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For Immediate Release:

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### **National Estuaries Day: A Time to Appreciate Vital Seacoast Natural Resources**

Saturday, September 29, is National Estuaries Day and opportunities abound around the Seacoast for people to appreciate local estuaries and to learn what is being done to protect these valuable natural resources.

The Great Bay Estuary is the focus of three guided tours: two by boat and one by bus. In the morning, NH Sea Grant will lead a hands-on, educational Discovery Cruise from Portsmouth to Great Bay to help participants learn about estuarine ecology and science. The five-hour cruise is open to the public at the cost of \$20 per person, however pre-registration is required. Register on-line at <http://www.unh.edu/marine-education/programs/great-bay.html> or call 603-749-1565 for information

In the afternoon, the New Hampshire Estuaries Project is sponsoring a V.I.P. Tour of the Great Bay Estuary for planning board members and conservation commissioners of communities in the coastal watershed. This three-hour tour outlines the threats to our estuaries, the efforts underway to protect these natural resources, and the assistance available to help communities protect estuarine systems. The tour is free, however participants must be a land planning official from a coastal watershed community and pre-registration is required. Call 603-862-3403 for details.

In the middle of the day, the Society for the Protection of New Hampshire Forests (Forest Society), in cooperation with the Nature Conservancy and the Southeast Land Trust of New Hampshire, is hosting a six-hour bus tour to showcase scenic farms, forests, and salt marshes surrounding Great Bay and its tributaries to show the wide range of resource and public and private partners of the Great Bay Resource Protection Partnership. Expert staff will provide interpretation on a few short walking trails. The bus departs and returns to the Wentworth Coolidge State Historic Site in Portsmouth. The tour fee is \$30 per person and includes light refreshments. For details, call 603-224-9945.

The bus tour is part of a larger set of field presentations for the 106<sup>th</sup> Annual Meeting of the Forest Society that includes a tour of Hampton salt marshes with NH Coastal Program Director Ted Diers, a presentation on invasive species at Creek Farm Reservation in Portsmouth, a discussion of the Land Conservation Plan for New Hampshire's Coastal Watersheds by Forest Society Research Director Dan Sundquist, and a kayak excursion on Sagamore Creek in Portsmouth. For details on all nine Forest Society presentations in the Seacoast, call 603-224-9945.

A healthy environment and a healthy body go hand in hand at the Treasure Your Breathing Hampton Beach Seacoast Walk organized by Breathe New Hampshire (formerly the American Lung Association of New Hampshire). Starting in the morning, this 3-mile walk begins and ends at Hampton Beach State Park, next to the mouth of the Hampton/Seabrook Estuary. An entrance fee of \$10.00 per person is required and a light lunch is provided. For details, call 800-835-8647.

The Seacoast Science Center in Rye will be conducting public programs on the hour that draws attention to environmental monitoring of the oceans and estuaries, including the network of data collection buoys positioned throughout the region. A small entrance fee is required. Call 603-436-8043 for details.

The Great Bay Discovery Center in Stratham is providing two estuary programs on National Estuaries Day. The historic gundalow, *Captain Edward H. Adams*, will be docked at the center and free guided tours will be provided to the public during most of the day. A salt marsh ecology workshop for municipal board members and decision makers will occur in the morning that examines ecological function and values of salt marshes, current conservation concerns, and actions that municipalities can take to protect salt marshes. For details on both events, call 603-778-0015.

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