

Great Bay Management Plan Guides Reserve Strategy

The Management Plan for New Hampshire's Great Bay National Estuarine Research Reserve was developed collaboratively with members of the Great Bay Resource Protection Partnership and other coastal partners. The plan contains "strategies that will ensure the Great Bay area is properly managed and protected for future generations," said Cory Riley, Manager of the Reserve. The Reserve is managed through the New Hampshire Fish and Game Department with funding from NOAA. **See below for Executive Summary** of the management plan.



For more information about the management plan or any Reserve programs, [click to visit greatbay.org](http://greatbay.org) or contact Cory Riley at (603) 868-1095 or Cory.Riley@wildlife.nh.gov.

For those with high-speed internet, the **full Great Bay Management Plan** (16 MB) is available on this website -- [click here to download](#).

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Great Bay National Estuarine Research Reserve Management Plan Executive Summary

The Great Bay Estuary is one of the most recessed estuaries along the eastern seaboard. Located in the Gulf of Maine watershed, this drowned river valley extends 15 miles inland from the Atlantic coast creating a complex mosaic of freshwater wetlands. The Great Bay Estuary has elicited such diverse and descriptive phrases as New Hampshire's hidden treasure and the "Crown Jewel" of the seacoast. These descriptions just begin to paint a picture of a resource that has captured the hearts, minds and imagination of its inhabitants for hundreds of years.

The estuary is also located in a geographic area that has experienced intense development pressure since the 1970's. The two seacoast counties, Rockingham and Strafford, have added over 180,000 new residents from 1970 to 2000 (US Census figures 2000). This development pressure continues to escalate.

In 1989, Great Bay was designated as a National Estuarine Research Reserve (NERR) site, making it the 18th estuary in the United States to join the system. As a federal/state partnership, Reserves are committed to the long-term research, education and stewardship of valuable estuarine resources. The Great Bay Research Reserve operates under the auspices of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) within the authority of the Coastal Zone Management Act (CZMA). The New Hampshire Fish and Game Department has served as the lead state agency since 1989. It is within this management framework that the Reserve operates and sets the stage for how the Management Plan was developed.

Since the Great Bay Reserve's inception, a dynamic partnership approach has emerged in both resource management and protection of the Great Bay region that includes residents and individual volunteers, communities, state and federal agencies, nonprofit conservation organizations, businesses, and educational institutions. This collaborative effort has made tremendous strides in furthering the scientific understanding of the estuarine system, providing educational and outreach opportunities, and demonstrating the importance of providing for the estuary's protection and stewardship, now and in the future.

The Management Plan

In this context of both a richly diverse ecosystem and organizational partnership, the Great Bay NERR Management Plan was developed to serve as a dynamic, action-oriented document. The Reserve's mission is *to promote informed management of the Great Bay Estuary and estuarine habitats through linked programs of stewardship, public education, and scientific understanding*. The Management Plan seeks to achieve this vision and includes the following:

- Provides a description and summary of the Great Bay's natural and cultural history.
- Highlights the accomplishments of the Reserve since its inception in 1989.
- Identifies the current management issues facing the Reserve.
- Establishes the Reserve's goals, objectives and action items for the next 5 years.
- Provides a framework for the design, implementation and evaluation of the actions and progress of the Reserve's programs and Management Plan goals.
- Serves as an internal management tool to assist Reserve staff in their planning activities.
- Serves as an external educational tool to inform the public of both the Great Bay Reserve and the Reserve Systems' mission and programs.
- Serves as a tool to help guide the Coastal Zone Management Act Section 312 evaluation of the Reserve.

The Management Plan is organized into nine information chapters. The mission statements for the nine elements are as follows:

1. **Administration:** Provide administrative leadership and resources necessary to fulfill the Reserve's mission as established in state and federal law, administrative rules and inter-agency agreements.
2. **Research and Monitoring:** Improve the health of the Great Bay Estuary and the watershed by conducting research and monitoring activities and providing information that promotes informed resource management.
3. **Resource Protection:** Provide for the long-term conservation and protection of the biodiversity of the Great Bay Estuary and associated habitats.
4. **Stewardship:** Maintain the ecological integrity of the Great Bay region by using a comprehensive stewardship approach to education, land acquisition, and research and monitoring.
5. **Facilities and Construction:** Enhance the mission of the Reserve and its associated research, education, and stewardship programs through the maintenance and development of facilities necessary to support these efforts.
6. **Education, Outreach and Interpretation:** Design and implement a comprehensive program of education and interpretation based on solid scientific principles that strengthen understanding, appreciation and stewardship of estuaries, coastal habitats, and associated wetlands throughout the Great Bay watershed.
7. **Public Involvement and Volunteerism:** Continue hosting and participating in activities that encourage residents within the Great Bay watershed to understand and support the Reserve's mission.
8. **Public Access:** Provide appropriate public access to the Reserve's protected lands and waters, while protecting the inherent natural resource values of these lands and waters.
9. **Boundary and Land Acquisition Plan:** Protect the critical estuarine resources and associated uplands of the Great Bay Estuary while working in partnership with other agencies and organizations to provide for the long-term conservation of properties within the Reserve boundary.

The Great Bay NERR Management Plan is both an ambitious and practical document that hopes to build on past successes, prioritizes the critical issues facing the estuary and develops strategies to address them. In collaboration with dedicated volunteers and partnering entities, we will work together to make the vision of this plan a reality.