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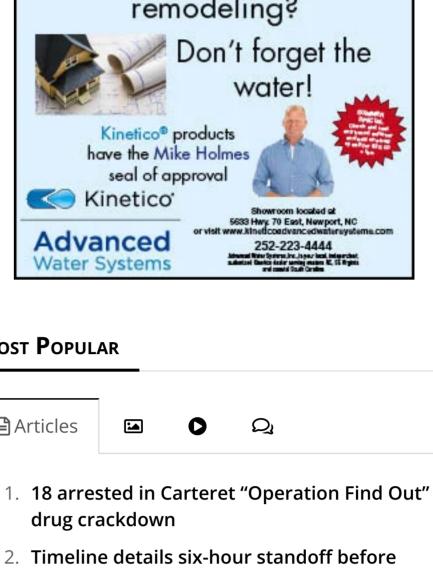
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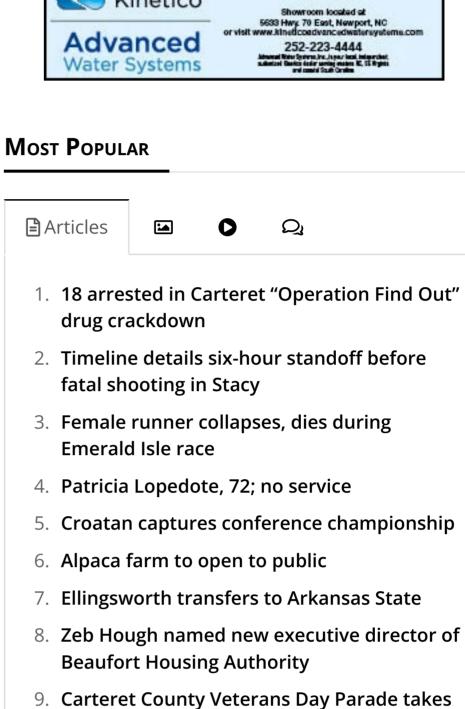
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According to Kelty, "This will have a significant impact on our work to keep communities safe from sea level rise and extreme weather events on the coasts. It also stops progress on the development and exploration of new technologies to address these coastal threats."

Since the Gilded Age, Carteret County has reaped increasing benefits from the Beaufort lab's presence, making its proposed closure all the more daunting for the area's environmental, economic

It was due to the group's use of marshes, or living shorelines, as protection from flooding that Pivers Island withstood Hurricane Florence's inundating storm surges in 2018. The entire NCCOS budget, including \$17.7 million allocated to Beaufort, will be terminated. The

nature-based solutions

harvesting

lab."

Climate

Resilience

Harmful Algal

**Bloom Detection** 

Offshore Wind

Development

**Coral Restoration** 

Deep Coral

Restoration

recreational fishing survey.

NMFS Beaufort

Lab Function

Fish Aging and

Technology and

Marine Mammal

Analytical

& Turtle

Menhaden

Program

statewide.

public access of sites.

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&

With the cuts, NCCOS would no longer be able to operate the Beaufort lab, leaving the costs to National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) or other NOAA functions. Kelty says it is possible for NMFS to take over the Beaufort lab in NCCOS' absence, but, "NMFS doesn't have the money to own the

proposed budget still provides \$4.3 million for HABs forecasts, to be carried out by other National

Ocean Service programs— underlining the importance of NCCOS' work in the Beaufort lab.

Funding for Beaufort **NCCOS Beaufort** NCCOS Beaufort Lab Specific Activities Lab function, FY Lab Function 2024

Minimize shoreline erosion; restore oyster reefs; reduce

nuisance flooding at Battleship North Carolina Park with About \$1 million

About \$1.7 million

About \$6.4 million

About \$2.8 million

About \$1.8 million

understand algal bloom habits; develop prevention & Forecasting efforts. Partnership between NCCOS, Bureau of Ocean Energy Siting for Management (BOEM), stakeholders and indigenous

Provide climate-controlled storage for 'uncrewed systems'

Conduct National Coral Reef Monitoring Program surveys;

large images of sea floor using AI and machine learning to

support Mission: Iconic Reefs in Florida Keys; analyze

Lead research cruises and habitat mapping in Gulf of

communities to identify locations for offshore wind

develop and study seafloor maps using uncrewed

Habitat Mapping like drones, underwater vehicles that map seafloor;

Characterization systems data; guide decision-making to protect or

manage locations using sea floor maps

identify areas in need of restoration

Deepwater Horizon Oil Spill

Beaufort Lab staff are under NMFS, according to Kelty.

Develop and deliver Harmful Algal Bloom forecasts; study

algae species; conduct water and sediment analyses to

**National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS)** NMFS, founder of the Beaufort lab, is a NOAA line office tasked with sustainable fisheries management. The Beaufort Lab contains multiple NMFS functions: the Southeast Fisheries Science Center (SEFSC), Southeast Regional Office and Habitat Conservation Field Office. Approximately 45

The Beaufort lab's SEFSC staff conduct critical surveys like the Southeast Fishery Independent Survey

(SEFIS) Program, assessing spreads and abundance of snapper-grouper fish, as well as the 1972-

originated Southeast Region Headboat Survey, the Southeast Atlantic's longest running saltwater

programs in North Carolina and nearby stretches of the Atlantic Ocean, which ultimately support

fishermen's livelihoods for the long term. They also collaborate on state and federal development

importance to the Crystal Coast, "NOAA is a broad agency, but [NMFS] plays a huge role in National

projects to protect fish, like N.C. Department of Transportation's infrastructural planning, port

expansions and Federal Energy Regulatory Commission's fish habitat restorations near dams.

Fishery stock assessments," Skinner continues, "We appreciate them. Although sometimes we

North Carolina Fisheries Association Executive Director Glenn Skinner helped clarify NMFS'

question their stock assessments, I don't know how you'd do it without them."

"If you did away with [NMFS], what would replace it?" Skinner asked.

Those in the Beaufort lab's Southeast Regional Office implement national habitat protection

Mexico; support studies on ecosystems impacted by 2010 About \$4 Million

Overall, Skinner emphasized, "We don't wanna see folks lose their jobs and we don't wanna lose the research they do," underlining NMFS' necessity in the area. Per the proposed budget, NMFS will lose 33% of its funding, leaving most of the main functions of NMFS in the Beaufort Lab largely unscathed, it targets NMFS' Habitat Conservation, species recovery and interjurisdictional grants for total elimination. NMFS Habitat Conservation projects have, from

maritime forests and other habitats in Carteret County, alone, and have brought in upwards of \$1.2

million to the County through project funds. Without these efforts, oyster habitats will suffer, coastal

**Beaufort Lab** 

function, FY 2024

About \$3.5 million

About \$0.6 million

Data not available

funding for

2000 to 2019, effectively restored 584.659 acres of oyster reef, tidal and freshwater wetlands,

erosion will go unmitigated and fisheries habitats will continue to degrade.

NMFS Beaufort Lab Specific Activities

Advanced Survey Southeast Fishery Independent Surveys; conduct

"Fisheries management isn't where it needs to be. In every stock assessment, something's missing,"

Skinner continued, "NMFS stock assessments are already slow, and this will just make them slower."

estimate number of fish, study how populations sustain About \$0.8 million Life-history studies themselves Fishery independent Support South Atlantic stock assessments for ~15-20 species; conduct South Atlantic Deepwater Longline and Surveys,

Receive ~35,000 fish samples, process ~22,000 per year;

Beaufort Bridgenet Ichthyoplankton Sampling Program;

develop underwater vehicles & aerial drones for surveys

Study behaviors & populations of sea turtles; support

bycatch reduction projects; collaborate with universities

Conservation Conduct stock assessments of federally regulated Stock species in South Atlantic, including red snapper, black Data not available Assessments sea bass, Atlantic menhaden and deepwater groupers Fishery Conduct Southeast Region Headboat Survey since 1972; Dependent Data not available add to Southeast Data, Assessment, and Review Surveys

Support monitoring and sampling of commercial

North Carolina Coastal Reserve/National Estuarine Research Reserves (NCCR/NERRS)

Quality. NCNERRS is a federal-state partnership program between NOAA's Office for Coastal

Management (OCM) and N.C.'s Division of Coastal Management, while NCCR is the State's own

reserve network; both of these networks oversee and protect estuarine reserves nation- and

1. Stewardship, or protection of natural resources and monitoring of conditions to ensure safe

2. Education, or offering field trips and summer camps with the NC Maritime Museum for K-12

4. Research, or using reserve sites as 'living laboratories,' for consistent monitoring and data

3. Training, or leading workshops and programs for coastal decision-makers in Carteret and 20 other

The North Carolina Coastal Reserve/National Estuarine Research Reserves (NCCR/NERRs) is also held

in the Beaufort Lab, with about 10 employees from North Carolina's Department of Environmental

fisheries for Menhaden

NCCR/NERRS, locally, serve the main functions of:

Coastal Area Management Act counties.

collection to inform decision-making.

who conduct studies locally.

habitable and profitable come from NOAA.

Community College.

student, as well as, continuing education credits for educators.

Crystal Coast. Rebecca Ellin, NC DCM's Coastal Reserve Program Manager at the Beaufort Lab, revealed that 18 commercial businesses and institutions brought 37,477 visitors to three NC reserve sites in 2024, yielding an estimated minimum profit of \$847,023 for those activities—16 of those businesses, Ellin shared, "depend directly on the Reserve sites for income." 380 real estate professionals also received continuing education credits, Ellin explained, "through free NC National Estuarine Research Reserve Training Program workshops on barrier islands and

She added, "More research permits have been issued for projects conducted at the Rachel Carson

Reserve than at any other reserve site," drawing even more money into the area from researchers

Ecologically, the Rachel Carson Reserve, "provides [...] benefits that support health and well-being,

water quality, and recreational, commercial, and subsistence fishing" and the Reserve's being both

from Beaufort Inlet waves, which is particularly important during storm events," according to Ellin.

Ellin disclosed that \$880,967 of NCCR/NERRS' funding comes from NOAA's NERRS budget to cover

NCCR/NERRS in Beaufort received an additional \$70,426 from NOAA Coastal Zone Management

Grants to support NC's six other state reserve sites. While the state matches federal funds to an

extent, the vast majority of funds that keep reserve sites, like the Rachel Carson Reserve, functional,

research, education and training at four NC sites, including the Rachel Carson Reserve.

an estuary and barrier island makes it a "a physical buffer for the Town of Beaufort and Pivers Island

living shorelines," equating to "\$19,000 in cost savings delivered to North Carolinians."

The Reserves they protect, namely the Rachel Carson Reserve, also provide a slew of benefits to the

Both NOAA NERRS and Coastal Zone Management Grant budgets are terminated in NOAA's proposed FY 2026 budget, jeopardizing the continued preservation of these sites and, consequently, the economic, environmental and educational benefits they deliver locally. **NC Sea Grant** 

North Carolina Sea Grant, one of 34 state-federal partnerships between NOAA's National Sea Grant

While NC Sea Grant administrators did not provide values of their federal funding, nor their budget,

they did explain that NC Sea Grant managed to bring in \$4 million of investments to North Carolina

and coastal states, funds researchers, "who monitor our coastal systems and solve difficult

last year, leveraging "3 dollars for every 1 dollar in federal funding," according to Jones. She

explained NC Sea Grant, "partnered with 84 communities to help them solve problems such as

problems," says Rebecca Jones, NC Sea Grant's Communications Director.

flooding or harmful algal blooms and about 4,500 people attended our trainings or workshops on everything from how to be a commercial fisherman to using native plants for more resilient landscaping," illustrating the breadth of the work done through Sea Grant funding that ultimately benefits coastal NC.

NC Sea Grant holds a particular prevalence in Carteret County, "where there is a concentration of

stewards and researchers. NC Sea Grant funds and partners with all of the university marine labs

research projects, from 2016 to 2024 funding cycles, were completed by researchers who work from

the Duke University Marine Lab, UNC Institute of Marine Sciences, NC State's CMAST lab or Carteret

Even more Sea Grant-funded studies were conducted in or around Carteret County. One such was

Katherine Anarde's, NC State Professor, and Miyuki Hino's, UNC Assistant Professor, recent project

including in Beaufort and Sea Level. It is studies like these that keep already vulnerable Carteret

The National Sea Grant funding is also eliminated in NOAA's proposed budget. However, Jones

County from enduring further environmental and economic degradation.

impossible to imagine a Carteret County without the Beaufort Lab.

Coral Reef Sea Systems Ecology Essential Fish Habitat Aquatic Ecology

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Fisheries to

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Marine

hold

National Marine Fisheries Service

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that improved accuracy of flood measurements by deploying land-based sensors across N.C.'s coast,

affirmed, "Thanks to our supporters, Congress restored our funding with bipartisan support during a

located in Carteret County," according to Jones. At least 15 of NC Sea Grant's 39 core funded

similar situation in the first Trump administration." She notes that Congress created the Sea Grant program, therefore, "Elimination of the budget does not mean elimination of the program," said Jones, offering hope for the continuation of research funding. Between NCCOS, NMFS and NCCR/NERRS, Carteret County has received at least \$24.7 million in direct investments and lab budgets — not accounting for the added revenue of researchers' and scientists' presence in the area, nor the revenue created as a result of the value added by NOAA's local interventions. Though their investments may not be immediately visible at first glance, one can find the value of NOAA's work in the health of our waters, the livability of our coastlines and the abundance of our fisheries. For over a century, this area has enjoyed the benefits of NOAA's presence, making it nearly

**NATIONAL** 

about

Melissa

Hurricane

What to know

National Estuarine Research Reserve

Physical Geography Hydrography

Environmental Science Stock Assessment Water Seabed Marine Biology Environmental Engineering

National Oceanic And Atmospheric Administration | Coast | Algal Bloom | Beaufort, North Carolina

National Ocean Service

Natural Environment

Harmful Algal Bloom

Fisheries Science Hydrology

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spiny dogfish

can be used for

Report

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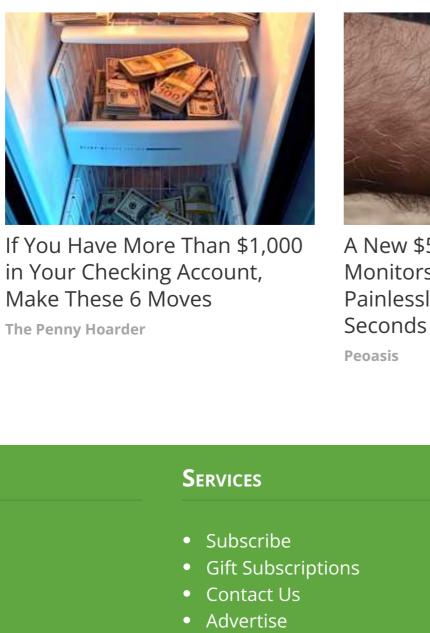
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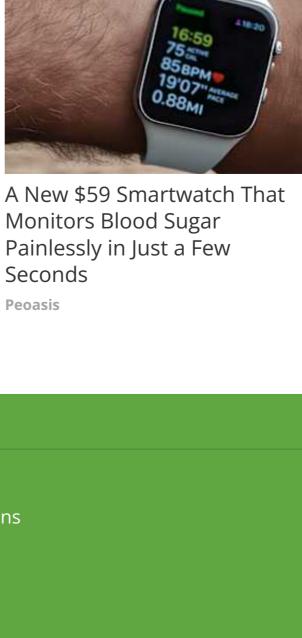
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