

Economic Impact of N.C.'s Submerged Aquatic Vegetation (SAV)

Information for Local Governments



North Carolina is home to **over 130,000 acres** of submerged aquatic vegetation, or, as many know it, underwater grasses. This resource is critical to both our environment and our economy, adding **millions of dollars in value** each year through its carbon storage, water filtration, shoreline stabilization, and habitat value. But **N.C.'s SAV is under threat**, primarily from declining water quality. From economic development officials to city councils and recreation departments, **local government can play a major role** in protecting this important resource and could help shield coastal North Carolina from **over \$88 million in losses** over the next 10 years.



Where is our SAV?



Declines in SAV are a Loss for Local Economies

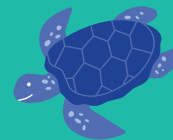
	If 5% of SAV is lost by 2031:	If 50% of SAV is lost by 2031:
Declines in carbon storage, allowing carbon dioxide to enter atmosphere	\$5.6 million in losses	\$55.6 million in losses
Declines in residential property values	\$2.0 million in losses	\$22.6 million in losses
Declines in commercial blue crab catch	\$0.7 million in losses	\$6.6 million in losses
Declines in recreational spotted seatrout and red drum catch	\$0.5 million in losses	\$4.2 million in losses

Unquantified Economic Benefits of SAV

- Waterbird habitat that creates recreational value for hunters and birders
- Improved water quality by absorbing nutrients from land runoff and trapping sediment
- Erosion protection for vulnerable shorelines
- Habitat for other aquatic species, such as sea turtles, and support for other economically important fisheries

Policies for Healthy SAV and a Healthy Economy

- SAV **protection is much cheaper** than SAV restoration, which averages \$50,000/acre with just a 38% success rate
- **Incentivize land conservation** efforts that help reduce impervious surfaces and provide natural filters for excess nutrients and sediment
- Focus on **living shorelines** and shoreline restoration instead of hard shorelines, which can damage SAV
- Implement **stormwater management** practices that reduce the flow of sediment, fertilizers, and oils into the watershed
- **Upgrade septic systems** to reduce leakage of pollutants into estuarine waters
- **Maximize cooperation** with other agencies, organizations, and municipalities



Learn More

- [Read the Full SAV Economic Valuation Report](#)
- [APNEP's Work to Protect N.C.'s SAV](#)
- [SAV Monitoring and Mapping](#)
- [APNEP's Economic Valuation of the Entire Watershed](#)
- [Smart Growth Policies and Water](#)

Albemarle - Pamlico

National Estuary Partnership

