

Albemarle-Pamlico National Estuary Partnership (APNEP) Spring Updates (through April 2016)

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## Greetings from APNEP!

Dogwoods are blooming, spring storms are filling the skies, and shad, striped bass and other anadromous fish are making their way upstream for their springtime migration. Change and new growth can be seen wherever you look, and APNEP is no exception. We are very pleased to introduce two new staff members as we also sadly bid farewell and good luck to our Special Projects Associate. We announce some exciting updates in our mission to implement the Comprehensive Conservation and Management Plan (CCMP). Discover what APNEP has been up to through April!

## National Estuary Program Reauthorized

Exciting news from Washington! President Obama has signed bipartisan legislation reauthorizing the National Estuary Program (NEP) for the first time since it expired in 2010. The law [amends Section 320 of the Clean Water Act](#), reauthorizing the program through 2021. It allows the Environmental Protection Agency to provide grant assistance to Albemarle-Pamlico National Estuary Partnership (APNEP) and the other 27 NEP's to implement our Comprehensive Conservation and Management Plans, and award competitive grants to continue to address issues that threaten the economic and ecological well-being of our Estuaries of National Significance.

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## APNEP Staff Updates



## **New Ecosystems Analyst: Dr. Coley Hughes**

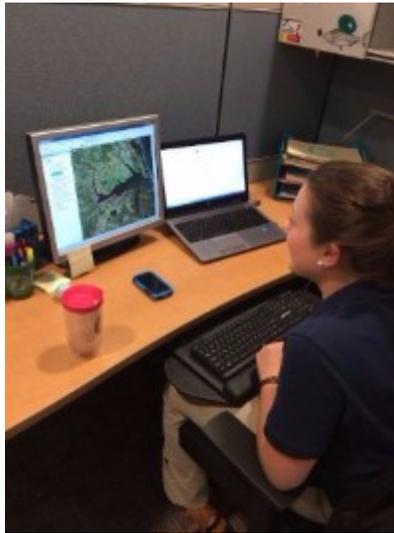
To start the year we welcomed Dr. Coley Hughes as Project Manager, whose role includes coordinating APNEP's grants and contracts. Coley's tenure was brief however, because she recently became APNEP's Ecosystems Analyst, a newly created position that strengthens our commitment to ecosystem-based management. While she is currently wearing both hats pending the hiring of a Project Manager, in her new role she will focus on collaborating with contributing scientists and managers to create tools to analyze and report upon metrics of environmental health within the Albemarle-Pamlico Estuarine System. The position is an excellent fit for Coley's expertise of more than 14 years in conservation, restoration, and research. A North Carolina native, she completed her Ph.D. at East Carolina University, where she researched the movement and life history strategies of striped bass, and has also previously managed lakes for the City of Raleigh.



## **New Policy & Engagement Manager: Stacey Feken**

At winter's end we next welcomed Stacey Feken to the APNEP team as Policy and Engagement Manager, a position previously held by Jim Hawhee. Originally hailing from the Pelican State of Louisiana, Stacey brings over 15 years of experience in ecosystem restoration and water resource management experience in Louisiana, Florida and Georgia. In her new position, Stacey will strengthen partnerships with government agencies, community organizations and universities to increase collaboration, engagement, and environmental stewardship in the region. Stacey earned her M.S. from the University of Georgia, where she studied the juvenile life history of white shrimp in tidal marshes surrounding Sapelo Island.

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### Off to New Waters: Marygrace Knight

In March we bid farewell and best wishes to our Special Projects Associate, Marygrace Knight, as she embarks on the next chapter in Swansboro, N.C. Marygrace first exhibited her passion and initiative as a REACH intern last summer, and grew to be a leading part of APNEP's field efforts, crafting the monitoring protocol and collecting samples in the field for our Hydrilla survey in the Chowan River in August 2015, and acting as crewleader during APNEP's first-ever National Coastal Condition Assessment monitoring intensification in fall 2015. Her affinity for marine science, strong work ethic and bright, positive personality made her an invaluable member of the APNEP team, and she has been greatly missed. We are hopeful that we haven't seen the last of her yet, and we look forward to following her accomplishments as she takes on new endeavors.

Her video as a N.C. REACH Intern can be seen on our [YouTube page](#).

More information about our staff is available on our [website](#).

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### From Workgroups to Action Teams

Following adoption of the [Comprehensive Conservation and Management Plan \(CCMP\)](#) in 2012, APNEP established numerous issue-based workgroups, in order to make tangible impacts in identifying, protecting, restoring, engaging and monitoring the significant resources of the Albemarle-Pamlico estuarine system. Building upon existing partnerships, groups of managers, experts, and stakeholders have been assembled to [implement](#) the CCMP objectives and actions. These groups are now known as Action Teams, and this year we are investing in their progress with renewed vigor. The teams will develop focused plans to tackle specific issues facing Oysters, Submerged Aquatic Vegetation, Freshwater Habitat and Fish Passage, and Education and Engagement, among other topics. A number of these Action Teams

will present their progress at the next meeting of the [Science and Technical Advisory Committee](#) (STAC) to be held August 18 in Greenville.

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## NC Coastal Envirothon 2016

In March, the [North Carolina Coastal Envirothon](#) in Askin brought students, educators and environmental professionals from 28 coastal counties together to test their knowledge of environmental topics in North Carolina. APNEP Education and Outreach Assistant Katia Griffin-Jakymec led a presentation on “Current Environmental Issues” to middle school students from across the coastal plain. The N.C. Coastal Envirothon is held annually at the cool Springs Environmental Education Center. The winning teams went on to compete in the statewide Envirothon held in Burlington in April.

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## NC Catch

The [North Carolina Catch Summit](#) was convened in Beaufort the second week of March. “N.C. Catch” is a nonprofit umbrella organization that ties the work of the local catch groups together to foster collaboration, to strengthen communication, and to enhance a statewide and national presence. The Summit brought together fisheries experts, chefs, market innovators, and local fisheries advocates to share insight and celebrate locally caught North Carolina seafood. N.C. Department of Environmental Quality Secretary Donald van der Vaart also attended.

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## Spotlight from EPA Headquarters

APNEP's large-scale monitoring effort last fall received a mention in the March Water Headlines newsletter from the Office of Water at the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. Read more about the initiative and the importance of monitoring on our [Soundings](#) page.

### Albemarle-Pamlico National Estuary Program Enhances EPA's National Coastal Condition Assessment

During the summer of 2015, an Albemarle-Pamlico National Estuary Program (NEP) field team became part of EPA's National Coastal Condition Assessment. The Albemarle-Pamlico NEP is one of 28 estuaries across the U.S. that make up the [National Estuary Program](#), a non-regulatory program established by Congress that works to improve waters, habitats, and living resources of some of the most productive ecosystems on the planet. The National Coastal Condition Assessment (NCCA), is a component of the [National Aquatic Resource Surveys](#) that uses rigorous, standardized protocols to better understand what percent of the nation's estuarine and Great Lakes near shore waters are in good, fair and poor condition for key indicators of water quality; the extent of stressors that affect water quality; and whether the conditions in the estuaries are getting better or worse.



### Roanoke River Days

In April, the Roanoke River Days program brought a team of educators from the North Carolina Museum of Natural Sciences and

## Shad in the Classroom

The Museum of Natural Sciences and partners led another successful year of the popular Shad in the Classroom program. Releases took place throughout the month of April, with partners and APNEP staff participating in various events, including an electrofishing demonstration conducted by Ben Ricks and Kayla Herrera of the North Carolina Wildlife Resources Commission.

Educators saw where their adopted shad begin their journeys during a tour of the National Fish Hatchery in Edenton, led by Sam Poole of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

APNEP staff on a weeklong tour of public elementary and middle schools along the Roanoke River to explore the natural and cultural heritage of the Roanoke River through a creative activity, field games and an immersive film. The Roanoke River was also known as “Moratuck,” or the River of Death, due to the tremendous floods that devastated the area well into the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Students learned about this and more, including the important American shad fish, whose life history is closely tied to the culture, economy and ecosystem of the Roanoke River.

Stay tuned for future guest Soundings posts from museum staff highlighting these successful collaborations that continue to foster a lasting impact on future generations.

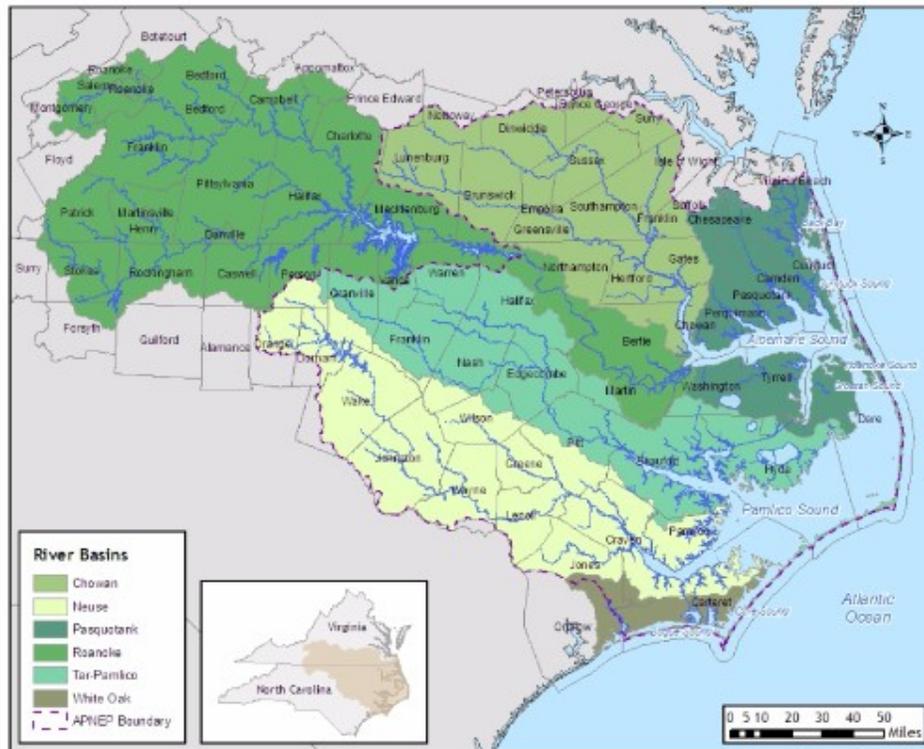


## Policy Board meeting

Policy Board members convened at the end of April in Greenville to review the many projects and partnerships of 2015, discuss plans for the upcoming year, and receive updates regarding APNEP's Action Teams, the Coastal Habitat Protection Plan, and the [North Carolina Coastal Atlas](#). The Board adopted the [Annual Workplan for FY2016-17](#). Thanks to all who were able to attend!

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## Economic Assessments of the Albemarle-Pamlico Region



APNEP recently released two final reports authored by research teams led by RTI International highlighting the economic value of the abundant natural resources in the Albemarle-Pamlico region. In case you missed it, the reports were featured in two recent press releases from APNEP's host, the North Carolina Department of Environmental Quality, linked below:

[North Carolina sees big returns with coastal habitat programs](#)

The first report highlights the coastal habitat programs managed by our partner, the N.C. Division of Marine Fisheries: the Shellfish Rehabilitation Program, Oyster Sanctuary Program and Artificial Reef Program. RTI conducted a cost-benefit analysis which demonstrated that every \$1 invested in the coastal habitat enhancement programs yields \$4 in benefits.

[New report highlights economic value of coastal region's natural resources](#)

The second report takes a comprehensive look at all of the natural resources in the Albemarle-Pamlico watershed. A webinar was held April 30 to present the findings of the Economic Valuation report, the slides can be accessed on our [website](#).

**We encourage our partners to [review both reports](#) and provide feedback to APNEP regarding utilization of the information to further our mission of identifying, protecting, and restoring the significant resources of the A-P region.**



## [NC Sea Grant/APNEP Offer 2016 Joint Fellowship](#)

North Carolina Sea Grant and APNEP are [accepting applications](#) through June 30 for the 2016 Graduate Fellowship in Estuarine Research. The fellowship provides funding for graduate students based in North Carolina and Virginia with an opportunity to conduct applied research within the North Carolina portion of the APNEP region. Last year's joint fellow, Liz Brown-Pickren interviewed residents of Tyrrell County to learn more about their fishing habits and perception of toxins such as mercury and dioxins. Read more about her project in this recent blog post:

["Gathering Perceptions of Contaminant Risk in Fish:  
Or How I Ended Up with a Bottle of Mr. Bailey's Super-Secret Collards Sauce in My Refrigerator"](#)

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## Grants

New opportunities from the Atlantic Coastal Cooperative Statistics Program, N.C. Sea Grant, Water Resources Research Institute (WRI), and APNEP can be found on our [grants page](#).



We're updating our communications plan and trying a few new things. Please contact [stacey.feken@apnep.org](mailto:stacey.feken@apnep.org) and let us know how you would like to interact with APNEP!

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