

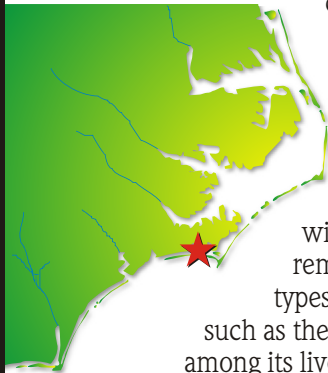
NC COASTAL FEDERATION RESTORATION & PROTECTION PROJECT:

HOOP POLE CREEK

Hoop Pole Creek, a 31-acre clean water preserve in Atlantic Beach in North Carolina, is a refuge and sanctuary for countless creatures. Herons and egrets stalk through the marsh grass looking for a meal. Oysters grow and colonize its waters in great numbers, and summer tourists find shelter from the traffic and hubbub that is a beach town.

Saving A Special Place

Hoop Pole's story could have ended very differently. Developers had designs on the place in the mid-1990s. Like so many other coastal creeks, Hoop Pole seemed destined for condos and marinas. Using a \$2.5 million grant from the NC Clean Water Management Trust Fund, the NC Carolina Coastal Federation (NCCF) bought the land surrounding the creek in 1997. Instead of succumbing to development, the creek's healthy maritime forest and coastal marshes have instead become important natural refuges for fish and wildlife. The preserve's evergreen forest is one of the few remaining on Bogue Banks and among the most threatened types of natural communities in the state. Rare migratory birds, such as the painted bunting and orange-crowned warbler, take refuge among its live oaks, red cedars, loblolly pines, yaupon, wax myrtles, and wild olives. The forest is also home to the small-flowered buckthorn, a threatened plant in North Carolina.



Hoop Pole Creek

Volunteers Play An Important Role

To allow people to experience the beauty of Hoop Pole and preserve its historic recreational value, NCCF enlisted community volunteers to build a self-guided trail that is open to the public year-round. At 18 stations along the trail, visitors can learn about the maritime forest. The trail was a featured trip site for the NCCF Education program. Since 2000, more than 4,500 students and teachers have participated in field and canoe trips based out of Hoop Pole Creek. NCCF also organizes an annual trail clean up each year where NCCF members, volunteers, and Atlantic Beach residents help maintain the trail.

Pollution has closed many of Bogue Sound's productive shellfish grounds, but Hoop Pole Creek remains one of the few areas where shellfish beds consistently remain open for commercial harvest. NCCF began an ongoing effort in 1998 to restore shellfish habitat in the creek. Since the project began, more than 500 students and volunteers have worked to establish and monitor oyster reefs, which are designated research sanctuaries. The volunteers have placed more than 2,000 bushels of oyster shells in the water to extend and create oyster habitat. Their work has resulted in more than 54,000 new oysters being added to the sanctuary.

Support for Hoop Pole Creek projects has been provided by NC Clean Water Management Trust Fund, NOAA Community Restoration Program, Restore America's Estuaries, FishAmerica Foundation, NC Wetlands Restoration Program, NC Division of Marine Fisheries and the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation.



Nature Trail



Overlooking Bogue Sound



Oyster bagging



North Carolina Coastal Federation | 3609 Hwy 24 (Ocean) | Newport, NC 28570
Phone: 252-393-8185 | Fax: 252-393-7508 | Email: nccf@nccoast.org | Web: www.nccoast.org

About the North Carolina Coastal Federation

The North Carolina Coastal Federation is the state's largest non-profit working to protect and restore coastal North Carolina. There are many exciting opportunities to get involved in restoration projects and help preserve our coastal environment. If you would like to support our efforts, please consider becoming an NCCF member. You also can learn about volunteer opportunities and other programs by checking out NCCF's website at www.nccoast.org, call 252-393-8185, or come by NCCF headquarters at 3609 Hwy 24 in Ocean, located between Morehead City and Swansboro.