



N.C. Department of Environment and Natural Resources

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Four new conservation projects funded in the Albemarle-Pamlico Estuary Region

RALEIGH – Staff with the Albemarle-Pamlico National Estuary Program announced grant awards today for four projects aimed at improving water quality in the Albemarle-Pamlico estuarine region, which covers parts of northeastern North Carolina and southeastern Virginia.

The APNEP Citizens' Advisory Committee selected the projects, each of which helps identify, protect and restore the natural resources of the Albemarle-Pamlico estuarine system. Details about each project follow.

- Researchers from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill have devised a novel use for some of the thousands of crab pots lost every year in coastal waters. Using the grant, the pots will be reshaped and placed in estuarine waters to provide prime oyster habitat and eliminate unintended bycatch. This approach aims to address marine pollution, ghost fishing, a lack of oyster habitat and other threats to environment.
- The North Carolina Coastal Federation was awarded funds to engage in habitat restoration on the banks of Bogue Sound. By replacing sandbags with native grasses, erosion rates can be reduced while purifying stormwater and creating valuable marsh habitats.
- Staff with the North Carolina Coastal Studies Institute will partner with government agencies and students to build, deploy and monitor Basic Observation Buoy, or BOB, units as part of an environmental education curriculum. The units can be used to collect information about water quality in the region's rivers and sounds. Information from these buoys will supplement other data collection efforts in the region, including information collected by the Albemarle-Pamlico National Estuary Program's Citizens' Monitoring Network. The monitoring network includes volunteers who routinely gather water quality data.
- Staff and students with Elizabeth City Middle School will use the grant to reconfigure a stormwater system to support an educational and functional wetland habitat on school grounds. In addition to providing an outdoor classroom space, the new wetland will filter stormwater runoff before it enters adjacent natural wetlands and the Pasquotank River.

Each project will improve water quality and educate residents about those improvements, said Bill Crowell, director of the Albemarle-Pamlico National Estuary Program. Environmental stewardship efforts are critical for the long-term protection of coastal ecosystems in the Albemarle-Pamlico region.

Estuaries are areas where river and ocean waters mix, supporting a rich array of terrestrial and aquatic life. The Albemarle-Pamlico estuarine system provides coastal storm protection and a key nursery area for many coastal fish and shellfish, which support the region's fishing and tourism industries. The Albemarle-Pamlico estuarine system was designated by Congress as an "estuary of national significance" in 1987. For more information, see www.apnep.org, or contact Jim Hawhee, APNEP's community specialist, at (919) 733-0121 or jim.hawhee@ncdenr.gov.

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