



FUNDING / NATIONAL ESTUARINE RESEARCH RESERVE SYSTEM FUNDED PROJECTS

National Estuarine Research Reserve System Funded Projects

Awards Funded by the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law

Habitat Protection and Restoration Awards National Estuarine Research Reserve System

In April 2024, NOAA announced the distribution of \$59.8 million for state and territory coastal management programs, \$15 million for national estuarine research reserves, and \$48 million for essential planning, collaborative engagement, and policy development and implementation. Funding is from the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law and Inflation Reduction Act to support coastal habitat restoration planning, engineering, and design projects, and implementation and land conservation projects. This slate of 22 projects across 16 states (coastal zone management) and eight projects across seven states (research reserves) will advance the resilience of their coastal communities. Award descriptions are below, and can be downloaded [here](#).

Find the previous year's award descriptions [here](#).

Gibiskising Minis Azhe-dibinaweziwin

Recipient: Board of Regents of the University of Wisconsin System

Project Type: Habitat Restoration Planning, Engineering, and Design

Funding Amount: \$348,860

Congressional District(s): WI-07

Summary: This project will create a community-informed plan to restore 10.9 acres of regained Ojibwe homelands on Lake Superior's Gibiskising Minis (land bridge, Wisconsin Point) to their inherent ecological and cultural nature. Input from tribal and non-tribal land managers,

plants, and cultural relationships.

Protection and Restoration of Ayres Point Oyster Reefs

Recipient: Mission-Aransas National Estuarine Research Reserve

Project Type: Habitat Restoration

Funding Amount: \$2,064,726

Congressional District(s): TX-37

Summary: The primary outcome of this project is the restoration of 11.5 acres of oyster reef along Ayres Point in the Mesquite Bay complex that provides shoreline and marsh habitat protection, and supports a broad diversity of species. The restored oyster reef structure will be constructed in an area closed to commercial harvest, facilitating recruitment and growth of oysters and providing oyster larvae to surrounding oyster reefs in both open and closed waters. The restored oyster reef complex will have the added benefit of creating a complex habitat for numerous recreationally and commercially important fish and invertebrate species.

Shoreline Restoration to Enhance Coastal Resilience within the Weeks Bay National Estuarine Research Reserve

Recipient: Alabama Department of Conservation and Natural Resources – Weeks Bay National Estuarine Research Reserve

Project Type: Habitat Restoration

Funding Amount: \$3,541,936

Congressional District(s): AL-01

Summary: This project will remove a degraded bulkhead, restore an emergent marsh shoreline, and promote shoreline stewardship at the East Gateway Tract within the Weeks Bay National Estuarine Research Reserve. The project will involve planning, engineering, design, construction, and monitoring activities, and will also serve as a demonstration site for education, outreach, professional training, and student-based coastal resilience workforce development.

Habitat Restoration and Protection to Enhance Salt Marsh Resilience to Sea Level Rise in the Wells Research Reserve

Recipient: Town of Wells, Wells National Estuarine Research Reserve

Project Type: Conservation and Restoration

Funding Amount: \$2,879,117

Congressional District(s): ME-01

Summary: This project will acquire a conservation easement for 9.5 acres of salt marsh and 8.5 acres of freshwater wetlands and uplands and restore the marsh's tidal hydrology. The Town of Wells and

tidal marsh as sea level rise progresses.

Ola i ka Lo'i Wai (Life through Indigenous Knowledge)

Recipient: Kāko'o 'Ōiwi

Project Type: Habitat Restoration

Funding Amount: \$3,400,000

Congressional District(s): HI-02

Summary: This project is based on Indigenous knowledge (Native Hawaiian) relating to the management of wetlands and estuaries. The project's goal is to restore 40 acres within the reserve, using Indigenous knowledge relating to wetland agroecology (lo'i wai) as a means to increase community resilience in regard to climate change, food security, and economic stability.

Mingo Creek Tract for Black River State Park

Recipient: University of South Carolina – North Inlet-Winyah Bay National Estuarine Research Reserve

Project Type: Land Conservation

Funding Amount: \$1,500,000

Congressional District(s): SC-07

Summary: This project will allow conservation partners to acquire 675 acres of ecologically significant coastal habitat within the Winyah Bay estuary in South Carolina. The Mingo Tract, which spans 4.5 miles of Mingo Creek to its confluence with the Black River at the edge of North Inlet Winyah Bay Research Reserve's target watershed, will be conserved in perpetuity. The protected properties along the Black River are intended for passive recreation that is compatible with habitat protection.

South Fenwick Island Parcel Additions to the ACE Basin Reserve

Recipient: South Carolina Department of Natural Resources – ACE Basin National Estuarine Research Reserve

Project Type: Land Conservation

Funding Amount: \$657,000

Congressional District(s): SC-01

Summary: This investment will support the acquisition of 8.6 acres of rare hummock and coastal habitat on South Fenwick Island, within the Ashepoo-Combahee-Edisto Basin (ACE Basin) National Estuarine Research Reserve. This project will add acreage to an already valuable conservation land holding and will fill an existing gap in conserved land on the island, helping to create a seamless array of protected habitat that also enables the South Carolina Department of Natural Resources to better manage its wildlife, cultural resources, and marsh migration corridors.



Recipient: Padilla Bay National Estuarine Research Reserve

Project Type: Habitat Restoration

Funding Amount: \$623,315

Congressional District(s): WA-02

Summary: The Padilla Bay Research Reserve will transition 15 acres of old pastures from a species-poor grassland dominated by non-native species to a species-rich native coastal oak prairie habitat that will be protected long-term as part of the reserve. This will be achieved by co-managing with local tribes (the Samish Indian Nation and the Swinomish Indian Tribal Community), integrating modern methods with the traditional knowledge that sustained this rare habitat for centuries and will ultimately be key to its resilience to climate change. The intended benefits include increased biodiversity and habitat resilience, increased public awareness and access, increased tribal access to rare and culturally important species, and promotion of traditional ecological knowledge as central to natural resource management in a changing climate.

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Announcements

On June 17, 2024, NOAA announced the availability of almost \$13 million for national estuarine research reserves to support coastal habitat restoration and conservation under the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law through a [competitive grant process](#).

On April 22, 2024, NOAA recommended approximately \$75 million in funding under the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law to support coastal habitat restoration and conservation in partnership with state coastal management programs and national estuarine research reserves.

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