



NORTH CAROLINA
AQUARIUM
SOCIETY

ANNUAL REVIEW 2022



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NC Aquarium at Fort Fisher

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Letter from the Chair



Hope Williams
2021-23 Board Chair

Thank you for your support of the NC Aquariums! We are pleased to share highlights of our successes in 2022, which turned out to be a record year for the nonprofit NC Aquarium Society. We celebrate the Society leadership of Jay Barnes and we are excited about the future, especially with the recent appointment of Liz Baird as our new Society President & CEO (learn more about Liz on page 4).

Your donations, memberships and gift shop purchases provide the financial foundation that makes our public-private partnership work. With a remarkable 1.3 million in annual visitation, our three Aquariums and Jennette's Pier continue to be statewide leaders in education and conservation—celebrating wild creatures and places and actively saving animals from extinction. Such popularity also makes them major players in North Carolina's robust tourism economy. Through your support, the NC Aquarium Society's partnership with these institutions continues to bolster their efforts, keeping them ranked among the very best public aquariums in the nation. Thank you for helping us achieve that goal!

Sincerely,
Hope Williams

Fort Fisher



475,000 visitors

13,291 Students Hosted

332 Volunteers

19,490 Volunteer Hours

Pine Knoll Shores



387,349 visitors

9,905 Students Hosted

158 Volunteers

8,882 Volunteer Hours

Roanoke Island



313,642 visitors

4,227 Students Hosted

284 Volunteers

13,318 Volunteer Hours

Jennette's Pier



157,483 visitors

5,800 Students Hosted

8 Volunteers

220 Volunteer Hours

2022 Statistics

The NC Aquarium Society Welcomes Liz Baird as New President and CEO



In August, following a forty-year career with the NC Aquariums, including twenty years as Director of the NC Aquarium at Pine Knoll Shores and the past four years as President and CEO of the NC Aquarium Society, Jay Barnes announced his plan to retire.

In a letter to Society staff, Barnes said: "Over the years I've been extremely

fortunate to have witnessed the evolution of the Aquariums as institutions and have had the pleasure of working with so many great people on exciting and rewarding ventures."

NC Department of Natural and Cultural Resources Secretary Reid Wilson remarked: "Over the last four decades, Jay Barnes has played an instrumental role in transforming our three NC Aquariums and Jennette's Pier into world-class facilities for visitors and researchers. On behalf of the state, I thank Jay for his outstanding service and wish him all the best as he embarks on his next seaworthy adventure."

In January 2023, the Society Board of Directors announced their appointment of his successor, Liz Baird. Baird joins the Society after

serving as Director at the NC Aquarium at Pine Knoll Shores for the past three years, where she helped guide the facility through the pandemic and fostered an environment of innovation, integrity and inclusivity, according to staff. Prior to that, she worked for 24 years managing education programming at the NC Museum of Natural Sciences in Raleigh, including nine years as Chief of School and Lifelong Education.

"I am absolutely delighted to be able to continue serving the mission of the NC Aquariums in this new role," says Baird. "The NC Aquarium Society is an incredible organization, and I am honored and excited to be leading the Society into the future."

Baird was North Carolina's Environmental Educator of the Year in 2010 and currently serves as the Chair of the Board of Trustees of Salem College, her alma mater. Since 2017, she has been a lecturer at Johns Hopkins University, teaching the Introduction to Museum Education Course for the Museum Studies Master's Program.

"Liz has built her career around her passions – teaching, learning, exploring, and leading others to build appreciation for the wonders of our natural world," says Drew Covert, Society Chair-Elect and Chair of the search committee. "We look forward to Liz's transition as Society President/CEO, which will naturally be aided by the depth of her working knowledge of our Aquariums and Pier."

Become Part of the Aquarium You Love

While you may not be able to visit as often as you might like, the NC Aquarium Society offers two unique opportunities to show your love and support by becoming a lasting part of your favorite Aquarium.

With a donation to the Own-A-Fish program, a fish-shaped plaque engraved with your personalized message will be installed at the NC Aquarium of your choice. Your contribution will support our ongoing work in animal care, education and conservation. Own-A-Fish is the perfect way to remember a loved one, honor a friend or make a statement for all to see!



Support the rescue and rehabilitation of sea turtles by becoming a Sea Turtle STAR. Donors are recognized with their choice of a teal, blue or green turtle-shaped plaque mounted along the wall leading to the NC Aquarium on Roanoke Island's sea turtle hospital, the STAR Center. Plaques are engraved with a custom message and are available in three sizes based on the species of turtle most frequently treated at the Center: loggerhead, green or Kemp's Ridley.

For both programs, a replica of your plaque is available for you to display at home for an additional donation. Learn more about the Own-A-Fish and Sea Turtle STARS programs at www.ncaquariumsociety.com.



Aquarium at Fort Fisher Renovation

Our Aquarium. Our Coast. Our Future.

The NC Aquarium at Fort Fisher is developing plans for a major expansion and renovation of its facilities. The Aquarium is forty-eight years old, and its last renovation was completed over twenty years ago in 2002.

Since then, an endless stream of visitors and harsh coastal conditions have taken their toll on infrastructure and public spaces alike. Numerous exhibits need a refresh, and an expansion featuring brand new animal habitats and education space will help the Aquarium better serve its critical educational and conservation mission, as well as sustain its popularity.

It's time for the Aquarium at Fort Fisher to match North Carolina's phenomenal growth—transforming its visitor experience and leading role statewide in education, conservation and economic impact. The Aquarium will grow in size by 50%, the amount of water on display will more than double and the number of animals will increase substantially.

The State of North Carolina has made an initial investment and we anticipate more over the next several years. But there's another important element in the funding plan—we're counting on private donors to step in to help make this transformation a reality.

North Carolina has a rich history of public-private partnerships for its most popular tourist destinations, including the NC Zoo, Battleship NC, and NC Museum of Art. Since 1986, the nonprofit NC Aquarium Society has partnered with the Aquariums to raise private support for exhibits and renovations.

The project's centerpiece will be a new 350,000-gallon *Sand Tiger Shark Habitat*—the largest aquarium display in North Carolina. With this addition, the Aquarium at Fort Fisher will be elevated to join facilities such as the world-renowned Georgia Aquarium and National Aquarium in Baltimore by creating new levels of wonder, inspiration and educational engagement for its visitors.

The exhibit's massive 40-foot curved window will immerse visitors into the world of these impressive sharks, bringing them face-to-fin with sharks, rays and goliath groupers. Visitors will learn about sand tiger sharks' importance to the ecosystem, while showcasing the conservation and research conducted by the Aquariums.

Other additions will include a new *Education and Event Wing* that will feature a rooftop *Skydeck* with stunning 360-degree views up and down the coast. A new *Shark and Ray Touch Pool* will offer guests a hands-on experience with amazing creatures while upholding the highest standards of animal well-being. Additional exhibits will highlight live corals and the importance of saving reefs, teach visitors about sustainable fishing practices and foster appreciation for all marine ecosystems.

We will be sharing more information in the coming months!

Stars are Born

The Fort Fisher Otter Pup Trio



Otterly adorable and an inspiration to all who visit the NC Aquarium at Fort Fisher (NCAFF), Selene, Mae and Stella joined the *Otters on the Edge* family May 21. The three female Asian small-clawed otter pups born behind-the-scenes to first-time parents Leia (3) and Quincy (8), represent success for the Association of Zoos & Aquariums (AZA) Species Survival Plan® (SSP) program. Leia is among thirteen breeding female otters in the AZA SSP program in the U.S.

"We were thrilled when we began seeing Leia and Quincy moving the newborn pups from one den to another and were able to count a total of three," said NCAFF Aquarist Shannon Anderson.

Under the attentive care of their parents, the pups were soon eating solid food and swimming proficiently. They eagerly explored their new habitat in August, making their public debut in the new *Otters on the Edge* habitat, which opened the previous year thanks to a donation by the Womack family and support from the NC Aquarium Society.

"Visitors to the Aquarium are very familiar with our two otter families, so it has been wonderful to share the story of these pups with the public," said NCAFF director Hap Fatzinger.



With so much love pouring in for the pups, the Aquarium engaged the community to vote on their names, and more than 14,000 votes later, Selene, Mae and Stella emerged as the new names for the trio. The names reflect the full moon, king tide and bright stars on the night of their birth. Selene is Greek for "moon," Mae is derived from the name of the Thai goddess of water and Stella is Latin for "star."

But the story doesn't end there! On January 31, 2023, Leia gave birth to a new trio of pups, this time two boys and a girl. The pups are bonding well with their parents and older siblings and represent the continued success of the SSP® program.

Asian small-clawed otters are the smallest otter species in the world and are listed as vulnerable on the International Union for Conservation of Nature's Red List of Threatened Species. Among their population threats are commercial development, deforestation, pollution, poaching and climate change. Selene, Mae, Stella and their new siblings, though small, are mighty ambassadors for the SSP® program, and their birth engenders greater security for this amazing otter species.

A New Plate: The Saga of the NC Aquariums Specialty License Plate

A long time ago in a campaign far, far away... Back in the fall of 2021, the NC Aquarium Society launched a specialty license plate campaign to create a custom plate available through the NCDMV. In October of that year, a Facebook poll gave followers the option to choose from three designs created by Aquarium staff. More than 4,000 responses were submitted, and the clear winner, with over 2,500 votes, features a colorful trio of Aquarium animals: sand tiger shark, sea turtle and river otter.



Design in hand, the NC Aquarium Society soared past the necessary 500 paid pre-orders required to submit an application to the NCDMV, receiving over 800 in a matter of weeks. Then, the wait began. After many months, the NCDMV and Highway Patrol finally signed off on the design in September 2022. At long last, the first plates were distributed by the DMV to the original applicants in mid-February 2023.

The NC Aquariums specialty plate can now be purchased through the NCDMV for an annual contribution of \$30, of which \$20 goes

directly to the Society to help fund the ongoing conservation, animal care and education programs at the three Aquariums and Jenette's Pier. The remaining \$10 goes to the NC Department of Transportation Wildflower Program.

Our thanks to all the patient supporters who joined us on this journey, and to all who will support the NC Aquariums through this program in the years to come. We're thrilled to finally see Aquarium plates swimming down the roads of North Carolina.

Volunteer Spotlight

Junior Volunteer Program at Pine Knoll Shores



The Aquarium at Pine Knoll Shores offers an exciting opportunity for local high schoolers. Rising 9th to 12th grade students can volunteer at the Aquarium for a summer or participate as Aquarium Teen Ambassadors year-round. These teens are trained by Aquarium staff and mentored by adult volunteers as they work at the facility's touch pool, themed education carts and aid with the *Discovery Classroom* and special events.

"Our teen programs allow young people to learn valuable skills such as communication, team building, public speaking and leadership, all while gaining self-confidence and learning about our environment and how they can make a difference," says the Aquarium's Volunteer Coordinator Aly Mack.

In 2022, sixteen teens participated in the program. One of them, Kaylee Whitley, created the Carnival to Combat Climate Change as part of a community service project for the Coastal Ecosystem Learning Center (CELC) Network. The free event was held at the Aquarium in April and provided a space for all ages to discuss environmental issues and engage with conservation leaders from across the state. The North American Association for Environmental Education (NAAEE), in partnership with CELC, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) and eeBLUE, awarded the Aquarium's youth program \$4,000 in grant monies through the NC Aquarium Society to help implement the event.



Nation's Aquariums Join Forces to Tackle Climate Change

On April 22, Earth Day, the three NC Aquariums and Jennette's Pier joined twenty other aquariums across the country to announce their first step in achieving the long-term goal of climate neutrality. Through the Aquarium Conservation Partnership (ACP), the Aquariums collectively pledged to address greenhouse gas emissions while working to leverage their outstanding legacy of leadership in conservation, science, communication and education to realize climate solutions.

As part of this pledge, the NC Aquariums committed to the following actions:

1. Completing an initial greenhouse gas inventory within one year of signing the commitment
2. Measuring and reporting greenhouse gas emissions annually
3. Developing an emissions reduction plan within two years of signing the commitment
4. Identifying and implementing strategies to eliminate greenhouse gas emissions from operations
5. Leveraging operational commitments to advocate for international, federal and state climate change policies
6. Communicating the journey to achieve net-zero emissions

"As aquariums, we know how important it is to protect our environment," said NC Aquariums Sustainability Committee Chair

Colleen Shytle. "We're excited to join fellow ACP organizations across the country as we expand our efforts to address the climate crisis."

The climate crisis is the greatest modern threat to the future of our planet, ocean and waterways. For decades, the global ocean has been taking the heat, absorbing more than 90% of the excess heat and nearly a third of the carbon dioxide generated by climate-altering greenhouse gas emissions. The result is an ocean that is warmer, more acidic and less habitable for fish and marine wildlife.

"As leaders in conservation, aquariums are expected to walk their talk, and that's exactly what this partnership is meant to do," said ACP Executive Director Kim McIntyre. "We are uniquely qualified to set an example for others—in reducing our carbon footprint, encouraging sustainable operating practices and inspiring hope in a public that is hungry to be part of the solution."



**Aquarium
Conservation
Partnership**

Spot A Shark, Save a Species

Popular in aquariums because of their fierce appearance but docile nature, sand tiger sharks are valuable ambassadors spreading awareness for threats to sharks and rays. Globally, sand tiger shark populations have experienced significant declines, but because these sharks can be found off the North Carolina coast year-round, the NC Aquariums and their partners can conduct important research to aid in this shark's conservation. Many shipwrecks in North Carolina's 'Graveyard of the Atlantic' are gathering spots for sand tiger sharks, but the extent to which they rely on this habitat is uncertain.



SCUBA charter operators offer highly popular trips where divers can observe wild sand tiger sharks off the NC coast. To take advantage of the serendipitous co-occurrence of sand tiger sharks, shipwrecks and SCUBA divers, the NC Aquariums launched Spot A Shark USA (SAS) in 2017. Through the program, divers can upload images of sand tiger sharks they encounter during their NC dive adventures to the SAS website (<https://spotasharkusa.com>). This completely hands-off way to study these sharks provides important research data about when and where they were photographed.

A defining characteristic of sand tiger sharks is their coloration, including brown spots located on their sides. Each shark has a unique spot pattern which can be used to identify them. Working in partnership with universities like NC State, UNC and Duke, SAS maps and stores these patterns in a database. Every new photo submission is compared using machine learning algorithms,

allowing researchers to track the movement of individual sharks. Since 2017, the NC Aquariums and SAS have collected photos of nearly 2,000 individual sharks, allowing researchers to document that individual sharks return to NC waters year after year, often to the same shipwreck where they were first spotted. This kind of long-term information tells us the NC coast is important habitat for all life stages of sand tiger sharks throughout the year, though the location of pupping grounds remains a mystery yet to be solved.

This conservation work would not be possible without the divers and dive operators who help gather photos and advocate for shark conservation, along with funding from the NC Aquarium Society, the South-East Zoo Alliance for Reproduction & Conservation (SEZARC) and other AZA facilities. To highlight this effort, the NC Aquariums are developing a Spot A Shark USA exhibit that will be displayed at all three Aquariums and at Jennette's Pier, made possible by a grant from the Walters Family Foundation.

Lifetime Giving

Grand Benefactors

(Gifts of \$1 Million or More)

NC Clean Water Management Trust Fund
NC Waterfront Access & Marine Industry Fund
Pepsi Bottling Ventures/PepsiCo Triad Foundation

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(Gifts of \$500,000 - \$1 Million)

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Daniel & Regina Gunsett
Thomas & Susan Hackney
Sara Hallas
Hanes Consulting
Allan & Nancy Harvin
Tracey Hemmerle
Jeanne Herrmann - In Memory of
Elizabeth Herrmann Barboza
Jeffrey S. Hill
Nancy Hinson - In Loving Memory of
Robert "Bob" Hinson
Erin Hogan - In Honor of
Riley Frasketi
Ella Ann L. & Frank B. Holding
Foundation
Olivia Holding
Loarraine Hudome
Island Automation PC
Island Beverage
Jessica's Gun Shop
Jersey Mike Sub's
John Hackney Agency
Jonathan Calhoun Insurance Agency
Kevin Jones
Seth B. Jones - In Memory of
Mark R. Robins
Andrea & Lucas Kagel
Melissa Kanarek - In Memory of
Herbie Hodges
Art & Alice Keeney
Kellogg Supply Company
Marilyn Kennedy
Kevin & Amanda Krug
Nichole Lampman
Cathy Lane
Kate & Sean Leahy
Nicole Lee - In Memory of
Lillian Charlotte Lee
Debbie Lillie
Lilly's Summer Camp
The Little Dipper
Ron & Vickie Livingston
Loggerhead Golf
Harry & Linda MacDonald
Kelly Mance - In Memory of
David E. Ritchey "Pancho"
Brian J. Mason - In Memory of
Donald Revelle
Master Service Corporation
Kevin Mattingly
Bob & Carol Mattocks
Penelope May - In Memory of
Kelley Eugene May
David & Lesley McAdams -
McAdams Foundation
Margo McKnight
Betty Miller

Milligan Plumbing
Allan & Margaret Mims Foundation
Modern Exterminating Company
Susan Moffat-Thomas
Adrienne Moore
Amy Morelock
Virginia Mowery
Joshua Nail
Nathional Fish and Wildlife Foundation
Barbara Neptune
NEST- Network for Endangered
Sea Turtles
Greg & Laura Nichols
North Carolina Community Foundation
North State Foundation
Jennifer, Brent, & Charlotte Nultemeier
Betsy & Mitch Oakley
Oceans East Bait & Tackle
Dana O'Donovan
Benjamin & Kelly Opipari
Outer Banks Community Foundation
Outer Banks Hospital
Oxi Fresh Carpet Cleaning
Kimberly Paisley - In Loving Memory of
John & Patricia Crawford
Parham Insurance Agency
Graham Parker - In Memory of
Don Parker
Thomas & Ginger Pate
Jay S. Paul
Brian & Suzanne Pecheles
Wesley Peck - In Memory of
Wes & Connie Peck
Pelagic Consulting
Pender Pines Garden Center
Pennymen Group
Wes & Stewart Perry
Alexandra & Hans Pflaumer
Carolyn Phipps - In Memory of
L. Jeff Phipps, Sr.
Linda Picarello
Charles & Mary C. Pierce
Port City Land Surveying
Jeremy Posey - Gary "Bear" Manus
Edythe Poyner
George Smedes Poyner Foundation
Radio Island Marina
Chuck & Bonnie Revelle
Ridge Care Senior Living
John M. Rundhammer - In Memory of
Jeanne Cross
S&B Trucking Company
Sam & Omie's Restaurant
Amy Sapp
Travis Schardt
Seaglass Training
Jason, Melody, Austin, & Asher Seely
Jon & Karen Segal
Janet Shafer & Family - In Memory of
Carl R. Shafer
Sharkbites Snack Bar
Adam & Sarah Shay
Blair & Martha Sheppard
Allison Shope - In Loving Memory of
Marion & Elizabeth Carroll
Siepmann IP, Intellectual Property Law
Fern Skelhorne - In Memory of Alana
Danielle Reams
Ronnie & Jody Sloan
Frank Smith - In Loving Memory of
Joe & Jess Shotko
Jason Smith
Smithfield's Chicken 'N Bar-B-Q
Jan Sondberg - In Memory of
Hunter Kristian Sondberg
Alexander & Jennifer Speal
Eddie Stallings
Patricia Stith
Mary Beth & Robert Styers
Suds for Sharks - Pine Knoll Shores
Buck Suiter Family
Shane Sweitzer - In Memory of
Emersyn Sweitzer
Nancy F. Sykes
Jessica Tadlock - In Memory of
Norman H. Tadlock, Jr.

John E. Tantum PA
Bill and Mary Hannah Taft
Amanda Taylor - In Memory of
Richard N. Taylor
George & Suzanne Taylor
Thomas Teets - In Memory of
Brenda Teets
Dave Tichenor
Brian Tomasic
Touchstone Bank - Debbie Schrum
Corrine Townsend
Triad Foundation
Twiddy & Company Family
Carol Tynch
University Book Exchange
United Brokerage
US Fish and Wildlife Service, Eastern
NC Ecological Services
Jesus Verdugo
Aaron Vickers - In Loving Memory of
James Cameron
Victory Chrysler Dodge Jeep Ram
Sandra & Michael Wagoner
David Livingstone Ward, Jr.
Bill & Krystal Webb
Jordy & Ann Whichard
April Whitaker
Katharine & Daniel Whitley
Mary Frances Whitley
Nancy Wildermann
Wiedner Water Works
Barbara Williams
Williams Hardware
Hope Williams & Tom Bersuder
Willis Cable Construction
Wilmington Eye
David & Sydney Womack
Shirley Wood
Wrenn Zealy Properties
Kelly Wright - In Loving Memory of
Jeff Wright
David P. Young
Z & Z Designs

Offshore Club

(\$1000 Annually)

Deborah Albert
Anderson Heating and Cooling
Archer Insurance Group
Myra Best
Biggs Cadillac, Buick, GMC Truck
Cape Fear Solar Systems
Carolinas Center for Surgery
Carteret Landing
Dock Life
East Coast Hearing and Balance
Emerald Isle Realty
Igoe Creative
Jeff Gordon Chevrolet
Jersey Mike's Subs Carolina Beach
Lime Rock Realty
The Little Dipper
Loggerhead Golf
The Brent Milgrom Family Foundation
Susan Moffat-Thomas
Dana O'Donovan
Ortega'z Grill
Parham Insurance Agency
Pelagic Consulting
Ridge Care Senior Living
Wayne & Amy Schriever
Siepman IP, Intellectual
Property Law
United Brokerage
Hope Williams
Willis Cable Construction
Wrenn Zealy Properties

Business Leaders

(\$500 Annually)

24/7 Plumbing and Repair
Abruzzo's Pizza
Amos Mosquito's
Atlantis Lodge
Barbour Brothers Construction
Bartlett Trees

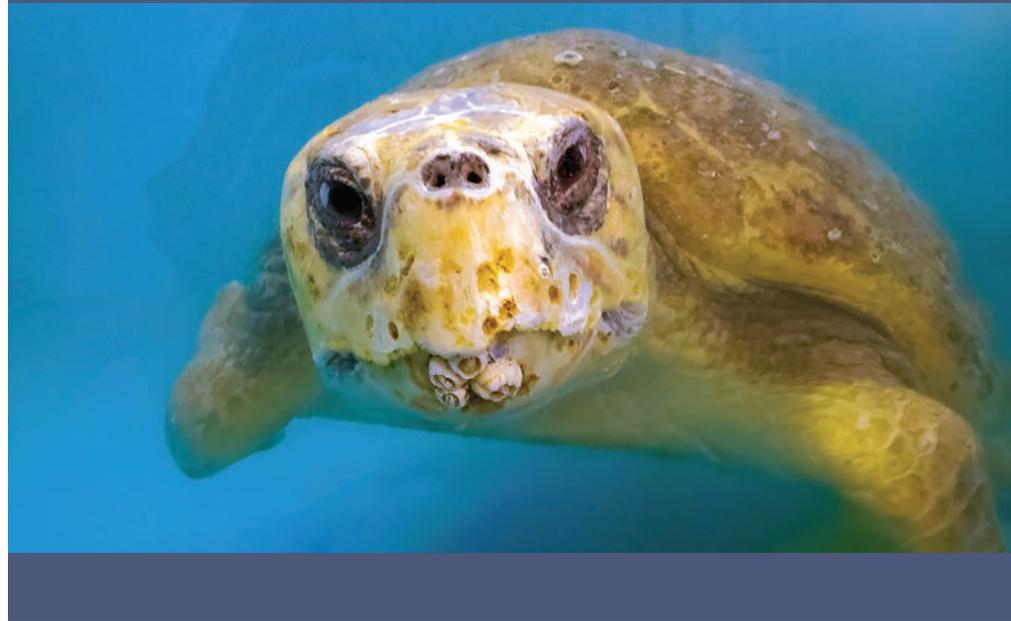
Beachcare Urgent & Family
Medical Center
Blackwell & Edwards, P.A.
Cape Fear Pharmacy
Charles Nash DDS PA
Chesnutt & Clemmons, P.A.
Cheyenne Veterinary Wellness and
Surgical Center
Cindi N. Smith Realty
Clancy & Theys Construction
Company
Coastal Business Development
Coastal Countertops & Tile
Comprehensive Rehabilitation &
Pain Specialists
Country Road Booting
Dark Seas Tattoo and Piercing
Dock Life
Dr. Albert Joseph Diab Foundation
Fast Track Leadership
FlanneryBuilt General Construction
Grants Creek Nursery
Grooms Equipment
HA Stoneworks
Hanes Consulting
Hatters Sno-balls
Icon Golf Cars
Infinity Custom Cabinets
Island Automation PC
Island Beverage
Jersey Mikes
John E. Tantum, Attorney at Law, P.A.
Lake Park Steakhouse
Malvin Riggins & Company
Mann Custom Boats
Mary Beth & Robert Styers
Master Service Corporation
MCO Transport
Mt. Olive Pickle Company
Nance's
Norris Mechanical
Oxi Fresh Carpet Cleaning
Plus Communications
Port City Land Surveying
Radio Island Marina
Riccobene Dentistry
Sam & Omie's Restaurant
SeaSide Dentistry
Superior Insurance
Tri-Tech Service Company
University Book Exchange
W. M. Jordan Company
Windjammer Inn

Business Members

(\$300 Annually)

101 Mobility
252 Athletics
AC/DC Electric of Wilmington
Ace Marine Rigging & Supply
Advance Tec
Adventure Wildlife Service
AI Williams Properties
Aligned Technology Group
Artistic Kitchen and Bath
At Home Therapy of Crystal Coast
Atlantic Beach Seafood Market
Atlantic Elevators
Austin Fish Company
Autumn Care of Myrtle Grove
Avian and Exotic Animal Care
B&M Roofing Contractors
Backyard Specialist
Basnight's Lone Cedar Café
Beaches-n-Cream
Beaufort Grocery Company
Benton Family Law
bioMONTR Labs
BlueCoast Realty
Bluewater Real Estate and
Vacation Rentals
Boeck Chiropractic Clinic
Brandi's Diner
Broome's Unlimited
BT Carawan
Byrd Quality

More Room to Rehabilitate



The Cameron Report
Carolina Designs Realty
Carolina Pain Center
Carteret RV
Carteret Vision Center
Charles K. McCotter, Jr., Attorney at Law
Chesson CPA, P.C.
Children's Health Services
Christopher Clark & Associates, DDS
ClinLab Consulting
Coastal Arthritis and Rheumatism
Coastal Carolina Orthodontics
Coastal Carolina Regional Airport
Coastal Dentistry
Comprehensive Dental Center
Conphalt
Copper Rose Tattoo
Crossbridge Financial Group
Crystal Coast Cytology Services
D. Rex Pharmacy
Dare County Tourism Board
Davies Contracting
Devan & Null, PLLC Attorneys at Law
DFS Pharma
Dietz Group
Discovery Map Crystal Coast
DLK Repair Service Corp.
Donna M. Gentry DDS
Dorothy Kirtley Real Estate
Down Under Divers Club
Drum Roll Charters
EarthTouch Concepts
Eastline Pest Management
El Gato Pelon
Elite Spray Foam Systems
Equinox Landscaping
Etheridge Pest Services
Financial Data Services
Finch and Company
First Carolina Cable
First Flight Adventure Park
Full Throttle Speedway
Glenn Baird
Goltz Holdings
Graham's Senior Living Homes
Gubbs Vending
Hawaiian Steam Carpet
Head to Toe Spa
Hilton Garden Inn, Kitty Hawk
Holiday Inn Express
The Holiday Trav-L-Park Resort
Holmes & Watson Hauling
Horns to Halos Dog Training
IBBI
Intracoastal Realty Corporation
Island Essentials
Jack Mackerel's Island Grill
J.M. Davis Industries
James E. Moore Insurance Agency
JemLinks
Jessica's Gun Shop
Johnson Family Dentistry
Jollay Electrical Contracting
Jonathan Calhoun Insurance Agency
Kaitlyn Batten/Social Media
Management
Kellogg Supply Company
Kesco Equipment
Kirkman, Whitford, Brady, Berryman
and Gordan, P.A.
Kitty Hawk Kites
Kurtis Chevrolet
Lenoir License Plate Agency
License To Chill
Linda Rike Real Estate
Lisa's Pizzeria
Live Oak Media
Lookout Ford
Lower Cape Fear Hospice
Mashburn Appraisal Group
Matchmaker Logistics
McClernon
McFadyen Engineers
MedSource Pharmacy
Michael and Russell
Middle of the Island Catering

Midway Enterprise
Miles Family
The Brent Milgrom Family Foundation
Milligan Plumbing
Modern Exterminating
Moeller, P.A.
Mollie A. Fearing & Associates
MSOC Health – Management
Service On Call
MusicMedic.com
Mystic Aquarium
Nest Realty
Ocean Grill and Tiki Bar
OneBoat Outer Banks
The Outer Banks Hospital
Outer Banks Visitors Bureau
PA Stoeber-Enos EA Services
Company
Paws & Claws Animal Hospital
Paynter Security Consulting Group
Pender Pine Garden Center
Pine Stand Coffee Co
Pleasant Farm & Garden
Polar Bear Heating & Air
Port City Java at Monkey Junction
Potter's Seafood
Pro Appliance
ProGreen Turf & Landscape
Quality Life Blueprint
QuistBuilder Websites &
Internet Marketing
Ram Rent-All
Rebath of Wilson
The Reel Outdoors
Rick Soles Property Management
Robinson & Stith Insurance
Rocky Top Catering
Ruddy Duck Tavern
Ryan Kerlin Painting
S3 Architects
S & B Trucking
Safrit Brothers
SAGA Realty & Construction
Sally Johns Design
The Saltbox Café
Saltwater Metals
Samet Corp
Scarborough Boatworks
Seaglass Training
Seaside Dynamic Wellness
Shell's Cottage Décor
Simon Law Group
Sky Parlor Salon
Snapperz
SoundBank
Sound of Sunshine Properties
SoundSide Restaurant
Southern Shores Realty
Southport Ace Hardware
Starcke Family Foundation
The STEM Labs
StormPro Public Adjuster
Suburban Electric Services
Sun Realty
Sweet Sip
Valerie Thompson - Realtor
Timberlands Unlimited
Town of Indian Beach
Tripp's Pressure Washing
Unique Perspective
Window Coverings
Uptown Properties
U.S. Arms & Ammunition
Victory Chrysler Dodge Jeep Ram
Von Creative Collection
Walker Ventures
Walter Davis Enterprises
Washington Electrical
Wiedner Water Works
Williams Hardware
Wilmington Eye, P.A.
Wilmington Police Recreation
Association
Your Hobby Place
Z&Z Designs

Over the summer, the NC Aquarium on Roanoke Island's *Sea Turtle Assistance and Rehabilitation (STAR) Center* underwent renovation, made possible by a grant from the Arthur L. and Elaine V. Johnson Foundation and the NC Aquarium Society. Since opening in 2015, the *STAR Center* has admitted over 1,500 sea turtles for treatment and was in need of updated equipment and a refresh.

Included in the update were new, more spacious pools, enabling the facility to hold larger sea turtles for longer rehabilitation stays. As if on cue, shortly after reopening to the public, the *STAR Center* received the most massive patient in its history. Aptly nicknamed Behemoth, the emaciated and anemic, yet mammoth male loggerhead tipped the scale at over 300 pounds. In the past, large patients were transferred to partnering rehabilitation facilities that could accommodate their size. Now, *STAR* has the space to hold sizeable sea turtles for the duration of their treatment.

Accompanying the Center's new pools, upgraded life support systems, including filtration, UV sterilization and protein skimmers were also installed. Behind-the-scenes, a rehabilitation holding area received a much-needed update. Roomier pools with viewing windows and improved life support systems replaced aging equipment, and the walls were treated to a fresh coat of sky-blue paint. Additional supplies were purchased to care for large influxes of turtles during mass-stranding events, including a mobile holding system.

The renovation allows the *STAR Center* to care for more sea turtles, better manage large sea turtles and provide enhanced care and welfare for all patients. These improvements were timely, not only for Behemoth, but for the over 200 turtles that were admitted during a large cold-stun event beginning in December 2022, and they will continue to benefit the Center as it cares for sick and injured sea turtles year-round.

Providing Access to Aquarium Learning Across North Carolina

Aquarium Scholars



Following two years of somewhat disrupted service as a result of COVID, the *Aquarium Scholars* program returned to a full and normal slate of field trips and outreach in 2022.

The *Aquarium Scholars* program provides access to science and environmental educational offerings for underserved students in Title I eligible schools across North Carolina. Teachers from these schools apply for *Aquarium Scholars* funding for class field trips to one of our three Aquariums or Jennette's Pier; for Aquarium Outreach, in which our educators bring programs to schools; or for virtual learning opportunities, in which our educators conduct live online programs. *Aquarium Scholars* engages students with fascinating aquatic animals, important environmental and conservation messages and other unique educational opportunities for thousands of students who might otherwise never experience a visit to the Aquariums along the coast.

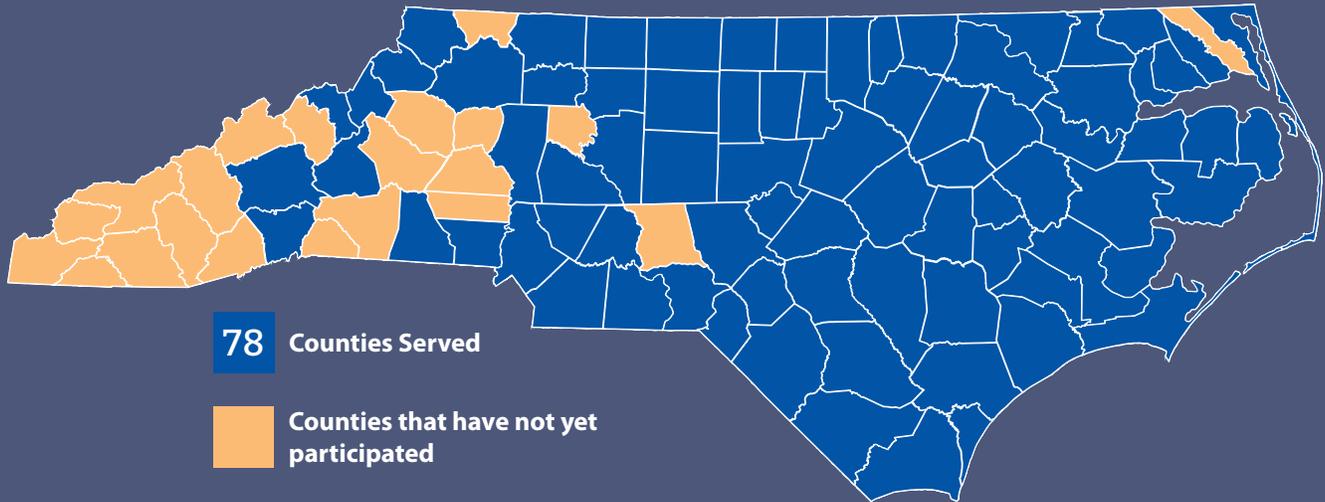
In the fall of 2022, the NC Aquarium Society awarded grants to 119 schools to participate in *Aquarium Scholars* programming during

the 2022-23 school year. Among these grants, 81 are for field trips, 30 for outreach programming and 8 for virtual programs.

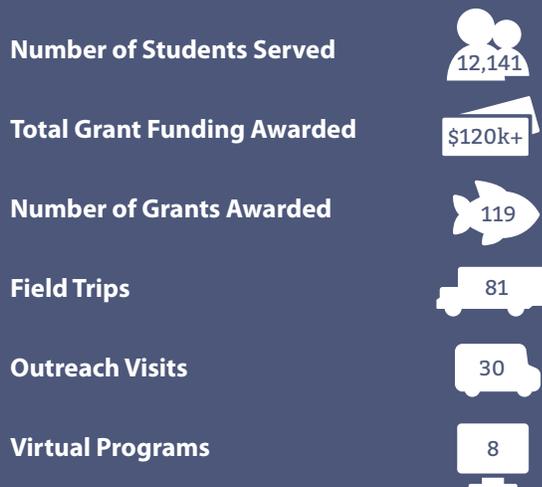
Aquarium Scholars has proven to be extremely well-received among participating teachers. Said one: "Working in a Title I school, many of our students have never been to the beach or the Aquarium, despite living so close to both of them." Another reported: "My students have limited experiences in the world... *Aquarium Scholars* allows them to see past their small world into something bigger. This brings them a little closer to similar experiences as their typically developing peers."

The generous funders of *Aquarium Scholars* are noted here. Teachers who are interested in applying to participate in the 2023-24 school year may find more information at www.ncaquariums.com, including eligibility criteria, deadlines and the online application (available summer 2023).

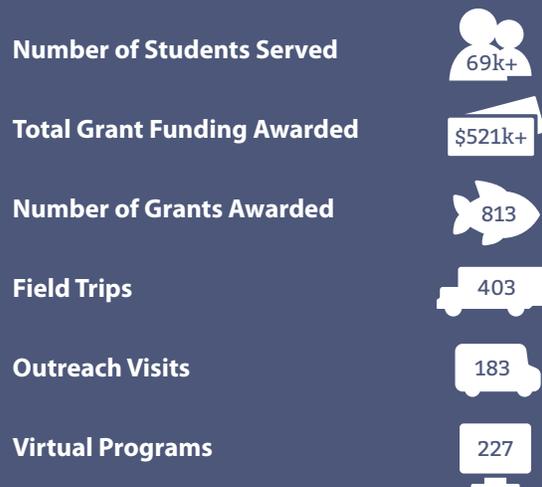
2022-23 Aquarium Scholars Outcomes



2022-23 Aquarium Scholars Outcomes



Cumulative Outcomes Since 2018



Aquarium Scholars Donors

Founders

R.A. Bryan Foundation
 Duke Energy Foundation
 NC GlaxoSmithKline Foundation
 Grady-White Boats
 Wells Fargo Foundation

Investors

Harold H. Bate Foundation
 Bill & Bob Dobo Trust
 Dominion Energy Charitable Foundation
 Goodnight Educational Foundation
 Allan C. & Margaret L. Mims Charitable Trust
 Tetlow and Roy Park Aquarium Legacy Fund
 George Smedes Poyner Foundation

Rotary Club of Kinston
 Z. Smith Reynolds Foundation
 Smithfield's Chicken 'N Bar-B-Q
 Southern Bank Foundation
 Triad Foundation
 Walters Family Foundation
100% of Aquarium Society Board of Directors
 Other Individuals



What's New at Pine Knoll Shores

The dust never had time to settle at the NC Aquarium at Pine Knoll Shores (NCAPKS) in 2022. Aquarium staff were busy all year long creating new and updating experiences, as well as welcoming multiple new animals.

The Aquarium's *Oyster Rock* habitat showcases the underappreciated oyster bed ecosystem, introducing visitors to the abundance of animals and plants found there. *Oyster Rock* received an update with the addition of an improved background and new plants and fish, including adorable juvenile burrfish.

The facility's popular *Box Turtle Habitat* also was renovated. The habitat area was doubled in size and the ten box turtle inhabitants were provided with expanded access to two bathing pools and natural brush for shade and burrowing. In addition, four interpretive graphic panels were installed to educate visitors about this turtle's ecological significance.

Journey to Orinoco is a new exhibit featuring critically endangered juvenile Orinoco crocodiles. Visitors can view and learn about these rare reptiles, hatched at partner Association of Zoos and Aquariums (AZA) accredited facilities in the U.S., as they are raised at NCAPKS until large enough to fend for themselves in the wild. When they're ready, the crocs will be released into protected habitat in the Orinoco region of South America as part of an AZA breeding and conservation project to increase wild populations.

If you venture down the *Alice Hoffman Nature Trail* behind the Aquarium, be sure to traverse the new *Suspension Bridge* through the maritime forest. The bridge, sponsored by Marvin and Cynthia Barnes, provides a safe, accessible area to view this endangered coastal habitat from a unique vantage point, and is a great place for bird watching.

Imagination comes alive at the new *Draw-A-Fish* exhibit, where guests can design a fish and then watch it swim across a colorful underwater scene. This interactive experience has been an instant hit, with visitors of all ages eager to see their animated creations.

In October, the popular *Coastal Encounters* skate and ray touch pool was emptied and removed as part of a multi-part renovation project of the touch pool area in the *Tidal Waters Gallery*. "We will be creating a new engaging space that uses today's best designs, including multiple depths and rest areas for the animals and a better and more accessible experience for our guests," said NCAPKS Director Liz Baird about the project.

Though much of the gallery is closed, guests can still visit Nimbus the white loggerhead sea turtle and the invertebrate touch pool.

If it has been a while since you last visited, it's time to plan a trip to see and do all that's new!

Waves to Water at Jennette's Pier

In April 2022, Jennette's Pier partnered with East Carolina University's Coastal Studies Institute (CSI) and the U.S. Department of Energy (DOE) to host the fifth and final round of the Powering the Blue Economy™ Waves to Water Prize competition.

This competition was designed to accelerate the innovation of a small, modular desalination system with the ability to transform seawater into clean, drinkable freshwater, powered entirely by natural energy harnessed from ocean waves.

"These devices could provide drinking water to isolated communities without freshwater resources or our own community following natural hazards," said Dr. Reide Corbett, CSI executive director.

Jennette's Pier was selected as the test location not only because of its strong relationship with CSI, but because it is publicly accessible and has unlimited potential for competition outreach, direct viewing and visitor engagement.

For the competition's DRINK Finale, four finalists deployed prototype desalination systems for testing into the waves off Jennette's Pier. The \$500,000 grand prize was awarded by the DOE to the Oneka

Team for their Snowflake Wave-Powered Watermaker, a compact, raft-like device that can be easily shipped, assembled without tools and can produce almost 1,850 gallons of clean drinking water per week.

"This has been the most high-profile opportunity to meet Jennette's Pier's goal of providing a public platform for relevant marine research projects with a focus on marine renewable energy," said Director Mike Remige.

Largely due to the success of the Waves to Water event, Jennette's Pier and CSI were included in the Atlantic Marine Energy Center (AMEC) team, a consortium led by the University of New Hampshire to evolve the utility industry and expand marine renewable energy capabilities. Recently, AMEC was awarded \$5 million by the DOE to expand their program over the next four years.

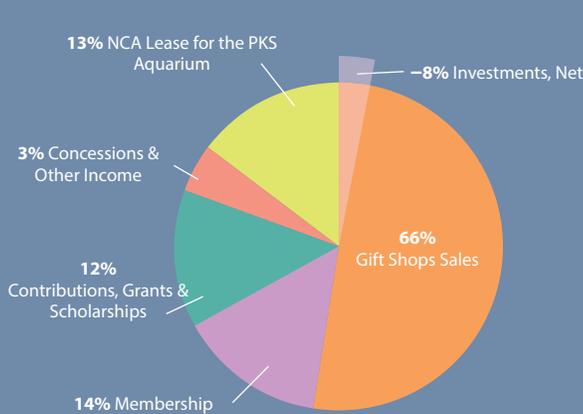
A portion of this funding will be used to develop an accredited wave energy test center at Jennette's Pier, bringing industry and federal investment to the state, providing Pier infrastructure improvements and expanding STEM education opportunities for North Carolina students.



2022 Funding & Revenue

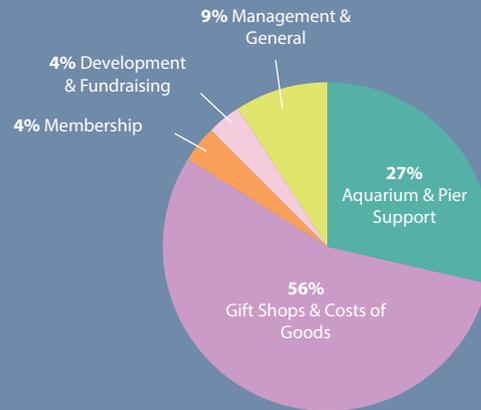
The Aquariums and Pier's enduring success is thanks to a dedicated staff, enthusiastic volunteers, broad support from state leaders and private support made available through the Aquarium Society. Using an entrepreneurial approach, the Aquariums now fund half of their operational needs from earned revenue and private contributions.

2022 Aquarium Society



Revenue (Rounded)

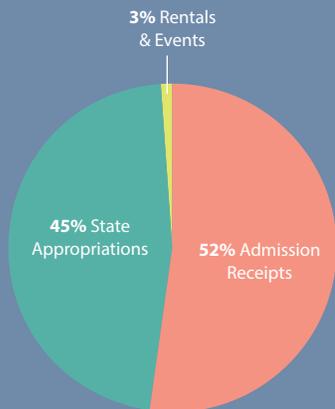
Gift Shops Sales	\$8.5 million
Membership	\$1.8 million
Contributions, Grants & Scholarships	\$1.6 million
Concessions & Other Income	\$400,000
Investments, Net	-\$1 million
NCA Lease for the PKS Aquarium	\$1.7 million
Total Revenue	\$13 million



Expenses (Rounded)

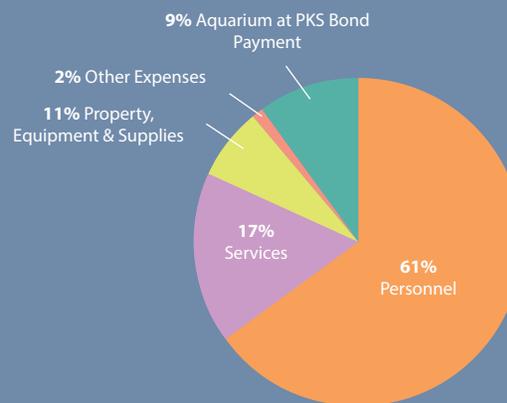
Aquarium & Pier Support	\$2.8 million
Gift Shops & Costs of Goods	\$5.8 million
Membership	\$400,000
Development & Fundraising	\$400,000
Management & General	\$900,000
Total Expenses	\$10.3 million

2022 NC Aquariums & Jennette's Pier



Revenue (Rounded)

State Appropriations	\$9 million
Admission Receipts	\$10.4 million
Rentals & Events	\$500,000
Total Revenue	\$19.9 million



Expenses (Rounded)

Personnel	\$11.9 million
Services	\$3.4 million
Property, Equipment & Supplies	\$2.2 million
Other Expenses	\$400,000
Aquarium at PKS Bond Payment	\$1.7 million
Total Expenses	\$19.6 million

A Banner Year for the NC Aquarium Society

Despite the uncertainties of the post-pandemic economy, the NC Aquarium Society had a banner year in 2022, bringing in critical revenue to support the mission and work of the NC Aquariums.

Membership earnings set a new record total of \$1.9 million, up 21% from 2021 (\$1.6 million) and surpassing the previous high in 2019 by 7.5%. Online membership sales through the Raleigh office continue to comprise the bulk of purchases, though the support of the Visitor Services teams at each NC Aquariums location remains a key component.

Development revenue in 2022 totaled \$1.2 million, including in-kind donations, reaching 116% of the annual goal. Conservation, Business Member and Sea Turtle STARs donations all were up, and giving through the online ticketing system remained strong.



The Gift Shops reached a new high with \$8.5 million in total sales, beating the previous record in 2021 by \$1.3 million, and up 24% from the pre-pandemic record set in 2019. Gift Shop donations for conservation also achieved a new record, surpassing 2021's total by nearly 30%.

"Our great success has been met with many challenges and changes, but even through these trying times, our Team has not wavered in their commitment to our mission," said Barbara Bayer, Society Director of Gift Shop Operations.

After a triumphant year, the NC Aquarium Society is proud of the level of support they can provide and looks forward to 2023.

2022 Accolades



USA TODAY 10BEST

The NC Aquariums collectively made the top 10 list for Best Aquarium in the country for the second year in a row in the USA Today 10Best Reader's Choice Awards. According to USA Today, "Aquariums let us explore hard-to-reach aquatic life from the world's oceans, lakes and waterways in a fun and educational setting. The best aquariums also play a vital role in conservation by taking part in rescue efforts and marine advocacy."



CHARITY NAVIGATOR

Once again, the NC Aquarium Society received a four-star rating from Charity Navigator in 2022, their highest rating. Charity Navigator is the nation's largest evaluator of nonprofits, assessing financial health and commitment to accountability and transparency. A four-star rating is testament that the Society "exceeds or meets best practices and industry standards" and is considered "a highly effective charity."



GUIDESTAR

In 2022, the NC Aquarium Society was again awarded with GuideStar's highest level of recognition, the Platinum Seal of Transparency. GuideStar is the world's largest nonprofit information resource, and the Platinum Seal indicates that the Society freely shares a wealth of up-to-date organizational metrics and financial information. By taking the time to provide this information, the Society demonstrates its commitment to giving its donors meaningful data through transparency.



LOCAL AWARDS

Both the NC Aquarium on Roanoke Island (NCARI) and Jennette's Pier received top marks from the JAM Media Solutions OBX Best of the Beach awards. NCARI won the category "Best Museum/Aquarium" and Jennette's Pier topped the chart as "Best Pier" in 2022 for the second year in a row. The two locations also received gold in *The Coastland Times* Coastal Gold People's Choice Awards, with NCARI designated "Best Indoor Activity" and Jennette's Pier "Best Fishing Pier." The NC Aquarium at Pine Knoll Shores won the category "Favorite Local Rainy Day Activity" from Carteret Curated People's Choice Awards, along with the title of "Best Family Outing" from *Be Local Crystal Coast Magazine*.



NC Aquarium Society
3125 Poplarwood Court, Suite 160
Raleigh, NC 27604

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