



Tony Evers

Office of the Governor | State of Wisconsin

VIA ELECTRONIC DELIVERY

October 27, 2022

The Honorable Richard W. Spinrad, Ph.D.
Under Secretary of Commerce for Oceans and Atmosphere and Administrator
National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration
1401 Constitution Ave, NW
Room 51030
Washington, DC 20320

Re: Green Bay National Estuarine Research Reserve Nomination

Dear Dr. Spinrad:

On behalf of the state of Wisconsin, I am pleased to announce that I will be nominating a site in the Bay of Green Bay for inclusion in the National Estuarine Research Reserve (NERR) System, and the full site nomination document will be submitted to NOAA in late November. The Green Bay ecosystem is the largest freshwater estuary in the world in one of the largest reservoirs of freshwater on the planet, the vitality of which is critical to the current and future prosperity of Wisconsin and the broader region. If selected, the Bay of Green Bay NERR will be the third reserve within the Great Lakes and the sole representative for the Lake Michigan-Huron biogeographic region.

The Green Bay NERR will create a “living laboratory” where scientists, educators, and community partners can work and collaborate to conduct cutting-edge research, develop and offer stewardship and training opportunities, and institute regionally tailored educational programming for all ages. The Green Bay NERR also presents an opportunity to accelerate sustainable development around our water resources, better engage Northeast Wisconsin with the incredible natural resources of the Green Bay ecosystem, and enhance the region’s economic, cultural, and recreational connections to our waters. On a larger scale, the Green Bay NERR will add an invaluable partner and globally unique resource to the NERR System, and through collaboration with coastal areas in Northeast Wisconsin, the Lake Michigan-Huron biogeographic region, and across the United States, will bring nearshore coastal expertise to the region.

After an extensive review process, the proposed multi-component Green Bay NERR includes the following areas: a) the Peshtigo River estuary; b) the west shore and lower bay, including the outflow of the Fox River into the bay and UW-Green Bay’s Point Sable and Wequiock Creek Natural Areas; and c) the Strawberry Creek and Big Creek estuaries in Sturgeon Bay. The proposed site is a composite of unique coastal ecosystem types representative of the Green Bay freshwater estuary and similar estuaries found within the Lake Michigan-Huron Biogeographic Great Lakes region.

Additionally, of the approximately 11,400 land acres within the proposed site, more than 8,900 acres are already designated areas managed by the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (DNR), including:

- a. The Peshtigo Harbor State Wildlife Area, Bloch Oxbow State Natural Area, and Badger Gift Lands, which represent the farthest north extent of the NERR;
- b. Peats Lake, Sensiba, Tibbet-Suamico, and Little Tail Units within the Green Bay West Shores Wildlife Area, and the Suamico River State Habitat Area, along the west shore of Green Bay; and
- c. The Strawberry Creek estuary in Sturgeon Bay.

The site also includes over 1,400 acres of land managed by Brown County, including the Barkhausen Waterfowl Preserve. The remaining 1,100 acres includes land owned by the Door County Land Trust, Crossroads at Big Creek, the city of Green Bay, the village of Howard, the village of Suamico, the town of Scott, the Sturgeon Bay School District, and the University of Wisconsin System. The diversity of land-holding partners included in the site represents a unique opportunity for building a clear, coordinated force to address locally relevant ecosystem challenges while serving the mission of the NERR.

On behalf of the state of Wisconsin, I appreciate your consideration and look forward to our work, together, to study and protect this critically important freshwater estuary.

Sincerely,



Tony Evers
Governor

cc: Dr. Jeffrey Payne, NOAA Office for Coastal Management Director
Keelin Kuipers, NOAA Office for Coastal Management Deputy Director
Joelle Gore, NOAA OCM Stewardship Division Chief
Erica Seiden, NOAA OCM Ecosystems Program Manager
Betsy Nicholson, NOAA OCM North Region Director
Bridget Faust-Accola, NOAA OCM Great Lakes Program Analyst