

# Georgia Coastal Education Group

The Georgia Coastal Education Group is a partnership of coastal federal and state government agencies that educates the general public about the importance and value of Georgia's coastal resources and promotes responsible stewardship. There are many ways for individuals, families, classes, and groups to help keep our beautiful coastal and offshore areas clean and healthy.

[www.georgiacoastaleducationgroup.org](http://www.georgiacoastaleducationgroup.org)





# Make a Difference!

## Here's What You Can Do to Help Protect Georgia's Coastal Treasures

### When Fishing

- ◆ The most fun part of fishing is catching. Help make sure there will be fish in your future to catch. Keep only fish that you will eat; release the rest.
- ◆ Take pictures of trophy fish and release them properly instead of mounting them.
- ◆ Practice ethical fishing methods by learning how to properly catch and release.
- ◆ Fish only species that are not of concern, threatened, or endangered.
- ◆ Know the size limits, bag limits, and seasons of the fish you are catching.
- ◆ Be a smart shopper, choose your seafood responsibly.
- ◆ Protect wildlife by disposing of fishing lines and nets properly, not in or near the water.
- ◆ Eliminate poisons. When fishing, use nontoxic alternatives to lead sinkers and jigs.

### While Boating

- ◆ Keep it friendly. Waves destroy shorelines and increase erosion. For environmentally friendly boating, observe posted speeds and "no-wake" signs.
- ◆ Secure loose items. Don't let items blow overboard and add to marine debris.
- ◆ Watch out for leaks. Be vigilant about oil leaks from boat engines. Not only are leaking engines harmful, but it's also illegal to leave a slick on the water.
- ◆ Mop up. Use environmentally friendly cleaning products and don't clean up by tossing debris out to sea. Trash, chemicals, plastic bags, and fishing lines can pollute or strangle vulnerable marine life.
- ◆ Respect habitat. Treat the homes of vital marine life with care. Habitat and survival go hand-in-hand. When habitat disappears, some plants and animals do too.

### At the Waterfront

- ◆ Protect waterside trees and shrubs. Forests and sea oats are a protective gift along the water's edge and should not be cut, pruned or altered in any way.
- ◆ Plant buffer strips. Restore riverside grasses, shrubs, and trees to filter pollutants, sediments, and excess nutrients from ground and surface water.
- ◆ Avoid erosion. Place mulch over disturbed soil in heavily used areas.
- ◆ Pave less. Hard surfaces hasten run-off and erosion.
- ◆ Curb run-off. When storm water is a problem, create a path or ledge to both capture run-off and filter pollutants through sand.

### When at Home

- ◆ Use water sparingly when watering your lawn and washing your car as well as for all other household chores.
- ◆ Use xeriscaping and native plants to reduce the amount of water needed for home and business landscaping purposes. Gardening and landscaping with plants native to your area reduces the need for watering and fertilizing your garden.
- ◆ Place all trash, especially non-biodegradable plastics, in proper receptacles.
- ◆ Turn off lights and appliances including the television when you are not in the room.
- ◆ In the summer set the thermostat at 80 degrees Fahrenheit or higher, and in the winter set it at 69 degrees Fahrenheit or lower.
- ◆ Inspect your wall outlets, windows, and doors for air leaks. Use shades and /or curtains or insulated windows and doors to reduce heat transfers.
- ◆ Use lawn fertilizer sparingly -- or not at all. Follow product directions carefully. You'll keep it from washing into our streams and waterways.
- ◆ Cut grass to proper height. A little more height is healthy, leading to a deeper root system and less erosion.
- ◆ Leave grass clippings on the lawn. Clippings decompose and are efficient, natural fertilizers.
- ◆ Think before you pour. Too many hazardous products flow from drains through sewage plants into coastal rivers and estuaries.
- ◆ Keep septic systems working properly. Pump every three years to assure proper working condition.
- ◆ Use lawn care products sparingly -- or not at all. Always follow the directions carefully. If these products wash into streams, roadside ditches, or street gutters, they can affect plants and animals far from your home.
- ◆ Reduce or better yet eliminate the use of herbicides, pesticides, and fertilizers on your lawn.
- ◆ Create nontoxic pesticides. A bit of soap and water added to strained chili pepper powder does the job -- and keeps harmful chemicals from ending up in nearby waterways.
- ◆ Explore safe alternatives to harsh household products. Baking soda or table salt, for instance, are safe substitutes for abrasive cleaners.
- ◆ Reduce or better yet eliminate the use of household non-biodegradable chemicals and detergents.
- ◆ Clean up after your pets. Animal waste adds to run-off, making water unhealthy.
- ◆ Walk, bike, carpool, use public transportation. Use your car less by combining errands.
- ◆ Reduce automobile pollution by using carpools, using fuel efficient vehicles, recycling motor oil, and keeping your vehicles in good working condition.
- ◆ Use less electricity. Conserve water and lessen fossil fuel consumption.

### While Playing

- ◆ Puncture inflated balloons after use and dispose of properly.
- ◆ Protect wildlife by not feeding sea animals including birds, sea turtles, dolphins, and whales.
- ◆ Protect ocean wildlife by not disturbing the nests and nesting grounds of shore birds and sea turtles.
- ◆ Keep animal homes safe. While playing, if you see a bird nest or other animal shelter, do not disturb it.
- ◆ Let nature be natural. Do not remove baby animals from their homes.

### When at the Beach

- ◆ Have fun on the beach, but leave it clean. When you leave the beach or park, your trash should leave too. Be sure to bring enough bags to take all trash with you.
- ◆ Watch your step. To view life in coastal regions, use a canoe or kayak so you don't destroy sensitive habitats.
- ◆ Respect life on the rocks. If you turn over rocks at the beach, remember to put them back so that animals that live on top, like barnacles, stay on top and those that live on the bottom stay on the bottom.
- ◆ Take only memories, leave only footprints.
- ◆ Dunes are delicate areas and provide nesting habitat for shorebirds and sea turtles. Please stay off the dunes.
- ◆ Scoop the poop! Pick up your pet's waste and dispose of properly.
- ◆ Some butts don't belong on the beach! Take all trash including cigarette butts with you and dispose of properly.

### In the Community

- ◆ Share your knowledge. Spread the word about America's estuaries. Share what you know about protecting them - with our families, students, community leaders, and others.
- ◆ Take action! Organize a stream or beach cleanup. Encourage your local newspaper to write a story, or ask an expert to speak at your community organization or local school.
- ◆ Scoop the poop! Pick up your pet's waste and dispose of properly.
- ◆ Watch out for contamination. Support periodic testing to make sure that pesticides aren't contaminating golf course waters, adjacent creeks, and groundwater.

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