



N.C. Coastal Reserve

A fishing boat navigates a North Carolina salt marsh.

# SALT MARSH: A WAY OF LIFE AND AN ECONOMIC ENGINE FOR OUR COASTS

**S**alt marshes are wetlands that fill and drain with the tides. These guardians of the coast protect military installations and communities from flooding, support commercially and recreationally valuable fish and wildlife, and are a defining landscape of eastern North Carolina, South Carolina, Georgia and Florida. The South Atlantic Salt Marsh Initiative (SASMI) is a coalition of over 400 members working to protect, restore, and conserve the region's one million acres of salt marshes – roughly the size of Grand Canyon National Park.

## A Regional Partnership Delivering Results

SASMI works alongside state and federal natural resource and resilience agencies, the military, local municipalities, fishermen, scientists, conservation groups, Gullah Geechee communities and private landowners to safeguard salt marsh from changing ocean conditions, growing coastal populations and development pressures.

We **protect** healthy salt marsh through actions such as using living shorelines to stabilize shorelines, promoting low-impact development and improving water quality.

We **restore** degraded salt marshes through actions such as building oyster reefs, replanting marsh vegetation, and restoring water and sediment flow.

We **conserve** adjacent lands and remove barriers to allow marshes space to shift in response to changing conditions.

SASMI's growing portfolio of partner projects can be found at [marshforward.org/projects](https://marshforward.org/projects)

## SASMI DELIVERS TANGIBLE PROTECTION AND ECONOMIC VALUE TO NORTH CAROLINA AND OUR NATION

State efforts are led by the North Carolina Coastal Federation and an implementation team of local, state, and federal partners. Together they are unified in their efforts to protect the future of this habitat. Salt marshes contribute to North Carolina by:

- Providing over \$1.6 billion per year in protection from storm surge and flooding.
- Supporting the commercial and recreational fishing industry that contributes over \$377 million and \$960 million respectively to the state's economy every year.
- Protecting vital military installations and training grounds including Marine Corps Base Camp Lejeune, Marine Corps Air Station Cherry Point, Military Ocean Terminal Sunny Point, and Dare County Bombing Range.



# A RESOURCE OF NATIONAL IMPORTANCE: 6 THINGS TO KNOW ABOUT SALT MARSHES



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**Redfish, which thrive in the salt marsh, are a prized catch for coastal anglers.**

- Salt marshes and the estuaries that support them provide shelter, food, and nursery grounds for more than 75% of commercial and recreational fish species in the country, including white shrimp, blue crab, redfish, and flounder.
- One acre of salt marsh can absorb up to 1.5 million gallons of floodwater, which is equivalent to more than 2.25 Olympic-size swimming pools.



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**A couple enjoys kayaking near the marsh.**

- Coastal tourism in this region generates over \$25 billion per year in GDP, bringing millions of people to our beaches, waterways, and salt marshes.
- By filtering runoff and excess nutrients, salt marshes help promote good water quality in coastal bays, sounds, and estuaries.

- **During storms, salt marshes absorb floodwaters and wave energy, decreasing property damage in adjacent communities and military installations by up to 20%, according to NOAA.**



Mark Bias

- **Salt marshes provide important habitat for a variety of birds that support hunting and tourism, including popular waterfowl such as the green-winged teal.**



Angela McCain/USFWS

For more information visit [marshforward.org](https://marshforward.org) or email [contact@marshforward.org](mailto:contact@marshforward.org).  
Roadmaps guide conservation and restoration efforts in each state.  
View the roadmap for North Carolina here:

