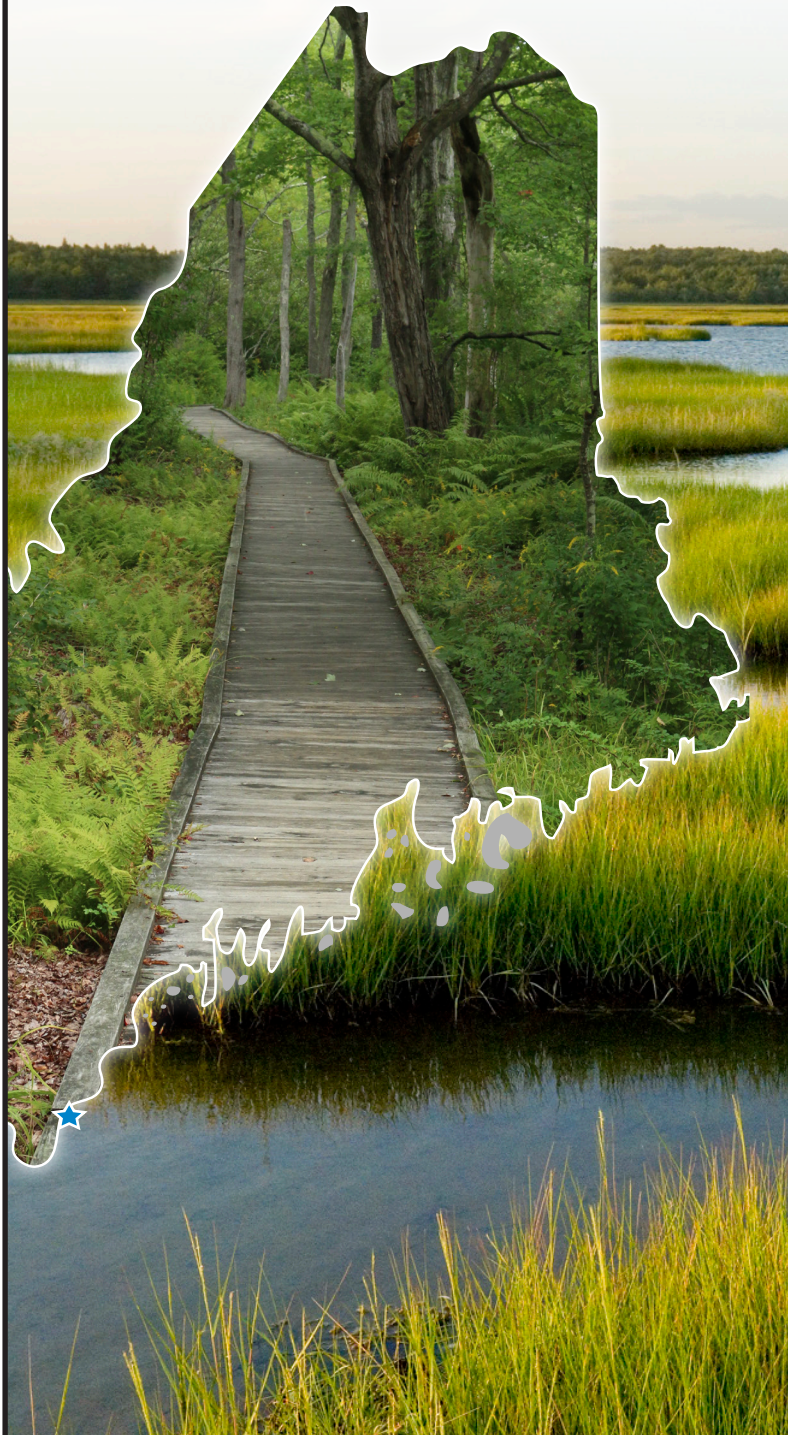




Wells

National Estuarine Research Reserve



Location: 31 miles southwest of Portland, Maine, and 26 miles northeast of Portsmouth, New Hampshire

Date Designated: 1984

Area Protected: 2,250 acres

Web Address: wellsreserve.org

Management: Oversight is provided by the Wells Reserve Management Authority. NOAA's Office for Coastal Management provides funding, national guidance, and technical assistance.

Access and Infrastructure

- The main campus features historic farm buildings renovated and restored to serve a 21st-century science and conservation mission.
- The property includes a half-mile-long undeveloped beach. Seven miles of trails are maintained and available year-round for hiking, snowshoeing, and cross-country skiing. The site is popular with artists, photographers, bird-watchers, and nature enthusiasts; up to 60,000 people visit each year.
- Exhibits at the visitor center trace landscape change through time. The Maine Coastal Ecology Center showcases coastal and estuarine research and how it influences coastal management.
- Dormitory facilities are available for visiting researchers, educators, and resource managers, as well as seasonal staff and interns.

The **Wells National Estuarine Research Reserve's** science program focuses on restoring habitat for migratory fish, investigating the effects of climate change on lobster reproduction, understanding the impacts of invasive species in salt marsh environments, and collecting long-term data on weather, water quality, and fish larvae. The education and training programs engage students, professionals, and community members in place-based learning about ecosystems, climate resilience, and habitat conservation. The stewardship program uses the site to exemplify best management practices for public access, water protection, biodiversity, and long-term benefits.

The reserve is managed in concert with government and nonprofit partners. The organization provides the expertise and resources needed to further conservation and restoration strategies throughout the region.

NOAA Office for Coastal Management

WELLS

National Estuarine Research Reserve

Interesting Things to Know

- The headquarters is listed on the National Register of Historic Places.
- Habitats supported here include rare species such as the least tern, piping plover, and slender blue flag iris.
- The reserve obtains all of its electricity from solar energy. It is the only reserve in the national system and the first not-for-profit organization in Maine to become 100 percent solar powered.
- Laudholm Trust, the reserve's nonprofit partner, has about 2,000 members who support the reserve's research, education, and resource management programs.



About the Programs

The nation's 30 research reserves represent a tremendous asset, protecting nearly 1.4 million acres and providing habitat where plants and wildlife thrive. Community benefits include recreation, flood protection, and water filtration. Because the following programs are offered at each reserve, the system is able to make an environmental impact at the local level, as well as nationally.

Stewardship. Site protection and enhancement are part of every research reserve. Activities may include managing land and water resources, restoring habitat, controlling invasive species, maintaining biodiversity, and reducing environmental stressors.

Research. Reserve research is focused on how environmental factors—such as nutrient loading, climate change, invasive species, and storms—impact coastal ecosystems. The System-Wide Monitoring Program, or SWMP, provides long-term data on water quality, weather, biological communities, habitat, and land-use and land-cover characteristics. This combination of research and data provides a strong, science-based foundation for addressing coastal management challenges.

Training. Engages communities and coastal managers in collaborative partnerships to address shared goals for climate resilience, watershed management, and habitat conservation. Trainings, workshops, webinars, and field trips integrate coastal science, best management practices, and inclusive approaches to participation.

Education. Local data generated at the reserve provide students with a firsthand experience of local environmental conditions. Educators lead student, teacher, and citizen field trips that are life-changing experiences, as participants see, feel, and smell what makes an estuary one of the most remarkable places in the world.

To learn more, visit coast.noaa.gov/nerrs.

Office for Coastal Management

