"In our standardized test–driven culture, there are few opportunities for students to participate in real-world scientific activities that are meaningful and provide tangible benefits for our community. Most students don’t develop a passion for environmental stewardship through reading or media. They develop it through doing."
Bob Hogdon
Richmond Hill Schools Field Study Program.

"What a power packed day of activities! The students enjoyed every minute of the day, and according to parents are still raving about their experiences."
Maria Williams
Independent Learning Network

In 2017, Sapelo Island National Estuarine Research Reserve’s (SINERR) Education Program took more than 1,800 students where classrooms can’t—outdoors and into the remarkable places that make coastal Georgia such a wonderful place to live. With Reserve educators as their guides, students journeyed into saltmarshes, maritime forests, and along the Atlantic seashore. They returned to the Reserve’s laboratory facility to examine the myriad life forms they encountered, using techniques that have been employed by hundreds of scientists who have worked on Sapelo. Students also toured the University of Georgia Marine Institute, where the field of modern ecology was born, and explored the 4,500 years of human history on the island, from the original Native Americans settlements to the present day.

The Sapelo Island Reserve’s Sea Turtle Conservation Workshop provided professional development and skill building for 14 educators in 2017. Not only did these teachers receive in-depth knowledge about these remarkable creatures by the very experts who study them, they also enjoyed a unique field experience. They were able to see these gentle giants come ashore on Sapelo’s remote beaches and watch as they carefully crafted their nests and laid their eggs. Experiences like these reinvigorate the teachers’ excitement for science and help them feel a connection to the environment, one they can pass on to their students. The Sapelo Island Reserve offers between four and six professional training opportunities for educators each year.

The Sapelo Island Reserve’s public education program offers many types of activities, and one of the most popular is Crab and Shrimp Day. In 2017, 58 state residents and visitors visited the Reserve and learned about the connection between locally caught seafood and the estuaries that enable this bounty. Participants learned about the life histories of Georgia crab and shrimp and the fishery industry that is vital to many small communities along the coast. The economic impact of these two fisheries to the state of Georgia was $12,994,231 in 2016. Participants were able to pull nets in the Atlantic and see these unique animals for themselves, and also enjoyed a good ole’ fashioned crab and shrimp boil — a sea-to-table approach that helps solidify understanding of this valuable resource and encourages the stewardship of ocean resources.
National Estuarine Research Reserve Education

Change on the Ground in 2017

Connects
People to Estuaries

1 million+ ACRES of natural classrooms & living laboratories with
28 INTERPRETIVE CENTERS

650,340 VISITORS learn about estuaries through Research Reserve outreach & education

Prepares
the Next Generation

87,899 STUDENTS take learning out of the abstract & into the outdoors

3,079 TEACHERS are trained in the estuary & supported in the classroom

ESTUARY SCIENCE
LOCAL DATA
LAB WORK
FIELD INVESTIGATION

SKILLS BUILT
✓ Observation
✓ Asking research questions
✓ Problem solving
✓ Data driven decision making

Improves
the Environment

12,849 CITIZENS are trained & inspired to protect their coasts & estuaries

28 RESEARCH RESERVE EDUCATORS lead programs that foster coastal stewardship in communities in 23 states

Creating value through education 39,035 volunteer hours = $942,305*

coast.noaa.gov/estuaries

*Value of a volunteer hour is calculated at $24.14 based on data from the Independent Sector.