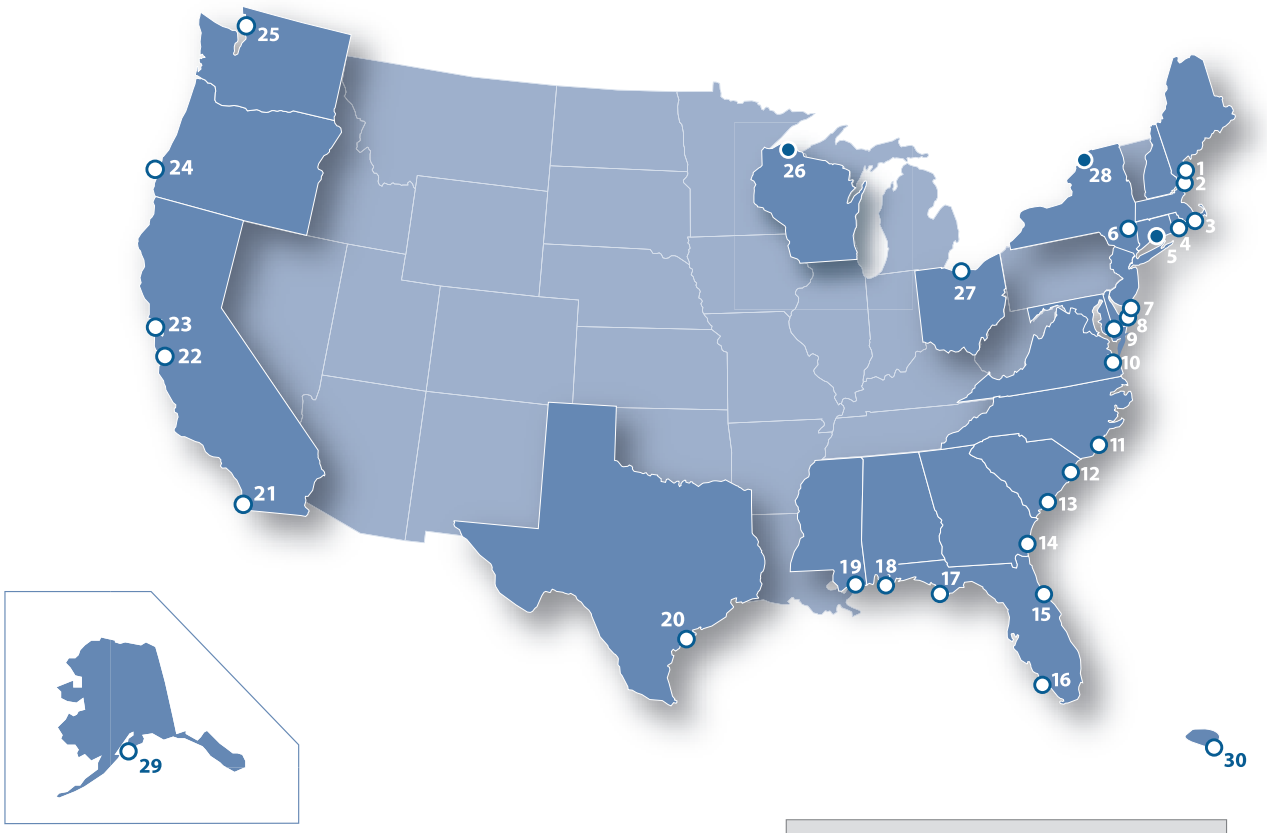
The National Estuarine Research Reserve System is a network of 27 protected areas representing different biogeographic regions of the United States. Established by the Coastal Zone Management Act of 1972, as amended, the reserve system is a partnership program between the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration and the coastal states. NOAA provides funding and national guidance. Each reserve is managed on a daily basis by a lead state agency or university, with input from local partners.

Reserve staff work with local communities and regional groups to address natural resource management issues, such as non-point source pollution, habitat restoration and invasive species. Through integrated research and education, the reserves help communities develop strategies to deal successfully with these coastal resource issues. Reserves provide adult audiences with training on estuarine issues of concern in their local communities. They offer field classes for K-12 students and target regional teachers through professional development programs in marine education. Reserves also provide long-term water quality and biological monitoring as well as opportunities for scientists and graduate students to conduct research in a "living laboratory."

United States Department of Commerce
National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration
National Ocean Service, Office of Ocean & Coastal Resource Management

nerrs.noaa.gov

estuarine research reserves



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

** Proposed Reserve*

designated proposed