



2015 ANNUAL REPORT

LOOKING BACK, FORGING AHEAD



RESTORE
AMERICA'S
ESTUARIES

2015

THE YEAR IN REVIEW



RESTORE
AMERICA'S
ESTUARIES

LOOKING BACK, FORGING AHEAD



193

acres restored



688

tons of oyster shell
collected for recycling



24

states



22,691

volunteers



112,792

volunteer hours served



\$2.7
million

economic value
leveraged through
volunteers

This past year marked a special milestone in Restore America's Estuaries' history – our 20th anniversary. Milestones like these provide occasion to reflect on the past, but more importantly, to reaffirm our vision for the future. Since our founding in 1995, much has changed—our alliance has grown to ten organizations, our headquarters has moved from Washington D.C. to Seattle and back again—but one thing remains the same, our dedication to protecting and restoring America's bays and estuaries so that our generation and those that follow can enjoy the benefits of healthy coastal ecosystems. It is this vision, along with the boundless passion and dedication of our supporters, which has allowed us to achieve the many significant accomplishments that you will read about in this report.

As the leading national voice for protecting and restoring our nation's estuaries, Restore America's Estuaries and our colleagues work to advance our mission by providing leadership, information, and inspiration to stakeholders throughout the country. Through our blue carbon initiative, we work to advance the science of blue carbon to make projects that promote coastal conservation and restoration a reality. Our living shorelines program provides policymakers and

homeowners with information they need to make environmentally-sound decisions that support coastal ecosystems while providing protection from erosion. Our community-based restoration projects and our leadership of National Estuaries Week inspire communities across the nation to engage with the estuaries in their backyard, through restoration, volunteering, and recreation.

Over the past 20 years, we have come a long way, yet there is still more work to be done. Thanks in no small part to the enthusiasm and commitment that you, our supporters, have for our mission and our work, we know that we will continue to build upon these achievements and make significant strides toward healthy and abundant coasts over the next 20 years. We thank you for your ongoing support, and look forward to sharing our successes with you in the years to come as we forge ahead to protect and restore America's estuaries.

Sincerely,

Jeff Benoit
*President
and CEO*

Jonathan Stone
*Chair – Board of
Directors*



20 YEARS OF RESTORE AMERICA'S ESTUARIES



1995

Founded through the leadership of the Pew Charitable Trust, which convened top conservation organizations throughout the country to be a voice for our nation's estuaries.



Championed and successfully passed the Estuary Restoration Act, landmark legislation for coastal restoration that supports community-based habitat restoration projects.

2000



2002

Developed the nation's first National Strategy to Restore Coastal and Estuarine Habitat, providing the strategic framework to advance restoration and fully implement the Estuary Restoration Act.

Convened the First National Summit on Coastal and Estuarine Habitat Restoration in Baltimore, Maryland, bringing together hundreds of managers, scientists, policymakers, and stakeholders.



2003



2006

Completed our 500th restoration project through our partnership with NOAA's Community-based Restoration Program.

20th Anniversary of National Estuaries Day, a national day of estuary education, restoration, and stewardship, now spearheaded by RAE and celebrated as National Estuaries Week.



2008



2010

Organized the National Blue Ribbon Panel on Blue Carbon, producing the Action Plan to Guide Protocol Development, which guided RAE's successful efforts to develop the first-ever blue carbon restoration methodology for marshes and seagrass.

Welcomed EarthCorps to the RAE alliance as our regional restoration partner in Washington, building leaders through environmental stewardship and restoration to protect and enhance nearshore ecosystems of Puget Sound.



2013

SUPPORTER SPOTLIGHT - MUNICH RE

In 2015, Munich Re, leading experts on risk solutions worldwide, provided generous support to Restore America's Estuaries and our efforts to encourage and facilitate the implementation of living shorelines in coastal communities across the country. RAE's Living Shoreline program seeks to reduce the risks to coastal communities' residents, infrastructure, and resources from storm surge, erosion, and flooding, while maintaining or increasing beach and wetland habitat. Munich Re supported these efforts by sponsoring the 1st National Living Shorelines

Technology Transfer Meeting and Regional Workshops, which RAE hosted December 1-2 in Hartford, CT, in partnership with the Connecticut Institute for Resilience and Climate Adaptation.

Munich Re's business model is based on the combination of primary insurance and reinsurance under one roof. They take on risks worldwide of every type and complexity, and their experience, financial strength, efficiency and first-class service make them the first choice for all

matters relating to risk. Their client relationships are built on trust and cooperation.

Munich Re stands for exceptional solution-based expertise, consistent risk management, financial stability and client proximity. We greatly appreciate their support of our efforts to protect and restore our nation's vital bays and estuaries, as well as the coastal communities that rely upon them.

Munich RE 

LOCAL FOCUS, NATIONWIDE IMPACT: COMMUNITY-BASED RESTORATION

Restoration of our nation's estuaries is best accomplished by the people and communities who have the strongest connection to them. RAE works through our 10 member organizations to support restoration projects that are community-based from design to execution. In 2015, our Community-Based Restoration Program supported projects to which approximately 6,000 volunteers contributed more than 24,400 service hours to bring about tangible results including the restoration of nearly 200 acres, the opening of more than 5 stream miles, and the collection of 688 tons of oyster shell for recycling. Projects completed by these volunteers included: oyster and scallop restoration, dam removal, invasive plant removal, living shoreline construction, and salt marsh planting. Results such as these brought about by local community members demonstrate not only the on-the-ground impact that RAE and our member organizations are able to produce, but also the value that coastal communities place on their local waters and natural resources.



POND LILY DAM REMOVAL: REDUCED RISKS, RESTORATION REWARDS

In 2015, Save the Sound, with support from the NOAA/RAE partnership, removed the dam at Pond Lily Nature Preserve in New Haven, Connecticut. Pond Lily Dam, constructed in the 18th century, was in poor condition and no longer serving a useful purpose. Removing the

dam and restoring natural river flow allowed the passage of migratory fish upstream, improved water quality, and prevented the potentially catastrophic failure of an old dam. This project restored more than 2.6 miles of important fish spawning habitat for herring, shad, and eels, and helped to alleviate downstream flooding that has plagued local communities.

Following the dam removal, more than 100 local volunteers came together to plant native plant species along the new streambank. The resulting ecological benefits from the dam removal and revegetation go hand-in-hand with increasing open space and trail access for New Haven residents, and the visible, urban location of the former impoundment makes it an excellent educational site. This project builds on other West River Watershed restoration efforts by Save the Sound, and serves as an excellent example of community-based restoration serving communities and wildlife.



BLUE CARBON: PROMOTING ESTUARY CLIMATE BENEFITS

Coastal wetlands capture more carbon on a per area basis than forests and store this carbon in the soil where it can remain locked up for centuries, helping to mitigate the effects of climate change. RAE's Blue Carbon Program is increasing understanding of blue carbon climate benefits and helping to incorporate these benefits into coastal habitat management.

RAE is building capacity for coastal managers and stakeholders to understand and apply blue carbon

ecosystem services in climate adaptation and restoration planning. Along with our Gulf of Mexico partners, RAE hosted blue carbon workshops from Florida to Texas, formed regional working groups, and provided technical assistance to identify opportunities to use blue carbon to meet management priorities.

Blue carbon can also provide market incentives to support restoration. RAE led the development of the first and only globally applicable tidal wetland and seagrass



restoration methodology for greenhouse gas offsets. This methodology was approved by the Verified Carbon Standard, allowing wetland projects with a climate benefit to generate valuable carbon credits.



LIVING SHORELINES: CREATING RESILIENT COMMUNITIES AND HABITATS

Living shorelines are nature-based alternatives to traditional shoreline protection structures, like bulkheads and seawalls, that provide shoreline protection while preserving and restoring coastal habitat. RAE is a leader in the advancement of living shorelines science and implementation, and in 2015, our Living Shorelines program made several significant strides. In 2015, RAE released the "[*Living Shorelines: From Barriers to Opportunities*](#)" report, a national assessment of institutional barriers to living shoreline use as well as an [*educational video*](#) on living

shorelines that is being used to educate property owners about this environmentally-friendly option for erosion control. RAE also launched the [*Living Shorelines Academy*](#), an online hub of living shorelines resources that will support our in-person trainings. To cap off the year's efforts, in December 2015, RAE convened the first-ever national [*Living Shorelines Summit*](#). This two-day event with more than 250 attendees included both regional workshops and discussion of national issues and priorities for advancing the science and practice of living shorelines.

RAMPING UP RESTORATION THROUGH NATIONAL ESTUARIES WEEK

This year's National Estuaries Week, held September 19-26, continued to build on previous successes, with a record number of registered events throughout the country where thousands of enthusiastic volunteers and dedicated site hosts joined together to improve, restore, and celebrate our nation's estuaries. Some highlights include:

- 74 registered events. Of these events, 16 were sponsored by RAE member organizations, 29 were sponsored by NOAA National Estuarine Research Reserves, 24 were sponsored by EPA National Estuary Program Partners, and 5 were hosted by other organizations
- 16,724 volunteers participated in a combined 88,378 hours of service and other activities, totaling an economic contribution of over \$2 million based on Independent Sector's analysis of the economic value of volunteer time
- More than 1 million social media impressions using #EstuariesWeek
- A tripartisan Senate Resolution (*S. Res. 269*) recognizing National Estuaries Week with the support of 20 Senators
- 15 National Estuaries Week proclamations by state governors and the District of Columbia



Thanks to CITGO, the National Estuaries Week Gulf Region sponsor, RAE was able to partner with the Alabama Coastal Foundation and the Land Trust for the Mississippi Coastal Plain to support two new National Estuaries Week events. Dedicated volunteers planted more than 1,200 trees and restored more than 13 acres of upland habitat destroyed by Hurricane Katrina.



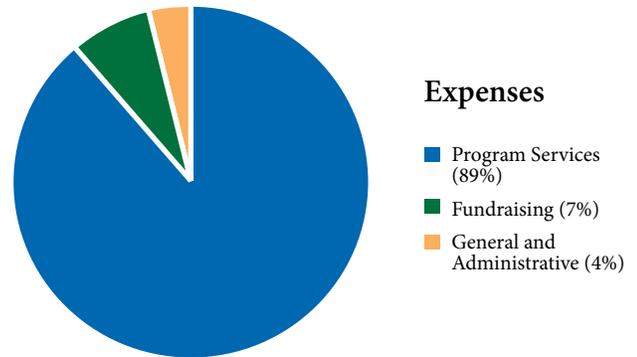
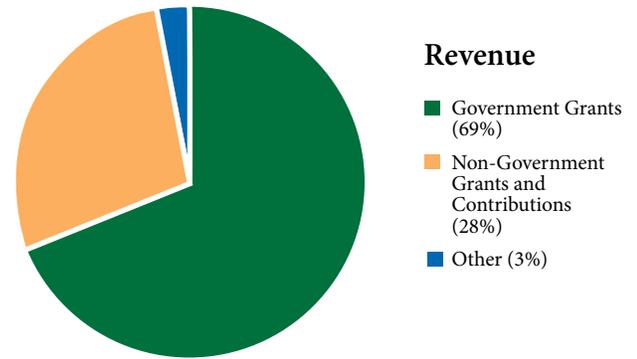
VOLUNTEERS KEEP TRASH OUT OF THE SPLASH AT NATIONAL ESTUARIES WEEK EVENT

In honor of National Estuaries Week, the Chesapeake Bay Foundation organized a shoreline clean up at Bill Burton Fishing Pier State Park in Maryland. Local volunteers and staff from the Maryland Department of Natural Resources spent the day removing trash and discarded tires from around the pier, a popular local fishing destination. In total, more than 600 pounds of trash was collected and removed from the site, preventing it from entering the Choptank River and eventually, the Chesapeake Bay.

FINANCIAL REPORT: OUR REVENUE & EXPENSES

2015 Financial Statements

Years Ended December 31	2015	2014
Revenue		
Government Grants	\$1,275,136	\$1,865,034
Grants and Contributions	477,121	542,909
National Summit and Meetings	37,860	937,487
Other Income	45,100	53,650
Investment Income	6,335	8,326
Total Revenue	\$1,841,552	\$3,407,406
Expenses		
Program Services	\$1,781,112	\$3,076,181
Fundraising	\$138,937	\$136,413
General and Administrative	\$85,572	\$55,134
Total Expenses	\$2,005,621	\$3,267,728
Change in Net Assets	\$(164,069)	\$139,678
Net Assets at Beginning of Year	\$1,034,883	\$896,524
Net Assets at End of Year	\$873,922	\$1,034,883



ACKNOWLEDGING OUR 2015 SUPPORTERS

RESTORE AMERICA'S ESTUARIES IS GRATEFUL TO THE MANY INDIVIDUALS, CORPORATIONS, FOUNDATIONS, AND ORGANIZATIONS THAT HAVE SUPPORTED OUR WORK OVER THE PAST YEAR.

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| Amazon Smile (on behalf of anonymous donors) | Ducks Unlimited | Lynette Cardoch | Steve Dubiel |
| Anonymous | Earth Share | Michelle Orr | Tampa Bay Estuary Program |
| Apalachicola NERR | Ecology and Environment, Inc. | Mo Lynch | TECO Energy |
| Barbara Oelke | Environmental Protection Agency | Mosaic | The Nature Conservancy |
| Barbara O'Hare | Friends of the Reserve | Munich Re | Three Twins Ice Cream |
| Battelle | Grand Bay NERR | National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration | Tim Dillingham |
| Bob Myers | Great Lakes Dredge & Dock Co. | National Parks Conservation Association | Todd Miller |
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| CITGO | Jack Kerns | Norcross Wildlife Foundation | U.S. Geological Survey |
| Clayton Fund | Jane Wardrop | Northern Trust | University Corporation for Atmospheric Research |
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| Dewberry | Linda Shead | Sea World Busch Gardens Conservation Fund | |
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**RESTORE
AMERICA'S
ESTUARIES**

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The support of our generous donors makes possible all that we do. To learn more about how you can help protect and restore estuaries, contact Lance Speidell at lspeidell@estuaries.org or visit www.estuaries.org/donate.