



The National Estuary Program was established in 1987 by amendments to the Clean Water Act to identify, restore, and protect nationally significant estuaries of the United States. Unlike traditional regulatory approaches to environmental protection, the NEP targets a broad range of issues and engages local communities in the process. The program focuses not just on improving water quality in an estuary, but on maintaining the integrity of the whole system — its chemical, physical, and biological properties, as well as its economic, recreational, and aesthetic values.

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Fact Sheet/Spring 2005

Great Bay and the Seacoast



What Makes Great Bay and the Seacoast Special?

- The Great Bay is a relatively pristine region with a diversity of habitats that are important for waterfowl, migratory birds, and rare species such as bald eagles.
- Shellfish, eelgrass, salt marsh and other marine plants and organisms can be found in the area's harbors and bays.
- There are a variety of rare species and communities such as Atlantic White Cedar swamps.
- The area contains groundwater wells in towns which have few alternate sources of drinking water.

Why Does Great Bay Need Special Attention?

- Storm water runoff needs to be reduced in order to improve water quality.
- Habitat areas need protection, especially along the estuary and streams, for water quality and wildlife improvement.

What are the Long Term Goals?

- Clean up water quality to open more shellfish beds.
- Preserve open space in Great Bay watershed area and help direct development to more suitable areas.
- Increase the acreage and value of salt marshes, wetlands and other estuarine habitats.

Progress/Goals for the Future

What Partnership Progress has Been Made?

- Over 500 acres of shellfish beds were reopened from 2000 - 2004.
- Over 6,000 acres of waterfront habitat were protected along Great Bay by outright ownership and/or conservation easements from 1998 - 2004.
- Over 500 acres of salt marsh and eelgrass have been restored from 1998 - 2004.
- The final NEP Comprehensive Conservation Management Plan was completed in 2000.
- Over 40 action items have been completed, including stormwater, mapping and elimination, habitat restoration and community assistance.

What Major Actions are Planned for 2005?

- Protect an additional 500 acres of habitat.
- Raise additional money for land protection.
- Open additional acres of spawning grounds and shellfish beds.
- Restore additional acres of salt marsh and eelgrass.
- Update Action Plans in the National Estuary Program (NEP).
- Complete study of the best restoration and protection sites in 19 coastal towns.

The logo for the National Estuary Program. It features a stylized blue silhouette of a bird in flight over a body of water with a white wake. The words "NATIONAL" and "ESTUARY PROGRAM" are written in white capital letters on green rectangular backgrounds at the top and bottom, respectively.



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New England

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