



# Great Bay

**MATTERS**

*Promoting research, education  
and stewardship throughout  
the Great Bay Estuary*

# GET TO KNOW GREAT BAY



# 110

bird species relying on  
**GREAT BAY**  
shoreline habitat

OCTOBER 2014



**GBNERR**  
turns

# 25!

# 52,000



STUDENTS HAVE ENJOYED THE BOARDWALK  
AT GREAT BAY DISCOVERY CENTER

# 144

 MILES OF TIDAL SHORELINE IN GREAT BAY

# SHORELINE EROSION

a major source of  
sedimentation in  
Great Bay

# FIFTEEN



boat access points in the  
**GREAT BAY**  
ESTUARY

# 2000

FEET MUD FLATS  
**EXTEND**  
DURING Low TIDE  
AT SANDY POINT

# ONE MILE

DEPTH OF GLACIAL ICE  
ONCE COVERING GREAT BAY



# 45

VOLUNTEERS HELPED  
'SAVE A SHORELINE'  
AT ADAM'S POINT  
FOR EARTH DAY  
**2014**



GBNERR Projects



GREAT BAY  
NATIONAL  
ESTUARINE  
RESEARCH  
RESERVE

Great Bay National Estuarine Research Reserve (GBNERR) is an estuary comprised of 7,300 acres of tidal waters and 2,935 acres of coastal land. Acquired through land purchases and conservation easements, GBNERR was designated on October 3, 1989 to be preserved for the purposes of education, research, and resource protection.

**GBNERR**

Manager: Cory Riley

**GREAT BAY DISCOVERY CENTER**

Education Coordinator:  
Kelle Loughlin

**GREAT BAY STEWARDS**

President: Jack O'Reilly



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manager's corner



How many times have you stood on the edge of a waterbody contemplating a meaningful change in your life? Gazing out from the shore provides a perspective and peace that poets, painters and plain old people are drawn to when grappling with our fate. In this issue, we stand in that same place and turn around to take a look at, and contemplate the fate of our shorelines. Do we protect the natural features like dunes and saltmarsh or do we protect our homes and our public infrastructure? Can we do both at the same time? Can we enhance both the integrity of our natural systems and the safety of our built environments through wise planning and innovative solutions?

To answer these questions we need sound science, we need to explore the experience and expertise of other coastal areas, and we need to ask ourselves what is at stake if we let erosion, storm surge or sea level rise change our shore. We have to understand how risk tolerant we are as a community, and how accepting we are of change – whether those changes are forced by nature or by hand.

*Cory Riley, Reserve Manager, GBNERR*



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# CHASING A CHANGING SHORELINE

***S**horeline management is a straight-forward concept – knowledge applied to the management of our shoreline resources to meet the needs of humans. In the modern world where our attention is pulled in many ways, very few people think about shoreline management until a problem arises.*

The residents of coastal New Hampshire have enjoyed the benefit of a stable coastline for many decades. This has allowed a boom of development throughout the Seacoast. “Flying” the 18-mile NH coast on a virtual tour with Google Earth reveals a very developed coastline. Humans love to live and play on the coast which helps to sustain economies that rely on this penchant.

For shoreline management to be successful by any measure, it must take into consideration the specific conditions of the location. The critical environmental factors that must be considered are; duration and frequency of exposure to wave and

wind energy, tidal expression, storm surge and freshwater flooding. Other considerations are human uses, emergency management and impacts to the ecosystem.

The relatively stable coastline conditions of past decades are gone. There are stronger winds, bigger storms with larger amounts of rainfall, a rising sea level and a higher storm surge. From the late 1800’s until about 20 years ago, the rate of sea level rise was about .55 inches per decade. Since then, it appears to have doubled to about 1.15 inches per decade. Global observations and scientific research all point to larger change coming our way, with estimates of over 6 feet of sea level rise possible

during this century. The bigger storm systems also impact storm and flood waters in coastal municipalities where the amount of impervious surface in developed areas dramatically increase runoff volumes. All of these forces combine and subject our coastal infrastructure and natural systems to larger and more frequent destructive forces, creating the need for better planning.

There are four basic categories of shoreline management techniques used to manage our coastal resources; hard or structural, soft or non-structural, hybrid systems, and policy and planning.

**Hard or structural practices** use engineered structures that armor and stabilize the shore. Rip-rap is a very common type of hard structural shoreline stabilization. Other examples are bulkheads, concrete sea walls, jetties and breakwaters. The potential benefits of such systems include a slowing of erosion rates and protection to specific infrastructure landward, particularly in high energy environments. The potential drawbacks are short life-spans and exacerbated rates of erosion seaward of hardened structure, altering shoreline and water dynamics and leading to loss of beach and intertidal habitat. These systems are frequently used unnecessarily in low energy environments.

**Soft or non-structural practices** use plantings or organic materials to restore, protect or enhance the natural shoreline environment. Planting sea grass, salt marsh, or dune grass and restoring oyster reefs and dunes are all examples of soft practices. The potential benefits of using natural buffers include reduction in shoreline erosion and sediment runoff, and increased natural vegetation, preserving or creating habitat for a variety of organisms. Using non-structural practices offers more natural habitat features and mimics the dynamics of a shoreline ecosystem. However, they are not often suitable for high wave energy environments and may require ongoing maintenance.



*Encroaching waves threaten coastal infrastructure along the N.H. seacoast.*

**Hybrid systems** are a combination of structural and non-structural techniques. Combining low-profile rocks, rubble, oyster reefs or wood structures with vegetative plantings is one example of a hybrid system. Another example would be a beach replenishment project that also included a breakwater. Potential benefits are similar to those of soft stabilization, but may be used in a wider variety of habitats, typically with slightly higher wave energy. The potential drawbacks are small-to-moderate alterations of natural shoreline and water dynamics, and they may require ongoing maintenance.

**Policy & planning techniques** to manage shorelines do not physically alter them, but instead regulate human uses on or near the shoreline. Often policy and planning techniques are used as a preventative measure to avoid the need for physical stabilization, or in response to shoreline erosion when physical stabilization could be costly, ineffective or undesirable. Examples of this are managed retreat or the relocation of structures and utilities, construction setbacks and land-use planning. Policy and planning can often reduce and avoid the need for other measures by maintaining the natural dynamics of the shore. The potential drawbacks are policy solutions can be difficult to impose after construction of structures along the shore, especially if property values are high or significant development already exists, as it does in New Hampshire.

While the concept of shoreline management is straight-forward, the implementation and balance of protecting natural resources, public infrastructure and private property epitomizes the difficulty of doing it successfully. Catching up with the implications of shoreline change will be achieved through a common vision that includes sound science and engineering, and the discipline to follow through with decisions that implement our vision for the NH shoreline.

*Steve Miller, CTP Coordinator, GBNERR*

## SHORELINE CONFERENCE IN DECEMBER 2014

The NH Coastal Hazards and Risks Commission will make policy recommendations about shoreline management in 2016. To help inform those recommendations, the Great Bay NERR is developing a conference focused on sharing the science of and research in shoreline management. Presentations and discussion will focus on available shoreline management tools and their performance under New Hampshire climatic conditions. Shoreline management tools such as hard shoreline engineering, soft shorelines, green infrastructure approaches and natural systems will be addressed. Societal considerations including economic and environmental costs and benefits, ecosystem health and function and quality of life issues will also be addressed. Participants will engage in a dialogue about shoreline tools and options, lessons learned and how to strike a balanced approach to shoreline management. The conference is planned for early December, 2014. Visit [greatbay.org](http://greatbay.org) or call Steve Miller at (603) 294-0146 for details.

# Saving a SENSITIVE Shoreline



## Helping to Strengthen the Shoreline Along Adams Point

Located in Durham, at the mouth of Great Bay, Adams Point is a spectacular coastal destination. With meandering trails edging this rugged peninsula, the area is an ideal location to view wildlife such as bald eagles, waterfowl, horseshoe crabs and more. Native American shell middens reveal that for centuries it has been a popular shell-fishing destination and an important location to access the waters of Great Bay proper. Once the site of the locally famous Adams family farm, you can walk the trail to find a large granite obelisk marking the spot of the family tomb—the last family resident of the farm, Edward Hamlin Adams, died in 1950. This area is now the site of Jackson Estuarine Laboratory, run by the University of New Hampshire. The extraordinarily beautiful property is managed by the New Hampshire Fish and Game Department (NHFG) and the Great Bay National Estuarine Research Reserve (GBNERR).

Over time, Adams Point has suffered from erosion caused by foot traffic from visitors who enjoy spending time on this picturesque shoreline. On the shoreline, trees cling to the jagged bedrock that seems to rise straight up from the bay, with roots exposed and growing sideways up the cliffs. Rather than restrict access, the NHFG, working with GBNERR, decided to help strengthen the shoreline along Adams Point and provide carefully managed access points for visitors to enjoy this area without negatively impacting the important shoreline habitat. Undertaking this big project

Welcome to the Adams Point Shoreline Planting Day

Team	Captain	Size
	Wain/Halcy	1, 2, 3
	Cory	4
	Nicole	5, 6
	Fith	7
	Erendra	8, 9

*Thank you for making a difference and helping us celebrate Earth Day!*

required a lot of planning and hard work! First, maintaining access was very important and had to be considered during the planning process. Also, the shoreline is approximately one mile long, with erosion sites spread out along the trail, making for a rather daunting task. Furthermore, because it is an historical site, no digging is allowed and therefore all plant beds had to be built upward with the addition of soil and erosion matting.

Conserving this sensitive shoreline has been a priority for several years now, and in the fall of 2013, NHFG installed stairways to facili-

tate shoreline access, keeping visitors from traveling over some of the more fragile areas. In April of 2014, over 40 community volunteers, from high school and college students, to retired community members and environmental professionals, celebrated Earth Day at our 'Save a Shoreline' volunteer event. Because Adams Point is a large area, with erosion sites throughout (see workday map), volunteer site captains helped to lead small groups at each location to help strengthen the shoreline with erosion matting and plants. Volunteers helped carry supplies to the sites, built up plant beds with soil, installed the matting and planted over 80 native shrubs. Each site was chosen not only to help strengthen the overall area, but also to provide food and shelter for wildlife and redirect foot traffic to the stairways. The project was funded by the Natural Resource Conservation Service and the Great Bay Stewards.



*A small group of volunteers help strengthen the Adams Point shoreline with erosion matting and plants.*

After a long and productive day, with many hard working vol-

unteers, the beds were built, the shrubs were planted and watered, and the sites were on their way to becoming part of a stronger, more resilient shoreline! The erosion matting will help the shrubs stay in place long enough to establish roots. Once the roots are strong; the plants will help this shoreline become more stable, preventing further erosion.

A stable shoreline is a resilient shoreline and will help to protect the area from strong storms, and erosion, while at the same time providing much needed coastal edge habitat for wildlife. Without the hard work and dedication of the volunteers, this project would not have been possible, and the shoreline at Adams Point would continue to erode, compromising this vital coastal ecosystem. The project was a huge success, and by Earth Day 2015 the erosion sites will be well on their way to making Adams Point strong enough to last for generations to come!

*Melissa Brogle, GBNERR Volunteer Coordinator*

## Estuary Almanac

### Saltmarsh Sparrow

*(Ammodramus caudacutus)*

This elusive bird is an extreme habitat specialist that relies on healthy shorelines. It nests only in the narrow ribbon of high salt marsh habitat that extends from southern Maine to North Carolina. Low marsh is the section of saltmarsh that is flooded at each high tide. High marsh is flooded less frequently but, as sea level rises, it is the habitat first squeezed out. It is thought that saltmarsh sparrows number fewer than 250,000 individuals in the world. The future survival of this species will be determined by the success of efforts to target land conservation toward low lying undeveloped tracts that abut existing salt marsh, and the strategic removal of certain natural and human created barriers. Both these actions support the potential inland migration of the high salt marsh habitat that this bird relies on to survive.

### Natural history

In New Hampshire, saltmarsh sparrows are designated as a species of special concern.

Secretive in the salt marsh, these rarely seen birds also have a barely audible song. They forage on the ground where they eat insects, spiders, marine invertebrates and sometimes seeds. Their nests are built from grasses and form an open cup that can be built up on the sides to form a partial covering. Saltmarsh sparrows are not territorial and young are raised by the females only.

The saltmarsh sparrow was formerly considered the same species as the Nelson's sharp-tailed sparrow. The two forms differ in genetics, songs, subtle plumage characters, and have separate breeding ranges that overlap only in southern Maine and New Hampshire.

### Where to see around Great Bay

Saltmarsh sparrows may be seen at Chapman's Landing boat launch off Route 108 in Stratham. The launch is managed by NH Fish and Game and the Great Bay National Estuarine Research Reserve. In 2011 and



© Howard B. Eskin

2012 UNH, researchers found this to be the "hot spot" for both bird numbers and nesting success in Great Bay. Bring your binoculars or spotting scope to see if you can glimpse any of these amazing habitat specialists flitting about the marsh - good luck!

*Rachel Stevens,  
Stewardship Coordinator, GBNERR*



# NERRS NEWS



## Program News and Events from GBNERR

### GULF OF MAINE COUNCIL RECOGNIZES STEVE MILLER

Several individuals and a nonprofit organization from New Hampshire were recently recognized by the Gulf of Maine

Council on the Marine Environment for their work in coastal environmental protection at an international awards ceremony in Halifax, Nova Scotia. One award the Council gives is the Susan Snow-Cotter Leadership Award.

This special award is bestowed in memory of Susan Snow-Cotter, a long-time friend and supporter of the Council. The award is given to an individual from one of the five states and provinces bordering the Gulf of Maine.

This year New Hampshire's Steve Miller received this award for his outstanding leadership as a coastal management professional within the Gulf of Maine. As the Coastal Training Program Coordinator for the Great Bay National Estuarine Research Reserve, Steve has been working to increase awareness of environmental problems and promote better management of our coastal resources for over a decade. Steve's leadership and spirit of collaboration rallied scientists, planners, and coastal managers toward meaningful contributions to projects benefitting citizens of the broader Seacoast region.

More information about the Gulf of Maine Council 2014 awards with detailed recipient bios is available at: [gulfofmaine.org/awards](http://gulfofmaine.org/awards).



Hon. Randy Delorey, Nova Scotia Minister of Environment; Susan Snow-Cotter Leadership Award Winner Steve Miller; U.S. Consul General Richard Riley

### TEACHERS ON THE ESTUARY WORKSHOP

This past July, fourteen teachers from around New Hampshire and Maine participated in GBNERR'S first Teachers on the Estuary (TOTE) workshop. TOTE is a researcher and field-based training initiative of the National Estuarine Research Reserve System. The goal of TOTE is to improve teachers' and students' understanding of the environment using local examples. The program provides resources and experience for teachers to incorporate estuary and watershed topics into classroom teaching. The course focused on oyster restoration and saltmarsh ecology, highlighting national estuary principles and concepts with the Next Generation Science Standards teachers are beginning to adopt throughout the

state. University of New Hampshire Research professors, Dr Ray Grizzle, Dr. Dave Burdick and Research Technician, Kristin Ward of

Jackson Estuarine Laboratory in Durham, worked with the staff of the Reserve throughout the two-day course.



Dr. Ray Grizzle, UNH Research Professor explains oyster restoration practices during a Teachers on the Estuary (TOTE) Workshop.

# Educational Offerings

## Celebrate Great Bay NERR'S 25th Anniversary!

On October 9, 1989, Governor Judd Gregg designated Great Bay as this nation's 17th National Estuarine Research Reserve. This came fifteen years after Aristotle Onassis proposed to build the world's largest oil refinery on the shores of Great Bay. Spearhead by the Great Bay Trust, the designation took place at the Durham home of Evelyn Browne and Marion Beckwith. In 1996, the Trust merged

with the Great Bay Stewards at Sandy Point to become the official friends group of the Reserve – Great Bay Stewards, Inc. Celebrate the remarkable accomplishments of the Reserve and the Great Bay Stewards on October 9, 2014, at the Hugh Gregg Coastal Conservation Center in Greenland, NH. For further details visit [GreatBayStewards.org](http://GreatBayStewards.org).

## National Estuaries Day September 27th, 2014

Discover the magic of estuaries on National Estuary Day. The Great Bay Discovery Center is your gateway to Great Bay. National Estuaries Day is an annual celebration of the vibrant coastal areas where rivers meet the sea – estuaries.

### Get on Board!

After 22 years of service, the boardwalk at the Great Bay Discovery Center is at the end of its life. We need your help to reach our fund raising goal and replace this local treasure. The effort to rebuild the boardwalk coincides with the 25th anniversary of the Great Bay National Estuarine Research Reserve.

Since 1992, the boardwalk has been

the center piece of many Reserve programs. Over 52,500 children have walked on it during school programs, many researchers have used it to access and study the marsh, and thousands have simply enjoyed the peace and serenity it brings with just a stroll or a glimpse of an elusive song bird.

Visit [greatbaystewards.org](http://greatbaystewards.org) and join our "Buy a Board" campaign today!



Sofia Hamilton

## 2014 Great Bay 5K Road Race

Run one of New England's top ten favorite road races!

Saturday October 25th

Start: 9:00 am

Kids' fun run starts at approx. 9:50 a.m.

Don your craziest costume for a chance to win big bucks and join one thousand other runners on a scenic course along the Great Bay Estuary. Visit [Greatbaystewards.org](http://Greatbaystewards.org) for details.



# A National Perspective: *Shorelines*

**A**t Reserves around the nation, shorelines are a hot topic – from working to understand how people value riparian buffers (where rivers meet the land) in Maine, to helping communities incorporate adaptation to environmental change in Florida, Alaska, and California. Read below about two Reserve projects that focus on stabilizing and protecting shorelines.

## ASSESSING RESILIENT SHORELINE TREATMENTS AT HUDSON RIVER NERR, NY

The shorelines of the Hudson River Estuary are home to a variety of stabilization methods. Many structures suffered a range of damages from tropical storms Irene and Lee in 2011, and Sandy in 2012. As part of their Hudson River Sustainable Shorelines Project, started in 2008, HRNERR is working collaboratively with engineers, landscape architects, regulators, municipal officials and land managers to understand why some natural and engineered shorelines were more resilient than others during extreme weather. The project's data is currently being analyzed and the results may help inform future shoreline management decisions in the Hudson River Estuary and beyond. Reprinted in part from [hnmerr.org/hudson-river-sustainable-shorlines/](http://hnmerr.org/hudson-river-sustainable-shorlines/).



*A Hudson River shoreline restored using a mixture of armoring and vegetation planting prior to super storm Sandy.*

## RESTORING NATURAL BARRIERS TO COASTAL EROSION AT ACE BASIN NERR, SC

The eastern oyster offers a number of ecosystem services including shoreline stabilization. In South Carolina, oyster bed restoration along shorelines has been used to successfully combat erosion caused by boat traffic and storm events. Unfortunately, resources to implement these “living shorelines” are scarce. So how does the team from ACE Basin NERR prioritize their shoreline restoration efforts? By asking the people who live there! By involving community members the team is identifying vulnerable areas of local importance that will have a high chance of success while planting the seed (or spat) for future “living shoreline” projects. In 2013, over 4000 linear feet of “living shoreline” was created and



*The same shoreline post Sandy. This site is part of the analysis being done by HRNERR on which shoreline treatments are the most resilient.*

the project staff and volunteers plan to more than double this amount in 2014. Reprinted in part from the ACE Basin NERR website [dnr.sc.gov/marine/NERR/index.html](http://dnr.sc.gov/marine/NERR/index.html).

*By Brendan Newell, UNH TIDES student, GBNERR intern*



*Volunteers and staff unloading bags of oyster shell to construct a reef in ACE Basin.*

## Volunteer for Great Bay!

- **Fall Clean Up: October 22, 1 p.m. – 4 p.m.:** Help prepare the grounds and gardens of the Great Bay Discovery Center for the winter ahead. Enjoy autumn treats, hot cider and take home a pumpkin for your stoop!
- **Volunteer Educator:** Teach elementary students about the unique cultural history of Great Bay. Help students learn about the natural resources that were important to Native Americans and Colonists throughout

the estuary. Volunteer Educator Training – September 10. Call Beth Heckman at (603) 778-0015 for details and to register.

- **Save the Date for Earth Week 2015!:** “Gettin’ Dirty for Great Bay-Community Wildlife Garden” Earth Day celebration 2015 will be a week of fun stewardship workdays! Help us repurpose old timbers as garden edging, create new garden beds, and remove invasive species. The new gardens will provide food and cover for

wildlife, as well as a wonderful place for visitors to explore while connecting to Great Bay. The main event will be Saturday April 25th, with plenty of help needed in the days prior! It’s a fun, family-friendly way to give back to Great Bay! For more information call Melissa Brogle @ (603)778-0015 or visit [greatbay.org/visitus](http://greatbay.org/visitus).

For more information visit [greatbay.org/volunteer](http://greatbay.org/volunteer) and our calendar of events at [greatbay.org/events](http://greatbay.org/events).



There was a lot of activity happening this summer with the Great Bay Stewards. We had very successful fundraising events with Fabulous Find of Kittery, Maine and Country View Restaurant in Greenland. Our Art Show was a huge success and we kicked off our Fundraising Campaign for the replacement of the 22 year old boardwalk at the Discovery Center with an event at the Piscataqua Café in New Castle. We have also now

partnered with ENH Power, where the Stewards will receive donations for each new account that designates us as a recipient. Our Race Committee is hard at work making preparations for this fall's

Great Bay 5K. These events are only able to happen because of all the hard work of our Trustees, Executive Director, Administrative Coordinator and staff at the Center.

We have received the grant for our proposed **Soak Up the Rain** Great Bay project and held a kickoff event on June 28th. We will be working on the installation of a number of rain gardens over the next couple of years. We proudly took part in the ribbon cutting of the Center's new Blue Heron Pavilion, which was funded through a partnership between the Great Bay Stewards and the New Hampshire Wildlife Heritage Foundation. We hope to continue with this partnership for future endeavors.

We encourage people to visit our website at [greatbay.org](http://greatbay.org) and learn about all the benefits and discounts now available to our members. It's an exciting time to be a Great Bay Steward!

*Jack O'Reilly, President, Great Bay Stewards*

## Great Bay Stewards chosen as Fabulous Find charity:

The Great Bay Stewards were thrilled to be chosen by Kittery, Maine-based Fabulous Find as a recipient non-profit organization for money collected during the month of March. Based on sales of new and gently used items at the store during the entire month, the Great Bay Stewards received a check from the non-profit boutique-style thrift shop for \$5,178.68!

"We truly appreciate the tremendous hard work of the staff at Fabulous Find," says Peter Wellenberger, executive director of the Great Bay Stewards. "This is a phenomenal achievement and the funds donated to us will go a long way toward improving our educational exhibits and programs at the Great Bay Discovery Center."

In addition to the more than \$5,000 donated to the Stewards, Fabulous Find has donated a total of more than \$400,000 to area non-profit organizations. The Stewards are extremely thankful to have been selected by Fabulous Find and its tremendous volunteer staff.



*From left to right Marcye Philbrook, Jack O'reilly, Judy Rigmont.*



## PLEASE JOIN US!

All interested parties are cordially invited to become Great Bay Stewards. Members receive Great Bay Matters and other pertinent mailings.

Annual dues may be paid by check made payable to the **Great Bay Stewards** and sent to: Membership Committee, 89 Depot Road, Greenland, NH 03840

- Guardian \$150     Protector \$75
- Steward/Family \$35     Student \$20     Other \$ \_\_\_\_\_

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state \_\_\_\_\_ zip \_\_\_\_\_

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## Together We Are Stronger

As a New England company, ENH Power shares in the responsibility to build community. Our Power to Help Fund helps local organizations like Great Bay Stewards do what they do best — from protecting our environment to providing for our needy, from supporting our veterans to advocating for our youth, and everything in between.

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