



North Carolina  
Coastal Federation  
*Working Together for a Healthy Coast*

# OUR STRATEGY

2016



“We share in the responsibility  
to protect and restore our coastal  
public trust resources.”

— TODD MILLER

# LETTER FROM THE DIRECTOR

With more than 2.2 million acres of public trust areas in coastal North Carolina, our beaches, sounds, rivers, creeks and public lands belong to every one of us. We need to cherish our coast much in the same fashion that we protect and manage the approximately 218,000 acres that are formally managed as State Parks. We share in the responsibility to protect and restore our coastal public trust resources.

Recognizing the challenges facing our coast, the North Carolina Coastal Federation board of directors recently adopted a strategic plan to guide our work over the next three years. This plan summarized in the following pages, aims to protect and restore our coast. The plan embodies our philosophy that we need to seek out and make opportunities to better manage our coast, and not wait to react to problems.

The 10 goals in the plan reflect important environmental outcomes that we seek to achieve: beautiful beaches,



productive estuaries, environmentally compatible economic development, clean marshes, safe waters for swimming and harvesting shellfish, and fair and equitable environmental safeguards for everyone in North Carolina. These goals will be achieved through our on-going programs that advocate for sound environmental management, restore degraded habitats and water quality, educate us all to be better environmental stewards, and provide reliable and accurate news coverage of coastal issues.

I invite you to read this plan carefully, and encourage your participation in our upcoming work. We need your help to accomplish these ambitious objectives. Thank you for your continued support.

With best regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Todd Miller".

Todd Miller, Executive Director

# Our Approach

Since 1982, the Coastal Federation has worked to protect and restore the coastal water quality and habitats throughout the N.C. coast. We engage people from all walks of life, both residents and visitors, who commit to preserving the coast for current and future generations.

This is how we do our work:



## We Collaborate

To deliver our programs and successfully complete our projects, we coordinate with stakeholders, partners and decision-makers: from community groups to corporations and local businesses to research institutions to government agencies. We achieve long-lasting results by working together.

We are known for finding common ground among diverse groups of people, forming unlikely alliances, and recruiting nontraditional partners. We want to work for and with anyone that depends on healthy and productive coastal waters to live, work and play.

## We Advocate

Our advocacy goes beyond supporting or opposing a position—we take action by engaging people from all walks of life in decisions about the future of our coast. We inform and unite people, communities, businesses and government agencies to form effective partnerships. We build public and therefore political support for compatible land and water uses that protect coastal water quality, critical habitats and public access.

By identifying and communicating injustices, to both people and the coastal environment, we help decision-makers consider the long-term consequences of their actions.

We have a daily presence in the N.C. General Assembly. Our contract lobbyist works the legislature moving our agendas forward. We seek laws and policies that are in the best interest of the N.C. coast and the communities that depend on it.



## We Restore and Protect

In the field, we restore and protect critically important coastal habitats and water quality. Putting into action our collaboration, advocacy and education efforts to ensure a clean and healthy coast for all.

The Coastal Federation coordinates and engages neighborhoods, local governments, engineers, contractors, landowners, and a host of volunteers to complete both small and very large-scale restoration projects along the N.C. coast.

Our work repairs damaged coastal areas by building and preserving oyster reefs, living shorelines, wetlands, shorebird nesting rookeries and native coastal forests. We install retrofits to drainage systems to reduce the amount of polluted stormwater reaching our waterways, ensuring the waters we all depend on to fish, boat and swim in are clean and safe.

## We Educate

Making a direct human connection with our natural coast is an integral component of our education program. From students building oyster reefs to stormwater engineers clamming in Bogue Sound, our education programs strive to establish a bond between our audience and our coastal habitats, waters and communities.

Taking people into a marsh, exploring an inlet shoal, building a community rain garden, or touring a watershed restoration project enables students, families, and public officials to have a much deeper understanding of and appreciation for what it takes to maintain the coast we all love.

Experiencing the outdoors and engaging in hands-on education using local environmental issues; allowing participants to explore and become teachers; and implementing service learning and community projects are tools we use to create coastal stewards and informed decision makers.

## We Inform

The Coastal Federation produces, Coastal Review Online (CRO), a daily, not-for-profit, news and feature service covering the N.C. coast. It is a member of the N.C. Press Association and works as a public information resource. While the Coastal Federation often advocates for better laws and policies, CRO is not an advocacy publication.

Written by professional journalists, CRO covers all sides of the issue and strives to meet the highest standards of fairness and accuracy. CRO's approach holds strongly to the belief that if you give the public the facts; they will come to the right conclusions.



# Protect and Restore Coastal Water Quality by Decreasing Polluted Runoff

Clean coastal waters are vital to our health, economy and lifestyles. Along the coast, the waters we depend on for fishing and swimming are becoming polluted by stormwater runoff. When rain falls on roofs, streets, driveways, and parking lots, it collects bacteria and other pollutants and discharges them into our coastal waters.

The Coastal Federation brings together partners in urban and rural landscapes to tackle stormwater runoff on two fronts: to *prevent* stormwater runoff and *reduce* the volumes of runoff currently impacting our waterways.

We promote and apply strategies that slow down the flow of stormwater and allow it to soak into the ground. Most of these strategies include Low Impact Development (LID) techniques such as infiltration that enable us to reduce the volume of polluted runoff.

Using a variety of approaches, we work to promote and implement watershed restoration plans and stormwater management programs at the state and local level. By educating and assisting regional property owners, coastal communities and farmers to design and install targeted wetland and stormwater retrofits, the volume of polluted stormwater reaching our coastal waters can be substantially decreased.

## MAKE SMART CHOICES

Check out ways you can reduce the stormwater pollution coming from your yard, request a copy of our free *Smart Yards* brochure by emailing [nccf@nccoast.org](mailto:nccf@nccoast.org) or go to [nccoast.org/smartyards](http://nccoast.org/smartyards).

# Improve the Economy Through Coastal Restoration

Projects aimed at repairing environmental damage are becoming much more commonplace in coastal North Carolina. Coastal restoration projects are normally evaluated based upon their environmental benefits. However, restoration projects also provide a suite of economic and community benefits.

In a fairly new initiative, the Coastal Federation is promoting how coastal restoration and economic development are closely tied together by demonstrating how restoration can create jobs and boost industry growth like tourism and fishing.

To better document these benefits, we commissioned

Research Triangle Institute International to evaluate the direct economic benefits resulting from four of our restoration projects.

The study found that for every million dollars spent on restoration projects, about 15 full time jobs are supported.

It also found that coastal restoration projects provide significant economic benefit to areas of the coast that are economically depressed and have difficulty attracting industry or new business to their communities.

The Coastal Federation is now working directly with communities to introduce coastal restoration as an economic development tool. We are engaging key stakeholders, decision makers and partners to scale up the economic benefits of coastal restoration into a multi-million dollar strategy.



## THE ECONOMIC BENEFITS OF COASTAL RESTORATION.

The Coastal Federation's coastal restoration activities such as oyster reef creation, estuarine shoreline, and wetland restoration provide significant long-term benefits to our communities.

For example, oyster restoration creates additional habitat for oysters by deploying oyster shells and larvae into areas where they are known to live. Abundant oyster populations filter enormous quantities of water, which promotes habitats that provide sanctuary for numerous species and attracts larger fish, increasing commercial and recreational use of the area by fisherman.





# Advocate for Compatible Industrial Development in the Coastal Zone

Opposing industries and policies that have the potential to significantly degrade our coast is a major initiative for the Coastal Federation. Advocating for environmentally compatible industrial development along the N.C. coast and promoting clean economic growth opportunities will continue to be a priority throughout 2016.

Two major issues we have undertaken in recent years and will continue to focus on include:

## TITAN AMERICA

Titan America wants to develop one of the largest cement manufacturing facilities and strip mines in the nation on the shores of the Northeast Cape Fear River in New Hanover County. If they succeed, it will be one of the largest sources of air pollution and one of the greatest threats to water resources in the region. Titan Cement is expected to extract 13-16 millions of gallons of our local drinking water supply, while risking our health and destroying our natural resources including thousands of acres of valuable wetlands.

The aim of the Coastal Federation's Stop Titan campaign is to keep Titan Cement from establishing its operations in the region and to promote clean economic growth for a healthy coast.

## OFFSHORE DRILLING

The proposed five-year plan of the Bureau of Ocean Energy Management (BOEM) for 2017-2022 includes opening up the N.C. coast to oil and gas development. This exposes our shores to possible environmental hazards unlike any we have ever seen, placing in jeopardy the coast where we swim, fish, boat and make a living with our fishing and tourism industries. The Coastal Federation opposes offshore oil drilling and maintains that the risk to our coast is higher than any perceived reward. Keeping the lines of communication open between coastal residents, government officials, and researchers will help to ensure the majority of people oppose efforts to drill off our coast.

The Gulf's continuing struggle to recover from the 2010 Deepwater Horizon disaster warns us of the potential for spills and the long lasting negative effects to water quality, the economy, wildlife and fisheries. In addition, the potential negative effect of seismic surveying in preparation for drilling has shown to have adverse effects on marine life.

# Protect Oceanfront and Inlet Beaches for Public Uses and Maintain Their Natural Functions

North Carolina's beaches and inlets are some of our coast's most valuable environmental and economic assets. Our ability to use the beach and inlets is a basic public trust right that we all share. The state's constitution specifically states that preserving our beaches is part of our common heritage and the responsibility of state government (N.C. Constitution, Article XIV, Section 5).

In recent years, public access and use of our beaches and inlets have become increasingly hampered as some oceanfront property owners push to install hardened structures, such as sand bags and terminal groins, to protect their seaside investments from possible erosion- all at a great cost financially and environmentally.

In an effort to preserve the natural functions of our beaches and inlets and people's access to these areas, we promote and support alternative ways to address erosion issues at a much lower financial, social and environmental cost. We are also diligently working to prevent hardened structures that are currently proposed along our coast.

## TAKING ACTION

*The Coastal Federation is leading campaigns to prevent terminal groins at a number of our inlet beaches. Learn more about these campaigns and sign our petitions to help protect your access to the beach.*

**[SaveRichInlet.org](http://SaveRichInlet.org)**

**[SaveLockwoodFollyInlet.org](http://SaveLockwoodFollyInlet.org)**

**[SaveShallotteInlet.org](http://SaveShallotteInlet.org)** (coming soon)







North Carolina  
Coastal Federation  
*Working Together for a Healthy Coast*

NCCOAST.ORG

# 2016

## January

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31

## February

## March

## April

## May

## June

## July

## August

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31

## September

## October

## November

## December

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30 31

## 2016 Holidays

<b>January 18</b>	Martin Luther King Day
<b>February 14</b>	Valentine's Day
<b>February 15</b>	Presidents' Day
<b>March 13</b>	Daylight Saving
<b>March 17</b>	St. Patrick's Day

<b>March 25</b>	Good Friday	<b>September 5</b>	Labor Day
<b>March 27</b>	Easter	<b>October 10</b>	Columbus Day
<b>April 22</b>	Earth Day	<b>October 31</b>	Halloween
<b>May 8</b>	Mother's Day	<b>November 6</b>	Daylight Saving
<b>May 30</b>	Memorial Day	<b>November 11</b>	Veterans' Day
<b>June 19</b>	Father's Day	<b>November 24</b>	Thanksgiving
<b>July 4</b>	Independence Day	<b>December 25</b>	Christmas Day



# Protect the Natural Functions of Estuarine Shorelines

North Carolina's estuarine shorelines are some of the most ecologically and economically valuable pieces of real estate in the world. Rising sea levels and waves from storms and boat wakes are causing these shorelines to erode. For decades, property owners have built bulkheads and hardened hundreds of miles of shoreline to combat this loss. But bulkheads are just a temporary fix and often need costly repair. More importantly, bulkheads destroy the valuable intertidal salt marsh and fish habitat seaward of them.

In cooperation with partners from all over the nation, we promote a more effective and natural way to manage shoreline erosion called "living shorelines". Living shorelines are longer-term, less-expensive techniques that reduce erosion while at the same time maintaining or restoring the shoreline's natural integrity and functions.

Living shorelines are typically planted with salt marsh grasses, alone or in combination with an offshore structure called a sill

that absorbs wave energy. They minimize erosion and protect the shoreline while providing valuable coastal habitat.

The Coastal Federation is committed to streamline permitting for living shorelines, promote living shorelines to waterfront property owners and train coastal landowners and marine contractors on how to design and build these more environmentally friendly alternatives to bulkheads.

## LIVING SHORELINES ACADEMY

Coming in spring of 2016  
[livingshorelinesacademy.org](http://livingshorelinesacademy.org)



The Living Shorelines Academy is a result of a partnership between the Coastal Federation and Restore America's Estuaries and is funded by the Environmental Protection Agency.

This online information portal will help to advance the policy, science and practice of living shorelines, improve collaboration among governmental and private stakeholders and educate property owners.

In addition to providing news and research materials, a networking database and tools to assist policy makers, regulators and contractors, the Academy website includes online training modules for shoreline property owners looking for solutions to address their shoreline erosion issues.



## Restore and Sustainably Manage Oysters

Oysters are a vital keystone species in our estuaries, providing habitat for other commercially and recreationally important species, filtering our water and serving as an important food source and part of our maritime culture. However, oyster populations are in decline in North Carolina. Some estimates indicate the population is at 10 percent of historic levels due to disease, poor water quality, overfishing and natural disaster.

Since 2003, a cohesive, statewide effort spearheaded by the Coastal Federation in close coordination with the N.C. Division of Marine Fisheries, has blended the latest science, cutting edge restoration techniques, watershed protection efforts and active resource management. This work paid big dividends in 2015 as the N.C. General Assembly embraced and funded programs to enhance oyster restoration and management.

The goal is to have a N.C. coast regarded as the “Napa Valley” of oysters. We help to coordinate the efforts of all stakeholders to build a statewide network of oyster sanctuaries, enhance shellfish management areas, improve and protect water quality, and implement other priority actions. We also engage and educate the public to build political support for oyster restoration.

### DID YOU KNOW?

Our native Eastern Oyster (*Crassostrea virginica*) is one of the most important, or “keystone”, species in our estuaries. Oysters and the reefs they form:

- Provide valuable habitat
- Are a critical link in the food chain
- Filter water and help clean our estuaries
- Control erosion along shorelines
- Combat climate change and adapt to sea level rise
- Are an important fishery

# Preserve Riparian Lands Vital to Coastal Water Quality

Our coastal habitats, waterfront buffers and remaining wild spaces are under increasing pressure from urbanization and population growth making it even more important to strategically preserve or restore targeted coastal

lands that are so important to our coast.

Strategic acquisition of land critical to coastal water quality is an important part of our work. Priority sites for preservation include riparian waterfront shorelines as well as cropland that can be restored to wetlands.

Once preserved or restored, these lands provide critical water quality and habitat benefits. They are also great places for recreation, environmental education, scientific research and provide refuges for fish and wildlife. Since 1982, our work has resulted in more than 150,000 acres of land being preserved in coastal North Carolina.



## NORTH RIVER WETLANDS PRESERVE



Nearly 6,000 acres of ditched and heavily drained cropland and forests are being restored back to their natural state at the former North River Farms in Carteret County. This work improves water quality and fisheries in the downstream tidal creeks and sounds, allowing for more oysters, clams and fish to grow and to be caught.

The Coastal Federation works with dozens of governmental, academic and private partners as it plugs ditches, plants millions of trees and marsh grasses, and recreates wetlands that soak up and cleanses farm drainage before it reaches the estuary.

# Reduce Coastal Marine Debris

Marine debris hurts wildlife, ecosystems, human health and the economy. Ranging from a plastic bag to an abandoned vessel, marine debris is a persistent problem. The Coastal Federation works to prevent and remove marine debris from the N.C. coast.

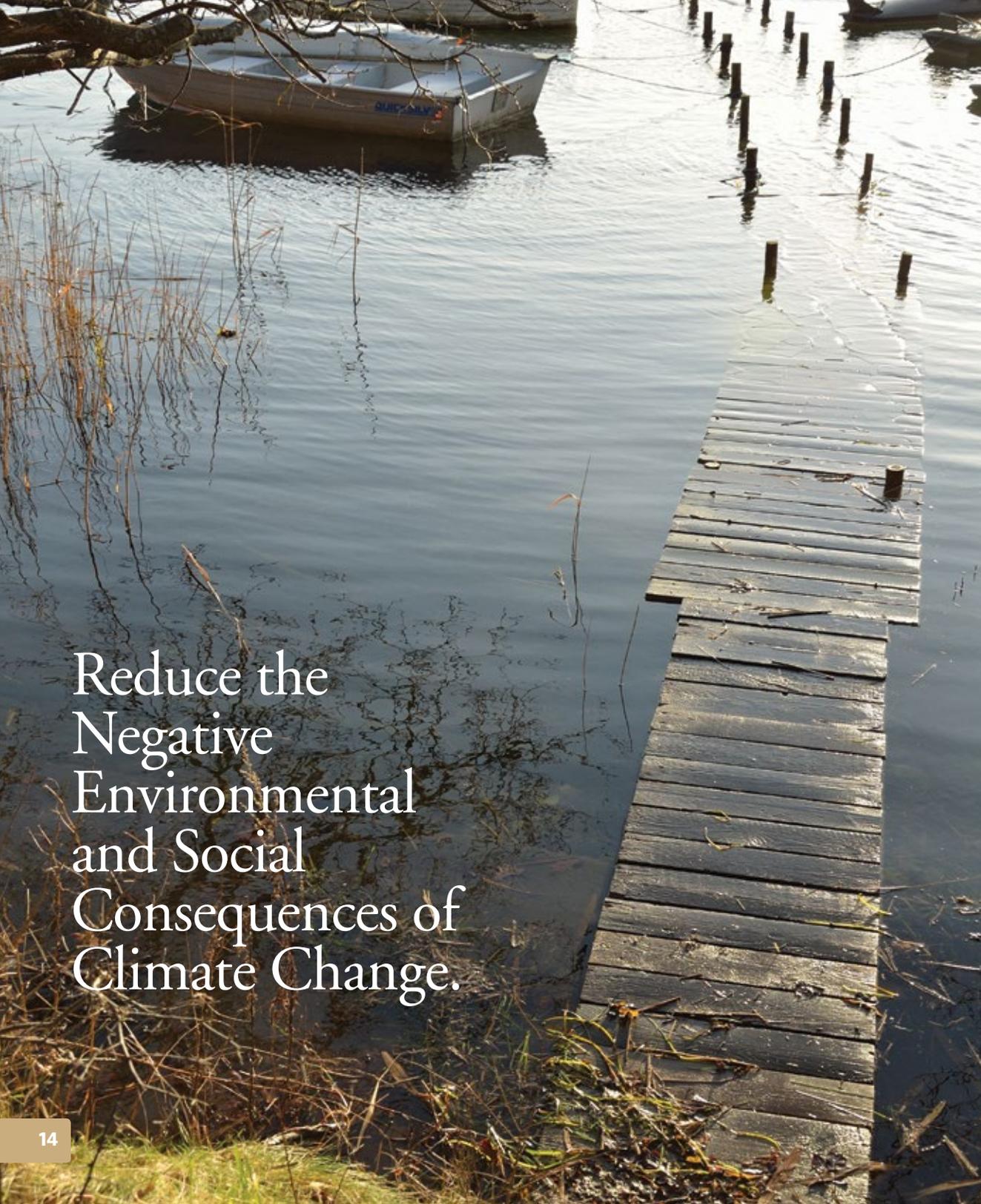
Along with our partners, community groups and hundreds of volunteers, we inspire action, encourage stewardship, build awareness and reduce hazards. From organizing cleanups to joining forces with local watermen for our annual crab pot recovery program, we engage stakeholders in reducing the amount of debris found along our coast.

## CRAB POT PROJECT

The Coastal Federation's Northeast office, along with a number of partners and community members retrieve derelict and submerged crab pots from the Pamlico, Currituck, Croatan and Roanoke sounds and the Alligator River. In 2015, this project employed 24 commercial fishermen and removed just over 1,000 pots from the Virginia line to Hatteras. Some of the collected pots were then cleaned, prepped and placed in the sounds to create artificial oyster reefs at three sites around Roanoke Island. Going into the third year, this project continues gaining momentum.

Learn more at: [ncoast.org/crabpotproject](http://ncoast.org/crabpotproject)





# Reduce the Negative Environmental and Social Consequences of Climate Change.

Changes in our climate have a direct bearing on many of the projects we protect and restore the coast. The results of rising seas and more extreme weather events can appear most obvious in coastal communities—more shoreline, erosion, flooding, salt water intrusion, forest fires, crop failures, and increased polluted runoff into shellfish and swimming waters.

The influence of climate change on the health of the coast is addressed throughout many of our strategies. Advocating for more resilient ways to manage our shorelines, producing educational seminars in order to motivate action at a personal level, and restoring areas already harmed are just a few of the ways we integrate the climate change issue into our daily work.

## **DID YOU KNOW?**

Estuaries, like those along the North Carolina coast, store CO<sub>2</sub> from the atmosphere and are one of many potential strategies that can be used to offset the impacts of climate change.

Considered “blue carbon,” marsh grasses actually sequesters carbon more effectively and more permanently than forests. The carbon stored in these plants and peat soil is not broken down and released as readily as in other habitats. By protecting and restoring our marshes, we help to soak up and store more CO<sub>2</sub> which is just one of the many benefits of these coastal ecosystems.



# Promote Environmental Justice In All Our Activities

A founding priority of the Coastal Federation is to provide a clean and healthy coast for all. Twelve of our 20 coastal counties are losing population, and many communities struggle to secure environmentally compatible economic development, safeguard the health of their residents from pollution, and obtain help recovering from natural disasters. The Coastal Federation works with people who typically have less influence and political power to empower them to be heard and engaged in coastal management decisions.

With little voice to engage decision-makers and the inability to simply pick up and move to avoid the situation, these communities are often left out of the process and adversely affected by a variety of detrimental environmental and health consequences.

Through our work, the Coastal Federation involves communities and brings awareness to these struggles; gives access to resources for opposing environmental challenges; and seeks to repair and prevent actual and potential adverse environmental impacts for all N.C. coastal communities and people.

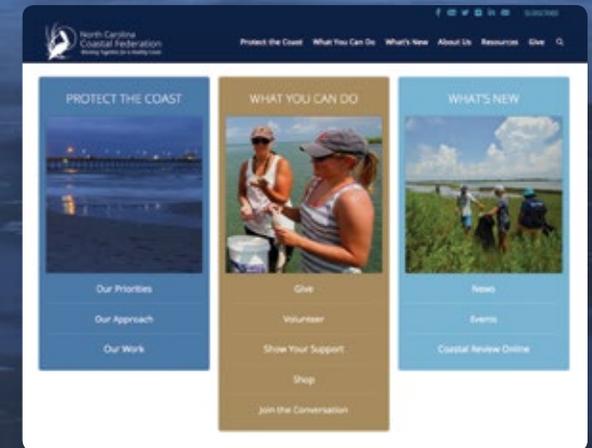
## EPA's definition of Environmental Justice

*Environmental Justice is the fair treatment and meaningful involvement of all people regardless of race, color, national origin, or income with respect to the development, implementation, and enforcement of environmental laws, regulations, and policies.*



# Strategic Plan Updates to be Featured on [www.nccoast.org](http://www.nccoast.org)

We have recently revamped our website with a new look and enhanced functionality. The redesigned site simplifies navigation, enhances content, improves search capabilities, and optimizes use on mobile devices allowing you quicker access to information on our programs and events. The site also provides a number of ways for you to become involved in projects that ensure our coast remains healthy and productive.



Look for special reports from *Coastal Review Online* featuring the latest issues and updates on our strategic plan initiatives. Register today to receive our daily email of coastal news at: [coastalreview.org](http://coastalreview.org).

We have great plans for [www.nccoast.org](http://www.nccoast.org) including information pages on each of our strategies presented in this publication that will help you better understand how each advances our mission to protect and restore the N.C. coast.

We'll be updating our "What's New" section frequently as well as launching several new pages over the coming months, so check

back often and see how our work is progressing. We have also been working to integrate the site with our existing presence on Facebook, LinkedIn, and Twitter. If you participate in any of these social media platforms, look for us and join in the conversation [@nccoastalfed](https://twitter.com/nccoastalfed).

Whether you've been a member for years

or are new and interested in learning more about what we do and how our strategic plan is advancing, we hope these improvements will make your visits to our site more informative, interactive and enjoyable. Please email any comments or suggestions on the site to: [kathleenc@nccoast.org](mailto:kathleenc@nccoast.org).

# LOOKING AHEAD

From educational sessions to breathtaking cruises to local celebrations—there’s always something happening at the North Carolina Coastal Federation. Here’s a look at some of the most anticipated events coming up in 2016.

For details on these and other ways to connect with us go to: [www.nccoast.org/events](http://www.nccoast.org/events)



## JANUARY

## FEBRUARY

## MARCH

## APRIL

## MAY

## JUNE

Crab Pot Pick ups begin in Northeast.

Wrightsville Beach Coastal Speaker’s Series.

Our spring beach clean ups get underway!

Earth Day celebrations along the coast.

Check your mailbox for the 2016 *Our Coast* for the best in coastal summer fun!

Coastal Cruises are happening along the coast.

## JULY

## AUGUST

## SEPTEMBER

## OCTOBER

## NOVEMBER

## DECEMBER

Coastal Adventures in Wrightsville Beach

Pelican Awards honor those who give to the coast.

National Estuaries Day celebrated throughout the coast.

Volunteers are always needed—check out our site & lend a hand to the coast.

Give Thanks for our beautiful & productive N.C. coast!

Our chance to thank you! Regional Volunteer Appreciation Celebrations!



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