

# National Estuaries Day Celebrations: A Fun Opportunity for Education and Stewardship

The N.C. Coastal Reserve celebrated the 25<sup>th</sup> Annual [National Estuaries Day](#) on a beautiful September day, joining dozens of programs across the country in an effort to promote knowledge and understanding of estuaries and engage citizens in responsible coastal stewardship. National Estuaries Day events were held in Beaufort, Wilmington, and Columbia.

In Beaufort, N.C. Coastal Reserve staff partnered with the Town of Beaufort, Duke University Marine Lab, N.C. Big Sweep, and local Boy Scout troops to conduct coastal cleanups at the Rachel Carson Reserve and the Town of Beaufort shoreline. Hundreds of pounds of trash were collected from the town and Reserve sites, and 38 volunteers participated in the cleanup efforts.

The N.C. Maritime Museum in Beaufort hosted outdoor displays from the Rachel Carson Reserve and the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill's Institute of Marine Sciences (UNC-IMS). Educators at the Rachel Carson Reserve display led younger visitors through interactive



Communications Specialist Kate Brogan interacts with visitors at the N.C. Maritime Museum in Beaufort.

games designed to teach estuarine ecology principles, and provided information about Reserve habitat types, wildlife, and public access. UNC-IMS researchers from Dr. Joel Fodrie's lab brought aquariums filled with estuary inhabitants such as crabs, urchins, and sea spiders, and had microscopes on hand for viewing the planktonic larvae that settle in estuarine environments. The lab group also showed a video presentation about using electronic

tagging to monitor the movements and habitat preferences of red drum in the estuary.

The Masonboro Island Reserve hosted an outreach event featuring a coastal cleanup, interpretive hike around unique Reserve habitats, and educational materials about estuarine ecology and wildlife. Education Specialist Marie Davis talked to the public about the National Estuarine Research Reserve System's [Estuary Literacy Principles](#), and encouraged visitors to sign a pledge outlining one way they could help protect estuaries.

Buckridge Reserve Manager Woody Webster and Northern Sites Manager Scott Crocker participated in the Pocosin Lakes Fun Day event at the Pocosin Lakes National Wildlife Refuge in Columbia. The Fun Day event featured fishing



The outreach event at Masonboro Island encouraged participants to think about ways they can protect estuaries.

and archery activities, arts and crafts, and displays about the diverse array of wildlife found at the N.C. Coastal Reserve sites and the Pocosin Lakes National Wildlife Refuge. Visitors to the Reserve display learned about the importance of water quality for juvenile animals found in estuaries.

The impact from these events will likely last well past National Estuaries Day celebrations each year. Trash removed from Reserve sites improves conditions for wildlife and recreational users, and learning about the unique plants and animals found in estuarine environments inspires curiosity and conservation. The N.C. Coastal Reserve and its many National Estuaries Day event partners look forward to continuing opportunities for estuarine education and stewardship in the coming year!