



## NC Coastal Reserve – NC Sea Grant 2025 NC Coastal Research Fellowship Request for Proposals

### Funding Agencies

The Coastal Reserve is a program of the N.C. Division of Coastal Management in the N.C. Department of Environmental Quality ([www.nccoastalreserve.net](http://www.nccoastalreserve.net)). North Carolina Sea Grant is a multi-campus program within the University of North Carolina system and is part of the national Sea Grant Network ([www.ncseagrant.org](http://www.ncseagrant.org)).

### Purpose

The North Carolina Coastal Reserve and National Estuarine Research Reserve (Coastal Reserve) and North Carolina Sea Grant are accepting applications for the 2025 North Carolina Coastal Research Fellowship. This \$10,000 fellowship provides North Carolina-based graduate students with an opportunity to conduct research within one or more of the 10 sites that constitute the Coastal Reserve. Using the reserve sites as a research platform, fellows must conduct question-based research that addresses coastal management issues in one or more of the following broad focus areas of this RFP (in no order of importance):

- 1. Sediment dynamics and influences on shoreline position, habitat type, and quality**
- 2. Sources and impacts of emerging contaminants, plastics, and marine debris**
- 3. Impacts of invasive species on coastal ecosystems**
- 4. Impacts of coastal hazards to habitat restoration and conservation practices, including shoreline stabilization approaches**
- 5. Understanding relationships of water quality on Reserve ecosystems and the role Reserve sites play in the estuarine filter**
- 6. Wetland carbon stocks and soil and flora properties driving spatial variability**
- 7. Influences on maritime forest habitat distribution, changes, and health**
- 8. Application of innovative technologies to enhance research and monitoring in coastal systems**
- 9. Quantifying economic contributions of Reserve ecosystems (ecosystem service valuations)**
- 10. Modeling compound flooding to understand vulnerabilities within and around Reserve sites and the potential protective services provided**

Proposed work must relate to **both** of the following:

- An identified goal(s) in one (or more) of the Coastal Reserve management plans ([deq.nc.gov/reserve-management-plans](http://deq.nc.gov/reserve-management-plans));
- A focus area(s) from North Carolina Sea Grant's Strategic Plan, which include *Healthy Coastal Ecosystems, Environmental Literacy and Workforce Development, Sustainable Fisheries and Aquaculture, and Resilient Communities and Economies*.



## **Fellowship Overview**

- One fellowship is anticipated for 2025, subject to NCSG and NCCR receiving sufficient federal funding, and the quality of the received applications. If either of these factors are not met, the funding entities are not obligated to fund a project from this call.
- The fellowship will be for 13 months. All work should be completed within the first 12 months. The final month is reserved for preparation of the required final report. (See the reporting requirements below.)
- The fellowship starts May 1, 2025.
- The fellowship is \$10,000 in the form of a direct stipend to the student in three installments over the course of the award period. The second and third installments depend on acceptable project progress. (See the reporting requirements below.)
- A research permit from the Coastal Reserve is necessary before research can begin. The fellow must obtain all additional state and federal permits required for conducting the research.
- We expect to issue award decisions on or near April 22, 2025.

## **Eligibility**

Only graduate students in good academic standing, attending an accredited North Carolina university or college, are eligible to apply. First year graduate students that have not yet started coursework are not eligible to apply. Undergraduate students are ineligible to apply for funding, but we encourage research projects that include undergraduate participation.

International graduate students are eligible to apply, but funding for an international fellow would require an alternate process that will take longer to implement. As such project's led by international applicants will have a delayed start date.

Research must be conducted within the boundaries of at least one of the 10 sites that make up the Coastal Reserve (<https://deq.nc.gov/reserve-sites>). The Coastal Reserve is especially interested in projects that include work at one or more of the state sites (Kitty Hawk Woods, Buxton Woods, Buckridge, Permuda Island, Bald Head Woods, and Bird Island Reserves).

## **Application Requirements**

All applications must include the following elements:

- A Research Proposal (described below), limited to 5 pages.
- A current curriculum vitae (CV) for the student applicant, limited to 2 pages.
- A letter of support from the student's faculty advisor.
- A data management plan, limited to 2 pages.



## Research Proposal Format

The research proposal should be prepared in 12-point, Arial font, with 1-inch margins, and not exceed 5 pages. Proposals must contain items 1-7 below:

1. **Title Page:** Please include a title page that provides: The proposal title, the student applicant's name and contact information, academic institution, major, and faculty mentor contact information, which coastal reserve/s the work is to occur, and the congressional district where the work will be undertaken. No other information should appear on this title page.
2. **Description** of the project, including: *rationale*, *relevance* of the project to the coastal management focal area(s) of this RFP listed above, *research question*, and *alignment* with the program interests of the Coastal Reserve and North Carolina Sea Grant (as noted above).
3. **Materials and Methods**, with clear explanations of the project's intended methods, including anticipated statistical analyses (if needed).
4. Clearly defined **Tasks** and a **Timeline** to complete them.
5. Declaration of **Other Sponsored Support to be Received** for the overall project.
6. A description of your **Outreach/Dissemination Plan**. How do you plan to share the results of this work to a broad and diverse set of stakeholders?
7. A **brief explanation of how the stipend money will be used** in support of the project.

Optional items (not included in the 5-page limit):

8. A **Literature Cited** section if needed
9. Up to **2 additional letters of support** from end-users and other appropriate parties documenting the need for this work and/or validating collaboration within the project. (These are in addition to the required faculty advisor letter of support.)

## Submission

All application materials are due by **5 p.m. Eastern time on Monday, April 7, 2025**.

Applications will only be accepted through the eSeaGrant portal at [go.ncsu.edu/ncesg](http://go.ncsu.edu/ncesg). The portal will walk you through submitting all required elements of the application. We are unable to accept incomplete or late applications for any reason. **The portal automatically closes at the deadline.**

## Review Process

A technical review panel will assess the fellowship applications. The panel will be made up of Coastal Reserve and Sea Grant staff along with additional topical experts as needed.

Proposals will be assessed based on relevance to the focus areas (above), strategic priorities of both organizations, quality of the proposed science, thoughtfulness of the outreach plan, quality of the faculty letter of support, and adherence to the instructions above.



## Reporting Requirements

- A 6-month progress report, received and accepted prior to the disbursement of the stipend's second installment.
- A final report is required. The 13<sup>th</sup> month of the fellowship is reserved for the preparation of this report. The final stipend payment will not be disbursed until this final report is received.
- The winning student will also have additional opportunities to disseminate the project's findings through engagement and product development with Coastal Reserve and North Carolina Sea Grant communication experts.

The fellow will submit the 6-month progress report to Aman Kohli by email (below) and the final report (along with other required reporting metrics) through the eSeaGrant portal. (Dr. Kohli will assist the student with the eSeaGrant reporting access in the 13th month.) The fellow's major professor/advisor must agree to ensure the student meets all reporting requirements.

## Contact Information

If you have any questions, please reach out to:

**Justin Ridge**, Research Coordinator, NC Coastal Reserve and National Estuarine Research Reserve, [justin.ridge@deq.nc.gov](mailto:justin.ridge@deq.nc.gov)

**John Fear**, Deputy Director, North Carolina Sea Grant, [jmfear@ncsu.edu](mailto:jmfear@ncsu.edu)

**Aman Kohli**, Research and Program Coordinator, North Carolina Sea Grant, [akkohli@ncsu.edu](mailto:akkohli@ncsu.edu)