



**NORTH CAROLINA
COASTAL RESERVE &
NATIONAL ESTUARINE
RESEARCH RESERVE**

Benefits of Estuaries



Estuaries consist of many habitats including saltmarshes, oyster reefs, mudflats, and seagrass beds that are economically and ecologically indispensable to North Carolina.



These coastal habitats provide important food and nesting material for waterfowl and other wildlife.

Marsh plants guard against erosion and flood damage. Their leaves and stems buffer wave energy, and their root systems bind soil.

Nutrients and decayed plant material produced by marsh plants contribute to the productivity of the estuarine system.



Estuarine habitats like seagrass, saltmarsh, and oyster reefs trap debris and excess nutrients.

These natural buffers along the shoreline help regulate the flow of fresh water into the estuary by filtering stormwater runoff, the most significant water quality pollutant in North Carolina.



The aesthetic value of estuaries draws visitors to the area year-round. Vacationers, artists, sportsmen and photographers travel to the coast and support the local economy.



Fishing, hunting, kayaking, bird-watching and hiking are among the many activities enjoyed by people that live on the coast.



The estuarine habitats of North Carolina provide important ecosystem services. In order to continue to benefit from these services, we must work together to protect our coastal habitats. Learn more by exploring the North Carolina Coastal Reserve & National Estuarine Research Reserve website: <http://www.nccoastalreserve.net/>