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Kozic is a NOAA Environmental Hero



Josephine Kozic, volunteer coordinator at the [Jacques Cousteau National Estuarine Research Reserve](#) in Tuckerton, New Jersey, was one of 10 people nationwide selected as [Environmental Heroes by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration this week](#).

The Environmental Hero Awards, established in 1996, are announced in conjunction with Earth Day celebrations nationwide to honor people who volunteer their time and energy to help NOAA carry out its mission to protect the nation's environment.

Over the past six years, Kozic has established a robust volunteer program through aggressive recruiting and careful management in support of the Jacques Cousteau Reserve's science-based research, education and stewardship programs.

"Josephine's recruitment style is through community engagement wherever she goes, be it the grocery store, daytrips through her church or involvement in local civic groups, or just in casual conversation as she goes through her day," says reserve Manager Michael DeLuca.

"She seeks out potential recruits at festivals, information fairs and many other events. She has also expanded the annual volunteer recognition dinner to include a special incentive program, which has increased volunteer hours."

Kozic also made the program more attractive to volunteers by creating opportunities for volunteers to work with staff researchers studying dolphin behavior, tracking striped bass with acoustic sensors and evaluating mortality of terrapins along roadways.

"Josephine's generous contribution of time and talent is vital to the success of the Jacques Cousteau Reserve and the National Estuarine Research Reserve System," says Laurie McGilvray, chief of NOAA's Estuarine Reserves Division.

A retired successful businesswoman, Kozic has used her business expertise to develop an accounting system to track volunteer activities for maximum benefit to the reserve. She does much of her recruiting in new retirement communities springing up on the New Jersey coast, identifying and encouraging people with needed skills.

In particular, Kozic's volunteers have ensured that monitoring programs such as those associated with the reserve's long-term ecosystem observatory remain operational during critical research periods, sometimes even with 24-hour volunteer coverage.

Kozic's success has added a great deal to the National Estuarine Research Reserve System as a whole, as well. Her account of her program during a recent system annual meeting inspired the manager of another reserve to scrutinize his volunteer needs and seek information on hiring a volunteer coordinator.