



INFLATION REDUCTION ACT

Preparing Virginia Parks for the Future

Photo: Colonial National Historic Park

National parks are experiencing more record-setting floods, fires, droughts and disease each year. Irreplaceable objects of cultural significance are at risk of disappearing, and the natural world, which draws millions of visitors who contribute significantly to local economies, is changing.

Work has begun to help parks prepare for the impacts from climate change they cannot avoid. The Inflation Reduction Act is one important source of funding that helps parks plan for hotter temperatures and extreme storms. Currently 100% of the park service's IRA funds have been planned, scheduled and announced across 78 projects. However, nearly twice as many projects were proposed than could be funded with the park service's IRA funding.

These investments support parks and secure the natural heritage of these treasured landscapes for future park visitors. They leverage collaborative approaches through partnerships with youth, conservation organizations and Indigenous communities and work to foster community engagement while ensuring these resources exist for future generations.

Conserve and Restore Coastal Marsh Systems in Northeast Parks Accounting for Future Sea Level Rise

VA NPS Sites: Assateague Island National Seashore, Colonial National Historic Park, George Washington Birthplace National Monument

Project Type: Resilience-Enhance Resiliency of NPS Ecosystems

Investment: \$3.4M

Anthropogenic impacts have resulted in the loss of over half of the original salt marshes in the US, and the mid-Atlantic states predict 83% of the remaining coastal marshes will be lost by 2100. Salt marshes provide essential ecological and socio-economic services, protecting communities from flooding, erosion, and storm surges while preserving their livelihoods and economies. Meanwhile, salt marshes are also an ecosystem necessity as they sequester carbon at over 40 times the rate of forested ecosystems and provide critical habitat for 75% of coastal fishery species. This project assesses existing and projected marsh conditions and implements restoration efforts to mitigate marsh depletion. By building marsh ecosystem resiliency, this project will reduce climate change vulnerabilities, protect coastal fishery species, and combat storm surges to provide a healthier and more resilient ecosystem for locals, visitors, and wildlife.

Reverse Seagrass Meadow Decline – Identify Heat-Tolerant Variants, Seed Sources and Outplanting sites

VA NPS Sites: Assateague Island National Seashore

Project Type: Resilience-Enhance Resiliency of NPS Ecosystems

Investment: \$800,000

Seagrass meadows provide valuable and biodiverse habitats that reduce coastal erosion, improve water clarity, capture carbon, and serve as nurseries for commercially imported fish. Eelgrass, a type of seagrass found primarily in the Northeast and Mid-Atlantic, is declining at an alarming rate. In almost 30 years, 4,000 acres were lost and continue to disappear with increasing water temperatures. Across five East Coast National Parks, 11,200 acres (about half the area of Manhattan) of eelgrass meadows remain; however, without action, eelgrass will continue declining due to high summer water temperatures and human impact. In efforts to restore and recover this vital piece of ocean ecosystems, the National Park Service and a multi-institutional workgroup identify potential eelgrass seed sources, test the suitability of seeds, and identify target locations for restoration and rehabilitation. This method presents the best opportunity to halt or reverse seagrass decline and build resilient seagrass meadows.

Increasing Coastal Resilience through Salt March Restoration and Conservation

VA NPS Sites: Assateague Island National Seashore, Colonial National Historical Park, George Washington Birthplace National Monument

Project Type: Resilience-Enhance Resiliency of NPS Ecosystems

Investment: \$2.5M

Over the last decade, the United States has led the world in rates of salt marsh loss due to development and climate change. Salt marshes are a globally rare ecosystem and home to unique native species that live nowhere else, including fish, birds, and wildlife that rely on salt marshes and support commercial and recreational fish species, such as seabass and flounder, who support multi-billion-dollar outdoor recreation and fishing industries. Salt marshes provide additional protection for coastal communities and cultural resources from significant flooding due to major storms, which are intensifying due to climate change. Jamestown Island at Colonial National Historic Park sits less than three feet above the waterline and is at risk of flooding and erosion. As a component of the Maryland Coastal Bays initiative, this project focuses on restoring degraded salt marsh systems to revitalize these delicate and essential ecosystems for wildlife, industry, history, and people.



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