

The logo for National Estuaries Week features three stylized, curved green lines on the left side, resembling grass or reeds. To the right of these lines, the words "NATIONAL ESTUARIES WEEK" are written in a clean, black, sans-serif font, stacked in three lines.

NATIONAL
ESTUARIES
WEEK

2019 Event Planning Toolkit



Contents

Introduction	3
Media Resources.....	4
Op-Ed Template	4
Media Advisory Template	5
Social Media Resources	7
Blog Topics	7
Facebook Posts	8
Twitter Posts	8
Instagram Posts.....	9
Involving Key Stakeholders	10
Tips for Contacting Key Stakeholders	10
Special Considerations for Elected Officials.....	10
Schedule Request Template	11

Introduction

National Estuaries Week (NEW) is a nationwide celebration of our bays and estuaries and the many benefits they provide to local communities. Each year, hundreds of organizations throughout the country host local events in celebration of National Estuaries Week, from beach cleanups and marsh restoration events, to kayaking tours. We create awareness around our estuaries through social media and engaged citizens.

The goals of National Estuaries Week include:

- To create broad public awareness and support for our nation's estuaries and coasts
- To encourage active engagement and participation with local estuaries through volunteer and educational events
- To communicate the value and importance of our estuaries and coasts to key decision makers at the local and federal levels

Restore America's Estuaries, the Association of National Estuary Programs (ANEP), and the National Estuarine Research Reserves Association (NERRA) partner to promote National Estuaries Week on a broad scale. Together, we strive to elevate public awareness about the importance of our estuaries throughout the week, both at home and on Capitol Hill.

This toolkit will provide you with the basics to plan and execute a successful event for 2019 National Estuaries Week. Events are a great opportunity to increase public engagement and support for these special places. Events are also a way to gain positive press for your organization, attract new supporters, and invite local, state, and federal officials to visit project sites or participate in events. NEW-associated events can also be a great opportunity to give awards or recognize special supporters.

National Estuaries Week is all about celebrating the benefits of our coasts and estuaries in a way that matters to **you**. Keep in mind this toolkit is designed to be tailored to fit the needs of your unique organization. There is no-one-fits all strategy for celebrating your estuaries!

For more information contact Sarina Katz, Communications & Outreach Manager, at skatz@estuaries.org.

Media Resources

Media stories can help your organization reach a wider audience. It will elevate the work you are doing at a local level and increase awareness about your cause. Consider some of the following resources when approaching journalists, newspapers, etc.

Op-Ed Template

National Estuaries Week (NEW) is a nationwide celebration of our bays and estuaries and the many benefits they provide to us all. Much like (*insert local bay name here*), estuaries provide vital food supplies, clean water, and support the local economy. Yet more than a quarter century after the first National Estuaries Day in 1988, threats to our estuaries and coasts have never been more pressing. We invite you to join us September 14-21, 2019 in celebration of our estuaries and the vital role they play in our community.

Here in (*insert local city/region name*), we see those threats firsthand: Pollution and development of (*insert bay name*) fouls our water and poisons our fish and wildlife.

Most of us live here because we like the coastal lifestyle. We all know that the coast and the bay provide a great place to work, live, play, and raise our families. That's true nationally as well. Americans love the water.

Despite that love, we have lost more than half the nation's original coastal wetlands over the past 200 years. Everything from salt marshes along the Atlantic and Pacific shorelines to the mangrove swamps ringing Florida and the Gulf Coast have seen declines. We have developed our shorelines, dredged our bays, drained stormwater and sewage, and destroyed fisheries and shell beds. The very existence of the coasts and cities we love is now threatened.

With the ongoing concern about our nation's economic and financial health, it is important to recognize the value that protecting and restoring our estuaries delivers to both our local economy and nation.

Nationally, our coasts and estuaries are worth nearly \$1 trillion annually to the American economy. Coastal waters add more than \$800 billion in trade and commerce and tens of billions in recreational dollars. 43 percent of us live in coastal areas, accounting for 40 percent of all employment nationally – 69 million jobs in all – and a whopping 43 percent of our overall economic output.

Here in (*insert local economic data/factoid here*).

Locally, (*name of city/ies*) are doing their part to save (*insert bay name*). In fact, we have more than (*insert number*) volunteers set to tackle (*name/location of NEW project(s)*). Moreover, (*prominent local politicians/VIPs*) will be rolling up their sleeves (and pant legs) to help out as we (*short details on NEW projects*).

Even with all the local help and good will, we might not be able to do restoration projects like this much longer. Organizations like (name of organization) depend on both local and federal funds.

Despite clear-cut economic and environmental returns, critical coastal conservation and restoration programs like NOAA's Community-Based Restoration Program (insert other important programs) are caught in political battles. Without continued efforts and funds to support coastal restoration and protection, we jeopardize the many benefits upon which we have come to enjoy and rely.

So this year, in celebration of the 30th anniversary of National Estuaries Week, we are asking (name of city/ies) to act globally and locally, by supporting our restoration efforts, but also by calling on Congress and the Administration to prioritize restoring and protecting our estuaries.

Help us help the coasts!

Media Advisory Template

A media advisory alerts local media that your event is taking place and serves as an official invitation for them to cover it. Media coverage will increase awareness about your organization, the NEW event, and about estuaries as a whole.

Send a media advisory to your contacts the week of September 3, and again on September 10 and 14 (if there are updates to locations, activities, etc., make those changes in each version).

Media Advisory

(date of event)

For more information contact:

(insert your name & contact info at which the press can reach you)

National Estuaries Week draws local volunteers to support our bay and coasts

(Insert expected # of participants) of local residents expected to join (insert invited member of Congress) for National Estuaries Week event in (insert name of city).

OR

(Insert your organization name) will host (insert description of what will happen, i.e. "beach clean-up or celebration") on (date information).

National Estuaries Week (NEW) is a nationwide celebration of our bays and estuaries and the many benefits they provide to local communities. Each year, organizations across the country host local events in celebration of National Estuaries Week, from beach cleanups to marsh restoration events to kayaking tours. We aim to increase

national awareness of our estuaries and celebrate the vibrant coastal areas where rivers meet the sea.

This year (**your organization**) will be hosting (**name of event**) at (**location/date/time**). We invite you to join our volunteers on this exciting day to learn more about estuary restoration in our local area.

WHO: (**INSERT:** Names of local participants, including sponsor, public officials and agencies, schools, nonprofit groups, special guests, and other volunteers.)

WHAT: (**INSERT:** Describe the work to be accomplished.)

WHEN: (**INSERT:** date, time, etc.)

WHERE: (**INSERT:** Site name and address. Provide directions if necessary.)

CONTACT: (**INSERT:** Event organizer with phone number, email, and website address.)

National Estuaries Week is supported by Restore America's Estuaries, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, the Environmental Protection Agency, the National Estuarine Research Reserve Association, the Association of National Estuary Programs, and countless other associations and agencies.

More information can be found at <https://www.estuaries.org/new>.

Social Media Resources

National Estuaries Week is an opportunity to post exciting content to your social media channels. Incorporating NEW activities, news, and community attention into your social posts can bring new followers, draw readers to your blog, increase your social presence, and showcase the excellent work being done by your organization throughout the week.

For digital media art templates, download our social media kit from the [website](#).

All social media posts should include **#EstuariesWeek**.

Blog Topics

- Have each staff member share the story of why he or she is passionate about estuaries and/or the benefits provided by estuaries. Click [here](#) or [here](#) for good examples of this type of blog post.
- Share and analyze news about National Estuaries Week that promotes your organization's mission. Use this information to draw attention to the importance of NEW as a means of highlighting the many benefits of restoration: Securing food resources, promoting tourism, providing clean air and water, helping commercial and recreational fisheries, and protecting communities from extreme weather damage. Click [here](#) for a great example.
- Write about projects and volunteer events that your organization is undertaking/has completed. This is a great way to explain exactly what your organization is doing to promote estuaries and the benefits they provide. This is also an opportunity to explain why this work is effective and important to your organization. This type of post is great for announcing additional volunteer opportunities and asking supporters to join the next event, a mailing list, etc.
- Have experts from outside your organization write posts about the importance of estuaries. In the weeks leading up to NEW, consider asking an expert to write a post explaining why, from their perspective, estuaries are important. This type of post provides an outsider's perspective which can be very beneficial for your readers and donors to understand.
- Include supporters' letters/emails and photos in the blog. This is a great post to include a subtle "ask" for donations.
- In the buildup to NEW, you could have your readers send in their favorite photos of estuaries and you could put one up each day of NEW.
- Post videos, articles, and estuary-related links to your blog. Some good sources of estuary-related content include the sites of NOAA and the EPA.
- Collaborate with other organizations to share and/or create new posts.

Facebook Posts

Once your event is planned, create a **Facebook event** and invite your followers. You can also encourage your followers to share the event invitation to a wider audience.

Will you do your part to help protect and restore our coasts? Join our volunteer event (**insert details about your event**) on (**date of event**) for #EstuariesWeek! **Include link to your event page.**

National #EstuariesWeek is this September! Join us for a day on the bay -- we'll be gathering by the water (**insert local place**) to celebrate the importance of estuaries and the need to protect them! Are you excited?

We're holding an event to celebrate the 30th anniversary of #EstuariesWeek! (**Include details about your event.**) Learn more! (www.estuaries.org/new)

National #EstuariesWeek is right around the corner. Check out the website to find an event near you! (www.estuaries.org/new/events)

Twitter Posts

It's National #EstuariesWeek! Did you know 2/3 of fish and shellfish we eat live in estuaries at some point?! @NOAA @EPAGov

It's National #EstuariesWeek! Did you know our coastal counties provide >40% of our national GDP!? @NOAA @EPAGov

It's National #EstuariesWeek! Did you know healthy estuaries support the >\$5 billion commercial fishing industry?!

>68% of commercial fish catch and >80% of recreational fish catch use habitat in estuaries at some point in their life! #EstuariesWeek

Volunteer in your community during #EstuariesWeek. Restore coastal habitat near year! (www.estuaries.org/new/events) @NOAA @EPAGov

Learn more about what we do during National #EstuariesWeek. Take a trip to see us today! (**link to your own website**)

Celebrate National #EstuariesWeek with me! Upload pictures of you enjoying your local bay or coast! @NOAA @EPAGov

Coastal restoration = jobs! Up to 30 jobs/\$1mil invested #EstuariesWeek @NOAA @EPAGov

Instagram Posts

Provide a link to your volunteer sign-up page in the bio on your account page.

National Estuaries Week 2019 is here! Join us on **(date of event)** for **(name of event)**! See link in bio to sign up! #EstuariesWeek

Get ready for National Estuaries Week 2019! Volunteer at your local bay or estuary and have fun spending a day outdoors! Post a picture of your favorite estuary with the hashtag #EstuariesWeek and tag us **@(insert username)** Don't forget to sign up for National Estuaries Week 2019 using the link in our bio!

Thank you to all of the volunteers who made National #EstuariesWeek 2019 a success! On **(date of event)** **(# of volunteers)** volunteers helped us **(describe event)**.

Involving Key Stakeholders

Inviting your local officials or other key stakeholders to a National Estuaries Week event can be a great opportunity to showcase the work your organization is doing to support healthy estuarine habitats.

Their participation can be varied; you could invite them to speak at your event, take them on a tour of your property and projects, or even have them get involved in some of “dirty work” of a clean-up project.

- **Capturing the event:** Get those cameras ready! Take lots of pictures and be sure to take notes on your guest’s remarks. These events can make great material for your newsletter, website, and social media.
- **Connect on social:** Most local officials and stakeholders have their own social media accounts. Remember to include their handle in your social posts and tag them in all posts. It’s a great way to keep the conversation going after the event.
- **Follow-up:** Send a thank you note after the event to your guest’s office or staff. It helps keep your organization front and center. Send pictures of the event as well!

Tips for Contacting Key Stakeholders

- **Timeline:** It is best to contact them as soon as possible – most schedules fill up quickly, so it’s never too early!
- **Who do I contact?** Search online or call the office to find out if there is an official scheduler. If not, you could reach out to an executive assistant or whoever is in charge of outreach or communications.
- **What do I say?** Once you know who to contact to make the scheduling request, you can use the template (page 11) for what to say in your email. Adjust the language to fit your needs, but be sure to give clear dates, a concise but thorough description of the event, and your ask.

Special Considerations for Elected Officials

If your organization is a public charity (501(c)(3) non-profit), your organization may *never* endorse a candidate for public office. It’s important to remember that if an elected official is attending your event there can be no mention, implied or otherwise, of a political endorsement.

- Be sure *not* to mention any upcoming election or make reference to the current elected official’s candidacy. Likewise, the official should not make reference to his/her candidacy or the upcoming election.
- If the official is currently up for re-election, specify that his/her attendance is not in their capacity as a political candidate.
- More information on how to ensure your event is compliant is available on the IRS [webpage](#).

Schedule Request Template

Dear <insert member of congress name>,

We are writing to invite you and your colleagues to participate in our local National Estuaries Week (NEW) event. NEW is the nation's largest annual celebration to promote the importance of estuaries and the need to protect them. National Estuaries Week inspires Americans across the country to get outside and participate in community events for the benefit of their local coasts, bays, and estuaries.

This year, we are celebrating the 30th anniversary of National Estuaries Week September 15-22. We anticipate thousands of Americans to participate in countless celebrations and volunteer projects across the nation. Celebratory events include live-music on the beach, canoe and kayak trips, and educational workshops – all for the purpose of raising public-awareness about the importance of estuaries in maintaining healthy waterways and coastlines.

You can find nationwide events at: <http://www.estuaries.org/national-estuaries-week>.

Our local NEW event will be held at (insert your event location). (Insert approx. #) volunteers will gather at (insert event time) and will complete (insert event projects). We would be honored for you to join us for/to participate in (insert event/activity details).

We all benefit from healthy estuaries, and NEW is a great opportunity for all of us to give back to our community, celebrate our coasts, and spend quality time outdoors.

Please contact me for more information and to confirm your attendance.
(Insert contact information)

Thank you,
(your name, title)
(organization)