

# Our Global Estuary

## A Transformative Initiative to Address Estuaries as Critical Local and Global Resources

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### U.S. National Workshop Consensus Points

*In October 2013 the Our Global Estuary U.S. National Workshop convened estuarine scientists, resource managers, coastal and ocean observing system managers, educators, and experts in urban planning, Native American culture, and environmental law to discuss the state of estuary science, technology, management, and policy. The purpose of the workshop was to generate thinking on how knowledge generated in the study and caretaking of individual estuaries could be collected and made available to support efforts for all estuaries worldwide.*

1. Although each estuary is unique, there are strong commonalities across estuaries worldwide. They provide societal and ecosystem benefits and are subjected to stressors that impact their function to varying degrees.
2. Many estuaries are experiencing disruptive stresses and all are exposed to long-term challenges, creating the need for actions that strengthen estuarine resilience and broaden societal choices on balancing uses of estuarine resources.
3. The importance of estuaries to local economies and populations is the most effective lever for change, but local change benefits from a global perspective.
4. Comparing and contrasting knowledge about estuaries and management approaches worldwide is essential to capturing and gaining from lessons learned locally.
5. Use of classification systems along with observation and prediction systems provides tools for comparing and contrasting the resilience of estuaries, and for engaging indigenous communities, citizen science, researchers, and managers.
6. Success in addressing estuarine stresses and opportunities is a critical component of overall global sustainability due to the concentration of people and assets, both human and natural, in places where rivers meet the sea.
7. An international workshop to continue the discussion on the importance of local and global estuarine sustainability is recommended.

### Our Global Estuary Recommends

#### More people, more knowledge, more sharing

- ~ Because the importance of each estuary to its local economy and population is the most effective lever for change, the spectrum of people who value the resource must be encouraged to "own" the estuary and contribute to the associated discussions and actions.
- ~ Common ground may be fostered through knowledge gathering and sharing that honors the range of perspectives that the people hold.
- ~ Better knowledge gathering and sharing are keys to better caretaking.

#### Comparing estuaries and applying their lessons

- ~ Although every estuary is unique, each shares characteristics with others, and these commonalities enable comparisons that can greatly improve understanding and caretaking of these systems
- ~ Widespread use and refinement of estuary classification systems would reveal commonalities and foster a compare/contrast approach, which makes it possible to transfer the lessons learned in well-studied systems to estuaries where less is known.

#### A network of observation and prediction systems

- ~ Measurement and observation systems enhance understanding of estuarine variability and susceptibility to change, including the efforts to improve an estuary's health.
- ~ Such systems might range from citizens collecting data to advanced, automated sensor collection across multiple ecosystem environments.
- ~ Incorporating all systems into a worldwide knowledge network would support awareness, understanding, valuation, and management of estuaries at both local and global scales.

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