

Improving and Maintaining the Health of Estuaries - National Estuary Program Celebrates 20th Anniversary

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(11/1/07) Thanks to EPA's National Estuary Program (NEP), more than 1 million acres of critical habitat has been sustained or restored--- that's a figure that is just shy of the total area of the state of Rhode Island. The NEP, which includes 28 estuaries across the country, was developed 20 years ago to protect and restore these national resources.

Stories of success and on-the-ground environmental results are evident from coast-to-coast. These examples help tell the story:

- Indian River Lagoon Estuary in Palm Bay, Fla., has rehabilitated 34,943 acres of wetlands;
- The Charlotte Harbor NEP restored 700 acres of Florida habitat by eliminating exotic plant species. It also founded the Babcock Preservation Partnership to save 91,361 acres from development;
- 81,000 students have learned about stormwater management through the Lower Columbia River Estuary Partnership's Schoolyard Stormwater Project;
- The Massachusetts Bays program has restored 13 shellfish beds;
- The Barnegat Bay Program in New Jersey has saved more than 32,000 acres of critical habitat;
- Coastal Bend Bays Estuary in Corpus Christi, Texas, secured \$6 million to protect more than 1,000 acres of wetlands; and
- The Narragansett Bay Estuary Program's dissolved oxygen surveys which documented hypoxia and anoxia in that estuary were a catalyst for Rhode Island to legislate a 50 percent reduction in nutrients from treatment plants discharging to the Narragansett Bay.

The NEP was authorized under the 1987 Amendments to the Clean Water Act to improve estuarine waters, habitats and living resources by working with partners and the public.