



Matt Ray Photography

A fisherman uses a “push pole” to navigate the shallow waters of a salt marsh.

SALT MARSH: A WAY OF LIFE AND AN ECONOMIC ENGINE FOR OUR COASTS

Salt marshes are wetlands that fill and drain with the tides. These guardians of the coast protect military installations and communities from flooding, support commercially and recreationally valuable fish and wildlife, and are a defining landscape of eastern North Carolina, South Carolina, Georgia and Florida. Initiated by The Pew Charitable Trusts and Southeast Regional Partnership for Planning and Sustainability, the South Atlantic Salt Marsh Initiative (SASMI) is a coalition of over 400 members working to protect, restore, and conserve the region’s one million acres of salt marshes – roughly the size of Grand Canyon National Park.

A Regional Partnership Delivering Results

SASMI works alongside state and federal natural resource and resilience agencies, the military, local municipalities, fishermen, scientists, conservation groups, Gullah Geechee communities and private landowners to safeguard salt marsh from changing ocean conditions, growing coastal populations and development pressures.

We **protect** healthy salt marsh through actions such as using living shorelines to stabilize shorelines, promoting low-impact development and improving water quality.

We **restore** degraded salt marshes through actions such as building oyster reefs, replanting marsh vegetation, and restoring water and sediment flow.

We **conserve** adjacent lands and remove barriers to allow marshes space to shift in response to changing conditions.

SASMI’s growing portfolio of partner projects can be found at marshforward.org/projects

SASMI DELIVERS TANGIBLE PROTECTION AND ECONOMIC VALUE IN THE SOUTH ATLANTIC AND OUR NATION

State efforts are led by an implementation team of local, state, and federal partners. Together they are unified in their efforts to protect the future of this at-risk habitat. Salt marshes contribute to the region by:

- Providing over \$6.8 billion per year in protection from storm surge and flooding.
- Supporting the recreational fishing industry that contributes over \$2.2 billion to the economy every year.
- Bolstering a multibillion-dollar commercial fishing industry and providing habitat for species such as blue crab, shrimp, oysters, flounder and gag grouper.
- Protecting vital military installations and training grounds, such as Marine Corps Air Station Cherry Point, Marine Corps Recruit Depot Parris Island, Naval Submarine Base Kings Bay, and Naval Station Mayport.

A RESOURCE OF NATIONAL IMPORTANCE: 6 THINGS TO KNOW ABOUT SALT MARSHES



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Redfish, which thrive in the salt marsh, are a prized catch for coastal anglers.

- Salt marshes and the estuaries that support them provide shelter, food, and nursery grounds for more than 75% of commercial and recreational fish species in the country, including white shrimp, blue crab, redfish, and flounder.
- One acre of salt marsh can absorb up to 1.5 million gallons of floodwater, which is equivalent to more than 2.25 Olympic-size swimming pools.



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A couple enjoys kayaking near the marsh.

- Coastal tourism in this region generates over \$25 billion per year in GDP, bringing millions of people to our beaches, waterways, and salt marshes.
- By filtering runoff and excess nutrients, salt marshes help promote good water quality in coastal bays, sounds, and estuaries.

- During storms, salt marshes absorb floodwaters and wave energy, decreasing property damage in adjacent communities and military installations by up to 20%, according to NOAA.



Mark Bias

- Salt marshes provide important habitat for a variety of birds that support hunting and tourism, including popular waterfowl such as the green-winged teal.



Angela McCain/USFWS

For more information visit marshforward.org or email contact@marshforward.org.
Roadmaps guide conservation and restoration efforts in each state.
View the four roadmaps here:

