

NOAA Accepts Nomination of National Estuarine Research Reserve Site Along Bay of Green Bay

Written by GOV Press Wisconsin

Thursday, 25 January 2024 10:40 - Last Updated Friday, 26 January 2024 17:56

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MADISON — Gov. Tony Evers today announced The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) has reviewed the final nomination package submitted by the state of Wisconsin for a multi-component site in the Bay of Green Bay and determined that it meets all regulatory requirements for accepting the nomination of a National Estuarine Research Reserve (NERR).



“Conserving and protecting our natural resources and land continues to be a top priority for my administration, and I am thrilled to see this important effort to designate a site along the Bay of Green Bay as a new National Estuarine Research Reserve move forward,” said Gov. Evers. “I want to thank everyone at UW-Green Bay, NOAA, and all those involved in this effort, and I look forward to the continued progress to see this designation, which will bolster efforts to study and conserve this important regional ecosystem, realized.”

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“This nomination embodies the collaboration with partners and the public that is the backbone of the research reserve system,” said Nicole LeBoeuf, director of NOAA’s National Ocean Service. “As we move through the designation process, NOAA is committed to hearing from partners about how research, education, and stewardship opportunities can help make this estuarine ecosystem and Great Lakes communities more resilient.”

In 2022, Gov. Evers [announced](#) he would be nominating a site in the Bay of Green Bay for inclusion in the [NERR System](#), a national network of 30 sites across the coastal United States and the Great Lakes designed to protect and study estuaries and their coastal wetlands. The site is made up of a number of natural areas along the bay’s shoreline and surrounding region that were submitted to the governor by the University of Wisconsin (UW)-Green Bay, which has been the lead state organization behind the effort to designate a Bay of Green Bay NERR for the last several years.

NOAA’s acceptance of this site for nomination is a significant milestone in the NERR designation process and a step toward bringing the water quality research, educational programming, and technical expertise that comes with such a designation to Northeast Wisconsin. UW-Green Bay will continue to lead the state’s efforts through the next steps toward NERR designation, and if selected, the reserve will be a non-regulatory entity managed by UW-Green Bay with program guidance and technical assistance from NOAA.

“This is an exciting next step for our region. UW-Green Bay is committed to studying, preserving, and protecting the area that includes the largest freshwater estuary in the world,” said University of Wisconsin-Green Bay Chancellor Michael Alexander. “The partnership that can happen by bringing in a national network of coastal research experts will provide information that is locally relevant and nationally significant and bring attention and support to the region to help solve some of the challenges facing our great waterways. This is an effort we are proud to lead.”

The designation of a Bay of Green Bay NERR presents an opportunity to protect and restore the Green Bay ecosystem while generating economic, cultural, and recreational benefits for the entire region. The NERR designation will also bring national attention to the Bay of Green Bay as an important waterway for the state and the Great Lakes region. Only publicly owned or lands open to the public are eligible to be included in the NERR, and no new land will be purchased for the designation.

The site proposal is the culmination of several years of local, grassroots support for a research reserve in Northeast Wisconsin. The proposed sites were selected following a comprehensive evaluation process that sought the input of the public, affected landowners, and other interested parties. State and local agency officials, representatives from Tribal Nations, estuarine experts, and industry leaders served as committee members and evaluated candidate site areas. More information about the Bay of Green Bay NERR, the site selection process, and next steps can be found [here](#).