

One of the most important aspects of the Estuary Enhancement Program (EEP) is its educational programs. Not only does the EEP provide numerous opportunities for environmental education, it also participates in teacher training workshops and public environmental education programs through monetary grants, use of the physical facilities at the Estuary Enhancement Program sites, and by providing tours and materials.

From the start, the EEP developed and implemented public use programs for each of its restoration and preservation sites in New Jersey in collaboration with The Nature Conservancy, the EEP advisory committee, and local Community Involvement Committees comprised of local residents, business representatives and public officials; particular emphasis was placed on providing local schools with a place for hands-on, outdoor education and nature observation. Public use areas were designed to meet the general education, public access, and ecotourism interests of each community hosting an EEP site.



As an example, the Fairfield Township School District developed an environmental education curriculum that includes required field trips to the Cohansey River Watershed Wetland Restoration Site each school year for classes. Collaborating with the township, the EEP constructed public use enhancements uniquely tailored to their interests, including a nature trail through five different habitats, outdoor classroom areas, planting boxes, viewing areas, a boardwalk bridge, and access for water education and nature observation. The school system uses a portion of an outbuilding on the nature trail during inclement weather, and periodically conducts in-service workshops to orient educators to the site and offer ideas for its effective use.

The EEP has worked with local communities and schools to increase awareness about the existence of its sites, the public use enhancements, and the potential for new ecotourism and education opportunities. As a result, the EEP was awarded the Certificate of Recognition for Environmental Education Commitment by the Delaware Department of Natural Resources and Environmental Control for its significant contribution to wetland education in the Delaware Estuary Region, by partnering in the production of Wetland Discovery Kits for school loan in New Jersey and Delaware. The EEP has also partnered with the National Park Service on its New Jersey Coastal Heritage Trail program. Through their combined efforts, all of the EEP's New Jersey restoration sites are identified as NJ Coastal Heritage Trail sites and feature educational signs describing the flora, fauna and history of the areas.

The EEP offers a natural laboratory for marine biological, conservation, and environmental research, and supports these efforts through access to field stations and data. Research by EEP scientists, consultants, local colleges and universities and others has resulted in the publication of dozens of scientific papers and international peer-reviewed journals and conference proceedings, on broad ranging subjects from the effects of invasive plant species on fish habitat to the form and function of the inner ear of silver perch. To date, over 70 peer-reviewed scientific papers have been published with EEP research or data.

The following is a snapshot of the Educational Programs supported by the EEP:



- Fairfield Township School District Outdoor Classroom
 - Delaware Nature Society Environmental Careers Conference, Nature Link Science Program
 - NJ Marine Sciences Consortium “A Partnership for Learning” Educators’ Program
 - South Jersey Chamber of Commerce, Summer Teachers Institute
 - Gloucester County Cub Scout Leader Roundtable
 - Bryn Mawr College Biology Class
 - Earth Day Exhibits
 - Vineland High School’s Marine Science Class Field Tour
 - Field Tours for Camden Aquarium
 - Rowan University Studies at EEP Sites
 - Field Tours for Lower Alloways Creek Elementary School
 - Partnership for the Delaware Estuary Annual Teachers Institute
 - Field Tours for Camden Children’s Garden Youth Staff
- Monthly Education Tours Conducted by The Nature Conservancy