

## SASMI tipsheet April 16, 2026 North Carolina

*This is a draft and can be adapted as necessary. Please feel free to add a quote from your organization as well.*

A regional partnership spanning North Carolina, South Carolina, Georgia, and Florida released targeted plans for each state this week to conserve [coastal salt marshes](#)—grassy wetlands that fill with saltwater and drain as the tides ebb and flow. These habitats protect communities and more than a dozen at-risk military installations from floods, provide fish breeding grounds, and offer recreation and seafood to millions of people.

The plans, which are part of an effort to conserve and restore 1 million acres of salt marshes—roughly the size of Grand Canyon National Park—were developed by state-based member teams from the South Atlantic Salt Marsh Initiative (SASMI), a group of more than 400 stakeholders working to save marshes from encroaching seas, polluted runoff, unsustainable development, and other threats. SASMI members include state and federal agencies, the U.S. military, scientists, businesses, Gullah Geechee representatives, and nonprofit organizations.

“These state specific plans are a roadmap for successfully conserving one of the country’s most spectacular and valuable areas of intact salt marshes. Communities can expect real benefits from protecting this habitat that absorbs floodwaters, provides us delicious seafood and shapes our coastal lifestyle,” said Lora Clarke, a senior officer with The Pew Charitable Trusts, which founded SASMI along with the Southeast Regional Partnership for Planning and Sustainability, a group that brings together governments, the military, and others to address conservation and resilience issues.

The initiative released a [regional plan](#) in 2023 that outlined broad strategies to conserve and restore marshes. And now, the individual state plans build on that regional plan by identifying actions that are most important for each state.

[North Carolina’s plan](#), led by the [North Carolina Coastal Federation](#), calls for increased use of and funding for living shorelines—reefs typically built with recycled oyster shells that can help reduce the power of waves during storms. The plan also calls for working with willing property owners to acquire land adjacent to marshes, which would allow marshes to move as seas rise. If roads or buildings block their movement, marshes drown. The plan also outlines strategies for mapping priority marsh conservation areas, targeting places where stream flow into marshes can be improved, addressing invasive species impacts, and educating the public about marshes.

North Carolina’s salt marshes provide more than \$1.6 billion per year in protection from storm surge and flooding. They also support the commercial and recreational fishing industries that contribute more than \$377 million and \$960 million respectively to the state’s economy every year. The habitat protects 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.

SASMI partners will work with local and state decision-makers, planners, and others to put these suggestions into action and to pursue funding sources, such as grants and public-private partnerships.

The plans are designed to guide salt marsh conservation work for at least the next five years and will be updated as efforts progress.

See all four state plans by visiting [www.marshforward.org](http://www.marshforward.org) or reading Pew's post here: [New Plans Would Conserve Salt Marsh to Protect Southeastern Coastal Communities, Military Installations | The Pew Charitable Trusts](#)

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Photos: <https://marshforward.org/media/euwmv30r/sasmi-photos-for-media-usedocx.pdf>

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Videos: <https://marshforward.org/resources/videos/>

Salt marsh facts: <https://marshforward.org/media/5fpp21or/salt-marsh-facts.pdf>

Map: <https://marshforward.org/media/yppfdjif/sasmi-map.pdf>