



SALT MARSH FACTS

- The marshes provide an estimated \$7,284 per acre, annually, in protective value from storm surge and flooding alone.
- 14% to 34% of existing salt marshes along the South Atlantic could be lost by 2060 if seas continue to rise as expected, [according to the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration](https://pulitzercenter.org/stories/million-acres-priceless-marshes-protect-nc-sc-ga-will-they-perish-rising-tides) (<https://pulitzercenter.org/stories/million-acres-priceless-marshes-protect-nc-sc-ga-will-they-perish-rising-tides>).
- The U.S. has approximately 3.8 million acres of salt marshes including a vast interconnected 1 million-acre stretch from North Carolina to Florida.
- Salt marshes, and the estuaries that support them, provide shelter, food, and nursery grounds for [more than 75%](https://oceanservice.noaa.gov/facts/saltmarsh.html) (<https://oceanservice.noaa.gov/facts/saltmarsh.html>) of commercial and recreational fish species in the country, including white shrimp, blue crab, redfish, and flounder.
- During storms, salt marshes absorb flood waters and wave energy, decreasing property damage in adjacent communities by up to 20%, [according to NOAA](https://www.fisheries.noaa.gov/infographic/infographic-value-coastal-wetland-habitat) (<https://www.fisheries.noaa.gov/infographic/infographic-value-coastal-wetland-habitat>).
- One acre of salt marsh can absorb [up to 1.5 million gallons of floodwater](https://www.fisheries.noaa.gov/infographic/infographic-value-coastal-wetland-habitat) (<https://www.fisheries.noaa.gov/infographic/infographic-value-coastal-wetland-habitat>), which is equivalent to more than 2.25 Olympic-size swimming pools.
- By filtering runoff and excess nutrients, salt marshes help maintain water quality in coastal bays, sounds, and estuaries.
- Salt marshes provide important habitat for a variety of birds, including popular waterfowl and imperiled species such as the Eastern black rail and saltmarsh sparrow.
- Salt marshes get their salt from the seawater that comes in with the tides. They are marshy because their ground is composed of fine, muddy sediment and decomposing plant matter known as peat.
- Salt marshes and coastal wetlands sequester and store carbon at a rate [10 times that of mature tropical forests](https://oceanservice.noaa.gov/ecosystems/coastal-blue-carbon/) (<https://oceanservice.noaa.gov/ecosystems/coastal-blue-carbon/>), helping to moderate the effects of climate change.
- Also known as tidal wetlands, salt marshes are one part of a complex coastal ecosystem with interdependent habitats. For example, by filtering pollutants, marshes help oyster reefs and seagrass beds, which need clean water to survive. But as salt marshes degrade, the health of adjacent coastal habitats and marine life suffers.

