

# Wisconsin's Freshwater Estuary Initiative

• Developing a Lake Superior Freshwater Estuary



Center •

[freshwaterestuary.uwex.edu](http://freshwaterestuary.uwex.edu)

# Freshwater estuaries are unique Great Lakes coastal wetlands



Jim Meeker

They occur where rivers and Great Lakes water mix in shallow wetlands located near the mouth of a river

# Why are freshwater estuaries important?



**They provide a sense of place for local communities by serving as areas for recreation and tourism**

# Why are freshwater estuaries important?



Tetra Tech



Epstein



Meeker

They protect and improve our water quality

# Why are freshwater estuaries important?

They provide food and shelter and serve as nursery and nesting areas for fish and wildlife



**Important Habitat**

# Wisconsin's Freshwater Estuary Initiative

**Increasing understanding  
and stewardship of  
Wisconsin's freshwater  
estuaries.**

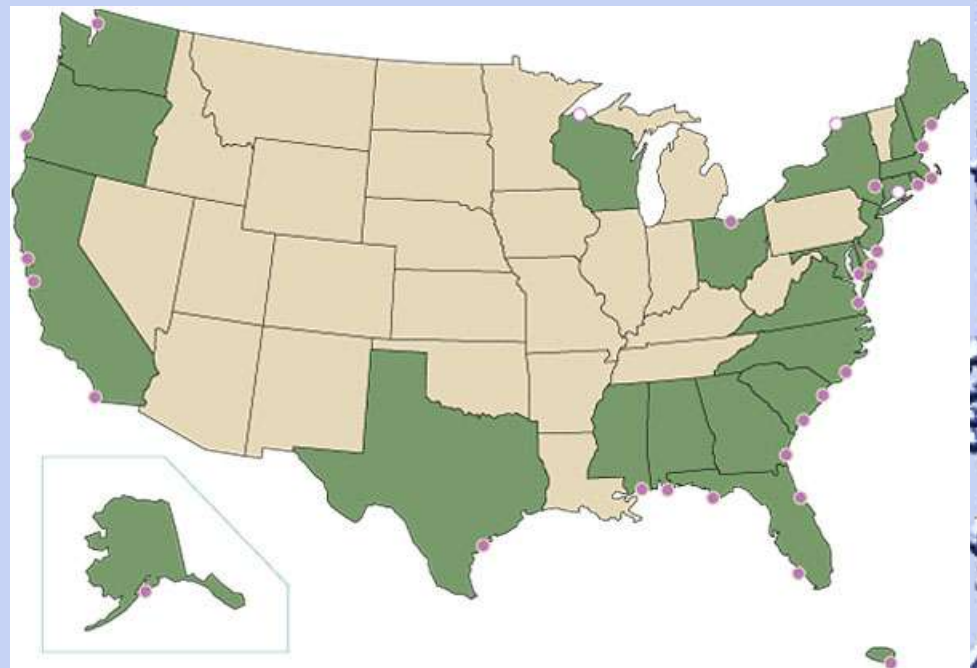
**Establishing a  
*Lake Superior Freshwater Estuary Center*  
supported through the  
National Estuarine Research Reserve  
program.**



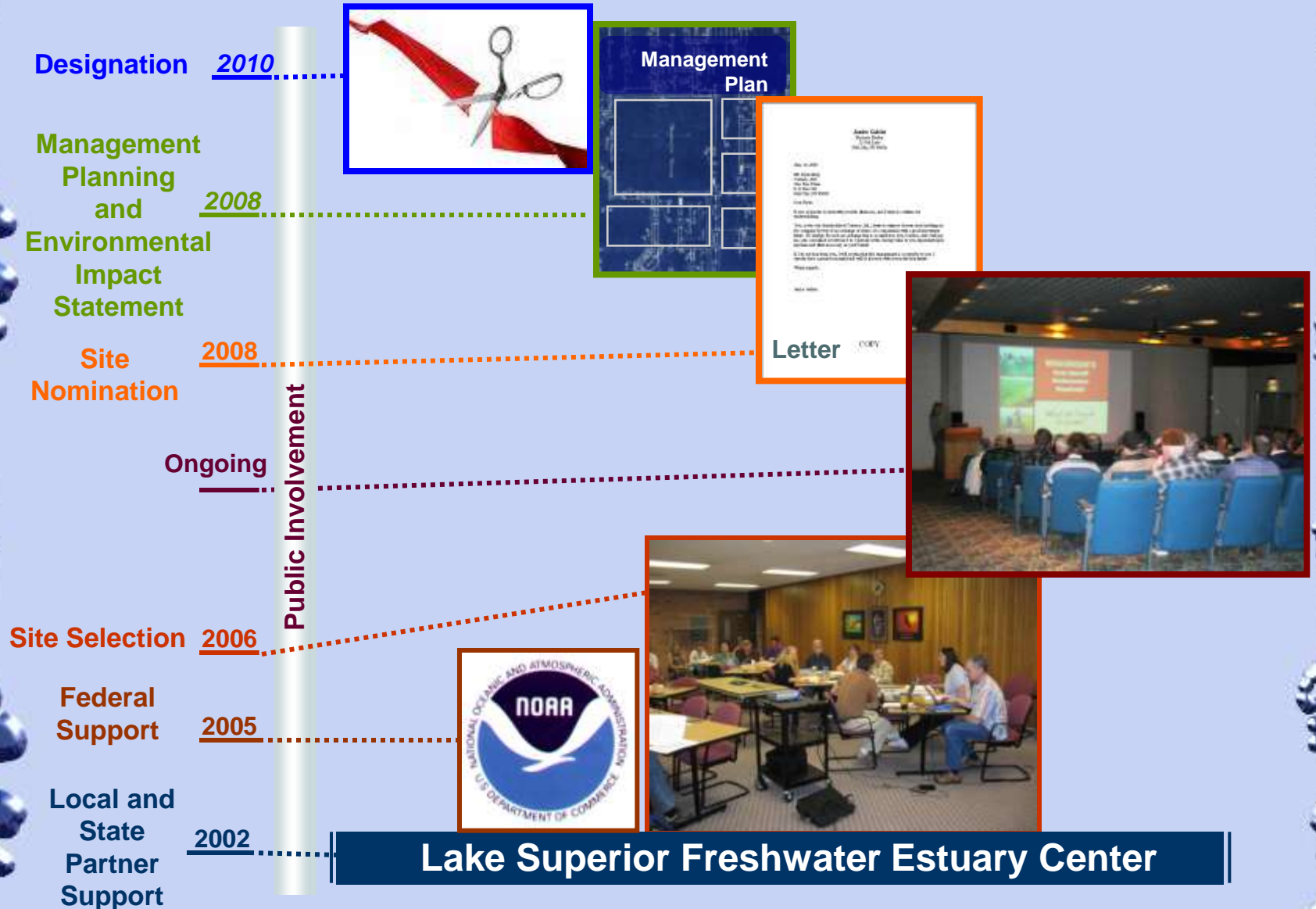
## National Estuarine Research Reserve (NERR)

- Wisconsin and NOAA partnership in cooperation with local communities
- Non-regulatory program
- Network of 27 research sites in USA
- Research, education, stewardship

***Wisconsin's site will be the 2<sup>nd</sup> freshwater estuary in the NERR program.***



# Steps to Designation



# Site Selection Process

## WISCONSIN'S LAKE SUPERIOR NATIONAL ESTUARINE RESEARCH RESERVE

### The Timeline in Brief

April 2003

More than 20 organizations participate in a grassroots effort to generate support for a site selection and feasibility study.

March 2004

Governor Doyle sends a formal letter of interest to NOAA.

2004 – 2005

An outreach initiative increases public awareness related to Lake Superior's freshwater estuaries and fosters stakeholder involvement.

July 2006

NOAA responds that staff resources are available to assist with the site selection process.

October 2006

The site selection process officially begins with the NOAA kickoff meeting in Wisconsin.

March 2008

Target date for Wisconsin's Governor to submit a site nomination to NOAA.



### Site Selection Teams

#### State Liaison Team (SLT)

Coordinates state agency roles, operates as liaison to federal and tribal partners, and provides administrative guidance.

#### Coordination Team (CT)

Provides leadership for site selection efforts and facilitates communication among partners.

#### Site Selection Technical Team (SSTT)

Provides expertise for evaluating the candidate sites relative to technical criteria, and provides local knowledge regarding freshwater estuary resources.

#### Public Involvement Team (PIT)

Assists with development and implementation of the public involvement and engagement efforts and includes local representation such as elected officials and community members.



### Site Selection Process

**Step 1** The Teams develop a Vision Statement to guide the selection process.

**Step 2** The SSTT adapts the site selection criteria guidance for use in the Great Lakes freshwater estuary evaluation – the first time this has been done in the NERR Program.

**Step 3** The SSTT uses the criteria to evaluate all Lake Superior freshwater estuaries in Wisconsin, and develops a "short list" of NERR candidate sites.

**Step 4** The SLT refines the "short list" based on administrative considerations.

**Step 5** The PIT engages local governments and affected landowners adjacent to the short list sites, and explores community interest and concerns related to a NERR designation.

**Step 6** The Teams collectively consider the site evaluations, public involvement outcomes, and administrative factors to select a final site for nomination.

**Step 7** Required public meetings are held in the vicinity of the proposed site.

**Step 8** The Wisconsin Coastal Management Program works with the Governor's Office to finalize and submit the site nomination.



#### AUTHORS:

Travis Olson, Wisconsin Coastal Management Program, [travis.olson@wisconsin.gov](mailto:travis.olson@wisconsin.gov)  
Patrick Robinson, UW-Extension, [patrick.robinson@ces.uwex.edu](mailto:patrick.robinson@ces.uwex.edu)  
Becky Sapper, UW-Extension, [beckysapper@ces.uwex.edu](mailto:beckysapper@ces.uwex.edu)  
Cathy Techtmann, UW-Extension, [catherina.techtmann@ces.uwex.edu](mailto:catherina.techtmann@ces.uwex.edu)

● Candidate Sites

0 5 10

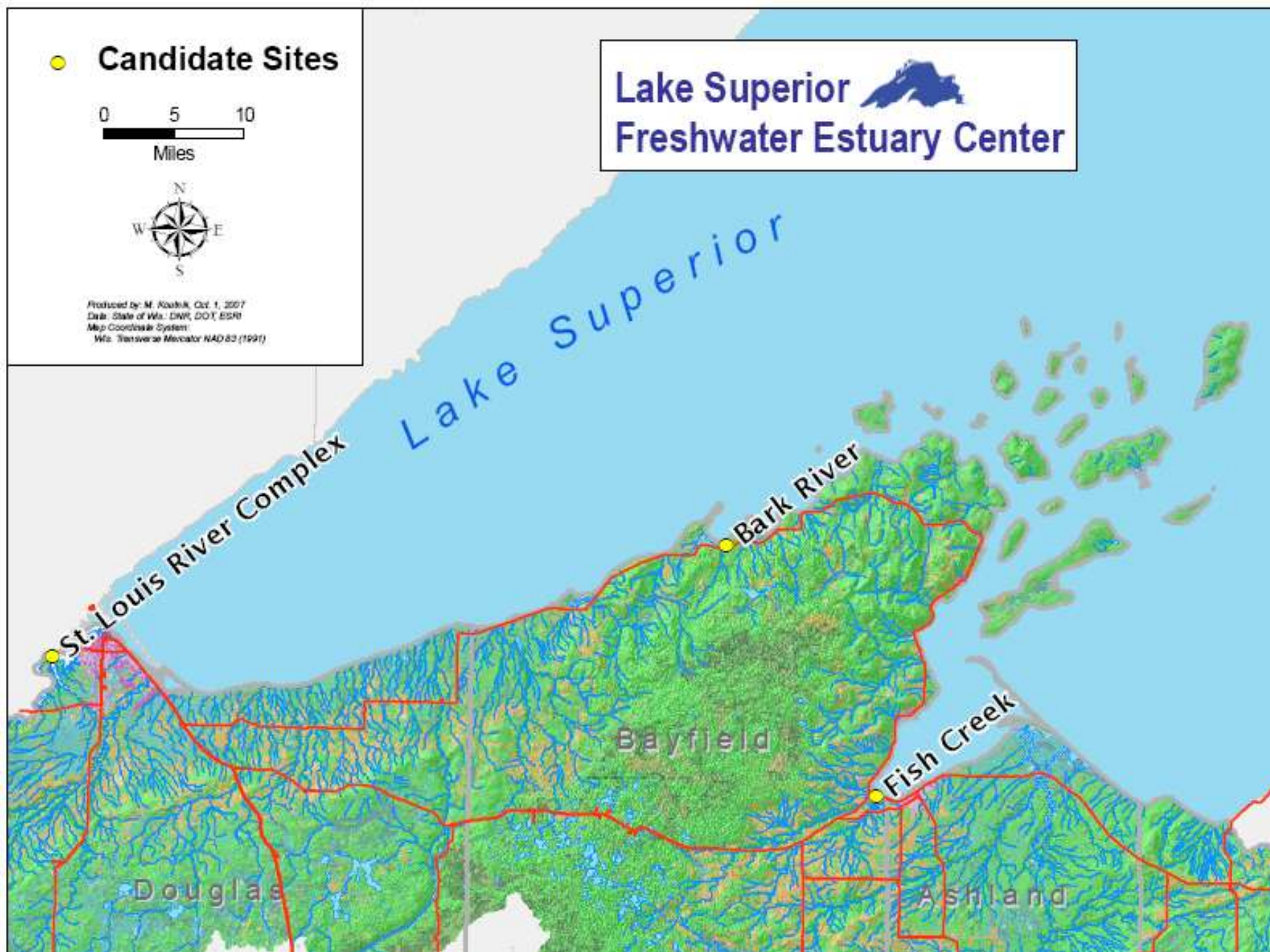


Miles



Produced by: M. Koshik, Oct. 1, 2007  
Data: State of Wis. DNR, DOT, ESRI  
Map Coordinate System:  
Wis. Transverse Mercator NAD 83 (1991)

Lake Superior   
Freshwater Estuary Center



# Will private lands be taken for a Freshwater Estuary Center?

**No**

Land must be under public ownership to be considered for inclusion

Tribal lands can not be included

Private, non-tribal land can only be included if the landowner voluntarily chooses to participate



Ted Cline



# Will we still be able to access and use these areas?

**Yes**



**A Freshwater Estuary Center will not require any additional restrictions on public access or use of the site**

# Will I still be able to hunt and fish in the estuary?



**Yes**



**A Freshwater Estuary Center will not require additional restrictions on hunting and fishing**

# Funding for a Freshwater Estuary Center



**Approximately \$750,000 is annually funded by federal and state sources for staff, applied research and education needs and infrastructure maintenance**

# Managing a Freshwater Estuary Center

***LW  
Extension*** will administer the  
*Freshwater Estuary Center*



**Community Advisory Council**  
**Local input is required...and encouraged**

# Overall Benefits



**Federal designation makes a NERR site eligible for federal and state funds**

**Supports research and educational efforts to increase our understanding of freshwater estuaries and coastal wetlands**



**Management techniques will be researched and applied to important issues for our communities**



# Community Benefits



**Water quality, fish populations and wildlife habitat will benefit from work conducted through the Freshwater Estuary Center**

# Community Benefits



**More educational opportunities for school and community groups**

# Community Benefits



**Attraction for local tourism and recreation**

## **Becky Sapper**

Lake Superior Freshwater Estuary Outreach Coordinator

UW-Extension, 715-685-2652

[becky.sapper@ces.uwex.edu](mailto:becky.sapper@ces.uwex.edu)

## **Patrick Robinson**

Freshwater Estuary Specialist

UW- Extension, 920-465-2175

[patrick.robinson@ces.uwex.edu](mailto:patrick.robinson@ces.uwex.edu)



## **Wisconsin's Freshwater Estuary Initiative**

[freshwaterestuary.uwex.edu](http://freshwaterestuary.uwex.edu)

## **National Estuarine Research Reserve System:**

[www.nerrs.noaa.gov](http://www.nerrs.noaa.gov)