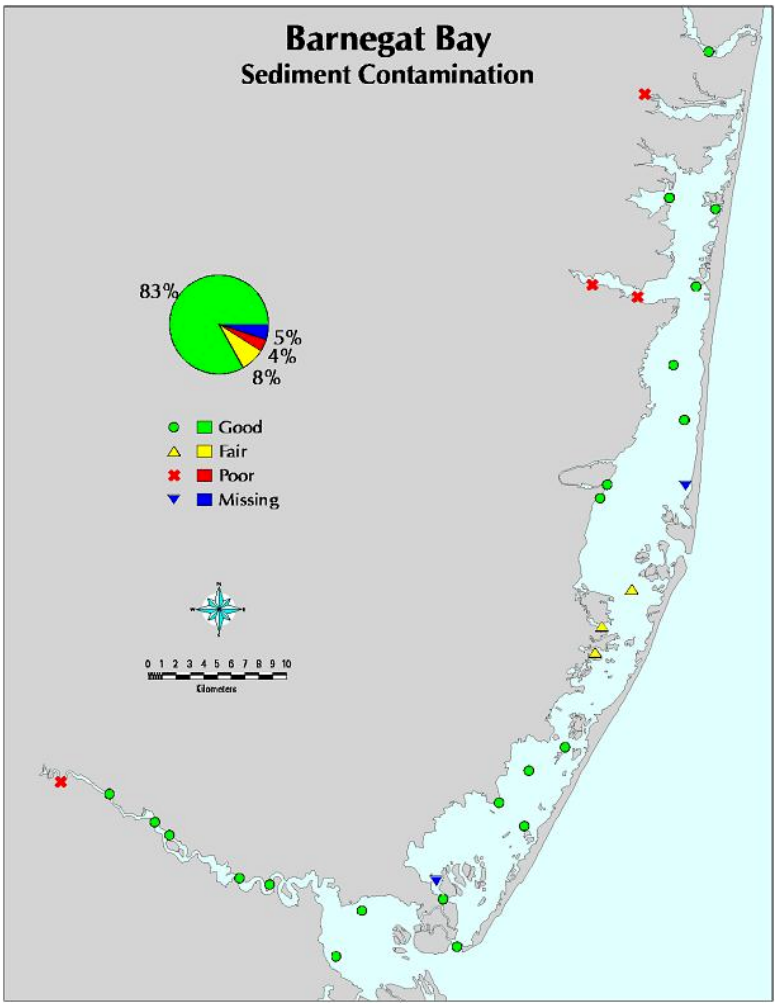
National Coastal Assessment Network

National Coastal Assessment (NCA) is a federally funded program to assess the ecological condition of the nation's estuarine resources. Starting in 2000, NCA's annual summer sampling involves collection of water, sediment, and benthic invertebrate samples at 35 locations in NJ's coastal bays. Samples are analyzed for water chemistry (e.g., nutrients, dissolved oxygen), sediment chemistry/toxics, sediment toxicity and benthic diversity. Results from this program are used in EPA's National Coastal Condition Reports. Results from NCA sampling are also now being used by NJDEP to assess ecosystem impairment of the NY/NJ Harbor in NJ's Integrated Assessment Report. Through a collaborative effort between EPA, NJDEP and Rutgers University, research is currently underway in New Jersey to expand NCA's assessment to the state's (and subsequently the nation's) near-shore ocean waters.



The design of the NCA program is probabilistic, which means that it can be used to estimate what percentage of the state's or nation's waters are in good, fair or poor condition. The pie chart to the right shows an example of that type of assessment of sediment contamination in the Barnegat Estuary. Red, yellow and green marks on the map show conditions measured at specific locations within the estuary.

NCA data are available from EPA's NCA website (www.epa.gov/emap/nca/index.html).