



Bay of Green Bay National Estuarine Research Reserve (NERR)



The University of Wisconsin-Green Bay is excited to be leading the designation of a new National Estuarine Research Reserve (NERR) on the bay of Green Bay. The NERR system is a national network of 30 sites across the coastal US, including the Great Lakes, designed to protect and study estuaries and their coastal wetlands. The mission of the NERR System is, “To practice and promote stewardship of coasts and estuaries through innovative research, education, and training using a place-based system of protected areas.” Established through the Coastal Zone Management Act, the reserves represent a partnership program between NOAA and the coastal states. NOAA provides funding and national guidance, and each site is managed daily by a lead state agency or university with input from local partners. For the Bay of Green Bay NERR, the University of Wisconsin-Green Bay is leading the designation process. At the local level, a Bay of Green Bay NERR will offer a coordinating force to manage, restore, and protect the Green Bay ecosystem, with a programmatic focus on four sectors: research, education, stewardship, and training. Green Bay is the world's largest freshwater estuary and the concept of locating a NERR in the Bay has been in discussion for some years.

The designation process is being led by a steering committee chosen to represent a range of regional interests and contribute a breadth of professional expertise. Committee members include representations from the Oneida Nation, Menominee Indian Tribe of Wisconsin, Wisconsin Sea Grant, Wisconsin Coastal Management Program, Department of Natural Resources, UW-Extension, the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee School of Freshwater Science, and Microsoft TechSpark Wisconsin.

Bay of Green Bay NERR Fact Sheet

- The University of Wisconsin-Green Bay is leading the designation
- **Non-regulatory**
- State-NOAA partnership for research, education, and training
 - The state is responsible for the day-to-day management of the reserve
 - NOAA administers the entire reserve system; responsible for establishing standards for designation and operating reserves that benefit the entire system
- Green Bay NERR representing the Lake Michigan/Huron Basin
 - Physical location in waters of Green Bay
 - Programs and resources for the region
- Joining a national network (30 reserves, 1.3 million acres) to tell the story of Green Bay
 - World's largest freshwater estuary
 - Highlight cultural and economic connections to water



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- 'Locally Relevant, Nationally Significant' = address local coastal management issues (changing water levels, PFAS, harmful algae blooms, etc.) while elevating the national and international visibility of Green Bay
- \$1.24 million/year for water-focused Research, Education, Stewardship, and Training (REST)
 - At least one staff position for each area of REST
- A visitor center for hands-on and place-based education, lab space, conference area, dorms, boats
- Goals for a Green Bay NERR:
 - To be the most "technologically advanced" NERR in the system
 - Think holistically about all the ways water touches our lives

Activities of a NERR– Research, Education, Stewardship, Training

- 1) **Research** – Data contributes to a national network assessing the health of estuaries;
- 2) **Education** – Work with K-12 school districts; Teacher on the Estuary Program- train teachers in coastal and estuary science.
- 3) **Stewardship** - Mapping; restoration; interdisciplinary problem-solving.
- 4) **Training** – Technical assistance on coastal zone challenges (stormwater management, coastal development, working waterfronts): Bring science to local decision-making: Access to national NOAA expertise in coastal economics, policy, modeling, and science communication.

Timeline of Designation

- ✓ Letter of Interest from Governor – completed Summer 2019
- ✓ Site Selection & Nomination – completed January 2024
- Draft Environmental Impact Statement and Management Plan for the Reserve
 - Management activities reflect the local interest in the site and include activities already happening in the area –fishing, birding, hunting, boating, etc.
- Public review and finalize EIS and Management Plan – anticipated 2025
- Designation findings and certificate; Record of Decision
- Designation Ceremony

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