

# The Great Estuary Hunt

by Andrew McCown

**Objective:** To enhance understanding of estuarine ecosystems.

**Materials:** World Map or Atlas.

**Part I**—Begin by reviewing the vocabulary words through a question and answer session focusing on a map of the Chesapeake Bay or other estuary.

**Part II**—Discuss the importance of the estuarine system from a global perspective.

**Question:** Who or what besides people could benefit from estuaries?

**Answer:** The oceans and their inhabitants. Approximately 70% of oceanic animals depend on estuaries—for spawning grounds, for feeding grounds, or as a source of food. Think of estuaries as roots of the oceans.

**Part III**—Look at a world map or atlas and attempt to locate estuaries. This could be done in small groups, with each group charged with addressing particular coastlines or continents around the world.

**a)** Assign groups to work toward identifying the most important estuary in their study area.

**b)** In what ways are those estuaries different? How are they similar?

**c)** Students could write reports on important estuaries in the world, comparing them in terms of ecological productivity and environmental degradation. How have humans altered these ecosystems?

editor's note: *The Life and Death of the Chesapeake Bay* (see Resources) includes information about some of the world's major estuaries.

