

Albemarle-Pamlico National Estuary Partnership (APNEP) Spring 2017 Updates

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Albemarle-Pamlico National Estuary Partnership

Spring 2017 Updates



Director's Corner

2017 is a special year for us – APNEP is celebrating its 30th anniversary as a National Estuary Program. We're commemorating the occasion with [Sound Reflections](#), a series of

interviews with some of the past and present partners who have made APNEP a success over the years. Take a look and celebrate with us! Please let us know if you have a story to share. We will also be hosting an APNEP Symposium Nov. 15 (details forthcoming).

Recently, the Environmental Protection Agency announced that APNEP was the recipient of a grant award. This is a partial award of our annual funding administered by EPA in its cooperative agreement with the North Carolina Department of Environmental Quality. This partial award is welcomed, as it arrives five months ahead of our normal schedule. More information is in the newsletter below.

Last month, I attended the NEP Director's meeting in Washington, D.C., where I met Surabhi Shah. She will become EPA's Partnership Programs Branch Chief this month and oversee the EPA-HQ staff responsible for the NEPs. We welcome Ms. Shah, as she is familiar with our watershed as she was formally with our host agency when it was the N.C. Department of Environment and Natural Resources.

In February, the Policy Board and Science and Technical Advisory Committee met to conduct annual business, discuss program priorities, and frame our annual workplan and grant application. Many of our Implementation Action Teams have been meeting and have updates below regarding their proposed efforts to implement APNEP's Comprehensive Conservation and Management Plan (CCMP). From seagrass surveys to ecological flow studies, APNEP is continuing to partner with diverse stakeholder groups to protect and restore the Albemarle-Pamlico ecosystem!

Sincerely,

Dr. Bill Crowell
APNEP Director



THE ASSOCIATION OF
National Estuary Programs



National Estuary Program News

National Estuary Program Directors, including our own Dr. Bill Crowell, recently met in Washington, D.C. to exchange ideas and information. Some participated in a successful briefing of the House Estuary Caucus, representing the Association of National Estuary Programs (ANEP).

[Bipartisan Representatives Create Congressional Estuary Caucus](#)

Representatives Suzanne Bonamici (D-OR), Rick Larsen (D- WA), Bill Posey (R-FL), and Frank LoBiondo (R-NJ) have founded and serve as co-chairs of the new Congressional Estuary Caucus. The bipartisan Congressional Estuary Caucus unites lawmakers to keep our nation's estuaries strong and protect our local economies and critical ecosystems. To date, a total of 27 U.S. Representatives have joined the new [caucus](#). The caucus will host events throughout the 115th Congress to educate other members about the importance of estuaries to community health and the national economy, and to promote initiatives that protect estuaries and their ecosystems.

[Congress Funds National Estuary Program for remainder of FY 17](#)

Congress passed an omnibus budget for the remainder of FY 17 in early May, funding the federal government through the remainder of the federal fiscal year. Congress fully funded the National Estuary Program at current levels for each of the 28 NEPs. For APNEP that means funding through September 2018. Presently, APNEP has received a partial grant award, more information is below:

[EPA Awards APNEP Grant:](#)

[Protecting Natural Resources and Strengthening Local Economies](#)

Recently, EPA announced that the Albemarle-Pamlico National Estuary Partnership (APNEP) will receive approximately \$343,883 in the form of a federal grant appropriated by Congress to identify, conserve, and protect the significant resources within its 30,000-square-mile region of North Carolina and Virginia. APNEP will use EPA's grant funding to continue decades of work with its diverse partners to implement actions identified in the

Comprehensive Conservation and Management Plan, including oyster and fish passage restoration, submerged aquatic vegetation mapping, and water quality protection. Learn more [here](#).

National Outreach

The Association of National Estuary Programs (ANEP) is working to secure continued bipartisan support on behalf of the NEPs, and has developed [fact sheets](#) for each region to educate decision and policy makers about the importance of investing in the program. The federal administration's [FY18 budget](#) proposes to eliminate the National Estuary Program (NEP) and similar geographic ecosystem restoration programs, suggesting responsibility for funding local environmental efforts be returned to state and local entities.

The NEP has established a strong 30-year track record of success in protecting and restoring our national estuaries, with the federal government as a key partner. Among the federally funded coastal programs, only NEPs organize local stakeholders in a unique decision-making framework to create a shared vision and develop strategic plans to improve communities. The ecosystem issues addressed cross multiple jurisdictions and leveraged federal dollars 19:1 nationally last year. During this period APNEP leveraged approximately 15 dollars for every dollar received under the federal grant.

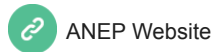
Thank you for your continued support of the National Estuary Program and partnerships with APNEP. Please join us in celebrating three decades of shared success in protecting and restoring our estuary of national significance.

[parts extracted from [ANEP fact sheet](#) and website].



ANEP recently launched a new website, which features [APNEP's long standing submerged aquatic vegetation \(SAV\) partnership](#) in the Albemarle-Pamlico Estuary.

In addition to serving as a clearinghouse for legislative updates, the site features success stories from National Estuary Programs (NEPs) across the country. Check out the links below to the new ANEP website or to follow them on Facebook to see what other NEP's are up to!



ANEP Website



ANEP Facebook Page

APNEP Announcements



3rd Annual Joint APNEP - North Carolina Sea Grant 2017 Graduate Fellowship Open

North Carolina Sea Grant and APNEP are [accepting applications](#) through July 31 for the 2017 Graduate Fellowship in Estuarine Research. The fellowship provides funding for graduate students based in North Carolina and Virginia with an opportunity to conduct applied research within the North Carolina portion of the APNEP region.



NFWF

APNEP has received a \$75,000 National Fish and Wildlife Federation grant to study underwater grasses that provide critical habitat in Albemarle and Pamlico sounds. The study will build upon previous work commissioned by the Submerged Aquatic Vegetation (SAV) Partnership. APNEP has facilitated this

diverse group of stakeholders to promote conservation of SAV along the entire coast of North Carolina and southeastern Virginia for more than 15 years.

APNEP News



New Staff Members Join APNEP!

We'd like to welcome Dr. Timothy Ellis and Kelsey Ellis to the APNEP team (no relation, by the way!). Tim joined us in March as APNEP's Ecosystems Analyst, and has extensive research experience addressing ecological questions which can lead to better management strategies for NC's coastal resources. As Ecosystems Analyst, Tim will be helping with APNEP's monitoring and assessment efforts.

Kelsey Ellis has a background in scientific research and education, and joined APNEP at the beginning of May as our new Program Associate. She will be working to develop outreach programs to support CCMP implementation, as well as assisting with APNEP communications. Their bios and more information about our staff is available on our [website](#).

APNEP Management Conference Updates

In honor of National Volunteer Week held in April, we recognized that our volunteers are our partners. Thank you for the time spent participating on the boards, committees, and teams that comprise the APNEP Management

Conference. We hope to continue to work together and leverage our collective resources to identify, protect, and restore the Albemarle-Pamlico estuarine system.



In February, APNEP's policy board met and named its new [leadership team](#) for the next two years. Dr. Kirk Havens, Assistant Director of the Center for Coastal Resources Management and Director of the Coastal Watersheds Program at the Virginia Institute of Marine Science, assumed the chairmanship at the board's meeting. Holly White, the principal planner for the town of Nags Head, will serve as vice chairperson. We also welcomed new member Mary Penny Kelley as Secretary Michael Regan's appointee from the N.C. Department of Environmental Quality.

The board held a joint afternoon meeting with the Science and Technical Advisory Committee (STAC) to discuss tracking CCMP implementation and setting program priorities based on feedback from partners gathered during the [needs assessment](#). Both groups conducted their business meetings, approving the [APNEP FY 2017-2018 Workplan](#), bylaws, and STAC action plan. Meeting materials can be found [here](#).



CCMP [Implementation Action Team](#) Meeting Highlights

Invasives (January 24): Kick off meeting; discussed current and past collaborative efforts in North Carolina and Virginia regarding the management of invasive aquatic and terrestrial species, and outlined steps to establish and prioritize a list of invasive flora and fauna in the Albemarle-Pamlico estuary.

Freshwater Habitat and Fish Passage (April 25): Discussed various activities pertaining to the seven CCMP actions assigned to this team. Action items include plans for a potential fish passage project in the region, and data requirements and availability for developing and updating comprehensive maps of ditched and drained areas, inland freshwater habitats, and anadromous fish spawning areas in the Albemarle-Pamlico Estuary.

Submerged Aquatic Vegetation (May 8th): Discussed future plans for continuing SAV surveys throughout the AP region. A sub-committee will be formed to compare the differences and similarities between existing federal SAV policies (ASMFC and SAFMC) and state SAV policies.

Ecological Flows (May 9th): Provided guidance for ongoing effort to gather data about ecological flows in the AP region.

Engagement & Stewardship Meeting (May 16th): Discussed support of ongoing projects and partnerships, and brainstormed new project ideas centered around stormwater education, fish consumption and contaminant risk, algal bloom communication, and regional education and recreational opportunities.

Monitoring and Assessment Teams: The Wetland Resources and Air Quality teams have met to prioritize indicators for the APNEP region. Other [Monitoring and Assessment Teams](#) will be meeting summer and fall 2017. This information will be utilized to update the 2012 Ecosystem Assessment and facilitate development of integrated monitoring networks.



Sound Reflections

The U.S. Congress designated the Albemarle-Pamlico estuarine system an “estuary of national significance” in 1987. That same year, the Albemarle-Pamlico Estuarine Study (APES) was among the first of 28 National Estuary Programs established by the EPA through amendments to the Clean Water Act. To help commemorate our 30th anniversary, we’re highlighting the history of APNEP through a series of interviews with past and present partners throughout 2017. Check out the entire archive at on [our website](#), including interviews with Dr. Mike Orbach, Tony Reevy, Mike Gantt, Dr. Mary Lou Addor, and Jeff Turner. Reply to this newsletter to let us know if you would like to participate!

2017 also marks the twentieth anniversary of the 1997 NC Fisheries Reform Act. Don't miss the special [edition](#) with Susan West telling the story of a unique community collaboration featuring the voices of fishermen, scientists, environmental advocates, and resource managers instrumental in shaping the most significant fisheries legislation in NC history. APNEP staff member Jimmy Johnson is the co-principal investigator on project.

APNEP Outreach



SciREN Coast, February 16

[SciREN](#) (The Scientific Research and Education Network) events connect STEM researchers and educators in order to bring current scientific research into classrooms and

local communities. APNEP staff member Marygrace Rowe attended the February SciREN Coast event at the NC Aquarium at Pine Knoll Shores to present three APNEP-created lesson plans. Many of our partners attended the event as well, including The NC Coastal Federation, UNC Institute of Marine Sciences, East Carolina University, North Carolina Sea Grant and many more! Learn more about North Carolina's premier scientist-educator collaboration and networking event in a guest Soundings post, [Celebrating Five Years of SciREN Coast](#), from Alexandria Hounshell of the University of North Carolina Institute of Marine Sciences. For APNEP's complete list of K-12 lesson plans, visit [our website](#).

A Time for Science Expo, March 11

Over 45 exhibitors and 2,000+ attendees came together at the [A Time for Science: Nature and Learning Center](#) in Greenville, NC, to showcase interactive science activities for kids of all ages. APNEP staff member Marygrace Rowe attended the event and presented a game from APNEP's [lesson plan database](#). This fun, interactive game is a great way of showcasing the importance of submerged aquatic vegetation (SAV) in protecting aquatic estuarine animals from predation. It was also a great opportunity to boast about North Carolina's estimated 138,000 acres of SAV and how crucial it is to our estuarine ecosystem!

Coastal Envirothon, March 21

APNEP staff member Marygrace Rowe helped out at this year's NC Coastal Envirothon at the Cool Springs Environmental Education Center in New Bern. The [Envirothon](#) is an academic competition for middle and high school students that addresses environmental and natural resource topics such as soils, forestry, wildlife, and aquatics.

[Shad in the Classroom 2017](#)

The Museum of Natural Sciences and partners wrapped up another successful Shad in the Classroom Program at the end of April. Policy Board / STAC member Dr. Wilson Laney and colleague Emily Wells of the USFWS participated at a release at Falls Dam with over 100 fifth graders. APNEP staff members Stacey Feken, Tim Ellis, Jimmy Johnson, and Margrace Rowe participated in other release events with elementary and middle school students on the Eno and Neuse Rivers. Students from Tiller Elementary School surprised staff with thank you cards. We're impressed that these enthusiastic 4th graders not only learned the scientific name, but also wrote haikus about their shad as they waited on the banks to release their baby fish. Learn more about our long standing partnership in a guest Soundings post, [Proud Shaddys and Shamommas](#) from program coordinator Danielle Pender.



Soundings

A fresh take on the region's salty affairs



May 19, [Cypress Trees as Sentinels of the Sounds](#)

STAC Member Marcelo Ardón launches Citizen Science project to monitor our changing coastline.

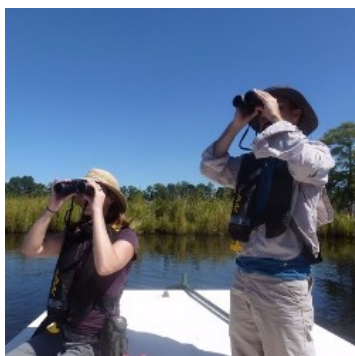
[Read more](#)



April 5th, [Becoming the Napa Valley of Oysters](#)

Takeaways from the 2017 North Carolina Sound Economic Development Summit – how can North Carolina tap into its coastal resources to boost the state's economy?

[Read more](#)



February 28th, [Sound Science Guiding Conservation of the Albemarle-Pamlico Region](#)

Exploring the history and efficacy of North Carolina's Natural Heritage Program after over 40 years. Photo by Misty Buchanan.

[Read more](#)

Partner Spotlight



[Collaboration + Good Coffee = Connected Science Learning Success:](#)
***State Agencies Partner to Unite Formal and Informal Educators in
North Carolina***

The N.C. Office of Environmental Education unites classroom teachers, curriculum specialists, and educators from environmental education centers, science museums, parks, aquariums, and similar organizations to advance science education throughout the state. Learn more about their partnership with the Department of Public Instruction and efforts to form collaborations between formal and informal educators in North Carolina:

<http://csl.nsta.org/2017/05/good-coffee/>



NC Sentinel Landscapes Partnership recipient of the 2017 REPI Challenge Award

The North Carolina Sentinel Landscapes Partnership has been [awarded funds](#) to support conservation efforts in Eastern North Carolina through the U.S. Department of Defense REPI Challenge! Learn more about the link between conservation, working lands, and defense in our [Soundings post](#) from last summer.



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