



Bay of Green Bay National Estuarine Research Reserve Natural Area Candidate Sites

The University of Wisconsin-Green Bay is leading a process to designate a new National Estuarine Research Reserve in the Green Bay coastal area of Lake Michigan. The National Estuarine Research Reserve (NERR) System is a network of 30 coastal areas designated for long-term research, education, and interpretation to promote informed management of the nation's estuaries and coastal habitats.

Designation is a six-step process that typically takes between four and six years to complete. In 2019, the University of Wisconsin-Green Bay began step two of the designation process, site selection and nomination. Since then, the University, in partnership with NOAA, has designed a state-led process for site selection and convened three committees with wide-ranging expertise and geographic representation to execute this process. The development of a list of *candidate sites* for the natural areas of the Bay of Green Bay National Estuarine Research Reserve (NERR) is one step in the overall site selection process. An overview of the site selection process, based on NOAA guidance, can be found [here](#).

1. What are candidate site areas? Candidate site areas are the natural areas that will have a full suite of site selection criteria applied to them to find the ideal location for the National Estuarine Research Reserve. To determine the candidate site areas, the [Site Development Committee](#) undertook a process called preliminary site screening. Through this process, the committee reviewed all public lands within the [Relevant Coastal Geography](#) and applied four high-level criteria to narrow the universe of potential sites to those that are suitable for a reserve. This process was intended to generate a list of 3-5 optimal candidate areas, but the process was expanded to include nine optimal candidate areas. Note, the

candidate site areas **are not** the boundaries of the NERR; the boundaries will be established after the detailed site selection criteria have been applied, and a site has been selected.

A site for the visitor and education center will be determined later in the designation process. The location of the visitor center does not need to be located within a candidate site area or within the boundaries of the reserve, post-designation.

2. How were candidate site areas determined? The candidate site areas were determined by the Site Development Committee with input and consultation from the [Site Coordination Committee](#). The Site Development Committee applied an iterative process to review all publicly owned and land trust properties within the [Relevant Coastal Geography](#). They considered four key questions in their review:

- Is the area coastal or estuarine?
- Does the area have features aligned with the research and education goals of the NERR (i.e., not a playground)?
- Is it publicly owned or a land trust property?
- Is it connected to the estuary in a significant way? (i.e., Is there a direct linkage with the waters of the Green Bay estuary, and does the connection have bidirectional flow?)

3. How will the candidate site areas be evaluated? The candidate site areas will be evaluated by the [Site Evaluation Committee](#). Detailed site selection criteria will be applied to all candidate site areas and the results will be leveraged by the committee to recommend a site(s) for the natural area components of the reserve. The Site Evaluation Committee expects to have a recommended site(s) for the natural areas of the Bay of Green Bay NERR by early Fall 2022.

4. How do I view a digital map of the Candidate Site Areas? A map of the candidate site areas can be viewed [here](#).

5. I would like the committee to consider a publicly owned or land trust area that is not currently within a candidate site area; how do I share this information with the Site Evaluation Committee? Contact Emily Tyner (tynere@uwgb.edu) for the procedure to submit a request for consideration of additional candidate site areas within the [Relevant Coastal Geography](#) of the Green Bay Estuary.

6. How can I learn more about the preliminary site screening and candidate site areas? The University of Wisconsin-Green Bay is hosting a technical webinar to discuss progress on designation efforts and share details on the site selection criteria and the candidate site areas. The same webinar will be offered on two dates: Tuesday, May 10th from 2-3 pm (central time) and Wednesday, May 11th from 6:30-7:30 pm (central time). **The webinar sign-up is [here](#).** At a date following the technical webinars, the University of Wisconsin-Green Bay and NOAA will host a virtual question-and-answer session to provide an opportunity for more in-depth discussion. A formal date and time for the question-and-answer session will be announced at the webinar, shared via email, and posted on the Green Bay NERR website. A recording of the webinars, and a summary of questions and answers asked during the webinars and the follow-up session will be posted to the [Green Bay NERR website](#).