



# PROJECT OCEANOLOGY



## Salt Marsh Says

*Adapted from a game by Mary Horrigan*

**Grades:** Any

**Time:** 30+ minutes

**Playing Area:** OPEN room or outside on grass is best

**Number of players:** 12+ (the more the better)

### OVERVIEW:

This game is like a combination of Simon Says and Captain's Calling. It is an elimination game based on listening skills and understanding the commands briefed by the game leader. The commands are just a tricky way to explain the functions of the salt marsh as a review or an opening activity. Take your time explaining the game commands and really be thorough, as this is the educational value of the game.

### TO PLAY:

The leader shouts out, "Salt Marsh Says!" followed by a command.

If the leader calls out a command without saying "Salt Marsh Says," then any participants who respond will be eliminated and help judge.

Each command requires participants to group themselves into groups of specific size. Participants can be eliminated if their group has too many or too few people.

### COMMANDS (the educational portion of this game)

**High Marsh** – (everybody) Everyone must run towards the designated high marsh closest to the leader. *High Marsh is the region of a marsh that rarely gets flooded with salt water. Taller plants, shrubs, and deep roots.*

**Low Marsh** – (everybody) Everyone must run towards the designated low marsh, farthest away from the leader. *Low Marsh is the region of a marsh that is in direct contact with the flowing tides and can manage salt water the best.*

**Egret** – (1) (stand on one leg, arms spread as wings, neck stretched to look for food). This task requires one person. *Egrets are one of many birds that depend on marshes for food, habitat, and nesting grounds. Some salt marsh birds are migratory – temporary visitors – while others live in CT year-round. The protected waters provide food, and the tall grasses provide protection for the young.*

**Buffer** – (2) (one person crouches and waves hands like Spartina, the other person hovers and crashes like a wave!). This task requires 2 people. *A Salt Marsh plays a critical role in protecting the shores from erosion. Storms and waves crash along shorelines, often carrying water past the high tide zone and taking sediments back out to sea with it. Beaches and rocky shore habitats are constantly changing size and shape. A Salt Marsh, however is built to withstand storm surges, manage flooding, and keep erosion to a minimum. Vegetation is capable of surviving salt influx, and the peat filters and holds firm despite flooding. The Salt Marsh “buffers” us from the impacts of storms!*

**Food Factory** – (3) (all three crouch and use hands from ground to face to start simulating munching and eating!) This task requires 3 people. *A Salt Marsh has an abundance of vegetation as well as its invertebrates and vertebrates. Salt marsh peat is the build-up of organic material from decaying plants and animals, and it is a deep and nutrient-rich layer at the base of the marsh. These nutrients support vigorous plant growth in the marsh and clouds of phytoplankton in the water, which form the base of an extensive and healthy food chain. It's fair to call the salt marsh a food factory!*

**Nursery** – (4) (One person stands tall and waves arms in the air, representing marsh plants. The other three circle around like baby fish hiding in the marsh). This task requires 4 people. *A Salt Marsh provides a safe, protected place for many organisms to spawn, lay eggs and reproduce. Many fish and seabirds spend most of their lives at sea but return each year to the salt marsh to reproduce. Salt marshes are also important recruitment grounds for larval crabs and fish, who settle out of the plankton to hide and grow in the safe and food-rich salt marsh. In this way, a salt marsh acts like a nursery!*

**Filter** – (5) (three people stretch and hold hands in a line, and two others cruise in and out under their linked arms). This task requires 5 people. *A Salt Marsh acts as a filter to protect the oceans and bays from pollution in runoff from the land. Runoff is the water that flows off rooftops across parking lots and streets. As it flows, the water grabs organic particles, motor oils on the roads, salt on the streets, litter, fertilizers, and much more. If the water reaches a salt marsh, the spongy peat of the marsh will absorb and filter out many pollutants before they ever reach the ocean. Salt marsh plants also help by absorbing and sequestering some contaminants from the run-off. Salt marshes are nature's water filter!*

### **TIME TO PLAY! Leader HINTS!**

- Do a practice run or have students practice each command
- Until your participants are experts, say the command and also how many people it involves
- Manage eliminations by counting how many people are left and calling a command that will (or will not) result in eliminations.
- When you get down to 4-5 people, you can declare them all winners or keep going until only one is left standing.

**Example**

1. Salt marsh says, High Marsh!
2. Salt marsh says, Low Marsh!
3. Salt marsh says Egret!
4. Food Factory – three people! (If anyone moves, they are eliminated)
5. Salt marsh says Food Factory – three people! (Now they can do it – eliminate anyone who couldn't find a group of 3)
6. Salt marsh says Egret!
7. Salt marsh says, Filter! (Eliminate anyone who didn't find a group of 5)
8. High Marsh (eliminate anyone who moves)
9. Salt marsh says high marsh!
10. Salt marsh says Nursery – four people!
11. Salt marsh says low marsh!
12. Salt marsh says Buffer – two people!
13. Salt marsh says high marsh! (Tire them out)
14. Filter! (If they move, eliminate).
15. ...and so on.