



Jobos Bay

National Estuarine Research Reserve



Location: Southern coast of Puerto Rico, between the municipalities of Guayama and Salinas

Date Designated: 1981

Area Protected: 2,883 acres

Web Address: drna.pr.gov/jbnerr

Access and Infrastructure

- A historic building that was once the clubhouse for Aguirre's Sugar Refinery Company houses the reserve's visitor center, administrative offices, conference room, laboratories, dormitories, and library.
- The reserve offers six interpretive trails through the Jobos Bay ecosystem.
- The visitor center has a room for the reserve's photographic and interactive exhibits, which cover the reserve and its ecosystems, geography, hydrology, history, and flora and fauna.

Management: Daily oversight is provided by the Puerto Rico Department of Natural and Environmental Resources. NOAA's Office for Coastal Management provides funding, national guidance, and technical assistance.

The Jobos Bay National Estuarine Research Reserve encompasses parts of Mar Negro Lagoon and Cayos Caribe, a linear formation of 15 tear-shaped, reef-fringed mangrove islands extending westward from the southern tip of the mouth of Jobos Bay. The site supports extensive healthy ecosystems, including seagrass beds, coral rubble, extensive upland dry forests, mangrove forests, and lagoons. The area is also important for marine recreation, ecotourism, and commercial and recreational fishing.

This research reserve protects the Jobos Bay estuary, monitors environmental conditions, offers educational and training programs, and undertakes the scientific research needed by Puerto Rico's coastal municipalities and the nation. Study focus areas include water quality, coastal and estuarine ecosystem protection, and coastal hazards resilience. Stakeholder participation and community engagement in resource management is an important priority for the reserve.

NOAA Office for Coastal Management

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Interesting Things to Know

- The reserve is partnering with The Ocean Foundation to restore seagrass beds and mangrove forests impacted by Hurricane Maria.
- Located in the second largest estuary in Puerto Rico, this reserve has more than three times the shoreline of any other estuarine area on the island.
- The site represents a West Indies estuary type typical of the Caribbean region, with extensive lagoons, mangroves, and coral reefs.
- Several endangered species can be found here, including the yellow-shouldered blackbird, the hawksbill sea turtle, and the West Indian manatee.

About the Programs

The nation's 30 research reserves represent a tremendous asset, protecting nearly 1.4 million acres and providing habitat where plants and wildlife thrive. Community benefits include recreation, flood protection, and water filtration. Because the following programs are offered at each reserve, the system is able to make an environmental impact at the local level, as well as nationally.

Stewardship. The reserve provides public access, acquires critical lands, restores and enhances habitats, and tracks long-term change. Staff members improved the demarcation of the reserve boundaries with appropriate signage and strengthened their relationship with law enforcement to address illegal practices within the reserve.

Research. Research is focused on how environmental factors—such as nutrient loading, climate change, invasive species, and storms—impact coastal ecosystems. The monitoring program provides long-term data and will soon include sentinel site monitoring in a coastal mangrove forest to document vegetation alterations due to sea level changes. This combination of research and data provides a strong, science-based foundation for addressing coastal management challenges.

Training. Training and technical assistance are provided to community leaders and decision makers. Topics include coastal habitat protection, water quality, climate change, land use, and coastal development. The reserve offers this knowledge through workshops, seminars, trainings, and hands-on field experiences.

Education. Education serves to enhance public awareness and understanding of estuarine areas through interpretation and other public interactions, and presents information from the reserve's research efforts for improved understanding and management of estuarine areas. Educators lead student, teacher, and citizen field trips that are life-changing experiences, as participants see, feel, and smell what makes an estuary one of the most remarkable places in the world.

To learn more, visit coast.noaa.gov/nerrs.

Office for Coastal Management

