Apalachicola Research Reserve Education is Change on the Ground

Pre-K to High School and Beyond

Empowering local students. Every student in the local district participates in Reserve led programs every other year (pre-K, 1, 3, 5, 7, high school) to become stewards of their own neighborhood. By the time students graduate, they will have a broad perspective on the ecology of the estuary beginning in pre-K with an exploration of the interactions between snails and hermit crabs. In first grade, they canvas the shoreline for marsh stories and learn about the value of estuaries. In third grade, the students study the estuary’s function as a nursery and oysters as a keystone species. The marsh protecting the Reserve is a living shoreline legacy planted by fifth graders who extend the marsh every year and then return as seventh graders to assess the health of a food web they grew. Over the course of the last decade, middle school students have grown marsh to protect the entire Reserve Center shoreline and tagged more than 20,000 monarch butterflies as part of these field trips.

Watershed Wonder

Over the last three years, the entire watershed has become a classroom for high school students from the Westminster School in Atlanta, Georgia. After traveling from the headwaters of the Apalachicola River system to the reserve, with stops along the way to talk to farmers, urban water treatment experts and recreational users, these students gain a thorough understanding of the impact of water on humans and wildlife. With reserve staff, the students test water from the river, bay, and ocean. They document their travels fusing art, science and literature in their nature and video journals. Local high school students, who have also taken the same trip from the river to Little St. George Island, are able to learn from their Georgia peers and see their familiar natural world through a fresh and powerful perspective.

“I have never heard the message delivered so well and understood so quickly. Because of this program I heard our students express concern and motivation to act to and care for their own estuary in Bay County.”
Paula Weaver - Local Science Teacher

“Who knew how much water I use in Atlanta affects the life of oysters in Apalachicola Bay? Well now I know!”
Georgia Visitor - on Trip Advisor
National Estuarine Research Reserve Education

Change on the Ground in 2022

Connects
People to Estuaries

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

Hello to the Connecticut Reserve, designated in 2022!

296,131 VISITORS learn about estuaries through Research Reserve outreach & education

Prepares
the Next Generation

54,773 STUDENTS take learning out of the abstract & into the outdoors

4,347 TEACHERS are trained in the estuary & supported in the classroom

SKILLS BUILT

ESTUARY SCIENCE
LOCAL DATA
LAB WORK
FIELD INVESTIGATION

Implements
the Environment

10,570 CITIZENS are trained & inspired to protect their coasts & estuaries

30 RESEARCH RESERVE EDUCATORS lead programs that foster coastal stewardship in communities in 25 states

VOLUNTEER ACTIONS

Protect wildlife
Monitor water quality
Plant native species
Clean up the coasts

Creating value through education
37,371 volunteer hours = $1,119,261*

*Value of a volunteer hour is calculated at $25.95 based on data from the Independent Sector.

cost.noaa.gov/estuaries