



NORTH CAROLINA  
AQUARIUM  
SOCIETY

# AQUARIUM SCHOLARS SUMMARY



2022-2023





# AQUARIUM SCHOLARS

Bringing the Wonders of the Aquariums to North Carolina Schools

## THE NORTH CAROLINA AQUARIUM SOCIETY

The North Carolina Aquarium Society is a private, nonprofit 501(c)3 organization whose purpose is to provide philanthropic support for the three state-operated NC Aquariums at Fort Fisher, Pine Knoll Shores and Roanoke Island, as well as Jennette's Pier in Nags Head. This support is provided through donations, exhibit and program sponsorships, membership programs, gift shop operations and advocacy. These efforts support the Aquariums' mission to "inspire appreciation and conservation of our aquatic environments" through education, experiences and conservation action.

The Society, under the leadership of its 45-member Board of Directors, provides millions of dollars annually in fulfillment of its mission. Often cited as a role model for public-private partnerships, the Society has earned a reputation for innovation and excellence in support of the state Aquariums. As a private partner, the Society has worked hand-in-hand with the Aquariums and the Department of Natural and Cultural Resources to secure more than \$100 million in funding over the past 25 years.



**"ONE [OF MY STUDENTS] HAD NEVER BEEN TO THE OCEAN OR THE AQUARIUM, AND [THE FIELD TRIP] MADE HIS CONNECTION TO THE STORIES WE READ TO PREPARE FOR THE TRIP SO POWERFUL."**

*2022-23 GRANT RECIPIENT*

## THE NEED



The NC Aquariums have years of experience offering dynamic and inspiring education programming for public schools across the state. Millions of students have participated in these programs over the Aquariums' almost 50 year history. These programs, often featuring live animals or unique experiences in coastal habitats, serve to not only educate and inform, but to expand students' exposure to careers in science, technology, engineering and math (STEM). They create connections to the natural world that cannot come from classroom instruction alone. Unfortunately, the Aquariums have seen a decline in the number of students visiting and participating in these programs in recent years - especially from underserved communities. Teachers and school leaders indicate that the decline is not due to lack of interest, but directly related to available school funding. Many of these students have never experienced an aquarium or visited the coast.



# THE PROJECT

To address the challenges schools face bringing students to the Aquariums and Pier, in 2017 the Aquarium Society founded Aquarium Scholars, a unique program funded through a consortium of private donors. This program expands access to the Aquariums’ science and environmental educational offerings for underserved students across the state. Through this partnership between the Aquariums, North Carolina public schools and Aquarium Society donors, teachers have the ability to immerse their students in the underwater world, creating meaningful content connections and memories that will last a lifetime.



## EDUCATORS CAN BE AWARDED FUNDING FOR:

-  FIELD TRIPS
-  OUTREACH VISITS
-  VIRTUAL PROGRAMS

The application process is simple. Educators from Title I eligible North Carolina schools can apply on the NC Aquariums website for Aquarium Scholars mini-grants to fund their choice of experience: field trips to one of the three Aquariums or Jennette’s Pier, Aquarium outreach programs in the classroom or virtual learning opportunities where educators conduct live online programs. The diversity of options ensures that regardless of the school’s proximity to the coast, there is a program that is relevant and accessible to engage students.

Mini-grant awards for class field trips typically range from \$350-\$1,250 and in addition to covering program fees, may be used to support the cost of transportation to an Aquarium, including buses and fuel, the cost of substitute teachers, chaperone admission and meals. North Carolina school groups always receive free admission to the Aquariums and Jennette’s Pier.

# THE IMPACT

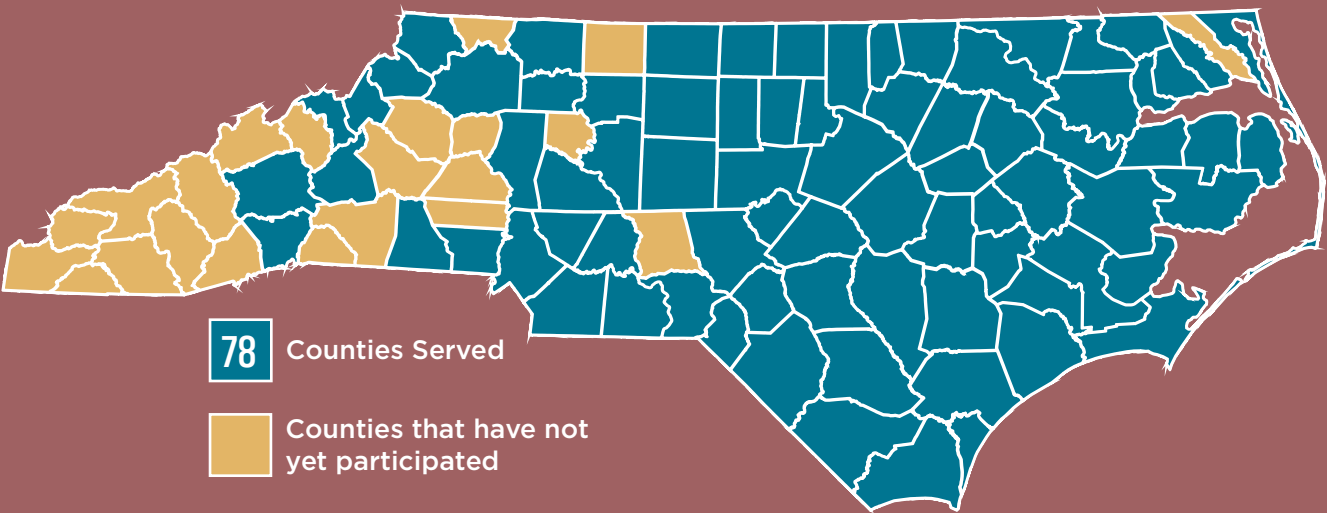
Field trips and programs such as those made possible through Aquarium Scholars have been shown to be effective tools to increase student engagement (Greene et al, 2013) and academic improvement, including test scores (Riskowski et al, 2009). Further, these experiences have lasting impact. One study found that 96% of students could recall a field trip they took years earlier, and nearly 100% could recall one or more things they had learned on the trip (Faulk & Dierking, 2010).







COUNTIES SERVED SINCE 2018



2022-2023 AQUARIUM SCHOLARS OUTCOMES:

|                             |         |
|-----------------------------|---------|
| Number of Students Served   | 12,141  |
| Total Grant Funding Awarded | \$120K+ |
| Number of Grants Awarded    | 119     |
| Field Trips                 | 81      |
| Outreach Visits             | 30      |
| Virtual Programs            | 8       |

CUMULATIVE OUTCOMES SINCE 2018:

|                             |         |
|-----------------------------|---------|
| Number of Students Served   | 69K+    |
| Total Grant Funding Awarded | \$521K+ |
| Number of Grants Awarded    | 813     |
| Field Trips                 | 403     |
| Outreach Visits             | 183     |
| Virtual Programs            | 227     |

“WE APPRECIATE ALL THAT THE NC AQUARIUM SCHOLARS PROGRAM DOES TO OFFER LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES TO STUDENTS OF NORTH CAROLINA. THROUGH YOUR SUPPORT, OUR STUDENTS HAVE A FOUNDATION OF INFORMATION AND ARE DEVELOPING INTEREST IN OCEAN ANIMALS, THEIR HABITATS, AND THE CONNECTIONS RIGHT HERE NEAR OUR HOME TOWN, THE IMPACT WE HAVE ON THEIR SURVIVAL.”

2022-23 GRANT RECIPIENT



# THE FINDINGS

The North Carolina Aquarium Society worked with an external Evaluation and Research firm to gauge the value to students and educators of the Aquarium Scholars program in 2022-2023.



97% of teachers agreed that the program helped their students understand the connection between people, animals and habitats in North Carolina



52% of participating teachers had never taken their students on a field trip to an aquarium before



80% of teachers agreed that the program helped pique student interest in career options associated with aquariums



69% of students demonstrated interest in continuing to learn about specific animals and conservation actions



87% of students said that the animals and/or hands-on activities were a memorable experience



95% of teachers said that the program helped their students understand more about what aquariums do



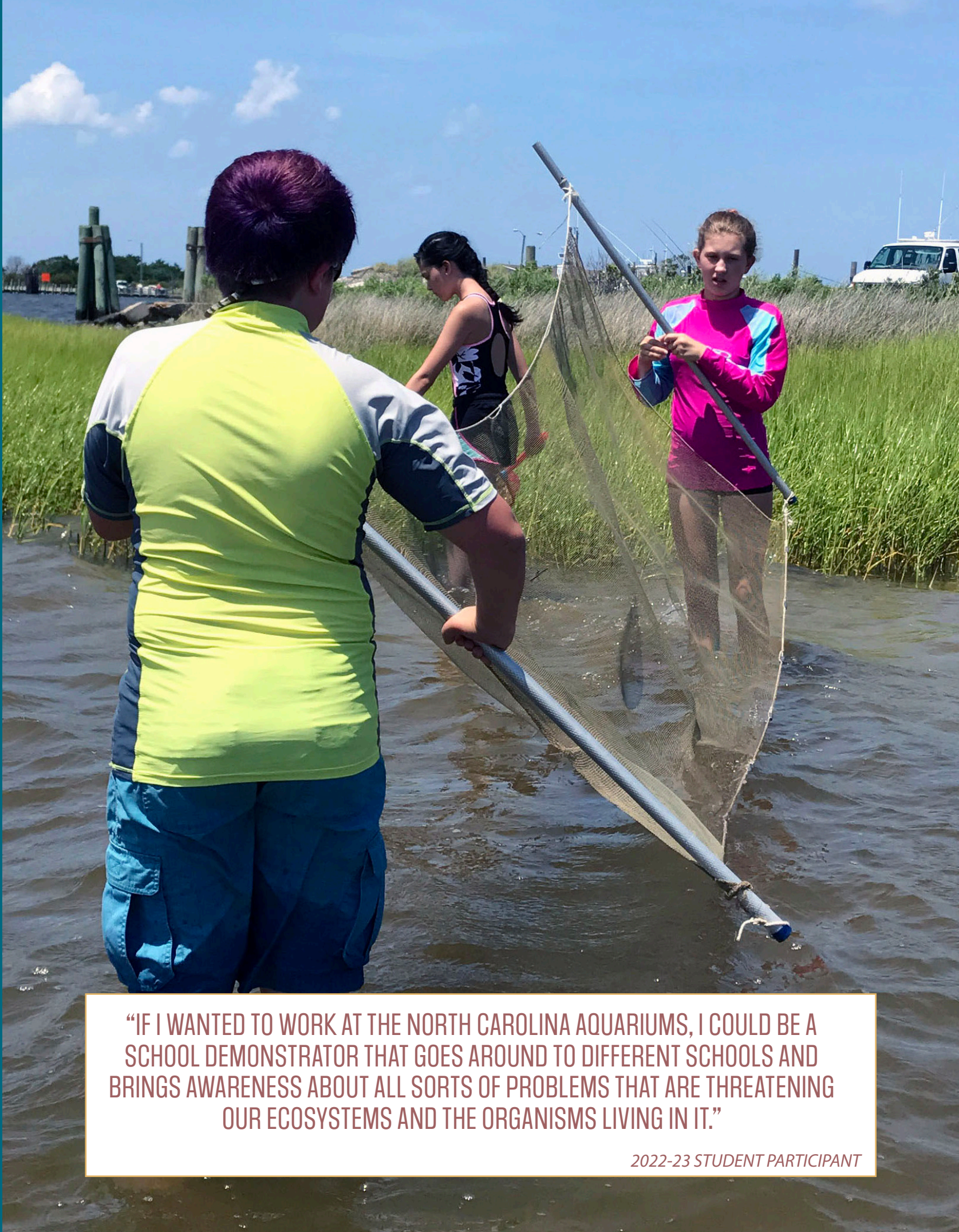
Teachers were 26% more confident to teach about local habitats and wildlife after participating



90% of teachers said that the program's online learning modules enhanced their science instruction



97% of teachers said the program sparked interest in their students to spend more time in nature



“IF I WANTED TO WORK AT THE NORTH CAROLINA AQUARIUMS, I COULD BE A SCHOOL DEMONSTRATOR THAT GOES AROUND TO DIFFERENT SCHOOLS AND BRINGS AWARENESS ABOUT ALL SORTS OF PROBLEMS THAT ARE THREATENING OUR ECOSYSTEMS AND THE ORGANISMS LIVING IN IT.”

2022-23 STUDENT PARTICIPANT





# PROGRAM SPONSORS

## 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 & Margaret Mims Foundation  
George Smedes Poyner Foundation  
Tetlow & Roy Park Aquarium Legacy Fund  
Smithfield's Chicken 'N Bar-B-Q  
Southern Bank Foundation  
Triad Foundation  
Walters Family Foundation  
Rotary Club of Kinston  
Z. Smith Reynolds Foundation  
NC Aquarium Society Board of Directors  
Other Individuals

“MY STUDENTS TALKED ABOUT THE EXPERIENCE FOR WEEKS AND TOLD ME STORIES OF TIMES THEY INTERACTED WITH WATER AND WILDLIFE. THEY TRIED TO SEE CONNECTIONS BETWEEN WHAT THEY LEARNED AND WHAT THEIR HOME LIFE LOOKS LIKE, EVEN IF THE ENVIRONMENT IS NOT EXACTLY THE SAME.”

2022-23 GRANT RECIPIENT

### Cited Literature:

Falk, John & Dierking, Lynn. (2010). School Field Trips: Assessing Their Long-Term Impact. Curator: The Museum Journal. 40. 211 - 218. 10.1111/j.2151-6952.1997.tb01304.x.

Riskowski, Jodi & Todd, Carrie & Wee, Bryan & Dark, Melissa & Harbor, Jon. (2009). Exploring the Effectiveness of an Interdisciplinary Water Resources Engineering Module in an Eighth Grade Science Course. International Journal of Engineering. 25.

Greene, J., Kisida, B., & Bowen, D. (2013). The educational value of field trips. The Journal, 14 (1). EducationNext.



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