

## **Response to Questions Lake Michigan NERR Public Kickoff Meeting**

The University of Wisconsin - Green Bay hosted two public meetings to kick off the site selection and nomination process for a National Estuarine Research Reserve in the Green Bay coastal area of Lake Michigan. These meetings were held virtually on April 15 and 19, 2021. Recordings of both events can be found [here](#). Participants in both public kickoff meetings were invited to voluntarily submit questions in advance of the event. This document contains responses to those questions. Please note, where possible, duplicate questions were consolidated to reduce redundancy. For more information, please contact the University of Wisconsin - Green Bay's Director of Freshwater Strategy, Emily Tyner ([tynere@uwgb.edu](mailto:tynere@uwgb.edu)) and/or NOAA Office for Coastal Management liaison to the designation team, Bridget Faust-Accola ([bridget.faust@noaa.gov](mailto:bridget.faust@noaa.gov)).

### ***Reserve Boundaries***

**Questions:** What will the boundaries be, and what kinds of facilities will be available and where?

**Answer:** The Bay of Green Bay NERR designation process is still in its early stages and the location for the reserve and related facilities has not yet been selected. With respect to facilities, reserves typically include facilities such as an interpretive center, administrative building space, dormitories, labs, trails, and boat ramps. Following the designation of a reserve, it becomes eligible for competitive funding to support the construction of reserve facilities as well as land acquisition. That said, this funding is limited and it often takes a few years to construct the above listed reserve facilities.

**Question:** Because the Green Bay estuary is a large area, is it possible to split the NERR physical research campus facilities between northern and southern components?

**Answer:** The Bay of Green Bay NERR designation process is still in its early stages and the location for the reserve and related facilities has not yet been selected. A multi-component reserve is a possibility that is being explored. A multi-component reserve has two or more noncontiguous protected areas, or components, that are under the managerial jurisdiction of the reserve. Per section §921.10(b) of the reserve system regulations, "a state may choose to develop a multiple-site Reserve reflecting a diversity of habitats in a single biogeographic region. A multiple-site Reserve allows the state to develop complementary research and educational programs within the individual components of its multi-site Reserve. Multiple-site Reserves are treated as one Reserve in terms of financial assistance and development of an overall management framework and plan."

### ***Partnership Opportunities***

**Question:** What would the community involvement opportunities look like for the county/region that the NERR is designated in?

**Answer:** Reserves are home to a host of programs that foster community involvement. For example, reserves offer field classes for K-12 students and support teachers through professional development programs in marine education. Reserves provide adult audiences with locally relevant training on estuarine issues of concern to better inform coastal management decisions. Finally, reserves also typically have friends groups which sometimes help to organize volunteer events.

That said, opportunities for community involvement for the county/region actually begin long before the NERR designation process is complete. For example, the state is seeking volunteers for the site evaluation team that will be responsible for applying site selection criteria through a transparent and objective process, and ultimately, recommending the location of the Bay of Green Bay NERR for nomination. In addition, if NOAA accepts the state's nomination, the state will work in collaboration

with NOAA and the surrounding community to develop a management plan for the reserve. The management plan will identify the reserve niche and strategic collaborations and partner opportunities, and also includes plans for resource protection, administration, public access, research, education and interpretation, construction of facilities, potential acquisition of lands and waters, and restoration and resources manipulation as applicable. For more information on the state-led site selection and nomination process, please contact Emily Tyner ([tynere@uwgb.edu](mailto:tynere@uwgb.edu)).

**Question:** What are examples of projects/partnerships that would be forged through NERR designation?

**Answer:** The University of Wisconsin - Green Bay anticipates having a close partnership with regional K-12 school districts to facilitate place-based learning at sites within the NERR; working with area universities and organizations to conduct relevant research on topics like harmful algal blooms, emerging contaminants, shoreline erosion, nutrient runoff, etc.; partnering with watershed groups like the Clean Bay Backers, Save the Bay initiative, the Green Bay Conservation Partners, and others to conduct watershed related programs.

One example project/partnership that was forged by an existing NERR is the Highs and Lows Conference hosted by the Lake Superior NERR and others in the region. Specifically, in 2019, the Lake Superior NERR partnered with the Minnesota Coastal Management Program, Minnesota Sea Grant, Wisconsin Coastal Management Program, and NOAA's Office for Coastal Management to create the Highs and Lows Conference. This event brought together 84 individuals from Minnesota to Wisconsin to learn more about lake level trends, drivers, and impacts to communities, and also to share perspectives on resources that could improve their ability to manage water level impacts. For more information, visit the Lake Superior NERR's website.

**Question:** What sort of public-private partnerships are likely to be leveraged out of this designation?

**Answer:** A key avenue for public-private partnerships is in support of the visitor and education center. There is the potential for a variety of partnership types to support construction and showcasing the cultural, economic, civic, and recreational history and future of the bay of Green Bay.

One example public-private partnership from an existing reserve is a partnership between the Rookery Bay NERR, Friends of the Rookery Bay NERR, and Rising Tide Explorers, an ecotourism outfitter. This partnership enables up to 32 guided kayak tours and eight boat tours weekly to explore the 110,000-acre Rookery Bay National Estuarine Research Reserve. To learn more, check out the full story on NOAA's website.

**Question:** How will this NERR collaborate with the Lake Superior NERR?

**Answer:** The University of Wisconsin - Green Bay has already started the collaboration! The University worked with the Lake Superior NERR on an art-water focused presentation at the Chazen Art Museum in Madison. Long-term there will be opportunities for programmatic collaborations, sharing of resources related to monitoring protocols, potentially student exchanges facilitated through the Freshwater Collaborative Wisconsin. If the reserve is designated, it will be one of three NERRs in the Great Lakes and two in Wisconsin. The University of Wisconsin - Green Bay are excited for opportunities to work closely with the Lake Superior NERR.

**Question:** How can we connect the NERR with the Wisconsin National Marine Sanctuary designation to fully leverage conservation opportunities and federal resources?

**Answer:** The University of Wisconsin - Green Bay will explore opportunities for working with the Wisconsin National Marine Sanctuary once the Bay of Green Bay NERR is up and running.

**Question:** What role will UWGB-Marquette have in this project?

**Answer:** As part of the University of Wisconsin – Green Bay campus, the NERR will work with students, faculty, and staff at Marinette. This will include student opportunities on research projects, partnerships for education faculty, water-related training opportunities, etc.

**Question:** How can we leverage technology to support the goals of NERR?

**Answer:** A technology focus is a priority for the Bay of Green Bay NERR. The university is already working with local technology company Cellcom and partner Aexonis to deploy sensor technology within the bay to track bird movements. There is potential to leverage technology in the visitor/education center through virtual displays of sensor data, or by offering distance educational experiences. The NERR is being designed to consider water technologies of the future and what that will mean for jobs, education, research, and public engagement.

**Question:** How can we collaboratively engage other conservation groups to help garner additional support for the NERR?

**Answer:** Emily Tyner ([tyner@uwgb.edu](mailto:tyner@uwgb.edu)) is in conversation with various outdoors, sportsperson, and conservation groups to garner support for the NERR. These include Ducks Unlimited, Wisconsin Waterfowl Association, Menominee and Marinette Great Lakes Sport Fisherman Association, The Nature Conservancy, and The Ocean Conservancy. The University of Wisconsin - Green Bay is also interested in engaging with other conservation groups and welcome future opportunities for discussion.

**Question:** How can schools along the Fox River Watershed get involved with the NERR designation process?

**Answer:** Community input, particularly from schools and school districts, will be an important part of the Bay of Green Bay NERR management plan development process. If NOAA accepts the Bay of Green Bay NERR site nomination, the University of Wisconsin - Green Bay plans to begin talking with schools in the watershed. Specifically, when the University begins the process of writing the management plan, anticipated to start in early 2023.

**Question:** How will students be incorporated into this?

**Answer:** Education is one of five primary sectors of the National Estuarine Research Reserve system. If the NERR is designated, there will be opportunities for field trips to the NERR, partnerships with classrooms on research projects, and teacher-training programs. The University of Wisconsin - Green Bay is in conversation with local K-12 administrators to help envision how the NERR can best serve students.

**Question:** How will the NERR Program support NOAA's mission through collaboration with the states?

**Answer:** NERRs are a great example of NOAA's mission in action. When a National Estuarine Research Reserve is designated the state and NOAA form a partnership. The state is responsible for the day-to-day management and operation of a reserve, program staff, implementing the reserve's research, education, training, and stewardship programming, building relationships within the local community, and responding to their needs. NOAA administers the entire reserve system by leading visioning and strategic planning, providing oversight, technical support, and guidance for reserve operations, undertaking projects that benefit the entire system, integrating information to support national program decision-making, and overseeing and evaluating the implementation of each reserve.

### ***Designation Process and Timeline***

**Question:** Can other cities and towns in Wisconsin apply for the NERR designation?

**Answer:** The designation of a National Estuarine Research Reserve begins with the state submitting a letter to NOAA's administrator expressing interest in developing a reserve program and nominating a general site. Per section 921.3 (a) of the reserve system regulations, National Estuarine Research Reserves are chosen to reflect regional differences and to include a variety of ecosystem types. To accomplish this end, a biogeographic classification scheme based on regional variations in the nation's coastal zone was developed. This biogeographic classification scheme is used to ensure that the National Estuarine Research Reserve System includes at least one site from each region. If designated, the Bay of Green Bay NERR would be the third NERR in the Great Lakes biogeographic region and the first to represent the Lakes Michigan and Huron biogeographic sub-region. Because the Bay of Green Bay NERR would fill this gap in representation, if designated, it is unlikely that NOAA would consider designation of another NERR in this biogeographic sub-region at this time. Even so, if a city or town is interested in initiating the reserve designation process - separately from the Bay of Green Bay NERR designation - please contact Bridget Faust-Accola ([bridget.faust@noaa.gov](mailto:bridget.faust@noaa.gov)) for more information. If a city or a town is interested in participating in the Bay of Green Bay NERR designation process, please contact Emily Tyner ([tyner@uwgb.edu](mailto:tyner@uwgb.edu)) for more information on the state-led designation process.

**Question:** What is the timeline that is being assumed for this process?

**Answer:** There are six major milestones in the reserve designation process and recent reserve designations have taken approximately four to six years to complete. At this time, the University of Wisconsin - Green Bay is kicking off step two of the reserve designation process - site selection and nomination. UW - Green Bay's working goal is to submit a site nomination to NOAA by the end of 2022. If NOAA accepts the state's site nomination, the University of Wisconsin - Green Bay is tentatively aiming to complete the designation process by the end of 2024.

**Question:** How soon can this get started? This is outstanding news!

**Answer:** The Bay of Green Bay NERR designation process was initiated in March 2019 when Governor Evers submitted a letter expressing interest in the designation of a reserve in the Green Bay coastal area of Lake Michigan to NOAA. NOAA affirmed its support in July 2019. Site selection and nomination (step 2 in the designation process) kicked off in the fall of 2020.

**Question:** What are the vision, goals, and objectives of the NERR?

**Answer:** The National Estuarine Research Reserve System (NERRS) Strategic Plan 2017-2022 identifies the reserve system goals. They are as follows:

- Enhance and inspire stewardship, protection, and management of estuaries and their watersheds in coastal communities through place-based approaches.
- Improve the scientific understanding of estuaries and their watersheds through the development and application of reserve research, data, and tools.
- Advance environmental appreciation and scientific literacy, allowing for science-based decisions that positively affect estuaries, watersheds, and coastal communities.

The CZMA and its implementing associated federal regulations provide that reserves will:

Ensure a stable environment for research through long-term protection of National Estuarine Research Reserve resources.

- Address coastal management issues identified as significant through coordinated estuarine research within the reserve system the System.

- Enhance public awareness and understanding of estuarine areas and provide suitable opportunities for public education and interpretation.
- Promote Federal, state, public and private use of one or more reservesReserves within the System when such entities conduct estuarine research.
- Conduct and coordinate estuarine research within the System, gathering and making available information necessary for improved understanding and management of estuarine areas.

**Question:** Who is involved in the process?

**Answer:** The reserve designation process is being led by the University of Wisconsin - Green Bay and NOAA, and is very much informed by community input. To date, the University has conducted over 80 community presentations talking to over 1,100 people about the NERR. Within the designation process, the University has involvement from the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, the DNR, Wisconsin Sea Grant, Wisconsin Coastal Management Program, the Oneida Nation, Microsoft TechSpark Wisconsin, US Fish & Wildlife Service, UW-Madison Extension, Calumet County Community Economic Development Director, Ducks Unlimited, and The Nature Conservancy.

**Question:** Within the last several years there was an effort to create a sanctuary in Lake Michigan. That effort failed. Why do we believe this process will be a success while that effort failed?

**Answer:** The National Marine Sanctuary and National Estuarine Research Reserve Systems have different authorizing legislation and purposes. They also have different designation processes with distinct requirements. National Marine Sanctuaries and Estuarine Research Reserves may not overlap, but may be adjacent.

The Wisconsin Shipwreck Coast National Marine Sanctuary was designated on August 16, 2021. The multi-year, public process was led by NOAA's Office of National Marine Sanctuaries.

**Question:** How long is the designation in effect?

**Answer:** The oldest NERR in the system was designated in 1974 - so it is well over 40 years old already. That statistic speaks to the longevity of the reserves that comprise the National Estuarine Reserve System. That said, if a reserve fails to meet its statutory obligations, it is possible for the designation to be withdrawn by the NOAA administrator. States may also withdraw the designation of a reserve.

### ***Site Selection Process***

**Question:** What are the criteria for site selection for the Green Bay NERR?

**Answer:** Reserve sites are chosen to reflect regional variations and ecosystem types, termed "biogeographic regions," and unique estuarine habitat features within each biogeographic region per the program regulations that guide implementation. NOAA has developed specific site selection criteria related to research, education, access, administration, etc. that each state must apply as during the site selection and nomination process. These criteria may be augmented by the state, in consultation with NOAA, to ensure that they are applicable to the designation in question. At this time, the criteria that will be used in the site selection process for the Bay of Green Bay reserve designation have not been finalized, if you'd like to learn more about how the criteria will be developed and who will be involved, please contact Emily Tyner ([tyner@uwgb.edu](mailto:tyner@uwgb.edu)).

**Question:** How long does the process take to get to the designated site stage? Explain briefly what the basic steps are please.

**Answer:** Designating a National Estuarine Research Reserve is a six-step process that typically takes 4-6 years to complete. The major milestones in the process are as follows:

- Step 1: Letter of Interest - The state sends a letter, usually from the governor, to the NOAA administrator identifying interest in developing a reserve program and nominating a site, among other things. NOAA responds to the state with a determination of whether it can consider a nomination. This step was completed by the state of Wisconsin in March 2019.
- Step 2: Site Selection and Nomination - This is the milestone the university team is working to accomplish now. The state develops a transparent and objective process to evaluate potential sites for the reserve. Potential sites are evaluated through state-developed site selection criteria. NOAA provides basic site-selection criteria and approves the finalized criteria developed by the state. The governor submits to the NOAA administrator a site-selection document and a nomination letter identifying the proposed site and confirming the lead state agency. NOAA reviews the site-selection document and sends a letter to the governor accepting or rejecting the nomination.
- Step 3: Draft Environmental Impact Statement and Draft Management Plan - If the nomination is accepted, the state works in collaboration with NOAA to develop a draft Environmental Impact Statement and a draft Management plan. A public scoping meeting is held prior to beginning work on the draft Environmental Impact Statement. Once the documents are prepared, NOAA announces the availability of the Draft Environmental Impact Statement and Draft Management Plan in the Federal Register. The date of publication begins a 45-day comment period on this plan. The state and NOAA hold one or more public hearings 30-45 days after the Federal Register notice and the notice through the local media.
- Step 4: Final Environmental Impact Statement and Final Management Plan - NOAA works with the state to respond to comment on the Draft Environmental Impact Statement and Draft Management Plan. The state makes necessary changes to the document and submits preliminary and final documents to NOAA for review. Once the documents are final, NOAA publishes a Federal Register notice announcing the availability of the final plan. The date of publication begins the 30-day waiting period.
- Step 5: Designation Findings and Certificate; Record of Decision - After a 30-day waiting period, NOAA prepares designation findings for signature by the NOAA administrator. Once the designation findings and the memorandum of understanding between NOAA and the state are signed, the designation is official.
- Step 6: Designation Ceremony - NOAA presents the certificate of designation to state officials and the reserve partners. The new reserve is on its way to serving its community with long-term research, water quality monitoring, educational programs, and coastal stewardship activities.

A more detailed overview of the reserve designation process can be found on NOAA's website: <https://coast.noaa.gov/nerrs/about/designation-process.html>.

**Question:** Does this include the Oneida Nation reservation lands?

**Answer:** Reservation lands may be considered for inclusion in the boundaries of a National Estuarine Research Reserve. If a tribe is interested, NOAA welcomes the opportunity to discuss this or any other questions or concerns about the NERR process with the tribe. It is important to ensure that the rights of sovereign tribal governments are fully respected. As such, any deliberation regarding the inclusion of reservation lands in the boundaries of a National Estuarine Research Reserve would include NOAA requesting formal government-to-government consultation from the subject Tribe(s). For more information, please contact Bridget Faust-Accola (bridget.faust@noaa.gov).

If a Tribal Government is not interested in including reservation lands within a National Estuarine Research Reserve, there are still formal and informal mechanisms for collaboration and partnership that can be pursued. For example, the Fond Du Lac Band of Lake Superior Chippewa is a signatory on a multi-party Memorandum of Understanding which establishes a framework for coordination, cooperation, collaboration, and communication regarding the Lake Superior National Estuarine Research Reserve. A key component of the framework established through this Memorandum of Understanding is the Reserve Advisory Board, which the Fond du Lac Band of Lake Superior Chippewa is a member of. Reserves and Tribal Governments also partner on projects. For example, the Lake Superior NERR's research and monitoring activities are helping to support the efforts of Tribal Government, state, and other partners to restore wild rice in the St. Louis River estuary. For more information on this project please visit the Nation Estuarine Research Reserve Association's website: <https://www.nerra.org/restoring-manoomin-in-lake-superior/>.

**Question:** Who has a voice or say in what site(s) are selected? How are different publics involved?

**Answer:** The process of designation is very much informed by community input. To date the University of Wisconsin - Green Bay has conducted 65 community presentations talking to over 890 people about the NERR. Within the designation process, the University of Wisconsin - Green Bay has involvement from the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, the DNR, Wisconsin Sea Grant, Wisconsin Coastal Management Program, the Oneida Nation, Microsoft TechSpark Wisconsin, US Fish & Wildlife Service, UW-Madison Extension, Calumet County Community Economic Development Director, Ducks Unlimited, and The Nature Conservancy.

**Question:** How inclusive is this process? How are traditionally underrepresented groups being included?

**Answer:** Each state is responsible for developing and leading a transparent and objective process to select and nominate a site for designation. NOAA does not dictate exactly how that process must be conducted, but there must be public input throughout the process as outlined in the NERRS regulations (15 CFR 921 Subpart B). Each state decides how to engage the surrounding community, partners, and stakeholders. There are several regulatory requirements that states must meet to designate a reserve, including some related to public engagement. Specifically, federal regulations require the state leading the designation process to involve and seek the views of affected landowners, resources users, local governments, and state and federal agencies, as well as others interested in the areas being considered for a reserve early in the site selection process (15 CFR § 921.11(d)). The state, in partnership with NOAA, must also hold public meetings at critical points in the designation process to ensure that feedback from the surrounding community, stakeholders, and partners is taken into account.

NOAA also has federal obligations that must be met in the designation process that help to ensure that feedback from the public, stakeholders, and partners is taken into account. For example, review under the National Environmental Policy Act must be completed before NOAA can designate a reserve. As part of National Environmental Policy Act review, NOAA must announce the availability of both the draft and final environmental impact statement in the Federal Register for public review and comment, and must hold at least one public hearing (15 C.F.R. §Part 921.13 (d)). In addition, federally recognized tribes with current or historic interests in a potential reserve site must also be invited to consult during the designation process pursuant to Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act and/or Executive Order 13175.

The University of Wisconsin - Green Bay has worked to include traditionally underrepresented groups through involvement in the Site Selection and Nomination process. This includes leaders from the Oneida Nation and Menominee Indian Tribe of Wisconsin serving on the NERR steering committee and

Site Evaluation committee, respectively. There has also been conversation and a site visit from members of the Ho-Chunk Nation about involvement in designation and NERR programming. The university continues to seek out other opportunities for involvement from traditionally underrepresented groups, particularly for inclusion in the process of writing the management plan, to begin in late 2022.

**Question:** Are they looking at state/county/township or privately owned lands? Is the aforementioned a determining factor?

**Answer:** The University of Wisconsin - Green Bay is considering public lands as well as those held by land trusts at this stage.

**Question:** What factors will influence the site designation?

**Answer:** Site selection will be guided by criteria established by NOAA and regional needs and interests for a Bay of Green Bay NERR. The NOAA criteria include four major categories for consideration when selecting a site: Environmental Representativeness; Value of the Site for Research, Monitoring, and Resource Protection; Suitability of the Site for Education and Interpretation; and Acquisition and Management Considerations. The Bay of Green Bay NERR Site Development Committee will tailor and build off these established criteria in consultation with NOAA.

### ***Impacts of Designation***

**Question:** Will there be any costs to the local community(ies) within or near the designated NERR, especially a community hosting a physical presence such as a visitor center, in terms of maintenance, promotion, research support, etc.?

**Answer:** A National Estuarine Research Reserve is operated by a state in partnership with NOAA's Office for Coastal Management. Reserve system funding is appropriated under the authority of the Coastal Zone Management Act and requires a 70-30 federal-state funding match for annual operations awards to each reserve that receives an equal amount of appropriated funding. NOAA works closely with their state partners to identify the most appropriate sources of matching funds.

**Question:** Have you seen any measurable ecological improvements in locations where other NERRs have been established?

**Answer:** Reserves are designated in representative estuaries that are relatively undisturbed and protected for long term research and education in their already undisturbed condition. So the designation of a reserve in and of itself may not substantially impact the ecological characteristics of the habitats therein. That said, reserves partner on small and large scale restoration projects, provide long term monitoring of water quality, weather, habitat characteristics and more, and importantly, translate their findings into education and training opportunities that benefit the communities they are located in. These activities can lead to greater awareness of coastal management issues and better environmental stewardship in the long run. For example, the Lake Superior National Estuarine Research Reserve supported a project that identified forest areas most likely to be impacted by the invasive Emerald Ash Borer and designed a study to determine resilient tree species to replace the ash trees. Community volunteers assisted, planting more than 800 saplings underneath stands of ash trees, helping the forest sustain itself in the face of this invasive pest.

**Question:** What Programs and benefits do research reserves offer? What would this designation mean for the people of NE Wisconsin?

**Answer:** Reserves apply science and education to improve the management of estuaries. They do this by working with communities to address natural resource management issues, such as water quality and quantity, habitat protection and restoration, and environmental change, including climate change. Each



reserve brings together local stakeholders, scientists, land management professionals, and educators to understand coastal management issues and generate local, integrated solutions to coastal management challenges in their location. In addition to collecting and disseminating nationally and locally relevant data, reserves also provide the trainers and educators needed to bring the data and information to local citizens and decision makers.

Reserves further benefit their surrounding community by leveraging existing NOAA resources and bringing in additional federal funding that is only available to designated reserves.

- Reserves provide adult audiences with locally relevant training on estuarine issues of concern to better inform coastal management decisions.
- Reserves offer field classes for K-12 students and support teachers through professional development programs in marine education.
- Reserves are considered “living laboratories” providing for long-term water quality and habitat monitoring as well as opportunities for both scientists and graduate students to conduct research in our nation’s estuaries.
- Reserves work to protect and understand estuarine habitats, they study the impacts of stressors like land use and climate change, and conduct restoration science projects to inform future management.

**Question:** Does the NERR designation have any impact on management of the bay or the recreational users of the bay? What does this designation mean for marine traffic?

**Answer:** Reserve designation will not, in and of itself, change the current public uses of the lands and waters within a reserve. State authorities regulate public uses on state lands and waters, and site land owners make decisions about the permissible uses of their land consistent with applicable state authorities. For any existing federal land and water included within a reserve, federal regulations will continue to regulate uses of those lands and waters.

**Question:** Are there financial benefits for the resource with this designation?

**Answer:** Yes. Following the designation of a new National Estuarine Research Reserve, the reserve becomes eligible to receive funding from NOAA annually to support its operations. Reserve system funding is appropriated by Congress under the authority of the Coastal Zone Management Act and requires a 70-30 federal-state funding match for annual operations awards. Each reserve receives an equal amount of appropriated funding. NOAA works closely with their state partners to identify the most appropriate sources of matching funds.

Reserves also become eligible for competitive funding opportunities that are only available to National Estuarine Research Reserves following designation. These funding programs include the NERRS Science Collaborative Program and the annual Procurement, Acquisition, and Construction funding competition.

Finally, NOAA provides funding to support a two-year graduate research fellow at each reserve through the Margaret A. Davidson Fellowship Program. For more information on reserve system funding opportunities and matching requirements, please contact Bridget Faust-Accola (Bridget.Faust@noaa.gov).

**Question:** What does this mean for UW-Green Bay students and/or their research initiatives?

**Answer:** National Estuarine Research Reserves create opportunities that benefit University students. For example, every two years, students currently enrolled in a MS or PhD program are eligible to apply to the Margaret A. Davidson Fellowship Program which funds a student to conduct a two year research

project at each of the reserves in the system. Many students that participate in the Ernest F. Hollings Undergraduate Scholarship Program also have had the opportunity to complete projects at National Estuarine Research Reserves and be mentored by reserve staff. Finally, reserves also frequently hire student interns and fellows through their own site-specific programs.

**Question:** How is this project different from other efforts that have gone before and is this tying in with other initiatives like the Area of Concern, Cat Island Restoration and other projects?

**Answer:** The designation of a NERR along the Bay of Green Bay is the next step following the tremendous accomplishments of the Fox River cleanup, Cat Island restoration, and delisting of the Menominee River Area of Concern. The NERR could provide a central hub for future restoration and conservation work in the region. The NERR is focused on four sectors: research, education, stewardship, and training. With these four sectors providing the platform, the NERR and its staff will work in a variety of capacities to build off the recent restoration initiatives and help bring communities and organizations together to plan northeast Wisconsin's water future.

**Question:** I am curious as to what kind of economic impact this might have on the area? Have other NERR's seen an economic impact?

**Answer:** The University of Wisconsin - Green Bay anticipates economic impacts in a variety of ways. One is the power of tourism and the ability to draw in visitors interested in visiting the natural areas associated with the NERR. Second, money will come to the region for research and education. Third, the designation provides support for permanent staff positions. The University also anticipates that a Bay of Green Bay NERR could strengthen existing industries such as recreational fishing or shipbuilding because of the increased attention and ecosystem benefits that often follow from a reserve designation.

NOAA recently conducted a pilot study on five National Estuarine Research Reserves to better understand and communicate their economic contributions to their surrounding economies. This study found that:

- Guana Tolomato Matanzas Reserve, its partners, and their visitors contribute approximately 521 jobs and \$57.6 million in revenue annually to Duval, St. Johns, and Flagler Counties in Florida;
- Rookery Bay Reserve, its partners, and their visitors contribute over 512 jobs and \$55 million in revenue annually to Collier and Lee Counties in Florida;
- South Slough Reserve, its partners, and their visitors contribute over 65 jobs and \$6.1 million in revenue annually to Coos County, Oregon; and
- Apalachicola Reserve, its partners, and their visitors contribute over 664 jobs and \$46.4 million in revenue annually to Franklin County, Florida.

For more information, please reference this report on the pilot study's findings.

**Question:** What restrictions will be placed on businesses and homeowners who will end up with property within or adjacent to the Reserve?

**Answer:** While it is up to the state to determine what land and water areas will be considered during the site selection process, reserves are typically designated on existing public lands. NOAA relies on the existing authorities that protect the lands and waters to protect the reserve in the long run. As a result, the designation of a reserve in and of itself doesn't impose any new federal regulations, nor does it change the current public uses of the land and waters within the reserve.

**Question:** How will the designation serve to advance the restoration of the Bay's water quality?

**Answer:** If designated, the Bay of Green Bay NERR will be focused on addressing local ecosystem challenges, including water quality from a research, education, and stewardship perspective. This means additional funding to conduct research on water quality monitoring, and support for watershed and classroom education programs that address point source and nonpoint source pollution, among other ecological topics.

**Question:** Will there be an impact to area Waterfowling during open Waterfowling seasons?

**Answer:** The NERR system is a non-regulatory entity with no restrictions placed on recreational or commercial activities that already occur in and around the Bay. We might anticipate a long-term improvement in waterfowl habitat and population numbers because of the research, education, and stewardship initiatives conducted through a Bay of Green Bay NERR.

### ***How To Get Involved***

**Question:** How can our community support the NERR coming to our area?

**Answer:** The University of Wisconsin - Green Bay is excited to hear about interest in becoming involved and/or contributing to the NERR designation process. There are a few primary ways to get involved:

- Join our newsletter to stay up to date on progress:  
[https://uwgreenbay.ca1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV\\_6nWSwheukTSrmAZ](https://uwgreenbay.ca1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_6nWSwheukTSrmAZ)
- Request a presentation about the Green Bay NERR for a local group or organization:  
[https://uwgreenbay.ca1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV\\_eWKKsyYmDZTQ2sR](https://uwgreenbay.ca1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_eWKKsyYmDZTQ2sR)
- Tell your community, neighbors, family, and friends about the NERR and the benefits it will bring to the region. Share our website for more information: <https://www.uwgb.edu/national-estuarine-research-reserves/>
- Join a working group to help write the Green Bay NERR Management Plan. This will start towards the end of 2022/early 2023 and will rely on community input. If interested email Emily Tyner ([tynere@uwgb.edu](mailto:tynere@uwgb.edu)).
- If your organization would like to work with the University of Wisconsin-Green Bay on the designation process, please contact Emily Tyner ([tynere@uwgb.edu](mailto:tynere@uwgb.edu))
- No field trips are currently planned but this is a fun idea for after a site(s) has been selected. At that time, interested individuals could request a field trip to the NERR site(s).

### ***Post-Designation NERR Management***

**Question:** Who will be responsible for allocating the stewardship dollars associated with this designation?

**Answer:** If the NERR is designated, NOAA will allocate funding to the reserve on an annual basis to support its operations. Further decisions around the use of those funds will be the responsibility of the Bay of Green Bay NERR staff and their home organization, the University of Wisconsin-Green Bay. Funds to support the reserve's activities, including stewardship, will be allocated in accordance with the long-term vision of the Bay of Green Bay NERR established in the management plan. For more information on the portion of state and federal reserve funding that was used to support stewardship activities, please refer to NOAA's National Estuarine Research Reserve System Funding Summary for Fiscal Year 2020.

**Question:** How are Aquatic Invasive Species being incorporated into the NERR plan?

**Answer:** It is likely that consideration of aquatic invasive species (AIS) will play a role in the programmatic focus of the NERR research and education sectors.

**Question:** Having recently moved to Wisconsin, are there particular areas of estuary/water research that will be unique to the Green Bay NERR?

**Answer:** The size and classification of the Bay as the world's largest freshwater estuary is significant. The Green Bay watershed comprises about 1/3 of the Lake Michigan watershed and contributes about 1/3 of the nutrient impact. The Bay has a significant effect on Lake Michigan and the entire Great Lakes basin.

**Question:** What standard monitoring is planned for the NERR and how would that be resourced?

**Answer:** All reserves in the system participate in the System Wide Monitoring Program. Through this program, reserves collect data on water quality, weather, biological communities, habitat, land use, and land-cover characteristics using standardized instrumentation and data collection protocols. For more information, please visit the reserve system website or contact Bridget Faust-Accola ([bridget.faust@noaa.gov](mailto:bridget.faust@noaa.gov)).

### **Miscellaneous**

**Question:** In what ways is noise pollution considered when protecting these areas?

**Answer:** If NOAA accepts the State of Wisconsin's site nomination, impacts of the reserve designation would be considered during the development of the Environmental Impact Statement for the NERR designation. For more information, please contact Bridget Faust-Accola ([bridget.faust@noaa.gov](mailto:bridget.faust@noaa.gov)).

**Question:** What future actions can local organizations take now that it has the designation to prevent further pollution?

**Answer:** The Bay of Green Bay NERR is currently in the process of being designated; the designation has not yet been officially achieved. Once designated, local organizations could work with the Bay of Green Bay NERR to address shoreline and ecosystem challenges, including point- and nonpoint source pollution.

**Question:** What kind of efforts are being done to protect the wetlands and tributaries?

**Answer:** If designated, the Bay of Green Bay NERR will focus on four sectors: research, education, stewardship, and training. Work within these sectors may contribute to the decisions of management agencies to offer further protection for wetlands and tributaries. Within the land and water areas that become part of the Bay of Green Bay NERR, conservation and restoration efforts will work to maintain the ecological integrity of those systems.

**Question:** What happened between idea inception and March 25, 2019?

**Answer:** During the period between idea inception and the letter of interest from Wisconsin Governor Tony Evers to NOAA, the University of Wisconsin-Green Bay was building regional community support and partnerships for a Bay of Green Bay NERR. Some of that support took the form of letters submitted to NOAA. Other support came via funding from private donors, the Fund for Lake Michigan, and NOAA's Office for Coastal Management to initiate the designation process.

**Question:** Will this process affect the native fish population?

**Answer:** If designated, the Bay of Green Bay NERR will be a non-regulatory entity which means there will be no change in how fishing occurs within the waters of designated areas. That being said, the University of Wisconsin - Green Bay anticipates that the research, monitoring, education, and stewardship opportunities that come from the designation will help ecological restoration efforts in the region, including efforts to help native fish populations.

**Question:** How can it help with the Menominee River Area of Concern now that it has been delisted?

**Answer:** Depending on what areas within the Green Bay estuary are designated as part of the NERR, some part of the Menominee River may become part of the area monitored as part of NERR research activities. Additionally, the NERR can serve as a platform for regional organizing around the future of the delisted Menominee River Area of Concern alongside other past conservation and restoration efforts.

**Question:** What involvement does NERR have with the ecosystem of the Great Lakes? Are there pressures beyond the legal boundary surrounding the Great Lakes to transport fresh water to other municipalities and states?

**Answer:** The Green Bay NERR will represent the Lakes Michigan and Huron biogeographic sub-region and will work closely with the other two reserves in the Great Lakes on Lakes Erie and Superior. Water transport issues are relevant to the [Great Lakes Compact](#) and are unlikely to be addressed by the NERR designation.

**Question:** How does it affect any effort to organize efforts to make Longtail Island or any other area along the Waterway into a State Park?

**Answer:** The NERR designation is a separate effort from other initiatives.