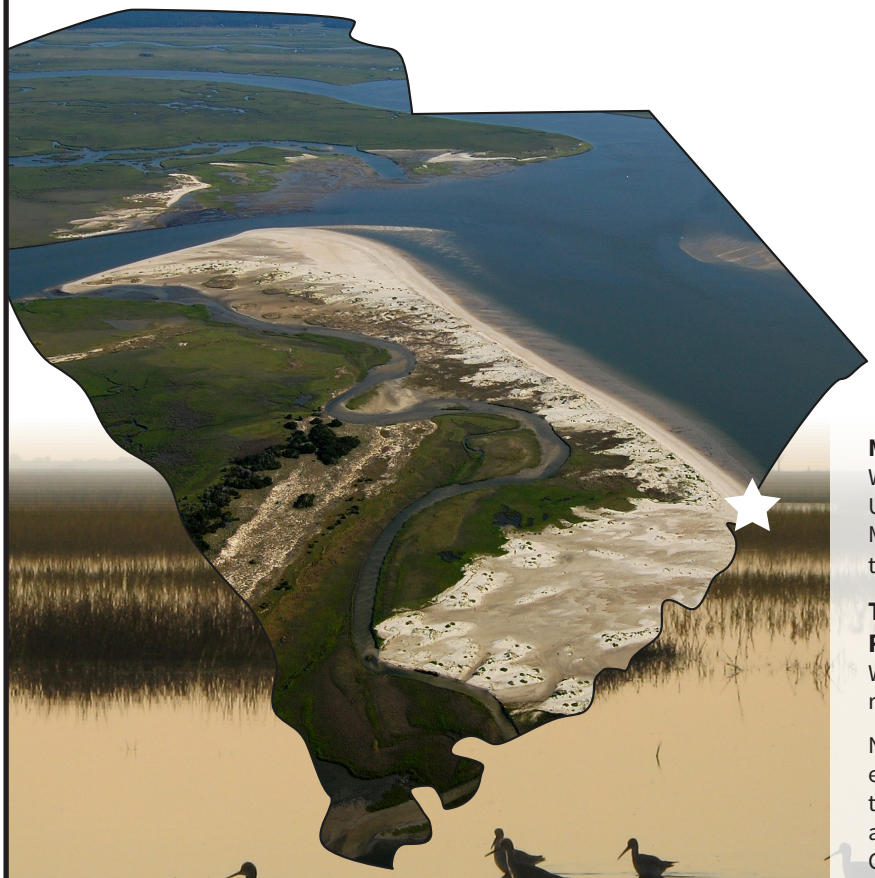
North Inlet-Winyah Bay

National Estuarine Research Reserve



Location: 30 miles south of Myrtle Beach and 50 miles north of Charleston, South Carolina, in Georgetown County

Date Designated: 1992

Area Protected: 18,916 acres

Web Address: *northinlet.sc.edu*

Access and Infrastructure

- The reserve headquarters is located at the Baruch Marine Field Laboratory on Hobcaw Barony.
- Visitors can view exhibits and sign up for programs at the Hobcaw Barony Discovery Center.
- School groups, summer camps, and other program participants enjoy the outdoor interpretive shelter, salt marsh trail, and boardwalk. A conference building and accommodations for college students and faculty are also available.
- Some portions of the reserve are only accessible by boat.

Management: Daily oversight is provided by the Belle W. Baruch Institute for Marine and Coastal Sciences, University of South Carolina. NOAA's Office for Coastal Management provides funding, national guidance, and technical assistance.

The North Inlet-Winyah Bay National Estuarine Research Reserve includes North Inlet and lower Winyah Bay and encompasses tidal marshes, oyster reefs, beaches, coastal forest, and open water.

North Inlet is an ocean-dominated estuary with extensive salt marshes and a small forested watershed that is largely undeveloped. In contrast, Winyah Bay is a brackish-water estuary (the third largest on the East Coast) that drains five major rivers and is influenced by agriculture, industry, and other human activities. This reserve provides habitat for many species, including federally threatened and endangered sea turtles, sturgeon, red knots, and wood storks.

The reserve conducts scientific research and provides education programs needed by South Carolina's coastal counties and the nation to conserve and manage coastal resources. Primary focus areas include impacts of urbanization and stormwater management on coastal water quality, effects of climate variability on natural and human coastal communities, and monitoring and actions to protect biodiversity.

NOAA Office for Coastal Management

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Interesting Things to Know

- North Inlet is designated by the state as having "outstanding resource waters" with unique ecological qualities. It is one of the cleanest and most studied estuaries in the world, with some long-term studies spanning more than 35 years.
- Annually, more than 80 different projects are conducted in the reserve.
- Over 15,000 people visit the Hobcaw Barony Discovery Center each year and participate in educational programs.
- This reserve is located on Hobcaw Barony. "Hobcaw" is a Native American term for "between the waters," and "barony" refers to the property's origin as a king's grant. The Belle W. Baruch Foundation owns and manages the property, and because of the king's grant, has title down to the low tide line of the marshes and beaches.
- The location is the former site of 11 different rice plantations. The site was visited by Franklin D. Roosevelt and Winston Churchill as well as other important political figures during WWII, and the owner of Hobcaw (and South Carolina native), Bernard Baruch, coined the phrase "Cold War." His daughter, Belle W. Baruch, purchased the property from him and had the vision to preserve it for wildlife, teaching, and research.

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. Site protection and enhancement are part of every research reserve. Activities may include managing land and water resources, restoring habitat, controlling invasive species, maintaining biodiversity, and reducing environmental stressors.

Research. Reserve research is focused on how environmental factors—such as nutrient loading, climate change, invasive species, and storms—impact coastal ecosystems. The monitoring program, known as the System-Wide Monitoring Program, or SWMP, provides long-term data on water quality, weather, biological communities, habitat, and land-use and land-cover characteristics. This combination of research and data provides a strong, science-based foundation for addressing coastal management challenges.

Training. To provide the community with the information and skills needed to integrate coastal science into local decision-making and everyday lives, reserves provide specialized courses and information. Reserve training professionals are active in community planning and improvement initiatives.

Education. Local data generated at the reserve provide students with a firsthand experience of local environmental conditions. 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