

National Estuarine Research Reserve Education Change on the Ground in 2019

Connects

People to Estuaries

**1 million+
ACRES**

of natural classrooms & living laboratories with



29 INTERPRETIVE CENTERS



29 RESEARCH RESERVES



613,152 VISITORS

learn about estuaries through Research Reserve outreach & education



Aloha to our Hawai'i Reserve, designated in 2017!

Prepares

the Next Generation

**93,916
STU-**

take learning out of the abstract & into the outdoors



**4,784
TEACHERS**

are trained in the estuary & supported in the classroom



SKILLS BUILT

- ✓ Observation
- ✓ Asking research questions
- ✓ Problem solving
- ✓ Data driven decision making

ESTUARY SCIENCE

LOCAL DATA

LAB WORK

FIELD INVESTIGATION

Improves

the Environment

**13,704
CITIZENS**

are trained & inspired to protect their coasts & estuaries



VOLUNTEER ACTIONS

- ✓ Protect wildlife
- ✓ Monitor water quality
- ✓ Plant native species
- ✓ Clean up the coasts

29 RESEARCH RESERVE EDUCATORS

lead programs that foster coastal stewardship in communities in 23 states



Creating value through education
32,000 volunteer hours = \$753,920

Sapelo Island Research Reserve Education is Change on the Ground



2019

Connect



7,500 acres of habitat protected
11,821 visitors to the Sapelo Island Visitor Center
1,539 public tour participants



Prepare

159 teachers trained
1,837 students engaged
6,034 student contact hours
1,170 adult learners educated

Improve



631 citizen scientists activated
2,645 volunteer hours
77 volunteer projects



"In our standardized test-driven culture, there are few opportunities for students to participate in real-world scientific activities that are meaningful and provide tangible benefits for our community. Most students don't develop a passion for environmental stewardship through reading or media. They develop it through doing."

Bob Hogdon
Richmond Hill Schools
Field Study Program.

"What a power packed day of activities! The students enjoyed every minute of the day, and according to parents are still raving about their experiences."

Maria Williams
Independent Learning
Network

Beyond the Boundaries

The Sapelo Island National Estuarine Research Reserve's Education Program partnered with the Georgia Department of Natural Resources Coastal Resources Division (CRD) to conduct an off-campus marine learning experience for three local elementary schools. Because these schools did not have the opportunity to visit the Reserve itself, they traveled to CRD's headquarters in Brunswick, GA, where the Reserve had set up a learning booth. Unlike festivals where it is difficult to achieve a deep learning experience with visitors, this format afforded the Reserve the luxury of spending a longer period of one-on-one time with each class. The Reserve was able to provide 533 students with a high-quality learning experience focused on the diverse and dynamic ecology of the Georgia coast.

Going Deep

The Reserve's Education Program conducted a unique teacher workshop experience with the Coweta County School System. Coweta County is one of Georgia's western-most counties and far from the Atlantic Ocean. A group of Coweta teachers were engaged in tracing the flow of Georgia rivers to the sea. After following one of Georgia's watersheds to the Gulf of Mexico and ending up at the Apalachicola NERR, the teachers turned their sights on tracing the flow of freshwater toward the Atlantic Ocean. Twenty-four Coweta teachers travelled to the Reserve and spent three days learning about estuaries and Georgia coastal management issues. The teachers were able to directly compare and contrast the two watersheds. The Reserve's EC, RC, SWMP Manager, and biologists with CRD and the UGA Marine Institute all helped guide these instructors through this experience, which culminated in an excursion on UGA's research vessel, the *R/V Spartina*. These paired experiences enabled the teachers to gain a solid understanding of Georgia's unique ecosystems and the complex issues surrounding them, new knowledge that they will take back to their students in the classroom.

Leading from the Front

In 2019, the Education Coordinator was elected President of the local chapter of the National Marine Educators Association, GAME (Georgia Association of Marine Educators). This position allowed the Reserve to greatly expand its role in marine education and help shape marine education for the entire state. GAME's mission is to promote ocean literacy and to help educators attain the knowledge, tools and techniques that will directly translate into the classrooms of Georgia. It is leadership like this that makes the Reserve an integral part of marine and estuarine education along the entire Georgia coast and beyond.

Sapelo Island NERR is one of 29 sites in the National Estuarine Research Reserve System. Each site is a state federal partnership that combines research, monitoring, and education to advance the understanding and management of estuarine environments.

