

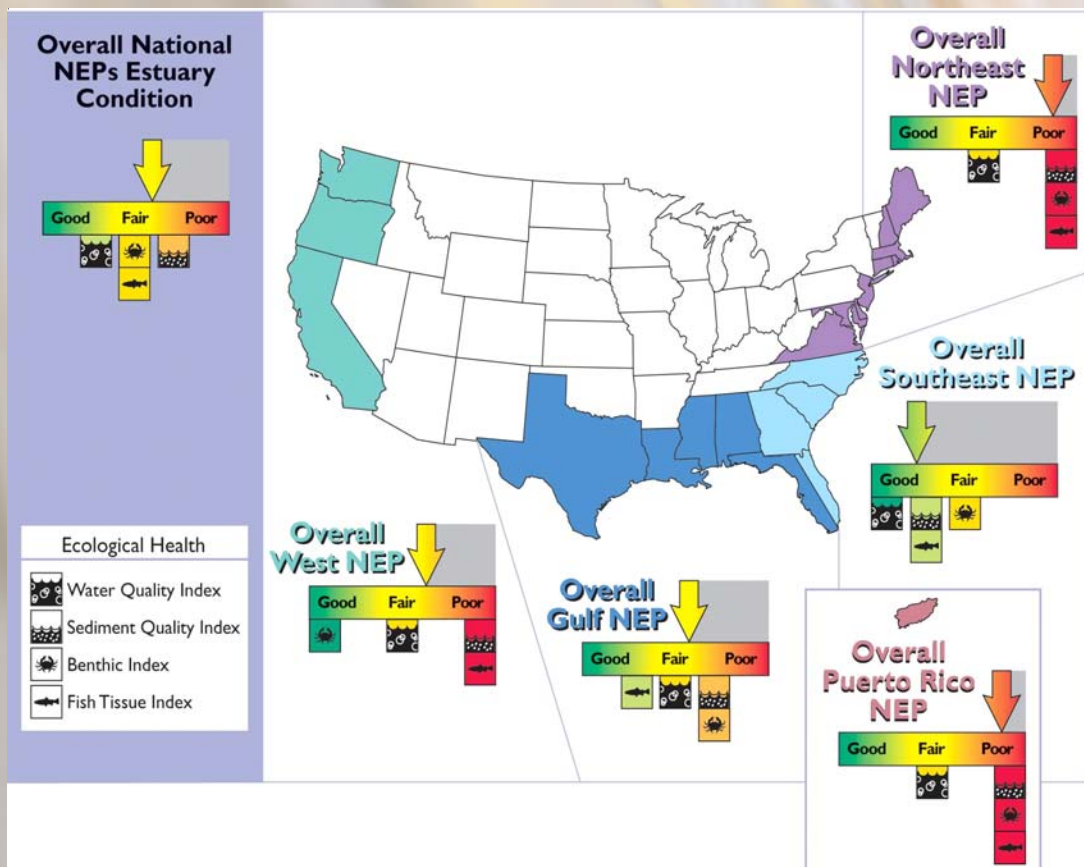
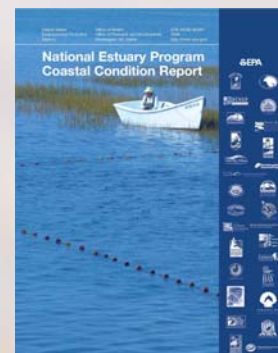


The National Estuary Program Coastal Condition Report – Fact Sheet

What is the National Estuary Program Coastal Condition Report?

EPA issued the National Estuary Program Coastal Condition Report (NEPCCR) in June, 2007. It is the third in a series of coastal environmental assessments. The first two reports covered all U.S. coastal waters. This *Report* includes assessments of the twenty-eight National Estuary Programs (NEPs) in the U.S. and Puerto Rico. Estuaries are bodies of water where fresh water from rivers meets the salt waters of the ocean. This interaction provides a unique, highly productive environment that supports a great diversity of wildlife and fisheries and contributes tremendous value to the nation's economy. The NEPCCR presents two major types of data for each NEP estuary:

- (1) estuarine monitoring data collected as part of EPA's National Coastal Assessment surveys, and
- (2) estuarine monitoring data collected by the individual NEPs or by the NEPs in partnership with interested stakeholders, including state environmental agencies, universities, or volunteer monitoring groups.



What is the National Estuary Program?

In 2007, the National Estuary Program, established as part of the 1987 amendments to the Clean Water Act (CWA), celebrates its 20th anniversary of protecting and restoring estuaries of national significance. The program promotes comprehensive planning efforts and actions to help protect 28 designated estuaries that are deemed to be threatened by pollution, development, or overuse. Between 2000 and 2006, the NEPs restored and protected one million acres of habitat. The CWA also requires that EPA report periodically on the condition of the nation's estuarine waters.

What is the Overall Condition of the Nation's NEPs?

Overall condition of the nation's NEPs is fair. This rating is based on four indicators of estuarine condition—water quality index (e.g., dissolved inorganic nitrogen, dissolved inorganic phosphorus, chlorophyll *a*, water clarity, and dissolved oxygen), sediment quality index (e.g., sediment toxicity, sediment contaminants, and sediment total organic carbon), benthic index, and a fish tissue contaminants index.

For each of these four key indicators, we assigned a score of good, fair, or poor to each NEP. We then averaged these ratings to create overall regional and national scores illustrated in the map on the first page, using "traffic light" color scoring.

Population pressures in the NEPs were greater than those in non-NEP estuaries from 1990-2000, yet, the NEP estuaries showed the same or better estuarine condition than our coastal waters overall.

Summary of Other Findings:

The NEP indicators that show the poorest conditions throughout the United States are sediment quality, fish tissue contaminants (rated fair), and benthic condition (rated fair). The indicator that generally shows the best condition is water quality (rated fair).

Nationally, 37% of NEP estuaries are in poor condition. Regionally, Puerto Rico's NEP estuary (San Juan Bay) is in poor condition, and about 46% of the Northeast Coast, 46% of the Gulf Coast, 36% of the West Coast, and 23% of the Southeast Coast NEP estuaries are in poor condition.

Our Treasured Estuaries

- Estuaries serve as feeding, spawning and nursery grounds for many species of finfish, shellfish and birds that spend most of their adult lives in the ocean.
- Estuaries provide habitat for more than 75 percent of America's commercial fish catch and 80 to 90 percent of recreational fish catch.
- The continued viability of these fisheries depends on continued good health of their habitat.



Patry Scott, EPA

For More Information:

The National Estuary Program Coastal Condition Report reflects a collaborative effort among the U.S. EPA, and the individual National Estuary Programs and their partners.

Consistent with the Oceans Commission report (www.oceancommission.gov), this report sends a clear message about the serious challenges facing our nation's ocean and coastal resources.

For more information, contact: Barry Burgan in EPA's Office of Wetlands, Oceans and Watersheds at (202) 566-1242 or Virginia Engle in EPA's Office of Research and Development at (850) 934-9354.

For a copy of the report, please call 1-800-490-9198 and request EPA publication # EPA-842-B-06-001 or visit EPA's web site at:

www.epa.gov/owow/oceans/nepccr/.

EPA-842-F-06-001