

Wisconsin's National Estuarine Research Reserve Nomination: Integrating Multi-state Collaboration, Large-scale Group Processes, and Grassroots Involvement into Extension Programming

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What is a Freshwater Estuary?

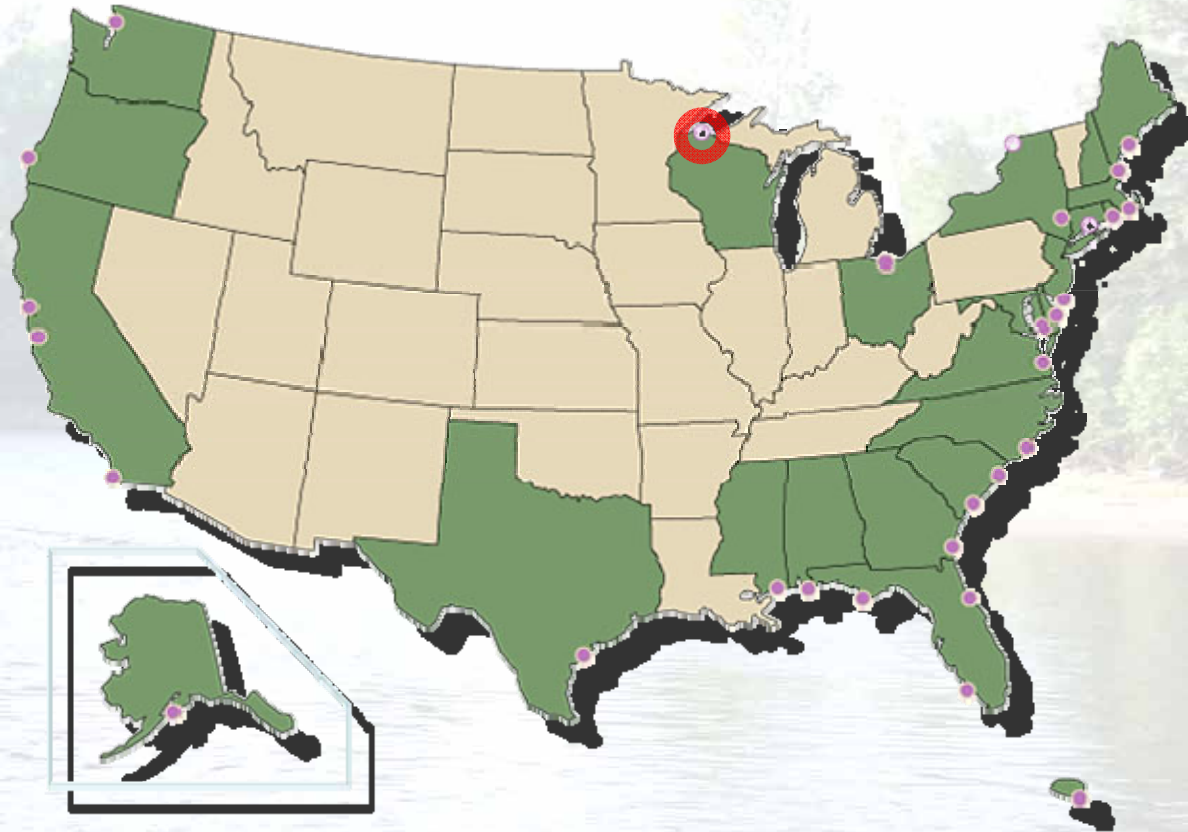
A coastal wetland formed where water from a river mixes with water from the Great Lakes



Photo: Eric Epstein, WDNR, 1996

What is the National Estuarine Research Reserve System?

- A National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration partnership with states that involves local partners
- Integrates research and monitoring, education and outreach, and stewardship
- Wisconsin's site would be only the second Great Lakes site

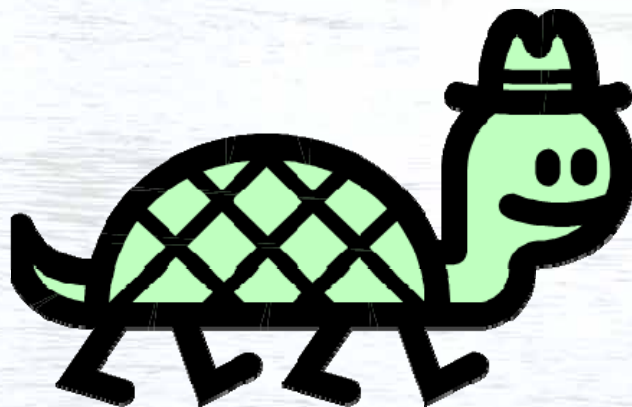


Lake Superior NERR Origins

- Started in 1999 with outreach and education programming – Estuary Ed-Venture Program, String of Pearls DVD, exhibits, local involvement
- Inclusive effort with substantial grassroots involvement and leadership
- April 2003 – more than 20 organizations formally petition the Governor to request a NERR feasibility study

The Speed of Government

- March 2004 – Governor sends a formal letter of interest to NOAA
- July 2006 – NOAA responds that staff resources are available to assist with the site selection process



Site Selection Kick-off

- October 2006 – Site selection kick-off meeting with assistance from NOAA and Ohio Old Woman Creek NERR
- Formed four teams
 - State Agency Liaison Team (Final decision-making authority)
 - Coordination Team
 - Site Selection Technical Team (Advisory)
 - Public Involvement Team (Advisory)
- Teams included involvement of MN partners

Lake Superior NERR Vision

- Promote appreciation, understanding, and protection of the unique estuary systems of Lake Superior
- Demonstrate the application of watershed principles
- Create a vital community asset and a destination for visitors
- Become a model for long-term community involvement and inter-governmental cooperation
- Conduct research of local, statewide, national, and international importance
- Provide leadership for research, management, and outreach related to freshwater estuaries

Site Evaluation

Legend

NERR Candidate Sites

Status

- Considered
- Active

- State Highways
- Streams (100K Quads)
- Open Water (100K Quads)

Produced by: M. Koutnik
Date: February 13, 2007
Data: WI DNR, ESRI



Narrowing the Candidates

- Developed a “short list” of candidate sites
- Conducted intense public information and involvement effort in the communities surrounding the “short list” sites



Process Summary

- Over 70 participants in the teams
- Evaluated 35 candidate sites
- Teams met 25 times over 15 months
- Developed and implemented a detailed public involvement plan
- 17 presentations were made to local governments and organizations
- 8 resolutions of support, 8 letters of support, one community report, and additional support from 7 organizations

Ashland County Land & Water Conservation Department

Bad River Band of Lake Superior Chippewa

Bayfield County Land & Water Conservation Department

Bayfield Regional Conservancy

City of Ashland

City of Bayfield

City of Superior

Douglas County Extension Board of Supervisors

Douglas County Land & Water Conservation Department

Greenland County Extension Board of Supervisors

National Park Service



Natural Resources Research Institute, University of Minnesota Duluth

Northland College

Red Cliff Band of Lake Superior Chippewa

Technical Considerations (SSTT)
Research and Education

Administrative Considerations (SLT)
(Operation, Finances, Logistics, etc.)

Community Considerations (PIT)
(Local Support or Concerns)

Our Happy
Place

Site Recommendation

- St. Louis River Freshwater Estuary
- 12,000 acre system on largest US tributary to Lake Superior
- Home to over 45 native fish species and 230 bird species

The St. Louis River Estuary

The Superior choice for the next National Estuarine Research Reserve

Superior
There's More To Our Show!

DOUGLAS COUNTY
WISCONSIN

UNIVERSITY of WISCONSIN
Superior

CITIZENS ACTION COMMITTEE
ST. LOUIS RIVER

The NERR Future

- Development of an Environmental Impact Statement and Management Plan
- Process will again includes advisory committees and partner involvement
- Represents a regional opportunity



Managing a NERR in Wisconsin

LAW ***Extension*** *is the anticipated lead agency
for the Wisconsin NERR*



St. Louis River Alliance

Willard Munger, Sr. Environmental Stewardship Award

Presented to

Patrick Robinson

Wisconsin Freshwater Estuary Initiative Coordination Team

In recognition of exemplary leadership in
organizing and coordinating the Lake Superior
Freshwater Estuary site selection process.



**ST. LOUIS RIVER
ALLIANCE**

Bonita L. Martin
SLRA Chair

Jack Ezell
Chair, Stewardship Committee

January 2009

Lessons Learned/Confirmed

- The strength of multi-agency partnerships
- The importance of public engagement and involvement
- Be explicit about roles in the process and state them over, and over, and over
- Effective outreach and engagement takes time (and patience)
- Somebody(ies) needs to commit to leading and facilitating the process

Acknowledgements



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 **WISCONSIN COASTAL
MANAGEMENT PROGRAM**

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