



Chesapeake Bay–Maryland

National Estuarine Research Reserve



Location: Three sites: Jug Bay, located 20 miles from Washington, D.C.; Otter Point Creek, 19 miles northeast of Baltimore, Maryland; and Monie Bay, 20 miles from Salisbury, Maryland

Date Designated: 1985

Area Protected: 6,249 acres

Web Address: dnr.maryland.gov/waters/cbnerr

Management: Daily oversight is provided by the Maryland Department of Natural Resources. NOAA's Office for Coastal Management provides funding, national guidance, and technical assistance.

Access and Infrastructure

- Jug Bay: The Jug Bay Wetlands Sanctuary includes the McCann Wetlands Center, a nature play space, guided nature programs, outdoor education programs, citizen science and volunteer opportunities, a trail network, a fishing pier, and a car-top boat launch.
- Jug Bay: Patuxent River Park offers camping, hiking, bicycling, horseback riding, fishing, hunting, boating, kayaking and canoeing, archaeology, and nature study.
- Otter Point Creek: The Anita C. Leight Estuary Center is located here and offers canoeing and kayaking, pontoon boating, crafts, hiking, education, animal encounters, and citizen science opportunities.
- Monie Bay: Access to this remote wildlife management area is provided through a network of three trails that offer paddlers a unique view into the area's wildlife, plants, and maritime history.

The Chesapeake Bay–Maryland National Estuarine

Research Reserve protects and manages the diversity of estuarine habitats found within the Maryland portion of the Bay. The Chesapeake Bay is the largest estuary in the United States, and one of the most productive bodies of water in the world.

This research reserve protects estuaries, monitors environmental conditions, offers educational and training programs, and undertakes the scientific research needed by Maryland's 16 coastal counties, Baltimore City, and the nation. Study focus areas include water quality, coastal and estuarine ecosystem protection, climate impacts to marsh systems, and coastal hazards resilience.

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Interesting Things to Know

- The National Audubon Society gave the Jug Bay Wetlands Sanctuary an “Important Bird Area” designation. The area’s diverse habitats represent one of the attributes that make this a prolific birding location.
- Archaeologists discovered tens of thousands of artifacts (projectile points, sherds of prehistoric pottery, faunal materials, jasper flakes, stone tools) within Jug Bay that date as far back as 9,000 years.
- The reserve recently coordinated a bio-blitz at the Monie Bay component, recording an impressive 212 species of plants, fungi, birds, reptiles, amphibians, insects, invertebrates, fish, and mammals in a 24-hour period.

About the Programs

The nation’s 30 research reserves represent a tremendous asset, protecting nearly 1.4 million acres and providing habitat where plants and wildlife thrive. Community benefits include recreation, flood protection, and water filtration. Because the following programs are offered at each reserve, the system is able to make an environmental impact at the local level, as well as nationally.

Stewardship. Site protection and enhancement are part of every research reserve. Activities may include managing land and water resources, restoring habitat, controlling invasive species, maintaining biodiversity, and reducing environmental stressors.

Research. Reserve research is focused on how environmental factors—such as nutrient loading, climate change, invasive species, and storms—impact coastal ecosystems. The monitoring program, known as the System-Wide Monitoring Program, or SWMP, provides long-term data on water quality, weather, biological communities, habitat, and land-use and land-cover characteristics. This combination of research and data provides a strong, science-based foundation for addressing coastal management challenges.

Training. To provide the community with the information and skills needed to integrate coastal science into local decision-making and everyday lives, reserves provide specialized courses and information. Reserve training professionals are active in community planning and improvement initiatives.

Education. Local data generated at the reserve provide students with a firsthand experience of local environmental conditions. Educators lead student, teacher, and citizen field trips that are life-changing experiences, as participants see, feel, and smell what makes an estuary one of the most remarkable places in the world.

To learn more, visit coast.noaa.gov/nerrs.

