The Louisiana National Estuarine Research Reserve (LaNERR)

Site Selection and Nomination Report

November 22, 2022

Office of the Governor
State of Louisiana

JOHN BEL EDWARDS
GOVERNOR

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June 29, 2022

Richard W. Spinrad, Ph.D.
Under Secretary of Commerce for Oceans and Atmosphere & NOAA Administrator
1401 Constitution Avenue, NW
Room 51030
Washington, DC 20230

RE: Louisiana National Estuarine Research Reserve Nomination

Dear Dr. Spinrad:

On behalf of the State of Louisiana, I am pleased to nominate the Atchafalaya site for inclusion in the National Estuarine Research Reserve (NERR) System. This site is a unique coastal environment that will fill an important gap in the NERR System while greatly contributing to the focus areas of stewardship, research, training, and education of this National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) program. Please find the attached site selection and nomination report for the details which are summarized in the remainder of this letter.

The proposed Atchafalaya NERR will be a composite of ecosystem types that are representative of an active large-river delta estuary in the Mississippi River Delta Region, the only active programming delta coastline in the Gulf of Mexico. The site includes the fluvial and deltaic floodplains of the Atchafalaya River and bays comprised of state-owned land and water areas as follows:

a) The proposed Atchafalaya NERR will include the Atchafalaya River Basin floodplain, the Atchafalaya and Wax Lake deltaic floodplains, and the adjacent estuaries of Atchafalaya, Vermilion, and East and West Cote Blanche bays;
b) Of the approximately 650,000 hectares (1.6 million acres) within the proposed site, there are about 305,000 hectares (750,000 acres) of state-owned lands and about 121,500 hectares (300,000 acres) of state-owned water bodies;
c) Within the lands and waterways of the proposed Atchafalaya site are more than 10 state or federally designated wildlife management areas (WMAs), wildlife sanctuaries, wildlife refuges, and state parks which present unique opportunities to serve the mission of the NERR program; and
d) The majority of the state lands proposed for potential inclusion in the proposed Atchafalaya NERR are WMAs operated by the Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries (LDWF) including Sherburne, Attakapas, and Atchafalaya Delta WMAs, Marsh Island and State Wildlife Refuges, and Lake Fausse Pointe and Cypremort Point State Parks.

The proposed site was selected to meet the guidelines of NOAA's policy on NERR expansion. Establishing a NERR in Louisiana will:

a) Represent a unique and essential addition to the NERR System. As of 2022, Louisiana is the only marine coastal state in the country lacking a reserve, and the Atchafalaya's one-of-a-kind biogeographic setting would make it the only large river-delta estuary in the NERR System;
b) Provide opportunities for short-term and long-term targeted research, monitoring, education, and outreach to help Louisiana enable the Coastal Zone to be more resilient in the face of numerous environmental challenges;
c) Provide a national stage to showcase the unique attributes of a major river-delta estuary to the nation and promote efforts at the national level to restore and protect this natural, economic, and cultural resource; and
d) Add value to the Atchafalaya National Heritage Area, authorized by the US Congress in October 2006, to meet the heritage area's goals of enhancing interpretation and awareness of the area's key stories, supporting sustainable cultural economic development opportunities, increasing appreciation for cultural resources, and increasing appreciation for natural resources.

Louisiana's proposed NERR will contribute significantly to enhancement of the NERR System's four foci of stewardship, research, education, and training by:

a) Building upon current monitoring efforts and restoration activities to increase physical and biological monitoring in the riverine system and fresh, floating, brackish, and salt marshes (stewardship);
b) Providing vital research opportunities and access, becoming the only active delta estuarine ecosystem in the NERR network, thus adding value to the significance of the research conducted at the site (research);
c) Offering a variety of opportunities for learning to diverse audiences by providing relatively short travel distances from major coastal cities and universities (education); and
d) Serving as an ideal place to discuss the interconnectedness of engineering and ecology and the impacts on communities (training).

The selection process identified the proposed site through a multi-year effort, examining six estuarine zones that represent the hydrologic basins of the Mississippi River Delta and engaging individuals from a variety of state agencies, academic institutions, and non-governmental organizations. The site nomination effort was coordinated among staff from the Governor's Office of Coastal Activities (GOCA), Louisiana State University's Department of Oceanography and Coastal Sciences (LSU), and Louisiana Sea Grant who worked closely with NERR Program staff from the NOAA Office for Coastal Management to ensure that the proposed site met or exceeded NERR Program guidelines and state management needs.

Oversight of the search for a NERR included an executive committee with representatives from GOCA, Coastal Protection and Restoration Authority (CPRA), Louisiana Department of Natural Resources, and LDWF. During the public engagement phases, local governments and numerous organizations at local and regional levels expressed support for a Louisiana NERR. Completion of the designation process for a proposed site would be managed by a partnership between CPRA and LSU and include opportunities to develop collaborations with other organizations where programmatic interests and expertise may align. The point of contact at CPRA for the designation process will be Brian Lezina who can be contacted via telephone at (225) 342-1475 or via email at

brian.lezina@la.gov.

The State of Louisiana looks forward to your favorable review of this nomination and the beginning of a new partnership with your agency.

Sincerely,

John Bel Edwards
Governor

cc: Chip Kline, GOCA
Bren Haase, CPRA
Robert R. Twilley, Ph.D., LSU
Kristin Ransom, NOAA OCM
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The Louisiana National Estuarine Research Reserve (LaNERR)
Site Selection and Nomination Report

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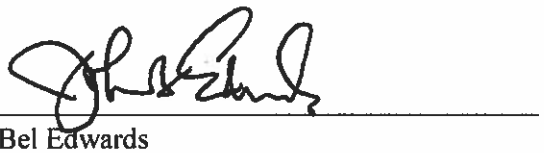
SIGNATURE OF APPROVAL:



John Bel Edwards
Governor

6-29-2022
Date

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ARBRE	Atchafalaya River Basin Restoration and Enhancement (ARBRE Task Force)
BTNEP	Barataria-Terrebonne National Estuary Program
C.F.R.	Code of Federal Regulations
CPRA	Coastal Protection and Restoration Authority (of Louisiana)
CRMS	Coastwide Reference Monitoring System
CWPRRA	Coastal Wetlands Planning, Protection and Restoration Act
CZMA	Coastal Zone Management Act
DEIS	Draft Environmental Impact Statement
DLT	Designation Leadership Team
DMP	Draft Management Plan
EIS	Environmental Impact Statement
FEIS	Final Environmental Impact Statement
FMP	Final Management Plan
GIS	Geographic Information System
GIWW	Gulf Intracoastal Water Way
GOCA	(Louisiana) Governor's Office of Coastal Activities
K-12	Kindergarten through twelfth grade
LDRR	Louisiana and Delta Railroad

LCRP	Louisiana Coastal Resources Program
LCWCP	Louisiana Coastal Wetlands Conservation Plan
LaNERR	Louisiana National Estuarine Research Reserve
LDEQ	Louisiana Department of Environmental Quality
LDNR	Louisiana Department of Natural Resources
LDWF	Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries
LSU	Louisiana State University
LUMCON	Louisiana Universities Marine Consortium
MP	Management Plan
MOU	Memorandum of Understanding
NASA	National Aeronautics and Space Administration
NEPA	National Environmental Policy Act
NERR	National Estuarine Research Reserve
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
NOAA	National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration
NRCS	Natural Resources Conservation Service (USDA)
NSF	National Science Foundation
NWR	National Wildlife Refuge
OCM	Office of Coastal Management
ROD	Record of Decision
SAV	Submerged Aquatic Vegetation
SDC	Site Development Committee
SEES	Science, Engineering and Education for Sustainability
TNC	The Nature Conservancy
USACE	U.S. Army Corps of Engineers
USFWS	U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
U.S.C.	U.S. Code
USGS	U.S. Geological Survey
WMA	Wildlife Management Area

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The Louisiana National Estuarine Research Reserve (LaNERR) site nomination is the culmination of several decades of hard work and commitment among a broad partnership of organizations and individuals.

The Louisiana Coastal Protection and Restoration Authority (CPRA), Governor's Office of Coastal Activities (GOCA), Louisiana Sea Grant, and Louisiana State University (LSU) Department of Oceanography and Coastal Sciences played key roles in organizing and leading the state effort. The Site Development Committee (SDC) included dozens of individuals from various federal, state, academic, non-governmental, and other groups who - over the span of two years - donated considerable amounts of their time, resources, and expertise to help advance this nomination. Their dedication and professionalism were instrumental in successfully completing the site selection process. Federal staff from the National Program in the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's (NOAA) Office for Coastal Management provided valuable guidance and insights on requirements, programming, and implementation.

The efforts of these parties not only demonstrate the strong support and enthusiasm for a Louisiana Reserve but also highlight the critical elements of the federal-state partnership approach that the NERR System is founded upon.

We would also like to specifically acknowledge the efforts of Morgan Crutcher of GOCA whose enthusiastic participation in the process for establishing a NERR in Louisiana has been missed since her passing in May 2021.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This document describes the process used to select and nominate a NERR in Louisiana. Each reserve, as defined in Code of Federal Regulations (C.F.R.) Title 15, Vol.3, Part 921.2[1] of the NERR System regulations, is "*an area that is a representative estuarine ecosystem suitable for long-term research, which may include all of the key land and water portions of an estuary, and adjacent transitional areas and uplands constituting to the extent feasible a natural unit, and which is set aside as a natural field laboratory to provide long-term opportunities for research, education, and interpretation*." In other words, reserves serve as living laboratories for the study of estuaries and natural and man-made changes. They help connect science to people, whether they are teachers, students, decision makers, or coastal residents, and serve as demonstration sites where new ideas are tested and modeled.

A number of system-wide programs implemented by reserves focus on monitoring, training, and education that allow them to have a regional and national impact. The integration of locally relevant reserve programs with system-wide approaches fosters innovation and allows comparison of estuarine conditions across the country. In addition, reserves, as place-based entities, build trusted long-term relationships with local communities, state and federal agencies, and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and form partnerships that amplify the impact of individual reserves and the NERR System. By working locally, regionally, and nationally, the NERR System is more efficient and effective in addressing the key issues faced by coastal managers and communities today.

Within the United States, 34 coastal and Great Lakes states and territories are eligible to designate a reserve. Of these, 25 states and territories have one or more reserves for a total 30 reserves across the nation. South Carolina has two reserves, while Florida and California have three each. As of 2022, Louisiana is the only marine coastal state in the country lacking a NERR.

The concept of establishing a NERR in Louisiana has been a point of discussion for decades. Former Governor Kathleen Blanco was very interested in starting the process to establish a NERR, but the issue was sidelined due to Hurricanes Katrina and Rita in 2005. Louisiana Governor John Bel Edwards officially began the designation process on July 23, 2019, when he sent a request for consideration to the Undersecretary of the NOAA (per the Coastal Zone Management Act [15 C.F.R. § 921.11]), who responded affirmatively on November 20, 2019. NOAA indicated that Louisiana represents a unique coastal ecosystem along with important economic and cultural traditions that serve the interest of the NOAA NERR System (refer to Appendix 1 Letters of Importance). Under the direction of the Governor's Office, and with guidance from NOAA, Louisiana Sea Grant, LSU, and CPRA established and implemented a site selection process to nominate a NERR in coastal Louisiana.

This document details the comprehensive and transparent site section process conducted over the last 24 months to evaluate potential candidate sites across coastal Louisiana.

Steps for nominating a NERR include the following:

[1] https://www.govinfo.gov/content/pkg/CFR-2014-title15-vol3/pdf/CFR-2014-title15-vol3-part921.pdf

Step 1: The state sends a letter to NOAA identifying its interest in developing a reserve program and nominating a site. NOAA will determine if they can support an expansion effort.

Step 2: If NOAA determines they can support the expansion, the state develops selection criteria and implements a process for selecting a site in consultation with NOAA and key partners. The state must also ensure public input is received on the preferred site. The results are compiled into a site selection report.

Step 3: The governor submits the site selection document and a nomination letter to NOAA. NOAA reviews the site selection document and sends a letter to the governor accepting or rejecting the nomination.

Step 4: If NOAA accepts the nomination, the state, in collaboration with NOAA, prepares a Draft and Final Management Plan (DMP and FMP), including a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) identifying state and NOAA roles in managing the reserve, and the appropriate MOUs among reserve partners establishing roles and responsibilities. NOAA, in coordination with the state, completes the requirements for Draft and Final Environmental Impact Statements (DEIS and FEIS).

Step 5: Upon successful completion of the FMP and FEIS, NOAA prepares designation papers, and the reserve is officially designated.

In 2019, the state submitted a letter to NOAA seeking approval to begin the selection process. The materials herein represent the necessary requirements to fulfil Step 2 above. Subsequent steps will be addressed upon notification of NOAA's acceptance of this report.

Site Selection and Nomination

Site selection is a process that enables the state to evaluate and select candidate sites for their consideration as a reserve. Critical to the success of this step is the formation of committees or teams (see Teams and Functions section) to evaluate and select a site for nomination to NOAA.

These groups are designed to

- Identify and evaluate candidate sites;
- Conduct outreach to the public and affected entities;
- Develop partnerships to support reserve designation and future operations;
- Select a site for nomination; and
- Create a nomination package to be submitted to NOAA.

Louisiana Sea Grant was designated as the lead agency to manage and oversee the site selection and nomination process, , which engaged over 80 volunteers across state and federal agencies, universities, and NGOs to serve on four main committees - the Designation Leadership Team (DLT) chaired by Dr. Robert Twilley of LSU (formerly Executive Director of Louisiana Sea Grant), the Site Development Committee (SDC), Site Criteria Subcommittee, and Site Screening Subcommittee.

Preliminary Site Screening was conducted over the course of several months to reduce the number of potential sites across the Louisiana coast to those that were truly viable; this reduced the total potential sites from six to three (Figure 1).

Figure 1. Six estuarine zones evaluated in Louisiana for a NERR nomination[2].

The process culminated in closer evaluation of three potential candidate sites including the Atchafalaya, Barataria, and Pontchartrain estuarine zones.

Members of the SDC developed proposals for each of the three candidate sites using site criteria, developed with advice from NOAA and applied to the unique Mississippi River Delta region, as a guide. Nine public Town Hall meetings (three each in the three estuarine zones) were held to engage stakeholders in the process of developing site proposals. Letters of support for each estuarine zone represented a cross section of public and private interest in seeing a NERR developed in coastal Louisiana. The Screening Subcommittee, a subset of the SDC, scored each of the three proposals against the final LaNERR Site Criteria. The Screening Subcommittee was chaired by Seth Blitch of The Nature Conservancy (TNC) and included seventeen other members.

Following Detailed Site Screening and Scoring of the three estuarine zone proposals by the Screening Subcommittee, the Executive Committee of the LaNERR process reviewed the overall site selection process and outcomes of the Detailed Site Screening and Scoring process and made the final recommendation of one NERR site to the Governor for consideration in a nomination to NOAA. This committee included two persons each from the Louisiana Department of Natural Resources (LDNR), CPRA, and GOCA and three members from the Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries (LDWF). On May 26, 2022, by a six to three vote, the LaNERR Executive Committee recommended the Atchafalaya Basin (Figure 2) to be nominated to NOAA as the location of the Louisiana NERR. The Executive Committee also recommended that CPRA would serve as the state lead agency, along with continued support from LSU, to work with NOAA in completing the remaining tasks in designating the Atchafalaya NERR. Through a June 15, 2022, press release, Governor John Bel Edwards publicly announced his support for nominating the Atchafalaya NERR to NOAA.

[2] The term estuarine zone was used through the site evaluation process; it refers to areas of the coast that were considered during the site selection process. Estuarine zone is used interchangeably with coastal basin and basin.

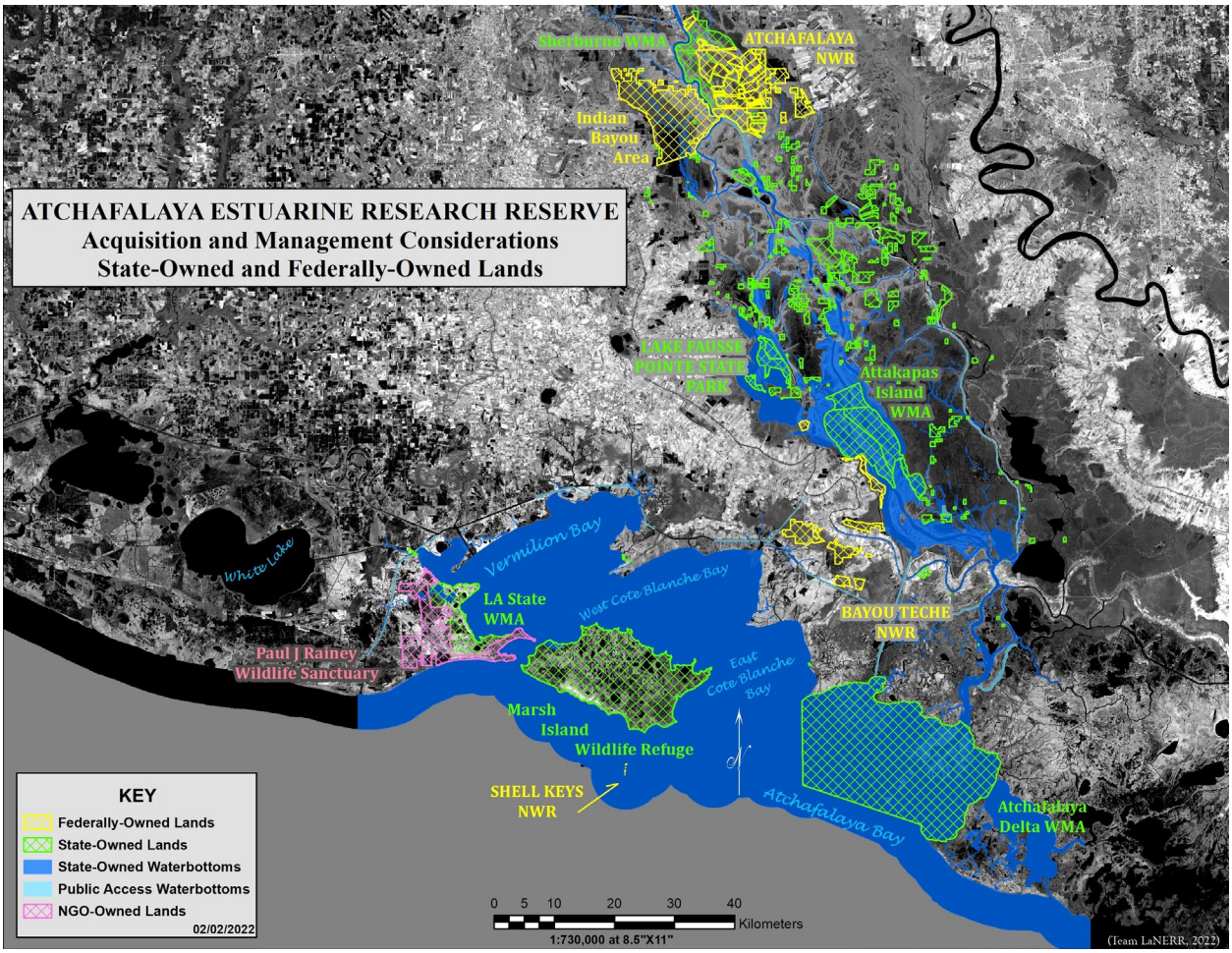

Figure 2. Map of the Atchafalaya Basin, including all state, federal, and NGO-owned lands and state water bottoms. Refer to Figure 17 for the preliminary draft core and buffer area being nominated to NOAA for a Louisiana NERR.

Three public meetings were held in early November 2022. One in-person meeting was held in Morgan City, Louisiana, and two virtual meetings were also held. These meetings are discussed in the Public Meetings Describing the Proposed Site section and in Appendix 12 Site Nomination Public Meetings.

Summary and Next Steps

This report synthesizes the details and outcomes of the Louisiana site selection effort and fulfils the NOAA requirement for states seeking to propose a NERR nomination. Upon acceptance of the nomination by NOAA, the LaNERR team, led by CPRA, will coordinate the development of the DMP and FMP for the operation of the reserve. They will also assist NOAA in development of the required DEIS and FEIS.

The NERR System recognizes that there is no “one-size fits all” management model and encourages states to seek structures that best leverage their own unique resources to support their reserve’s mission and goals. As such, responsibility for the overall management of the Louisiana Reserve will be finalized during the subsequent management planning steps. Regardless of which organization assumes the management capacity, multiple entities may have formal roles to

address the various research, education, and resource management objectives of the NERR based on their assorted areas of expertise. These roles will be fully explored and defined during the subsequent phases, and once finalized, be codified via MOU with NOAA. Since the management planning phases will rely on external stakeholder review and input, it is possible that other parties may express an interest to support the reserve. As needed, these will be reviewed and addressed accordingly, via additional MOUs or other appropriate measures.

INTRODUCTION

Overview of the National Estuarine Research Reserve (NERR) System

The NERR System is a network of protected areas representative of the various biogeographic regions and estuarine types in the United States. Reserves are established for long-term research, education, and interpretation to promote informed management of the nation's estuaries and coastal habitats.

The NERR System is made up of a network of 30 reserves that work to protect and study estuarine systems. Established by the Coastal Zone Management Act (CZMA) of 1972, 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 with input from local partners. NOAA's Office for Coastal Management administers the program by providing guidance, coordination, technical assistance, and funding. State partners manage reserve resources, implement programs locally, and provide funds to match the federal investment.

According to 15 C.F.R. § 921.11, the goals of the program are to:

- Ensure a stable environment for research through long-term protection of National Estuarine Research Reserve resources;
- Address coastal management issues identified as significant through coordinated estuarine research within the System;
- Enhance public awareness and understanding of estuarine areas and provide suitable opportunities for public education and interpretation;
- Promote federal, state, public and private use of one or more reserves within the System when such entities conduct estuarine research; and
- Conduct and coordinate estuarine research within the System, gathering and making available information necessary for improved understanding and management of estuarine areas.

Reserves apply science and education to improve the management of estuaries. They do this by working with communities to address natural resource management issues, such as nonpoint source pollution, habitat restoration, and invasive species, on a local scale. Each reserve brings together local stakeholders, scientists, land management professionals, and educators to understand coastal management issues and generate local, integrated solutions for those issues. In addition to collecting and disseminating nationally and locally relevant data, reserves also provide the trainers and educators needed to bring the reserve-generated data and information to local citizens and decision makers. Reserves further benefit their surrounding communities by leveraging existing NOAA resources and bringing in additional federal funding that is only available to reserves.

Currently, each reserve shares three system-wide programs: System-Wide Monitoring Program, the Coastal Training Program, and the Teachers on the Estuary Program. These programs are standardized and applied at local, regional, and national scales to improve management strategies

at every level. Both as a system and as individual reserves, NERR's embrace common principles that serve to:

- Engage and inform local citizens, teachers, students, and communities in science-based stewardship of coastal estuaries and watersheds;
- Conduct high-caliber science and use science-based collaborative approaches to address complex coastal management problems;
- Create meaningful partnerships to enhance program success and estuary health;
- Lead by example through innovating, testing, and applying best management practices, planning approaches, and behaviors;
- Facilitate the use of best available science to make informed management decisions; and
- Understand and utilize stakeholder needs to guide program implementation.[3]

It is important to note that reserves do not bring or impose any new federal regulations – the uses of lands and waters in a reserve are controlled by existing state regulations and policies.

NERR Program Policy for Adding New Reserves

NOAA aims to choose new reserves that reflect variations in coastal ecosystems that are not already represented in the NERR System. In order to categorize estuarine ecosystem types, NOAA has divided the United States and its territories into "biogeographic regions" and subregions (Figure 3). According to this system, Louisiana is located in the Louisianan Biogeographic Region, which extends from the Texas-Mexico coastal border to Cedar Key, Florida. It is further classified in the Mississippi Delta subregion, which extends from Galveston, Texas to Mobile Bay, Alabama.

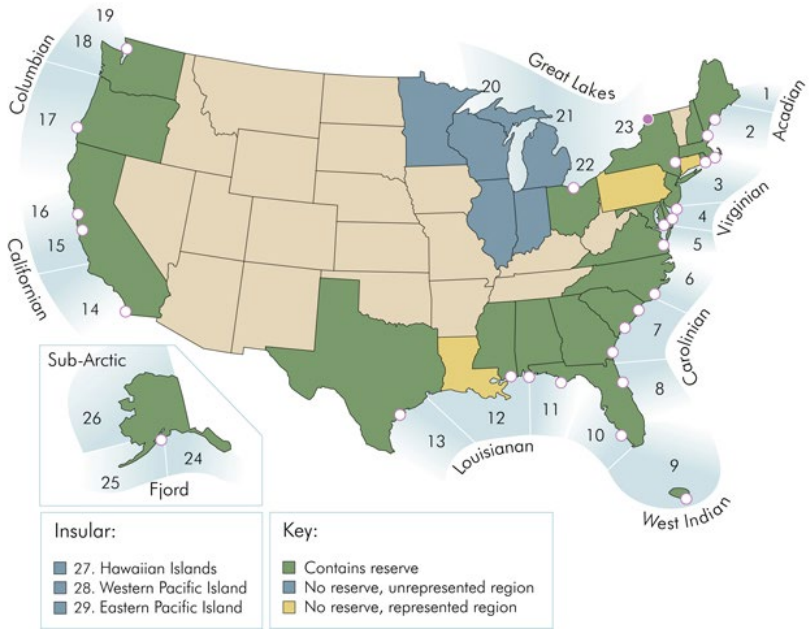

Figure 3. Map of the biogeographic regions with points for NERR locations.

[3] NOAA NERR Strategic Plan 2017-2022: https://coast.noaa.gov/data/docs/nerrs/StrategicPlan.pdf

To further distinguish estuarine environments based on a variety of factors, the NERR System implements a typological characterization that serves as a thorough description of the estuary. These "typologies" are codified in 15 C.F.R. § 921, App. II[4]. Biogeographic regions and typologies are the most important factors in the categorization of sites within the NERR System.

The following policies apply to existing sites and potential designations.

1. NOAA is committed to completion of a system of reserves representing the diverse biogeographic and typological character of the estuaries of the United States and estuarine-like systems of the Great Lakes, consistent with available resources.
2. The first priority for use of NOAA funding is to support the operation of designated reserves, system-wide projects benefiting designated reserves, and development of reserves in states that currently have a formal commitment from NOAA to proceed with the designation process.
3. Additional reserves (beyond the existing 30 designated and two proposed reserves) will be considered by NOAA only when

    (a) sufficient funds are available to provide reserves continuing operations support after designation and;

    (b) sufficient federal staff and resources are available to adequately support new designation and operation activities.

4. Priorities for accepting new nominations are as follows:

    (a) first priority will be given to nominations that incorporate both a biogeographic subregion and an estuary type not represented by existing or developing reserves (see NOAA regulations at 15 C.F.R. § 921);

    (b) second priority may be given to nominations that incorporate either a biogeographic subregion or an estuary type not represented by existing or developing reserves.

Louisiana received the formal commitment to proceed with the designation process. However, as there are currently three NERR sites in the Mississippi Delta biogeographic region, identifying the unique typological factors present in Louisiana is critically important to the ultimate designation of a Louisiana NERR.

Rationale for Establishing a Louisiana NERR

As of 2022, Louisiana is the only marine coastal state in the country lacking a reserve. Louisiana's unique biogeographic setting makes it a unique, if not essential, addition to the NERR System, which does not currently contain a large, active river-delta estuary (Bianchi & Allison, 2009). The Kachemak NERR in Alaska contains a small delta, and Weeks Bay NERR in Alabama is in the extended Mississippi River Delta Region but is a drowned river estuary. However, the riverine processes that influence Louisiana's coast are far greater than these sites,

[4] NERR Typologies: https://www.govinfo.gov/content/pkg/CFR-2014-title15-vol3/pdf/CFR-2014-title15-vol3-part921-appII.pdf

especially in the Atchafalaya Basin. From an environmental and scientific point of view, the Atchafalaya Basin is the nation's largest freshwater swamp, and where it meets the Gulf of Mexico, there are two (Atchafalaya River Delta and Wax Lake Delta) active, land-building coastal deltas that represent river-delta estuaries (Twilley et al., 2016).

In addition to its unique ecosystems, Louisiana faces many challenges such as: some of the highest rates of land loss in the nation, subsidence-induced flooding of coastal communities, frequent tropical storms and hurricanes, human caused catastrophes such as the *Deepwater Horizon* oil spill; and sea level rise. Establishing a NERR will provide short-term and long-term targeted research, monitoring, education, and outreach to help Louisiana enable the Coastal Zone to be more resilient in the face of these challenges. Designating a reserve in Louisiana, and being part of the NERR System, would provide a national stage to showcase the unique attributes of a major river-delta estuary to the nation; it would also promote efforts at the national level to restore and protect this natural, economic, and cultural resource.

In addition to the national attention a Louisiana reserve would garner, it would also serve the local communities. The established reserve will provide educational programs to local school systems and the public. The facilities and sites will be used for river-delta estuary education for kindergarten through twelfth grade (K-12) students and teachers, community college and university students and teachers, as well as the public. Ideally, this exposure to Louisiana's natural environment will build support for other coastal programs from recreation to restoration.

A Louisiana-based reserve could complement and extend the scientific, educational, and stewardship activities and needs of existing programs like the Barataria-Terrebonne National Estuary Program (BTNEP), the Louisiana Coastal Management Program, Louisiana Sea Grant, Louisiana Universities Marine Consortium (LUMCON), the Atchafalaya Basin Program, Atchafalaya River Basin Restoration and Enhancement (ARBRE) Task Force and various NGO, governmental, and academic entities through the addition of funding, resources, and expertise. Lastly, it could enable new directions and initiatives by leveraging nationwide programs that are only accessible to reserves.

Background, History, and Status of Louisiana's NERR Initiative

The concept of establishing a NERR in Louisiana has been a point of discussion for decades, as it is now the only marine coastal state without a NERR site. Former Governor Kathleen Blanco was very interested in starting the process to establish a NERR, but the issue was sidelined due to Hurricanes Katrina and Rita in 2005. Louisiana Governor John Bel Edwards officially began the designation process on July 23, 2019, when he sent a request for consideration to the Undersecretary of the NOAA who responded affirmatively on November 20, 2019. In his letter to NOAA, Governor Edwards identified Louisiana Sea Grant as the lead agency in the site selection and nomination process, that along with the GOCA, would initiate a process to nominate a LaNERR to NOAA. Following NOAA's approval, the LaNERR site selection process kicked off. The site selection process, detailed in the following sections, included robust technical input and public participation. It is worth noting that the LaNERR site selection process was affected by Hurricanes Laura (2020) and Ida (2021), which devastated coastal Louisiana and the people and communities involved in the LaNERR process. Following completion of site selection, on May 26, 2022, the LaNERR Executive Committee nominated (by majority vote) the

proposed Atchafalaya NERR as the recommended site. Through a press release, Governor John Bel Edwards publicly announced his support for nominating the Atchafalaya NERR to NOAA on June 15, 2022.

LOUISIANA SITE SELECTION PROCESS OVERVIEW

The Louisiana NERR site selection and nomination process is consistent with Section 315 of the CZMA, the associated C.F.R. regulations, and the guidelines provided by NOAA. This section provides an overview of the site selection process. Additional details and materials are provided in appendices, which are referenced throughout this document.

Project Area

The LaNERR site selection and nomination process began by considering land and waters within Louisiana's Coastal Zone (Figure 4). Over time, specific areas of consideration expanded beyond the Coastal Zone based on the various team's familiarity with the coast, adjacent watersheds, riverine processes, its estuarine ecosystems, and the requirements for selecting, nominating, and designating a NERR. Ultimately, teams evaluated areas that extended beyond the Coastal Zone to capture the entirety of the river delta processes that affect Louisiana's coast.

Figure 4. Louisiana's Coastal Zone boundary.

Public Communication Outlets

Early in the process (October 2020), the LaNERR Designation Leadership Team (DLT) established a website (http://www.laseagrant.org/deltanerr/), an email listserv (deltanerr@lsu.edu), and social media pages including Twitter (https://twitter.com/DeltaNERR) and Facebook (https://www.facebook.com/DeltaNERR/).

Teams and Functions

As indicated in NOAA's guidance, several teams and committees were formed to identify and evaluate candidate sites, conduct outreach to the public and affected entities, develop partnerships to support a reserve and future operations, select a site for nomination, and create this nomination package. The following is a brief overview of each of the primary teams and

their functions; additional details regarding when and how they performed these functions are given in later sections associated with each phase of the LaNERR site selection and nomination process.

Designation Leadership Team (DLT)

This group served to provide day to day leadership and oversight of the site selection and nomination process. Robert Twilley was Executive Director of Louisiana Sea Grant at the inception and was the catalyst for securing the approval from NOAA to proceed with the NERR nomination process. During the site selection and nomination process, he moved from partial administrative to full-time faculty position in the Department of Oceanography and Coastal Sciences (assuming Executive Director emeritus with Louisiana Sea Grant); however, he maintained his role as Chair of the DLT while Julie Lively joined to represent Louisiana Sea Grant. The DLT's charge was to manage and document all phases of site selection and nomination by coordinating the various committees, briefing state agencies as members of LaNERR Executive Committee, engaging the public, and working closely with the local NOAA Liaison to obtain NOAA's feedback and to keep NOAA updated on progress.

The DLT met weekly or bi-weekly for the duration of the site selection and nomination process. Individuals who served as members of the DLT are listed in Table 1.

Table 1. Designation Leadership Team (DLT) members.

Name	**Affiliation**
Robert Twilley (Chair)	Louisiana State University
Sandy Parfait	Louisiana State University
Julie Lively	Louisiana Sea Grant
LaTosha Mullins	Louisiana Sea Grant
Morgan Crutcher	Governor's Office of Coastal Activities
Kristin Ransom	National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

Additionally, in December 2020, Kirk Rhinehart, Mandy Green, and Alaina Grace of Royal Engineers & Consultants began providing program management support to the DLT. In addition, Hampton Peele and DeWitt Braud of LSU provided geographic information system (GIS) support to the DLT and the proposal teams during the site selection and nomination process.

Site Development Committee (SDC)

The SDC was formed to serve as a multi-agency, technical team of over 80 people, responsible for preliminary screening of potential sites across the coast to ensure site options were suitable to serve the function of a NERR. The SDC remained engaged throughout the site selection and nomination process. Some members of the SDC volunteered to serve on several additional subcommittees (described below) and to develop candidate site proposals. Key duties and responsibilities of the SDC included:

- Develop specific Site Criteria representative of the delta biogeographic region to align with the goals of the NERR System;
- Evaluate and vote on estuarine zones across the coast to serve as potential candidate sites using data layers operationalizing Site Criteria (as described in the Preliminary Site Screening section);

- Develop collaborative proposals for potential LaNERR sites (as described in the Candidate Site Proposals section);
- Identify gaps in draft proposals of LaNERR sites that may need to be addressed with additional information or data;
- Review, prepare, and assemble proposals of LaNERR sites that represent NOAA and state-specific criteria;
- Attend Roadshows as available to receive public feedback on collaborative proposals for candidate sites;
- Assess public feedback on proposed LaNERR sites to refine proposals and identify proposals for further consideration;
- Attend public Town Hall meetings as available to receive public feedback on the candidate LaNERR sites (as described in the public Town Hall meetings section); and
- Submit candidate LaNERR site proposals to the Executive Committee for review and selection of one LaNERR site to recommend to the Governor for nomination to NOAA.

The SDC was established in September 2020, and an orientation meeting was held in October 2020. The SDC then met seven additional times through May 2022.

Below are the dates and topics of each SDC meeting to better explain when and how this group was engaged.

Meeting 1 – October 8 or 9, 2020

- Orientation of the SDC to NOAA NERR and to the LaNERR site selection and nomination process
- Overview of:
    - NOAA suggested Site Criteria
    - Preliminary Screening Criteria
    - LaNERR site selection and nomination timeline

Meeting 2 – October 20 or 21, 2020

- Synthesis of Meeting 1
- Discuss:
    - Reducing the number of estuarine zones (i.e., potential site locations)
    - Recommendations for modifications to NOAA Site Criteria

Meeting 3 – February 25 or 25, 2021

- Overview of LaNERR site selection and nomination process and revised timeline
- Review maps, preliminary screening criteria, and DLT's preliminary screening evaluation of six estuarine zones

Meeting 4 – March 30 or 31, 2021

- Overview of estuarine zone voting results
- Review example preliminary candidate sites
- Discuss 1st draft LaNERR Site Criteria

- Guidance for proposal team formation and Phase 1 Candidate Site Proposals

Meeting 5 – May 13, 2021

- Discuss Phase I Proposals (presentations by proposal teams)
- Review 2nd draft LaNERR Site Criteria
- Discuss guidance for Phase II and Final Candidate Site Proposals

Meeting 6 – July 14, 2021

- Review Revised LaNERR workflow, milestones, and schedule
- Discuss Phase II Proposals (presentations by proposal teams)
- Updates on:
    - NOAA feedback on LaNERR Site Criteria
    - Next steps for Screening Subcommittee
    - Preparing for public Town Hall meetings

(SDC meetings were postponed due to the impacts of Hurricane Ida)

Meeting 7 – November 29, 2021

- Mock public Town Hall meeting (presentations by proposal teams)
- Review revised LaNERR workflow, milestones, and schedule
- Advertise public Town Hall meetings (Feb 1 – 11, 2022)

Meeting 8 – May 3, 2022

- Update on LaNERR site selection and nomination process
- Outcomes of Detailed Site Screening and Scoring

Meeting agendas, supplemental documents, presentations, and meeting summaries materials and slides are provided in Appendix 7 SDC Meetings.

State and federal agencies, NGOs, and universities were represented on the SDC (Table 2). Although actual individuals may have changed over time, all agencies and organizations below were represented on the SDC for the duration of the LaNERR site selection and nomination process.

Table 2. Site Development Committee (SDC) members.

Name	**Affiliation**
Abigail Bockus	Louisiana Universities Marine Consortium
Aimee Hollander	Nicholls State University
Alex Kolker	Louisiana Universities Marine Consortium
Amy Dixon	U.S. Army Corps of Engineers
Andy Dolan	U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
Andy Fischer	Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries
Beth Stauffer	University of Louisiana at Lafayette
Brian Gautreau	Louisiana State University Ag Center
Brian Roberts	Louisiana Universities Marine Consortium
Bryan Piazza	The Nature Conservancy
Carol Wilson	Louisiana State University

Name	Affiliation
Cheston Hill	Office of State Lands
Chip McGimsey	Department of Culture, Recreation & Tourism
Chuck Hunter	U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
Cindy Brown	Land Trust for Louisiana
Claire Anderson	Ripple Effect
Corey Miller	Coalition to Restore Coastal Louisiana
Craig Colten	Louisiana State University
Danielle Keller	U.S. Army Corps of Engineers
David Muth	National Wildlife Federation
David Podgorski	University of New Orleans
Dean Blanchard	Barataria-Terrebonne National Estuary Program
Devyani Kar	Environmental Defense Fund
Donata Henry	Tulane University
Emad Habib	University of Louisiana at Lafayette
Erik Johnson	Audubon
Erin Cox	University of New Orleans
Gary LaFleur	Nicholls State University
Gina Campo	Office of Community Development
Giovanna McClenachan	Nicholls State University
Greg Steyer	U.S. Geological Survey
Heather Stone	University of Louisiana at Lafayette
Honora Buras, retired	Coastal Protection and Restoration Authority
Illya Tietzel	University of New Orleans
Jennifer Guidry	Coastal Wetlands Planning, Protection and Restoration Act
Jennifer Hill	Louisiana Tech University
Jill Trepanier	Louisiana State University
James Nelson	University of Louisiana at Lafayette
Joey Breaux	Louisiana Department of Agriculture and Forestry
John Andrew Nyman	Louisiana State University Ag Center
John Tirpak	U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
Jonathan Foret	South Louisiana Wetlands Discovery Center
Julie Whitbeck	National Park Service
Justin K. Lemoine	Atchafalaya Natural Heritage Area
Ken Krauss	U.S. Geological Survey
Kenny Ribbeck	Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries
Kevin Ringelman	Louisiana State University
Kristi Trail	Pontchartrain Conservancy
Kristin Ransom	National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration
Kyle Piller	Southeastern Louisiana University
Liz Skilton	University of Louisiana at Lafayette
Maida Owens	Department of Culture, Recreation & Tourism
Malay Ghose Hajra	University of New Orleans
Mark Davis	Tulane University
Mark Kulp	University of New Orleans
Mark Tobler	Loyola University
Martin O'Connell	University of New Orleans
Matthew Hiatt	Louisiana State University
Megan La Peyre	U.S. Geological Survey

Name	Affiliation
Michael Pasquier	Louisiana State University
Mike Carloss	Ducks Unlimited
Mitchell Aleshire	Department of Culture, Recreation & Tourism
Morgan Kelly	Louisiana State University
Natalie Snider	Environmental Defense Fund
Nathan Corley	Louisiana Department of Education
Navid Jafari	Louisiana State University
Pat Arnould	Louisiana Governor's Office of Indian Affairs
Patty Ferguson-Bohnee	Arizona State University
Quenton Fontenot	Nicholls State University
Rebecca Triche	Louisiana Wildlife Federation
Robert A. Thomas	Loyola University
Robert Mahon	University of New Orleans
Robert Moreau	Southeastern Louisiana University
Ron Boustany	Natural Resources Conservation Service
Sara Krupa	Louisiana Department of Natural Resources
Scott Hemmerling	The Water Institute of the Gulf
Seth Blitch	The Nature Conservancy
Simone Maloz	Restore the Mississippi River Delta
T. Erin Cox	University of New Orleans
Thomas Gresham	Louisiana Department of Education
Tracy Quirk	Louisiana State University
Shirell Parfait-Dardar	Grand Caillou/Dulac Band of Biloxi-Chitimacha-Choctaw

Site Criteria Subcommittee

The Site Criteria Subcommittee was established to review and customize NOAA's Site Criteria to focus them on Louisiana's unique coastal system (refer to the Site Criteria section and to Appendix 5 Final LaNERR Site Criteria). The subcommittee was made up of a subset of members of the SDC who volunteered to serve on this committee (Table 3); they met four times between April 9 and May 21, 2021.

Table 3. Site Criteria Subcommittee members.

Name	Affiliation
Brian Gautreau	Louisiana State University Ag Center
Claire Anderson	Ripple Effect
Heather Stone	University of Louisiana at Lafayette
Honora Buras, retired	Coastal Protection and Restoration Authority
Ilya Tietzel	University of New Orleans
James Nelson	University of Louisiana at Lafayette
John Andrew Nyman	Louisiana State University Ag Center
Jonathan Foret	South Louisiana Wetlands Discovery Center
Julie Whitbeck	National Park Service
Justin Lemoine	Atchafalaya Natural Heritage Area
Kristi Trail	Pontchartrain Conservancy
Mark Tobler	Loyola University
Michael Pasquier	Louisiana State University
Natalie Snider	Environmental Defense Fund
Rebecca Triche	Louisiana Wildlife Federation

Name	Affiliation
Robert Moreau	Southeastern Louisiana University
Robert Thomas	Loyola University
T. Erin Cox	University of New Orleans
Tracy Quirk	Louisiana State University

Screening Subcommittee

The Screening Subcommittee was also made up of members of the SDC who volunteered to serve plus five additional technical experts with long-standing history working in coastal Louisiana (Table 4). They met three times from June 1, 2021 through March 24, 2022. They were first tasked with reviewing the Phase II Candidate Site Proposals with the intent of providing constructive feedback to the three proposal teams regarding how they could improve their proposals with respect to the NOAA-recommended Site Criteria; refer to Appendix 8 Phase II Proposal Feedback (note: because Phase II Proposals were considered draft versions of Final Proposals, they are not included in the appendix). The Screening Subcommittee then conducted Detailed Site Screening and Scoring using the final LaNERR Site Criteria to provide scores and associated comments for each of the three Final Candidate Site Proposals (refer to Appendix 11 Detailed Site Screening and Scoring).

Table 4. Screening Subcommittee members.

Name	Affiliation
Seth Blitch, Chair	The Nature Conservancy
Alisha Renfro	National Wildlife Federation
Scott Hemmerling	The Water Institute of the Gulf
Ron Boustany	Natural Resources Conservation Service
Sara Krupa	Louisiana Department of Natural Resources
Rebecca Triche	Louisiana Wildlife Federation
Pat Arnould	Governor's Office of Indian Affairs
Mike Carloss	Ducks Unlimited
Kenny Ribbeck	Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries
Glenn Constant	U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
Honora Buras, retired	Coastal Protection and Restoration Authority
Greg Steyer	U.S. Geological Survey
Gina Campo	Office of Community Development
Melissa Baustian*	The Water Institute of the Gulf
Sam Bentley*	Louisiana State University
Mead Allison*	Tulane University
Shirley Laska*	University of New Orleans, emeritus
Jenneke Visser*	University of Louisiana Lafayette, emeritus

*Member did not serve on the SDC but was invited to join the Screening Subcommittee due to specific topical expertise.

Proposal Teams

Following Preliminary Site Screening, members of the SDC volunteered to participate in proposal teams (Table 5) to lead the development of Phase I, II, and Final proposals, one in each

remaining candidate estuarine zone – Atchafalaya, Barataria, and Pontchartrain. Proposal team leads were free to enlist help from individuals outside of the SDC as they developed proposals.

Table 5. Proposal Team members.

Name	Affiliation	Proposal Team
Brian Roberts	Louisiana Universities Marine Consortium	Atchafalaya
Justin Lemoine	Atchafalaya National Heritage Area	Atchafalaya
James Nelson	University of Louisiana at Lafayette	Atchafalaya
John Andrew Nyman	Louisiana State University Ag Center	Barataria
Tracy Quirk	Louisiana State University	Barataria
Kristi Trail	Pontchartrain Conservancy	Pontchartrain
Robert Moreau	Southeastern Louisiana University	Pontchartrain
Robert Thomas	Loyola University	Pontchartrain
Mark Davis	Tulane University	Pontchartrain
David Podgorski	University of New Orleans	Pontchartrain
Cheston Hill	Louisiana Office of State Lands	Resource for all teams
Erik Johnson	Audubon	Resource for all teams
Jill Trepanier	Louisiana State University	Resource for all teams
Sara Krupa	Louisiana Department of Natural Resources	Resource for all teams
Claire Anderson	Ripple Effect	Resource for all teams
Pat Arnould	Louisiana Governor's Office of Indian Affairs	Resource for all teams

To avoid potential conflicts of interest in committee assignments, the DLT instructed that any one person could not serve both on a proposal team and on the Screening Subcommittee. Therefore, SDC members could serve on the Criteria Subcommittee and Screening Subcommittee or the Criteria Subcommittee and a proposal team but not on both the Screening Subcommittee and a proposal team.

Executive Committee

The LaNERR Executive Committee was responsible for reviewing the overall site selection and nomination process and the final proposed sites for a LaNERR as recommended by the SDC. Its task was to select one site to be recommended to the Governor for nomination to NOAA based upon final candidate site proposals and screening/scoring outcomes provided by the DLT. This committee included two persons each from LDNR, CPRA, and GOCA and three members from LDWF (Table 6). They met four times between August 2020 and May 2022. The Executive Committee was also routinely kept abreast of the process by email updates from Robert Twilley.

Table 6. Executive Committee members.

Name	Affiliation
Harry Vorhoff	Governor's Office of Coastal Activities
Russell Caffery	Governor's Office of Coastal Activities
Bren Haase	Coastal Protection and Restoration Authority
Gregory Grandy	Coastal Protection and Restoration Authority
Keith Lovell	Louisiana Department of Natural Resources
Charles Reulet	Louisiana Department of Natural Resources
Patrick Banks	Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries
Randy Myers	Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries
Cole Garrett	Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries

NOAA NERR Leadership Team

The DLT met monthly (when possible) with NOAA's NERR Leadership Team (Table 7) to update them on the LaNERR process and get their input and guidance. While not participating in a decision-making capacity, they provided general counsel, guidance, and lessons learned.

Table 7. NOAA NERR Leadership Team members.

Name	Position Title
Erica Seiden	Program Manager, Ecosystems and NERRS Program
Matthew Chasse	Coastal Management Specialist and Federal Program Officer
Heidi Stiller	South Regional Director
Kristin Ransom	Regional Coastal Management Specialist

Regional NERR Representatives

The DLT also met with representatives of reserves in Texas, Mississippi, Alabama, and Florida who provided critical insight to, and lessons learned from, the site selection and nomination process, information regarding the management of their respective reserves, and guidance on implementation of required educational, research, and outreach programs. These regional NERR representatives are listed in Table 8. The DLT met with this group on April 26, 2021, and the group met again with the LaNERR proposal team leads on June 10, 2021. Several members of this group also participated in the public Town Hall meetings.

Table 8. Regional NERR representatives.

Name	NERR	Position Title
Jace Tunnell	Mission-Aransas, TX	Reserve Director
Katie Swanson	Mission-Aransas, TX	Stewardship Coordinator
Ed Buskey	Mission-Aransas, TX	Research Coordinator
Ayesha Gray	Grand Bay, MS	Director
Margo Posten	Grand Bay, MS	Assistant Manager/Coastal Training Program Coordinator
Kim Cressman	Grand Bay, MS	Research Coordinator
Jonathan Pitchford	Grand Bay, MS	Stewardship Coordinator
Angela Underwood	Weeks Bay, AL	Acting Manager – Education Coordinator
LG Adams	Weeks Bay, AL	Former Reserve Manager
Mike Shelton	Weeks Bay, AL	Coastal Training Program and Watershed Coordinator
Will Underwood	Weeks Bay, AL	Coastal Section Administrator
Eric Brunden	Weeks Bay, AL	Stewardship Coordinator
Jenna Harper	Apalachicola, FL	Manager
Kim Wren	Apalachicola, FL	Assistant Manager
Keith Laakkonen	Rookery Bay, FL	Manager
Jessica McIntosh	Rookery Bay, FL	Coastal Training Program Coordinator
Donna Pace	Rookery Bay, FL	Operation Management Consultant

Louisiana was also in regular communication with the site nomination teams from Connecticut and Green Bay to share experiences regarding the site selection process and lessons learned, among other topics.

LOUISIANA SITE SELECTION PROCESS IMPLEMENTATION

The prior section presented an overview of the site selection process including designation of teams, team members, and sequencing of events. This implementation section describes, in detail, the outcomes associated with the site selection process.

The LaNERR DLT began by creating a workflow, set of milestones, and an associated schedule (refer to Appendix 2 LaNERR Milestones and Schedule). They then implemented a two-phase screening process of Preliminary Site Screening followed by Detailed Site Screening and Scoring. The first phase was used to identify only those sites that had a high probability of meeting NERR criteria; this reduced candidate sites from six to three. In the second phase, the detailed LaNERR Site Criteria, as approved by NOAA, were used to screen and score the three remaining candidate sites toward final selection and nomination of one site. Public engagement was prioritized throughout the site selection process as detailed above and in the sections that follow. Additional details and materials are provided in appendices, which are referenced throughout.

Preliminary Site Screening

For Preliminary Site Screening, the DLT used five criteria from the NOAA-recommended Site Criteria to evaluate the merits of six candidate zones (from west to east: Calcasieu, Atchafalaya, Terrebonne, Barataria, Pontchartrain, and Mississippi River) in developing more specific candidate sites for a LaNERR. The general location of the six candidate estuarine zones is provided in Figure 5; more detailed maps of the six zones are presented in Figure 6 through Figure 11 (presented from west to east across coastal Louisiana).

Figure 5. Six candidate estuarine zones in Louisiana.

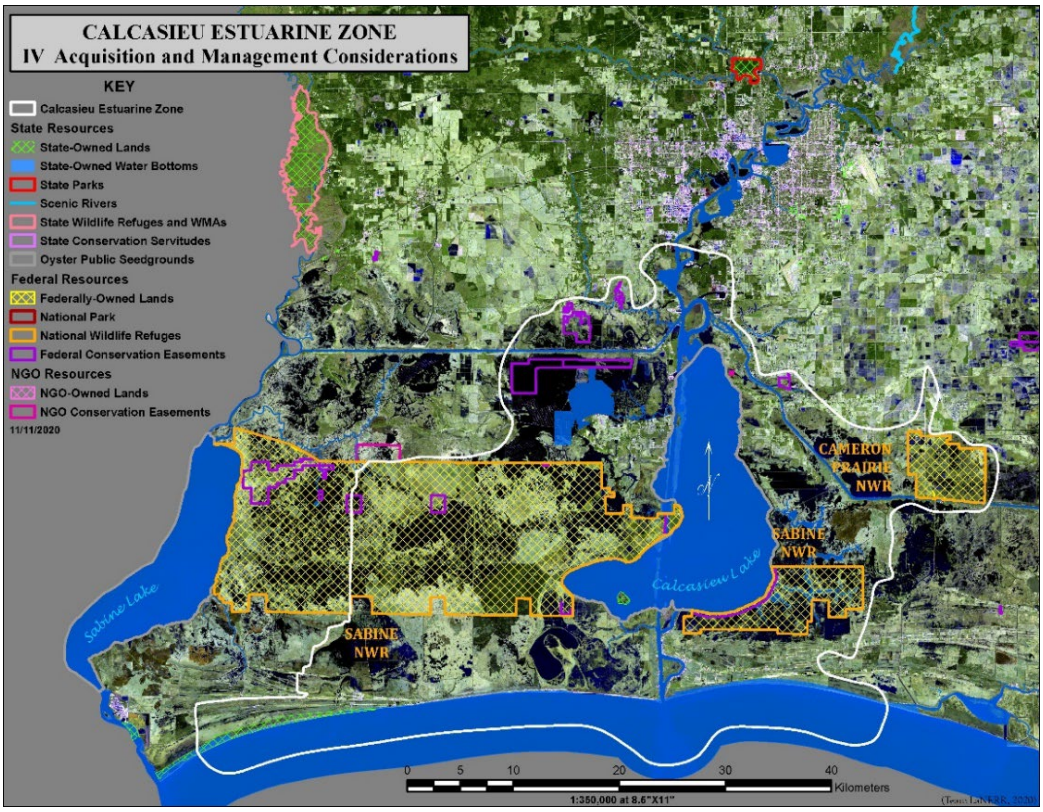

Figure 6. Calcasieu candidate estuarine zone.

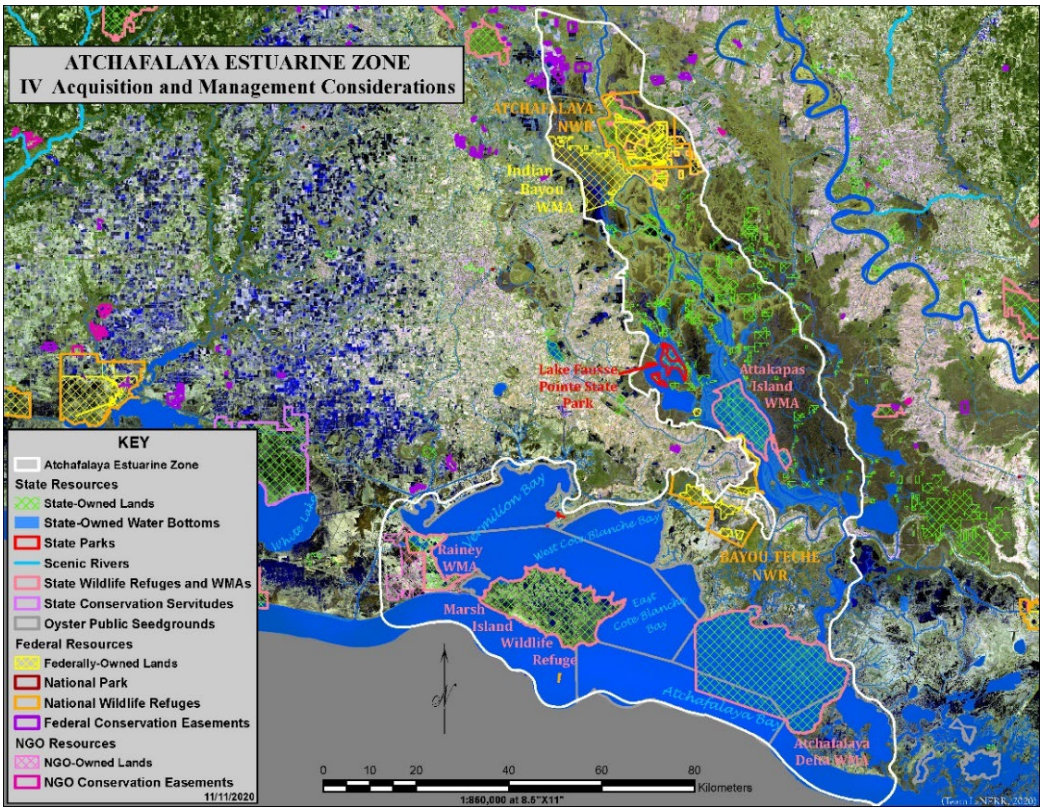

Figure 7. Atchafalaya candidate estuarine zone.

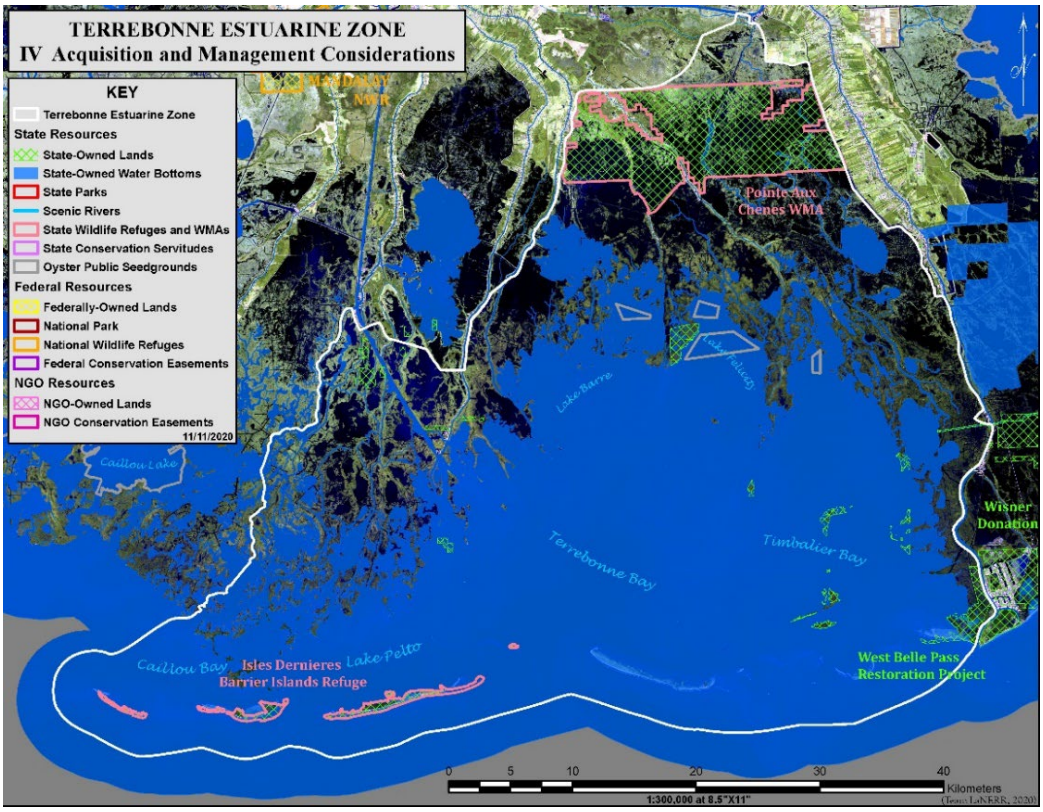

Figure 8. Terrebonne candidate estuarine zone.

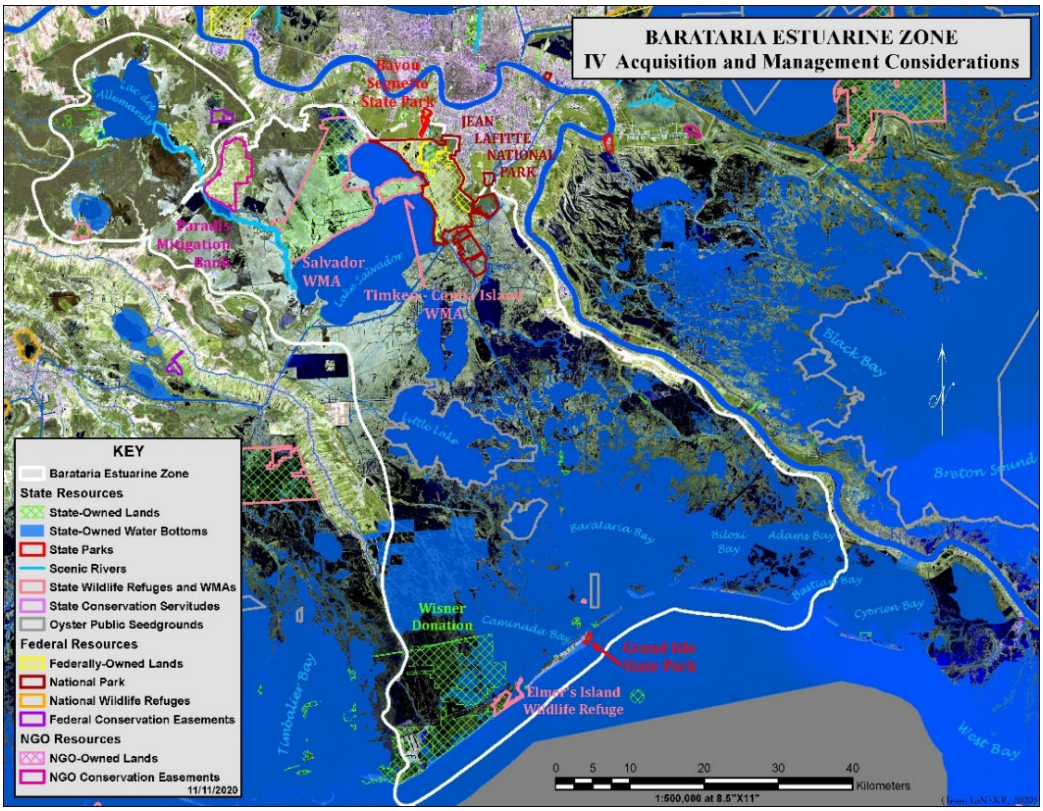

Figure 9. Barataria candidate estuarine zone.

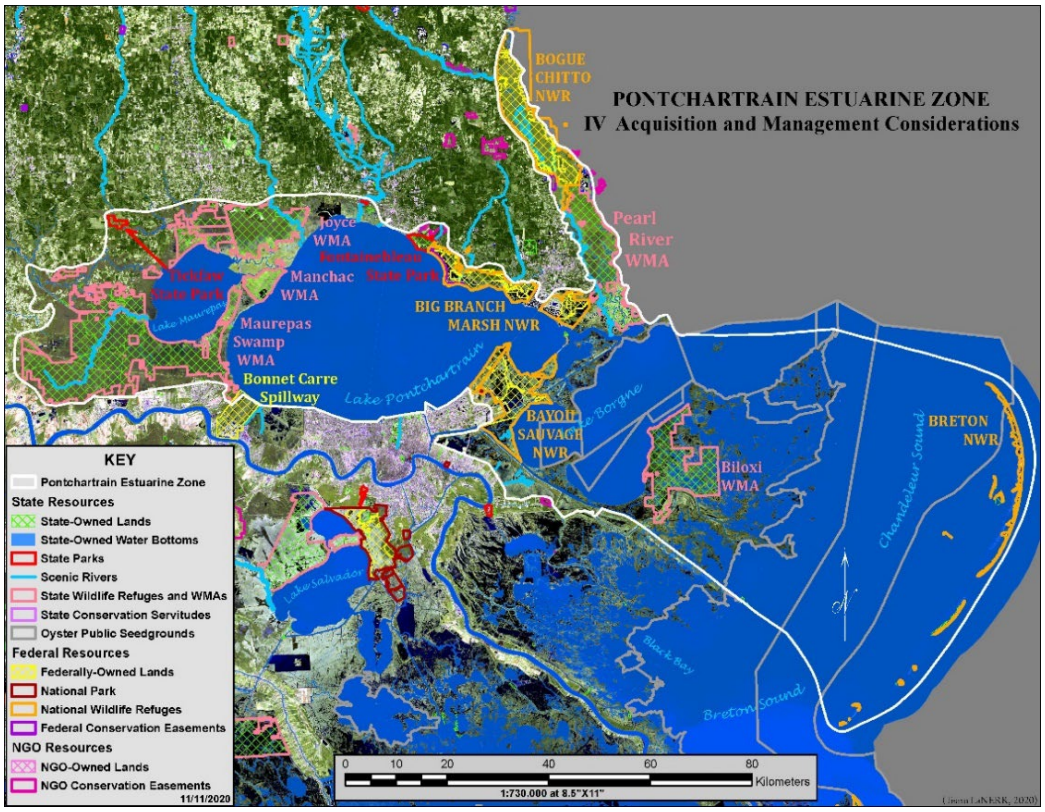

Figure 10. Pontchartrain candidate estuarine zone.

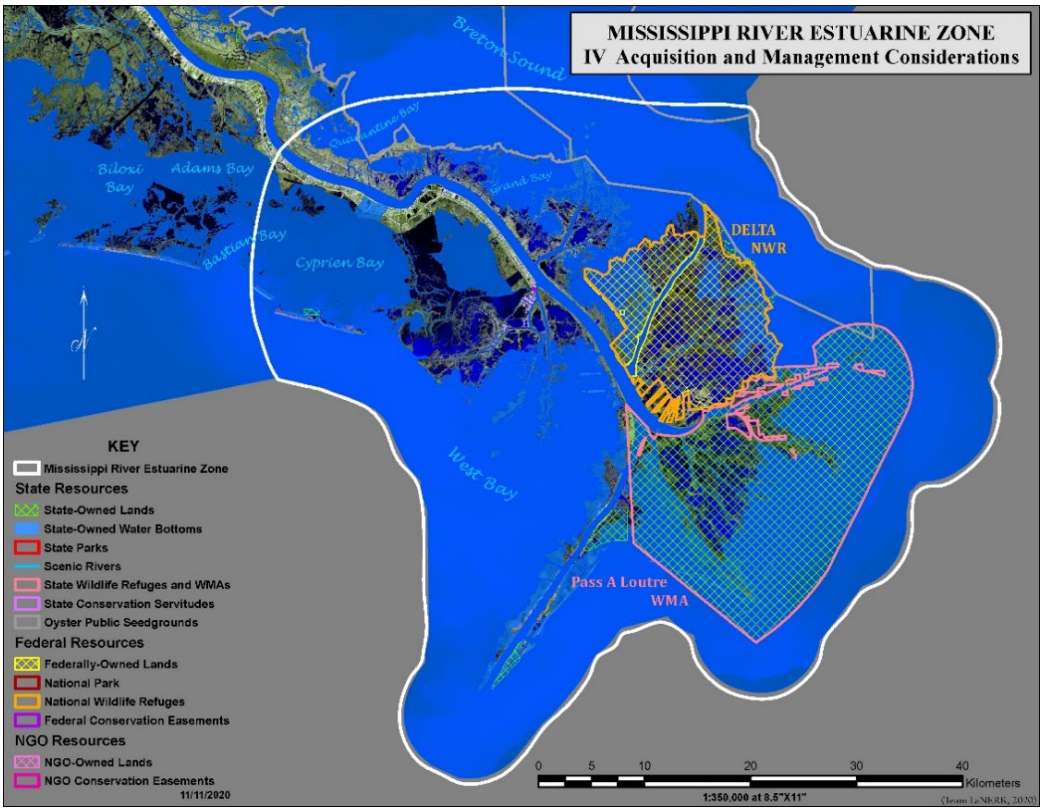

Figure 11. Mississippi River candidate estuarine zone.

The five criteria represent the first tier of evaluation that must be met before an area can be considered further in developing candidate sites. The approach is based on several key assumptions/principles:

1. The current distribution of habitat types and state-owned lands of the estuarine zone provide insights into what may represent a competitive candidate site.
2. Changes in the distribution of habitat types and land loss in the estuarine zone provide insights into what may be considered maintaining integrity of a candidate site over the next 50 years (based on 50-year projections from the 2017 Coastal Master Plan [CPRA, 2017]).
3. Those estuarine zones that do not provide sufficient habitat diversity representative of a deltaic estuary, do not include state-owned lands that could be used as core areas, or do not represent future integrity of landscapes should not be included in the planned development of candidate site proposals for nomination of a LaNERR.

The five preliminary screening criteria were:

1. Unique Coastal Setting

   Are there potential core areas (state-owned lands and waters) in this estuarine zone that represent unique habitats, coastal processes, and salinity gradients of a delta estuary in comparison to the other NERR sites in Louisianian Biogeographic Zone of NERR System (sections 11, 12, 13). Unique environmental representativeness is important to the research and education mission of a NERR.

   Description: Current distribution of habitat types, based on 2017 Coastal Master Plan (CPRA, 2017) initial condition vegetation, was used to define salinity zones in each estuarine zone (refer to maps in Appendix 3 Preliminary Site Screening).

2. State-Owned Lands

   Is there currently sufficient area of state-owned lands within this estuarine zone conducive to developing LaNERR candidate sites that meet the NERR System objectives?

   Description: Majority of publicly-owned land used as core areas within a candidate site cannot be federal lands. Further, the state must demonstrate adequate management control for core areas to be designated as a NERR. NOAA requires that state lands be available in the initial designation of a NERR site since the agreement is a NOAA-state MOU.

3. Land Integrity

   Is the integrity of the wetlands that may serve as potential core (state-owned land) and buffer areas that provide the unique features of the NERR (see criterion #1) maintained in perpetuity within this estuarine zone, which would allow for development of facilities and programs (critical for research and education)?

   Description: Land change was measured by comparing the 2017 Coastal Master Plan initial condition vegetation to the year 50 projected vegetation under the medium scenario

with implementation of the plan. A reduction of 50% in wetland area from initial to projected was considered sufficient to question the integrity of a zone.

4. Change in Habitat Diversity

   Do the wetlands that would serve as potential core (state-owned land) and buffer areas currently support a diversity of habitats along a salinity gradient representative of a delta estuary? Do these wetland areas maintain a diversity of habitats in perpetuity (maintain integrity) within this estuarine zone over the next 50 years?

   Description: Changes that demonstrate significant habitat diversity change represent conflict with foreseeable program development in research and education to meet the mission of a NERR. Change in habitat diversity was measured by comparing the 2017 Coastal Master Plan initial condition vegetation to the year 50 projected vegetation under the medium scenario with implementation of the plan.

   Insignificant change (fresh or saline habitat change <-25%). Moderate change (fresh or saline habitat change -25 to -65%). Significant change (fresh or saline habitat change > -65%.

5. Hydrologic Manipulations

   Do existing or anticipated operations of water control structures and levees (including marsh impoundments) by federal and state authorities with the sole purpose of manipulating hydrology for either flood control, marsh management, or coastal restoration have the potential to impact the integrity of potential core or buffer areas thus causing potential conflicts between NERR objectives (critical for environmental representativeness, research, and education)?

Based on an evaluation of habitat types and uniqueness, maps and acreage of state and federally owned land, current and 50-year projected land area and changes to associated habitat types (from the 2017 Coastal Master Plan), and an evaluation of large scale restoration and protection features (e.g., hydrologic manipulations) currently in place and/or planned, the DLT provided the following evaluation and summary of the estuarine zones to the SDC for their review and consideration (Table 9 and Table 10). See Appendix 3 for more detailed information on the maps, data, and analysis used during the Preliminary Site Screening phase.

Table 9. Preliminary Site Screening assessment by the DLT.

Estuarine Zone	**#1 Unique Coastal Setting**	**#2 State Owned Lands**	**#3 Land Integrity**	**#4 Change in Habitat Diversity**	**#5 Hydrologic Manipulations**
Calcasieu	Insignificant Unique Setting	Insufficient Core Areas	Insignificant Area Change	Significant Habitat Diversity Change	Hydrologic Control Impacts - Potentially Interfere

Estuarine Zone	#1 Unique Coastal Setting	#2 State Owned Lands	#3 Land Integrity	#4 Change in Habitat Diversity	#5 Hydrologic Manipulations
Atchafalaya	Significant Unique Setting	Sufficient Core Areas	Insignificant Area Change	Moderate Habitat Diversity Change	Hydrologic Control Impacts - Insignificant
Terrebonne	Insignificant Unique Setting	Sufficient Core Areas	Significant Area Change	Significant Habitat Diversity Change	Hydrologic Control Impacts - Potentially Interfere
Barataria	Significant Unique Setting	Sufficient Core Areas	Insignificant Area Change	Significant Habitat Diversity Change	Hydrologic Control Impacts - Potentially Interfere
Mississippi River Delta	Significant Unique Setting	Sufficient Core Areas	Significant Area Change	Significant Habitat Diversity Change	Hydrologic Control Impacts - Insignificant
Pontchartrain	Significant Unique Setting	Sufficient Core Areas	Insignificant Area Change	Significant Habitat Diversity Change	Hydrologic Control Impacts - Potentially Interfere

Table 10. Preliminary Site Screening summary statements by the DLT.

Estuarine Zone	Summary Statements
Calcasieu	The Calcasieu estuarine zone has very limited state-owned lands that could be used as core areas to establish a LaNERR. The state-owned lands that are currently present do not represent the diverse unique habitats and processes of delta estuary. The changes in land area are not significant, but changes in habitat type are significant. Due to the lack of state-owned land, there is limited opportunity for establishing a LaNERR in this estuarine zone. Further, hydrologic manipulations potentially challenge the establishment of a NERR.
Atchafalaya	The Atchafalaya estuarine zone currently has significant state-owned lands that represent the unique habitats and processes of a delta estuary. There are diverse habitat types and salinity zones representative of a delta estuary. The projected changes to both the land area and habitat types over the next 50 years are insignificant and moderate, respectively. This zone experiences the least future change when compared to the other zones. This estuarine zone represents a region sufficient to establish a LaNERR, and hydrologic manipulations will not challenge the establishment of a NERR.

Estuarine Zone	Summary Statements
Terrebonne	The Terrebonne estuarine zone currently has state-owned lands that could serve as core areas. However, the zone does not have a diversity of habitat types or salinity gradients representative of a delta estuary. The projected changes to both the land area and habitat types over the next 50 years limit the potential of this zone for establishing a LaNERR. Further, hydrologic manipulations potentially challenge the establishment of a NERR.
Barataria	The Barataria estuarine zone currently has significant state-owned lands that represent the diverse habitats and salinity gradients of a delta estuary. The projected changes in land area are not significant, but changes in habitat type over the next 50 years are significant. The more interior regions of this estuarine zone may represent a region sufficient to establish a LaNERR. Hydrologic manipulations will potentially challenge the establishment of a LaNERR.
Pontchartrain	The Pontchartrain estuarine zone currently has significant state-owned lands that represent the diversity of habitats and salinity gradients of a delta estuary. The projected changes in land area are not significant, but changes in habitat type over the next 50 years are significant. The more interior regions of this estuarine zone may represent a region sufficient to establish a LaNERR. However, hydrologic manipulations will potentially challenge the establishment of a NERR.
Mississippi River Delta	The Mississippi River estuarine zone has current state-owned lands that represent the unique habitats, although dominated by intermediate marsh and salinity zone. There are both fresh and saline habitats in this estuarine zone. However, the projected loss of land area and changes to habitat types over the next 50 years limit the potential of this zone for establishing a LaNERR. Hydrologic manipulations will not challenge the establishment of a NERR.

Following the SDC Meeting #3 on February 25 and 26, 2021, a Qualtrics survey was provided to the SDC so members could vote on whether each estuarine zone should be considered further for the development of candidate LaNERR sites. A total of 53 votes were received; a summary of the results is provided in Table 11.

Table 11. Outcomes of SDC voting on DLT's Preliminary Site Screening of six candidate estuarine zones.

Estuarine Zone	Remove from Further Evaluation	Proceed with Further Evaluation
Calcasieu	98%	2%
Atchafalaya	4%	96%
Terrebonne	74%	26%
Barataria	30%	70%
Pontchartrain	17%	83%
Mississippi River Delta	74%	26%

Outcomes of the voting were presented to the SDC during their 4th meeting in March 2021. Based on a majority vote, it was decided that the Atchafalaya, Barataria, and Pontchartrain estuarine zones would move forward for further consideration in developing candidate LaNERR site proposals for evaluation and nomination to NOAA; the formation of proposal teams soon followed.

Preliminary Public Outreach

Public outreach during the Preliminary Site Screening process consisted of several components including a public kick-off, updates to the LaNERR website, and informational Roadshows and webinars. Materials associated with these can be found in Appendix 4 Preliminary Public Outreach.

A public kickoff was hosted at Nicholls State University with the option of virtual participation (December 9, 2020; two time options were available for additional participation); this public LaNERR kickoff was held in conjunction with a CPRA Board Meeting as a way to leverage participation by key state and parish level stakeholders.

Several news articles announcing the search for a NERR in Louisiana were published soon after. Copies of the articles can be found in Appendix 4 Preliminary Public Outreach.

The LaNERR website was updated to include an option for interested parties to request a Roadshow presentation, and it served as a warehouse of status updates and materials relevant to the LaNERR site selection and nomination process. It also included a password protected site for the SDC meeting materials. A process Milestones and Schedule was created to identify activities and timing throughout the site selection and nomination process; this file was kept updated and posted on the website (refer to the most recent version in Appendix 2 LaNERR Milestones and Schedule).

Public Roadshows took place from November 2020 to August 2021 (Table 12). During these Roadshows, an overview presentation of the NERR site nomination and designation process and the LaNERR process was given to various stakeholders to solicit feedback on both the process and the candidate sites being considered. Members of the DLT were primary presenters for these public Roadshow presentations, but in some cases, proposal team leads or co-leads gave presentations to stakeholders in the estuarine zone they represented.

These initial presentations focused on:

- Outlining the benefits of the NERR System and of a LaNERR specifically
- Overview of the LaNERR process
- Receiving feedback on proposed LaNERR candidate site locations

Table 12. Public Roadshows conducted as part of Preliminary Public Outreach.

Organization Category	**Date**	**Organization**	**Presenter**
Federal Agency	11/5/2020	Barataria-Terrebonne National Estuary Program	Robert Twilley
State Agency	11/10/2020	Louisiana Environmental Education Commission	Morgan Crutcher
State Agency	11/18/2020	Governor's Advisory Commission on Coastal Activities	Seth Blitch

Organization Category	Date	Organization	Presenter
State Agency	12/9/2020	Coastal Protection and Restoration Authority Board[5] - Public Kickoff	Robert Twilley/ Kristin Ransom
General Public	12/9/2020 Mid-day	Public Webinar w/ NOAA and Gulf NERR representative[6]	Robert Twilley/ Kristin Ransom
General Public	12/9/2020 Evening	Public Webinar w/ NOAA and Gulf NERR representative[7]	Robert Twilley/ Kristin Ransom
State Agency	1/7/2021	Louisiana Wildlife and Fisheries Commission	Robert Twilley
Economic Development Groups	1/7/2021	Rotary Club of Morgan City	Morgan Crutcher
NGO	1/8/2021	Delta Dispatch (podcast)[8]	Robert Twilley
Economic Development Groups	1/22/2021	St. Mary Excel	Morgan Crutcher
NGO	1/26/2021	Friends of the Atchafalaya	Morgan Crutcher
NGO - Education	2/15/2021	Louisiana Master Naturalist Program - All Chapters	Robert Twilley/ Kristin Ransom
State Agency	3/10/2021	Atchafalaya Trace Commission	Morgan Crutcher
Parish Government	3/10/2021	Plaquemines Parish Council	John Andrew Nyman
Parish Government	3/25/2021	Louisiana Department of Natural Resources Coastal Zone Management	Kristin Ransom
NGO	3/31/2021	Pontchartrain Conservancy and New Orleans Regional Black Chamber of Commerce	Robert Twilley/ Kristin Ransom
User Group	4/13/2021	Port Manchac	Rob Moreau
Parish Government	5/5/2021	St John the Baptist Parish - Coastal Zone Management Advisory Committee	Morgan Crutcher
User Group	5/26/2021	Teacher Leader Conference	Robert Twilley
Academia, NGO	6/9/2021	Pontchartrain Conservancy, Southeastern Louisiana University, and Friends of Manchac Greenway	Robert Twilley
Cross-agency	8/12/2021	Atchafalaya River Basin Restoration and Enhancement Task Force	Brian Roberts

The LaNERR site selection and nomination process was also covered on the "Delta Dispatches" podcast in an episode titled "A National Estuarine Research Reserve for Louisiana's Coast" featuring Dr. Robert Twilley from the Designation Leadership Team. Recordings of presentations were made available on the website where possible.

[5] The Coastal Protection and Restoration Authority Board is comprised of members from the Office of the Governor, state agencies, levee districts, parish governing authorities, the Louisiana Legislature, and the Office of the Lieutenant Governor.
[6] Recording: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EfcZybU8PBo
[7] Recording: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=S44ATJqiTqs
[8] Recording: Delta Dispatches

Site Criteria

During SDC Meeting #4 in March 2021, an overview was given of draft revisions that could be considered for the NOAA-recommended Site Criteria. The subset of the SDC that volunteered to serve on the Site Selection Subcommittee met four times between April 9 and May 21, 2021, to review and revise the NOAA recommended criteria to ensure their relevancy to Louisiana's unique coastal systems and that they included feedback from NOAA. Drafts of the Site Criteria and updates on the approval process by NOAA were also presented to the full SDC during SDC Meeting #5 on May 13, 2021, and Meeting #6 on July 14, 2021.

The DLT submitted the criteria to NOAA on June 1, 2021. NOAA provided suggestions for minor revisions on July 6, 2021 (i.e., addition of two Site Criteria [Appendix 4 of the NOAA Guidelines – 5. Resilience and 6. Partnerships]). The DLT submitted the final LaNERR Site Criteria to NOAA on July 28, 2021, and NOAA approved the LaNERR Site Criteria in August 2021 for use in final Detailed Site Screening and Scoring. The final LaNERR Site Criteria were provided to the full SDC during SDC Meeting #7 on November 29, 2021.

The final list of LaNERR Site Criteria for Detailed Site Screening and Scoring can be found below in Table 13. Appendix 5 contains the expanded Final LaNERR Site Criteria.

The three candidate sites that remained after Preliminary Site Screening were then evaluated in the second phase of site selection: Detailed Site Screening and Scoring. Further elaboration on how the LaNERR Site Criteria were applied can be found in the section regarding Detailed Site Screening and Scoring.

Table 13. Final LaNERR Site Criteria.

Section	Site Criteria	Minimum Score	Maximum Score
1	Environmental Representativeness		
1.1	Ecosystem Composition	1	3
1.2	Balanced Ecosystem Composition	0	3
1.3	Habitat Composition and Complexity	1	3
1.4	Significant Faunal and Floral Support	0	3
1.5	Geologic Representativeness, diversity, and uniqueness	0	3
1.6	Salinity Gradient	0	3
1.7	Degree Developed and Potential Impacts to Water Quality	0	3
2	Research, Monitoring & Resource Protection		
2.1	Value of Site for Research	0	3
2.2	Previous Research and Monitoring Effects	0	3
2.3	Suitability for Environmental Bassline Monitoring	0	3
2.4	Ability to Address Local, State, and Regional Coastal Management Issues	0	3
3	Education and Interpretation		
3.1	Diversity and Quality of Training, Education, and Interpretation Opportunities	0	3
3.2	Diversity and Availability of Target Audiences	0	3
3.3	Availability of Facilities	0	3
3.4	Proximity and Accessibility to Researchers, Educators, and Resource Management Decision Makers	0	3

Section	Site Criteria	Minimum Score	Maximum Score
3.5	Value of Site for Environmental Education and Interpretation Programs	0	3
4	Acquisition and Management Consideration		
4.1	Publicly Owned Lands and Feasibility of Land Acquisition	0	3
4.2	Compatibility with Existing Management Practices and Consumptive and Non-Consumptive Uses	0	3
4.3	Compatibility with Adjacent Land Uses	0	3
4.4	Land Ownership	1	3
4.5	Enforcement and Protection of Site Area Management Practices	0	3
4.6	Land and Water Access	0	3
4.7	Future Urban and Industrial Development Plans	0	3
5	Ability to Conduct Research on Resilience and Climate Change Impacts		
5.1	Coastal Resilience Research	1	3
5.2	Ability to Accommodate Shifts in Habitat as Sea-Level Rise, Inundation, or other Climate-Change Impacts Occur	0	3
5.3	Infrastructure and Access	0	3
5.4	Public Access Resilience	0	3
6.0	LaNERR Partnerships		
6.1	Potential to Develop Partnerships	0	3
6.2	Internal NOAA Partnerships	0	3
6.3	Diversity of Partnerships	0	3

Candidate Site Proposals

Following Preliminary Site Screening and NOAA's approval of the final LaNERR Site Criteria, proposal teams were organized around the three remaining candidate estuarine zones: Atchafalaya, Barataria, and Pontchartrain. During SDC Meeting #4 in March 2021, guidance was provided on the proposal development process. Teams were asked to prepare their proposals in phases with each phase building upon the previous. A significant component of the proposal was to identify how well each candidate estuarine zone addresses each of the Site Criteria.

The DLT provided guidance, relevant data, and a standard set of maps to each of the proposal teams. The map set included maps of state and federal lands, vegetation types, education facilities, and monitoring stations within each estuarine zone. Information sharing sites were established for each proposal team to promote collaborative preparation of proposals.

Proposal teams developed Phase I, II, and Draft/Final Proposals from April 26, 2021, through May 4, 2022 (refer to Appendix 6 Phase I, II, Final Proposal Guidance). The DLT met with the proposal teams nine times between April 16, 2021, and May 3, 2022, to provide guidance, answer questions, and highlight key information needs. Supplemental guidance and updates were provided via email by Robert Twilley throughout the proposal development process.

Phase I Proposals

Phase I Proposals were due May 3, 2021. DLT guidance requested that the proposal identify the proposal team lead (or co-leads), key team member names, and relevant expertise in addressing four Site Criteria (Education and Interpretation; Environmental Representativeness; Research,

Monitoring, and Resource Protection; and Acquisition and Management Consideration[9]). Teams were allowed to recruit members outside of the SDC if needed. They were also asked to include a brief explanation of their team's proposal development plan including their team's meeting format and process and any anticipated needs for proposal preparation. Last, they were asked to provide a general visual of their anticipated LaNERR site, including draft core and buffer areas.[10]

Proposal teams presented their Phase I Proposals to the SDC during SDC Meeting #5 on May 13, 2021 and solicited feedback for future proposal development phases. Phase II and Final Proposals were also discussed during this meeting.

Phase II Proposals

Phase II Proposals, which were expanded versions of Phase I Proposals, were due on June 30, 2021. Refer to Appendix 6 Phase I, II, Final Proposal Guidance for the detailed guidance provided.

Proposal teams presented their Phase II Proposals to the SDC and the Screening Subcommittee during SDC Meeting #6 on July 14, 2021, and Seth Blitch (Screening Committee Chair) gave an overview of the Screening Subcommittee's Phase II Proposal review process. It was noted that the review by this subcommittee was intended to provide constructive feedback to proposal teams regarding improvements that could be made to help improve their proposals, particularly the section focused on addressing the Site Criteria.

The Screening Subcommittee met June 1 and July 21, 2021, to discuss logistics for reviewing and providing feedback on the Phase II Proposals. Evaluation of the climate change and partnerships criteria was completed later, during the Detailed Site Screening and Scoring of the Final Proposals as Phase II proposals were written prior to the addition of these criteria. Phase II Proposals and a Qualtrics survey for each proposal were provided to the Screening Subcommittee. The survey allowed for comments specific to each subsection of each proposal as well as general comments/feedback. Feedback was due on August 6, 2021, and the DLT collated individual review responses anonymously for each proposal. This feedback was provided to proposal teams on August 13, 2021. Refer to Appendix 8 Phase II Proposal Feedback for Screening Subcommittee feedback received on the Phase II proposals. Phase II Proposals can be found in Appendix 7 SDC Meeting #6 materials.

Final Proposals

Final Proposal were due March 25, 2022, and were expanded versions of the Phase II Proposals. Refer to Appendix 6 Phase I, II, Final Proposal Guidance for the detailed guidance provided. One of the key additions to the Final Proposals was the incorporation of public and stakeholder letters of support gathered during and after the public Town Hall meetings (described in the section below). Stakeholder feedback was also incorporated into the Final Proposals.

[9] The Resilience and Partnerships Site Criteria had not yet been provided by NOAA.

[10] Given the large geographic scale of coastal Louisiana and the size of three candidate estuarine zones, NOAA later suggested that proposal teams not focus on core and buffer areas until after one of the three candidate sites was selected for nomination.

The Final Proposals underwent Detailed Site Screening and Scoring by the Screening Subcommittee as described in the section below. The Screening Subcommittee met on March 24, 2022, to discuss logistics for applying the LaNERR Site Criteria for Detailed Site Screening and Scoring to the Final Proposals.

Prior to submittal of Final Proposals to the Executive Committee (on May 6, 2022), the proposal teams were allowed to provide a cover letter to address Screening Subcommittee scores and associated comments, to incorporate any additional public and stakeholder letters of support, and to identify potential partners, advisors, and/or contributors identified following submission of the Final Proposals. This new information was due on May 4, 2022. Refer to Appendix 9 Final Candidate Site Proposals for the Atchafalaya, Barataria, and Pontchartrain's Final Proposals, cover letters to the Executive Committee responding to the Screening Subcommittee's scores and comments, and letters of support.

Public Town Hall Meetings

Proposal teams presented to the SDC during their Meeting #7 on November 29, 2021, as a "mock" Town Hall meeting, and SDC members were asked to begin advertising the public meetings through their networks. Prior to the public Town Hall meetings, Robert Twilley met with the Executive Committee on December 21, 2021, to brief them on the status of the LaNERR site selection process and to begin advertising the public Town Hall meetings. There were also targeted updates to the Louisiana Oyster Task Force (November 29, 2021), the Louisiana Wildlife and Fisheries Commission (February 3, 2022), and the CPRA Board (January 19 and June 15, 2022).

Between February 1 – 11, 2022, the DLT and proposal teams organized public Town Hall meetings for each of the three candidate sites: Atchafalaya, Barataria, and Pontchartrain. The goal of these Town Hall meetings was to engage the public by providing them with information about the NERR System and what a reserve would provide to their respective regions. Additionally, these meetings provided an opportunity to receive feedback from the public in the form of a public question and answer session and a questionnaire administered at the end of each meeting. The DLT and the proposal teams used these meetings to evaluate potential support and/or concerns of local stakeholders regarding each of the candidate sites.

Three Town Hall meetings (virtual and hybrid) were organized for each candidate site. The public was encouraged to participate either in-person or virtually. Virtual meetings were held strictly online. Hybrid meetings could be attended either in-person or online. Registration was required for online participation.

The public Town Hall meetings were announced to the SDC during Meeting #7 on November 29, 2021, and a press release with information about the meetings was posted on the LaNERR webpage in January 2022. It was also distributed via the following:

- Media outlets (sent by Louisiana Sea Grant)
- LaNERR website
- LaNERR Facebook and Twitter accounts
- LaNERR listserv

- Louisiana Sea Grant listserv
- Proposal teams and their respective university listservs and targeted local contacts
- Site Development Committee
- LDNR OCM
- National Park Service
- NOAA NERR staff
- Gulf NERR contact list
- Restore the MS River Delta Campaign

The agenda for each public Town Hall meeting included discussion of the following topics:

- What is a National Estuarine Research Reserve System – Kristin Ransom, NOAA (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yhPBom-_6TE)
- Introduction to LaNERR Process – Robert Twilley, Professor, LSU (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HtnY1AUHPrQ)
- Presentation by the specific LaNERR Candidate Site Team
- Public Q&A and questionnaire for public to provide feedback

Links to the following were provided in the virtual Zoom chat, and print copies of documents were available at the in-person meetings:

- Louisiana Sea Grant LaNERR website: https://www.laseagrant.org/deltanerr/
- LaNERR email: deltanerr@lsu.edu
- NERR/LaNERR factsheet: https://www.laseagrant.org/wp-content/uploads/LaNERR-Town-Hall-Intro.pdf
- NERR/LaNERR Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs): https://www.laseagrant.org/wp-content/uploads/LaNERR-TownHall-FAQ.pdf
- Questionnaire: https://lsu.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_dmp13jzZEEJwQ3Y
- Site Specific
    - Atchafalaya NERR Town Hall presentation: https://www.laseagrant.org/wp-content/uploads/LaNERR-Atchafalaya-Town-Hall.pdf
    - Atchafalaya NERR proposal factsheet: https://www.laseagrant.org/wp-content/uploads/LaNERR-Atchafalaya-Proposal-2pg.pdf
    - Barataria NERR Town Hall presentation: https://www.laseagrant.org/wp-content/uploads/LaNERR-Barataria-Town-Hall.pdf
    - Pontchartrain NERR Town Hall presentation: https://www.laseagrant.org/wp-content/uploads/LaNERR-Pontchartrain-Town-Hall.pdf
    - Pontchartrain NERR proposal factsheet: https://www.laseagrant.org/wp-content/uploads/LaNERR-Pontchartrain-Proposal-2pg.pdf

Along with the press release, all meeting materials including FAQs, NERR System / LaNERR factsheet, questionnaire, Atchafalaya and Pontchartrain factsheets, proposal team slides, and summaries of each meeting are available in Appendix 10 Public Town Hall Meetings. Many of these materials are also available on the LaNERR website.

Atchafalaya and Pontchartrain had two hybrid meetings and one virtual meeting. Due to the long-term impact of Hurricane Ida in the Barataria Basin, Barataria had one hybrid and two virtual meetings.

Atchafalaya Town Hall Meetings

The Atchafalaya proposal team hosted three Town Hall meetings as part of the LaNERR site selection process. Participation is summarized below:

- Wednesday, February 2 (12:00 – 2:00pm) Virtual Only
    - 92 virtual participants
- Tuesday, February 8 (6:00 – 8:00pm) Virtual and In-Person at Morgan City Municipal Auditorium, 728 Myrtle St., Morgan City, LA
    - 74 virtual participants and 135 in-person participants
- Thursday, February 10 (6:00 – 8:00pm) Virtual and In-Person at Sliman Theatre for the Performing Arts, 129 E. Main St., New Iberia, LA
    - 40 virtual participants and 8 in-person participants

In total, there were **206** virtual participants and **143** in-person participants. Participants included local elected officials; city officials; members from parish, state, and federal agencies; regional NERR staff; NGOs, including economic development and technical training programs; academia; private sector; business owners; landowners; K-12 educators; local high school students; local media; and community members. Proposal team members, members of the DLT, and program management support staff also participated.

Barataria Town Hall Meetings

The Barataria proposal team hosted three Town Hall meetings as part of the LaNERR site selection process. Participation is summarized below:

- Monday, February 7 (6:00 – 8:00pm) Virtual and In-Person at Lafitte Barataria Museum & Wetland Trace, 4917 City Park Drive, Lafitte, LA
    - 21 virtual participants and 23 in-person participants
- Wednesday, February 9 (12:00 – 2:00pm) Virtual Only
    - 47 virtual participants
- Wednesday, February 9 (6:00 – 8:00pm) Virtual Only
    - 16 virtual participants

In total, there were **84** virtual participants and **23** in-person participants. Participants included members from parish, state, and federal agencies; NGOs, including economic development and technical training programs; academia; private sector; regional NERR staff; business owners; and community members. Proposal team members, members of the DLT, and program management support staff also participated.

Pontchartrain Town Hall Meetings

The Pontchartrain proposal team hosted three Town Hall meetings as part of the LaNERR site selection process. Participation is summarized below:

- Tuesday, February (6:00 – 8:00pm) Virtual and In-Person at Southeastern University, Student Union Annex – Theater, Hammond, LA

    - 47 virtual participants and 28 in-person participants
- Thursday, February 3 (6:00 – 8:00pm) Virtual Only
    - 37 virtual participants
- Friday, February 11 (12:00 – 2:00pm) Virtual and In-Person at Geoghegan Grand Ballroom, University of New Orleans Homer Hitt Alumni and Visitors Center, New Orleans, LA
    - 63 virtual participants and 6 in-person participants

In total, there were **147** virtual participants and **34** in-person participants. Participants included members from parish, state, and federal agencies; regional NERR staff; NGOs, including community groups, economic development, and technical training programs; academia; private sector; landowners; and community members. Proposal team members, members of the DLT, and program management support staff also participated.

The DLT provided an overview of the public Town Hall meetings and meeting summaries via email to the SDC on March 17, 2022.

Detailed Site Screening and Scoring

The Screening Subcommittee was chaired by Seth Blitch of TNC and included seventeen other members (refer to the roster in the Teams and Functions section); although, two members were unable to participate in Detailed Site Screening and Scoring.

The Screening Subcommittee met on March 24, 2022, to review the final LaNERR Site Criteria and answer any questions associated with the Detailed Site Screening and Scoring process. Following that meeting, the subcommittee had approximately two weeks to complete their evaluation process (due April 15, 2022). Each member completed an evaluation by providing scores and comments for each criterion for each of the three candidate sites using Qualtrics surveys. The final scores and comments were collected by the DLT and used to formulate a report (as described below) for the SDC and LaNERR Executive Committee. The screening and scoring outcomes were provided to the SDC for their Meeting #8 on May 3, 2022, and to the Executive Committee for their meeting on May 11, 2022.

Scoring Analysis Process

Each respondent's final scoring sheets were submitted via Qualtrics, which assigned a reviewer number in the order received (R1, R2, etc.). The scoring sheets and reviewer comments were integrated into a report. This document contained all initial scores and comments by each Screening Subcommittee member. There were 15 evaluations of each of the three site proposals submitted (refer to Appendix 11 Detailed Site Screening and Scoring).

Scoring was organized around evaluations of six criteria categories (refer to Appendix 5 Final LaNERR Site Criteria for the full list of criteria) as follows:

- Environmental Representativeness
- Research/Monitoring/Stewardship
- Education and Training
- Acquisition/Management
- Resiliency

- Partnerships

The results from each reviewer were collected and used to generate an average score by criterion. The average score for each criterion was summed within each of the six categories that the criterion was associated to generate a summed score for each site by one of six categories (see categories above). The average score per criterion was also summed for all criteria to generate a total score and converted to a percentage based on 90 points representing the total possible score. The total and percentage scores were used to rank the three candidate site proposals.

The tables and figures below provide a breakdown of how the scoring of each criterion contributed to the overall site scores, as well as how sites compared when looking at criteria groups. Atchafalaya and Pontchartrain scored first or second in all six of the criteria categories and Barataria was second in only one criteria category (Table 14). Atchafalaya ranked first in 4 of the 6 criteria categories, and second and third in one each. Pontchartrain ranked first in two categories and second in four other categories. Specifically, Atchafalaya scored higher in Environmental Representativeness, Research/Monitoring/Stewardship, Acquisition/Management, and Resiliency. Pontchartrain Basin scored higher in Education/Training and Partnerships. The scores between Atchafalaya and Pontchartrain were particularly close in Environmental Representativeness and Partnerships. Barataria did not have the highest score for any of the six categories. Atchafalaya received 87.2% of the possible points compared to 86.5% for Pontchartrain and 77.7% for Barataria Basin (Figure 12). The following sections provide further details of the scoring of LaNERR Site Criteria groups.

Table 14. Average rank scoring of site criteria groups for each candidate site.

Site Criteria Groups	**Atchafalaya**	**Barataria**	**Pontchartrain**
Environmental Representativeness Ave Group Score Rank	1	3	2
Research / Monitoring / Stewardship Ave Group Score Rank	1	3	2
Education / Training Ave Group Score Rank	3	2	1
Acquisition / Management Ave Group Score Rank	1	3	2
Resiliency Ave Group Score Rank	1	3	2
Partnerships Ave Group Score Rank	2	3	1

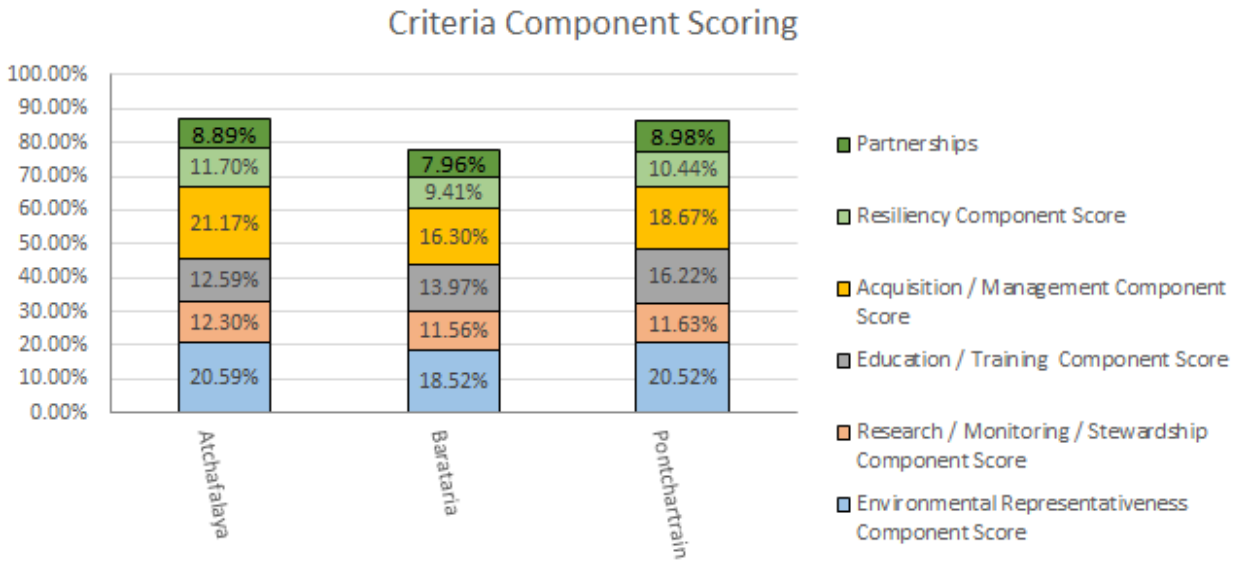

Figure 12. Final cumulative scores (percentage of total points) for each of the six criteria groups for each of the three candidate sites.

Site scores for Environmental Representativeness and Research/Monitoring/Stewardship are presented in Figure 13 (A and B, respectively). The environmental representativeness of a candidate site is relative to ecosystem type (as defined in Appendix 2 of NERR System program regulations [15 C.F.R. § 921]). Sites were evaluated using a suite of ecological, biological, physical, and chemical characteristics that fall under the general category of "Ecosystem and Ecological Characteristics." The ecological and biological characteristics focus primarily on factors concerning a site's diversity and balance in regard to the types of ecosystems and habitats present, as well as any significant or unique biotic trait. The remaining criteria for physical and chemical characteristics focus on a site's position within the watershed to which it belongs, geological and salinity characteristics, water quality, and the degree to which it is developed. A site with representative, unique, and highly diverse characteristics will provide greater research, monitoring, and resource protection opportunities than one lacking these characteristics.

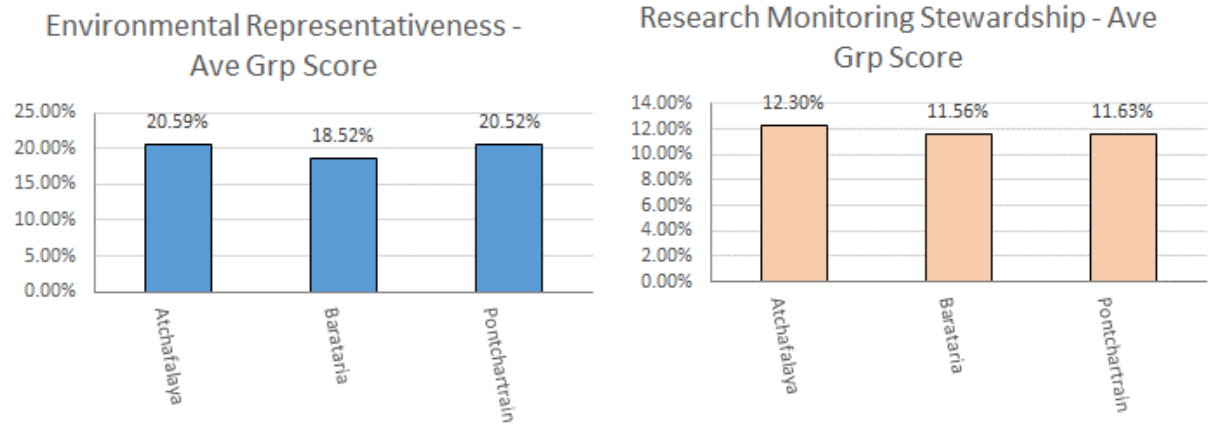

Figure 13. Candidate site scores for Environmental Representativeness (left) and Research/Monitoring/Stewardship (right).

Site scores for Suitability for Education, Training, and Interpretation and Suitability for Acquisition and Management are presented in Figure 14 (A and B, respectively). Suitability for

Education, Training, and Interpretation is a measure of the variety and quality of training, education, and interpretation opportunities (i.e., ecological, archaeological, cultural, historical, etc.) provided by the site. The assumption is that a candidate site with a diversity of such opportunities of high quality will be utilized to a greater extent than one with fewer opportunities. A candidate site with compatible land-use practices on adjacent lands is more likely to maintain the integrity of the reserve; sites with fewer conflicts are more likely to maintain both public support and the integrity of the site. Measures of available facilities, proximity to institutions that may use the NERR, and accessibility of the proposed NERR site are also considered.

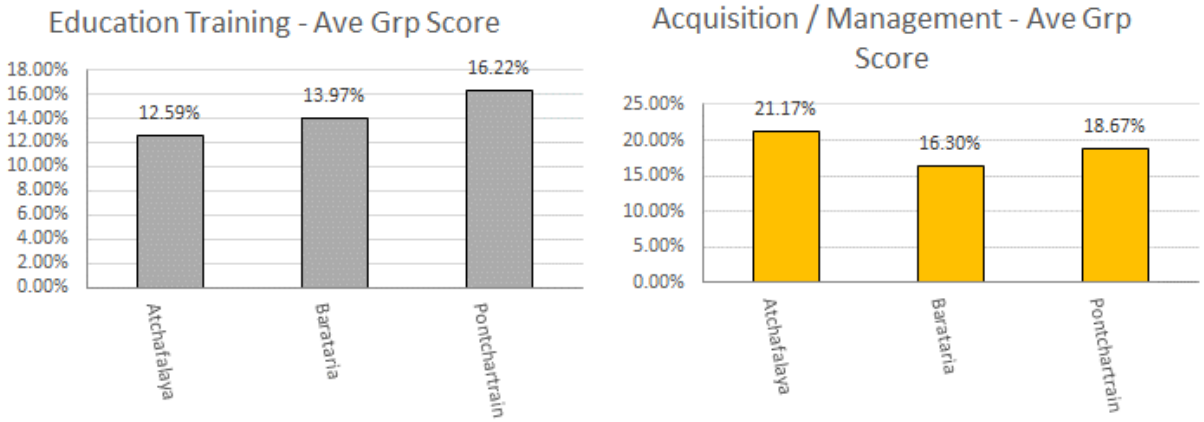

Figure 14. Candidate site scores for Education, Training, and Interpretation (left) and Acquisition and Management (right).

Site scores for Coastal Resilience Research and LaNERR Partnerships are presented in Figure 15 (A and B, respectively). The consideration of Coastal Resilience Research is important for the reserve site to be able to assess climate and coastal change impacts on the area. LaNERR Partnerships should be relevant and aid the program in achieving its goals, reach target audiences, and develop and deliver key messages. They increase the resilience of the reserve and its ability to work with the local community to address research needs and gaps, reach education and public engagement goals, and provide access to facilities and field opportunities.

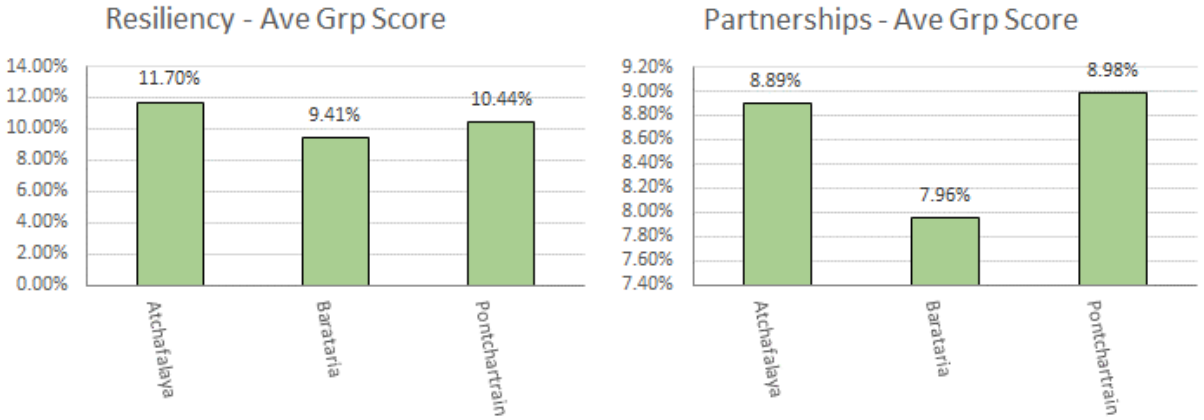

Figure 15. Candidate site scores for Coastal Resilience Research (left) and LaNERR Partnerships (right).

Final Executive Committee Decision

Following receipt of Final Proposals, outcomes of the Detailed Site Screening and Scoring, and presentations of the summary candidate site by proposal teams on May 11, 2022, the Executive Committee explored voting options (i.e., one vote per agency or one vote per member) for the process by which they would determine which LaNERR site to recommend to the Governor for nomination to NOAA. The Executive Committee met again on May 26, 2022, and agreed that each member of the Executive Committee would receive one vote. By a six to three vote, the Executive Committee recommended the Atchafalaya NERR as the preferred site to be nominated by the Governor to NOAA. Governor John Bel Edwards publicly announced his support for nominating a NERR in the Atchafalaya Basin on June 15, 2022.

Public Meetings Describing the Proposed Site

On Wednesday, November 2, 2022, an in-person public meeting to describe the selection process and the proposed site and to seek public comments was held at 5:00pm CT at the Morgan City Auditorium (728 Myrtle Street, Morgan City, Louisiana 70380). Two virtual meetings were held on Thursday, November 3, 2022, at 12:00pm and 5:00pm CT.

Per NOAA regulations, notice of the meetings was posted in the Federal Register by NOAA on October 19, 2022, and the notice was also posted by CPRA in The Daily Review (Morgan City, Louisiana) on October 14 and 19, 2022, and in The Advocate on October 18, 2022.

The public meetings were also announced via the following:

- Email
    - LaNERR Executive Committee
    - CPRA listserv (over 3,500 email addresses, including but not limited to, the press, CPRA employees, CPRA Board Members, coastal zone managers, legislators, parish officials, state and federal employees, NGOs, academia, private sector, stakeholders, and community members)
- CPRA website and social media platforms
    - Key Initiatives (https://coastal.la.gov/our-work/key-initiatives/atchafalaya-national-estuarine-research-reserve/)
    - Facebook (https://www.facebook.com/LouisianaCPRA/)
    - LinkedIn (https://www.linkedin.com/company/coastal-protection-and-restoration-authority-of-louisiana/)
- Word of mouth, including personalized phone calls by CPRA staff
- Congressional Notifications
    - *Louisiana Delegation*
        - Senator Cassidy (R-LA)
        - Senator Kennedy (R-LA)
        - Representative Scalise (R-LA-1)
        - Representative Carter (D-LA-2)
        - Representative Higgins (R-LA-3)
        - Representative Johnson (R-LA-4)
        - Representative Graves (R-LA-6)

    - *Relevant Committees*
        - Senate Appropriations Committee, Commerce, Justice, Science, and Related Agencies Subcommittee, Majority and Minority Staff
        - House Appropriations Committee, Commerce, Justice, Science, and Related Agencies Subcommittee, Majority and Minority Staff
        - Senate Commerce Committee
        - House Natural Resources Committee
        - House Science Committee
        - Estuary Caucus
        - House Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure
        - Select Committee on Climate Crisis
- Tribal Notifications
    - Alabama-Coushatta Tribe of Texas (Mikko Kanicu Donnis Battise)
    - Chitimatcha Tribe of Louisiana (Hon. Melissa Dardan, Chairman)
    - Choctaw Nation (Chief Gary Batton)
    - Coushatta Tribe of Louisiana (Hon. David Stickey, Chairman)
    - Jena Band of Choctaw Indians (Hon. B. Cheryl Smith, Chief)
    - Seminole Nation of Oklahoma (Hon. Greg Chilcoat, Principal Chief)
    - Tunica-Biloxi Indian Tribe (Hon. Joey Barbry, Chairman)

The agenda for all three public meetings included discussion of the following topics:

- Setting the stage (how did Louisiana get to this point in the NERR process; why does Louisiana want to have a NERR)
- NERR System overview
- Overview of the LaNERR site selection and nomination process
- Next steps in the LaNERR designation process, including an anticipated timeline
- Public feedback and questions and answer session

Print copies of the following documents were made available at the in-person meeting:

- NERR / LaNERR Frequently Asked Questions
- Two-page overview of the NERR System and the LaNERR process, including dates, times, and the agenda for the public meetings

Participation in the public meetings is summarized below:

- Wednesday, November 2 (5:00pm CT) In-Person at Morgan City Municipal Auditorium, 728 Myrtle St., Morgan City, LA
    - 30 participants (per sign-in sheets)
- Thursday, November 3, 2022 (12:00pm CT) Virtual Only
    - 24 participants
    - Recording of this meeting: https://youtu.be/ZwzjgYS0mQo
- Thursday, November 3, 2022 (5:00pm CT) Virtual Only
    - 5 participants
    - Recording of this meeting: https://youtu.be/ZwzjgYS0mQo

In total, there were **59** participants, including local elected officials; city officials; parish officials; members from parish, state, and federal agencies; other NOAA/NERR staff; NGOs; academia; private sector; business owners; landowners; K-12 educators; local high school students; local media; and community members. The LaNERR leadership team and program management support staff also participated.

Comments were generally very favorable and supportive of the site selection and nomination process and for the designation of a NERR in the Atchafalaya area. Several participants asked questions about the designation process, next steps and timelines, as well as the potential to include privately owned land. The public comment period was open for seven days following the last meeting. Comments could be sent by email to coastal@la.gov or by mail to the following address: Coastal Protection and Restoration Authority; Public Comments – NERR; 150 Terrace Avenue, Baton Rouge, LA, 70802. Six written comments were received by email during this time.

Documentation of the meeting notices, other advertisements, associated meeting materials, questions and answers, and written comments received is available in Appendix 12 Site Nomination Public Meetings. It should be noted that several hundred support letters regarding designating a NERR in the Atchafalaya Basin can be found in Appendix 9 Final Candidate Site Proposals (refer to the end of the Atchafalaya Proposal).

Proposed Management and Operational Partners

The Executive Committee recommended that CPRA serve as the state lead agency to work with NOAA in completing the remaining tasks in designating the proposed Atchafalaya NERR, including development of a DMP and FMP and assisting NOAA with meeting National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) requirements, including the development of a DEIS and FEIS. Considering LDWF is the managing entity of Louisiana's wildlife management areas (WMAs), their existing management plans would be incorporated into the day-to-day management and use of the nominated site.

Tribal Considerations

Pat Arnould, Executive Director of the Governor's Office Indian Affairs, Chief Shirell Parfait-Dardar of the Grand Caillou/Dulac Band of Biloxi-Chitimacha-Choctaw, and Patty Ferguson-Bohnee, member of the Pointe-au-Chien Indian tribe and Director of Indian Legal Clinic and Associate Clinical Professor of Law at the Sandra Day O'Connor College of Law at Arizona State University served on the Site Development Committee. Pat Arnould also volunteered to serve as a resource for each proposal team through the duration of the LaNERR site selection and nomination process. Upon NOAA's approval of this nomination package, additional tribal engagement is anticipated during development of the D/FEIS and D/FMP.

LOUISIANA NERR SITE DESCRIPTION

In Governor John Bel Edward's 2019 letter to NOAA, he stated "Louisiana would like to nominate a site in the Delta biogeographic region for inclusion in the NERRS". When developing the proposed Atchafalaya NERR, the proposal team had to ask the question "How do we best design a Delta NERR site?" They concluded that a delta NERR should include three main components or zones: the river and its alluvial floodplain, the river delta, and the estuarine ecosystem. The overall approach to the development of the Atchafalaya NERR is to include key ecosystems included in the Site Criteria with the understanding that the site encompasses relevant habitats found in Louisiana. The Atchafalaya NERR is essentially a small-scale version of Louisiana, representing many of the habitats found within the state and serving as a model for how the state and other large river-delta estuaries are formed.

This overall vision for the Atchafalaya NERR, like other NERR sites, is to establish locations for long-term stewardship, research, education, and training. The Atchafalaya NERR will build upon current monitoring efforts and restoration activities to increase physical and biological monitoring in the riverine system and fresh, floating, brackish, and salt marshes (stewardship); provide vital research opportunities and access, becoming the only active delta estuarine system in the NERR network, thus adding value to the significance of the research conducted at the site (research); offer a variety of opportunities for learning to diverse audiences by providing relatively short travel distances from major coastal cities and universities (education); and be an ideal place to discuss the interconnectedness of engineering and ecology and the impacts on communities (training). Considering the vast spatial scale of Louisiana's coast and the area being nominated, the information that follows may be broader in nature as the Louisiana team awaits approval from NOAA and can begin winnowing down composites of land and water for evaluation as alternatives in the EIS. Some sections of text below were excerpted from the Final Atchafalaya NERR Proposal, which is provided in Appendix 9.

Site Boundaries

Of the approximately 650,000 hectares (1.6 million acres) within the Atchafalaya Basin, there are about 305,000 hectares (750,000 acres) of state-owned lands and about 121,500 hectares (300,000 acres) of state-owned water bodies, which account for more than 65% of the total area. There are more than 10 state or federally designated WMAs, wildlife sanctuaries, wildlife refuges, and state parks. The Atchafalaya Basin is depicted in Figure 16, and the preliminary areas being nominated to NOAA to serve as the core and buffer of the NERR are shown in Figure 17.

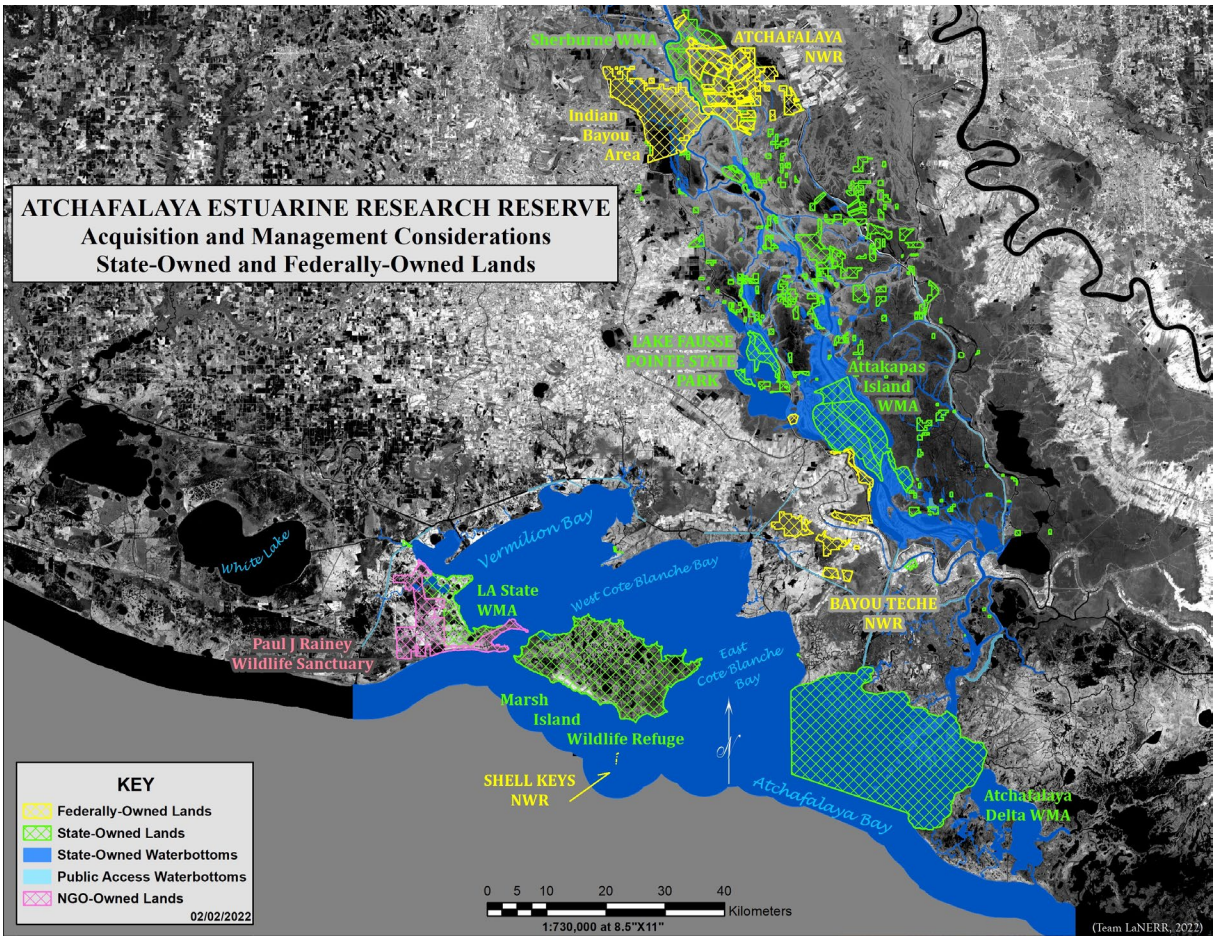

Figure 16. Map of the Atchafalaya Basin, including all state, federal, and NGO-owned lands and state water bottoms.

Core and Buffer Areas

NOAA requires reserves to identify "core and "buffer" areas. Core areas refer to areas so vital to the functioning of the estuary ecosystem that they must be under a level of control sufficient to ensure the long-term viability of the reserve. Buffers denote areas, typically adjacent or near to core areas that serve to protect the core and may also accommodate future habitat shifts. Buffers also include facility areas (NERR Core and Buffer areas: 15 C.F.R. § 921.11c(3)). The preliminary delineation of core and buffer areas is shown in Figure 17 and includes a subset of state-owned land that could serve as core areas and adjacent water bodies that could serve as the buffer area.

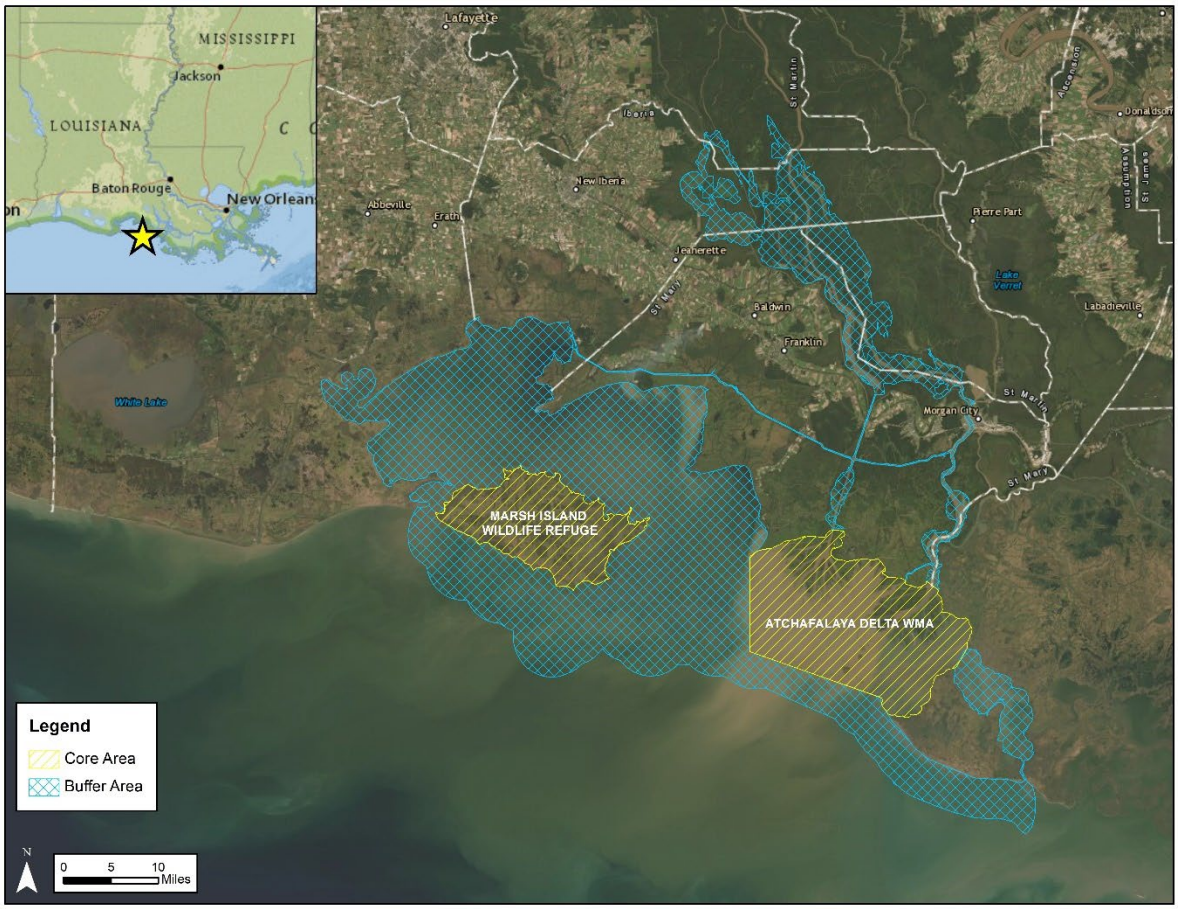

Figure 17. Map of the preliminary core and buffer areas of the Atchafalaya NERR being nominated to NOAA.

The core and buffer are representative of key habitats and ecosystems in Louisiana. The most unique habitat in this proposed NERR site is the actively growing river delta.

The alluvial floodplain consists of bottomland hardwood forests in higher elevation areas with limited flooding and lower elevation areas with more frequent flooding; these lower elevation areas support bald cypress. Moving south, the active river deltas and tidal fresh marsh dominate the landscape. Moving east and west of the river deltas, estuarine conditions are present, including areas of brackish to saline marsh.

Core (~208,430 acres):

- Atchafalaya Delta WMA – included because it represents the unique, active river delta habitat of the proposed LaNERR
- Marsh Island Wildlife Refuge – included because it extends into estuarine conditions

Buffer (~658,360 acres): included to provide surrounding waterbodies and connecting waterways

Total area (~866,790 acres)

Given the large geographic scale of coastal Louisiana and the size of three candidate estuarine zones, NOAA suggested that proposal teams not focus on core and buffer areas until after one of the three candidate sites was selected for nomination. The Louisiana NERR team understands that core and buffer areas will be further refined if this nomination package is approved by NOAA and proceeds to the draft and final EIS and MP phase as part of the site designation process. Therefore, to ensure a thorough and adequate description of the site, the following sections include information pertaining to the entire Atchafalaya Basin as shown in Figure 16. Specific information pertaining to the core and buffer areas will be provided as these boundaries are further refined in collaboration with NOAA during the development of the EIS and MP.

Physical Site Description

Climate

The coastal region of southern Louisiana, which includes the Atchafalaya Basin is characterized as a humid, subtropical climate with long, hot summers and short, mild winters. Precipitation is frequent year-round with numerous storms throughout the spring and summer and relatively dryer conditions in the winter. The Gulf of Mexico helps moderate the climate in the southern portion of the state, while temperatures and precipitation are more variable in the northern part of the state. The highest temperatures state-wide are generally between June and September with average highs around 32.2°C (90°F) and lows around 21.1°C (70°F). Winters are milder with highs near 18.9°C (66°F) and nights averaging around 2.8°C (37°F) (Weather Atlas, n.d.). Higher temperatures are generally seen in the southern part of the state. The average annual rainfall throughout Louisiana ranges from 1.2 meters (4 feet) in the north to 1.9 meters (6.25 feet) in the south (Weather Atlas, n.d.). The wet season lasts from April to September and the dry season from October to March.

Louisiana is exposed to colliding influences of diverse warm and cool air masses as well as a clockwise circulation of air around a semipermanent high-pressure system in the North Atlantic, which facilitates frequent and often severe weather events during the warmer months and an average of over 60 thunderstorms a year (NOAA, 2022b). Tropical events such as hurricanes, tropical storms, and cyclones occur during what is referred to as “hurricane season,” which lasts from June to November. As such, coastal Louisiana has suffered significant ecological and economic impacts from hurricanes and tropical storms such as Hurricane Laura in 2020 and Hurricane Ida in 2021. Tornadoes are most frequent from January to March. Snowfall is rare. Large-scale climate phenomena such as El Nino-Southern Oscillations and the North Atlantic Oscillation also likely effect precipitation patters, storm events, and river flow within the Atchafalaya Basin (Smits et al., 2019).

Hydrography/Oceanography

The Atchafalaya River system serves as a repository for approximately 30% of the combined flows of the Mississippi and Red Rivers making it the fifth largest river in the North America in mean annual discharge. During floods, it can become the second largest discharging river on the continent. Because the Atchafalaya River includes flows from both the Mississippi River and the Red River (one of the major mid-continental rivers in North America), it has the largest drainage basin in North America and shares with the Mississippi the distinction of having the third largest drainage basin in the world. The system extends from the Old River Control Structure near

Simmesport, Louisiana in the north to the Gulf of Mexico in the south where it empties into the Vermilion, West and East Cote Blanche, and Atchafalaya bays via the Atchafalaya River and Wax Lake Outlet. Major features of the basin include the Lower Atchafalaya River, Wax Lake Outlet, Atchafalaya Bay, Atchafalaya River, and Bayous Chene, Boeuf, and Black navigation channels (CWPPRA, n.d.). For more information on navigable waterways within the Atchafalaya Basin see the Marine Navigation section.

The Atchafalaya Basin is the largest example of an intact large river-delta estuary in the country and is unique in that it is an actively growing river delta with nearly stable wetlands (CWPPRA, n.d.; Twilley et al., 2019). The upper and middle portions of the Atchafalaya Basin comprise the alluvial floodplain and represent the largest block of floodplain forest in the United States (Ford & Nyman, 2011). The lower region consists of the coastal deltaic floodplains where the Atchafalaya River meets the Gulf of Mexico. The Atchafalaya River and Wax Lake Deltas are an actively growing delta system at the mouth of the Atchafalaya River (Twilley et al., 2019). From the river deltas to the west, the system transitions from freshwater to brackish saltmarshes along the shallow Vermilion and West and East Cote Blanche bays.

The Atchafalaya River empties into an active coastal basin forming both coastal deltaic floodplains and delta estuaries meeting the definition of large river delta estuaries as proposed by Bianchi & Allison (2009). Large river delta estuaries are recognized as part of delta-fronts extending from the upper influence of tides or salt in the river channel to the edge of river plume on the continental shelf. This mixing zone of river and gulf waters is a function of currents, tides and waves, controlling the deposition of sediments forming subaqueous and subaerial deposits. A majority of the mean (6,400 cubic meters per second; 226,013 cubic feet per second) discharge from Atchafalaya River discharges into Atchafalaya Bay, which is a 150 kilometer (93.2 foot) wide shelf area with shallow water extending 40 kilometer (24.9 mile) offshore to shelf edge (Figure 16). The Atchafalaya Bay is a broad, shallow (<2–3 meters; 6.6-9.8 feet) embayment coupled to a shallow and broad low-gradient shelf (10-meter [32.8-foot] isobath is more than 40 kilometer [24.9 mile] offshore of the delta), which is exposed to episodically energetic storms (Bevington et al., 2017). The river plume from the Atchafalaya River extends out beyond the shelf edge during high flow, generating physical and biogeochemical impacts in the coastal and deep-water ocean mostly westward to the Texas shelf. This easily identifiable turbid water plume at high discharge defines the large river delta estuary seaward boundary (Bianchi & Allison, 2009). The nearshore coastal plume covers Atchafalaya Bay, and adjacent Cote Blanche and Vermillion Bays, and extends southwest along the coastal boundary zone flowing towards Texas. Discharge into the Atchafalaya Bay system is highly seasonal, and the estuary receives most of its sediment input and high loadings of nutrients during spring.

Fourleague Bay is a 9,500 hectares (23,475 acres) coastal waterbody located approximately 10 km southeast of the mouth of the Atchafalaya River bounded by a vast coastal wetland complex of about 38,000 hectares (93,900 acres), that formed several thousand years ago when the Mississippi River flowed into the region (Roberts, 1997). The bay has a mean depth of ~1.5 meters (4.9 feet), with a well-mixed water column and a tidal range of about 0.30 meters (0.98 feet). The bay receives river water from the Atchafalaya through a 2.5-kilometer (1.6-mile) wide opening to the north and is influenced by the Gulf of Mexico through a 180-meter wide (590.6

feet), 4-kilometer (2.5-mile) long tidal channel to the south, referred to as Oyster Bayou (average depth ~ 5.5 meters; 18 feet). Seasonal salinity and nutrient gradients, controlled by the relative influence of river input in the upper bay compared to tidal exchange in the lower bay, have extreme daily variation depending on changes in physical boundary conditions (Perez et al., 2000; Perez et al., 2003). Surface waters towards the southern extent of Atchafalaya Bay routinely exceed salinities of 15 ppt during lower river flow periods (Sweet et al., 2022), and bottom waters in the region regularly exceed salinities of 20 ppt when stratification is strong (Roberts & Doty, 2015).

Tidal changes in coastal Louisiana can be up to 0.3 meters (0.98 feet), but tidal flow is often disrupted by various human constructed structures such as canals and roads (Oliver-Cabrera & Wdowinski, 2014). Average annual water temperature off the coast of the Atchafalaya Basin in the Gulf of Mexico is around 21.1-22.8°C (70-73°F), with lowest average temperatures in January and highest in July and August (NOAA, 2022a).

Geology

The Atchafalaya Basin contains lacustrine and coastal delta systems that have experienced rapid sedimentation since the Atchafalaya River began to capture flow from the Mississippi River. The Atchafalaya Basin is one of the major historic inter-distributary basins in the Mississippi River delta plain, and soil cores document 30 meters (98.4 feet) of deltaic sedimentation that corresponds to at least four sedimentary starvation-deposition cycles (sediment starvation and compaction-induced subsidence followed by lacustrine delta deposition and aggradation) during the construction of multiple major marine Holocene delta complexes in the Mississippi River delta plain (Roberts, 1997; Roberts et al., 2003).

The oldest deposits in the Atchafalaya Basin are related to the Sale-Cypremort and Teche delta systems, and the most recent lacustrine delta deposits were precursors to the development of the marine Atchafalaya River Delta. The current geological transition of the Atchafalaya Basin represents an interaction between natural riverine (Mississippi River flow capture) and sedimentary processes and human forcing that exacerbated those processes (e.g., logjam removal, Shreve's cut, levees, channel training). Because the Atchafalaya Basin was the site of Mississippi River distributaries in the past, sediment entered lake basins through numerous relict distributary channels that existed within prior deltas (hyperpycnal underflows), building new lacustrine deltas. Water and sediment entered lake basins through these relict channels and delta progradation began with a long period of subaqueous (below water surface) prodelta platform formation, created through deposition of fine-grained sediments. Rapid subaerial (above water surface) delta building resulted from subsequent deposition of coarse-grained sediments, which eventually led to abandonment of the newly created delta (Roberts, 1997). The construction of flood protection levees also severed the connection to riverine processes outside the levees, initiating a slower phase of the delta cycle whereby landscape change would become dominated by subsidence processes.

Lake Fausse Pointe Delta is an example of a once growing area that experienced severing of significant sediment input because of the protection levees. Its growth was stopped, and its geological development was frozen in time. This delta formed between 1919 and 1932 and was

fed by Grand Bayou, a small distributary channel of the Atchafalaya River. The delta grew rapidly for 13 years until the West Atchafalaya Protection Levee severed its connection to Grand Bayou, cutting off its sediment supply, and stopping its growth. Today, that delta exists as the 2,428 hectare (6,000 acre) Lake Fausse Point State Park. This system contains two archetypal coastal geologic formations in the Louisiana coast – lacustrine delta and bayhead delta. The different ages of the deltas correspond to a diversity of floodplain forest types from bottomland hardwood forest examples on highest aggraded land to cypress-tupelo swamps in the lowest (newer) areas to finally, coastal marsh in the newest aggraded areas. Sediment transport from this system westward builds the geologic formation of the Chenier Plain.

Water Quality

The proposed Atchafalaya NERR supports a broad range of habitat types and organisms as a result of its salinity gradient and hydrologic complexity. The Atchafalaya Basin does not contain extensive development (industrial activity/commercial development, residences, agriculture/silviculture); much of the development is restricted to a narrow corridor around Highway 90 near Morgan City, LA. As a result, a very low proportion of the basin has any development, and even the development that does exist is at a comparatively low density. The proposed NERR would only contain state-owned lands/water bodies that do not contain development and will not likely have any in the future. All of Louisiana is part of the Mississippi-Atchafalaya watershed, so impacts of the development in the watershed that can impact water quality are felt across the region. However, the large alluvial floodplain swamps in the upper regions of the Atchafalaya Basin do have some capacity to dampen water quality impacts within the lower regions of the basin. The coastal deltaic floodplains of the proposed Atchafalaya NERR also remove nitrate before river water empties into the downstream shelf contributing to improved water quality in the region (Lane et al. 2002; 2011).

Site Components and Habitat Types

As shown in Figure 18, the Atchafalaya Basin can be divided into three zones: 1) Alluvial Floodplain Zone, 2) River Delta and Fresh Marsh Zone, and 3) Brackish and Salt Marsh Zone. The basin in nearly every ecological sense is representative of the key habitats and ecosystems in Louisiana. From the alluvial flood plains of the upland river to the active river delta transitioning to brackish and saltmarsh system, the proposed Atchafalaya NERR is a microcosm to study important ecological dynamics that drive change in Louisiana and other major river deltas. Unlike any other NERR site, the Atchafalaya Basin contains an actively growing coastal deltaic floodplain. The Atchafalaya and Wax Lake Deltas, where the Atchafalaya River empties into the Gulf of Mexico, contain over 50,000 hectares (123,553 acres) of the most recently created land in North America. The basin and coastal marshes exhibit disproportionately high levels of native biodiversity (Calhoun, 1999).

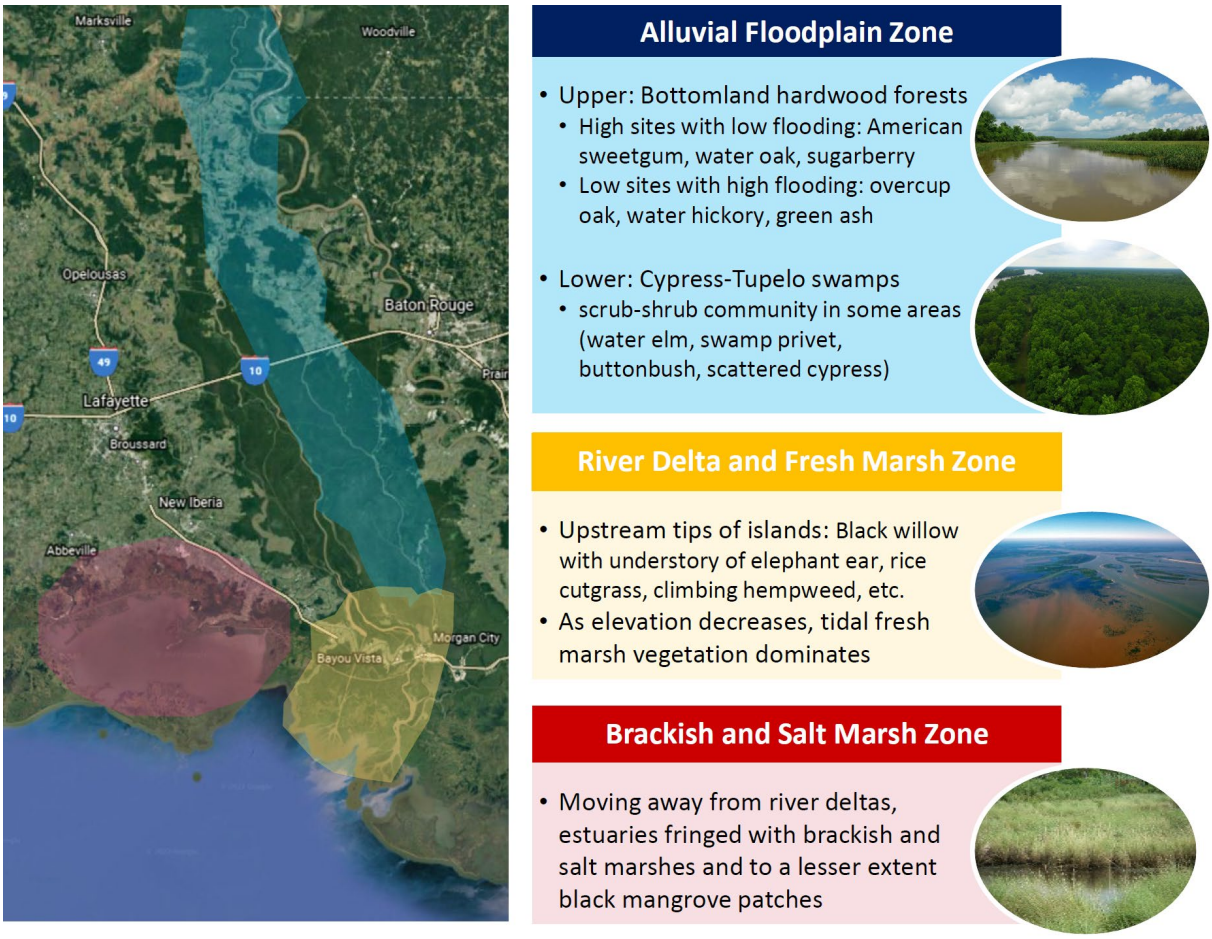

Figure 18. Map of Atchafalaya Basin highlighting different zones (and dominant vegetation habitats within them).

The current distribution and maintenance of the upper basin's wetland habitats are driven by past and present seasonal water flow and sedimentary processes (Piazza, 2014). Bottomland hardwood forests (150,000 hectares; 370,000 acres) span the northern section of the basin, where the land is highest and overbank flooding is infrequent with species composition varying based on flooding frequency, depth, and duration. Cypress-tupelo swamps (106,000 hectares; 262,000 acres) exist in the middle portion of the basin, where flooding frequency, depth, and duration are greater. Bald cypress (*Taxodium distichum*) and water tupelo (*Nyssa aquatica*) can persist under near constant flooding, although regeneration requires periodic, prolonged low-water periods during the growing season. In some areas with high levels of growing season flooding, a scrub-shrub community exists where scattered cypress trees and flood-tolerant water-elm (*Planera aquatica*), swamp privet (*Forestiera acuminata*), and buttonbush (*Cephalanthus occidentalis*) dominate (Piazza, 2014). The upper and middle portions of the Atchafalaya Basin comprise the alluvial floodplain and represent the largest block of floodplain forest in the United States (Ford & Nyman, 2011).

In the lower Atchafalaya Basin, deltaic floodplains first emerge as subaqueous deltas and increase in elevation forming hydrogeomorphic zones, with vegetation community composition controlled by elevation (Twilley et al. 2019). This pattern follows the model of alluvial

floodplains where primary ecological succession on newly formed land (emergence as subaerial delta) undergoes rapid shifts in elevation, hydrology, soil development, and plant succession, leading to the development of diverse wetland habitats (Shaffer et al., 1992). Older and higher elevation lobes of the deltaic floodplains tend to have a mixed community composed of taro (*Colocasia esculenta)*, common reed (*Phragmites australis)*, dotted smartweed (*Polygonum punctatum)*, cattail (*Typha spp*.), bulrush (*Schoenoplectus spp*.), and giant cutgrass (*Zizaniopsis miliacea)*. Black willow (*Salix nigra)* is the dominant woody vegetation present at levees of the older lobes, with an understory of taro and dotted smartweed. Recent from the Balize delta indicate that there may have been a shift in community composition to the invasive phenotype of common reed in 2008. Other shifts in dominance from species previously described have also occurred in the Wax Lake and Atchafalaya River Deltas, where broadleaf arrowhead (*Sagittaria latifolia)* is no longer dominant and delta arrowhead (*Sagittaria platyphylla*) and increasingly American lotus (*Nelumbo lutea*) have taken its place.

Moving east and west away from the river deltas, the estuaries are fringed with brackish marsh (e.g., saltmeadow cordgrass [*Spartina patens*]) and salt marsh (e.g., smooth cordgrass [*Spartina alterniflora*]) habitats and to a lesser extent black mangrove (*Avicennia germinans*) patches. Submerged aquatic vegetation (SAV) is found in low intertidal and subtidal areas. The proposed NERR contains extensive areas of open water (and associated subtidal and submerged bottom) habitats spanning from the river to the open Gulf of Mexico. Altogether, the Atchafalaya Basin consists of approximately 809,371 hectares (2 million acres) of land, waterways, and coastal waters.

Site's Ability to Accommodate Shifts in Habitat as Sea Level, Inundation, or Other Climate-Change Impacts Occur

The Atchafalaya River, upper alluvial floodplain, and lower deltaic floodplains and estuaries is one of the few hydrologic basins in Louisiana not experiencing rapid land and habitat loss due to climate change, sea level rise, subsidence, and anthropogenic impacts. In fact, many of the habitats that define this region have expanded and remain resilient since the latter part of the 20th century (Madden et al., 1988). The bald cypress and bottomland hardwood habitats that dominate the alluvial flood plain portion of the system have expanded since the 1980s. During that same period, large freshwater marsh and deltaic habitats have formed in and around the Wax Lake Outlet. Since 2001, there has been an 82% increase in forested wetlands and a 65% increase in freshwater marsh habitats in the region. While some portion of salt marsh habitats have been converted to freshwater marsh since 2001, the relative proportion of habitats in the lower part of the basin have remained static, and overall the system has gained approximately 5,000 hectares (12,400 acres) of land since the installation of the major water control structures on the Atchafalaya River (i.e., Old River Control Complex, which was completed in 1963). As depicted in Figure 19, the rate of loss in the Atchafalaya Basin over the past century is much slower than in many other regions of Louisiana with some areas gaining land as a result of the river outlets (Twilley et al., 2016). This combination of changes over time makes the Atchafalaya Basin an ideal location for a NERR focused on studying climate change impacts as its boundaries allow for habitat migration and shifts within the reserve.

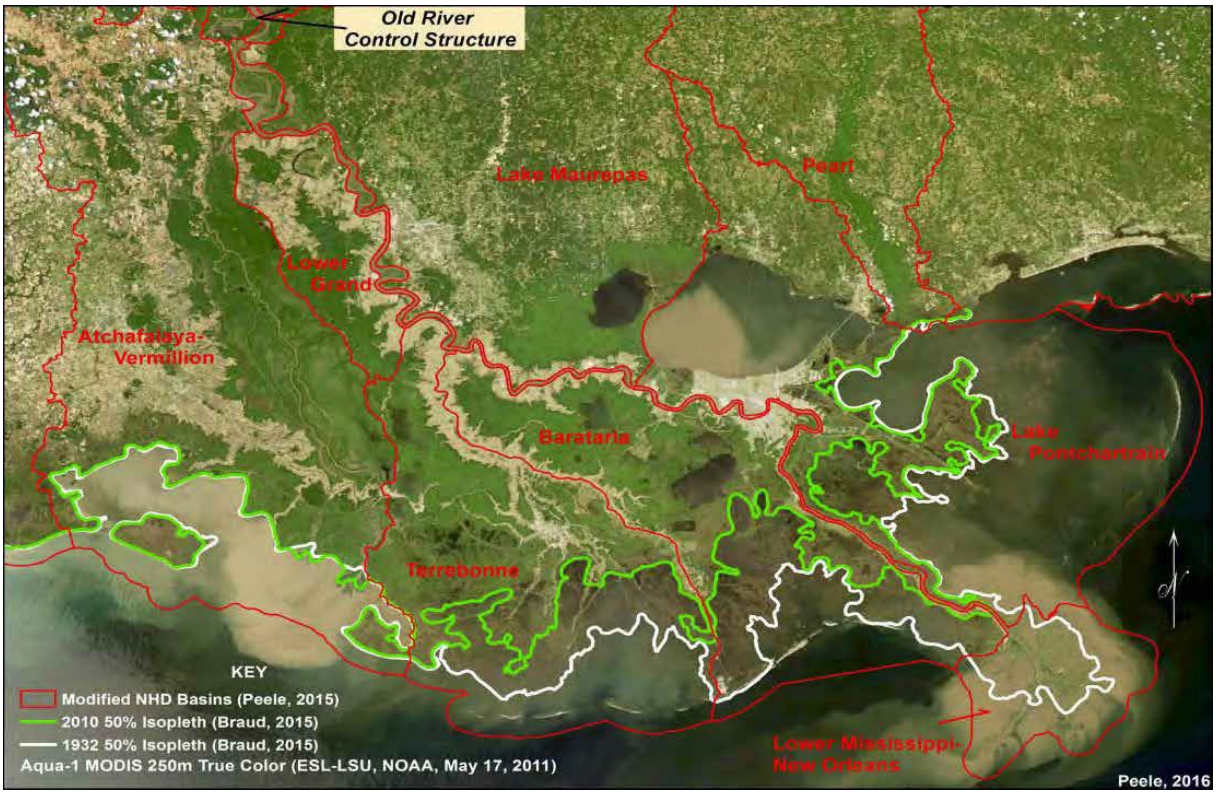

Figure 19. Map displaying 1932 (white) and 2010 (green) shorelines in Louisiana coastal basins (From Twilley et al., 2016).

Significant Flora and Fauna

Details about flora in the Atchafalaya Basin are described in the Site Components and Habitat Types Section above. The Basin also contains extensive wildlife and fisheries resources (Piazza, 2014, Appendix 2). Resources include 17 plant and animal species of conservation concern, including seven distinct natural plant communities; five species of plants; seven species of birds; two species of mammals; and three species of fish (full list and review in Piazza 2014, Table 5.1). Threatened Natural Communities in the proposed NERR site include: salt dome hardwood forest (G1/S1[11]), live oak forest (G2/S1), freshwater marsh (G3G4/S2), vegetated pioneer emerging delta (G3G4, S2), intermediate marsh (G4/S3), brackish marsh (G4/S3), salt marsh (G5/S3S4), bottomland hardwood forest (G4G5/S4), cypress swamp (G4G5/S4), and cypress-tupelo swamp (G3G5/S4). More than 320 regularly occurring birds can be found breeding, wintering, or migrating through the Atchafalaya Basin. Conservation priority birds include snowy plover (*Charadrius nivosus*) (G3/S2N), Wilson's plover (*Charadrius wilsonia*) (G5/S2B, S1N), swallow-tailed kite (*Elanoides forficatus*) (G5/S1S2B), and bald eagle (*Haliaeetus leucocephalus*) (G5/S3), and the basin has been declared as critical bird habitat. Audubon has multiple coastal bird survey sites in the delta area to monitor non-breeding shorebirds. The state conducts colonial breeding surveys of multiple rookeries in the system as well as mid-winter waterfowl surveys. The alluvial floodplain zone includes habitats for Louisiana black bear (*Ursus americanus luteolus*), American alligators (*Alligator mississippiensis*), and diverse freshwater fish and invertebrate species. The estuarine regions of the basin provide habitat for

[11] Conservation status ranks are described at https://explorer.natureserve.org/AboutTheData/Statuses

numerous waterfowl, wading birds, manatees, and sea turtles and nursery habitats for commercially important species such as several species of shrimp and blue crabs as well as oyster reefs.

Several threatened and endangered species occupy the proposed Atchafalaya NERR such as the piping plover (*Charadrius melodus),* West Indian manatee (*Trichechus manatus)*, pallid sturgeon (*Scaphirhyncus albus)*, and at least four species of sea turtles (Table 15).

Table 15. Threatened and endangered species within the Atchafalaya Basin.[12]

Species	**Group**	**Status**
West Indian Manatee (*Trichechus manatus)*	Mammal	Threatened
Eastern Black Rail *(Laterallus jamaicensis)*	Bird	Threatened
Piping Plover (*Charadrius melodus)*	Bird	Threatened, Critical Habitat
Red Knot (*Calidris canutus rufa)*	Bird	Threatened
Hawksbill Sea Turtle (*Eretmochelys imbricata)*	Reptile	Endangered
Kemp's Ridley Sea Turtle (*Lepidochelys kempii)*	Reptile	Endangered
Leatherback Sea Turtle (*Dermochelys coriacea)*	Reptile	Endangered
Loggerhead Sea Turtle (*Caretta caretta)*	Reptile	Threatened
Pallid Sturgeon (*Scaphirhynchus albus)*	Fish	Endangered

[12] https://ipac.ecosphere.fws.gov/

CONFORMITY OF PROPOSED SITE WITH NERR PROGRAM GUIDELINES

Site's Contribution to the Biogeographical and Typological Balance of the NERR System

As previously discussed, NOAA aims to designate new reserves that reflect variations in coastal ecosystems that are not already represented in the NERR System. The proposed Atchafalaya NERR would be within the Louisianan Biogeographical Region, which extends from the Texas-Mexico coastal border to Cedar Key, Florida (Figure 3). It is further classified in the Mississippi Delta Subregion, which extends from Mobile Bay, Alabama to Galveston, Texas. There are currently three NERR sites in the Mississippi Delta biogeographic region, so identifying the unique typological factors present in Louisiana is critically important to the designation of a Louisiana NERR. The proposed Atchafalaya NERR would be the only reserve with a bald cypress dominated alluvial floodplain and an active large river-delta estuary. As such, it would substantially enhance the biogeographical and typological balance of the network and provide new and unique opportunities for research, monitoring, and resource protection (15 C.F.R. § 921.11(c)(1)). Specifically, the bald cypress dominated alluvial floodplains in the upper Atchafalaya Basin and the actively prograding coastal deltaic floodplains cannot be found in other reserves.

Site's Ecological Characteristics and Degree of Human Influence

As described in detail in other sections, the proposed site contains unique ecosystems and processes of large river-delta estuaries. The habitat types within the proposed Atchafalaya NERR include upland habitats of bottomland hardwood forests and cypress-tupelo swamps; intertidal habitats of coastal forested wetlands; floating, fresh, intermediate, and salt marshes; mangroves; intertidal beaches/dunes and mud/sand flats; and submerged bottom habitats of subtidal hard bottoms/reefs, soft bottoms, and SAV. One of the great advantages of the Atchafalaya Basin as the location of a potential NERR, is the extensive, intact tracts of state-owned lands and waters spanning across the diversity of ecosystems described above. As a result, it is possible to select a final NERR site that contains upland, intertidal, and subtidal habitats with a combination of sub-habitat types that are desired for the NERR. The Atchafalaya Basin contains numerous species of conservation concern, distinct natural plant communities, critical habitat for the Louisiana black bear and piping plover, threatened and endangered species, and nursery habitats for commercially and recreationally important species.

In response to the Great Mississippi Flood of 1927, Congress passed the Flood Control Act of 1928, which designated the Atchafalaya Basin as a floodway system and provided funding for dredging and levee construction for flood protection. By the 1950s, studies of the Mississippi and Atchafalaya River flows concluded that the Atchafalaya River would capture the Mississippi River and cause extensive flood damage and economic disruption to the nation. To prevent this capture, Congress appropriated funds for the construction of the Old River Control Complex, which was completed in 1963. Since that time, the Atchafalaya Basin receives 30 percent of the combined flow of the Mississippi and Red Rivers annually.

Although oil and gas activity is common across coastal Louisiana, there is very little human development and/or industrial activity within the proposed Atchafalaya NERR. Due to heavy sedimentation, routine maintenance dredging is required for navigation in many areas of the basin, including the Lower Atchafalaya River. There are also several ports near the proposed

Atchafalaya NERR (e.g., Iberia and Morgan City), whose activity is largely limited to the port facilities and navigable waterways. Finally, the Gulf Intracoastal Water Way (GIWW), which experiences significant inland barge traffic, bisects the proposed NERR south of Morgan City.

Adequacy of Site's Boundaries and Control Over Human Activities

One of the great advantages of the Atchafalaya Basin as the site of a NERR is that it would only require state lands. There are more than 10 state or federally designated areas (WMAs, state parks, etc.) throughout the basin that contain large, intact parcels (see Figure 16). Of the approximately 650,000 hectares (1.6 million acres) within the Atchafalaya Basin, there are about 305,000 hectares (750,000 acres) of state-owned lands and about 121,500 hectares (300,000 acres) of state-owned water bodies. These state-owned lands and water bodies account for over 65% of the total area in the basin and span its entire north to south and east to west habitat gradients. An Atchafalaya NERR would not contain all of these lands/waters, but state ownership of potential lands makes the development of a NERR more straightforward. Any NERR site within the Atchafalaya Basin will have its core (and likely buffer) areas completely located within state-owned lands and water bodies, as depicted in Figure 17. Wildlife Enforcement Agents routinely patrol public lands and waters and WMAs to enforce proper uses and ensure public safety. These agents monitor access to permitted sites, ensure adequate licensure based upon prescribed activity, and ensure that proper wildlife harvesting techniques and quantities are being followed. With these activities in place already, adequate protection of core (and buffer) areas for the proposed Atchafalaya NERR site currently exists.

Site's Suitability for Long-Term Estuarine Research

There is a long and rich history of research activities in the Atchafalaya Basin that spans across the potential core and buffer areas of the Atchafalaya NERR and diverse disciplines. The region has been the site where research has established some of the fundamental concepts of the delta cycle (Roberts, 1997; Roberts et al., 2003) and establishing large river-delta estuaries as unique coastal features (Bianchi & Allison, 2009). The Atchafalaya Basin as a large river-delta estuary also has conceptually defined strategies in major delta restoration efforts in Louisiana and around the world (Paola et al., 2011). This region has been the site of some of the largest research projects including the initial study of the newly emerging deltas at mouth of Atchafalaya River funded by Louisiana Sea Grant in the 1970's and 1980's. The National Center for Earth Surface Dynamics[13], a National Science Foundation (NSF) Science and Technology Center, selected Wax Lake Delta as focus of multi-year investigation of deltaic processes, involving 12 universities around the nation including LSU. Other significant long-term investigations by NSF in the Atchafalaya Basin include Earth Surface Processes section and Coastal Science, Engineering and Education for Sustainability (SEES) program (with projects including investigators from LSU). Today, the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) has invested a $21million project entitled Delta-X[14] to understand how the Mississippi River Delta is growing and sinking. This NASA program will use airborne remote sensing to investigate health of deltas around the world based on calibrations and models developed from the Atchafalaya Basin. These national programs demonstrate the significant research potential of

[13] http://www.nced.umn.edu/
[14] https://deltax.jpl.nasa.gov/

the proposed Atchafalaya NERR as model of large river-delta estuaries to understand the fundamental processes of delta dynamics.

Research activities in the upper alluvial basin were summarized in *The Atchafalaya River Basin: History and Ecology of an American Wetland* (Piazza, 2014), which includes 26 pages of literature cited from the basin. Since the book's publication, almost 5,000 additional publications for "Atchafalaya" can be found in Google Scholar, indicating the rich history of diverse research activities that have taken place in the Atchafalaya Basin. The close proximity of the basin to numerous colleges, universities, and research institutions combined with the importance of the system has and will likely continue to facilitate this extensive investment in research within the basin.

A few representative publications from 2014-present include (in chronological order):

- Shaw J.B., Mohrig D. 2014. The importance of erosion in distributary channel network growth, Wax Lake Delta, Louisiana, USA. Geology 42:31-34.
- Roberts B.J., Doty S.M. 2015. Spatial and temporal patterns of benthic respiration and net nutrient fluxes in the Atchafalaya River Delta Estuary. Estuaries and Coasts 38(6):1918-1936. DOI: 10.1007/s12237-015-9965-z
- Carle M.V., Sasser C.E., Roberts H.H. 2015. Accretion and vegetation community change in the Wax Lake Delta following the historic 2011 Mississippi River flood. Journal of Coastal Research 31:569-587.
- Piazza B.P., Allen Y.C., Martin R., Bergan J.F., King K. 2015. Floodplain conservation in the Mississippi River Valley: combining spatial analysis, landowner outreach, and market assessment to enhance land protection for the Atchafalaya River Basin, Louisiana, USA. Restoration Ecology 23:65-74.
- Shaw J.B., Ayoub F., Jones C.E., Lamb M.P., Holt B., Wagner R.W., Mohrig D. 2016. Airborne radar imaging of subaqueous channel evolution in Wax Lake Delta, Louisiana, USA. Geophysical Research Letters 43:5035-5042.
- Alam R.Q., Benson B.C., Visser J.M., Gang D.D. 2016. Response of estuarine phytoplankton to nutrient and spatio-temporal pattern of physico-chemical water quality parameters in Little Vermilion Bay, Louisiana. Ecological Informatics 32:79-90.
- Bennett M.G, Kozak J.P. 2016. Spatial and temporal patterns in fish community structure and abundance in the largest U.S. river swamp, the Atchafalaya River floodplain, Louisiana. Ecology of Freshwater Fish, 25:577-589.
- DeLaune R.D, Sasser C.E, Evers-Hebert E., White J.R., Roberts H.H. 2016. Influence of the Wax Lake Delta sediment diversion on aboveground plant productivity and carbon storage in deltaic island and mainland coastal marshes. Estuarine, Coastal and Shelf Science, 177:83-89.
- Mossa J. 2016. The changing geomorphology of the Atchafalaya River, Louisiana: A historical perspective. Geomorphology, 252:112-127.
- Twilley, R.R., Bentley, S.J., Chen, Q., Edmonds, D.A., Hagen, S.C., Lam, N.S., McCall, A. 2016. Co-evolution of wetland landscapes, flooding, and human settlement in the

Mississippi River Delta Plain. Sustainability Science, 11:711-731. doi:10.1007/s11625-016-0374-4

- Twilley R.R., Day J.W., Bevington A.E., Castañeda-Moya E., Christensen A., Holm G., Heffner L.R., Lane R., McCall A., Aarons A., Li S., Freeman A., Rovai A.S. 2019. Ecogeomorphology of coastal deltaic floodplains and estuaries in an active delta: insights from the Atchafalaya Coastal Basin. Estuarine, Coastal, and Shelf Science 227:106341
- Olliver E.A., Edmonds D.A., Shaw J.B. 2020. Influence of floods, tides, and vegetation on sediment retention in Wax Lake Delta, Louisiana, USA. Journal of Geophysical Research: Earth Surface, 125:e2019JF005316.
- Bevington, A.E., Twilley, R.R. 2018. Island edge morphodynamics along a chronosequence in a prograding deltaic floodplain wetland. Journal of Coastal Research, 34 (4):806-817.
- Bevington, A.E., Twilley, R.R., Sasser, C.E., Holm, G.O. 2017. Contribution of river floods, hurricanes, and cold fronts to elevation change in a deltaic floodplain, northern Gulf of Mexico, USA. Estuarine, Coastal and Shelf Science, 191:188-200. doi:10.1016/j.ecss.2017.04.010
- Li, S., Christensen, A., Twilley, R.R. 2020. Benthic fluxes of dissolved oxygen and nutrients across hydrogeomorphic zones in a coastal deltaic floodplain within the Mississippi River delta plain. Biogeochemistry, 149:115-140.
- Li, S., Twilley, R.R. 2021. Nitrogen dynamics of inundated sediments in an emerging coastal deltaic floodplain in mississippi river delta using isotope pairing technique to test response to nitrate enrichment and sediment organic matter. Estuaries and Coasts, 44:1899-1915.
- Li, S., Twilley, R.R., Hou, A. 2021. Heterotrophic nitrogen fixation in response to nitrate loading and sediment organic matter in an emerging coastal deltaic floodplain within the Mississippi River Delta plain. Limnology and Oceanography, 66(5):1961-1978.
- Ma, H., Larsen, L.G., Wagner, R.W. 2018. Ecogeomorphic feedbacks that grow deltas. Journal of Geophysical Research: Earth Surface, 123(12):3228-3250.
- Restreppo, G.A., Bentley, S.J., Wang, J., Xu, K. 2018. Riverine sediment contribution to distal deltaic wetlands: Fourleague Bay, LA. Estuaries and Coasts, 42(1): 55-67.
- Christensen, A., Twilley, R.R., Willson, C.S., Castañeda-Moya, E. 2020. Simulating hydrological connectivity and water age within a coastal deltaic floodplain of the Mississippi River Delta. Estuarine, Coastal and Shelf Science, 245, 106995.
- Shields, M.R., Bianchi, T.S., Gélinas, Y., Allison, M.A., Twilley, R.R. 2016. Enhanced terrestrial carbon preservation promoted by reactive iron in deltaic sediments. Geophysical Research Letters, 43:1149-1157. doi:10.1002/2015GL067388

The proposed Atchafalaya NERR would be the only active large river-delta estuary in the NERR network. As such, it would substantially enhance the biogeographical and typological balance of

the network and provide new and unique opportunities for research, monitoring, and resource protection (in keeping with 15 C.F.R. § 921.11(c)(1)). Specifically, the bald cypress dominated alluvial floodplains in the upper Atchafalaya Basin and the actively prograding delta floodplains cannot be found in other reserves. Research topics in these habitats could focus on flood/water management impacts, responses to storm events, natural processes that influence delta formation, successional patterns and expansion of species into newly formed habitats, and much more. Each of these topics would be a new facet of investigation not found in any other NERR sites. Simultaneously, the site creates valuable opportunities to conduct comparative research, particularly in the coastal marsh zone, between network estuarine systems (e.g., Grand Bay and Weeks Bay) and non-network systems (e.g., Mobile Bay). The Atchafalaya Basin meets all of the criteria of a valuable site for research including 1) a high diversity of ecosystem and habitat types; 2) freshwater habitats through estuarine waters connecting to offshore marine habitats; 3) representative biotic and geologic sites and hydrologic characteristics; 4) critical habitat for Louisiana black bear, neotropical migratory birds, American alligators, fish and invertebrates including many threatened or endangered species; 5) multiple sites of historic and/or archaeological significance as the area has been inhabited for a millennia, including Native American communities, enslaved populations, and European settlers; and 6) multiple opportunities to address important habitat or resource management issues.

Coastal Resilience Research

Few places on earth are experiencing such rapid change as coastal Louisiana. Home to nearly half of the wetlands in the continental United States, Louisiana is losing more than 4,500 hectares (11,000 acres) of wetland habitat to subsidence and sea level rise annually. This unprecedented coastal change is matched only by the human effort to abate it. To date, the CPRA has sponsored over 100 projects to restore or create marsh habitats using more than 120,000,000 cubic meters (4 billion cubic feet) of dredged sediment to build nearly 20,000 hectares (49,000 acres) of new land. The Atchafalaya Basin has been the host to over 20 Coastal Wetlands Planning, Protection and Restoration Act (CWPPRA) restoration sites and is home to numerous Coastwide Reference Monitoring System (CRMS) locations that are maintained by the U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) and CPRA. With more than $21 billion in secured funding for coastal restoration in Louisiana over the next decade, human manipulation of the coastal environment will also be an important driver of coastal change for the foreseeable future, touching every aspect of life in Louisiana from culture to economy. The proposed Atchafalaya NERR offers an incredible opportunity to support these massive restoration efforts by providing the archetype for a future ‘with action.’ As the only active land building delta proposed as a NERR site, the Atchafalaya River and Wax Lake Delta systems will provide a deeper understanding of how major restoration efforts such as the Mid-Barataria Sediment Diversion will operate under a changing climate. The site will provide research and experimental opportunities to understand the land building process and how deltas respond to rising seas and storm events. To address issues related to the natural flow regime of the Atchafalaya River and the resulting sedimentation and water quality issues within the basin and how they affect the coastal communities, Governor Edwards created the ARBRE Task Force, which is comprised of 20 key state and local stakeholders as well as five federal non-voting members. Planning for and

implementation of recommendations put forth by the ARBRE Task Force may also provide opportunities for coastal resilience research.

Site's Suitability for Baseline Monitoring

The proposed reserve would leverage existing monitoring opportunities that would use physical monitoring stations maintained by the USGS, Louisiana Department of Environmental Quality (LDEQ), and others in the alluvial portion of the system. In active delta and marsh systems there are numerous CRMS locations that are maintained by USGS and CPRA. CRMS was designed to monitor the changes in the coast and effectiveness of restoration actions at multiple spatial scales from individual projects to the influence of projects on the entire coastal landscape. The CRMS design includes a suite of sites encompassing a range of ecological conditions in swamp habitats and fresh, intermediate, brackish, and salt marshes. Approximately 390 sites are monitored across coastal Louisiana using standardized data collection techniques and fixed sampling schedules. Over 60 CRMS sites are located within the Atchafalaya Basin. Additionally, NOAA real time physical oceanographic stations monitor physical water parameters in the Atchafalaya Bay portion of the proposed site. In addition to these state and federal monitoring networks, there are extensive historic and current monitoring programs conducted and maintained by individual researchers, universities and research institutions, NGOs, and other entities. Figure 20 provides a visual of existing research, monitoring, and resource protection efforts in and around the Atchafalaya Basin.

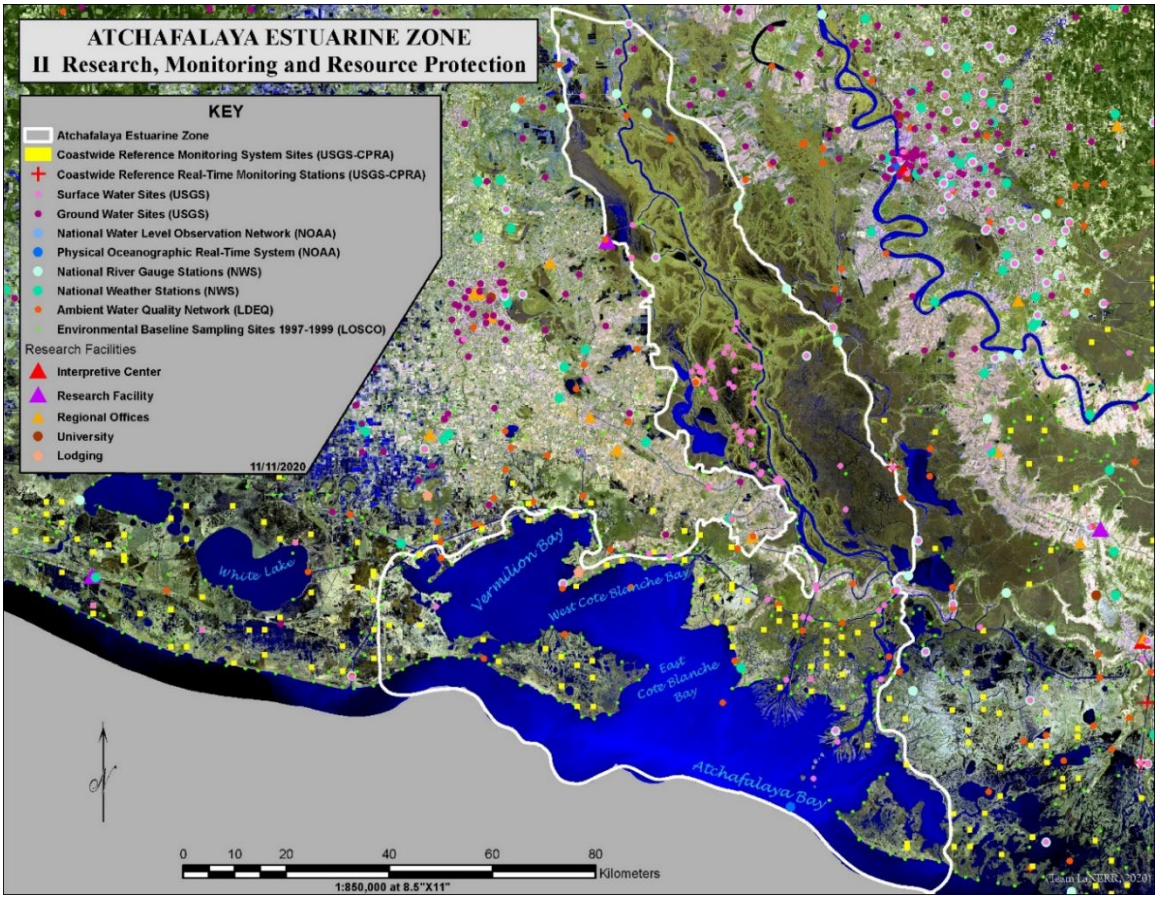

Figure 20. Map of monitoring/research stations used in the Preliminary Site Screening.

Site's Importance to Education and Interpretation

The Atchafalaya Basin has many rich and extremely diverse habitats that would provide the basis for education and interpretation programs that are unique to the region, state, and nation. Beyond the benefits of the natural setting, this site also benefits from being located in a heritage area with cultural significance and historical value. Without question, the combined value of the ecological assets and resources, the cultural significance, and the proximity to some of Louisiana's largest and most diverse populations means that any education and interpretation would be unique, impactful, and significant to any interested learner. Education opportunities serving a variety of youth and adult audiences could easily meet the needs and interests of communities that use the site. Whether observing the changing botanical diversity on a transect of the Wax Lake Delta islands, studying the fauna surrounding Marsh Island, learning about local residents' adaptation to living with water in the region, or observing the water management structures that influence the region's development (e.g., Old River Control Structure, levees, etc.), the proposed Atchafalaya NERR offers varied learning opportunities. For example, the hardwood bottomland swamps and cypress/tupelo swamps within the Atchafalaya Basin represent an opportunity to learn about the evolution of an ecological system in the face of water management for the sake of flood control. Brackish marshes around western Vermilion Bay and the growing coast around the mouth of Atchafalaya River and Wax Lake Deltas are exceptional opportunities for collaborative learning with early childhood and university partners. They provide the potential for education about the dynamic coastal conditions in the region and how they compare to the rate of land loss across the east and west sections of the vast Louisiana coastline. The relative stability of the estuarine lands and water bodies provides a consistent site for field study, while the ever-changing nature of the sections of growing coastline provides new and challenging learning opportunities as it evolves over time.

The proposed Atchafalaya NERR, centrally located along Louisiana's coast, provides relatively short travel distances from all of Louisiana's major coastal zone cities. The alluvial floodplain region of the Atchafalaya Basin is located between Lafayette and Baton Rouge with each city being less than 120 kilometers (75 miles) from any point in the basin and Lafayette being located within the Vermilion Basin (if that area were to be included in the final NERR). New Orleans is within 137 kilometers (85 miles) of the proposed NERR; smaller cities like Houma and Thibodaux are closer, and Morgan City is located within the Atchafalaya Basin. These cities are home to communities that represent the diversity of Louisiana's citizenry, including significant African American, Acadian, and Native American populations. Approximately 3.3 million people live within 160 kilometers (100 miles) of the Atchafalaya Basin and ~2.2 million people within 120 kilometers (75 miles). This population includes major urban and rural population centers and popular tourist centers and attractions.

The Atchafalaya Basin is a short commute from most of Louisiana's largest school districts, major coastal research universities (University of Louisiana Lafayette, Louisiana State University in Baton Rouge, Tulane University, University of New Orleans, Nicholls State University), multiple Historically Black Colleges and Universities (Dillard, University, Xavier University, Southern University Baton Rouge, and Southern University New Orleans) as all are within 136 kilometers (85 miles) of the Atchafalaya Basin. There are 860 schools with more than

456,000 students located within 120 kilometers (75 miles) of the basin, which is estimated as a reasonable day trip for school groups.

The region offers students a wide range of field trip opportunities to engage in hands-on learning with topics ranging from ornithological studies, coastal biology, engineering, geologic processes to resource management, United States history, United States geography, and cultural anthropology. Much of coastal Louisiana is engineered, and the Atchafalaya is an ideal place to discuss the complex relationships of society and natural systems. From the Old River Control Structure in Concordia Parish controlling the volumes of water in the Atchafalaya and Mississippi Rivers, to the Morganza floodway levees' management of floodwaters, to the levees and floodwalls that protect coastal communities, the Atchafalaya Basin is an ideal natural outdoor classroom for all audiences. There is a tremendous opportunity for education and interpretation around the connectivity of the upper basin to the active land building delta and the value of land preservation for water management, water quality, and water literacy. Programming designed for this site would offer meaningful place-based education and interpretation that cannot be done anywhere else and thus would add substantial value both to local communities and to the NERR System. Through the public Town Hall meeting process, it became clear that even in areas like Morgan City and St. Mary Parish, where there is tremendous interest and support for locating a NERR in the Atchafalaya Basin, there is also a great need for more opportunities to learn about and have access to the diversity of the region.

Research, monitoring, restoration, and education activities are being conducted throughout the proposed NERR by public and private universities but also by state and federal agencies (e.g., LDWF, LDNR, CPRA, Louisiana Sea Grant, USGS, BTNEP, etc.) and NGOs (e.g., Audubon Delta, TNC, etc.). Many of these groups have well established education and outreach activities currently taking place within the basin and have expressed interest in engaging with a NERR. Louisiana Sea Grant initiated a project utilizing these education assets in a program entitled 'Watch the Delta Grow'[15], that included teacher workshops, student field trips, and lesson plans taking advantage of the environmental setting. Additionally, LUMCON serves as both the state's marine science lab and as host to the consortium of all of the public and private universities and colleges, including community and technical colleges, in Louisiana with interests in coastal and marine science research and education and has a long track record of efforts that focus on broader impact activities. Additionally, the Nicholls State University Coastal Center and the Boy Scouts of America Education and Research Center currently being designed represent tremendous investments in facilities and programming that could provide value for expanding education and interpretation within the proposed NERR. Within the area, there are a number of existing interpretive signage programs, including the Water Heritage Trail[16] (which includes hiking, birding, paddling, driving tours, etc.), and interpretive signs within neighboring state parks and WMAs. The McIlhenny Corporation hosts more than half a million visitors annually from across the globe on Avery Island in the southwest portion of the Atchafalaya Basin. See

[15] http://www.watchthedeltagrow.com/about-us
[16] http://waterheritage.atchafalaya.org/

Figure 21 for a map of education/interpretation facilities and groups in and adjacent to the Atchafalaya Basin.

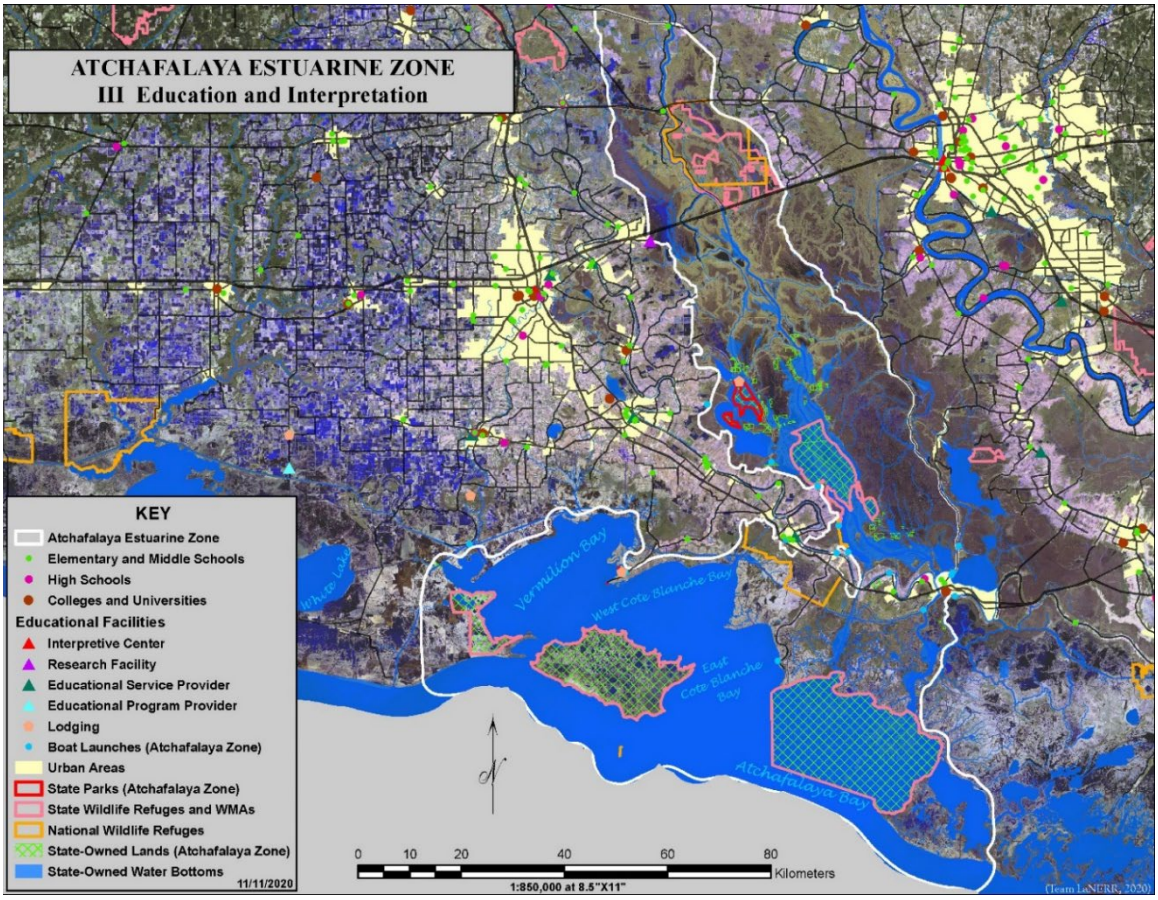

Figure 21. Map of education/interpretation centers used in the Preliminary Site Screening process.

It is a common perception that the Atchafalaya Basin is "remote;" however, an Atchafalaya NERR site will actually be highly accessible to researchers, educators, and resource management decision makers. Specifically, the basin has many existing access points to support NERR programs as well as visitation and recreation activities. Along the basin, there are more than 150 public boat ramps and access points that can be reached by ground transportation, including several on state and/or public lands. These access points stretch from the northern most reaches of the basin to the northern shore of the Vermilion Bay, providing access to the full gradient of habitats to educational groups. Interstate 10 passes through the upper basin between Lafayette and Baton Rouge, and the Atchafalaya National Heritage Area Welcome Center and a public boat launch are located just off the interstate. Highway 90 runs through the lower part of the basin passing through Houma, Morgan City, Franklin, New Iberia, and Lafayette with several boat launches available along the route. Recreational boating, along with ecotourism through private tour operators, is common from the north to the south ends of the basin. In most cases, boat access is within a few miles of municipalities. Water access points are readily accessible and well-signed from roads and major highways. Proximity of access points to populated areas varies greatly within the region, as most of the population does not live within the levees of the floodway.

While abundant in natural and cultural resources, the region lacks some of the infrastructure needed to support large groups within some of the more remote reaches of the coast. Restrooms, large-group dorms, and meeting facilities would be beneficial additions to facilitate expansion of education and research opportunities in more isolated areas of the region. Planned facilities in Morgan City, Henderson, Bayou Sorrel, and a number of other sites spaced throughout the area could potentially leverage the NERR designation on top of existing investments to stimulate education and research when properly coordinated across the wide array of public, non-profit, and private stakeholders. This combined with already existing partnerships with the Atchafalaya National Heritage Area (and all of its commission), Audubon Delta, TNC, Louisiana Sea Grant, LUMCON, multiple universities and community/technical colleges, BTNEP, USGS, Restore or Retreat, Inc., Restore the Mississippi River Delta, Boy Scouts of America, St. Mary Excel, and the municipalities within the Atchafalaya Basin provide a number of resources to aid in this mission (See letters of support, Appendix 9 Final Candidate Site Proposals [end of the Atchafalaya proposal]). These include the Atchafalaya Heritage Area Welcome Center (Interstate 10, exit 121); TNC's Atchafalaya Conservation Center, a 120' barge complex located on approximately 3.6 hectares (9 acres) of land along Bayou Sorrel, that is a meeting space for scientists, students, community members, and others interested in furthering conservation in the basin; and a camp at Audubon's Rainey Sanctuary. Existing facilities in Morgan City (e.g., Cajun Coast Visitors Center, Port, etc.) have been offered to the NERR and with additional current and planned facilities (described above) distributed throughout the basin could provide a series of locations, facilities, and access points for an Atchafalaya NERR. The region also contains a large number of state parks and boat launches near the proposed NERR that will greatly aid in achieving its mission.

As described above, the ecosystems of the Atchafalaya Basin are not experiencing climate change induced habitat and land loss to the extent of other regions in Louisiana and in fact are gaining land in many areas of the basin. This higher degree of habitat stability is an important asset to providing reliable platforms for NERR programs and activities. Having comparably low rates of land and habitat loss (even extensive areas of gain) bodes well for the likelihood of identifying locations for facilities that will be resilient and adaptable to climate change. These are important considerations when the NERR facilities/locations are ultimately chosen. Public access infrastructure within the proposed Atchafalaya NERR is as resilient and adaptable to climate change as any location in coastal Louisiana can be as it is one of the most buffered locations to climate change impacts (e.g., suffered least amount of land loss and actually has areas of significant land gain) in Louisiana (Figure 19). An additional reason public access is likely to remain viable in an Atchafalaya NERR is that many of the boat launches are associated with the large flood protection levees in the basin.

COMPATIBILITY WITH EXISTING AND POTENTIAL USES

The Atchafalaya Basin is the largest example of intact delta (lacustrine and bayhead) in the country and contains the largest stand of coastal cypress forest left in the world. Because of its large, intact nature, it provides a wealth of natural services including fish and wildlife habitat, flood control, and hurricane protection. While we do not think that development conversion is a threat in this basin, it is extremely susceptible to threats related to basin wide flow management, land subsidence, and sea level rise. For these reasons, it is imperative for conservation and restoration efforts to address water flows and their interaction with hydrologic restoration efforts in the basin. Research and monitoring effects across all natural services are critical to these efforts. To address issues related to modifications to the flow regime of the Atchafalaya River and the resulting sedimentation and water quality issues within the basin and how they affect the coastal communities, Governor Edwards created the ARBRE Task Force, which brings stakeholders from diverse perspectives together to work through the ongoing challenges in the basin and help identify opportunities. In addition to water management, the Atchafalaya Basin has the potential to play an important role in sediment management as the river carries high loads of sediment, which is in stark contrast to the adjacent sediment starved Terrebonne estuary. The Atchafalaya River could provide a significant source of sediment for restoration activities. Additionally, the Wax Lake Delta is a model for delta formation and serves as an important reference for riverine sediment diversion projects elsewhere in coastal Louisiana and other deltaic systems. The Rainey Sanctuary has been used to develop demonstration restoration projects, including, most recently, the utility of small dredges and tall terraces. Resources have been developed for land managers regarding fire management and Clean Water Act Section 404 permit applications in coastal wetlands based on these programs. There are numerous threatened or endangered species that occupy the basin including the piping plover and other bird species of concern, West Indian manatee, pallid sturgeon, and several species of sea turtles. The entire system lies within a major flyway for migratory birds and has been declared critical bird habitat by the Audubon Society. The alluvial floodplain core area contains multiple WMAs that provide critical habitats for Louisiana black bear, neotropical migratory birds, American alligators, and freshwater fish and invertebrate species. The deltaic floodplains of the Atchafalaya and Wax Lake region is also a WMA containing more than 6,000 hectares (15,000 acres) of freshwater and floating marsh habitats and more than 40,000 hectares (~100,000 acres) of brackish and saltmarsh habitats. WMAs at the southern ends of Vermilion and West and East Cote Blanche bays provide critical habitat to numerous waterfowl, wading birds, manatees, and sea turtles and nursery habitats for recreationally and commercially important species such as shrimp and blue crabs. The Atchafalaya Basin has also been the host to over 20 CWPPRA restoration sites. The Atchafalaya Basin is the nation's largest river swamp and holds significant ecological and cultural significance for Louisiana and the nation. The basin produces the largest wild caught crawfish harvest in the nation, supports thriving finfish and shellfish fisheries and hosts a unique and diverse array of plants and animals. The basin also serves as a critical relief valve for extreme flood events on the Mississippi River and is home to the Port of Morgan City, a critical connection point for inland and coastal shipping routes. In summary, the proposed Atchafalaya NERR would be able to address virtually every one of the example management issues/topics listed in LaNERR Site Criterion 2.4.

While it is clear that the proposed Atchafalaya NERR is in a coastal region with many existing uses, the introduction of the reserve will be compatible with existing and potential land and water uses, as well as state and local coastal programs. Furthermore, the establishment of a reserve does not bring with it new federal regulations, so ongoing uses (e.g., commercial fishing) are not affected and remain compatible. More detailed discussions of the compatibility of the proposed Atchafalaya NERR and existing and potential uses are discussed below.

Land Uses

The Atchafalaya Basin is predominately undeveloped (Figure 22). Above the GIWW, land cover is mainly classified as woody wetlands. Below the GIWW, dominant land cover types are estuarine and palustrine emergent marsh and open water. Development within the region is generally restricted to narrow corridors along roadways. These developed areas are primarily situated along Highway 90 in the south from Morgan City to Centerville; Highway 190 and Highway 105 in the north near Krotz Springs and Melville; and to a lesser extent, Highway 3177 from Interstate 10 to Butte La Rose in the center of the basin. Landcover data from the USGS indicates that these developed areas are a mosaic of cultivated agriculture and pasturelands and low to high density commercial, industrial, and residential development (Dewitz & USGS, 2021). Developed land makes up less than 6% of the Atchafalaya Basin (Table 16).

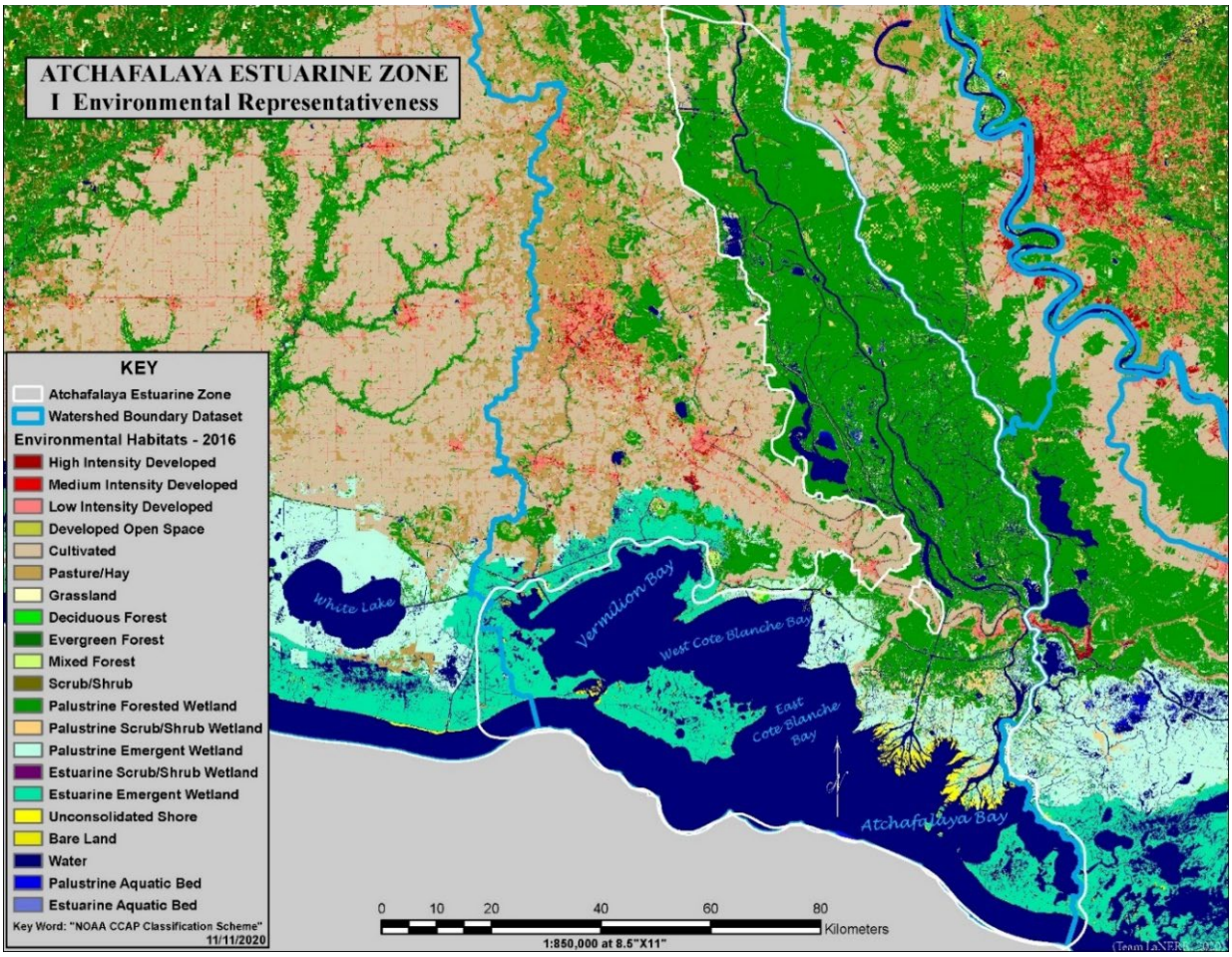

Figure 22. Land cover within the Atchafalaya Basin.

Table 16. Developed land cover within the Atchafalaya Basin (Dewitz & USGS, 2021).

Landcover Classification	**Description**	**% Cover Estimations**
Cultivated Crop	Areas used to produce annual crops, such as corn, soybeans, vegetables, tobacco, and cotton, and also perennial woody crops such as orchards and vineyards. Crop vegetation accounts for greater than 20% of total vegetation. Inclusive of actively tilled land.	3%
Pasture/Hay	Areas of grasses, legumes, or grass-legume mixtures planted for livestock grazing or the production of seed or hay crops, typically on a perennial cycle. Pasture/hay vegetation accounts for greater than 20% of total vegetation.	1%
Developed, open space	Areas with a mixture of some constructed materials, but mostly vegetation in the form of lawn grasses. Impervious surfaces account for less than 20% of total cover. These areas most commonly include large-lot single-family housing units, parks, golf courses, and vegetation planted in developed settings for recreation, erosion control, or aesthetic purposes.	<1%
Developed, low intensity	Areas with a mixture of constructed materials and vegetation. Impervious surfaces account for 20% to 49% percent of total cover. These areas most commonly include single-family housing units.	1%
Developed, medium intensity	Areas with a mixture of constructed materials and vegetation. Impervious surfaces account for 50% to 79% of the total cover. These areas most commonly include single-family housing units.	<1%
Developed, high intensity	Highly developed areas where people reside or work in high numbers. Examples include apartment complexes, row houses and commercial/industrial. Impervious surfaces account for 80% to 100% of the total cover.	<1%

The establishment of a NERR site in the Atchafalaya Basin will be compatible with existing management practices and consumptive and non-consumptive uses in the proposed lands and water bodies of the NERR. There are extensive state-owned lands/waters across a variety of ecosystem types within the proposed Atchafalaya NERR that are well suited for inclusion in the NERR System. The Atchafalaya Basin also contains large, contiguous tracts of federal and state-owned lands including the Atchafalaya National Wildlife Refuge (NWR) and several state-owned WMAs, wildlife refuges, and parks. The majority of the state lands proposed for potential inclusion in a NERR are WMAs operated by LDWF. These lands provide recreational use opportunities such as hunting, fishing, paddling, hiking, and wildlife viewing.

The lands proposed for possible inclusion in the Atchafalaya NERR exist within the floodway and Coastal Zone that sees tremendous temporal and spatial variation in water levels. The annual flood pulse limits development within the region to areas outside of the flood zone and levees. As a result, the pattern of development over the last several decades has been outside of the levees with most occurring on previously agricultural land. This trend is not likely to change in the future as the water, sediment, and other resources in the watershed are highly managed. The lands and water bodies to be proposed for inclusion in the Atchafalaya NERR are all state-owned with buffer areas being state water bottoms. These lands are therefore not anticipated to see impacts from additional land development in the future. Most private lands within the floodway and along coastal Atchafalaya are also expected to remain as they are today with minimal impacts due to their locations in areas at risk due to flood hazard.

Adjacent Land Uses

It is likely that core and buffer areas identified for inclusion within the Atchafalaya NERR will be public lands adjacent to private lands. Because of their location within the floodway and Coastal Zone, the majority of these adjacent private lands are operated in a method compatible with NERR activities on public lands. For example, south of the GIWW, adjacent land use is largely a combination of hunting and commercial and recreational fishing of estuarine and palustrine marsh and open water (Dewitz & USGS, 2021). Following acceptance of the proposed Atchafalaya NERR by NOAA, and during development of the EIS and MP, the team will continue to build relationships with private landowners (many of whom have already expressed interest in working with the NERR) to maintain quality and quantity of programming on the initial NERR site and to work toward potential expansion of activities into areas valuable for research, monitoring, and education.

State-Owned and Managed Properties

The state lands proposed for potential inclusion in an Atchafalaya NERR include a Wildlife Refuge and a WMA operated by LDWF, Marsh Island and Atchafalaya Delta WMA, respectively. There are many other similar land areas in the Atchafalaya Basin; these include: the Sherburne and Attakapas Island WMAs, State Wildlife Refuge, and Lake Fausse Point and Cypremort Point State Parks General information on hunting and fishing seasons and regulations can be obtained from LDWF,[17] but specific lands may have additional regulations. The following rules and regulations concerning the management, protection, and harvest of wildlife have been officially approved and adopted by the Louisiana Wildlife and Fisheries Commission in accordance with the authority provided in Louisiana Revised Statutes of 1950, Section 109 of Title 56. Failure to comply with these regulations will subject the individual to citation and/or expulsion from the WMA. Persons using WMAs or other LDWF administered lands for any purpose other than hunting must possess one of the following: a valid Wild Louisiana Stamp, a valid Louisiana fishing license, or a valid Louisiana hunting license with persons younger than 16 or older than 60 years of age being exempt from this requirement. Monitoring, data collection, and education and interpretation are all compatible with existing uses on WMAs and on state lands. As part of inclusion in a NERR, monitoring, data collection, and education and interpretation programs will involve agency coordination for any activities proposed for these

[17] https://www.wlf.louisiana.gov/page/seasons-and-regulations

public lands. The designation of an Atchafalaya NERR will not add any new regulations to state owned lands or impose regulations on privately-owned lands. A brief description of state-owned and managed properties within the Atchafalaya Basin is provided below.

Sherburne WMA

Sherburne WMA[18] is located in the Morganza Floodway system of the Atchafalaya Basin between the Atchafalaya River and the East Protection Guide Levee. LDWF owns Sherburne WMA (4,775 hectares; 11,800 acres) but manages the area as one unit along with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's (USFWS) Atchafalaya National Wildlife Refuge (6,160 hectares; 15,220 acres) and another 6,725 hectares (16,618 acres) owned by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE). The area is classified as bottomland hardwoods with four dominant tree species groups: cottonwood-sycamore, oak-gum-hackberry-ash, willow-cypress-ash, and overcup oak-bitter pecan. Ground cover in these areas is very dense and provides habitat for many game and non-game species. Hunting, fishing, and camping are the primary activities within the WMA, which also includes a shooting range.

Attakapas Island WMA

Attakapas Island WMA[19] was acquired by the State of Louisiana in 1976. The USACE also owns several tracts of land that are managed as part of the WMA. The WMA extends across portions of Iberia, St. Martin, and St. Mary parishes. Hunting, trapping, fishing, boating, birding, camping, and hiking are the primary activities that occur within the WMA. The WMA is characterized by flat swampland that is subject to periodic flooding from the Atchafalaya River. Areas adjacent to the river and spoil banks from dredging activities provide upland habitat and refuge areas during periods of high water.

Atchafalaya Delta WMA

The Atchafalaya Delta WMA[20] is located at the mouths of the Atchafalaya River and the Wax Lake Outlet and mostly consists of open water in Atchafalaya Bay. Within the bay, two deltas (Main Delta and Wax Lake Delta) have formed from the accretion of sediments from the Atchafalaya River and from dredged material deposited by the USACE. In total, the WMA covers 55,723 hectares (137,695 acres). LDWF owns and manages the WMA. Predominant activities occurring at the WMA include hunting, trapping, fishing, boating, and camping.

Marsh Island Wildlife Refuge

Marsh Island Wildlife Refuge[21] is located between Vermilion Bay and the Gulf of Mexico and is approximately 28,733 hectares (71,000 acres) in size. Marsh Island currently measures approximately 32 kilometers (20 miles) east to west and over 17 kilometers (11 miles) north to south. LDWF owns and manages the WMA. Habitat on the refuge is mainly brackish to intermediate marsh and flat, with very few trees. Marsh Island supports a wide array of animal species throughout the year and serves as wintering habitat to numerous waterfowl, wading and

[18] https://www.wlf.louisiana.gov/page/sherburne
[19] https://www.wlf.louisiana.gov/page/attakapas-island
[20] https://www.wlf.louisiana.gov/page/atchafalaya-delta
[21] https://www.wlf.louisiana.gov/page/marsh-island-refuge

shorebirds, and birds of prey. This refuge also serves as essential habitat for commercially important fish species, as well as alligators and furbearers.

State Wildlife Refuge

State Wildlife Refuge[22] is located on the southwestern shore of Vermilion Bay and is bordered by the Audubon/Paul J. Rainey Wildlife Sanctuary to the west and Marsh Island Refuge to the east. LDWF owns and manages the 5,260-hectare (13,000 acre) WMA. Hunting is prohibited on the refuge; however, other recreational activities such as fishing, shrimping, crabbing, and birding are allowed. State Wildlife Refuge is home to a variety of wildlife and provides important waterfowl wintering habitat in Vermilion Bay.

Lake Fausse Pointe State Park

Lake Fausse Pointe State Park[23] occupies 2,428 hectares (6,000 acres) in the Atchafalaya Basin. The area surrounding the park was formerly the home site of the Chitimacha Indians. From the middle 1700s, the region was dominated by French and Acadian farmers and trappers, although the Spanish were in control of the land from 1763 until 1802. The state park offers fishing, boating, canoeing, and hiking opportunities. A campground and cabin rentals are available to visitors.

Cypremort Point State Park

Cypremort Point State Park[24] occupies approximately 75 hectares (185 acres) on the east side of Vermilion Bay. The park is accessible via car and includes a 0.8 kilometer (0.5 mile), man-made beach. The park offers fishing, boating, swimming, and wildlife viewing. Cabins, campsites, and a group pavilion are available to visitors.

Federally-Owned and Managed Properties

The inclusion of federally-owned properties is not being considered at this time for the Atchafalaya NERR. However, there are three NWRs and one public access area within the Atchafalaya Basin. These federal properties include the Atchafalaya, Bayou Teche, and Shell Keys NWRs and the Indian Bayou Area. The NWRs are managed by the USFWS, and the Indian Bayou Area is managed by the USACE.

Transportation

Airports and Runways

The Harry P Williams Memorial Airport lies within the Atchafalaya Basin. It is a public airport located near U.S. Highway 90 in Patterson, Louisiana with the airfield also serving Morgan City, Louisiana. It has two runways, one of them being water for seaplanes. The airport currently has no scheduled passenger service but is served by charter flights. Other airports located near, but outside, the current proposed reserve boundary include the Le Maire Memorial Airport (Jeanerette, Louisiana), False River Regional Airport (New Roads, Louisiana), and Thibodaux Municipal Airport (Schriever, Louisiana).

[22] https://www.wlf.louisiana.gov/page/state-wildlife-refuge
[23] https://www.lastateparks.com/parks-preserves/lake-fausse-pointe-state-park
[24] https://www.lastateparks.com/parks-preserves/cypremort-point-state-park

Railways

The Amtrack, Louisiana and Delta Railroad (LDRR), and Union Pacific Railroad all have portions that run near the proposed NERR boundary. Amtrack is a passenger railroad service that provides inter-city rail service throughout the contiguous United States and into Canada. There are six Amtrack stations in Louisiana and one, located in New Iberia, which is near the proposed NERR boundary. The LDRR is a short-line railroad managed as a unit of Genesee and Wyoming, Inc. and has headquarters in New Iberia. The LDRR serves customers throughout southern Louisiana and carries more than 12,000 carloads annually of cargo consisting primarily of carbon black, sugar, molasses, pipe, rice, and paper products (Genesee and Wyoming Inc., 2021). Union Pacific has 1,835 kilometers (1,140 miles) of track that runs through the state of Louisiana (including through the Atchafalaya Basin), which connects businesses and industry in all four corners of the state and beyond. In 2021, the top five commodities shipped by volume (in order from most to least) were plastics, industrial chemicals, paperboard/printing paper, petroleum products, and fertilizer; the top five received by volume were industrial chemicals, plastics, petroleum products, grain, and coal (Union Pacific, n.d.).

Roadways and Bridges

The major roadways which run through the Atchafalaya Basin include U.S. Highway 190, U.S. Highway 90, and Interstate 10. Many other smaller Louisiana highways run through the area but are too numerous to list. Louisiana has 12,782 bridges throughout the state many of which are located within or near the proposed Atchafalaya NERR (American Road and Transportation Builders Association, 2022). The Atchafalaya Basin Bridge with a total length of 29 kilometers (18 miles) crosses the upper portion of the basin and is the second longest bridge on the interstate system.

LA DOTD Current Projects and Future Plans

Efforts to improve the highway system along the current U.S. Highway 90 from Lafayette to New Orleans by connecting the current terminus of Interstate 49 in Lafayette (intersection of I-10 and U.S. 167) to New Orleans (intersection of U.S. 90 Bus and Interstate 10) and create an Interstate 49 South corridor from U.S. Highway 90 have been put into place and could impact areas near the proposed NERR boundary. The project is estimated to cost $4.5 billion. Several segments of the project have been completed, and others are in initial design, planning, or construction phases. The Louisiana Department of Transportation and Development (LA DOTD) has also begun a project to improve U.S. Highway 90, Louisiana Highway 318, and associated frontage roads in St. Mary Parish located within the proposed NERR area. This project is ongoing and has been under construction since June of 2015.

Ports

There are three ports near the proposed Atchafalaya NERR (i.e., Ports of Morgan City, Iberia, and Krotz Springs). The Port of Morgan City is connected to the continental United States via the GIWW, Atchafalaya River, and the Black, Boeuf, and Chene Bayous. It sits on the GIWW in St. Mary Parish and is part of the Mississippi River Delta Waterway. The channel from the Port of Morgan City to the Gulf of Mexico is a minimum of 6.1 meters (20 feet) deep and 122 meters (400 feet) wide (World Port Source, n.d.). This port handles approximately 6.8 million metric tons (7.5 million tons) of cargo each year, with major inbound material being steel, offshore

equipment, project cargo, drilling supplies, and stone aggregates; major outbound materials include general cargo, heavy-lift project cargo, rice, salt, and molasses (World Port Source, n.d.). The Port of Iberia is part of the Mississippi River Delta Waterway and is connected to the Gulf of Mexico via its Commercial Canal and to the Mississippi River through the ports at Baton Rouge and New Orleans. The Port of Iberia Chanel is about 12.8 kilometers (8 miles) from the entrance to the GIWW and is a minimum of 4 meters (13 feet) deep, and 61 meters (200 feet) wide at the surface (World Port Source, n.d.). Access to the Port is facilitated by over 16 kilometers (10 miles) of roadway access with additional plans for access roads that will link the port to the future Interstate 49 corridor. Primary cargos that move through this port include gas and oil pipe and supplies, fabrication materials, agricultural products, limestone, aggregates, bulk concrete, and steel. It also supports the construction of vessels and barges. The Port of Krotz Springs is the northern most post near the proposed NERR. It sits on the Atchafalaya River and is part of the Mississippi River Delta System. The USACE assists in maintaining a depth of 3.7 meters (12 feet) in the river, and the channel at the Port is roughly 30 meters (100 feet) wide (World Port Source, n.d.). The Port of Krotz Springs is near Louisiana Highway 105 and U.S. Highway 190. The Union Pacific Railroad service also operates near the Port. Roughly 2.8 million metric tons (3.1 million tons) of liquid and dry bulk cargo flow through the Port annually including inbound crude oil and outbound refined petroleum products ana aggregate (World Port Source, n.d.).

Marine Navigation

The Mississippi River is the largest river system in North America extending about 3,730 kilometers (2,320 miles). The Mississippi River Delta has 15 ports and harbors of which seven are in Louisiana. The GIWW is a navigable inland waterway located along the Gulf of Mexico coastline and is a portion of the larger Intracoastal Waterway. The GIWW runs from Apalachee Bay/Carrabelle, Florida to Brownsville, Texas spanning roughly 1,690 kilometers (1,050 miles). The waterway is partially man-made and linked by a series of canals. It is an important route for barges as well as access to major ports for seafaring vessels. It crosses or meets numerous other navigable rivers and waterways, several of which fall within the proposed NERR. Other navigable waterways in or near the proposed Atchafalaya NERR include: Vermilion River, Vermilion Bay via Bayou Petite and via Acadiana Navigation Channel, West Cote Blanche Bay, Freshwater Bayou Canal, Bayou Teche, Weeks Bay, Sabine River as part of the Sabine-Neches Waterway and GIWW, Bayou Schaffer, Little Pigeon Bayou, and Schooner Bayou Canal.

Water Uses

Water Control Structures and Levees

Water in the Atchafalaya Basin is managed through various levees and control structures. The Old River Control Structure in Concordia Parish maintains the distribution of flow between the Mississippi River and the Atchafalaya River and effectively prevents the Atchafalaya River from capturing the flow of the Mississippi River. The basin is also bordered by about 644 kilometers (400 miles) of protection levees installed as part of the Atchafalaya Basin Floodway System project spearheaded by the USACE. The levees prevent floodwaters from inundating adjacent highly productive and developed farmland and funnel floodwaters south through the Lower Atchafalaya River and the Wax Lake Outlet to the Gulf of Mexico (USACE, 2007). In its

entirety, the Atchafalaya Basin Floodway System includes levees, control structures, locks, pumping stations, floodgates, channel improvements, and floodwalls (Atchafalaya Basin Advisory Committee, 1998).

Consumptive Water Use

Apart from St. Mary Parish, aquifers are the primary source of public water supply for the parishes with larger inhabited and developed areas within the Atchafalaya Basin (e.g., St. Landry, Pointe Coupee, and St. Martin). In St. Mary Parish, surface water is the main source of public water supply. Other major categories of water use in the region include power generation, industrial, aquaculture, irrigation, rural domestic and livestock use (Collier, 2018; Sargent, 2011).

Fishing and Hunting

Recreational and Commercial Fishing

The Atchafalaya Basin provides extensive recreational and commercial fishing opportunities. Common recreationally fished freshwater fish species in the basin are black (*Micropterus salmoides*), white (*Morone chrysops*), yellow (*Morone mississippiensis*), and striped (*Morone saxatilis*) bass; bowfin (*Amia calva*); bream (*Abramis brama*); buffalo (*Ictiobus*); channel (*Ictalurus punctatus*), blue (*Ictalurus furcatus*), and flathead (*Pylodictis olivaris*) catfish; crappie (*Pomoxis* sp.); and shad (*Alosa sapidissima*). Recreational crawfishing (*Cambarus* sp.) using set nets or recreational wire traps is a popular seasonal activity (Atchafalaya National Heritage Area, n.d.).

Coastal species include black (*Pogonias cromis*) and red (*Sciaenops ocellatus*) drum, southern flounder (*Paralichthys lethostigma*), striped mullet (*Mugil cephalus*), sea trout (*Salmo trutta trutta*), cobia (*Rachycentron canadum*), and king (*Scomberomorus cavalla*) and Spanish (*Scomberomorus maculatus*) mackerel. Snapper (*Lutjanus campechanus*), mutton (*Lutjanus analis*), tuna (*Thunnini* sp.), amberjack (*Seriola dumerili*), hogfish (*Lachnolaimus maximus*), and red drum (*Sciaenops ocellatus*) are popular offshore finfish species. Shrimp, crab, and oysters (*Crassostrea virginica*) are also harvested seasonally in coastal estuaries (Atchafalaya National Heritage Area, n.d.).

More than 70% of the commercial seafood and other fisheries products landed in the Gulf of Mexico each year comes through Louisiana, creating a total annual economic impact of nearly $2 billion (LDWF, n.d.-b). The Atchafalaya Basin is consistently the top producing river basin for freshwater fisheries in Louisiana (Figure 23, Bontakis and Lively, 2019). Catfish, buffalo, shad, carp (*Cyprinus carpio*), freshwater drum (*Aplodinotus grunniens*), bowfin, and crawfish are the largest commercial freshwater fisheries in the basin. Commercial freshwater fish landings in 2016 for the Atchafalaya Basin were 10 –30 million pounds (Bontakis and Lively, 2019).

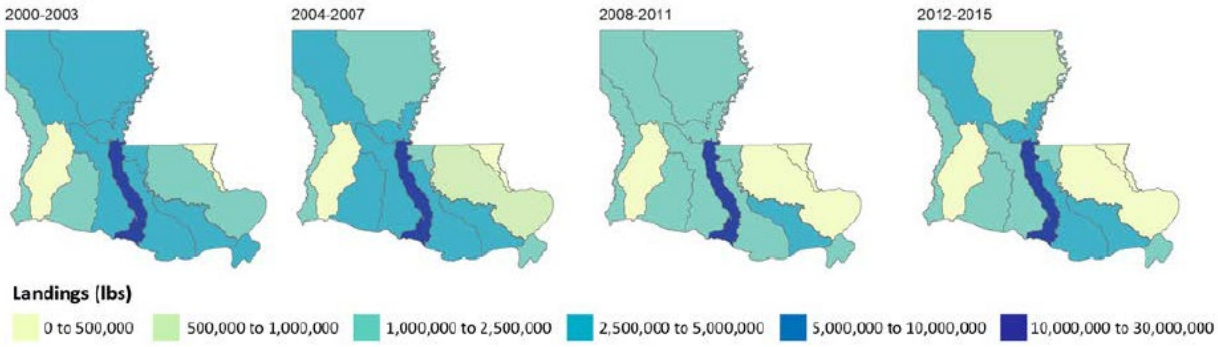

Figure 23. Commercial freshwater fish landings by Louisiana basin over time (Bontakis and Lively, 2019).

Wild crawfish is one of the most economically important freshwater fisheries in Louisiana and is consistently the most productive freshwater fishery within the Atchafalaya Basin. Over 87 million kilograms (kg; 193 million pounds) of wild crawfish were harvested in Louisiana from 1999-2016, with 87% (76 million kg; 168 million pounds) of it coming from the Atchafalaya Basin. From 1999-2016, crawfish accounted for approximately 67% ($154 million) of the total value of freshwater commercial harvest (Bontakis and Lively, 2019).

Commercial estuarine and marine fishery landings in Louisiana include spotted seatrout (*Cynoscion nebulosus*), black (*Pogonias cromis*) and red drum, sheepshead (*Archosargus probatocephalus*), menhaden (*Brevoortia patronus*), striped mullet, southern flounder, shark (*Selachimorpha* sp.), amberjack, snapper, grouper (*Epinephelinae* sp.), and yellowfin tuna (*Thunnus albacares*) (LDWF, n.d.-c). Other commercial landings include oyster, blue crab (*Callinectes sapidus*), and shrimp (LDWF, n.d.-b).

In the Atchafalaya-Vermilion-Teche River basins, blue crab landings averaged 3.28 million kg (7.23 million pounds) from 2000-2018 (Cagle and Isaacs, 2022). Average shrimp (brown [*Farfantepenaeus aztecus*], white [*Litopenaeus setiferus*], and seabob [*Xiphopenaeus kroyeri*]) landings within these basins for the years 2000-2013 were 1.35 million kg (2.98 million pounds), and average oyster landings from 2000-2014 were 274,323 kg (604,778 pounds) (Bourgeois et al., 2016; Banks et al., 2016). In 2017, 544,311 kg (1.2 million pounds) of black drum were landed in these basins, making up more than a third of total black drum landings in the state that year (Adriance et al., 2019). Commercial landing data by basin is lacking for other marine and estuarine fisheries.

Recreational Hunting

Recreational hunting is a popular pastime in Louisiana with over 5 million hunting licenses sold in 2020 (LDWF, 2020). Within the Atchafalaya National Wildlife Refuge, white-tailed deer (*Odocoileus virginianus*), squirrel (*Sciuridae* sp.), rabbit (*Sylvilagus* sp.), raccoon (*Procyon lotor*), woodcock (*Scolopax sp.*), snipe (*Gallinago* sp.), mourning dove (*Zenaida macroura*), rail (*Rallidae* sp.), gallinules (*Gallinula* sp.), fox (*Vulpes* sp.), turkey (*Meleagris* sp.), and waterfowl are open for hunting (USFWS, n.d.-a). In the southern portion of the basin, the Bayou Teche National Wildlife Refuge also allows for hunting of deer, squirrel, rabbit, woodcock, and waterfowl. Feral hog (*Sus scrofa*) hunting is allowed during archery season (USFWS, n.d.-b).

Further south, in the Atchafalaya Delta WMA, deer hunting is restricted to certain areas and is only permitted for adult archery season and youth lottery gun hunts. Waterfowl and rabbit hunting is permitted along with fur trapping (LDWF, n.d.-a). All hunting and trapping activities are subject to state licensing and regulations.

Existing Plans and Policies

Louisiana Coastal Resources Program (LCRP)

LDNR OCM is tasked with implementing the LCRP. The LCRP was approved in 1980 and is a cooperative program with NOAA. The primary authority for the LCRP is the State and Local Coastal Resources Management Act of 1978, as amended (Act 361, La. R.S. 49:214.21 et seq). The overall goal of the law is to balance coastal conservation with multiple coastal resource uses. The LCRP can help to resolve user conflicts, encourage coastal zone recreational values, and guide coastal development and conservation (LDNR, n.d.). The LCRP objectives of balancing coastal uses and conserving coastal habitats are consistent with the proposed Atchafalaya NERR.

Louisiana Coastal Wetlands Conservation Plan (LCWCP)

The LCWCP was adopted pursuant to CWPPRA in 1997. The plan requires that all unavoidable wetland loss due to regulated activities be compensated. Approval of the plan resulted in increased availability of federal coastal restoration funding from CWPPRA and a decreased state cost share from 25% to 15%. It also assisted in establishing Louisiana's coastal mitigation program and demonstrated the state's willingness to address wetland loss (LDNR, 1997).

Atchafalaya National Heritage Area Management Plan

With the congressional authorization of the Atchafalaya National Heritage Area in October 2006, the Atchafalaya Trace Commission was designated as responsible for the development of a management plan and environmental assessment hybrid for the area. Volume I and II of the document were released in 2011 with the purpose of providing a structured path forward for the Commission over the next 15-20 years. The document identified several alternatives and strategies to meet the heritage areas goals of enhancing interpretation and awareness of the area's key stories, supporting sustainable cultural economic development opportunities, increasing appreciation for cultural resources, and increasing appreciation for natural resources. The plan/EA also identified potential public and private partnerships and made recommendations for financial assistance sources (Atchafalaya Trace Commission, 2011). The proposed Atchafalaya NERR program is consistent with and has natural links to the aforementioned heritage area goals.

Louisiana Coastal Master Plan

The Louisiana Coastal Master Plan is developed by CPRA, a state agency tasked with integrating the protection and restoration of the Louisiana coast. The Master Plan serves as a guide for the agency to effectively plan, coordinate, and implement coast-wide restoration, resiliency, and protection projects within the context of other coastal uses such as transportation, navigation, water and land use management, and industry. A new version of the Master Plan is released every six years to ensure the best available science and engineering is incorporated. The objectives outlined in the current 2017 Master Plan are to reduce economic losses to homes and business from storm surge-based flooding, promote sustainable ecosystems, provide habitats for a variety of commercial and recreational activities coast wide, strengthen communities, and

support businesses and industry (CPRA, 2017). The proposed Atchafalaya NERR program is compatible with and can help support many of these goals through conservation stewardship, education, and research.

Atchafalaya Basin Program

The Atchafalaya Basin Program was established "to develop, implement, and manage a comprehensive state master plan for the Atchafalaya Basin Floodway System, Louisiana Project." CPRA is the non-federal sponsor for the USACE Floodway Project and must match federal dollars used in the mitigation of the floodway system (CPRA, 2022). In 2020, Governor Edwards established the ARBRE Task Force to address issues related to modifications to the natural flow regime of the Atchafalaya River and the resulting sedimentation and water quality issues within the basin and how they affect the coastal communities. The Task Force brings stakeholders from diverse perspectives together to work through the ongoing challenges in the basin and help identify opportunities. The ARBRE Task Force is comprised of 20 key state and local stakeholders as well as five federal non-voting members. The ARBRE Task Force is chaired and staffed by GOCA and has considerable overlap with the partner network already identified for the Atchafalaya NERR site.

Oil and Gas Activities

The first oil well in Louisiana was drilled in 1901 in Evangeline, Louisiana, and the first natural gas pipeline was laid in 1908 (LSU, 2000). All 64 Louisiana parishes produce oil or gas (LSU, 2000). Today, Louisiana is home to 14 oil refineries, which account for nearly 20% of United States refining capacity (USEIA, 2022). Louisiana ranks third in natural gas production and accounts for approximately 9% of the United States marketed gas production (USEIA, 2022).

Louisiana Regulations and Policies

Louisiana's oil and gas resources are overseen by the Office of Conservation, Office of Mineral Resources, and OCM, all of which are housed in LDNR. The Office of Conservation is charged with conserving and regulating the oil, gas, and lignite resources of the state. This statutory responsibility is to regulate the exploration and production of oil, gas and other hydrocarbons, and lignite; to control and allocate energy supplies and distribution; and to protect public safety and the environment from oilfield waste, including regulation of underground injection and disposal practices. The Office of Mineral Resources was established to manage the State's mineral assets in granting and administering leases on State-owned lands and water bottoms for developing and producing primarily oil and gas, as a means of revenue in the form of royalties, bonuses, and rentals to the State's general fund. The OCM regulates development activities and manages the resources of the Coastal Zone, especially those which have a direct and significant impact on coastal waters. The office is comprised of two closely related divisions: the Permits & Mitigation Division and the Interagency Affairs & Field Services Division. It is the function of OCM, through its staff, to maintain, protect, develop, and restore or enhance the invaluable coastal region of the State of Louisiana. Louisiana oil and gas laws can be found in Title 30 of Louisiana Revised Statutes.

Oil Spills

Given the large amount of oil and gas activity occurring within the Louisiana Coastal Zone, measures to protect the integrity of the Atchafalaya NERR, especially the "core" areas, will be addressed in the MP.

Future Oil and Gas Activities

Future oil and gas activities will be addressed in the MP. The MP will include specific protections for the right to explore for and develop oil, gas, and other minerals from state-owned or controlled lands within the boundaries of the Atchafalaya NERR. Regulations at 15 C.F.R. § 921.13(a)(10) provide that the MP shall include, if applicable, a resource manipulation plan describing those portions of the reserve buffer in which long-term, pre-existing manipulation for reasons not related to research or restoration is occurring.

PARTNERSHIPS

Public Engagement and Support

The proposed Atchafalaya NERR is supported by a growing number of partnerships. The diversity of viewpoints sought to understand what makes a good deltaic LaNERR site and how it best serves not only the national network of NERR sites but also the interests and needs of the local communities was highlighted by the construction of the Atchafalaya NERR proposal development team. The team consisted of members representing LUMCON, Atchafalaya National Heritage Area, University of Louisiana at Lafayette, TNC, Louisiana State University Baton Rouge, Louisiana Sea Grant, Nicholls State University, LSU Ag Center Wetlands and Outreach Program, Audubon Delta, USGS, Restore the Mississippi River Delta, South Louisiana Community College, and Restore or Retreat, Inc. with members that focus on diverse fields of research, education and outreach, communications, social science, conservation, and coalition and team building, among other backgrounds. These organizations formed the initial core of the growing number of partners in support of the development of LaNERR in the Atchafalaya Basin. The current list of partners also includes St. Mary Excel, LDWF, BTNEP, Boy Scouts of America, Purple Martin Conservation Initiative, McIlhenny Company, Rainey Conservation Alliance (Vermilion Corporation, McIlhenny Company, Audubon, Sagrera Estates), ARBRE Task Force, and municipalities and organizations located in the basin (see Appendix 8 –Final Proposals [Atchafalaya] for letters of support). The ARBE Task Force further includes members of CPRA, the Governor's Policy Director, Secretary of LDWF, Secretary of LDNR, Governor's Advisory Commission, two representatives (east and west basin), two landowners, two representatives of conservation organizations, one representative from energy transportation, one representative from the navigation sector, executive director of the Port of Morgan City, two representatives of the commercial fishing industry (east and west basin), one representative from the recreational fishing industry, and one representative from academia along with five non-voting members of federal agencies (USACE, USFWS, Natural Resources Conservation Service [NRCS], USGS, and EPA). The Atchafalaya proposal team, and more broadly through their partners, have a long and rich history of collaborating on formal and informal projects and represent a wide range of memberships in relevant groups, organizations, panels, societies. In summary, the partnerships for the Atchafalaya NERR are already diverse and and continue to grow as the network continues to communicate and interact with a broader audience of stakeholders.

The public interest, support and engagement throughout the Atchafalaya NERR selection and nomination process has been impressive. This support began with the enthusiastic and engaged involvement of a large team from diverse organizations on the proposal development team. It has continued to expand through increasing public engagement. During the February 2022 public Town Hall meetings, approximately 400 people were engaged either in person or on-line highlighted by approximately 150 people in person at the Morgan City Municipal Auditorium where the public stayed engaged in conversation for over an hour and a half. This level of enthusiasm and support for a NERR to be designated in the Atchafalaya Basin was seen again during the November 2022 public meetings and the verbal and written support received. The interest in learning about a Louisiana NERR site is encouraging as is the strong desire of diverse

stakeholders to not only see a NERR site come to the Atchafalaya Basin but also to pledge support and commitment to the future NERR and the programs and activities that will come with its arrival.

In Appendix 9 – Final Proposals [Atchafalaya], there are 408 pages of support letters that have been collected to date. These letters represent support from diverse stakeholders that range from grade school through high school students, to educators, research institutions, NGOs, organizations, companies, individual residents, municipalities, city and parish councils, mayors, parish presidents, university officials just to name a few. The letters are organized into categories to make them easier to review. Overall, the outpouring of support demonstrates how much the communities and stakeholders from the Atchafalaya Basin want to not only have the NERR in the region but truly want to be engaged with it. The enthusiasm in the communities in and around the basin is highlighted by the t-shirts (pictured in the student letter section of the appendix) that have been made and worn proudly at events in the region. This engagement and support further shows the tremendous impact it will have on the area and why the Atchafalaya Basin is an ideal location for Louisiana to add a delta NERR to the national network.

ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT AND MANAGEMENT PLAN

As required by the NEPA of 1969 (42 U.S. Code [U.S.C.] § 4321 et seq.), an EIS will be completed for the LaNERR designation. A MP is also required by NOAA for operation of the NERR. The DMP for the proposed LaNERR will be written as an attachment to the DEIS. Prior to writing the document, NOAA will hold a scoping meeting to identify alternatives and issues to be included in the DEIS/DMP. Louisiana will develop the DMP and will provide NOAA with the information necessary to complete the EIS.

Upon completion of the DEIS/DMP, a public meeting will be held, and additional comments collected during a 45-day period. The public comments will be incorporated into the final EIS and final MP. The final EIS/MP will then be submitted for final review and public comment.

Not less than 30 days after the publication of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency Notice of Availability of the final EIS, NOAA may issue a Record of Decision (ROD) documenting its decision concerning the proposed NERR designation.

Sample DEIS and DMP Outline
(Standard Outline Approved for Use by NOAA)

The outline below provides an example starting point for discussions on what issues and items should or should not be addressed in the DEIS/DMP. The sections that meet DEIS requirements are noted as "DEIS," and the sections which meet DMP requirements are noted as "DMP."

Cover Sheet (DEIS)

Summary

Table of Contents

1.0 Introduction (DMP)

- 1.1 The National Estuarine Research Reserve System
- 1.2 Proposed mission and goals of the Reserve

2.0 Purpose of and Need for Action (DEIS)

- 2.1 Explain who wants to do what; where how and when they want to do it; and why.
- 2.2 Explain any other documents that influence the scope of this EIS.
- 2.3 Explain the decision to be made and identify any other agencies involved in this analysis.
- 2.4 Summarize the scoping and explain the significant issues.
- 2.5 List Federal permits, licenses, and entitlements necessary to implement the project.
- 2.6 Preview the remaining chapters of your DEIS/DMP.

3.0 Alternatives Including the Proposed Action (DEIS)

- 3.1 Explain that this chapter describes the alternatives (potential actions) and summarizes the environmental consequences of the alternatives.

3.2 Describe the alternatives, including the proposed action and no action.

3.3 Explain how these alternatives represent a range of reasonable alternatives.

3.4 Compare the alternatives by summarizing their environmental consequences.

3.5 Identify the preferred alternative. (DEIS)

3.5.1 Administration plan (DMP)

3.5.2 Existing resource protection (DMP)

3.5.3 Boundaries/acquisition plan (if applicable) (DMP)

3.5.4 Stewardship plan (DMP)

3.5.5 Restoration/Resource manipulation plan (DMP)

3.5.6 Public access plan (DMP)

3.5.7 Facilities/construction plan (DMP)

3.5.8 Research and monitoring plan (DMP)

3.5.9 Education/interpretation/outreach plan (DMP)

3.5.10 Volunteer plan (DMP)

4.0 The Affected Environment. Describes the current resources. This is the baseline environment for analytical purposes. (DEIS)

4.1 Biogeographic region analysis.

4.2 Physical aspects.

4.3 Geology.

4.4 Biology and habitats (ecology).

4.5 Human environment/impact.

4.6 Cultural aspects.

Note: Resources include all physical, biological, social, and economic features of the human environment.

Note: Significant issues (resources) should receive more extensive discussion than nonsignificant issues.

5.0 Environmental Consequences (DEIS)

5.1 General impacts. (DEIS)

5.2 Specific impacts. (DEIS)

5.3 Unavoidable adverse environmental or socioeconomic impacts. (DEIS)

5.4 Relationship between the proposed action on the environment and the maintenance and enhancement of long-term productivity. (DEIS)

5.5 Irreversible and irretrievable commitment of resources. (DEIS)

5.6 Possible conflicts between the proposed action and the objectives of federal, state, regional, local, and native land use plans, policies, and controls for the areas concerned. (DEIS)

6.0 List of Preparers (DEIS)

7.0 References

8.0 Appendices

Sample State-Federal Memorandum of Understanding

Below is a sample MOU that can serve as the basis for developing a final version during subsequent management planning phases. The sample includes placeholder notations for elements that will be finalized during the development of the Louisiana NERR MP.

******SAMPLE******

Memorandum of Understanding

Between the

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration and

The (state agency)

Detailing the State-Federal Roles in the Management of the (name of reserve)

I. PARTIES AND PURPOSE

This Memorandum of Understanding (MOU or agreement) establishes the framework for the cooperative management of (full name of reserve) (abbreviated name of reserve, which should be used consistently throughout the MOU) in the State of Louisiana, between the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), Office for Coastal Management and (state partner agency). This agreement supersedes the previous agreement between NOAA and (state partner agency) regarding (name of reserve) made on (date of last MOU).

II. AUTHORITY

The authority for this agreement is the Coastal Zone Management Act of 1972, as amended (CZMA, 16 U.S.C. §§ 1451-65), and its implementing regulations at 15 C.F.R. §§ 921 and 923.

III. BACKGROUND

A. The State of Louisiana has determined the waters and related coastal habitats of (state reserve areas) provide unique opportunities for the study of natural and human processes to contribute to the science of estuarine ecosystem processes, enhance environmental education opportunities and public understanding of estuarine areas, and provide a stable environment for research through the long-term protection of reserve resources.

B. The State of Louisiana has determined that the resources of the (name of

reserve) and the values they represent to the citizens of Louisiana and the United States will benefit from the management of these resources as part of the National Estuarine Research Reserve (NERR) System.

C. The (state agency), as the agency designated by the Governor of Louisiana, is responsible for maintaining, operating, and managing the (name of reserve) in accordance with Section 315 of the CZMA, 16 U.S.C. § 1461, and acknowledges the value of state-federal cooperation for the long-term management and protection of the (name of reserve) in a manner consistent with the purpose of its designation.

D. NOAA finds that the State of Louisiana satisfied the legal and procedural requirements for designation and, pursuant to its authority under Section 315 of the CZMA, 16 U.S.C. § 1461, and in accordance with implementing regulations at 15 C.F.R. § 921, designated the (name of reserve).

E. The (name of reserve) management plan approved by NOAA describes the goals, objectives, strategies/actions, administrative structure, and institutional arrangements for the (name of reserve), including this agreement and others. In consideration of the mutual agreements herein, NOAA and (state agency) agree to the roles indicated in Section IV of this agreement.

IV. STATE-FEDERAL ROLES IN RESERVE MANAGEMENT

A. (state agency) Role in (name of reserve) Management

The (state agency) shall:

1. be responsible for compliance with all federal laws and regulations, and ensure that the (name of reserve) management plan is consistent with the provisions of the CZMA and implementing regulations;

2. ensure protection of the natural and cultural resources of the (name of reserve), and ensure enforcement of the provisions of state law and regulations aimed at protecting the (name of reserve);

3. ensure adequate, long-term protection and management of lands and waters included within the (name of reserve) boundary;

4. cooperate with NOAA to apply for and manage funds to support the (name of reserve) in accordance with federal and state laws, the (name of reserve) management plan, annual funding guidance from NOAA, and any other NOAA directives pertaining to (name of reserve) operations, research and monitoring, education and stewardship, and, as necessary, land acquisition and (name of reserve) facility construction;

5. conduct and coordinate research and monitoring programs that encourage scientists from a variety of institutions to work together to understand the ecology of the (name of reserve) ecosystem to improve coastal management;

6. conduct and maintain programs that disseminate research results via materials, activities, workshops, and conferences to resource users, state and local agencies, school systems, the general public, and other interested parties;

7. provide staff and endeavor to secure state funding for the manager, education coordinator, and research coordinator;

8. secure facilities and equipment required to implement the provisions within the (name of reserve) management plan;

9. ensure adequate support for facilities operation and maintenance;

10. maintain effective liaison with local, regional, state, and federal policy makers, regulators, and the general public;

11. serve as principal contact for issues involving proposed boundary changes and/or amendments to the (name of reserve) management plan; and

12. cooperate with NOAA regarding review of performance pursuant to Sections 312 and 315 of the CZMA, 16 U.S.C. §§ 1458 and 1461, 15 C.F.R. § 921.40, and ongoing management plan approvals.

B. Federal Role in (name of reserve) Management

NOAA's Office for Coastal Management shall:

1. administer the provisions of the Sections 312 and 315 of the CZMA, 16 U.S.C. § 1458 and 16 U.S.C. § 1461, respectively, to ensure that the (name of reserve) operates in accordance with goals of the NERR System and the (name of reserve) management plan;

2. review and process applications for financial assistance from the (state agency), consistent with 15 C.F.R. § 921, for management and operation of the (name of reserve), and, as appropriate, land acquisition and facility construction;

3. advise (state agency) of existing and emerging national and regional issues that have bearing on the (name of reserve) and NERR System;

4. maintain an information exchange network among reserves, including available research and monitoring data and educational materials developed within the NERR System; and

5. to the extent possible, facilitate the allocation of NOAA resources and capabilities in support of (name of reserve) goals and programs.

C. General Provisions

1. Nothing in this agreement shall obligate either party in the expenditure of funds, or for future payments of money. Each party

bears its own costs to implement this agreement. NOAA may provide Federal funding in accordance with the CZMA and any requirements of the U.S. Department of Commerce through financial assistance awards that are separate from this agreement.

2. A free exchange of research and assessment data between the parties is encouraged and is necessary to ensure success of cooperative studies.

D. Other Provisions

1. Nothing in this agreement diminishes the independent authority or coordination responsibility of either party in administering its respective statutory obligations. Nothing in this agreement is intended to conflict with current written directives or policies of either party. If the terms of this agreement are inconsistent with existing written directives or policies of either party entering this agreement, then those portions of this agreement that are determined to be inconsistent with such written directives or policies shall be invalid; but the remaining terms not affected by the inconsistency shall remain in full force and effect. In the event of the discovery of such inconsistency, and at the first opportunity for revision of this agreement, the parties shall seek to amend or terminate this agreement in accordance with the provisions of section VI of this agreement.

2. Any disagreement on the interpretation of a provision, amendment, or other matter related to this agreement shall be resolved informally at the lowest operating level of each party's respective organization. If such disagreement cannot be resolved, then the area(s) of disagreement shall be stated in writing and presented to the other party for further consideration. If agreement is not reached within thirty (30) days of presentation, then the parties shall forward the written presentation of the disagreement to their respective higher official for appropriate resolution.

V. PROGRAM EVALUATION

In accordance with sections 312 and 315 of the CZMA, 16 U.S.C. §§ 1458 and 1461, and 15 C.F.R. § 921.40, NOAA's Office for Coastal Management will schedule periodic evaluations of (state agency) performance in meeting the terms of this agreement and the (name of reserve) management plan. Where findings of deficiency occur, NOAA may initiate action in accordance with the interim sanctions or withdrawal of designation procedures established by the CZMA and applicable regulations at 15 C.F.R. § 921, Subpart E.

VI. EFFECTIVE DATE, REVIEW, AMENDMENT, AND TERMINATION

A. This agreement is effective on the date of the last signature on this

agreement and shall be in effect until terminated by either party.

B. This agreement will be reviewed periodically by both parties and may only be amended by the mutual written consent of both parties.

C. This agreement may be terminated by mutual consent of both parties or by unilateral termination by either party. Termination of this agreement may provide grounds for NOAA (at its discretion) to withdraw designation of the (name of reserve) from the NERR System, pursuant to applicable provisions of the CZMA and its implementing regulations as described under 15 C.F.R. §§ 921 (Subpart E) and 923 (Subpart L). Section 315 of the CZMA, 16 U.S.C. § 1461, provides that NOAA may withdraw designation of a NERR if: 1) NOAA finds that any of the criteria for establishing the reserve no longer exist; or 2) a substantial portion of the research conducted within the reserve fails to meet NERR System guidelines. In making any decision to withdraw designation, NOAA will take into consideration factors set forth in 15 C.F.R. § 921.40.

D. If any clause, sentence, or other portion of this agreement shall become illegal, null, or void for any reason, the remaining portions of this MOU shall remain in full force and effect.

E. No waiver of right by either party of any provision of this agreement shall be binding unless expressly confirmed in writing by the party giving the waiver.

IN WITNESS THEREOF, the parties have caused this agreement to be executed.

<Federal Signatures>

<State Signatures>

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APPENDICES

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Louisiana National Estuarine Research Reserve (LaNERR)
Site Selection & Nomination Report

November 2022

APPENDIX 1:

Letters of Importance

Office of the Governor
State of Louisiana

JOHN BEL EDWARDS
GOVERNOR

P.O. Box 94004
BATON ROUGE, LOUISIANA 70804-9004
(225) 342-7015
GOV.LA.GOV

July 23, 2019

RDML Timothy Gallaudet, Ph.D, USN Ret.
Assistant Secretary of Commerce for Oceans and Atmosphere
and Acting Under Secretary of Commerce for Oceans and Atmosphere
1401 Constitution Ave. NW, Room 5128
Washington, D.C. 20230

RE: National Estuarine Research Reserve (NERRS) in the Mississippi River Delta

Dear Assistant Secretary Gallaudet:

The State of Louisiana is writing to express its interest in participating in the National Estuarine Research Reserve System (NERRS) as administered by your agency under the Coastal Zone Management Act. The Mississippi River Delta ecosystem is not only a vibrant part of our state's natural landscape but also underpins important economic and cultural traditions as well. Since before the oil spill, Louisiana has made tremendous investments in the restoration and protection of our coast as well as scientific investigations to support that work. These activities will accelerate in size and scope as additional, substantial *Deepwater Horizon* funds are brought to this effort over the next several years. For these reasons, Louisiana would like to nominate a site in the Delta biogeographic region for inclusion in the NERRS. Together, I hope we can create a unique estuarine research reserve that will benefit state and national research and management interests.

Alongside our request to participate in NERRS, Louisiana would also like to formally request financial assistance in order to begin the site selection process in the delta biogeographic region. To begin this process, I designate Louisiana Sea Grant as the lead agency under this program, with the Coastal Protection and Restoration Authority (CPRA) providing pass through funds and general oversight during the site selection process.

Please direct future correspondence on this program to Dr. Robert Twilley at Louisiana Sea Grant and Bren Haase at CPRA.

Sincerely,

John Bel Edwards
Governor

Cc: Dr. Robert Twilley
Chip Kline
Bren Haase

13-068066

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE
The Under Secretary of Commerce
for Oceans and Atmosphere
Washington, D.C. 20230

NOV 20 2019

The Honorable John Bel Edwards
Governor
State of Louisiana
Office of the Governor
P.O. Box 94004
Baton Rouge, LA 70804

Dear Governor Edwards:

Thank you for your letter regarding the State of Louisiana's interest in establishing a National Estuarine Research Reserve System.

Per your letter, the state's unique natural coastal ecosystem – as well as important economic and cultural traditions – provides a strong basis to consider designating a reserve in the Mississippi Delta region. Furthermore, this designation would be consistent with the programmatic goal to include at least one site from each biogeographic region in the reserve system.

NOAA's National Ocean Service manages the site designation process, and the program lead is Erica Seiden. She can be reached at (240) 533-0781 or Erica.Seiden@noaa.gov. Ms. Seiden has been in contact with Dr. Robert Twilley from Louisiana State University and will coordinate next steps with the University and the Coastal Protection and Restoration Authority, specifically as it relates to applying for financial assistance.

We look forward to providing both technical assistance and broad capabilities for the site selection process. If you have any further questions, please contact Dr. Jeff Payne, Director of the Office for Coastal Management, at (240) 533-0906 or Jeff.Payne@noaa.gov.

Sincerely,

Neil A. Jacobs, Ph.D.
Assistant Secretary of Commerce for
Environmental Observation and Prediction
Performing the Duties of
Under Secretary of Commerce
for Oceans and Atmosphere

THE ADMINISTRATOR

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Louisiana National Estuarine Research Reserve (LaNERR)
Site Selection & Nomination Report

November 2022

APPENDIX 2:

Workflow, Milestones and Schedule

LaNERR Site Selection and Nomination

Workflow Overview and Schedule

November 22, 2021

		DESIGNATION LEADERSHIP TEAM	SITE DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE	CRITERIA SUBCOMMITTEE	SCREENING SUBCOMMITTEE	PROPOSAL TEAMS
FEB 2021	Early					
	Mid	Evaluate 6 Estuarine Zones				
	Late	Develop 1st draft of Site Criteria	**SDC Mtg 3:** Overview of Site Selection process; DLT's recommendations on Estuarine Zones based on preliminary screening criteria			
MAR 2021	Early	Develop preliminary (example) candidate sites	SDC voted on 6 Estuarine Zones			
	Mid					
	Late	• Establish subcommittees • Provide 1st draft of Site Criteria to Criteria Subcommittee	**SDC Mtg 4:** Review results of Estuarine Zone voting, example core/buffer areas, first draft Site Criteria, and guidance for developing Phase I Candidate Site Proposals			
APR 2021	Early			Working session #1		
	Mid					DLT check-in w/ Proposal Teams
	Late	Develop Phase II Candidate Site Proposal template & supporting maps and data		Working session #2		
MAY 2021	Early			• Working session #3 • Provide 2nd draft of Site Criteria to DLT		Submit Phase I Candidate Site Proposals for DLT review
	Mid		**SDC Mtg 5:** Presentations on Phase I Candidate Site Proposals, guidance for Phase II proposals, review 2nd draft of Site Criteria			
	Late			• Working Session #4 • Provide 3rd draft of Site Criteria		
JUN 2021	Early	Submit 3rd draft of Site Criteria to NOAA			Meeting #1: Orientation to subcommittee	DLT check in w/ Proposal Teams
	Mid					
	Late					

		DESIGNATION LEADERSHIP TEAM	SITE DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE	CRITERIA SUBCOMMITTEE	SCREENING SUBCOMMITTEE	PROPOSAL TEAMS
JUL 2021	Early	Receive NOAA comments on Site Criteria				• DLT check in w/ Proposal Teams (Town Hall planning) Submit Phase II Candidate Site Proposals
	Mid		**SDC Mtg 6:** Presentation of Phase II Candidate Site Proposals, NOAA feedback on Site Criteria, Town Hall prep		Check-in to discuss proposal review process	
	Late	Submit final draft of Site Criteria to NOAA for review			Review and comment on Phase II Candidate Sites Proposals	
AUG 2021	Early	Receive NOAA approval of Site Criteria				DLT check-in w/ Proposal Teams (Screening Subcommittee feedback)
	Mid					
	Late					
SEPT 2021	Early	***Many LaNERR activities, including Public Town Hall Meetings were postponed due to Hurricane Ida impacts/recovery***				DLT check-in w/ Proposal Teams (post-hurricane status)
	Mid					
	Late					
OCT 2021	Early					
	Mid					DLT check-in w/ Proposal Teams (revised schedule)
	Late					
NOV 2021	Early	Schedule Public Town Hall Meetings (3 / Estuarine Zone)				
	Mid	Schedule Executive Committee meeting (mid-Dec)				
	Late	Provide Town Hall guidance to Proposal Teams	**SDC Mtg 7:** Revised schedule & mock Town Hall presentations			
DEC 2021	Early					
	Mid	• Meet w/ Executive Committee • Advertise Town Halls				
	Late					
JAN 2022	Early	Advertise Town Halls				DLT check-in w/ Proposal Teams (Prep: Town Halls)
	Mid	• Present at CPRA Board Meeting • Advertise Town Halls				
	Late					

		DESIGNATION LEADERSHIP TEAM	SITE DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE	CRITERIA SUBCOMMITTEE	SCREENING SUBCOMMITTEE	PROPOSAL TEAMS
Feb 2022	Early	Assist w/ Public Town Hall meetings (3 / Estuarine Zone)				Host Public Town Hall Meetings
	Mid					DLT check-in w/ Proposal Teams (Feedback: Town Halls)
	Late		**SDC Mtg 8:** Town Halls Debrief			
Mar 2022	Early					Submit *(draft)* Final Candidate Site Proposals
	Mid				Conduct detailed site screening and scoring	
	Late				Submit outcomes from screening and scoring the *(draft)* Final Candidate Site Proposals	
Apr 2022	Early					
	Mid		**SDC Mtg 9:** Outcomes of screening & scoring			
	Late	Provide Final Candidate Site Proposals, scores, and rationale to Executive Committee				Submit Final Candidate Site Proposals
May 2022	Early					
	Mid					
	Late	Executive Committee nominates one site to the Governor				
June 2022	Early					
	Mid					
	Late	Governor submits nomination package to NOAA	DLT notify SDC of nomination decision			

Louisiana National Estuarine Research Reserve (LaNERR)
Site Selection & Nomination Report

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APPENDIX 3:

Preliminary Site Screening

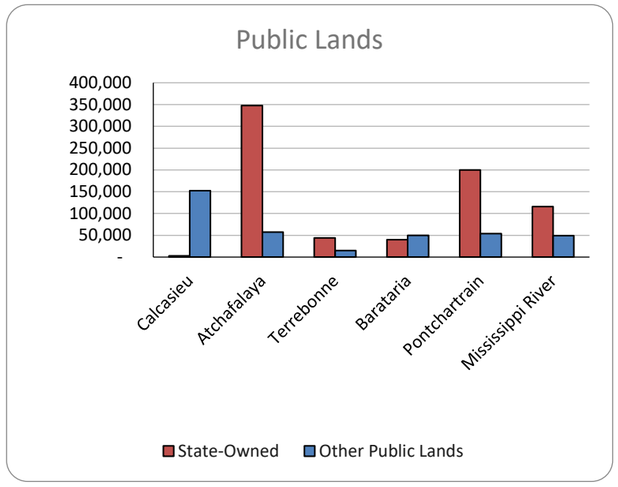
Note: Data for vegetation distribution and change is based 50-year projections (medium environmental scenario) from the 2017 Coastal Master Plan[1]

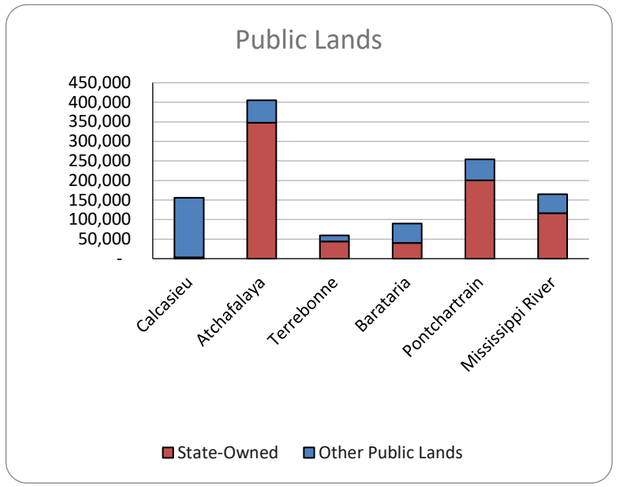
[1] Coastal Protection and Restoration Authority of Louisiana. 2017. Louisiana's Comprehensive Master Plan for a Sustainable Coast. Coastal Protection and Restoration Authority of Louisiana. Baton Rouge, LA

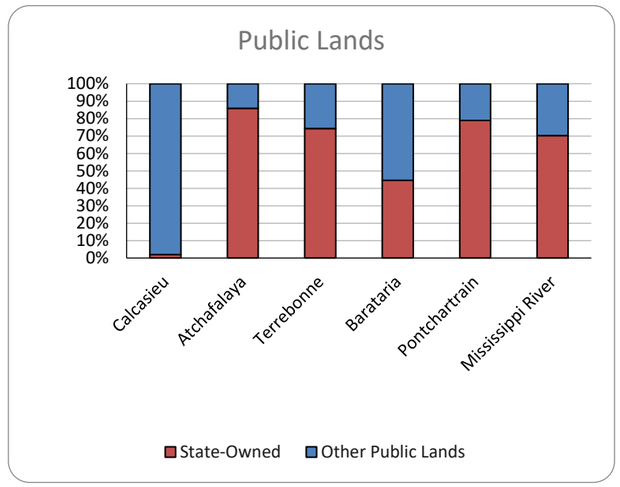
Land-Water Ownership by LaNERR Zone (acres)

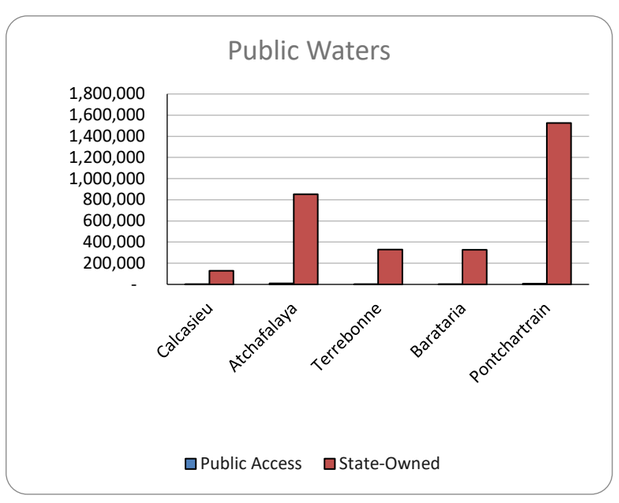
	State Lands		Federal Lands	State Waterbottoms	
Estuarine Zone	Partial Surface Interest	State-Owned	-	Public Access	State-Owned
Atchafalaya	14,605	347,945	42,622	9,682	852,191
Barataria	35,835	40,185	14,078	2,329	328,286
Calcasieu	-	3,046	152,585	3,222	129,465
Mississippi River	-	116,118	49,048	-	540,010
Pontchartrain	-	200,207	53,640	7,056	1,525,283
Terrebonne	15,260	44,203	-	1,307	330,363

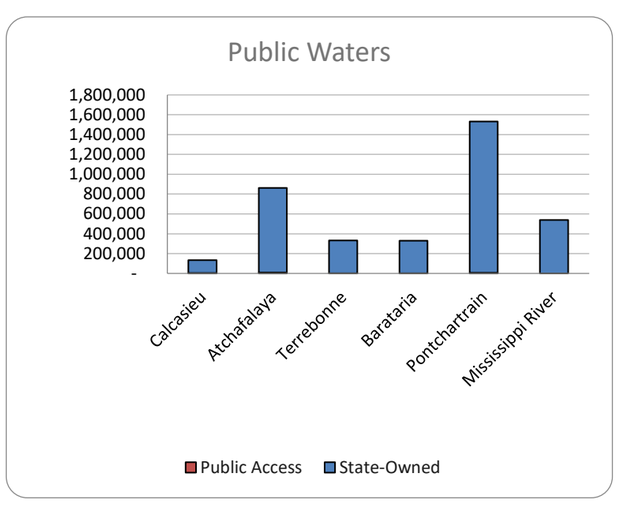
	State Lands		Total Public Lands	State Waterbottoms	
Estuarine Zone	Other Public Lands	State-Owned	-	Public Access	State-Owned
Calcasieu	152,585	3,046	155,631	3,222	129,465
Atchafalaya	57,227	347,945	405,172	9,682	852,191
Terrebonne	15,260	44,203	59,463	1,307	330,363
Barataria	49,913	40,185	90,098	2,329	328,286
Pontchartrain	53,640	200,207	253,847	7,056	1,525,283
Mississippi River	49,048	116,118	165,166	-	540,010

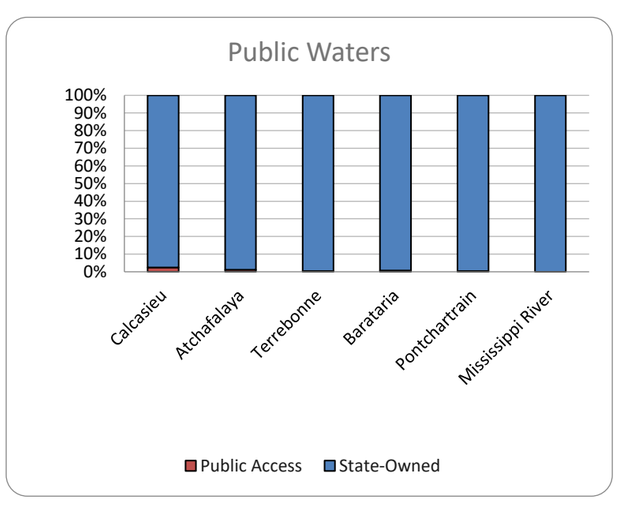








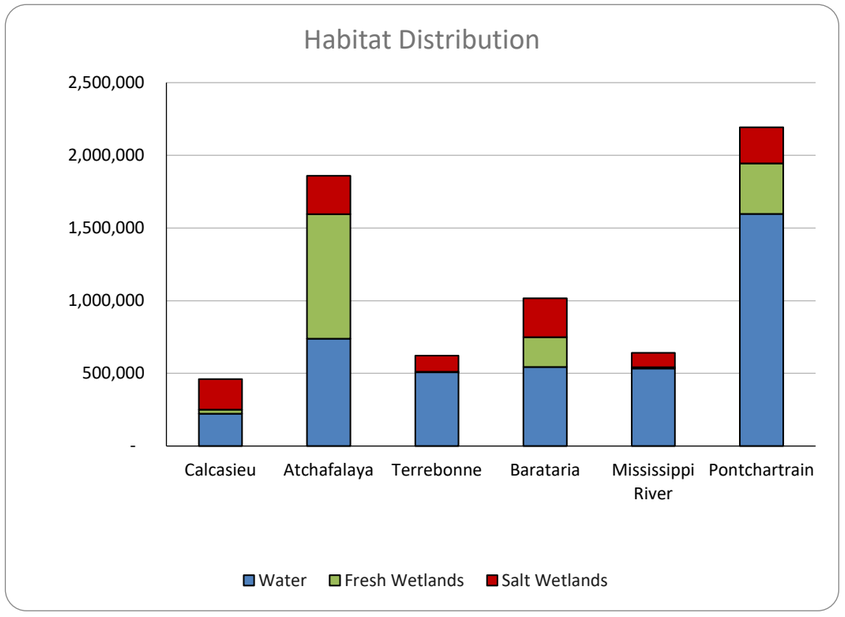


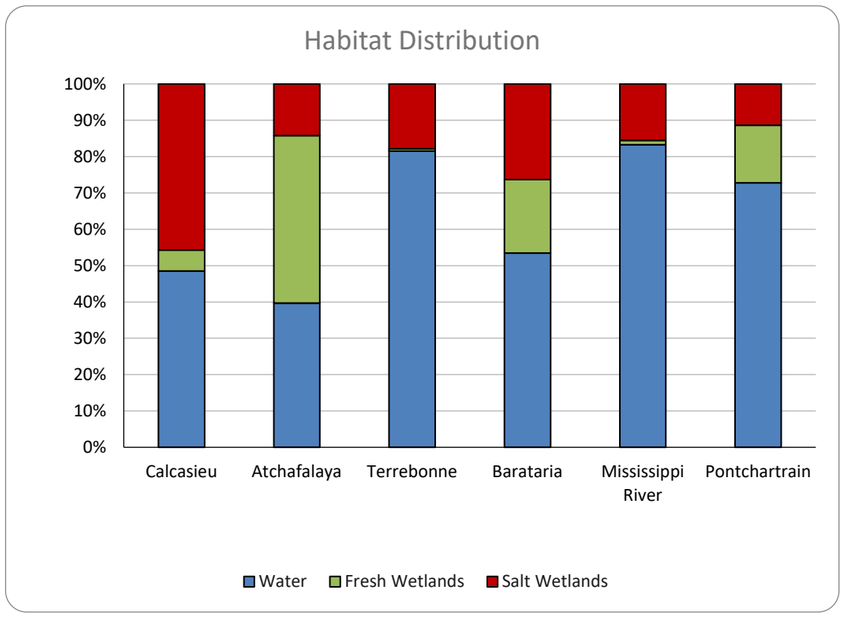


Data Used For Pre-Screening

Vegetation Distribution by Estuarine Zone - 2017 Coastal Master Plan Initial Conditions (acres)

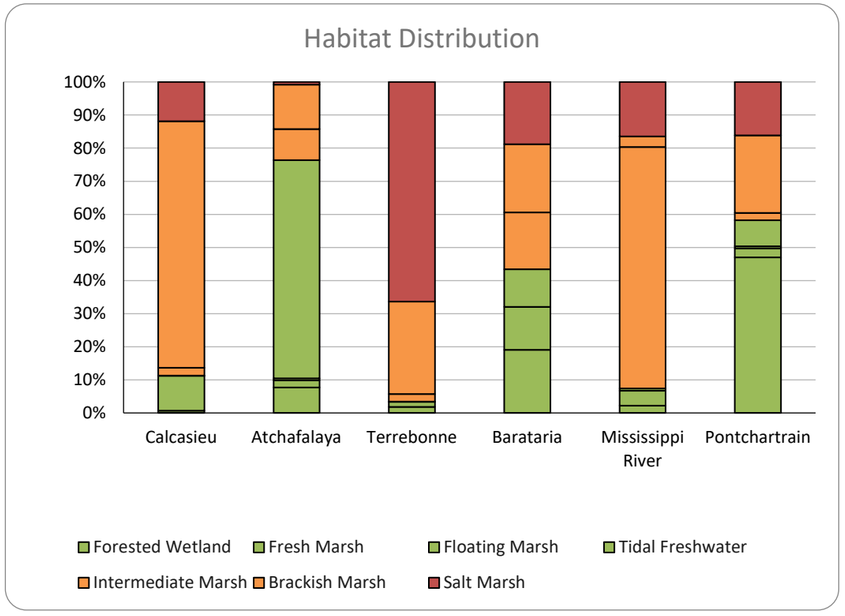
Estuarine Zone	Water	Wetlands	Fresh Wetlands	Salt Wetlands
Calcasieu	223,283	237,001	26,687	210,314
Atchafalaya	738,492	1,120,997	856,128	264,869
Terrebonne	507,175	115,007	3,954	111,053
Barataria	543,465	473,285	205,575	267,710
Mississippi River	533,979	107,521	7,960	99,561
Pontchartrain	1,596,245	597,075	347,601	249,474

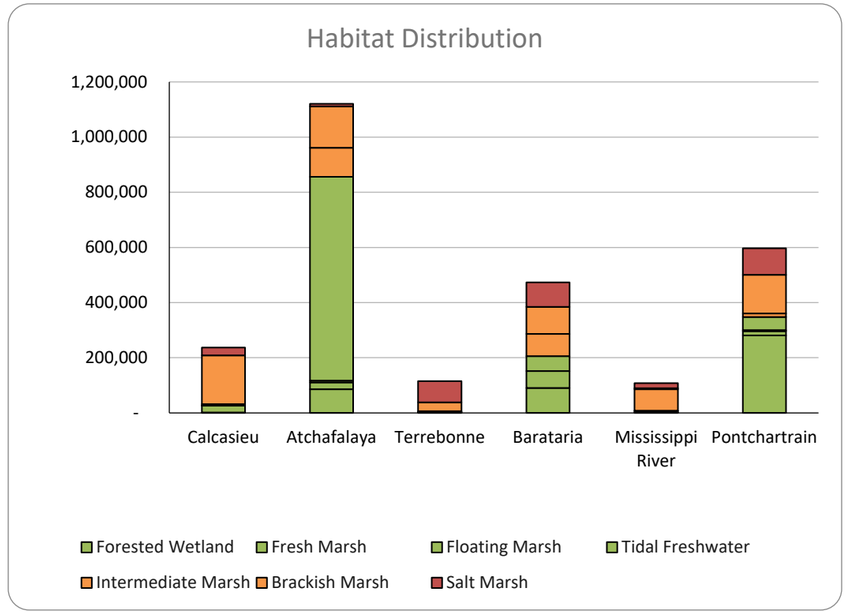




Data Used For Pre-Screening

Estuarine Zone	Forested Wetland	Fresh Marsh	Floating Marsh	Tidal Freshwater	Intermediate Marsh	Brackish Marsh	Salt Marsh
Calcasieu	1,541	25,033	113	-	5,609	176,512	28,192
Atchafalaya	85,961	24,344	7,064	738,759	104,978	150,541	9,350
Terrebonne	2,095	1,762	97	-	2,591	32,122	76,340
Barataria	90,312	61,441	53,823	-	81,101	97,406	89,203
Mississippi River	2,356	4,888	716	-	78,453	3,415	17,693
Pontchartrain	280,608	16,224	3,670	47,100	13,177	139,642	96,655





Data Used For Pre-Screening

Vegetation Distribution - 2017 Coastal Master Plan Initial Conditions (acres)

Calcasieu

Vegetation Type	2017
Forested Wetland	1,541
Fresh Marsh	25,033
Floating Marsh	113
Tidal Freshwater	
Intermediate Marsh	5,609
Brackish Marsh	176,512
Salt Marsh	28,192
Water	223,283
Unclassified	15,549
Bare Ground	3,598
Total	475,832

Water	223,283
Wetlands	237,001
Fresh Wetlands	26,687
Salt Wetlands	210,314

Wetlands:Water Ratio	1.061
Salt:Fresh	7.881

Atchafalaya

Vegetation Type	2017
Forested Wetland	85,961
Fresh Marsh	24,344
Floating Marsh	7,064
Tidal Freshwater	738,759
Intermediate Marsh	104,978
Brackish Marsh	150,541
Salt Marsh	9,350
Water	738,492
Unclassified	28,024
Bare Ground	6,559
Total	1,887,514

Water	738,492
Wetlands	1,120,997
Fresh Wetlands	856,128
Salt Wetlands	264,869

Wetlands:Water Ratio	1.518
Salt:Fresh	0.309

Terrebonne

Vegetation Type	2017
Forested Wetland	2,095
Fresh Marsh	1,762
Floating Marsh	97
Tidal Freshwater	
Intermediate Marsh	2,591
Brackish Marsh	32,122
Salt Marsh	76,340
Water	507,175
Unclassified	
Bare Ground	622
Total	622,182

Water	507,175
Wetlands	115,007
Fresh Wetlands	3,954
Salt Wetlands	111,053

Wetlands:Water Ratio	0.227
Salt:Fresh	28.087

Barataria

Vegetation Type	2017
Forested Wetland	90,312
Fresh Marsh	61,441
Floating Marsh	53,823
Tidal Freshwater	
Intermediate Marsh	81,101
Brackish Marsh	97,406
Salt Marsh	89,203
Water	543,465
Unclassified	4,475
Bare Ground	12,197
Total	1,021,226

Water	543,465
Wetlands	473,285
Fresh Wetlands	205,575
Salt Wetlands	267,710

Wetlands:Water Ratio	0.871
Salt:Fresh	1.302

Mississippi River

Vegetation Type	2017
Forested Wetland	2,356
Fresh Marsh	4,888
Floating Marsh	716
Tidal Freshwater	
Intermediate Marsh	78,453
Brackish Marsh	3,415
Salt Marsh	17,693
Water	533,979
Unclassified	81,012
Bare Ground	2,476
Total	722,513

Water	533,979
Wetlands	107,521
Fresh Wetlands	7,960
Salt Wetlands	99,561

Wetlands:Water Ratio	0.201
Salt:Fresh	12.507

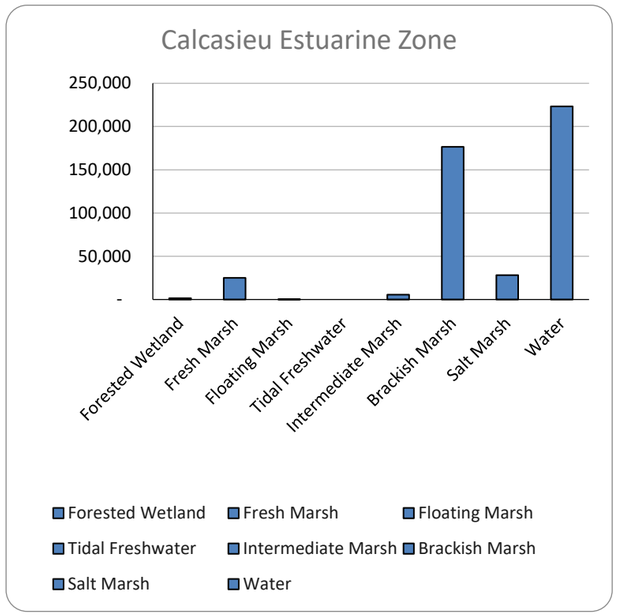
Pontchartrain

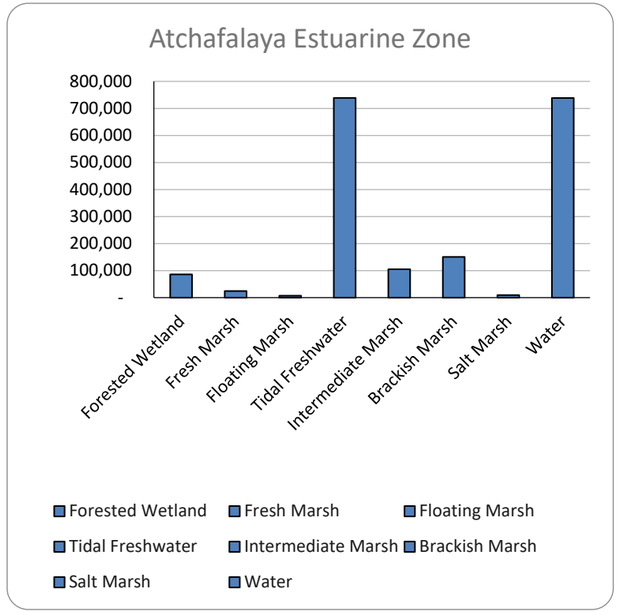
Vegetation Type	2017
Forested Wetland	280,608
Fresh Marsh	16,224
Floating Marsh	3,670
Tidal Freshwater	47,100
Intermediate Marsh	13,177
Brackish Marsh	139,642
Salt Marsh	96,655
Water	1,596,245
Unclassified	54,694
Bare Ground	8,797
Total	2,248,014

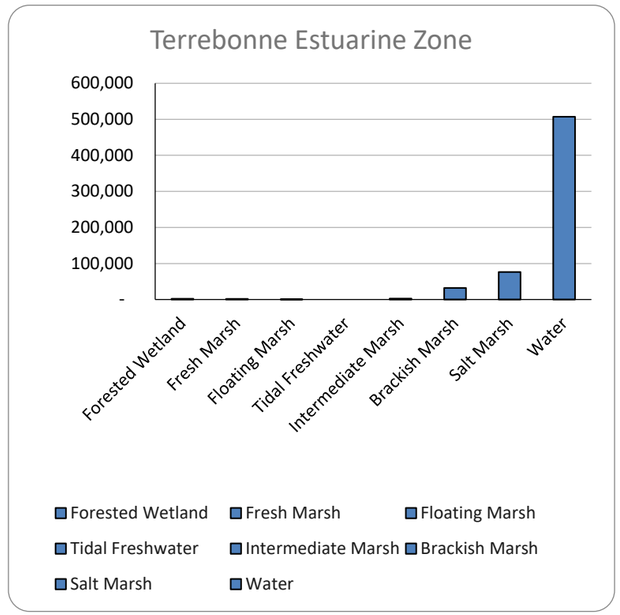
Water	1,596,245
Wetlands	597,075
Fresh Wetlands	347,601
Salt Wetlands	249,474

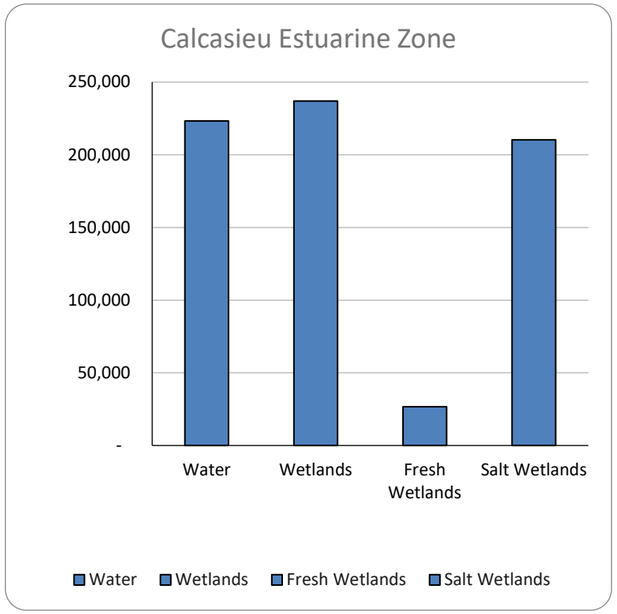
Wetlands:Water Ration	0.374
Salt:Fresh	0.718

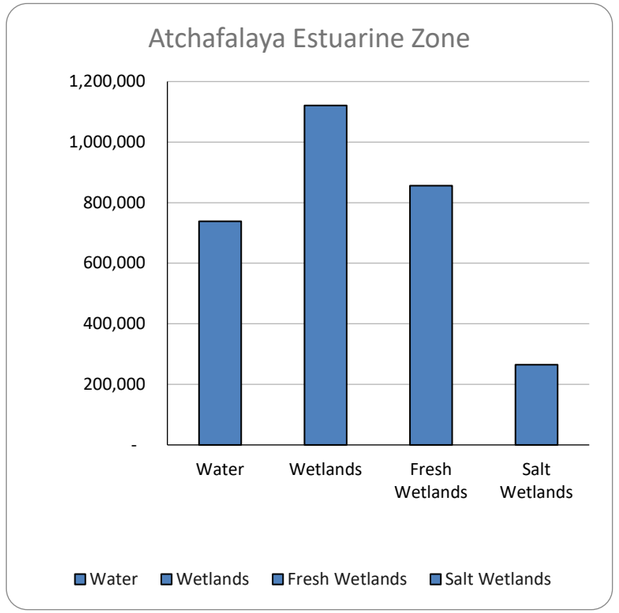
Data Used For Pre-Screening

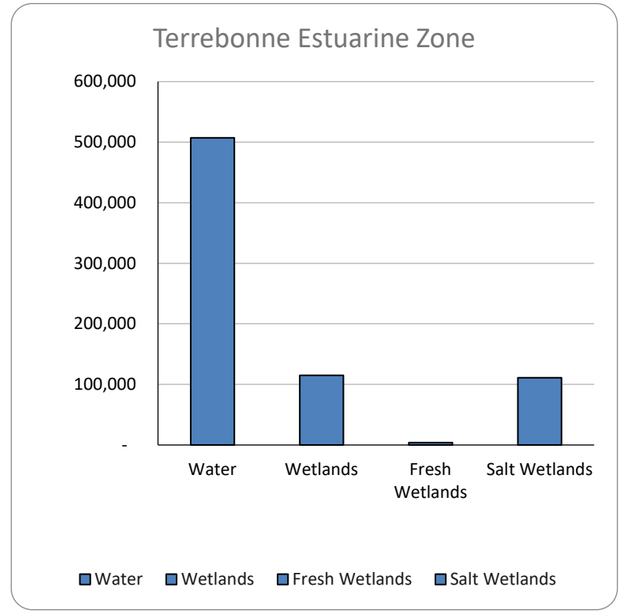












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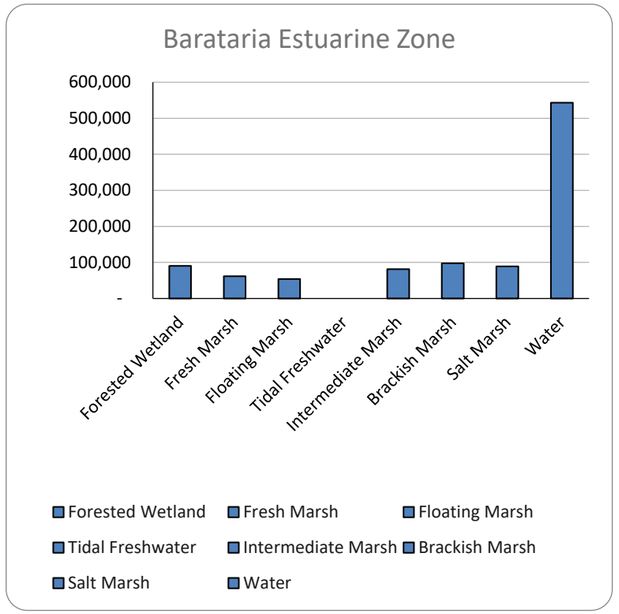
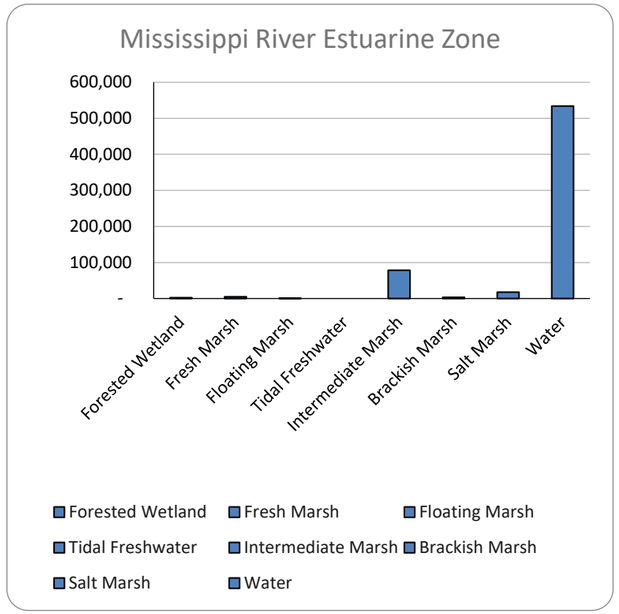
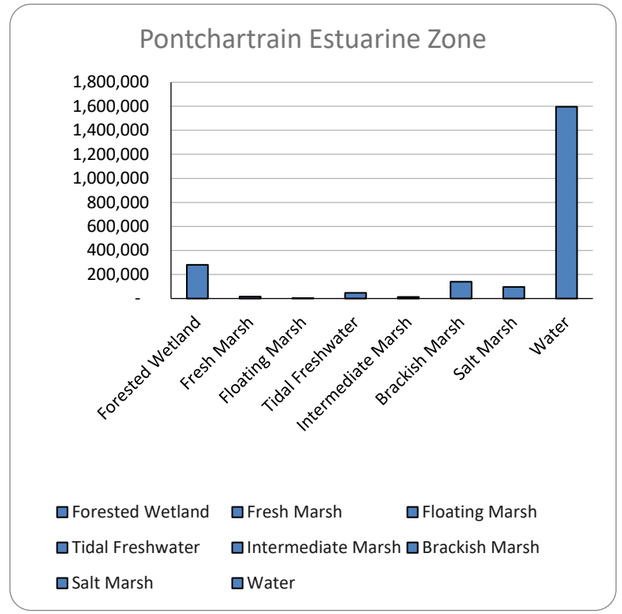
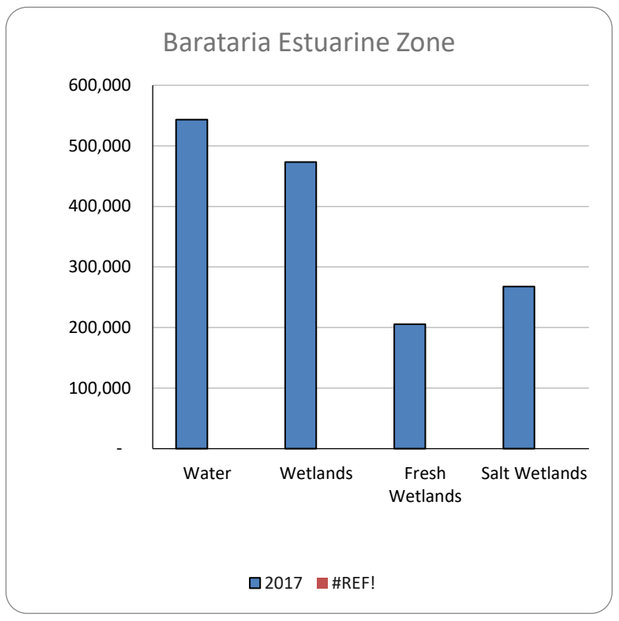
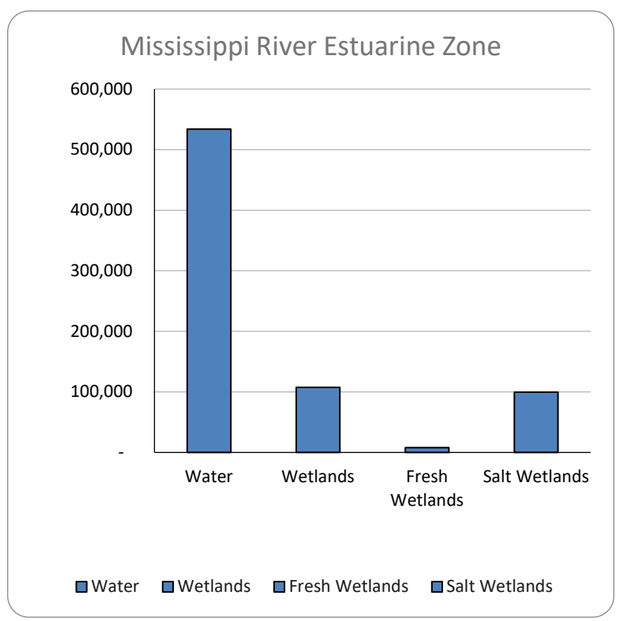
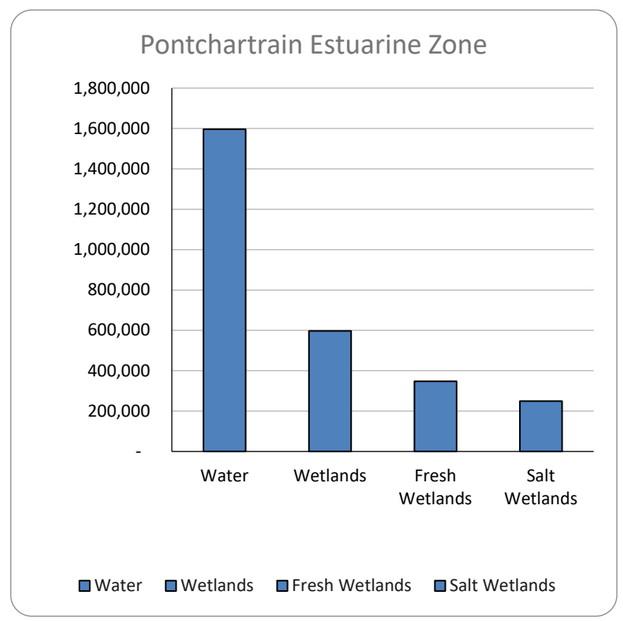










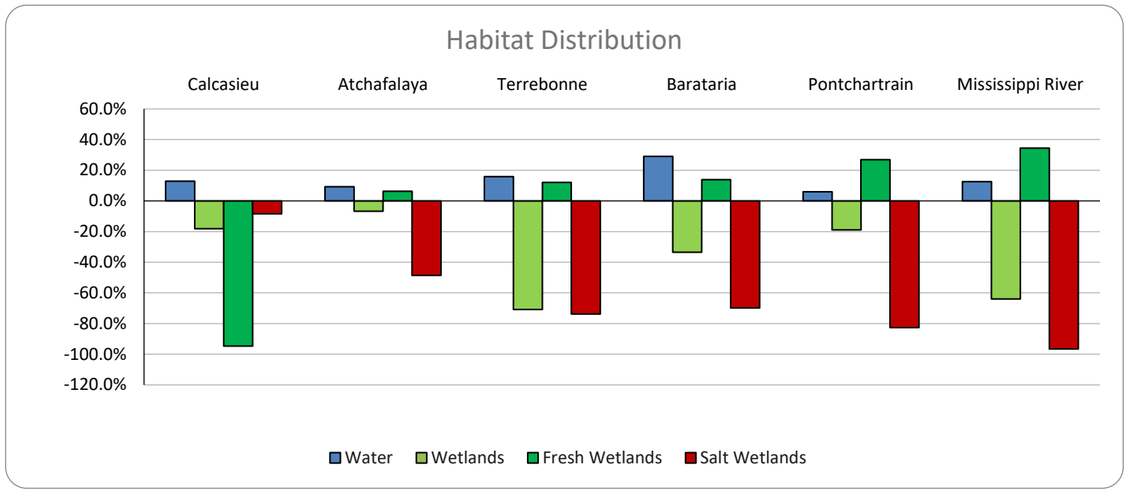


Data Used For Pre-Screening

Vegetation Change by Estuarine Zone (acres)
2017=CPRA 2017 Master Plan Initial Conditions
2067=CPRA 2017 Master Plan Projected Vegetation, Medium Scenario With Plan

Estuarine Zone	Water	Wetlands	Fresh Wetlands	Salt Wetlands
Calcasieu	28,752	-42,922	-25,264	-17,659
Atchafalaya	68,962	-75,267	53,363	-128,630
Terrebonne	80,123	-81,435	474	-81,909
Barataria	157,427	-158,369	28,529	-186,898
Pontchartrain	96,338	-112,861	93,270	-206,131
Mississippi River	67,486	-68,755	27,367	-96,122

Estuarine Zone	Water	Wetlands	Fresh Wetlands	Salt Wetlands
Calcasieu	12.9%	-18.1%	-94.7%	-8.4%
Atchafalaya	9.3%	-6.7%	6.2%	-48.6%
Terrebonne	15.8%	-70.8%	12.0%	-73.8%
Barataria	29.0%	-33.5%	13.9%	-69.8%
Pontchartrain	6.0%	-18.9%	26.8%	-82.6%
Mississippi River	12.6%	-63.9%	34.4%	-96.5%



Data Used For Pre-Screening

Calcasieu

Vegetation Type	2017	2067	Change
Forested Wetland	1,541	2	-1540
Fresh Marsh	25,033	1,303	-23730
Floating Marsh	113	119	6
Tidal Freshwater	-	-	0
Intermediate Marsh	5,609	7	-5601
Brackish Marsh	176,512	69,101	-107412
Salt Marsh	28,192	123,547	95355
Water	223,283	252,035	28752
Unclassified	15,549	15,522	-27
Bare Ground	3,598	17,795	14197
Total	475,832	461,636	-14197

	2017	2067	Change
Water	223,283	252,035	28,752
Wetlands	237,001	194,079	-42,922
Fresh Wetlands	26,687	1,424	-25,264
Salt Wetlands	210,314	192,655	-17,659

	2017	2067
Wetlands:Water Ratio	1.061	0.770
Salt:Fresh	7.881	135.334

	2017	2067	Change
Water	223,283	252,035	12.9%
Wetlands	237,001	194,079	-18.1%
Fresh Wetlands	26,687	1,424	-94.7%
Salt Wetlands	210,314	192,655	-8.4%

Atchafalaya

Vegetation Type	2017	2067	Change
Forested Wetland	85,961	46,793	-39168
Fresh Marsh	24,344	118,874	94530
Floating Marsh	7,064	5,065	-1999
Tidal Freshwater	738,759	738,759	0
Intermediate Marsh	104,978	22,181	-82797
Brackish Marsh	150,541	17,416	-133125
Salt Marsh	9,350	96,642	87292
Water	738,492	807,454	68962
Unclassified	28,024	27,915	-109
Bare Ground	6,559	12,989	6431
Total	1,887,514	1,881,099	-6415

	2017	2067	Change
Water	738,492	807,454	68,962
Wetlands	1,120,997	1,045,730	-75,267
Fresh Wetlands	856,128	909,491	53,363
Salt Wetlands	264,869	136,239	-128,630

	2017	2067
Wetlands:Water Ratio	1.518	1.295
Salt:Fresh	0.309	0.150

	2017	2067	Change
Water	738,492	807,454	9.3%
Wetlands	1,120,997	1,045,730	-6.7%
Fresh Wetlands	856,128	909,491	6.2%
Salt Wetlands	264,869	136,239	-48.6%

Terrebonne

Vegetation Type	2017	2067	Change
Forested Wetland	2,095	0	-2095
Fresh Marsh	1,762	4,377	2614
Floating Marsh	97	51	-46
Tidal Freshwater	-	-	0
Intermediate Marsh	2,591	-	-2591
Brackish Marsh	32,122	3,817	-28305
Salt Marsh	76,340	25,327	-51013
Water	507,175	587,298	80123
Unclassified	-	-	0
Bare Ground	622	1,935	1312
Total	622,182	620,870	-1312

	2017	2067	Change
Water	507,175	587,298	80,123
Wetlands	115,007	33,573	-81,435
Fresh Wetlands	3,954	4,428	474
Salt Wetlands	111,053	29,144	-81,909

	2017	2067
Wetlands:Water Ratio	0.227	0.057
Salt:Fresh	28.087	6.582

	2017	2067	Change
Water	507,175	587,298	15.8%
Wetlands	115,007	33,573	-70.8%
Fresh Wetlands	3,954	4,428	12.0%
Salt Wetlands	111,053	29,144	-73.8%

Data Used For Pre-Screening

Barataria

Vegetation Type	2017	2067	Change
Forested Wetland	90,312	3,394	-86917
Fresh Marsh	61,441	194,902	133461
Floating Marsh	53,823	35,808	-18015
Tidal Freshwater	-	-	0
Intermediate Marsh	81,101	25,294	-55808
Brackish Marsh	97,406	44,017	-53389
Salt Marsh	89,203	11,501	-77701
Water	543,465	700,893	157427
Unclassified	4,475	4,443	-32
Bare Ground	12,197	13,174	977
Total	1,021,226	1,020,252	-973

	2017	2067	Change
Water	543,465	700,893	157,427
Wetlands	473,285	314,916	-158,369
Fresh Wetlands	205,575	234,104	28,529
Salt Wetlands	267,710	80,812	-186,898

	2017	2067
Wetlands:Water Ratio	0.871	0.449
Salt:Fresh	1.302	0.345

	2017	2067	Change
Water	543,465	700,893	29.0%
Wetlands	473,285	314,916	-33.5%
Fresh Wetlands	205,575	234,104	13.9%
Salt Wetlands	267,710	80,812	-69.8%

Mississippi River

Vegetation Type	2017	2067	Change
Forested Wetland	2,356	0	-2356
Fresh Marsh	4,888	34,619	29731
Floating Marsh	716	708	-8
Tidal Freshwater	-	-	0
Intermediate Marsh	78,453	13	-78440
Brackish Marsh	3,415	1,944	-1472
Salt Marsh	17,693	1,482	-16210
Water	533,979	601,465	67486
Unclassified	81,012	80,965	-48
Bare Ground	2,476	3,775	1299
Total	722,513	721,196	-1317

	2017	2067	Change
Water	533,979	601,465	67,486
Wetlands	107,521	38,766	-68,755
Fresh Wetlands	7,960	35,327	27,367
Salt Wetlands	99,561	3,439	-96,122

	2017	2067
Wetlands:Water Ratio	0.201	0.064
Salt:Fresh	12.507	0.097

	2017	2067	Change
Water	533,979	601,465	12.6%
Wetlands	107,521	38,766	-63.9%
Fresh Wetlands	7,960	35,327	343.8%
Salt Wetlands	99,561	3,439	-96.5%

Pontchartrain

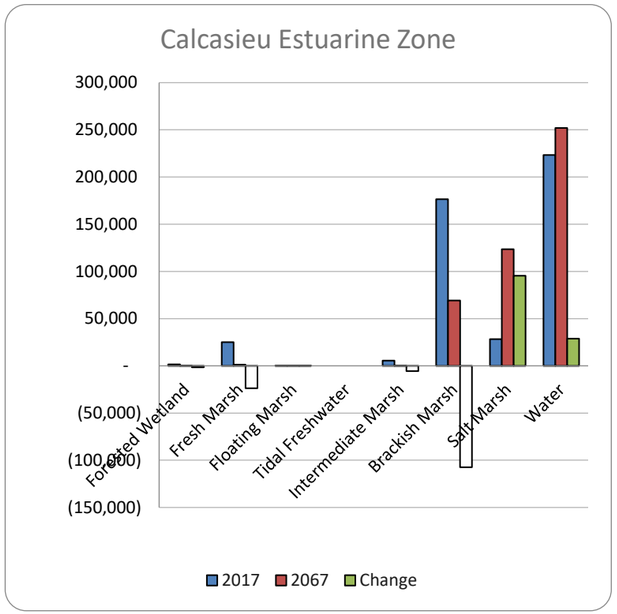
Vegetation Type	2017	2067	Change
Forested Wetland	280,608	72,428	-208180
Fresh Marsh	16,224	319,032	302808
Floating Marsh	3,670	2,311	-1359
Tidal Freshwater	47,100	47,100	0
Intermediate Marsh	13,177	819	-12358
Brackish Marsh	139,642	32,022	-107619
Salt Marsh	96,655	10,501	-86154
Water	1,596,245	1,692,583	96338
Unclassified	54,694	55,713	1019
Bare Ground	8,797	24,266	15468
Total	2,248,014	2,232,509	-15505

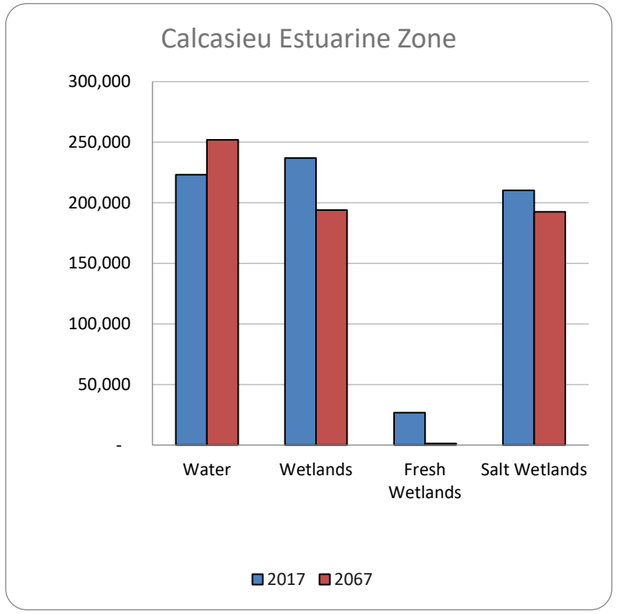
	2017	2067	Change
Water	1,596,245	1,692,583	96,338
Wetlands	597,075	484,214	-112,861
Fresh Wetlands	347,601	440,871	93,270
Salt Wetlands	249,474	43,343	-206,131

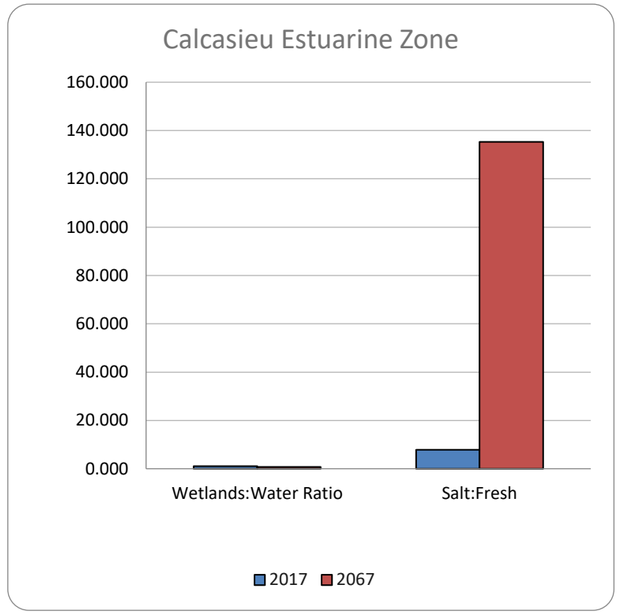
	2017	2067
Wetlands:Water Ratio	0.374	0.286
Salt:Fresh	0.718	0.098

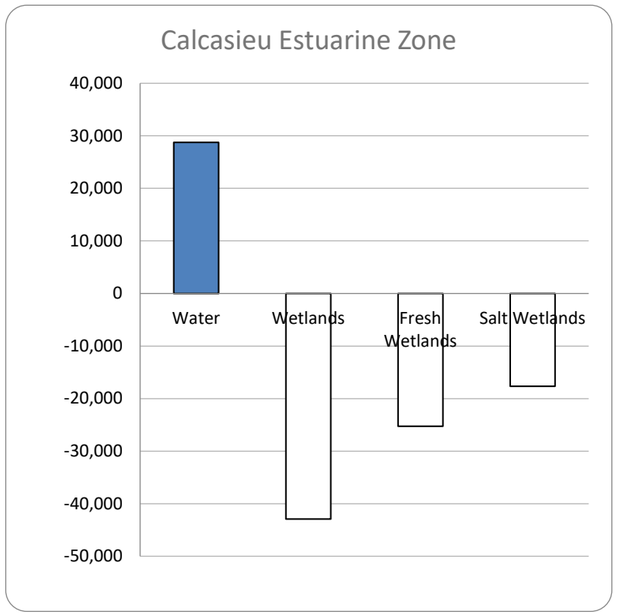
	2017	2067	Change
Water	1,596,245	1,692,583	6.0%
Wetlands	597,075	484,214	-18.9%
Fresh Wetlands	347,601	440,871	26.8%
Salt Wetlands	249,474	43,343	-82.6%

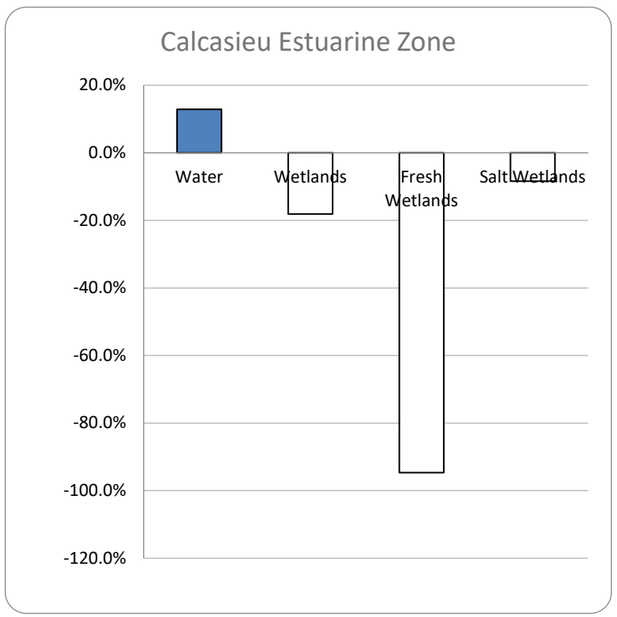
Data Used For Pre-Screening











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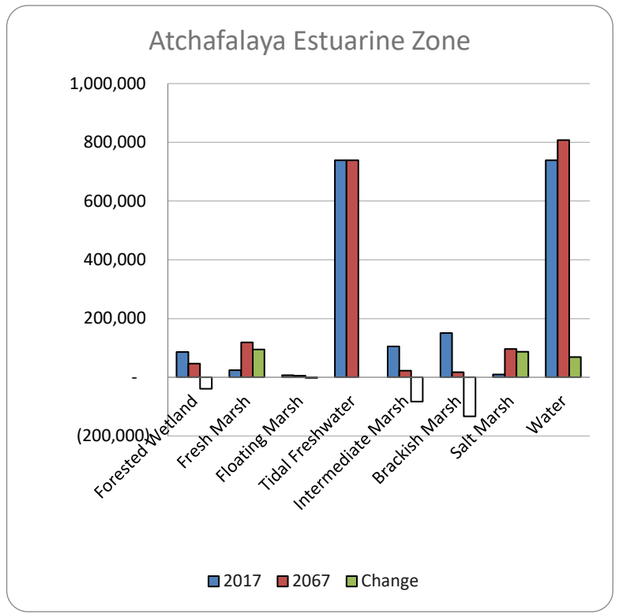

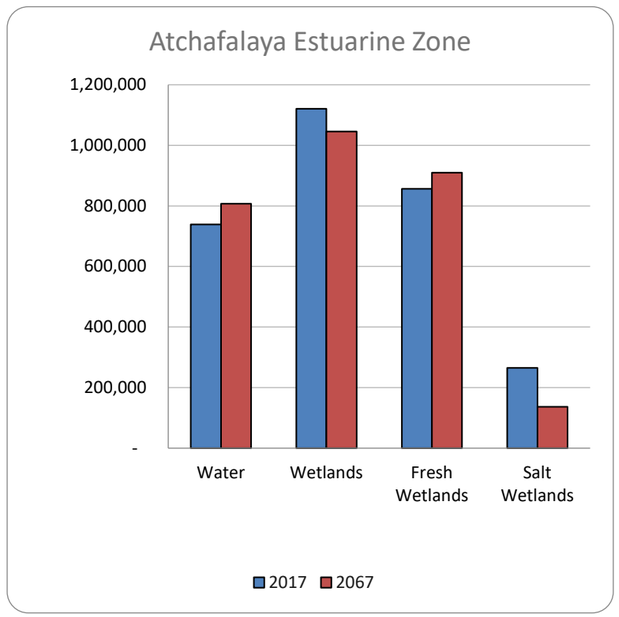

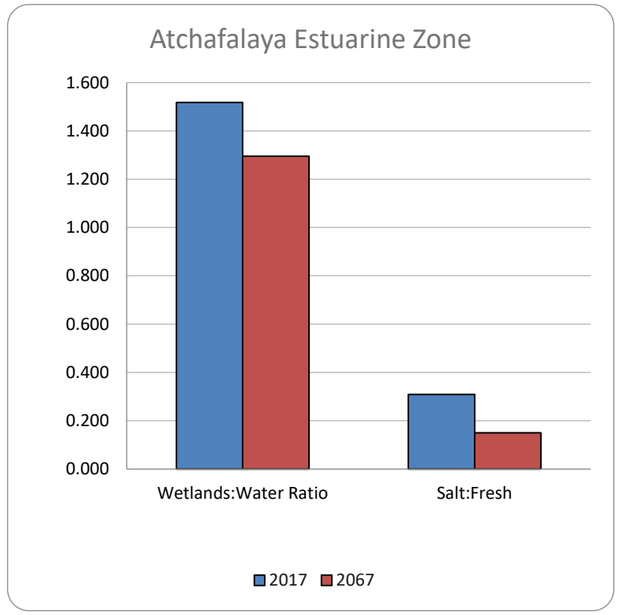

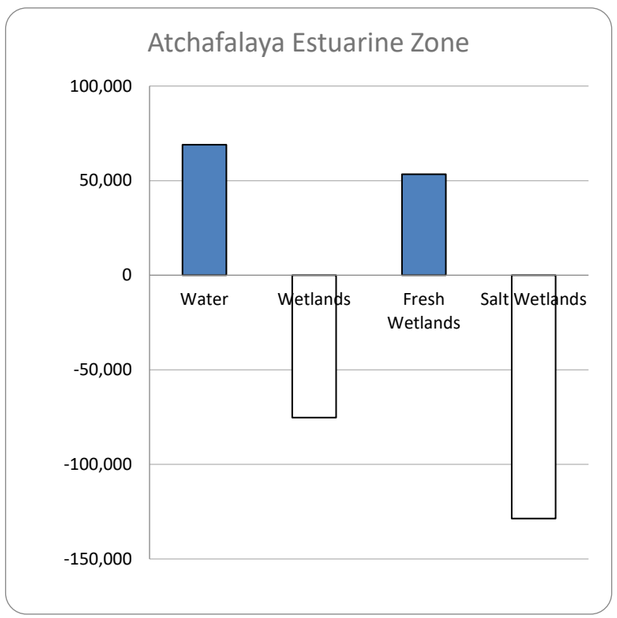

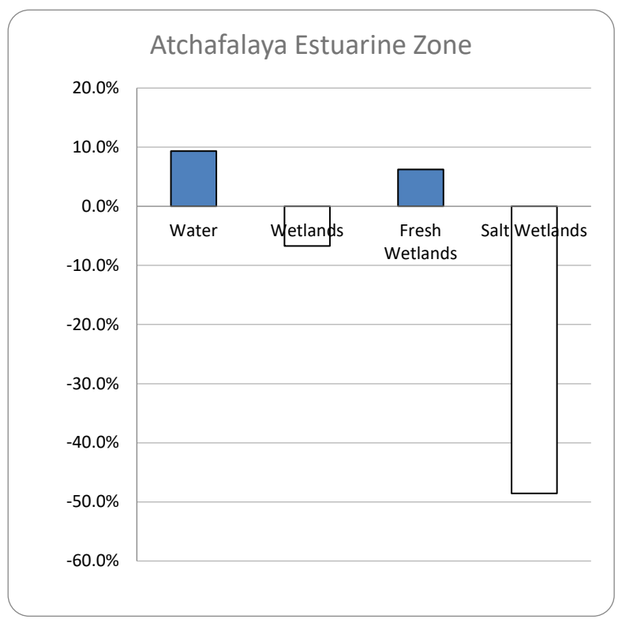

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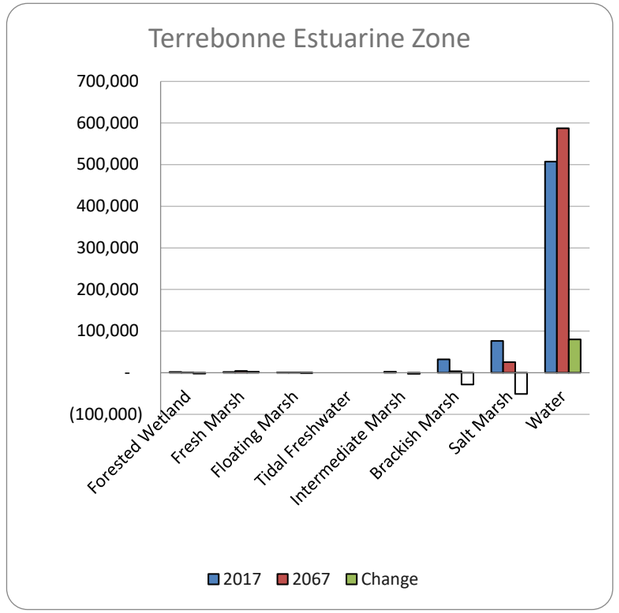

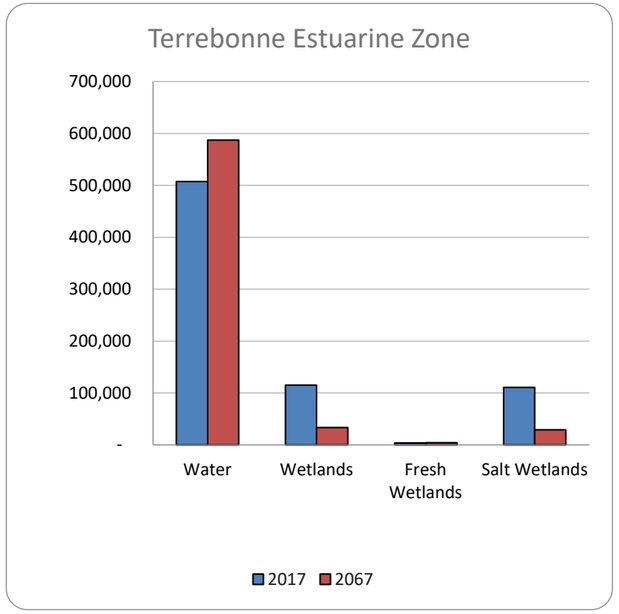

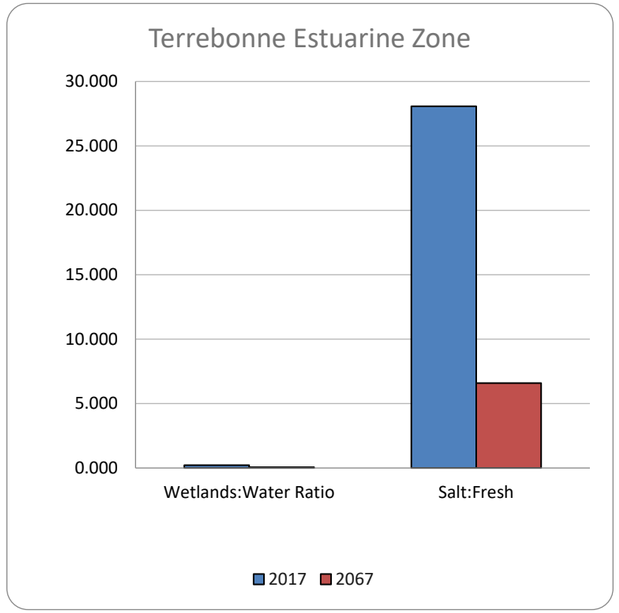

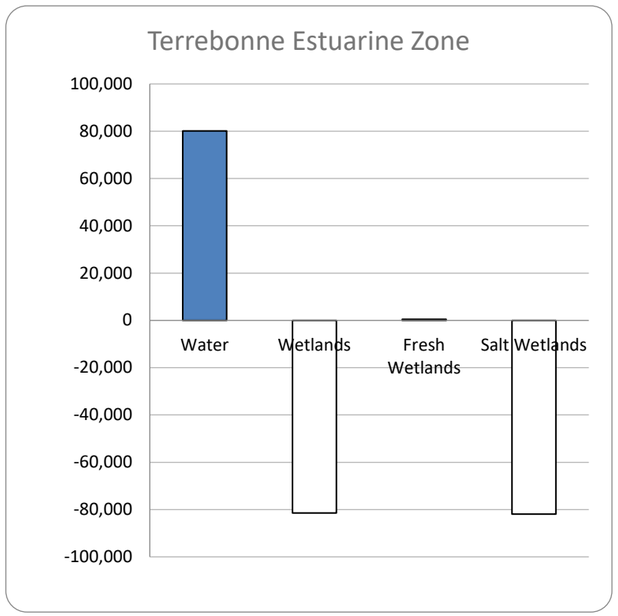

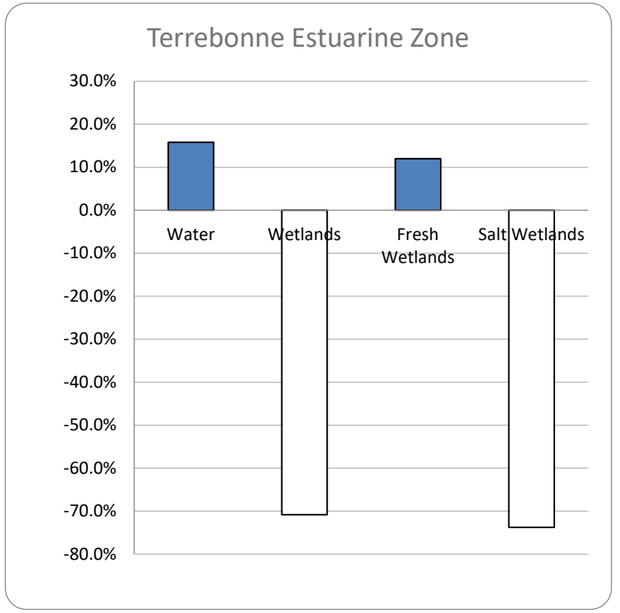

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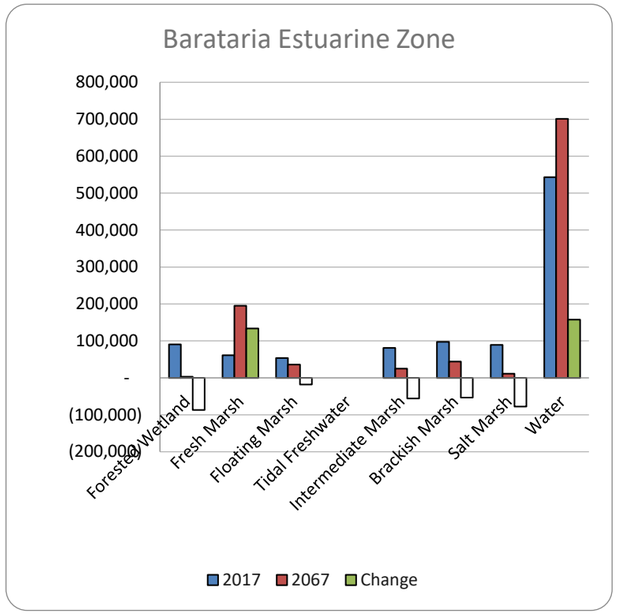

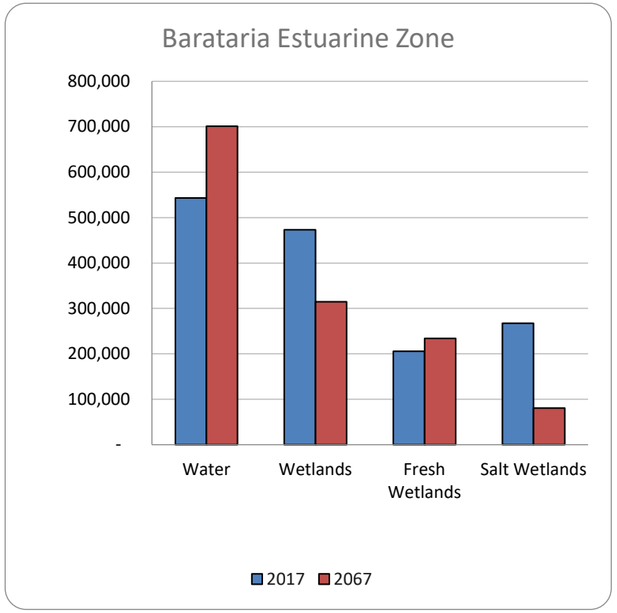

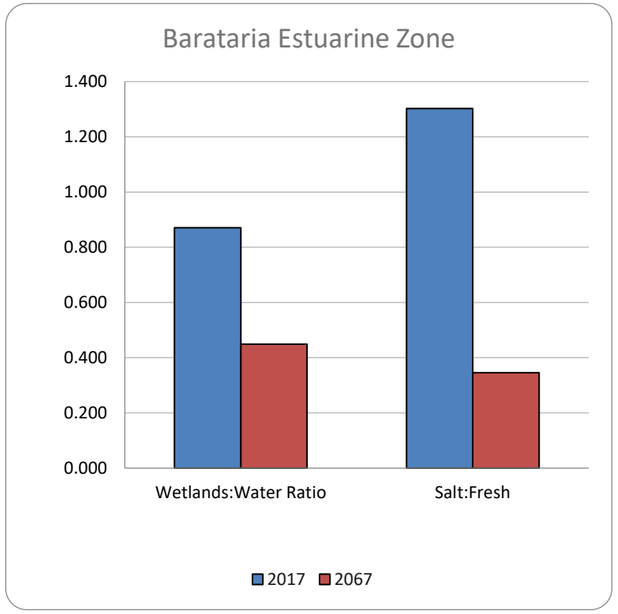

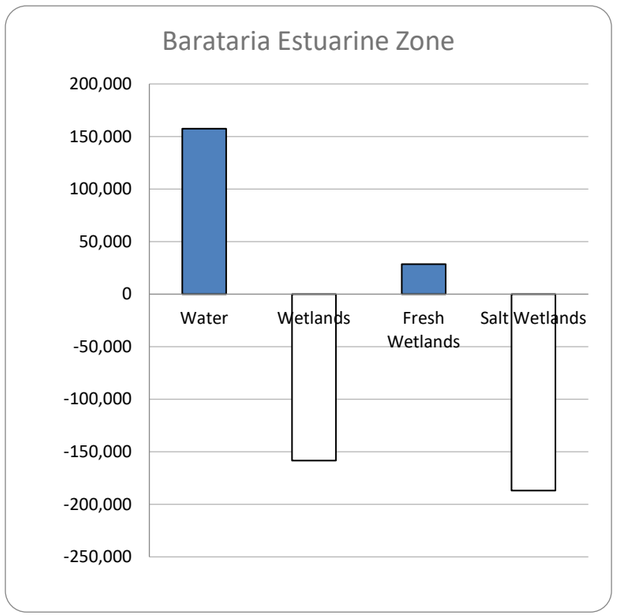

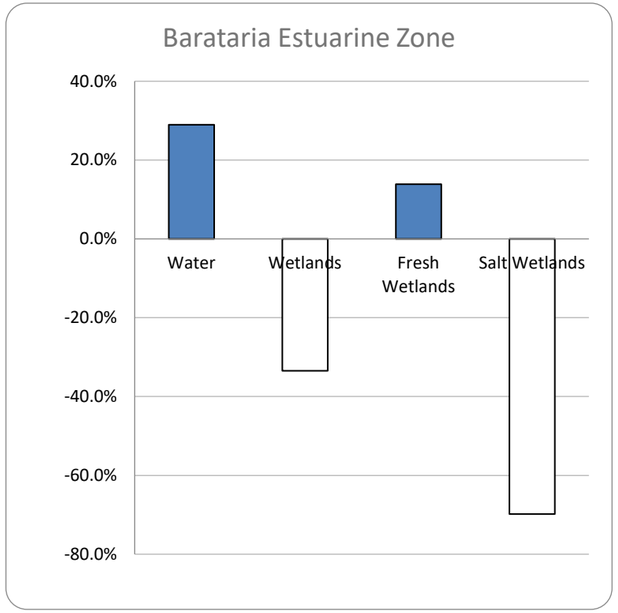

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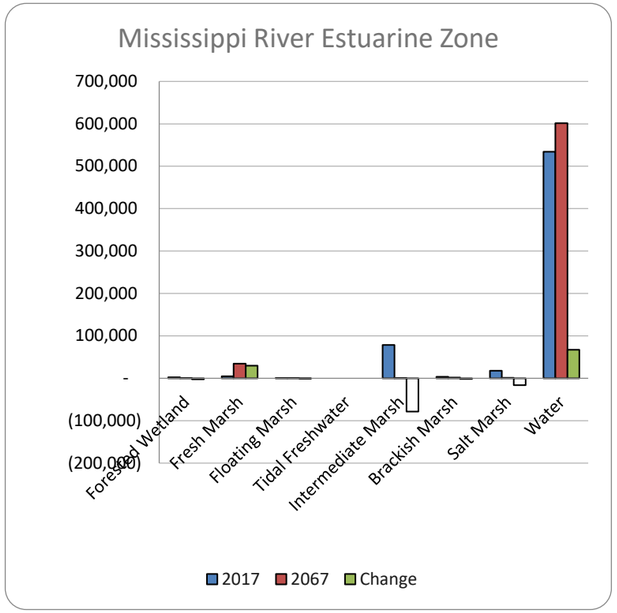

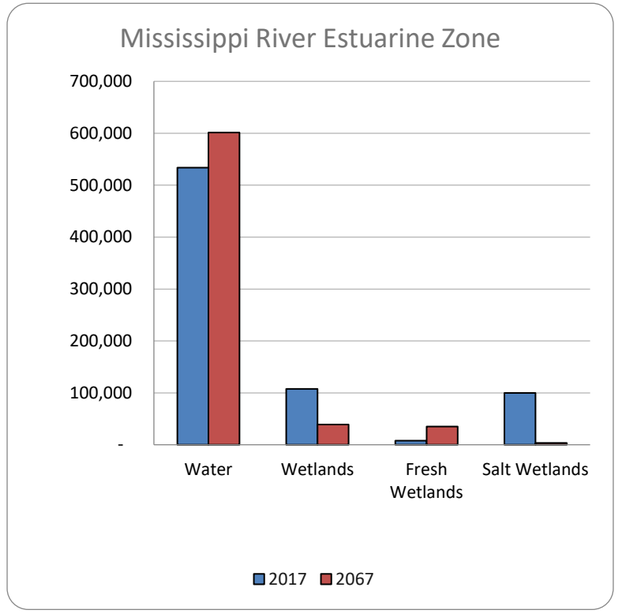

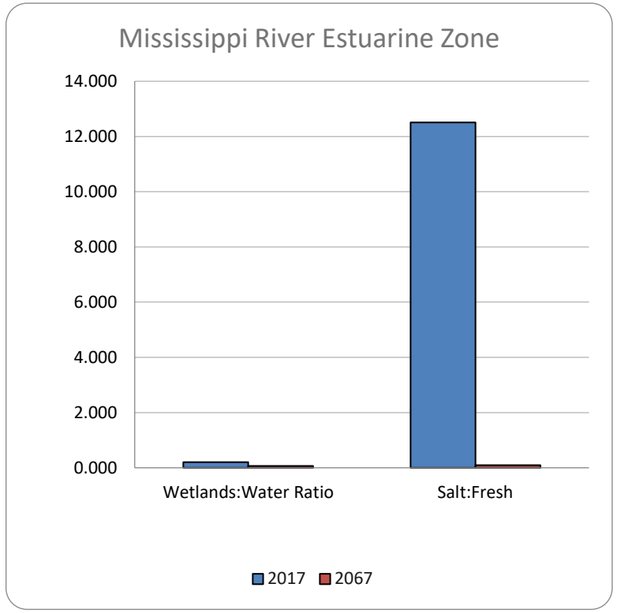

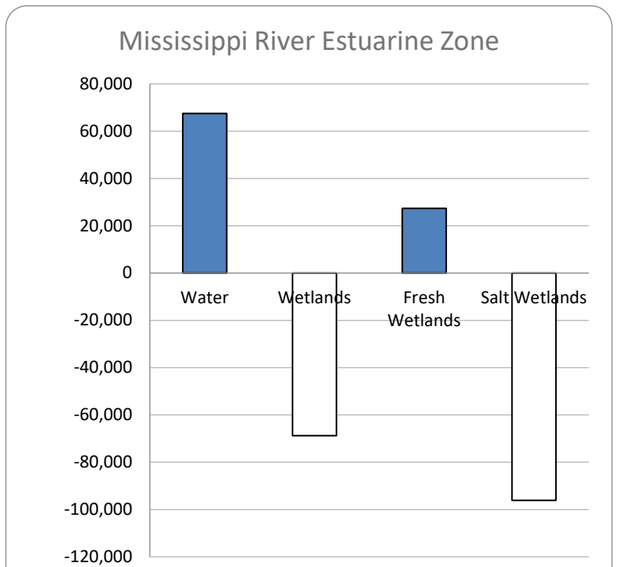

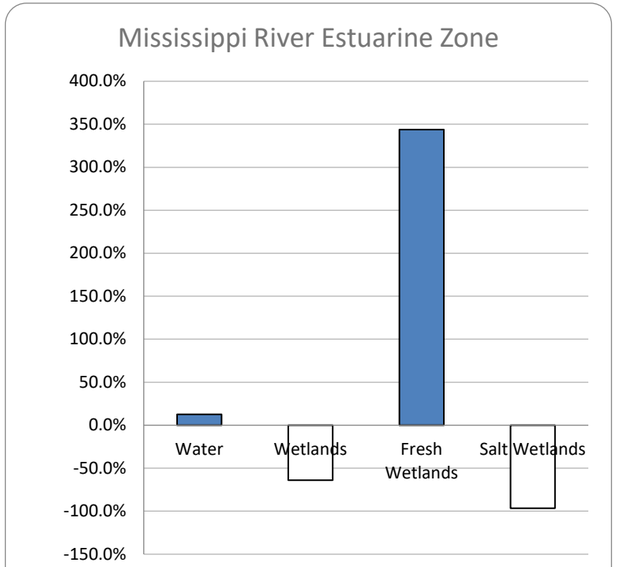

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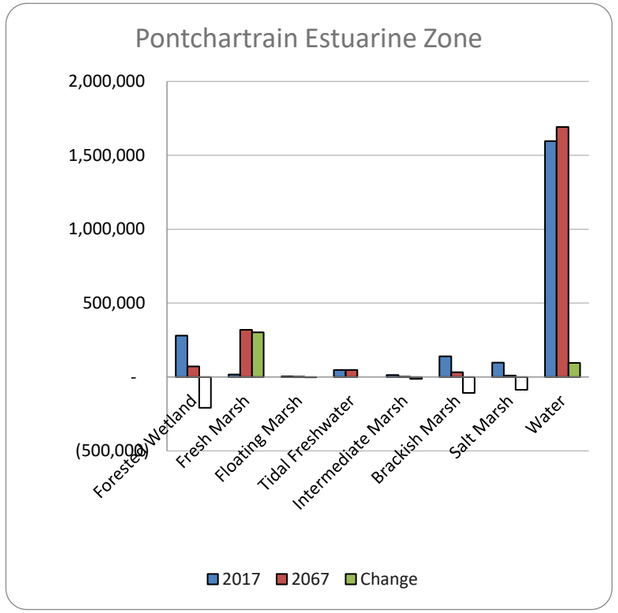
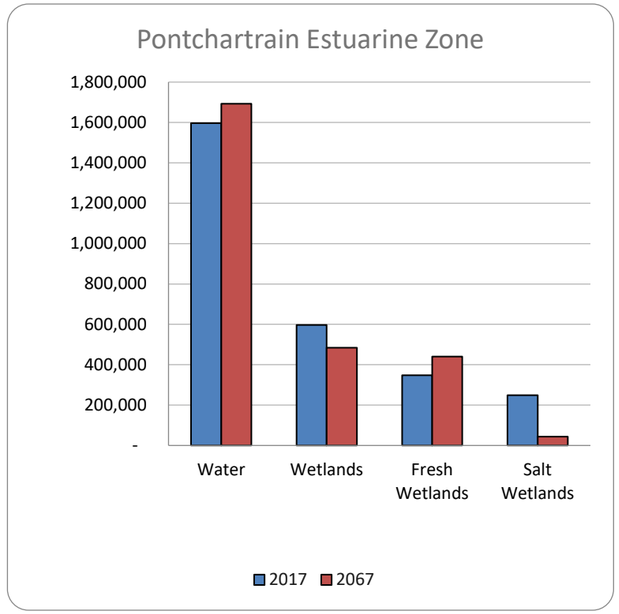
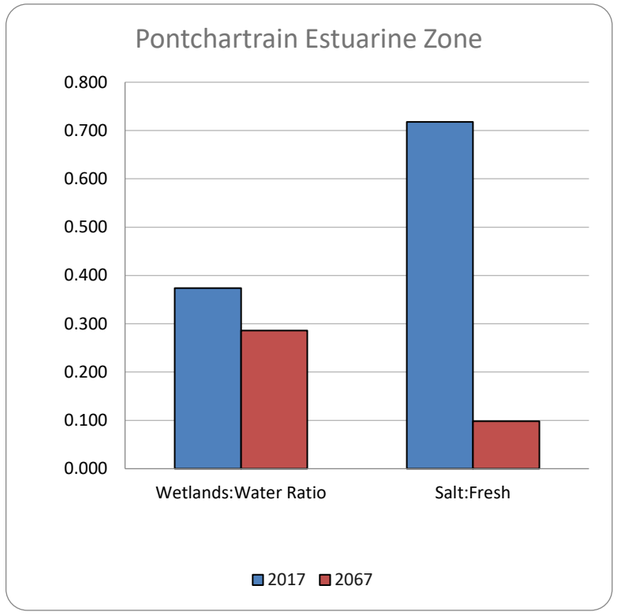
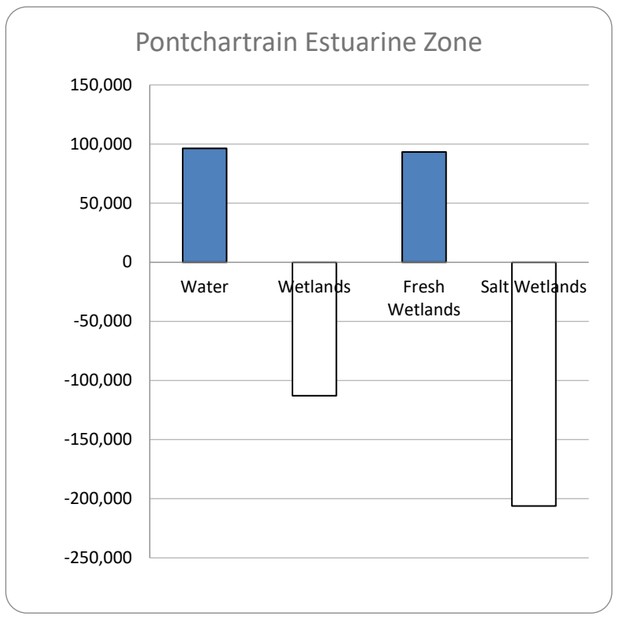
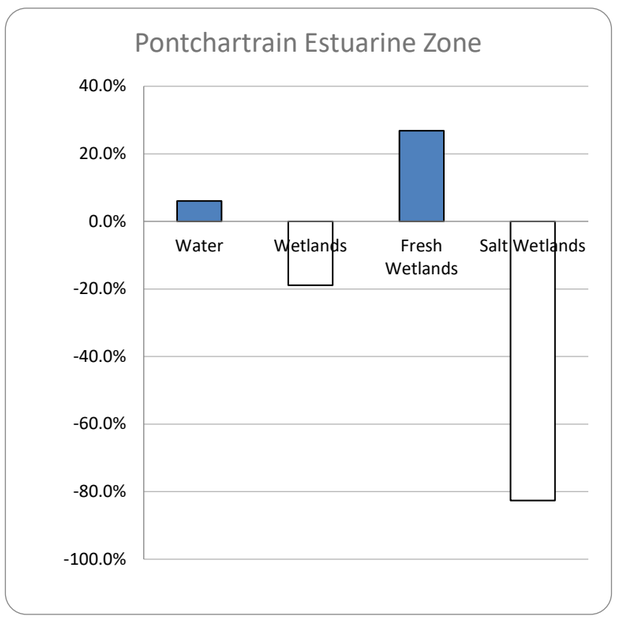










Data Used For Pre-Screening

LaNERR

Louisiana
National Estuary Research Reserve

Updated maps for Site Development Committee – aligning pre-screening site criteria questions to maps and data

18 February 2021

This presentation provides background information and guidance for the Site Development Team to discuss and evaluate recommendations from the Designation Leadership Team in how Pre-screening Criteria partially based upon NOAA guidelines can be used to establish competitive candidate sites for a LaNERR in the Mississippi River Delta.

Five pre-screening criteria (slide #5) are provided that will be used to evaluate the merits of each of the six Estuarine Zones in developing more specific candidate sites for a LaNERR. The five criteria selected, in consultation with NOAA and based on SDC discussions in October 2020, represent the first tier of evaluation that must be met before a zone can be considered further in developing candidate sites.

The approach is based on couple of key assumptions:

1. The current distribution of habitat types and state-owned lands of the estuarine zone provide insights into what may represent a competitive candidate site;
2. Changes in the distribution of habitat types and land loss in the proposed estuarine zone generalized boundaries provides insights into what may be considered maintaining integrity of a candidate site over the next 50 years.
3. Those estuarine zones that do not provide sufficient habitat diversity of a delta estuary, state-owned lands as core areas, or represent future integrity of landscapes should not be included in the planned development of candidate site proposals for a LaNERR.

The next several slides are grouped around information as maps, graphs, and tables to evaluate the merits of each of the six Estuarine Zones based on the five criteria presented in considering further the development of candidate sites for a LaNERR.

Criteria #1 and #2 are first presented to discuss the merits of the six Estuarine Zones relative to unique habitat diversity of a delta estuary; and the amount of state lands in the vicinity of these habitats to serve as core areas of a LaNERR.

Criteria #3 and #4 are then presented to discuss the merits of the six Estuarine Zones relative to projected changes in both land area and distribution of habitats to define the integrity of zones over the next 50 years. Again, this is not specific to any state lands or proposed candidate sites but is intended to demonstrate the challenges of establishing a LaNERR in a zone that is considered vulnerable to significant landscape changes in the future.

Finally, criterion #5 presents the potential challenges of the six Estuarine Zones relative to hydrologic manipulations that may cause coastal management issues and thus future conflict in a LaNERR. The coastal zone of Louisiana is highly engineered for flood control and restoration. Future large-scale projects are planned in the Coastal Master Plan. It is best to present these challenges in the early stages of developing LaNERR candidate sites.

The objective of the SDC meeting #3 in late February is to evaluate the six Estuarine Zones for merits in developing candidate sites for a LaNERR. The five criteria will be used to evaluate each Estuarine Zone independently as to whether it should be considered further in planning a LaNERR.

The Designation Leadership Team (DLT) has provided an evaluation of each Estuarine Zone and a recommendation as to the merits of the zone for further consideration.

The recommendations by the DLT for each of the six Estuarine Zones are provided in columns adjacent to each criterion.

After all five criteria have been presented with recommendations by the DLT along with maps, graphs, and tables to justify the DLT recommendations, a summary slide is presented (slide #59) that summarizes a final recommendation based on considering all five criteria.

These recommendations and summaries will be presented to SDC as a committee report. The SDC will be asked to evaluate which of the six Estuarine Zones should be considered further for developing candidate site proposals for LaNERR.

Table of the Five Pre-Screening Criteria used to Evaluate the Six Estuarine Zones along with Pre-Screening Recommendation by Designation Leadership Team (DLT).

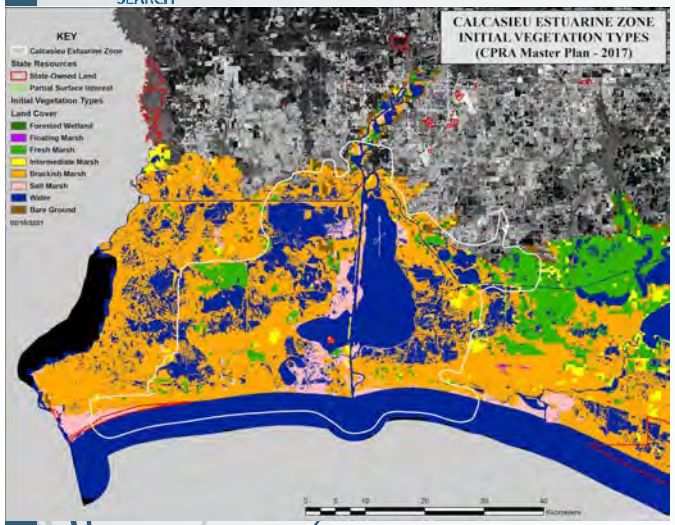
Pre-Screening Criteria #1 Unique Coastal Setting	Pre-Screening Criteria #2 State-Owned Lands	Pre-Screening Criteria #3 Land Integrity	Pre-Screening Criteria #4 Change in Habitat Diversity	Pre-Screening Criteria #5 Hydrologic Manipulations	Pre-Screening Recommendation by DLT
1. Are there potential core areas (state-owned lands and waters) in this Estuarine Zone that represent unique habitats, coastal processes and salinity gradients of a delta estuary in comparison to the other NERR sites in Louisianian Biogeographic Zone of NERR System (sections 11, 12, 13). Unique environmental representativeness is important to the research and education mission of a NERR. Description: Current distribution of habitat types, based on 2017 Coastal Master Plan initial condition vegetation, was used to define salinity zones in each Estuarine Zone. Habitat types are shown in outlined areas of state-owned land in red.	2. Is there currently sufficient area of state-owned lands within this Estuarine Zone conducive to developing LaNERR Candidate Sites that meet National Estuarine Reserve System objectives? Description: Majority of publicly-owned land used as core areas within a candidate site cannot be federal lands. Further, the state must demonstrate adequate management control for core areas to be designated as a NERR. NOAA requires that state lands be available in the initial designation of a NERR site since the agreement is a NOAA-state MOU.	3. Is the integrity of the wetlands that may serve as potential core (state-owned land) and buffer areas that provide the unique features of the NERR (see criterion #1) maintained in perpetuity within this Estuarine Zone, which would allow for development of facilities and programs (research & education)? Description: Land change was measured by comparing the 2017 Coastal Master Plan initial condition vegetation to the year 50 projected vegetation under the medium scenario with implementation of the plan. A reduction of 50% in wetland area from initial to projected was considered sufficient to question the integrity of a zone.	4. Do the wetlands that would serve as potential core (state-owned land) and buffer areas currently support a diversity of habitats along a salinity gradient representative of a delta estuary. Do these wetland areas maintain a diversity of habitats in perpetuity (maintain integrity) within this Estuarine Zone over the next 50 years? Description: Changes that demonstrate Significant Habitat Diversity change represent conflict with foreseeable program development in research & education to meet the mission of a NERR. Change in habitat diversity was measured by comparing the 2017 Coastal Master Plan initial condition vegetation to the year 50 projected vegetation under the medium scenario with implementation of the plan. Insignificant change (fresh or saline habitat change <-25%); Moderate change (fresh or saline habitat change -25 to -65%); Significant change (fresh or saline habitat change > -65%.	5. Do existing or anticipated operations of water control structures and levees (including marsh impoundments) by federal and state authorities with sole purpose of manipulating hydrology in coastal basins for either flood control, marsh management, or coastal restoration have the potential to impact the integrity of potential core or buffer areas thus causing potential conflicts between LaNERR objectives (environmental representativeness, research & education)?	The following columns contain summary statements and recommendations for each Estuarine Zone prepared by the Designation Leadership Team.

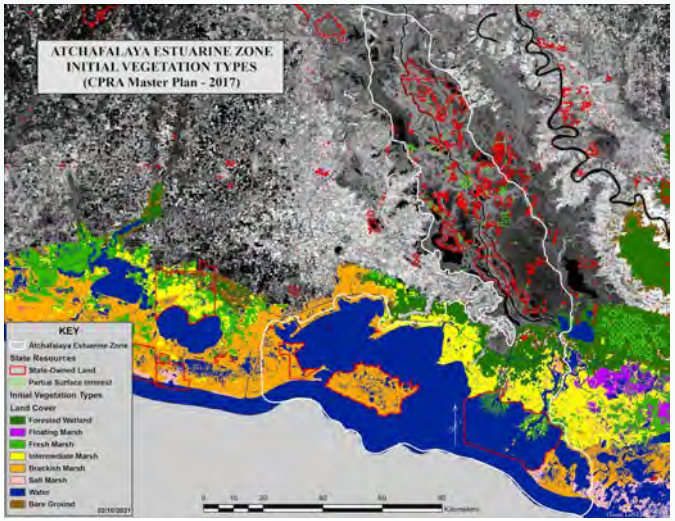
This section of the presentation focuses on Criterion #1.

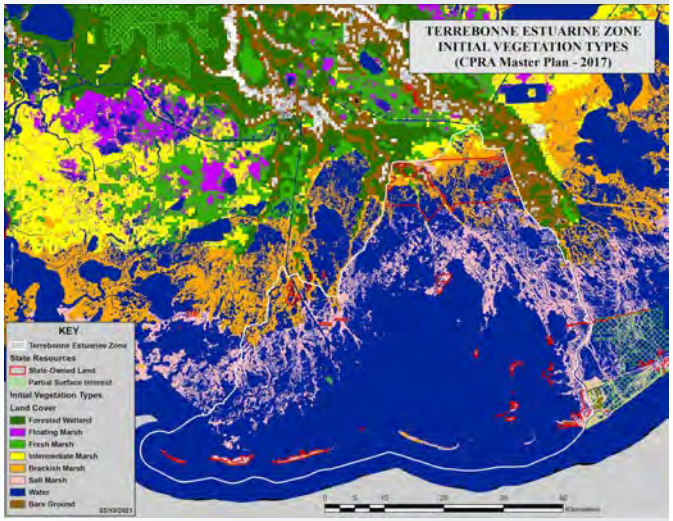
Pre-Screening Criteria #1 Unique Coastal Setting
1. Are there potential core areas (state-owned lands and waters) in this Estuarine Zone that represent unique habitats, coastal processes and salinity gradients of a delta estuary in comparison to the other NERR sites in Louisianian Biogeographic Zone of NERR System (sections 11, 12, 13). Unique environmental representativeness is important to research and education mission of a NERR. Description: Based on current distribution of habitat types used to define salinity zones in each Estuarine Zone maps using 2017 Coastal Master Plan. Habitat types are shown in outlined area of state-owned land in red.

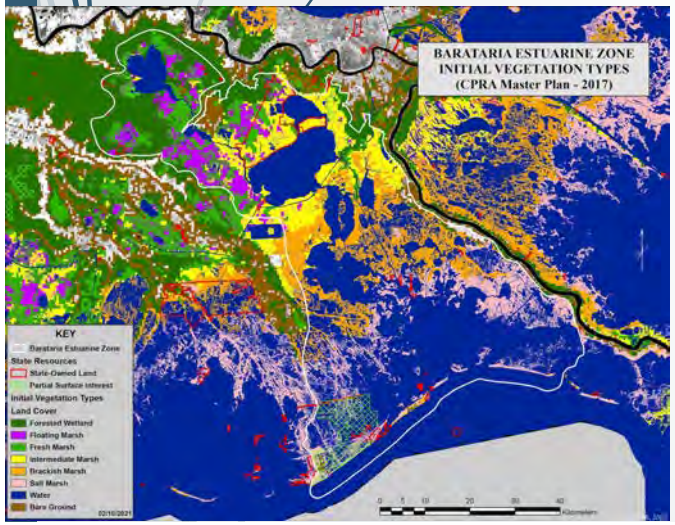
Estuarine Zone	Calcasieu Estuarine Zone	Atchafalaya Estuarine Zone	Terrebonne Estuarine Zone	Barataria Estuarine Zone	Pontchartrain Estuarine Zone	Mississippi River Estuarine Zone
Pre-Screening Criteria	Pre-Screening Recommendation	Pre-Screening Recommendation	Pre-Screening Recommendation	Pre-Screening Recommendation	Pre-Screening Recommendation	Pre-Screening Recommendation
1. Are there potential core areas (state-owned lands and waters) in this Estuarine Zone that represent unique habitats, coastal processes and salinity gradients of a delta estuary in comparison to the other NERR sites in Louisianian Biogeographic Zone of NERR System (sections 11, 12, 13). Unique environmental representativeness is important to the research and education mission of a NERR. Description: Current distribution of habitat types, based on 2017 Coastal Master Plan initial condition vegetation, was used to define salinity zones in each Estuarine Zone. Habitat types are shown in outlined areas of state-owned land in red.	Insignificant Unique Setting: The coastal setting represented by state-owned lands of this Estuarine Zone is not unique to other NERR sites in the Louisianian Biogeographic Zone of NERR System (sections 11, 12, 13) based on the objective to represent delta estuary. The vegetation diversity demonstrates dominance by brackish and salt zones. The chenier ridges, if they can be included in state-owned lands, are considered a unique habitat of delta estuary.	Significant Unique Setting: The coastal setting of this Estuarine Zone is unique in the Louisianian Biogeographic Zone of NERR System (sections 11, 12, 13) based on the objective to represent delta estuary. The vegetation diversity demonstrates dominance by tidal freshwater but with both forested wetlands and brackish marshes. The development of candidate sites for LaNERR in this Estuarine Zone would provide unique habitats, coastal processes and salinity gradients that could be used for program development (research & education).	Insignificant Unique Setting: The coastal setting of this Estuarine Zone is not unique in the Louisianian Biogeographic Zone of NERR System (sections 11, 12, 13) based on the objective to represent delta estuary. The vegetation diversity demonstrates dominance by salt and brackish marsh with little representation of other salinity zones. The development of candidate sites for LaNERR in this Estuarine Zone would not provide unique habitats, coastal processes and salinity gradients that could be used for program development (research & education).	Significant Unique Setting: The coastal setting of this Estuarine Zone is unique in the Louisianian Biogeographic Zone of NERR System (sections 11, 12, 13) based on the objective to represent delta estuary. The vegetation diversity demonstrates equal distribution by freshwater, brackish and saline zones. The development of candidate sites for LaNERR in this Estuarine Zone would provide unique habitats, coastal processes and salinity gradients that could be used for program development (research & education).	Significant Unique Setting: The coastal setting of this Estuarine Zone is unique in the Louisianian Biogeographic Zone of NERR System (sections 11, 12, 13) based on the objective to represent delta estuary. The vegetation diversity demonstrates equal distribution by freshwater, brackish and saline zones. The development of candidate sites for LaNERR in this Estuarine Zone would provide unique habitats, coastal processes and salinity gradients that could be used for program development (research & education).	Significant Unique Setting: The coastal setting of this Estuarine Zone is unique in the Louisianian Biogeographic Zone of NERR System (sections 11, 12, 13) based on the objective to represent delta estuary. The vegetation diversity demonstrates dominance by intermediate salinity zones but also has freshwater, brackish and saline zones. The development of candidate sites for LaNERR in this Estuarine Zone would provide unique habitats, coastal processes and salinity gradients that could be used for program development (research & education).

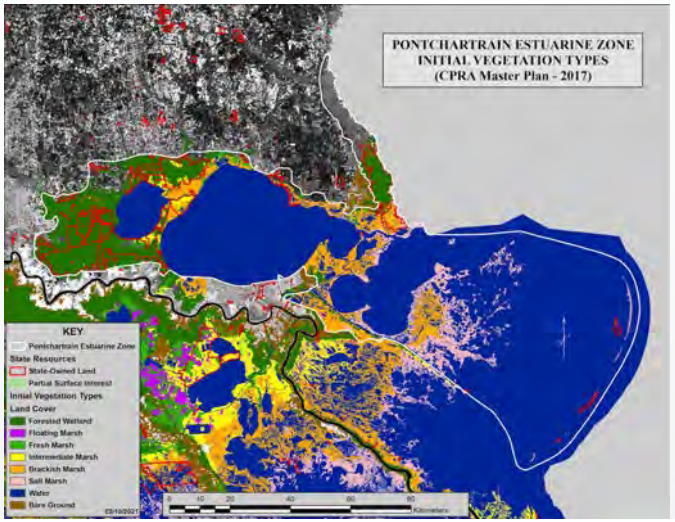
These maps show the distribution of habitat types in each of the six Estuarine Zones. This information was used to develop recommendations for Criterion #1.

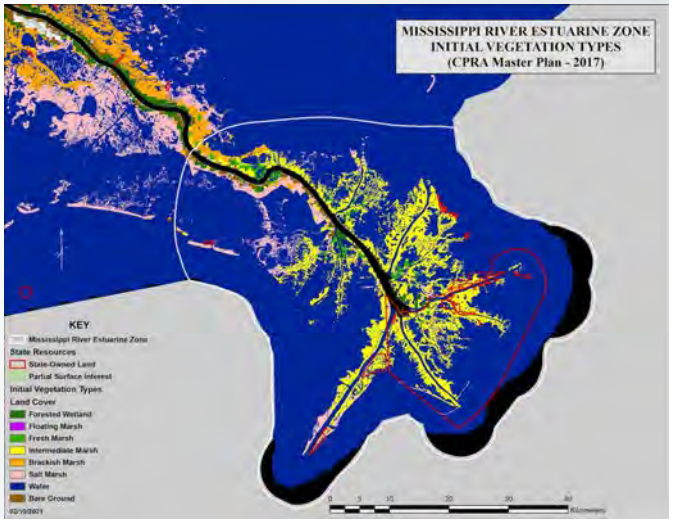










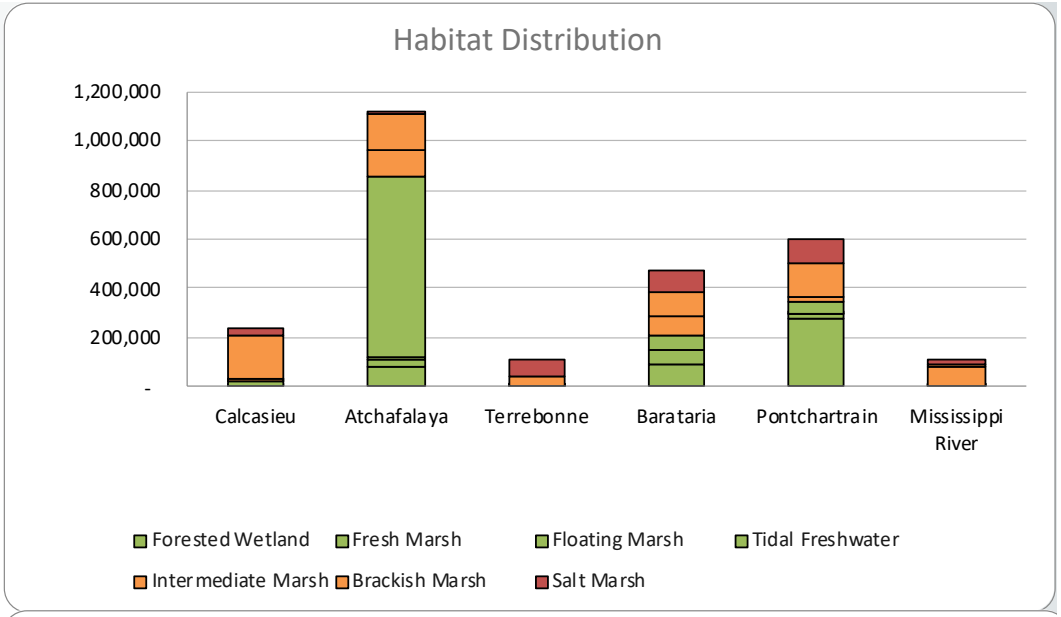


LaNERR SEARCH

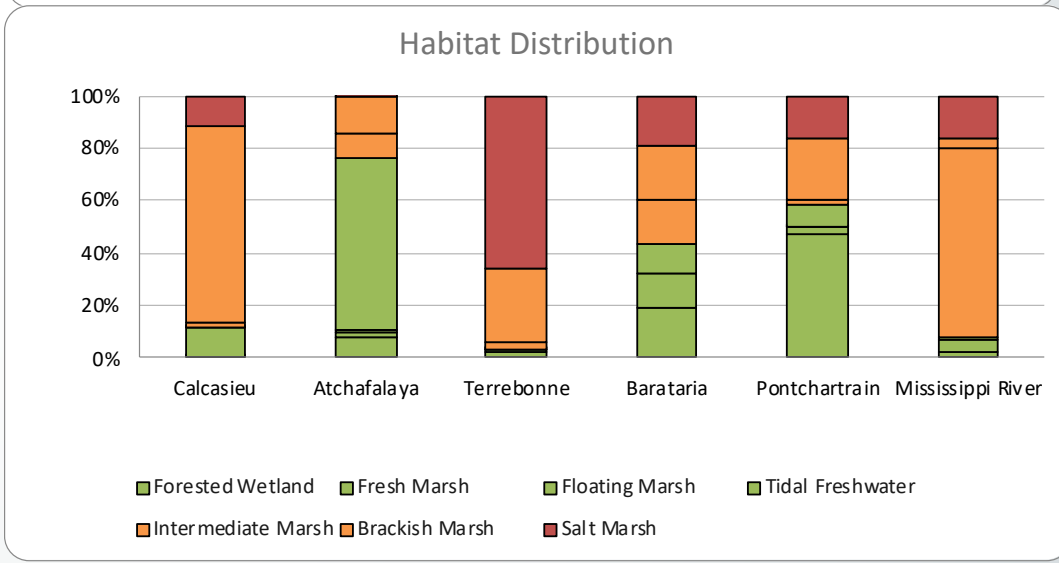
I. Environmental Representativeness

Graphs representing the current (2017) distribution of wetland habitats in each of the six Estuarine Zones (based on area and percentage). Habitat types are also used to infer distribution of salinity gradients in each of the Estuarine Zones.

Area in Acres



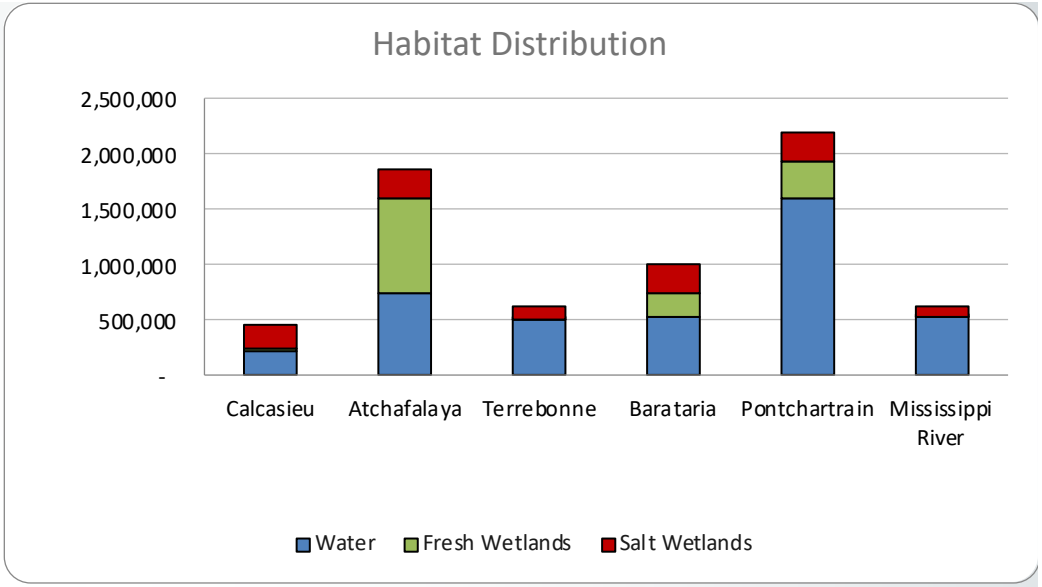
Percentage of Total Area



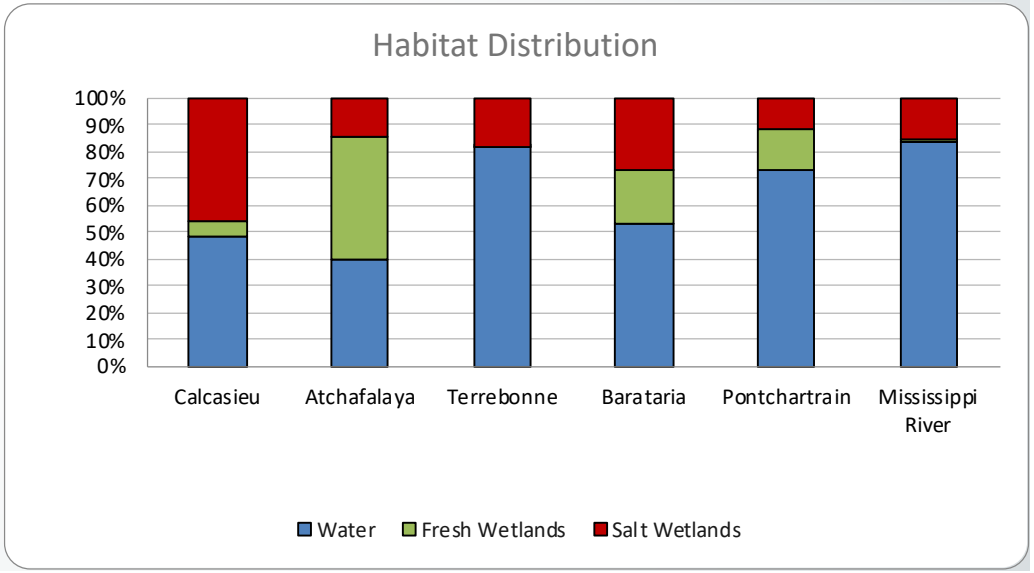
I. Environmental Representativeness

Graphs representing the current (2017) distribution of wetland habitats (fresh or saline) in each of the six Estuarine Zones compared to water habitats.

Area in Acres



Percentage of Total Area



This table shows the distribution of current habitat types (using acres in each category) in each of the six Estuarine Zones. The lower panel is the distribution (acreage) of wetlands, water and fresh and saline wetlands to total area. Ratios of acreage for wetlands vs water areas, and saline vs fresh areas, are given in last two rows. This information was used to develop recommendations for Criterion #1.

Units are in Acres	Calcasieu	Atchafalaya	Terrebonne	Barataria	Pontchartrain	Mississippi River
Vegetation Type	**2017**	**2017**	**2017**	**2017**	**2017**	**2017**
Forested Wetland	1,541	85,961	2,095	90,312	280,608	2,356
Fresh Marsh	25,033	24,344	1,762	61,441	16,224	4,888
Floating Marsh	113	7,064	97	53,823	3,670	716
Tidal Freshwater		738,759			47,100	
Intermediate Marsh	5,609	104,978	2,591	81,101	13,177	78,453
Brackish Marsh	176,512	150,541	32,122	97,406	139,642	3,415
Salt Marsh	28,192	9,350	76,340	89,203	96,655	17,693
Water	223,283	738,492	507,175	543,465	1,596,245	533,979
Unclassified	15,549	28,024		4,475	54,694	81,012
Bare Ground	3,598	6,559	622	12,197	8,797	2,476
Total	475,832	1,887,514	622,182	1,021,226	2,248,014	722,513
	2017	**2017**	**2017**	**2017**	**2017**	**2017**
Water	223,283	738,492	507,175	543,465	1,596,245	533,979
Wetlands	237,001	1,120,997	115,007	473,285	597,075	107,521
Fresh Wetlands	26,687	856,128	3,954	205,575	347,601	7,960
Salt Wetlands	210,314	264,869	111,053	267,710	249,474	99,561
	2017	**2017**	**2017**	**2017**	**2017**	**2017**
Wetlands:Water Ratio	1.061	1.518	0.227	0.871	0.374	0.201
Salt:Fresh	7.881	0.309	28.087	1.302	0.718	12.507

This table shows the distribution of current habitat types (using percent of total wetland area in the upper panel) in each of the six Estuarine Zones. The lower panel is the distribution (%) of wetlands, water and fresh and saline wetlands to total area (sum of water and wetlands area). This information was used to develop recommendations for Criterion #1. (Raw data in previous slide).

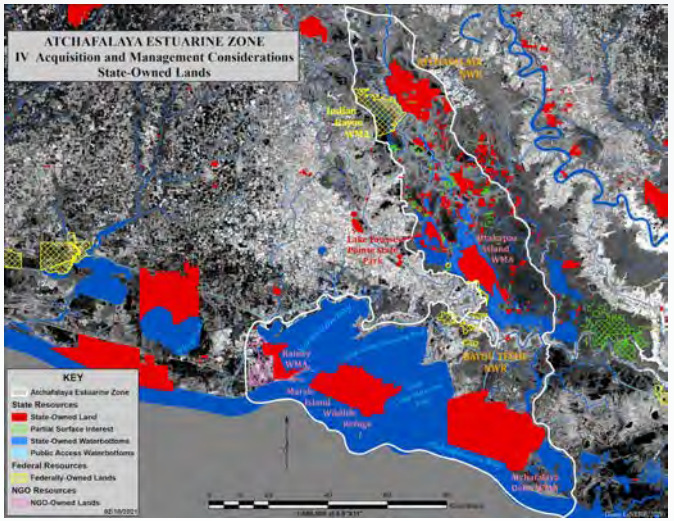
Percentage of Habitat Type	Calcasieu	Atchafalaya	Terrebonne	Barataria	Pontchartrain	Mississippi River
Vegetation Type	2017	2017	2017	2017	2017	2017
Forested Wetland	0.7%	7.7%	1.8%	19.1%	47.0%	2.2%
Fresh Marsh	10.6%	2.2%	1.5%	13.0%	2.7%	4.5%
Floating Marsh	0.0%	0.6%	0.1%	11.4%	0.6%	0.7%
Tidal Freshwater	0.0%	65.9%	0.0%	0.0%	7.9%	0.0%
Intermediate Marsh	2.4%	9.4%	2.3%	17.1%	2.2%	73.0%
Brackish Marsh	74.5%	13.4%	27.9%	20.6%	23.4%	3.2%
Salt Marsh	11.9%	0.8%	66.4%	18.8%	16.2%	16.5%
	2017	2017	2017	2017	2017	2017
Water	46.9%	39.1%	81.5%	53.2%	71.0%	73.9%
Wetlands	49.8%	59.4%	18.5%	46.3%	26.6%	14.9%
Fresh Wetlands	11.3%	76.4%	3.4%	43.4%	58.2%	7.4%
Salt Wetlands	88.7%	23.6%	96.6%	56.6%	41.8%	92.6%

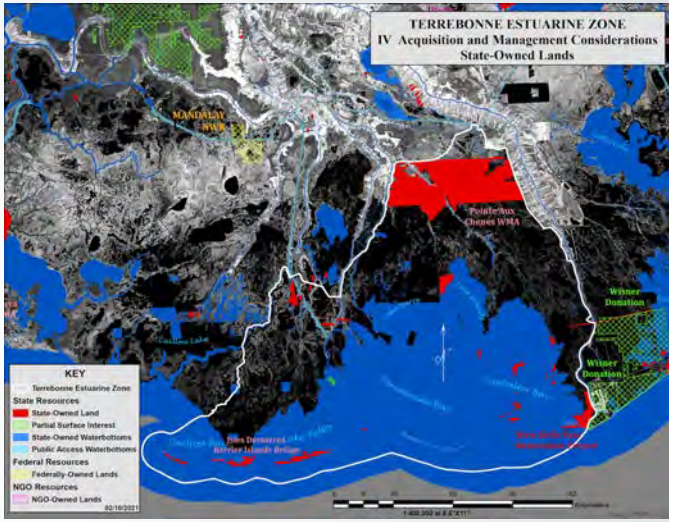
This section of the presentation focuses on Criterion #2.

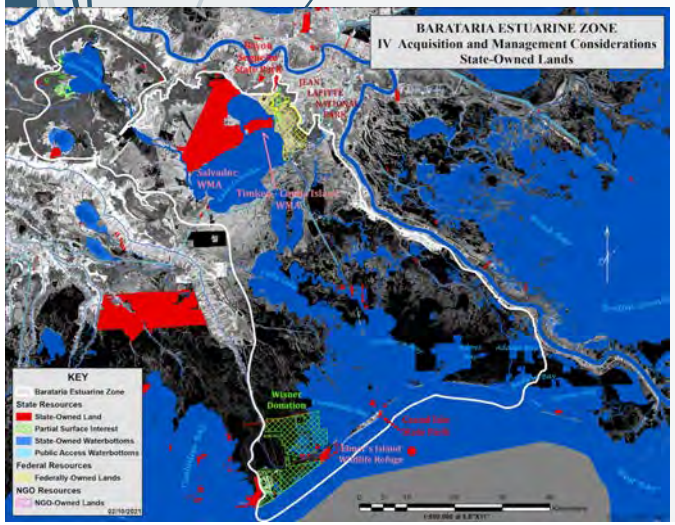
Pre-Screening Criteria #2 State-Owned Lands
2. Is there currently sufficient area of state-owned lands within this Estuarine Zone conducive to developing LaNERR Candidate Sites that meet National Estuarine Reserve System objectives? Description: Majority of publicly-owned land used as core areas within a candidate site cannot be federal lands. Further, the state must demonstrate adequate management control for core areas to be designated as a NERR. NOAA requires that state lands be available in the initial designation of a NERR site since the agreement is a NOAA-state MOU.

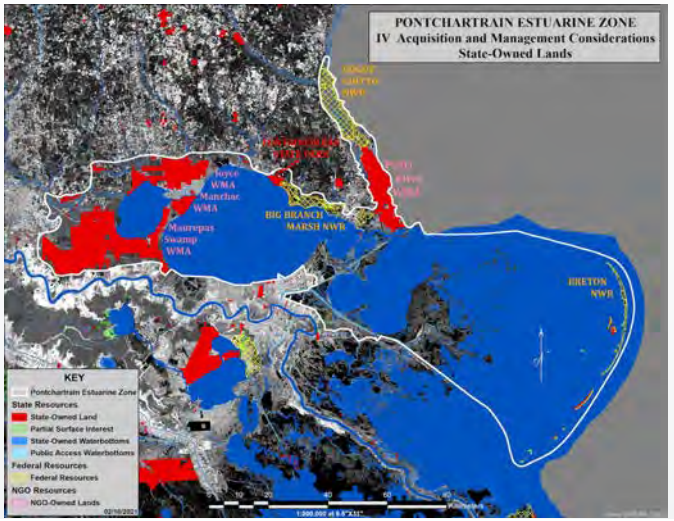
Estuarine Zone	Calcasieu Estuarine Zone	Atchafalaya Estuarine Zone	Terrebonne Estuarine Zone	Barataria Estuarine Zone	Pontchartrain Estuarine Zone	Mississippi River Estuarine Zone
Pre-Screening Criteria	Pre-Screening Recommendation	Pre-Screening Recommendation	Pre-Screening Recommendation	Pre-Screening Recommendation	Pre-Screening Recommendation	Pre-Screening Recommendation
2. Is there currently sufficient area of state-owned lands within this Estuarine Zone conducive to developing LaNERR Candidate Sites that meet National Estuarine Reserve System objectives? Description: Majority of publicly-owned land used as core areas within a candidate site cannot be federal lands. Further, the state must demonstrate adequate management control for core areas to be designated as a NERR. NOAA requires that state lands be available in the initial designation of a NERR site since the agreement is a NOAA-state MOU.	Insufficient Core Areas: The current availability of state-owned lands to establish core areas for candidate LaNERR sites in the Calcasieu Estuarine Zone is very limited. Most of the public lands in this Estuarine Zone are federal lands. State Lands = 3,046 acres; Other Public Lands = 152,585 acres	Sufficient Core Areas: The current availability of state-owned lands to establish core areas for candidate LaNERR sites in the Atchafalaya Estuarine Zone is sufficient. State Lands = 347,945 acres; Other Public Lands = 57,227 acres	Sufficient Core Areas: The current availability of state-owned lands to establish core areas for candidate LaNERR sites in the Terrebonne Estuarine Zone is sufficient. State Lands = 44,203 acres; Other Public Lands = 15,260 acres	Sufficient Core Areas: The current availability of state-owned lands to establish core areas for candidate LaNERR sites in the Barataria Estuarine Zone is sufficient. State-owned lands in this Estuarine Zone are slightly less compared to other public lands. State Lands = 40,185 acres; Other Public Lands = 49,913 acres	Sufficient Core Areas: The current availability of state-owned lands to establish core areas for candidate LaNERR sites in the Pontchartrain Estuarine Zone is sufficient. State Lands = 200,207 acres; Other Public Lands = 53,640 acres	Sufficient Core Areas: The current availability of state-owned lands to establish core areas for candidate LaNERR sites in the Mississippi River Estuarine Zone is sufficient. State Lands = 116,118 acres; Other Public Lands = 49,048 acres

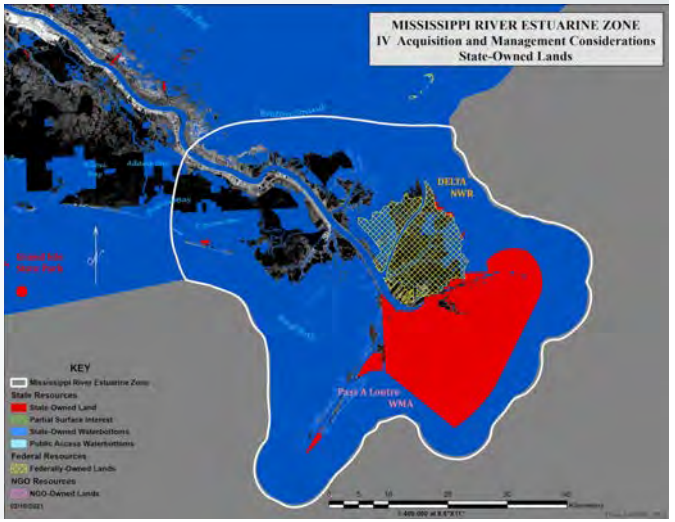
These maps show the distribution of state-owned lands (solid red) in each of the six Estuarine Zones. This information was used to develop recommendations for Criterion #2.





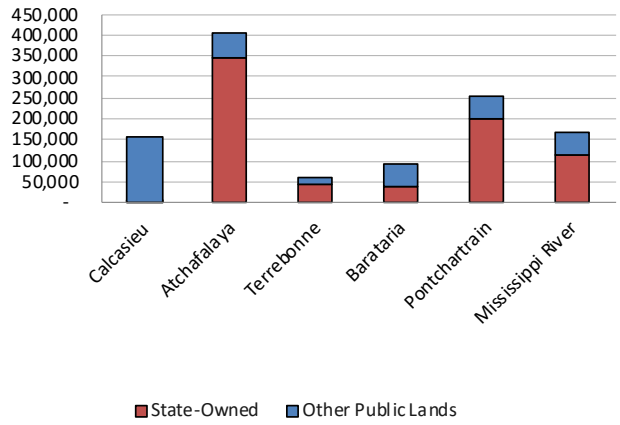




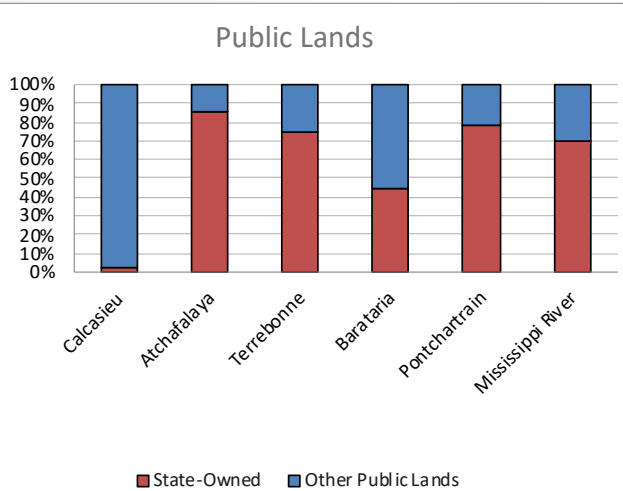


IV. Acquisition and Management Considerations

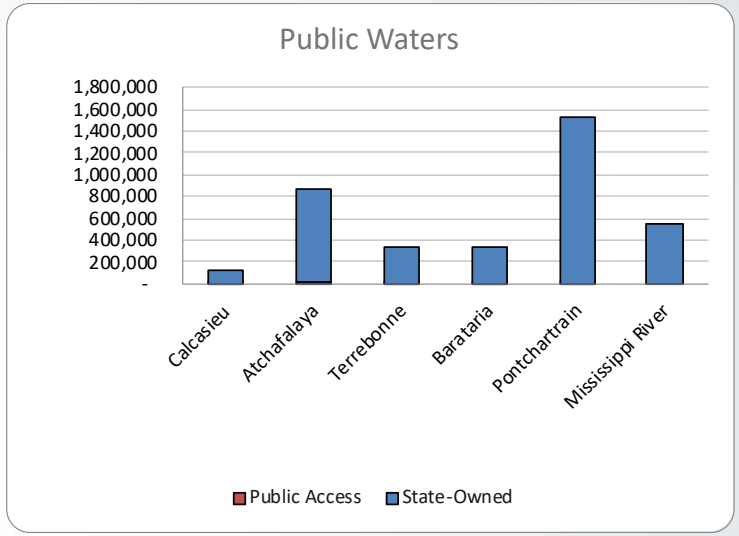
Area in Acres



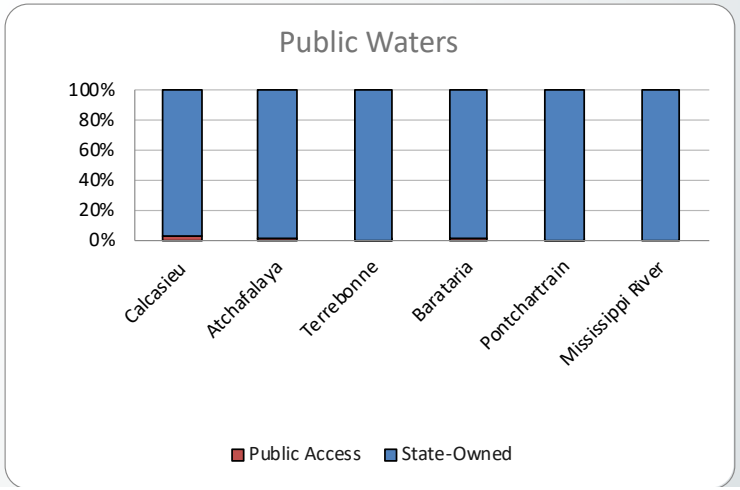
Percentage of Total Area



Area in Acres



Percentage of Total Area



IV. Acquisition and Management Considerations

Land-Water Ownership by LaNERR Zone

Units in Acres	State Lands		Federal Lands	State Waterbottoms	
	Partial Surface Interest	State-Owned		Public Access	State-Owned
Atchafalaya	14,605	347,945	42,622	9,682	852,191
Barataria	35,835	40,185	14,078	2,329	328,286
Calcasieu	-	3,046	152,585	3,222	129,465
Mississippi River	-	116,118	49,048	-	540,010
Pontchartrain	-	200,207	53,640	7,056	1,525,283
Terrebonne	15,260	44,203	-	1,307	330,363

Units in Acres

	State Lands		Total Public Land	State Waterbottoms	
	Other Public Lands	State-Owned		Public Access	State-Owned
Atchafalaya	57,227	347,945	405,172	9,682	852,191
Barataria	49,913	40,185	90,098	2,329	328,286
Calcasieu	152,585	3,046	155,631	3,222	129,465
Mississippi River	49,048	116,118	165,166	-	540,010
Pontchartrain	53,640	200,207	253,847	7,056	1,525,283
Terrebonne	15,260	44,203	59,463	1,307	330,363

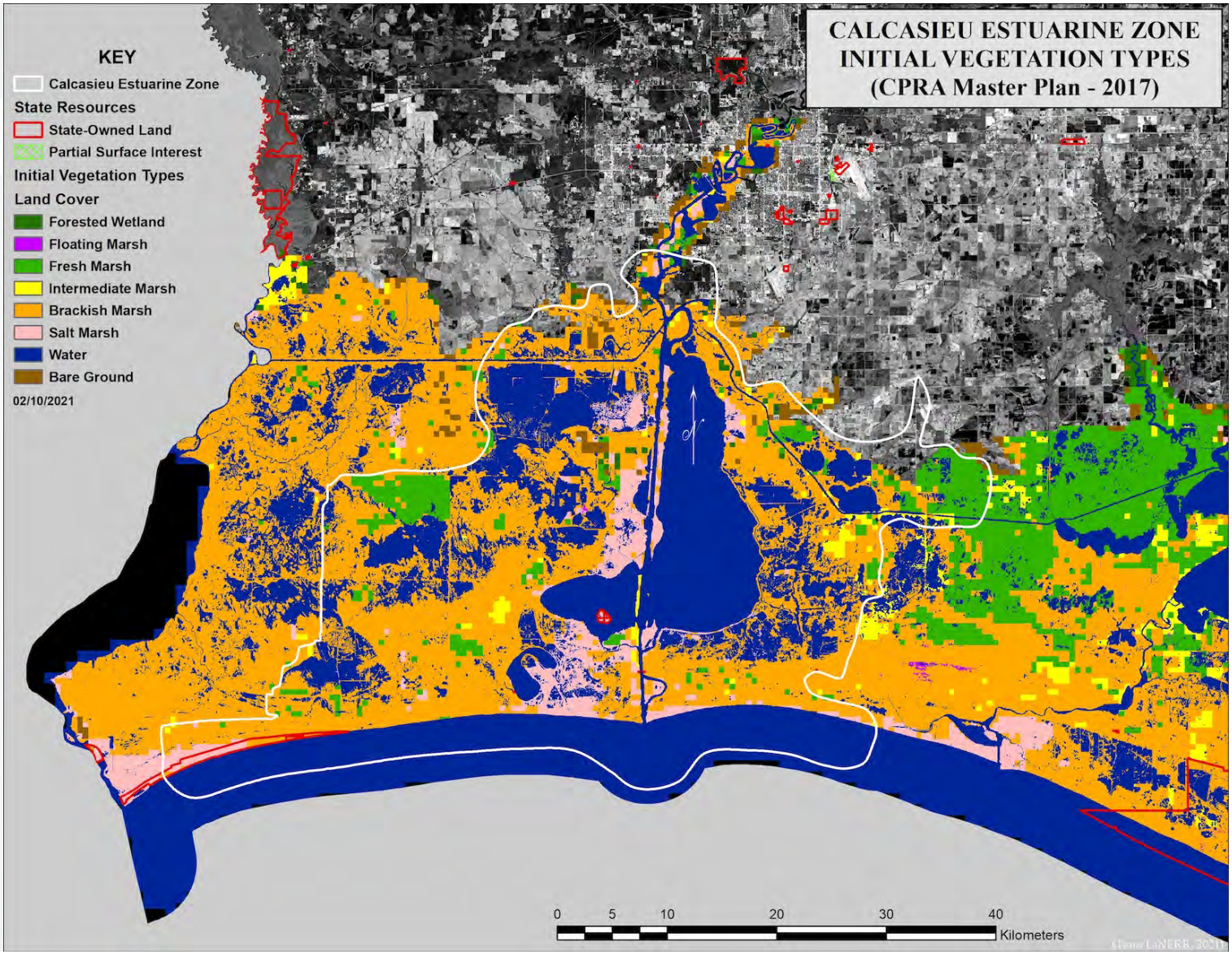
I. Environmental Representativeness

Calcasieu Estuarine Zone

Pre-Screening Recommendation #1

<u>Insignificant Unique Setting:</u>

The coastal setting represented by state-owned lands of this Estuarine Zone is not unique to other NERR sites in the Louisianian Biogeographic Zone of NERR System (sections 11, 12, 13) based on the objective to represent delta estuary. The vegetation diversity demonstrates dominance by brackish and salt zones. The chenier ridges, if they can be included in state-owned lands, are considered a unique habitat of delta estuary.



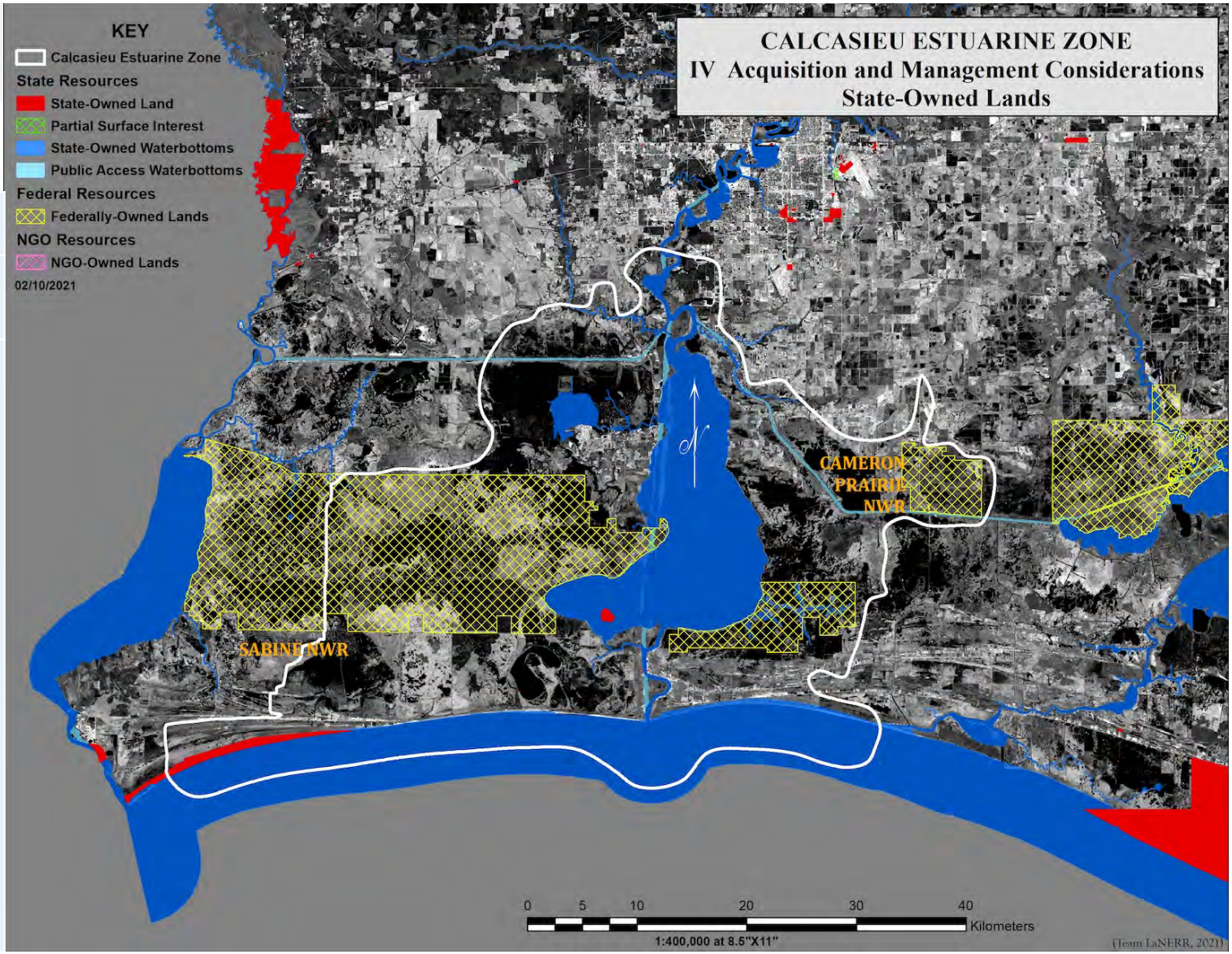
IV. Acquisition and Management Considerations

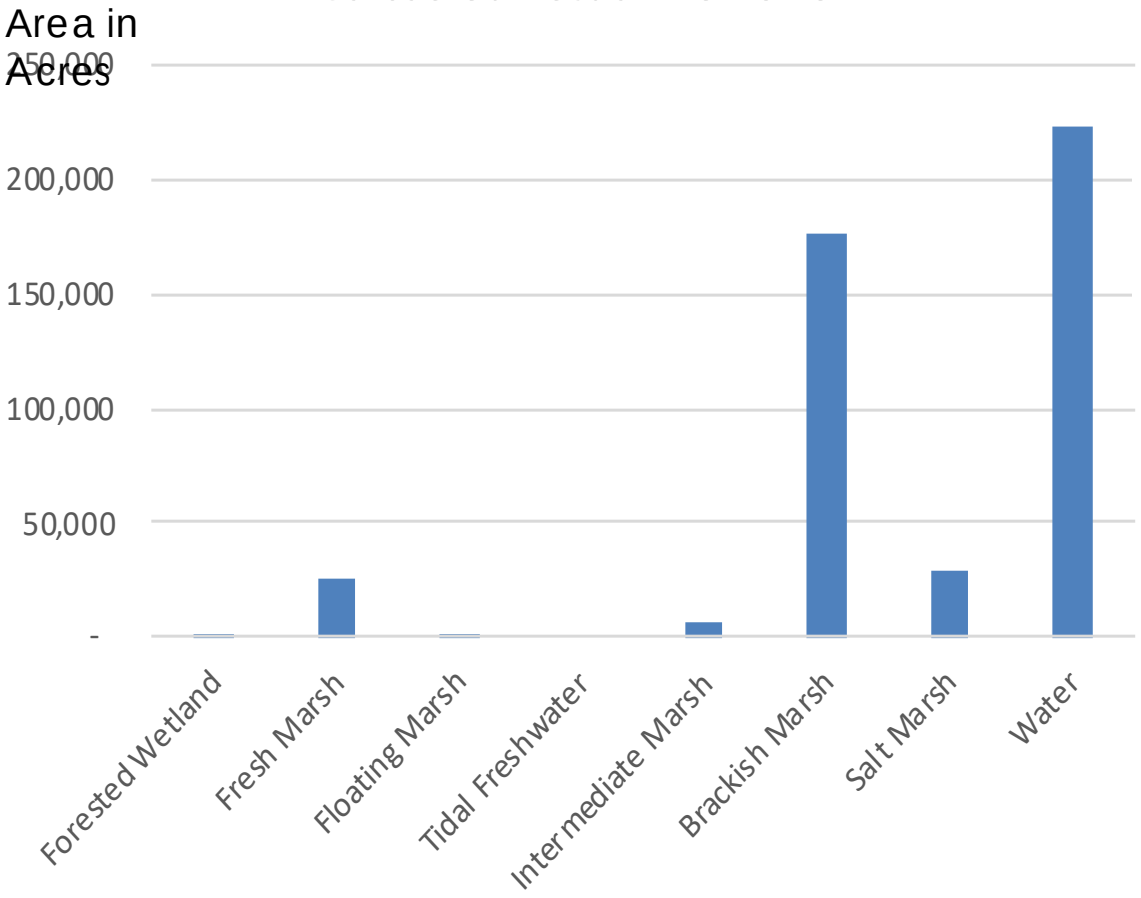
Calcasieu Estuarine Zone

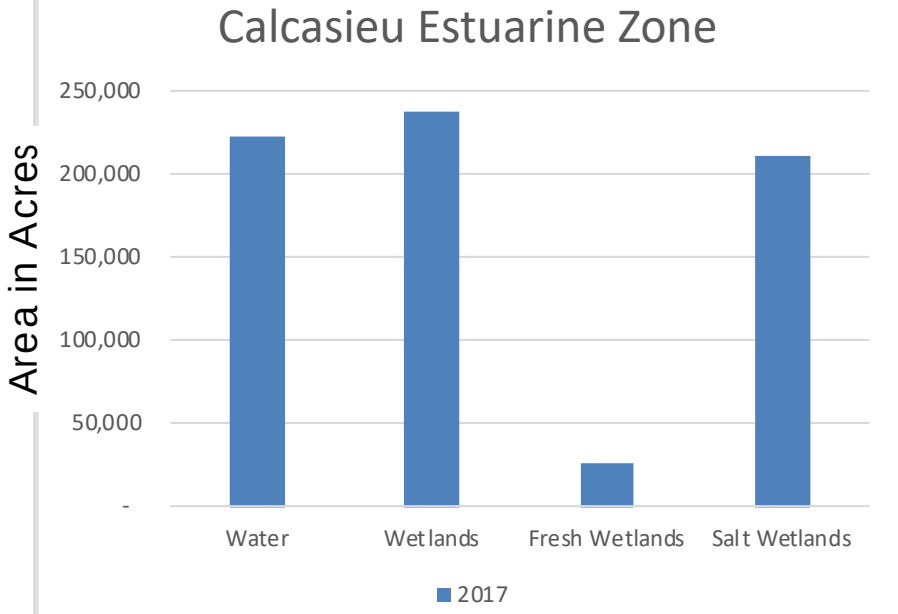
Pre-Screening Recommendation #2

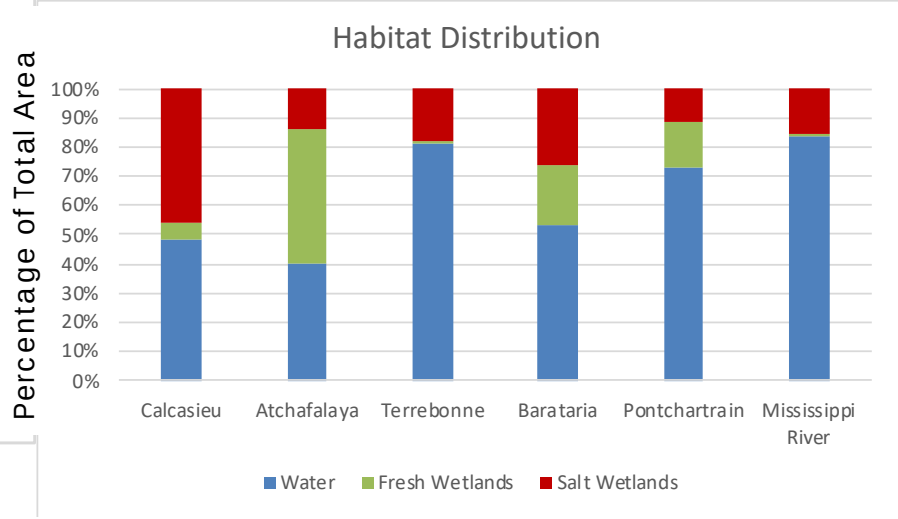
<u>Insufficient Core Areas:</u> The current availability of state-owned lands to establish core areas for candidate LaNERR sites in the Calcasieu Estuarine Zone is very limited. Most of the public lands in this Estuarine Zone are federal lands.

State Lands = 3,046 acres;
Other Public Lands = 152,585 acres









Graphs representing the current (2017) distribution of wetland habitats (fresh or saline) in each of the six Estuarine Zones compared to water habitats.

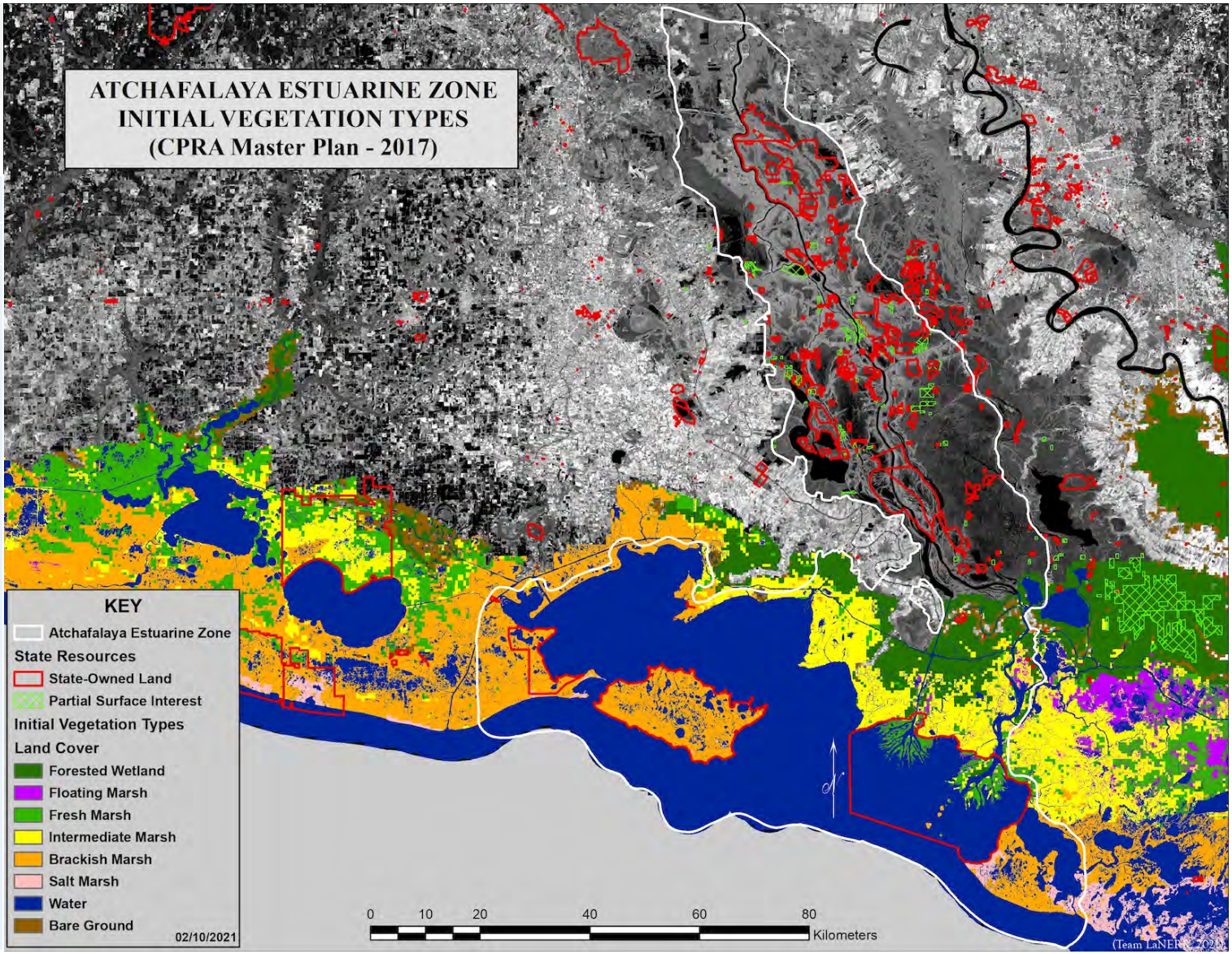
LaNERR SEARCH

I. Environmental Representativeness

Atchafalaya Estuarine Zone

Pre-Screening Recommendation #1

Significant Unique Setting: The coastal setting of this Estuarine Zone is unique in the Louisianian Biogeographic Zone of NERR System (sections 11, 12, 13) based on the objective to represent delta estuary. The vegetation diversity demonstrates dominance by tidal freshwater but with both forested wetlands and brackish marshes. The development of candidate sites for LaNERR in this Estuarine Zone would provide unique habitats, coastal processes and salinity gradients that could be used for program development (research & education).



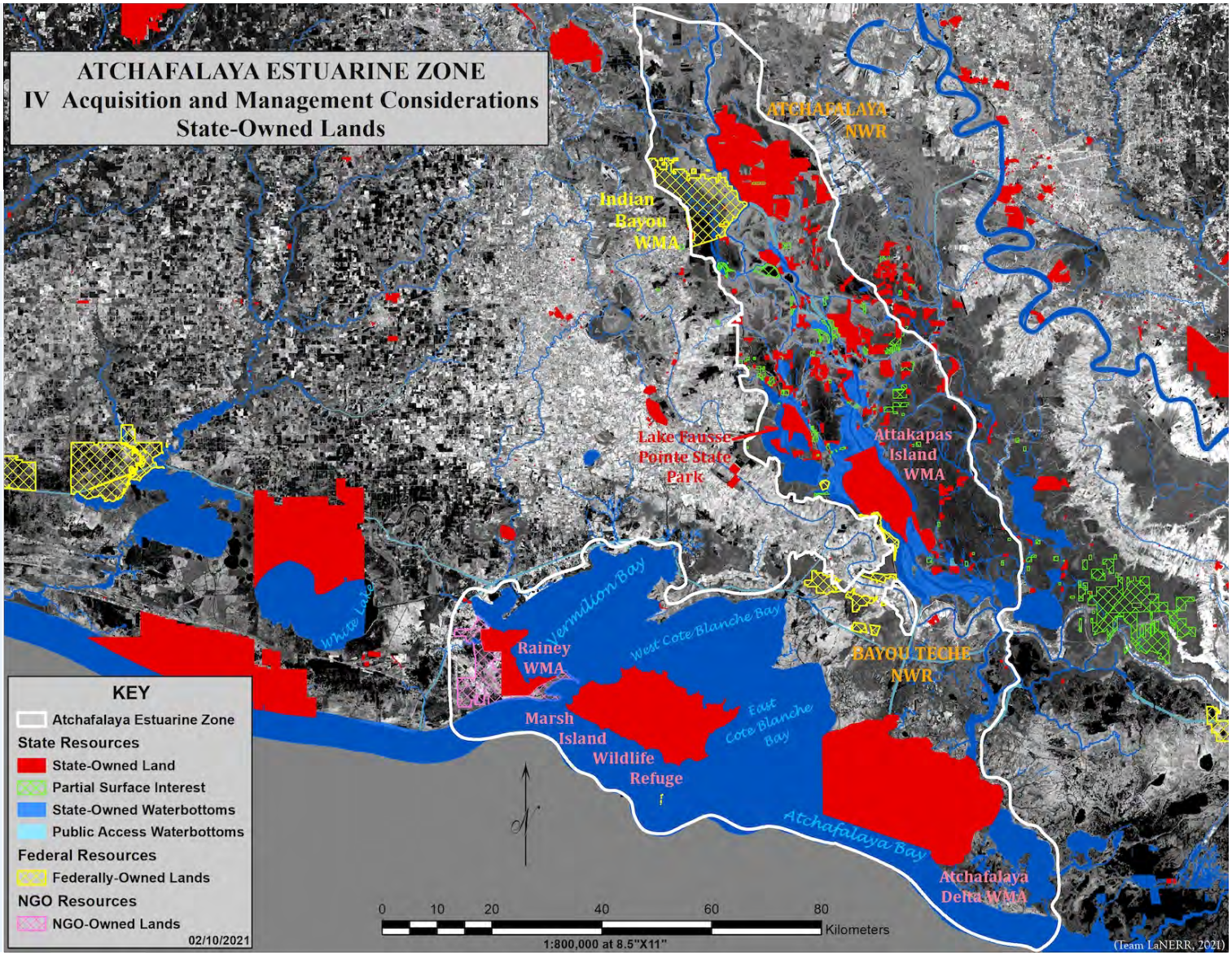
IV. Acquisition and Management Considerations

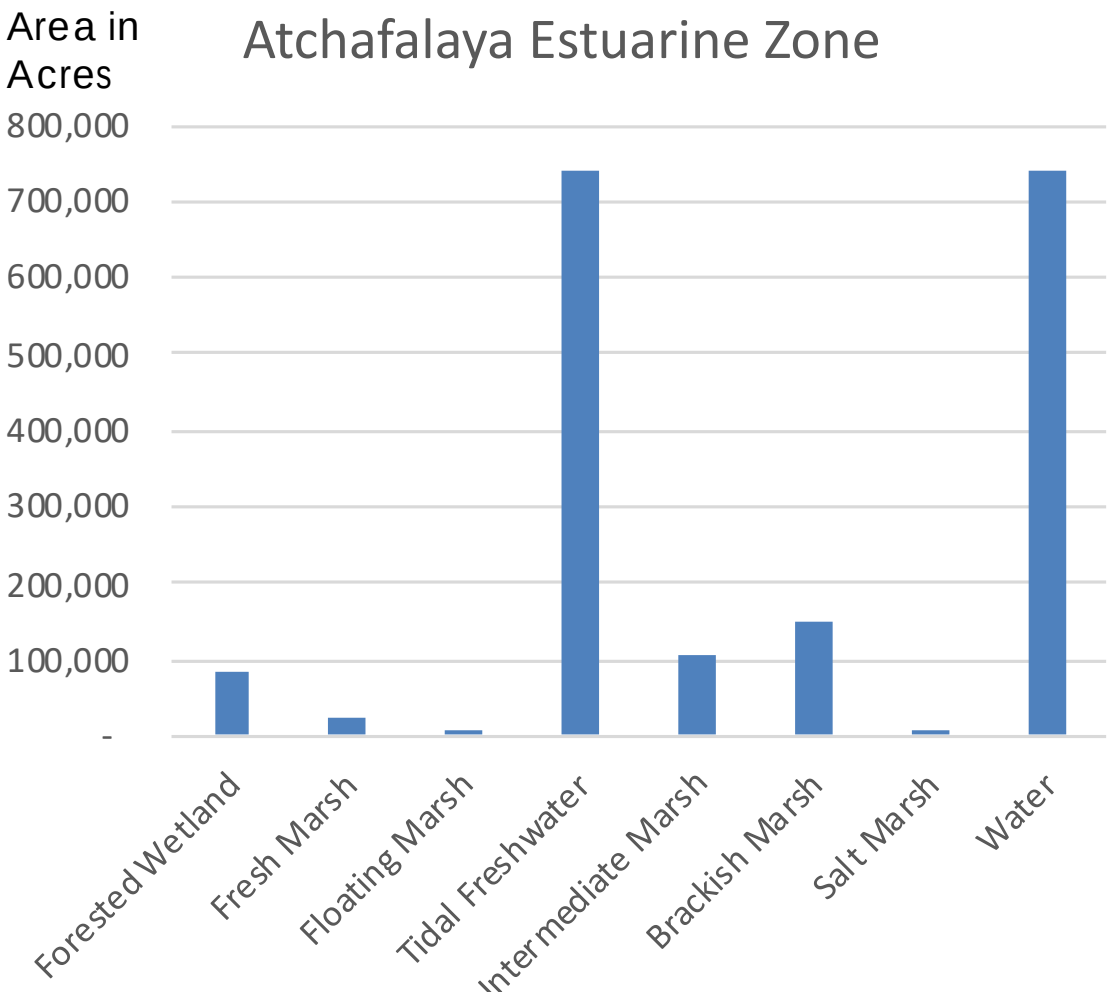
Atchafalaya Estuarine Zone

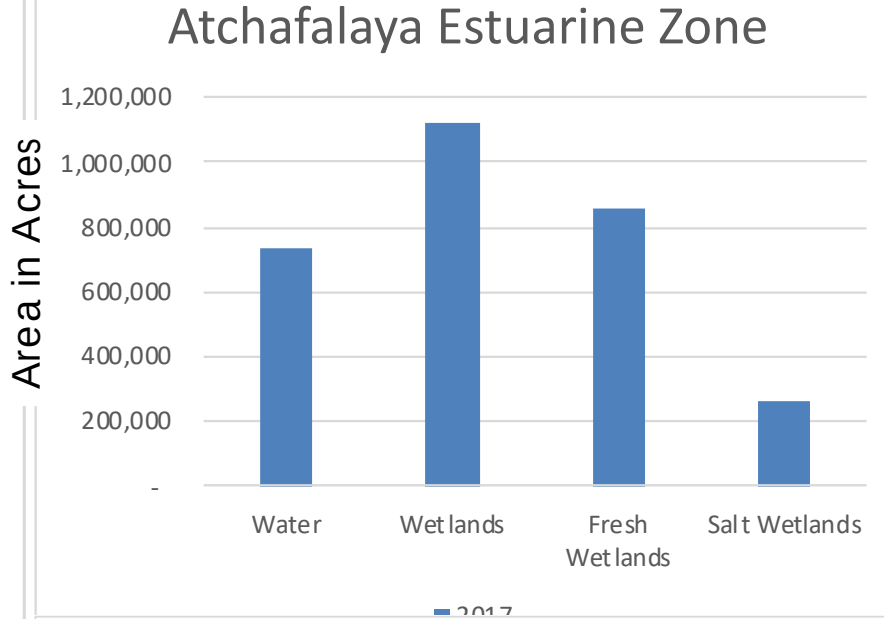
Pre-Screening Recommendation #2

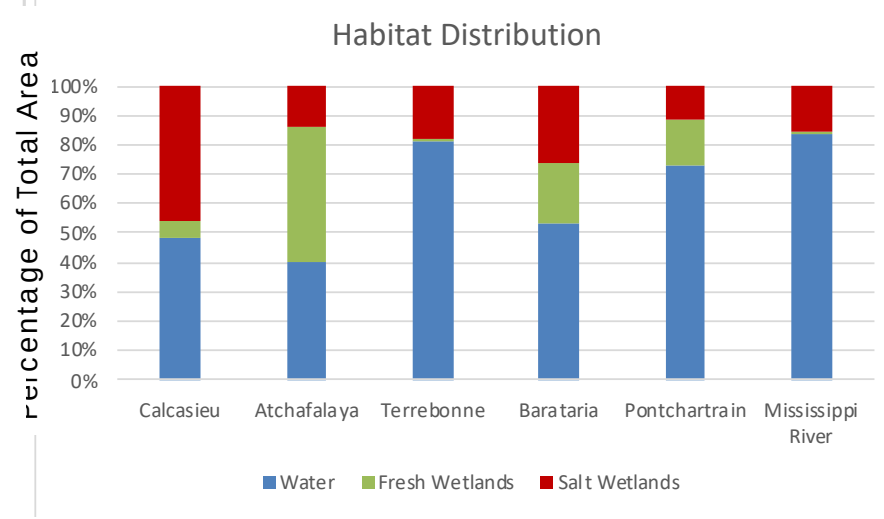
<u>Sufficient Core Areas:</u> The current availability of state-owned lands to establish core areas for candidate LaNERR sites in the Atchafalaya Estuarine Zone is sufficient.

State Lands = 347,945 acres; Other Public Lands = 57,227 acres









Graphs representing the current (2017) distribution of wetland habitats (fresh or saline) in each of the six Estuarine Zones compared to water habitats.

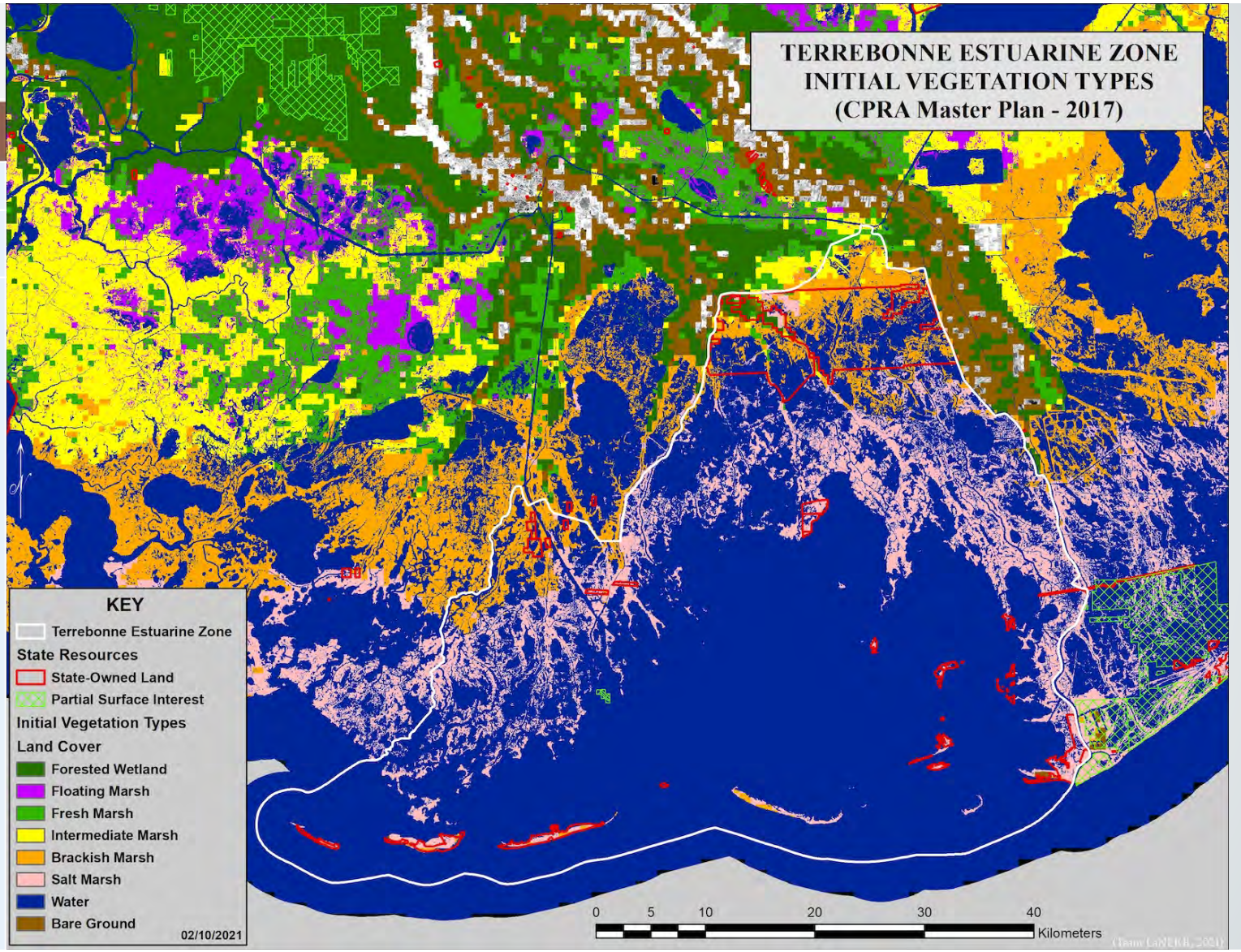
LaNERR SEARCH

I. Environmental Representativeness

Terrebonne Estuarine Zone

Pre-Screening Recommendation #1

Insignificant Unique Setting: The coastal setting of this Estuarine Zone is not unique in the Louisianian Biogeographic Zone of NERR System (sections 11, 12, 13) based on the objective to represent delta estuary. The vegetation diversity demonstrates dominance by salt and brackish marsh with little representation of other salinity zones. The development of candidate sites for LaNERR in this Estuarine Zone would not provide unique habitats, coastal processes and salinity gradients that could be used for program development (research & education).



LaNERR SEARCH

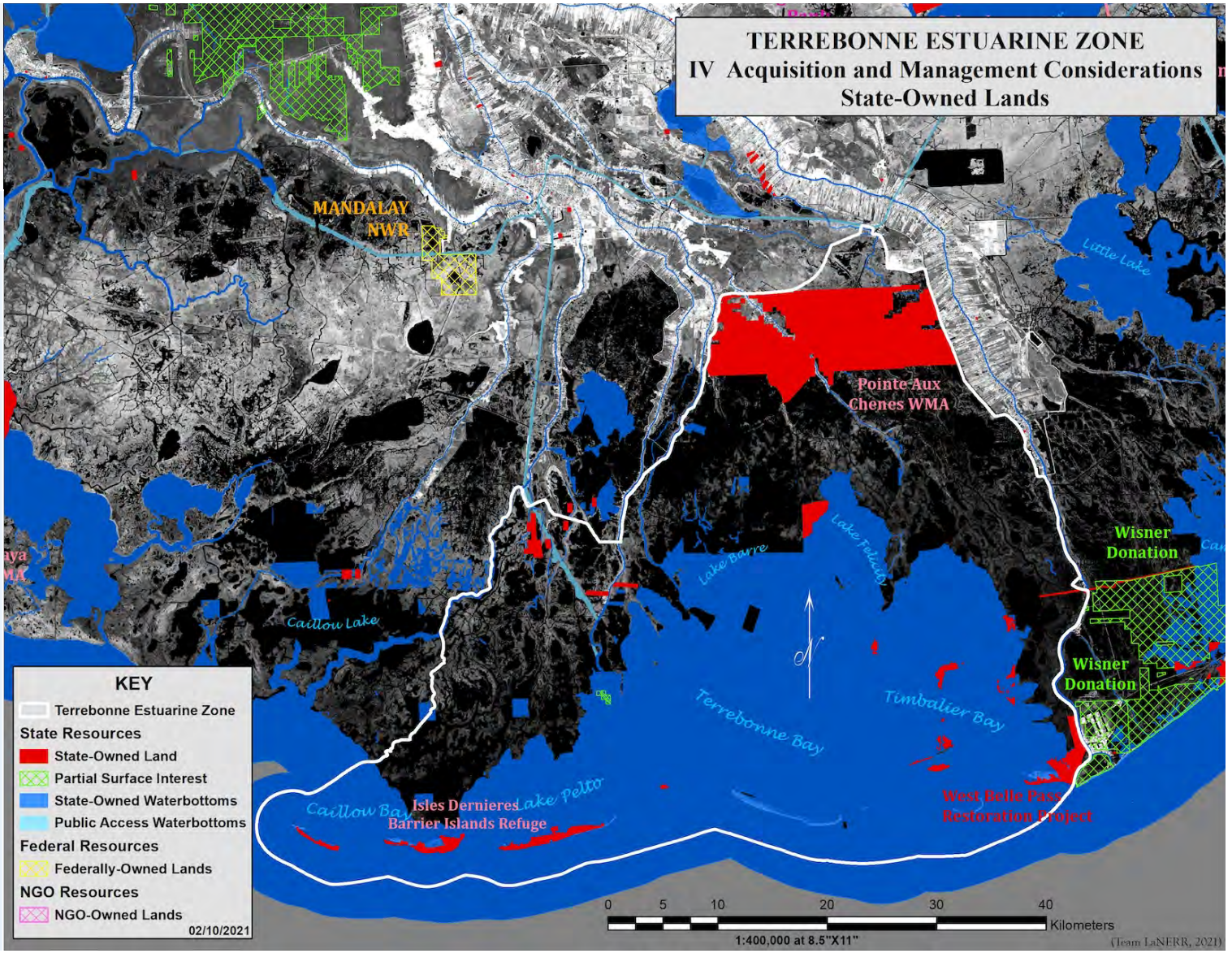
IV. Acquisition and Management Considerations

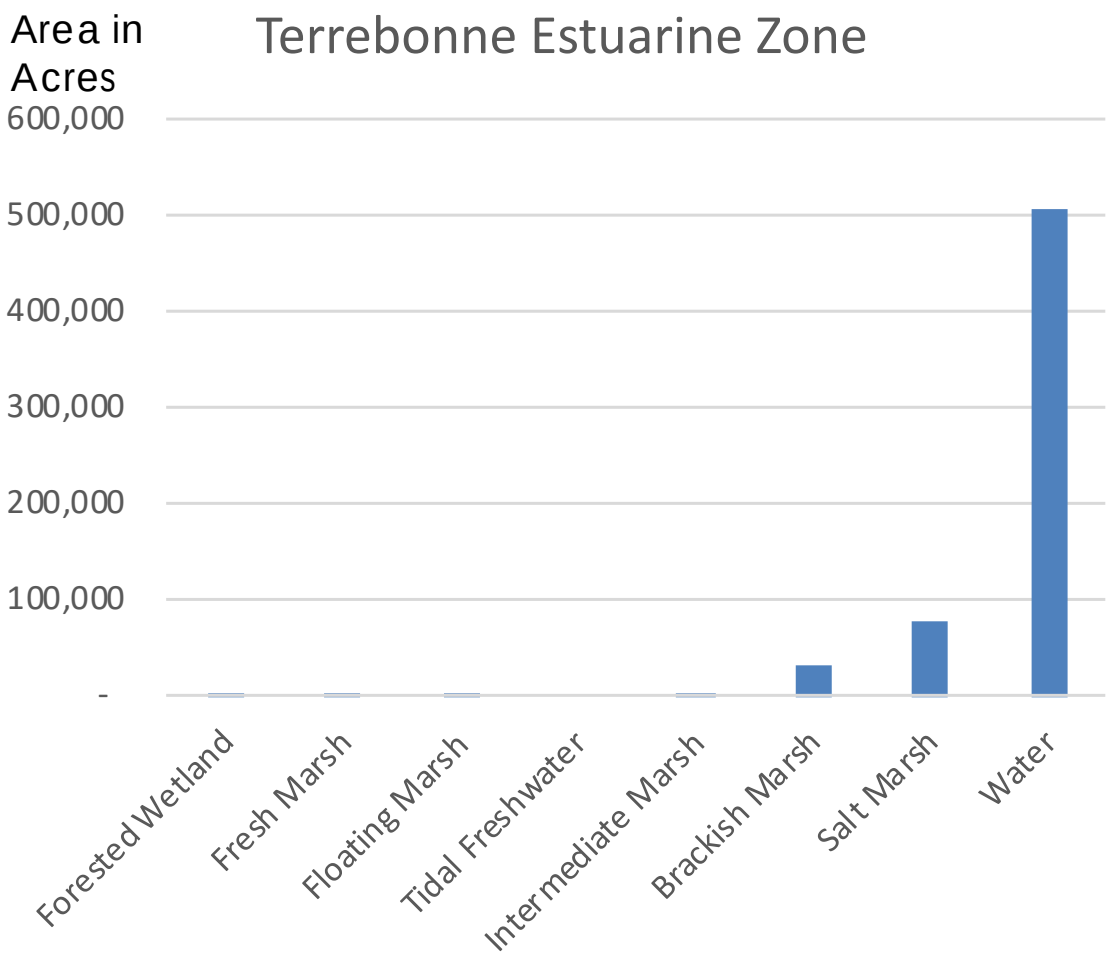
Terrebonne Estuarine Zone

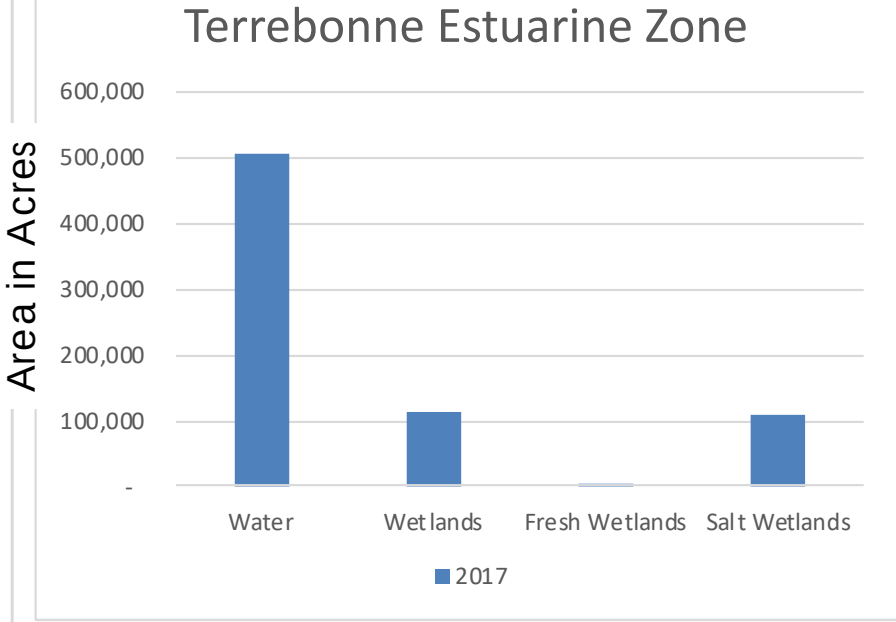
Pre-Screening Recommendation #2

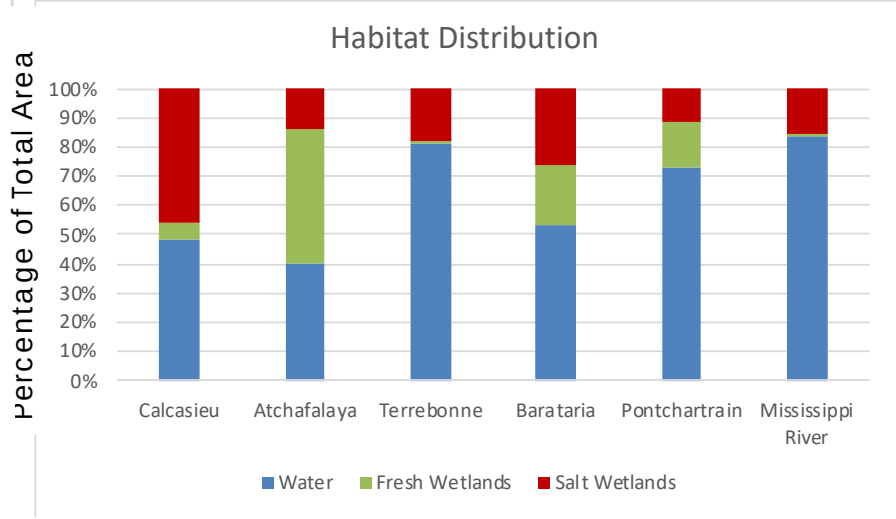
Sufficient Core Areas: The current availability of state-owned lands to establish core areas for candidate LaNERR sites in the Terrebonne Estuarine Zone is sufficient.

State Lands = 44,203 acres; Other Public Lands = 15,260 acres









Graphs representing the current (2017) distribution of wetland habitats (fresh or saline) in each of the six Estuarine Zones compared to water habitats.

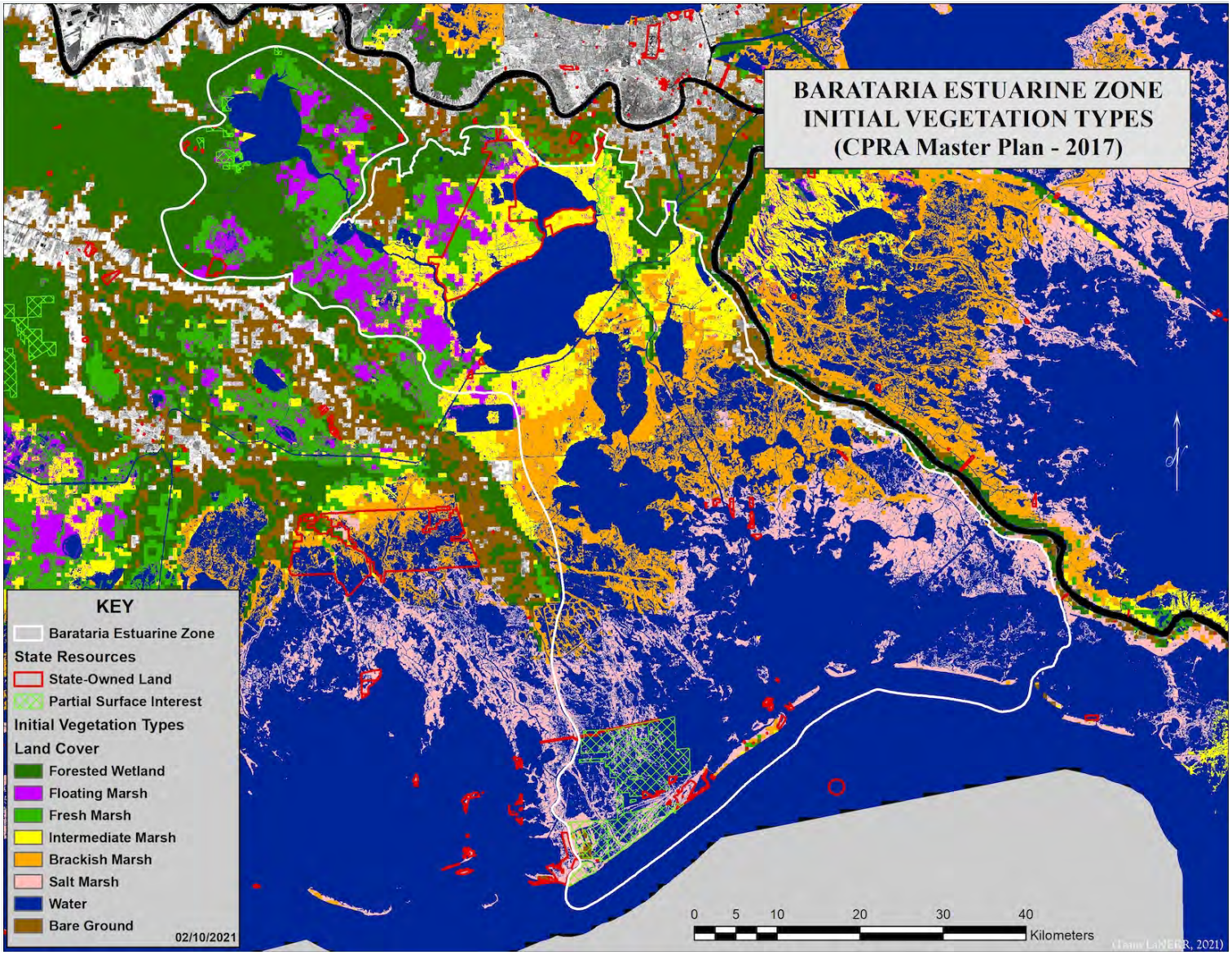
LaNERR SEARCH

I. Environmental Representativeness

Barataria Estuarine Zone

Pre-Screening Recommendation #1

Significant Unique Setting: The coastal setting of this Estuarine Zone is unique in the Louisianian Biogeographic Zone of NERR System (sections 11, 12, 13) based on the objective to represent delta estuary. The vegetation diversity demonstrates equal distribution by freshwater, brackish and saline zones. The development of candidate sites for LaNERR in this Estuarine Zone would provide unique habitats, coastal processes and salinity gradients that could be used for program development (research & education).



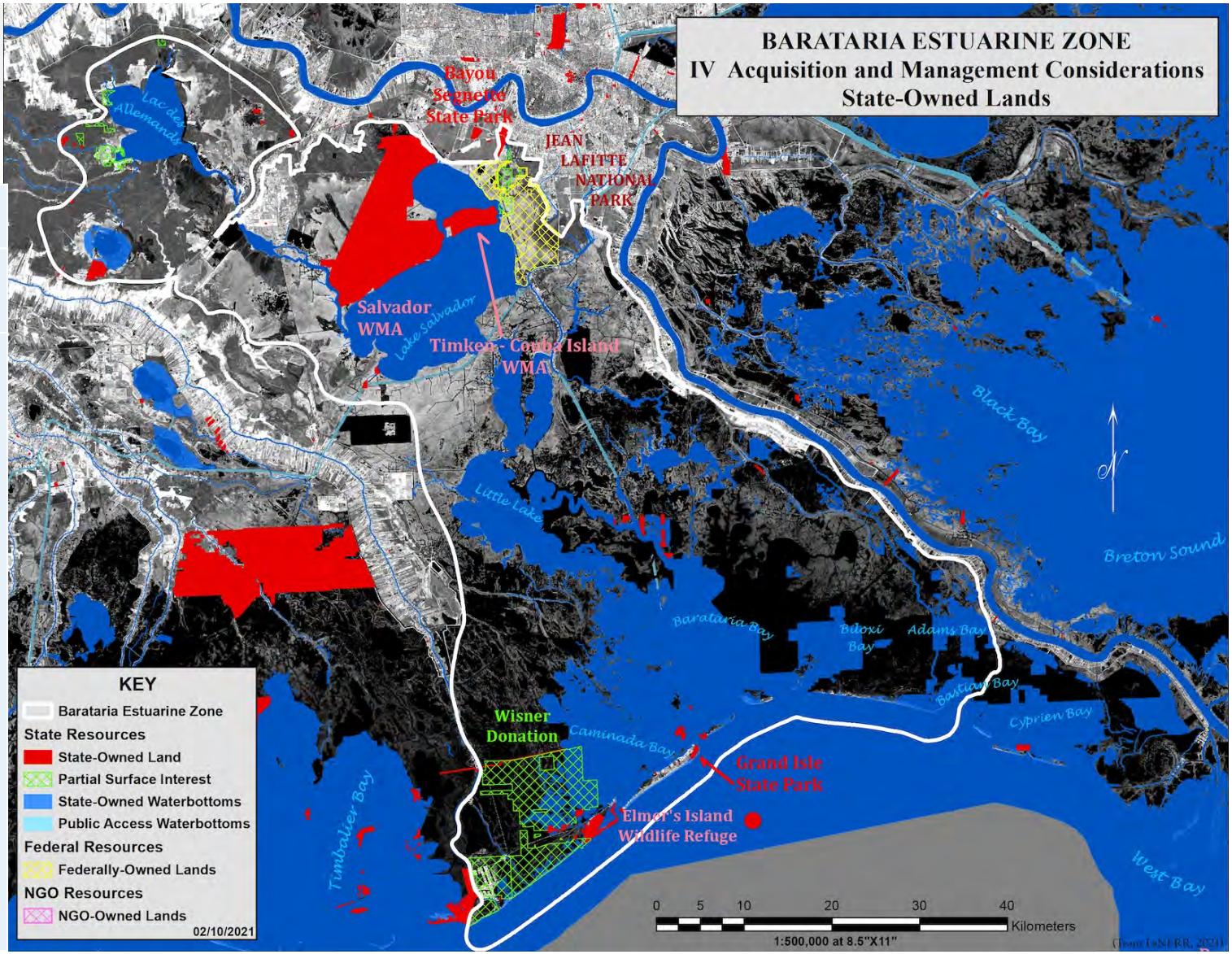
IV. Acquisition and Management Considerations

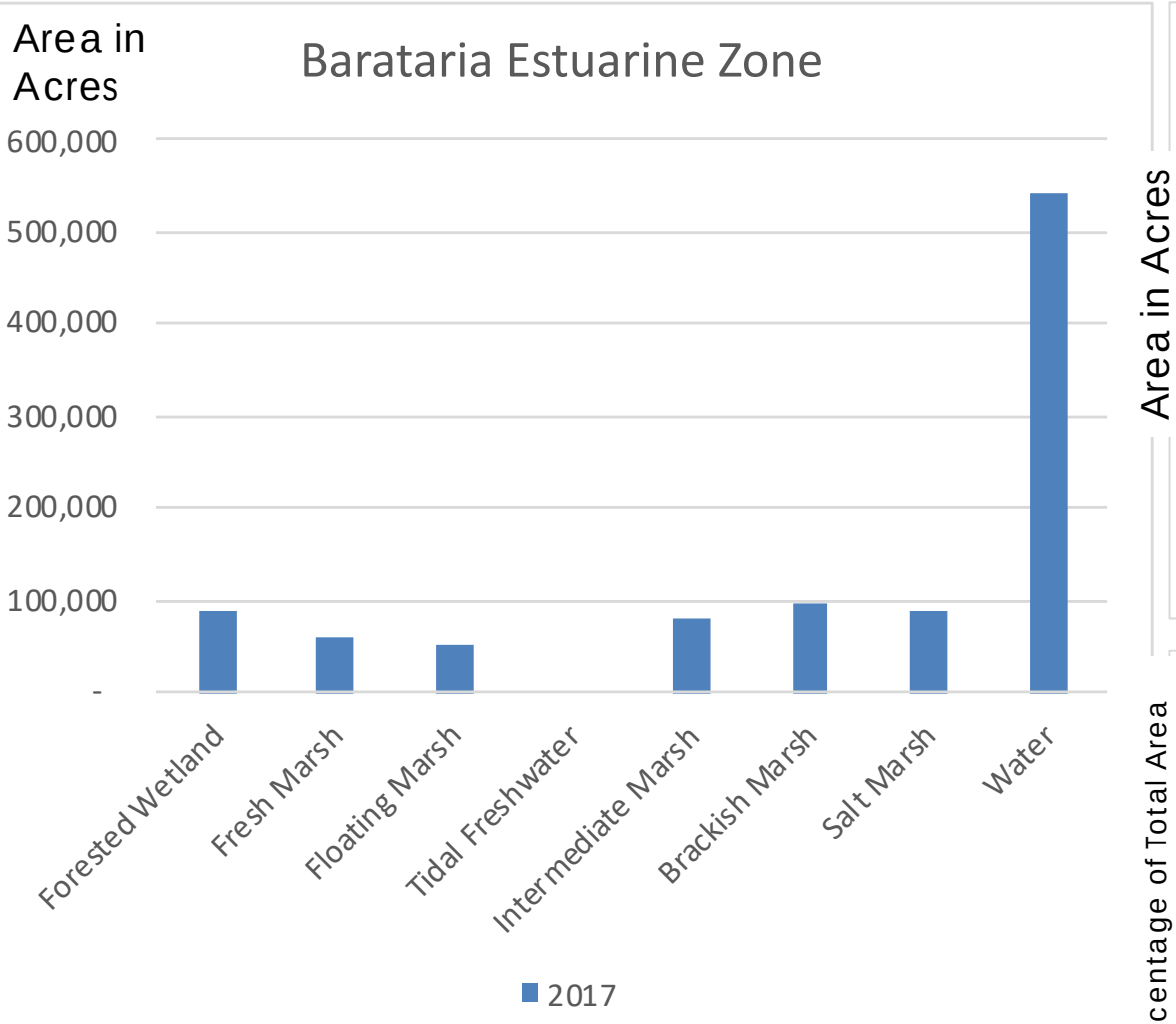
Barataria Estuarine Zone

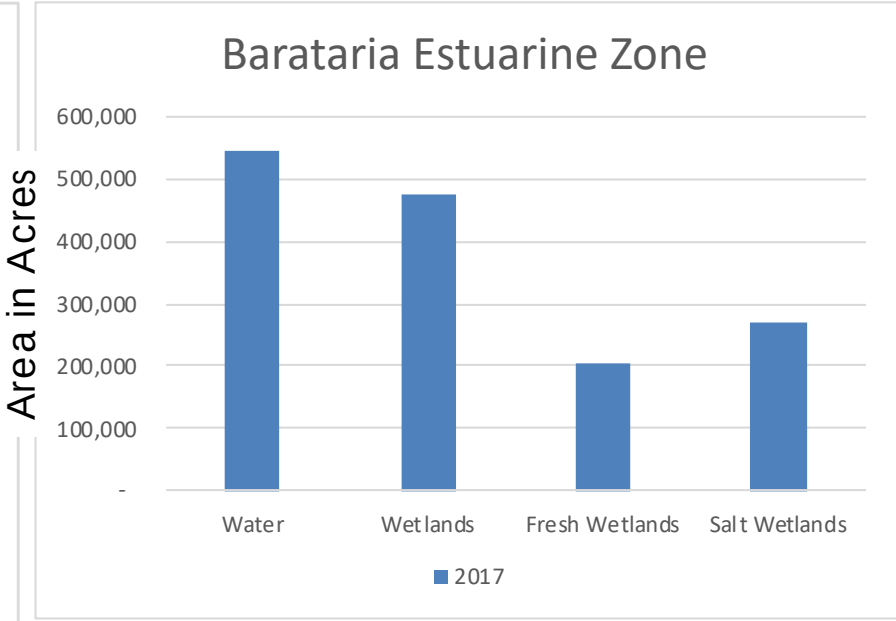
Pre-Screening Recommendation #2

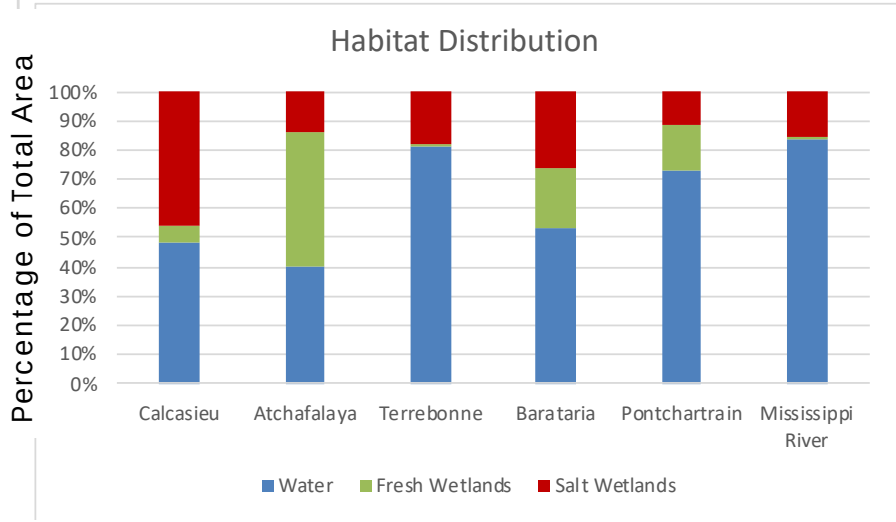
Sufficient Core Areas: The current availability of state-owned lands to establish core areas for candidate LaNERR sites in the Barataria Estuarine Zone is sufficient. State-owned lands in this Estuarine Zone are slightly less compared to other public lands.

State Lands = 40,185 acres;
Other Public Lands = 49,913 acres









Graphs representing the current (2017) distribution of wetland habitats (fresh or saline) in each of the six Estuarine Zones compared to water habitats.

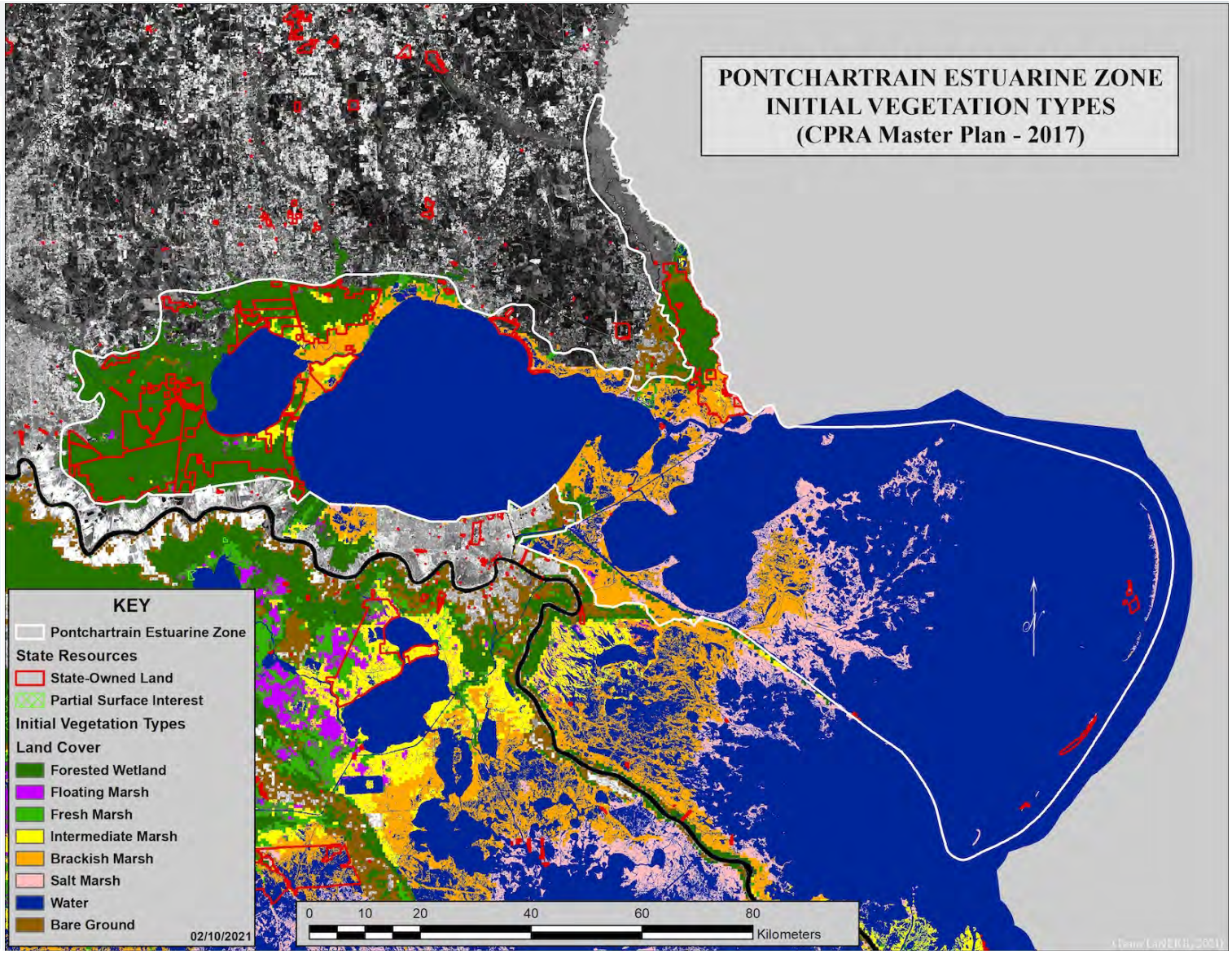
LaNERR SEARCH

I. Environmental Representativeness

Pontchartrain Estuarine Zone

Pre-Screening Recommendation #1

<u>Significant Unique Setting:</u> The coastal setting of this Estuarine Zone is unique in the Louisianian Biogeographic Zone of NERR System (sections 11, 12, 13) based on the objective to represent delta estuary. The vegetation diversity demonstrates equal distribution by freshwater, brackish and saline zones. The development of candidate sites for LaNERR in this Estuarine Zone would provide unique habitats, coastal processes and salinity gradients that could be used for program development (research & education).



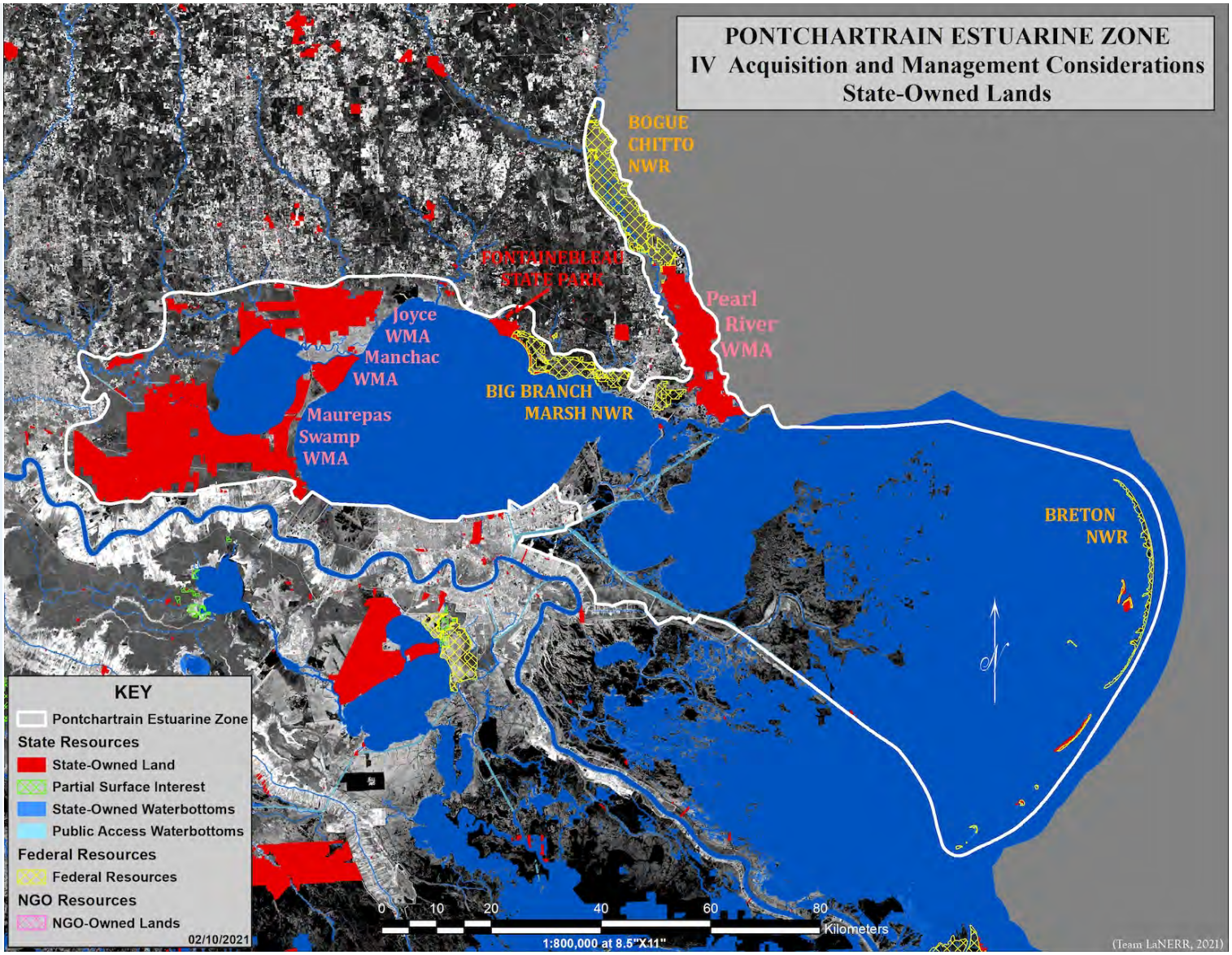
IV. Acquisition and Management Considerations

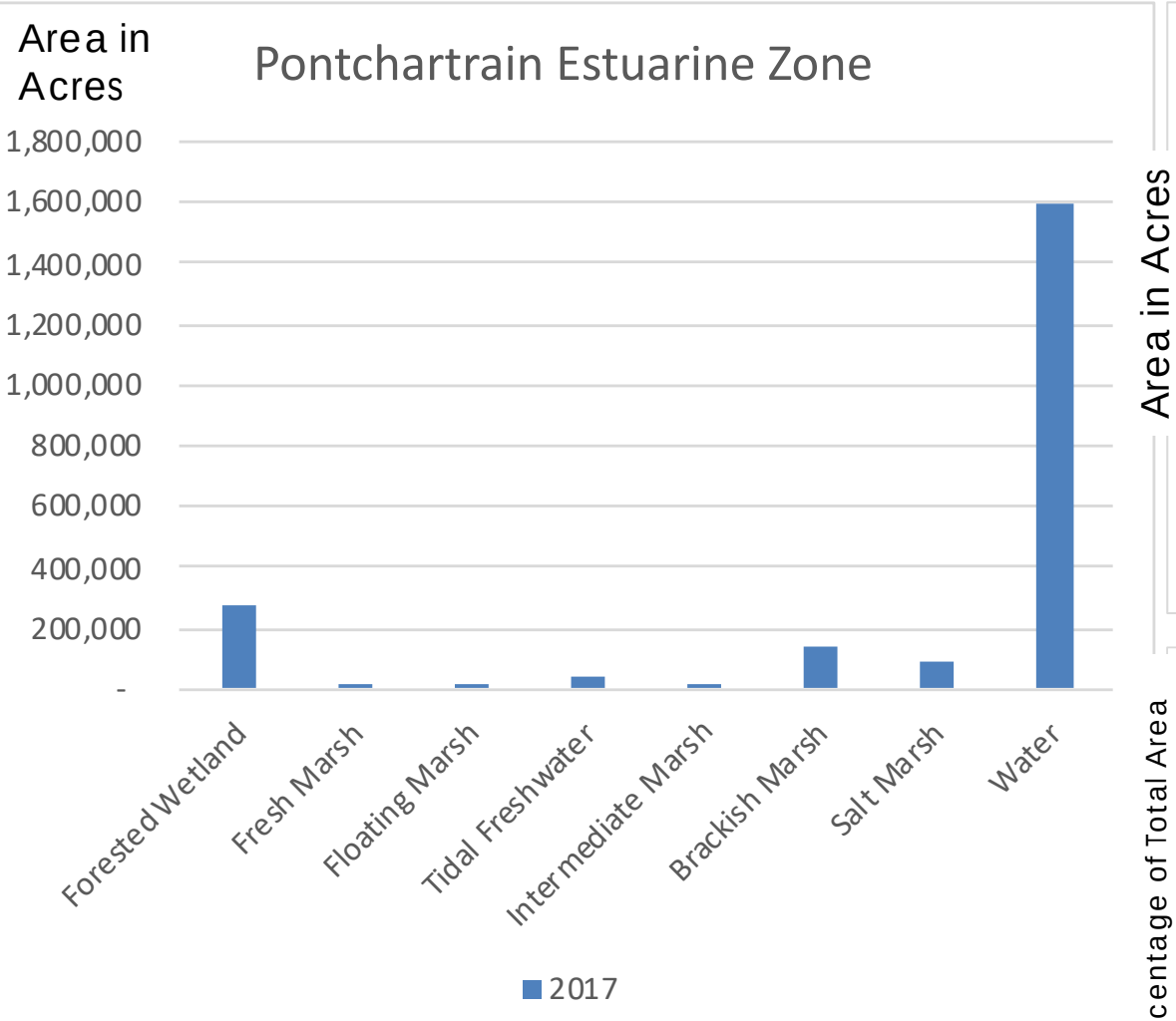
Pontchartrain Estuarine Zone

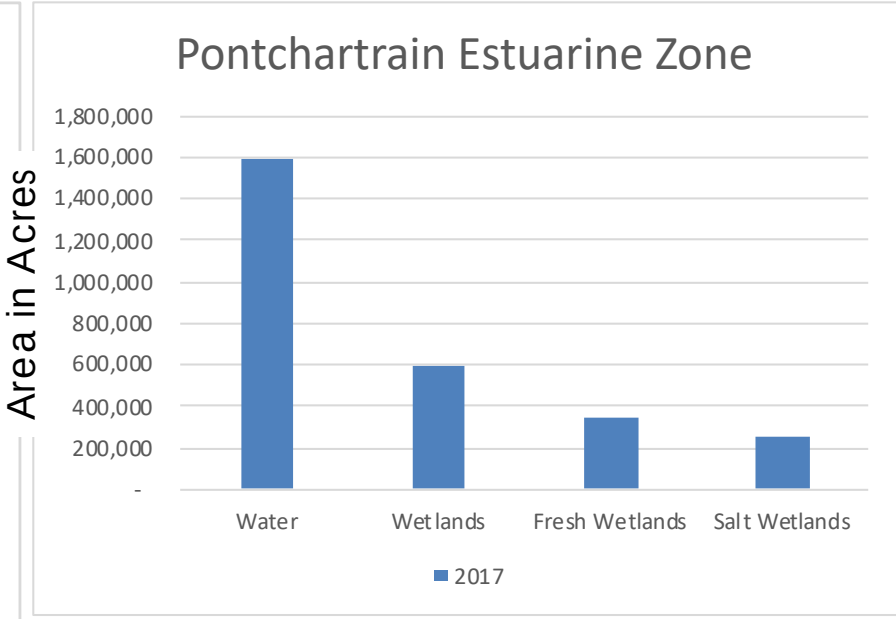
Pre-Screening Recommendation #2

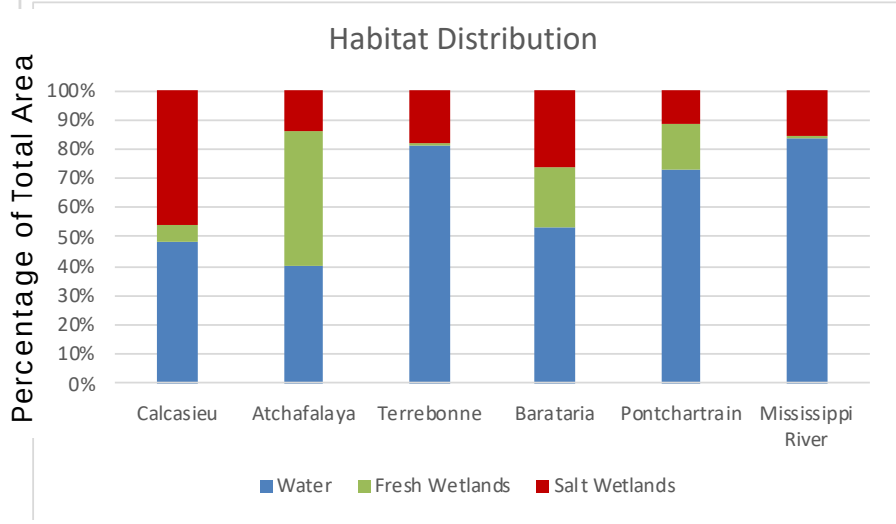
<u>Sufficient Core Areas:</u> The current availability of state-owned lands to establish core areas for candidate LaNERR sites in the Pontchartrain Estuarine Zone is sufficient.

State Lands = 200,207 acres; Other Public Lands = 53,640 acres









Graphs representing the current (2017) distribution of wetland habitats (fresh or saline) in each of the six Estuarine Zones compared to water habitats.

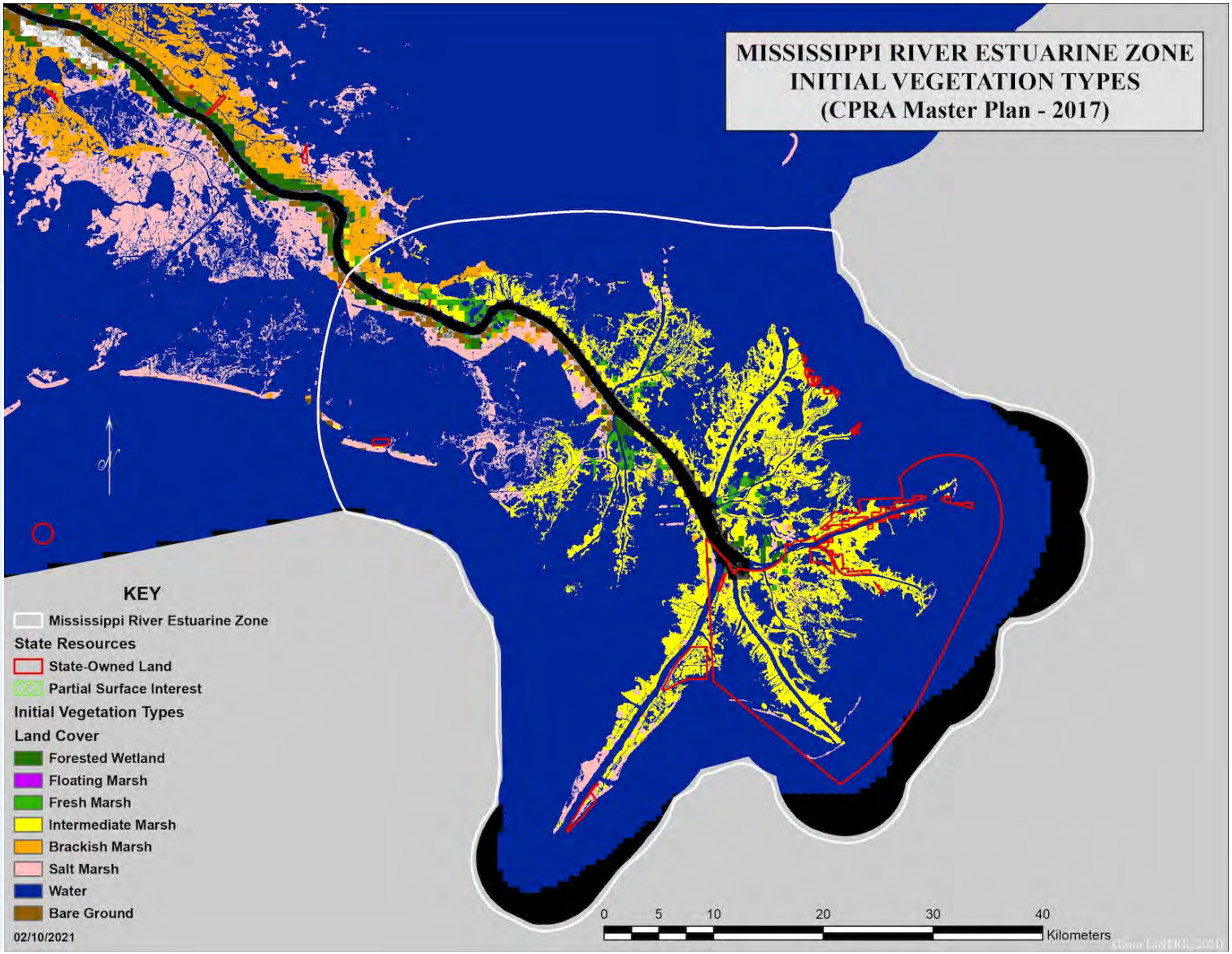
LaNERR SEARCH

I. Environmental Representativeness

Mississippi River Estuarine Zone

Pre-Screening Recommendation #1

Significant Unique Setting: The coastal setting of this Estuarine Zone is unique in the Louisianian Biogeographic Zone of NERR System (sections 11, 12, 13) based on the objective to represent delta estuary. The vegetation diversity demonstrates dominance by intermediate salinity zones but also has freshwater, brackish and saline zones. The development of candidate sites for LaNERR in this Estuarine Zone would provide unique habitats, coastal processes and salinity gradients that could be used for program development (research & education).



LaNERR SEARCH

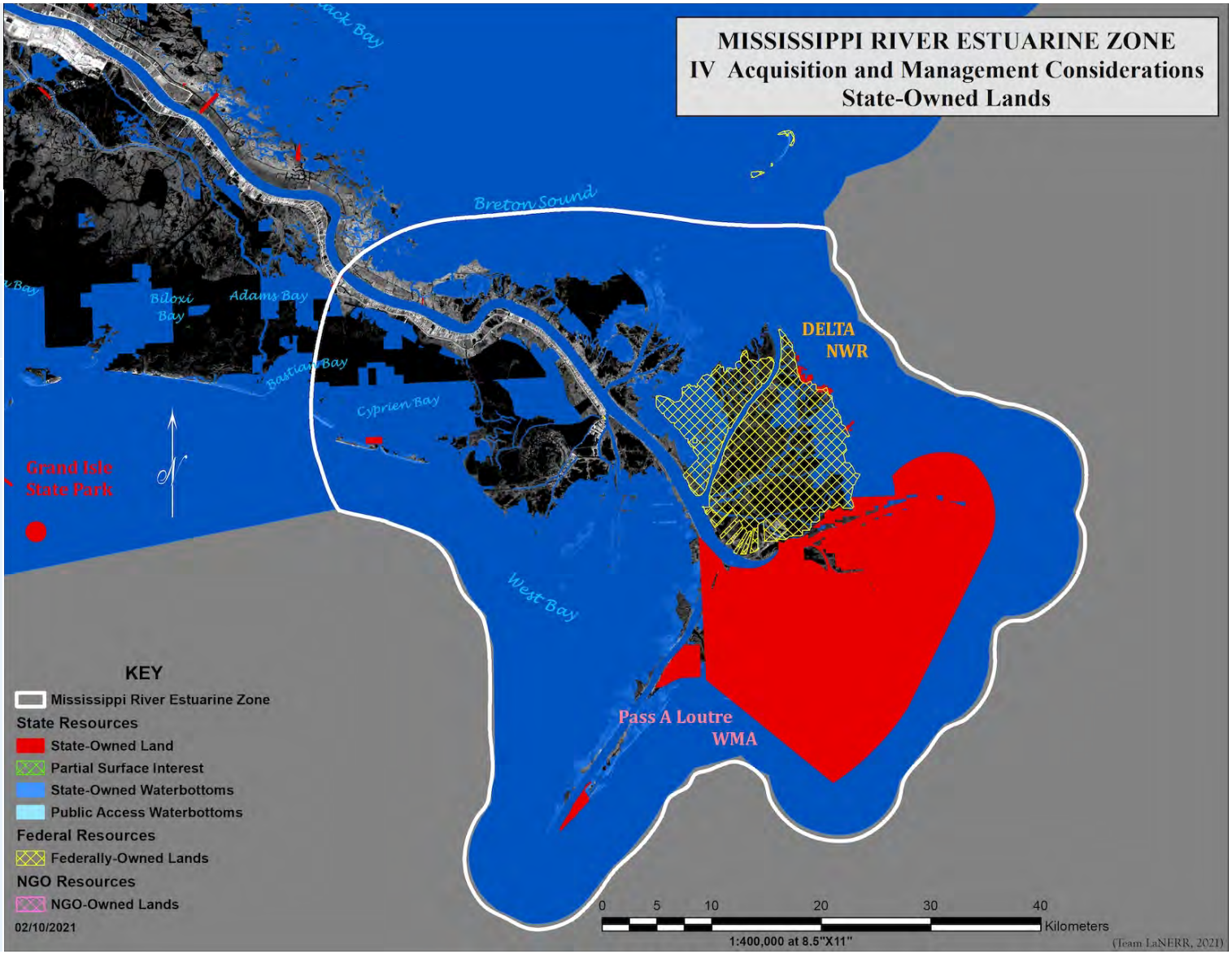
IV. Acquisition and Management Considerations

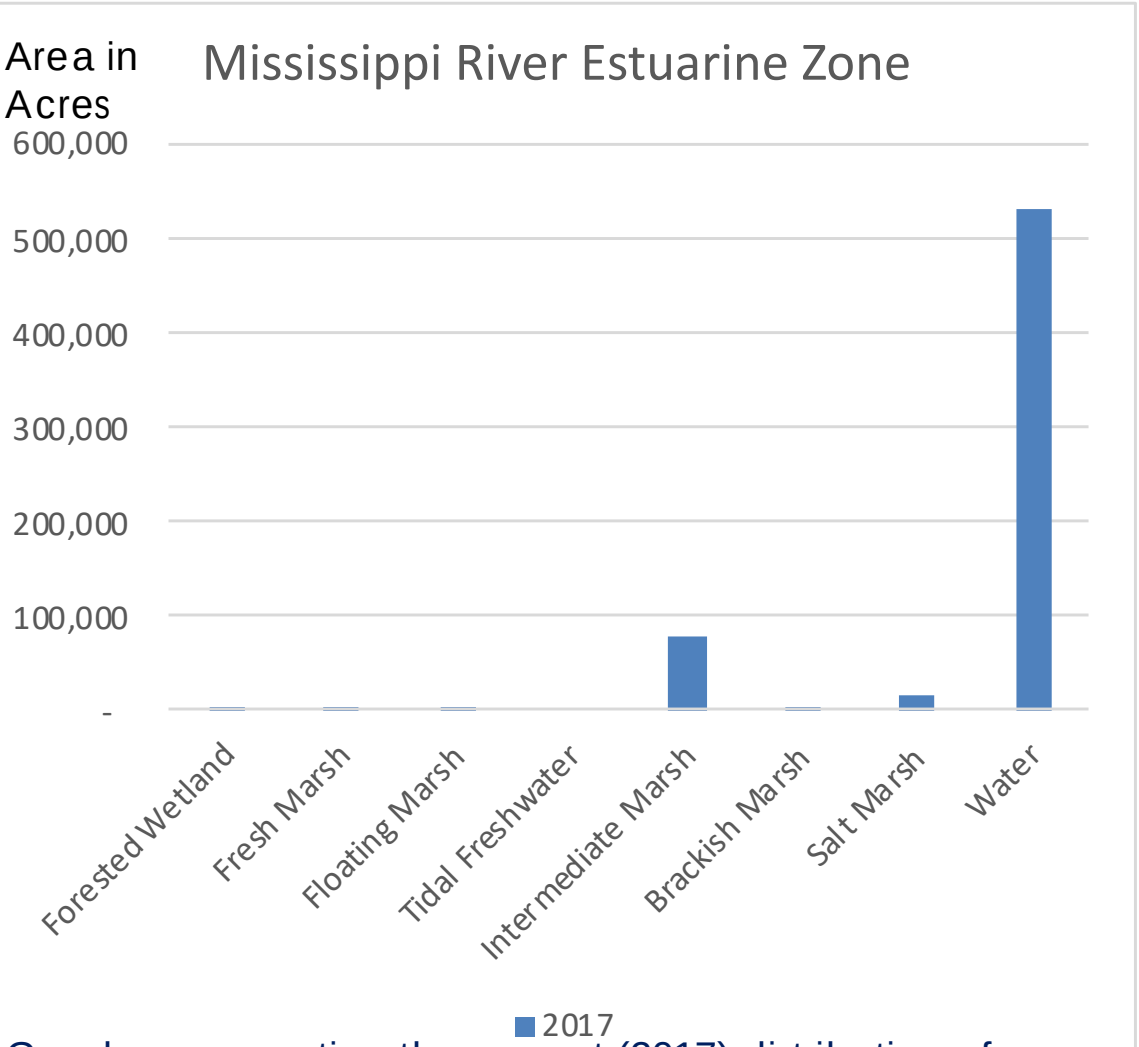
Mississippi River Estuarine Zone

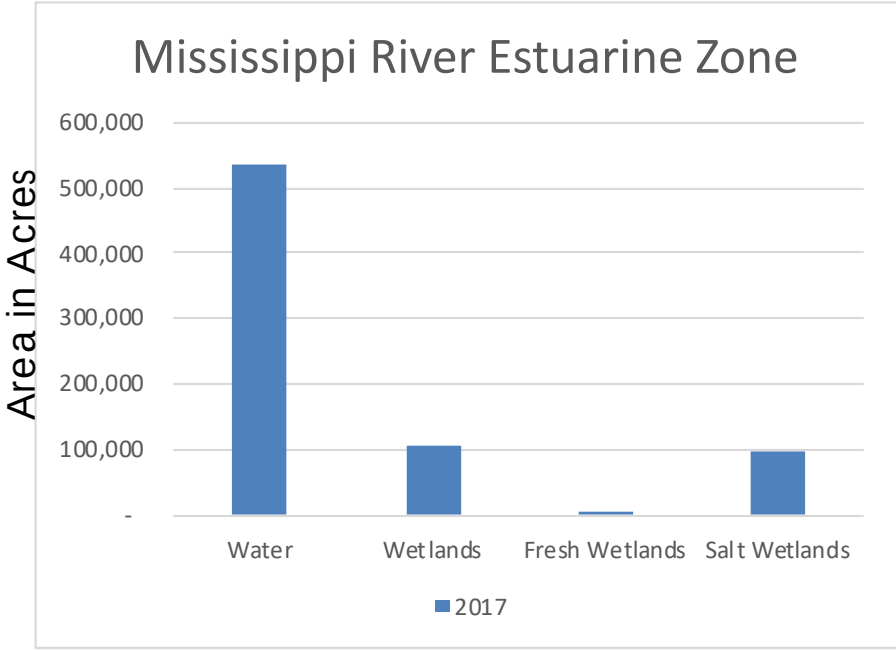
Pre-Screening Recommendation #2

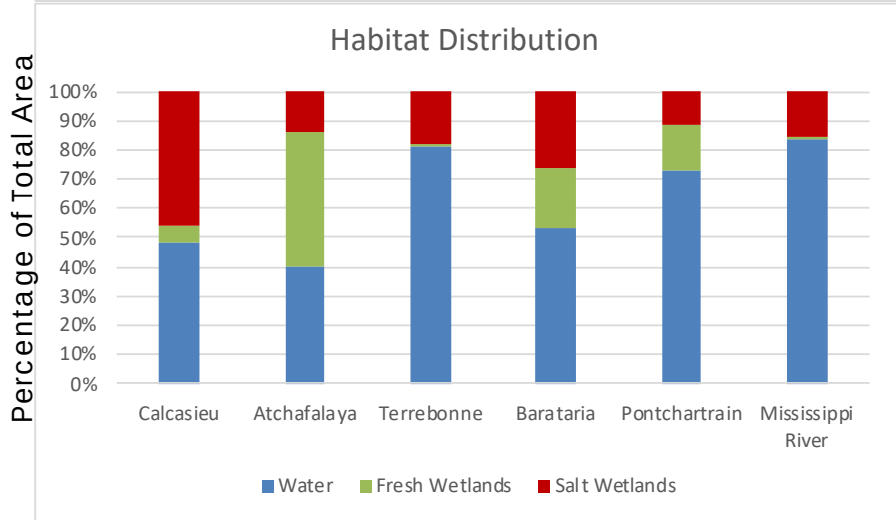
<u>Sufficient Core Areas:</u> The current availability of state-owned lands to establish core areas for candidate LaNERR sites in the Mississippi River Estuarine Zone is sufficient.

State Lands = 116,118 acres; Other Public Lands = 49,048 acres









Graphs representing the current (2017) distribution of wetland habitats (fresh or saline) in each of the six Estuarine Zones compared to water habitats.

This section of the presentation focuses on Criterion #3.

Pre-Screening Criteria #3
Land Integrity

3. Is the integrity of the wetlands that may serve as potential core (state-owned land) and buffer areas that provide the unique features of the NERR (see criterion #1) maintained in perpetuity within this Estuarine Zone, which would allow for development of facilities and programs (research & education)?

Description: Land change was measured by comparing the 2017 Coastal Master Plan initial condition vegetation to the year 50 projected vegetation under the medium scenario with implementation of the plan. A reduction of 50% in wetland area from initial to projected was considered sufficient to question the integrity of a zone.

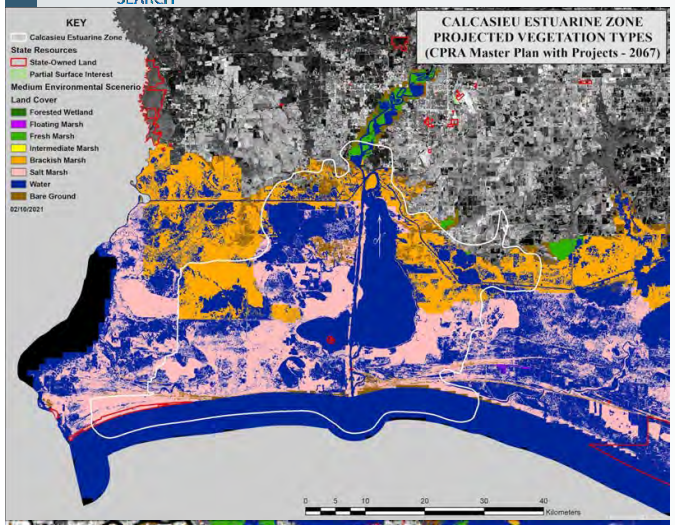
Estuarine Zone	Calcasieu Estuarine Zone	Atchafalaya Estuarine Zone	Terrebonne Estuarine Zone	Barataria Estuarine Zone	Pontchartrain Estuarine Zone	Mississippi River Estuarine Zone
Pre-Screening Criteria	Pre-Screening Recommendation	Pre-Screening Recommendation	Pre-Screening Recommendation	Pre-Screening Recommendation	Pre-Screening Recommendation	Pre-Screening Recommendation
3. Is the integrity of the wetlands that may serve as potential core (state-owned land) and buffer areas that provide the unique features of the NERR (see criterion #1) maintained in perpetuity within this Estuarine Zone, which would allow for development of facilities and programs (research & education)? Description: Land change was measured by comparing the 2017 Coastal Master Plan initial condition vegetation to the year 50 projected vegetation under the medium scenario with implementation of the plan. A reduction of 50% in wetland area from initial to projected was considered sufficient to question the integrity of a zone.	Insignificant Area Change: There is insignificant land loss in the potential core areas (state-owned lands) that could be used to develop candidate sites for LaNERR The Estuarine Zone has minimum potential level of conflict because of future land loss with respect to developing facilities and programs (research & education) of LaNERR. Initial Wetland Area = 237,001 acres; Projected Wetland Area = 194,655 acres. % Wetland Change = -18.1%	Insignificant Area Change: There is insignificant land loss in the potential core areas (state-owned lands) that could be used to develop candidate sites for LaNERR. Potential core areas are sufficient, and the Estuarine Zone has minimum potential level of conflict because of future land loss with respect to developing facilities and programs (research & education) of LaNERR. Initial Wetland Area = 1,120,997 acres; Projected Wetland Area = 1,045,730 acres. Wetland Change = -6.7%	Significant Area Change: There is significant land loss in the potential core areas (state-owned lands) that could be used to develop candidate sites for LaNERR. Potential core areas are sufficient at present (initial conditions), but the Estuarine Zone has significant level of conflict in the future because of land loss of core areas that would be used for developing facilities and programs (research & education) of LaNERR. Initial Wetland Area = 115,007 acres; Projected Wetland Area = 33,573 acres. Wetland Change = -70.8%	Insignificant Area Change: There is insignificant land loss in the potential core areas (state-owned lands) that could be used to develop candidate sites for LaNERR. Potential core areas are sufficient, and the Estuarine Zone has minimum potential level of conflict because of future land loss with respect to developing facilities and programs (research & education) of LaNERR. Initial Wetland Area = 473,285 acres; Projected Wetland Area = 314,916 acres. Wetland Change = -33.5%	Insignificant Area Change: There is insignificant land loss in the potential core areas (state-owned lands) that could be used to develop candidate sites for LaNERR. Potential core areas are sufficient, and the Estuarine Zone has minimum potential level of conflict because of future land loss with respect to developing facilities and programs (research & education) of LaNERR. Initial Wetland Area = 597,075 acres; Projected Wetland Area = 484,214 acres. Wetland Change = -18.9%	Significant Area Change: There is significant land loss in the potential core areas (state-owned lands) that could be used to develop candidate sites for LaNERR. Potential core areas are sufficient at present (initial conditions), but the Estuarine Zone has significant level of conflict in the future because of land loss of core areas that would be used for developing facilities and programs (research & education) of LaNERR. Initial Wetland Area = 107,521 acres; Projected Wetland Area = 38,766 acres. Wetland Change = -69.9%

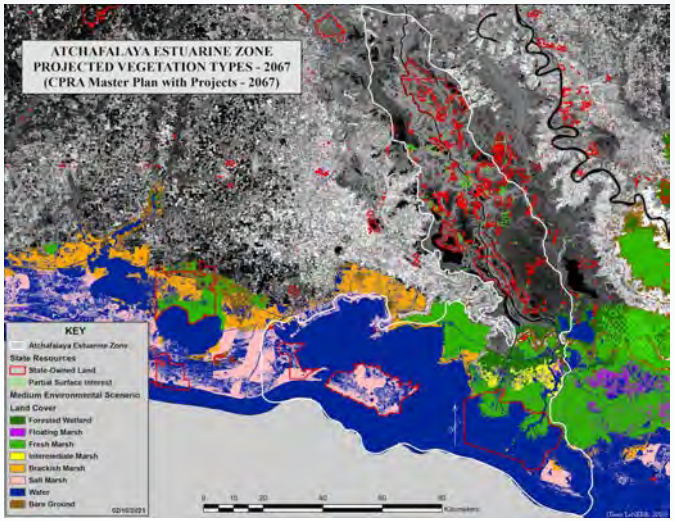
This section of the presentation focuses on Criterion #4.

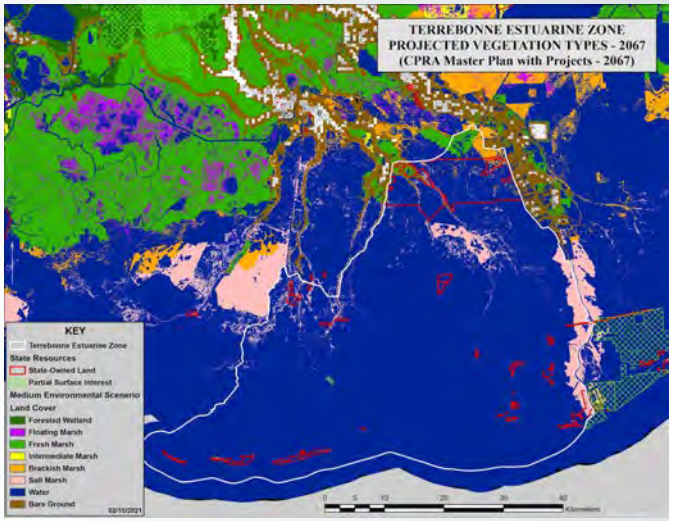
Pre-Screening Criteria #4 Change in Habitat Diversity
4. Do the wetlands that would serve as potential core (state-owned land) and buffer areas currently support a diversity of habitats along a salinity gradient representative of a delta estuary. Do these wetland areas maintain a diversity of habitats in perpetuity (maintain integrity) within this Estuarine Zone over the next 50 years? Description: Changes that demonstrate Significant Habitat Diversity change represent conflict with foreseeable program development in research & education to meet the mission of a NERR. Change in habitat diversity was measured by comparing the 2017 Coastal Master Plan initial condition vegetation to the year 50 projected vegetation under the medium scenario with implementation of the plan. (see criteria to the right) Insignificant change (fresh or saline habitat change <-25%); Moderate change (fresh or saline habitat change -25 to -65%); Significant change (fresh or saline habitat change > -65%).

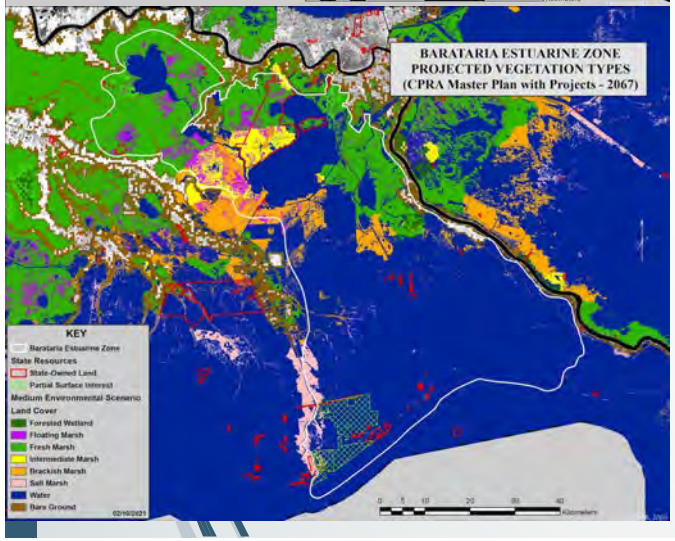
Estuarine Zone	Calcasieu Estuarine Zone	Atchafalaya Estuarine Zone	Terrebonne Estuarine Zone	Barataria Estuarine Zone	Pontchartrain Estuarine Zone	Mississippi River Estuarine Zone
Pre-Screening Criteria	Pre-Screening Recommendation	Pre-Screening Recommendation	Pre-Screening Recommendation	Pre-Screening Recommendation	Pre-Screening Recommendation	Pre-Screening Recommendation
4. Do the wetlands that would serve as potential core (state-owned land) and buffer areas currently support a diversity of habitats along a salinity gradient representative of a delta estuary. Do these wetland areas maintain a diversity of habitats in perpetuity (maintain integrity) within this Estuarine Zone over the next 50 years? Description: Changes that demonstrate Significant Habitat Diversity change represent conflict with foreseeable program development in research & education to meet the mission of a NERR. Change in habitat diversity was measured by comparing the 2017 Coastal Master Plan initial condition vegetation to the year 50 projected vegetation under the medium scenario with implementation of the plan. Insignificant change (fresh or saline habitat change <-25%); Moderate change (fresh or saline habitat change -25 to -65%); Significant change (fresh or saline habitat change > -65%).	Significant Habitat Diversity Change: There is significant change in habitat types in the core areas that could be used to develop candidate sites for LaNERR. Potential core areas in the Estuarine Zone are insufficient in the future because of d significant habitat change to develop programs (research & education) of LaNERR. Percent change in Fresh Wetland Area = -94.7%; Percent change in Saline Wetland Area = -8.4%.	Moderate Habitat Diversity Change: There is moderate change in habitat types in the core areas that could be used to develop candidate sites for LaNERR. Potential core areas are sufficent and the Estuarine Zone has moderate potential level of conflict due to change in habitat type that would impact future program development (research & education) of LaNERR. Percent change in Fresh Wetland Area = +6.2%; Percent change in Saline Wetland Area = -48.6%.	Significant Habitat Diversity Change: There is significant change in habitat types in the core areas that could be used to develop candidate sites for LaNERR and the diversity lacks tidal freshwater habitats. Potential core areas in the Estuarine Zone are insufficient in the future because of significant habitat change to develop programs (research & education) of LaNERR. Percent change in Fresh Wetland Area = +12.0%; Percent change in Saline Wetland Area = -73.8%.	Significant Habitat Diversity Change: There is significant change in habitat types in the core areas that could be used to develop candidate sites for LaNERR. Potential core areas in the Estuarine Zone are insufficient in the future because of significant habitat change to develop programs (research & education) of LaNERR. Percent change in Fresh Wetland Area = +13.9%; Percent change in Saline Wetland Area = -69.8%.	Significant Habitat Diversity Change: There is significant change in habitat types in the core areas that could be used to develop candidate sites for LaNERR. Potential core areas in the Estuarine Zone are insufficient in the future because of significant habitat change to develop programs (research & education) of LaNERR. Percent change in Fresh Wetland Area = +26.8%; Percent change in Saline Wetland Area = -82.6%.	Significant Habitat Diversity Change: There is significant change in habitat types in the core areas that could be used to develop candidate sites for LaNERR. Potential core areas in the Estuarine Zone are insufficient in the future because ofsignificant habitat change to develop programs (research & education) of LaNERR. Percent change in Fresh Wetland Area = +343.8%; Percent change in Saline Wetland Area = -96.5%.

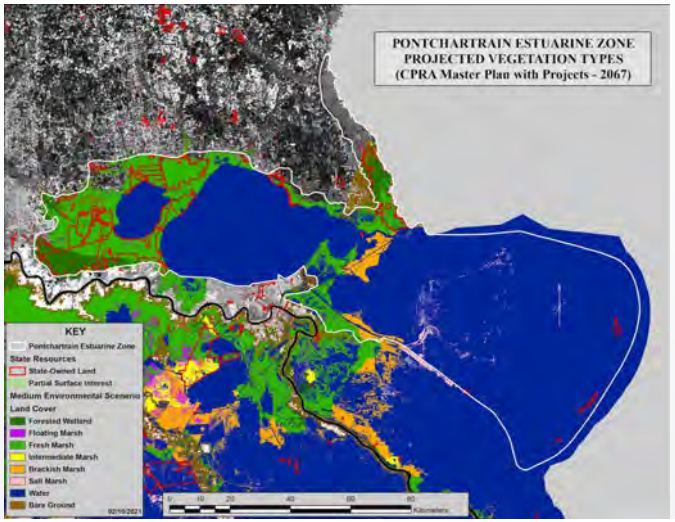
These maps show the distribution of habitat types projected in 50 yrs in each of the six Estuarine Zones. This information was used to develop recommendations for Criteria #3 and #4.

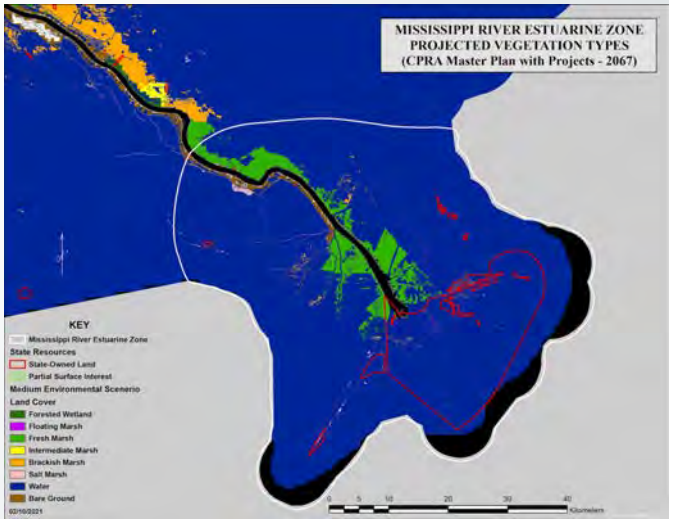




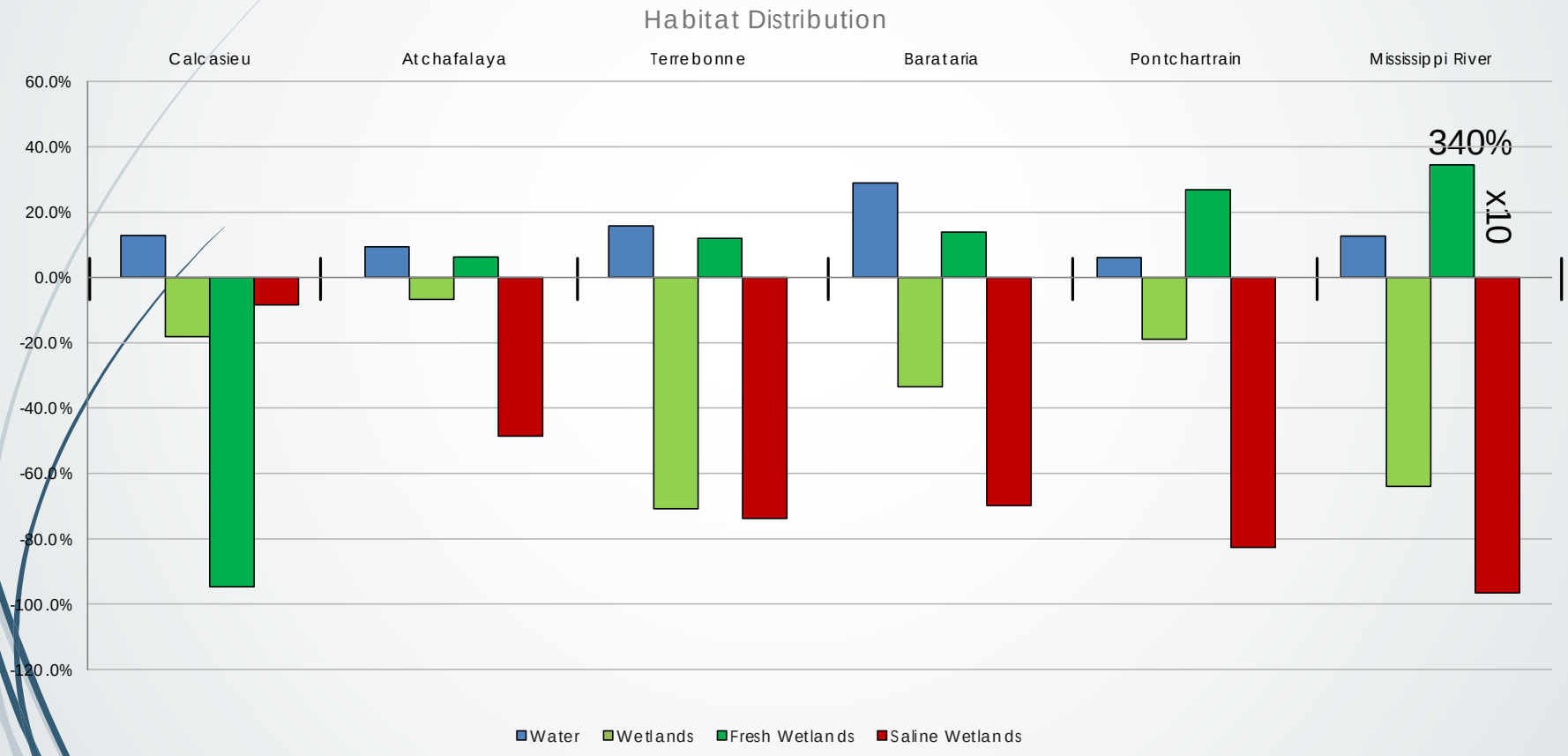








Percentage Change in Area for Each Habitat Type



Units in Acres

Table of raw data used to calculate the Percentage Change in Area for Each Habitat Type for each of the six Estuarine Zones

Atchafalaya

Vegetation Type	2017	2067	Change
Forested Wetland	85,961	46,793	(39,168)
Fresh Marsh	24,344	118,874	94,530
Floating Marsh	7,064	5,065	(1,999)
Tidal Freshwater	738,759	738,759	-
Intermediate Marsh	104,978	22,181	(82,797)
Brackish Marsh	150,541	17,416	(133,125)
Salt Marsh	9,350	96,642	87,292
Water	738,492	807,454	68,962
Unclassified	28,024	27,915	(109)
Bare Ground	6,559	12,989	6,431
Total	1,887,514	1,881,099	(6,415)

	2017	2067	Change
Water	738,492	807,454	9.3%
Wetlands	1,120,997	1,045,730	-6.7%
Fresh Wetlands	856,128	909,491	6.2%
Salt Wetlands	264,869	136,239	-48.6%

	2017	2067
Wetlands:Water Ratio	1.518	1.295
Salt:Fresh	0.309	0.150

Barataria

Vegetation Type	2017	2067	Change
Forested Wetland	90,312	3,394	(86,917)
Fresh Marsh	61,441	194,902	133,461
Floating Marsh	53,823	35,808	(18,015)
Tidal Freshwater			-
Intermediate Marsh	81,101	25,294	(55,808)
Brackish Marsh	97,406	44,017	(53,389)
Salt Marsh	89,203	11,501	(77,701)
Water	543,465	700,893	157,427
Unclassified	4,475	4,443	(32)
Bare Ground	12,197	13,174	977
Total	1,021,226	1,020,252	(973)

	2017	2067	Change
Water	543,465	700,893	29.0%
Wetlands	473,285	314,916	-33.5%
Fresh Wetlands	205,575	234,104	13.9%
Salt Wetlands	267,710	80,812	-69.8%

	2017	2067
Wetlands:Water Rat	0.871	0.449
Salt:Fresh	1.302	0.345

Calcasieu

Vegetation Type	2017	2067	Change
Forested Wetland	1,541	2	(1,540)
Fresh Marsh	25,033	1,303	(23,730)
Floating Marsh	113	119	6
Tidal Freshwater			-
Intermediate Marsh	5,609	7	(5,601)
Brackish Marsh	176,512	69,101	(107,412)
Salt Marsh	28,192	123,547	95,355
Water	223,283	252,035	28,752
Unclassified	15,549	15,522	(27)
Bare Ground	3,598	17,795	14,197
Total	475,832	461,636	(14,197)

	2017	2067	Change
Water	223,283	252,035	12.9%
Wetlands	237,001	194,079	-18.1%
Fresh Wetlands	26,687	1,424	-94.7%
Salt Wetlands	210,314	192,655	-8.4%

	2017	2067
Wetlands:Water Ra	1.061	0.770
Salt:Fresh	7.881	135.334

Mississippi River

Vegetation Type	2017	2067	Change
Forested Wetland	2,356	0	(2,356)
Fresh Marsh	4,888	34,619	29,731
Floating Marsh	716	708	(8)
Tidal Freshwater			-
Intermediate Marsh	78,453	13	(78,440)
Brackish Marsh	3,415	1,944	(1,472)
Salt Marsh	17,693	1,482	(16,210)
Water	533,979	601,465	67,486
Unclassified	81,012	80,965	(48)
Bare Ground	2,476	3,775	1,299
Total	722,513	721,196	(1,317)

	2017	2067	Change
Water	533,979	601,465	12.6%
Wetlands	107,521	38,766	-63.9%
Fresh Wetlands	7,960	35,327	343.8%
Salt Wetlands	99,561	3,439	-96.5%

	2017	2067
Wetlands:Water Rat	0.201	0.064
Salt:Fresh	12.507	0.097

Pontchartrain

Vegetation Type	2017	2067	Change
Forested Wetland	280,608	72,428	(208,180)
Fresh Marsh	16,224	319,032	302,808
Floating Marsh	3,670	2,311	(1,359)
Tidal Freshwater	47,100	47,100	-
Intermediate Marsh	13,177	819	(12,358)
Brackish Marsh	139,642	32,022	(107,619)
Salt Marsh	96,655	10,501	(86,154)
Water	1,596,245	1,692,583	96,338
Unclassified	54,694	55,713	1,019
Bare Ground	8,797	24,266	15,468
Total	2,248,014	2,232,509	(15,505)

	2017	2067	Change
Water	1,596,245	1,692,583	6.0%
Wetlands	597,075	484,214	-18.9%
Fresh Wetlands	347,601	440,871	26.8%
Salt Wetlands	249,474	43,343	-82.6%

	2017	2067
Wetlands:Water Rat	0.374	0.286
Salt:Fresh	0.718	0.098

Terrebonne

Vegetation Type	2017	2067	Change
Forested Wetland	2,095	0	(2,095)
Fresh Marsh	1,762	4,377	2,614
Floating Marsh	97	51	(46)
Tidal Freshwater			-
Intermediate Marsh	2,591	-	(2,591)
Brackish Marsh	32,122	3,817	(28,305)
Salt Marsh	76,340	25,327	(51,013)
Water	507,175	587,298	80,123
Unclassified			-
Bare Ground	622	1,935	1,312
Total	622,182	620,870	(1,312)

	2017	2067	Change
Water	507,175	587,298	15.8%
Wetlands	115,007	33,573	-70.8%
Fresh Wetlands	3,954	4,428	12.0%
Salt Wetlands	111,053	29,144	-73.8%

	2017	2067
Wetlands:Water Ra	0.227	0.057
Salt:Fresh	28.087	6.582

I. Environmental Representativeness

Next several maps, graphs, and tables show the changes in habitat type by distribution of habitat area in current vs projected conditions. Both the change in total land area relative to water and the shift in vegetation type of those land areas are used to demonstrate if there are sufficient issues of integrity in each of the six Estuarine Zones.

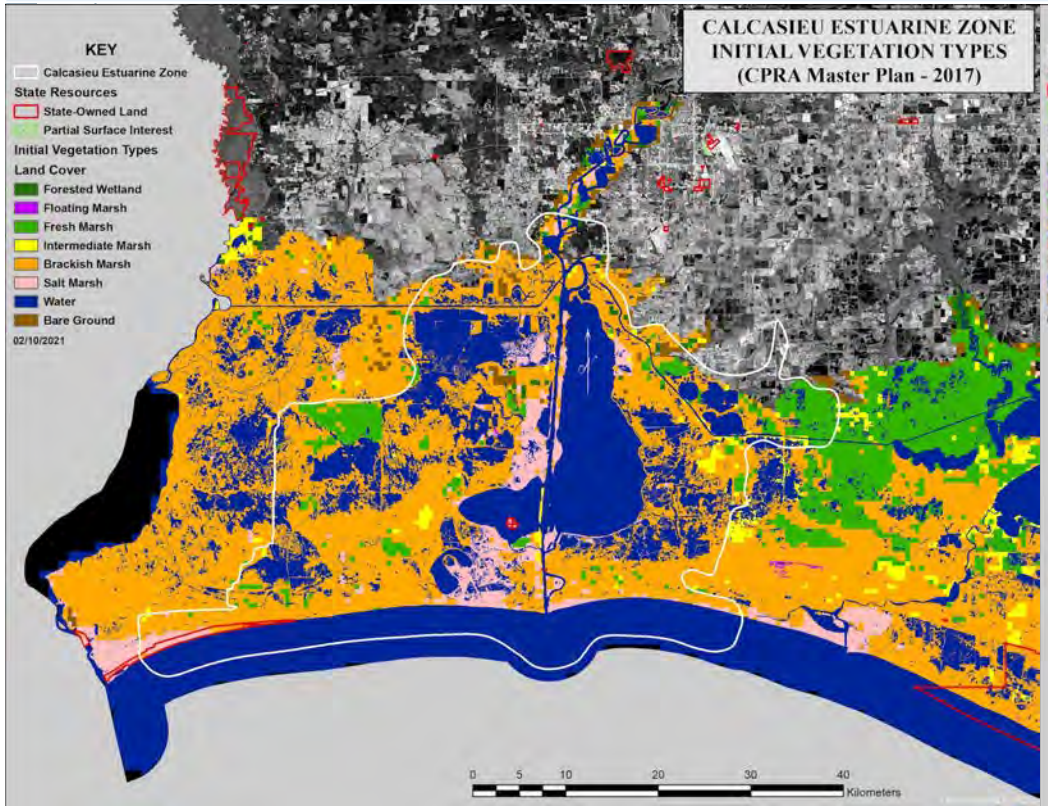
The summary evaluation from DLT is on the top of the slides with the maps of each Estuarine Zone. This evaluation is based on Criteria #3 and #4. (Same evaluation that is shown for each zone on slides 37 and 39, respectively.)

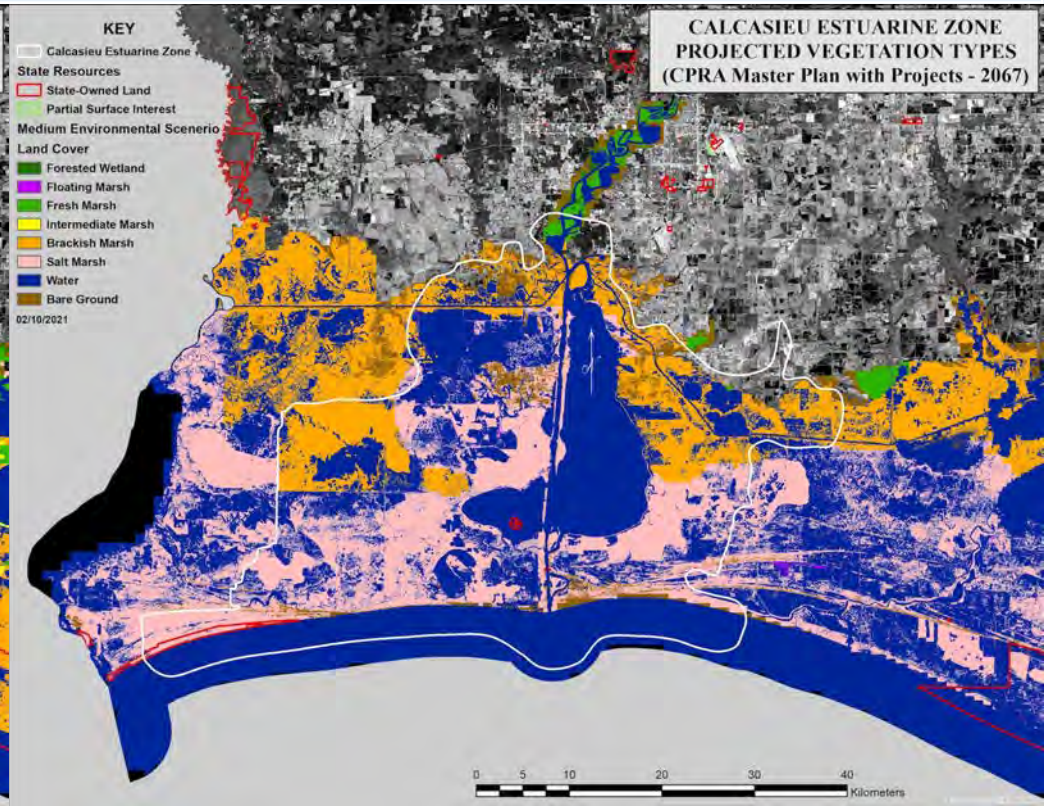
Calcasieu Estuarine Zone

Pre-Screening Recommendation #3 and #4

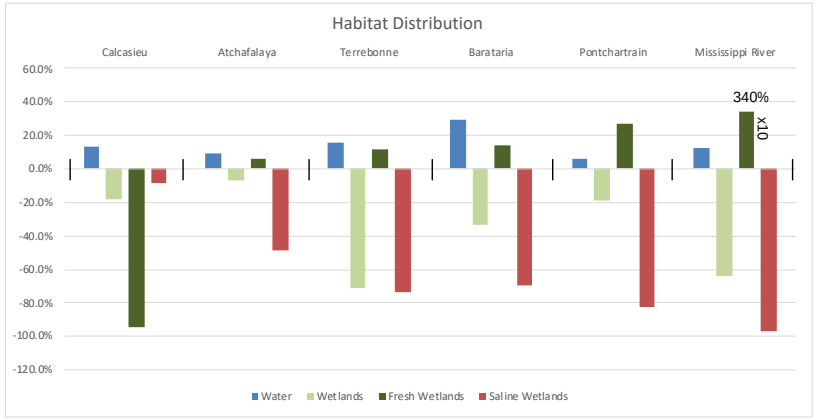
#3: Insignificant Area Change: There is insignificant land loss in the potential core areas (state-owned lands) that could be used to develop candidate sites for LaNERR The Estuarine Zone has minimum potential level of conflict because of future land loss with respect to developing facilities and programs (research & education) of LaNERR. Initial Wetland Area = 237,001 acres; Projected Wetland Area = 194,655 acres. % Wetland Change = -18.1%

#4: Significant Habitat Diversity Change: There is significant change in habitat types in the core areas that could be used to develop candidate sites for LaNERR. Potential core areas in the Estuarine Zone are insufficient in the future because of significant habitat change to develop programs (research & education) of LaNERR. Percent change in Fresh Wetland Area = -94.7%; Percent change in Saline Wetland Area = -8.4%.

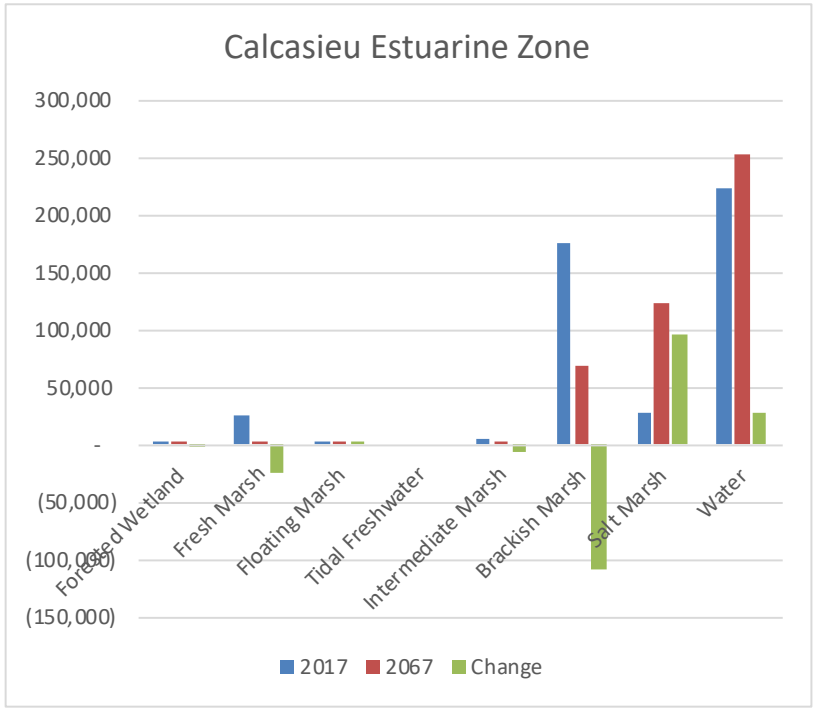




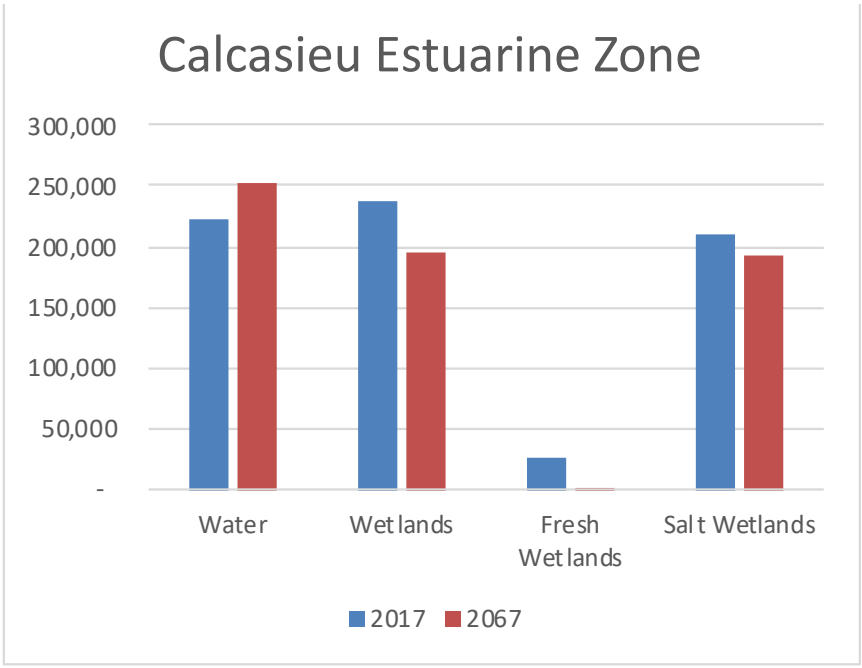
Percentage Change in Area for Each Habitat Type



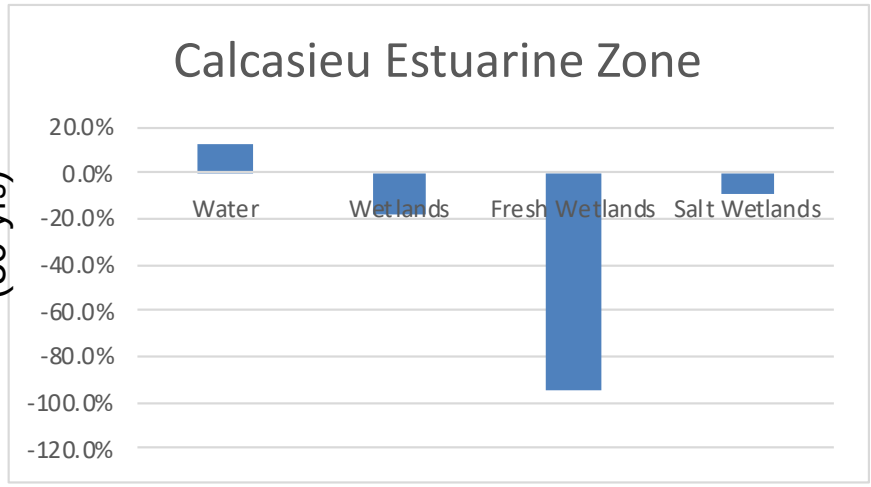
Area in Acres



Area in Acres



Percentage Change (50 yrs)

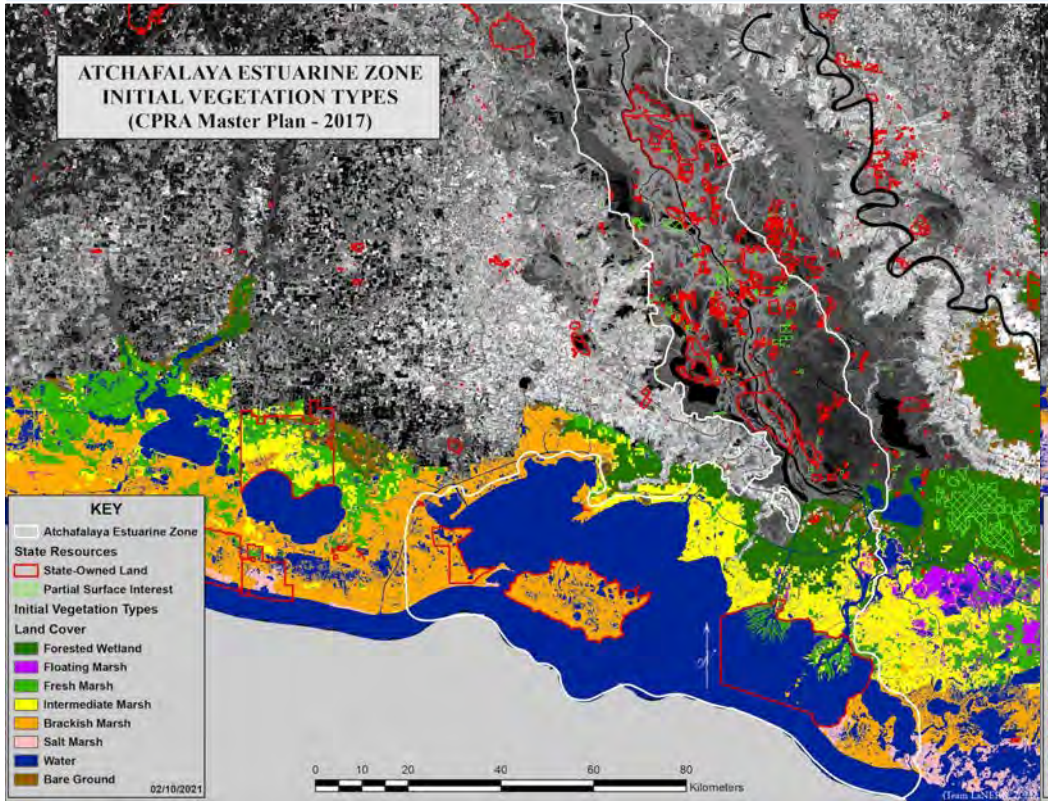


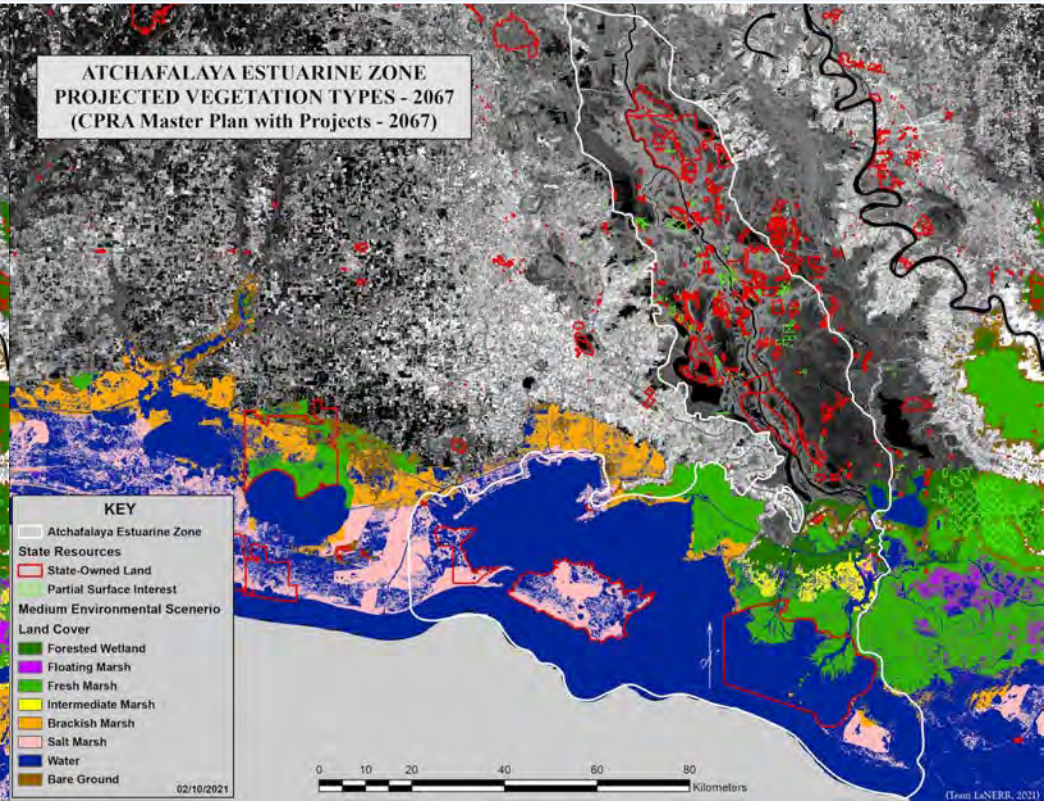
Atchafalaya Estuarine Zone

Pre-Screening Recommendation #3 and #4

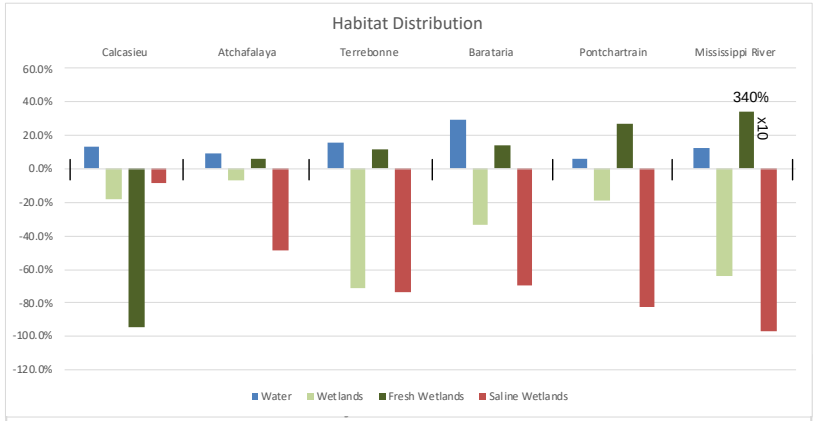
#3: Insignificant Area Change: There is insignificant land loss in the potential core areas (state-owned lands) that could be used to develop candidate sites for LaNERR. Potential core areas are sufficient, and the Estuarine Zone has minimum potential level of conflict because of future land loss with respect to developing facilities and programs (research & education) of LaNERR. Initial Wetland Area = 1,120,997 acres; Projected Wetland Area = 1,045,730 acres. Wetland Change = -6.7%

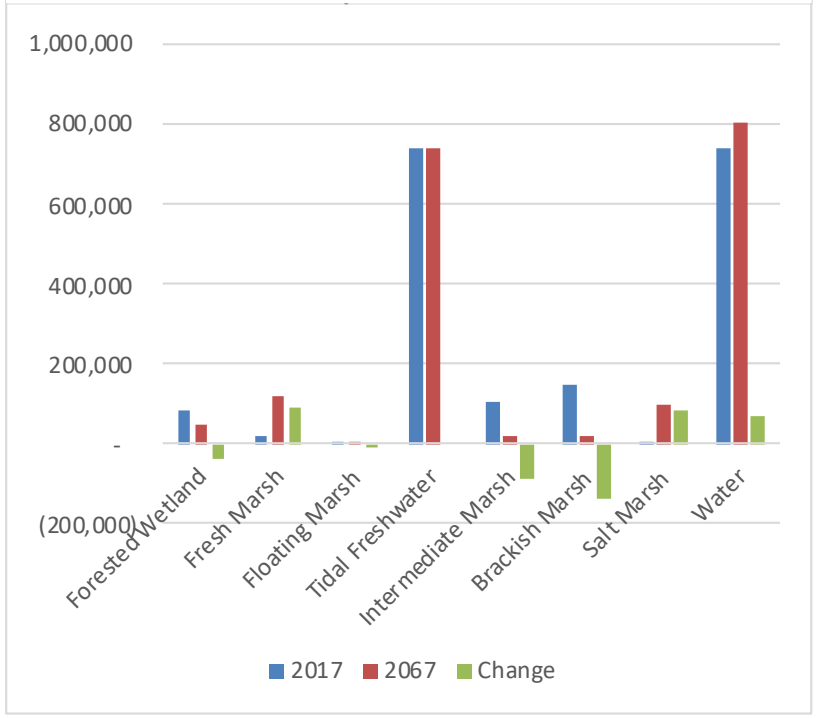
#4: Moderate Habitat Diversity Change: There is moderate change in habitat types in the core areas that could be used to develop candidate sites for LaNERR. Potential core areas are sufficent and the Estuarine Zone has moderate potential level of conflict due to change in habitat type that would impact future program development (research & education) of LaNERR. Percent change in Fresh Wetland Area = +6.2%; Percent change in Saline Wetland Area = -48.6%.

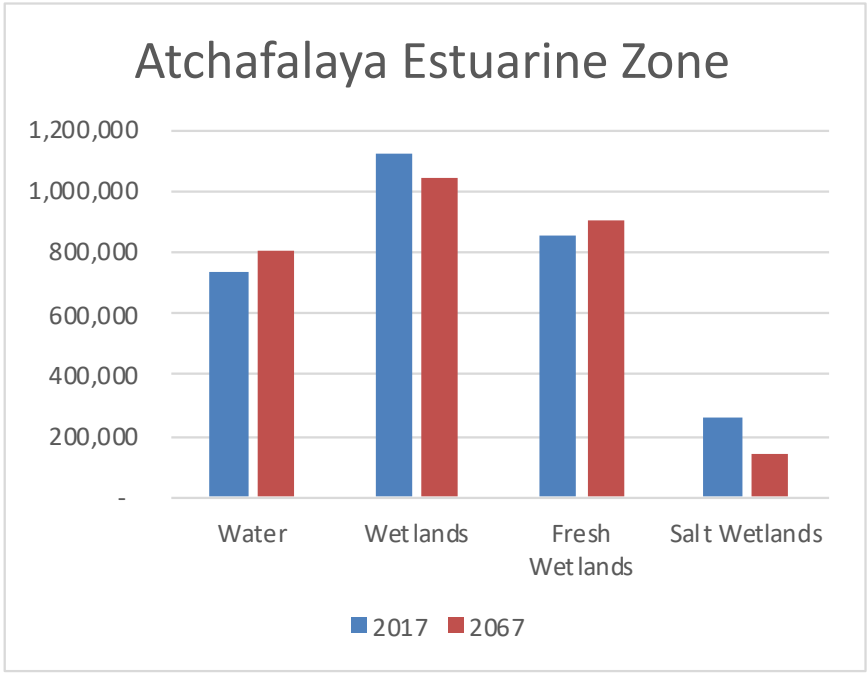


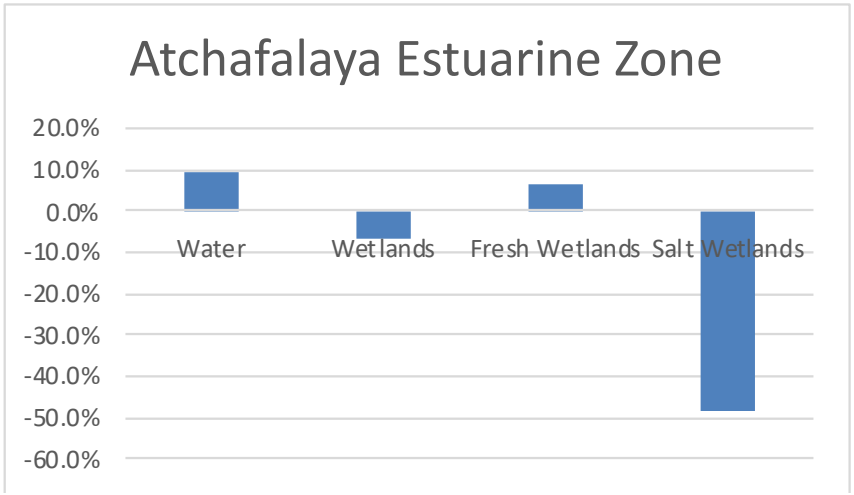


Percentage Change in Area for Each Habitat Type







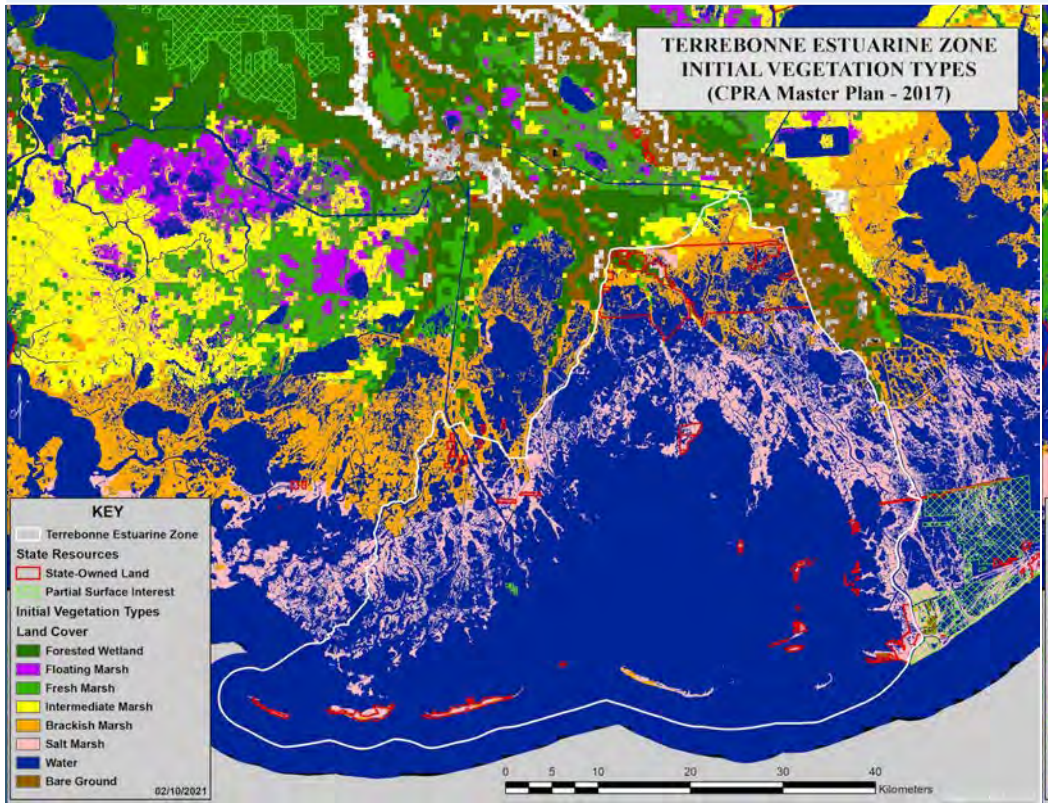


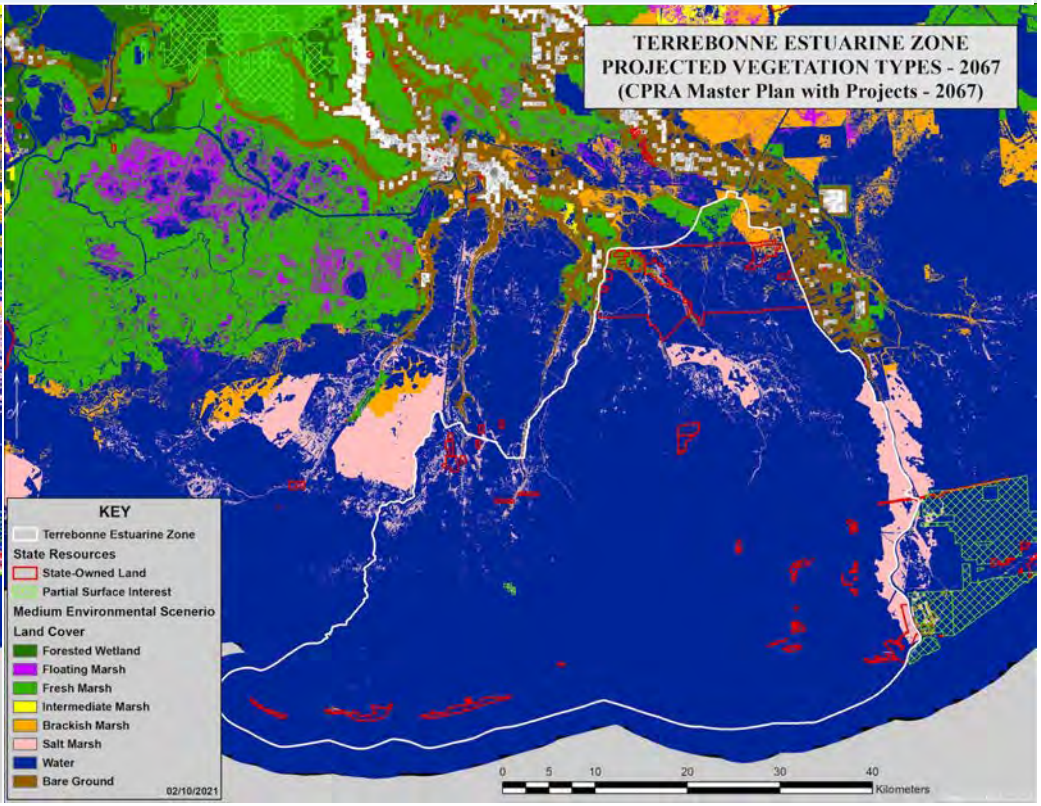
Terrebonne Estuarine Zone

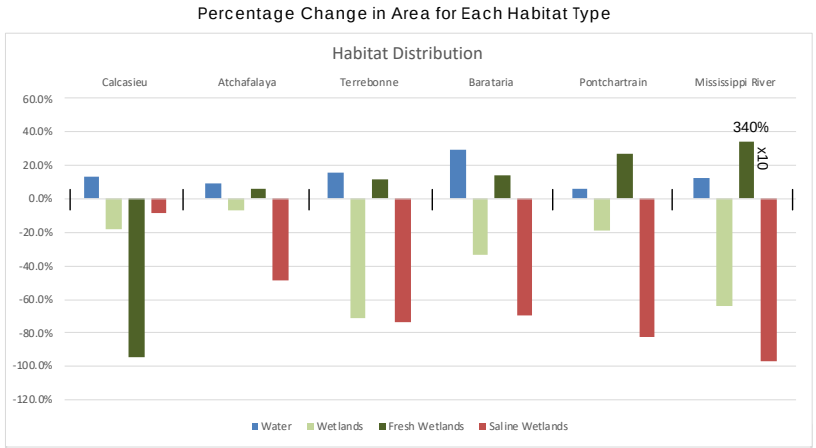
Pre-Screening Recommendation #3 and #4

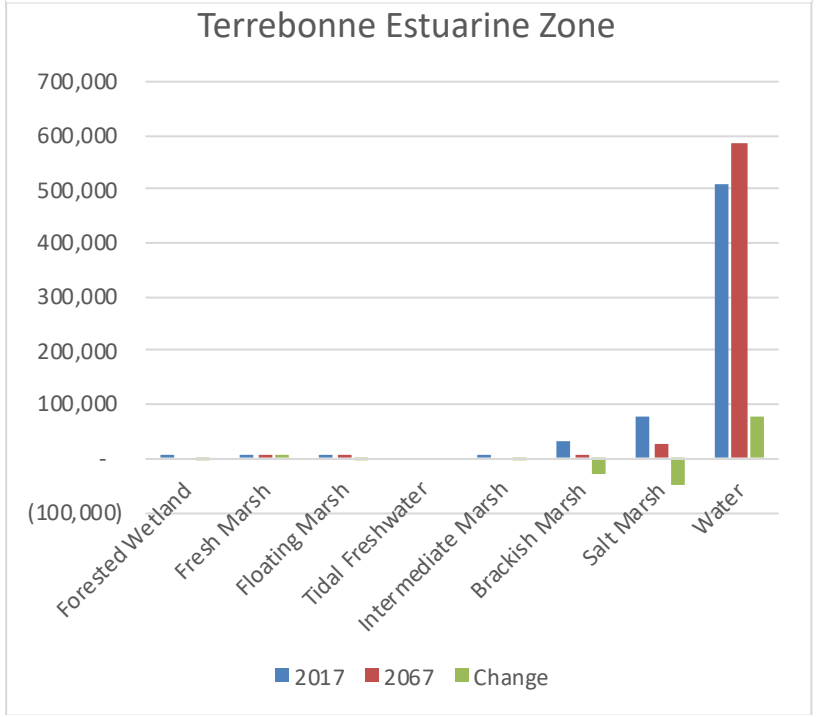
#3: Significant Area Change: There is significant land loss in the potential core areas (state-owned lands) that could be used to develop candidate sites for LaNERR. Potential core areas are sufficient at present (initial conditions), but the Estuarine Zone has significant level of conflict in the future because of land loss of core areas that would be used for developing facilities and programs (research & education) of LaNERR. Initial Wetland Area = 115,007 acres; Projected Wetland Area = 33,573 acres. Wetland Change = -70.8%

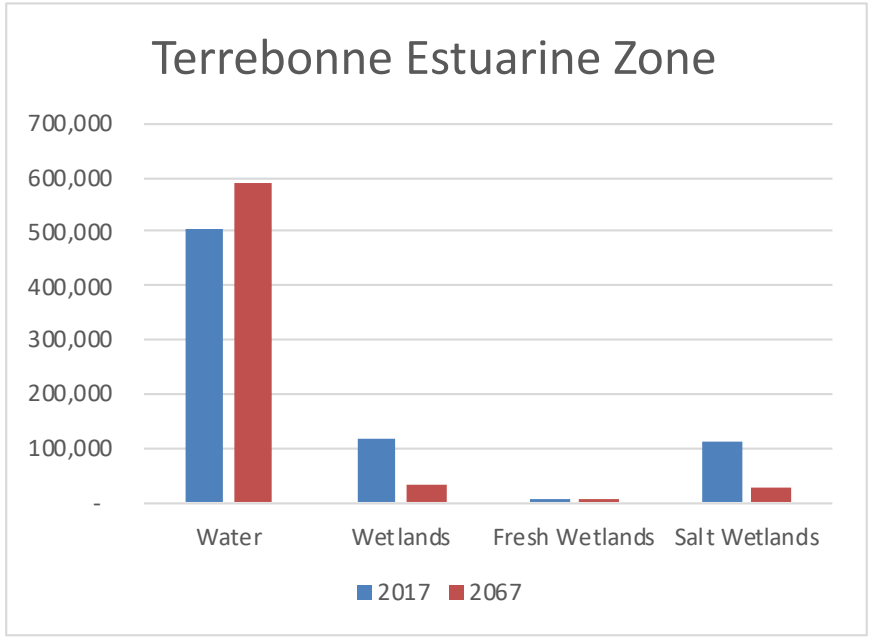
#4: Significant Habitat Diversity Change: There is significant change in habitat types and total habitat area in the core areas that could be used to develop candidate sites for LaNERR and the diversity lacks tidal freshwater habitats. Potential core areas in the Estuarine Zone are insufficient in the future because of significant habitat change to develop programs (research & education) of LaNERR. Percent change in Fresh Wetland Area = +12.0%; Percent change in Saline Wetland Area = -73.8%.

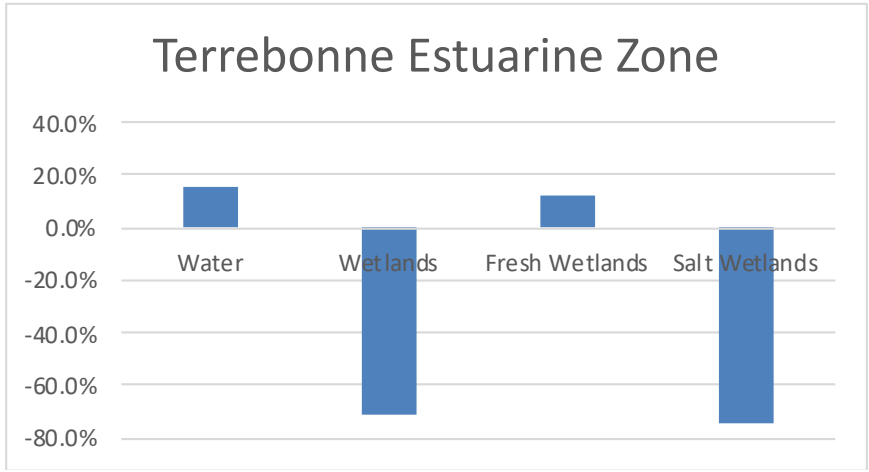





Percentage Change in Area for Each Habitat Type
Habitat Distribution
Calcasieu
Atchafalaya
Terrebonne
Barataria
Pontchartrain
Mississippi River
60.0%
40.0%
20.0%
0.0%
-20.0%
-40.0%
-60.0%
-80.0%
-100.0%
-120.0%
340%
x10
Water
Wetlands
Fresh Wetlands
Saline Wetlands


Terrebonne Estuarine Zone
Area in Acres
700,000
600,000
500,000
400,000
300,000
200,000
100,000
-
(100,000)
Forested Wetland
Fresh Marsh
Floating Marsh
Tidal Freshwater
Intermediate Marsh
Brackish Marsh
Salt Marsh
Water
2017
2067
Change


Terrebonne Estuarine Zone
Area in Acres
700,000
600,000
500,000
400,000
300,000
200,000
100,000
-
Water
Wetlands
Fresh Wetlands
Salt Wetlands
2017
2067

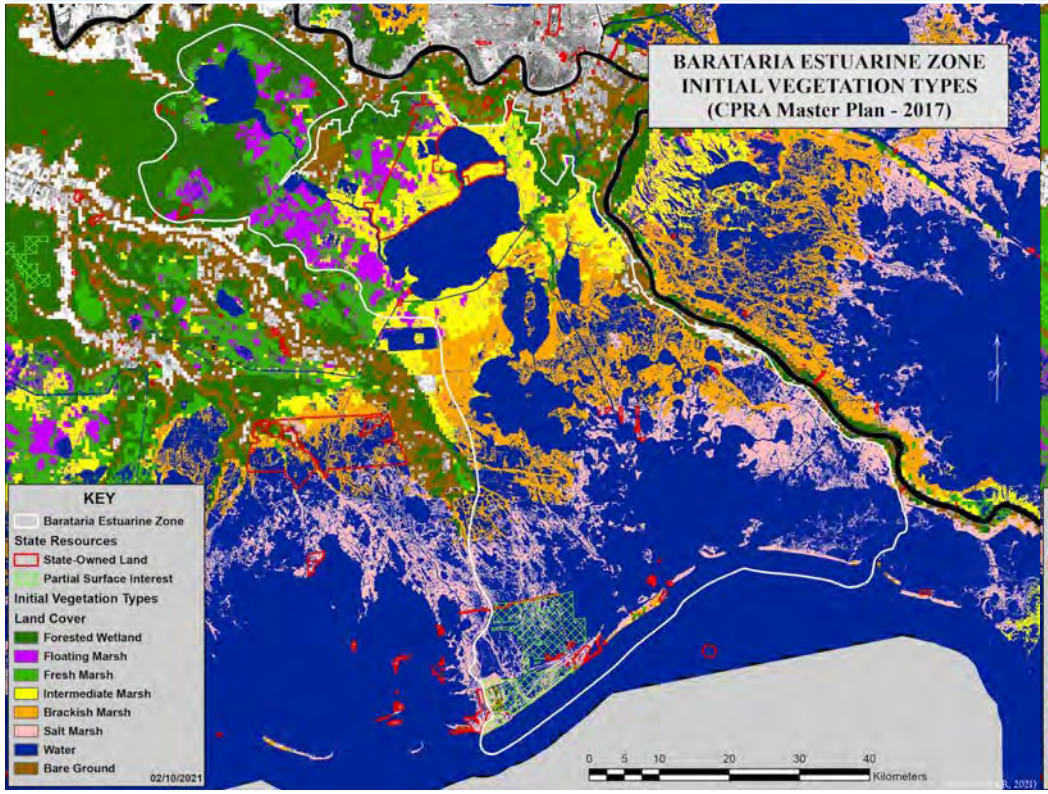

Terrebonne Estuarine Zone
Percentage Change (50 yrs)
40.0%
20.0%
0.0%
-20.0%
-40.0%
-60.0%
-80.0%
Water
Wetlands
Fresh Wetlands
Salt Wetlands

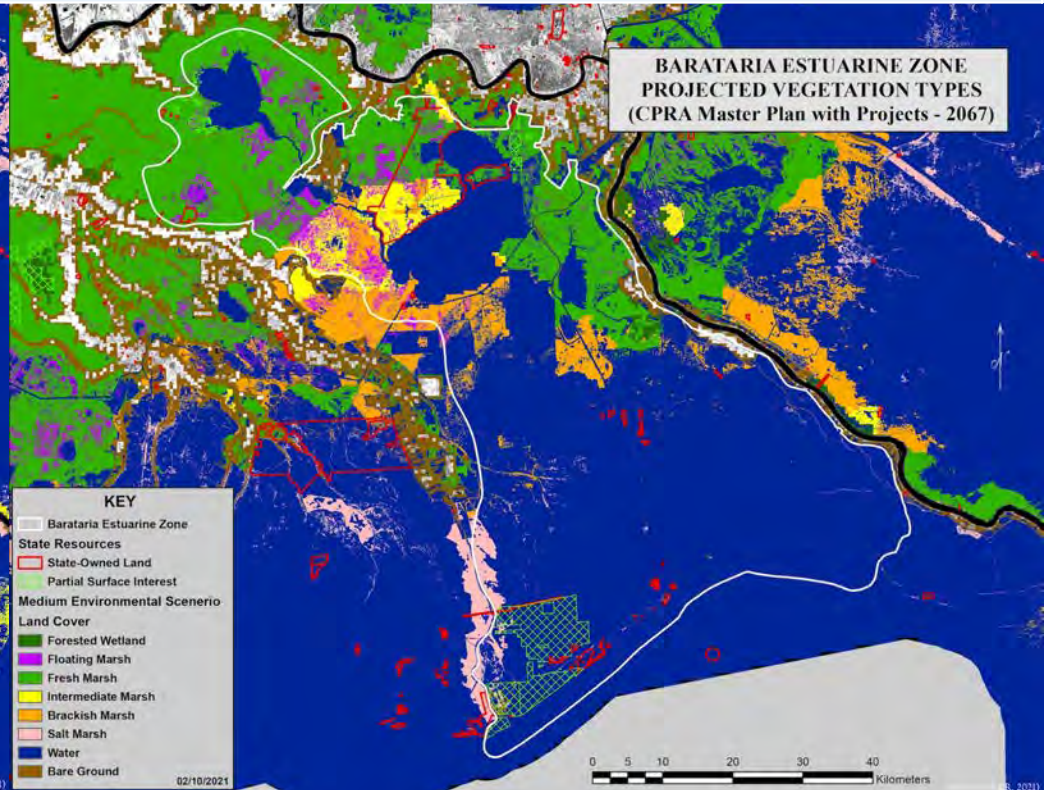
Barataria Estuarine Zone

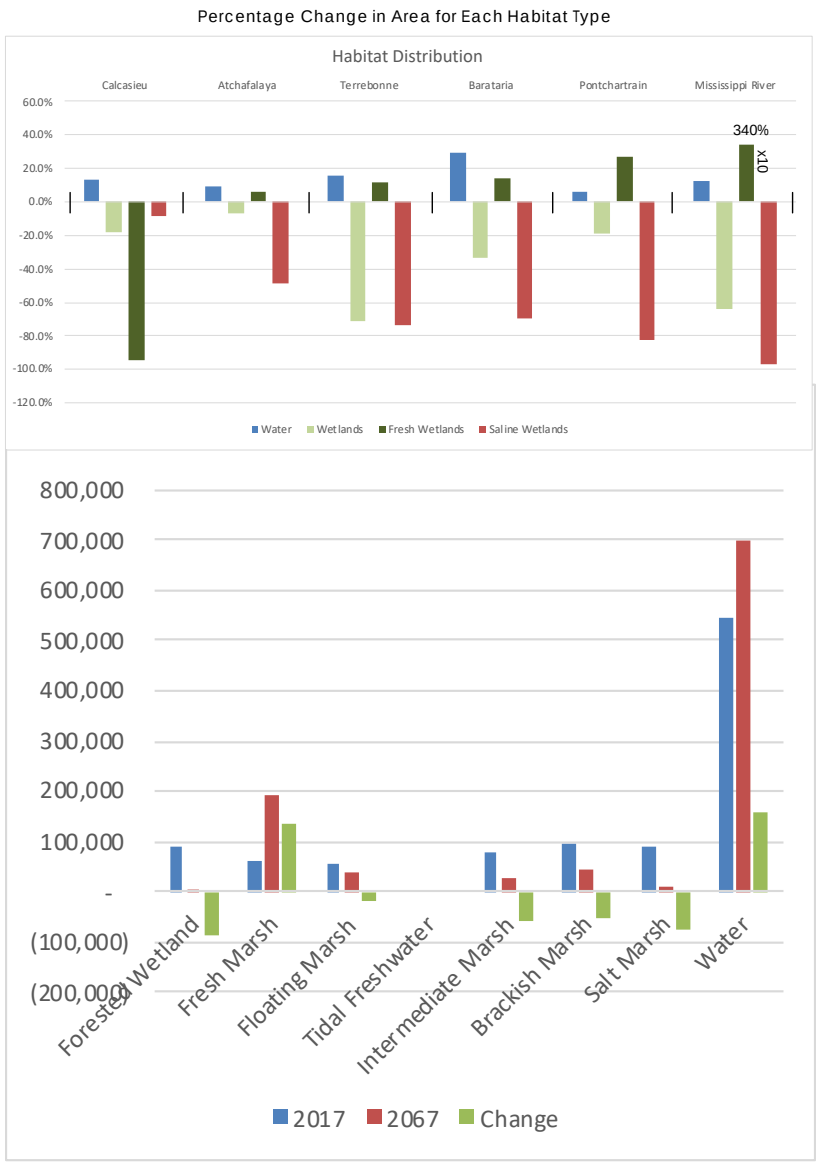
Pre-Screening Recommendation #3 and #4

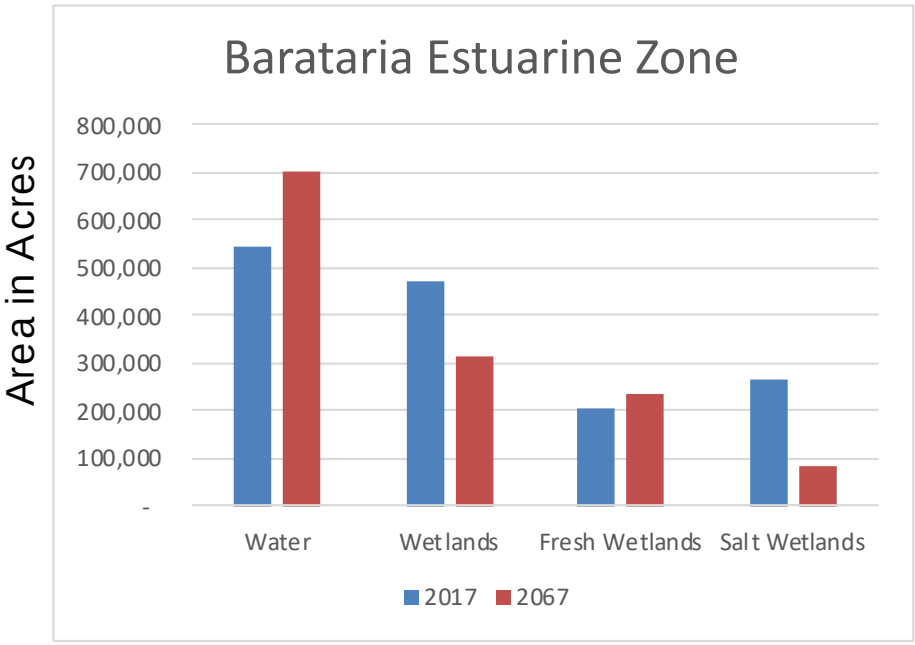
#3: Insignificant Area Change: There is insignificant land loss in the potential core areas (state-owned lands) that could be used to develop candidate sites for LaNERR. Potential core areas are sufficient, and the Estuarine Zone has minimum potential level of conflict because of future land loss with respect to developing facilities and programs (research & education) of LaNERR. Initial Wetland Area = 473,285 acres; Projected Wetland Area = 314,916 acres. Wetland Change = -33.5%

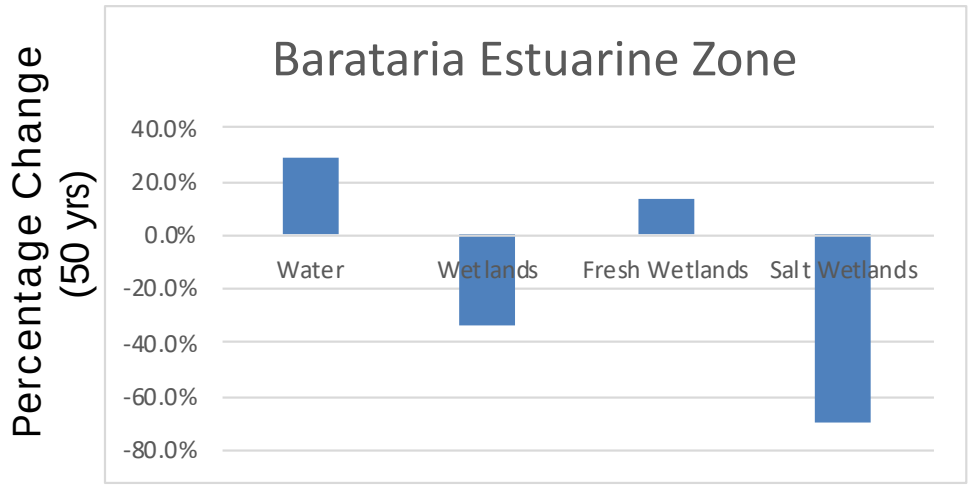
#4: Significant Habitat Diversity Change: There is significant change in habitat types and total habitat area in the core areas that could be used to develop candidate sites for LaNERR. Potential core areas in the Estuarine Zone are insufficient in the future because of significant habitat change to develop programs (research & education) of LaNERR. Percent change in Fresh Wetland Area = +13.9%; Percent change in Saline Wetland Area = -69.8%.






Percentage Change in Area for Each Habitat Type
Habitat Distribution
Calcasieu
Atchafalaya
Terrebonne
Barataria
Pontchartrain
Mississippi River
60.0%
40.0%
20.0%
0.0%
-20.0%
-40.0%
-60.0%
-80.0%
-100.0%
-120.0%
340%
x10
Water
Wetlands
Fresh Wetlands
Saline Wetlands
Area in Acres
800,000
700,000
600,000
500,000
400,000
300,000
200,000
100,000
-
(100,000)
(200,000)
Forested Wetland
Fresh Marsh
Floating Marsh
Tidal Freshwater
Intermediate Marsh
Brackish Marsh
Salt Marsh
Water
2017
2067
Change


Barataria Estuarine Zone
Area in Acres
800,000
700,000
600,000
500,000
400,000
300,000
200,000
100,000
-
Water
Wetlands
Fresh Wetlands
Salt Wetlands
2017
2067

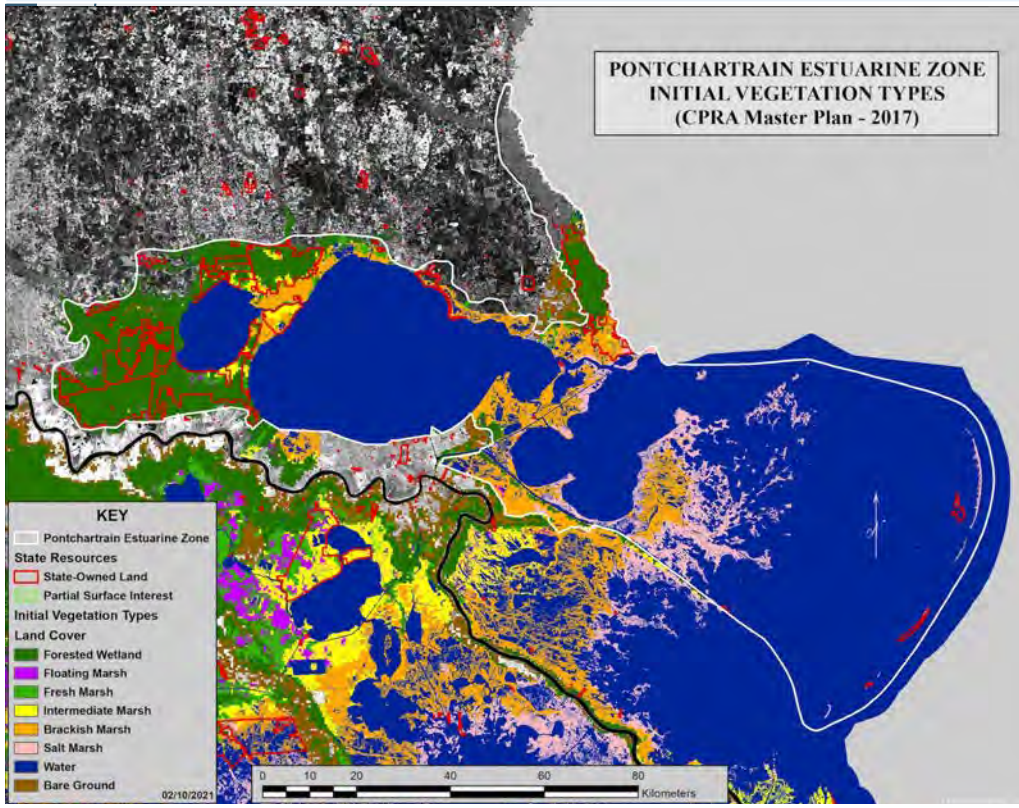

Barataria Estuarine Zone
Percentage Change (50 yrs)
40.0%
20.0%
0.0%
-20.0%
-40.0%
-60.0%
-80.0%
Water
Wetlands
Fresh Wetlands
Salt Wetlands

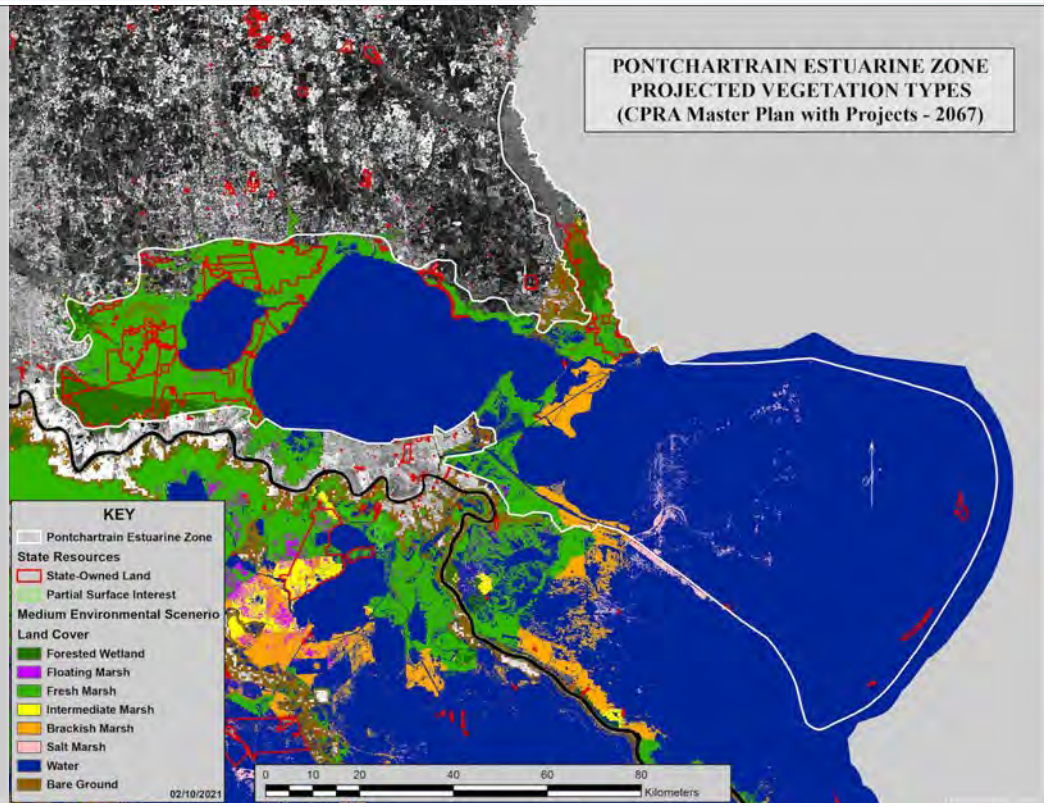
Pontchartrain Estuarine Zone

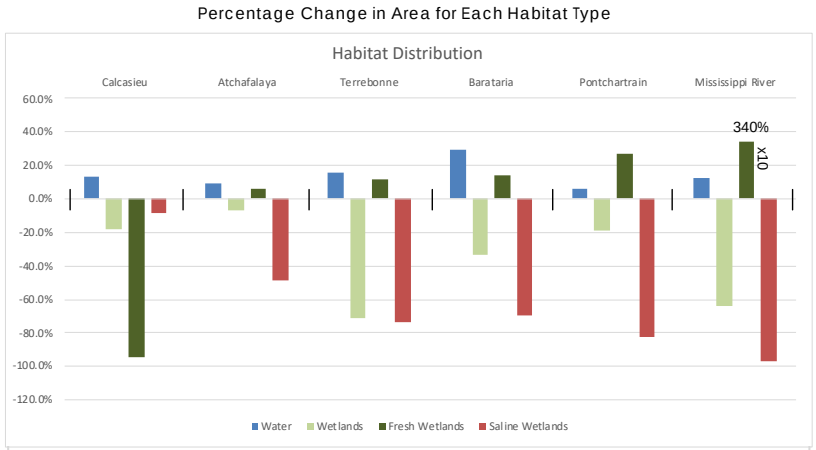
Pre-Screening Recommendation #3 and #4

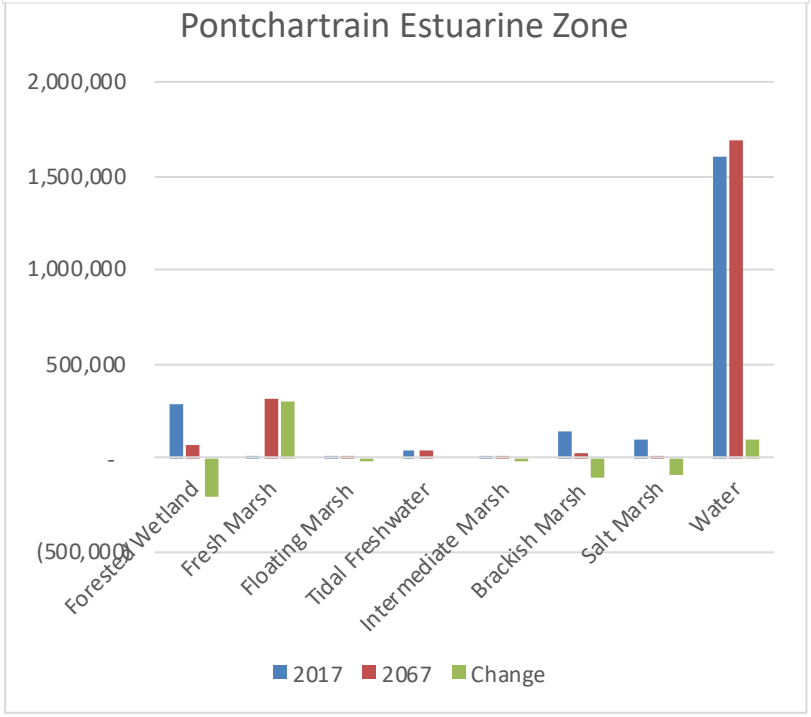
#3: Insignificant Area Change: There is insignificant land loss in the potential core areas (state-owned lands) that could be used to develop candidate sites for LaNERR. Potential core areas are sufficient, and the Estuarine Zone has minimum potential level of conflict because of future land loss with respect to developing facilities and programs (research & education) of LaNERR. Initial Wetland Area = 597,075 acres; Projected Wetland Area = 484,214 acres. Wetland Change = -18.9%

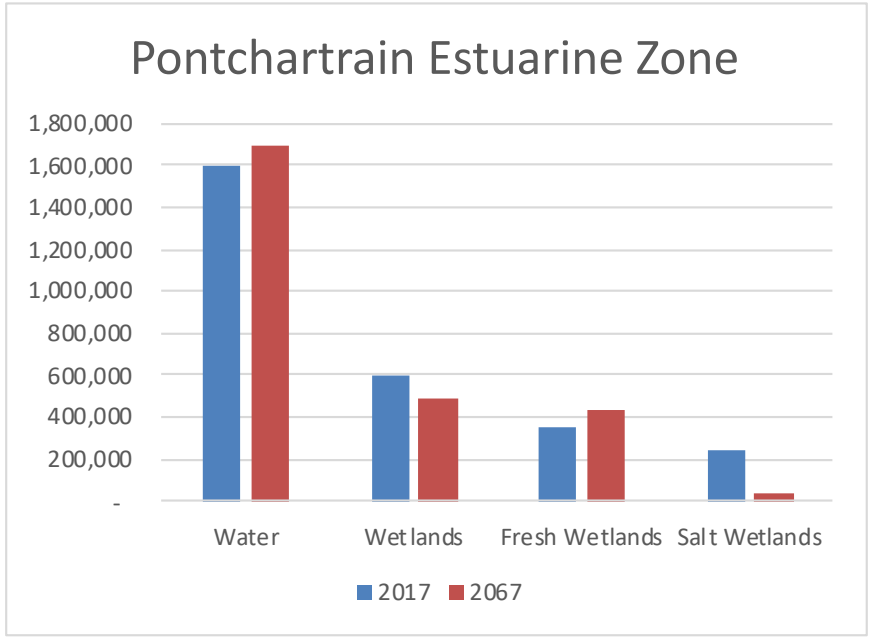
#4: Significant Habitat Diversity Change: There is significant change in habitat types in the core areas that could be used to develop candidate sites for LaNERR. Potential core areas in the Estuarine Zone are insufficient in the future because of significant habitat change to develop programs (research & education) of LaNERR. Percent change in Fresh Wetland Area = +26.8%; Percent change in Saline Wetland Area = -82.6%.

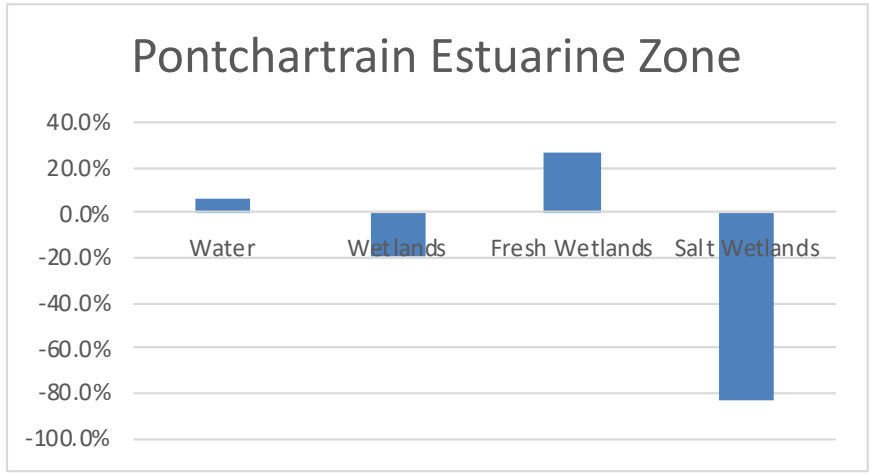





Percentage Change in Area for Each Habitat Type
Habitat Distribution
Calcasieu
Atchafalaya
Terrebonne
Barataria
Pontchartrain
Mississippi River
60.0%
40.0%
20.0%
0.0%
-20.0%
-40.0%
-60.0%
-80.0%
-100.0%
-120.0%
340%
x10
Water
Wetlands
Fresh Wetlands
Saline Wetlands


Area in Acres
Pontchartrain Estuarine Zone
2,000,000
1,500,000
1,000,000
500,000
-
(500,000)
Forested Wetland
Fresh Marsh
Floating Marsh
Tidal Freshwater
Intermediate Marsh
Brackish Marsh
Salt Marsh
Water
2017
2067
Change


Area in Acres
Pontchartrain Estuarine Zone
1,800,000
1,600,000
1,400,000
1,200,000
1,000,000
800,000
600,000
400,000
200,000
-
Water
Wetlands
Fresh Wetlands
Salt Wetlands
2017
2067

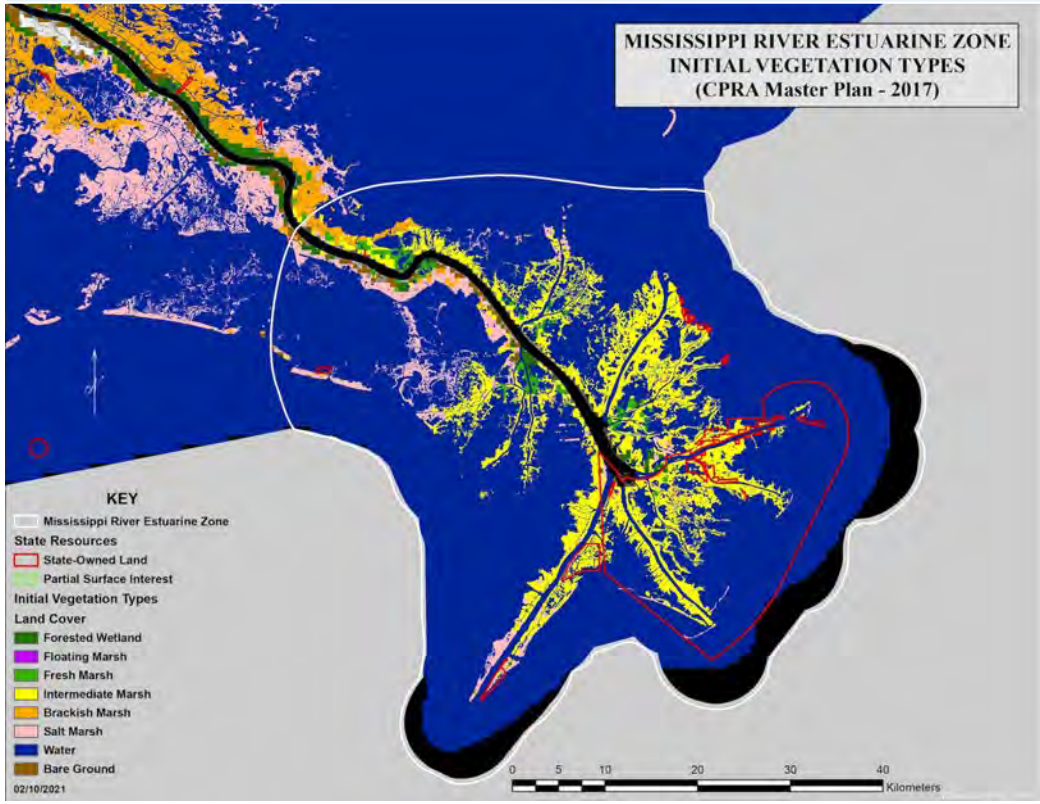

Percentage Change (50 yrs)
Pontchartrain Estuarine Zone
40.0%
20.0%
0.0%
-20.0%
-40.0%
-60.0%
-80.0%
-100.0%
Water
Wetlands
Fresh Wetlands
Salt Wetlands

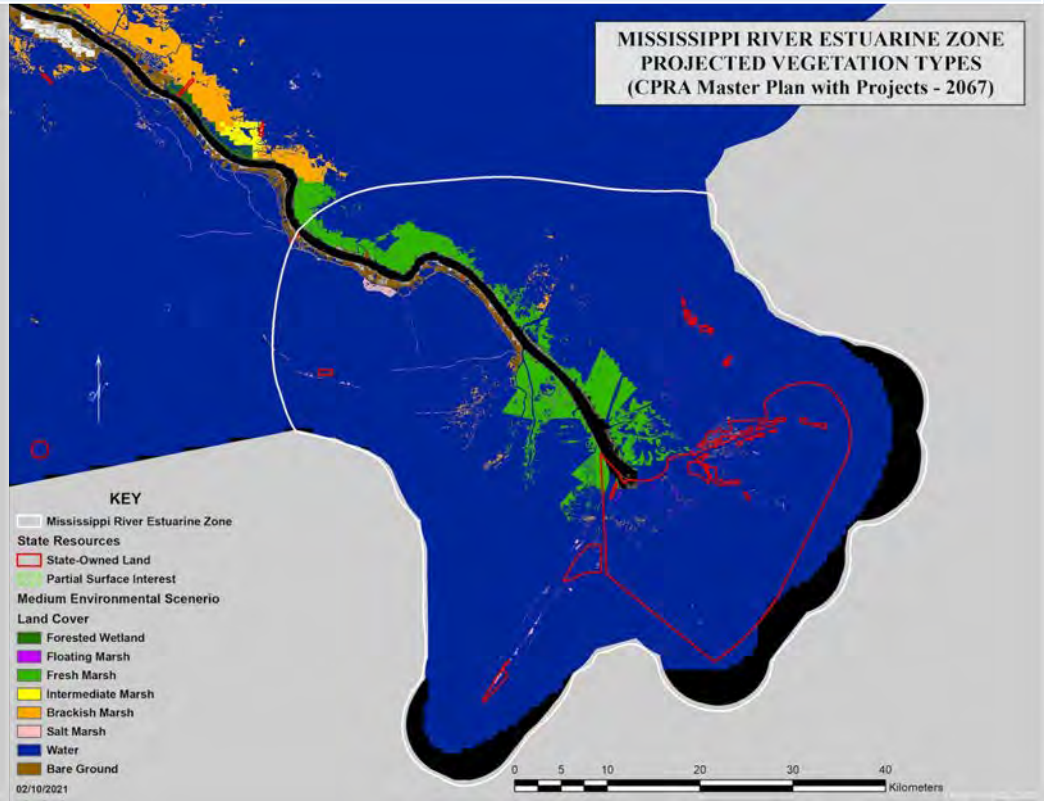
Mississippi River Estuarine Zone

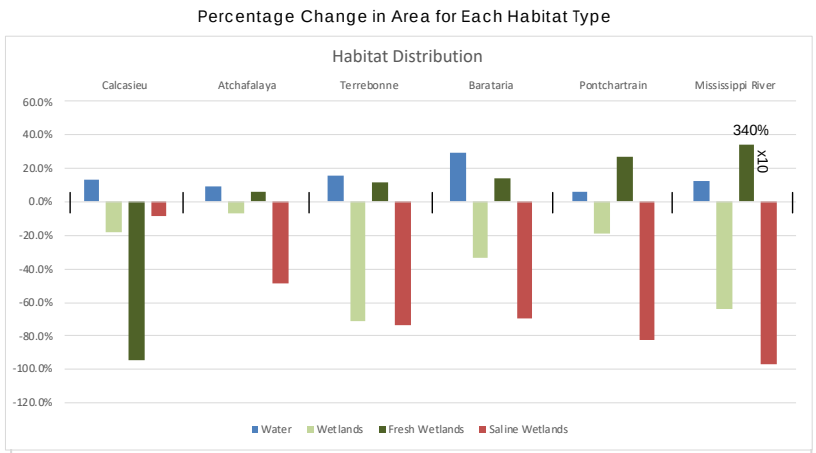
Pre-Screening Recommendation #3 and #4

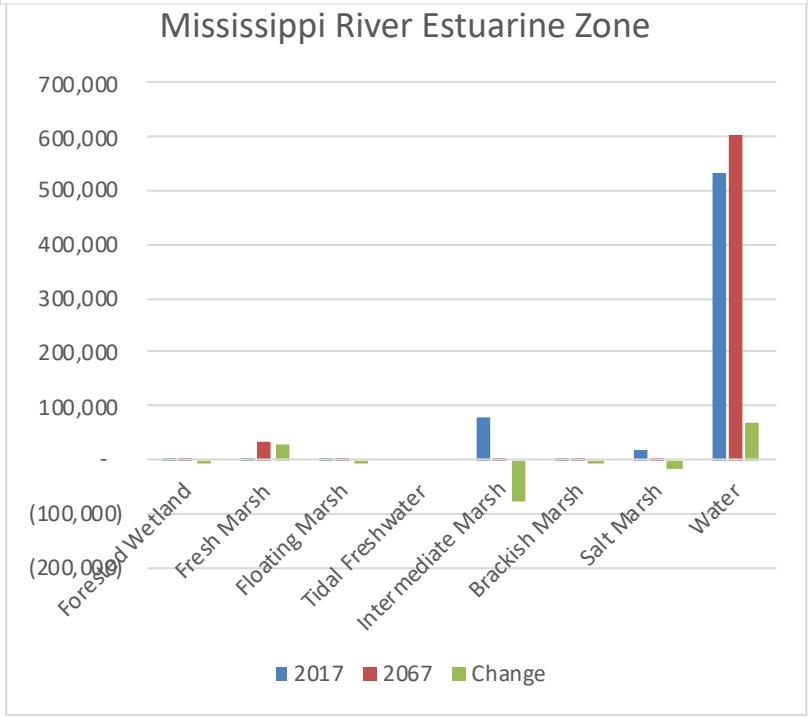
#3: Significant Area Change: There is significant land loss in the potential core areas (state-owned lands) that could be used to develop candidate sites for LaNERR. Potential core areas are sufficient at present (initial conditions), but the Estuarine Zone has significant level of conflict in the future because of land loss of core areas that would be used for developing facilities and programs (research & education) of LaNERR. Initial Wetland Area = 107,521 acres; Projected Wetland Area = 38,766 acres. Wetland Change = -69.9%

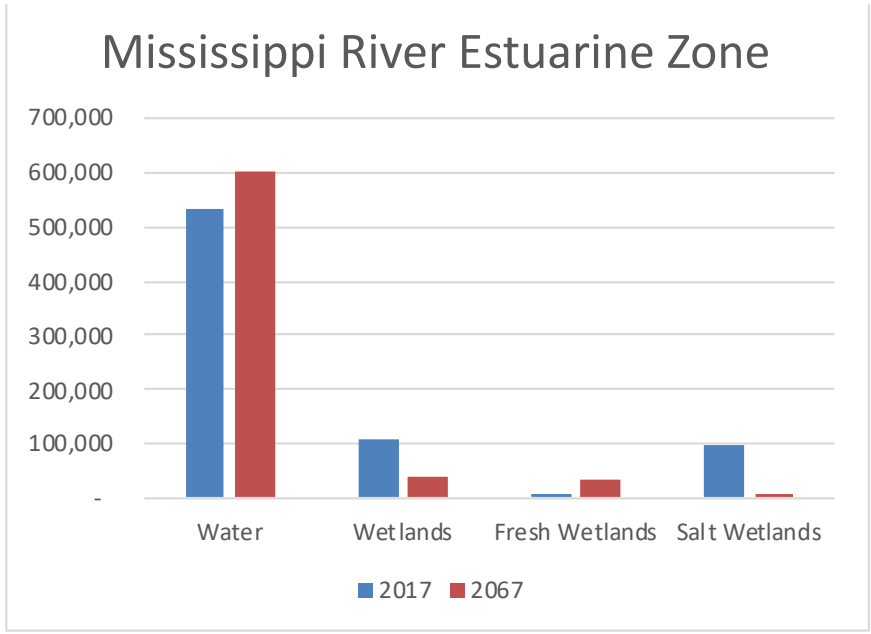
#4: Significant Habitat Diversity Change: There is significant change in habitat types and total habitat area in the core areas that could be used to develop candidate sites for LaNERR. Potential core areas in the Estuarine Zone are insufficient in the future because ofsignificant habitat change to develop programs (research & education) of LaNERR. Percent change in Fresh Wetland Area = +343.8%; Percent change in Saline Wetland Area = -96.5%.

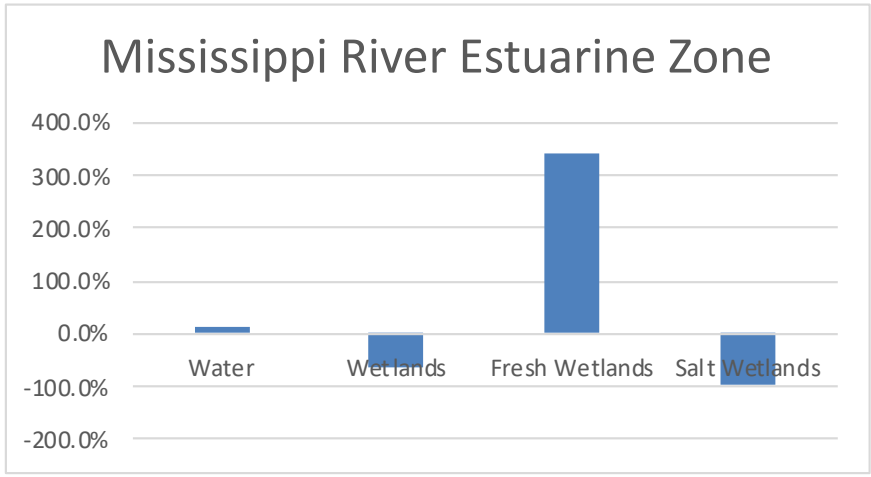





Percentage Change in Area for Each Habitat Type
Habitat Distribution
Calcasieu
Atchafalaya
Terrebonne
Barataria
Pontchartrain
Mississippi River
60.0%
40.0%
20.0%
0.0%
-20.0%
-40.0%
-60.0%
-80.0%
-100.0%
-120.0%
340%
x10
Water
Wetlands
Fresh Wetlands
Saline Wetlands


Mississippi River Estuarine Zone
Area in Acres
700,000
600,000
500,000
400,000
300,000
200,000
100,000
-
(100,000)
(200,000)
Forested Wetland
Fresh Marsh
Floating Marsh
Tidal Freshwater
Intermediate Marsh
Brackish Marsh
Salt Marsh
Water
2017
2067
Change


Mississippi River Estuarine Zone
Area in Acres
700,000
600,000
500,000
400,000
300,000
200,000
100,000
-
Water
Wetlands
Fresh Wetlands
Salt Wetlands
2017
2067


Mississippi River Estuarine Zone
Percentage Change (50 yrs)
400.0%
300.0%
200.0%
100.0%
0.0%
-100.0%
-200.0%
Water
Wetlands
Fresh Wetlands
Salt Wetlands

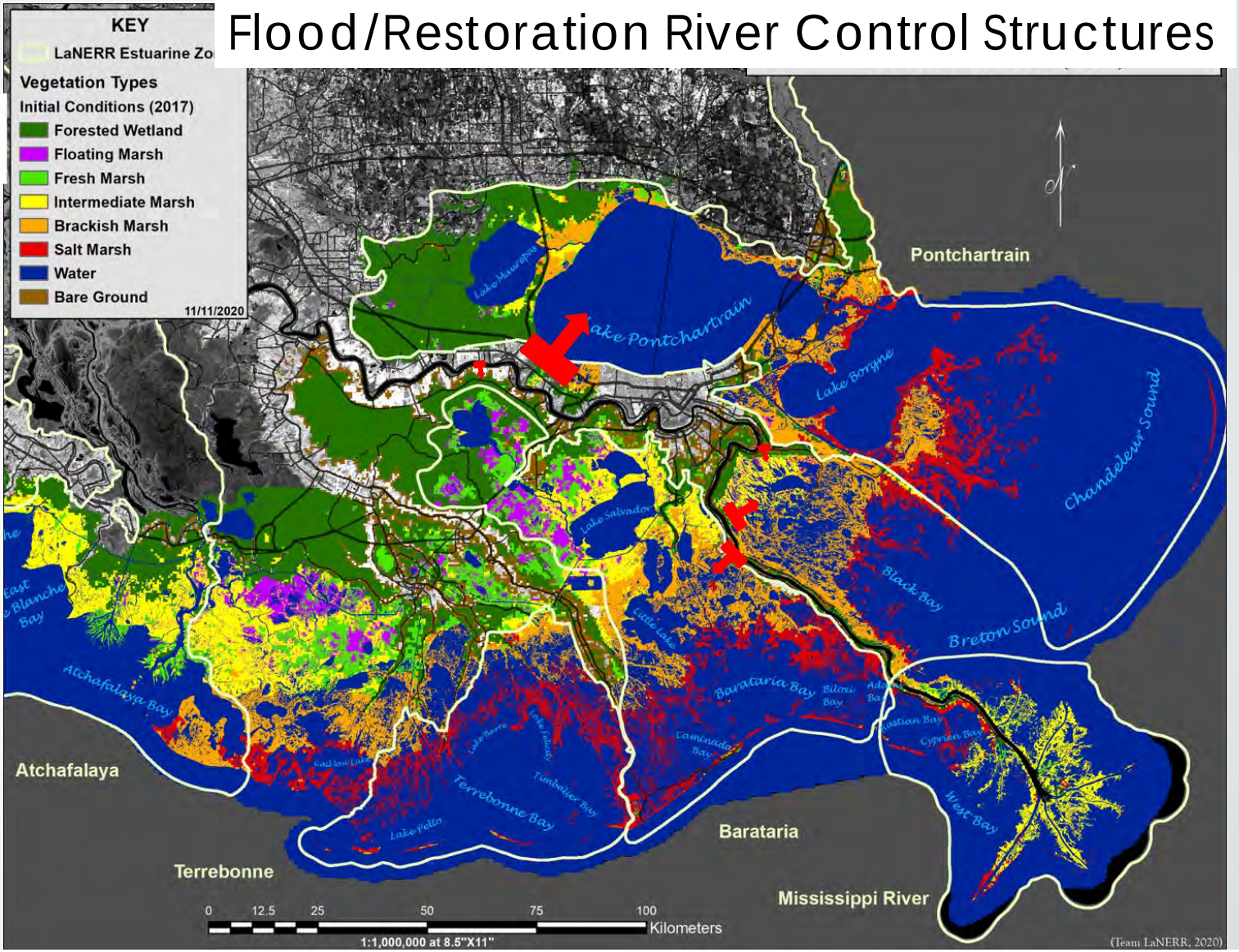
This section of the presentation focuses on Criterion #5.

Pre-Screening Criteria #5 Hydrologic Manipulations
5. Do existing or anticipated operations of water control structures and levees (including marsh impoundments) by federal and state authorities with sole purpose of manipulating hydrology in coastal basins for either flood control, marsh management, or coastal restoration have the potential to impact the integrity of potential core or buffer areas thus causing potential conflicts between LaNERR objectives (environmental representativeness, research & education)?

Estuarine Zone	Calcasieu Estuarine Zone	Atchafalaya Estuarine Zone	Terrebonne Estuarine Zone	Barataria Estuarine Zone	Pontchartrain Estuarine Zone	Mississippi River Estuarine Zone
Pre-Screening Criteria	Pre-Screening Recommendation	Pre-Screening Recommendation	Pre-Screening Recommendation	Pre-Screening Recommendation	Pre-Screening Recommendation	Pre-Screening Recommendation
5. Do existing or anticipated operations of water control structures and levees (including marsh impoundments) by federal and state authorities with sole purpose of manipulating hydrology in coastal basins for either flood control, marsh management, or coastal restoration have the potential to impact the integrity of potential core or buffer areas thus causing potential conflicts between LaNERR objectives (environmental representativeness, research & education)?	Hydrologic Control Impacts - Potentially Interfere: The coastal setting of this Estuarine Zone presents future potential coastal management issues with planned construction of marsh management and salinity control structures associated with the Calcasieu Ship Channel. The planning of candidate sites in this Estuarine Zone will have to consider how to incorporate these manipulations in planning program development (research & education) that utilize these impacts.	Hydrologic Control Impacts - Insignificant: This Estuarine Zone is manipulated by the Old River Control Structure at the head of the Atchafalaya River Basin. This flood control structure operates on a fixed percentage (70/30% split) of flow from combined Red and Mississippi River discharge that is directed to the Mississippi and Atchafalaya River, respectively. Given the percentage of total flow represents seasonal flood-pulse of a major river basin, this is not considered an operation abnormal to seasonal river flood patterns.	Hydrologic Control Impacts - Potentially Interfere: This Estuarine Zone is impacted by water control structures (e.g., Pointe-aux-Chenes WMA) and the construction and operation of the Morganza to the Gulf flood control project that has water control structures and levees that may impact developing programs (research & education) in candidate sites for LaNERR.	Hydrologic Control Impacts - Potentially Interfere: The coastal setting of this Estuarine Zone presents future potential coastal management issues with operation of the Mid-Barataria diversion structure and Upper Barataria Risk Reduction Project. The planning of candidate sites in this Estuarine Zone will have to consider how to incorporate these manipulations in planning program development (research & education) that utilize these impacts.	Hydrologic Control Impacts - Potentially Interfere: The coastal setting of this Estuarine Zone presents future potential coastal management issues with operation of the Bonnet Carre flood control structure and West Shore Lake Pontchartrain flood protection project. In addition, there is the future construction of the Maurepas diversion structure. The planning of candidate sites in this Estuarine Zone will have to consider how to incorporate these manipulations in planning program development (research & education) that utilize these impacts.	Hydrologic Control Impacts - Insignificant: This Estuarine Zone does not have issues of impacts from water control structures and levees that would potentially impact developing programs (research & education) in candidate sites for LaNERR.

Flood/Restoration River Control Structures

Map shows some of the present and proposed water control structures that will influence the manipulation of freshwater delivery to six Estuarine Zones.



These are the Summary Recommendations by Designation Leadership Team (DLT).

SUMMARY RECOMMENDATIONS	Calcasieu Estuarine Zone	Atchafalaya Estuarine Zone	Terrebonne Estuarine Zone	Barataria Estuarine Zone	Pontchartrain Estuarine Zone	Mississippi River Estuarine Zone
The following columns contain summary statements and recommendations for each Estuarine Zone prepared by the Designation Leadership Team.	The Calcasieu Estuarine Zone has very limited state-owned lands that could be used as core areas to establish a LaNERR. The state-owned lands that are currently present do not represent the diverse unique habitats and processes of delta estuary. The changes in land area are not significant, but changes in habitat type are significant. Due to the lack of state-owned land, there is limited opportunity for establishing a LaNERR in this Estuarine Zone. Further, hydrologic manipulations potentially challenge the establishment of a NERR.	The Atchafalaya Estuarine Zone currently has significant state-owned lands that represent the unique habitats and processes of delta estuary. There are diverse habitat types and salinity zones representative of a delta estuary. The projected changes to both the land area and habitat types over the next 50-yrs are insignificant and moderate, respectively. This zone experiences the least future change when compared to the other zones. This Estuarine Zone represents a region sufficient to establish a LaNERR, and hydrologic manipulations will not challenge the establishment of a NERR.	The Terrebonne Estuarine Zone currently has state-owned lands that could serve as core areas. However, the zone does not have a diversity of habitat types or salinity gradients representative of a delta estuary. The projected changes to both the land area and habitat types over the next 50-yrs limit the potential of this zone for establishing a LaNERR. Further, hydrologic manipulations potentially challenge the establishment of a NERR.	The Barataria Estuarine Zone currently has significant state-owned lands that represent the diverse habitats and salinity gradients of a delta estuary. The projected changes in land area are not significant, but changes in habitat type over the next 50-yrs is significant. The more interior regions of this Estuarine Zone may represent a region sufficient to establish a LaNERR. Hydrologic manipulations will potentially challenge the establishment of a LaNERR.	The Pontchartrain Estuarine Zone currently has significant state-owned lands that represent the diversity habitats and salinity gradients of a delta estuary. The projected changes in land area are not significant, but changes in habitat type over the next 50-yrs is significant. The more interior regions of this Estuarine Zone may represent a region sufficient to establish a LaNERR. However, hydrologic manipulations will potentially challenge the establishment of a NERR.	The Mississippi River Estuarine Zone has current state-owned lands that represent the unique habitats, although dominated by intermediate marsh and salinity zone. There are both fresh and saline habitats in this Estuarine Zone. However, the projected loss of land area and changes to habitat types over the next 50-yrs limit the potential of this zone for establishing a LaNERR. Hydrologic manipulations will not challenge the establishment of a NERR.

Louisiana National Estuarine Research Reserve (LaNERR)
Site Selection & Nomination Report

November 2022

APPENDIX 4:

Preliminary Public Outreach

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
December 8, 2020
Contact: coastal@la.gov

Louisiana Launches Search for National Estuarine Research Reserve Site

BATON ROUGE, LA – Louisiana has formally launched its search for a site to serve as a National Estuary Research Reserve (NERR). The NERR system is a National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) program operated in partnership with coastal and Great Lake states for long-term research, education, and restoration. The current system is made up of 29 designated estuaries representative of the distinct estuary types found across the nation.

Gov. John Bel Edwards noted, “As the only Gulf coast state without a NERR, and thus the only Gulf state not sharing in the benefits of the system, I am delighted to bring the NERR program to Louisiana so we can showcase not only our unique deltaic system to the rest of the nation but also our determined and extensive efforts to restore and protect it.”

In July of 2019, Gov. Edwards sent a letter of interest to NOAA announcing Louisiana’s intent to host a NERR and identified Louisiana Sea Grant as the agency to lead the search. In December of 2019, NOAA accepted the request.

Dr. Robert Twilley, the executive director of Louisiana Sea Grant, described what a Louisiana NERR could add to the state at the Coastal Protection and Restoration Authority Board meeting on Wednesday, December 9, 2020.

“NERR sites bring the benefit of federal support to state driven applied science, monitoring, education and outreach activities. This also may include education and research facilities, public access improvements like nature trails, boat launches and overnight accommodations,” he said.

NOAA staff described the system of NERRs around the country and the benefits they provide to host states to the CPRA Board. Kristin Ransom, a Senior Coastal Management Specialist on contract to the NOAA Office of Coastal Management and the local NOAA representative who is helping to guide Sea Grant through the process, outlined the valuable programming that a NERR brings to states including system-wide monitoring, coastal training, K-12 education, research fellowships, and science collaboration.

She said, “The State is responsible for the land ownership and management, hiring staff, and implementing these value-added programs, but 70% of the funding comes from the federal government. In addition to federal funding, our role is to provide guidance and technical assistance while coordinating across the system.”

Bren Haase, Executive Director of the Coastal Protection and Restoration Authority, supported the effort saying, “A NERR site in Louisiana is yet another initiative that shows Louisiana’s commitment to finding practical solutions to restore, and promoting access to our coastal areas. We look forward to working with our partners in identifying the ideal site in Louisiana.”

Louisiana Sea Grant has launched its public roadshow to educate coastal stakeholders about the program. Two public webinars will be held on Wednesday, December 9 from 3 to 4:30 pm and 5:30 to 7 pm. For more information about the meetings, visit http://www.laseagrant.org/2020/lanerr-public-webinars/.

For more information on the search for a NERR site in Louisiana, visit http://www.laseagrant.org/deltanerr/.

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Louisiana National Estuarine Research Reserve
Site Development and Nomination Process
Louisiana Sea Grant College Program
Baton Rouge, LA. 70503

DATE

Dear NAME,

We would like to introduce you and your organization to the process of identifying a National Estuarine Research Reserve in Louisiana (LaNERR). The National Estuarine Research Reserve (NERR) System was established through the Coastal Zone Management Act and represents a network of 29 coastal sites covering over 1.3 million acres of estuaries across the nation. A new estuarine research reserve in Louisiana would represent a partnership program with NOAA focused on promoting stewardship, research, training, and education at a particular site in our coastal zone. Each site is managed on a daily basis by a lead state agency or university with input from local partners while NOAA provides funding and national guidance.

The concept of establishing a NERR has been a point of discussion for decades here in Louisiana, one of the few coastal states without a NERR site. Louisiana Governor John Bel Edwards changed the nature of the conversation on July 23, 2019 when he sent a request for consideration to the Undersecretary of the NOAA who responded affirmatively in December that same year. In his letter to NOAA, Governor Edwards identified Louisiana Sea Grant as the lead agency in the designation process, that along with the Governor's Office of Coastal Activities, would initiate a process to nominate a Louisiana NERR (LaNERR) to NOAA.

The LaNERR Team would very much like to offer a presentation to your organization as orientation to the search for a Louisiana NERR. The 20-30 minute presentation would explain what is the NERR System at the national level, how would a NERR site in our coastal zone benefit Louisiana and what is the process of identifying a site that would represent the NOAA criteria for a NERR.

This critical first step requires a collaborative process of developing the proper qualities that meet the standards of NERR sites across the nation and represent a unique addition to the NERR System from the Mississippi River Delta. However, this process needs to be transparent and include public awareness and support. We are reaching out to you to ask to include a presentation entitled "Searching for a LaNERR Site" on the calendar at your next meeting, or establishing a meeting just on this topic.

If you are interested in helping us set up a meeting to present the LaNERR process to your organization, please contact LaTosha Mullins or myself, by replying 'all' to this email. We will work with you on setting up a speaker for your meeting to present this topic.

Sincerely,

Robert R. Twilley
Executive Director
Louisiana Sea Grant College Program
237 Sea Grant Bldg.
Louisiana State University
Baton Rouge, LA 70803-7507
Phone (cell): (225) 279-0353
Fax: (225) 578-6331

LaNERR – Louisiana National Estuarine Research Reserve

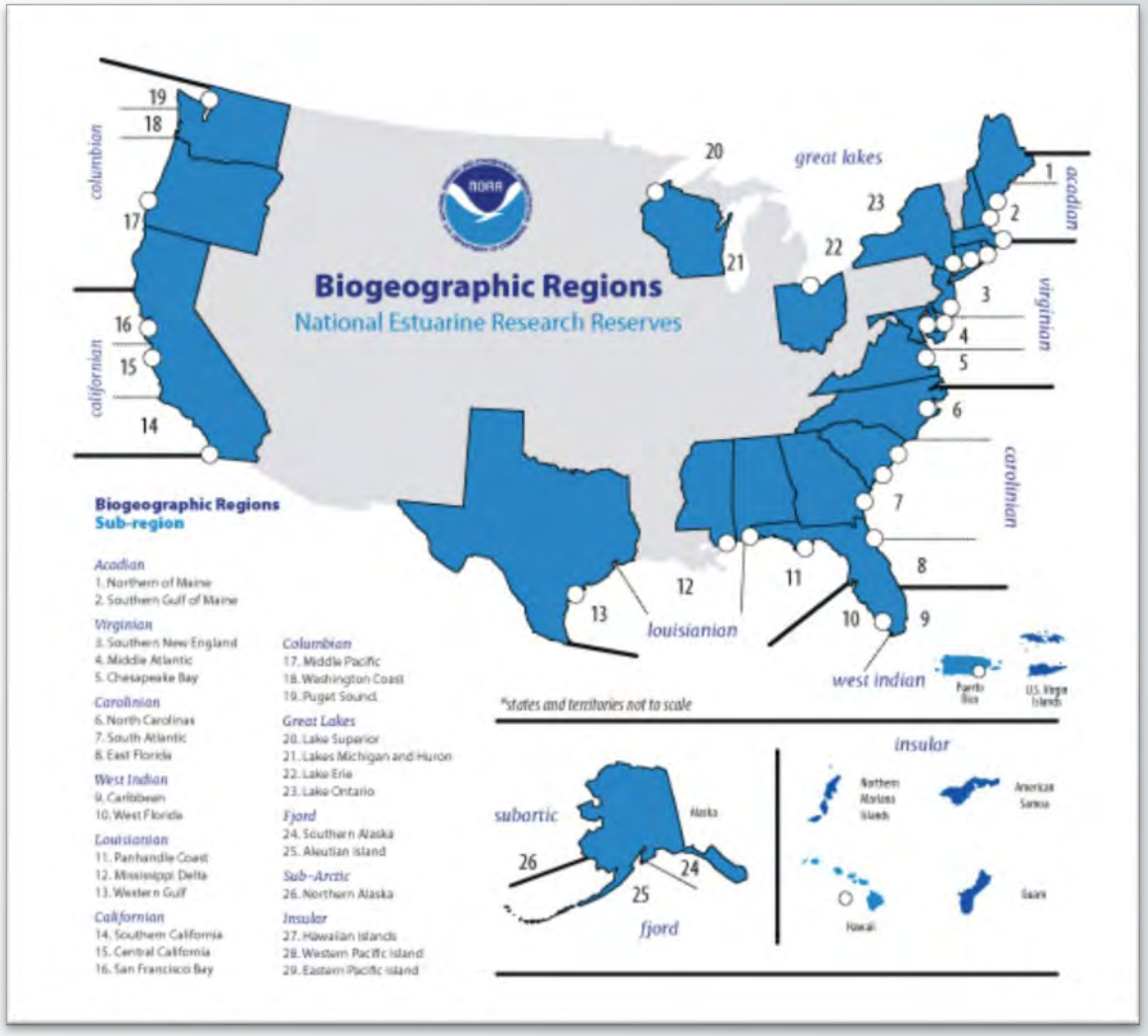
What is the National Estuarine Research Reserve (NERR) System and
What are benefits of a NERR in Louisiana

A Louisiana National Estuarine Research Reserve– Participating in a National Network to Tell our Story

National Estuarine Research Reserve System (NERRS)

network of protected areas representative of the various biogeographic regions and estuarine types in the United States.

Reserves are established as state-NOAA partnership for long-term research, education, and stewardship to promote informed management of the nation's estuaries and coastal habitats.



Primary Goals of the Reserve System

1. **Long-term protection to insure longitudinal research**
2. **Address significant coastal management issues through coordinated research**
3. **Enhance public awareness and understanding of estuaries**
4. **Partner with feds, state, public, and private entities on research**
5. **Conduct and coordinate system wide research**

STEWARDSHIP

- Mapping
- Restoration
- Land Acquisition

RESEARCH

- Monitoring
- Collaboration
- Student Fellowships

TRAINING

- Target Audiences
- Priority Issues

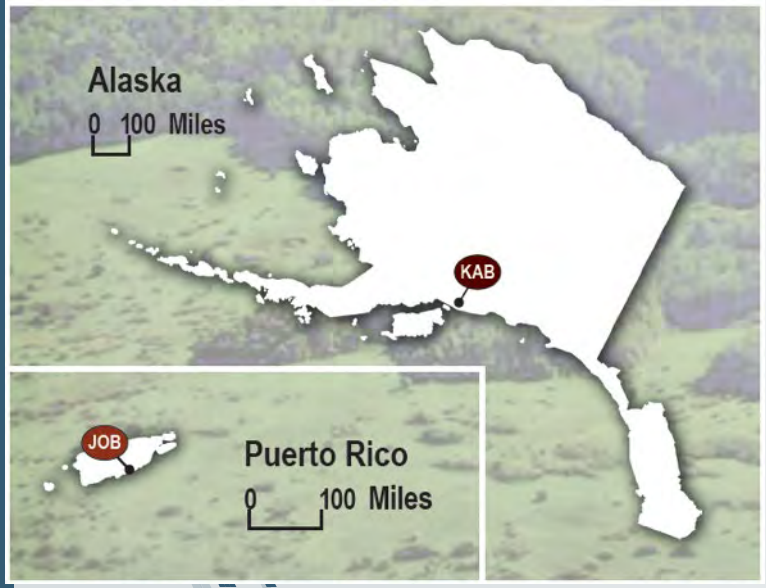
EDUCATION

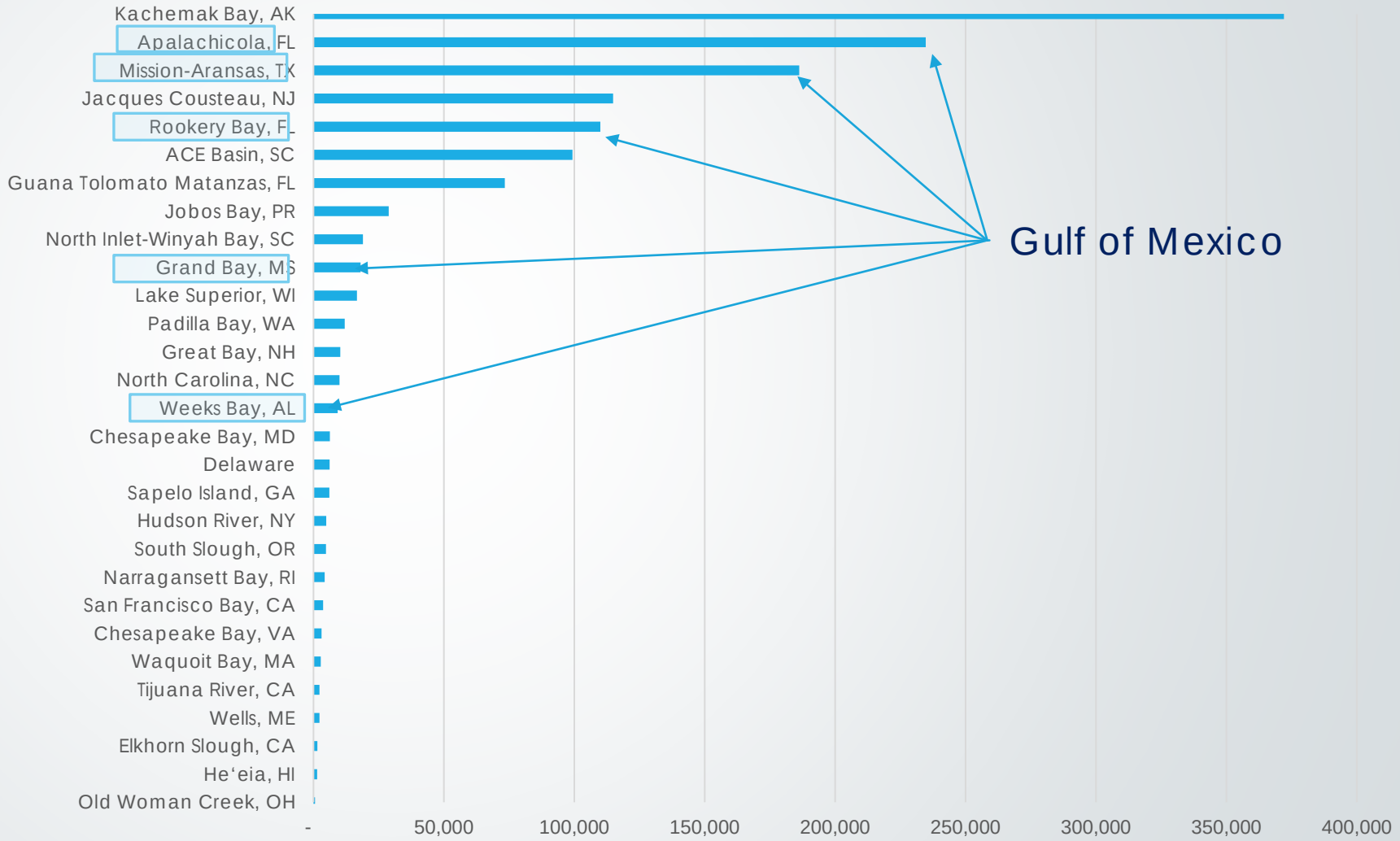
- Teachers
- Communities
- Students

What are benefits of NERR System to Louisiana?

- **The NERR System provides a national network to describe the unique attributes of a major delta ecosystem to the nation; and promote our efforts at national level to restore and protect this natural, economic, and cultural resource.**
- **A LaNERR will provide federal support for applied science, monitoring, education and outreach opportunities and resources to our coast.**
- **Facilities and site to enhanced education of 'what is a delta estuary' to K-12 and public builds support for our coastal programs from recreation to restoration.**

Reserve Size Varies

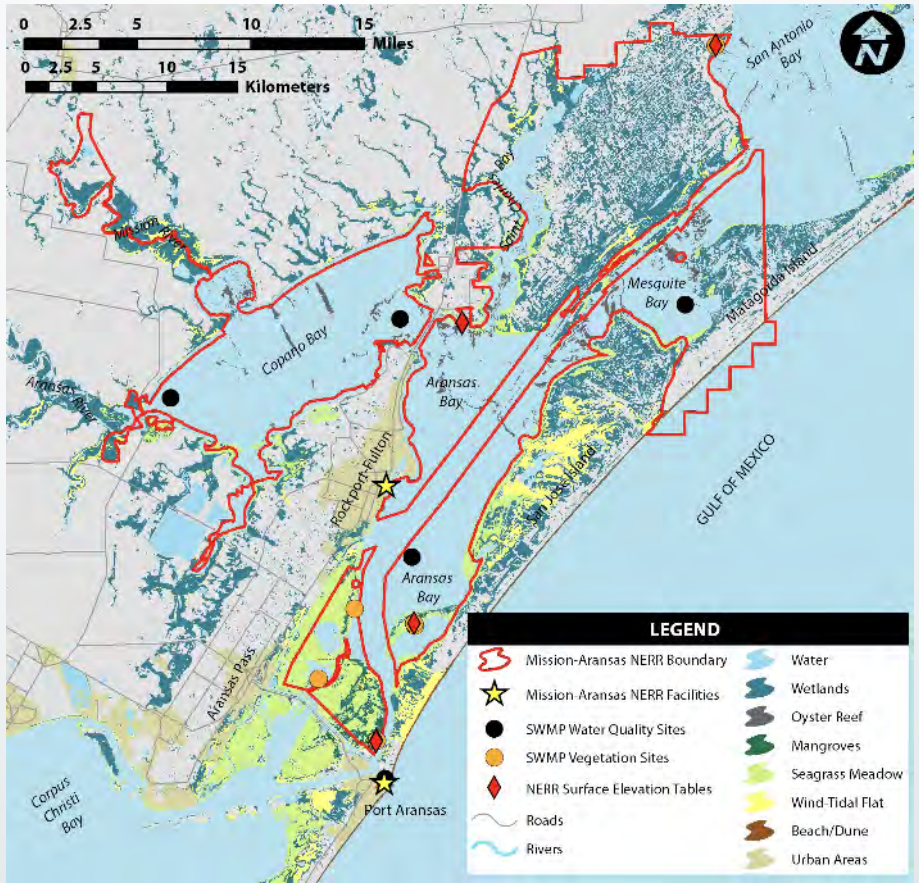




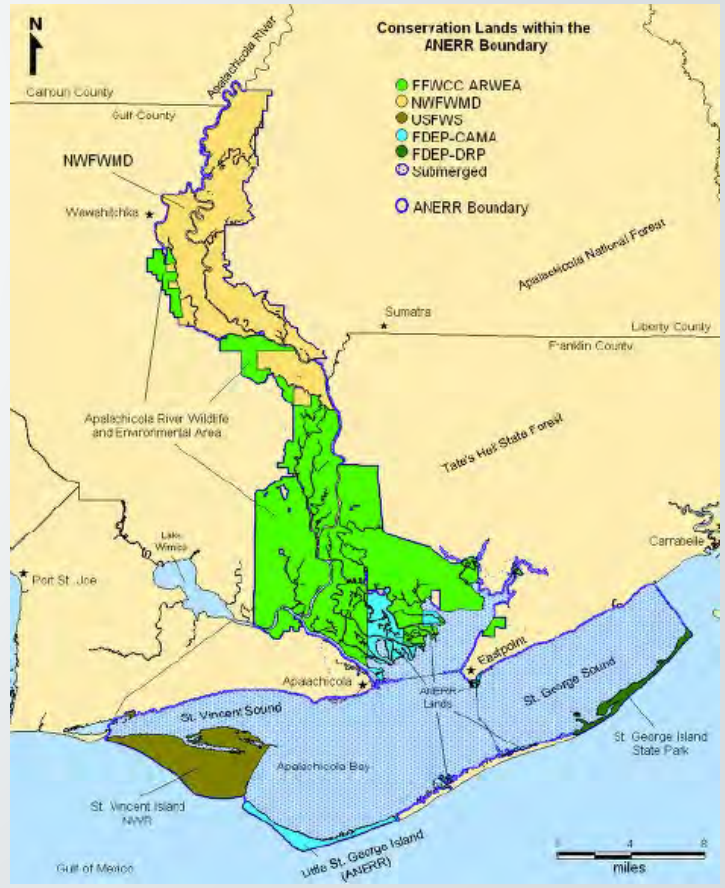
Public lands connected by state waters

Weeks Bay NERR, AL

Mission-Aransas NERR, TX



Apalachicola NERR, FL.



Six proposed LaNERR Estuarine Zones for consideration

Common Questions

- **Will the state have to purchase land for a Louisiana reserve?**

  No. Louisiana is considering sites from existing publicly owned lands and adjacent public trust waters. NOAA would not own or manage the land within a LaNERR. The LaNERR would be the property of Louisiana along with any other agreements with other public (federal refuge) or private lands (conservation easements).

- **Does the designation of a reserve bring more rules and regulations?**

  The designation of a LaNERR would not add any new regulations. There are no federal regulations imposed as a result of reserve designation.

- **Will the federal government run the reserve?**

  LaNERR would be a partnership between NOAA and Louisiana. The state is responsible for the day-to-day management of a reserve. NOAA administers the entire reserve system. NOAA responsibilities include establishing standards for designating and operating reserves that benefit the entire system.

Step 1- Letter of Interest

Step 2- Site Selection and Nomination (*Current Step*)

- **Site-Selection Process** must include: Site Selection (Executive) Committee, site criteria that are applied to entire coastal zone, key stakeholder outreach and engagement, and at least one public meeting held jointly with NOAA
- **Governor Submits a Site Nomination Packet** including: Governor's nomination letter, description of the proposed site in relationship to each of the site selection criteria, an analysis of the proposed site based on the biogeographical scheme defined in regulations, a description of the site's major resources, location, proposed boundaries, and adjacent land uses, the public engagement process, and all other sites considered and why none of these were chosen.

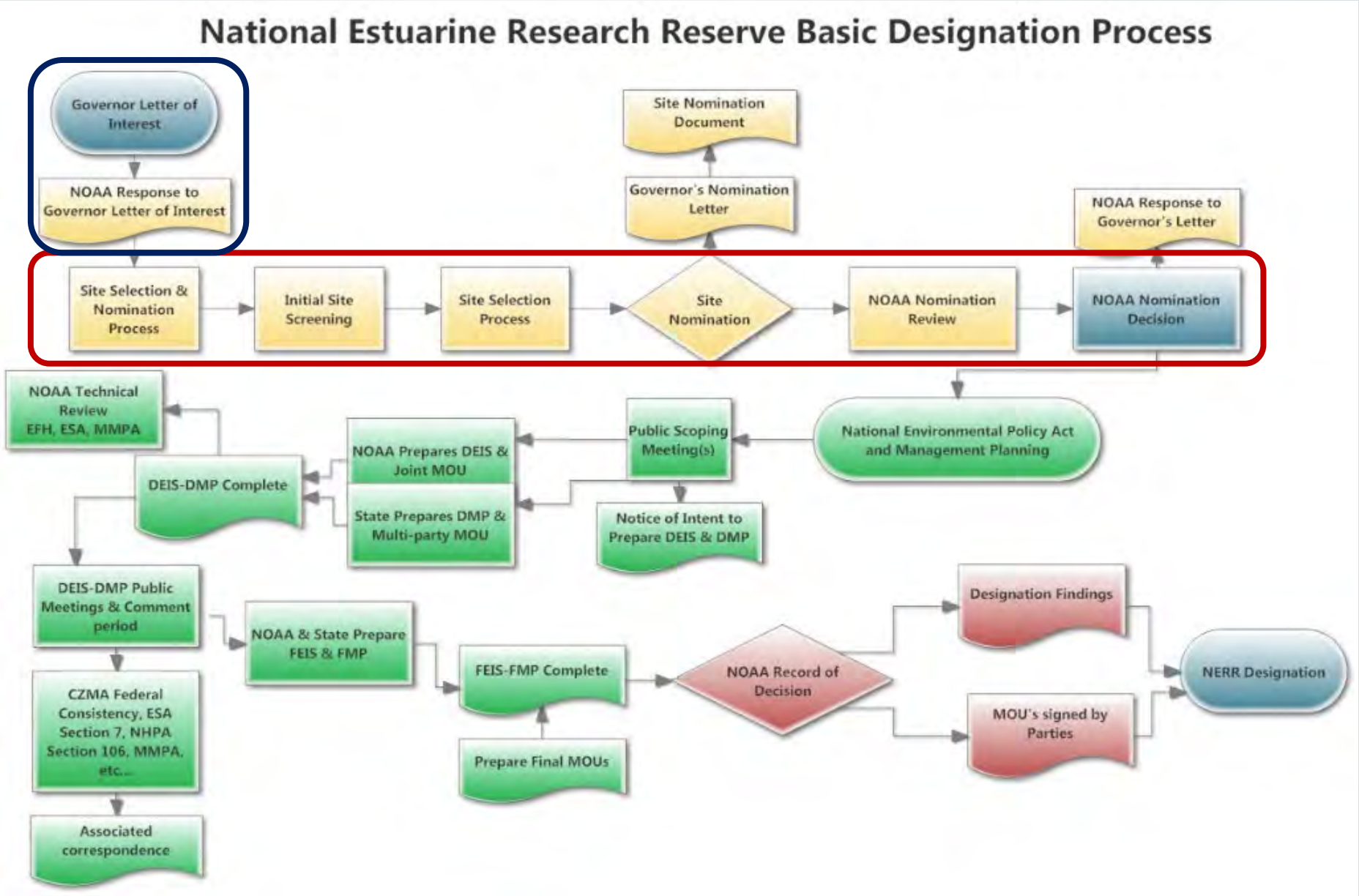
Step 3- Draft Environmental Impact Statement and Draft Management Plan

Step 4- Final Environmental Impact Statement and Final Management Plan

Step 5- Designation findings and certificate; Record of Decision

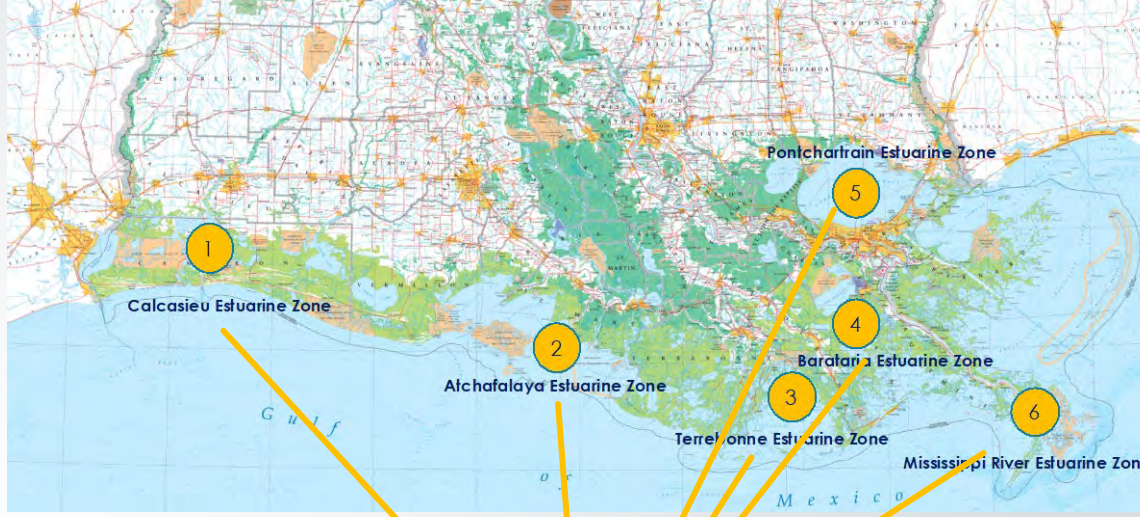
Step 6- Designation Ceremony

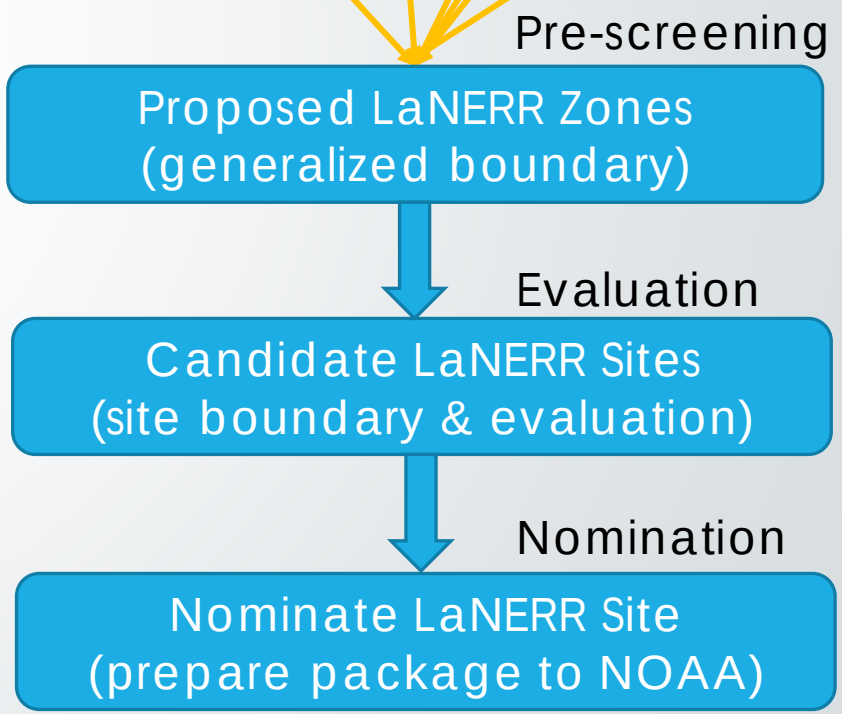
Pre-designation Process



How will Louisiana determine where to establish a LaNERR?

1. Develop **pre-screening criteria** that reflect LaNERR goals;
2. **Establish generalized zones** within which to identify candidate sites;
3. Use proposed zones to **modify NOAA site criteria** to help identify sites for consideration and final nomination;
4. Evaluate proposed LaNERR Zones to **select candidate sites** that define preferred goals;
5. **Generate public support and partnerships** for proposed final site to NOAA.





LaNERR Site Selection and Nomination Teams

Designation Leadership Team

- Serves to provide leadership and oversight of the state designation. Its task is to manage the phases of the designation over time by coordinating the various committees, engaging the public, and by working closely with local NOAA Liaison to keep NOAA updated on progress

Site Development Committee

- the technical team responsible for pre-screening the coastal zone to evaluate those areas clearly suitable to serve the function of a LaNERR. Its task is to submit 1-3 proposed sites to the Site Evaluation Committee for nomination of one final site to NOAA for site designation

Site Evaluation Committee

- the executive level committee responsible for reviewing the final proposed sites for a LaNERR as recommended by the Site Development Committee. Its task is to select the final site to be recommended to the governor for nomination prior to being submitted to NOAA

LaNERR Executive Committee Members

- Harry Vorhoff
  - *Governor's office of Coastal Activities*
- Russell Caffery
  - *Governor's office of Coastal Activities*
- Gregory Grandy
  - *CPRA*
- Bren Haase
  - *CPRA*
- Charles Reulet
  - *DNR*
- Keith Lovell
  - *DNR*
- Randy Myers
  - *LDWF*
- Cole Grarrett
  - *LDWF*
- Patrick Banks
  - *LDWF*

- Members met on August 13 to receive an update on LaNERR Site Selection process
- Executive Members felt the process depicted a fair and transparent way to select and nominate a site
- Members will be updated as process evolves

Criteria from the NOAA guidelines to establish a LaNERR site in the Mississippi River Delta.

National Estuarine Research Reserve Designation Guidance

Site Selection, Nomination, and Designation

February 1, 2020

Authored by NOAA

Stewardship Division
Office for Coastal Management
National Ocean Service
National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

I. Environmental Representativeness

II. Value of the Site for Research, Monitoring, and Resource Protection

III. Suitability of the Site for Education and Interpretation

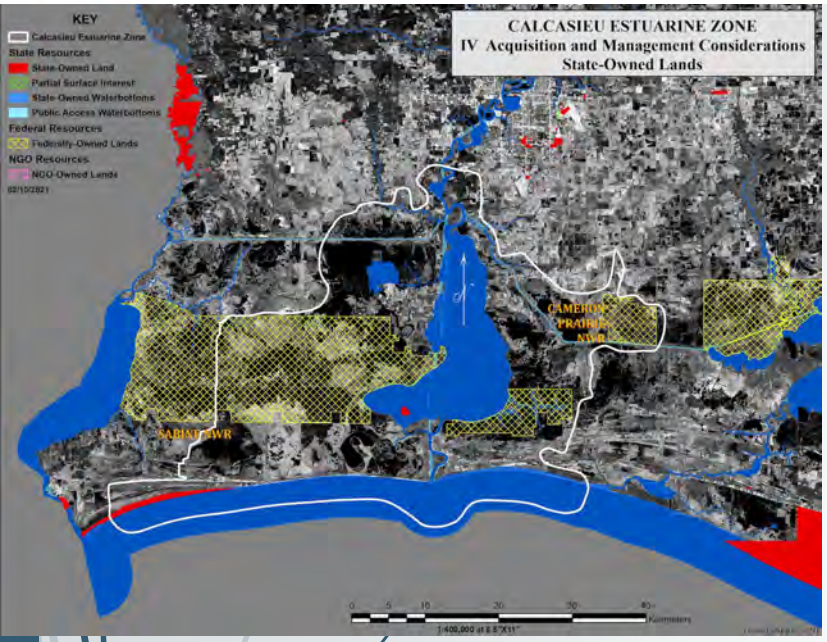
IV. Acquisition and Management Considerations

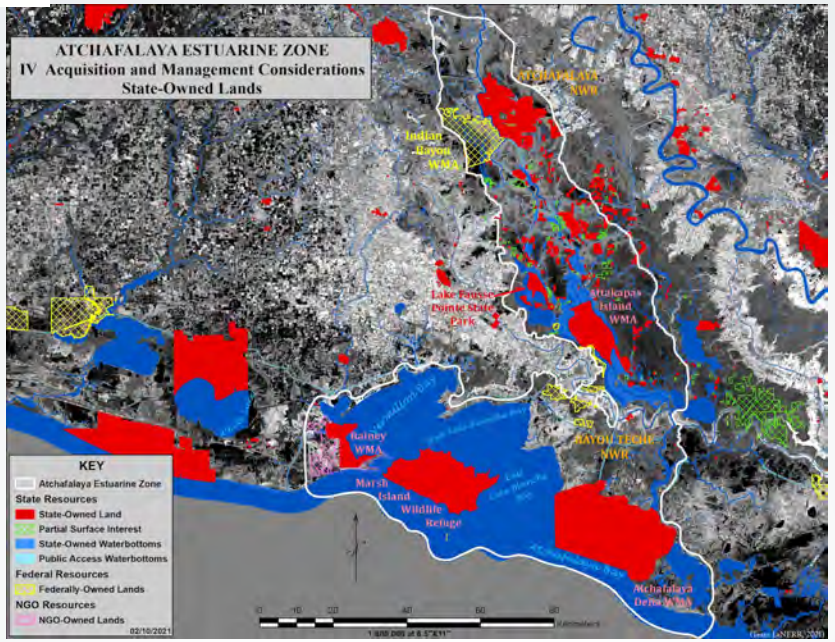
IV. Acquisition and Management Considerations

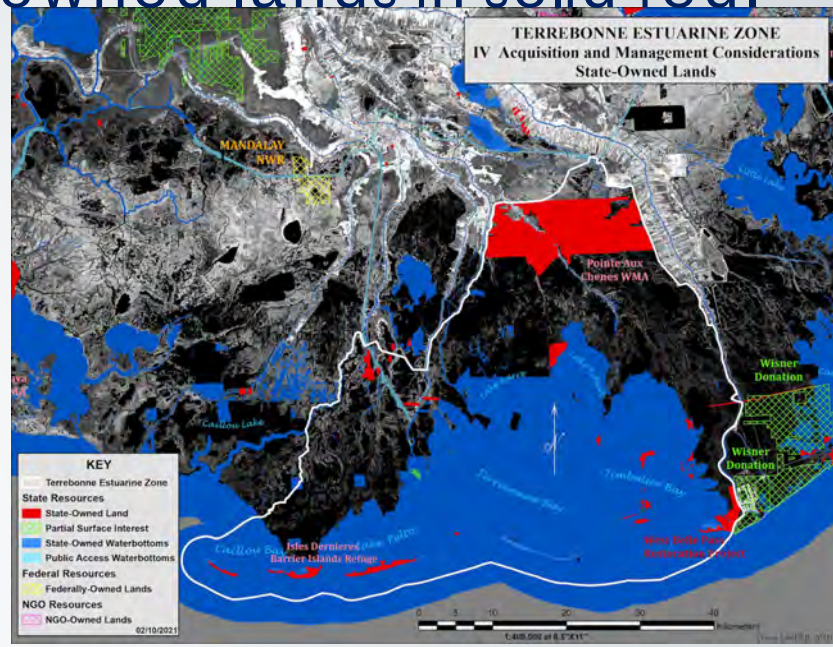
The generalized boundaries of the proposed LaNERR zone include **sufficient land and water area to maintain the integrity of the delta ecosystem**.

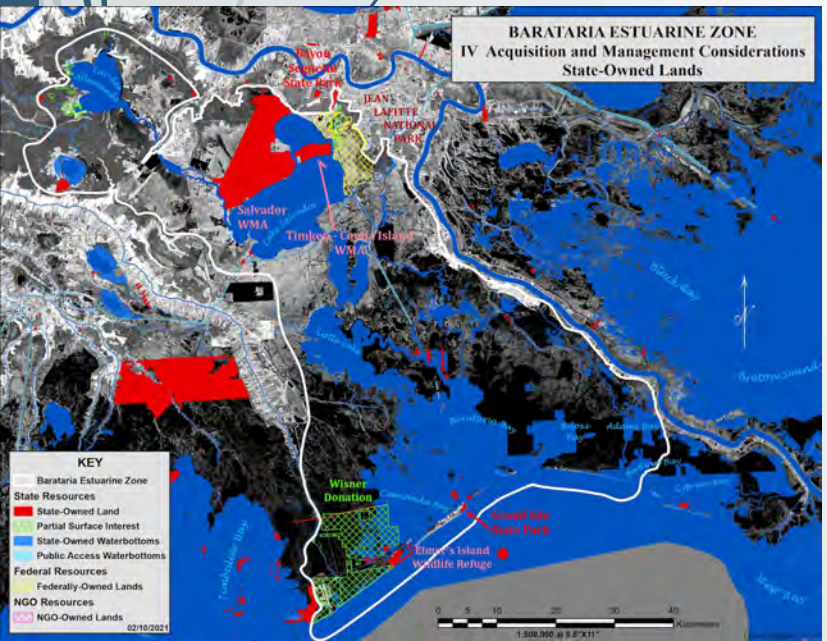
- The candidate site consists of publicly owned lands or demonstrates sufficient potential for land acquisition and adequate land-use control to meet Reserve System goals.
- There are Wildlife Management Areas, State Parks, National Parks, conservation easements, etc. in the LaNERR zone.
- The candidate site is suitable to address key **coastal management issues**.

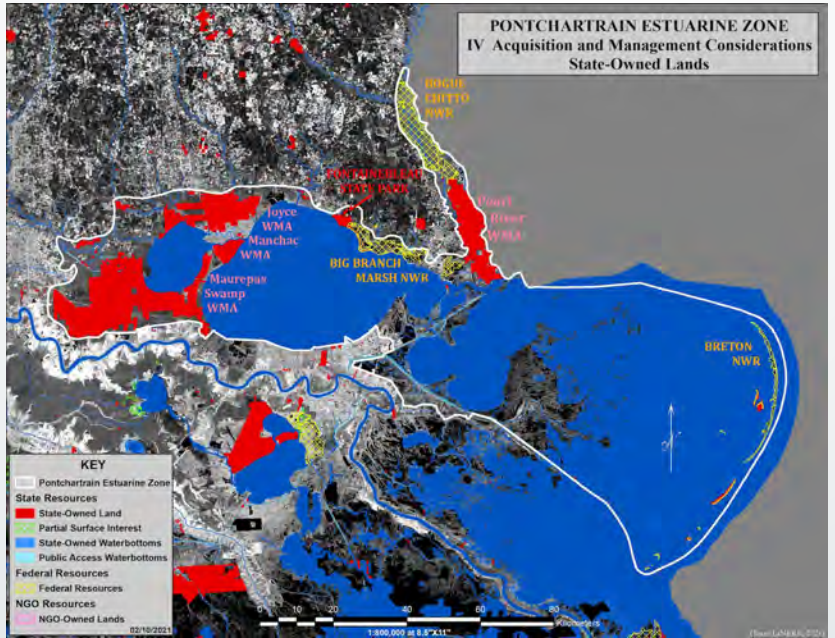
Distribution of public lands in each of the proposed Estuarine Zones with state-owned lands in solid red.

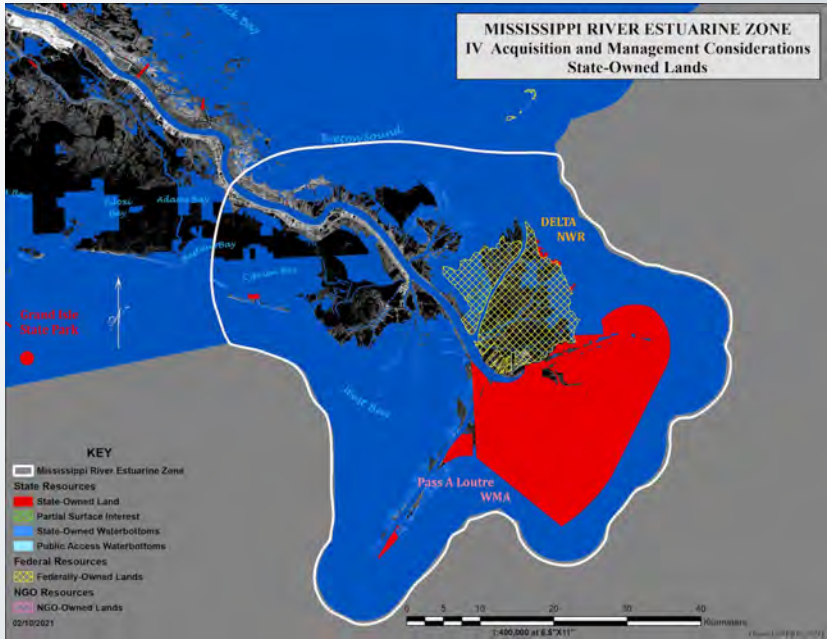










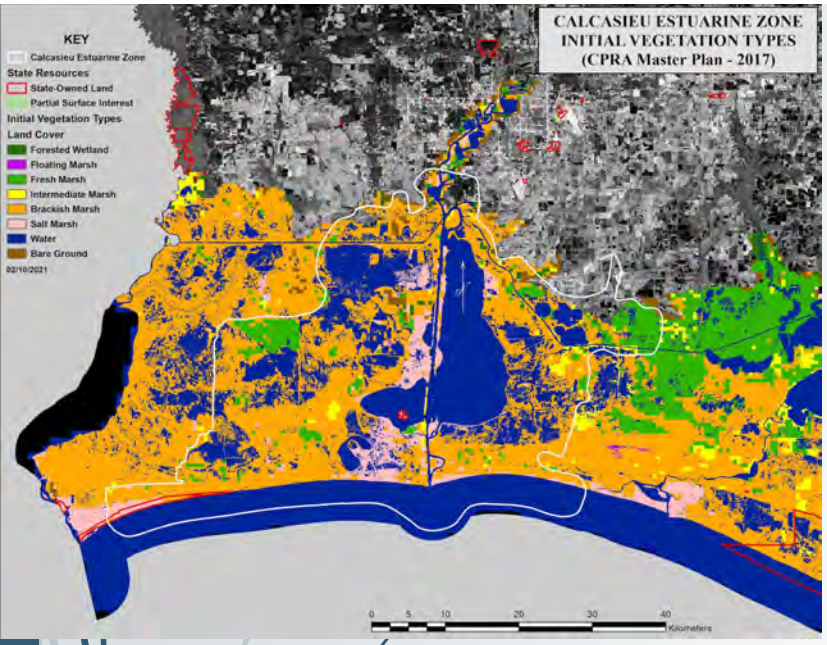


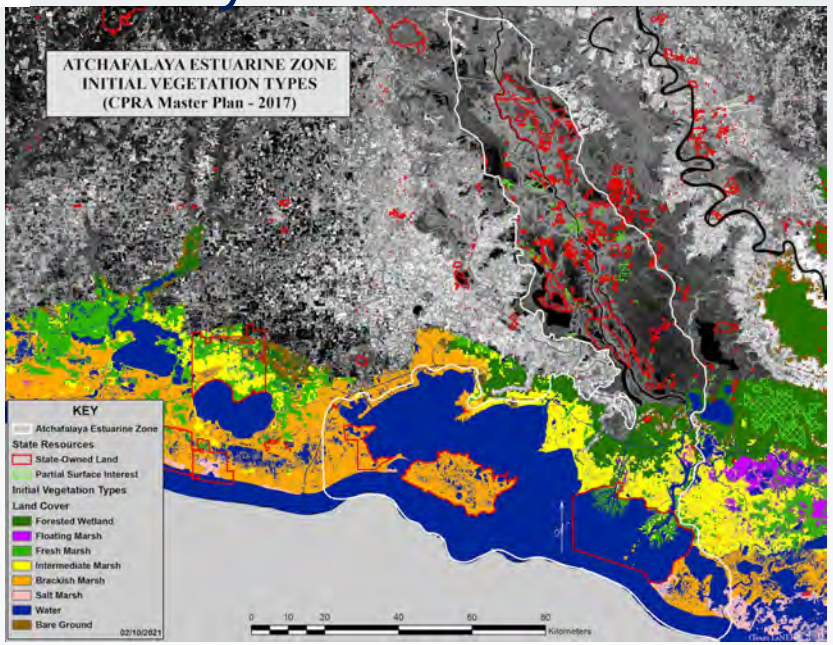
I. Environmental Representativeness

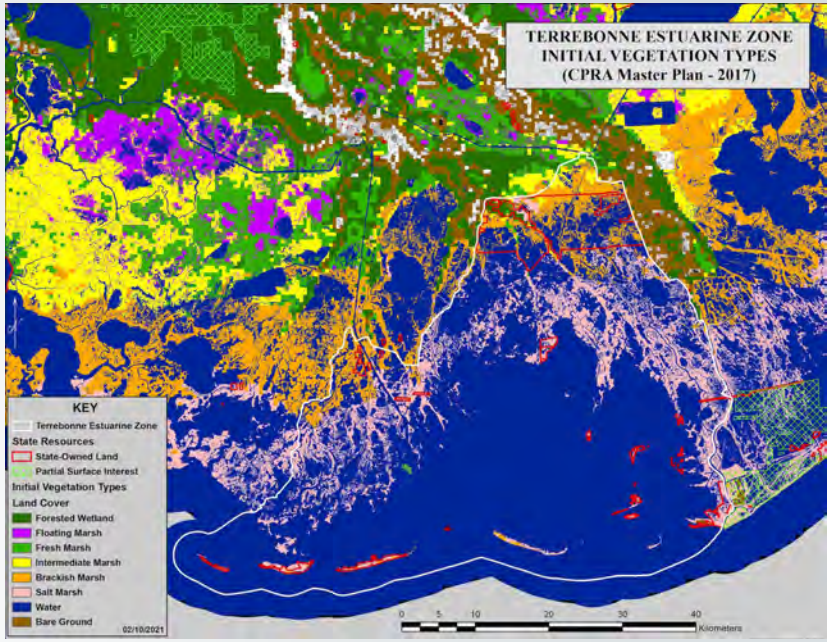
The candidate site is in the **Mississippi River Delta** that represents an active delta estuary.

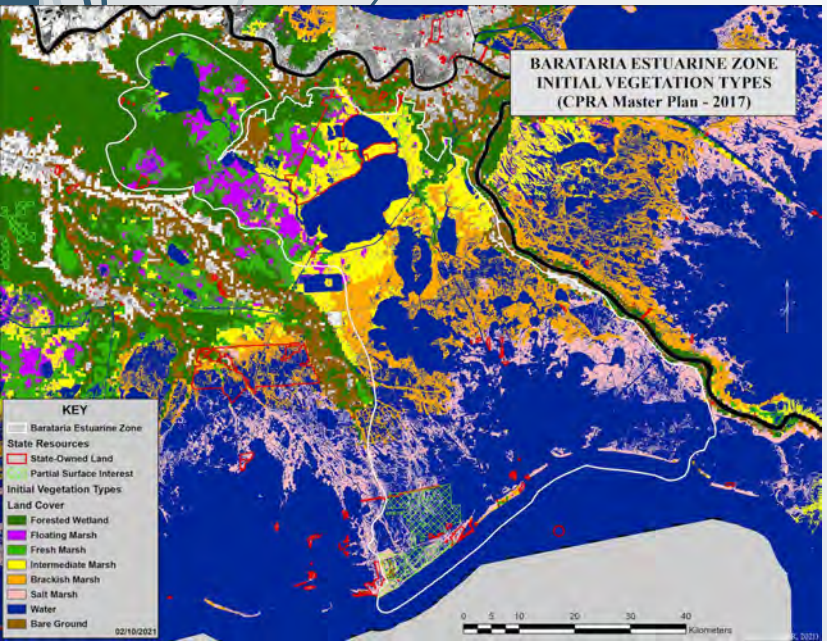
- Core and buffer areas describe the ecological features of a delta estuary such as the life cycles of estuarine-dependent species;
- Vegetation types include the delta estuary habitats from tidal freshwater to estuarine marshes and forested wetlands;
- Does the proposed delta estuary have habitat with unique and endangered species;

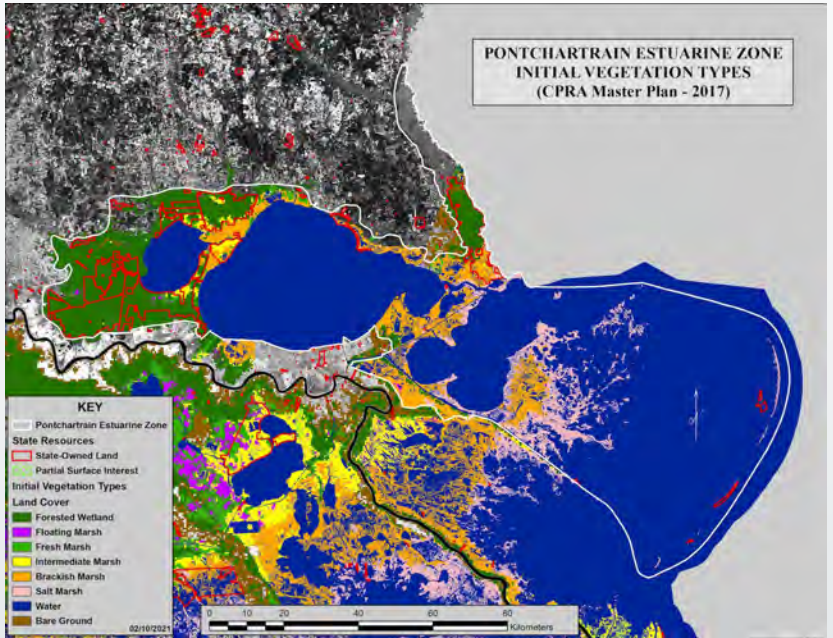
Distribution of current habitat types representing salinity zones based on 2017 Coastal Master Plan.

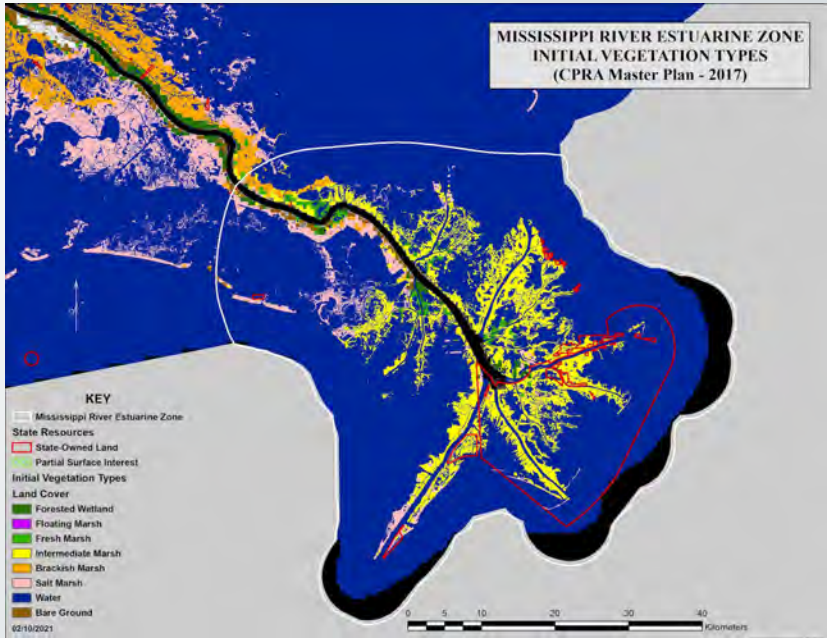




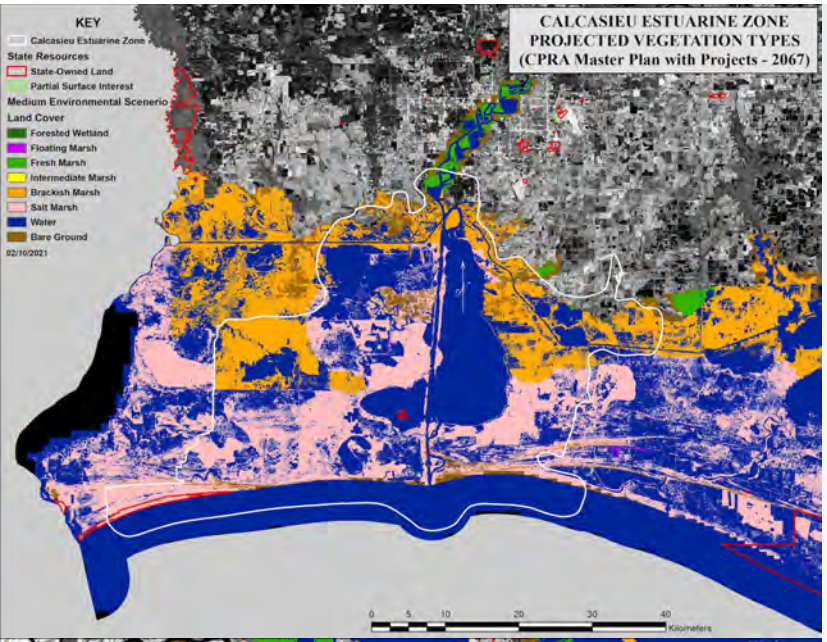


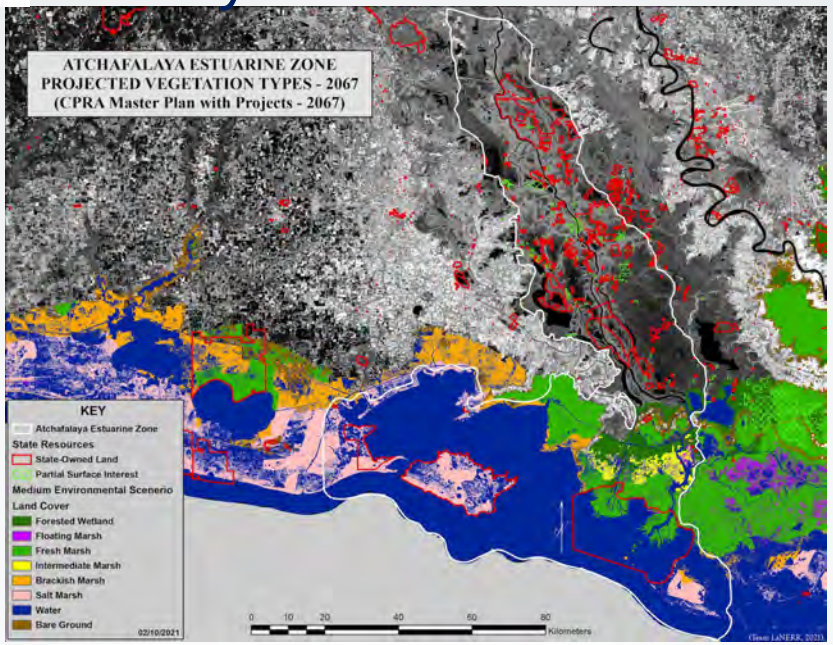


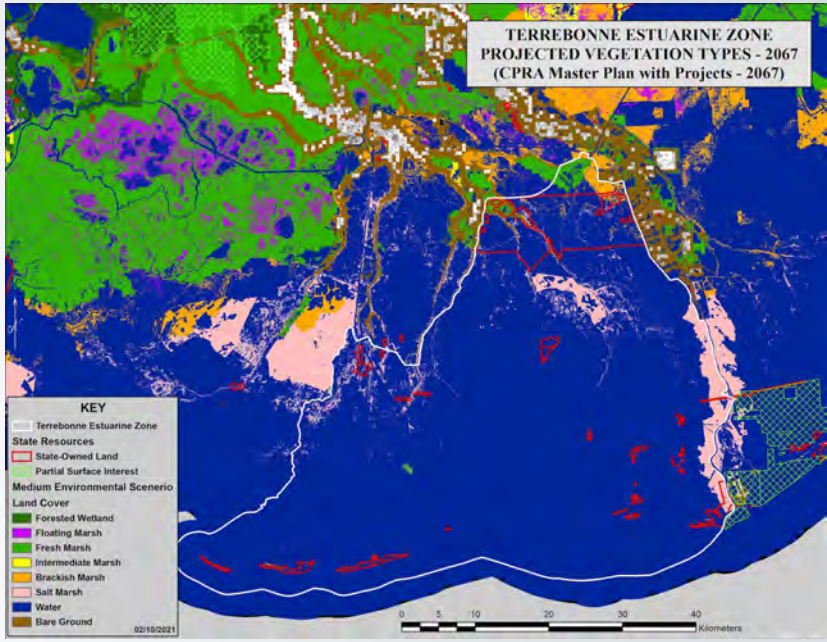


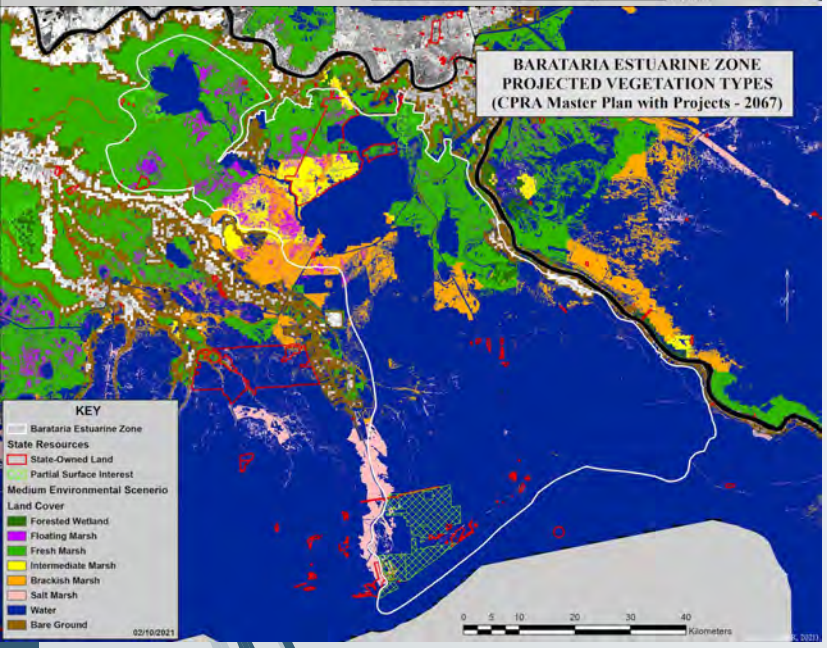


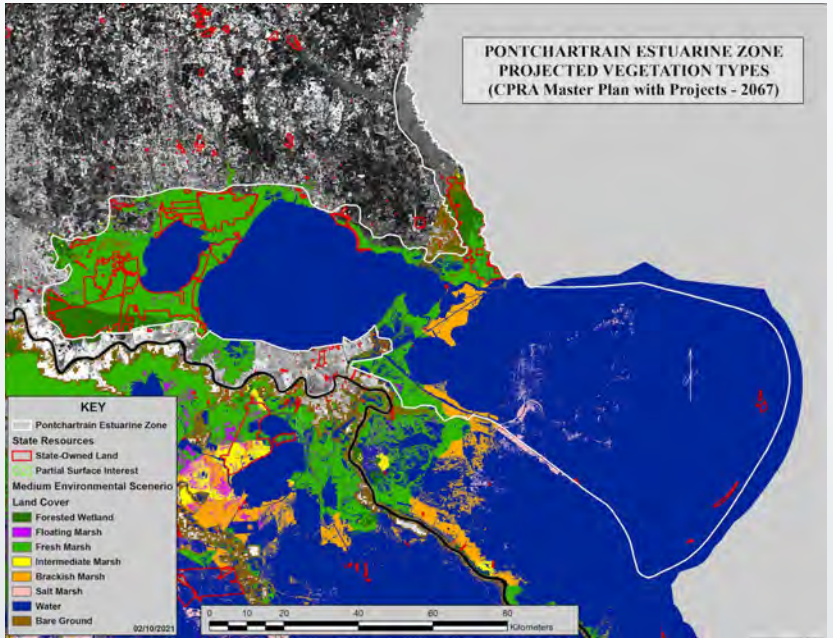
Distribution of projected habitat types representing salinity zones based on 2017 Coastal Master Plan.

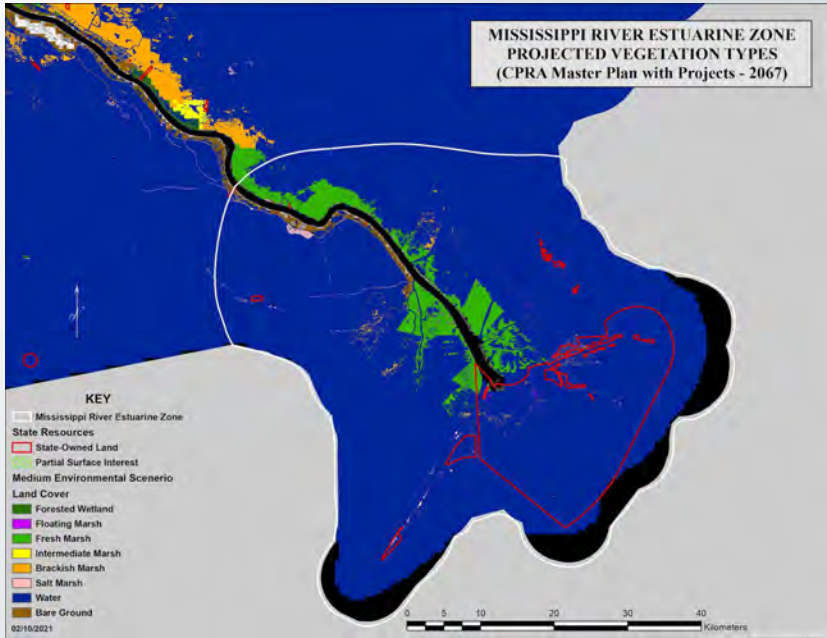










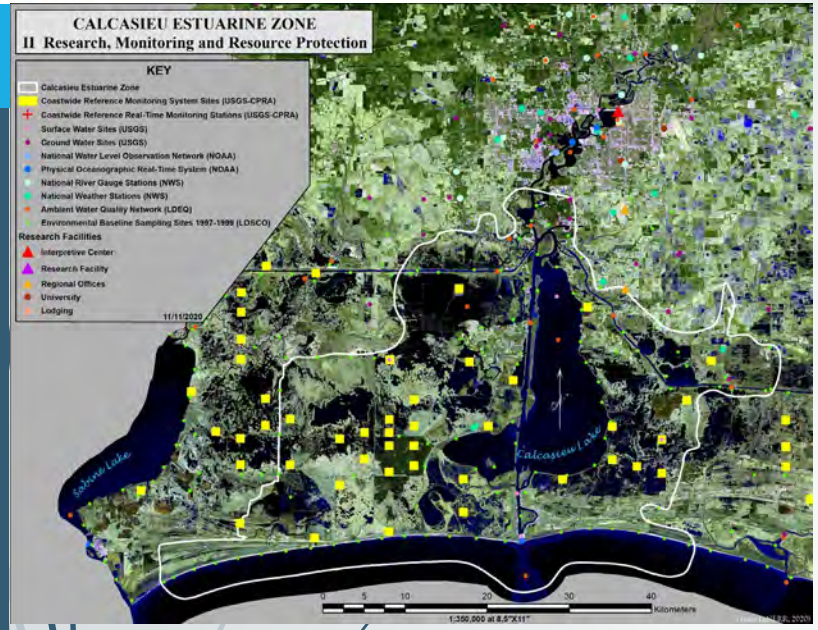


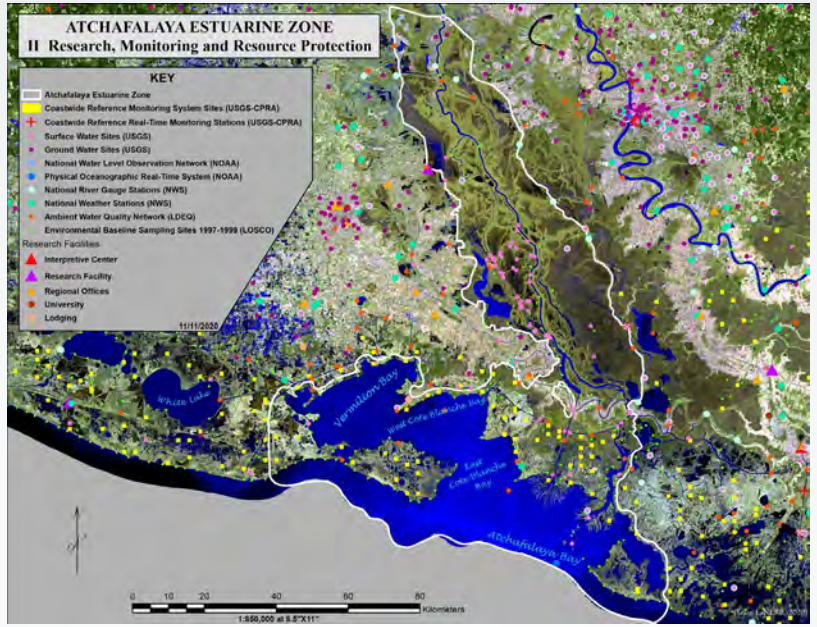
II. Value of the Site for Research, Monitoring, and Resource Protection

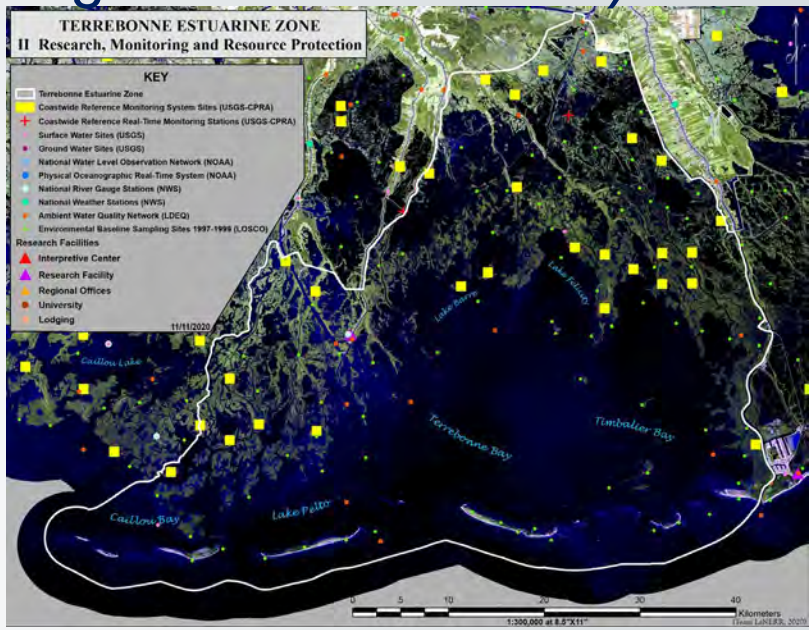
The candidate site is suitable for **research, monitoring, and resource protection** activities.

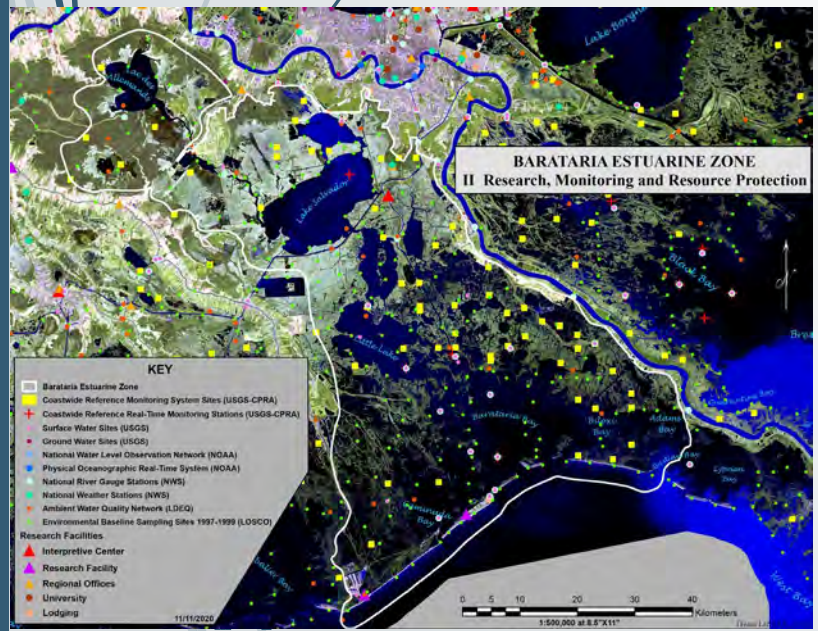
- The proposed zone has ecosystems suitable for monitoring processes of delta estuary; and has been site of long-term research efforts.
- There are research institutions and facilities in general area that can utilize the proposed site for research and monitoring programs;
- There is long-term sustainability and resilience to ecosystems in the proposed site; land use issues allow for resource protection.

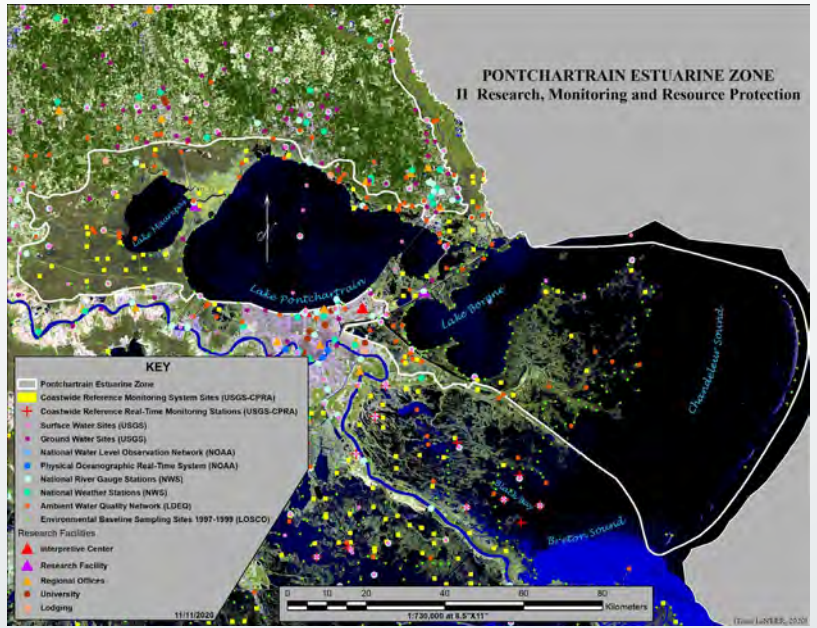
Distribution of monitoring stations (including coastwide reference monitoring stations – CRMS).

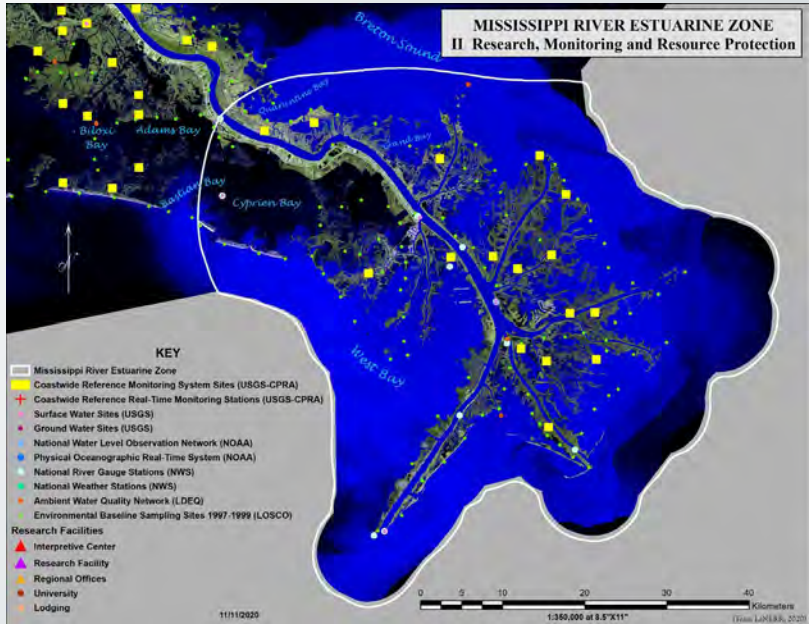










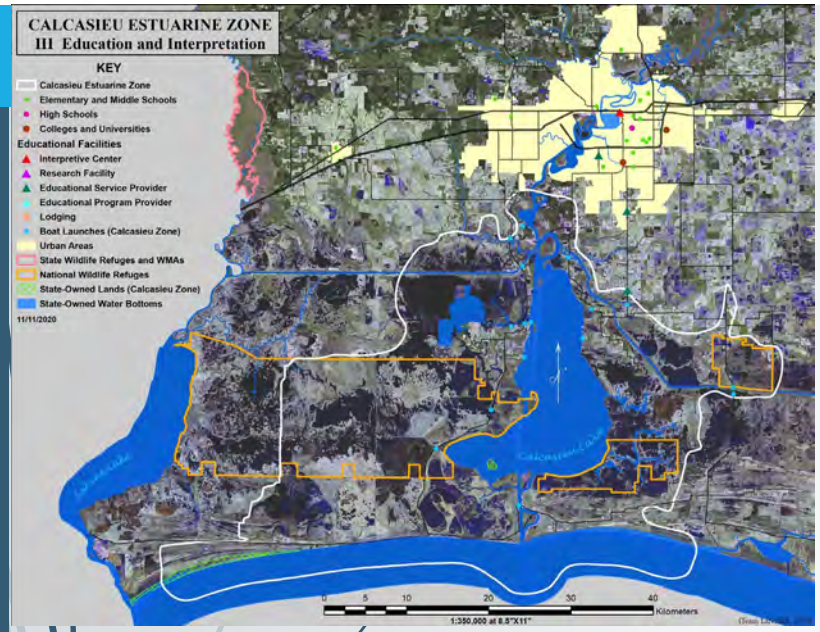


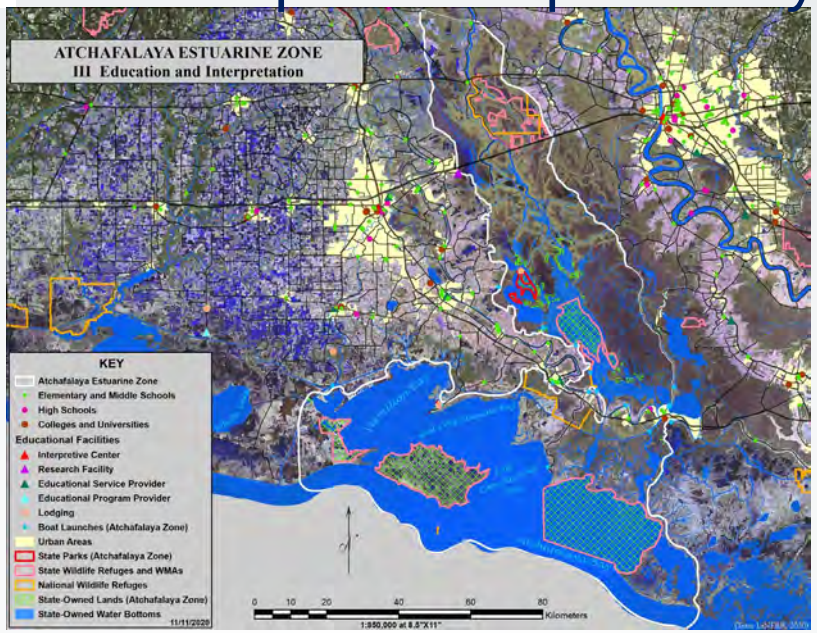
III. Suitability of the Site for Education and Interpretation

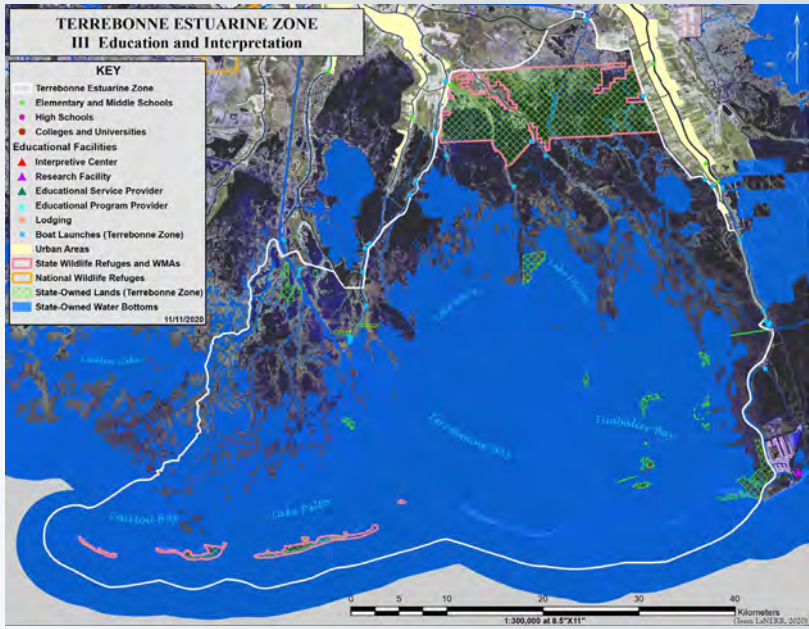
The candidate site is suitable for **education, training, and interpretation** activities.

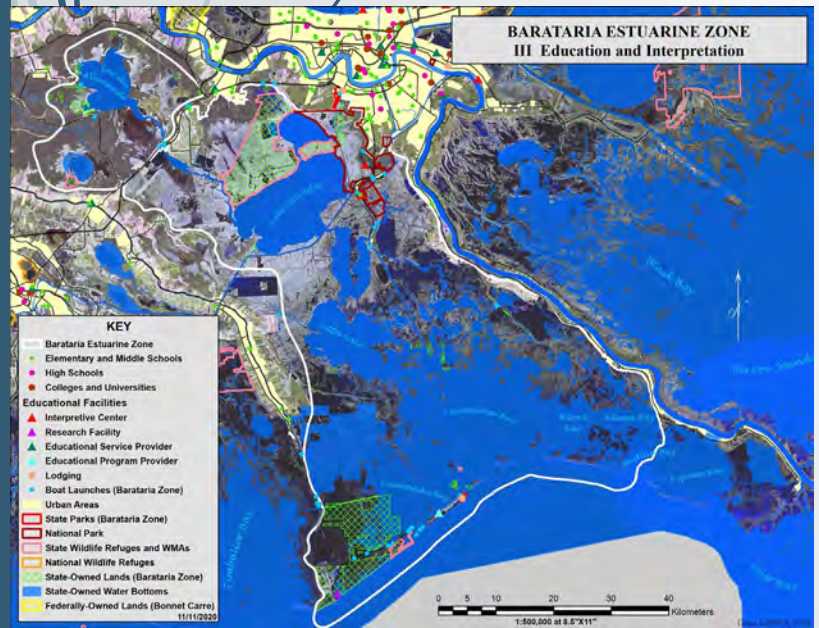
- Does the LaNERR zone have significant features such as Scenic and Historic Rivers, Scenic Byways, Indian mounds, Archeological sites, etc., that provide education and interpretation value;
- Are there schools and known educational and interpretive centers near the LaNERR zone;
- Is the proposed site accessible by normal modes of transportation. What roads and boat launches provide access points to waterways of the LaNERR zone.

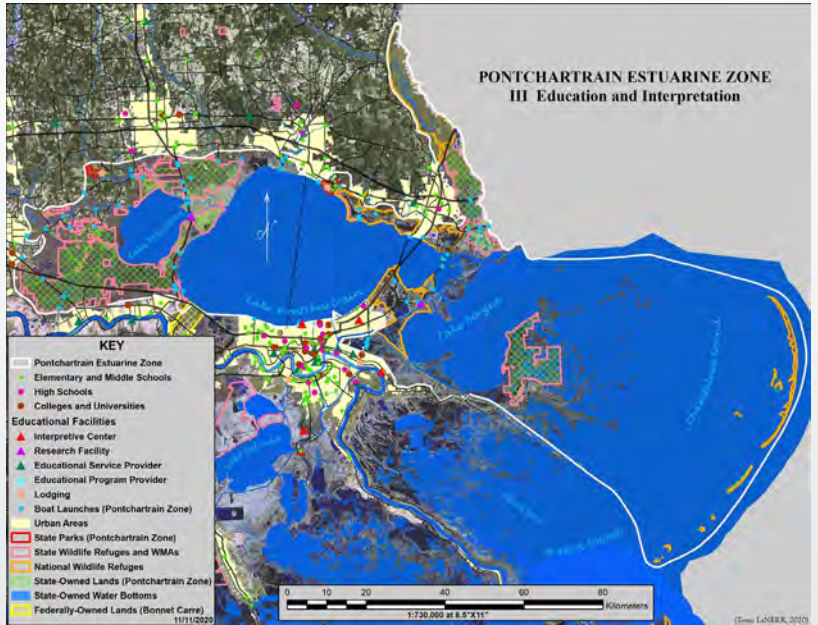
Distribution of urban areas and schools along with access points in proximity of six Estuarine Zones.

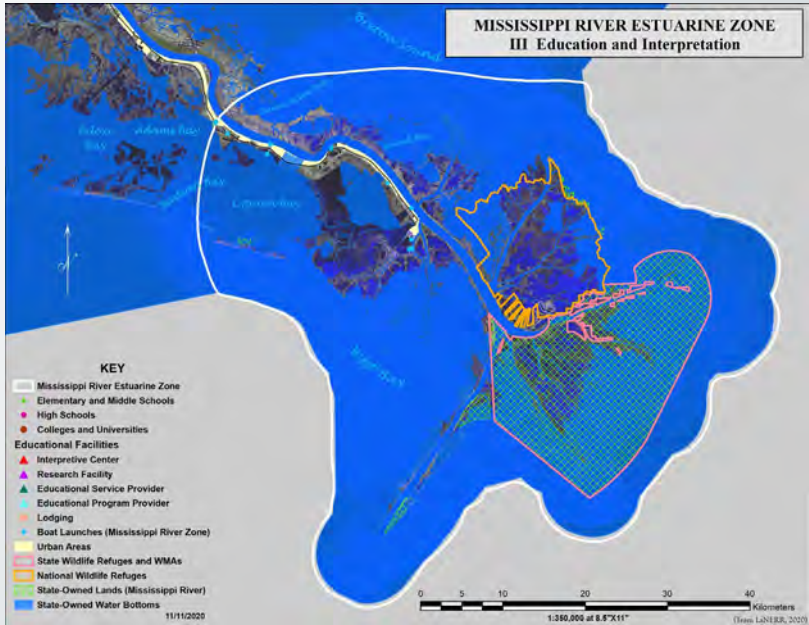












LaNERR Site Selection and Nomination Process: Public Participation and Transparency

Site Development

- Propose LaNERR Zones
- Prescreen Zones to identify Sites
- Develop Candidate Sites
- Modify Site Criteria to NOAA

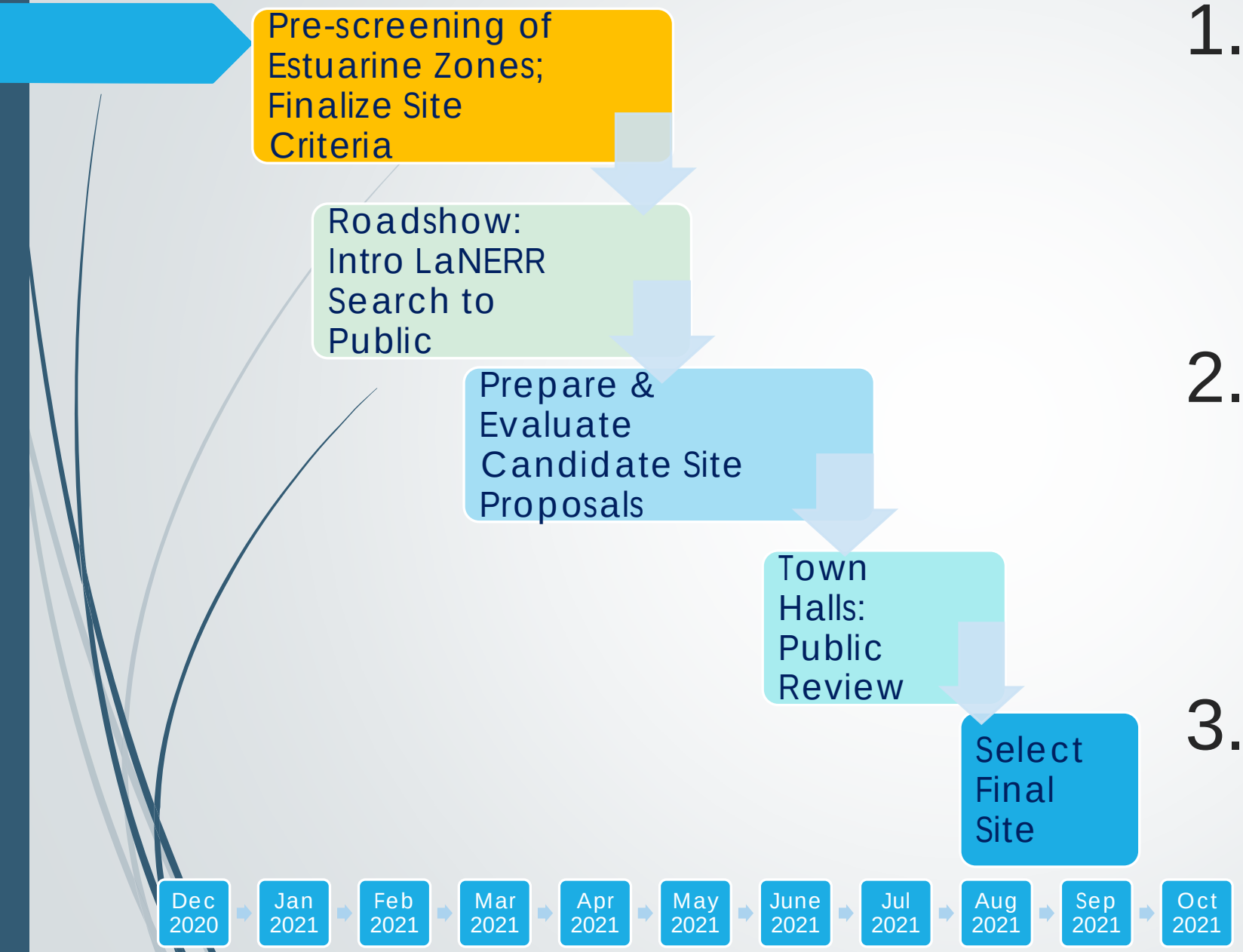
Public Roadshow

- Outline Benefits of NERRS & LaNERR
- Overview of LaNERR Process to Stakeholders
- Receive feedback on Proposed LaNERR Zones

Town Halls at Candidate Sites

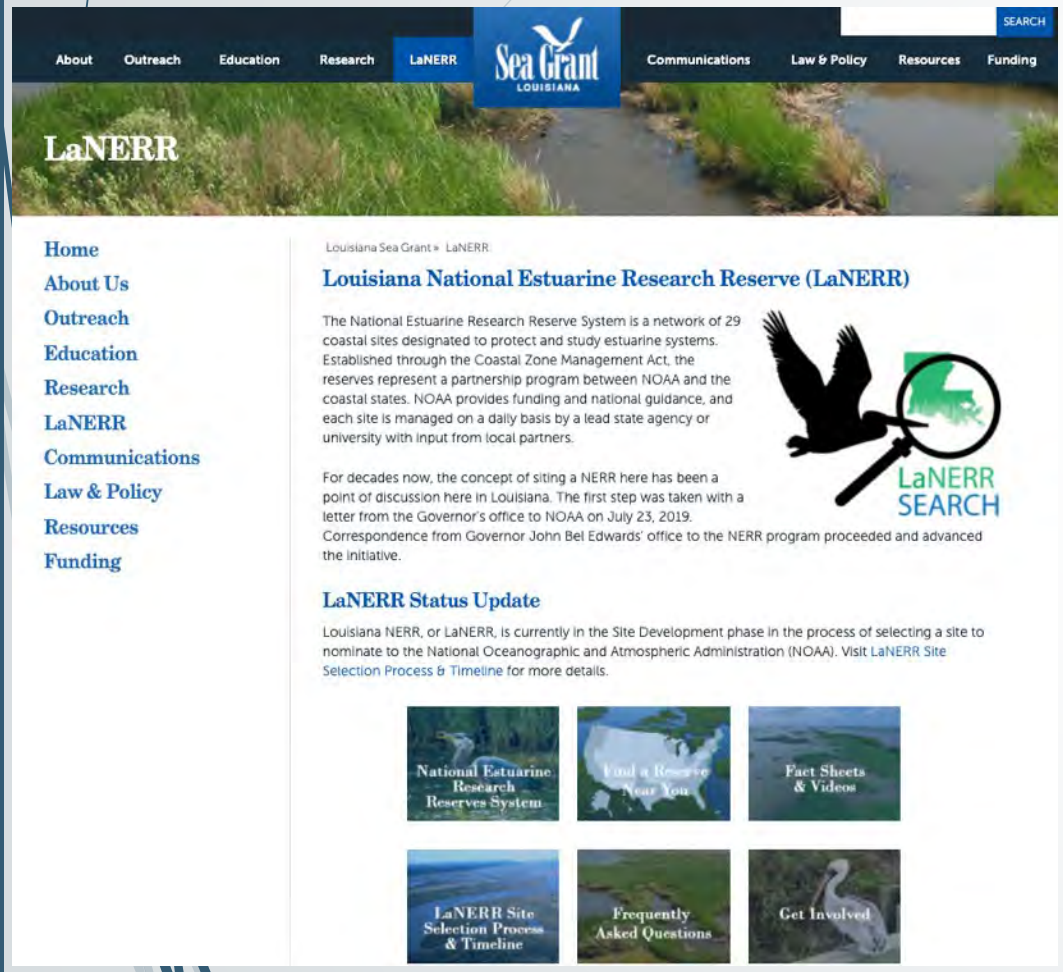
- Presentation of Candidate Sites to local communities
- Public and stakeholder engagement
- Evaluate potential value of sites

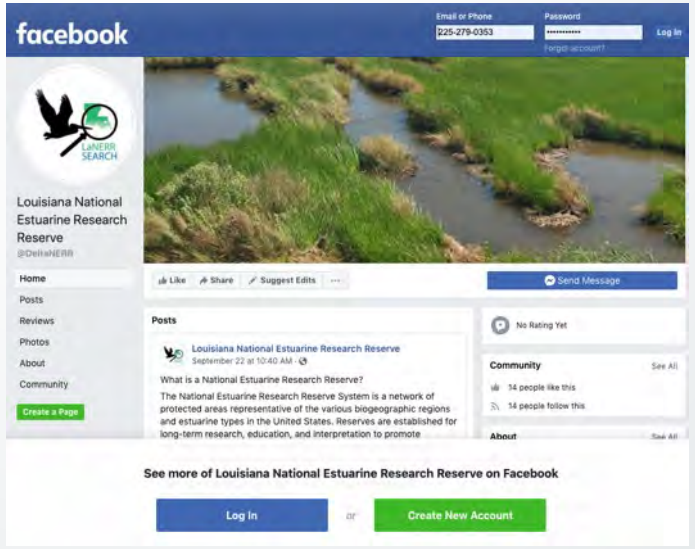
What are the next steps in the pre-designation process.



1. Site Development Committee will be evaluating the six proposed generalized estuarine zones as qualifications for a LaNERR.
2. Based on that recommendation, the Site Development Committee will begin to develop more specific Candidate Sites for consideration for a LaNERR.
3. Town Hall meetings will be held at those Candidate Sites that have merit for a LaNERR.

How do I stay engaged in the process?





Contact

email deltanerr@lsu.edu

- Social Media:
  - **https://twitter.com/DeltaNERR**
- Website:
  - **http://www.laseagrant.org/deltanerr/**
- Facebook
  - **https://www.facebook.com/DeltaNERR/**

LaNERR

Louisiana
National Estuary Research Reserve

Questions?

The **Site Designation Coordination Team** provides leadership and oversees the designation process by the state. This team includes:

- **Robert Twilley** (Director of Louisiana Sea Grant),
- **Morgan Crutcher** (Governor's Office of Coastal Activities)
- **LaTosha Mullins**(Louisiana Sea Grant).
- This committee will work closely with the NOAA Liaison member, **Kristin Ransom**, to keep the Ecosystems and NERRS Program in the NOAA Office of Coastal Management updated on progress.
- In addition, this group will communicate with the Site Development Committee, and the Site Evaluation Committee to coordinate phases of the designation process over time.

The **Site Development Committee** is a technical team that will be responsible for pre-screening the coastal zone to evaluate those areas clearly suitable to serve the function of a LaNERR.

The Site Development Committee will submit 1-3 proposed sites to the Site Evaluation Committee for nomination of a LaNERR to NOAA for site designation.

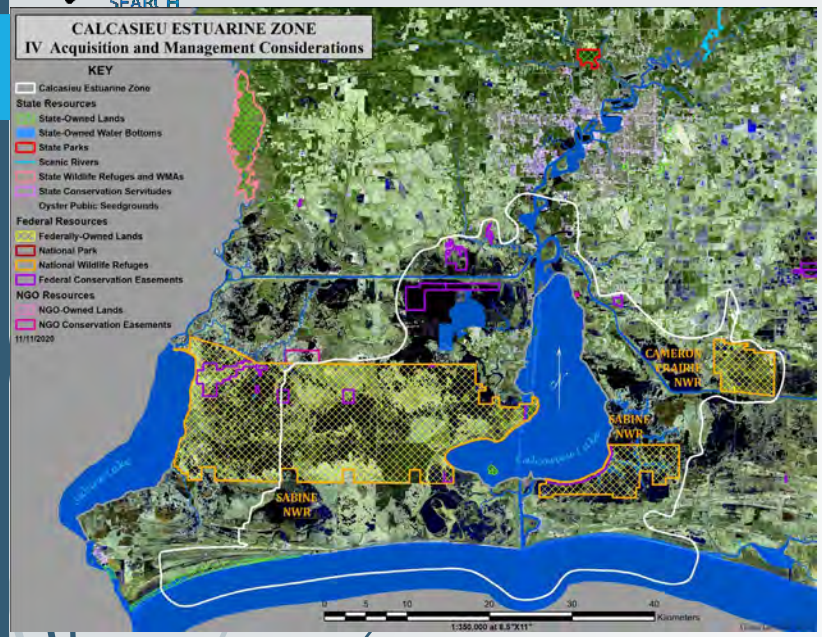
State Agencies: CPRA; Archaeology; State Parks; La. Culture, Recreation and Tourism; Atchafalaya Basin Natural Heritage District; State Lands Office; LDAF;LDEQ; LDNR; LDOTD; LDWF; Louisiana Watershed Initiative

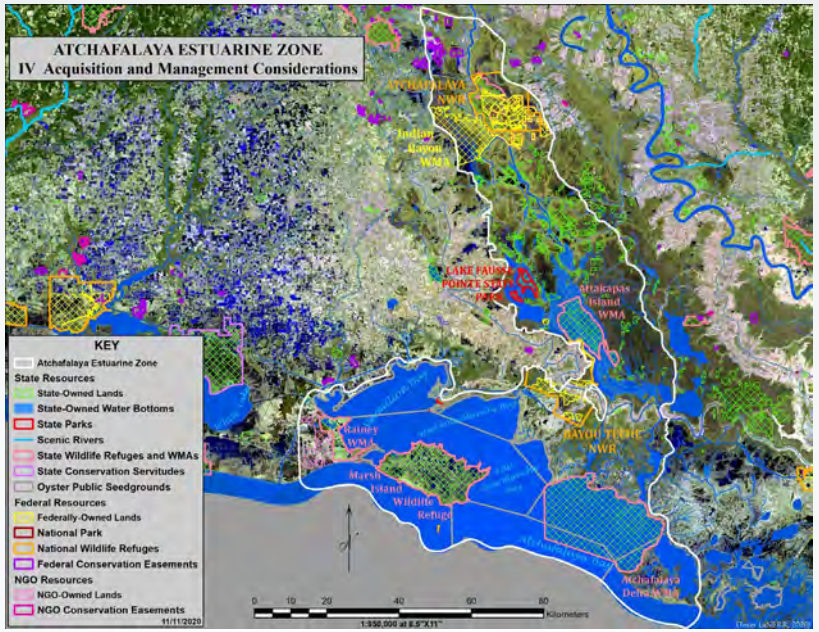
Federal Agencies: NOAA OCM - Gulf Coast Rep; USFWS; USGS; NWRC; NRCS; National Park Service; USACE; EPA

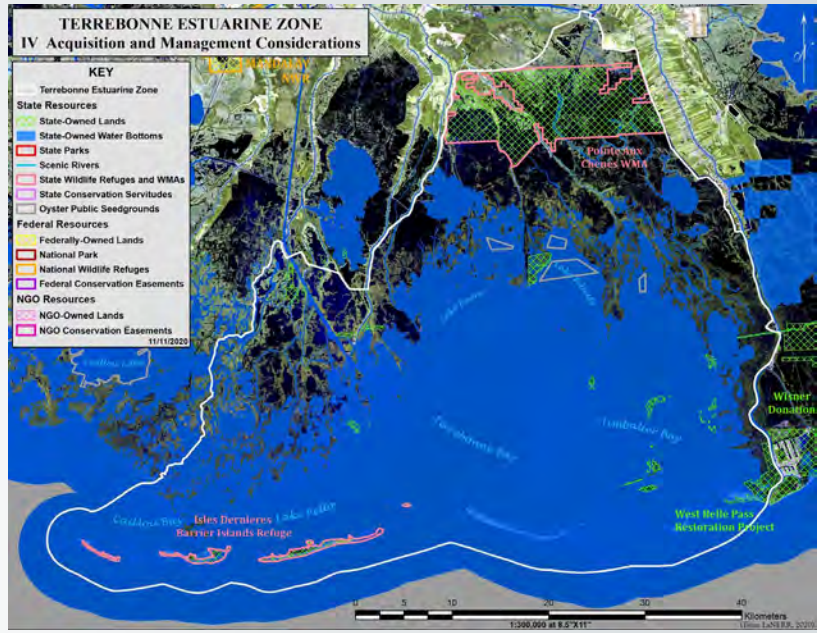
NGOs: The Nature Conservancy; Ducks Unlimited; The Conservation Fund; Land Trust for LA; LWF; Pontchartrain Conservancy; Restore or Retreat; The Water Institute of the Gulf; Mississippi River Delta Campaign – EDF; Audubon; CRCL; Trust for Public Land; BTNEP; Pointe au Chien Indian Tribe

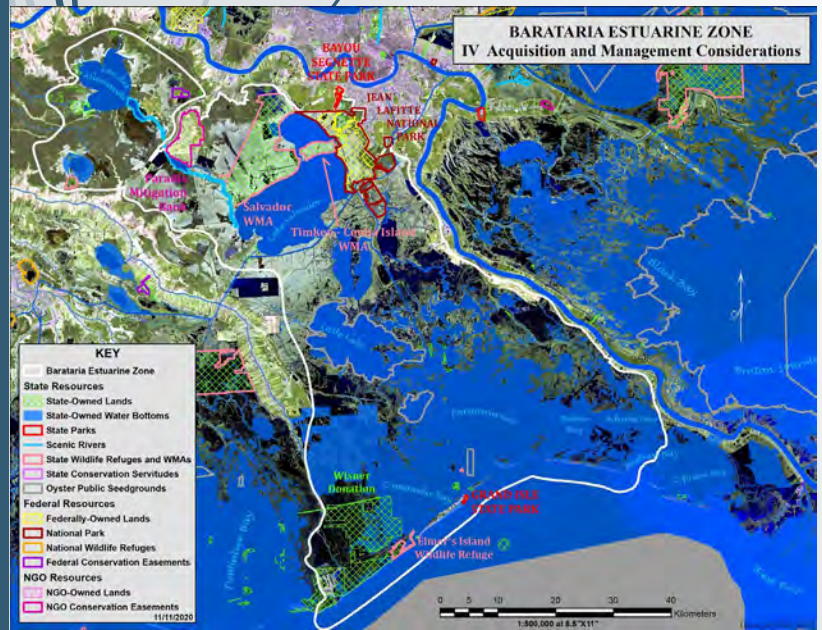
Universities: LSU; LSU AgCenter; LUMCON; Nicholls State; McNeese; Southeastern La. University; Loyola University; University of Lafayette; Tulane; SUNO;

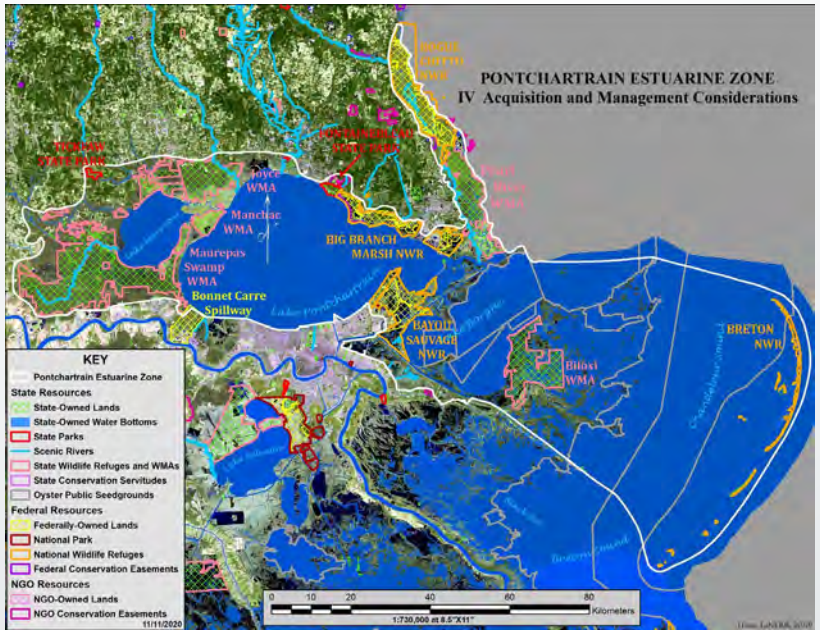
IV. Acquisition and Management Considerations

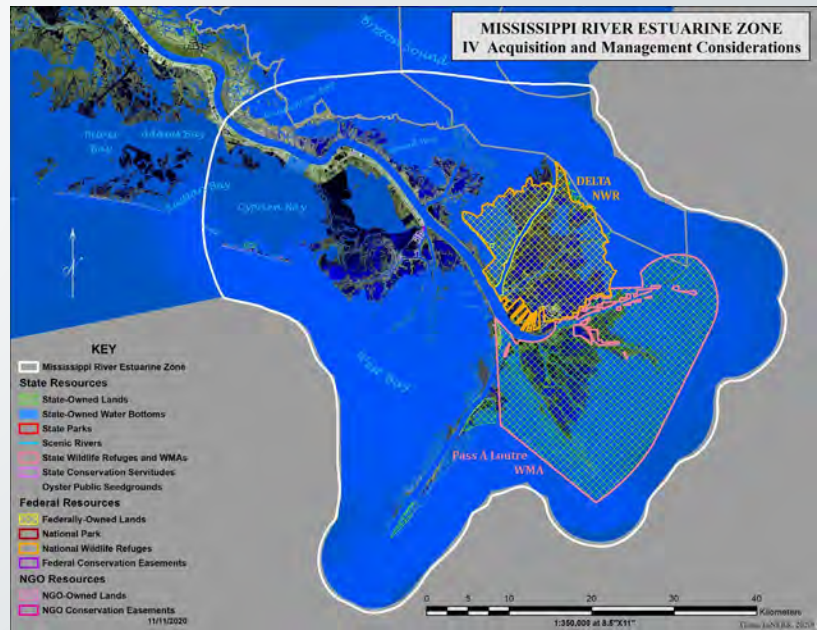


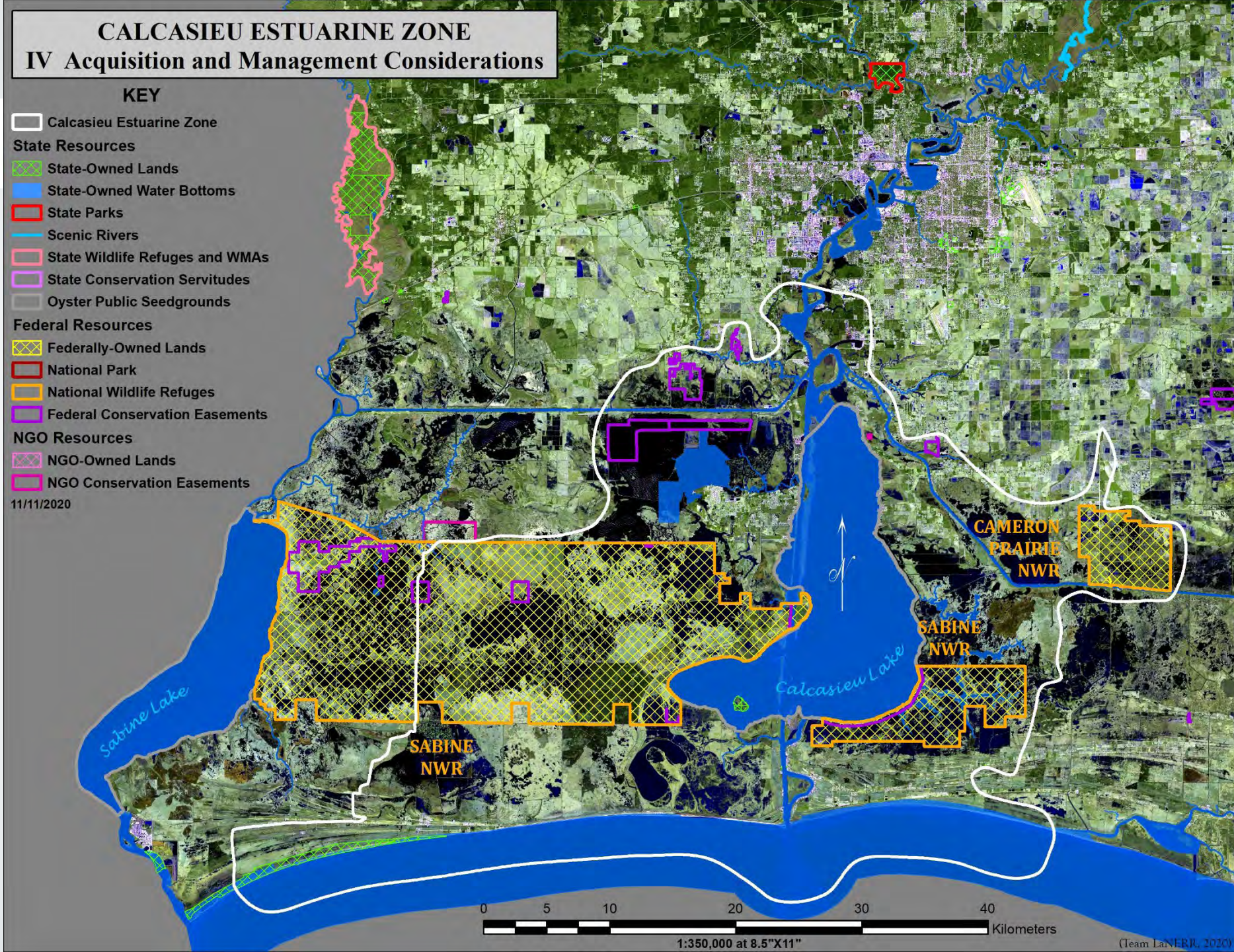


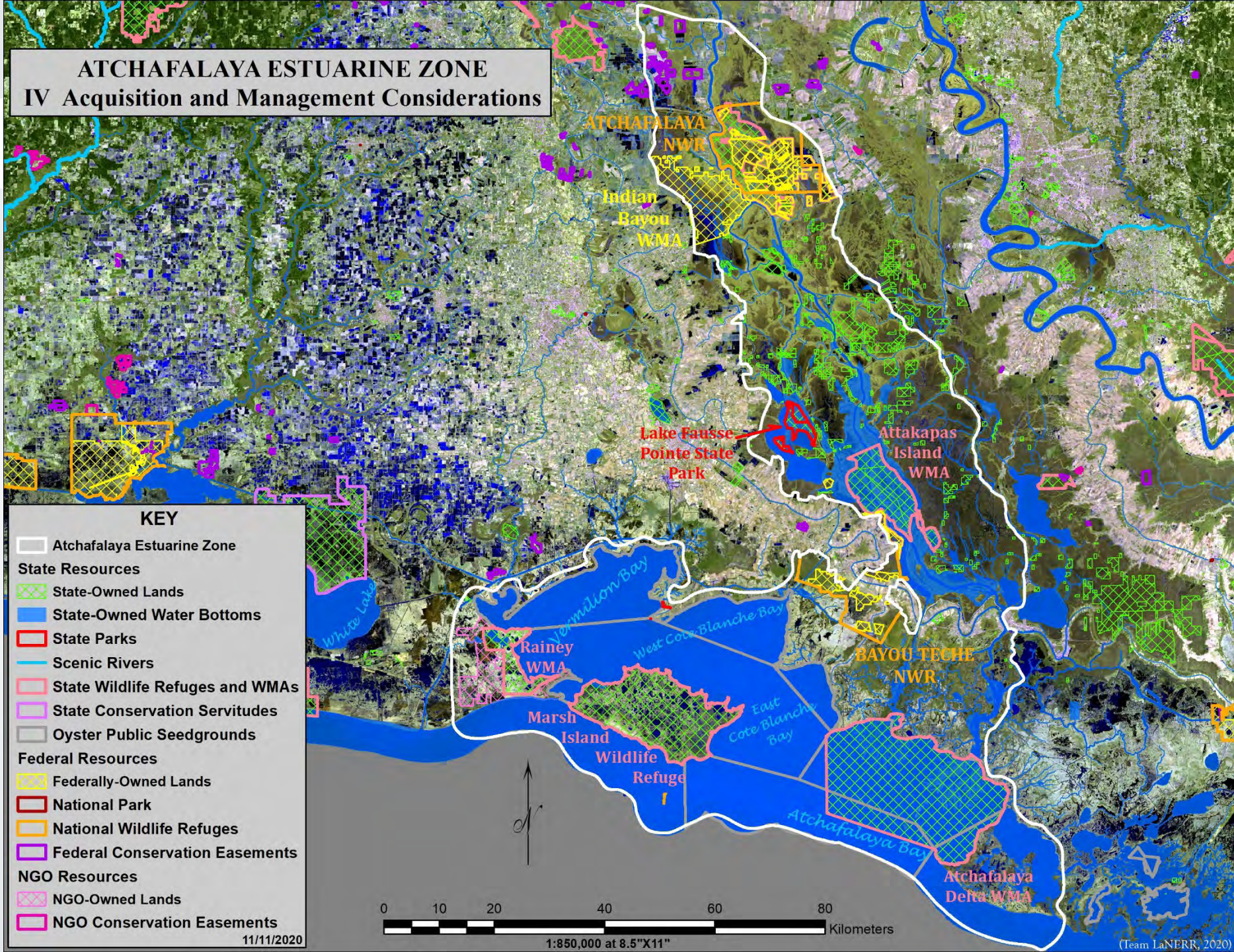


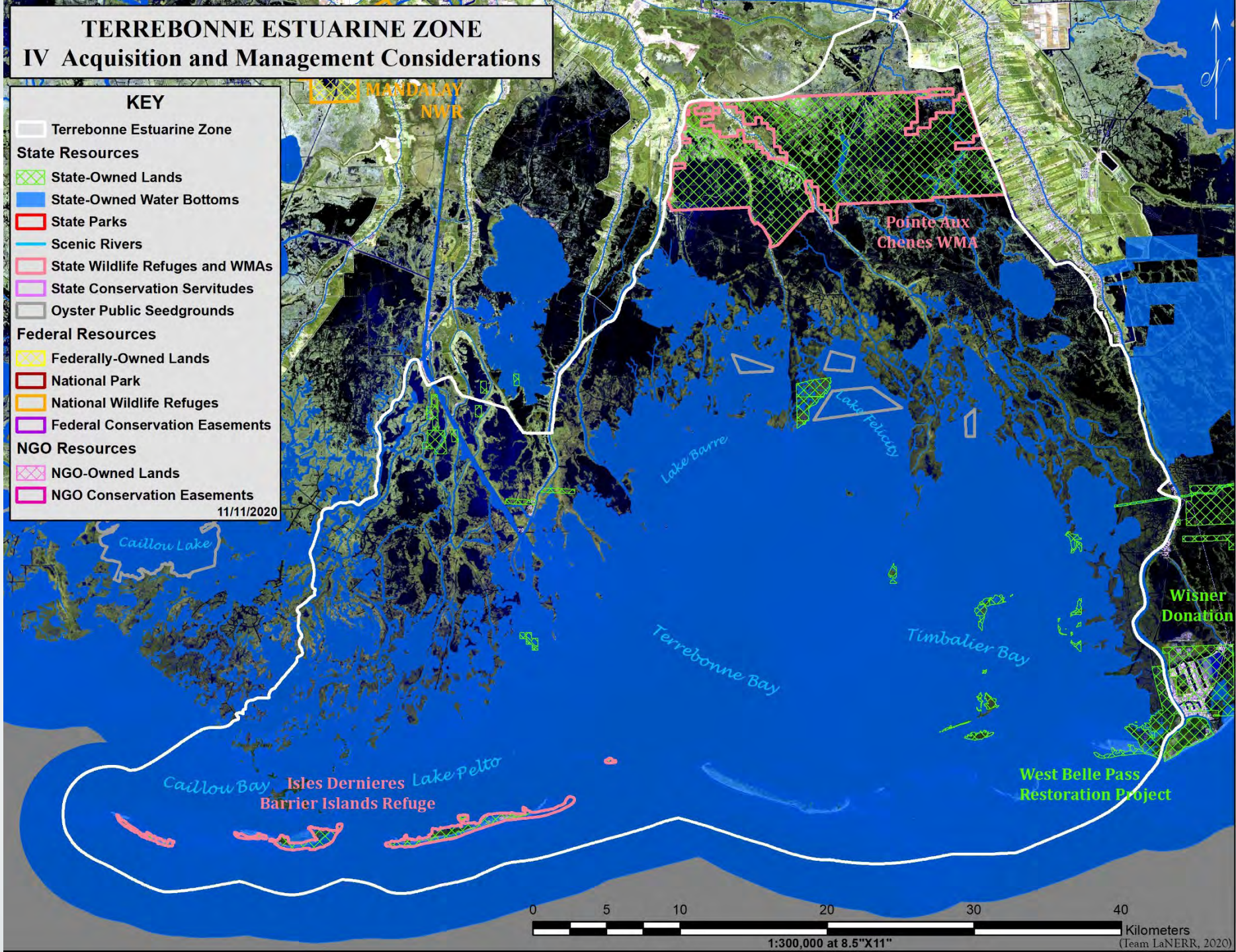






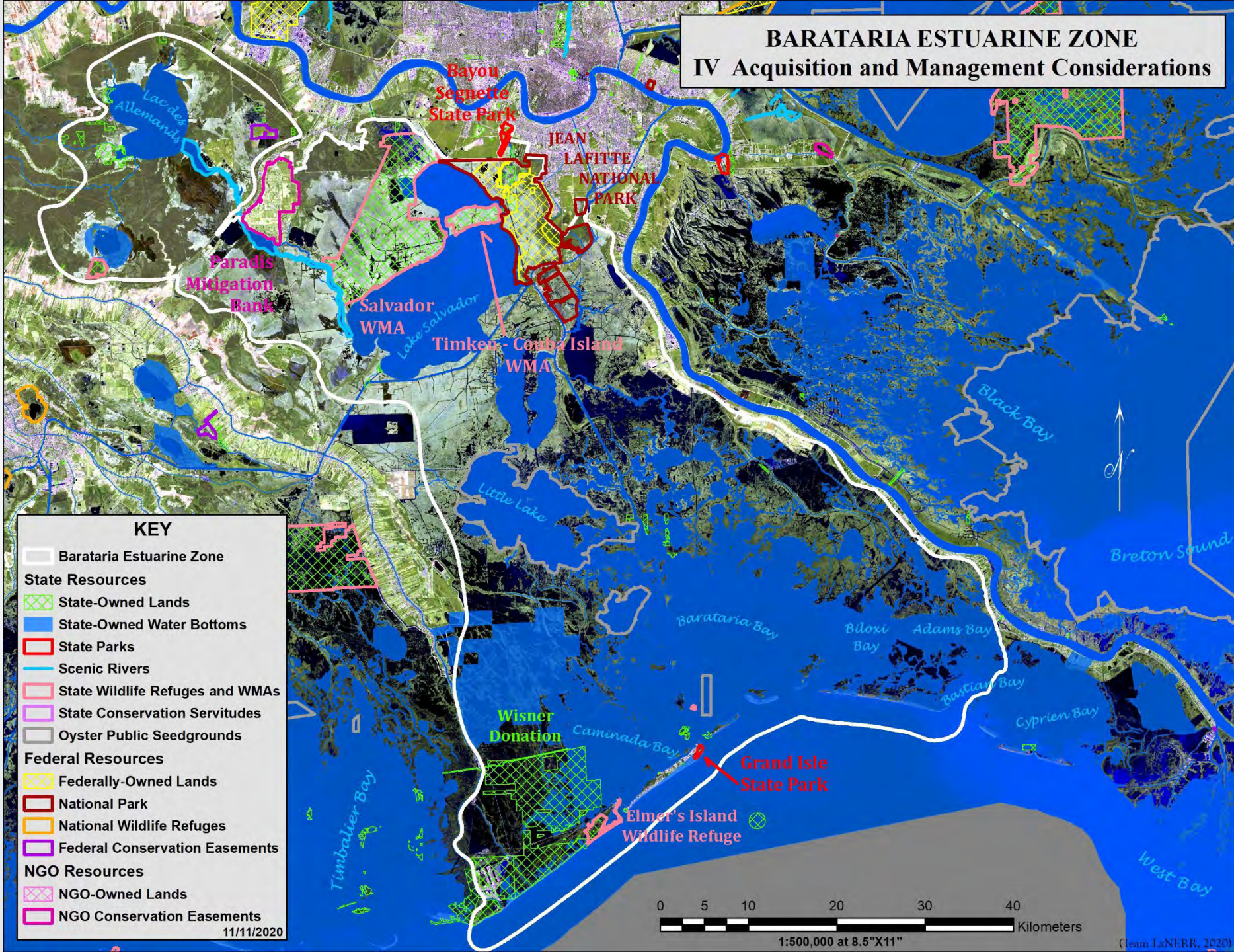

CALCASIEU ESTUARINE ZONE
IV Acquisition and Management Considerations
KEY
Calcasieu Estuarine Zone
State Resources
State-Owned Lands
State-Owned Water Bottoms
State Parks
Scenic Rivers
State Wildlife Refuges and WMAs
State Conservation Servitudes
Oyster Public Seedgrounds
Federal Resources
Federally-Owned Lands
National Park
National Wildlife Refuges
Federal Conservation Easements
NGO Resources
NGO-Owned Lands
NGO Conservation Easements
11/11/2020
CAMERON PRAIRIE NWR
SABINE NWR
SABINE NWR
Sabine Lake
Calcasieu Lake
0 5 10 20 30 40
Kilometers
1:350,000 at 8.5"X11"
(Team LaNERR, 2020)

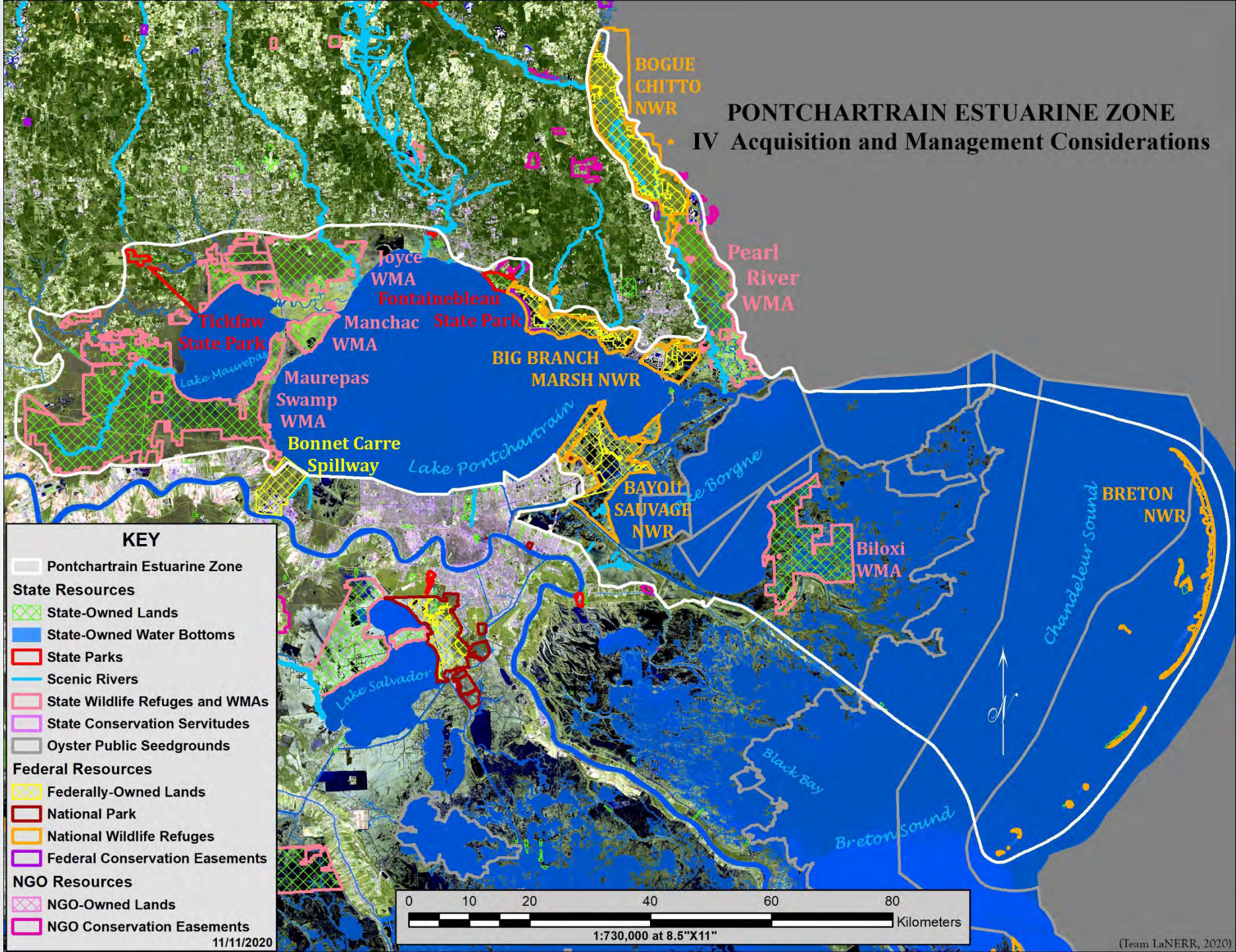

ATCHAFALAYA ESTUARINE ZONE
IV Acquisition and Management Considerations
ATCHAFALAYA NWR
Indian Bayou WMA
Lake Fausse Pointe State Park
Attakapas Island WMA
BAYOU TECHE NWR
Rainey WMA
Marsh Island Wildlife Refuge
Atchafalaya Delta WMA
Vermilion Bay
West Cote Blanche Bay
East Cote Blanche Bay
Atchafalaya Bay
White Lake
KEY
Atchafalaya Estuarine Zone
State Resources
State-Owned Lands
State-Owned Water Bottoms
State Parks
Scenic Rivers
State Wildlife Refuges and WMAs
State Conservation Servitudes
Oyster Public Seedgrounds
Federal Resources
Federally-Owned Lands
National Park
National Wildlife Refuges
Federal Conservation Easements
NGO Resources
NGO-Owned Lands
NGO Conservation Easements
11/11/2020
0 10 20 40 60 80
Kilometers
1:850,000 at 8.5"X11"
(Team LaNERR, 2020)

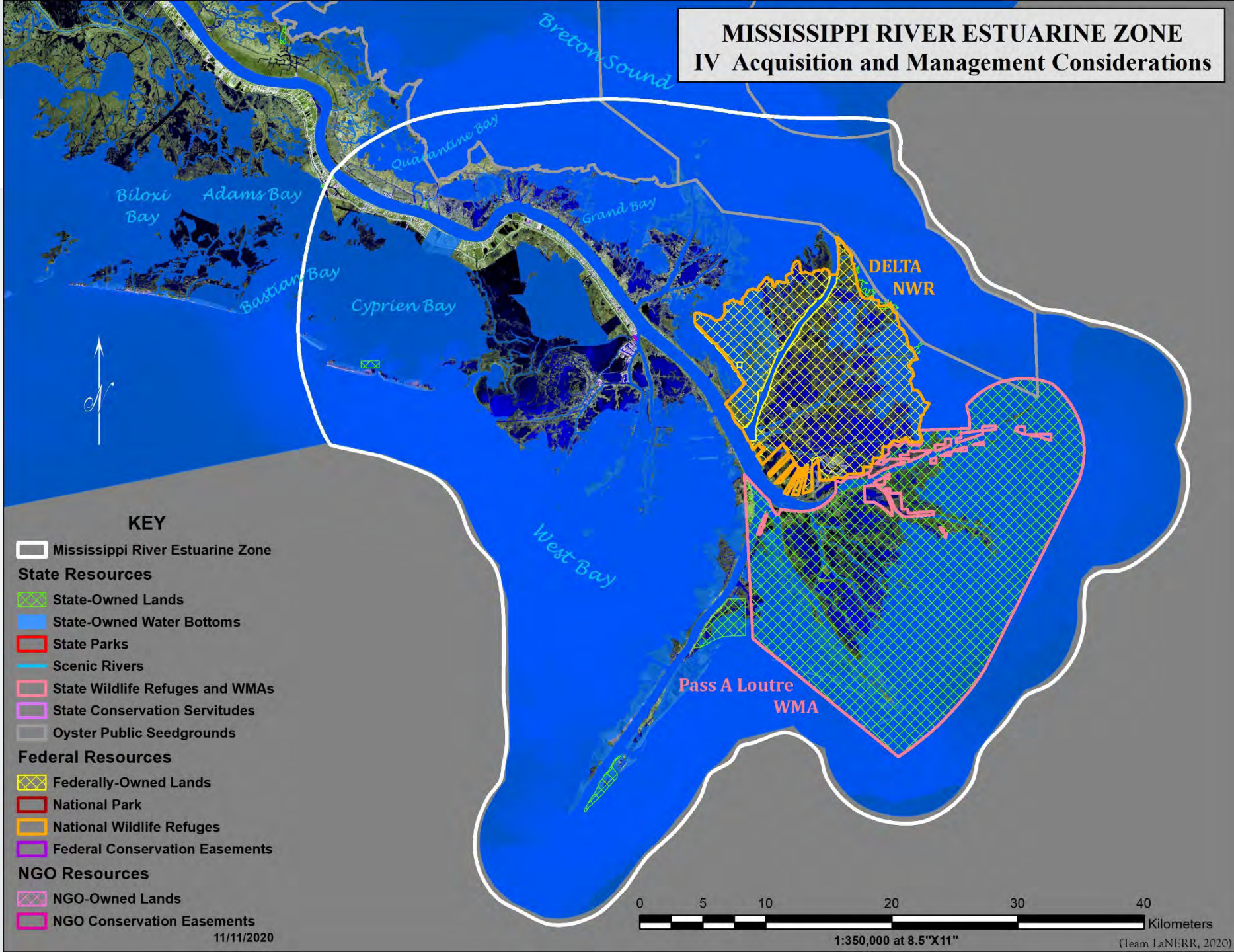

TERREBONNE ESTUARINE ZONE
IV Acquisition and Management Considerations
KEY
Terrebonne Estuarine Zone
State Resources
State-Owned Lands
State-Owned Water Bottoms
State Parks
Scenic Rivers
State Wildlife Refuges and WMAs
State Conservation Servitudes
Oyster Public Seedgrounds
Federal Resources
Federally-Owned Lands
National Park
National Wildlife Refuges
Federal Conservation Easements
NGO Resources
NGO-Owned Lands
NGO Conservation Easements
11/11/2020
MANDALAY NWR
Pointe Aux Chenes WMA
Lake Barre
Lake Felicity
Caillou Lake
Terrebonne Bay
Timbalier Bay
Wisner Donation
Caillou Bay
Isles Dernieres Barrier Islands Refuge
Lake Pelto
West Belle Pass Restoration Project
0 5 10 20 30 40
Kilometers
1:300,000 at 8.5"X11"
(Team LaNERR, 2020)

LaNERR SEARCH

IV. Acquisition and Management Considerations



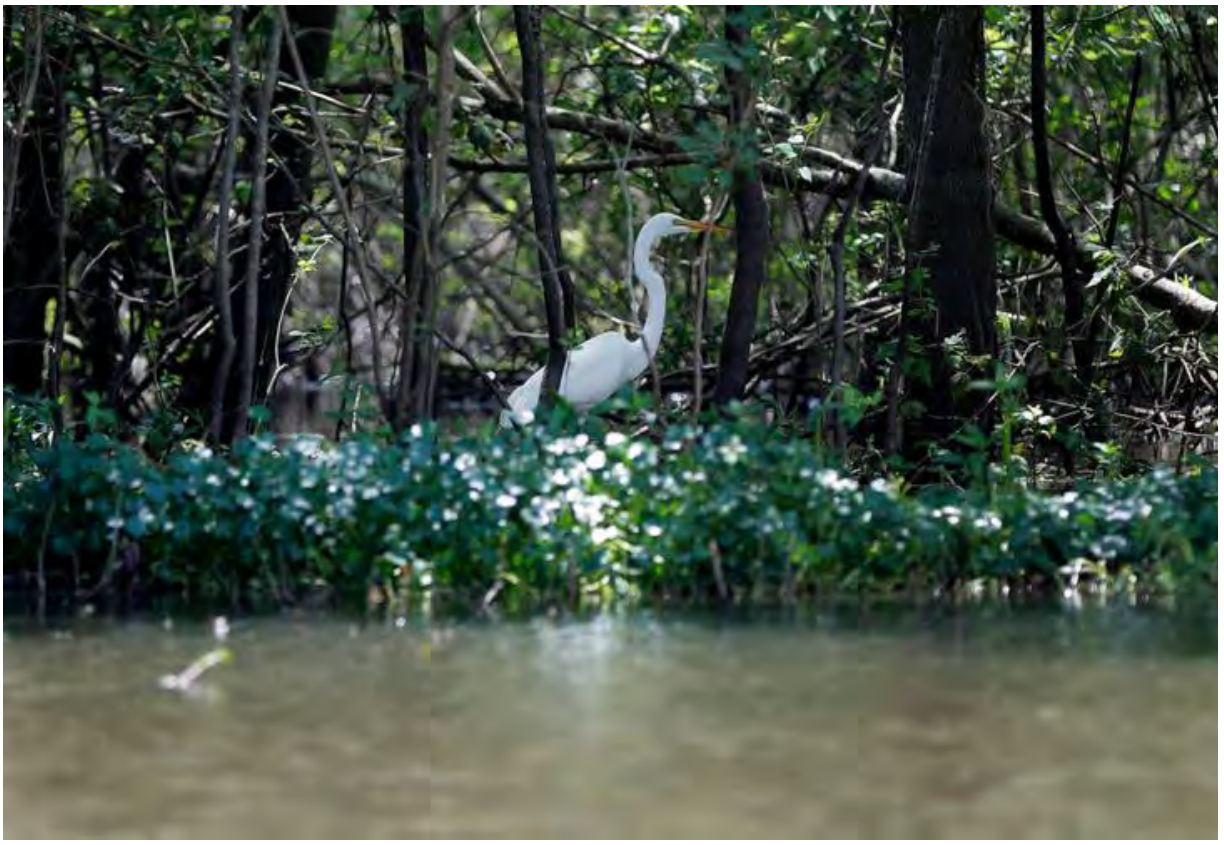

PONTCHARTRAIN ESTUARINE ZONE
IV Acquisition and Management Considerations
BOGUE CHITTO NWR
Pearl River WMA
Joyce WMA
Fontainebleau State Park
Tickfaw State Park
Manchac WMA
Lake Maurepas
Maurepas Swamp WMA
BIG BRANCH MARSH NWR
Bonnet Carre Spillway
Lake Pontchartrain
BAYOU SAUVAGE NWR
Lake Borgne
Biloxi WMA
BRETON NWR
Chandeleur Sound
Lake Salvador
Black Bay
Breton Sound
KEY
Pontchartrain Estuarine Zone
State Resources
State-Owned Lands
State-Owned Water Bottoms
State Parks
Scenic Rivers
State Wildlife Refuges and WMAs
State Conservation Servitudes
Oyster Public Seedgrounds
Federal Resources
Federally-Owned Lands
National Park
National Wildlife Refuges
Federal Conservation Easements
NGO Resources
NGO-Owned Lands
NGO Conservation Easements
11/11/2020
0 10 20 40 60 80
Kilometers
1:730,000 at 8.5"X11"
(Team LaNERR, 2020)


MISSISSIPPI RIVER ESTUARINE ZONE
IV Acquisition and Management Considerations
Breton Sound
Quarantine Bay
Biloxi Bay
Adams Bay
Grand Bay
Bastian Bay
Cyprien Bay
DELTA NWR
West Bay
Pass A Loutre WMA
KEY
Mississippi River Estuarine Zone
State Resources
State-Owned Lands
State-Owned Water Bottoms
State Parks
Scenic Rivers
State Wildlife Refuges and WMAs
State Conservation Servitudes
Oyster Public Seedgrounds
Federal Resources
Federally-Owned Lands
National Park
National Wildlife Refuges
Federal Conservation Easements
NGO Resources
NGO-Owned Lands
NGO Conservation Easements
11/11/2020
0 5 10 20 30 40
Kilometers
1:350,000 at 8.5"X11"
(Team LaNERR, 2020)

https://www.nola.com/news/education/article_bfc7b900-3a6a-11eb-b555-db2dba9b6ab9.html

Louisiana could join other Gulf states in creating site for estuary research

BY MARK SCHLEIFSTEIN | STAFF WRITER
DEC 10, 2020 - 7:00 AM



In this Friday, April 27, 2018 photo, a great white heron appears through trees on Bayou Sorrel in the Atchafalaya River Basin in Louisiana. (AP Photo/Gerald Herbert)

Mark
Schleifstein

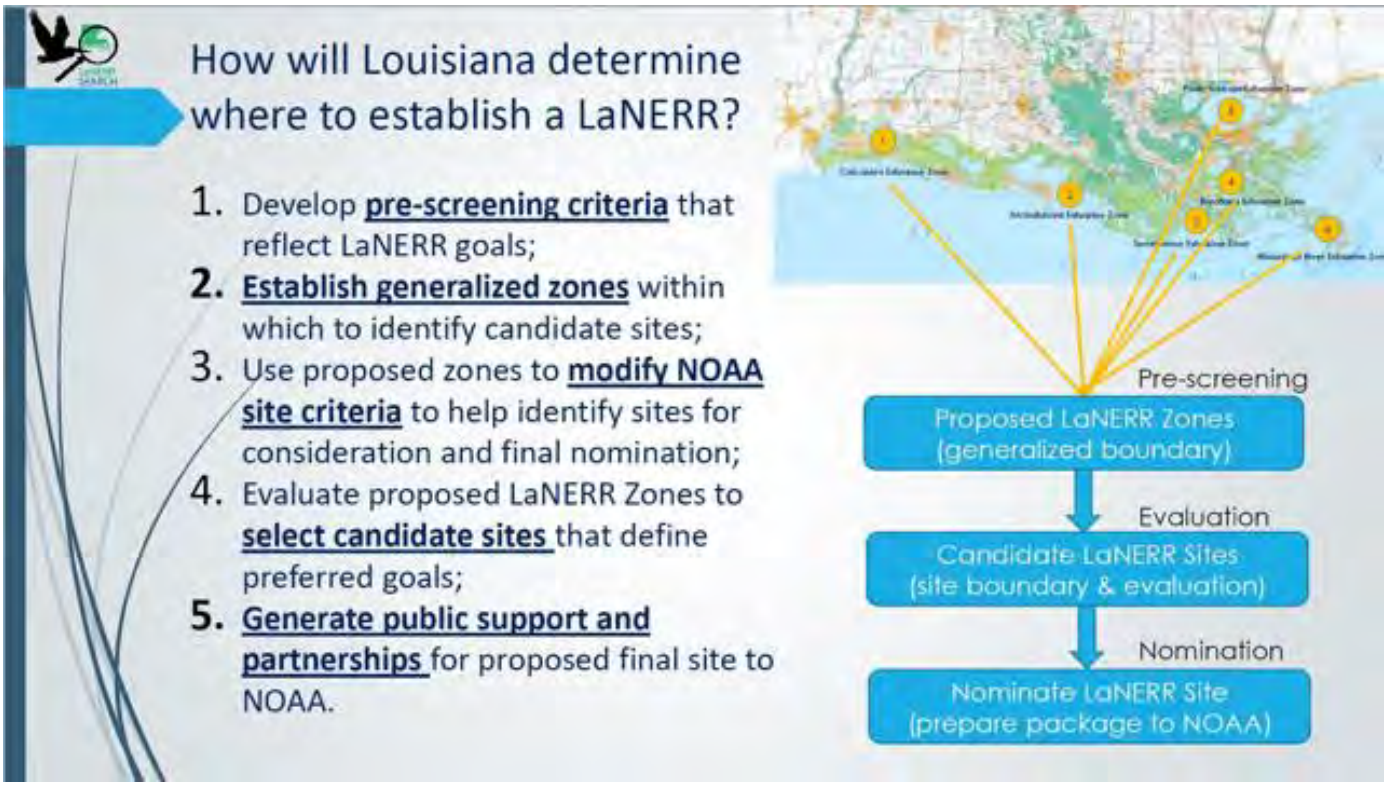
Louisiana has kicked off an effort to identify part of its coastline that can be added to the National Oceanic and

The new reserve would be a site for research projects aimed at better understanding the chosen estuary – an area where the tidal reach of ocean or Gulf waters meets the flow of water from a river. The reserve would also serve as a base for educating students and the general public on the importance of estuary features, including fisheries and wildlife.

The reserve's operations would be paid for with a 70-30 split of federal and state funds.

The area selected would be publicly owned lands and adjacent water that is controlled by the state under "public trust" law. It could also include municipal and nonprofit-owned property, or land that is either donated or purchased from private parties.

Protections provided to the new reserve area would only be implemented under existing state laws and regulations, and would not include any new federal restrictions on use of the land and water.



Coastal Protection and Restoration Authority

Gov. John Bel Edwards notified NOAA in 2019 that the state was interested in participating in the program, which now includes 29 sites representing distinct types of estuaries, including five in the other four Gulf Coast states. That includes the Weeks Bay reserve in Alabama and the Grand Bay reserve in Mississippi.

The state selection process is being led by Louisiana Sea Grant, with support from the Coastal Protection and Restoration Authority.

“As the only Gulf coast state without a NERR, and thus the only Gulf state not sharing in the benefits of the system, I am delighted to bring the NERR program to Louisiana so we can showcase not only our unique deltaic system to the rest of the nation but also our determined and

extensive efforts to restore and protect it," Edwards said in a news release that followed a briefing of the CPRA on the selection process.

The selection process generally takes four to six years, said Louisiana Sea Grant Director Robert Twilley. The process began Wednesday afternoon and evening with two public meetings at Nicholls State University and on Zoom. The afternoon meeting included more than 100 web participants listening to a briefing on the selection process.

Twilley said six broad areas of Louisiana's coast are being searched for a potential reserve area: the estuarine zones of the Calcasieu River, Atchafalaya River Basin, Terrebonne Basin, Barataria River, Pontchartrain Basin and the lower Mississippi River.

National Estuarine Research Reserves

He told the CPRA on Wednesday morning that Louisiana's estuaries are unique, in comparison with existing Gulf reserves, because they all include wetland areas that were created as part of the historic creation of the Mississippi River delta.

The national reserves "bring the benefit of federal support to state driven applied science, monitoring, education and outreach activities. This also may include education and research facilities, public access improvements like nature trails, boat launches and overnight accommodations," he said in the CPRA news release announcing the start of the selection process.

The selection process requires the state to show NOAA that the site is valuable for research, monitoring and resource protection, is suitable for use for education and interpretation purposes, and that the state has addressed issues including acquiring the land and its management.

For more information on the search for a reserve site in Louisiana, visit http://www.laseagrant.org/deltanerr/.

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NEWS COVERING LOUISIANA

Louisiana hopes to add estuary to federal research program

NEW ORLEANS (AP) — Louisiana has started a selection process to identify part of its coastline the state hopes can be added to the National Estuary Research Reserve program.

If approved, the area would become a site for research projects aimed at better understanding the chosen estuary — an area where the tidal reach of ocean or Gulf waters meets the flow of water from a river. The reserve would also serve as a base for educating students and the general public on the importance of estuary features, including fisheries and wildlife.

The Times-Picayune/The New Orleans Advocate reports the reserve's operations would be paid for with a 70-30 split of federal and state funds.

The research program is run by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration. Gov. John Bel Edwards notified the federal agency in 2019 th

Louisiana is the only Gulf state without an estuary in the program. The state selection process is being led by Louisiana Sea Grant, with support from the Coastal Protection and Restoration Authority.

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The area selected would be publicly owned lands and adjacent water that is controlled by the state under "public trust" law. It could also include municipal and nonprofit-owned property, or land that is either donated or purchased from private parties. Protections for the new reserve area would only be implemented under existing state laws and regulations, and would not include any new federal restrictions on use of the land and water.

The selection process generally takes four to six years, Twilley said. The process began Wednesday with two public meetings. The state must show NOAA the site is valuable for research, monitoring and resource protection and is suitable for use for education and interpretation purposes.

Morgan Crutcher of the Governor's Office of Coastal Activities speaks during Friday's St. Mary Excel virtual meeting about the planned Louisiana National Estuarine Research Reserve site. Shown are the six zones under considering for the state's reserve.

St. Mary Excel Facebook screenshot

UPDATED: LOCALS LEARN MORE ABOUT NERR SITE SELECTION PROCESS

Sat, 01/23/2021 - 4:29pm

GEOFF STOUTE
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The process of selecting and getting a National Estuarine Research Reserve System site in operation takes, on average, four to six years.
That was one of the many pieces of information locals learned in presentations from a representative from the Governor's Office of Coastal Activities and the

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration during Friday's virtual St. Mary Excel meeting.

Currently, Louisiana is in the nomination/selection process of a site for the Louisiana National Estuarine Research Reserve, or LaNERR, in accordance with NOAA guidelines. A site will be chosen from among six zones along the Louisiana coast. The Atchafalaya Estuarine Zone, which includes the local area, is one of those zones.

St. Mary Excel is promoting the parish as a site for such a reserve. The group says the reserve would mean educational opportunities for young people as well as potential tourism dollars for the parish.

The Morgan City, Berwick and St. Mary Parish councils and the St. Mary Parish School Board have adopted resolutions in favor of a reserve in the parish.

At St. Mary Excel's meeting, Kristen Ransom of NOAA's Office of Coastal Management and Morgan Crutcher of the Governor's Office of Coastal Activities discussed the federal and state roles in this process.

In the current phase of the LaNERR development, the Atchafalaya Estuarine Zone is competing with the Calcasieu, Terrebonne, Pontchartrain, Barataria and Mississippi River Estuarine zones for the coveted site.

Sites will be rated in accordance with how compatible they are with criteria in NOAA's guidelines that are adapted at the state level to reflect Louisiana's characteristics, Crutcher said.

In lobbying for the site, St. Mary Parish President David Hanagriff cited multiple reasons why the LaNERR should be here. He touted the parish's central location in the state with the Rockefeller Wildlife Refuge west of the parish, the Atchafalaya Basin north of St. Mary and the Gulf of Mexico to the south. He also said the parish is centralized with the University of Louisiana at Lafayette, Nicholls State University and LSU nearby, there are two land-building areas in St. Mary and the area's history of fishing, hunting and oil and gas.

"We know how important the environment is, and we know how important it is to make sure that environment is safe for our children going forward," Hanagriff said. "So I think St. Mary Parish would be an excellent choice for this particular facility here."

Crutcher stressed that wherever the reserve is placed, it will not impact activities, such as hunting or fishing, which already had been ongoing in those areas.

To narrow the potential sites to one to three possibilities, a site development committee made up of 80 members, including state and federal agencies, tribes, universities and others, will look at the list and compare how they meet the NOAA guidelines for a NERR.

Once those sites have been pared, public meetings will be held later this year where the one to three potential sites that emerged from the initial judging will be presented. At these town hall meetings, the public can make their cases for particular sites, Crutcher said.

"Those town halls are really going to be key, because that feedback will go directly into the proposal for each site that will then be considered for selection," Crutcher said.

Once the reserve site is selected at the state level, the choice is submitted to NOAA for approval or denial.

"The not accepting it doesn't happen very often," Ransom said.

Wherever the reserve will be, it will join 29 that are protected across the United State and Puerto Rico.

There are more than 1.3 million acres of estuary habitat in the country that are protected.

"We cover the range of different types of habitats and ecosystems in the country as well," Ransom said.

The largest in the country is more than 372,000 acres in Alaska, while the smallest is about 500 acres in Ohio. Many are less than 20,000 acres, Crutcher said. She said Louisiana's could be big or it could be small.

"It just depends on how these sites measure up to the criteria that NOAA provides in its guidance for selecting the site," she said.

The land will be a combination of state and federal property, with the federal share not exceeding 49%, Crutcher said.

The federal government would provide 70% of the LaNERR's funding, with the

state picking up the rest.

Among the benefits of estuaries Ransom listed are they are important in healthy ecosystems, provide protection from hurricanes and benefit an area's economy

"These are crucial resources for us to make sure stick around," she said of estuaries.

By joining the national system of estuarine reserves, Crutcher said it allows the state to share its story with the nation.

As has been stressed previously in St. Mary Excel presentations to local government bodies in securing support for the Atchafalaya Estuarine Zone, community support is important for any of the six zones to be chosen.

"I think one of the things that makes or breaks a designation process is community support," Ransom said.

NEWS LOCAL STATE

ST. MARY EXCEL NATIONAL ESTUARINE RESEARCH RESERVE NERR

Louisiana National Estuarine Research Reserve (LaNERR)
Site Selection & Nomination Report

November 2022

APPENDIX 5:

Final LaNERR Site Criteria

LaNERR Site Criteria

August 25, 2021

The following section identifies the detailed Site Criteria used for evaluating potential Louisiana NERR (LaNERR) sites. LaNERR Site Criteria include six topical areas to evaluate potential NERR candidate sites: (1) Environmental Representativeness, (2) Research, Monitoring & Resource Protection, (3) Education and Interpretation, (4) Acquisition, Management Consideration, (5) Ability to conduct research on resilience and climate change, and (6) LaNERR Partnerships.

These LaNERR criteria are based on modifications to the NOAA Site Criteria Guidelines to better reflect terminology used in coastal Louisiana and Louisiana specific conditions as well as the addition of two new topical areas (#5 and #6 above) provided by NOAA. Changes to the original criteria are based on meetings of the Site Criteria Subcommittee on April 9, April 30, May 7, and May 21, 2021. In addition, final comments from the Site Criteria Subcommittee were solicited on changes proposed following recommendations from NOAA.

1.0 Environmental Representativeness

1.1 Ecosystem composition: A measure of the diversity of ecosystem types present within the boundaries of the site. This criterion assumes that sites that have a high diversity of major ecosystem types are of higher relative "value" for protection and management than those with low ecosystem diversity (unless the ecosystem in consideration is rare or unique).

3 Points. The site has a high diversity of habitat composition within its major ecosystem type, i.e., it contains three or more habitat types or subtypes within its major ecosystem type (e.g., site consists of a combination of swamps, coastal marshes, and mud flats) or has a combination of multiple coastal marsh types (e.g., tidal freshwater, brackish, salt marsh zones).

2 Points. The site has a moderate diversity of habitat composition within its major ecosystem type, i.e., it contains only two habitat types or subtypes within its major ecosystem type (e.g., consists of a combination of forested wetlands and a single coastal marsh type).

1 Point. The site has a low diversity of habitat composition within its major ecosystem type, i.e., its major ecosystem type consists of a single habitat type (e.g., tidal freshwater marsh or brackish marsh, or forested wetland).

These are the suggested Ecosystem Types to be used in the LaNERR evaluation:

Group I- Uplands

Alluvial Forested Wetlands
Longleaf Pine Savannahs/Pine Flatwoods
Maritime Forest- Woodland
Coastal Prairie/bogs
Coastal Shrublands and Cheniers

Group II- Intertidal areas

Coastal Forested Wetlands
Coastal Floating Marshes
Coastal Freshwater Marsh
Coastal Intermediate Marsh
Coastal Brackish Marsh
Coastal Salt Marsh
Coastal Mangroves
Intertidal Beaches and Dunes
Intertidal Mud and Sand Flats

Group III- Subtidal and Submerged Bottoms

Subtidal hard bottoms/reefs
Subtidal soft bottoms
Subtidal Plants (SAV)

1.2 Balanced ecosystem composition: A measure of the relative composition of ecosystem types within the boundaries of a site (buffer plus core areas). This criterion assumes that sites with a balanced proportion of ecosystem types are of higher relative "value" for protection and management. High, moderate, and low values are assigned to sites that contain variations in the proportions of all three ecosystem types. A value of zero is assigned to a site that is dominated by one ecosystem type or contains less than three ecosystem types.

3 Points. The site contains representative upland, intertidal, and subtidal habitats in relatively equal proportions (i.e. areal cover of any one ecosystem type not less than 25 percent of the total area).

2 Points. The site contains representative upland, intertidal, and subtidal habitats, with the areal cover of any one type not less than 10 percent of the total area.

1 Point. The site contains representative upland, intertidal, and subtidal habitats, with the areal cover of any one type less than 10 percent of the total area.

0 Points. The site contains representative upland, intertidal, and subtidal habitats, with the areal cover of two types being less than 10 percent of the total area *or* the site consists of habitats from only one or two of the three major ecosystem types.

1.3 Habitat composition and complexity: A measure of the diversity of habitat types present within the major ecosystem type found within the boundaries of the site. This criterion assumes that sites that have a high diversity of habitat types are of higher relative "value" for protection and management than those with a low diversity of habitat types. Major ecosystem type is defined here as that type that comprises approximately 40 percent of the site. Use the habitat type designations listed above for "ecosystem composition."

3 Points. The site has a high diversity of habitat composition within its major ecosystem type, i.e., it contains three or more habitat types or subtypes within its major ecosystem type (e.g., site consists of a combination of swamps, coastal marshes, and reefs) or has a combination of multiple coastal marsh types (e.g., tidal freshwater, brackish, salt marsh zones including mangroves).

2 Points. The site has a moderate diversity of habitat composition within its major ecosystem type, i.e., it contains only two habitat types or subtypes within its

major ecosystem type (e.g., consists of a combination of swamps and a single coastal marsh type).

1 Point. The site has a low diversity of habitat composition within its major ecosystem type, i.e., its major ecosystem type consists of a single habitat type (e.g., brackish marsh or tidal freshwater wetlands).

1.4 Significant faunal and floral support: A measure of the degree to which a site supports significant faunal or floral components. This criterion focuses on a site's contribution (i.e., function) toward supporting the activities (e.g., feeding, nesting) of the following suite of significant faunal or floral components. The list of components includes groups or organisms that are known to be dependent upon estuarine habitats for the entire or a crucial part of their life cycle.

- Fish and Shellfish Spawning and Nursery Grounds (includes use by either freshwater, estuarine, or estuarine-dependent marine species)
- Migratory Bird or Waterfowl Use
- Bird Nesting or Roosting Area
- Critical Mammal Habitat
- Non-Game Animals (amphibians, reptiles, etc.)
- State or federally Listed Species or of concern (animal or plant – including candidate species)
- Other biodiversity support as representative of ecosystem services (such as invertebrates, reef environments...).

3 Points. The site supports or serves as an important site for a wide range of the faunal or floral components listed above (4 of 6) or is an extremely important site for any threatened or endangered species.

2 Points. The site supports or serves as an important site for a moderate range and diversity of the significant faunal or floral components listed above (3 of 6).

1 point. The site supports or serves as an important site for one or two of the significant faunal or floral components listed above.

0 point. The site does not support significant faunal or floral components.

1.5 Geologic representativeness, diversity, and uniqueness of the site: A measure of the representativeness, diversity, and uniqueness of the geologic characteristics that define part or the whole of a candidate site. This criterion attempts to consider both the surface and subsurface geologic formations that may be representative or unique within a site, particularly as they affect or define associated biotic habitats. Included in these considerations are the ways that local geology affects surface hydrology, such as drainage and fluvial systems, and subsurface hydrology, such as shallow-water aquifers. Geologic and hydrologic maps should be used to evaluate this criterion.

3 Points. The site has numerous geologic characteristics, two or more unique geologic characteristics, and contains a high diversity of formation types or strata within its boundaries.

2 Points. The site has a moderate number of representative geologic characteristics and at least one unique geologic characteristic and contains a moderate diversity of formation types or strata within its boundaries.

1 Point. The site has a moderate number of geologic characteristics, no unique geologic characteristics, or contains a moderate diversity of formation types or strata within its boundaries.

0 Points. The site has few or only one representative geologic characteristic, no unique geologic characteristics, or contains few or only one formation type or strata within its boundaries.

1.6 Salinity gradient A measure of the seasonal and spatial range of salinity over multiple years within a candidate site's boundaries. This criterion recognizes the effect of salinity on the biotic structure of estuarine habitats (including the plant communities and faunal components that inhabit them). It assumes that a site with a greater range of salinity will support a broader range of habitat types and organisms.

3 Points. The site encompasses > 10 parts per thousand (ppt) or greater range of salinity within its boundaries.

2 Points. The site encompasses a 5-10 ppt range of salinity within its boundaries.

1 Point. The site encompasses a 2-5 ppt range of salinity within its boundaries.

0 Points. The site encompasses < 2 ppt range of salinity within its boundaries.

1.7 Degree developed and potential impacts to water quality: A measure of the degree to which the site (core and buffer) is developed and the relative impacts to surface waters from human activities upstream in its associated hydrologic basin (see reference map). This criterion assumes that human impacts to a site are directly proportional to the degree and type of development on site and upstream. Exceptions to this assumption may need to be considered where development at a site and its surrounding area have been subject to high levels of control. Density of development (e.g., no industrial activity or commercial development, few residences, minimal agricultural or silvicultural activity), water quality status within the site, or whether the land is in protected status are points of consideration for this criterion.

3 Points. The site is relatively undisturbed and the hydrologic basin contains low intensity development upstream (e.g., no industrial or commercial development, few residences, minimal agricultural or silvicultural activity) or the land is in protected status.

2 Points. The site is relatively undisturbed and the hydrologic basin contains moderate development upstream (e.g., relatively few residences, moderate agricultural or silvicultural activity, minimal commercial or industrial development).

1 Points. The site has been moderately disturbed and the hydrologic basins contains relatively intensive development (e.g., moderate density of residences, or the presence of industrial activity).

0 Points: The site has been extremely disturbed and the hydrologic basins contains very intensive development (e.g., high density residential, or commercial or industrial activity).

2.0. Research, Monitoring & Resource Protection

2.1 Value of site for research: A measure of the opportunities offered by characteristics of the site for research, such as a high diversity of ecosystem and habitat types, a balanced habitat composition, a wide salinity range (see criterion 1.7), biotic or geologic representativeness of the site, known historic uses or archaeological sites, and unique opportunities to conduct applied research regarding important local, state, and regional coastal management issues (including past and potential management activities). The assumption is that a site with representative, unique, and highly diverse characteristics will provide greater research, monitoring, and resource protection opportunities than one lacking these characteristics. Ratings generated for these factors under previous selection criteria can be used as a guide for rating this overall factor.

3 Points. The site has (1) a high diversity of ecosystem and habitat types, (2) moderate salinity range, (3) representative biotic and geologic sites or hydrologic characteristics, (4) state and federally listed species, (5) historic and archaeological significance, and (6) opportunities to address important habitat or resource management issues.
2 Points. The site has four or five of the six above.
1 Point. The site has two or three of the six above.
0 Points. The site has one or none of the six above.

2.2 Previous research and monitoring efforts: A measure of the degree to which the site (including the hydrologic basin) has been used for past research and monitoring, including considerations of the diversity of inquiry (fields of research), and the availability of data (the form and availability of documentation, e.g., peer-reviewed papers, grey literature, inventory reports). The assumption is that an area with previously established research and monitoring interest offers greater opportunity for future projects than an area that has not sparked such an interest in the past.

3 Points. The site has a long history of well-documented research and monitoring projects in a wide variety of topics. Data are readily available.
2 Points. The site has had major and well-documented research and monitoring efforts, generating data that are readily available. It has not had a long history of research and monitoring.
1 Point. The site has had only minor research and monitoring projects generating limited data (e.g., inventories) and/or these data may be difficult to obtain.
0 Points. The site has no known history of research and monitoring.

2.3 Suitability of site for environmental baseline monitoring: A measure of the suitability of the site as a reference area for assessing long-term natural resource trends or ecological characteristics, based on the degree to which the site has not been fragmented by land-use practices on or near the site. The assumption is that a site with contiguous habitats that provide landscape continuity (not interrupted by developed or disturbed lands & waters) will be a more valuable reference area to generate baseline monitoring information than a site that has been extensively altered.

3 Points. The site has outstanding areas to generate environmental baseline data to assess long- term resource trends or ecological characteristics for a wide range of needs.

2 Points. The site has adequate areas to generate environmental baseline data to assess long- term resource trends or ecological characteristics for many needs.

1 Point. The site has marginal areas to generate environmental baseline data to assess long-term resource trends or ecological characteristics.

0 Points. The site has been so extensively altered by past activities that it is unsuitable for generating environmental baseline data.

2.4. Ability to address key local, state, and regional coastal management issues: A measure of the degree to which the site is appropriate for investigating issues relevant to coastal management at the local, state, and regional levels. Solutions to these issues may require either the application of land management practices or habitat manipulations to perform meaningful research and assessment. As such, the site should offer both adequate control areas plus areas where demonstration projects and habitat manipulations (such as coastal restoration projects) can be accommodated to study many of the issues of concern. The assumption is that a site where diverse coastal management issues are evident and can be addressed will be of greater value from research and resource management standpoint than sites where these issues do not arise. The diversity and significance of coastal management issues should be identified for the hydrologic basin as it may influence core and buffer areas proposed. The following list are suggestions that may be included in the description of the sites ability to address key local, state, and regional coastal management issues.

- Wetland loss and habitat change;
- Wetland loss mitigation, restoration, and creation;
- Dredging and spoil disposal;
- Beneficial uses of dredged materials;
- Shoreline erosion;
- Commercial or recreational fisheries;
- Waterfowl and other wildlife management;
- Best management practices for habitat protection or management (e.g., wildlife management);
- Best management practices to limit impacts from agricultural, silvicultural, or development activities;
- Effects of pollutants on water quality and living resources (including oil spills, nutrients, harmful algal blooms, bacteria contamination, etc.)
- Impacts of relative sea-level rise;
- Prehistoric and early historic settlement and land use;
- Unique connections in cultural and natural resources within the site (language, customs, land-use, etc.);
- Fire management, invasive species;
- Hydrologic restoration;

3 Points. The site is highly appropriate for investigating a diversity of coastal zone management issues.

2 Points. The site is appropriate for investigating coastal zone management issues.

1 Point. The site is minimally appropriate for investigating coastal zone management issues.
0 Points. The site is not appropriate for investigating coastal zone management issues.

3.0. Education and Interpretation

3.1 Diversity and quality of training education and interpretation of opportunities: A measure of the variety and quality of training, education, and interpretation opportunities (i.e., ecological, archaeological, cultural, historical, etc.) provided by the site (core and buffer areas) for the different target audiences. The assumption is that a candidate site with a diversity of such opportunities of high quality will be utilized to a greater extent than one with fewer opportunities.

3 Point. The site has numerous different training, education, and interpretation opportunities of high quality.
2 Points. The site has several significantly different educational opportunities of good quality.
1 Point. The site has few significant educational opportunities.
0 Points. The site has insignificant educational opportunities.

3.2 Diversity and availability of target audiences: A measure of the diversity and availability of target audiences (e.g., user groups, resource managers, residents, environmental groups, decision makers, teachers and students, and the general public) which may routinely utilize the site (accessible during a single day trip) for training, education, and interpretation. The assumption is that a candidate site with a variety of available target audiences will be utilized to a greater extent than one with fewer target audiences.

3 Points. The site is suitable for a variety of target audiences that are readily available (accessible during a single day trip).
2 Points. The site is suitable for a moderate number of target audiences that are readily available (accessible during a single day trip).
1 Point. The site is suitable for few target audiences that are available (accessible during a single day trip).
0 Points. The site is so remote or inaccessible that it is not suitable for any target audience.

3.3 Availability of facilities: The degree to which the site (core and buffer areas) has existing facilities or potential sites for future facilities that can be used by staff, researchers, classes, and training groups (e.g., administrative building space, dormitories, labs, interpretive centers, trails and boardwalks, boat ramps, etc.). The assumption is that, due to limited reserve construction funds, a candidate site with existing facilities can meet the objectives of the Reserve System program sooner and more completely than a site without existing facilities. The availability of other sources of construction funds should be considered as part of this criterion.

3 Points. The site has established structures and facilities that can be used for reserve activities.

2 Points. The site has limited established structures or facilities that can be used for reserve activities.

1 Point. The site has excellent potential for the development of facilities for reserve activities.

0 Points. The site has limited established structures and limited potential for the development facilities for reserve activities.

3.4 Proximity and accessibility of site to researchers, educators, and resource management decision makers: A measure of (1) the relative proximity of the site to urban centers, K-12 schools, research and education institutions, and resource management agencies that may routinely utilize the site and (2) the adequacy of the roads or points for boat access at the site. The underlying assumption is that the proximity and accessibility of the site will enhance its utilization for education, research, monitoring, and resource protection purposes.

3 Points. The site can be utilized by the above-listed entities during a single day trip. There are good roads or points for boat access at the site.

2 Points. The site is relatively isolated, and utilization would require an overnight stay from any of the above-listed entities, but accommodations are readily available. There are adequate roads or points for boat access at the site.

1 Point. The site is relatively isolated and reasonable accommodations for an overnight stay to utilize the site are limited. There are limited roads or points for boat access at the site.

0 Points. The site is extremely isolated and accommodations to utilize the site are not available. There are inadequate or no roads, or points for boat access at the site.

3.5 Value of site for environmental education and interpretation programs: It is likely that sites with existing education programs have the necessary infrastructure in place to further expand their programs, thus it is valuable to rate sites based on the presence of these programs. However, in an area as large as the Louisiana Coastal Area, numerous excellent sites exist where virtually no education or interpretation programs have been developed. Thus, the potential for education and interpretation program development should be considered as well according to the diversity and quality of educational and interpretive program opportunities. Some suggestions to evaluate potential for education and interpretation program development include the following:

- Number of educational institutions in the watershed of the proposed alternative;
- Existing educational programs in the area that would likely take advantage of a NERR site;
- Level of ability to access a proposed alternative by school groups; or
- Existing facilities to host classroom education and training events.

3 Points. The site has a long history of education and interpretation, or the site offers excellent potential for future education and interpretation program development.

2 Points. The site has a good but short history of education and interpretation but is otherwise well suited or offers good potential for future education and interpretation program development.

1 Point. The site has had only a minor amount of education and interpretation being conducted, or the site offers fair potential for future education and interpretation program development.

0 Points. The site offers no significant potential for education and interpretation program development

4.0. Acquisition and Management Consideration

4.1 Publicly owned lands and feasibility of land acquisition: The degree of control on activities allowed on proposed land and waters of the candidate site (core and buffer areas) is regulated by conditions of land ownership. Land ownership by state, federal government, or local governments, or environmental interest groups, and the degree to which owners have an interest in participating in a research reserve are important to realize the missions of a LaNERR. The assumption is that the degree of control needed to maintain the site to meet the missions of a NERR increases with publicly and privately owned land, along with the chances of purchasing additional areas, increase value of a NERR candidate site. In the combination of ownership described below, no more than 49% of the area within the boundary can be federal lands.

3 Points. A large percentage (more than 50 percent) of the site (core and buffer areas) is currently owned by the state, federal, or local governments, or environmental groups, representing significant opportunities for future land acquisition.

2 Points. State, federal, or local governments, or environmental groups own 25 to 50 percent of the site with the remainder in the hands of a few owners representing some degree of opportunities for future land acquisition.

1 Point. State, federal, or local governments or environmental groups own less than 25 percent of the site with the remainder in the hands of a few owners representing limited opportunities for future land acquisition.

0 Points. The site is owned by a large number of owners with little potential interest in supporting opportunities for future land acquisition.

4.2. Compatibility with existing management practices and consumptive and non-consumptive uses: A measure of the degree to which existing management practices (e.g., habitat manipulations, restoration projects, best management practices, wildlife management areas, leased bottoms, conservation easements, etc.) and historic and current consumptive and non-consumptive uses might conflict with planned and future management practices implemented under a research reserve program. The assumption is that sites with fewer conflicts are more likely to maintain both public support and the integrity of the site (core and buffer areas). NOTE: This factor should be measured with focus on how present management practices for both land and water in core and buffer areas support both the mission of a NERR and reduce potential conflict with how the public expectations align with the expected usage of the candidate site to meet the mission of a research reserve site. It should be measured with a balance of how the site protects natural and cultural resources against reasonable access by the public to other areas of the site.

3 Points. Existing management practices and consumptive and non-consumptive uses of the site would not conflict with any foreseeable management policy of a research reserve

2 Points. Due to the presence of proportionately small areas of unique habitat and endangered species or threats to the integrity of ecosystem, there is the potential for limited restrictions on existing management practices or consumptive and non-consumptive uses of a site

1 Point. Due to the presence of areas of unique habitat and endangered species and threats to the integrity of the ecosystem, some restrictions on existing management practices or consumptive and non-consumptive uses of a site are likely

0 Points. Large areas of unique habitat and threats to the integrity of the ecosystem will require restrictions on existing management practices or consumptive and non-consumptive uses of a site.

4.3 Compatibility with adjacent land use: A measure of the potential conflicts between management practices on a candidate site (core and buffer areas) with land-use practices on adjacent lands to the site (core and buffer areas). It is also a measure of the adequacy of land-use regulations, plans, or other risk management controls (e.g. sufficient regulatory control in the event of an impact) to sustain the site's natural resources for long-term research, education, and resource protection. The assumption is that a candidate site with compatible land-use practices on adjacent lands is more likely to maintain the integrity of the reserve. NOTE: This issue should be evaluated relative to the potential for present or future conflicts with adjacent lands and the potential to designate buffer areas around a site.

3 Points. A large percentage of the land adjacent to the site is not currently used for activities that might impact the site (and therefore, may be obtainable as a buffer) or the land-use practices on adjacent lands would not have any negative impacts on a possible research reserve.

2 Points. A large to moderate percentage of the land adjacent to the site is not currently used for activities that might negatively impact the site, or the land-use practices on adjacent lands either could be negotiated or would have only minor impacts a possible research reserve.

1 Point. Some of the land adjacent to the site is currently used for activities that would have negative impacts on a possible research reserve and may not be negotiable.

0 Points. A large percentage of the land adjacent to the site is currently used for activities that would have negative impacts on a possible research reserve and would lead to conflicts.

4.4 Land ownership A measure of the degree to which the property used to establish core and buffer areas of a candidate site is divided among landowners (e.g., divided into fewer parcels or owned by many agencies/individuals). The assumption is that a candidate site with fewer property owners will be easier to control types and levels of activities and offers opportunity for future acquisitions.

3 Points. The property is relatively undivided among agencies or individuals.

2 Points. The property is divided among few property owners.
1 Point. The property is divided among many property owners.

4.5. Enforcement and protection of site area management practices: A measure of the degree to which land and water ownership has enforcement capabilities to protect and limit the types and levels of activities that are inconsistent with the management plans described in Site Criterion 4.2 above. This degree of control is based on size, geography, proximity to adjacent residential development and present management practices and controls. The assumption is that the integrity and security of a potential research reserve site can be better maintained with a higher level of enforcement and protection of core habitat areas to enforce management practices (such as a wildlife management area, or guidelines associated with private lands) that protects the consistency with how land and water will promote the mission of a NERR.

3 Points. Site areas are strongly protected and enforced to the degree necessary to meet management practices.
2 Points. Site areas are moderately protected and enforced to the degree necessary to meet management practices.
1 Point. Site areas are minimally protected and enforced to the degree necessary to meet management practices.
0 Point. Site areas are not protected and enforced to the degree necessary to meet management practices.

4.6. Land and water access: A measure of the degree to which land and water access to the site support visitation and recreational value within guidelines of existing management plans. This degree of access is based on points of access (present and proposed), size, geography, proximity to adjacent residential development and present management practices and controls.

3 Points. The site has many existing and planned access points to support visitation and recreation that are very consistent with the management plans.
2 Points. The site has several existing and planned access points to support visitation and recreation that are very consistent with the management plans..
1 Point. The site has few existing and planned access points to support visitation and recreation that are very consistent with the management plans.
0 Points. The site has no existing and planned access points to support visitation and recreation that are very consistent with the management plans.

4.7. Future urban and industrial development plans A measure of the potential level of future impacts of land development (urban and industry) in areas on or adjacent to a candidate site that would impact core and buffer areas. The assumption is that a candidate site with minimal to no development plans on-site and on adjacent lands to the candidate site is more likely to maintain the integrity of the reserve. NOTE: This issue involves the degree to which adjacent lands are currently being used or may be attainable as buffer areas for the research reserve.

3 Points.: A large percentage (more than 50 percent) of the land adjacent to the site is currently undeveloped or is not likely to be developed for urban and industrial usage (based on present urban and industrial activity). This large percentage of

adjacent lands is very unlikely to be developed in the near future for urban and industrial development (e.g., consisting of marginally developable property, such as wetlands, which could be obtained as buffer).

2 Points. A moderate percentage (between 25 and 50 percent) of the land adjacent to the site is currently undeveloped (urban and industrial) or is not likely to be developed for urban or industrial usage (based on present or expected activity). The adjacent lands are unlikely to be developed in the near future for urban and industrial development (e.g., consisting of marginally developable property, such as wetlands, which could be obtained as buffer).

1 Point. A small to moderate percentage (10 to 25 percent) of the land adjacent to the site is currently undeveloped or is not likely to be developed for urban or industrial usage (based on present or expected activity).

0 Points. A large percentage (more than 50 percent) of the land adjacent to the site is developed (urban or industrial) and the area is likely to continue to be developed in the future.

5.0 Ability to conduct research on resilience and climate change impacts

5.1 Coastal resilience research: How suitable is the site (and hydrologic basin where it is found) to support research on coastal resilience including both natural, cultural, and social systems. This includes how climate change may amplify impacts of land-use change, increases in the vulnerability of the habitats of the site (and hydrologic basin) to relative sea level rise, and other climate change impacts. Research focuses include adaptations of natural, cultural, and social systems to climate change impacts, including restoration and protection projects.

3 Points. The site (and hydrologic basin) demonstrates high value in researching adaptation of natural, cultural, and social systems to climate change and relative sea level rise including research on adaptations that reduce vulnerability.

2 Points. The site (and hydrologic basin) demonstrates moderate value in researching adaptation of natural, cultural, and social systems to climate change and relative sea level rise including research on adaptations that reduce vulnerability.

1 Point. The site (and hydrologic basin) demonstrates low value in researching adaptation of natural, cultural, and social systems to climate change and relative sea level rise including research on adaptations that reduce vulnerability.

5.2 This criterion focuses on the ability to accommodate shifts in habitat as sea level, inundation or other climate-change impacts occur. Is there sufficient ability of the system to accommodate these shifts within the site boundaries and/or is there an ability to expand the boundaries to allow for maintenance of an ecological unit. This includes consideration for additional property acquisition.

3 points. Reserve boundary allows for habitat migration and several areas adjacent to the boundary provide an option for expansion to accommodate habitat shifts and boundary expansion.

2 points. Reserve boundary allows for some habitat migration and some areas adjacent to the boundary provide an option for expansion to accommodate habitat shifts and boundary expansion.
1 point. Reserve boundary allows for little habitat migration and little to no areas adjacent to the boundary provides an option for expansion to accommodate habitat shifts and boundary expansion.
0 points. Reserve boundary does not allow for habitat migration and there are no areas adjacent to the boundary that provide an option for expansion to accommodate habitat shifts and boundary expansion.

5.3 Infrastructure and Access: A changing climate is resulting in a variety of impacts that differ based on geography and conditions within geography. Reserves are designated to ensure a stable platform for research, address significant coastal management issues, enhance public awareness and understanding and promote use of the reserves consistent with the purposes outlined. Access to infrastructure that supports these purposes is key to achieving the mission of the reserve system. This criterion focuses on the expected vulnerability of existing facilities (including visitor centers, labs, storage facilities) proposed for use by the reserve to remain viable and accessible taking into account the most relevant climate change stressors in the locale. This accounts for adaptive strategies that are and/or may be in place to mitigate anticipated stressors.

3 points. Facility(ies) resilient and adaptable under high impact climate change scenarios given current understanding of vulnerability
2 points. Facilities resilient and adaptable under medium impact climate change stressor/threat scenarios
1 point. Facilities unlikely to be resilient and adaptable under medium/low impact climate change stressor/threat scenarios
0 points. Facilities vulnerable and not resilient under any climate change scenarios

5.4. Public Access Resilience: This criterion focuses on the ability to access the resources of the reserve. This includes access to water via docks and boat launches; access to interpretive and educational experiences via trails, pavilions, amphitheaters, as well as access to existing recreational and professional opportunities in the resource.

3 points. Public access infrastructure is resilient and adaptable under high impact climate change scenarios given current understanding of vulnerability
2 points. Public access infrastructure resilient and adaptable under medium impact climate change stressor/threat scenarios
1 point. Public access infrastructure unlikely to be resilient and adaptable under medium/low impact climate change stressor/threat scenarios
0 points. Public access infrastructure vulnerable and not resilient under any climate change scenarios

6.0 LaNERR Partnerships:

Partnerships should be relevant and aid the program in achieving their goals, reaching target audiences, and developing and delivering key messages. They increase the resilience of the reserve and its ability to work with the local community to address climate change and impacts

from other important stressors. Partnerships can increase the ability to address research needs and gaps, reach education and public engagement goals, and provide access to facilities and field opportunities. Institutional partnerships can also provide administrative services, support leveraging of resources, and reduce program costs. These organizations or third parties can also assist with fund-raising, grant development and management, and management of program income (ex. Friends Groups and NERRA). The strength of the reserve's partnerships and potential for partnerships will be evaluated based on the following:

6.1 Potential to develop partnerships: This criterion focuses on the site's ability to create new partnerships and strengthen existing partnerships to achieve their goals, reach target audiences, develop and deliver key messages, and address relevant coastal management issues. This can be demonstrated by potential partner interest, geography, etc. with a focus on the outcomes of the partnership, not the number or name of organizations. This will be measured by the following metrics:

- Existing MOUs or agreements explaining shared resources such as facilities and salaries
- Memberships of key individuals to professional organizations such as National Marine Educators Association, Coastal and Estuarine Research Federation, Society of Wetland Scientists, other state professional organizations, research organizations, local or regional consortia, etc.
- Recent history of key personnel participation in multi-institutional grants, publications, and projects
- Letters from existing informal partners about past projects, their outcomes, and organizational structure
- Letters from potential partners focusing on how the partner could complement or contribute to the reserve goals. This letter should include information such as historical context for partnership and their vision for contributing to the reserve mission.

3 Points. The site has strong potential to develop and strengthen new and existing partnerships of high quality evidenced by metrics stated above.
2 Points. The site has potential for new partnerships of good quality to develop.
1 Point. The site has potential for partnership development.
0 Points. The site has insignificant potential for partnerships.

6.2 Internal NOAA Partnerships: This is a measure of the number and quality of partnerships with other NOAA entities that already exist within a program or that have the potential to develop based on common goals, geographic proximity, etc. The assumption is that a candidate site with a high diversity of existing partnerships and partnership potential will have opportunities to leverage support and create sustainable programs more so than one with fewer partnerships. Some examples include Sea Grant, Coastal Programs, Marine Sanctuaries, Weather Service, Climate Office and other line offices of NOAA. This will be measured by the following metrics:

- Existing MOUs or agreements explaining shared resources such as facilities and salaries

- Recent history of key personnel participation in grants, publications, and projects with NOAA

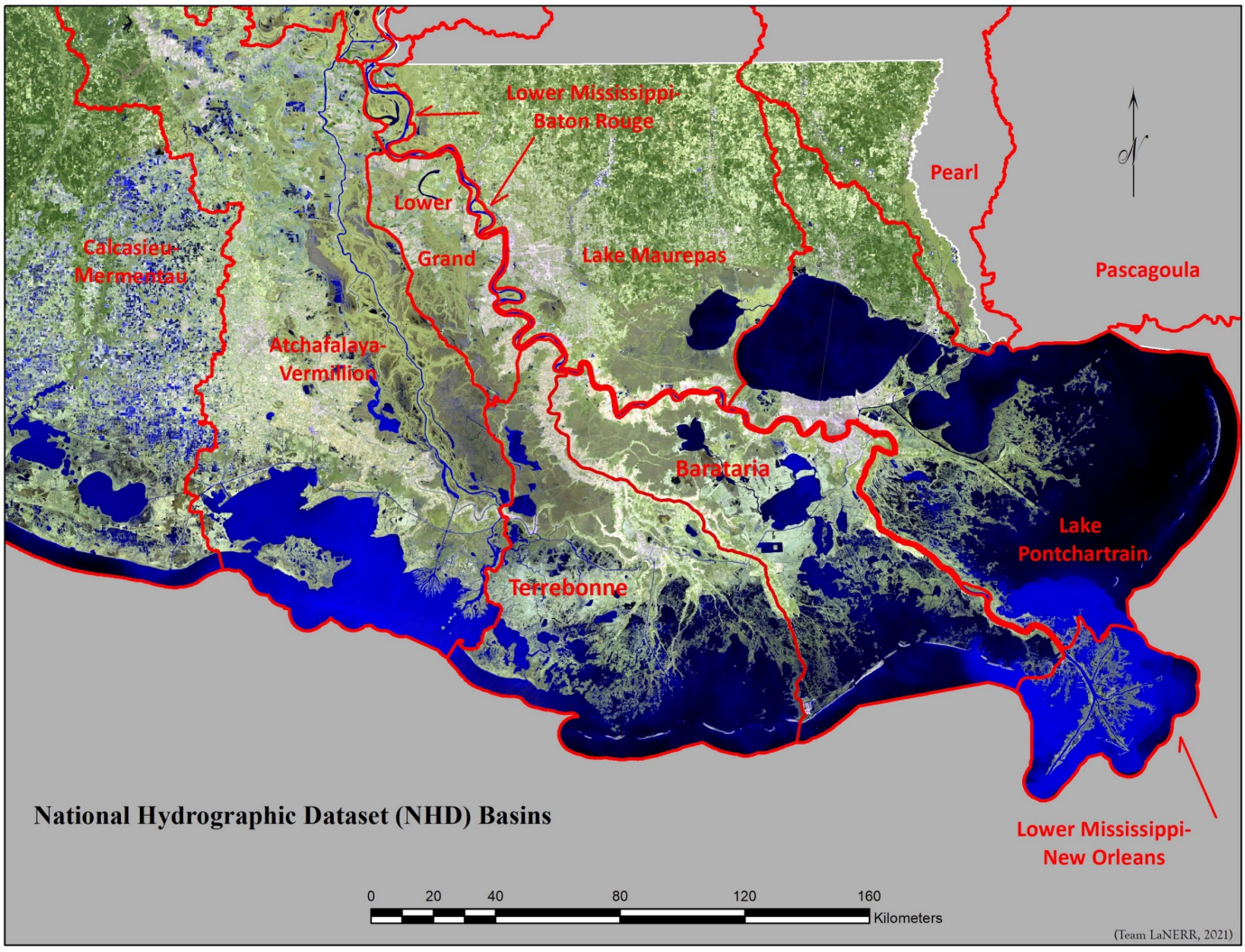
3 Points. The site has a history of NOAA partnerships and there is strong potential to develop and strengthen new and existing ones of high quality evidenced by the metrics stated above.
2 Points. The site has several partnerships in place and there is potential for new partnerships of good quality to develop.
1 Point. The site has potential for partnership development.
0 Points. The site has insignificant potential for partnerships.

6.3 Diversity of Partnerships: This is a measure of the ability to reach diverse audiences through existing partnerships or potential partnerships based on common goals and geographic proximity. The assumption is that a candidate site with a high diversity of existing partnerships and partnership potential will have opportunities to leverage support and create sustainable programs more so than one with fewer partnerships. These partnerships should increase the candidate site's ability to address relevant coastal management issues, address research needs and gaps, and reach diverse audiences. These partner organizations should range in diversity such as federal agencies (ex. National Estuary Programs, National Wildlife Refuges, National Parks), state agencies and parks, local organizations (Marine Labs and Land Trusts), NGOs, and umbrella groups (national, regional or local). These partnerships should help bridge the gap between the NERRS and new audiences that the NERRS has not typically engaged (e.g., urban audiences) or that could help the NERRS become more effective at reaching intended audiences (e.g., national municipal association to facilitate reaching local officials). The focus of these partnerships should be the outcomes, not the number or name of organizations. This will be measured by the following metrics:

- Existing MOUs or agreements explaining shared resources such as facilities and salaries
- Recent history of key personnel participation in multi-institutional grants, publications, projects
- Letters from existing informal partners about past projects, outcomes, and organizational structure
- Letters from potential partners focusing on how the partner could complement or contribute to the reserve goals. This letter should include historical context and vision for partnership contributing to the reserve mission.

3 Points. The site has many diverse partnerships and there is strong potential to develop and strengthen new and existing ones of high quality evidenced by metrics stated above.
2 Points. The site has several diverse partnerships in place and there is potential for new partnerships of good quality to develop.
1 Point. The site has potential for partnership development.
0 Points. The site has insignificant potential for partnerships.

This map was provided to the Site Criteria Subcommittee to use as a reference for “hydrologic basins.”



Louisiana National Estuarine Research Reserve (LaNERR)
Site Selection & Nomination Report

November 2022

APPENDIX 6:

Phase I, II, and Final Candidate Site Proposal Guidance

LaNERR - Phase I Candidate Site Proposal Guidelines

April 26, 2021

Please provide the following in PDF and PowerPoint format to the Designation Leadership Team (DLT) deltanerr@lsu.edu no later than May 3, 2021.

1. Team Lead (or Co-Leads)
2. Team member names and relevant expertise in addressing four NOAA topical areas (teams can recruit members outside SDC to cover the four criteria topical areas):
    a. Education and Interpretation
    b. Environmental Representativeness
    c. Research, Monitoring, and Resource Protection
    d. Acquisition and Management Consideration

    At a minimum, indicate members of your 'Core Team' (i.e., team members that will actively participate in proposal development). Members of your 'Extended Team' can also be included (e.g., advisory/support personnel, future participants, etc.)

3. Brief explanation of proposal development plan including:
    a. Proposal Team meeting format and process – *this includes details on how your proposal team plans to communicate (e.g., team call frequency, call participants, who will coordinate/schedule those calls, who will document action items, etc.). Please also indicate who will present status updates to the DLT or SDC on the team's behalf. Additional guidance for developing Phase II and Final Phase Proposals is forthcoming.*
    b. Needs for proposal implementation – *include all anticipated needs to the extent possible (e.g., SharePoint folder, GIS support, etc.).*

4. Visual of anticipated LaNERR site, including draft core and buffer areas

Support for Proposal Development:

- SDC members that volunteered as 'consultants' have been identified to help with specific issues (e.g., state lands, Indian affairs, extreme weather and anticipated climate shifts, K-12 education, avian ecology/importance, and general information gathering)
- The DLT is available for meetings to support Proposal Team efforts and answer questions (schedule with LaTosha Mullins via the deltanerr@lsu.edu email)
- The DLT is willing to set up SharePoint folders to aid in team interactions and sharing information
- You may find both the First Draft NOAA Site Criteria and the NERR Designation Guidance (Feb 2020) documents useful, especially regarding drafting core and buffer areas

Please be prepared to give an overview (approximately 10 min with 5 min for Q&A) of your proposed candidate site during SDC meeting #5, anticipated to be scheduled during the middle of May.

LaNERR - Phase II Candidate Site Proposal Guidelines

May 10, 2021

Please provide the following in PDF format to the Designation Leadership Team (DLT) deltanerr@lsu.edu no later than June 30, 2021

1.0 Physical Description of the Site (one page maximum): Adequacy of Site's Core and Buffer Areas to merit NOAA-State Partnership: (a) boundaries should encompass an adequate portion of the key land and water areas of the natural system; (b) key land and water areas should encompass environmental resources that are representative of a delta estuary ecosystem; (c) boundaries must balance the overall size of a reserve by covering an ecosystem large enough to make long-term estuarine research viable yet having a discrete contiguous area that can be effectively managed with resources available to support a NERR.

1.1 Include map of Core and Buffer Areas (provided by Team LaNERR GIS Support; see instructions to proposal teams for providing information on polygons of proposed core and buffer areas; polygons are due by **June 1, 2021, by sending to deltanerr@lsu.edu**)
1.2 Include land-owner names and contact information for CORE and BUFFER AREAS including state, parish, federal, and private lands
1.3 What percentage of the total CORE AREA is owned by the state: _____%
1.4 Have candidate site CORE AREA land-owners been contacted?
1.5 Have candidate site BUFFER AREA land-owners been contacted?

2.0 Ecological Characteristics of the Site (one page maximum): Use the listing of habitats in the second draft of LaNERR Site Criteria to describe the habitats proposed in the core and buffer areas that capture the ecological characteristics of a delta estuary. Include a statement that also defines the proposed core and buffer areas as unique contributions to the Biogeographic Zone compared to the other NERR sites in the Gulf of Mexico.

2.1 Include map of Vegetation Types in the general region of the Core and Buffer Areas (provided by Team LaNERR GIS Support (deltanerr@lsu.edu); see instructions in section 4.0 for team responsibility in providing information on polygons of proposed core and buffer areas)
2.2 List examples of habitat types in the general area of the Core and Buffer Zones based on the SECOND DRAFT of SITE CRITERIA
2.3 Significant Fauna and Flora in the general area of the Core and Buffer Areas

3.0 Narrative describing the candidate site's qualities around each of the following topics. Use the SECOND DRAFT of the LaNERR Site Criteria for guidance on what constitute qualities of a site in each of the three areas below (there is 500-word limit on narrative for each of the three areas – a listing may also be used).

3.1 Suitability for Research, Monitoring and Resource Protection: Is there a history of research activities at the site? If so, can they be generally described? If there is not a history, can the site support a research program? What are some examples/reasons? Are there any obvious limitations or concerns?

3.2 Suitability for Education, Interpretation, and Training: Is there a history of educational activities at the site? If so, can they be described? If there is not a history, can the site

support educational activities? What are some examples/reasons? Are there any obvious limitations or concerns?

3.3 Site's Compatibility with Coastal Management Issues: Since most of these may be already under some level of protection, this is more geared toward what functional roles they provide (e.g., bird habitat, wildlife management, etc.). Are there any obvious limitations or concerns?

- Existing and future land and water uses and manipulations
- Land use projections in core and buffer areas
- Consumptive uses in the proposed LaNERR
- Contributions to coastal stewardship

4.0 Maps and Tables to Document Sections 1-3: The Team LaNERR GIS Support will provide TWO maps and quantitative estimates for each of the Proposal Teams as outlined below.

4.1 Two standardized Site GIS Maps will be generated for each team for Phase II. The Thematic GIS Maps will be generated for each Site based on geospatial polygons submitted by each respective Proposal Team of the CORE and BUFFER areas proposed by the teams. The polygons will be used by Team LaNERR GIS Support to generate information based on EXISTING GIS Data Layers for each of the three Estuarine Zones (Atchafalaya, Barataria, Pontchartrain). **Each polygon needs to be uniquely identified (e.g. core-#1, core-#2, buffer-#1, buffer-#2, or use specific place names for each core or buffer polygon, etc.) and are due June 1, 2021, by sending to deltanerr@lsu.edu. Please also include contact information for person managing geospatial data for each respective team.**

4.2 Thematic GIS Map ONE: A GIS map that depicts the candidate site's CORE and BUFFER AREAS. Data will be generated as follows for each of the CORE and BUFFER polygons:

- Total area of each polygon
- Total area of state-owned lands of each polygon
- Total area of state-owned water bottoms of each polygon
- Other area that is not state-owned (land plus water bottoms)

4.3 Thematic GIS Map TWO: A GIS map of the CPRA initial vegetation types and distribution described in sections 2.0 above. Data will be generated as follows for each of the CORE and BUFFER polygons:

- Acreage of each wetland typology of CPRA initial vegetation in each CORE AREA polygon (if vegetation types are included in CPRA data)
- Acreage of each wetland typology of CPRA initial vegetation in each BUFFER AREA polygon (if vegetation types are included in CPRA data)

5.0 Optional Sections Encouraged (two-page maximum).

- Facilities in the region that may help to support the research, education, and training mission of the proposed LaNERR.
- Bibliography of past research, data, or reports documenting candidate site's resources

LaNERR – Final Candidate Site Proposal Guidelines

Frist sent May 10, 2021; revised February 28, 2022

Please provide the following in PDF format to the Designation Leadership Team (DLT) (send to Sandy Parfait sandyparfait@lsu.edu) later than March 25, 2022.

Instructions: There are four sections to the Final proposals. **Please use font size of at least 12. You may remove page breaks in the form provided.**

Section 1 is an update from Phase II Proposals on information concerning the physical description of state lands and waters that are being considered for the candidate site. **ONE PAGE SUMMARY**

Section 2 requests details on how the candidate site addresses each of the Site Criteria using the worksheet provided in Appendix 1. **35 PAGES MAXIMUM (present space is 29 pages; you can remove page breaks; use font size of 12 for responses)**

Section 3 includes maps that are used to define proposed NERR state lands and waters and other public areas considered for the candidate site. **UP TO 5 PAGES (one page per map)**

Section 4 request additional information on public support and engagement from community in support of the Candidate Site Proposal. **ONE PAGE SUMMARY**; more information can be added in an Appendix 2

TOTAL 42 PAGES

1.0 Physical Description of the Site: Adequacy of Site's Areas to merit NOAA-State Partnership: (a) boundaries should encompass an adequate portion of the key land and water areas of the natural system; (b) key land and water areas should encompass environmental types that are representative of a delta estuary ecosystem; (c) boundaries should cover an ecosystem size with contiguous areas sufficient to make long-term estuarine research viable, yet having discrete areas that can be used for education and interpretation.

1.1 Include map of proposed NERR Areas that were generated by the Team LaNERR GIS Support Team per Town Hall presentation.

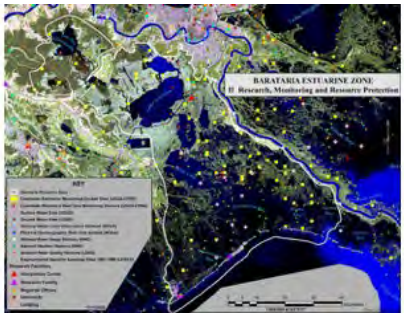
2.0 The LaNERR Site Criteria worksheet to provide the narrative addressing each of the LaNERR criteria (See Worksheet in Appendix 1 of this proposal package).

3.0 Maps and Tables to Document Sections 1-2: The Team LaNERR GIS Support will provide THREE maps and quantitative estimates such as those in Phase II and Town Hall meetings for each of the Proposal Teams as outlined below.

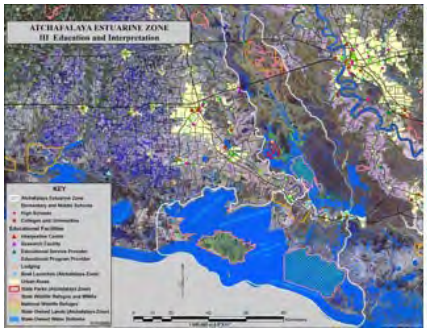
3.1 Map 1: Include the standardized Site GIS Maps that were generated for the Town Hall meetings. The polygons will be used by Team LaNERR to generate information based on EXISTING GIS Data Layers for each of the three Estuarine Zones (Atchafalaya, Barataria, Pontchartrain).
3.2 Map 2: GIS Map of Monitoring/Research Stations per maps used in Pre-Screening Process included for respective Estuarine Zone
3.3 Map 3: GIS Map of Education/Interpretation Centers per maps used in Pre-Screening Process included for respective Estuarine Zone (1:850,000 scale)
3.4 Maps 4 and 5: A maximum of TWO MAPs of CHOICE generated by the respective Proposal Teams to assist with documenting elements of the LaNERR CRITERIA.

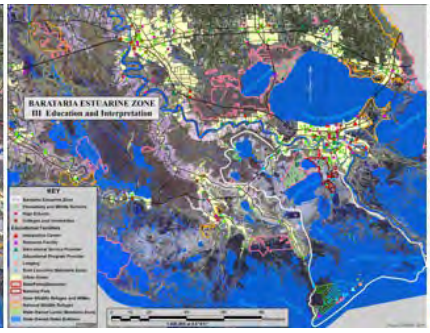
4.0 Letters of Support from Potential Partners, Advisors, Contributors (Final Proposal)

<u>These are the base maps that polygons for proposed areas will be placed for Map #2.</u>



<u>These are the base maps that polygons for proposed candidate sites will be placed for Map #3.</u>





Two Maps of Choice can by the Proposal Teams for total of Five Maps in the Final Proposal

Appendix 1:

WORKSHEETS TO PROPOSAL TEAMS: Narrative for each LaNERR Site Criteria – Final Proposals

The TABLES below have six topical areas of criteria approved by NOAA to evaluate potential NERR sites in Louisiana: (1) Environmental Representativeness, (2) Research, Monitoring & Resource Protection, (3) Education and Interpretation, (4) Acquisition and Management Consideration, (5) Ability to conduct research on resilience and climate change impacts, and (6) LaNERR Partnerships.

The Proposal Teams are asked to provide a narrative that support the qualifications of a candidate site as applied to the FINAL LaNERR Site Criteria. Initial scores in each of the criteria topics by the Screening Committee will be used to provide feedback to Proposal Teams on the qualifications of specific candidate sites for nomination as a LaNERR.

NOTE: TO SAVE SPACE, THE TABLE INCLUDED THE LANERR SITE CRITERA ON THE RIGHT AND BLANK SPACE ON THE LEFT FOR PROPOSAL TEAMS TO COMPLETE; THE TABLE IS NOT INCLUDED HEREIN BUT CAN BE FOUND IN THE APPENDIX WITH THE FINAL CANDIDATE SITE PROPOSALS.

Louisiana National Estuarine Research Reserve (LaNERR)
Site Selection & Nomination Report

November 2022

APPENDIX 7:

Site Development Committee Meetings and Associated Materials

Site Development Committee Meeting 1

October 8 & 9, 2020

October 8th or 9th, 2020
10am - 11am CST
Site Development Committee Orientation

Review the following Materials provided in the following links or attached:

1. Orientation Video (link)
2. NOAA Suggested Criteria (doc)
3. LaNERR Site Nomination Timeline (pdf)
4. Pre-screening Criteria (pdf)
5. Agenda (pdf)

Agenda

1. Introduction (20)
    a. NERRS Overview (10 m)
    b. LaNERR Overview (10 m)
2. Review Charge to Site Development Committee (20)
    a. Overview Nomination Timeline (5 m)
    b. Pre-Screening Criteria and Proposed Zones (10 m)
    c. Review Charge for Next Meeting (5 m)
3. Questions & Comments (20m)

LaNERR

Louisiana
National Estuary Research Reserve

Charge to the Site Development Committee

Activities of the pre-designation process

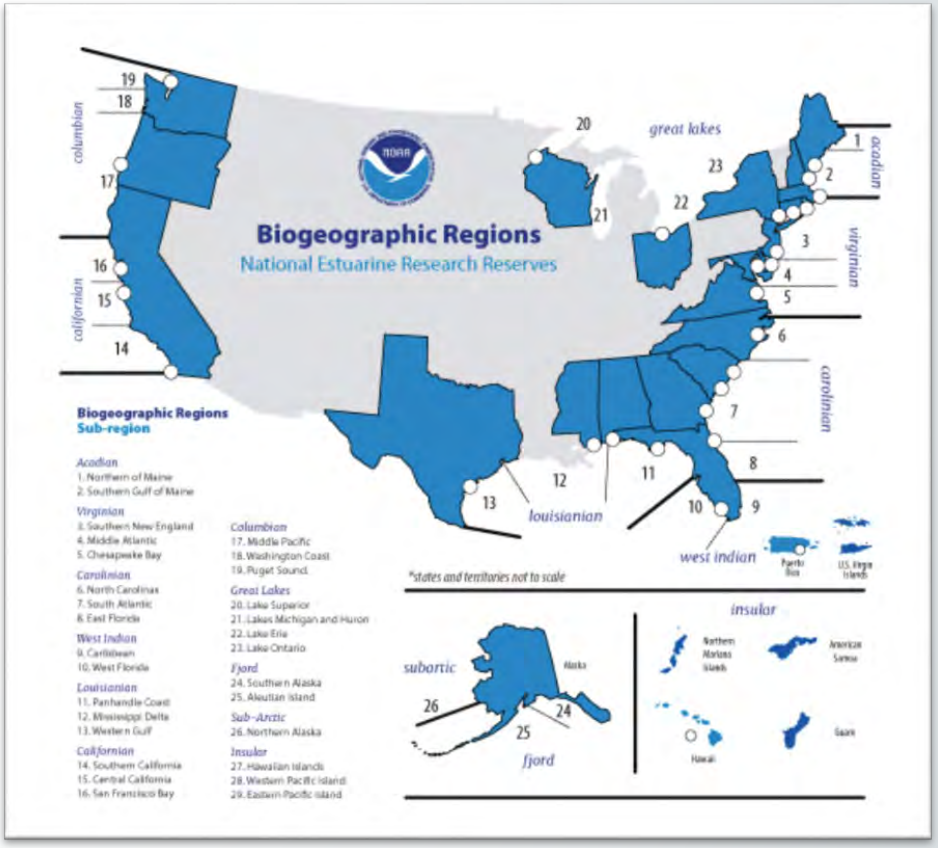
30 September 2020

A Louisiana National Estuarine Research Reserve– Participating in a National Network to Tell our Story

National Estuarine Research Reserve System (NERRS)

network of protected areas representative of the various biogeographic regions and estuarine types in the United States.

Reserves are established as state-NOAA partnership for long-term research, education, and stewardship to promote informed management of the nation's estuaries and coastal habitats.



Primary Goals of the Reserve System

1. **Long-term protection to insure longitudinal research**
2. **Address significant coastal management issues through coordinated research**
3. **Enhance public awareness and understanding of estuaries**
4. **Partner with feds, state, public, and private entities on research**
5. **Conduct and coordinate system wide research**

STEWARDSHIP

- Mapping
- Restoration
- Land Acquisition

RESEARCH

- Monitoring
- Collaboration
- Student Fellowships

TRAINING

- Target Audiences
- Priority Issues

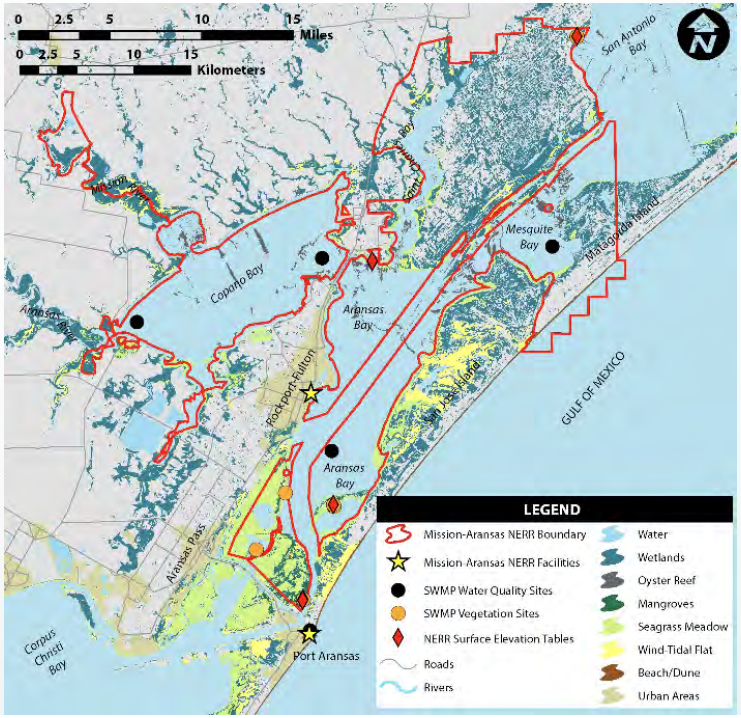
EDUCATION

- Teachers
- Communities
- Students

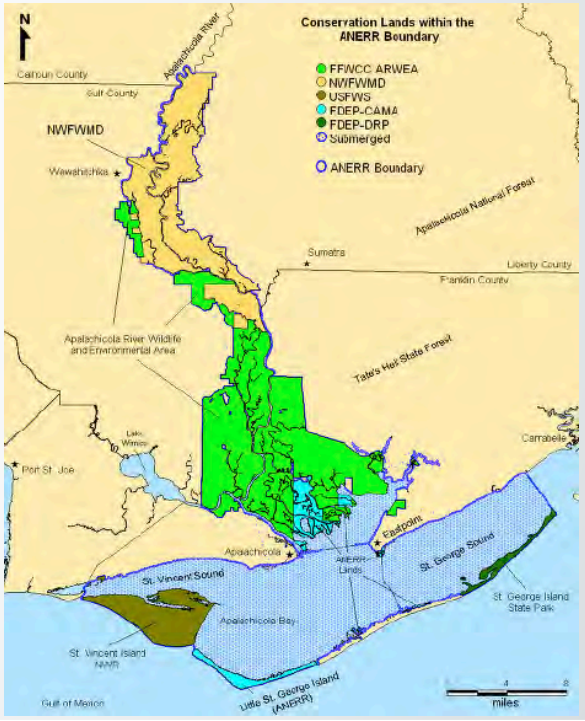
Public lands connected by state waters

Weeks Bay NERR, AL

Mission-Aransas NERR, TX



Apalachicola NERR, FL.

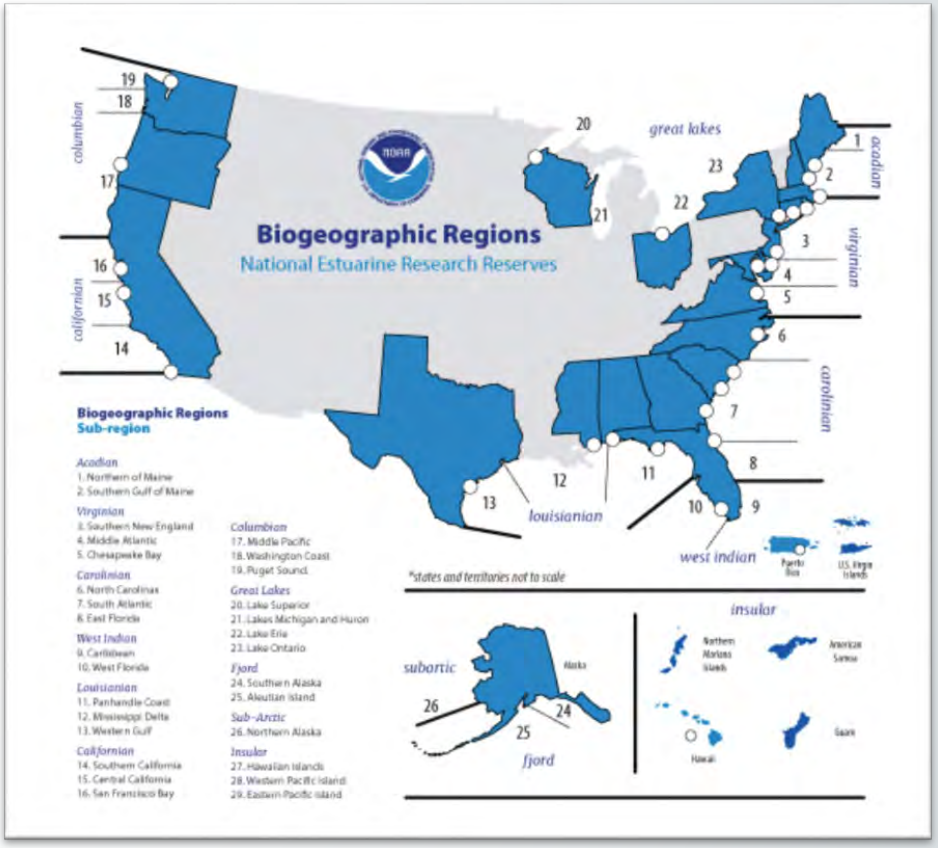


A Louisiana National Estuarine Research Reserve– Participating in a National Network to Tell our Story

National Estuarine Research Reserve System (NERRS)

network of protected areas representative of the various biogeographic regions and estuarine types in the United States.

Reserves are established as state-NOAA partnership for long-term research, education, and stewardship to promote informed management of the nation's estuaries and coastal habitats.



Primary Goals of the Reserve System

1. **Long-term protection to insure longitudinal research**
2. **Address significant coastal management issues through coordinated research**
3. **Enhance public awareness and understanding of estuaries**
4. **Partner with feds, state, public, and private entities on research**
5. **Conduct and coordinate system wide research**

STEWARDSHIP

- Mapping
- Restoration
- Land Acquisition

RESEARCH

- Monitoring
- Collaboration
- Student Fellowships

TRAINING

- Target Audiences
- Priority Issues

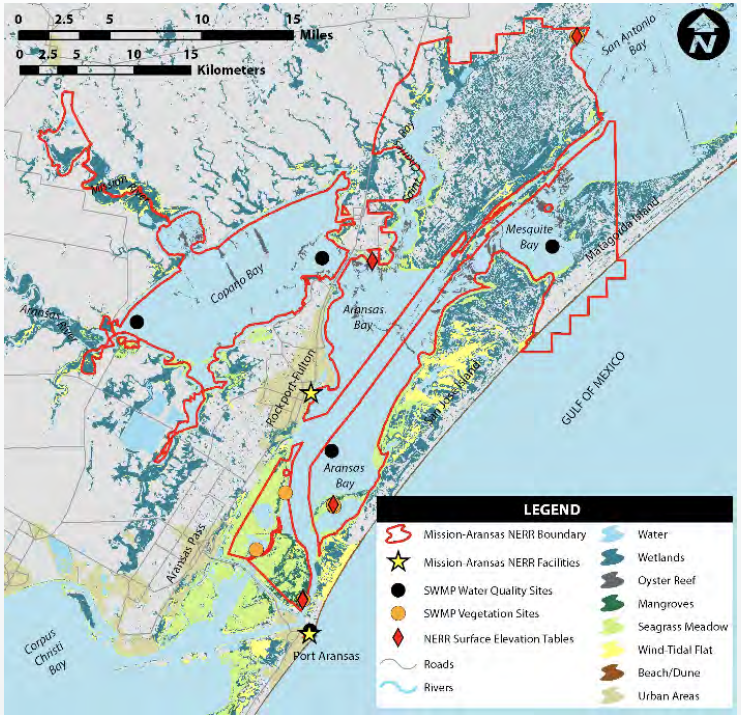
EDUCATION

- Teachers
- Communities
- Students

Public lands connected by state waters

Weeks Bay NERR, AL

Mission-Aransas NERR, TX



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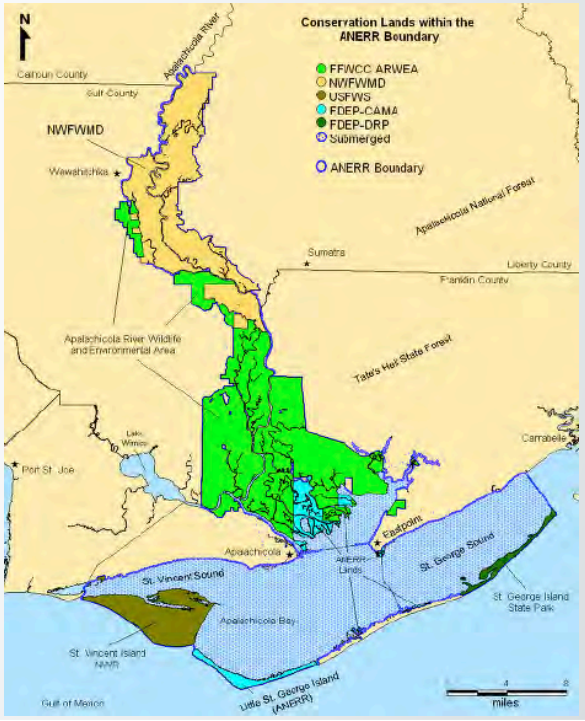
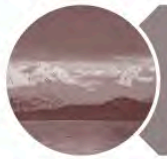


Criteria from the NOAA guidelines to establish a LaNERR site in the Mississippi River Delta.

I. Environmental Representativeness

II. Value of the Site for Research, Monitoring, and Resource Protection

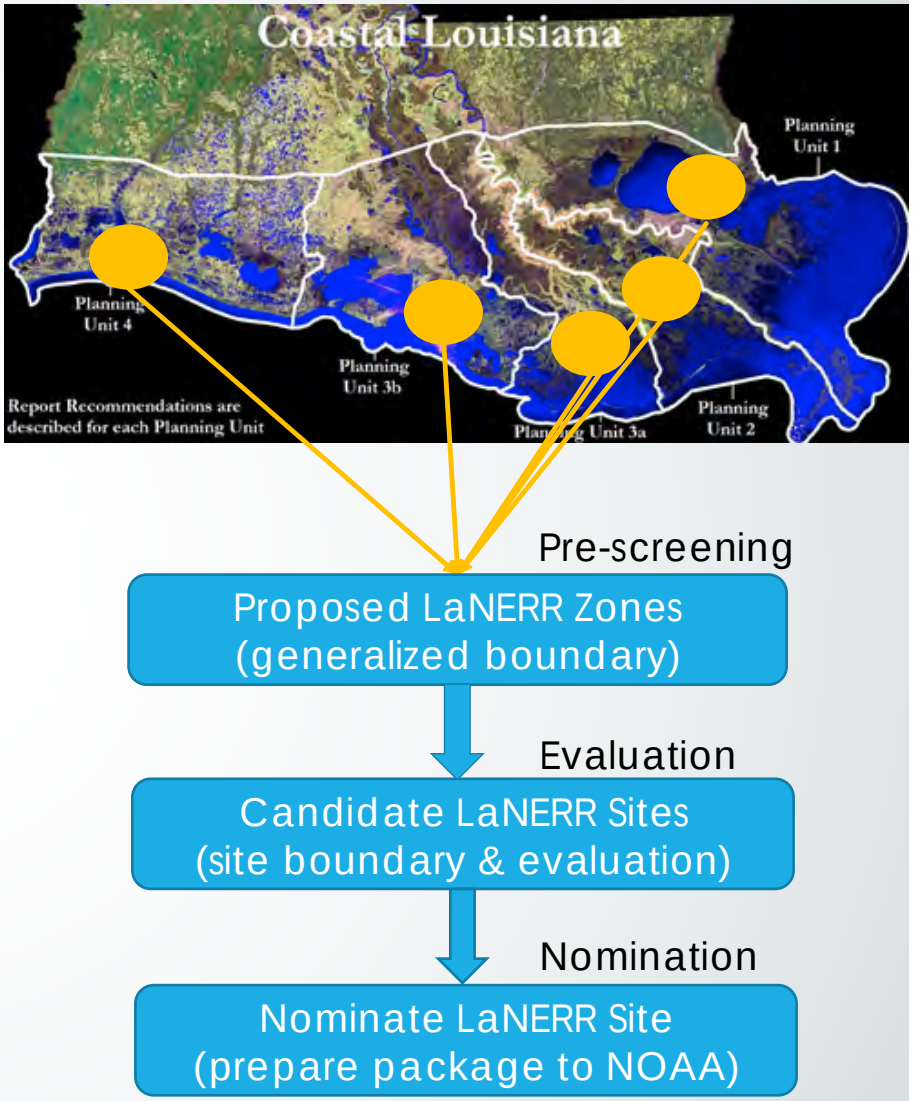
III. Suitability of the Site for Education and Interpretation



IV. Acquisition and Management Considerations

How will Louisiana determine where to establish a LaNERR?

1. Develop **pre-screening criteria** that reflect LaNERR goals;
2. **Establish generalized zones** within which to identify candidate sites;
3. Use proposed zones to **modify NOAA site criteria** to help identify sites for consideration and final nomination;
4. Evaluate proposed LaNERR Zones to **select candidate sites** that define preferred goals;
5. **Generate public support and partnerships** for proposed final site to NOAA.



Step 1- Letter of Interest

Step 2- Site Selection and Nomination (*Current Step*)

- **Site-Selection Process** must include: Site Selection Committee, site criteria that are applied to entire coastal zone, key stakeholder outreach and engagement, and at least one public meeting held jointly with NOAA
- **Governor Submits a Site Nomination Packet** including: Governor's nomination letter, description of the proposed site in relationship to each of the site selection criteria, an analysis of the proposed site based on the biogeographical scheme defined in regulations, a description of the site's major resources, location, proposed boundaries, and adjacent land uses, the public engagement process, and all other sites considered and why none of these were chosen.

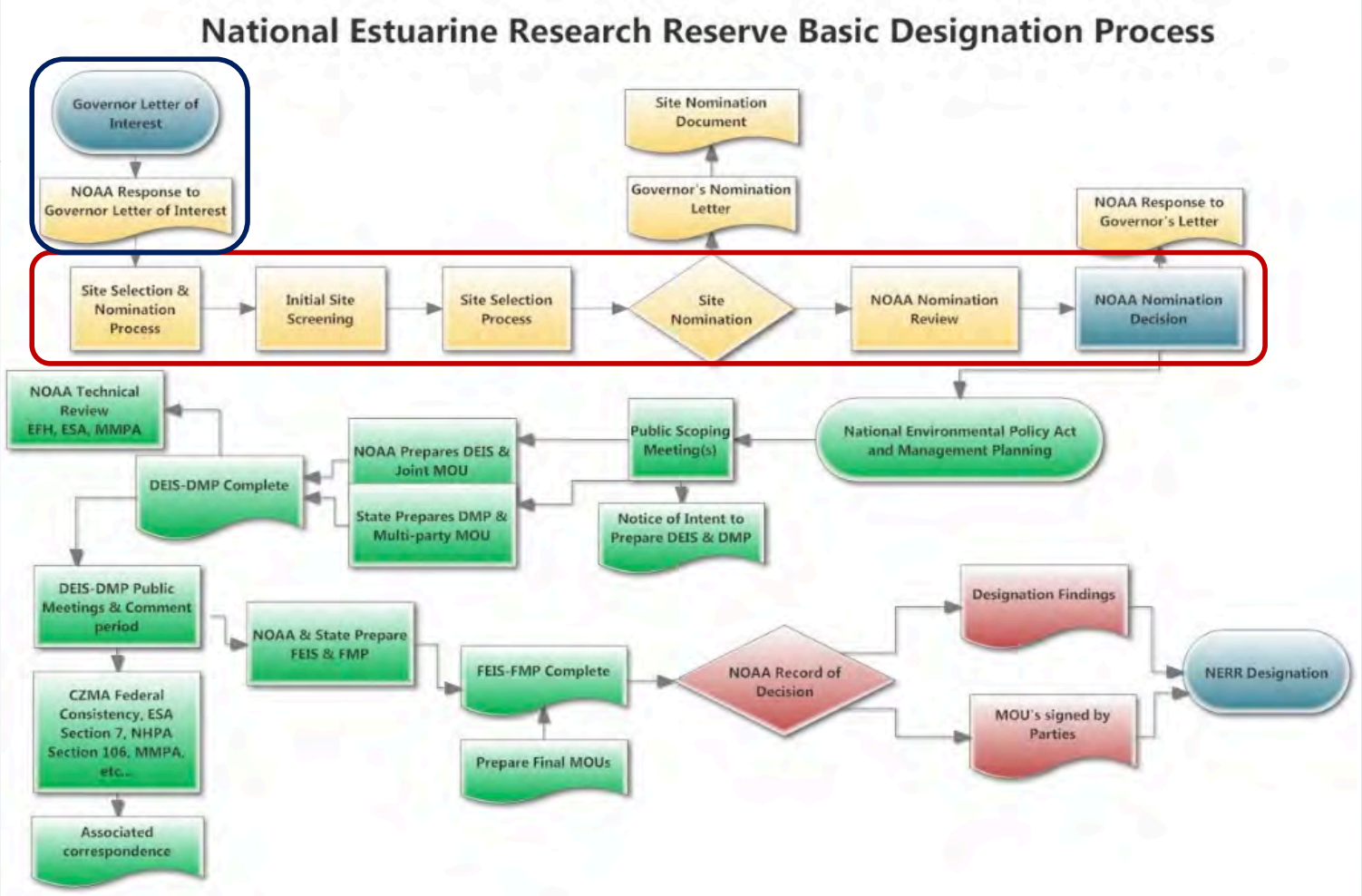
Step 3- Draft Environmental Impact Statement and Draft Management Plan

Step 4- Final Environmental Impact Statement and Final Management Plan

Step 5- Designation findings and certificate; Record of Decision

Step 6- Designation Ceremony

Pre-designation Process



LaNERR Site Selection and Nomination Teams

Site Designation Coordination Team

- Serves to provide leadership and oversight of the state designation. Its task is to manage the phases of the designation over time by coordinating the various committees, engaging the public, and by working closely with local NOAA Liaison to keep NOAA updated on progress

Site Development Committee

- the technical team responsible for pre-screening the coastal zone to evaluate those areas clearly suitable to serve the function of a LaNERR. Its task is to submit 1-3 proposed sites to the Site Evaluation Committee for nomination of one final site to NOAA for site designation

Site Evaluation Committee

- the executive level committee responsible for reviewing the final proposed sites for a LaNERR as recommended by the Site Development Committee. Its task is to select the final site to be recommended to the governor for nomination prior to being submitted to NOAA

The **Site Designation Coordination Team** provides leadership and oversees the designation process by the state. This team includes:

- **Robert Twilley** (Director of Louisiana Sea Grant),
- **Morgan Crutcher** (Governor's Office of Coastal Activities)
- **LaTosha Mullins**(Louisiana Sea Grant).
- This committee will work closely with the NOAA Liaison member, **Kristin Ransom**, to keep the Ecosystems and NERRS Program in the NOAA Office of Coastal Management updated on progress.
- In addition, this group will communicate with the Site Development Committee, and the Site Evaluation Committee to coordinate phases of the designation process over time.

LaNERR Executive Committee Members

- Harry Vorhoff
  - *Governor's office of Coastal Activities*
- Russell Caffery
  - *Governor's office of Coastal Activities*
- Gregory Grandy
  - *CPRA*
- Bren Haase
  - *CPRA*
- Charles Reulet
  - *DNR*
- Keith Lovell
  - *DNR*
- Randy Myers
  - *LDWF*
- Cole Grarrett
  - *LDWF*
- Patrick Banks
  - *LDWF*

- Members met on August 13th to receive an update on LaNERR Site Selection process
- Executive Members felt the process depicted a fair and transparent way to select and nominate a site
- Members will be updated as process evolves

The **Site Development Committee** is a technical team that will be responsible for pre-screening the coastal zone to evaluate those areas clearly suitable to serve the function of a LaNERR.

The Site Development Committee will submit 1-3 proposed sites to the Site Evaluation Committee for nomination of a LaNERR to NOAA for site designation.

State Agencies: CPRA; Archaeology; State Parks; La. Culture, Recreation and Tourism; Atchafalaya Basin Natural Heritage District; State Lands Office; LDAF;LDEQ; LDNR; LDOTD; LDWF; Louisiana Watershed Initiative

Federal Agencies: NOAA OCM - Gulf Coast Rep; USFWS; USGS; NWRC; NRCS; National Park Service; USACE; EPA

NGOs: The Nature Conservancy; Ducks Unlimited; The Conservation Fund; Land Trust for LA; LWF; Pontchartrain Conservancy; Restore or Retreat; The Water Institute of the Gulf; Mississippi River Delta Campaign – EDF; Audubon; CRCL; Trust for Public Land; BTNEP; Pointe au Chien Indian Tribe

Universities: LSU; LSU AgCenter; LUMCON; Nicholls State; McNeese; Southeastern La. University; Loyola University; University of Lafayette; Tulane; SUNO;

LaNERR Site Selection and Nomination Process: Public Participation and Transparency

Site Development

- Propose LaNERR Zones
- Prescreen Zones to identify Sites
- Develop Candidate Sites
- Modify Site Criteria to NOAA

Public Roadshow

- Outline Benefits of NERRS & LaNERR
- Overview of LaNERR Process to Stakeholders
- Receive feedback on Proposed LaNERR Zones

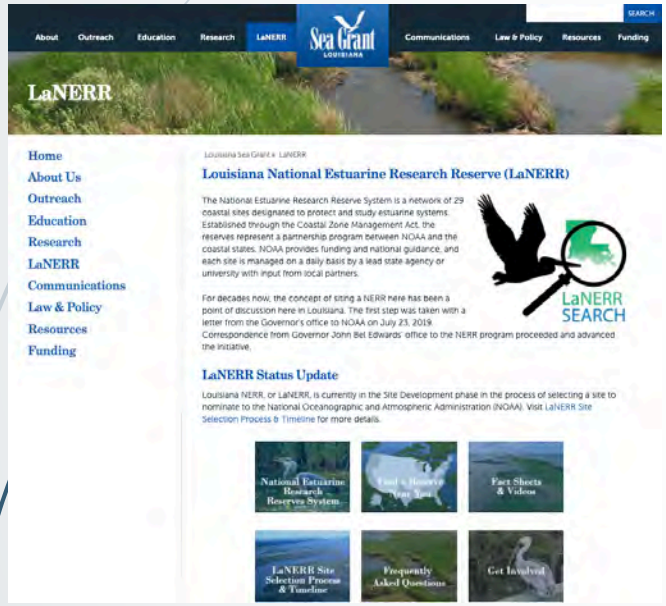
Town Halls at Candidate Sites

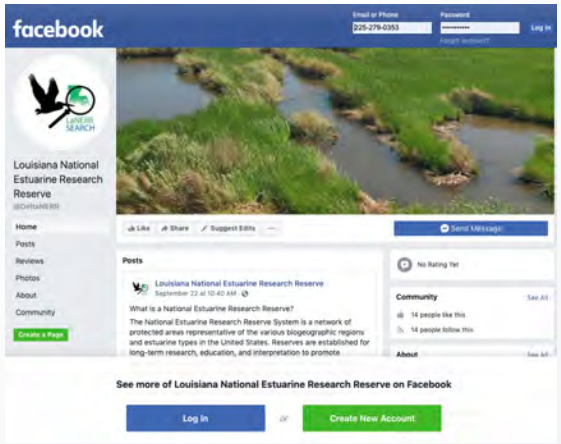
- Presentation of Candidate Sites to local communities
- Public and stakeholder engagement
- Evaluate potential value of sites

Timeline of Site Selection Process (Step 2)

2020					2021						
SEP	OCT	NOV	DEC	JAN	FEB	MAR	APR	MAY	JUN	JUL	AUG
Pre-screening of Coast: Identify Zones & Potential Sites		Roadshow: NERR Intro Public Review of Zones, Criteria, & Potential Sites		Collaborative Site Development: Evaluate & Prepare Candidate Site Proposals			Town Halls: Public Review of Candidate Site Proposals			Final Site Selection and Nomination	

LaNERR Social Media





Contact

email deltanerr@lsu.edu

- Social Media:
  - **https://twitter.com/DeltaNERR**
- Website:
  - **http://www.laseagrant.org/deltanerr/**
- Facebook
  - **https://www.facebook.com/DeltaNERR/**

Criteria from the NOAA guidelines to establish a LaNERR site in the Mississippi River Delta.

National Estuarine Research Reserve Designation Guidance

Site Selection, Nomination, and Designation

February 1, 2020

Authored by NOAA

Stewardship Division
Office for Coastal Management
National Ocean Service
National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

Criteria from the NOAA guidelines to establish a LaNERR site in the Mississippi River Delta.

I. Environmental Representativeness

II. Value of the Site for Research, Monitoring, and Resource Protection

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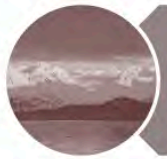


IV. Acquisition and Management Considerations

NOAA's NERR Designation Process: Step 2

2A. Developing Site Selection Criteria

- Site selection criteria are designed to address major site considerations that reflect the goals of the National Estuarine Research Reserve System.
- Sites may consider modifying or adding additional criteria that reflect regional differences in the ecological characteristics of the habitats to be considered.
- The suite of criteria selected by a state for a Reserve System designation process require NOAA approval.

2B. Preliminary Site Screening

- Prior to the application of the full suite of site selection criteria, it may be appropriate for the state, in consultation with the Office for Coastal Management, to utilize a simplified procedure to screen the proposed sites to eliminate those areas that are clearly not suitable candidates.
- A preliminary screening should reduce the amount of time and effort that is required to apply the full suite of criteria to all sites.

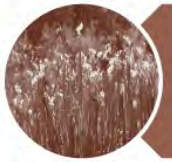
NOAA's NERR Designation Process: Step 2

2C. Selecting a Site for Nomination

- Upon narrowing down the list of potential sites, a state should evaluate the remaining candidate sites using the approved site-selection criteria.
- Typically, a small team of experts, with strong technical expertise or relevant local knowledge, scores the list of candidate sites using the approved selection criteria.
- Sites are ranked and forwarded to another team for final selection.
- In addition to demonstrating site-selection criteria, a nominated site should incorporate public, partner, and stakeholder input.

2D. Creating a Nomination Document

- A site nomination package makes the case to NOAA for the designation of a new reserve to the Reserve System.
- The nomination provides the rationale for why the site would be a valuable addition to the national network and contribute to the goals of the Reserve System regulations.
- The package should provide a detailed description of the site; and describe its compatibility with existing plans for land and water uses and public support.



I. Environmental Representativeness

1. The candidate site is in the **Mississippi River Delta** that represents an active delta estuary.
   - Active Delta Estuary – Core and buffer areas that capture how fluvial processes and deltaic geomorphology are coupled to ecological features of an active delta estuary;
   - Ecological processes capture the unique life cycles of estuarine-dependent species based on exchange among riverine-bay-shelf habitats;
   - Vegetation types include the elevation and salinity gradients of deltaic wetlands from tidal freshwater to estuarine marshes and forested wetlands;
   - Delta ecosystems that are habitat to unique and endangered species;

II. Value of the Site for Research, Monitoring, and Resource Protection

2. The candidate site is suitable for **research, monitoring, and resource protection** activities.
   - The proposed zone has ecosystems suitable for monitoring processes of delta estuary; and has been site of long-term research efforts.
   - There are research institutions and facilities in general area that can utilize the proposed site for research and monitoring programs;
   - There is long-term sustainability and resilience to ecosystems in the proposed site; land use issues allow for resource protection.

III. Suitability of the Site for Education and Interpretation

3. The candidate site is suitable for **education, training, and interpretation** activities.
   - Does the LaNERR zone have significant features such as Scenic and Historic Rivers, Scenic Byways, Indian mounds, archeological, historical sites, etc., that provide education and interpretation value;
   - Are there schools and known educational and interpretive centers near the LaNERR zone;
4. The candidate site is accessible by normal modes of transportation.
   - What roads and boat launches provide access points to waterways of the LaNERR zone.

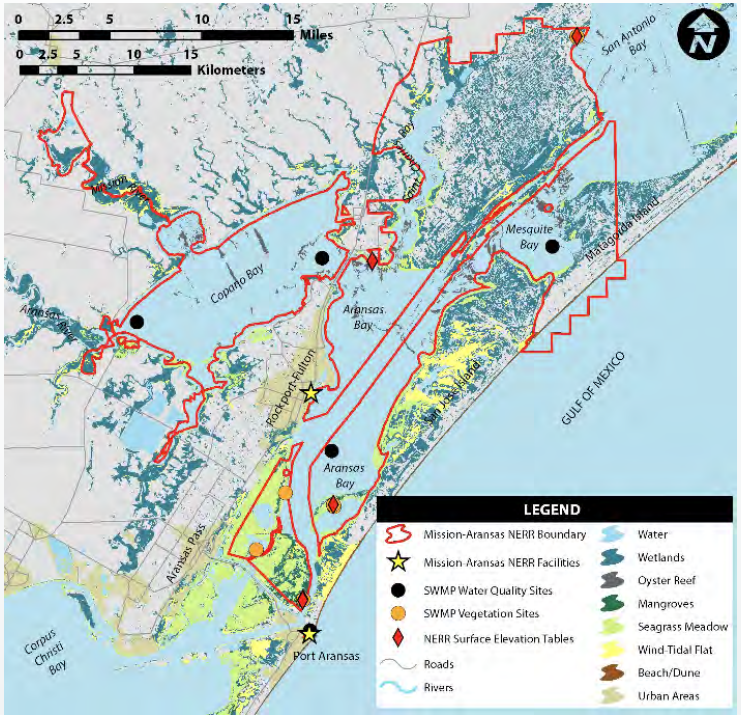
IV. Acquisition and Management Considerations

5. The generalized boundaries of the proposed LaNERR zone include sufficient land and water area to maintain the integrity of the active delta ecosystem.
6. The candidate site consists of publicly owned lands or demonstrates sufficient potential for land acquisition and adequate land-use control to meet Reserve System goals.
   - There are Wildlife Management Areas, State Parks, National Parks, conservation easements, etc. in the LaNERR zone.
7. The candidate site is suitable to address key local, state, and regional **coastal management issues**.

Public lands connected by state waters

Weeks Bay NERR, AL

Mission-Aransas NERR, TX



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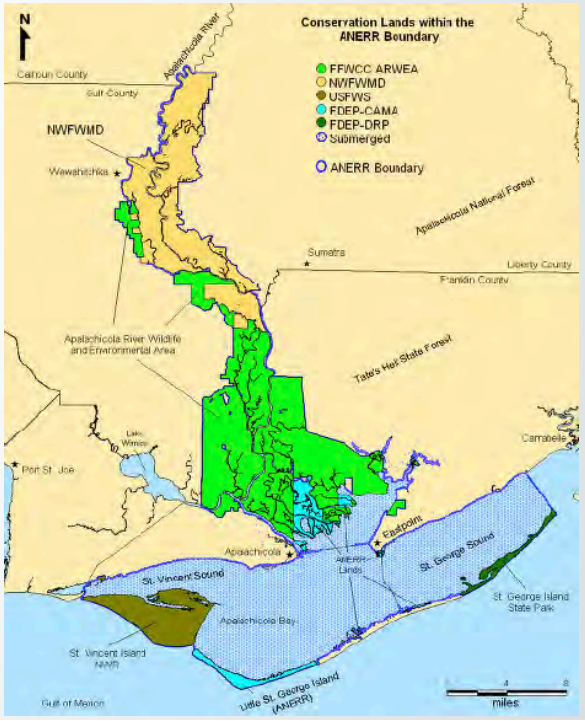
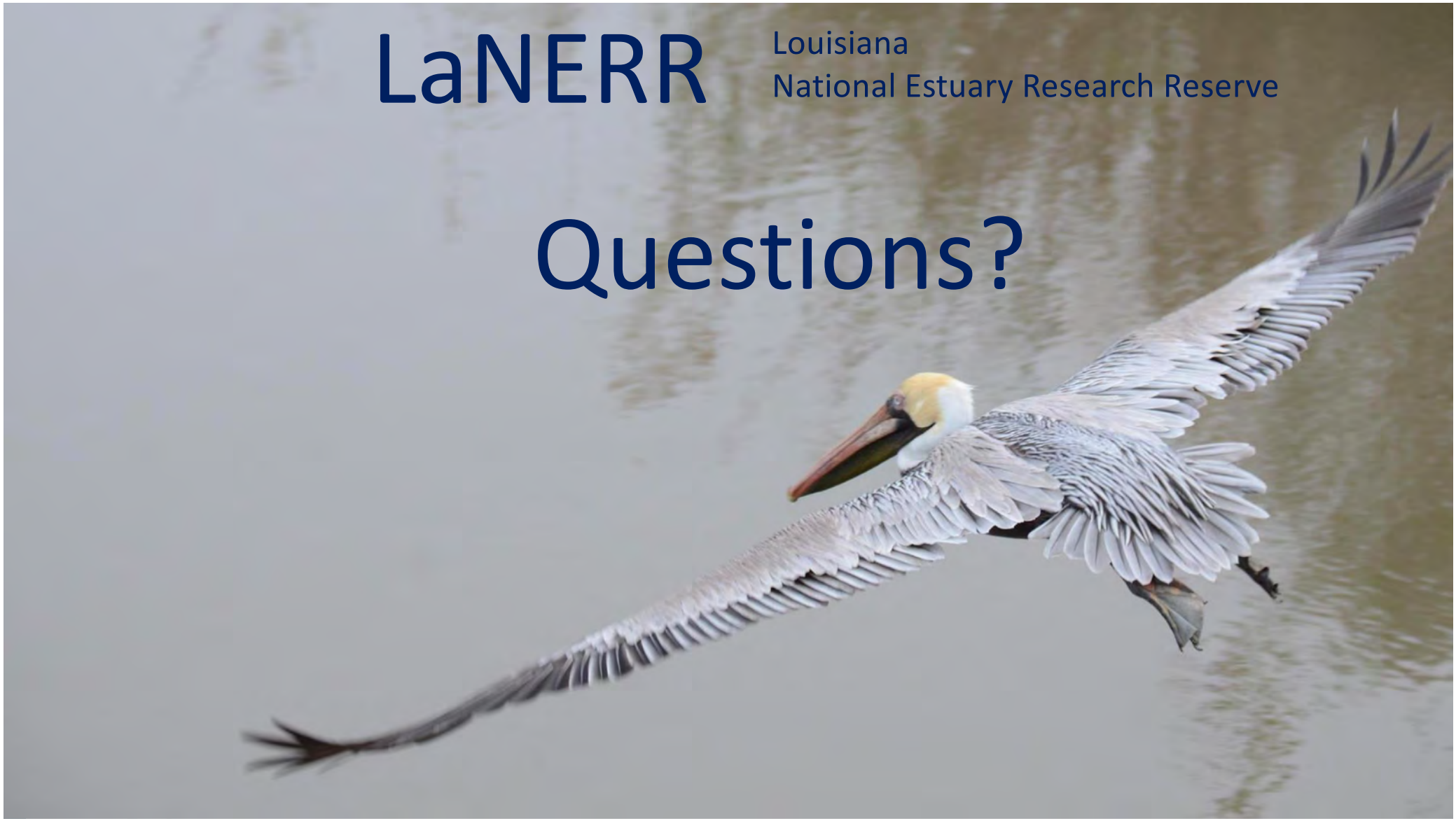


NOAA Criteria	NAME OF PROPOSED LaNERR ZONE (1-7) Prescreening Criteria:	Highly Recom -mend	Recom -mend	Do not Recom -mend
I. Environmental Representativeness	1. The candidate site is representative of an active delta estuary.			
II. Value of the Site for Research, Monitoring, and Resource Protection	2. The candidate site is suitable for research, monitoring, and resource protection activities.			
III. Suitability of the Site for Education and Interpretation	3. The candidate site is suitable for education, training, and interpretation activities. 4. The candidate site is accessible by normal modes of transportation.			
IV. Acquisition and Management Considerations	5. The generalized boundaries of the candidate site include sufficient land and water area to maintain the integrity of an active delta estuary.			
	6. The candidate site consists of publicly owned lands or demonstrates sufficient potential for land acquisition and adequate land-use control to meet Reserve System objectives. 7. The candidate site is suitable to address key local, state, and regional coastal management issues.			

LaNERR

Louisiana
National Estuary Research Reserve

Questions?



SDC Meeting #1
October 8 or 9, 2020

Orientation Video (LINK)

Pre-Screening Criteria Breakout Group Discussion Notes

Contents

General NERR Questions and Answers

- What is the difference between the Pre-screening Criteria we are looking at today and the full NOAA criteria?
  The purpose of the pre-screening criteria is to allow the Site Development Committee to narrow its focus to only those areas of the coast that meet the minimum requirements for a NERR. Site Development Committee members are asked to recognize that most sites could be good sites, but the criteria are meant to identify the best site for the stated goals of the NOAA program and the state's needs. Modification of the full criteria allow us to identify the optimal site for a NERR. We will have to send modifications of the full criteria to NOAA for review and approval. This can take a while, so we will conduct public engagement around the NERR while this is undergoing review.

- Are the questions equally weighted?
  The Pre-screening criteria are equally weighted however the final modified site criteria do not have to be. There may be more points potentially scored within one criteria grouping over another. This is a decision to be made by the Site Development Committee.

- What is the optimal size for a Louisiana NERR?
  The smallest NERR in the system is in Ohio at a little less than 500 acres and the largest is in Alaska at more than 350,000 acres. The majority of NERRs are less than 50,000 acres. Three of the top five largest NERRs are in the Gulf states – Two in Florida and one in Texas. Obviously, a NERR in Louisiana has the potential to be one of the top five. If you consider that Maurepas WMA is over 100,000 acres alone. Constraining the size of the NERR site ultimately chosen are factors such as the amount of state land immediately available, anticipated cost increases due to management of larger parcels, etc.

- Can Louisiana have two sites?
  It is allowable for Louisiana to nominate two sites. There is one other state that has done this,

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- Can Louisiana have two sites?
  It is allowable for Louisiana to nominate two sites. There is one other state that has done this,

North Carolina. This decision comes with consequences. Two sites require two sets of staff, two sets of facilities however NOAA will only provide one allotment of funding. It is preferable that if there are two sites identified, one site be selected and nominated, then, after the first site is established and when appropriate, the state undergoes the selection process again.

- Can the managing entity be a consortium or a partnership of entities?
  It is preferable that one managing entity be identified and that any partnerships be conducted through the use of Memoranda of Understanding, Cooperative Endeavor Agreements, and the like depending on the purpose of the relationship. Early in the NERR System's history, state agencies were more likely to be the managing entities of the NERR. Within the last decade, it is more often the case that a university or non-profit is the managing entity.

- What timeline for existence should we think about for the life of the NERR?
  The goal of a NERR site is for longitudinal research. The oldest NERR site has been on the ground now since 1974, 46 years old already. Site Development committee members are asked to think forward 50 years knowing that there is the potential for the NERR to last even longer than that. Siting the NERR, developing public support, and establishing a managing entity is vital to its long-term success.

- Why was Breton Sound not included as a zone?
  There is no State or federally owned public land in this area.

- Why is the Site Development Committee not considering donations of land from private interests at this time?
  NOAA requires a minimum of state control over the property to ensure long-term management. Donations can take years and thus we cannot depend up the precarious nature of land deals to site a NERR. Donations will be considered later in the process as lagniappe.

- Does office space, lodging, interpretive centers, etc. all have to located on the property?
  Facilities must be within a reasonable distance of the site to facilitate management. Obviously, if the entire site is all marsh then it may not be feasible for construction even on the buffer zone.

- What if I am not familiar with one or more zones? When it comes time, how am I expected to vote on those zones?
  Not one member of the Site Development Committee is equally familiar with all of the zones. That is o there is a concern is about how well do you know these sites, then how comfortable do you feel with answering questions about this site, feel survey is biased about what folks know best, individual expertise, diversity of people in the group may help with the averages if folks making best judgement, can someone more knowledgeable in the area make a point during the breakout sections, some folks don't feel competent to make these determinations without being more informed, if you don't feel qualified to make a determination you should put a 0 as the answer, how would that be quantified in the averages?

- What was the thinking behind the middle option in the pre-screening answer options?
  In scaling responses to the pre-screening questions, Site Development Committee members took issue with the meaning of poll option three. Some members feel that this option pushes members to make a choice in one direction or the other and this is a good thing. Others feel that it is a

wasted option: A thing either is or is not. There is no middle ground. The decision to provide this option ….

Breakout Group 1: Environmental Representativeness

1. How representative or unrepresentative as an active delta estuary are each of the seven LaNERR Estuarine Zones as NOAA criteria to describe the biogeographic area?

5. Very representative
4. Somewhat representative
3. Neither representative nor unrepresentative
2. Somewhat unrepresentative
1. Very unrepresentative

Discussion:

- *A number of breakout groups identified using the term "active delta" as opposed to the more inclusive "active and inactive" as an immediate point of discussion. Suggested modifications included "influenced by active delta" instead of "active delta." There was concern that the term active delta could eliminate many sites. In the regulations that govern the selection and nomination of a NERR site, NOAA has final authority to approve the nominated site. NOAA prioritizes biogeographic areas not already within the NERR system portfolio and encourages states to prioritize these areas within their modified site selection criteria. NOAA has stated that it does not have an active delta and thus we are prioritizing "active delta" within the site selection criteria. To do this, active delta is the highest priority and that when answering this question on a scale of 1 – 5, your response should measure proximity to that goal.*
- *Salinities vary greatly among the different zones and can vary based on the time of year. For example, an active delta's salinity levels are low certain times of the year. Large-scale restoration projects such as Mid-Barataria sediment diversion could further alter salinities in the future. The salinity criterion suggested by NOAA will need to be modified to accommodate Louisiana's deltaic environment.*

2. How diverse or similar is the habitat composition within each of the seven LaNERR Estuarine Zones as defined by including many of the habits such coastal forests, freshwater to estuarine wetlands, flotant wetlands, and mud flats (there exist salinity gradients from freshwater to polyhaline environments) or the habitats of the estuarine zone are very similar representing few habitat types.

5. Very diverse types
4. Somewhat diverse types
3. Neither diverse nor similar types
2. Somewhat similar types
1. Very similar types

Discussion:

- *Site Development Committee members will decide how to take into account how future scenarios including RSLR, planned projects, projects in construction, project operations, and other factors may shape our future coast in deciding upon pre-screening criteria and*

modification of the full criteria. Master Plan land loss maps and trends within the USGS land change analysis may aid this decision making. The 50-year horizon should also inform decision-making.

3. How sufficient or insufficient is the amount of land and water area in the generalized boundaries of each of the seven LaNERR Estuarine Zones to maintain the integrity of a delta estuary as NOAA criteria to represent the biogeographic area?

5. Very sufficient
4. Somewhat sufficient
3. Neither sufficient nor insufficient
2. Somewhat insufficient
1. Very insufficient

Discussion:

- *Suggestion: Combine both the Mississippi River Estuarine Zone and Barataria Estuarine zone to form one estuarine zone.*
- *With regards to urban areas, the NERR site is allowed a certain ratio of buffer zone to Core areas of ecological functioning, the more pristine the better although NOAA acknowledges today's reality of declining rates of "pristine" habitat or even what we thought was pristine, may have been highly managed by native peoples. Urban areas may be adjacent to a NERR and may even facilitate access, but the regulations require a minimum buffer to core ratio.*
- *Core vs. buffer zones would be helpful.*

Breakout Group 2: Research, Monitoring & Resource Protection

4. How suitable or unsuitable is each of the seven LaNERR Estuarine Zones for research as defined by including the following research attributes: (1) a high diversity of ecosystem and habitat types, (2) salinity range of delta estuary, (3) representative biotic and geologic sites or characteristic of delta estuary, (4) state and federally listed species, (5) sites of historic and archaeological significance, and (6) opportunities to address important habitat or resource management issues.

5. Very suitable
4. Somewhat suitable
3. Neither suitable nor unsuitable
2. Somewhat unsuitable
1. Very unsuitable

Discussion:

- *It would be preferable for each of the subparts to be considered individually. There is too much there to unpack in order to answer the question with all parts included, all of these subparts have meaning when finally selecting at the site, but it seems high to compare for the zone*
- *Recommendation: Break into 3 questions 1. diversity of habitat (could incorporate salinity range into this), 2. Representativeness (can include listed species), and then 3. addressing management issues. General concurrence that breaking these up into more questions would provide more*

accurate score for the areas, not a problem with verbiage, sub-questions succinct and direct and can be scored individually

- *Is this a good question for scoring zones? yes, if separate. It seems like some cover a lot more latitude so that lends itself to crossing salinity ranges, can be more or less diverse by the area they cover/latitude they cover, some are so much more estuarine or aquatic vs terrestrial- a lot to consider, difficult to weigh out different categories because the breadth makes it difficult to compare.*
- *Since other NERRs cover much of the country and vary in size, is there opportunity to expand some of these to make them larger to integrate more area or change the borders? All of south LA is a delta and would fit or any of the sites individually are all good options, generally NOAA says it can be big, but have to make it relevant that it is an ecological unit, as regions are defined some would be the biggest in the nation based on the maps, so don't want us to get so large that it is difficult to manage, relative scale in order to manage would be helpful larger vs smaller site, NC has 3 disconnected sites and they are difficult to manage with budget, want more information on size or scale of what is possible for the potential site, as people consider these what are folks thinking? #4 lots of WMAs, what type of species are in these areas, which ones are protected, varied species (i.e. birds). Don't feel that information has been presented and would be helpful info, more specific info about species native to LA or threatened, proximity to populations. –*
- *Pontchartrain has potential on proximity but off on salinity ranges, wind up averaging these items*
- *Pearl River should be included in Pontchartrain zone as well as Borgne.*
- *Question about whether relative alteration of the zone is captured.*

5. How adequate or inadequate is each of the seven LaNERR Estuarine Zones for research and monitoring based upon considerations in the past for the diversity of inquiry (fields of research), the existence of long-term monitoring and research stations, and the availability of data (e.g., peer-reviewed papers, grey literature, inventory reports).

5. Very adequate
4. Somewhat adequate
3. Neither adequate nor inadequate
2. Somewhat inadequate
1. Very inadequate

Discussion:

- *same considerations as Q4*
- *need to distinguish / define what "fields of research" (social science v physical or hydrology v biology)*
- *Representative research from each area that includes long term data, plus other researchers that may fill in the gaps*
- *Make sure that there is research representative for that zone and make it available*
- *If maps are being developed for other resources is it possible to have info for each site regarding existing long term monitoring.*
- *It would be helpful (rather than individuals digging in and finding this info), to know what types of research data would be helpful? fisheries, plant, independent monitoring data from LDWF could be provided*

- *Will there be a knowledgeable representative of existing data to "defend" each zone or will the voters need to use just info that they have at hand or are aware of*
- *Group is using information from CPRA monitoring stations, DEQ stations, but not university info, iterative process to dig deeper into this upon actual site selection,*

- *Will the human dimension of the environment be considered? Interest in what happens to the culture?*
- *Request for info about species diversity and whether there are endangered species*

6. How suitable or unsuitable is each of the seven LaNERR Estuarine Zones as a valuable environmental reference area to generate baseline monitoring information for assessing long-term natural resource trends or ecological characteristics, based on the degree to which the zone has been altered by land-use practices on or near the zone.

5. Very suitable
4. Somewhat suitable
3. Neither suitable nor unsuitable
2. Somewhat unsuitable
1. Very unsuitable

Discussion:

- *Question seems to assume a judgement as to whether a pristine environment vs. a significantly human-altered landscape would be preferential as a selection site. There is value in researching effects of human alteration and also restoration. Louisiana is a great example of large-scale impacts as well as large-scale restoration.*
- *Does this ask how altered it is by indirect or direct impact from humans? Is the wording valuable for LA since no area of LA is unaltered? if reference to human alteration, recommend more directly stated as "direct or indirect due to human use" rather than broadly as "land use." Or change wording to "land utilization" or "anthropogenic modification".*
- *Difficult to reconcile different kinds of attributes and how to evaluate with the broad criteria.*
- *Can site be bigger? How do we present a cohesive unit, knowledge about species, awareness of known data? Will the assessors dig up data or will it be provided; will we map long term data?*
- *In the final part of question should be more specific about zone since it is an estuary. Should we include "in the watershed" vs "in or near the zone"*
- *Lots of discussion around what land use and human alteration mean*
    - *How are "areas chopped up by pipeline canals" considered and how those areas may or may not be further impacted by planned CPRA and other restoration activities?*
    - *Regarding obtaining baseline data, is land use also harvest, does it include nutrients and water?*
    - *Not just land-use but should also refer to activities in rivers and streams of estuaries such as channelization, nutrients, leveeing.*
    - *Does this include climate change impacts?*
    - *Other considerations are urbanization, commercial, residential, green space, land use planning, oil infrastructure.*
- *Will locals be presented with the same questions when they are presented with this info? Terminology needs to be better defined.*

Breakout Group 3: Education and Interpretation

7. How suitable or unsuitable are the environmental characteristics in each of the seven LaNERR Estuarine Zones to provide education, training and interpretation opportunities to user groups, resource managers, residents, environmental groups, decision makers, teachers and students, and the general public.

5. Very suitable
4. Somewhat suitable
3. Neither suitable nor unsuitable
2. Somewhat unsuitable
1. Very unsuitable

Discussion:

- *What kinds of environmental characteristics does this question refer to? How do we define suitable? Do we really need to be specific with all these audiences if we aren't going to be specific about the first two things?*
- *Is the question, which habitats have the broadest interest to the broadest number and types of groups?*
- *What is the purpose of the education program? If education is supposed to touch upon all the other goals, then how are we supposed to know what to prioritize?*
- *How can we use the location of restoration projects as a tool for teaching?*
- *Our definition here of environmental characteristics could be clarified by use of the maps used to support decision-making in the environmental representativeness criteria. How do we take into account future scenarios for this question?*
- *For purposes of Education and Interpretation, the Site Development Committee should think about interest and accessibility to the broadest group, for example, How safe is the environment? Are there poisonous snakes? Are there boardwalks? Is it handicap accessible, etc? Can busloads of school children be accommodated?*
- *Areas that are appropriate for research may not be appropriate for visitation. Maps don't necessarily provide clarity on this aspect and we will have to rely on communal knowledge. The objectives of the defined user group(s) may help define the meaning of environmental characteristics.*
- *It would be desirable to have research that is something stakeholders are interested in and to which they have access.*
- *Question 8 and 9 answer same question:*
- *What is the broad educational mission designed to achieve.There are linkages to other pieces of the puzzle. Active delta is a great focusing term, are we going to be educating only about active deltas? Where do we consider restoration projects as educational topics? Our restoration program is unique compared to other areas, just as active deltas are.*

8. How available or unavailable are existing facilities or potential sites for future facilities that can be used by staff, researchers, classes, and training groups (e.g., administrative building space, dormitories, labs, interpretive centers, trails and boardwalks, boat ramps, etc.) at each of the seven LaNERR Estuarine Zones.

5. Very available

4. Somewhat available
3. Neither available nor unavailable
2. Somewhat unavailable
1. Very unavailable

Discussion:

- *We are being really specific about audiences again, but vague on availability of facilities.*
- *At the level of zone evaluation, "potential" and "existing" should be equally weighted. We should be very careful about how we evaluate potential sites versus existing facilities. Members may more readily recall existing facilities than identify potential. This may inadvertently provide more weight to those areas with existing resources as opposed to those areas that do not have resources reinforcing existing disparities.*

9. How accessible or inaccessible (using proximity and modes of transportation) are each of the seven LaNERR Estuarine Zones to serve education, training and interpretation functions define by the following: (1) the relative proximity of the site to urban centers, K-12 schools, research and education institutions, and resource management agencies that may routinely utilize the site, and (2) the adequacy of the roads or points for boat access at the site.

5. Very accessible
4. Somewhat accessible
3. Neither suitable nor inaccessible
2. Somewhat inaccessible
1. Very inaccessible

Discussion:

- *Committee members strongly feel that the concept of diversity is critical to the Education and Interpretation criteria.*
- *We should refine our audiences here to be more targeted. Consider removing resource management agencies. Consider creating separate questions for 9, 9a address proximity 9b address road and access*
- *We are using a Department of Education preliminary dataset (EcoRise Reports) as a starting point to identify environmental education service provider locations. The data providing program use is based on provider reporting which is sporadic/incomplete and therefore would paint an inaccurate picture of program reach. Therefore, we are relying on committee member best professional judgement conducting a visual analysis of provider locations in relation to school locations to estimate service provider reach. At a later date when we are evaluating specific sites, we are looking into conducting a network analysis of school locations to capture the number of students within field trip radius (2-4hr round trip drive). At this point because we are just evaluating zones, this level of analysis is not necessary.*
- *What is accessible to school children is not the same type of accessibility as accessbility to residents?*
- *Understanding future scenarios is also important. If the area does not exist into the future then it will not be accessible because it may not exist or there may no longer be roads, etc.*

Breakout Group 4: Acquisition, Management Consideration

10. How sufficient on insufficient are publicly owned lands or potential for land acquisition and adequate land-use control in each of the seven LaNERR Estuarine Zones to meet National Estuarine Reserve System objectives.

5. Very sufficient
4. Somewhat sufficient
3. Neither sufficient nor insufficient
2. Somewhat insufficient
1. Very insufficient

Discussion:

- *What kind of activity restrictions? Oil/gas? Fishing? Oyster?*
- *What are the nature of the restrictions?*
- *Land use restrictions could vary from site to site.*
- *Suggestion: Provide maps of state vs. private waters as well as dual claimed.*
- *Need to bring in other maps to overlay for more clarity.*
- *Need more information on land use control and how it ties into water bottom land use, etc.*
- *Federal lands may constitute no more than 49% of the total site. Private donations may be made or private landowners may enter into a contractual agreement with the managing entity regarding inclusion of the property into the NERR.*
- *worry about the Mississippi River not existing in the same way in 50 years (that is, serving the same purpose).*
- *How should Site Development Committee members appropriately consider Calcasieu without a map, and with most southwestern residents in recovery mode? Calcasieu may not have enough state owned land to be a viable zone.*
- *Are there numbers? Are there tables with information? We can't fully assess until we have numbers. Will help with decision making.*
- *Black Rail listed as endangered species. Possible habitat in Calcasieu*

11. How suitable or unsuitable are each of the seven LaNERR Estuarine Zones to address key local, state, and regional coastal management issues.

5. Very suitable
4. Somewhat suitable
3. Neither suitable nor unsuitable
2. Somewhat unsuitable
1. Very unsuitable

Discussion:

- *Need to understand better the potential for doing effective restoration work.*
- *Need to know the rates of land loss*
- *Would sustainable coastal restoration projects be able to occur and how will it affect the location?*
- *Would CPRA have access?*
- *Everyone agreed that specifics on restoration is very important*

- *Would federal property management be in conflict?*
- *Consider management for climate change and infrastructure that will be gone.*
- *CZM interest in research on wetland vs. non-wetland. Distance issues, competing uses.*

12. How insignificant or significant is the potential level of future development in areas on or adjacent to each of the seven LaNERR Estuarine Zones is likely to impact the integrity of the reserve causing potential conflicts between LaNERR objectives with land-use practices on adjacent lands.

5. Very insignificant
4. Somewhat insignificant
3. Neither insignificant nor significant
2. Somewhat significant
1. Very significant

Discussion:

- *Need more clarification between restoration and development. Restoration could be development. Different types have different impacts - O&G now and future, heavy industry vs. low impact, where people will move to and away from, transgression concerns.*
-
- *A suggestion was made to add layers from Sonris GIS interactive map which shows a very extensive pipeline network, waters claimed by state.*
- *More information is needed for Biloxi Marsh. Maps show it as state-owned but it is actually leased by the state and the lease could be pulled at any point. Land owned by the state is more ideal than those under lease.*

Site Development Committee Meeting 2

October 20 & 21, 2020

October 20th 12:30 - 3:00pm
or
October 21st 1:00 - 3:30pm
Site Development Committee Synthesis Agenda
Goals for today's Meeting:

- **Finalize zones**
- **Draft Recommendations for modifications to full site criteria**

Materials Provided in advance to Participants:

1. Discussion summaries by Zone
2. Criteria Grouping Recommendations

Agenda

1. Introduction and Welcome (3m)
2. Present Individual Zone Discussion Summaries (45m)
    a. Zone summaries (m)
    b. Discussion (m)
3. Vote on Zones (5m?)
4. Break (10m)
5. Full Criteria Modification Breakout Group Session (45m)
   Meeting moderator will move participants to appropriate breakout group where participants will discuss modifications of criteria for proposal to NOAA
    a. Pre

I Environmental Representativeness	II Research, Monitoring & Protection	III Education and Interpretation	IV Acquisition & Management
Facilitator:	*Facilitator:*	*Facilitator:*	*Facilitator:*
Participant Names	Participant Names	Participant Names	Participant Names

6. Breakout Group Report out of suggested revisions (15m)
   ID any significant issues/sticking point that will need to be addressed within "conference committee" by CG captains/volunteers, etc.

Site Development Committee Meeting 3

February 25 & 26, 2021

LaNERR Site Development Committee

Meeting #3

(Attend one of the following two options)

Thursday, Feb 25, 2021 (10:00 am – 12:30 pm)

or

Friday, Feb 26, 2021 (9:00 am – 11:30 am)

Zoom link: https://lsu.zoom.us/j/97546680919?pwd=SW1oVS95MW9RZmljaGVTa1pMOVRSdz09

Meeting ID: 975 4668 0919
Passcode: 507819
Mobile Dial In: 346-248-7799

Pre-meeting Materials:

1. Common terms and definitions associated with the NERR process (PDF)
2. Presentation of Criteria, Information, and Recommendations (PDF)
3. Table of Preliminary Screening Criteria (PDF)
4. Data Used to Generate Maps, Graphs, and Tables (Excel)
5. LaNERR Site Selection and Nomination Workflow Overview & Schedule – 2021 (PDF)

Objectives:

- Overview of LaNERR Site Selection and Nomination process
- Review maps, preliminary screening criteria, and DLT's evaluation of six Estuarine Zones

Agenda (Day 1):

Time	Topic	Notes
5 min	Welcome	
20 min	Overview of LaNERR Site Selection and Nomination Process	• Workflow overview and schedule • Definitions • Development of site selection criteria • Development of site proposals • Subcommittees and proposal teams
120 min	Review and Discuss Six Estuarine Zones	• Review preliminary screening criteria scorecard and associated maps to discuss recommendations for each zone
20 min	Pre-Screen Criteria #1	
20 min	Pre-Screen Criteria #2	
20 min	Pre-Screen Criteria #3	
20 min	Pre-Screen Criteria #4	

20 min	Pre-Screen Criteria #5	
20 min	DLT Recommendations	

5 min	Wrap Up and Next Steps	• SDC: Complete Qualtrics surveys to:
		  o Vote by estuarine zones
		  o Form subcommittees and proposal teams
		  o Schedule remaining SDC meetings
		• DLT: Provide Site Selection Criteria to Criteria Subcommittee within seven days
		• SDC meeting #4 (March) overview
		  o Review results of estuarine zone voting
		  o Preliminary candidate sites

Post-meeting follow up from DLT:

- Recordings of meeting
- Qualtrics survey to vote by estuarine zone
- Qualtrics survey to form subcommittees and proposal teams
- Qualtrics survey to schedule remaining SDC meetings

Common terms and definitions associated with the NERR process

February 19, 2021

Integrity – Ecosystem integrity is generally used to refer to the completeness, functionality, and health of an ecosystem. Declines in integrity reduce habitat quality for native biota, disrupt ecological processes and functions, and diminish ecosystem resilience and capacity to sustain species and many ecosystem services. Significant declines in ecosystem integrity could jeopardize the NERR system goal of long-term research. For example, substantial future land loss and/or habitat degradation could jeopardize the integrity of candidate LaNERR sites.

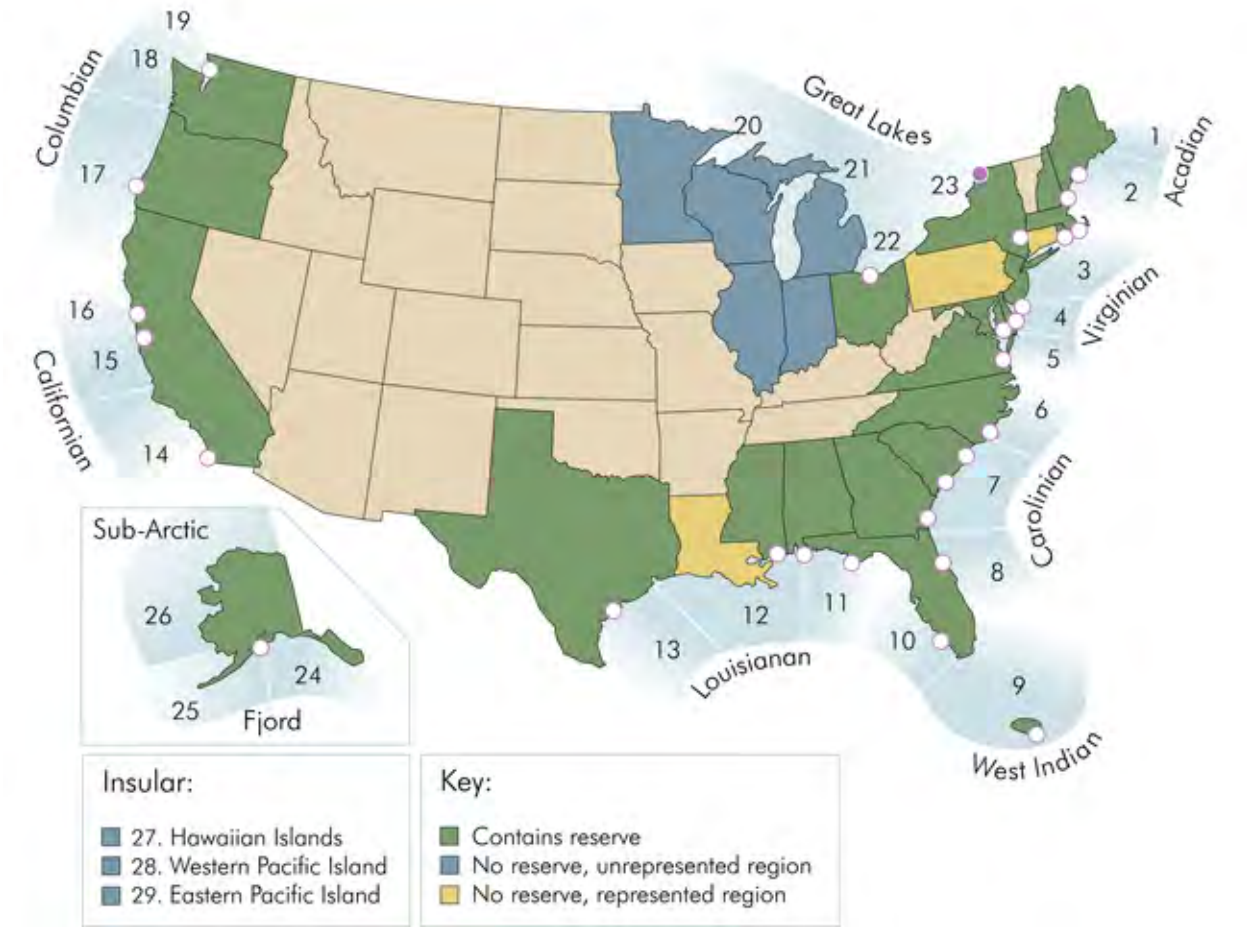
- **Core and buffer areas** – NOAA regulations define key or "core" land and water areas which contain "ecological units of a natural estuarine system which preserves, for research purposes, a full range of significant physical, chemical, and biological factors contributing to the diversity of fauna, flora and natural processes occurring within the estuary." The core area is "so vital to the functioning of the estuarine ecosystem that it must be under a level of control sufficient to ensure the long-term viability of the reserve for research on natural processes...[These areas] should encompass resources that are representative of the total ecosystem which, if compromised, could endanger the research objectives of the reserve." A buffer area is defined as an "area adjacent to or surrounding key lands and water areas and essential to their integrity. Buffer zones protect the core area and provide additional protection for estuarine-dependent species." The buffer area may include areas for research and education facilities (15 C.F.R Part 921.11). The majority of publicly-owned land used as core areas within a candidate site cannot be federal lands – the state must demonstrate adequate management control for core areas to be designated as a NERR.

- **In perpetuity** – NOAA requires that the integrity of a NERR be maintained in perpetuity. For the purposes of the LaNERR site selection and nomination process, the best available information to determine whether the integrity of a candidate site will be maintained in perpetuity is the 2017 Coastal Master Plan 50-year projections of land and vegetation change. While pre-screening is taking place using 50-year projections, consideration of a Louisiana NERR site should include the assumption that the site will exist permanently.

- **Unique** – Unique, as referred to in terms of NERR designation, refers to limited known occurrence of a habitat type, process, landscape feature, endangered or threatened species, etc. in the biogeographic region or sub-region. The 'unique' component of a LaNERR candidate site cannot already be included in a NERR within the Louisianian Biogeographic Zone of the NERR System (see sections 11, 12, and 13 below for more detail on the sites and the unique features included in the Louisianan Biogeographic Zone.)
    - Section 11 - Apalachicola Bay, FL: This reserve is a major forage area for trans-gulf migratory bird species and supports a local fishing industry worth $14-16 million annually, which in turn directly supports up to 85 percent of the local population. The site encompasses two barrier islands and a portion of a third, the lower 52 miles of the Apalachicola River and its

floodplain, portions of adjoining uplands, and the Apalachicola Bay estuarine, riverine, and floodplain systems.

- Section 11 - Weeks Bay, AL: considered a delta estuary and characterized by unique pitcher plant bog habitat.
- Section 12 - Grand Bay, MS: considered a closed bay with pine savannas. Characterized by waters that are semi-enclosed by land but have open, partly obstructed, or sporadic access to the ocean, in which seawater is at least occasionally diluted by freshwater runoff from land.
- Section 13 - Mission-Aransas, TX: Coastal prairie, oak motte, riparian freshwater, and salt marsh habitats make up the reserve. The water portion consists of three large, open and shallow bays that support extensive tidal flats, seagrass beds, mangroves, and oyster reefs. The largest wetland habitat (24,400 acres) on the north side of the reserve is part of the Aransas National Wildlife Refuge and is the winter home to the critically *endangered Whooping Crane*.



https://celebrating200years.noaa.gov/foundations/nerrs/image4.html

Consumptive Use Examples from NERRS

Apalachicola, Florida: Hunting

Hunting is a popular activity in the floodplain areas along the Apalachicola River. The cooperative agreement between Florida Fish and Wildlife Commission (FWC) and Florida Dept. of Environmental Protection (DEP) designates the lower Apalachicola area as a Type I Wildlife Management Area. FWC does not require a Management Area Permit to hunt those lands. However, other permits/stamps may be required depending on the type of hunt: quota permits for wild hog-dog season, archery permits, muzzle loading, gun permit, deer, wild turkey, migratory birds, waterfowl (state and federal) permit. Only a regular state hunting license is required. Dove hunting is allowed on Little St. George Island during specific seasons and is consistent with and managed by FWC regulations. Game hunting is allowed on the Lower River Marshes consistent with FWC regulations and seasons for the Apalachicola River Wildlife and Environmental Area. Other hunting opportunities exist in FWC-managed hunt areas, timber company lands, Tate's Hell State Forest, Apalachicola National Forest, St. Vincent National Wildlife Refuge, Northwest Florida Water Management District lands and private hunt leases. Management of hunting activities is through enforcement of rules by FWC and by refuge staff on St. Vincent NWR. Hunting information publications are available through the appropriate agency offices.

Mission-Aransas, Texas: Oil and Gas

Oil and gas exploration and production are allowed within the Reserve and are regulated by the Texas General Land Office and the Railroad Commission of Texas. Prior to the beginning of any oil and gas operation, permit(s) must be obtained from the USACE. The Nationwide Permits (NWP) required for oil and gas operations in bays and estuaries include NWP 6 for seismic activities and NWP 44 for mining activities. The NWPs

have several general conditions relevant to environmental protection. Some of these conditions include compliance with laws regarding water quality, coastal zone management, endangered species, historic properties, shellfish beds, mitigation, waterfowl breeding areas, and designated critical resource waters. The water quality and endangered species laws are two laws that more readily hold up permit approval.

Mission-Aransas, Texas: Commercial and Recreational Fishing

Commercial and recreational fishing and hunting are allowed within the Reserve boundary, and both activities require appropriate licenses administered by Texas Parks and Wildlife Department (TPWD). Numerous boat ramps and marinas are located near the Reserve boundary, providing ample opportunity for access to the Mission-Aransas Estuary for these uses. Texas law dictates that any person who takes or attempts to take fish, mussels, clams, crayfish, or other aquatic life in the public waters of Texas must have a current Texas fishing license with the appropriate stamp endorsement issued by TPWD. A saltwater endorsement is required to fish in coastal waters, while a freshwater endorsement is required for inland waters. Recreational anglers must have a Texas fishing license and saltwater endorsement to bring any fish taken in federal waters ashore in Texas.

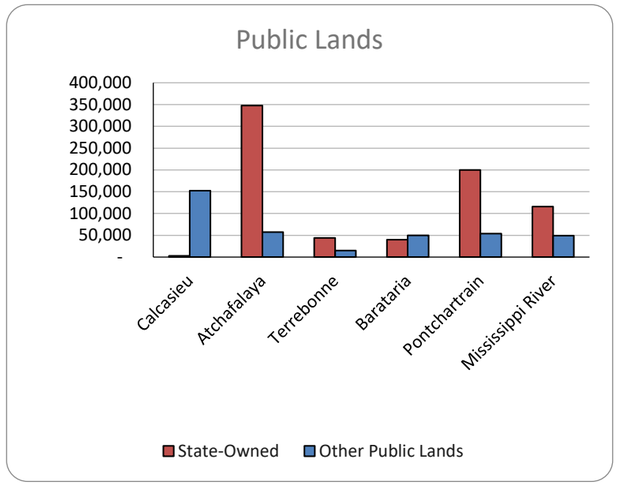
Grand Bay, Mississippi: Recreational Fishing

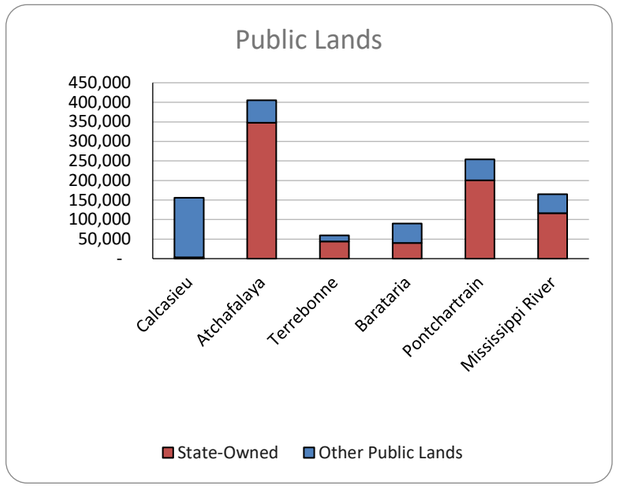
Grand Bay NERR is open to boating, fishing, hunting, shellfish harvesting, photography, and other recreational activities that existed before the designation of the reserve site.

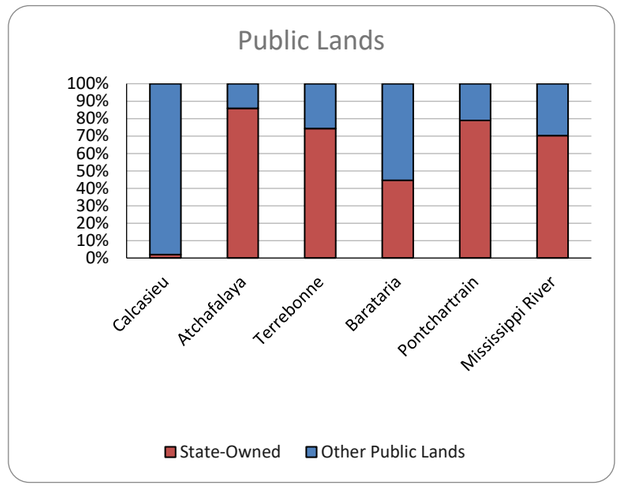
Land-Water Ownership by LaNERR Zone (acres)

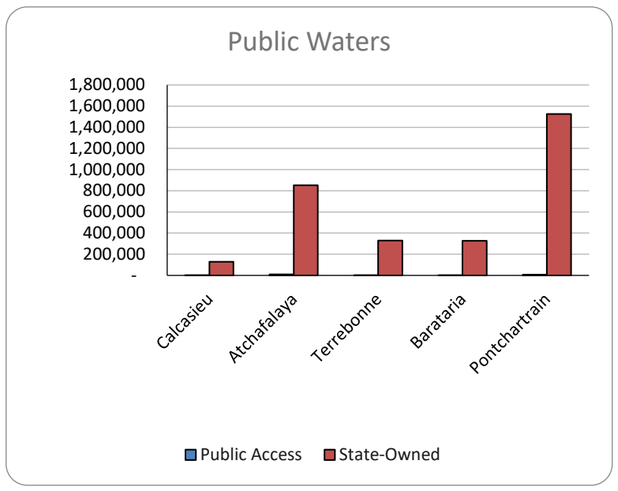
	State Lands		Federal Lands	State Waterbottoms	
Estuarine Zone	Partial Surface Interest	State-Owned	-	Public Access	State-Owned
Atchafalaya	14,605	347,945	42,622	9,682	852,191
Barataria	35,835	40,185	14,078	2,329	328,286
Calcasieu	-	3,046	152,585	3,222	129,465
Mississippi River	-	116,118	49,048	-	540,010
Pontchartrain	-	200,207	53,640	7,056	1,525,283
Terrebonne	15,260	44,203	-	1,307	330,363

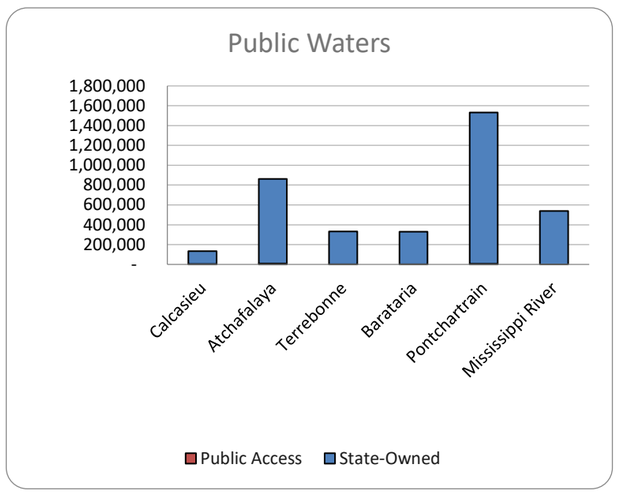
	State Lands		Total Public Lands	State Waterbottoms	
Estuarine Zone	Other Public Lands	State-Owned	-	Public Access	State-Owned
Calcasieu	152,585	3,046	155,631	3,222	129,465
Atchafalaya	57,227	347,945	405,172	9,682	852,191
Terrebonne	15,260	44,203	59,463	1,307	330,363
Barataria	49,913	40,185	90,098	2,329	328,286
Pontchartrain	53,640	200,207	253,847	7,056	1,525,283
Mississippi River	49,048	116,118	165,166	-	540,010

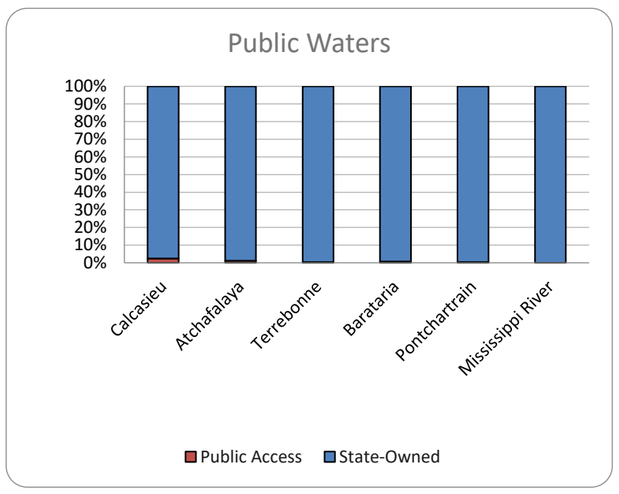








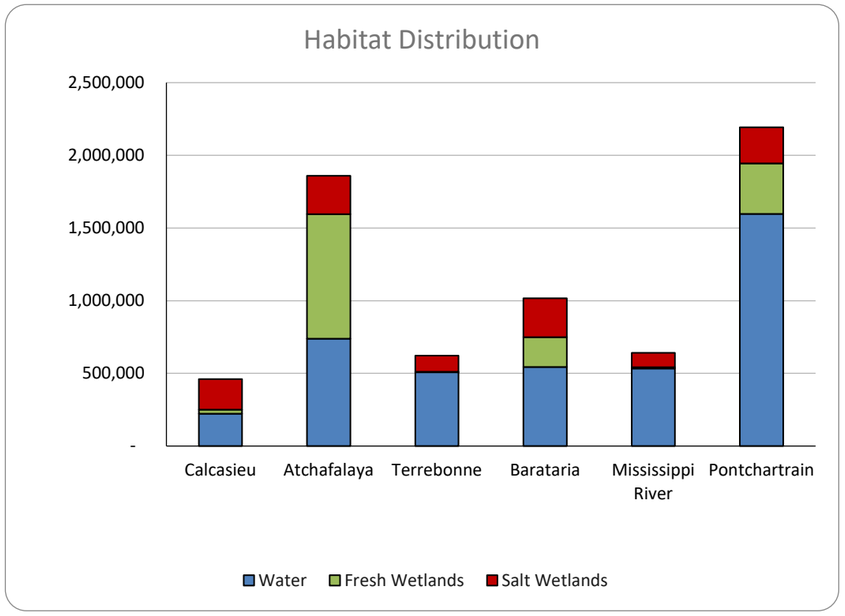


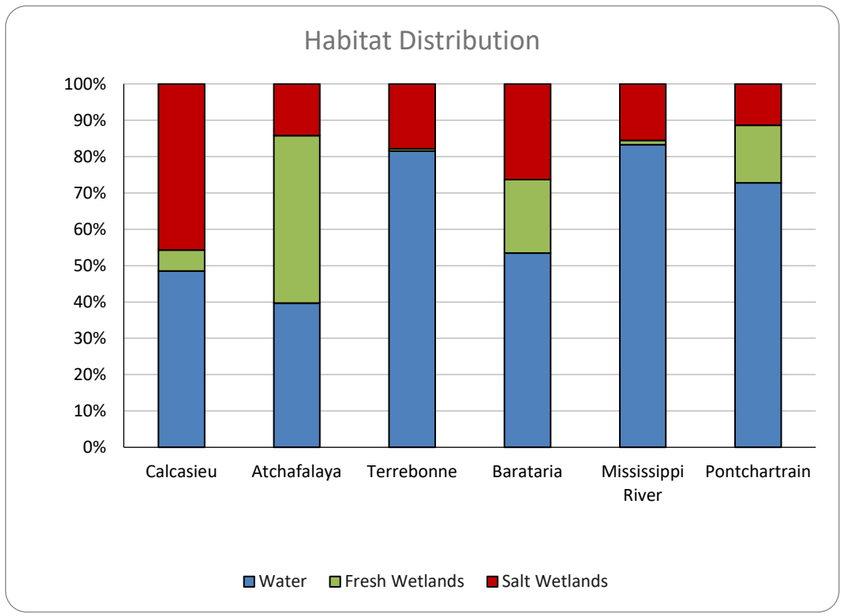


Data Used For Pre-Screening

Vegetation Distribution by Estuarine Zone - 2017 Coastal Master Plan Initial Conditions (acres)

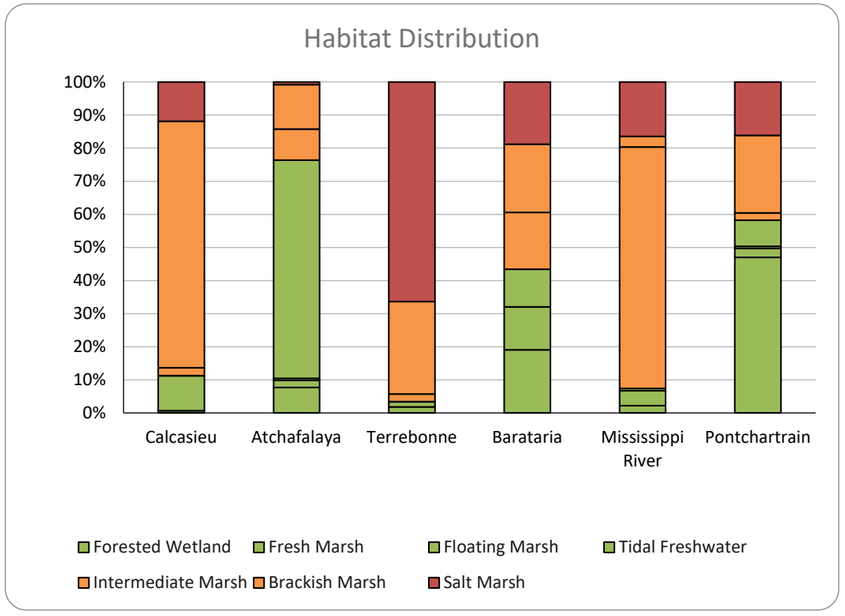
Estuarine Zone	Water	Wetlands	Fresh Wetlands	Salt Wetlands
Calcasieu	223,283	237,001	26,687	210,314
Atchafalaya	738,492	1,120,997	856,128	264,869
Terrebonne	507,175	115,007	3,954	111,053
Barataria	543,465	473,285	205,575	267,710
Mississippi River	533,979	107,521	7,960	99,561
Pontchartrain	1,596,245	597,075	347,601	249,474

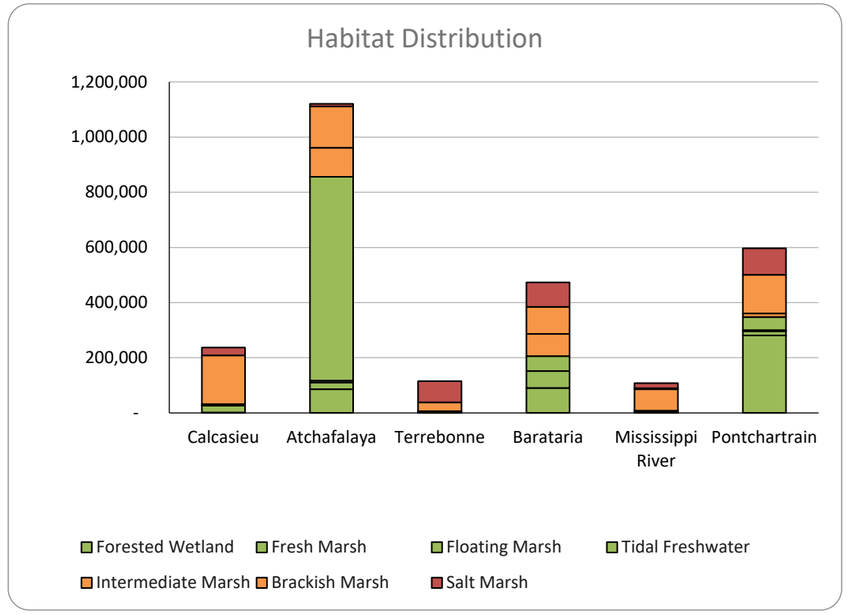




Data Used For Pre-Screening

Estuarine Zone	Forested Wetland	Fresh Marsh	Floating Marsh	Tidal Freshwater	Intermediate Marsh	Brackish Marsh	Salt Marsh
Calcasieu	1,541	25,033	113	-	5,609	176,512	28,192
Atchafalaya	85,961	24,344	7,064	738,759	104,978	150,541	9,350
Terrebonne	2,095	1,762	97	-	2,591	32,122	76,340
Barataria	90,312	61,441	53,823	-	81,101	97,406	89,203
Mississippi River	2,356	4,888	716	-	78,453	3,415	17,693
Pontchartrain	280,608	16,224	3,670	47,100	13,177	139,642	96,655





Data Used For Pre-Screening

Vegetation Distribution - 2017 Coastal Master Plan Initial Conditions (acres)

Calcasieu

Vegetation Type	2017
Forested Wetland	1,541
Fresh Marsh	25,033
Floating Marsh	113
Tidal Freshwater	
Intermediate Marsh	5,609
Brackish Marsh	176,512
Salt Marsh	28,192
Water	223,283
Unclassified	15,549
Bare Ground	3,598
Total	475,832

Water	223,283
Wetlands	237,001
Fresh Wetlands	26,687
Salt Wetlands	210,314

Wetlands:Water Ratio	1.061
Salt:Fresh	7.881

Atchafalaya

Vegetation Type	2017
Forested Wetland	85,961
Fresh Marsh	24,344
Floating Marsh	7,064
Tidal Freshwater	738,759
Intermediate Marsh	104,978
Brackish Marsh	150,541
Salt Marsh	9,350
Water	738,492
Unclassified	28,024
Bare Ground	6,559
Total	1,887,514

Water	738,492
Wetlands	1,120,997
Fresh Wetlands	856,128
Salt Wetlands	264,869

Wetlands:Water Ratio	1.518
Salt:Fresh	0.309

Terrebonne

Vegetation Type	2017
Forested Wetland	2,095
Fresh Marsh	1,762
Floating Marsh	97
Tidal Freshwater	
Intermediate Marsh	2,591
Brackish Marsh	32,122
Salt Marsh	76,340
Water	507,175
Unclassified	
Bare Ground	622
Total	622,182

Water	507,175
Wetlands	115,007
Fresh Wetlands	3,954
Salt Wetlands	111,053

Wetlands:Water Ratio	0.227
Salt:Fresh	28.087

Barataria

Vegetation Type	2017
Forested Wetland	90,312
Fresh Marsh	61,441
Floating Marsh	53,823
Tidal Freshwater	
Intermediate Marsh	81,101
Brackish Marsh	97,406
Salt Marsh	89,203
Water	543,465
Unclassified	4,475
Bare Ground	12,197
Total	1,021,226

Water	543,465
Wetlands	473,285
Fresh Wetlands	205,575
Salt Wetlands	267,710

Wetlands:Water Ratio	0.871
Salt:Fresh	1.302

Mississippi River

Vegetation Type	2017
Forested Wetland	2,356
Fresh Marsh	4,888
Floating Marsh	716
Tidal Freshwater	
Intermediate Marsh	78,453
Brackish Marsh	3,415
Salt Marsh	17,693
Water	533,979
Unclassified	81,012
Bare Ground	2,476
Total	722,513

Water	533,979
Wetlands	107,521
Fresh Wetlands	7,960
Salt Wetlands	99,561

Wetlands:Water Ratio	0.201
Salt:Fresh	12.507

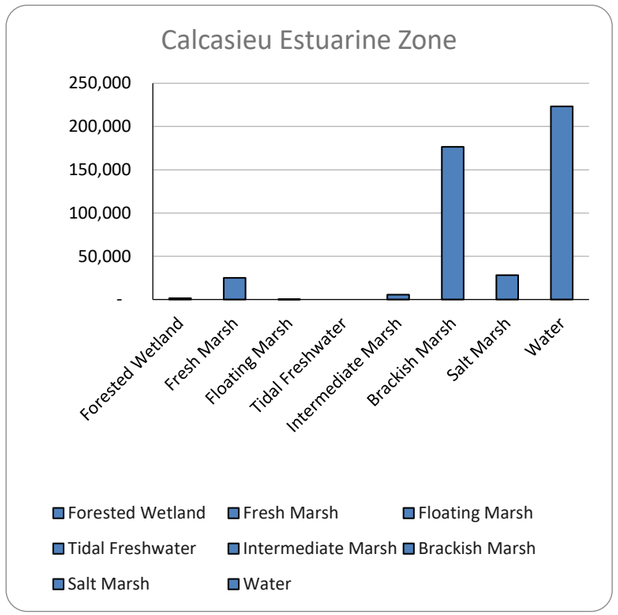
Pontchartrain

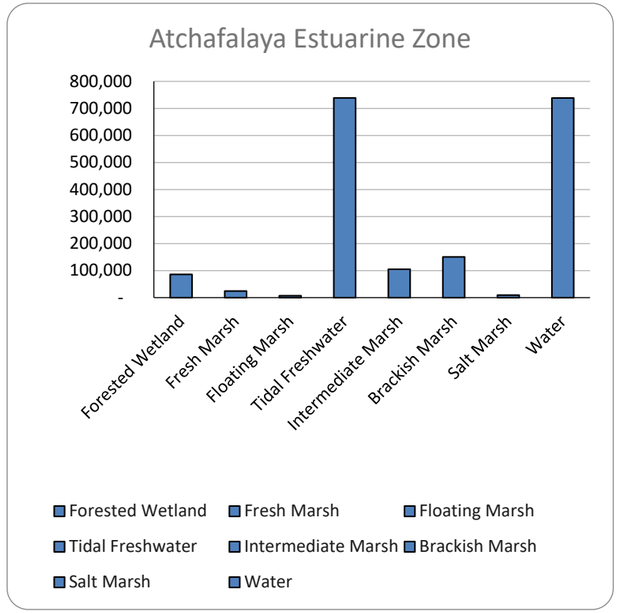
Vegetation Type	2017
Forested Wetland	280,608
Fresh Marsh	16,224
Floating Marsh	3,670
Tidal Freshwater	47,100
Intermediate Marsh	13,177
Brackish Marsh	139,642
Salt Marsh	96,655
Water	1,596,245
Unclassified	54,694
Bare Ground	8,797
Total	2,248,014

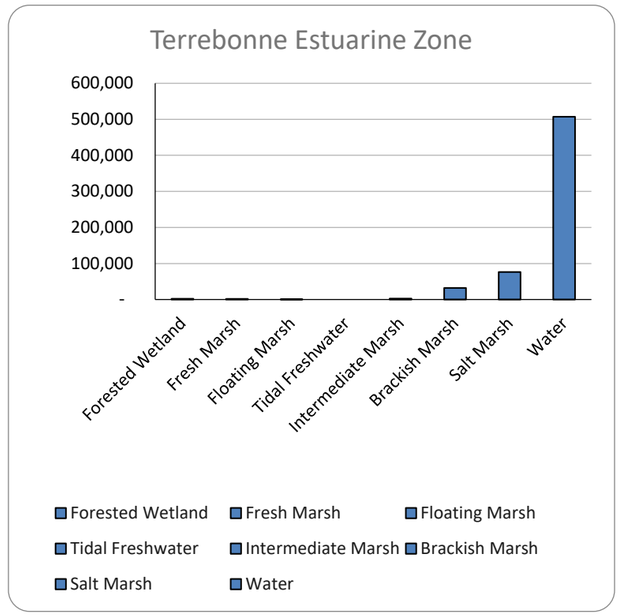
Water	1,596,245
Wetlands	597,075
Fresh Wetlands	347,601
Salt Wetlands	249,474

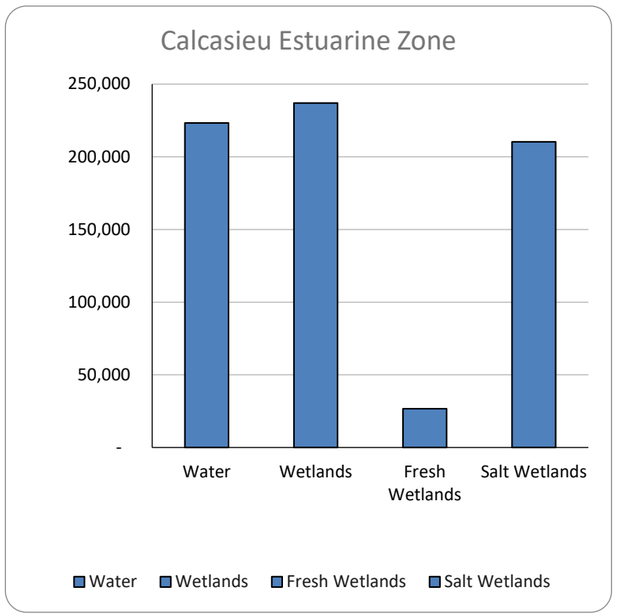
Wetlands:Water Ration	0.374
Salt:Fresh	0.718

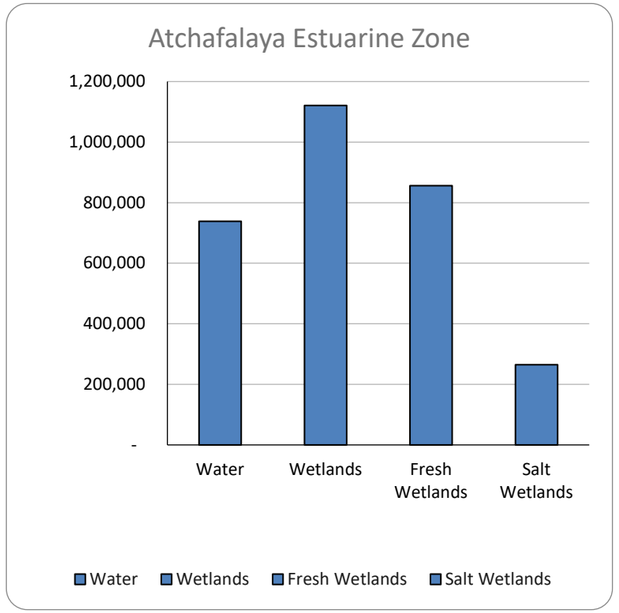
Data Used For Pre-Screening

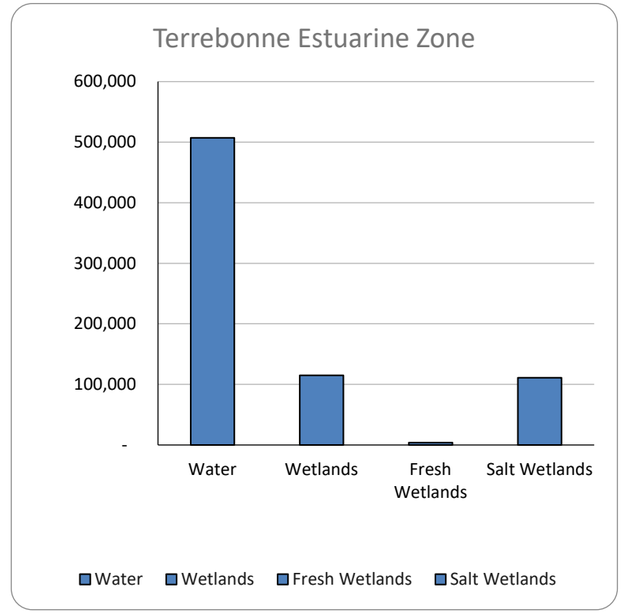












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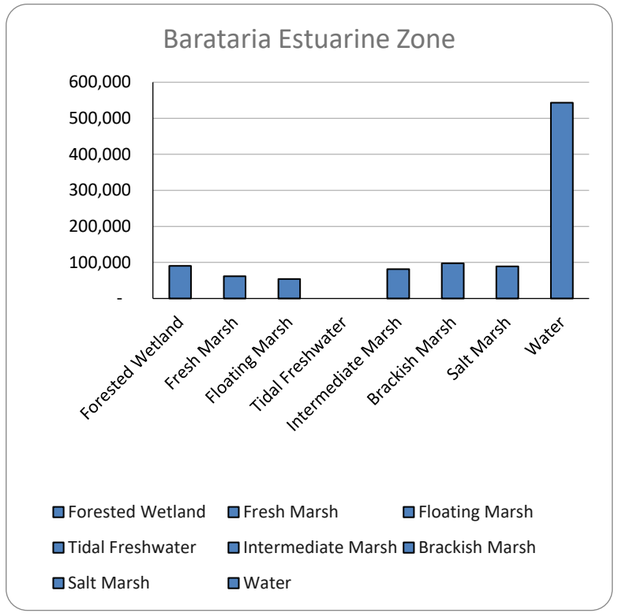
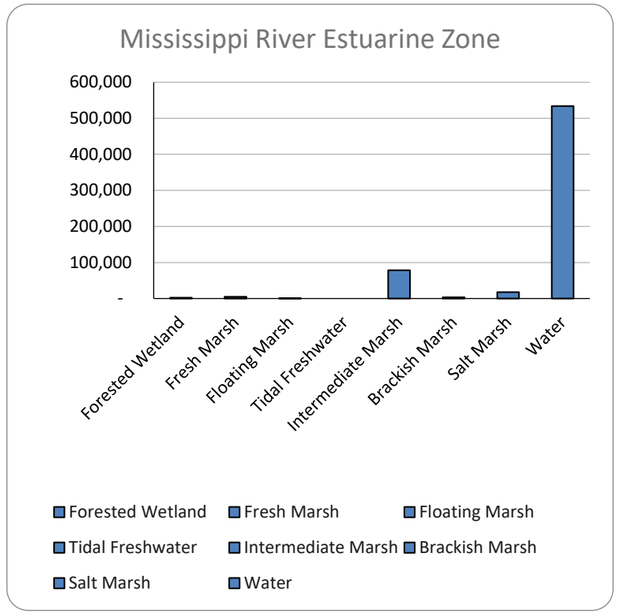
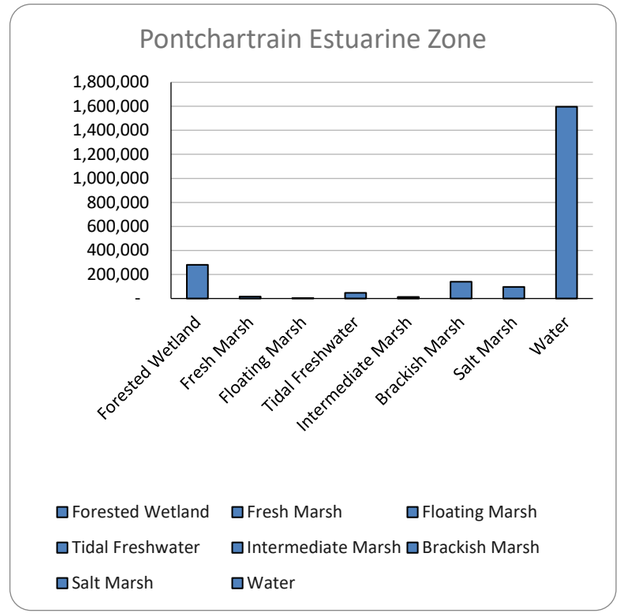
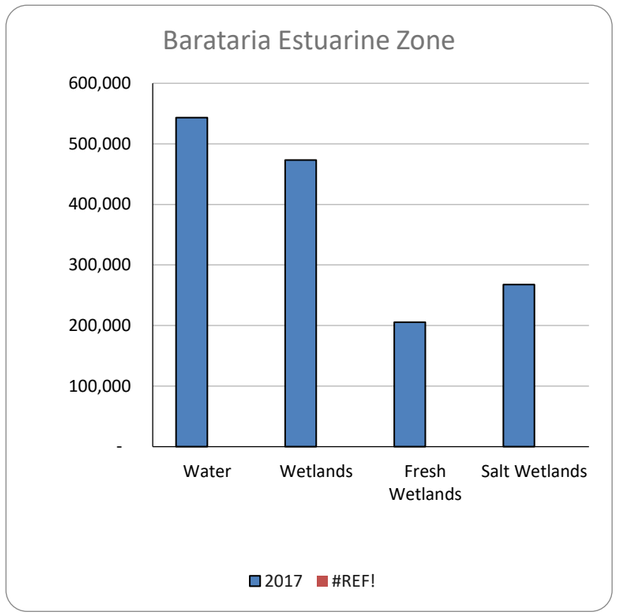
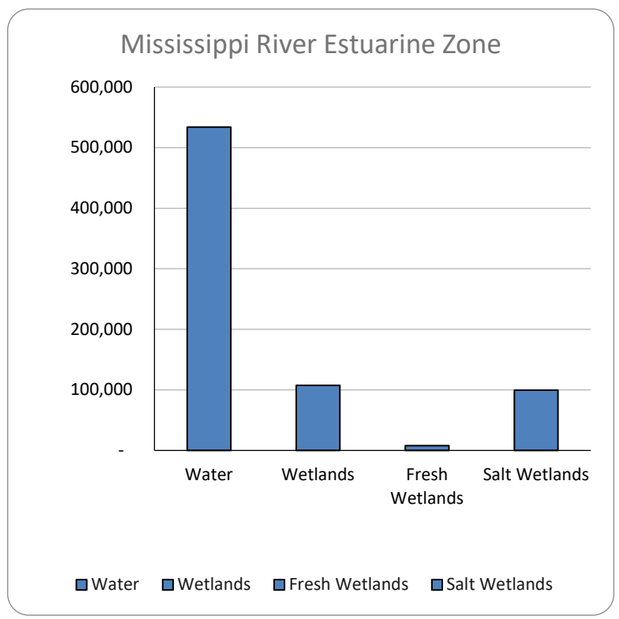
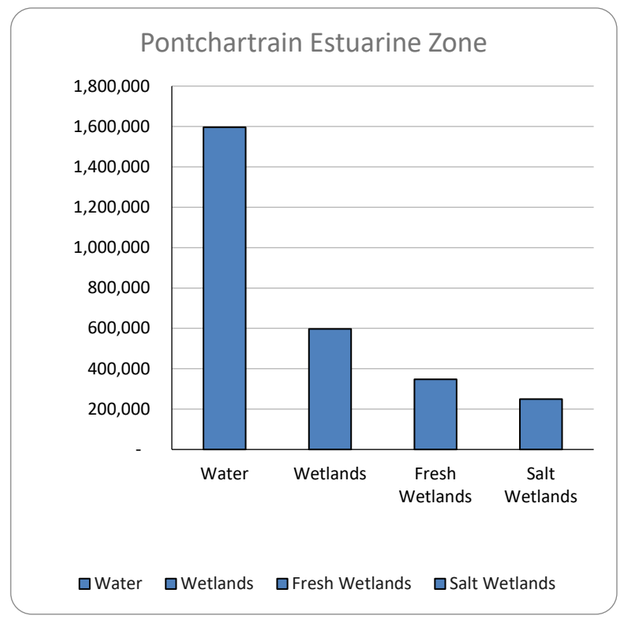










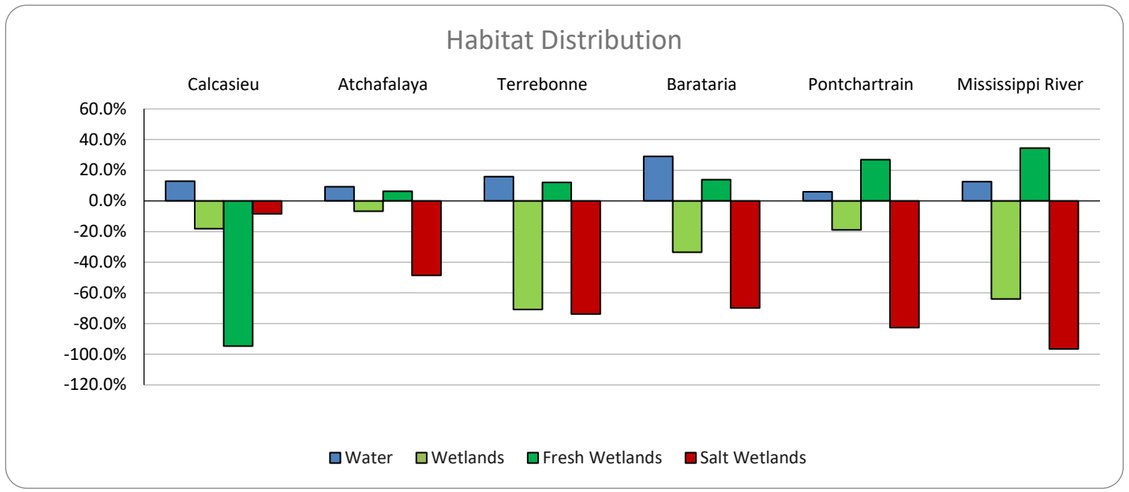


Data Used For Pre-Screening

Vegetation Change by Estuarine Zone (acres)
2017=CPRA 2017 Master Plan Initial Conditions
2067=CPRA 2017 Master Plan Projected Vegetation, Medium Scenario With Plan

Estuarine Zone	Water	Wetlands	Fresh Wetlands	Salt Wetlands
Calcasieu	28,752	-42,922	-25,264	-17,659
Atchafalaya	68,962	-75,267	53,363	-128,630
Terrebonne	80,123	-81,435	474	-81,909
Barataria	157,427	-158,369	28,529	-186,898
Pontchartrain	96,338	-112,861	93,270	-206,131
Mississippi River	67,486	-68,755	27,367	-96,122

Estuarine Zone	Water	Wetlands	Fresh Wetlands	Salt Wetlands
Calcasieu	12.9%	-18.1%	-94.7%	-8.4%
Atchafalaya	9.3%	-6.7%	6.2%	-48.6%
Terrebonne	15.8%	-70.8%	12.0%	-73.8%
Barataria	29.0%	-33.5%	13.9%	-69.8%
Pontchartrain	6.0%	-18.9%	26.8%	-82.6%
Mississippi River	12.6%	-63.9%	34.4%	-96.5%



Data Used For Pre-Screening

Calcasieu

Vegetation Type	2017	2067	Change
Forested Wetland	1,541	2	-1540
Fresh Marsh	25,033	1,303	-23730
Floating Marsh	113	119	6
Tidal Freshwater	-	-	0
Intermediate Marsh	5,609	7	-5601
Brackish Marsh	176,512	69,101	-107412
Salt Marsh	28,192	123,547	95355
Water	223,283	252,035	28752
Unclassified	15,549	15,522	-27
Bare Ground	3,598	17,795	14197
Total	475,832	461,636	-14197

	2017	2067	Change
Water	223,283	252,035	28,752
Wetlands	237,001	194,079	-42,922
Fresh Wetlands	26,687	1,424	-25,264
Salt Wetlands	210,314	192,655	-17,659

	2017	2067
Wetlands:Water Ratio	1.061	0.770
Salt:Fresh	7.881	135.334

	2017	2067	Change
Water	223,283	252,035	12.9%
Wetlands	237,001	194,079	-18.1%
Fresh Wetlands	26,687	1,424	-94.7%
Salt Wetlands	210,314	192,655	-8.4%

Atchafalaya

Vegetation Type	2017	2067	Change
Forested Wetland	85,961	46,793	-39168
Fresh Marsh	24,344	118,874	94530
Floating Marsh	7,064	5,065	-1999
Tidal Freshwater	738,759	738,759	0
Intermediate Marsh	104,978	22,181	-82797
Brackish Marsh	150,541	17,416	-133125
Salt Marsh	9,350	96,642	87292
Water	738,492	807,454	68962
Unclassified	28,024	27,915	-109
Bare Ground	6,559	12,989	6431
Total	1,887,514	1,881,099	-6415

	2017	2067	Change
Water	738,492	807,454	68,962
Wetlands	1,120,997	1,045,730	-75,267
Fresh Wetlands	856,128	909,491	53,363
Salt Wetlands	264,869	136,239	-128,630

	2017	2067
Wetlands:Water Ratio	1.518	1.295
Salt:Fresh	0.309	0.150

	2017	2067	Change
Water	738,492	807,454	9.3%
Wetlands	1,120,997	1,045,730	-6.7%
Fresh Wetlands	856,128	909,491	6.2%
Salt Wetlands	264,869	136,239	-48.6%

Terrebonne

Vegetation Type	2017	2067	Change
Forested Wetland	2,095	0	-2095
Fresh Marsh	1,762	4,377	2614
Floating Marsh	97	51	-46
Tidal Freshwater	-	-	0
Intermediate Marsh	2,591	-	-2591
Brackish Marsh	32,122	3,817	-28305
Salt Marsh	76,340	25,327	-51013
Water	507,175	587,298	80123
Unclassified	-	-	0
Bare Ground	622	1,935	1312
Total	622,182	620,870	-1312

	2017	2067	Change
Water	507,175	587,298	80,123
Wetlands	115,007	33,573	-81,435
Fresh Wetlands	3,954	4,428	474
Salt Wetlands	111,053	29,144	-81,909

	2017	2067
Wetlands:Water Ratio	0.227	0.057
Salt:Fresh	28.087	6.582

	2017	2067	Change
Water	507,175	587,298	15.8%
Wetlands	115,007	33,573	-70.8%
Fresh Wetlands	3,954	4,428	12.0%
Salt Wetlands	111,053	29,144	-73.8%

Data Used For Pre-Screening

Barataria

Vegetation Type	2017	2067	Change
Forested Wetland	90,312	3,394	-86917
Fresh Marsh	61,441	194,902	133461
Floating Marsh	53,823	35,808	-18015
Tidal Freshwater	-	-	0
Intermediate Marsh	81,101	25,294	-55808
Brackish Marsh	97,406	44,017	-53389
Salt Marsh	89,203	11,501	-77701
Water	543,465	700,893	157427
Unclassified	4,475	4,443	-32
Bare Ground	12,197	13,174	977
Total	1,021,226	1,020,252	-973

	2017	2067	Change
Water	543,465	700,893	157,427
Wetlands	473,285	314,916	-158,369
Fresh Wetlands	205,575	234,104	28,529
Salt Wetlands	267,710	80,812	-186,898

	2017	2067
Wetlands:Water Ratio	0.871	0.449
Salt:Fresh	1.302	0.345

	2017	2067	Change
Water	543,465	700,893	29.0%
Wetlands	473,285	314,916	-33.5%
Fresh Wetlands	205,575	234,104	13.9%
Salt Wetlands	267,710	80,812	-69.8%

Mississippi River

Vegetation Type	2017	2067	Change
Forested Wetland	2,356	0	-2356
Fresh Marsh	4,888	34,619	29731
Floating Marsh	716	708	-8
Tidal Freshwater	-	-	0
Intermediate Marsh	78,453	13	-78440
Brackish Marsh	3,415	1,944	-1472
Salt Marsh	17,693	1,482	-16210
Water	533,979	601,465	67486
Unclassified	81,012	80,965	-48
Bare Ground	2,476	3,775	1299
Total	722,513	721,196	-1317

	2017	2067	Change
Water	533,979	601,465	67,486
Wetlands	107,521	38,766	-68,755
Fresh Wetlands	7,960	35,327	27,367
Salt Wetlands	99,561	3,439	-96,122

	2017	2067
Wetlands:Water Ratio	0.201	0.064
Salt:Fresh	12.507	0.097

	2017	2067	Change
Water	533,979	601,465	12.6%
Wetlands	107,521	38,766	-63.9%
Fresh Wetlands	7,960	35,327	343.8%
Salt Wetlands	99,561	3,439	-96.5%

Pontchartrain

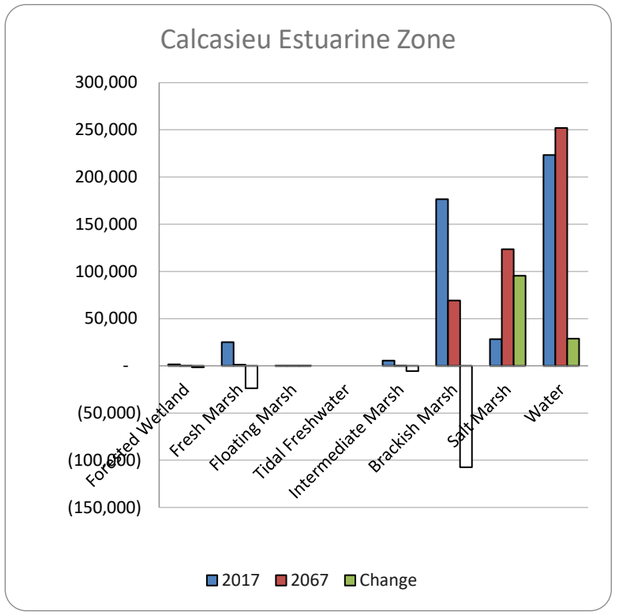
Vegetation Type	2017	2067	Change
Forested Wetland	280,608	72,428	-208180
Fresh Marsh	16,224	319,032	302808
Floating Marsh	3,670	2,311	-1359
Tidal Freshwater	47,100	47,100	0
Intermediate Marsh	13,177	819	-12358
Brackish Marsh	139,642	32,022	-107619
Salt Marsh	96,655	10,501	-86154
Water	1,596,245	1,692,583	96338
Unclassified	54,694	55,713	1019
Bare Ground	8,797	24,266	15468
Total	2,248,014	2,232,509	-15505

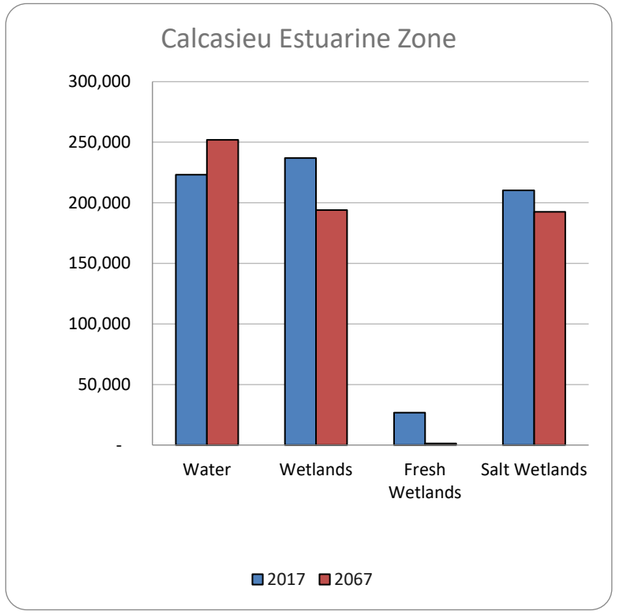
	2017	2067	Change
Water	1,596,245	1,692,583	96,338
Wetlands	597,075	484,214	-112,861
Fresh Wetlands	347,601	440,871	93,270
Salt Wetlands	249,474	43,343	-206,131

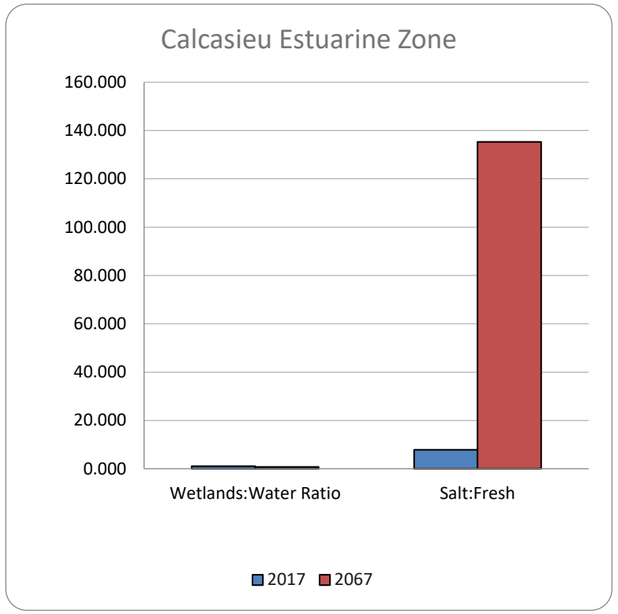
	2017	2067
Wetlands:Water Ratio	0.374	0.286
Salt:Fresh	0.718	0.098

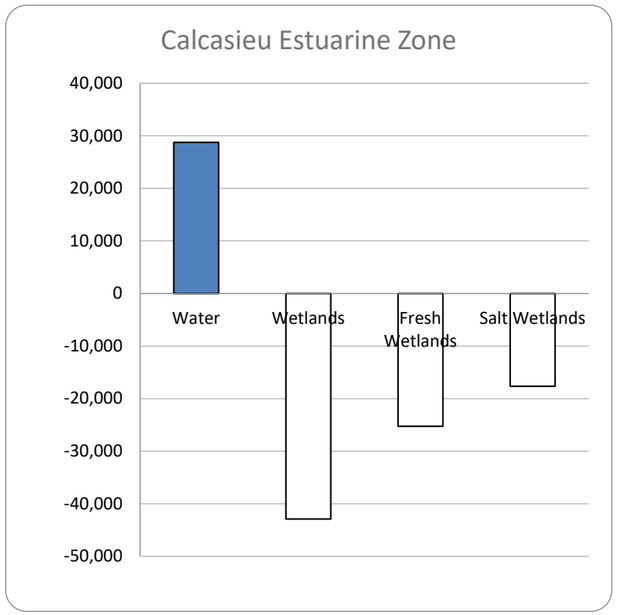
	2017	2067	Change
Water	1,596,245	1,692,583	6.0%
Wetlands	597,075	484,214	-18.9%
Fresh Wetlands	347,601	440,871	26.8%
Salt Wetlands	249,474	43,343	-82.6%

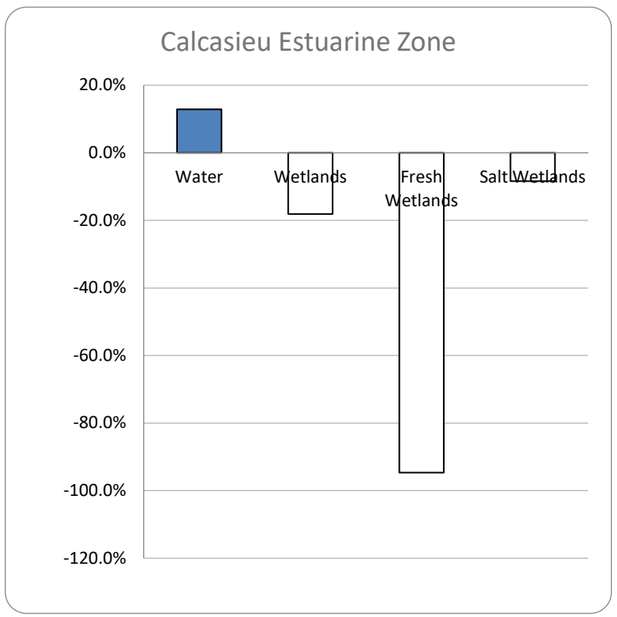
Data Used For Pre-Screening











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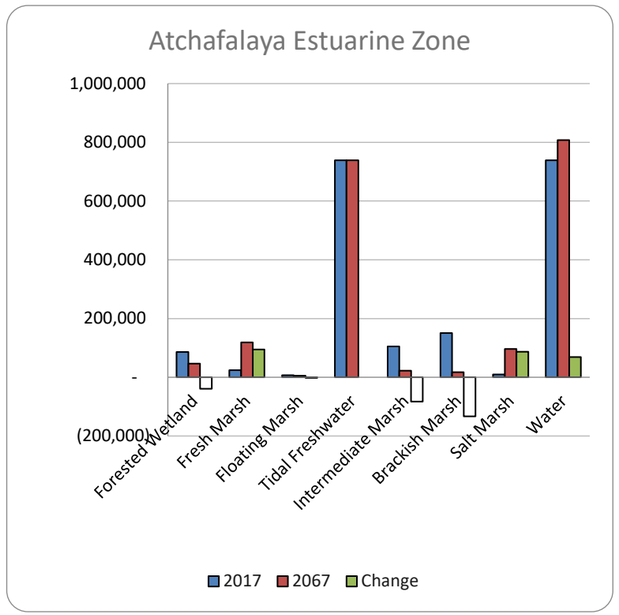

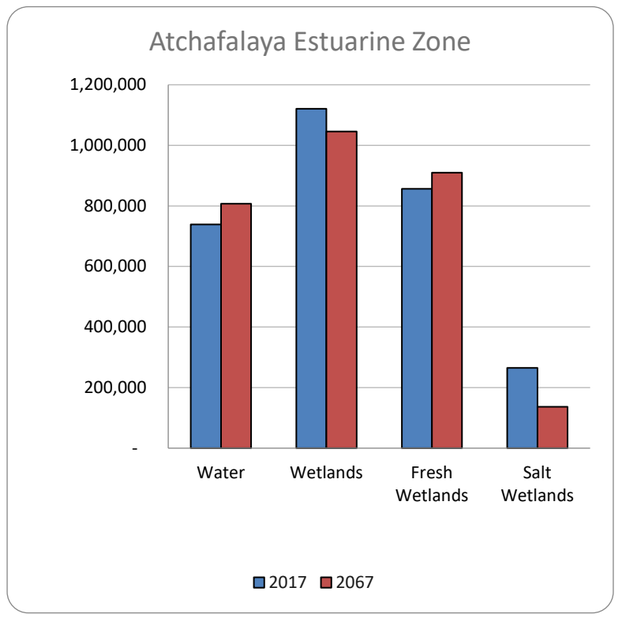

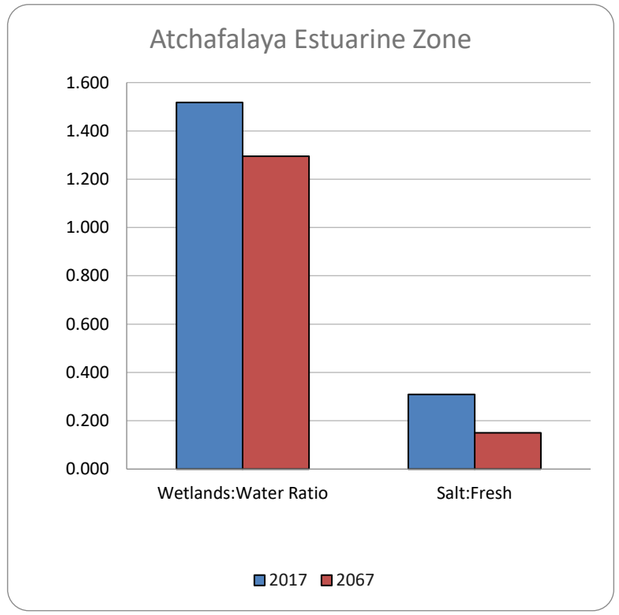

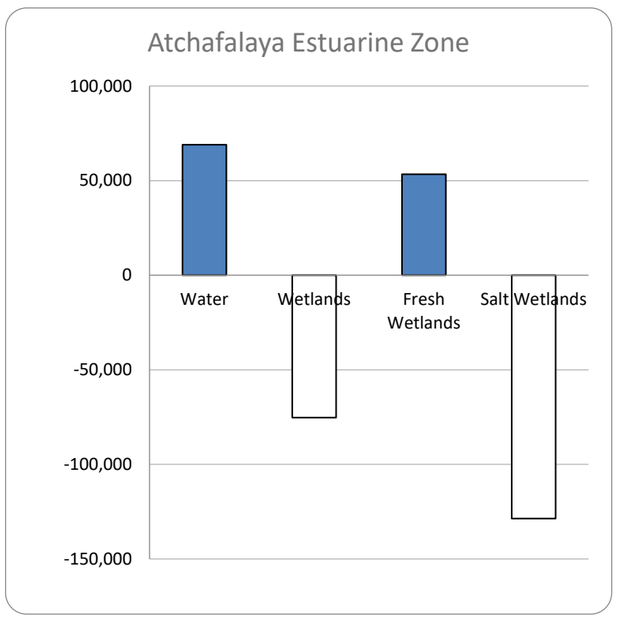

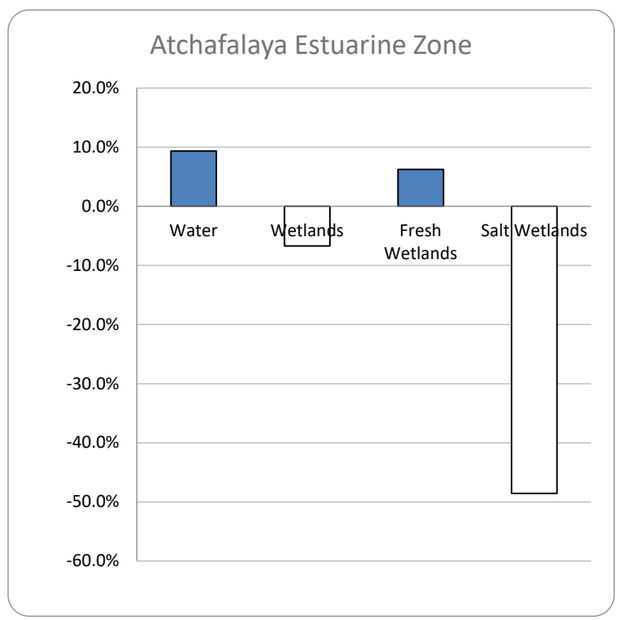

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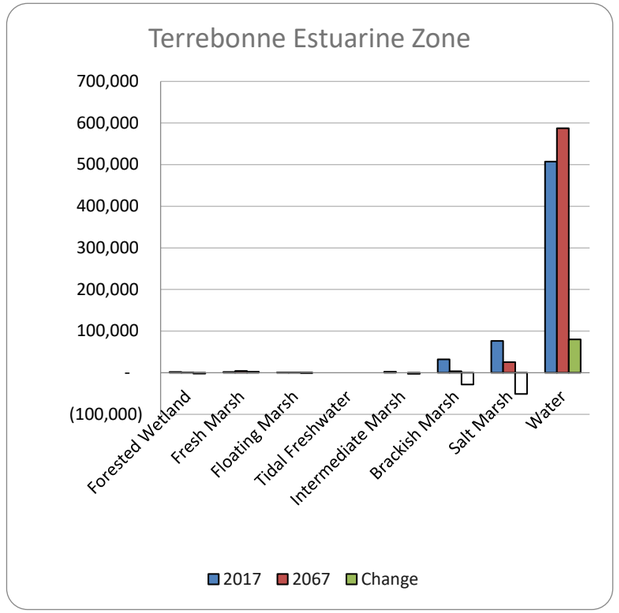

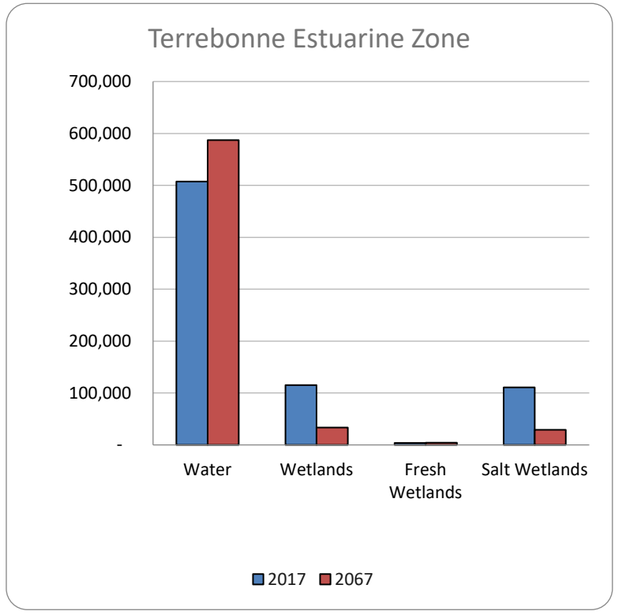

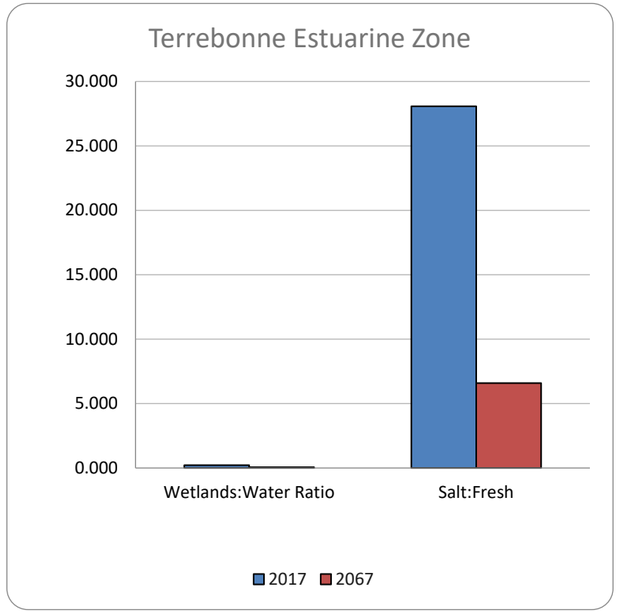

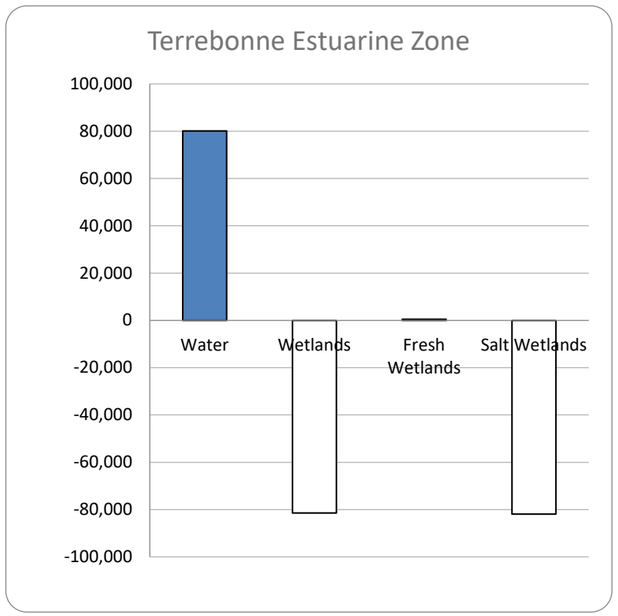

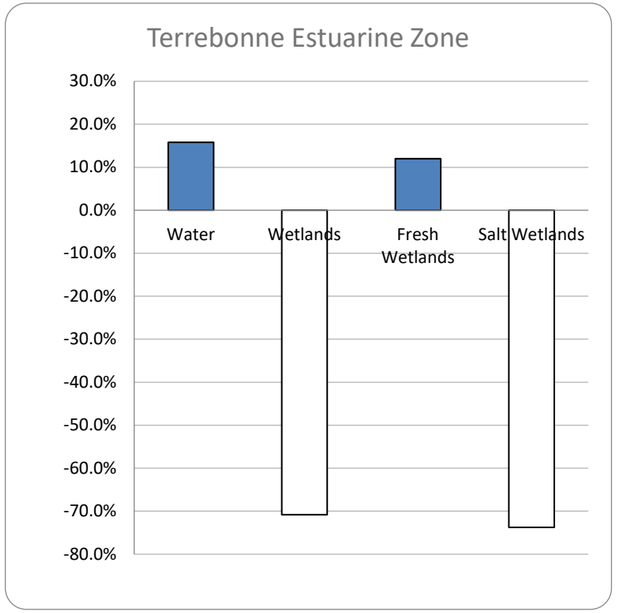

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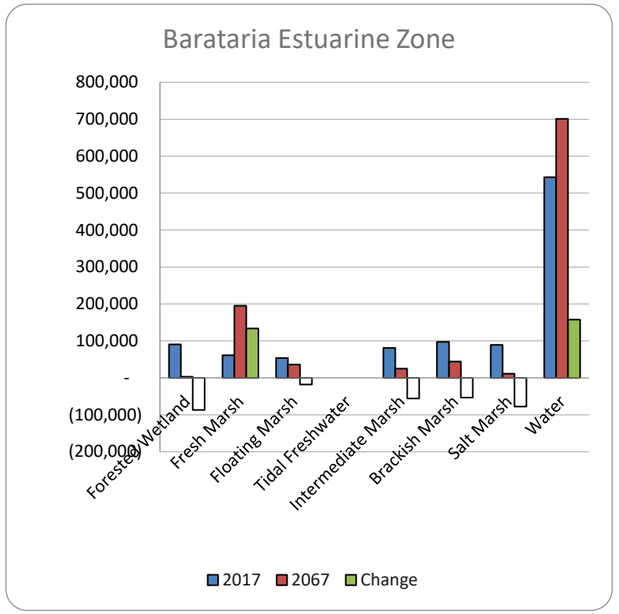
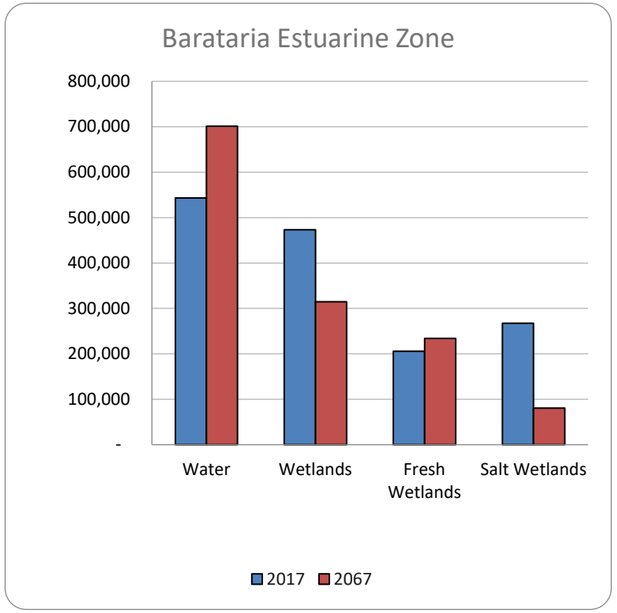
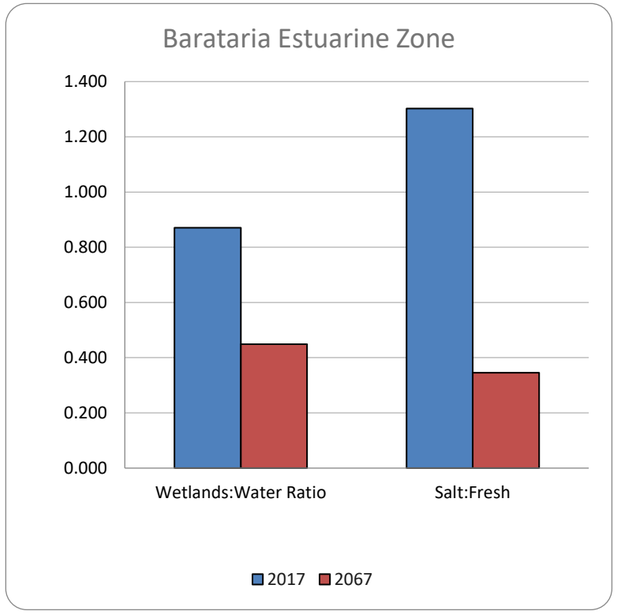
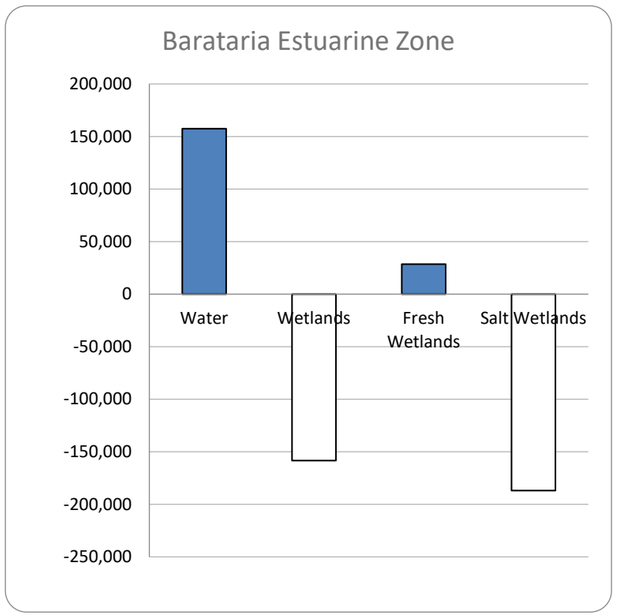
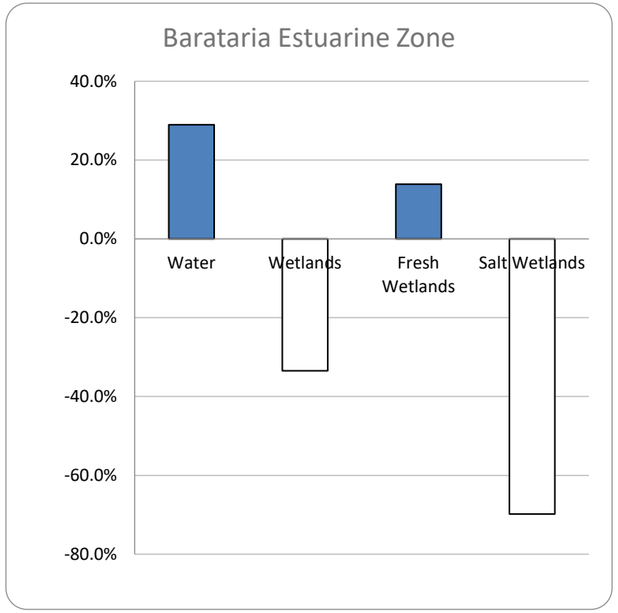


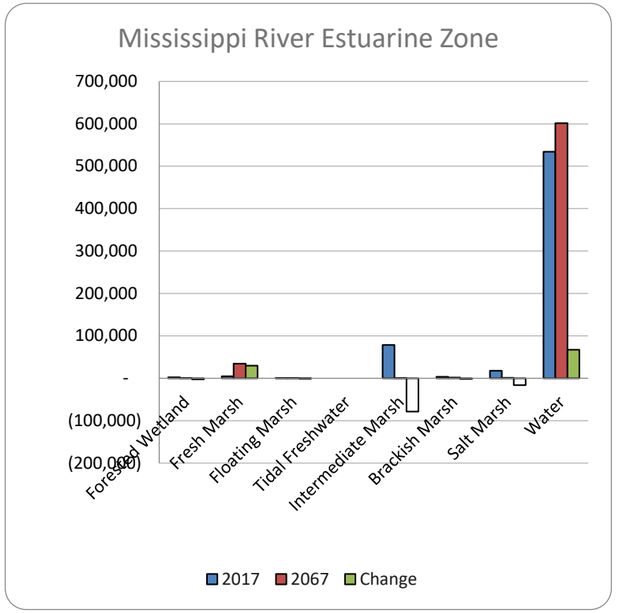


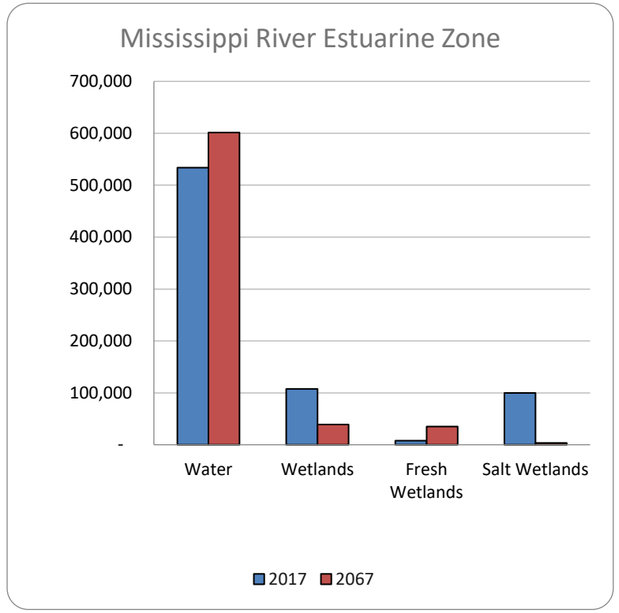


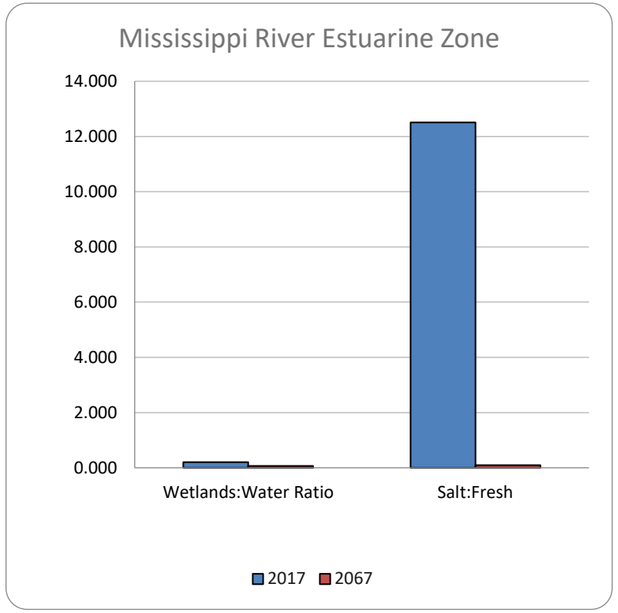


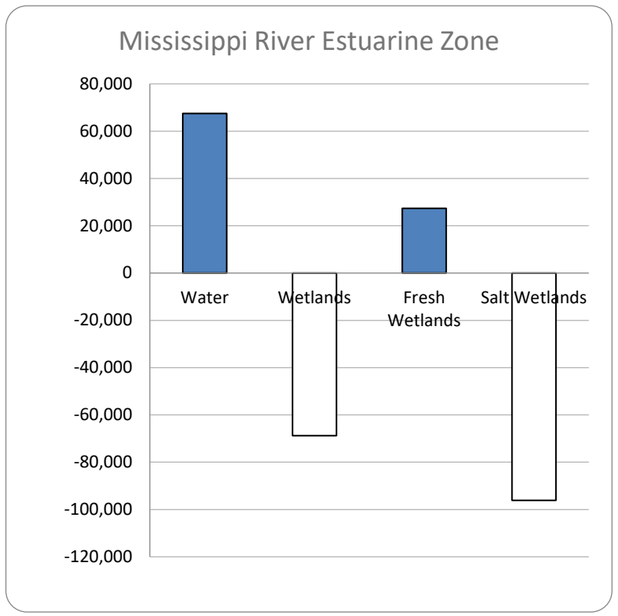


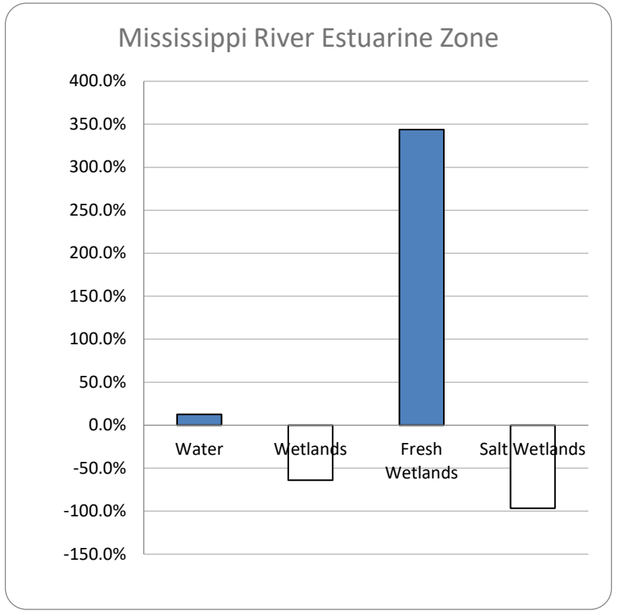
Data Used For Pre-Screening



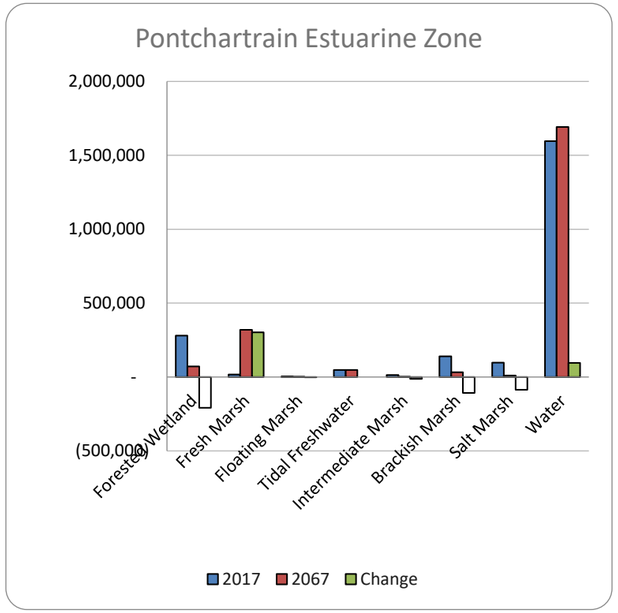


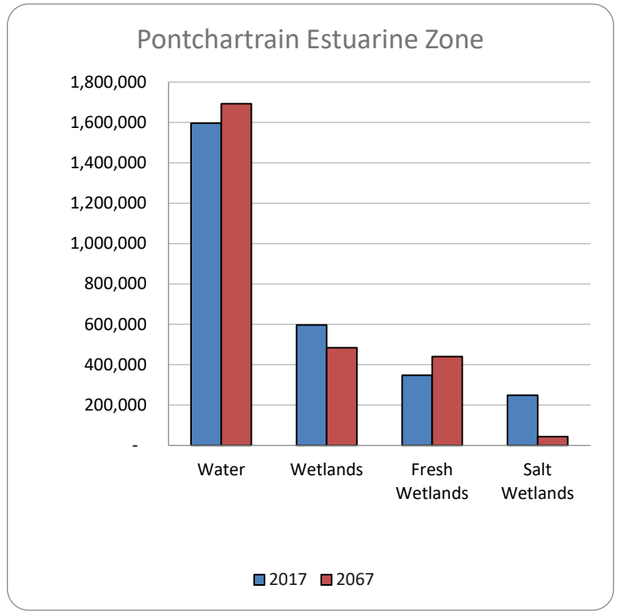


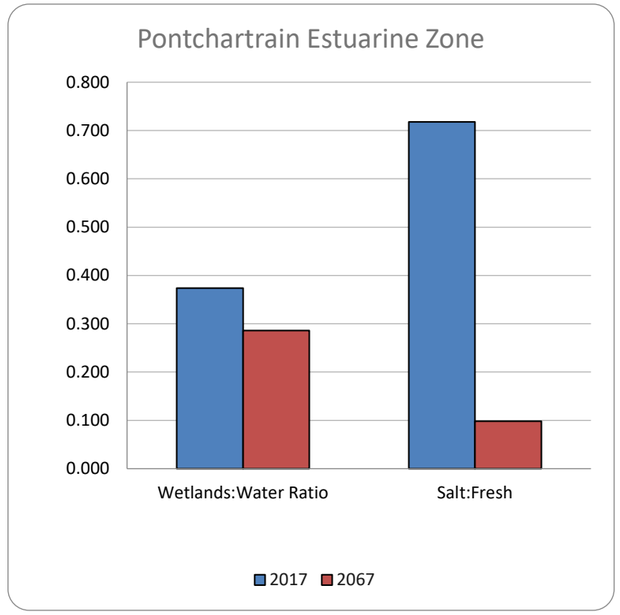


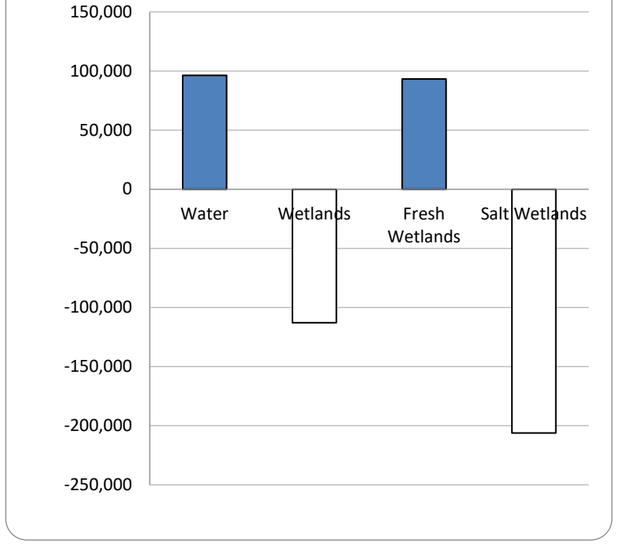


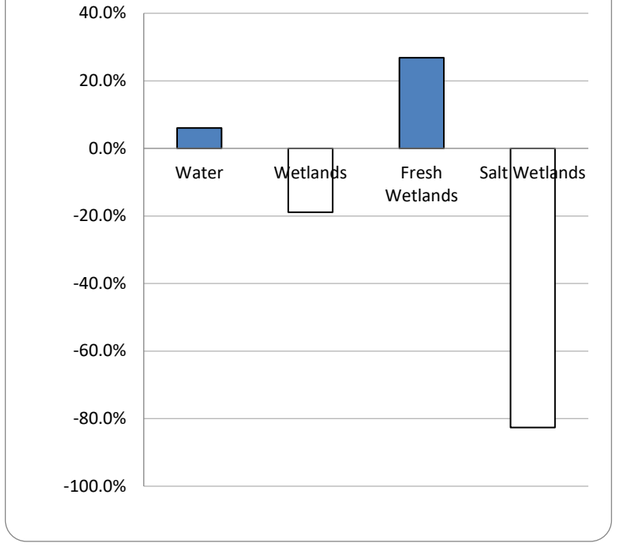
Data Used For Pre-Screening











Data Used For Pre-Screening

Table of the Five Pre-Screening Criteria used to Evaluate the Six Estuarine Zones along with Pre-Screening Recommendation by Designation Leadership Team (DLT).

Pre-Screening Criteria #1 Unique Coastal Setting	Pre-Screening Criteria #2 State-Owned Lands	Pre-Screening Criteria #3 Land Integrity	Pre-Screening Criteria #4 Change in Habitat Diversity	Pre-Screening Criteria #5 Hydrologic Manipulations	Pre-Screening Recommendation by DLT
1. Are there potential core areas (state-owned lands and waters) in this Estuarine Zone that represent unique habitats, coastal processes and salinity gradients of a delta estuary in comparison to the other NERR sites in Louisianian Biogeographic Zone of NERR System (sections 11, 12, 13). Unique environmental representativeness is important to the research and education mission of a NERR. Description: Current distribution of habitat types, based on 2017 Coastal Master Plan initial condition vegetation, was used to define salinity zones in each Estuarine Zone. Habitat types are shown in outlined areas of state-owned land in red.	2. Is there currently sufficient area of state-owned lands within this Estuarine Zone conducive to developing LaNERR Candidate Sites that meet National Estuarine Reserve System objectives? Description: Majority of publicly-owned land used as core areas within a candidate site cannot be federal lands. Further, the state must demonstrate adequate management control for core areas to be designated as a NERR. NOAA requires that state lands be available in the initial designation of a NERR site since the agreement is a NOAA-state MOU.	3. Is the integrity of the wetlands that may serve as potential core (state-owned land) and buffer areas that provide the unique features of the NERR (see criterion #1) maintained in perpetuity within this Estuarine Zone, which would allow for development of facilities and programs (research & education)? Description: Land change was measured by comparing the 2017 Coastal Master Plan initial condition vegetation to the year 50 projected vegetation under the medium scenario with implementation of the plan. A reduction of 50% in wetland area from initial to projected was considered sufficient to question the integrity of a zone.	4. Do the wetlands that would serve as potential core (state-owned land) and buffer areas currently support a diversity of habitats along a salinity gradient representative of a delta estuary. Do these wetland areas maintain a diversity of habitats in perpetuity (maintain integrity) within this Estuarine Zone over the next 50 years? Description: Changes that demonstrate Significant Habitat Diversity change represent conflict with foreseeable program development in research & education to meet the mission of a NERR. Change in habitat diversity was measured by comparing the 2017 Coastal Master Plan initial condition vegetation to the year 50 projected vegetation under the medium scenario with implementation of the plan. Insignificant change (fresh or saline habitat change <-25%). Moderate change (fresh or saline habitat change -25 to -65%). Significant change (fresh or saline habitat change > -65%.	5. Do existing or anticipated operations of water control structures and levees (including marsh impoundments) by federal and state authorities with sole purpose of manipulating hydrology in coastal basins for either flood control, marsh management, or coastal restoration have the potential to impact the integrity of potential core or buffer areas thus causing potential conflicts between LaNERR objectives (environmental representativeness, research & education)?	The following columns contain summary statements and recommendations for each Estuarine Zone prepared by the Designation Leadership Team.

Criterion #1 and Evaluation of each Estuarine Zone.

Estuarine Zone	Calcasieu Estuarine Zone	Atchafalaya Estuarine Zone	Terrebonne Estuarine Zone	Barataria Estuarine Zone	Pontchartrain Estuarine Zone	Mississippi River Estuarine Zone
Pre-Screening Criteria	Pre-Screening Recommendation	Pre-Screening Recommendation	Pre-Screening Recommendation	Pre-Screening Recommendation	Pre-Screening Recommendation	Pre-Screening Recommendation
1. Are there potential core areas (state-owned lands and waters) in this Estuarine Zone that represent unique habitats, coastal processes and salinity gradients of a delta estuary in comparison to the other NERR sites in Louisianian Biogeographic Zone of NERR System (sections 11, 12, 13). Unique environmental representativeness is important to the research and education mission of a NERR. Description: Current distribution of habitat types, based on 2017 Coastal Master Plan initial condition vegetation, was used to define salinity zones in each Estuarine Zone. Habitat types are shown in outlined areas of state-owned land in red.	<u>Insignificant Unique Setting:</u> The coastal setting represented by state-owned lands of this Estuarine Zone is not unique to other NERR sites in the Louisianian Biogeographic Zone of NERR System (sections 11, 12, 13) based on the objective to represent delta estuary. The vegetation diversity demonstrates dominance by brackish and salt zones. The chenier ridges, if they can be included in state-owned lands, are considered a unique habitat of delta estuary.	<u>Significant Unique Setting:</u> The coastal setting of this Estuarine Zone is unique in the Louisianian Biogeographic Zone of NERR System (sections 11, 12, 13) based on the objective to represent delta estuary. The vegetation diversity demonstrates dominance by tidal freshwater but with both forested wetlands and brackish marshes. The development of candidate sites for LaNERR in this Estuarine Zone would provide unique habitats, coastal processes and salinity gradients that could be used for program development (research & education).	<u>Insignificant Unique Setting:</u> The coastal setting of this Estuarine Zone is not unique in the Louisianian Biogeographic Zone of NERR System (sections 11, 12, 13) based on the objective to represent delta estuary. The vegetation diversity demonstrates dominance by salt and brackish marsh with little representation of other salinity zones. The development of candidate sites for LaNERR in this Estuarine Zone would not provide unique habitats, coastal processes and salinity gradients that could be used for program development (research & education).	<u>Significant Unique Setting:</u> The coastal setting of this Estuarine Zone is unique in the Louisianian Biogeographic Zone of NERR System (sections 11, 12, 13) based on the objective to represent delta estuary. The vegetation diversity demonstrates equal distribution by freshwater, brackish and saline zones. The development of candidate sites for LaNERR in this Estuarine Zone would provide unique habitats, coastal processes and salinity gradients that could be used for program development (research & education).	<u>Significant Unique Setting:</u> The coastal setting of this Estuarine Zone is unique in the Louisianian Biogeographic Zone of NERR System (sections 11, 12, 13) based on the objective to represent delta estuary. The vegetation diversity demonstrates equal distribution by freshwater, brackish and saline zones. The development of candidate sites for LaNERR in this Estuarine Zone would provide unique habitats, coastal processes and salinity gradients that could be used for program development (research & education).	<u>Significant Unique Setting:</u> The coastal setting of this Estuarine Zone is unique in the Louisianian Biogeographic Zone of NERR System (sections 11, 12, 13) based on the objective to represent delta estuary. The vegetation diversity demonstrates dominance by intermediate salinity zones but also has freshwater, brackish and saline zones. The development of candidate sites for LaNERR in this Estuarine Zone would provide unique habitats, coastal processes and salinity gradients that could be used for program development (research & education).

Criterion #2 and Evaluation of each Estuarine Zone.

Estuarine Zone	Calcasieu Estuarine Zone	Atchafalaya Estuarine Zone	Terrebonne Estuarine Zone	Barataria Estuarine Zone	Pontchartrain Estuarine Zone	Mississippi River Estuarine Zone
Pre-Screening Criteria	Pre-Screening Recommendation	Pre-Screening Recommendation	Pre-Screening Recommendation	Pre-Screening Recommendation	Pre-Screening Recommendation	Pre-Screening Recommendation
2. Is there currently sufficient area of state-owned lands within this Estuarine Zone conducive to developing LaNERR Candidate Sites that meet National Estuarine Reserve System objectives? Description: Majority of publicly-owned land used as core areas within a candidate site cannot be federal lands. Further, the state must demonstrate adequate management control for core areas to be designated as a NERR. NOAA requires that state lands be available in the initial designation of a NERR site since the agreement is a NOAA-state MOU.	Insufficient Core Areas: The current availability of state-owned lands to establish core areas for candidate LaNERR sites in the Calcasieu Estuarine Zone is very limited. Most of the public lands in this Estuarine Zone are federal lands. State Lands = 3,046 acres; Other Public Lands = 152,585 acres	Sufficient Core Areas: The current availability of state-owned lands to establish core areas for candidate LaNERR sites in the Atchafalaya Estuarine Zone is sufficient. State Lands = 347,945 acres; Other Public Lands = 57,227 acres	Sufficient Core Areas: The current availability of state-owned lands to establish core areas for candidate LaNERR sites in the Terrebonne Estuarine Zone is sufficient. State Lands = 44,203 acres; Other Public Lands = 15,260 acres	Sufficient Core Areas: The current availability of state-owned lands to establish core areas for candidate LaNERR sites in the Barataria Estuarine Zone is sufficient. State-owned lands in this Estuarine Zone are slightly less compared to other public lands. State Lands = 40,185 acres; Other Public Lands = 49,913 acres	Sufficient Core Areas: The current availability of state-owned lands to establish core areas for candidate LaNERR sites in the Pontchartrain Estuarine Zone is sufficient. State Lands = 200,207 acres; Other Public Lands = 53,640 acres	Sufficient Core Areas: The current availability of state-owned lands to establish core areas for candidate LaNERR sites in the Mississippi River Estuarine Zone is sufficient. State Lands = 116,118 acres; Other Public Lands = 49,048 acres

Criterion #3 and Evaluation of each Estuarine Zone.

Estuarine Zone	Calcasieu Estuarine Zone	Atchafalaya Estuarine Zone	Terrebonne Estuarine Zone	Barataria Estuarine Zone	Pontchartrain Estuarine Zone	Mississippi River Estuarine Zone
Pre-Screening Criteria	Pre-Screening Recommendation	Pre-Screening Recommendation	Pre-Screening Recommendation	Pre-Screening Recommendation	Pre-Screening Recommendation	Pre-Screening Recommendation
3. Is the integrity of the wetlands that may serve as potential core (state-owned land) and buffer areas that provide the unique features of the NERR (see criterion #1) maintained in perpetuity within this Estuarine Zone, which would allow for development of facilities and programs (research & education)? Description: Land change was measured by comparing the 2017 Coastal Master Plan initial condition vegetation to the year 50 projected vegetation under the medium scenario with implementation of the plan. A reduction of 50% in wetland area from initial to projected was considered sufficient to question the integrity of a zone.	<u>Insignificant Area Change:</u> There is insignificant land loss in the potential core areas (state-owned lands) that could be used to develop candidate sites for LaNERR The Estuarine Zone has minimum potential level of conflict because of future land loss with respect to developing facilities and programs (research & education) of LaNERR. Initial Wetland Area = 237,001 acres; Projected Wetland Area = 194,655 acres. % Wetland Change = -18.1%	<u>Insignificant Area Change:</u> There is insignificant land loss in the potential core areas (state-owned lands) that could be used to develop candidate sites for LaNERR. Potential core areas are sufficient, and the Estuarine Zone has minimum potential level of conflict because of future land loss with respect to developing facilities and programs (research & education) of LaNERR. Initial Wetland Area = 1,120,997 acres; Projected Wetland Area = 1,045,730 acres. Wetland Change = -6.7%	<u>Significant Area Change:</u> There is significant land loss in the potential core areas (state-owned lands) that could be used to develop candidate sites for LaNERR. Potential core areas are sufficient at present (initial conditions), but the Estuarine Zone has significant level of conflict in the future because of land loss of core areas that would be used for developing facilities and programs (research & education) of LaNERR. Initial Wetland Area = 115,007 acres; Projected Wetland Area = 33,573 acres. Wetland Change = -70.8%	<u>Insignificant Area Change:</u> There is insignificant land loss in the potential core areas (state-owned lands) that could be used to develop candidate sites for LaNERR. Potential core areas are sufficient, and the Estuarine Zone has minimum potential level of conflict because of future land loss with respect to developing facilities and programs (research & education) of LaNERR. Initial Wetland Area = 473,285 acres; Projected Wetland Area = 314,916 acres. Wetland Change = -33.5%	<u>Insignificant Area Change:</u> There is insignificant land loss in the potential core areas (state-owned lands) that could be used to develop candidate sites for LaNERR. Potential core areas are sufficient, and the Estuarine Zone has minimum potential level of conflict because of future land loss with respect to developing facilities and programs (research & education) of LaNERR. Initial Wetland Area = 597,075 acres; Projected Wetland Area = 484,214 acres. Wetland Change = -18.9%	<u>Significant Area Change:</u> There is significant land loss in the potential core areas (state-owned lands) that could be used to develop candidate sites for LaNERR. Potential core areas are sufficient at present (initial conditions), but the Estuarine Zone has significant level of conflict in the future because of land loss of core areas that would be used for developing facilities and programs (research & education) of LaNERR. Initial Wetland Area = 107,521 acres; Projected Wetland Area = 38,766 acres. Wetland Change = -69.9%

Criterion #4 and Evaluation of each Estuarine Zone.

Estuarine Zone	Calcasieu Estuarine Zone	Atchafalaya Estuarine Zone	Terrebonne Estuarine Zone	Barataria Estuarine Zone	Pontchartrain Estuarine Zone	Mississippi River Estuarine Zone
Pre-Screening Criteria	Pre-Screening Recommendation	Pre-Screening Recommendation	Pre-Screening Recommendation	Pre-Screening Recommendation	Pre-Screening Recommendation	Pre-Screening Recommendation
4. Do the wetlands that would serve as potential core (state-owned land) and buffer areas currently support a diversity of habitats along a salinity gradient representative of a delta estuary. Do these wetland areas maintain a diversity of habitats in perpetuity (maintain integrity) within this Estuarine Zone over the next 50 years? Description: Changes that demonstrate Significant Habitat Diversity change represent conflict with foreseeable program development in research & education to meet the mission of a NERR. Change in habitat diversity was measured by comparing the 2017 Coastal Master Plan initial condition vegetation to the year 50 projected vegetation under the medium scenario with implementation of the plan. Insignificant change (fresh or saline habitat change <-25%). Moderate change (fresh or saline habitat change -25 to -65%). Significant change (fresh or saline habitat change > -65%.	Significant Habitat Diversity Change: There is significant change in habitat types in the core areas that could be used to develop candidate sites for LaNERR. Potential core areas in the Estuarine Zone are insufficient in the future because of significant habitat change to develop programs (research & education) of LaNERR. Percent change in Fresh Wetland Area = -94.7%. Percent change in Saline Wetland Area = -8.4%.	Moderate Habitat Diversity Change: There is moderate change in habitat types in the core areas that could be used to develop candidate sites for LaNERR. Potential core areas are sufficient and the Estuarine Zone has moderate potential level of conflict due to change in habitat type that would impact future program development (research & education) of LaNERR. Percent change in Fresh Wetland Area = +6.2%. Percent change in Saline Wetland Area = -48.6%.	Significant Habitat Diversity Change: There is significant change in habitat types in the core areas that could be used to develop candidate sites for LaNERR and the diversity lacks tidal freshwater habitats. Potential core areas in the Estuarine Zone are insufficient in the future because of significant habitat change to develop programs (research & education) of LaNERR. Percent change in Fresh Wetland Area = +12.0%. Percent change in Saline Wetland Area = -73.8%.	Significant Habitat Diversity Change: There is significant change in habitat types in the core areas that could be used to develop candidate sites for LaNERR. Potential core areas in the Estuarine Zone are insufficient in the future because of significant habitat change to develop programs (research & education) of LaNERR. Percent change in Fresh Wetland Area = +13.9%. Percent change in Saline Wetland Area = -69.8%.	Significant Habitat Diversity Change: There is significant change in habitat types in the core areas that could be used to develop candidate sites for LaNERR. Potential core areas in the Estuarine Zone are insufficient in the future because of significant habitat change to develop programs (research & education) of LaNERR. Percent change in Fresh Wetland Area = +26.8%. Percent change in Saline Wetland Area = -82.6%.	Significant Habitat Diversity Change: There is significant change in habitat types in the core areas that could be used to develop candidate sites for LaNERR. Potential core areas in the Estuarine Zone are insufficient in the future because of significant habitat change to develop programs (research & education) of LaNERR. Percent change in Fresh Wetland Area = +343.8%; Percent change in Saline Wetland Area = -96.5%.

Criterion #5 and Evaluation of each Estuarine Zone.

Estuarine Zone	Calcasieu Estuarine Zone	Atchafalaya Estuarine Zone	Terrebonne Estuarine Zone	Barataria Estuarine Zone	Pontchartrain Estuarine Zone	Mississippi River Estuarine Zone
Pre-Screening Criteria	Pre-Screening Recommendation	Pre-Screening Recommendation	Pre-Screening Recommendation	Pre-Screening Recommendation	Pre-Screening Recommendation	Pre-Screening Recommendation
5. Do existing or anticipated operations of water control structures and levees (including marsh impoundments) by federal and state authorities with sole purpose of manipulating hydrology in coastal basins for either flood control, marsh management, or coastal restoration have the potential to impact the integrity of potential core or buffer areas thus causing potential conflicts between LaNERR objectives (environmental representativeness, research & education)?	Hydrologic Control Impacts - Potentially Interfere: The coastal setting of this Estuarine Zone presents future potential coastal management issues with planned construction of marsh management and salinity control structures associated with the Calcasieu Ship Channel. The planning of candidate sites in this Estuarine Zone will have to consider how to incorporate these manipulations in planning program development (research & education) that utilize these impacts.	Hydrologic Control Impacts - Insignificant: This Estuarine Zone is manipulated by the Old River Control Structure at the head of the Atchafalaya River Basin. This flood control structure operates on a fixed percentage (70/30% split) of flow from combined Red and Mississippi River discharge that is directed to the Mississippi and Atchafalaya River, respectively. Given the percentage of total flow represents seasonal flood-pulse of a major river basin, this is not considered an operation abnormal to seasonal river flood patterns.	Hydrologic Control Impacts - Potentially Interfere: This Estuarine Zone is impacted by water control structures (e.g., Pointe-aux-Chenes WMA) and the construction and operation of the Morganza to the Gulf flood control project that has water control structures and levees that may impact developing programs (research & education) in candidate sites for LaNERR.	Hydrologic Control Impacts - Potentially Interfere: The coastal setting of this Estuarine Zone presents future potential coastal management issues with operation of the Mid-Barataria diversion structure and Upper Barataria Risk Reduction Project. The planning of candidate sites in this Estuarine Zone will have to consider how to incorporate these manipulations in planning program development (research & education) that utilize these impacts.	Hydrologic Control Impacts - Potentially Interfere: The coastal setting of this Estuarine Zone presents future potential coastal management issues with operation of the Bonnet Carre flood control structure and West Shore Lake Pontchartrain flood protection project. In addition, there is the future construction of the Maurepas diversion structure. The planning of candidate sites in this Estuarine Zone will have to consider how to incorporate these manipulations in planning program development (research & education) that utilize these impacts.	Hydrologic Control Impacts - Insignificant: This Estuarine Zone does not have issues of impacts from water control structures and levees that would potentially impact developing programs (research & education) in candidate sites for LaNERR.

SUMMARY STATEMENT RECOMMENDATIONS	Calcasieu Estuarine Zone	Atchafalaya Estuarine Zone	Terrebonne Estuarine Zone	Barataria Estuarine Zone	Pontchartrain Estuarine Zone	Mississippi River Estuarine Z
The following columns contain summary statements and recommendations for each Estuarine Zone prepared by the Designation Leadership Team.	The Calcasieu Estuarine Zone has very limited state-owned lands that could be used as core areas to establish a LaNERR. The state-owned lands that are currently present do not represent the diverse unique habitats and processes of delta estuary. The changes in land area are not significant, but changes in habitat type are significant. Due to the lack of state-owned land, there is limited opportunity for establishing a LaNERR in this Estuarine Zone. Further, hydrologic manipulations potentially challenge the establishment of a NERR.	The Atchafalaya Estuarine Zone currently has significant state-owned lands that represent the unique habitats and processes of delta estuary. There are diverse habitat types and salinity zones representative of a delta estuary. The projected changes to both the land area and habitat types over the next 50-yrs are insignificant and moderate, respectively. This zone experiences the least future change when compared to the other zones. This Estuarine Zone represents a region sufficient to establish a LaNERR, and hydrologic manipulations will not challenge the establishment of a NERR.	The Terrebonne Estuarine Zone currently has state-owned lands that could serve as core areas. However, the zone does not have a diversity of habitat types or salinity gradients representative of a delta estuary. The projected changes to both the land area and habitat types over the next 50-yrs limit the potential of this zone for establishing a LaNERR. Further, hydrologic manipulations potentially challenge the establishment of a NERR.	The Barataria Estuarine Zone currently has significant state-owned lands that represent the diverse habitats and salinity gradients of a delta estuary. The projected changes in land area are not significant, but changes in habitat type over the next 50-yrs is significant. The more interior regions of this Estuarine Zone may represent a region sufficient to establish a LaNERR. Hydrologic manipulations will potentially challenge the establishment of a LaNERR.	The Pontchartrain Estuarine Zone currently has significant state-owned lands that represent the diversity habitats and salinity gradients of a delta estuary. The projected changes in land area are not significant, but changes in habitat type over the next 50-yrs is significant. The more interior regions of this Estuarine Zone may represent a region sufficient to establish a LaNERR. However, hydrologic manipulations will potentially challenge the establishment of a NERR.	The Mississippi River Estuarine Zone has current state-owned lands that represent the unique habitats, although dominated by intermediate marsh and salinity zone. There are both fresh and saline habitats in this Estuarine Zone. However, the projected loss of land area and changes to habitat types over the next 50-yrs limit the potential of this zone for establishing a LaNERR. Hydrologic manipulations will not challenge the establishment of a NERR.

LaNERR Site Selection and Nomination Workflow Overview and Schedule – 2021

February 19, 2021

		DESIGNATION LEADERSHIP TEAM	SITE DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE	CRITERIA SUBCOMMITTEE	SCREENING SUBCOMMITTEE	PROPOSAL TEAMS
FEB	Early					
	Mid	Evaluate 6 Estuarine Zones				
	Late	Develop 1st draft of Site Selection Criteria	SDC Mtg 3: Overview of Site Selection process; DLT's recommendations on Estuarine Zones based on preliminary screening criteria			
MAR	Early	• Establish subcommittees • Provide 1st draft of Site Selection Criteria to Criteria Subcommittee • Develop preliminary (example) candidate sites				
	Mid		SDC Mtg 4: Review results of Estuarine Zone voting; Preliminary Candidate Sites			
	Late	Send 2nd draft of Site Selection Criteria to NOAA for unofficial / preliminary review		Develop 2nd draft of Site Selection Criteria & provide to DLT		
APR	Early		SDC Mtg 5: Preliminary Candidate Sites (continued) & Review 2nd draft of Site Selection Criteria			
	Mid					
	Late			Develop 3rd draft of Site Selection Criteria & provide to DLT		Submit Phase 1 Candidate Sites for Screening
MAY	Early	Submit 3rd draft of Site Selection Criteria to NOAA for approval			Screen Phase 1 Candidate Sites	
	Mid		SDC Mtg 6: Review Results of Phase 1 Candidate Site Screening			
	Late					
JUN	Early					
	Mid	*Receives approved Site Selection Criteria from NOAA*				Submit Phase 2 Candidate Site Proposals

		DESIGNATION LEADERSHIP TEAM	SITE DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE	CRITERIA SUBCOMMITTEE	SCREENING SUBCOMMITTEE	PROPOSAL TEAMS
	Late					
JUL	Early				Screen Phase 2 Candidate Sites Proposals	
	Mid		SDC Mtg 7: Review Results of Phase 2 Candidate Site Proposal Screening & vote to proceed to Final Candidate Site Proposals			
	Late					
AUG	Early	Host Town Hall Meetings				Participate/present at Town Hall Meetings
	Mid					
	Late					Submit Final Candidate Site Proposals
SEP	Early				Screen Final Candidate Site Proposals	
	Mid	Submit Final Candidate Site Proposal to Site Evaluation Committee for nomination to NOAA				

LaNERR

Louisiana
National Estuary Research Reserve

Updated maps for Site Development Committee – aligning pre-screening site criteria questions to maps and data

18 February 2021

This presentation provides background information and guidance for the Site Development Team to discuss and evaluate recommendations from the Designation Leadership Team in how Pre-screening Criteria partially based upon NOAA guidelines can be used to establish competitive candidate sites for a LaNERR in the Mississippi River Delta.

Five pre-screening criteria (slide #5) are provided that will be used to evaluate the merits of each of the six Estuarine Zones in developing more specific candidate sites for a LaNERR. The five criteria selected, in consultation with NOAA and based on SDC discussions in October 2020, represent the first tier of evaluation that must be met before a zone can be considered further in developing candidate sites.

The approach is based on couple of key assumptions:

1. The current distribution of habitat types and state-owned lands of the estuarine zone provide insights into what may represent a competitive candidate site;
2. Changes in the distribution of habitat types and land loss in the proposed estuarine zone generalized boundaries provides insights into what may be considered maintaining integrity of a candidate site over the next 50 years.
3. Those estuarine zones that do not provide sufficient habitat diversity of a delta estuary, state-owned lands as core areas, or represent future integrity of landscapes should not be included in the planned development of candidate site proposals for a LaNERR.

The next several slides are grouped around information as maps, graphs, and tables to evaluate the merits of each of the six Estuarine Zones based on the five criteria presented in considering further the development of candidate sites for a LaNERR.

Criteria #1 and #2 are first presented to discuss the merits of the six Estuarine Zones relative to unique habitat diversity of a delta estuary; and the amount of state lands in the vicinity of these habitats to serve as core areas of a LaNERR.

Criteria #3 and #4 are then presented to discuss the merits of the six Estuarine Zones relative to projected changes in both land area and distribution of habitats to define the integrity of zones over the next 50 years. Again, this is not specific to any state lands or proposed candidate sites but is intended to demonstrate the challenges of establishing a LaNERR in a zone that is considered vulnerable to significant landscape changes in the future.

Finally, criterion #5 presents the potential challenges of the six Estuarine Zones relative to hydrologic manipulations that may cause coastal management issues and thus future conflict in a LaNERR. The coastal zone of Louisiana is highly engineered for flood control and restoration. Future large-scale projects are planned in the Coastal Master Plan. It is best to present these challenges in the early stages of developing LaNERR candidate sites.

The objective of the SDC meeting #3 in late February is to evaluate the six Estuarine Zones for merits in developing candidate sites for a LaNERR. The five criteria will be used to evaluate each Estuarine Zone independently as to whether it should be considered further in planning a LaNERR.

The Designation Leadership Team (DLT) has provided an evaluation of each Estuarine Zone and a recommendation as to the merits of the zone for further consideration.

The recommendations by the DLT for each of the six Estuarine Zones are provided in columns adjacent to each criterion.

After all five criteria have been presented with recommendations by the DLT along with maps, graphs, and tables to justify the DLT recommendations, a summary slide is presented (slide #59) that summarizes a final recommendation based on considering all five criteria.

These recommendations and summaries will be presented to SDC as a committee report. The SDC will be asked to evaluate which of the six Estuarine Zones should be considered further for developing candidate site proposals for LaNERR.

Table of the Five Pre-Screening Criteria used to Evaluate the Six Estuarine Zones along with Pre-Screening Recommendation by Designation Leadership Team (DLT).

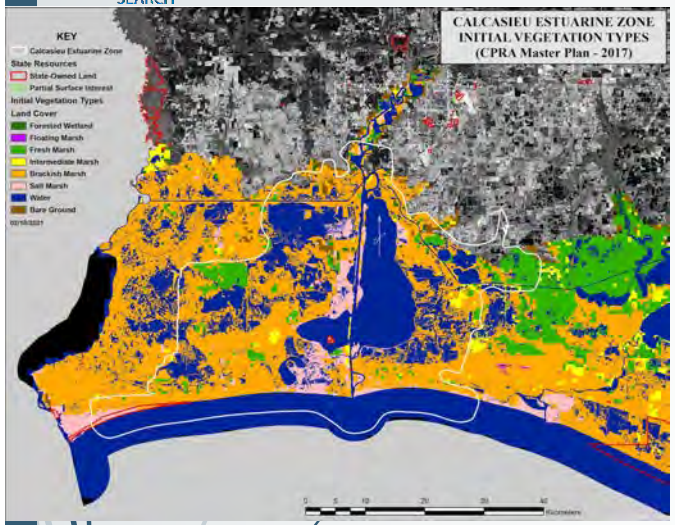
Pre-Screening Criteria #1 Unique Coastal Setting	Pre-Screening Criteria #2 State-Owned Lands	Pre-Screening Criteria #3 Land Integrity	Pre-Screening Criteria #4 Change in Habitat Diversity	Pre-Screening Criteria #5 Hydrologic Manipulations	Pre-Screening Recommendation by DLT
1. Are there potential core areas (state-owned lands and waters) in this Estuarine Zone that represent unique habitats, coastal processes and salinity gradients of a delta estuary in comparison to the other NERR sites in Louisianian Biogeographic Zone of NERR System (sections 11, 12, 13). Unique environmental representativeness is important to the research and education mission of a NERR. Description: Current distribution of habitat types, based on 2017 Coastal Master Plan initial condition vegetation, was used to define salinity zones in each Estuarine Zone. Habitat types are shown in outlined areas of state-owned land in red.	2. Is there currently sufficient area of state-owned lands within this Estuarine Zone conducive to developing LaNERR Candidate Sites that meet National Estuarine Reserve System objectives? Description: Majority of publicly-owned land used as core areas within a candidate site cannot be federal lands. Further, the state must demonstrate adequate management control for core areas to be designated as a NERR. NOAA requires that state lands be available in the initial designation of a NERR site since the agreement is a NOAA-state MOU.	3. Is the integrity of the wetlands that may serve as potential core (state-owned land) and buffer areas that provide the unique features of the NERR (see criterion #1) maintained in perpetuity within this Estuarine Zone, which would allow for development of facilities and programs (research & education)? Description: Land change was measured by comparing the 2017 Coastal Master Plan initial condition vegetation to the year 50 projected vegetation under the medium scenario with implementation of the plan. A reduction of 50% in wetland area from initial to projected was considered sufficient to question the integrity of a zone.	4. Do the wetlands that would serve as potential core (state-owned land) and buffer areas currently support a diversity of habitats along a salinity gradient representative of a delta estuary. Do these wetland areas maintain a diversity of habitats in perpetuity (maintain integrity) within this Estuarine Zone over the next 50 years? Description: Changes that demonstrate Significant Habitat Diversity change represent conflict with foreseeable program development in research & education to meet the mission of a NERR. Change in habitat diversity was measured by comparing the 2017 Coastal Master Plan initial condition vegetation to the year 50 projected vegetation under the medium scenario with implementation of the plan. Insignificant change (fresh or saline habitat change <-25%); Moderate change (fresh or saline habitat change -25 to -65%); Significant change (fresh or saline habitat change > -65%.	5. Do existing or anticipated operations of water control structures and levees (including marsh impoundments) by federal and state authorities with sole purpose of manipulating hydrology in coastal basins for either flood control, marsh management, or coastal restoration have the potential to impact the integrity of potential core or buffer areas thus causing potential conflicts between LaNERR objectives (environmental representativeness, research & education)?	The following columns contain summary statements and recommendations for each Estuarine Zone prepared by the Designation Leadership Team.

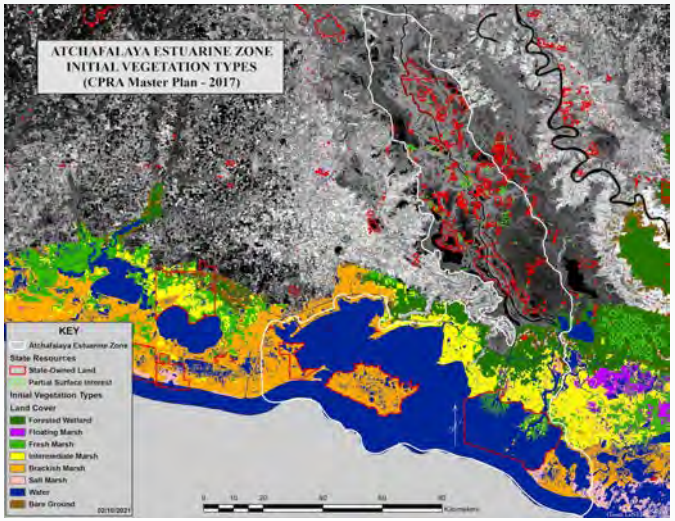
This section of the presentation focuses on Criterion #1.

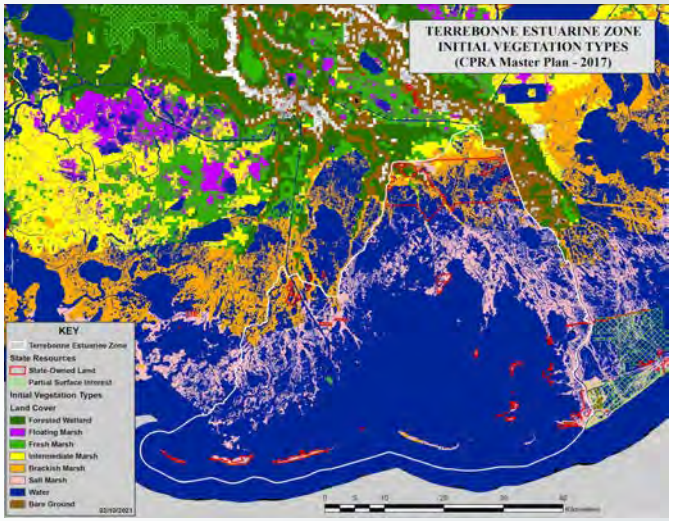
Pre-Screening Criteria #1 Unique Coastal Setting
1. Are there potential core areas (state-owned lands and waters) in this Estuarine Zone that represent unique habitats, coastal processes and salinity gradients of a delta estuary in comparison to the other NERR sites in Louisianian Biogeographic Zone of NERR System (sections 11, 12, 13). Unique environmental representativeness is important to research and education mission of a NERR. Description: Based on current distribution of habitat types used to define salinity zones in each Estuarine Zone maps using 2017 Coastal Master Plan. Habitat types are shown in outlined area of state-owned land in red.

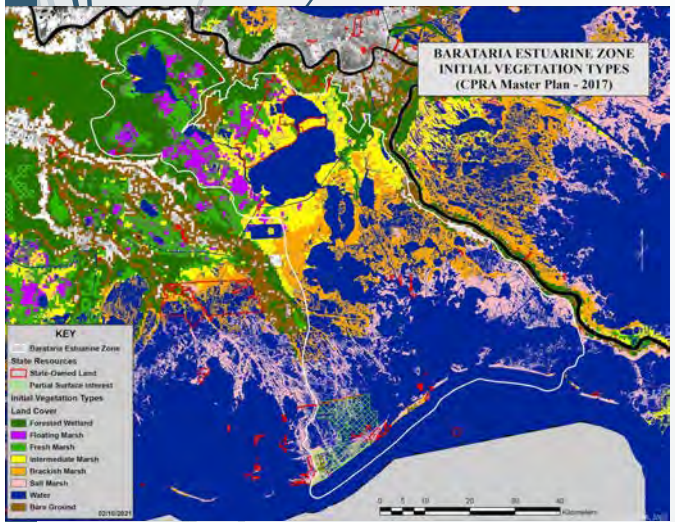
Estuarine Zone	Calcasieu Estuarine Zone	Atchafalaya Estuarine Zone	Terrebonne Estuarine Zone	Barataria Estuarine Zone	Pontchartrain Estuarine Zone	Mississippi River Estuarine Zone
Pre-Screening Criteria	Pre-Screening Recommendation	Pre-Screening Recommendation	Pre-Screening Recommendation	Pre-Screening Recommendation	Pre-Screening Recommendation	Pre-Screening Recommendation
1. Are there potential core areas (state-owned lands and waters) in this Estuarine Zone that represent unique habitats, coastal processes and salinity gradients of a delta estuary in comparison to the other NERR sites in Louisianian Biogeographic Zone of NERR System (sections 11, 12, 13). Unique environmental representativeness is important to the research and education mission of a NERR. Description: Current distribution of habitat types, based on 2017 Coastal Master Plan initial condition vegetation, was used to define salinity zones in each Estuarine Zone. Habitat types are shown in outlined areas of state-owned land in red.	Insignificant Unique Setting: The coastal setting represented by state-owned lands of this Estuarine Zone is not unique to other NERR sites in the Louisianian Biogeographic Zone of NERR System (sections 11, 12, 13) based on the objective to represent delta estuary. The vegetation diversity demonstrates dominance by brackish and salt zones. The chenier ridges, if they can be included in state-owned lands, are considered a unique habitat of delta estuary.	Significant Unique Setting: The coastal setting of this Estuarine Zone is unique in the Louisianian Biogeographic Zone of NERR System (sections 11, 12, 13) based on the objective to represent delta estuary. The vegetation diversity demonstrates dominance by tidal freshwater but with both forested wetlands and brackish marshes. The development of candidate sites for LaNERR in this Estuarine Zone would provide unique habitats, coastal processes and salinity gradients that could be used for program development (research & education).	Insignificant Unique Setting: The coastal setting of this Estuarine Zone is not unique in the Louisianian Biogeographic Zone of NERR System (sections 11, 12, 13) based on the objective to represent delta estuary. The vegetation diversity demonstrates dominance by salt and brackish marsh with little representation of other salinity zones. The development of candidate sites for LaNERR in this Estuarine Zone would not provide unique habitats, coastal processes and salinity gradients that could be used for program development (research & education).	Significant Unique Setting: The coastal setting of this Estuarine Zone is unique in the Louisianian Biogeographic Zone of NERR System (sections 11, 12, 13) based on the objective to represent delta estuary. The vegetation diversity demonstrates equal distribution by freshwater, brackish and saline zones. The development of candidate sites for LaNERR in this Estuarine Zone would provide unique habitats, coastal processes and salinity gradients that could be used for program development (research & education).	Significant Unique Setting: The coastal setting of this Estuarine Zone is unique in the Louisianian Biogeographic Zone of NERR System (sections 11, 12, 13) based on the objective to represent delta estuary. The vegetation diversity demonstrates equal distribution by freshwater, brackish and saline zones. The development of candidate sites for LaNERR in this Estuarine Zone would provide unique habitats, coastal processes and salinity gradients that could be used for program development (research & education).	Significant Unique Setting: The coastal setting of this Estuarine Zone is unique in the Louisianian Biogeographic Zone of NERR System (sections 11, 12, 13) based on the objective to represent delta estuary. The vegetation diversity demonstrates dominance by intermediate salinity zones but also has freshwater, brackish and saline zones. The development of candidate sites for LaNERR in this Estuarine Zone would provide unique habitats, coastal processes and salinity gradients that could be used for program development (research & education).

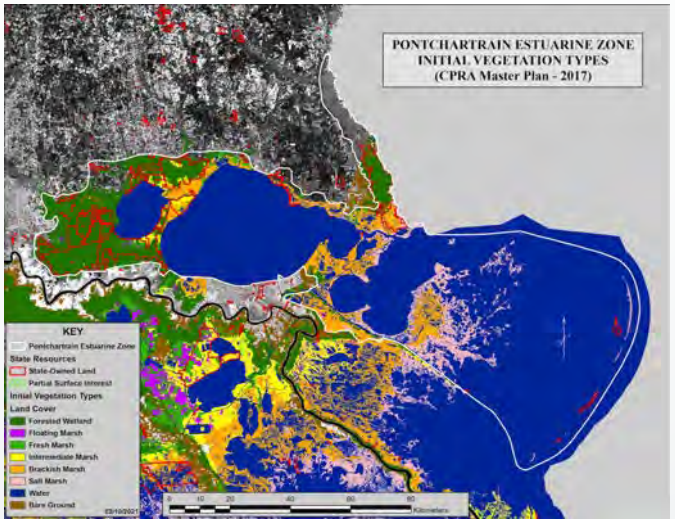
These maps show the distribution of habitat types in each of the six Estuarine Zones. This information was used to develop recommendations for Criterion #1.

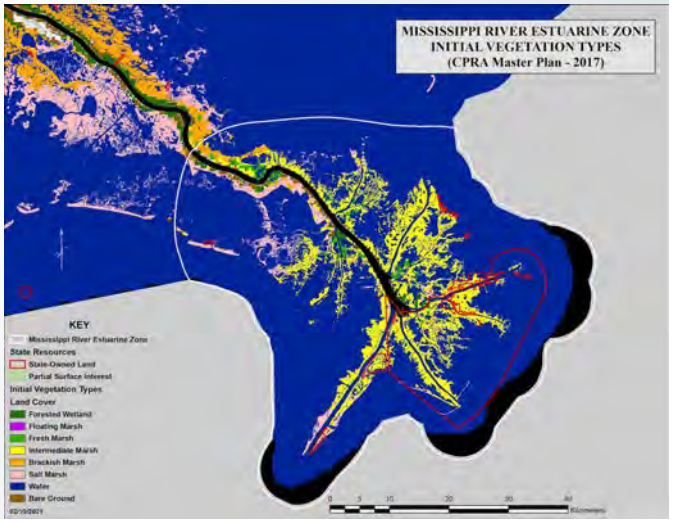










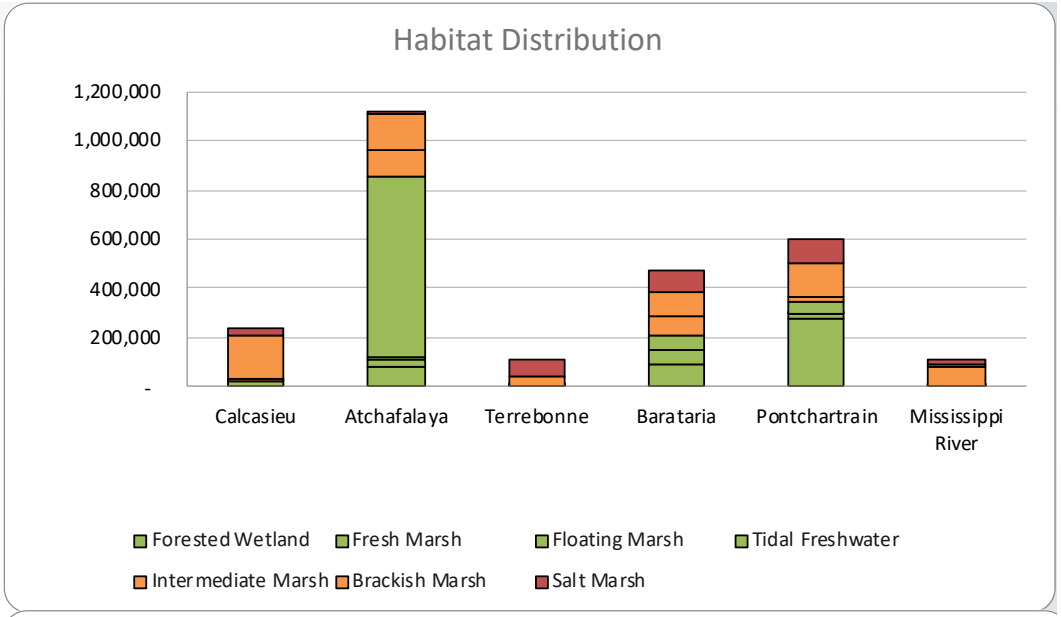


LaNERR SEARCH

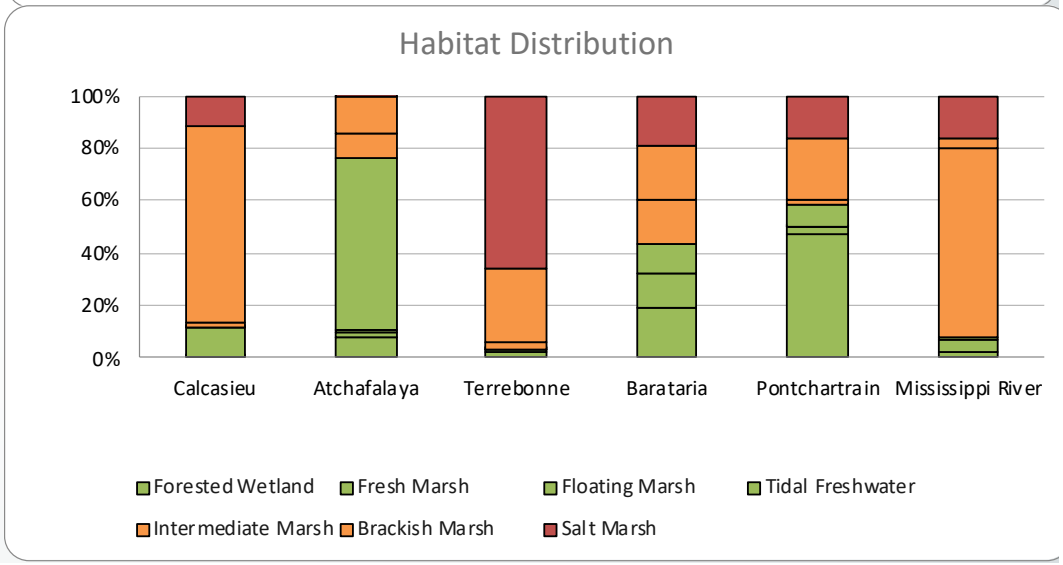
I. Environmental Representativeness

Graphs representing the current (2017) distribution of wetland habitats in each of the six Estuarine Zones (based on area and percentage). Habitat types are also used to infer distribution of salinity gradients in each of the Estuarine Zones.

Area in Acres



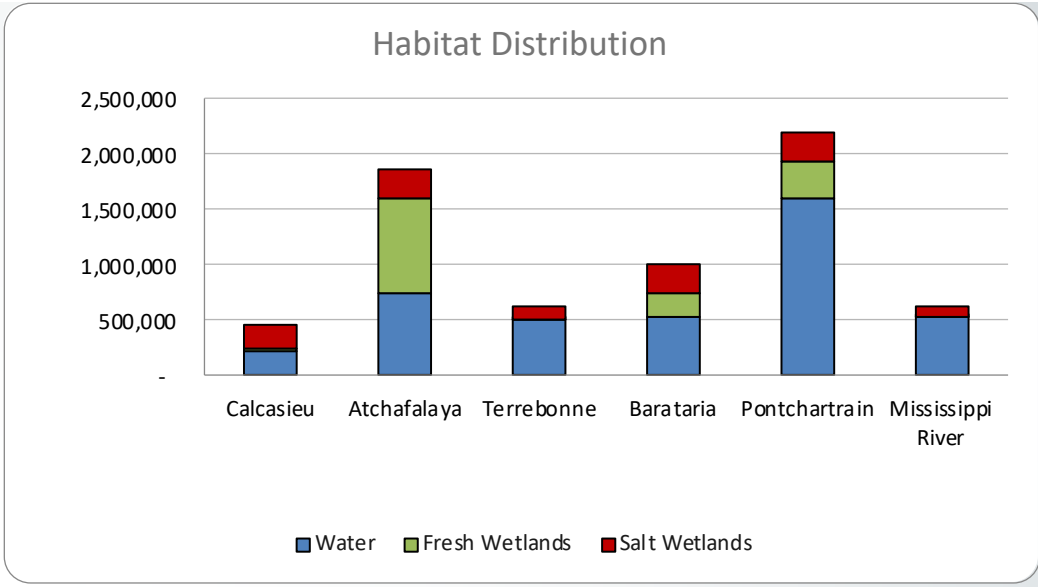
Percentage of Total Area



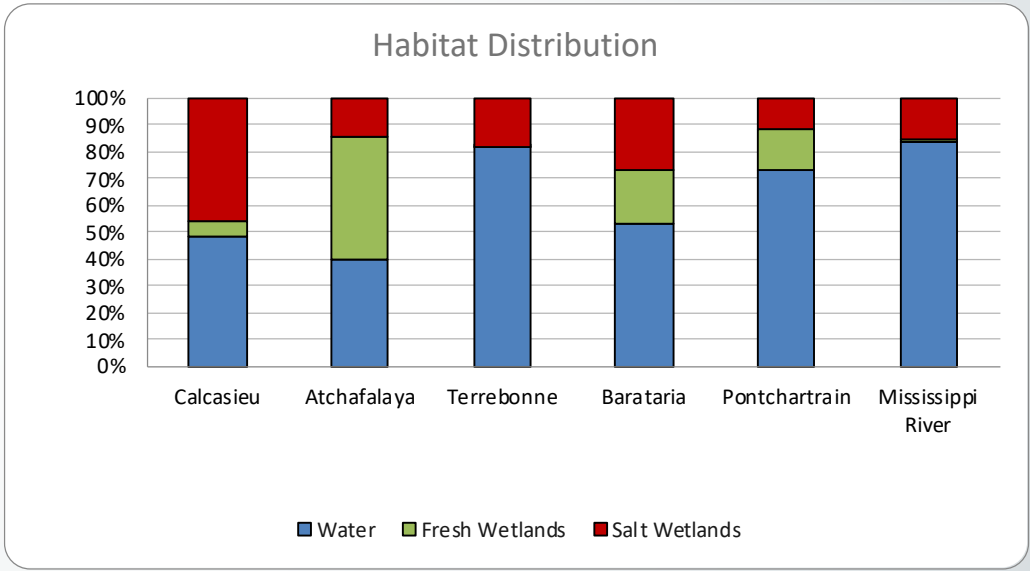
I. Environmental Representativeness

Graphs representing the current (2017) distribution of wetland habitats (fresh or saline) in each of the six Estuarine Zones compared to water habitats.

Area in Acres



Percentage of Total Area



This table shows the distribution of current habitat types (using acres in each category) in each of the six Estuarine Zones. The lower panel is the distribution (acreage) of wetlands, water and fresh and saline wetlands to total area. Ratios of acreage for wetlands vs water areas, and saline vs fresh areas, are given in last two rows. This information was used to develop recommendations for Criterion #1.

Units are in Acres	Calcasieu	Atchafalaya	Terrebonne	Barataria	Pontchartrain	Mississippi River
Vegetation Type	**2017**	**2017**	**2017**	**2017**	**2017**	**2017**
Forested Wetland	1,541	85,961	2,095	90,312	280,608	2,356
Fresh Marsh	25,033	24,344	1,762	61,441	16,224	4,888
Floating Marsh	113	7,064	97	53,823	3,670	716
Tidal Freshwater		738,759			47,100	
Intermediate Marsh	5,609	104,978	2,591	81,101	13,177	78,453
Brackish Marsh	176,512	150,541	32,122	97,406	139,642	3,415
Salt Marsh	28,192	9,350	76,340	89,203	96,655	17,693
Water	223,283	738,492	507,175	543,465	1,596,245	533,979
Unclassified	15,549	28,024		4,475	54,694	81,012
Bare Ground	3,598	6,559	622	12,197	8,797	2,476
Total	475,832	1,887,514	622,182	1,021,226	2,248,014	722,513
	2017	**2017**	**2017**	**2017**	**2017**	**2017**
Water	223,283	738,492	507,175	543,465	1,596,245	533,979
Wetlands	237,001	1,120,997	115,007	473,285	597,075	107,521
Fresh Wetlands	26,687	856,128	3,954	205,575	347,601	7,960
Salt Wetlands	210,314	264,869	111,053	267,710	249,474	99,561
	2017	**2017**	**2017**	**2017**	**2017**	**2017**
Wetlands:Water Ratio	1.061	1.518	0.227	0.871	0.374	0.201
Salt:Fresh	7.881	0.309	28.087	1.302	0.718	12.507

This table shows the distribution of current habitat types (using percent of total wetland area in the upper panel) in each of the six Estuarine Zones. The lower panel is the distribution (%) of wetlands, water and fresh and saline wetlands to total area (sum of water and wetlands area). This information was used to develop recommendations for Criterion #1. (Raw data in previous slide).

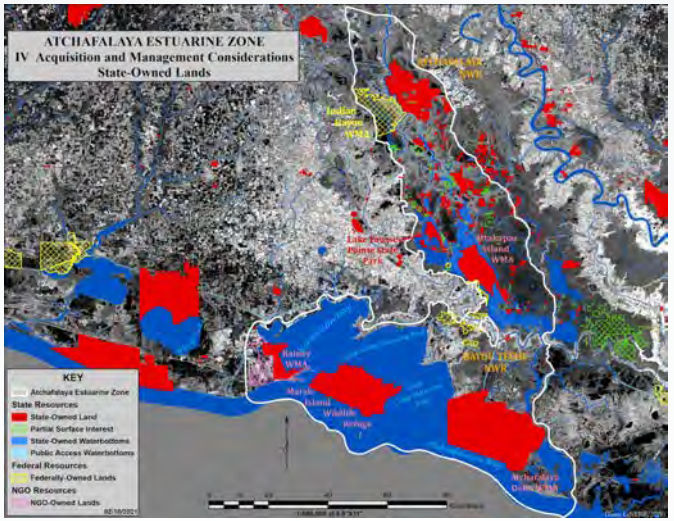
Percentage of Habitat Type	Calcasieu	Atchafalaya	Terrebonne	Barataria	Pontchartrain	Mississippi River
Vegetation Type	2017	2017	2017	2017	2017	2017
Forested Wetland	0.7%	7.7%	1.8%	19.1%	47.0%	2.2%
Fresh Marsh	10.6%	2.2%	1.5%	13.0%	2.7%	4.5%
Floating Marsh	0.0%	0.6%	0.1%	11.4%	0.6%	0.7%
Tidal Freshwater	0.0%	65.9%	0.0%	0.0%	7.9%	0.0%
Intermediate Marsh	2.4%	9.4%	2.3%	17.1%	2.2%	73.0%
Brackish Marsh	74.5%	13.4%	27.9%	20.6%	23.4%	3.2%
Salt Marsh	11.9%	0.8%	66.4%	18.8%	16.2%	16.5%
	2017	2017	2017	2017	2017	2017
Water	46.9%	39.1%	81.5%	53.2%	71.0%	73.9%
Wetlands	49.8%	59.4%	18.5%	46.3%	26.6%	14.9%
Fresh Wetlands	11.3%	76.4%	3.4%	43.4%	58.2%	7.4%
Salt Wetlands	88.7%	23.6%	96.6%	56.6%	41.8%	92.6%

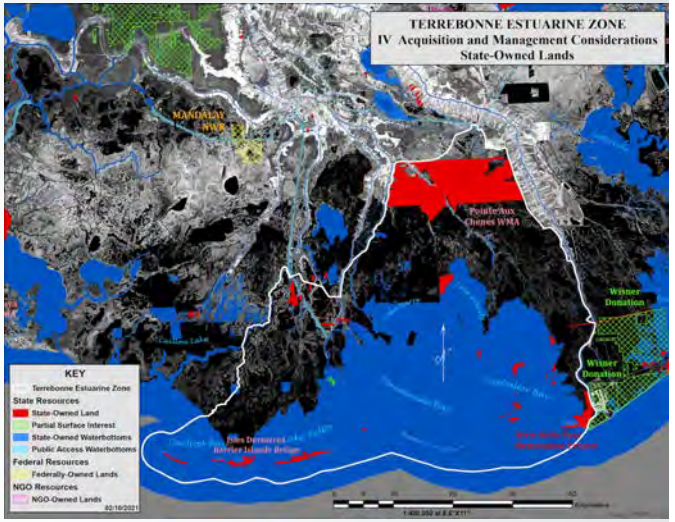
This section of the presentation focuses on Criterion #2.

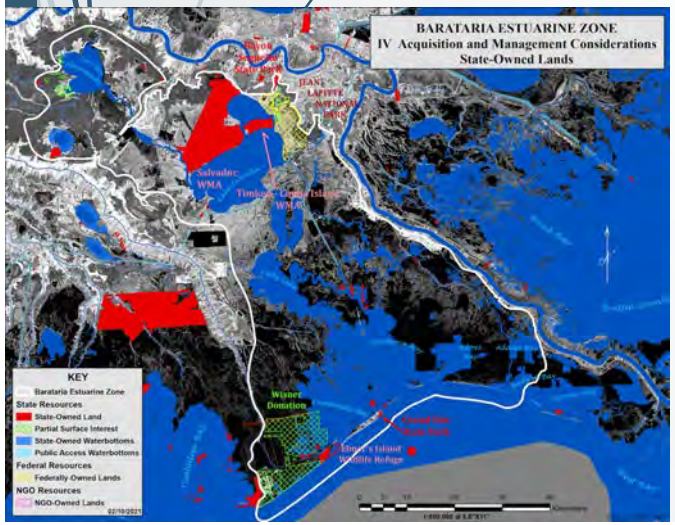
Pre-Screening Criteria #2 State-Owned Lands
2. Is there currently sufficient area of state-owned lands within this Estuarine Zone conducive to developing LaNERR Candidate Sites that meet National Estuarine Reserve System objectives? Description: Majority of publicly-owned land used as core areas within a candidate site cannot be federal lands. Further, the state must demonstrate adequate management control for core areas to be designated as a NERR. NOAA requires that state lands be available in the initial designation of a NERR site since the agreement is a NOAA-state MOU.

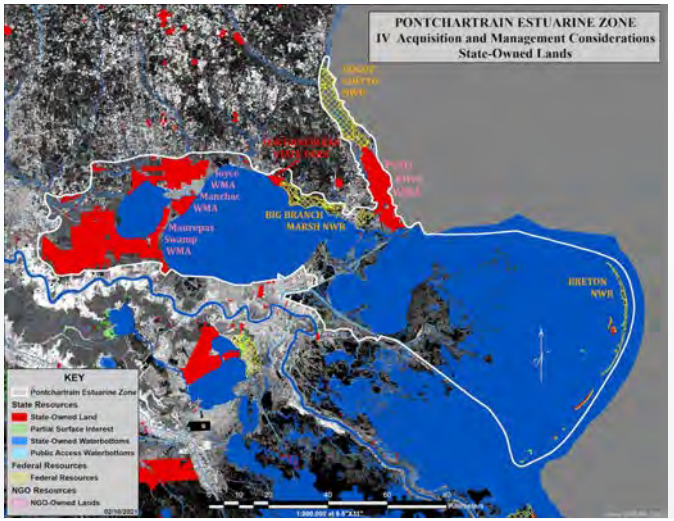
Estuarine Zone	Calcasieu Estuarine Zone	Atchafalaya Estuarine Zone	Terrebonne Estuarine Zone	Barataria Estuarine Zone	Pontchartrain Estuarine Zone	Mississippi River Estuarine Zone
Pre-Screening Criteria	Pre-Screening Recommendation	Pre-Screening Recommendation	Pre-Screening Recommendation	Pre-Screening Recommendation	Pre-Screening Recommendation	Pre-Screening Recommendation
2. Is there currently sufficient area of state-owned lands within this Estuarine Zone conducive to developing LaNERR Candidate Sites that meet National Estuarine Reserve System objectives? Description: Majority of publicly-owned land used as core areas within a candidate site cannot be federal lands. Further, the state must demonstrate adequate management control for core areas to be designated as a NERR. NOAA requires that state lands be available in the initial designation of a NERR site since the agreement is a NOAA-state MOU.	Insufficient Core Areas: The current availability of state-owned lands to establish core areas for candidate LaNERR sites in the Calcasieu Estuarine Zone is very limited. Most of the public lands in this Estuarine Zone are federal lands. State Lands = 3,046 acres; Other Public Lands = 152,585 acres	Sufficient Core Areas: The current availability of state-owned lands to establish core areas for candidate LaNERR sites in the Atchafalaya Estuarine Zone is sufficient. State Lands = 347,945 acres; Other Public Lands = 57,227 acres	Sufficient Core Areas: The current availability of state-owned lands to establish core areas for candidate LaNERR sites in the Terrebonne Estuarine Zone is sufficient. State Lands = 44,203 acres; Other Public Lands = 15,260 acres	Sufficient Core Areas: The current availability of state-owned lands to establish core areas for candidate LaNERR sites in the Barataria Estuarine Zone is sufficient. State-owned lands in this Estuarine Zone are slightly less compared to other public lands. State Lands = 40,185 acres; Other Public Lands = 49,913 acres	Sufficient Core Areas: The current availability of state-owned lands to establish core areas for candidate LaNERR sites in the Pontchartrain Estuarine Zone is sufficient. State Lands = 200,207 acres; Other Public Lands = 53,640 acres	Sufficient Core Areas: The current availability of state-owned lands to establish core areas for candidate LaNERR sites in the Mississippi River Estuarine Zone is sufficient. State Lands = 116,118 acres; Other Public Lands = 49,048 acres

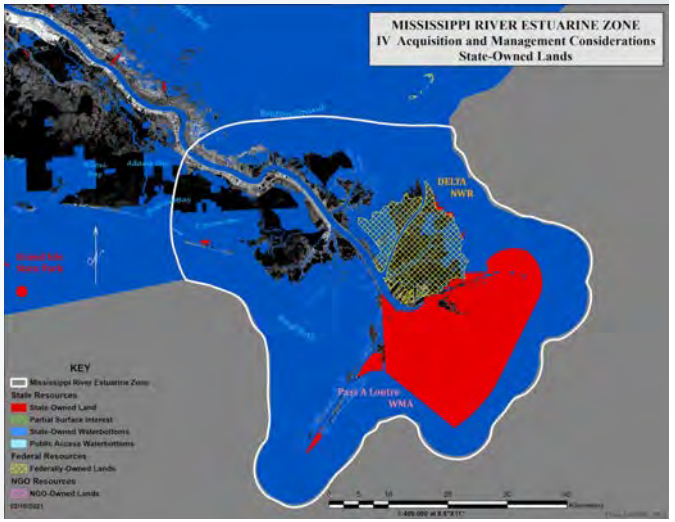
These maps show the distribution of state-owned lands (solid red) in each of the six Estuarine Zones. This information was used to develop recommendations for Criterion #2.





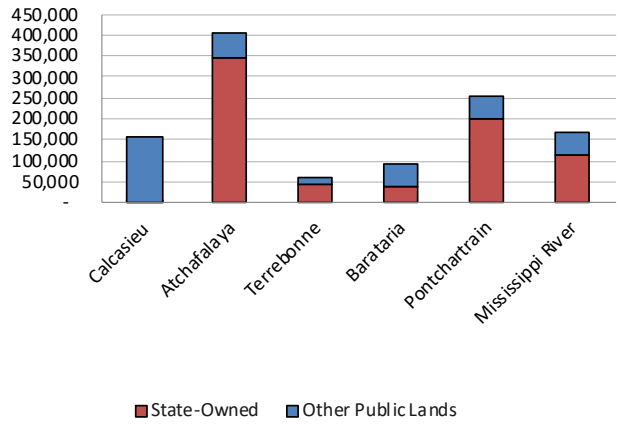




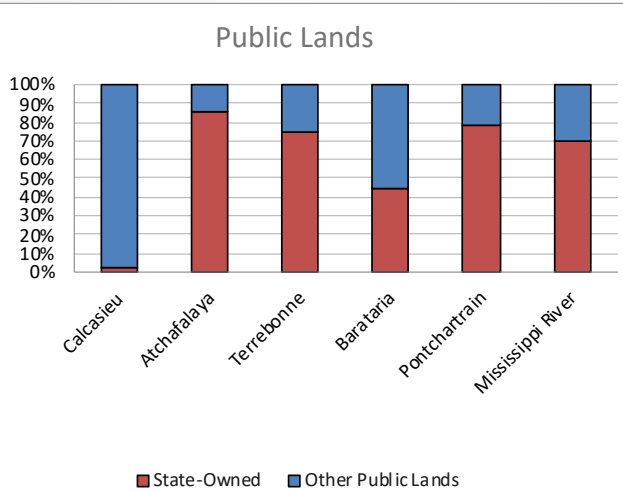


IV. Acquisition and Management Considerations

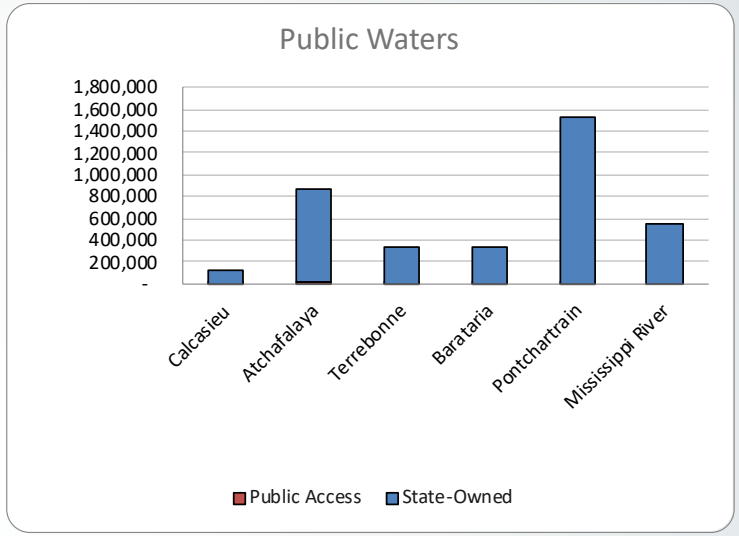
Area in Acres



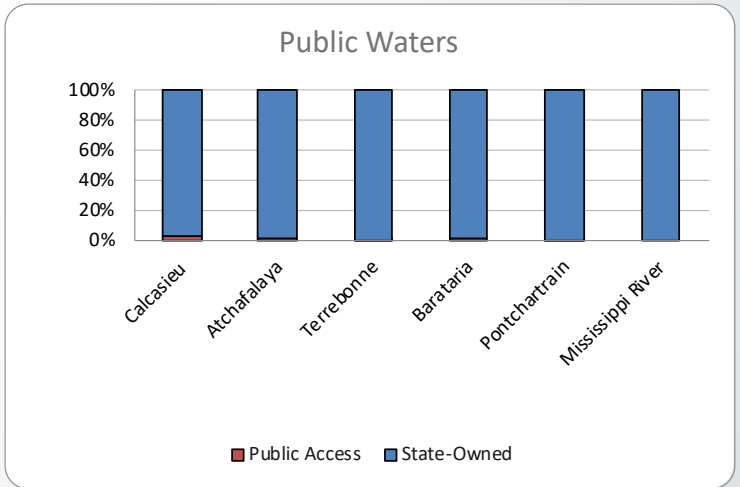
Percentage of Total Area



Area in Acres



Percentage of Total Area



IV. Acquisition and Management Considerations

Land-Water Ownership by LaNERR Zone

Units in Acres	State Lands		Federal Lands	State Waterbottoms	
	Partial Surface Interest	State-Owned		Public Access	State-Owned
Atchafalaya	14,605	347,945	42,622	9,682	852,191
Barataria	35,835	40,185	14,078	2,329	328,286
Calcasieu	-	3,046	152,585	3,222	129,465
Mississippi River	-	116,118	49,048	-	540,010
Pontchartrain	-	200,207	53,640	7,056	1,525,283
Terrebonne	15,260	44,203	-	1,307	330,363

Units in Acres

	State Lands		Total Public Land	State Waterbottoms	
	Other Public Lands	State-Owned		Public Access	State-Owned
Atchafalaya	57,227	347,945	405,172	9,682	852,191
Barataria	49,913	40,185	90,098	2,329	328,286
Calcasieu	152,585	3,046	155,631	3,222	129,465
Mississippi River	49,048	116,118	165,166	-	540,010
Pontchartrain	53,640	200,207	253,847	7,056	1,525,283
Terrebonne	15,260	44,203	59,463	1,307	330,363

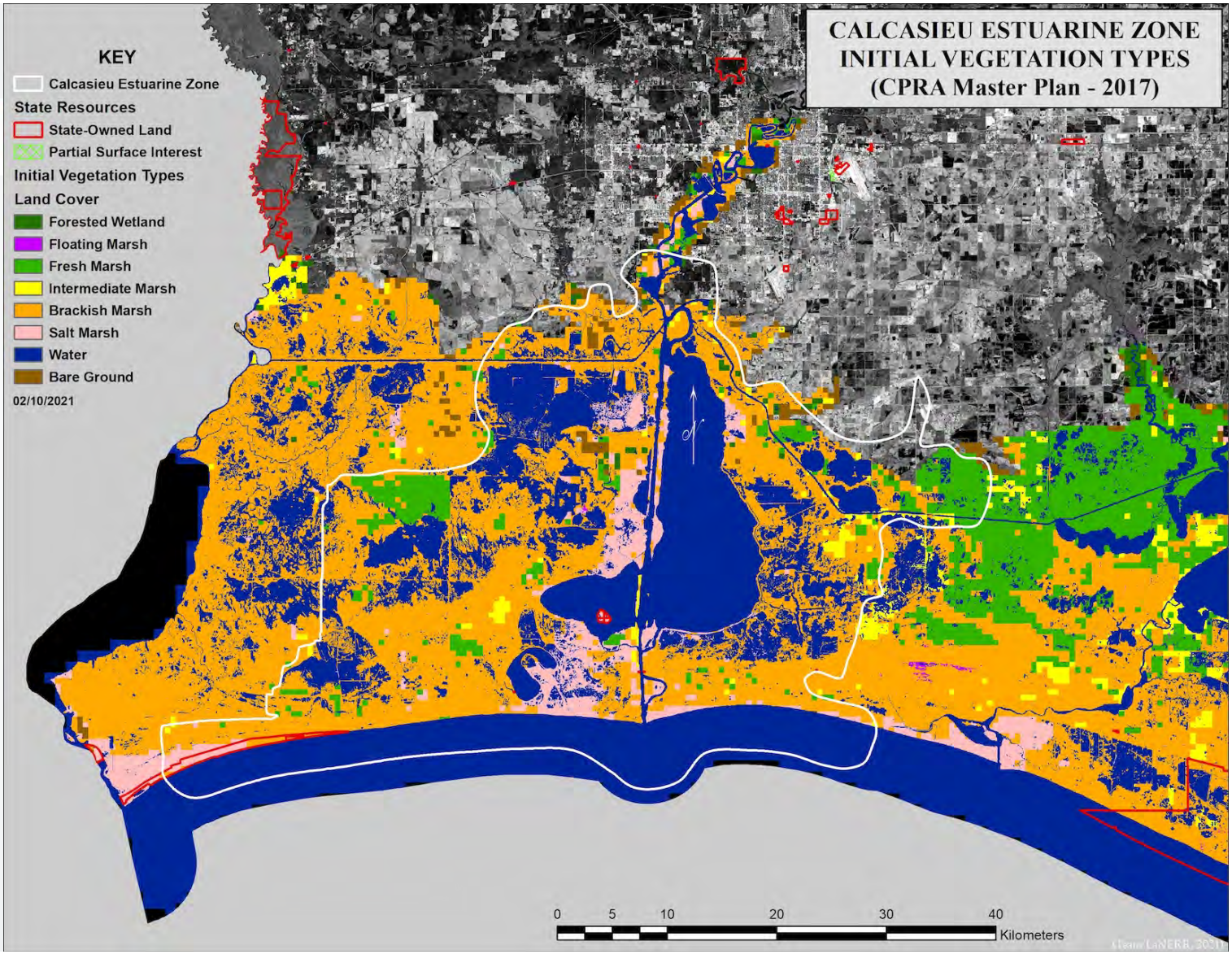
I. Environmental Representativeness

Calcasieu Estuarine Zone

Pre-Screening Recommendation #1

<u>Insignificant Unique Setting:</u>

The coastal setting represented by state-owned lands of this Estuarine Zone is not unique to other NERR sites in the Louisianian Biogeographic Zone of NERR System (sections 11, 12, 13) based on the objective to represent delta estuary. The vegetation diversity demonstrates dominance by brackish and salt zones. The chenier ridges, if they can be included in state-owned lands, are considered a unique habitat of delta estuary.



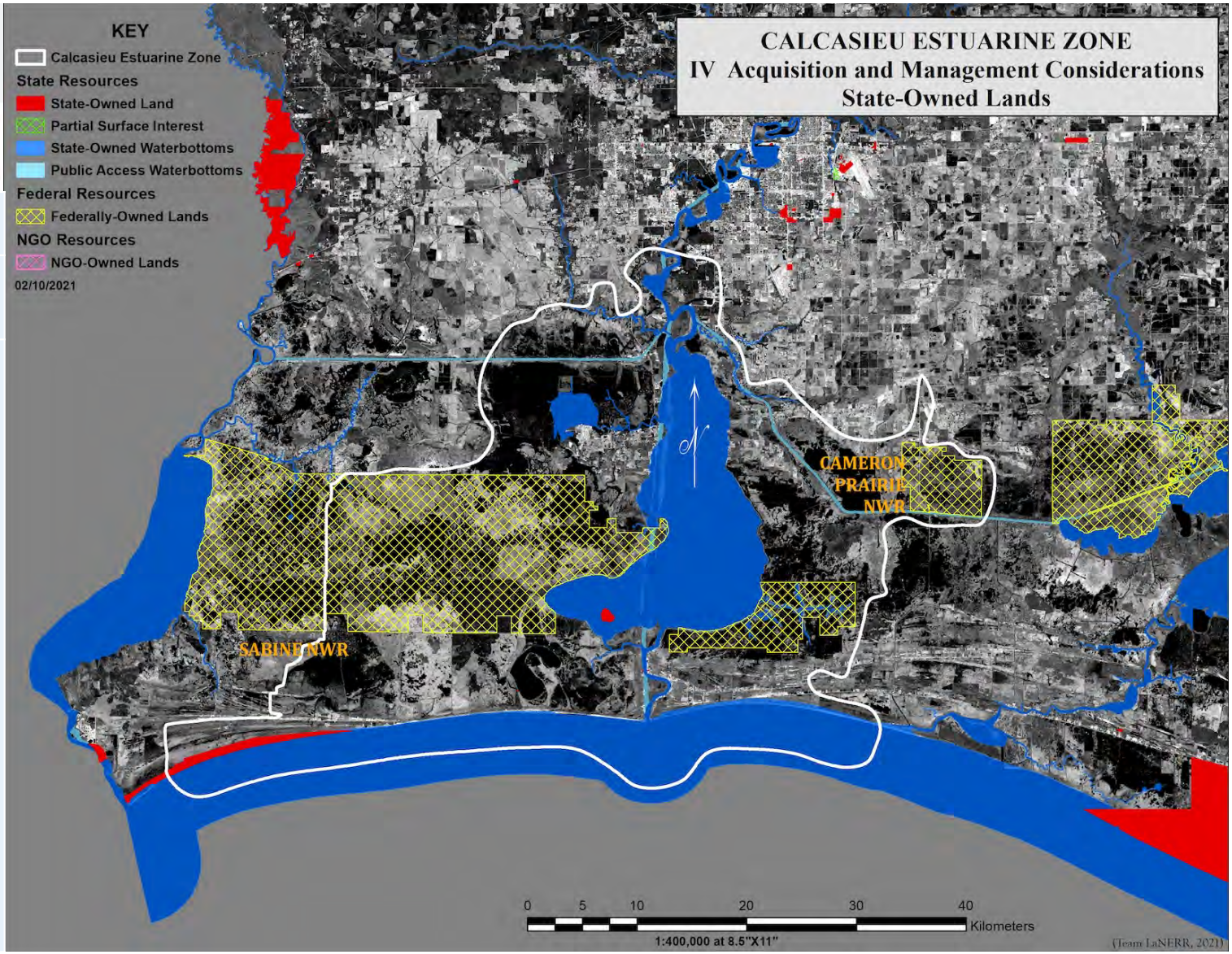
IV. Acquisition and Management Considerations

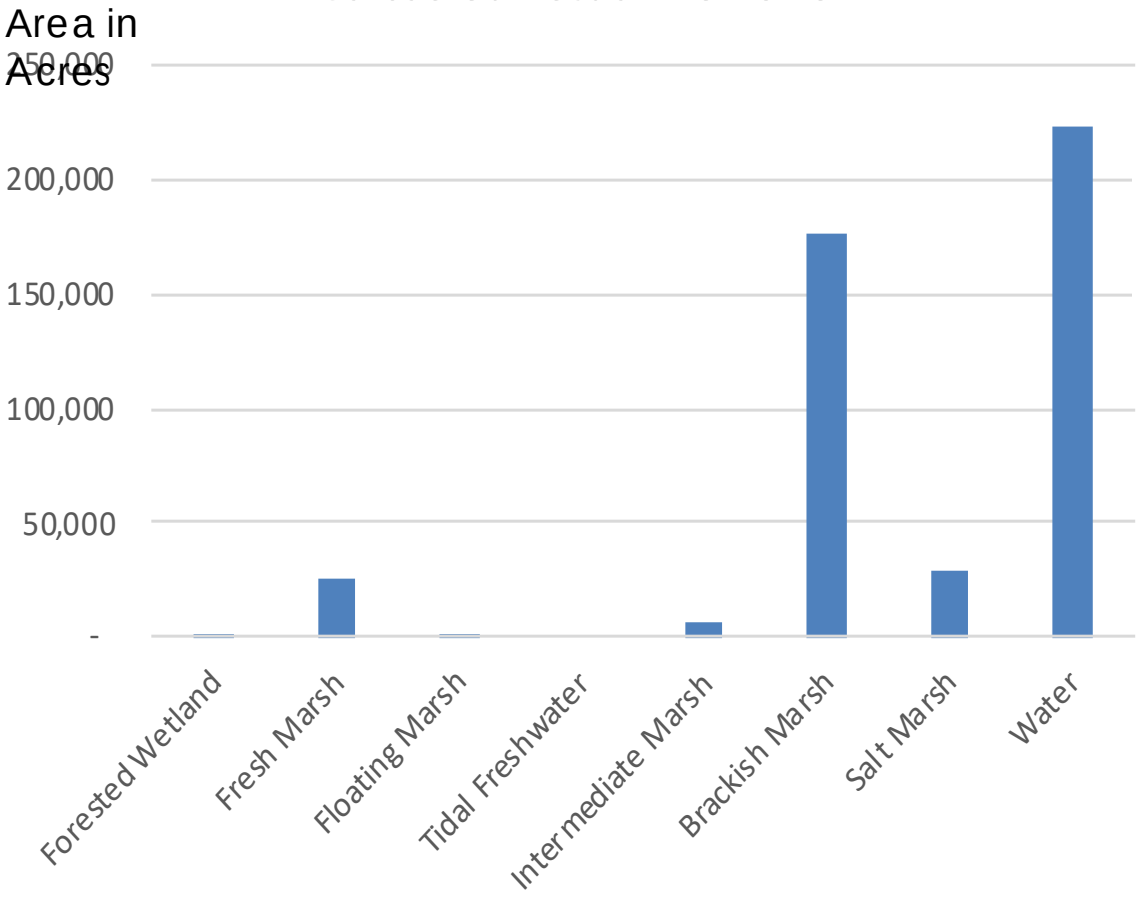
Calcasieu Estuarine Zone

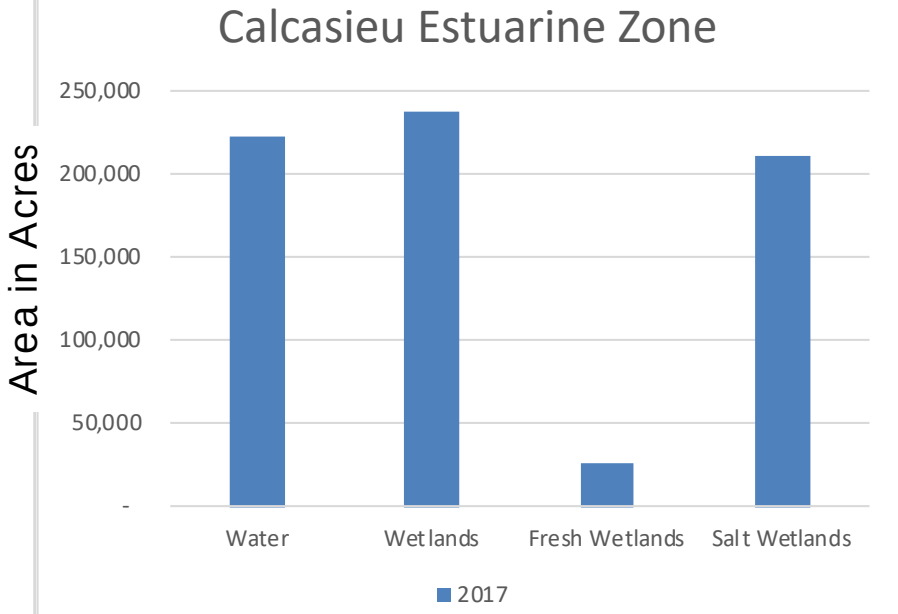
Pre-Screening Recommendation #2

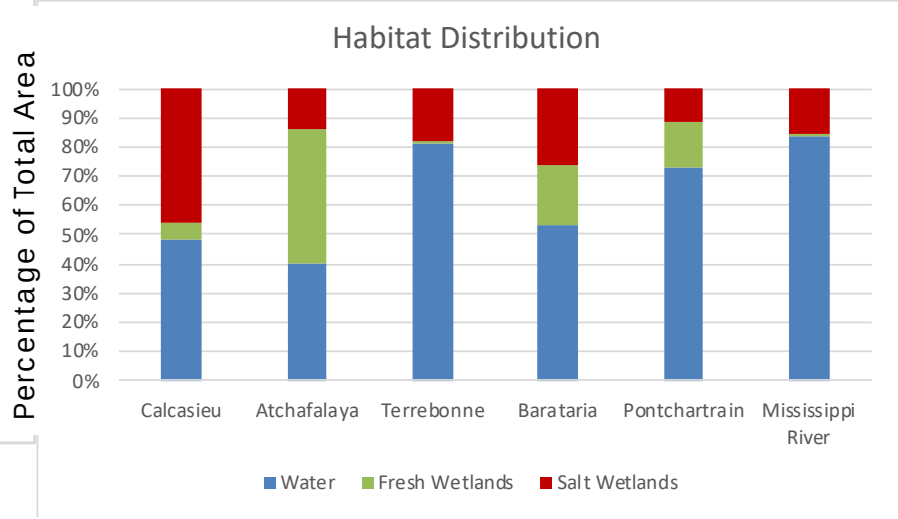
<u>Insufficient Core Areas:</u> The current availability of state-owned lands to establish core areas for candidate LaNERR sites in the Calcasieu Estuarine Zone is very limited. Most of the public lands in this Estuarine Zone are federal lands.

State Lands = 3,046 acres;
Other Public Lands = 152,585 acres









Graphs representing the current (2017) distribution of wetland habitats (fresh or saline) in each of the six Estuarine Zones compared to water habitats.

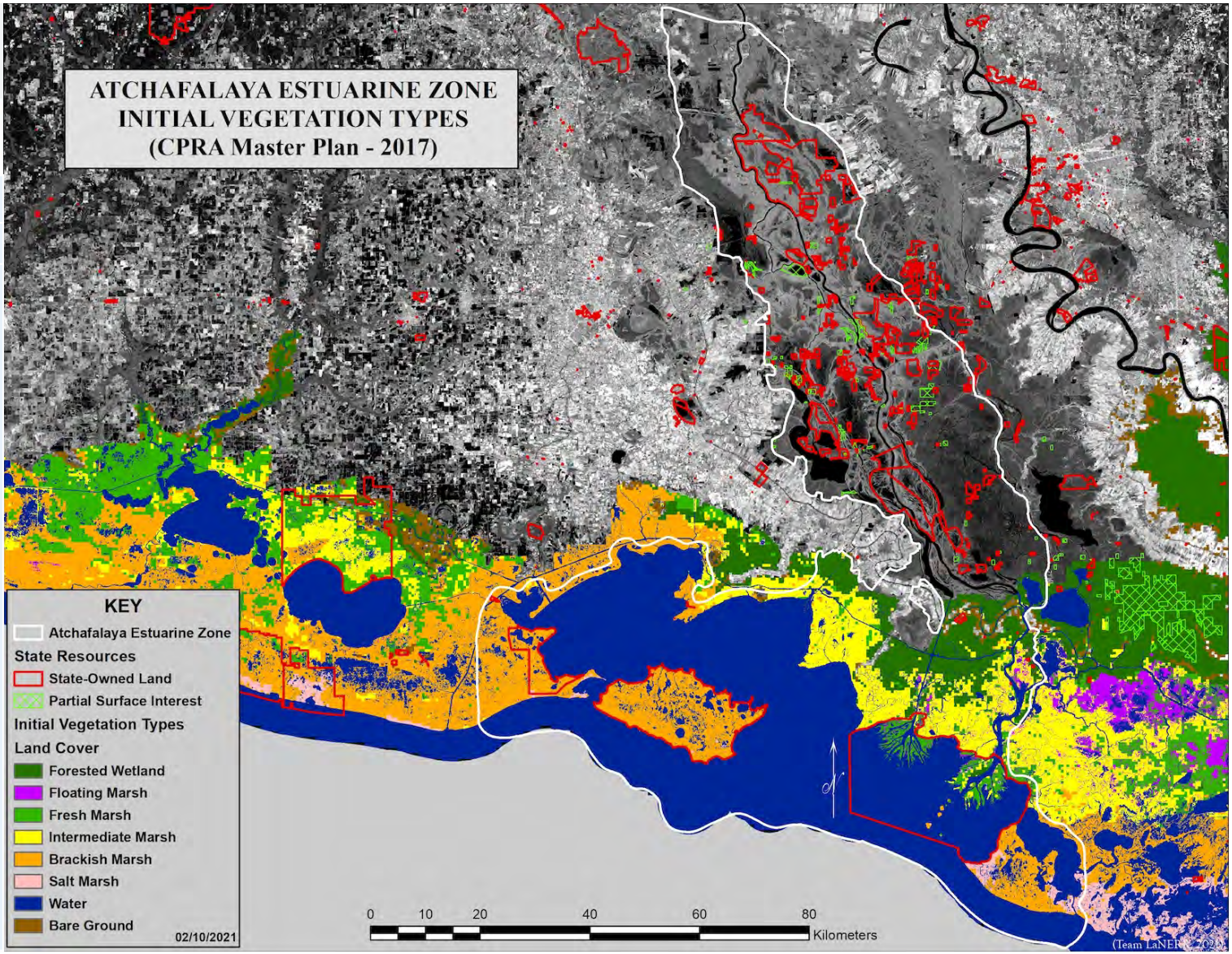
LaNERR SEARCH

I. Environmental Representativeness

Atchafalaya Estuarine Zone

Pre-Screening Recommendation #1

Significant Unique Setting: The coastal setting of this Estuarine Zone is unique in the Louisianian Biogeographic Zone of NERR System (sections 11, 12, 13) based on the objective to represent delta estuary. The vegetation diversity demonstrates dominance by tidal freshwater but with both forested wetlands and brackish marshes. The development of candidate sites for LaNERR in this Estuarine Zone would provide unique habitats, coastal processes and salinity gradients that could be used for program development (research & education).



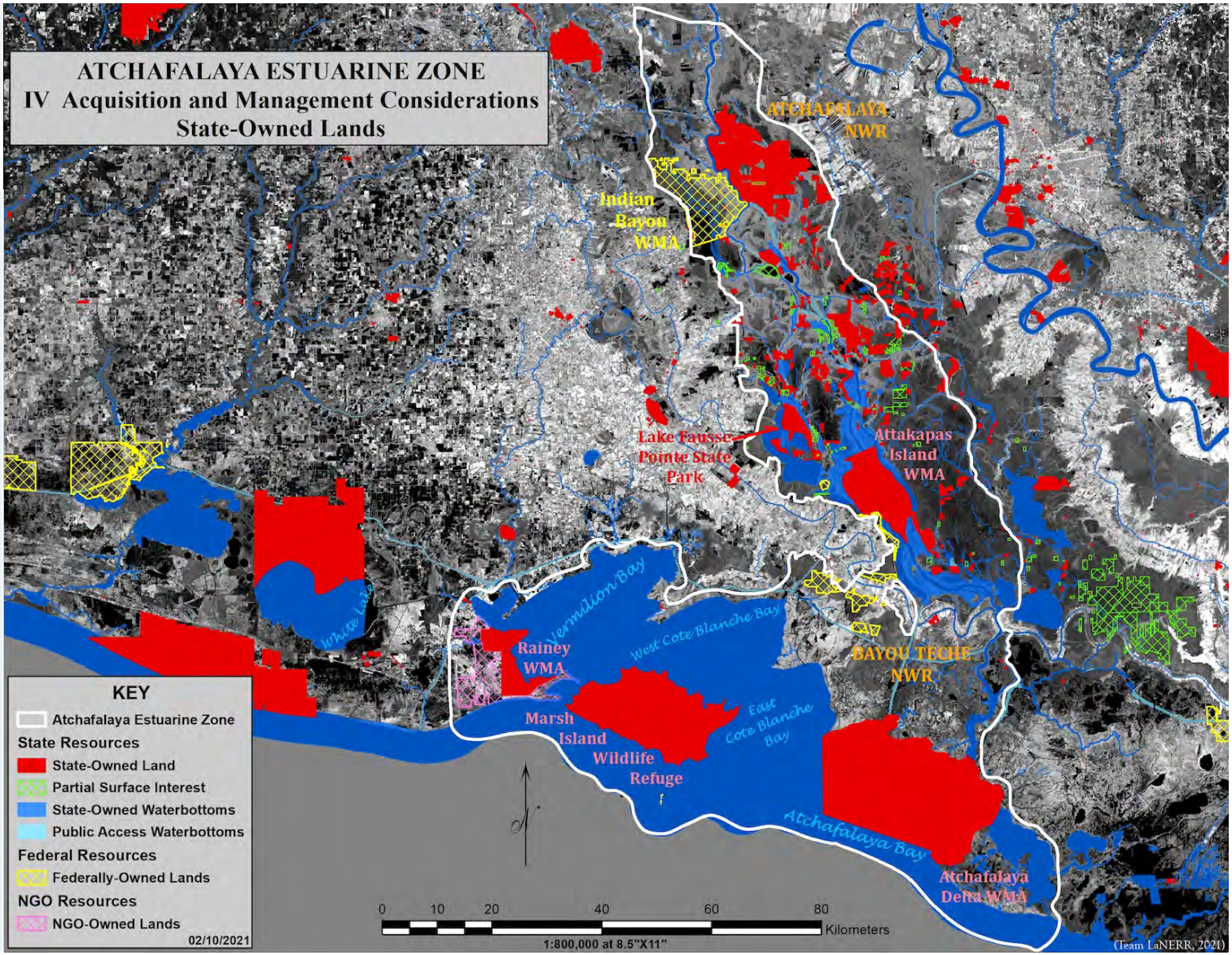
IV. Acquisition and Management Considerations

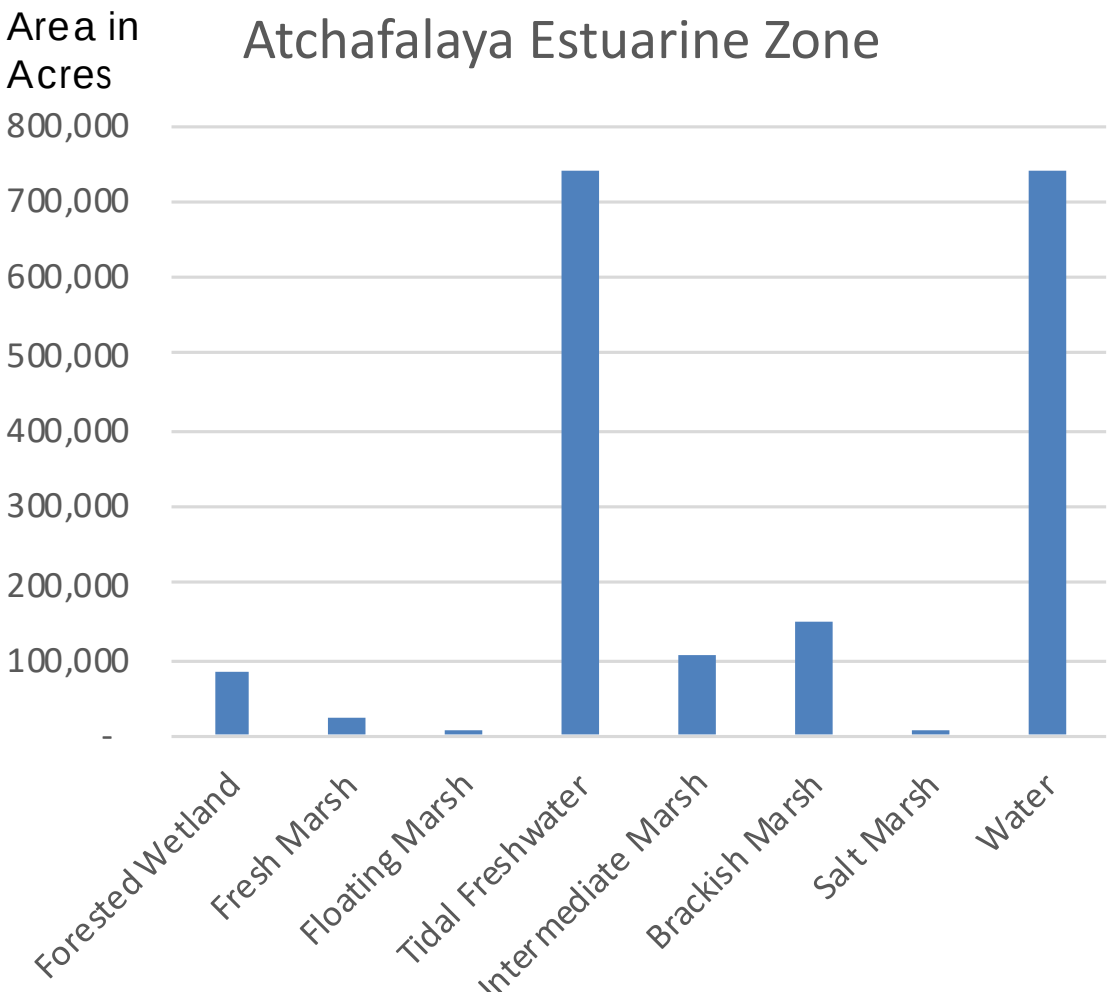
Atchafalaya Estuarine Zone

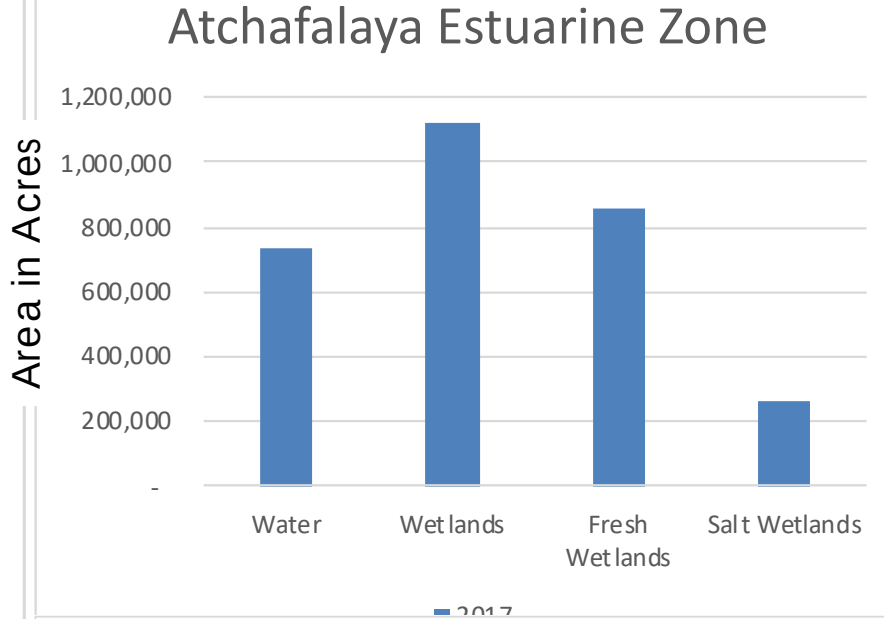
Pre-Screening Recommendation #2

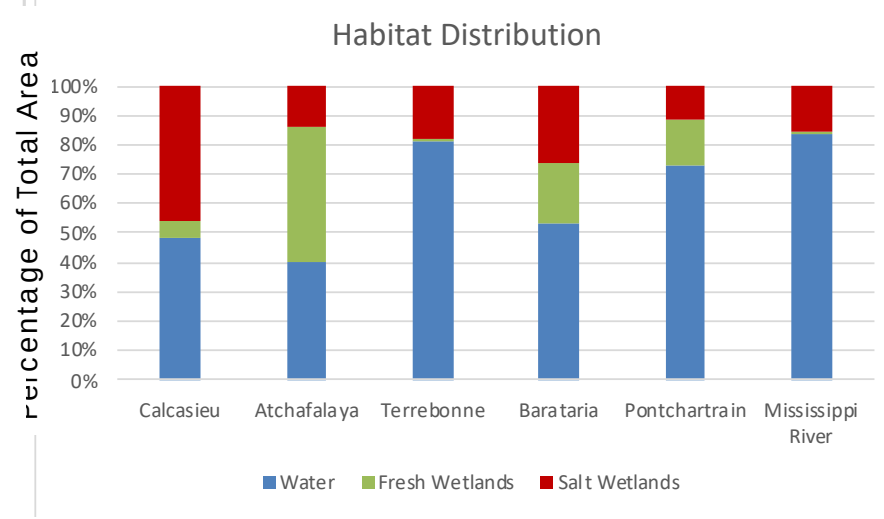
<u>Sufficient Core Areas:</u> The current availability of state-owned lands to establish core areas for candidate LaNERR sites in the Atchafalaya Estuarine Zone is sufficient.

State Lands = 347,945 acres; Other Public Lands = 57,227 acres









Graphs representing the current (2017) distribution of wetland habitats (fresh or saline) in each of the six Estuarine Zones compared to water habitats.

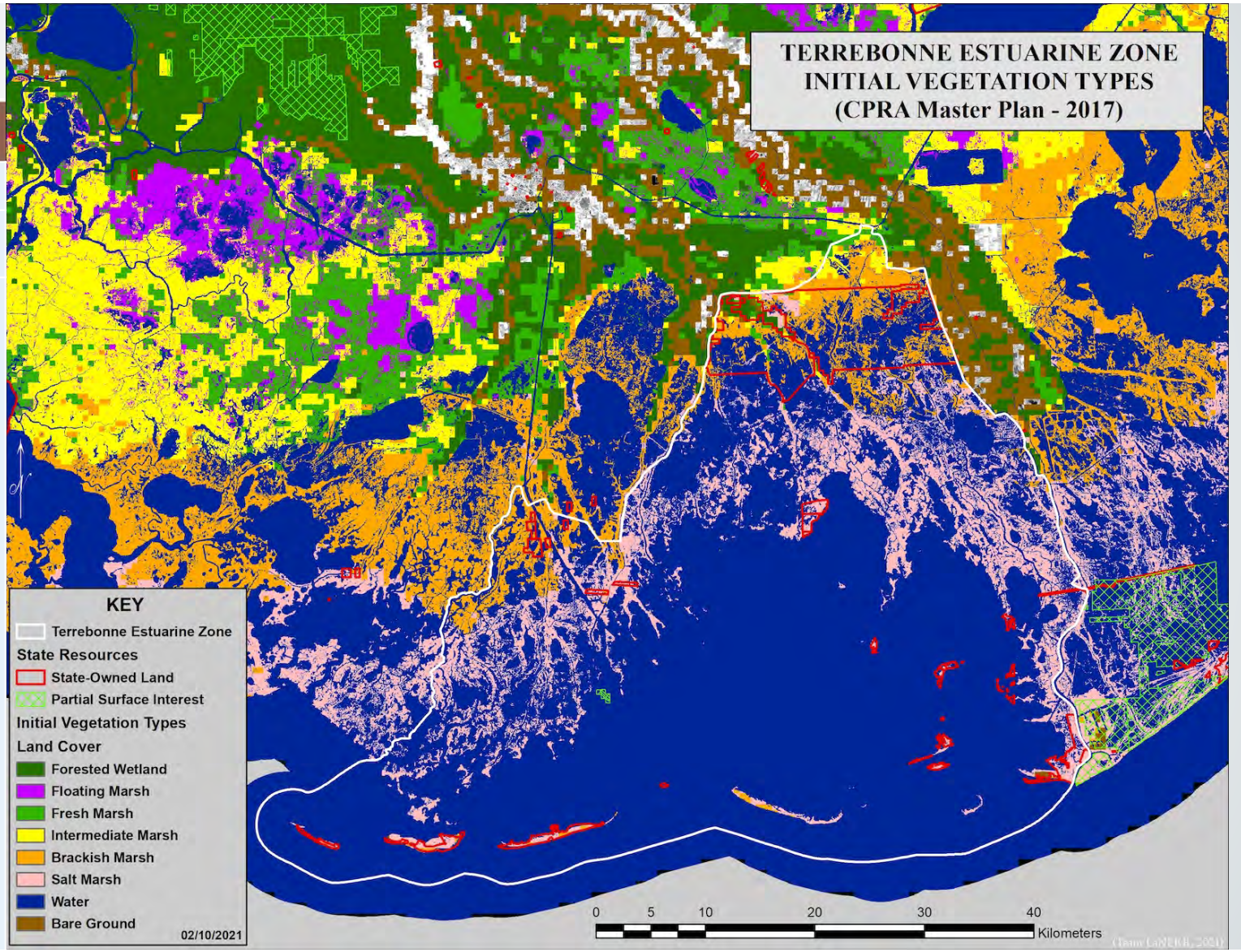
LaNERR SEARCH

I. Environmental Representativeness

Terrebonne Estuarine Zone

Pre-Screening Recommendation #1

Insignificant Unique Setting: The coastal setting of this Estuarine Zone is not unique in the Louisianian Biogeographic Zone of NERR System (sections 11, 12, 13) based on the objective to represent delta estuary. The vegetation diversity demonstrates dominance by salt and brackish marsh with little representation of other salinity zones. The development of candidate sites for LaNERR in this Estuarine Zone would not provide unique habitats, coastal processes and salinity gradients that could be used for program development (research & education).



LaNERR SEARCH

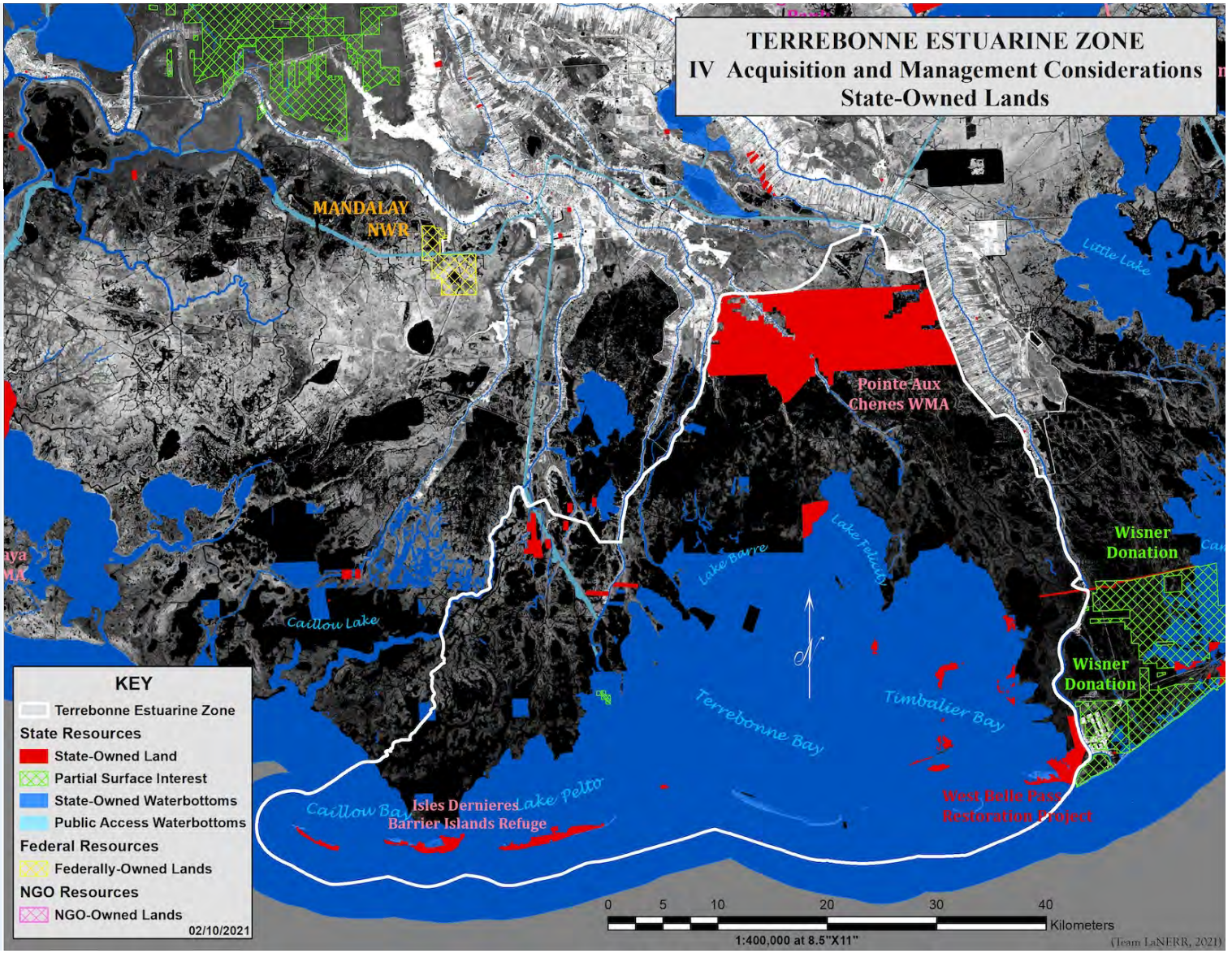
IV. Acquisition and Management Considerations

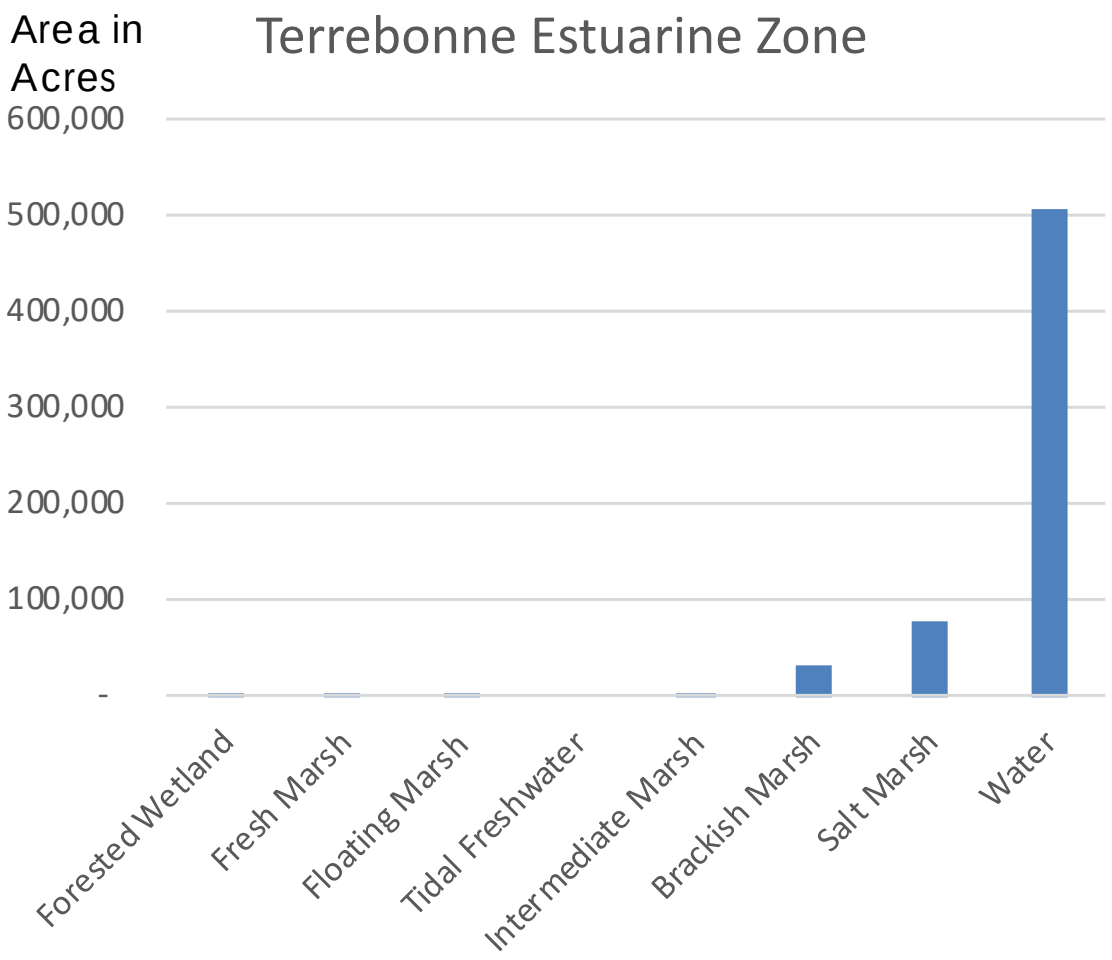
Terrebonne Estuarine Zone

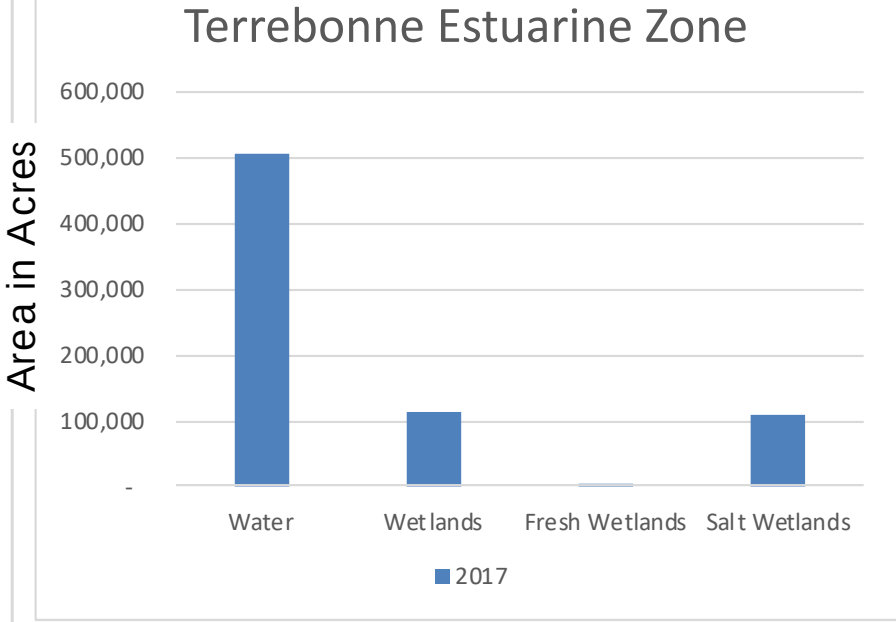
Pre-Screening Recommendation #2

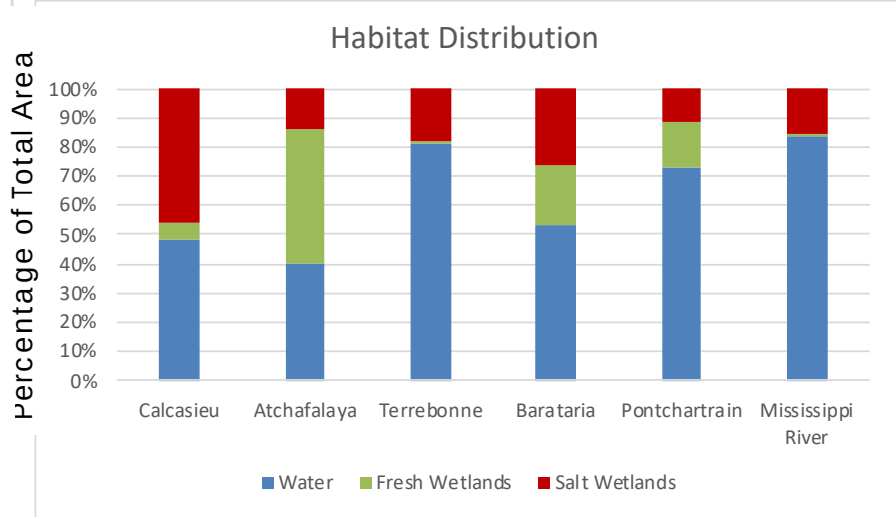
Sufficient Core Areas: The current availability of state-owned lands to establish core areas for candidate LaNERR sites in the Terrebonne Estuarine Zone is sufficient.

State Lands = 44,203 acres; Other Public Lands = 15,260 acres









Graphs representing the current (2017) distribution of wetland habitats (fresh or saline) in each of the six Estuarine Zones compared to water habitats.

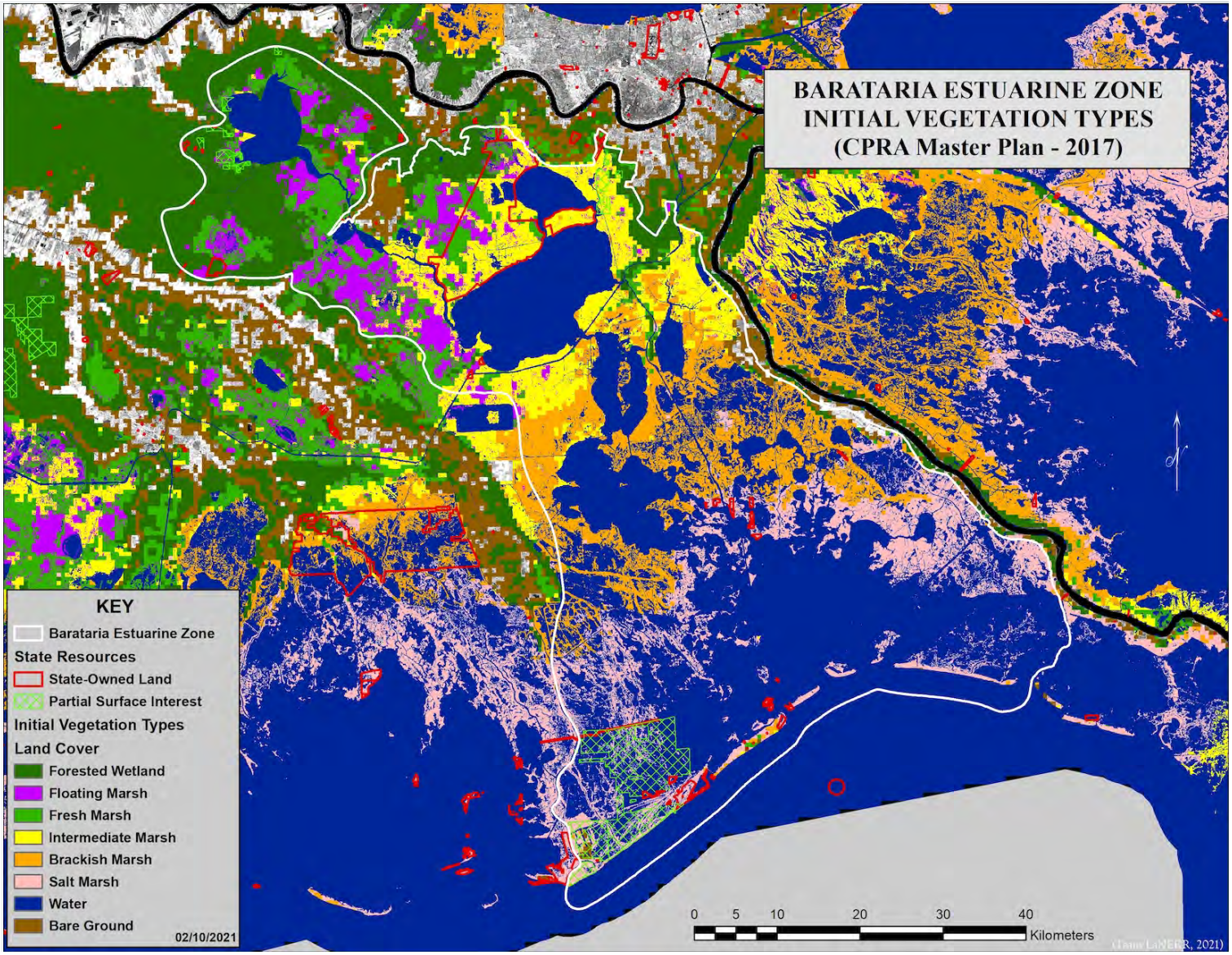
LaNERR SEARCH

I. Environmental Representativeness

Barataria Estuarine Zone

Pre-Screening Recommendation #1

Significant Unique Setting: The coastal setting of this Estuarine Zone is unique in the Louisianian Biogeographic Zone of NERR System (sections 11, 12, 13) based on the objective to represent delta estuary. The vegetation diversity demonstrates equal distribution by freshwater, brackish and saline zones. The development of candidate sites for LaNERR in this Estuarine Zone would provide unique habitats, coastal processes and salinity gradients that could be used for program development (research & education).



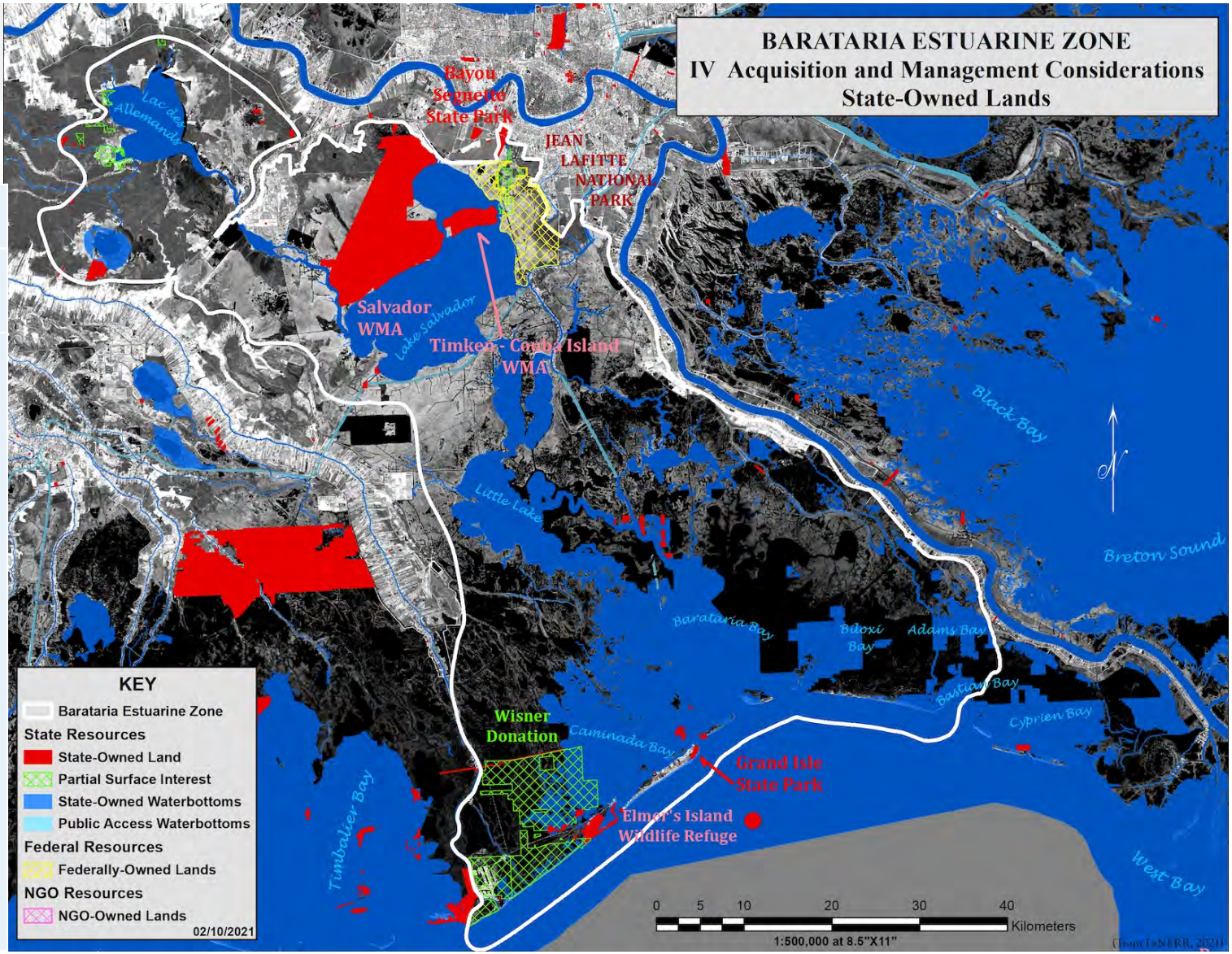
IV. Acquisition and Management Considerations

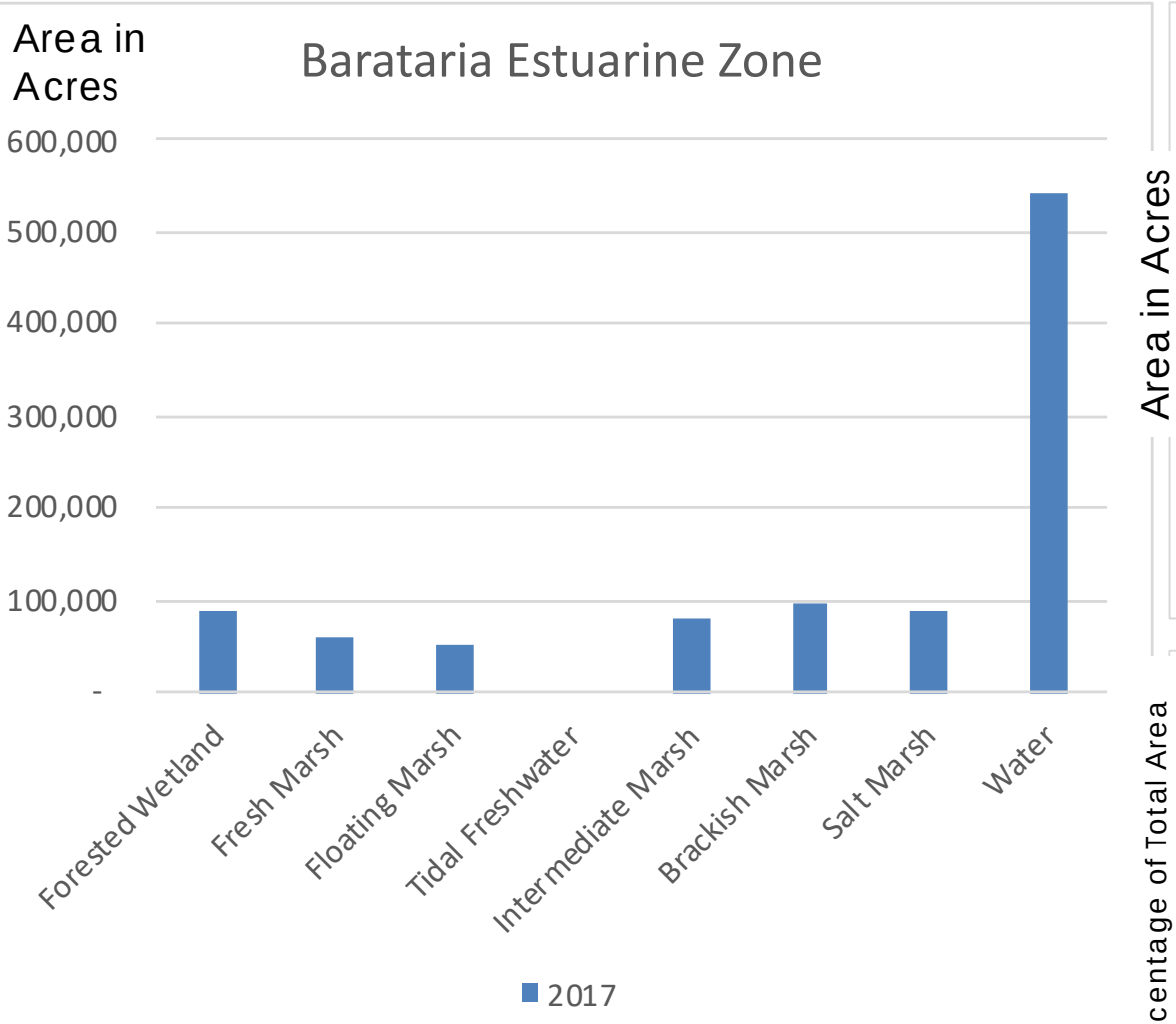
Barataria Estuarine Zone

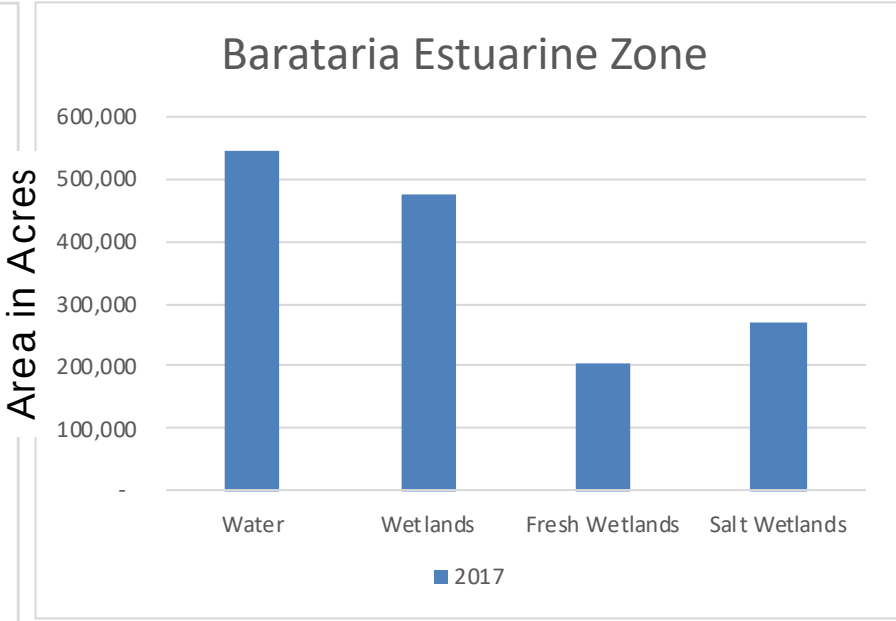
Pre-Screening Recommendation #2

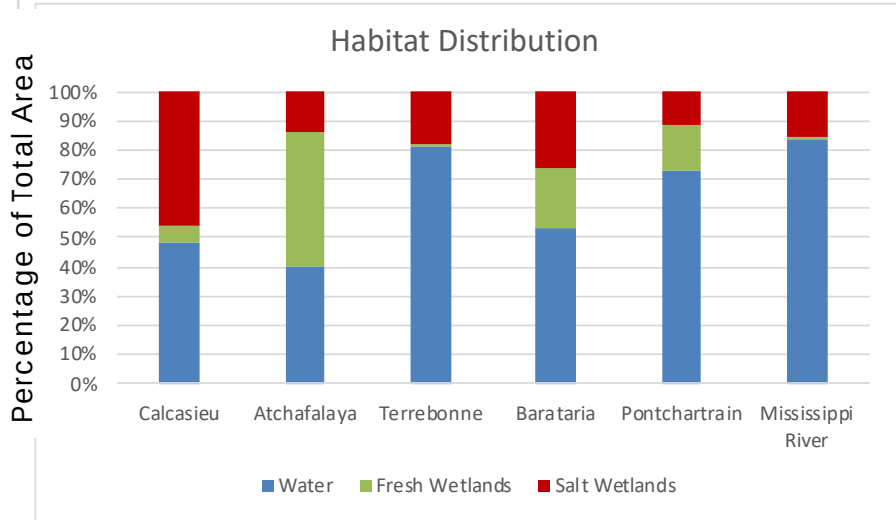
Sufficient Core Areas: The current availability of state-owned lands to establish core areas for candidate LaNERR sites in the Barataria Estuarine Zone is sufficient. State-owned lands in this Estuarine Zone are slightly less compared to other public lands.

State Lands = 40,185 acres;
Other Public Lands = 49,913 acres









Graphs representing the current (2017) distribution of wetland habitats (fresh or saline) in each of the six Estuarine Zones compared to water habitats.

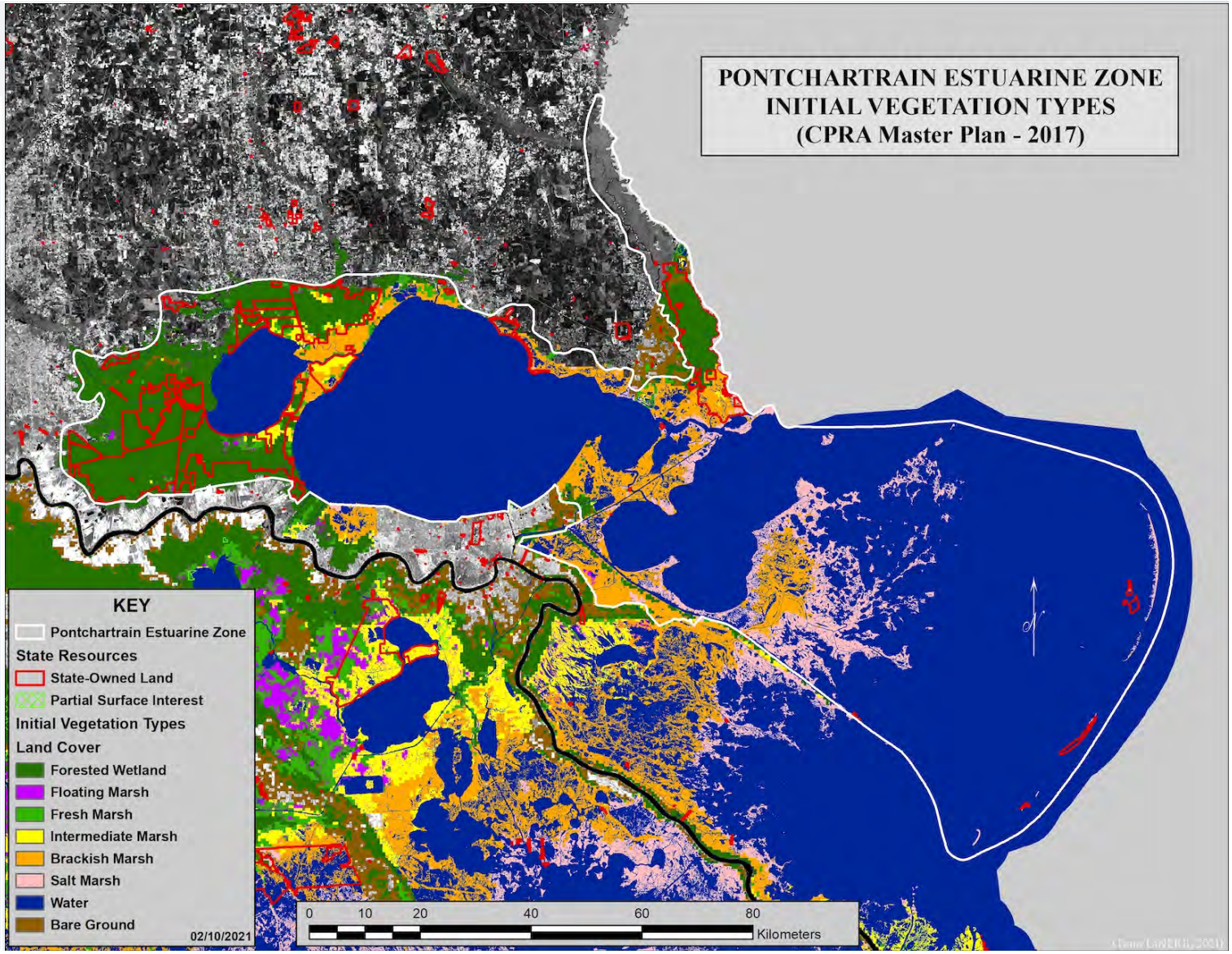
LaNERR SEARCH

I. Environmental Representativeness

Pontchartrain Estuarine Zone

Pre-Screening Recommendation #1

<u>Significant Unique Setting:</u> The coastal setting of this Estuarine Zone is unique in the Louisianian Biogeographic Zone of NERR System (sections 11, 12, 13) based on the objective to represent delta estuary. The vegetation diversity demonstrates equal distribution by freshwater, brackish and saline zones. The development of candidate sites for LaNERR in this Estuarine Zone would provide unique habitats, coastal processes and salinity gradients that could be used for program development (research & education).



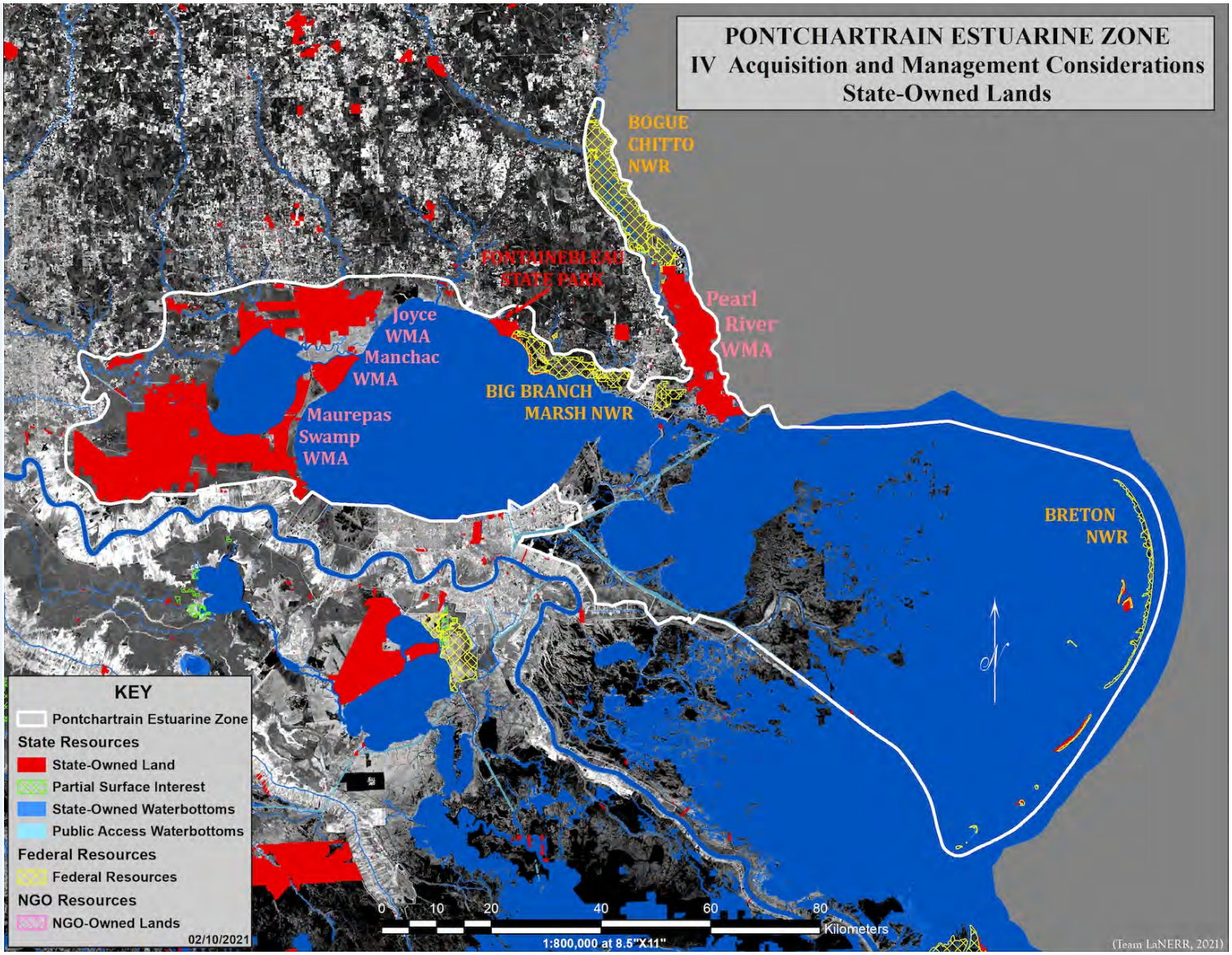
IV. Acquisition and Management Considerations

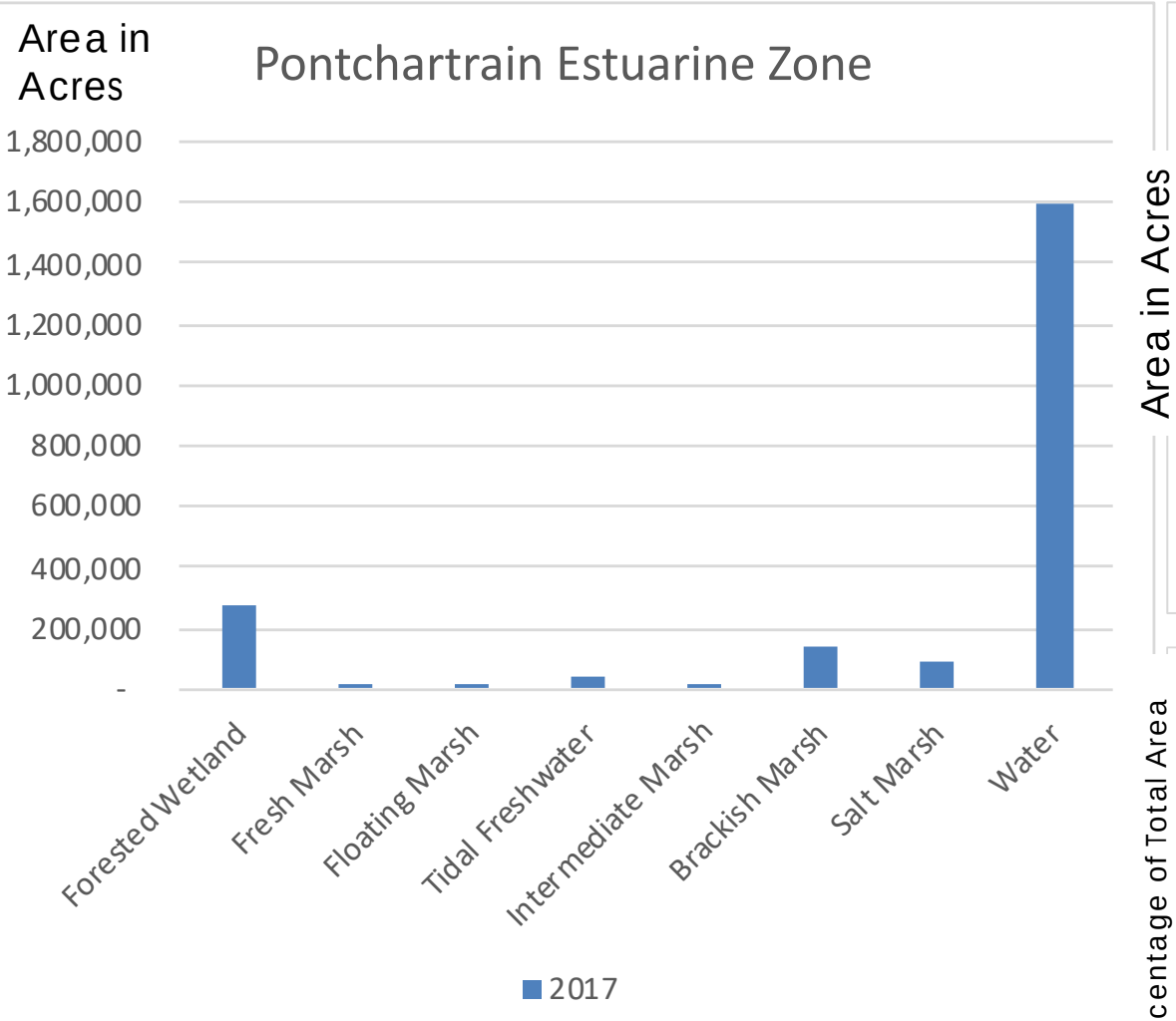
Pontchartrain Estuarine Zone

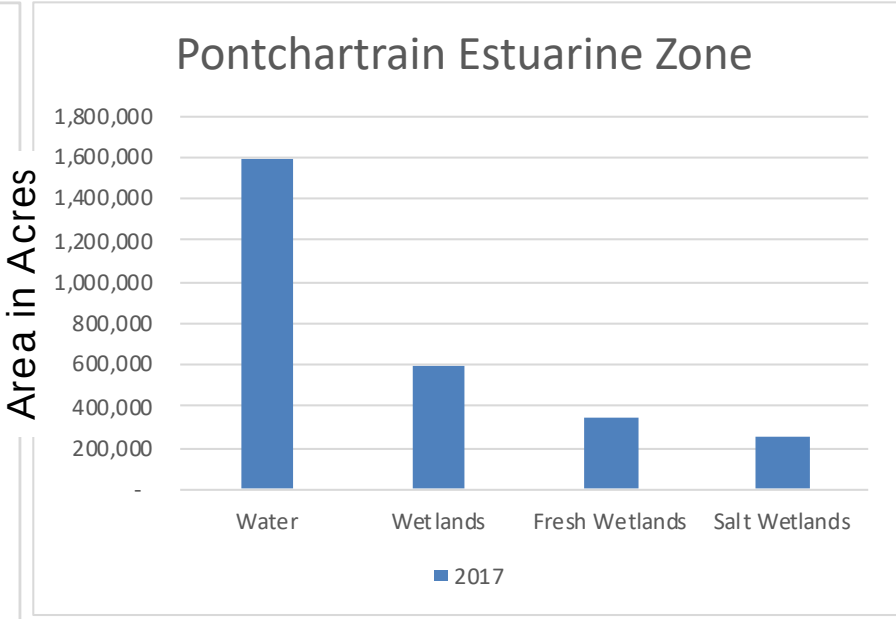
Pre-Screening Recommendation #2

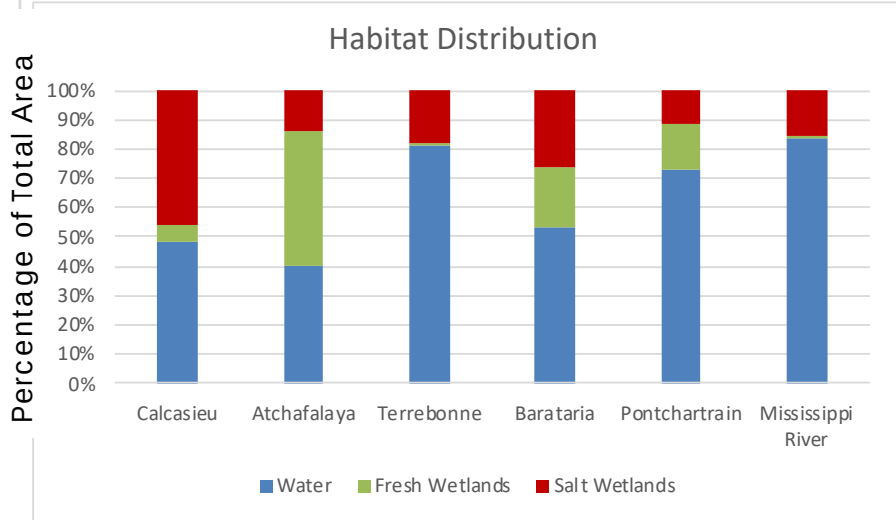
<u>Sufficient Core Areas:</u> The current availability of state-owned lands to establish core areas for candidate LaNERR sites in the Pontchartrain Estuarine Zone is sufficient.

State Lands = 200,207 acres; Other Public Lands = 53,640 acres









Graphs representing the current (2017) distribution of wetland habitats (fresh or saline) in each of the six Estuarine Zones compared to water habitats.

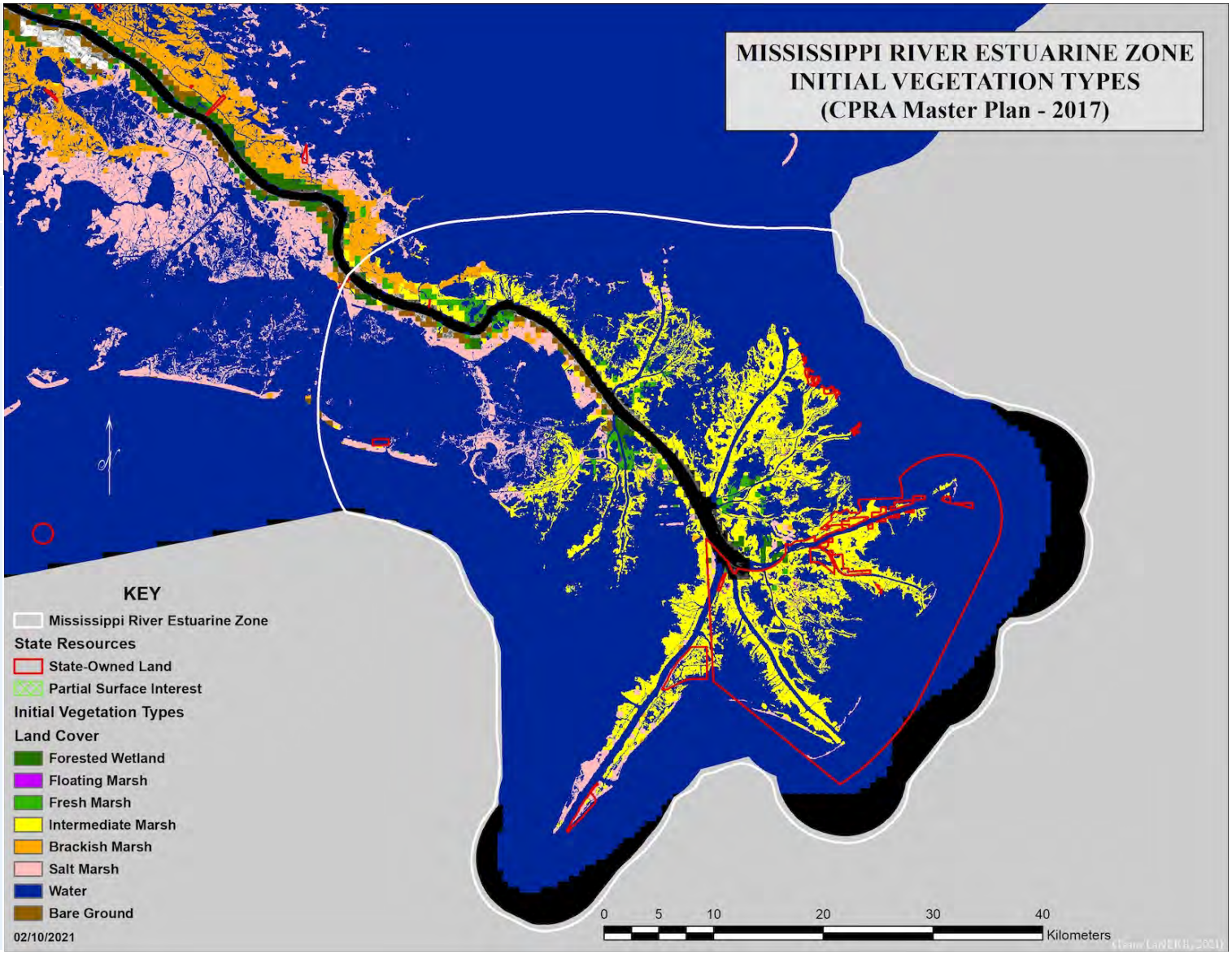
LaNERR SEARCH

I. Environmental Representativeness

Mississippi River Estuarine Zone

Pre-Screening Recommendation #1

Significant Unique Setting: The coastal setting of this Estuarine Zone is unique in the Louisianian Biogeographic Zone of NERR System (sections 11, 12, 13) based on the objective to represent delta estuary. The vegetation diversity demonstrates dominance by intermediate salinity zones but also has freshwater, brackish and saline zones. The development of candidate sites for LaNERR in this Estuarine Zone would provide unique habitats, coastal processes and salinity gradients that could be used for program development (research & education).



LaNERR SEARCH

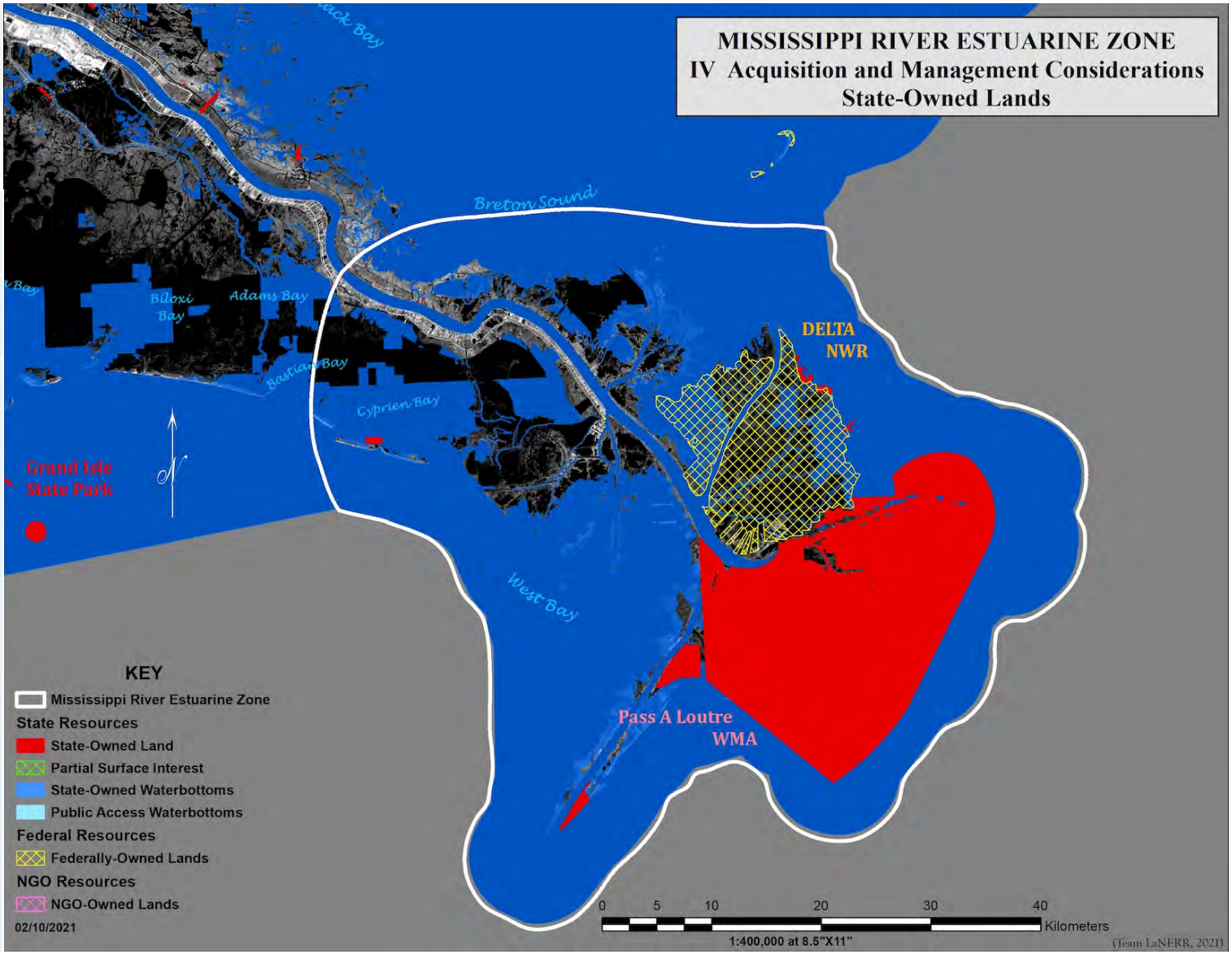
IV. Acquisition and Management Considerations

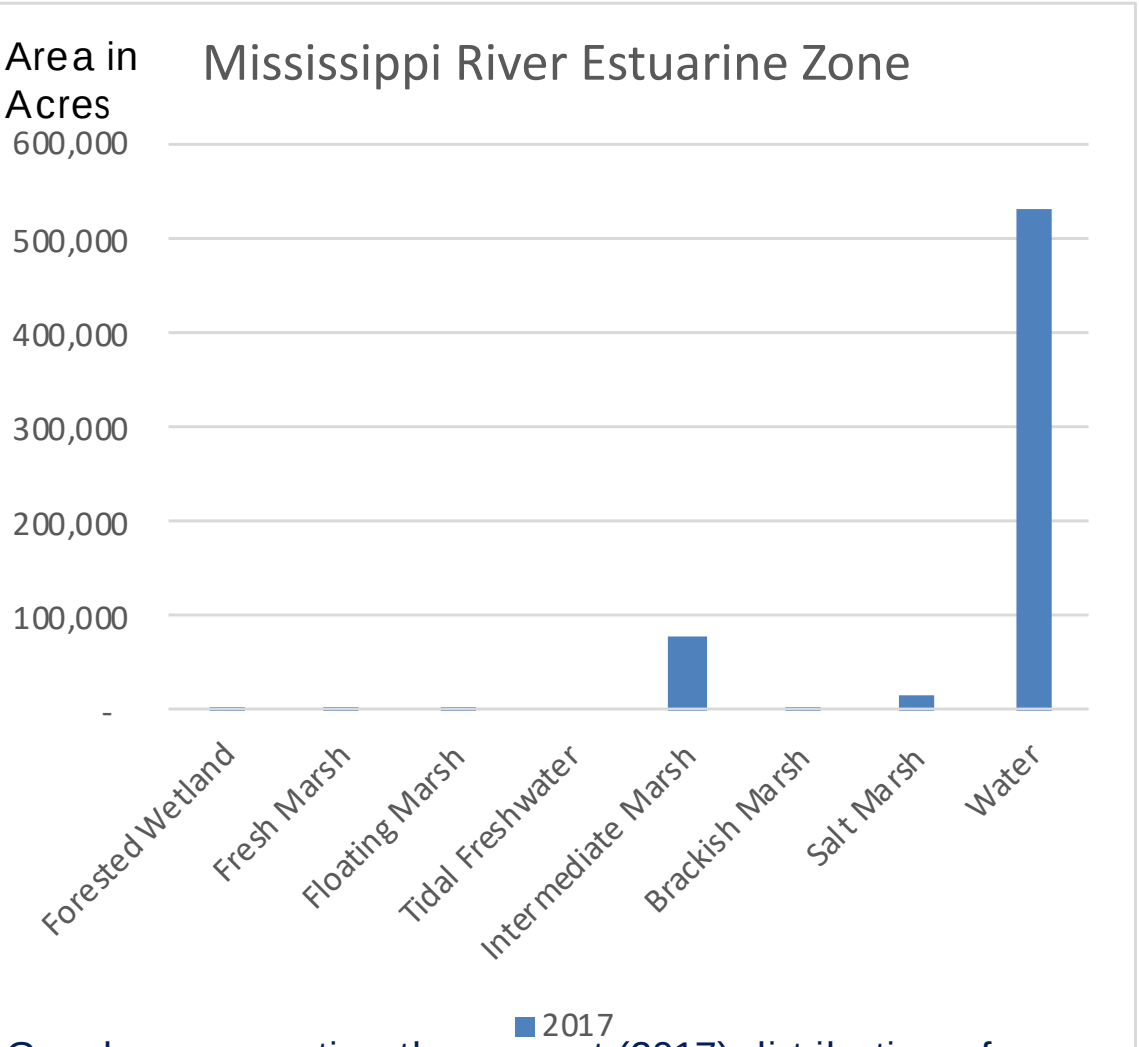
Mississippi River Estuarine Zone

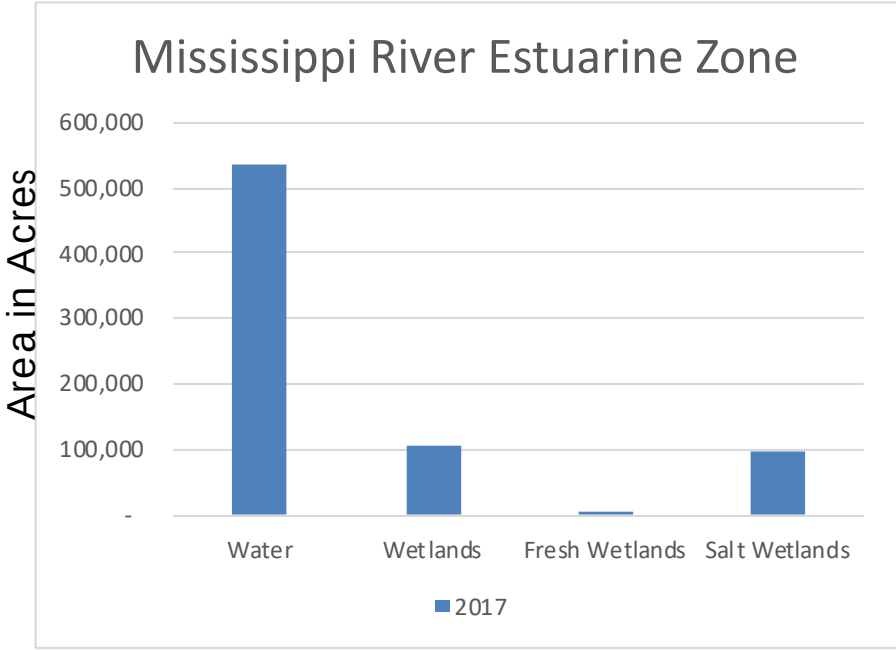
Pre-Screening Recommendation #2

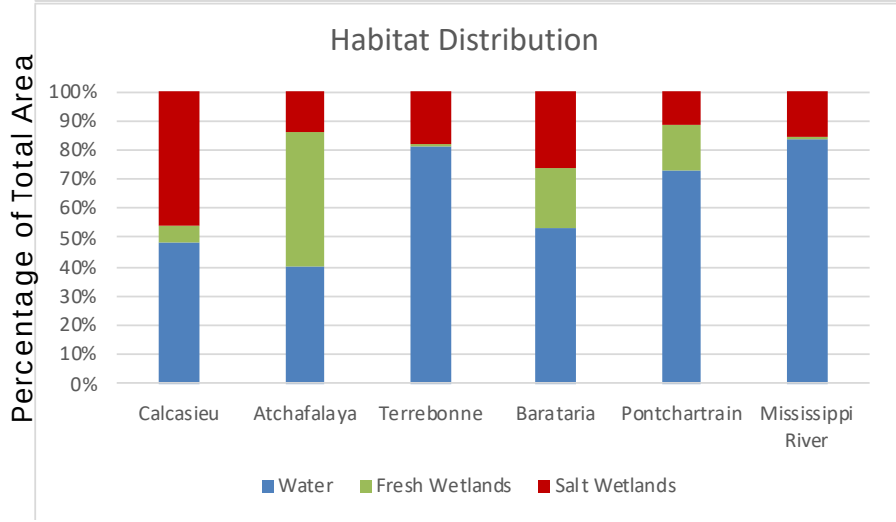
<u>Sufficient Core Areas:</u> The current availability of state-owned lands to establish core areas for candidate LaNERR sites in the Mississippi River Estuarine Zone is sufficient.

State Lands = 116,118 acres; Other Public Lands = 49,048 acres









Graphs representing the current (2017) distribution of wetland habitats (fresh or saline) in each of the six Estuarine Zones compared to water habitats.

This section of the presentation focuses on Criterion #3.

Pre-Screening Criteria #3
Land Integrity

3. Is the integrity of the wetlands that may serve as potential core (state-owned land) and buffer areas that provide the unique features of the NERR (see criterion #1) maintained in perpetuity within this Estuarine Zone, which would allow for development of facilities and programs (research & education)?

Description: Land change was measured by comparing the 2017 Coastal Master Plan initial condition vegetation to the year 50 projected vegetation under the medium scenario with implementation of the plan. A reduction of 50% in wetland area from initial to projected was considered sufficient to question the integrity of a zone.

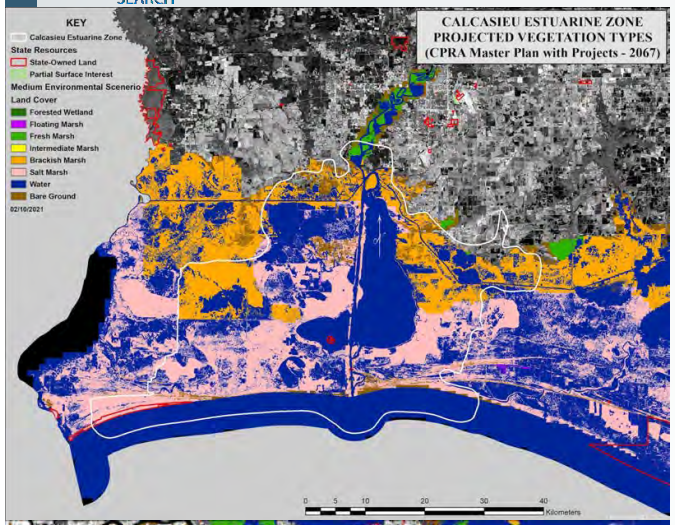
Estuarine Zone	Calcasieu Estuarine Zone	Atchafalaya Estuarine Zone	Terrebonne Estuarine Zone	Barataria Estuarine Zone	Pontchartrain Estuarine Zone	Mississippi River Estuarine Zone
Pre-Screening Criteria	Pre-Screening Recommendation	Pre-Screening Recommendation	Pre-Screening Recommendation	Pre-Screening Recommendation	Pre-Screening Recommendation	Pre-Screening Recommendation
3. Is the integrity of the wetlands that may serve as potential core (state-owned land) and buffer areas that provide the unique features of the NERR (see criterion #1) maintained in perpetuity within this Estuarine Zone, which would allow for development of facilities and programs (research & education)? Description: Land change was measured by comparing the 2017 Coastal Master Plan initial condition vegetation to the year 50 projected vegetation under the medium scenario with implementation of the plan. A reduction of 50% in wetland area from initial to projected was considered sufficient to question the integrity of a zone.	Insignificant Area Change: There is insignificant land loss in the potential core areas (state-owned lands) that could be used to develop candidate sites for LaNERR The Estuarine Zone has minimum potential level of conflict because of future land loss with respect to developing facilities and programs (research & education) of LaNERR. Initial Wetland Area = 237,001 acres; Projected Wetland Area = 194,655 acres. % Wetland Change = -18.1%	Insignificant Area Change: There is insignificant land loss in the potential core areas (state-owned lands) that could be used to develop candidate sites for LaNERR. Potential core areas are sufficient, and the Estuarine Zone has minimum potential level of conflict because of future land loss with respect to developing facilities and programs (research & education) of LaNERR. Initial Wetland Area = 1,120,997 acres; Projected Wetland Area = 1,045,730 acres. Wetland Change = -6.7%	Significant Area Change: There is significant land loss in the potential core areas (state-owned lands) that could be used to develop candidate sites for LaNERR. Potential core areas are sufficient at present (initial conditions), but the Estuarine Zone has significant level of conflict in the future because of land loss of core areas that would be used for developing facilities and programs (research & education) of LaNERR. Initial Wetland Area = 115,007 acres; Projected Wetland Area = 33,573 acres. Wetland Change = -70.8%	Insignificant Area Change: There is insignificant land loss in the potential core areas (state-owned lands) that could be used to develop candidate sites for LaNERR. Potential core areas are sufficient, and the Estuarine Zone has minimum potential level of conflict because of future land loss with respect to developing facilities and programs (research & education) of LaNERR. Initial Wetland Area = 473,285 acres; Projected Wetland Area = 314,916 acres. Wetland Change = -33.5%	Insignificant Area Change: There is insignificant land loss in the potential core areas (state-owned lands) that could be used to develop candidate sites for LaNERR. Potential core areas are sufficient, and the Estuarine Zone has minimum potential level of conflict because of future land loss with respect to developing facilities and programs (research & education) of LaNERR. Initial Wetland Area = 597,075 acres; Projected Wetland Area = 484,214 acres. Wetland Change = -18.9%	Significant Area Change: There is significant land loss in the potential core areas (state-owned lands) that could be used to develop candidate sites for LaNERR. Potential core areas are sufficient at present (initial conditions), but the Estuarine Zone has significant level of conflict in the future because of land loss of core areas that would be used for developing facilities and programs (research & education) of LaNERR. Initial Wetland Area = 107,521 acres; Projected Wetland Area = 38,766 acres. Wetland Change = -69.9%

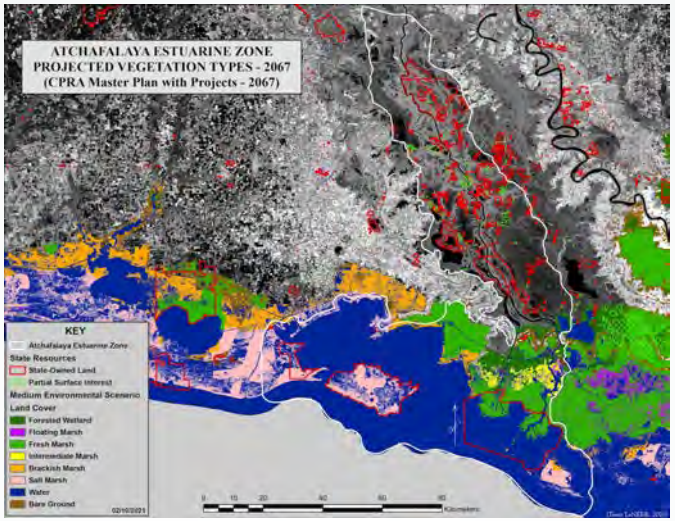
This section of the presentation focuses on Criterion #4.

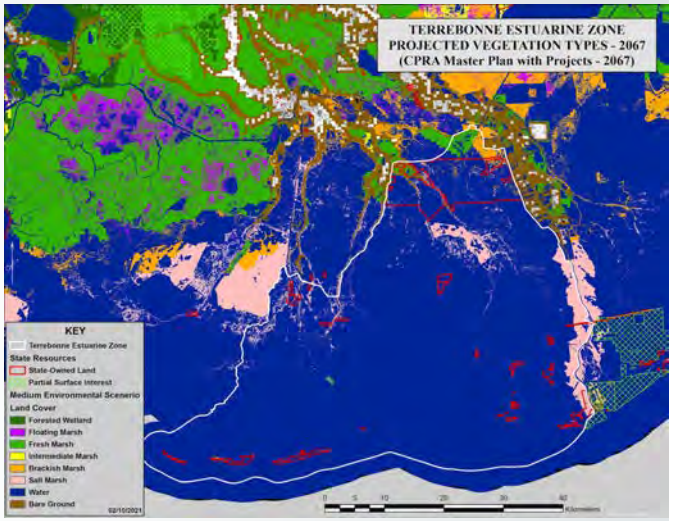
Pre-Screening Criteria #4 Change in Habitat Diversity
4. Do the wetlands that would serve as potential core (state-owned land) and buffer areas currently support a diversity of habitats along a salinity gradient representative of a delta estuary. Do these wetland areas maintain a diversity of habitats in perpetuity (maintain integrity) within this Estuarine Zone over the next 50 years? Description: Changes that demonstrate Significant Habitat Diversity change represent conflict with foreseeable program development in research & education to meet the mission of a NERR. Change in habitat diversity was measured by comparing the 2017 Coastal Master Plan initial condition vegetation to the year 50 projected vegetation under the medium scenario with implementation of the plan. (see criteria to the right) Insignificant change (fresh or saline habitat change <-25%); Moderate change (fresh or saline habitat change -25 to -65%); Significant change (fresh or saline habitat change > -65%).

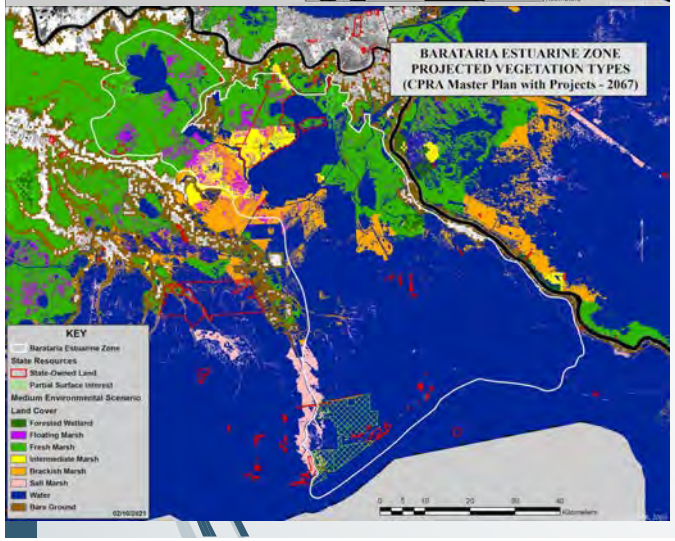
Estuarine Zone	Calcasieu Estuarine Zone	Atchafalaya Estuarine Zone	Terrebonne Estuarine Zone	Barataria Estuarine Zone	Pontchartrain Estuarine Zone	Mississippi River Estuarine Zone
Pre-Screening Criteria	Pre-Screening Recommendation	Pre-Screening Recommendation	Pre-Screening Recommendation	Pre-Screening Recommendation	Pre-Screening Recommendation	Pre-Screening Recommendation
4. Do the wetlands that would serve as potential core (state-owned land) and buffer areas currently support a diversity of habitats along a salinity gradient representative of a delta estuary. Do these wetland areas maintain a diversity of habitats in perpetuity (maintain integrity) within this Estuarine Zone over the next 50 years? Description: Changes that demonstrate Significant Habitat Diversity change represent conflict with foreseeable program development in research & education to meet the mission of a NERR. Change in habitat diversity was measured by comparing the 2017 Coastal Master Plan initial condition vegetation to the year 50 projected vegetation under the medium scenario with implementation of the plan. Insignificant change (fresh or saline habitat change <-25%); Moderate change (fresh or saline habitat change -25 to -65%); Significant change (fresh or saline habitat change > -65%).	Significant Habitat Diversity Change: There is significant change in habitat types in the core areas that could be used to develop candidate sites for LaNERR. Potential core areas in the Estuarine Zone are insufficient in the future because of d significant habitat change to develop programs (research & education) of LaNERR. Percent change in Fresh Wetland Area = -94.7%; Percent change in Saline Wetland Area = -8.4%.	Moderate Habitat Diversity Change: There is moderate change in habitat types in the core areas that could be used to develop candidate sites for LaNERR. Potential core areas are sufficent and the Estuarine Zone has moderate potential level of conflict due to change in habitat type that would impact future program development (research & education) of LaNERR. Percent change in Fresh Wetland Area = +6.2%; Percent change in Saline Wetland Area = -48.6%.	Significant Habitat Diversity Change: There is significant change in habitat types in the core areas that could be used to develop candidate sites for LaNERR and the diversity lacks tidal freshwater habitats. Potential core areas in the Estuarine Zone are insufficient in the future because of significant habitat change to develop programs (research & education) of LaNERR. Percent change in Fresh Wetland Area = +12.0%; Percent change in Saline Wetland Area = -73.8%.	Significant Habitat Diversity Change: There is significant change in habitat types in the core areas that could be used to develop candidate sites for LaNERR. Potential core areas in the Estuarine Zone are insufficient in the future because of significant habitat change to develop programs (research & education) of LaNERR. Percent change in Fresh Wetland Area = +13.9%; Percent change in Saline Wetland Area = -69.8%.	Significant Habitat Diversity Change: There is significant change in habitat types in the core areas that could be used to develop candidate sites for LaNERR. Potential core areas in the Estuarine Zone are insufficient in the future because of significant habitat change to develop programs (research & education) of LaNERR. Percent change in Fresh Wetland Area = +26.8%; Percent change in Saline Wetland Area = -82.6%.	Significant Habitat Diversity Change: There is significant change in habitat types in the core areas that could be used to develop candidate sites for LaNERR. Potential core areas in the Estuarine Zone are insufficient in the future because ofsignificant habitat change to develop programs (research & education) of LaNERR. Percent change in Fresh Wetland Area = +343.8%; Percent change in Saline Wetland Area = -96.5%.

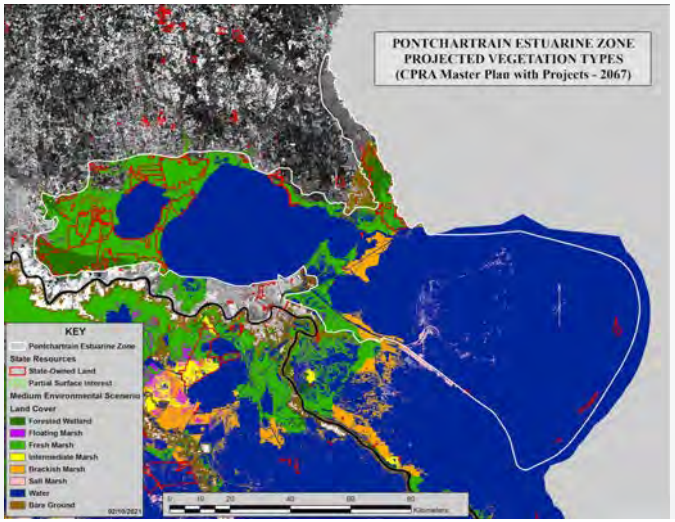
These maps show the distribution of habitat types projected in 50 yrs in each of the six Estuarine Zones. This information was used to develop recommendations for Criteria #3 and #4.

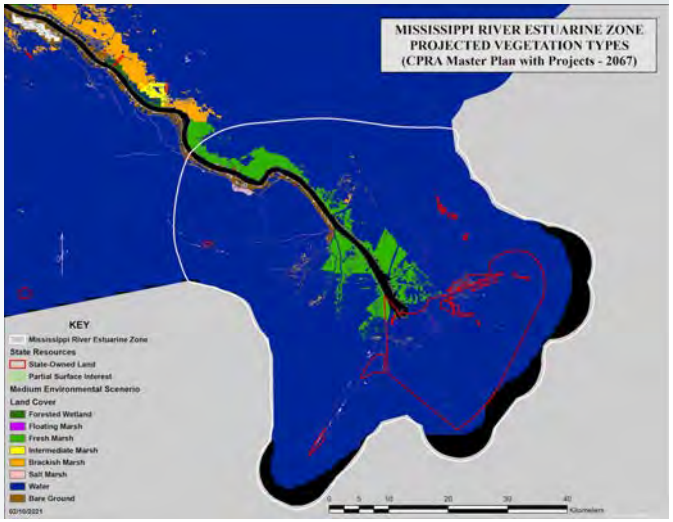




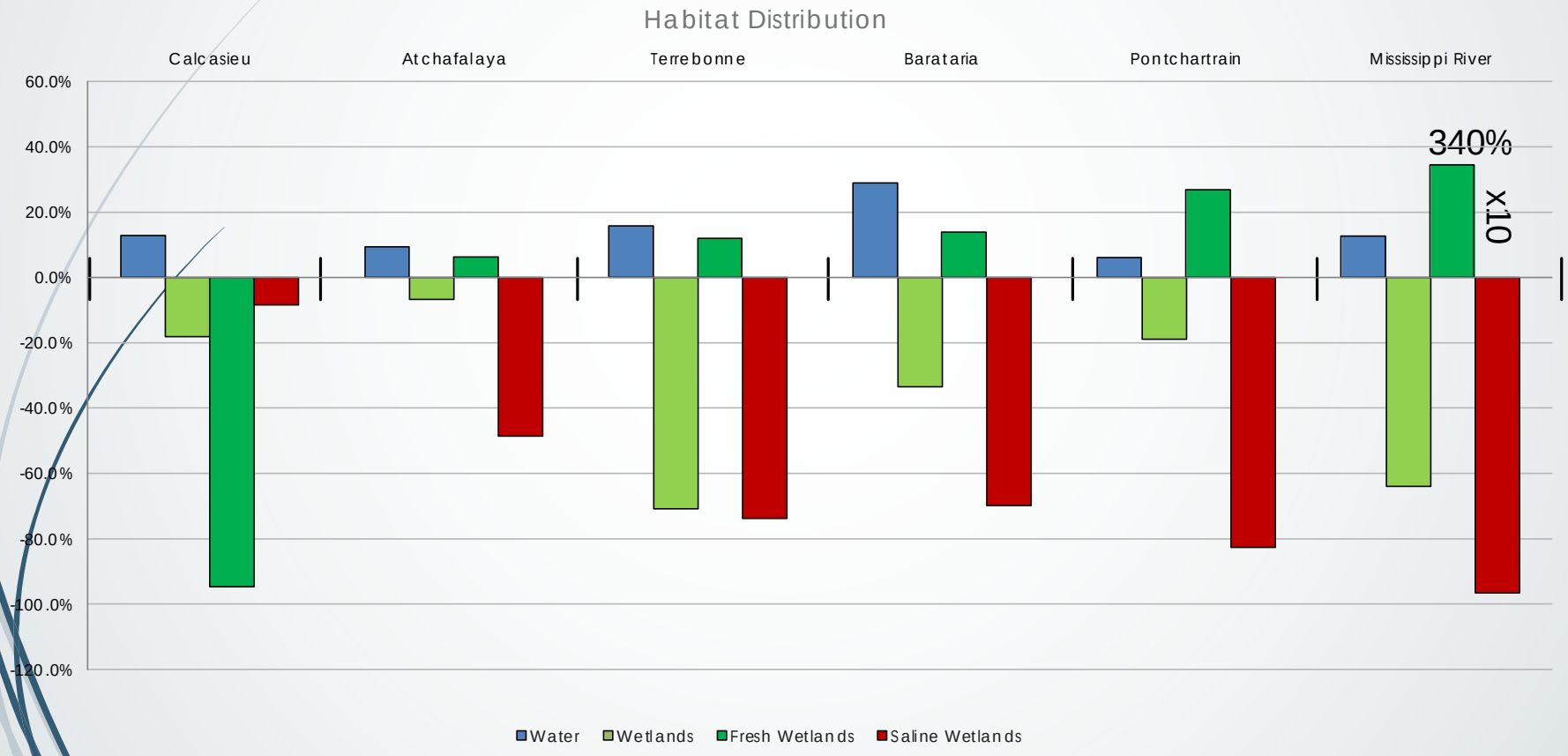








Percentage Change in Area for Each Habitat Type



Units in Acres

Table of raw data used to calculate the Percentage Change in Area for Each Habitat Type for each of the six Estuarine Zones

Atchafalaya

Vegetation Type	2017	2067	Change
Forested Wetland	85,961	46,793	(39,168)
Fresh Marsh	24,344	118,874	94,530
Floating Marsh	7,064	5,065	(1,999)
Tidal Freshwater	738,759	738,759	-
Intermediate Marsh	104,978	22,181	(82,797)
Brackish Marsh	150,541	17,416	(133,125)
Salt Marsh	9,350	96,642	87,292
Water	738,492	807,454	68,962
Unclassified	28,024	27,915	(109)
Bare Ground	6,559	12,989	6,431
Total	1,887,514	1,881,099	(6,415)

	2017	2067	Change
Water	738,492	807,454	9.3%
Wetlands	1,120,997	1,045,730	-6.7%
Fresh Wetlands	856,128	909,491	6.2%
Salt Wetlands	264,869	136,239	-48.6%

	2017	2067
Wetlands:Water Ratio	1.518	1.295
Salt:Fresh	0.309	0.150

Barataria

Vegetation Type	2017	2067	Change
Forested Wetland	90,312	3,394	(86,917)
Fresh Marsh	61,441	194,902	133,461
Floating Marsh	53,823	35,808	(18,015)
Tidal Freshwater			-
Intermediate Marsh	81,101	25,294	(55,808)
Brackish Marsh	97,406	44,017	(53,389)
Salt Marsh	89,203	11,501	(77,701)
Water	543,465	700,893	157,427
Unclassified	4,475	4,443	(32)
Bare Ground	12,197	13,174	977
Total	1,021,226	1,020,252	(973)

	2017	2067	Change
Water	543,465	700,893	29.0%
Wetlands	473,285	314,916	-33.5%
Fresh Wetlands	205,575	234,104	13.9%
Salt Wetlands	267,710	80,812	-69.8%

	2017	2067
Wetlands:Water Rat	0.871	0.449
Salt:Fresh	1.302	0.345

Calcasieu

Vegetation Type	2017	2067	Change
Forested Wetland	1,541	2	(1,540)
Fresh Marsh	25,033	1,303	(23,730)
Floating Marsh	113	119	6
Tidal Freshwater			-
Intermediate Marsh	5,609	7	(5,601)
Brackish Marsh	176,512	69,101	(107,412)
Salt Marsh	28,192	123,547	95,355
Water	223,283	252,035	28,752
Unclassified	15,549	15,522	(27)
Bare Ground	3,598	17,795	14,197
Total	475,832	461,636	(14,197)

	2017	2067	Change
Water	223,283	252,035	12.9%
Wetlands	237,001	194,079	-18.1%
Fresh Wetlands	26,687	1,424	-94.7%
Salt Wetlands	210,314	192,655	-8.4%

	2017	2067
Wetlands:Water Ra	1.061	0.770
Salt:Fresh	7.881	135.334

Mississippi River

Vegetation Type	2017	2067	Change
Forested Wetland	2,356	0	(2,356)
Fresh Marsh	4,888	34,619	29,731
Floating Marsh	716	708	(8)
Tidal Freshwater			-
Intermediate Marsh	78,453	13	(78,440)
Brackish Marsh	3,415	1,944	(1,472)
Salt Marsh	17,693	1,482	(16,210)
Water	533,979	601,465	67,486
Unclassified	81,012	80,965	(48)
Bare Ground	2,476	3,775	1,299
Total	722,513	721,196	(1,317)

	2017	2067	Change
Water	533,979	601,465	12.6%
Wetlands	107,521	38,766	-63.9%
Fresh Wetlands	7,960	35,327	343.8%
Salt Wetlands	99,561	3,439	-96.5%

	2017	2067
Wetlands:Water Rat	0.201	0.064
Salt:Fresh	12.507	0.097

Pontchartrain

Vegetation Type	2017	2067	Change
Forested Wetland	280,608	72,428	(208,180)
Fresh Marsh	16,224	319,032	302,808
Floating Marsh	3,670	2,311	(1,359)
Tidal Freshwater	47,100	47,100	-
Intermediate Marsh	13,177	819	(12,358)
Brackish Marsh	139,642	32,022	(107,619)
Salt Marsh	96,655	10,501	(86,154)
Water	1,596,245	1,692,583	96,338
Unclassified	54,694	55,713	1,019
Bare Ground	8,797	24,266	15,468
Total	2,248,014	2,232,509	(15,505)

	2017	2067	Change
Water	1,596,245	1,692,583	6.0%
Wetlands	597,075	484,214	-18.9%
Fresh Wetlands	347,601	440,871	26.8%
Salt Wetlands	249,474	43,343	-82.6%

	2017	2067
Wetlands:Water Rat	0.374	0.286
Salt:Fresh	0.718	0.098

Terrebonne

Vegetation Type	2017	2067	Change
Forested Wetland	2,095	0	(2,095)
Fresh Marsh	1,762	4,377	2,614
Floating Marsh	97	51	(46)
Tidal Freshwater			-
Intermediate Marsh	2,591	-	(2,591)
Brackish Marsh	32,122	3,817	(28,305)
Salt Marsh	76,340	25,327	(51,013)
Water	507,175	587,298	80,123
Unclassified			-
Bare Ground	622	1,935	1,312
Total	622,182	620,870	(1,312)

	2017	2067	Change
Water	507,175	587,298	15.8%
Wetlands	115,007	33,573	-70.8%
Fresh Wetlands	3,954	4,428	12.0%
Salt Wetlands	111,053	29,144	-73.8%

	2017	2067
Wetlands:Water Ra	0.227	0.057
Salt:Fresh	28.087	6.582

I. Environmental Representativeness

Next several maps, graphs, and tables show the changes in habitat type by distribution of habitat area in current vs projected conditions. Both the change in total land area relative to water and the shift in vegetation type of those land areas are used to demonstrate if there are sufficient issues of integrity in each of the six Estuarine Zones.

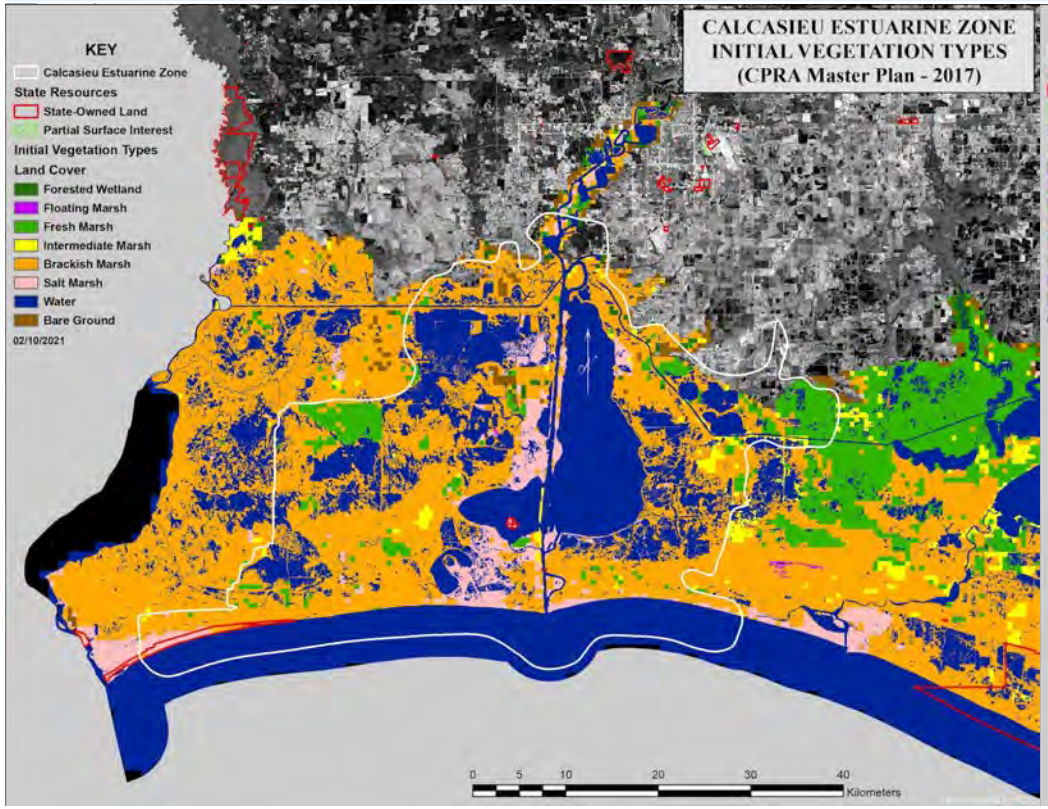
The summary evaluation from DLT is on the top of the slides with the maps of each Estuarine Zone. This evaluation is based on Criteria #3 and #4. (Same evaluation that is shown for each zone on slides 37 and 39, respectively.)

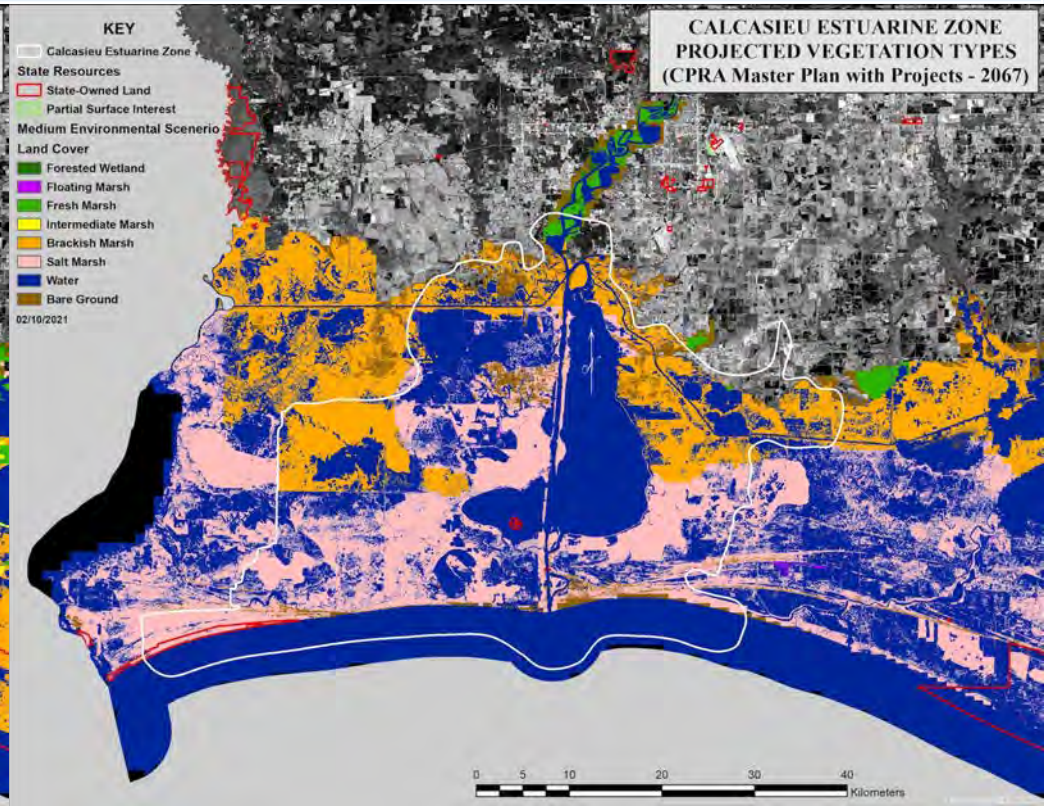
Calcasieu Estuarine Zone

Pre-Screening Recommendation #3 and #4

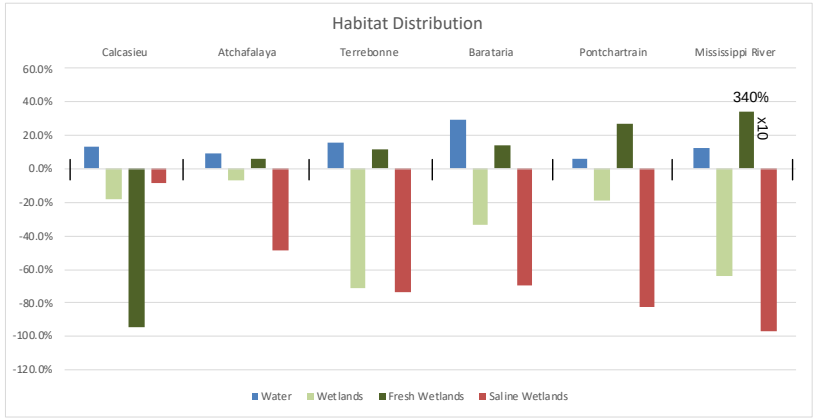
#3: Insignificant Area Change: There is insignificant land loss in the potential core areas (state-owned lands) that could be used to develop candidate sites for LaNERR The Estuarine Zone has minimum potential level of conflict because of future land loss with respect to developing facilities and programs (research & education) of LaNERR. Initial Wetland Area = 237,001 acres; Projected Wetland Area = 194,655 acres. % Wetland Change = -18.1%

#4: Significant Habitat Diversity Change: There is significant change in habitat types in the core areas that could be used to develop candidate sites for LaNERR. Potential core areas in the Estuarine Zone are insufficient in the future because of significant habitat change to develop programs (research & education) of LaNERR. Percent change in Fresh Wetland Area = -94.7%; Percent change in Saline Wetland Area = -8.4%.

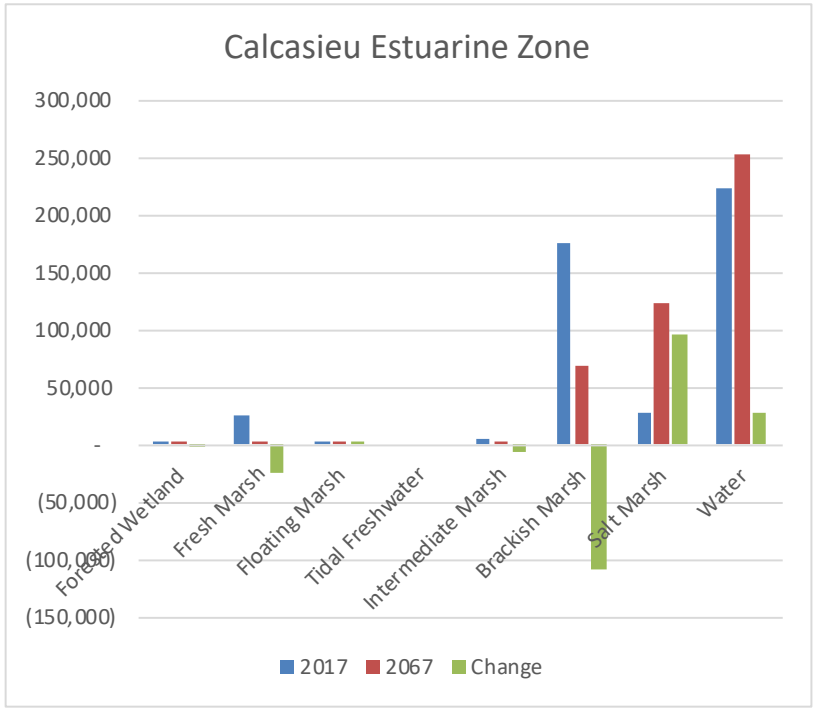




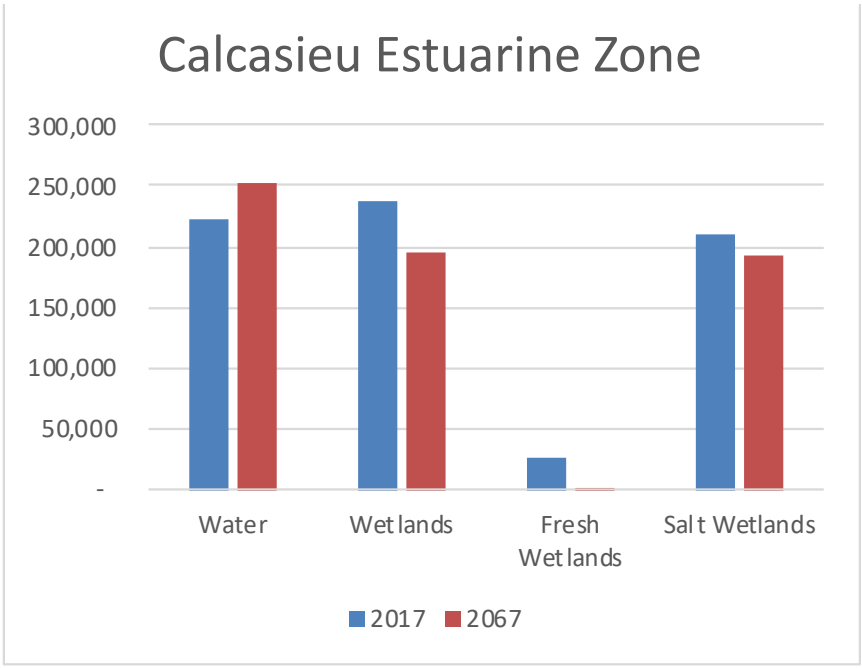
Percentage Change in Area for Each Habitat Type



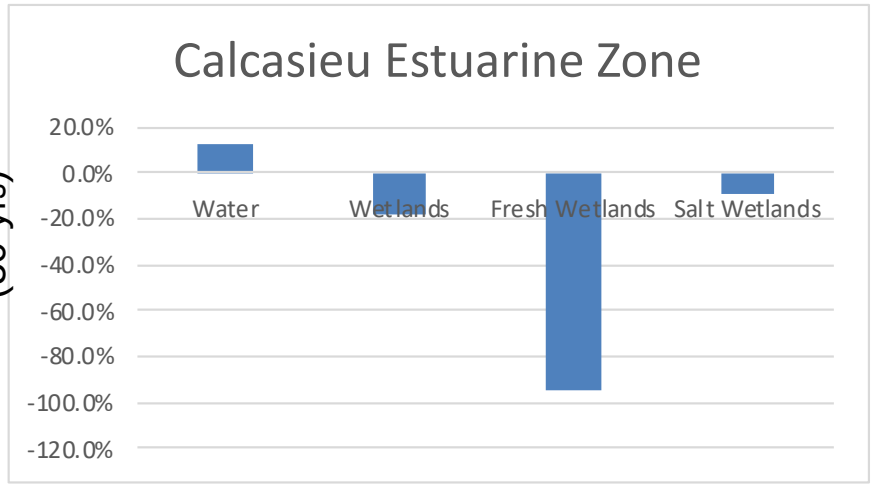
Area in Acres



Area in Acres



Percentage Change (50 yrs)

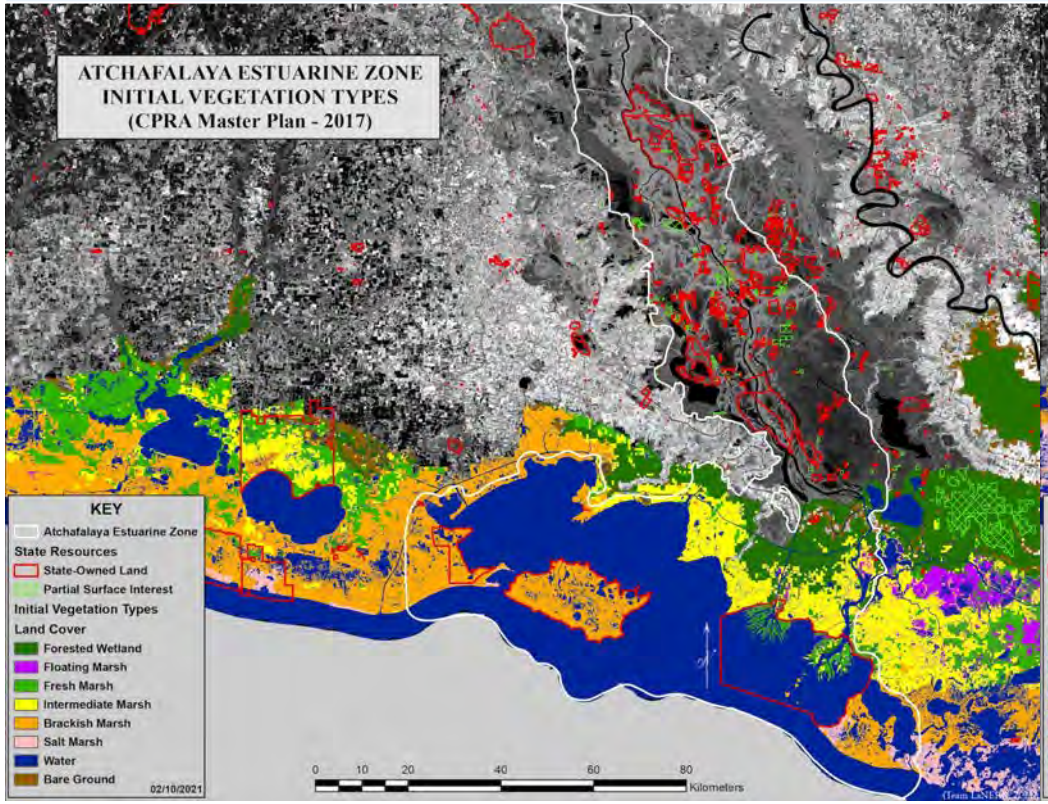


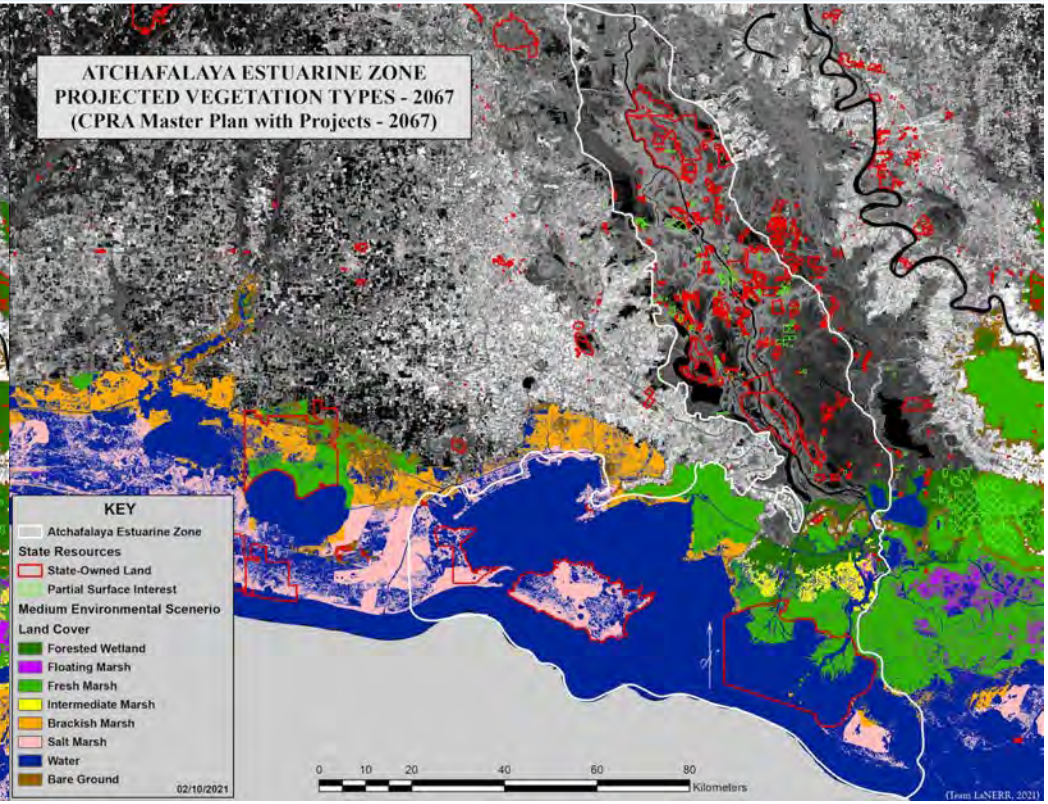
Atchafalaya Estuarine Zone

Pre-Screening Recommendation #3 and #4

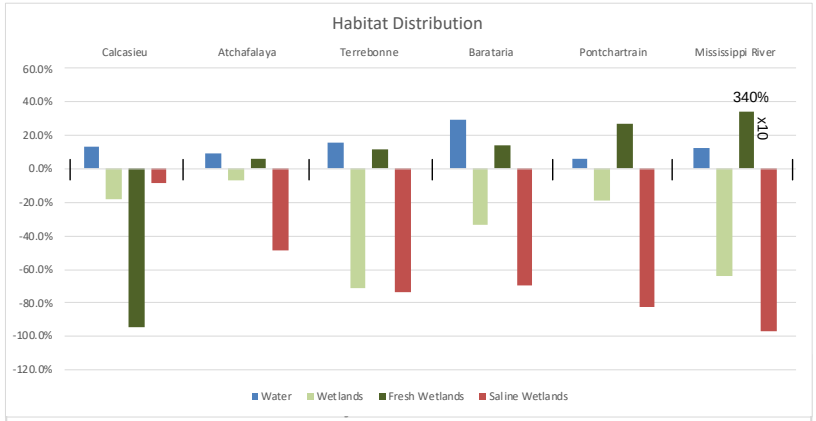
#3: Insignificant Area Change: There is insignificant land loss in the potential core areas (state-owned lands) that could be used to develop candidate sites for LaNERR. Potential core areas are sufficient, and the Estuarine Zone has minimum potential level of conflict because of future land loss with respect to developing facilities and programs (research & education) of LaNERR. Initial Wetland Area = 1,120,997 acres; Projected Wetland Area = 1,045,730 acres. Wetland Change = -6.7%

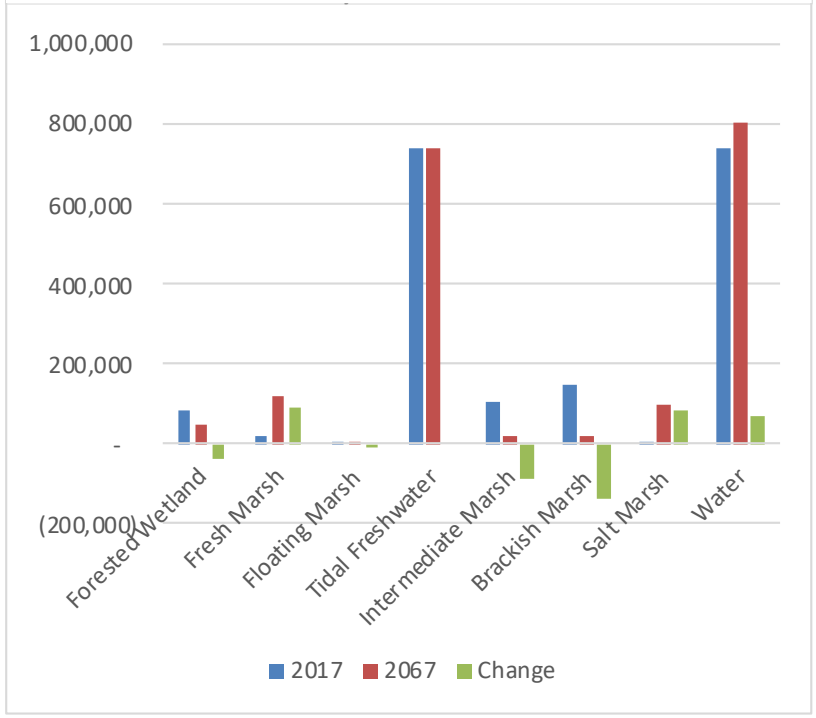
#4: Moderate Habitat Diversity Change: There is moderate change in habitat types in the core areas that could be used to develop candidate sites for LaNERR. Potential core areas are sufficent and the Estuarine Zone has moderate potential level of conflict due to change in habitat type that would impact future program development (research & education) of LaNERR. Percent change in Fresh Wetland Area = +6.2%; Percent change in Saline Wetland Area = -48.6%.

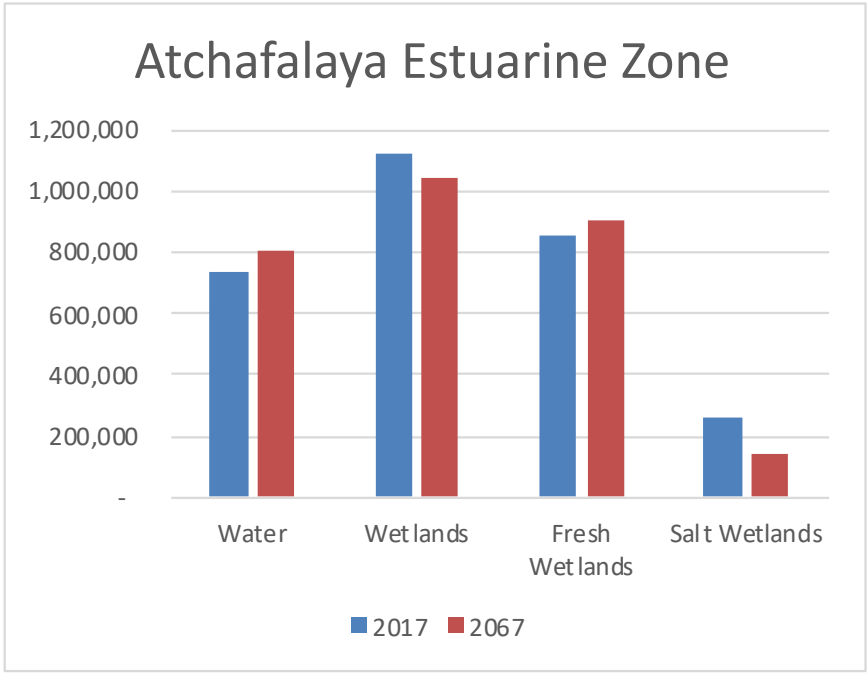


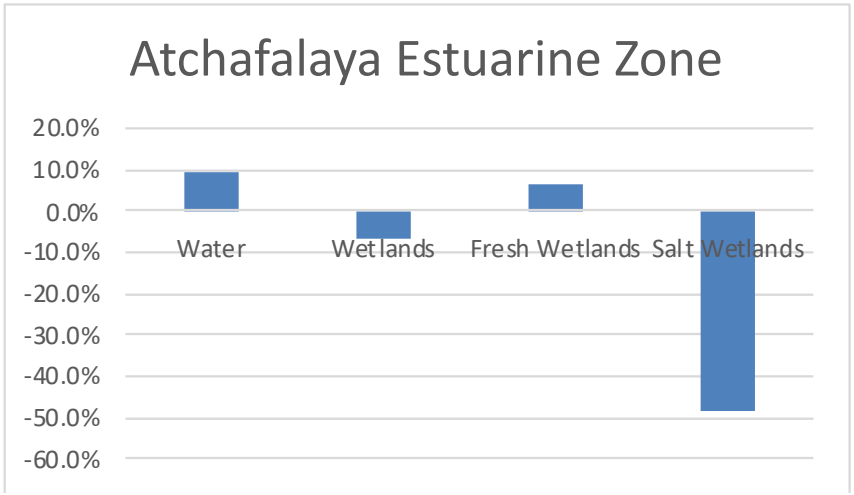


Percentage Change in Area for Each Habitat Type







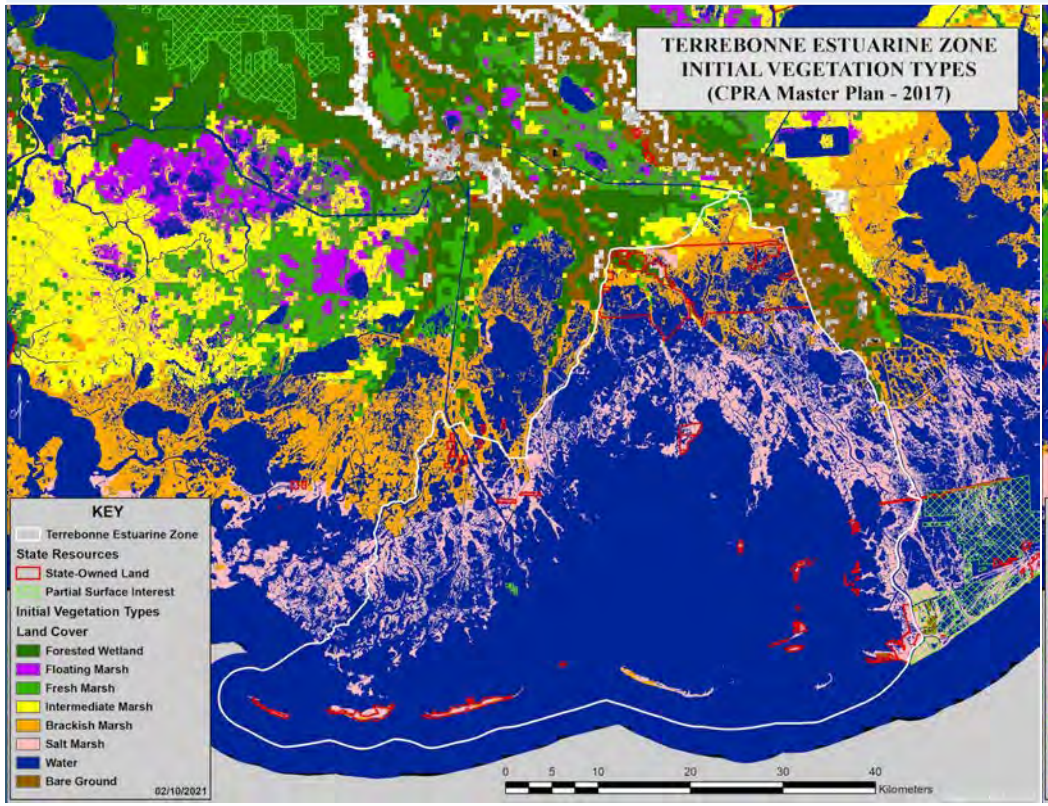


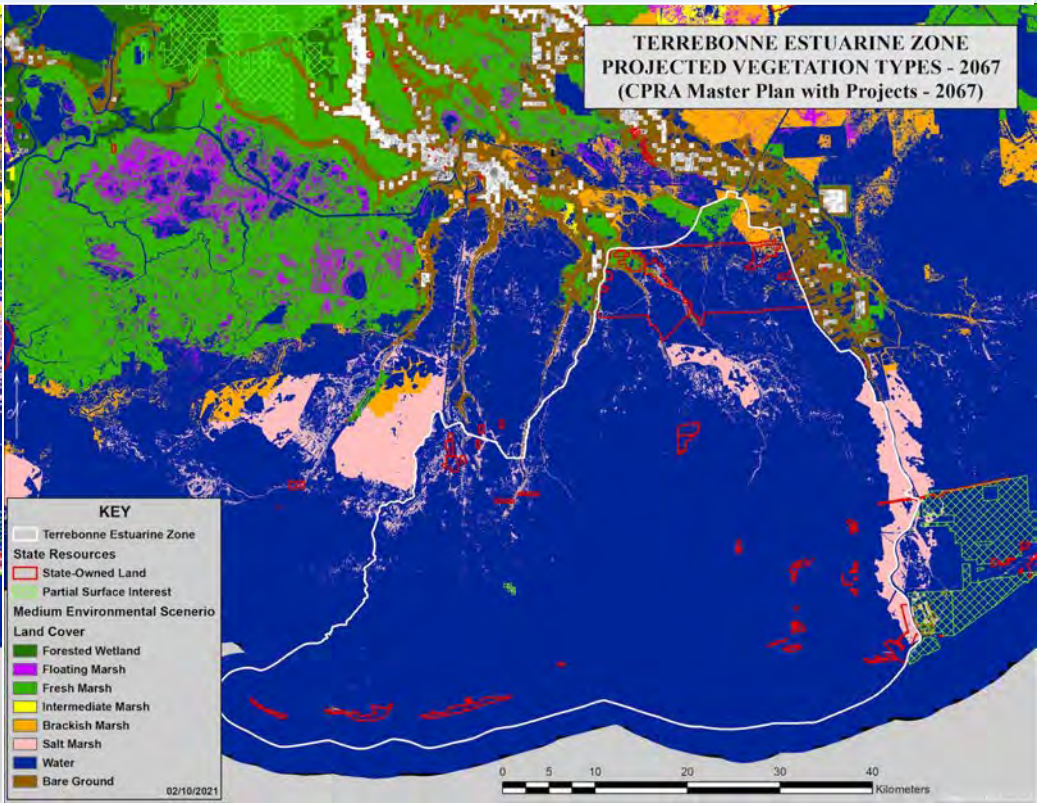
Terrebonne Estuarine Zone

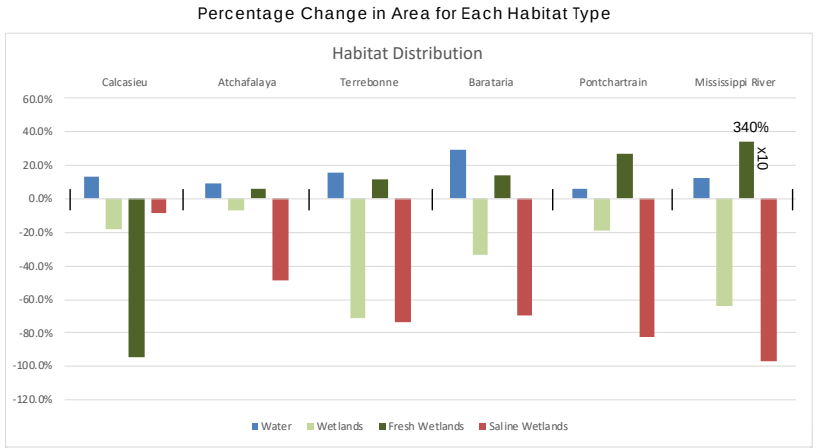
Pre-Screening Recommendation #3 and #4

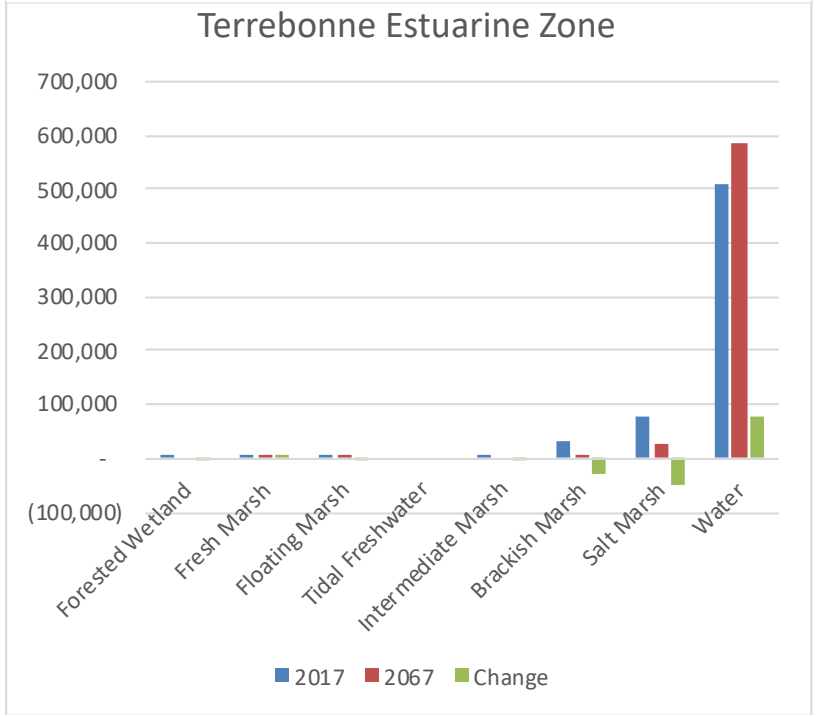
#3: Significant Area Change: There is significant land loss in the potential core areas (state-owned lands) that could be used to develop candidate sites for LaNERR. Potential core areas are sufficient at present (initial conditions), but the Estuarine Zone has significant level of conflict in the future because of land loss of core areas that would be used for developing facilities and programs (research & education) of LaNERR. Initial Wetland Area = 115,007 acres; Projected Wetland Area = 33,573 acres. Wetland Change = -70.8%

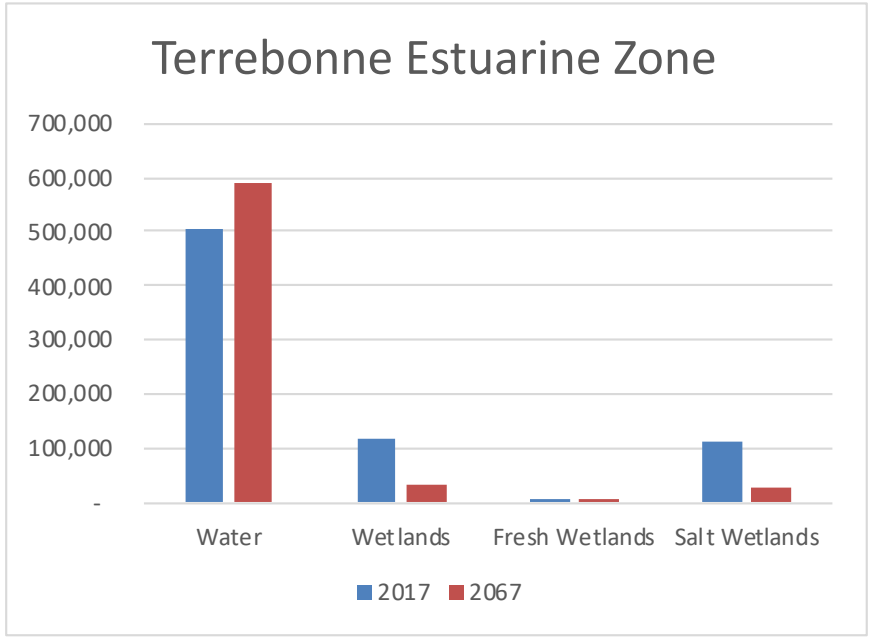
#4: Significant Habitat Diversity Change: There is significant change in habitat types and total habitat area in the core areas that could be used to develop candidate sites for LaNERR and the diversity lacks tidal freshwater habitats. Potential core areas in the Estuarine Zone are insufficient in the future because of significant habitat change to develop programs (research & education) of LaNERR. Percent change in Fresh Wetland Area = +12.0%; Percent change in Saline Wetland Area = -73.8%.

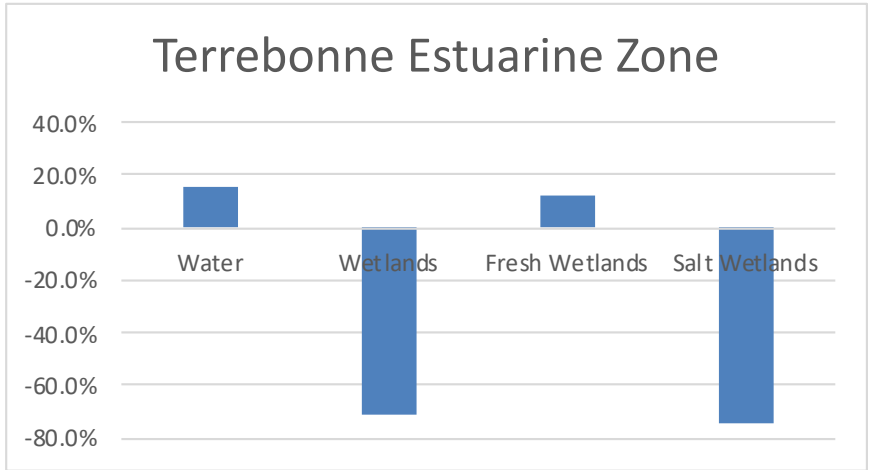





Percentage Change in Area for Each Habitat Type
Habitat Distribution
Calcasieu
Atchafalaya
Terrebonne
Barataria
Pontchartrain
Mississippi River
60.0%
40.0%
20.0%
0.0%
-20.0%
-40.0%
-60.0%
-80.0%
-100.0%
-120.0%
340%
x10
Water
Wetlands
Fresh Wetlands
Saline Wetlands


Terrebonne Estuarine Zone
Area in Acres
700,000
600,000
500,000
400,000
300,000
200,000
100,000
-
(100,000)
Forested Wetland
Fresh Marsh
Floating Marsh
Tidal Freshwater
Intermediate Marsh
Brackish Marsh
Salt Marsh
Water
2017
2067
Change


Terrebonne Estuarine Zone
Area in Acres
700,000
600,000
500,000
400,000
300,000
200,000
100,000
-
Water
Wetlands
Fresh Wetlands
Salt Wetlands
2017
2067

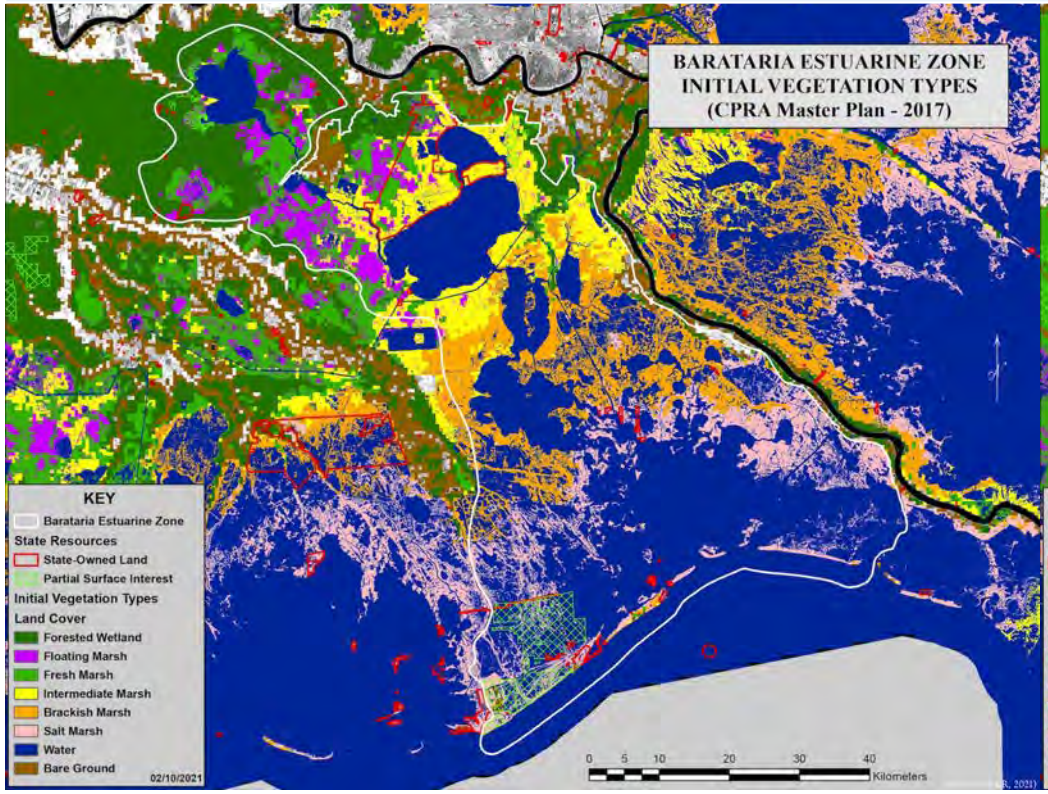

Terrebonne Estuarine Zone
Percentage Change (50 yrs)
40.0%
20.0%
0.0%
-20.0%
-40.0%
-60.0%
-80.0%
Water
Wetlands
Fresh Wetlands
Salt Wetlands

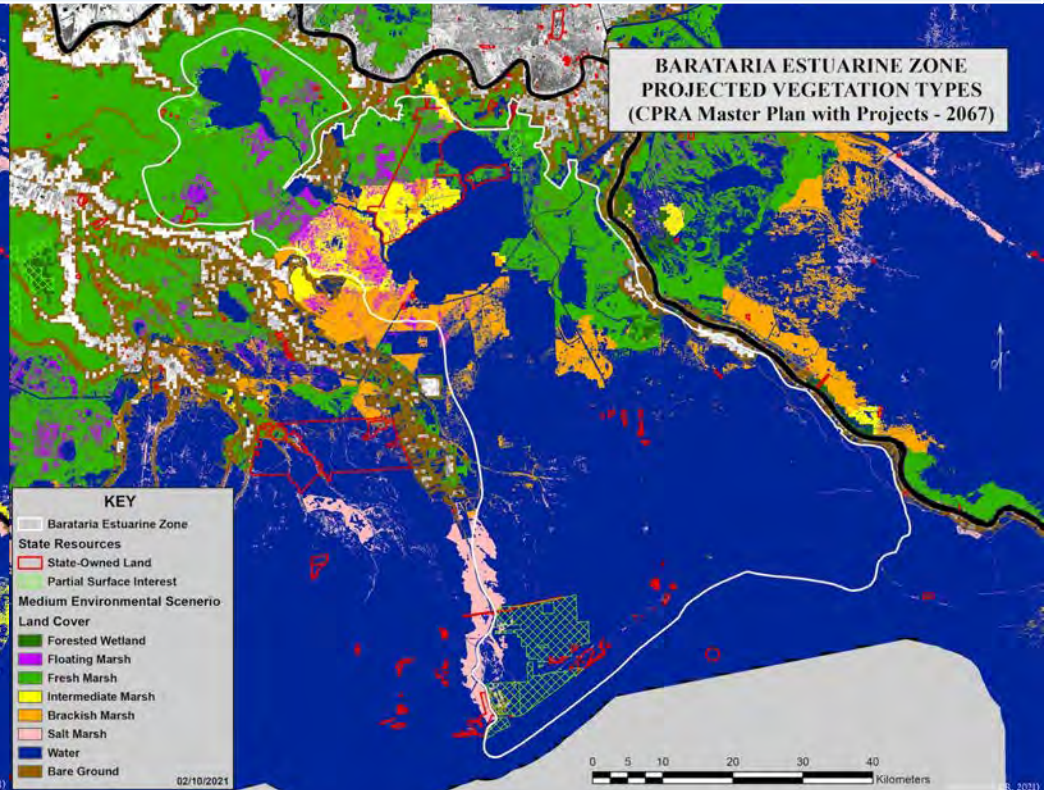
Barataria Estuarine Zone

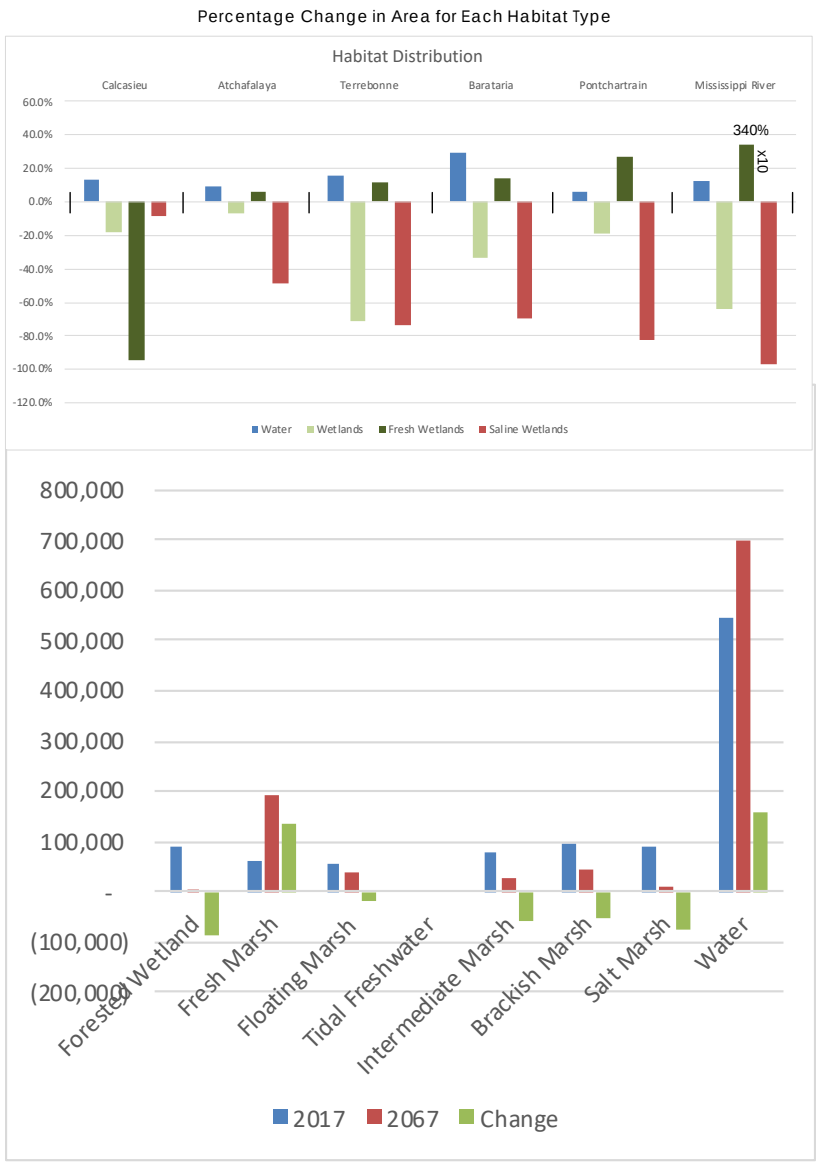
Pre-Screening Recommendation #3 and #4

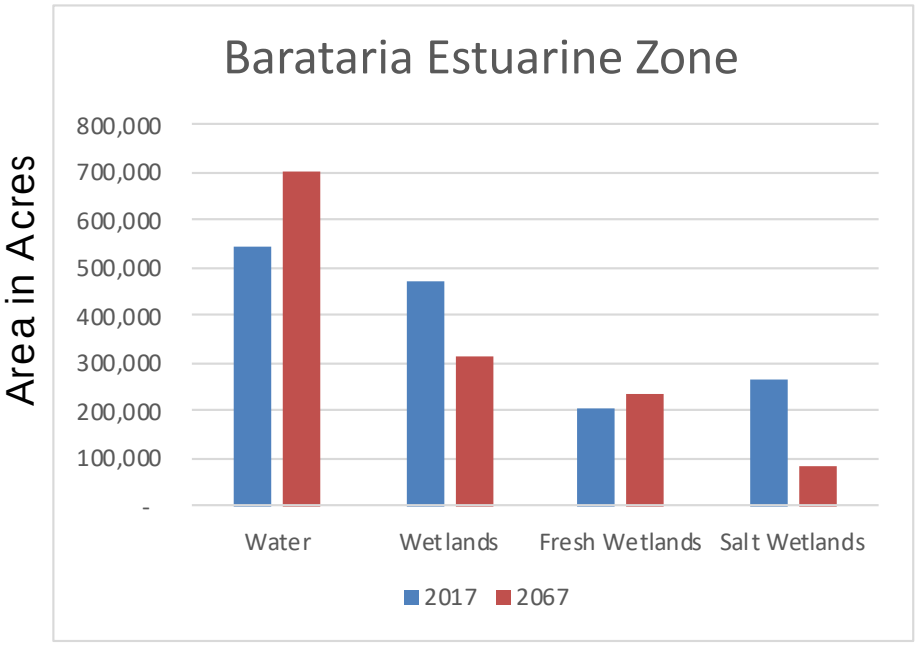
#3: Insignificant Area Change: There is insignificant land loss in the potential core areas (state-owned lands) that could be used to develop candidate sites for LaNERR. Potential core areas are sufficient, and the Estuarine Zone has minimum potential level of conflict because of future land loss with respect to developing facilities and programs (research & education) of LaNERR. Initial Wetland Area = 473,285 acres; Projected Wetland Area = 314,916 acres. Wetland Change = -33.5%

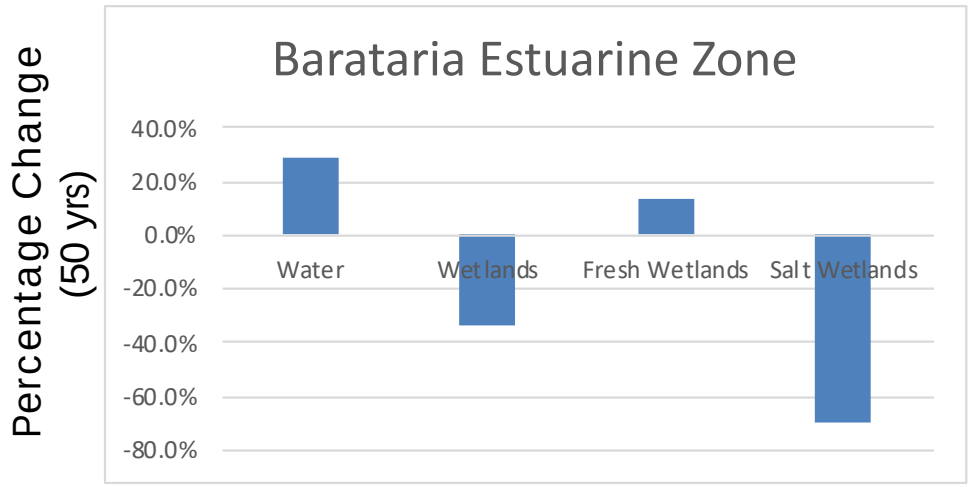
#4: Significant Habitat Diversity Change: There is significant change in habitat types and total habitat area in the core areas that could be used to develop candidate sites for LaNERR. Potential core areas in the Estuarine Zone are insufficient in the future because of significant habitat change to develop programs (research & education) of LaNERR. Percent change in Fresh Wetland Area = +13.9%; Percent change in Saline Wetland Area = -69.8%.






Percentage Change in Area for Each Habitat Type
Habitat Distribution
Calcasieu
Atchafalaya
Terrebonne
Barataria
Pontchartrain
Mississippi River
60.0%
40.0%
20.0%
0.0%
-20.0%
-40.0%
-60.0%
-80.0%
-100.0%
-120.0%
340%
x10
Water
Wetlands
Fresh Wetlands
Saline Wetlands
Area in Acres
800,000
700,000
600,000
500,000
400,000
300,000
200,000
100,000
-
(100,000)
(200,000)
Forested Wetland
Fresh Marsh
Floating Marsh
Tidal Freshwater
Intermediate Marsh
Brackish Marsh
Salt Marsh
Water
2017
2067
Change


Barataria Estuarine Zone
Area in Acres
800,000
700,000
600,000
500,000
400,000
300,000
200,000
100,000
-
Water
Wetlands
Fresh Wetlands
Salt Wetlands
2017
2067

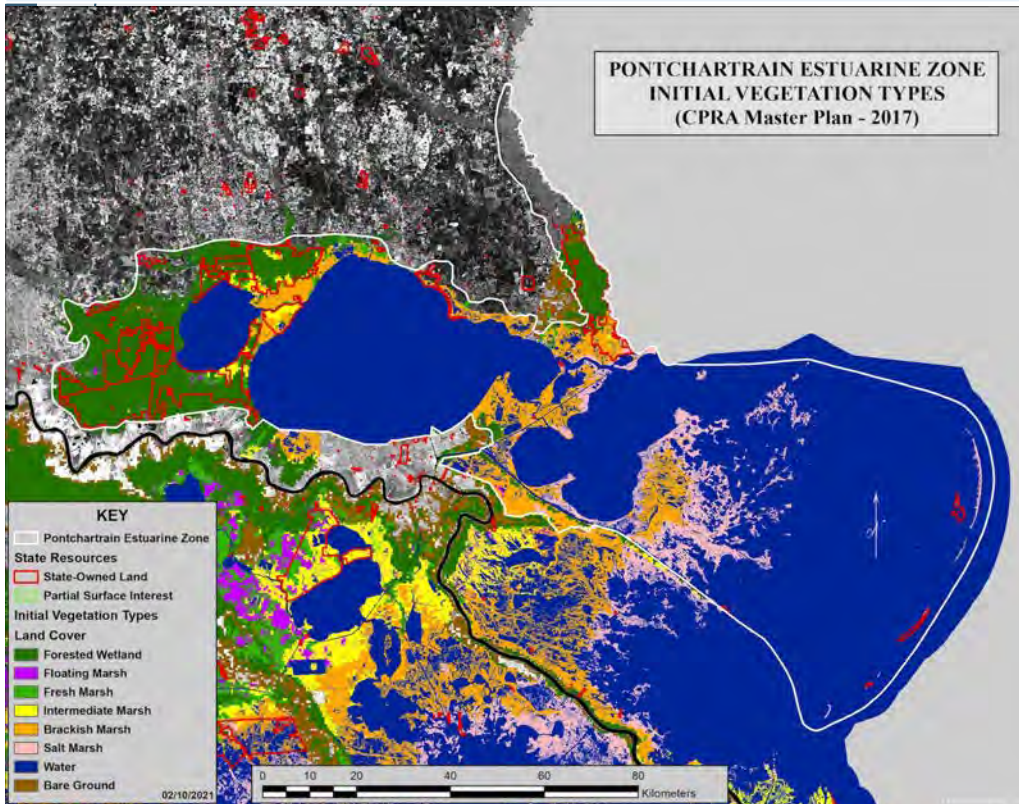

Barataria Estuarine Zone
Percentage Change (50 yrs)
40.0%
20.0%
0.0%
-20.0%
-40.0%
-60.0%
-80.0%
Water
Wetlands
Fresh Wetlands
Salt Wetlands

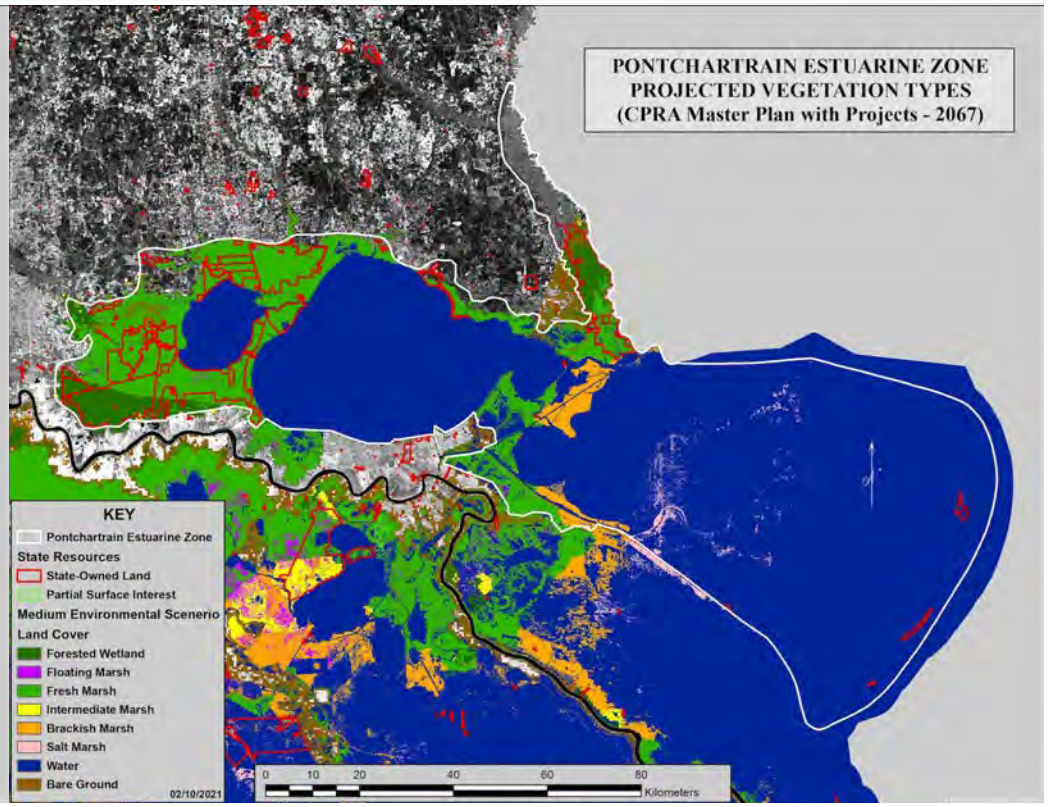
Pontchartrain Estuarine Zone

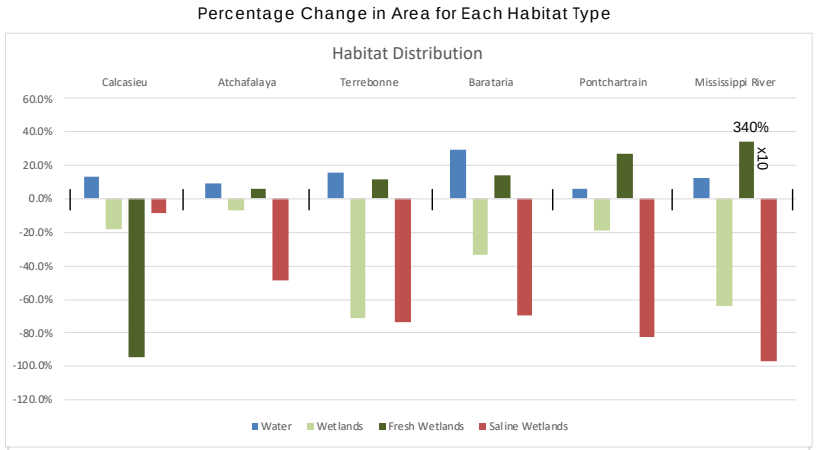
Pre-Screening Recommendation #3 and #4

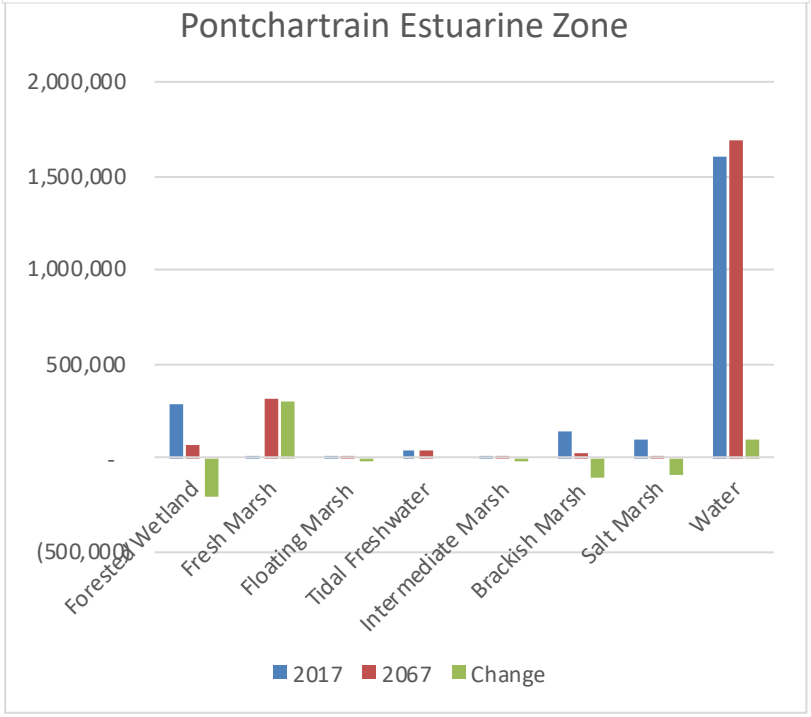
#3: Insignificant Area Change: There is insignificant land loss in the potential core areas (state-owned lands) that could be used to develop candidate sites for LaNERR. Potential core areas are sufficient, and the Estuarine Zone has minimum potential level of conflict because of future land loss with respect to developing facilities and programs (research & education) of LaNERR. Initial Wetland Area = 597,075 acres; Projected Wetland Area = 484,214 acres. Wetland Change = -18.9%

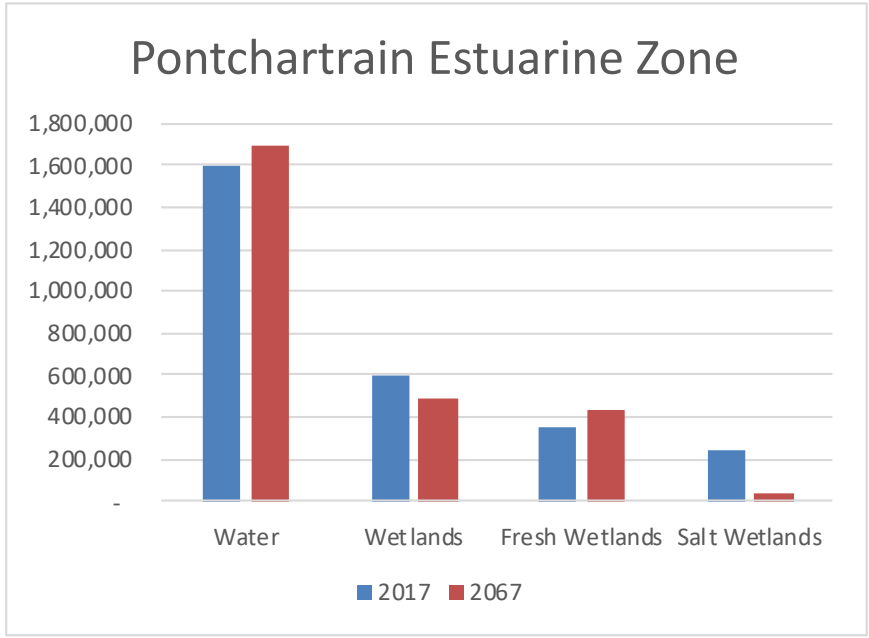
#4: Significant Habitat Diversity Change: There is significant change in habitat types in the core areas that could be used to develop candidate sites for LaNERR. Potential core areas in the Estuarine Zone are insufficient in the future because of significant habitat change to develop programs (research & education) of LaNERR. Percent change in Fresh Wetland Area = +26.8%; Percent change in Saline Wetland Area = -82.6%.

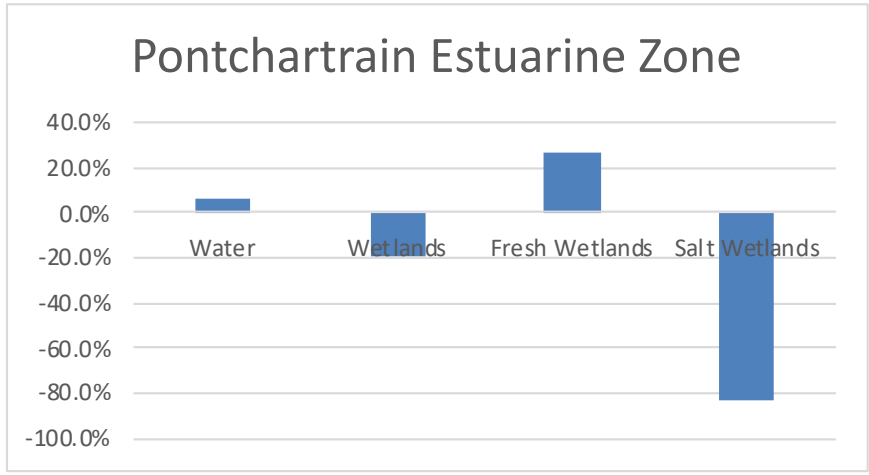





Percentage Change in Area for Each Habitat Type
Habitat Distribution
Calcasieu
Atchafalaya
Terrebonne
Barataria
Pontchartrain
Mississippi River
60.0%
40.0%
20.0%
0.0%
-20.0%
-40.0%
-60.0%
-80.0%
-100.0%
-120.0%
340%
x10
Water
Wetlands
Fresh Wetlands
Saline Wetlands


Area in Acres
Pontchartrain Estuarine Zone
2,000,000
1,500,000
1,000,000
500,000
-
(500,000)
Forested Wetland
Fresh Marsh
Floating Marsh
Tidal Freshwater
Intermediate Marsh
Brackish Marsh
Salt Marsh
Water
2017
2067
Change


Area in Acres
Pontchartrain Estuarine Zone
1,800,000
1,600,000
1,400,000
1,200,000
1,000,000
800,000
600,000
400,000
200,000
-
Water
Wetlands
Fresh Wetlands
Salt Wetlands
2017
2067

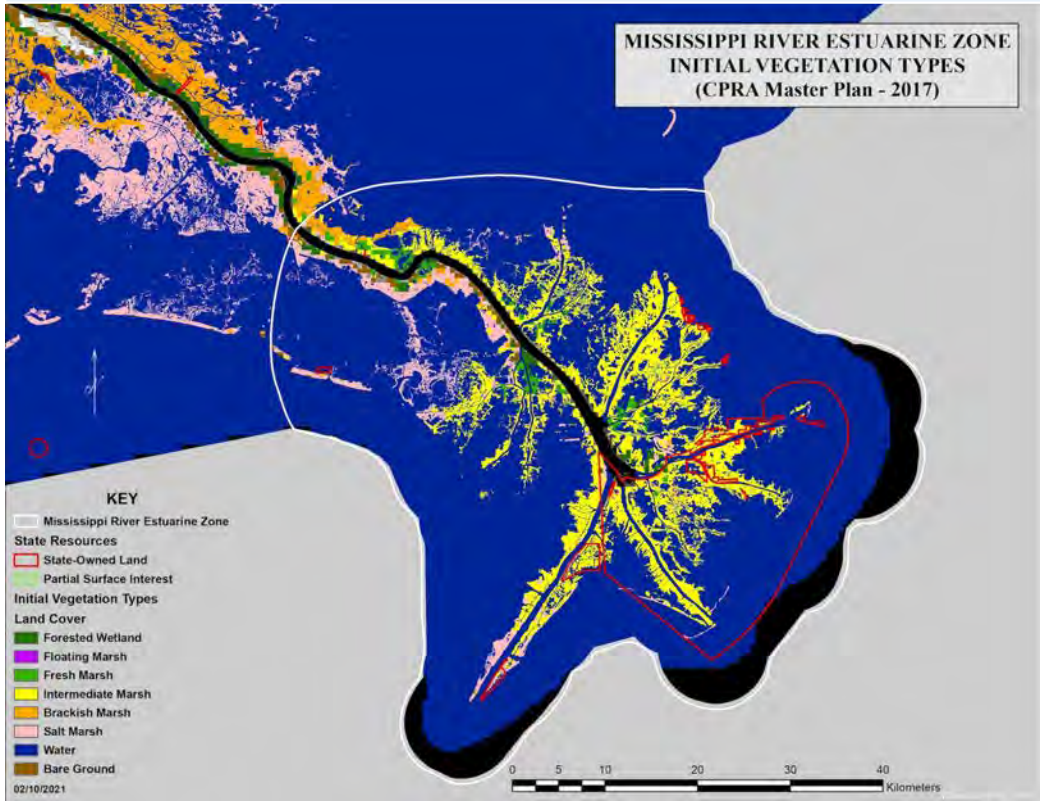

Percentage Change (50 yrs)
Pontchartrain Estuarine Zone
40.0%
20.0%
0.0%
-20.0%
-40.0%
-60.0%
-80.0%
-100.0%
Water
Wetlands
Fresh Wetlands
Salt Wetlands

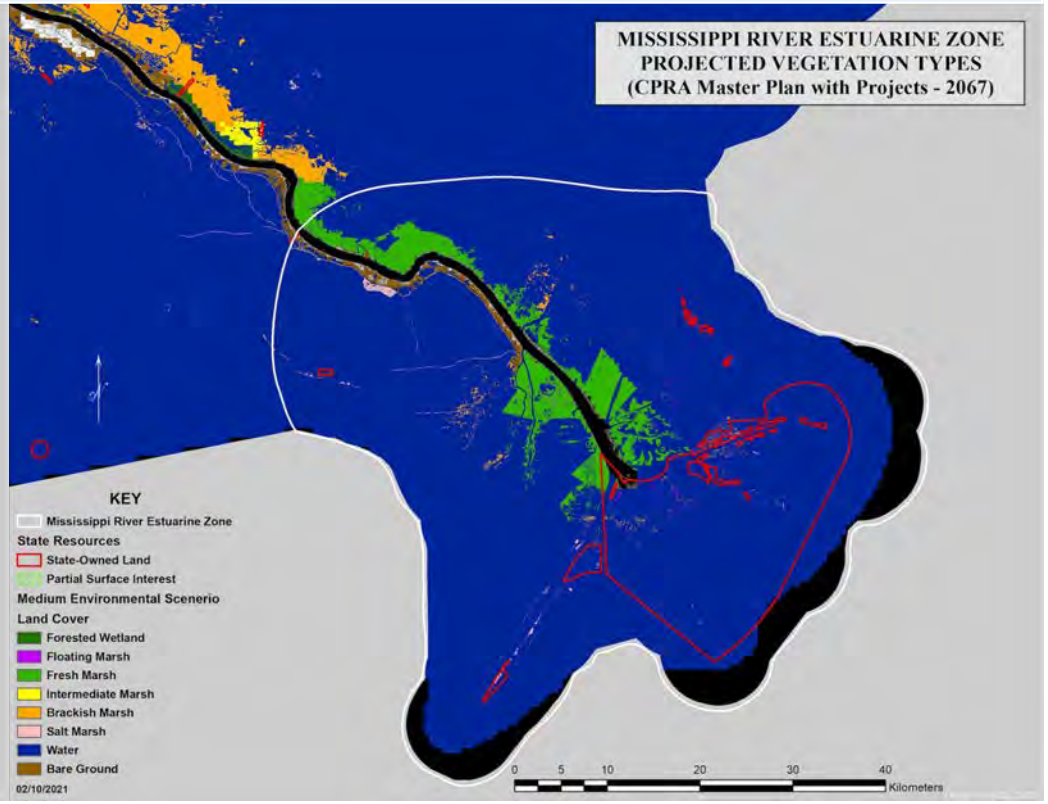
Mississippi River Estuarine Zone

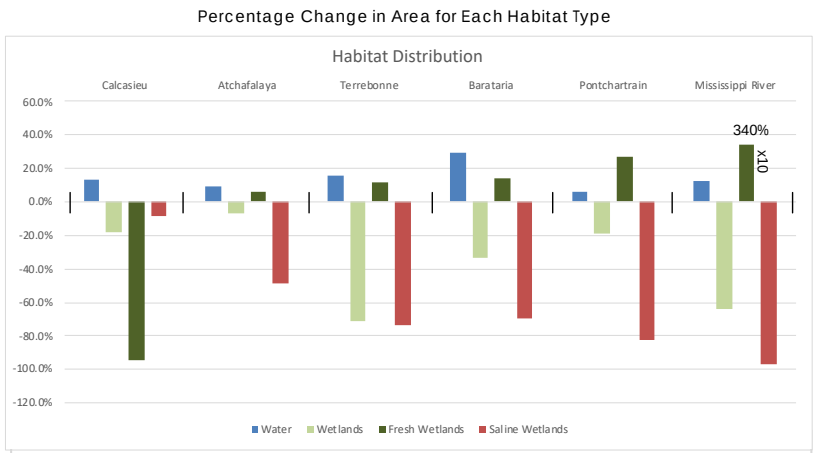
Pre-Screening Recommendation #3 and #4

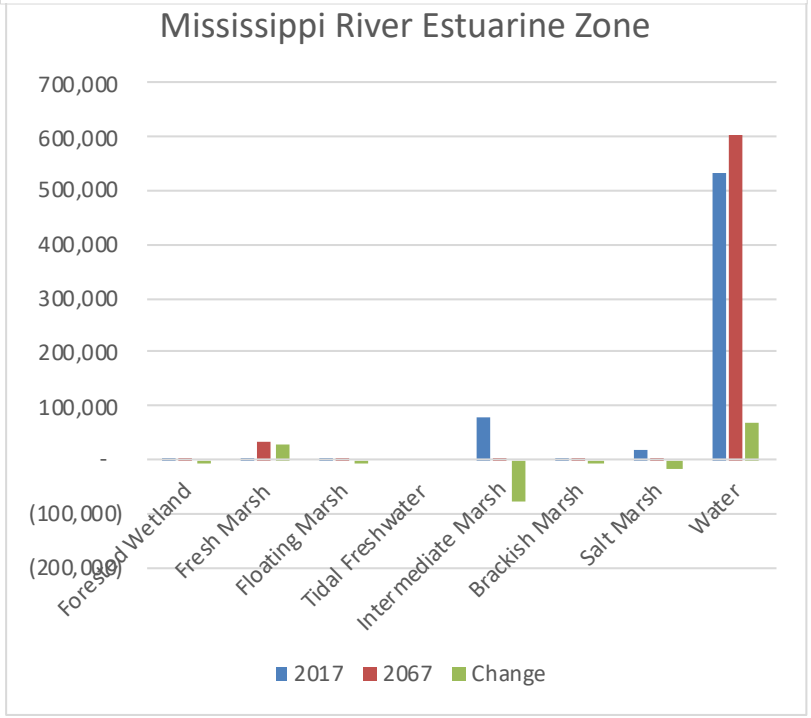
#3: Significant Area Change: There is significant land loss in the potential core areas (state-owned lands) that could be used to develop candidate sites for LaNERR. Potential core areas are sufficient at present (initial conditions), but the Estuarine Zone has significant level of conflict in the future because of land loss of core areas that would be used for developing facilities and programs (research & education) of LaNERR. Initial Wetland Area = 107,521 acres; Projected Wetland Area = 38,766 acres. Wetland Change = -69.9%

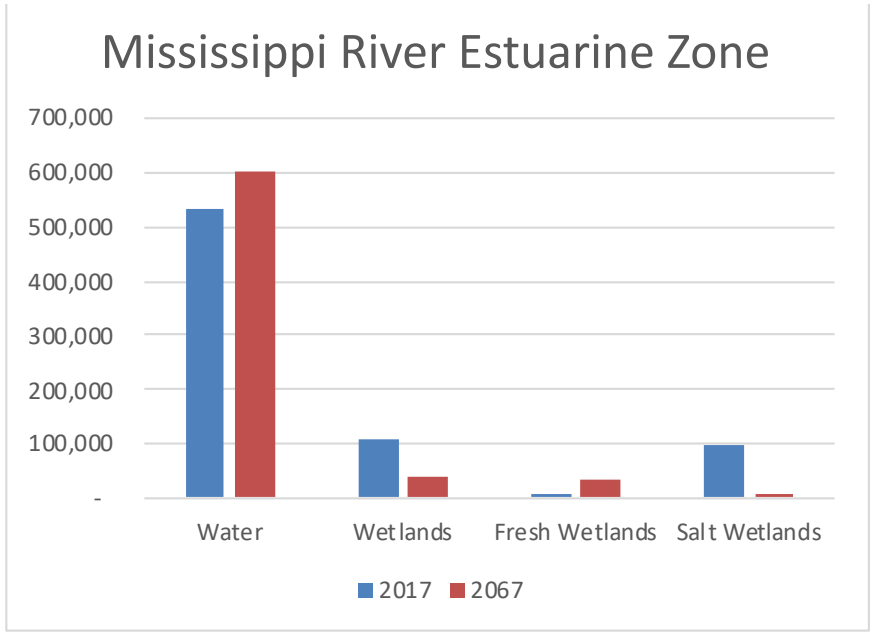
#4: Significant Habitat Diversity Change: There is significant change in habitat types and total habitat area in the core areas that could be used to develop candidate sites for LaNERR. Potential core areas in the Estuarine Zone are insufficient in the future because ofsignificant habitat change to develop programs (research & education) of LaNERR. Percent change in Fresh Wetland Area = +343.8%; Percent change in Saline Wetland Area = -96.5%.

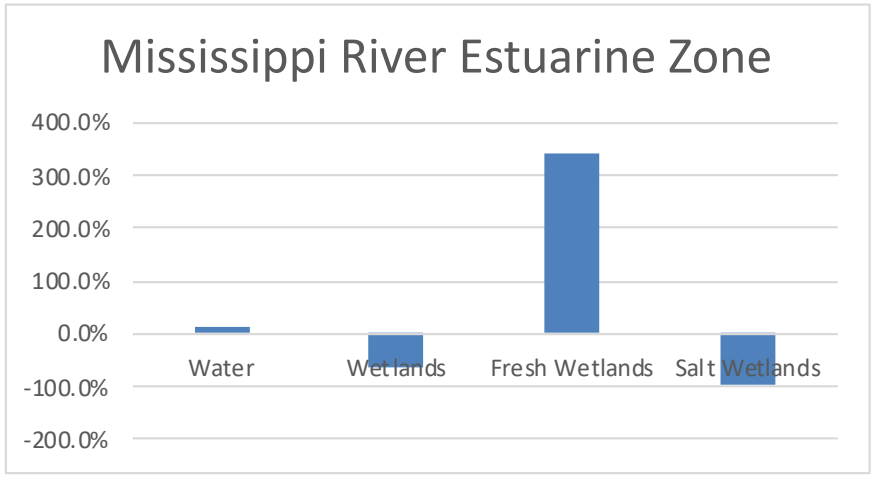





Percentage Change in Area for Each Habitat Type
Habitat Distribution
Calcasieu
Atchafalaya
Terrebonne
Barataria
Pontchartrain
Mississippi River
60.0%
40.0%
20.0%
0.0%
-20.0%
-40.0%
-60.0%
-80.0%
-100.0%
-120.0%
340%
x10
Water
Wetlands
Fresh Wetlands
Saline Wetlands


Mississippi River Estuarine Zone
Area in Acres
700,000
600,000
500,000
400,000
300,000
200,000
100,000
-
(100,000)
(200,000)
Forested Wetland
Fresh Marsh
Floating Marsh
Tidal Freshwater
Intermediate Marsh
Brackish Marsh
Salt Marsh
Water
2017
2067
Change


Mississippi River Estuarine Zone
Area in Acres
700,000
600,000
500,000
400,000
300,000
200,000
100,000
-
Water
Wetlands
Fresh Wetlands
Salt Wetlands
2017
2067


Mississippi River Estuarine Zone
Percentage Change (50 yrs)
400.0%
300.0%
200.0%
100.0%
0.0%
-100.0%
-200.0%
Water
Wetlands
Fresh Wetlands
Salt Wetlands

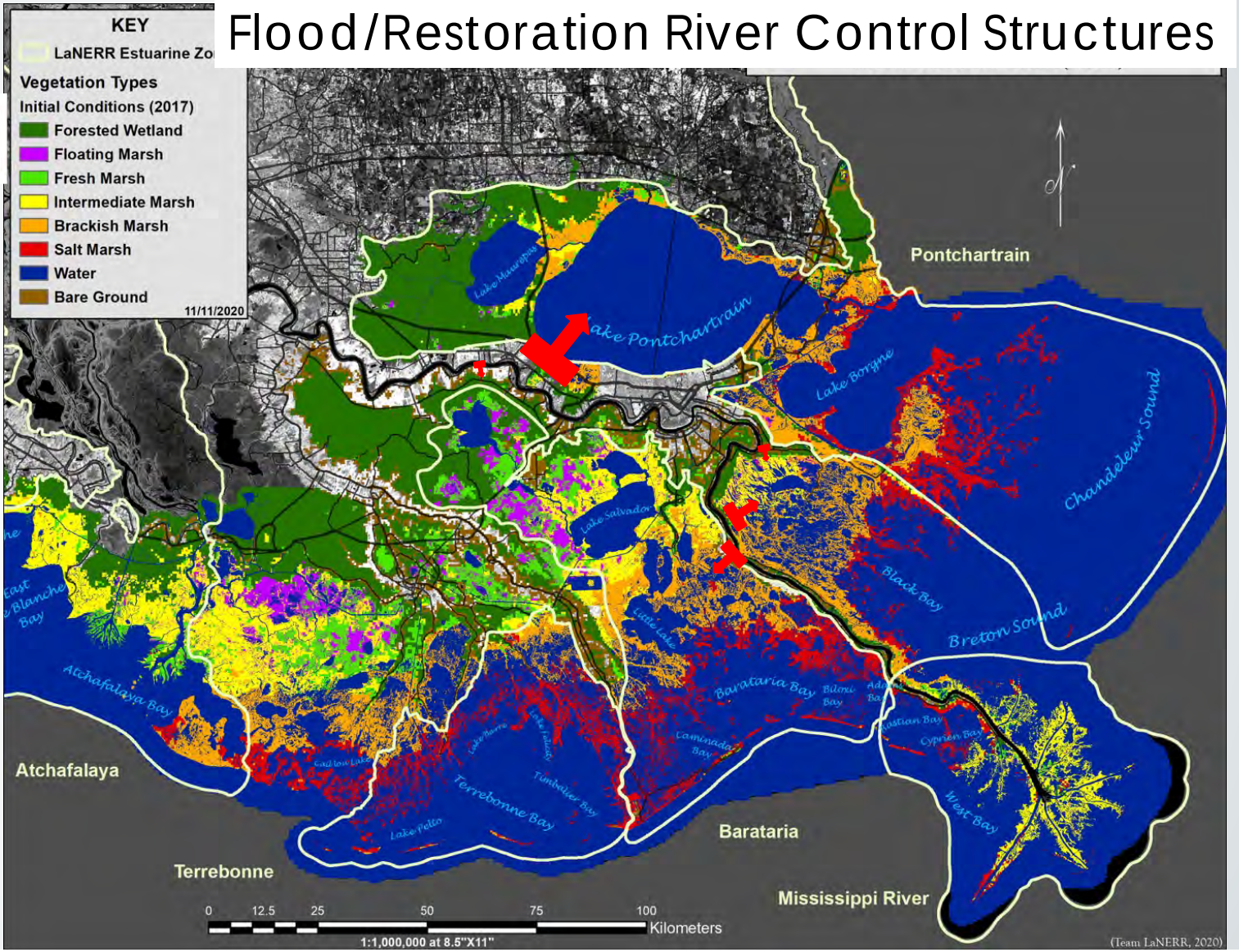
This section of the presentation focuses on Criterion #5.

Pre-Screening Criteria #5 Hydrologic Manipulations
5. Do existing or anticipated operations of water control structures and levees (including marsh impoundments) by federal and state authorities with sole purpose of manipulating hydrology in coastal basins for either flood control, marsh management, or coastal restoration have the potential to impact the integrity of potential core or buffer areas thus causing potential conflicts between LaNERR objectives (environmental representativeness, research & education)?

Estuarine Zone	Calcasieu Estuarine Zone	Atchafalaya Estuarine Zone	Terrebonne Estuarine Zone	Barataria Estuarine Zone	Pontchartrain Estuarine Zone	Mississippi River Estuarine Zone
Pre-Screening Criteria	Pre-Screening Recommendation	Pre-Screening Recommendation	Pre-Screening Recommendation	Pre-Screening Recommendation	Pre-Screening Recommendation	Pre-Screening Recommendation
5. Do existing or anticipated operations of water control structures and levees (including marsh impoundments) by federal and state authorities with sole purpose of manipulating hydrology in coastal basins for either flood control, marsh management, or coastal restoration have the potential to impact the integrity of potential core or buffer areas thus causing potential conflicts between LaNERR objectives (environmental representativeness, research & education)?	Hydrologic Control Impacts - Potentially Interfere: The coastal setting of this Estuarine Zone presents future potential coastal management issues with planned construction of marsh management and salinity control structures associated with the Calcasieu Ship Channel. The planning of candidate sites in this Estuarine Zone will have to consider how to incorporate these manipulations in planning program development (research & education) that utilize these impacts.	Hydrologic Control Impacts - Insignificant: This Estuarine Zone is manipulated by the Old River Control Structure at the head of the Atchafalaya River Basin. This flood control structure operates on a fixed percentage (70/30% split) of flow from combined Red and Mississippi River discharge that is directed to the Mississippi and Atchafalaya River, respectively. Given the percentage of total flow represents seasonal flood-pulse of a major river basin, this is not considered an operation abnormal to seasonal river flood patterns.	Hydrologic Control Impacts - Potentially Interfere: This Estuarine Zone is impacted by water control structures (e.g., Pointe-aux-Chenes WMA) and the construction and operation of the Morganza to the Gulf flood control project that has water control structures and levees that may impact developing programs (research & education) in candidate sites for LaNERR.	Hydrologic Control Impacts - Potentially Interfere: The coastal setting of this Estuarine Zone presents future potential coastal management issues with operation of the Mid-Barataria diversion structure and Upper Barataria Risk Reduction Project. The planning of candidate sites in this Estuarine Zone will have to consider how to incorporate these manipulations in planning program development (research & education) that utilize these impacts.	Hydrologic Control Impacts - Potentially Interfere: The coastal setting of this Estuarine Zone presents future potential coastal management issues with operation of the Bonnet Carre flood control structure and West Shore Lake Pontchartrain flood protection project. In addition, there is the future construction of the Maurepas diversion structure. The planning of candidate sites in this Estuarine Zone will have to consider how to incorporate these manipulations in planning program development (research & education) that utilize these impacts.	Hydrologic Control Impacts - Insignificant: This Estuarine Zone does not have issues of impacts from water control structures and levees that would potentially impact developing programs (research & education) in candidate sites for LaNERR.

Flood/Restoration River Control Structures

Map shows some of the present and proposed water control structures that will influence the manipulation of freshwater delivery to six Estuarine Zones.



These are the Summary Recommendations by Designation Leadership Team (DLT).

SUMMARY RECOMMENDATIONS	Calcasieu Estuarine Zone	Atchafalaya Estuarine Zone	Terrebonne Estuarine Zone	Barataria Estuarine Zone	Pontchartrain Estuarine Zone	Mississippi River Estuarine Zone
The following columns contain summary statements and recommendations for each Estuarine Zone prepared by the Designation Leadership Team.	The Calcasieu Estuarine Zone has very limited state-owned lands that could be used as core areas to establish a LaNERR. The state-owned lands that are currently present do not represent the diverse unique habitats and processes of delta estuary. The changes in land area are not significant, but changes in habitat type are significant. Due to the lack of state-owned land, there is limited opportunity for establishing a LaNERR in this Estuarine Zone. Further, hydrologic manipulations potentially challenge the establishment of a NERR.	The Atchafalaya Estuarine Zone currently has significant state-owned lands that represent the unique habitats and processes of delta estuary. There are diverse habitat types and salinity zones representative of a delta estuary. The projected changes to both the land area and habitat types over the next 50-yrs are insignificant and moderate, respectively. This zone experiences the least future change when compared to the other zones. This Estuarine Zone represents a region sufficient to establish a LaNERR, and hydrologic manipulations will not challenge the establishment of a NERR.	The Terrebonne Estuarine Zone currently has state-owned lands that could serve as core areas. However, the zone does not have a diversity of habitat types or salinity gradients representative of a delta estuary. The projected changes to both the land area and habitat types over the next 50-yrs limit the potential of this zone for establishing a LaNERR. Further, hydrologic manipulations potentially challenge the establishment of a NERR.	The Barataria Estuarine Zone currently has significant state-owned lands that represent the diverse habitats and salinity gradients of a delta estuary. The projected changes in land area are not significant, but changes in habitat type over the next 50-yrs is significant. The more interior regions of this Estuarine Zone may represent a region sufficient to establish a LaNERR. Hydrologic manipulations will potentially challenge the establishment of a LaNERR.	The Pontchartrain Estuarine Zone currently has significant state-owned lands that represent the diversity habitats and salinity gradients of a delta estuary. The projected changes in land area are not significant, but changes in habitat type over the next 50-yrs is significant. The more interior regions of this Estuarine Zone may represent a region sufficient to establish a LaNERR. However, hydrologic manipulations will potentially challenge the establishment of a NERR.	The Mississippi River Estuarine Zone has current state-owned lands that represent the unique habitats, although dominated by intermediate marsh and salinity zone. There are both fresh and saline habitats in this Estuarine Zone. However, the projected loss of land area and changes to habitat types over the next 50-yrs limit the potential of this zone for establishing a LaNERR. Hydrologic manipulations will not challenge the establishment of a NERR.

LaNERR Site Development Committee

Meeting #3

Session 1: Thursday, Feb 25, 2021 (10:00 am – 12:30 pm)

Session 2: Friday, Feb 26, 2021 (9:00 am – 11:30 am)

Attendees

SDC Members - Session 1: Andy Fischer, LDWF; Carol Wilson, LSU; David Muth, NWF; David Podgorski, UNO; Dean Blanchard, BTNEP; Gina Campo, OCD; Honora Buras, CPRA; Jonathan Foret, SLWDC; Julie Whitbeck, NPS; Justin Lemoine, CRT; Matthew Hiatt, LSU; Navid Jafari, LSU; Quenton Fontenot, NSU; Sara Krupa, LDNR; Tracy Quirk, LSU; Kacie Wright, USGS; Patty Ferguson Bohnee, ASU; John Nyman, LSU; Beth Stauffer, ULL; Heather Stone, ULL; Robert Moreau, SELU; Kevin Ringelman, LSU; Erin Cox, UNO; Kyle Piller, SELU; Mike Carloss, DU; Natalie Snider, EDF; Ron Boustany, NRCS; Scott Hemmerling, WI; Thomas Gresham, LDOE; Corey Miller, CRCL; Dinah Maygarden, UNO; Illya Tietzel, UNO; Mark Davis, Tulane; Alternates: T. Bradley Keith, BTNEP

SDC Members - Session 2: Abigail Bockus, LUMCON; Alex Kolker, LUMCON; Brian Roberts, LUMCON; Cheston Hill, OSL; Claire Anderson, Ripple Effect; Gary Lafleur, NSU; Giovanna McClenachan, NSU; Honora Buras, CPRA; Jill Trepanier, LSU; Maida Owens, CRT; Martin O'Connel, UNO; Nathan Corley, LDOE; Pat Arnould, GOIA; Rebecca Triche, LWF; Robert Thomas, Loyola; Robert Mahon, UNO; Seth Blitch, TNC; Simone Maloz, RoR; James Nelson, ULL; Kristi Trail, PC; Greg Steyer, USGS; Danielle Keller, USACE; Craig Colten, LSU; Mark Tobler, Loyola; Chip McGimsey, CRT; Liz Skilton, ULL; Eric Johnson, Audubon; Jennifer Hill, Louisiana Tech; John Nyman, LSU; Alternates: Ridgely Myers, PC

Designation Leadership Team: Robert Twilley, LA Sea Grant; LaTosha Mullins, LA Sea Grant; Morgan Crutcher, GOCA; Kristin Ransom, NOAA

LSU GIS Support: DeWitt Braud, R. Hampton Peele

Royal Engineers & Consultants (LA Sea Grant Support): Kirk Rhinehart, Alaina Grace, Mandy Green

SDC Members Unable to Attend: Aimee Hollander, NSU; Andy Dolan, USFWS; Brian Gautreau, LSU AgCenter; Bryan Piazza, TNC; Chuck Hunter, USFWS; Cindy Brown, LTL; Donata Henry, Tulane; Emad Habib, ULL; Joey Breaux, LDAF; John Tirpak, USFWS; Ken Krauss, USGS; Malay Ghose Hajra, UNO; Mark Kulp, UNO; Megan La Peyre, USGS; Michael Pasquier, LSU; Mitchell Aleshire, CRT; Morgan Kelly, LSU; Shirell Parfait-Dardar, GCDBCC

Summary

Welcome

The key objective of the meeting was to evaluate the merits of the six estuarine zones for developing candidate sites for a Louisiana National Estuarine Research Reserve (LaNERR). The meeting agenda was briefly reviewed.

Overview of LaNERR Site Selection and Nomination Process

This presentation covered the primary goals of the National Estuarine Research Reserve (NERR)system as well as Louisiana's process for deciding where to establish a NERR. Additionally, the formation of Criteria and Screening Subcommittees and Proposal Teams was discussed along with the role of each and the general timeframe over which they would be asked to serve.

Review and Discuss Six Estuarine Zones

The categories of NOAA site selection criteria were briefly discussed as an introduction to the pre-screening evaluation that was completed by the Designation Leadership Team (DLT) for each of the six estuarine zones. Definitions for key terms used in the NERR process and preliminary screening criteria were provided prior to the discussion of the five preliminary screening criteria. Each of the preliminary screening criteria was reviewed along with the DLT's evaluation of each of those criteria for each estuarine zone. Maps and graphs of supporting data for each criterion and zone were presented to the SDC. Following discussion of the summary evaluation for each estuarine zone, the Qualtrics survey for the SDC's estuarine zone voting was described. The session was opened for discussion, and key points raised are provided below, organized by the five preliminary screening criteria.

Preliminary Screening Criteria #1: Unique Coastal Setting

NOAA has priority areas for where they will support a designation, given funding and staff constraints. The highest priority is designating a site in a biogeographic region that is not yet represented in the system. The second priority, which is applicable to the LaNERR process, is a nomination which incorporates a biogeographic subregion not represented, or an estuary type not yet represented by existing or developing reserves. The LaNERR process will have to show how the site is unique from the other four NERRs in our biogeographic region.

Several SDC members indicated a preference for using the phrase "Active Delta Estuary" in the preliminary and site selection criteria instead of "Delta Estuary" This will distinguish the Louisiana NERR from retreating or abandoned deltas already in the NERR system.

The DLT acknowledged that the vegetation habitat modeling data produced for the 2017 Coastal Master Plan may not represent current conditions at every location (e.g., extent of saline marsh in the Atchafalaya Basin); however, it is the most complete coastwide data set available that provides both a current condition and 50-year projections.

Preliminary Screening Criteria #2: State-Owned Lands

A clarification from the DLT: % state-owned land in a zone (as presented in the graphs) is the % of the publicly owned lands in a zone, not the X% of the entire land area in zone

Several SDC members expressed concern over whether, through the preliminary screening process, non-state-owned lands were being precluded from incorporation into the LaNERR. The DLT indicated that these lands were not being precluded. The state must demonstrate adequate management control over the core areas designated as a NERR. Therefore, the focus of the preliminary screening process is to identify those state lands that can potentially serve as core areas. Federal, other public, or private lands can be considered for inclusion in the NERR once the state-owned core areas have been identified. Both land and water are important for the establishment of a NERR, as the NERR must be able to both house facilities and support research. NERR boundaries can be revised as part of the five year updates to the management plan.

The LaNERR process will not seek to change regulations related to current management of state-owned lands, but it will have to demonstrate that the current management supports the mission of the NERR program relative to research, education, etc. and preserve the unique features that are being set aside for study. Last, given the dynamic nature of Louisiana's coast, it will be necessary to consider the conversion of water bottom into land, and the changes in ownership and management that may result. Water bottoms are largely state owned.

Preliminary Screening Criteria #3: Land Integrity

NOAA guidelines indicate that the integrity of a NERR be maintained in perpetuity (i.e., unchanged forever); however, there is some flexibility given that all NERRs will likely experience changes due to sea-level rise and other climate related factors. The site nomination package should highlight how anticipated changes to the site can be incorporated into research.

Preliminary Screening Criteria #4: Change in Habitat Diversity

A clarification from the DLT: projections are from the 2017 Coastal Master Plan, with the plan, under the moderate scenario.

Changes in habitat type are almost inevitable, especially in coastal LA; the key is whether the core area will still serve its mission related to what we are trying to achieve (research, study, etc.) in perpetuity. Because of the anticipated changes in habitat diversity, habitat migration could be a point of interest for research; however, this should be acknowledged upfront as part of the nomination package.

Preliminary Screening Criteria #5: Hydrologic Manipulations

Coastal Louisiana is a highly managed system, and it will be very difficult to find areas that are not free from human controls. The key will be to acknowledge these potential challenges upfront and prepare for them through the management plan. Hydrologic manipulations can be an interesting source of research; however, once the reserve has been designated, significant hydrologic manipulations should not happen within the core boundary of the reserve as they would have the potential to alter the unique habitat of the reserve that is being preserved.

Wrap Up and Next Steps

The SDC Meeting #3 recordings have been posted to the SDC site.

The SDC was asked to complete the following Qualtrics surveys as they receive them:

1. Vote by estuarine zones; voting closed 3/2/21
2. Availability to attend SDC Meeting #4
3. Form subcommittees and proposal teams
4. Schedule remaining SDC meetings (TBD)

Key topics to be discussed at SDC Meeting #4 include draft Site Selection Criteria and development of preliminary candidate sites.

Site Development Committee Meeting 4

March 30 & 31, 2021

LaNERR Site Development Committee

Meeting #4

(Attend one of the following two options)

Tuesday, March 30 (9:00 – 10:30 am)

or

Wednesday, March 31 (1:00 – 2:30 pm)

Zoom link: https://lsu.zoom.us/j/93243971525?pwd=blFjUU40Nk5aQlJvT2hvWEhXZTJmdz09
Meeting ID: 932 4397 1525
Passcode: 074514
Mobile Dial In: 312-626-6799

Pre-meeting Materials:

1. NERR Designation Guidance - Attached
2. 1st Draft LaNERR Site Selection Criteria - Attached

Objectives:

- Overview of Estuarine Zone Voting Results
- Review Example Preliminary Candidate Sites
- Discuss 1st Draft Site Selection Criteria
- Guidance for Proposal Team Formation and Phase 1 Candidate Site Proposals

Agenda:

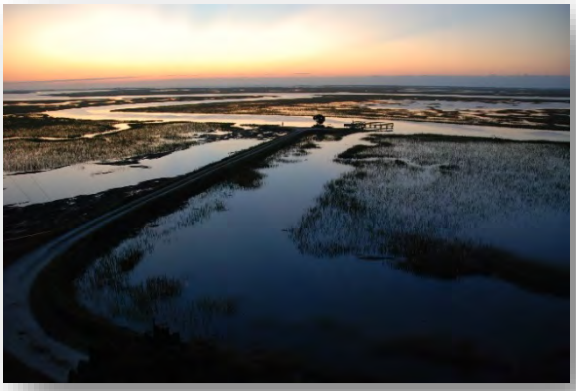
Time	Topic
5 min	Welcome
10 min	Overview of Estuarine Zone voting & address SDC comments
15 min	Example preliminary candidate sites (core & buffer areas) in approved Estuarine Zones
5 min	*Pontchartrain Estuarine Zone*
5 min	*Barataria Estuarine Zone*
5 min	*Atchafalaya Estuarine Zone*
15 min	Draft Site Selection Criteria & Charge to Criteria Subcommittee
40 min	Proposal Teams and developing Phase 1 Candidate Site Proposals • Team Members and relevant expertise in addressing four NOAA topical areas • Visual of anticipated LaNERR site, including draft core and buffer areas • Brief explanation of proposal development plan • Due end of April
5 min	Wrap up and next steps: • Criteria Subcommittee & Screening Subcommittee • SDC complete Qualtrics survey to schedule Meeting #5

Post-meeting follow up from DLT:

- Recordings of meeting
- Meeting summary
- Qualtrics survey to schedule SDC Meeting #5

National Estuarine Research Reserve Designation Guidance

Site Selection, Nomination, and Designation



February 1, 2020

Authored by NOAA

Stewardship Division
Office for Coastal Management
National Ocean Service
National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

National Estuarine Research Reserve Designation Guidance

Site Selection, Nomination, and Designation

Dear User,

The enclosed guidance provides a detailed overview of the national estuarine research reserve designation process, including feedback and insights from different states where reserve sites were designated. The process to designate a new reserve in the national system is a long and involved multi-year process requiring a long-term commitment by a state or territory and NOAA. There are multiple steps and milestones to this process that will require the involvement of many individuals and organizations at the local and state levels. Reserves are based on partnerships, with NOAA serving as the lead federal partner. Other partners in the process include state agencies, nonprofit groups, universities, and members of local communities, to name a few. Forming a collaborative partnership between a lead state partner or champion, NOAA, and other interested parties during the designation process is important and necessary for the long-term success of a future reserve.

On average, a designation may take between 3 to 5 years if all partners are working diligently throughout the process. As the primary audiences for this guidance, the lead state partner and NOAA staff need to work together toward achieving the designation milestones laid out in this document. The guidance is broken out into eight sections, providing specific guidance and recommendations to the lead state partner and NOAA staff. Contained within the document are links to other important supporting documentation and guidance.

The user should note that certain details related to internal NOAA approval processes may change over time and should be reviewed and compared to current clearance and approval procedures.

Table of Contents

1. Introduction to the National Estuarine Research Reserve System

The National Estuarine Research Reserve System (Reserve System) is a network of 29 protected areas representing different biogeographic regions and estuarine types within the U.S. that are protected for long-term research, monitoring, education, and coastal stewardship. Established by the Coastal Zone Management Act of 1972, as amended, the Reserve System is a partnership program between the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) and the coastal states. NOAA provides funding and national guidance. Each reserve is managed at the site level by a lead state agency or university, with input from local partners.

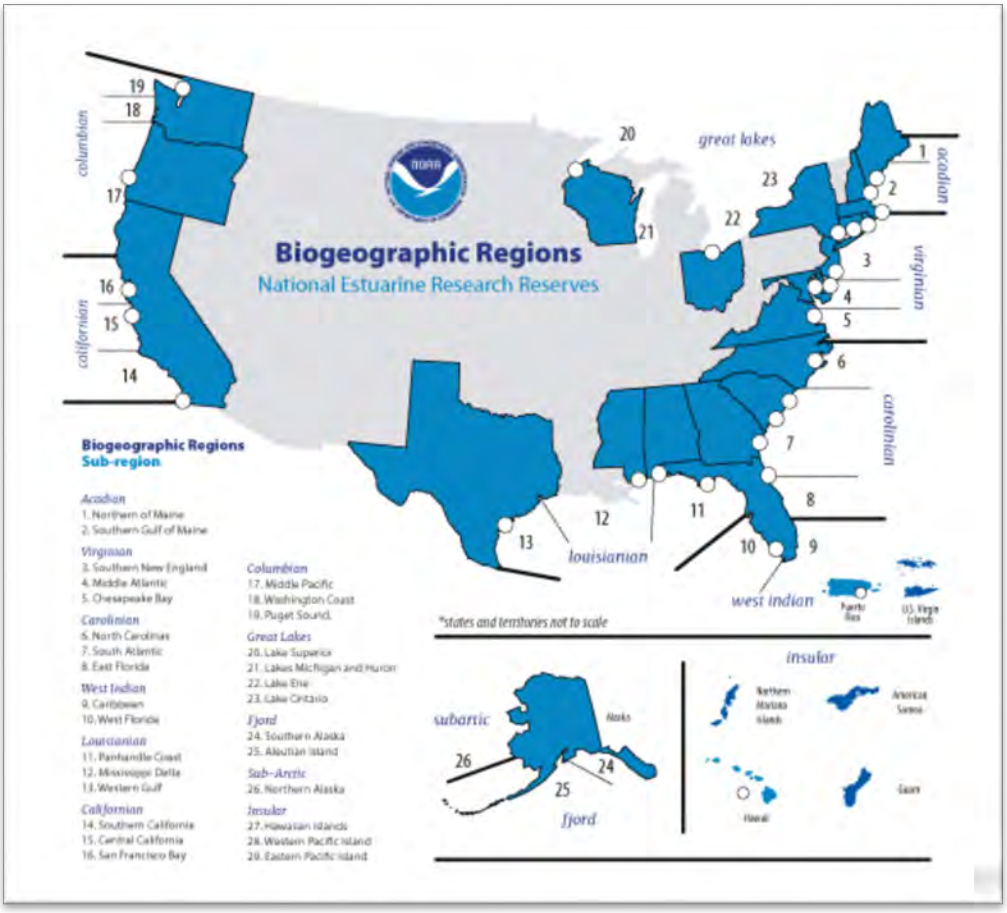


Figure 1. National Estuarine Research Reserve System, 2017

Reserve staff members work with local communities and regional groups to address natural resource management issues, such as nonpoint source pollution, visitor use, invasive species, habitat restoration, and changing climatic conditions. Through integrated research, education, and resource stewardship, the reserves help communities develop strategies to deal successfully with these coastal resource issues.

Reserves provide adult professional audiences with training on estuarine issues of concern in their local communities. They offer field classes for K-12 students and professional development programs in estuarine education for teachers. Reserves also provide long-term water quality and biological monitoring as well as opportunities for scientists and graduate students to conduct research in a "living laboratory."

What is a National Estuarine Research Reserve?

Each reserve, as defined in § 921.2 of the National Estuarine Research Reserve System regulations, is

"*an area that is a representative estuarine ecosystem suitable for long-term research, which may include all of the key land and water portions of an estuary, and adjacent transitional areas and uplands constituting to the extent feasible a natural unit, and which is set aside as a natural field laboratory to provide long-term opportunities for research, education, and interpretation . . . .*"

In other words, reserves serve as living laboratories for the study of estuaries and natural and man-made changes. They help connect science to people, whether they are teachers, students, decision makers, or coastal residents, and serve as demonstration sites where new ideas are tested and modeled.

A number of system-wide programs implemented by reserves focus on monitoring, training, and education that allow them to have a regional and national impact. The integration of locally relevant reserve programs with system-wide approaches fosters innovation and allows comparison of estuarine conditions across the country. In addition, reserves, as place-based entities, build trusted long-term relationships with local communities, state and federal agencies, and other nongovernmental entities and form partnerships that amplify the impact of individual reserves and the Reserve System. By working locally, regionally, and nationally, the Reserve System is more efficient and effective in addressing the key issues faced by coastal managers and communities today.

History of Reserve Designations

The U.S. Congress, through the Coastal Zone Management Act (CZMA) of 1972, established the Reserve System. Originally designated as estuarine sanctuaries, the 1985 reauthorization of the CZMA, enacted in 1986, renamed them as estuarine research reserves. In 1974, South Slough, located in southwestern

Oregon, became the first reserve designated. Since then, the system has expanded to 29 reserves with the most recent, He'eia in Hawai'i, designated in 2017.

The Reserve System expanded significantly during the 1980s and 1990s as noted in Figure 2. Then, in the 2000s the number of reserve designations leveled off to roughly one per five years. Despite significant increases in funding for the Reserve System in 1999, most of those resources were allocated to support a range of system-wide programs including the System-Wide Monitoring Program, Graduate Research Fellowships, and the Coastal Training Program.

As currently comprised, the Reserve System includes several multi-component reserves that are also multi-component designations, which means that, in some cases, different sites making up a reserve were designated over time. Examples include Chesapeake Bay Maryland and North Carolina reserves. In the history of the Reserve System, only one designated reserve was subsequently de-designated from the system. Waimanu Valley, in Hawaii, was originally designated in 1978 and then de-designated in 1996 by NOAA. A full listing of history of reserve designations is provided in Appendix E.

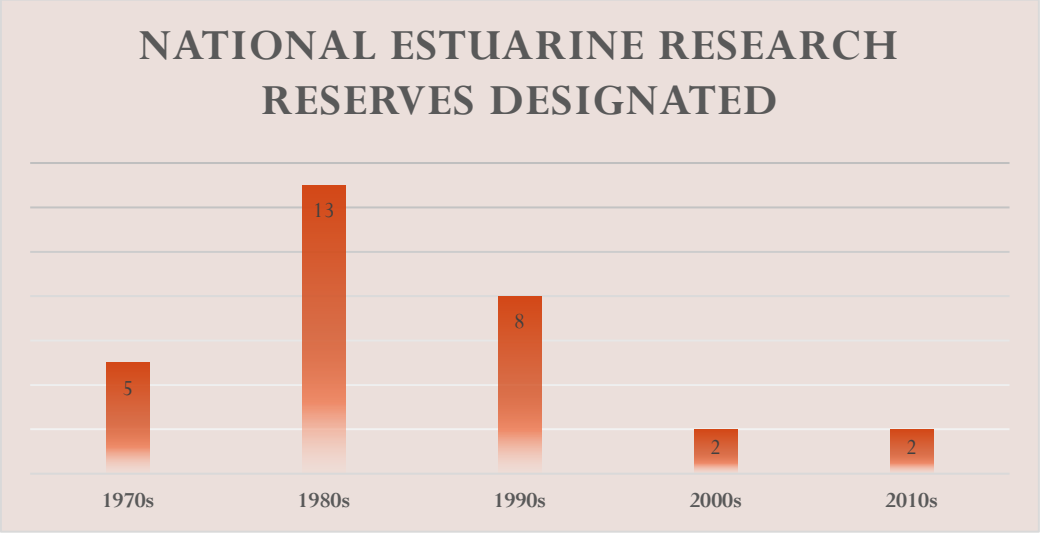


Figure 2. Research Reserve Designations by Decade (through 2017)

Future Expansion of the National Estuarine Research Reserve System

Within the U.S., 34 coastal and Great Lakes states and U.S. territories are eligible to designate a reserve. Of these, 24 states and territories have one or more reserves for a total 29 reserves across the nation. South Carolina has two reserves, while Florida and California have three each. As of 2018, Connecticut and Louisiana are the only marine coastal states in the country lacking a National Estuarine Research Reserve.

In 2016, NOAA convened a Blue Ribbon Panel to look at *"what should drive future geographic expansion and how to determine the point at which the system could be considered 'complete.'"* The panel noted that, historically, geographic expansion of the Reserve System was driven by biogeographic representation and interest from the states. However, the panel recognized that the Reserve System is challenged in trying to balance system expansion with the need to provide sufficient baseline support to existing reserves. The relatively flat budget scenarios since the early 2000s make this a key consideration when considering bringing new reserves into the system.

Currently, eight sub-regions (as defined in Appendix 2 of the Reserve System regulations (15 CFR Part 921)) do not contain a research reserve. To identify strategies needed to fill this gap, NOAA with its Reserve System partners are working to develop 5-year and 10-year strategic plan for the system and its resource needs. A steering committee was formed to establish a vision for the future of the Reserve System that is based on

- A recognition that completing biogeographic representation within the Reserve System may not be the most efficient or effective way to achieve its mission and goals per 15 CFR 921.1;

- A commitment to increasing congressional interest in understanding the Reserve System goals and the process for establishment of additional reserves to help meet the mission; and

- A need to align budget and resources with the pace of expansion to achieve current system goals and meet coastal community needs.

Funding Support for Reserve System Designation

Before starting a designation process, a state should consider what resources it will need to sustain a multi-year designation process and identify matching funding and staff to support the operation of a reserve upon designation. Per Reserve System regulations §920.10, pre-designation assistance is available to coastal states for site selection and scoping, site nomination, development of a draft management plan and draft environmental impact statement, development of a final management plan and final environmental impact statement, and to support a designation ceremony. This assistance may not exceed $100,000 during the length of the designation process. In addition to the federal financial assistance, states must provide 30 percent matching support (Table 2). Other federal financial assistance is not eligible to be used as state match to the pre-designation assistance. States have many options to supplement the federal financial assistance, and those are outlined in Table 1. In many instances, a state will use a combination of options to support the designation process.

Table 1. State and University Funding Support for Research Reserve Designation

Type of Funding Support	Generic Description
Cash	
Match for Federal Pre-Designation Assistance	State financial resource are used to match the federal dollars to support any or all aspects of the designation process
Third-Party Grants	State leverages third-party funding to support designation process outside of pre-designation assistance grant matching requirements (non-federal funding only)
Partner Support	Funding provided by partners to support any or all aspects of the designation process including document printing.
In-Kind	
Staff Support	State staff support used as match to federal funds or to generally support designation
Partner Support	Non-cash support from a partner (i.e., food, facilities, supplies, vehicle use, volunteers, etc.)
GIS or Product Support	Mapping support to the site nomination, management plan development, and environmental impact statement process
Combined	
Travel Support	Funding or staff supporting travel or logistics for meetings and reserve site-selection visits
Partial Cash and In-Kind Match	State uses a combination of cash and in-kind support to meet the federal matching requirements to support any or all aspects of the designation process

Upon designation, a reserve becomes eligible for annual operations funding and construction/acquisition funding resources. Each funding option has specific statutory matching requirements as described in table below.

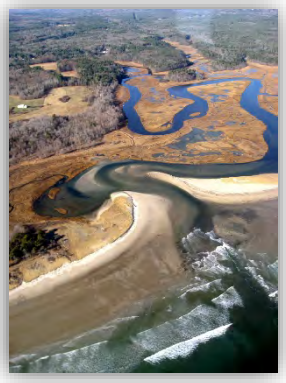
Table 2. Federal Funding Sources and Matching Requirements 2018 for Research Reserves

Type	Match Requirements	
	Federal Share	**State Share**
Operations Funds	70%	30%
Construction Awards	70%	30%
Land Acquisition Awards	50%	50%
Other NOAA Funds	Variable	Variable

2. Designation Process Overview

The process for federal designation of a national estuarine research reserve (research reserve or reserve) requires *multiple* steps and involves many individuals and organizations. Reserves are built on partnerships, with NOAA serving as the lead federal partner. Other partners include state agencies, nonprofit groups, universities, and members of the local community. The collaborative partnership formed between the lead state partner, NOAA, and other interested parties during the designation process is important and necessary for the long-term success of a proposed reserve. It takes the support from all partners to designate and operate a reserve. Since 2000, on average it takes approximately five years to designate a reserve if all partners are working diligently during each step of the process.

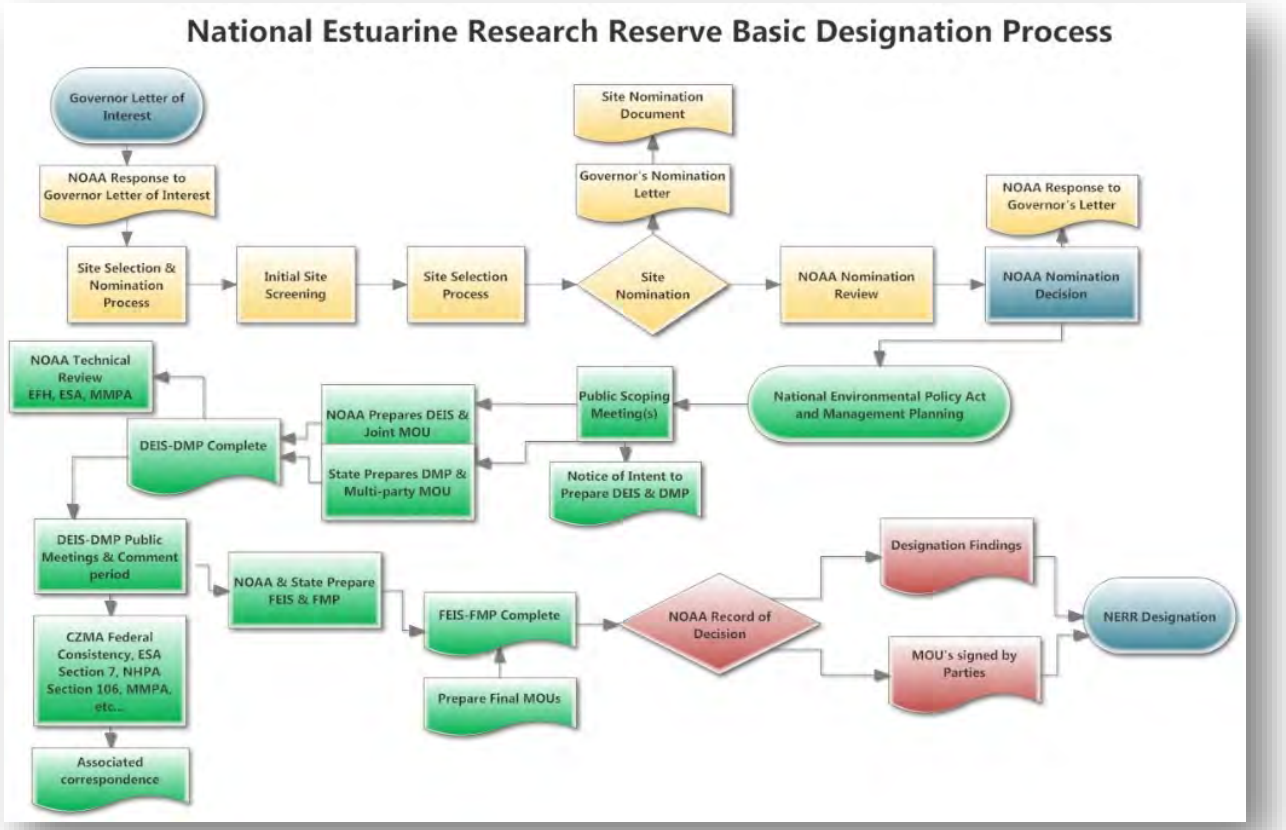
Each reserve designated is *operated* and *managed* by a state lead organization. This is where the designation process begins. Usually, a specific state resource agency or university will take the lead in organizing an effort to learn about what the national system is and to begin mobilizing local stakeholders to support a reserve designation. The state must take the first step in seeking federal designation as a reserve. NOAA works with the state at each step along the way. (photos NOAA)



A. The Basic Designation Process

The basic process for designating a national estuarine research reserve is summarized graphically in Figure 3. Note that there are several key components of the process that, combined, provide the essential information needed for the NOAA administrator to make an informed decision to designate or not.

Figure 3. National Estuarine Research Reserve System Designation Process, 2017



B. Critical Milestones to Reserve Designation

The critical milestones leading to the designation of a reserve are listed below and discussed in more depth on the subsequent pages. Situations may vary, resulting in slight modifications to some of the designation milestones. Detailed information for each of these steps can be found in additional guidance documents and the Reserve System regulations (15 CFR 921).

- ✓ **Governor's Letter of Interest**
- ✓ **Site-Selection Criteria and Nomination**
- ✓ **Drafting an Environmental Impact Statement and Management Plan**
- ✓ **Developing NOAA-State and Multi-party Memorandums of Understanding**
- ✓ **Finalizing the Environmental Impact Statement and Management Plan**
- ✓ **Findings and Record of Decision**
- ✓ **Designation Ceremony**

Milestone 1. A Governor's Letter of Interest

Each reserve designation has one or more local champions that seek to develop local community and state support to pursue the development of a national estuarine research reserve. Before the consideration of a governor's letter of interest, the champion works to develop support for the idea of a reserve. Usually, the champion is from a university or state agency working with local coastal interest groups to gauge public support for a reserve site and to identify a potential state lead in developing a reserve. Building support for creating a reserve site within a state can take years before in advance of seeking a governor's letter of interest. Critical considerations include the following:

- Developing state and local support for a generic site location. (More specific location is determined during Site Selection.)
- Identifying the lead state agency or university to lead the designation process. The state lead is typically the managing reserve partner (e.g., University of Texas for Mission-Aransas Research Reserve) at the time of designation but not always, as was the case with the He'eia Research Reserve process.
- Working with state elected officials to address the required cost-share funding for ongoing reserve operations (30 percent match requirement for annual operations awards)
- Working with federal legislators to support additional annual operations funding for a new reserve

The state champion or lead is advised to open a dialogue with the NOAA Office for Coastal Management's Stewardship Division director to address questions about the process.

Recommended elements of the governor's letter of interest include the following:

- ✓ Explain why the state would like to designation a national estuarine research reserve.
- ✓ Identify a lead state agency or university to work with NOAA.
- ✓ Request designation assistance funding and technical assistance.
- ✓ Address the letter to the NOAA administrator.
- ✓ Signed and dated by the state or territorial governor.

Examples found in Appendix B.

Milestone 2. Site Selection and Nomination

Site selection is a process that enables the state to evaluate and select candidate sites for the consideration as a reserve. Critical to the success of this step is the formation of committees or teams (See Section 3, "Best Practices") to evaluate and select a site for nomination to NOAA. For a state, these groups are designed to

- Identify and Evaluate candidate sites;
- Conduct outreach to the public and affected entities;
- Develop partnerships to support reserve designation and future operations;

- Select a site for nomination; and
- Create a nomination package for NOAA.

Overall, there are *four* critically important parts to site selection and nomination, detailed as follows:

Developing Site Selection Criteria

Site selection criteria are designed to address major site considerations that reflect the goals of the National Estuarine Research Reserve System as described in § 921.1 of the system regulations. Sites may consider modifying or adding additional criteria that reflect regional differences in the ecological characteristics of the habitats to be considered. The suite of criteria selected by a state for a Reserve System designation process require NOAA approval.

Preliminary Site Screening

Prior to the application of the full suite of site selection criteria, it may be appropriate for the state, in consultation with the Office for Coastal Management, to utilize a simplified procedure to screen the proposed sites to eliminate those areas that are clearly not suitable candidates. A preliminary screening should reduce the amount of time and effort that is required to apply the full suite of criteria to all sites. This is particularly important for states with a large array of potential sites.

Selecting a Site for Nomination

Upon narrowing down the list of potential sites, a state should evaluate the remaining candidate sites using the approved site-selection criteria. Typically, a small team of experts, with strong technical expertise or relevant local knowledge, scores the list of candidate sites using the approved selection criteria. The scored sites are ranked and forwarded to another team for final selection. In addition to scoring according to the site-selection criteria, a nominated site should incorporate public, partner, and stakeholder input.

Creating a Nomination Document

A site nomination package makes the case to NOAA for the designation of a new reserve to the Reserve System. The nomination provides the rationale for why the site would be a valuable addition to the national network and contribute to the goals as described in § 921.1 of the Reserve System regulations. The package should at a minimum provide a detailed description of the site-selection process; describe how the site conforms to Reserve System requirements under § 921.11 of the system regulations; provide a detailed description of the site; and describe its compatibility with existing plans and land and water uses.

Section 3 of this guidance provides additional detail about site selection and nomination.

Milestone 3. Drafting an Environmental Impact Statement and Management Plan

Management Plan

Upon NOAA approval of a site nomination, the NOAA administrator identifies the next steps in the reserve designation process. This includes

- Identifying who the state will be working with at NOAA;
- Hosting joint state and NOAA public meetings in the area affected by a reserve designation to

identify significant issues related to the proposed site that were not captured during the public engagement process prior to site nomination;

- Notifying the state or university lead to begin preparing a draft reserve management plan with assistance and support from NOAA. Note that the draft plan includes the development of appropriate memorandums of agreement/understanding between NOAA and the lead state agency or university and between the state and any land-owning partners; and
- NOAA's responsibility in preparing a draft environmental impact statement with support from the state.

Designating a national estuarine research reserve is considered a major federal action under both the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 (NEPA), 42 U.S.C. 4321 et seq., and 15 CFR § 921.13 of the Reserve System regulations. This requires that NOAA careful consider the environmental effects of proposed actions, analyze potential environmental effects of proposed actions and their alternatives, avoid or minimize adverse effects of proposed actions, and restore and enhance environmental quality to the greatest extent practicable. Early on in the environmental impact statement development process, all applicable consultations (Endangered Species Act, NHPA Sec. 106, etc.) related to this federal action should also be implemented.

The nominated reserve site and its management alternatives and impacts are evaluated in depth to satisfy all federal and state environmental statutes. NOAA's Office for Coastal Management and the lead state agency or university work closely together to develop both the Draft management plan and the DEIS documents.

During this step, NOAA is required to publish the following Notices in the *Federal Register*.

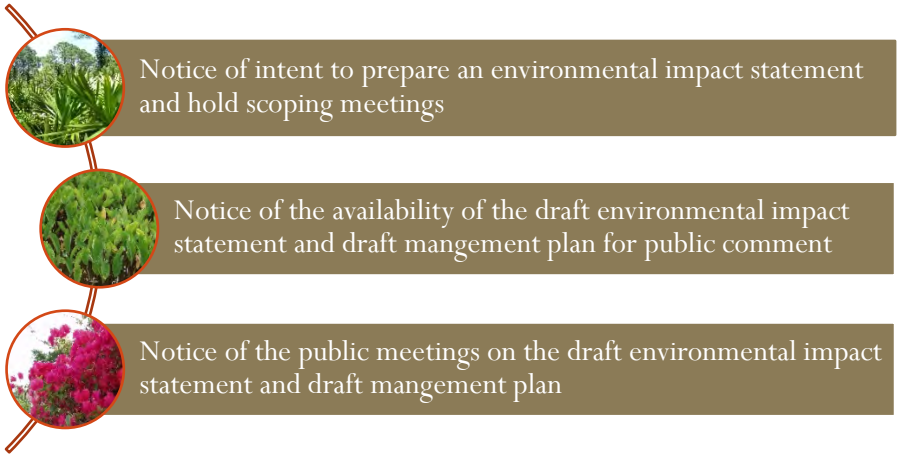


Figure 4. NOAA-Published Federal Register Notices Early in Designation Process, 2017

The date of publication of the draft environmental impact statement and draft management plan in the *Federal Register* begins a required 45-day comment period on the draft statement and plan. Jointly, the state lead and NOAA hold a public meeting or meetings on the draft statement and plan no sooner than 30-45 days after the announcement. NOAA also publishes a notice of the public meetings in the *Federal Register* 15 days before the hearing. Concurrently, the state publishes a notice of the public meetings in

the local media and, depending on state requirements, may publish the notice through official administrative outlets.

Milestone 4. Developing NOAA-State and Multi-party Memorandums of Understanding

Memorandums of understanding (MOU) are created to formalize partnerships and work with other federal agencies; universities; state, local, and international governments; tribes; private institutions; and other organizations. In the case of a national estuarine research reserve, an MOU details the federal-state role in the management of a reserve and expresses the state's long-term commitment to operating and managing a reserve in accordance with Section 315 of the Coastal Zone Management Act.

If the proposed reserve has multiple land and water owners or managing entities, the lead state partner must develop additional MOUs with those parties to ensure the long-term protection and operation of a reserve. Drafts of all MOU's must be included in the draft management plan and final MOUs in the final management plan. The MOUs must be signed before the official designation of the reserve. The NOAA-state partner MOU template is included Appendix A.

Milestone 5. Finalizing the environmental impact statement and the Management Plan

Upon completion of the 45-day public comment period for the draft environmental impact statement and draft management plan, the lead state agency and NOAA prepare finalized versions of those documents. The following general actions should occur:

- ✓ NOAA, after consulting with the state, responds to public comments on the draft environmental impact statement and draft management plan.
- ✓ NOAA makes changes to the draft environmental impact statement in response to the public comments.
- ✓ The state, after consulting with NOAA, makes necessary changes to the draft management plan and submits preliminary and final documents to NOAA for review.
- ✓ The NOAA-state and joint party MOUs establishing roles and responsibilities are finalized.
- ✓ The final environmental impact statement and final management plan include:
    - Added chapter or appendix containing public comments and how they were addressed in the environmental impact statement;

- Finalized versions of the MOUs in the draft management plan appendices;
- List of the agencies and individuals that were specifically notified of the opportunity to comment on the draft environmental impact statement and draft management plan documents; and
- Revised versions of the environmental impact statement and management plan for the proposed reserve.

Upon approval, NOAA, or in some cases the state partner, prints the final environmental impact statement and final management plan and distributes it to those who provided comments, to other interested parties, and to the NEPA distribution list posted on the Council on Environmental Quality website and available from the NOAA Office for Coastal Management's Environmental Compliance webpage.

NOAA, through the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, publishes a *Federal Register* notice announcing the availability of the final environmental impact statement and final management plan. The date of publication begins a 30-day "cooling-off" period. During this time, NOAA may receive comments but is not obligated to respond to them. This is essentially a time to address any minor issues or major litigious issues.

MILESTONE 6. FINDING AND THE RECORD OF DECISION

NOAA, through the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), announces the availability of the final environmental impact statement and final management plan in the *Federal Register*. After a 30-day cooling-off period is over and all issues identified through public comments or other avenues have been addressed, the following actions need to occur:

Figure 5. Designation Process Actions Post-Cooling-Off Period, 2017

NOAA prepares the designation findings, certificate of designation, and the record of decision for signature by the NOAA administrator. Once the designation findings and record of decision are signed, the designation of the site to the national system is official.

Subsequently, NOAA publishes a *Federal Register* notice announcing the reserve designation, the consistency determination, and the NEPA record of decision. The lead state partner announcing the

designation of the reserve should publish the designation in the local media and state administrative outlets as appropriate.

MILESTONE 7. DESIGNATION CEREMONY

Following the publishing of a *Federal Register* notice and local media announcement of a reserve designation, the state normally organizes a designation ceremony with congressional and state participation.

NOAA may support the state by providing an invitation list of NOAA personnel, arrange for speakers from NOAA, and assist with publicity. At the event, NOAA presents a ceremonial certificate of designation to state officials and congressional representatives.

C. Detailed Internal NOAA Process for Reserve Designations

As outlined in Figure 3, the overall reserve designation process has many steps and milestones over the course of a multi-year designation effort. NOAA uses a detailed internal decision-making process to review and clear actions that achieve the milestones identified throughout the process. Periodically, some of the details within this process may change due to internal Office for Coastal Management and National Ocean Service (NOS) decision-making. *Section 7, "Navigating the NOAA Review and Clearance Process,"* provides important guidance for NOAA staff to follow to ensure that the different milestones and requirements of the designation process are met.

D. Post-Designation – Reserve Funding and Implementation

Annual Reserve System operations funding is supported through annual congressional appropriations to the reserves. This funding is allocated for reserve operations, management, education, monitoring, and research according to Section 315 (e) of the Coastal Zone Management Act, and applicable Reserve System regulations under §921 subparts G, H, and I. Operational funding must be matched 70:30 (federal: state) except for specific projects that benefit the entire system. Reserves wishing to designate part of their allocation to another entity must meet statutory and regulatory requirements regarding

recipient eligibility. Additionally, Office of Management and Budget Uniform Grants Guidance applies to all Reserve System operations awards. For more information on Office of Management and Budget Grants Guidance, visit *www.grants.gov/fi/web/grants/learn-grants/grant-polices*.

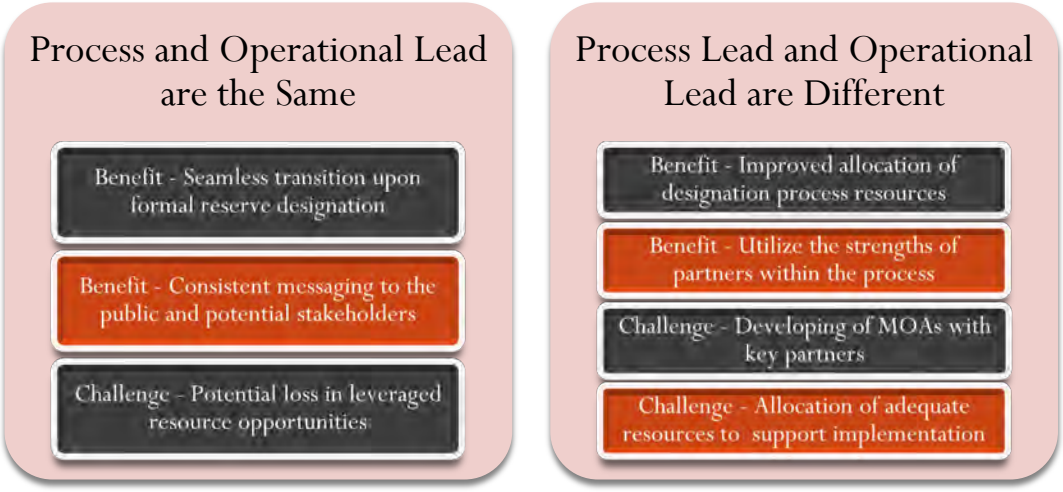
Separate Reserve System Procurement, Acquisition, and Construction (PAC) funding is available to support reserve facilities construction and land acquisition needs. This funding is based on annual congressional appropriations and is competitively awarded to applicable reserves in the system. New reserves are encouraged to compete for this funding to meet their facility needs and build the infrastructure necessary to implement their core programs. Note that to be eligible for PAC funding, projects submitted by the reserve must be identified in the reserve management plan.

Each year, the Office for Coastal Management provides official guidance to reserves following congressional appropriations and specific guidance from NOAA. Typically, the Reserve System ORF and PAC funding guidance is released between February and April.

E. State Approaches to the Designation Process

Historically, states and territories have taken different approaches to the designation of a research reserve site. Each approach used has its benefits and challenges. The table below offers a glimpse of some of the benefits and challenges that may be encountered when implementing different approaches to developing a reserve site.

Table 3. Research Reserve Development Approaches for States



3. Best Practices

Designation of a national estuarine research reserve is a multi-year effort that includes multiple steps requiring a concerted and detailed engagement by NOAA and the state Lead. Over the course of multiple designation processes, many best practices have been identified to aid the various parties in successfully designating a site to the National Estuarine Research Reserve System. They have also laid the groundwork for the long-term success and viability of the reserve.

To ensure a successful designation effort and build the foundation for a successful reserve in the years to come, key best practices are listed for the state and NOAA to consider during the designation of a reserve site.

List of Best Practices

Create a NOAA-State Coordination

Setting up a NOAA-state coordination team provides the key designation staff with an overall view of all the parts of the development process over the entire length of the designation. To sustain and streamline the designation process through the multi-year effort, an important observation from the state perspective is to keep the NOAA and state staffing consistent through the process.

Example NOAA Coordination Team Makeup – Reserve System site liaison; General Counsel assigned to the state; Office for Coastal Management NEPA coordinator; Office for Coastal Management regional lead or designee.

Example State Coordination Team Makeup – State partner lead, facilitator or communications lead, science lead. Other staff are variable based on need and site.

USE A STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT PROCESS

"We enabled their 'ownership' of both the process and decisions, which I think was key." – Patrick Robinson, Wisconsin Extension

Although each reserve designation process is unique, a successful strategy implemented by many states has been to use a stakeholder engagement process. Traditionally top-down, agency-driven decision-making has been the primary mechanism in natural resource management. More recently, successful resource management actions have incorporated processes that involve stakeholders and acknowledge the importance of public attitudes, perceptions, beliefs, and knowledge.[1] Stakeholder engagement has become a key component of designating national estuarine research reserves.

Since 2000, states have identified stakeholder engagement as a key component of their success in the National Estuarine Research Reserve System designation process. Bringing the full range of stakeholders to the table from the beginning enables a state to ensure that

- Potential adversaries and allies to the action feel that their voices and concerns are heard;
- Obstacles or hurdles to a reserve are identified early in the process and time is allowed for solutions to be developed;
- Willing stakeholders feel some ownership with the designation process and decisions; and
- Decisions are transparent and collaborative.

Given the multi-year timeline from conception to designation, the time and effort invested in a stakeholder engagement process will pay huge dividends in the long-term not just for this process but also in the long-term success of the reserve.

IDENTIFY THE LEAD STATE AGENCY EARLY

"Ensure that the lead state agency for the management of the reserve is involved and committed to the process . . ." – Hawaii Office of Planning

[1] NOAA, Coastal Services Center [now Office for Coastal Management]. 2007. *Introduction to Stakeholder Participation*. NOAA Coastal Services Center, Charleston, South Carolina.

Given the substantial investment of time and people needed to complete a reserve designation, it is critically important to identify and secure the commitment of a lead state agency to manage the process and operate the future reserve. The lead state agency should be prepared to commit state resources to support a multi-year effort and engage NOAA and other stakeholders throughout the designation process. This is key to ensuring that the process and engagement with stakeholders are sustained over time.

According to §921.11 of the National Estuarine Research Reserve System regulations, the state or territorial governor must formally identify a lead state agency or university that has the authority and responsibility for leading the designation process. The lead state agency is identified either in writing through an initial letter to NOAA seeking to designate a reserve or through a subsequent formal site nomination. Examples of these letters are found in Appendix B.

In partnership with NOAA, the state agency lead is tasked with managing the process and developing the appropriate documentation for a reserve designation. Although the lead state agency may be different for the management and operation of a reserve, it is essential that the lead be identified early. Without a lead state agency partner, NOAA will not begin a designation process. Ideally, the governor will identify the same lead state agency for both the development of a reserve and its subsequent operation. Early identification allows for better coordination with NOAA and certainty for potential partners.

ASSIGN A PROJECT LEAD

"Assigning a project lead was key!" – Sally Palmer, University of Texas

Ideally, both the lead state agency and NOAA identify and assign a lead person to manage the complex multi-year reserve designation process. These two people regularly engage with each other and their respective designation teams to ensure that the process is streamlined and sustained. These individuals develop agreed-upon timelines and roles and responsibilities for each phase of the designation process. On the state side, some of these include the following:

- Ensuring that the many different committees or teams are meeting and working toward specific goals and objectives;
- Hosting meetings about the process with a variety of potential stakeholders (i.e., local businesses, nongovernmental organizations, state agencies, municipalities, homeowner associations, etc.);
- Proactively identifying and addressing obstacles or concerns identified by stakeholders;
- Developing position descriptions for each committee or team so that all know their roles;
- Providing periodic updates to stakeholders and partners about the process; and
- Engaging with congressional delegations to gain support and keep apprised of the designation process status.

On the NOAA side, this may include

- Organizing periodic briefings with NOAA leadership on the status of the effort;

- Leading the NOAA team that will review the site nomination and developing an environmental impact statement to support or not support designation of the proposed reserve; and
- Engaging with local stakeholders about what a reserve is and what it really means to have one.

Nurture Local Support for a Reserve

The Reserve System designation process is a first and important step in the evolution of a reserve. Previous lead state agencies have noted that proactively bringing together stakeholders in the designation process was critical to ensuring success. Using a stakeholder engagement process is also one way to build and nurture local support for a reserve. Sometimes the local stakeholders are initially skeptical of what it means to have a reserve site. Providing multiple opportunities for stakeholders to engage in the process and communicate issues or concerns will go a long way to building a local network of reserve supporters and sow the seeds of a future "Friends of the Reserve" group.

Use Teams and Committees throughout the Process

"*Probably the greatest factor in our success . . .*" – Wisconsin Extension

The use of teams and committees to support various parts of the designation process is critical to a successful reserve designation. No one partner or individual has the knowledge and expertise to manage and complete the seven critical steps of the designation process or ensure stakeholder support for a reserve. Teams and committees enable the state agency lead to meet designation milestones, create information products, and build stakeholder support for a reserve.

Teams and committees form to support the reserve designation process in many ways, including

- Identifying and evaluating candidate sites
- Formulating state-specific site-selection criteria
- Educating the public and partners about the process and selected site
- Developing partnerships between stakeholders in support of a reserve
- Helping create a vision, mission, and goals for a reserve
- Creating technical or outreach materials to support designation
- Developing support within the state congressional delegation for a reserve
- Managing a public participatory process
- Bringing together diverse expertise and perspectives into the different steps of the designation process
- Working with the state or territorial governor to nominate a site for consideration

Multiple committees or teams are normally created to manage and guide the state through the different

phases of the designation. At a minimum, the lead state agency usually creates the following teams:

Site Coordination or Management Team

This team is typically lead by the lead state agency or university. It provides leadership and oversees the designation process for the state side. This team ensures that all the other teams are staffed and working towards defined goals and objectives. Most often, this team develops the site nomination package and the draft and final reserve management plan, and supports NOAA's environmental impact statement. This team also works to build support for a new reserve site within its congressional delegation.

Site Selection Team

This team consists of technical experts and people with local knowledge essential for the site-selection process. This team helps create resource-mapping products for potential sites, reviews and modifies site selection criteria to account for state and local considerations, and incorporates local knowledge to inform the selection process.

Site Evaluation Team

This team consists of technical experts and key stakeholders or partners that evaluate and score sites using uniform site selection criteria. In addition, this team can offer specific cultural and local perspectives regarding proposed sites.

State-NOAA Liaison team

This small team consists of persons representing the lead state agency and key partners. This team communicates directly with the NOAA team to coordinate the different parts of the designation process over time. Many of the individuals on this team are usually on the Site Coordination Team too.

Education and Outreach Team

This team consists of people with expertise in education and public outreach. The team develops and implements a public participatory process to ensure that stakeholders are informed about the designation process and to gather and share issues and concerns with the lead state agency, NOAA, and the other teams. It also help develops and disseminates reserve designation-related educational materials and resources to stakeholders and partners.

Teams meet as often as needed to accomplish their specific objectives and will eventually sunset as different milestones are achieved. The use of teams is time-consuming but essential to a successful reserve designation process. Using a collaborative and participatory process, the teams engage in decision-making and provide ownership for those involved. This creates an effective process and will pay dividends in the future as the reserve develops after designation.

IDENTIFY AND DELINEATE CORE AND BUFFER

Identifying the core and buffer areas of a proposed reserve site is a critical consideration when a state nominates a reserve to NOAA. Section 921.11 of Reserve System regulations describes site boundaries

as follows: "*encompass an adequate portion of the key land and water areas of the natural system to approximate an ecological unit and to ensure effective conservation. Boundary size will vary greatly depending on the nature of the ecosystem. Reserve boundaries must encompass the area within which adequate control has or will be established by the managing entity over human activities occurring within the Reserve*."

In practice, once the general site is identified through the site-selection process, the state agency lead must not only identify proposed boundaries for the site but also identify core and buffer areas within that proposed boundary. Section 5 provides more details on delineating reserve boundaries.

Reserves may include existing federal or state lands already in a protected status where mutual benefit can be enhanced. However, NOAA will not approve a site for potential reserve status that is dependent primarily (greater than 50 percent of total area) upon the inclusion of currently protected federal lands in order to meet the requirements for reserve status (such as key land and water areas). Normally, federal land areas generally included within reserve boundaries should serve as a buffer or for other ancillary purposes; and may be included, subject to NOAA approval, as a *limited portion* of the core area.

Develop Timelines and Requirements for Each Part of the Process

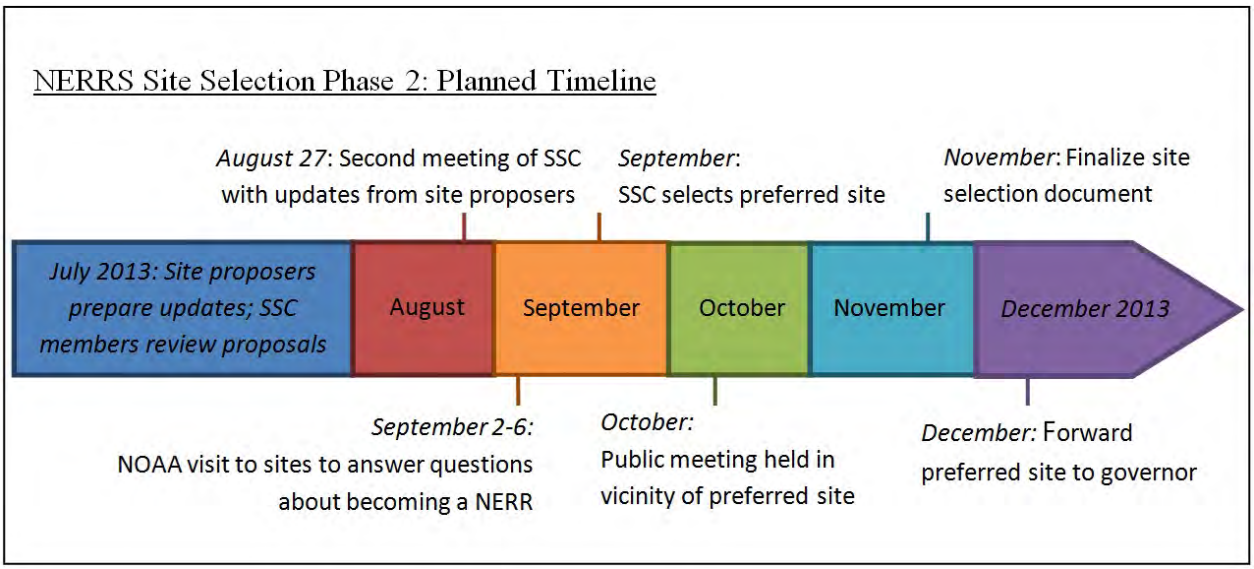
"*Ensuring teams and committees were aware of the timeline . . . was critical for the success of these groups*" – Hawaii Office of Planning

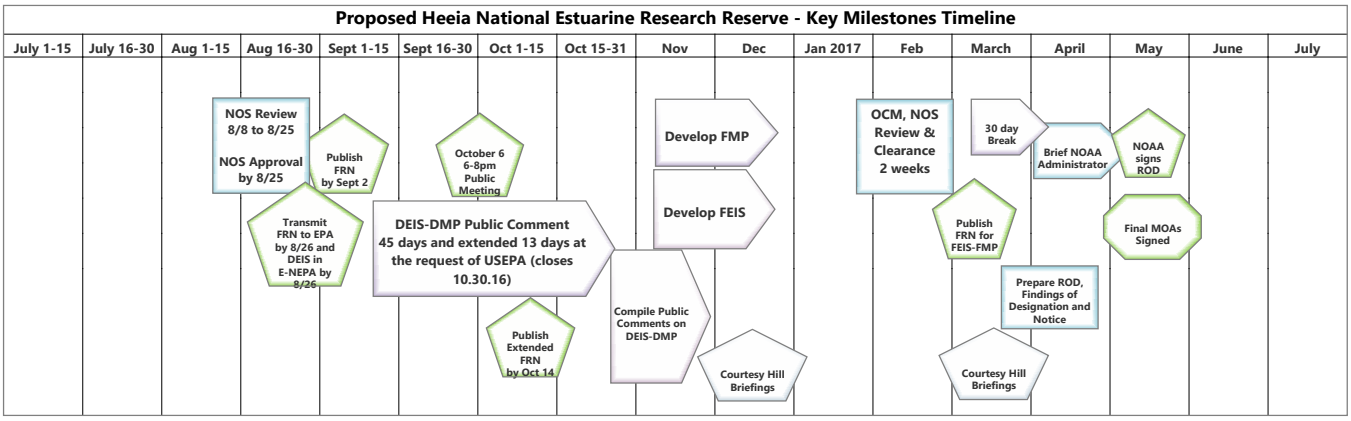
Understanding specific milestones in the process is very helpful for guiding the work and expectations of the state agency Lead, NOAA, partners, and others involved in a reserve designation process. As a multi-year effect using multiple teams or committees to achieve specific goals and objectives, the development of timelines is an important planning tool supporting reserve designation. They are not static planning tools and must be periodically updated to account for real-world and unexpected changes that occur over time.

In previous designations, timelines have been created to support a variety of needs. These include

- Tracking the major milestones of the multi-year process
- Managing the details of specific steps in the process (i.e., developing reserve management plan)
- Detailing NOAA's internal clearance process
- Providing an overview of the process for public audiences
- Supporting budget planning for state congressional delegations
- Guiding specific teams and committees (i.e., Site-Selection Team)

Timelines can be simple or complex depending on the need and the specific audience. Consider each of these factors carefully when developing a timeline. Examples follow:





SECURE LONG-TERM SOURCE OF STATE MATCH EARLY IN THE PROCESS

"I think that state match is an incredibly important decision that needs to last in spite of politics, retirements . . ." – Sally Palmer, University of Texas

Reserve system regulations stipulate a 70:30 match requirement for annual operational funds. As a result, there are two important considerations during the development of a new reserve.

1. Federal appropriations from Congress to support the Reserve System annual operations awards.
2. State funding to meet the match requirements of federal appropriations to a reserve.

Previously detailed in Section 1, "Funding Support for Reserve System Designation," the lead state partner should look to secure increased federal funding early in the process. This is extremely important because without an increase in federal funding, the available operational funding for the other reserves already in the Reserve System will decrease when the newly designated reserve becomes operational.

Secondly, the lead state agency has to plan for several financial resource commitments. These include matching funds for federal pre-designation assistance, funding staff and meeting support for the process, and most importantly, securing a source of long-term state match for reserve operations described in Table 1. Since 2000, federal-supported annual operations awards average over $600,000, with states providing 30 percent match for those dollars. Some important considerations for the lead state agency include the following:

1. What are my potential sources for long-term match funding?
2. Are there key partners I can leverage to support reserve operations after designation?
3. How to I work with my congressional delegation to increase Reserve System base funding on the federal side?
4. What do I need to do secure long-term match funding to support reserve operations?
5. Does my source of state match offer flexibility in changing budget cycles?

Answer these questions early in the process to prevent funding from becoming a roadblock to a successful reserve designation toward the end of the process. The long-term viability and success of a reserve depends on addressing these two considerations before designation.

COMMUNICATE EARLY AND OFTEN

"Persistence, meetings, and smiling." – University of Texas

Meeting often and early was very important over the course of the process. The use of multiple teams or committees to manage and guide the state through the different phases of the designation requires a lot of communication, facilitation, patience, and listening. Organize these teams and committees early in the designation effort and have them meet often. This will help them achieve their goals and objectives and develop ownership in the process by its members.

Outside of the multiple teams directly involved in designation, the state lead should meet periodically with a host of other critical stakeholders, including state agencies, local nongovernmental organizations, municipalities, tribal and cultural organizations, business groups, etc. A consistent flow of information and feedback with these stakeholder groups is critically important to build and maintain stakeholder support for a reserve. It will also help the state and NOAA identify and address important issues and concerns that these stakeholders communicate.

LEARN FROM PREVIOUS RESERVE EXPERIENCES

Staff from the state agency leads have access to a wealth of experience within the Reserve System and have experience going through the designation process, the initial startup phase, and longer-term reserve operations and management. Some suggestions on how a state agency lead can learn from

previous reserves:

- ✓ Seek NOAA recommendations of specific reserve staff to consult with.
- ✓ Invite reserve managers from comparable reserves to talk to local stakeholders and partners about what it means to have a research reserve.
- ✓ Participate in the National Estuarine Research Reserve System Annual Meeting and Program Managers Meeting to learn about how the system collaborates and coordinates strategically and programmatically.
- ✓ Send staff to visit other reserves to learn how a reserve operationalizes its activities and how it interacts with its reserve advisory board.

TRIBAL ENGAGEMENT IS A PRIORITY

Under Executive Order 13175, ‘‘Consultation and Coordination with Indian Tribal Governments’’ (November 6, 2000), establishes the manner in which the NOAA works with federally recognized Indian tribes when developing policies that have tribal implications, including the designation of a reserve site. This executive order reaffirms the unique government-to government relationship that exists between Indian tribes and NOAA. Federally recognized tribes, as sovereign governments, require consultation through consensus-based government-to-government discussions. However, this executive order does not cover other cultural groups, such as Native Hawaiians and the Geechee (i.e., Gullah) of Georgia and Florida. Regardless, tribes and other cultural groups potentially affected by a potential reserve site and their representative associations must be engaged in the designation process. Examples consultations letters are found in Appendix A.

Some basic guidelines around this engagement:

- ✓ Federally recognized tribes are not a public but rather a foreign government requiring government-to-government consultation.
- ✓ Each interested tribe or cultural group should be offered an opportunity to consult on the reserve designation.
- ✓ There is a difference between federally recognized and non-recognized tribes.
- ✓ All consultations are different, and there are no hard-and-fast rules for consultation.
- ✓ The federal government has an innate trust interest with the tribes.

IMPORTANT - Consult with qualified legal counsel before engaging with tribal or cultural groups as part of a designation process.

PLAN FOR A 5+ YEAR DESIGNATION EFFORT

Designation of a national estuarine research reserve is a complex multi-year effort that requires sustained engagement by the state agency lead, NOAA, and the many partners and stakeholders that participate in the process. All recent reserve designations have run from 3 to 5 years from the time NOAA positively responds to the letter of interest from a state or territorial governor. This does not include the initial engagement with stakeholders, partners, and elected and appointed officials that must happen before asking the governor to send a letter to NOAA. Many previous efforts noted that the process takes a long time and a substantial amount of work; however, given the magnitude of the decision, it is time well spent to ensure the long-term success of a reserve.

NOAA may respond to a letter of interest by not pursuing a designation at that time. Although rare, this could occur if the current administration does not support expansion of the Reserve System; if there are not sufficient resources at the Office for Coastal Management to support the 3-5 year designation process; or if there is strong objections from Congress. These factors and others could impact NOAA's decision whether to move forward with the process.

4. Site-Selection Criteria and Process

A. Introduction to Site Selection

Once NOAA determines that it can accept a new nomination based on the state or territorial governor's letter of interest, the identified state agency lead may submit an application to NOAA for site-selection funding. As outlined in Section 1, the state is eligible for federal funds for pre-designation activities. Activities appropriate for these funds are developing site selection, developing and applying a site-selection process, preparation of the draft environmental impact statement and draft management plan and final environmental impact statement and final management plan, and limited basic characterization studies of the physical, chemical, and biological attributes of the site.

Note: Federal **assistance may not exceed $100,000 during the length of the designation process.**

To ensure that pre-designation assistance funds are available for subsequent steps in the process, NOAA recommends that the state agency lead use approximately $25,000 to $40,000 in federal funding along with additional state resources to support the site-selection process. While not imperative that the state agency lead manage pre-designation funds, it is encouraged that they be prepared to accept and manage funds once the designation occurs. Any applications for pre-designation funds must identify who will be conducting the work and supplying match for the award.

Use the site-selection criteria detailed below in Section 4 as a model for determining new sites for the Reserve System. The criteria can be modified in consultation with the Office for Coastal Management to reflect regional differences in the ecological characteristics of the habitats to be considered. The relative "values" placed upon the criteria can also be modified as appropriate.

At the very outset of the site-selection and site-nomination process, determine whether there is an existing reserve located in the particular biogeographic and typological classification scheme under consideration. Candidate sites located in a biogeographic sub-region not currently represented are automatically of high value to the National Estuarine Research Reserve System. However, candidate sites within a biogeographic sub-region that is already represented in the national system can still be considered if they include unique habitat types. Some keys to a successful site-selection process are described in Figure 6.

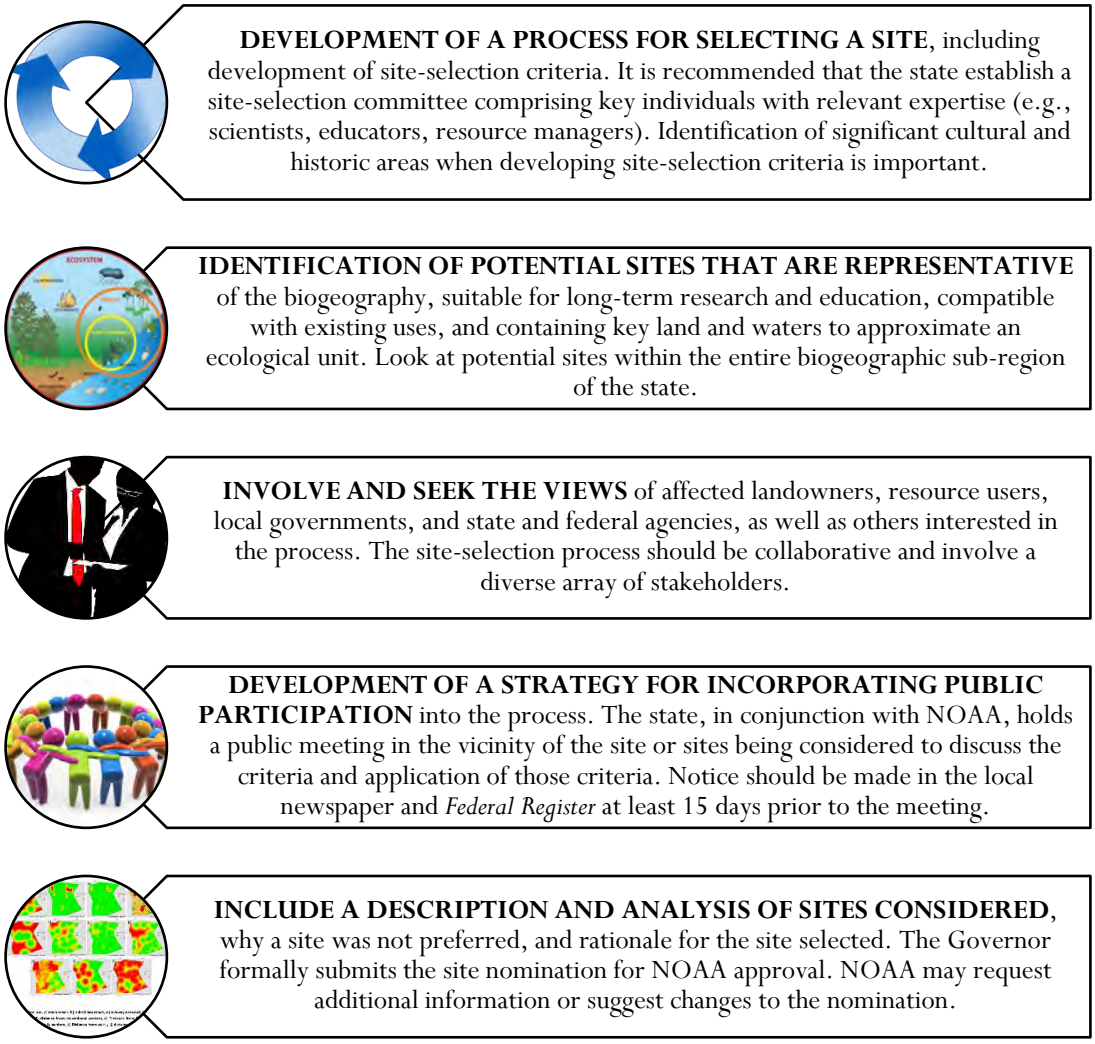


Figure 6. Key Elements of Site Selection

B. Preliminary Screening Process

Before the application of the full suite of site-selection criteria detailed above, it may be appropriate for the state, in consultation with the Office for Coastal Management, to utilize a simplified procedure to screen the proposed sites to eliminate those areas that are clearly not suitable candidates. A preliminary screening should reduce the amount of time and effort that is required to apply the full suite of criteria to all sites. Candidate sites that do not meet the following preliminary screening criteria should be considered for elimination.

- The candidate site is a representative estuary in the biogeographic region or sub-region.
- The proposed boundaries of the candidate site include sufficient land and water area to maintain the integrity of the ecosystem.
- The candidate site consists of publicly owned lands or demonstrates sufficient potential for land acquisition and adequate land-use control to meet Reserve System objectives.
- The candidate site is accessible by normal modes of transportation.
- The candidate site is suitable for research, monitoring, and resource protection activities.
- The candidate site is suitable for education, training, and interpretation activities.
- The candidate site is suitable to address key local, state, and regional coastal management issues.

C. Site Screening and Application of Site-Selection Criteria

There are a variety of ways that the application of the full set of site-selection criteria (Section 4) to the screened sites can be undertaken. An initial step is to identify who will be responsible for this phase of the site-selection process. Normally, these individuals become members of a site-selection committee. Once the site-selection committee has been identified, it is recommended that each member preliminarily assess and score each of the candidate sites individually. If necessary, the scoring within each criterion may be crafted to help better evaluate the proposed sites.

Field visits to each site will allow the committee members an opportunity to gain firsthand knowledge of the characteristics of each site. They should also give everyone a better understanding of the factors to be considered under each selection criterion and how these factors should be taken into account. Field trips may be appropriate before scoring the sites. However, the committee members should be familiar with the site-selection criteria before visiting the candidate sites.

Figure 7. Site-Selection Decisional Processes, 2017

After site-selection committee members have assessed the candidate sites individually, the site-selection committee should convene to assess the sites collectively and determine one site for nomination to the governor. Several options exist for this collective decision-making. These options are described below:

Option 1. Strict Averaging of the Individual Scores

All committee member scores for each criterion would be averaged and then totaled and weighted to arrive at one site to recommend to the governor for nomination.

Option 2. Working Group Discussions

The site-selection committee would be divided into two to three small working groups to assess all of the candidate sites, taking their individual assessments and scores into account. Each working group would then reach consensus as a group on an appropriate score for each criterion.

Thereafter, the working groups would reconvene in full committee and compare their collective decision-making with the goal of overall consensus on the scoring for each candidate site. One site would be recommended to the governor for nomination.

Option 3. Committee Discussion

The committee as a whole would assess each site, taking individual assessments and scores into account. Members would reach consensus as a group on each criterion and ultimately select the site to be recommended to the governor for nomination.

D. Reserve System Site-Selection Criteria

The site-selection criteria are designed to help states evaluate and select new estuarine research reserve sites for consideration within the national system. The criteria provided in this guidance fully support the guiding principles of site selection as described in §921.11 of the Reserve System regulations. However, additional criteria or modifications are allowed, in consultation with the Office for Coastal Management, to reflect regional differences in the ecological characteristics of the habitats to be considered or other factors. In addition, the relative “values” placed upon the criteria can also be modified as appropriate.

The criteria fall into the four major categories:

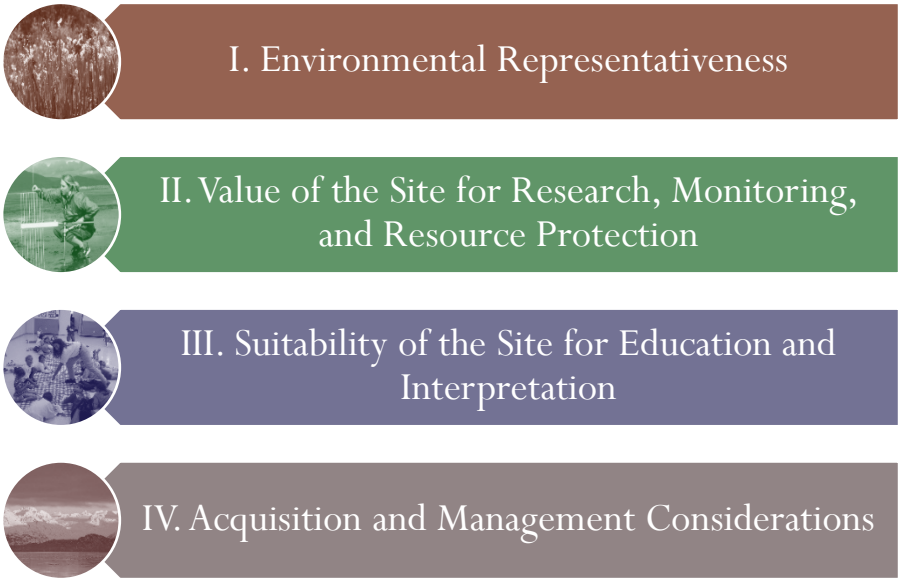


Figure 8. Site-Selection Criteria, 2017

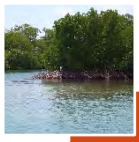
I. Environmental Representativeness: Ecosystem and Ecological Characteristics

In order to determine the representativeness of a candidate site relative to ecosystem type (as defined in Appendix 2 of Reserve System program regulations (15 CFR Part 921)), the site will be evaluated using the following suite of ecological, biological, physical, and chemical characteristics that fall under the general category of "Ecosystem and Ecological Characteristics." The first five criteria for ecological and biological characteristics focus primarily on factors concerning a site's diversity and balance in regard to the types of ecosystems and habitats present, as well as any significant or unique biotic trait. The remaining criteria for physical and chemical characteristics focus on a site's position within the watershed to which it belongs, geological and salinity characteristics, water quality, and the degree to which it is developed.

A. *Ecosystem Composition*. This is a measure of the diversity of ecosystem types present within the boundaries of the site. This criterion is based on the assumption that sites that have a high diversity of major ecosystem types are of higher relative "value" for protection and management than those with low ecosystem diversity (unless the ecosystem in consideration is rare or unique: see "Habitat Uniqueness of the Site"). Use the following ecosystem type designations (Appendix 2 of Reserve System program regulations (15 CFR Part 921)). Modify as appropriate.

Group I - Shorelands

- Maritime Forest-Woodland
- Coastal Shrublands
- Coastal Grasslands
- Coastal Tundra
- Coastal Cliffs



Group II - Transition Areas

- Coastal Marshes
- Coastal Swamps
- Coastal Mangroves
- Intertidal Beaches
- Intertidal Mud and Sand Flats
- Intertidal Algal Beds

Group III - Submerged Bottoms

- Subtidal Hard Bottoms
- Subtidal Soft Bottoms
- Subtidal Plants

3 Points — The site has a high diversity of ecosystem composition, i.e., it contains at least one representative habitat from *each* of the three main ecosystem groups listed above (e.g., maritime forest, coastal marsh, and oyster reef).

2 Points — The site has a moderate diversity of ecosystem composition, i.e., it contains at least one representative habitat from two of the three main ecosystem groups listed above (e.g., maritime forest and coastal marsh).

1 Point — The site has a low diversity of ecosystem composition, i.e., it contains at least two representative habitats from only *one* of the three main ecosystem groups listed above (e.g., coastal marsh and mud flat).

0 Points — The site has a very low diversity of ecosystem composition, i.e., it contains only a single habitat type within any one of the three main ecosystem groups listed above (e.g., maritime forest).

B. *Balanced Ecosystem Composition*. This is a measure of the relative composition of ecosystem types within the boundaries of a site. This criterion is based on the assumption that sites with a balanced proportion of ecosystem types are of higher relative "value" for protection and management. High, moderate, and low values are assigned to sites that contain variations in the proportions of all three ecosystem types. A value of zero is assigned to a site that is dominated by one ecosystem type or contains less than three ecosystem types.

3 Points — The site contains representative upland, intertidal, and subtidal habitats in relatively equal proportions (i.e., areal cover of any one ecosystem type not less than 25 percent of the total area).

2 Points — The site contains representative upland, intertidal, and subtidal habitats, with the areal cover of any one type not less than 10 percent of the total area.

1 Point — The site contains representative upland, intertidal, and subtidal habitats, with the areal cover of any one type less than 10 percent of the total area.

0 Points The site contains representative upland, intertidal, and subtidal habitats, with the areal cover of two types being less than 10 percent of the total area *or* the site consists of habitats from only one or two of the three major ecosystem types.

C. *Habitat Composition and Complexity*. This is a measure of the diversity of habitat types present within the major ecosystem type found within the boundaries of the site. This criterion is based on the assumption that sites that have a high diversity of habitat types are of higher relative "value" for protection and management than those with a low diversity of habitat types. Major ecosystem type is defined here as that type that comprises approximately 40 percent of the site. Use the habitat type designations listed above for "ecosystem composition."

3 Points The site has a high diversity of habitat composition within its major ecosystem type, i.e., it contains three or more habitat types or subtypes within its major ecosystem type (e.g., site consists of a combination of swamps, coastal marshes, and mud flats) *or* has a combination of multiple coastal marsh types (e.g., high, mid, and low marsh zones).

2 Points The site has a moderate diversity of habitat composition within its major ecosystem type, i.e., it contains only two habitat types or subtypes within its major ecosystem type (e.g., consists of a combination of swamps and a single coastal marsh type).

1 Point The site has a low diversity of habitat composition within its major ecosystem type, i.e., its major ecosystem type consist of a single habitat type (e.g., maritime forest or *Juncus* marsh).

D. *Habitat Uniqueness of the Site*. This criterion is a measure of the presence of rare or unique habitat types within a candidate site. This criterion recognizes the importance of emphasizing unique areas in the selection process, in addition to the representativeness of the candidate site in terms of ecosystem and habitat diversity. Unique habitat is defined here as a habitat type of "limited" known occurrence within the biogeographic region or sub-region. This criterion can be a simple "yes/no" question.

3 Points The site contains one or more "unique" habitat types within its boundaries.

0 Points The site contains no "unique" habitat types within its boundaries.

E. *Significant Faunal and Floral Support.* This is a measure of the degree to which a site supports significant faunal or floral components. This criterion focuses on a site's contribution (i.e., function) toward supporting the activities (e.g., feeding, nesting) of the following suite of significant faunal or floral components. The list of components includes groups or organisms that are known to be dependent upon estuarine habitats for the entire or a crucial part of their life cycle.

- Fish and Shellfish Spawning and Nursery Grounds (includes use by either freshwater, estuarine, or estuarine-dependent marine species)
- Migratory Bird or Waterfowl Use
- Bird Nesting or Roosting Area
- Critical Mammal Habitat
- Non-Game Animals (amphibians, reptiles, etc.)

- State or federally Listed Species (animal or plant – including candidate species)

3 Points The candidate site supports or serves as an important site for a wide range of the faunal or floral components listed above (4 of 6) or is an extremely important site for any threatened or endangered species.

2 Points The site supports or serves as an important site for a moderate range and diversity of the significant faunal or floral components listed above (3 of 6).

1 Point The site supports or serves as an important site for one or two of the significant faunal or floral components listed above.

0 Points The site does not support significant faunal or floral components.

F. *Site's Relationship to Its Tidally Influenced Drainage Basin*. This is a measure of relative proportion or juxtaposition of a site relative to the greater tidally influenced drainage basin to which it belongs. This factor assumes that, except for the deltaic portions of major river systems, most coastal drainage basins are relatively small, tidally influenced, coastal plain drainages, and that a site's "value" increases as a function of how much of the overall drainage basin is encompassed within its boundaries. Aerial photos and detailed topographic maps should be used for judging this criterion.

3 Points The site encompasses a relatively large percentage (greater than 75 percent) of the tidally influenced portion of the drainage basin to which it belongs.

2 Points The site is not large relative to the overall drainage basin (less than 75 but greater than 25 percent), but is situated either near the mouth or headwaters of the drainage basin.

1 Point The site is small relative to the overall drainage basin (less than 25 percent), but is situated either near the mouth or headwaters of the drainage basin.

0 Points The site is small relative to the overall drainage basin (less than 25 percent) and does not encompass either the mouth or headwaters of the drainage basin.

G. *Geologic Representativeness, Diversity, and Uniqueness of the Site.* This is a measure of the representativeness, diversity, and uniqueness of the geologic characteristics that define part or the whole of a candidate site. This criterion attempts to consider both the surface and subsurface geologic formations that may be representative or unique within a site, particularly as they affect or define associated biotic habitats. Included in these considerations are the ways that local geology affects surface hydrology, such as drainage systems, and subsurface hydrology, such as shallow-water aquifers. Geologic and hydrologic maps should be used to evaluate this criterion.

3 Points The site has numerous representative geologic characteristics, two or more unique geologic characteristics, and contains a high diversity of formation types or strata within its boundaries.

2 Points The site has a moderate number of representative geologic characteristics and at least one unique geologic characteristic, and contains a moderate diversity of formation types or strata within its boundaries.

1 Point The site has a moderate number of geologic characteristics, no unique geologic characteristics, or contains a moderate diversity of formation types or strata within its boundaries.

0 Points The site has few or only one representative geologic characteristics, no unique geologic characteristics, or contains few or only one formation type or strata within its boundaries.

H. *Salinity Gradient.* This is a measure of the range of salinity within a candidate site's boundaries. This criterion recognizes the effect of salinity on the biotic structure of estuarine habitats (including the plant communities and faunal components that inhabit them). It makes the assumption that a site with a greater range of salinity will support a broader range of habitat types and organisms.

3 Points The site encompasses a 25 parts per thousand (ppt) or greater *range* of salinity within its boundaries (e.g., 0-25 ppt, 5-30 ppt).

2 Points The site encompasses a 15-24 ppt range of salinity within its boundaries (e.g., 0-15 ppt, 5-25 ppt, 10-30 ppt).

1 Point The site encompasses a 6-14 ppt range of salinity within its boundaries (e.g., 0-8 ppt, 10-22 ppt, 25-32 ppt).

0 Points The site encompasses a 5 ppt or less range of salinity within its boundaries (e.g., 0-5 ppt, 8-10 ppt, 20-25 ppt).

I. *Degree Developed and Potential Impacts to Water Quality*. This is a measure of the degree to which the site and its surrounding area are developed and the relative impacts to surface waters from human activities. This criterion is based on the assumption that human impacts to a site are directly proportional to the degree of development. Exceptions to this assumption may need to be considered where development at a site and its surrounding area have been subject to high levels of control. Data on land use and water quality measurements from local, county, and state government agencies should be used to judge this criterion.

3 Points The site is relatively undisturbed and the watershed contains low intensity development (e.g., few residences, minimal agricultural or silvicultural activity) or the land is in protected status.

2 Points The site is relatively undisturbed and the watershed contains moderate development (e.g., relatively few residences, moderate agricultural or silvicultural activity, minimal commercial development).

1 Point The site has been moderately disturbed and the watershed contains relatively intensive development (e.g., moderate density of residences, or the presence of industrial activity).

0 Points The site has been extremely disturbed and the watershed contains very intensive development (e.g., high density residential, or commercial or industrial activity).

II. Value of the Site for Research, Monitoring, and Resource Protection

A. *Value of Site for Research*. This is a measure of the opportunities offered by characteristics of the site for research, such as a high diversity of ecosystem and habitat types, a balanced habitat composition, a wide salinity range, biotic or geologic representativeness of the site, known historic uses or archaeological sites, and unique opportunities to conduct applied research regarding important local, state, and regional coastal management issues (including past and potential management activities). The assumption is that a site with representative, unique, and highly diverse characteristics will provide greater research, monitoring, and resource protection opportunities than one lacking these characteristics. Ratings generated for these factors under previous selection criteria can be used as a guide for rating this overall factor.

3 Points The site has (1) a high diversity of ecosystem and habitat types, (2) moderate salinity range, (3) representative biotic and geologic sites or characteristics, (4) state and federally listed species, (5) historic and archaeological significance, and (6) opportunities to address important habitat or resource management issues.

2 Points The site has four or five of the six above.

1 Point The site has two or three of the six above.

0 Points The site has one or none of the six above.

B. *Previous Research and Monitoring Efforts*. This is a measure of the degree to which the site has been used for past research and monitoring, including considerations of the diversity of inquiry (fields of research), and the availability of data (the form and availability of documentation, e.g., peer-reviewed papers, grey literature, inventory reports). The assumption is that an area with previously established research and monitoring interest offers greater opportunity for future projects than an area that has not sparked such an interest in the past.

3 Points The site has a long history of well-documented research and monitoring projects in a wide variety of topics. Data are readily available.

2 Points The site has had major and well-documented research and monitoring efforts, generating data that are readily available. It has not had a long history of research and monitoring.

1 Point The site has had only minor research and monitoring projects generating limited data (e.g., inventories) that may be difficult to obtain.

0 Points The site has no known history of research and monitoring.

C. *Suitability of Site for Environmental Baseline Monitoring*. This is a measure of the suitability of the site as a reference area for assessing long-term resource trends or ecological characteristics, based on the degree to which the site has been altered by land-use practices on or near the site. The assumption is that a site that has relatively pristine land areas and waters will be a more valuable reference area to generate baseline monitoring information than a site that has been extensively altered.

3 Points The site has outstanding areas to generate environmental baseline data to assess long-term resource trends or ecological characteristics for a wide range of needs.

2 Points The site has adequate areas to generate environmental baseline data to assess long-term resource trends or ecological characteristics for many needs.

1 Point The site has marginal areas to generate environmental baseline data to assess long-term resource trends or ecological characteristics.

0 Points The site has been so extensively altered by past activities that it is unsuitable for generating environmental baseline data.

D. *Ability to Address Key Local, State, and Regional Coastal Management Issues*. This is a measure of the degree to which the site is appropriate for investigating issues relevant to coastal management at the local, state, and regional levels. Solutions to these issues may require either the application of land management practices or habitat manipulations in order to perform meaningful research and assessment. As such, the site should offer *both* adequate control areas plus areas where demonstration projects and habitat manipulations can be accommodated in order to study many of the issues of concern. The assumption is that a site where coastal management issues arise and can be addressed will be of greater value from a resource protection standpoint than sites where these issues do not arise. The significant issues should be identified for each region and may include the following:

- Wetlands development
- Wetlands mitigation, restoration, creation
- Dredging and spoil disposal
- Beneficial uses of dredged materials
- Shoreline erosion
- Commercial or recreational fisheries
- Waterfowl and other wildlife management
- Best management practices for habitat protection or management (e.g., fire management)
- Best management practices to limit impacts from agricultural, silvicultural, or development activities
- Best methods to control pestiferous insects or undesirable vegetation
- Effects of pollutants on water quality and living resources
- Impacts of sea-level rise
- Prehistoric and early historic settlement and land use

3 Points The site is highly appropriate for investigating coastal zone management issues.

2 Points The site is appropriate for investigating coastal zone management issues.

1 Point The site is minimally appropriate for investigating coastal zone management issues.

0 Points The site is not appropriate for investigating coastal zone management issues.

III. Suitability of the Site for Training, Education, and Interpretation

A. *Diversity and Quality of Training, Education, and Interpretation Opportunities.* This is a measure of the variety and quality of training, education, and interpretation opportunities (i.e., ecological, archaeological, cultural, historical, etc.) provided by the site for the different target audiences. The assumption is that a candidate site with a diversity of such opportunities of high quality will be utilized to a greater extent than one with fewer opportunities.

3 Points The site has numerous different training, education, and interpretation opportunities of high quality.

2 Points The site has several significantly different educational opportunities of good quality.

1 Point The site has few significant educational opportunities.

0 Points The site has insignificant educational opportunities.

B. *Diversity and Availability of Target Audiences.* This is a measure of the diversity and availability of target audiences (e.g., user groups, resource managers, residents, environmental groups, decision makers, teachers and students, the general public) which may routinely utilize the site for training, education, and interpretation. The assumption is that a candidate site with a variety of available target audiences will be utilized to a greater extent than one with fewer target audiences.

3 Points The site is suitable for a variety of target audiences that are readily available.

2 Points The site is suitable for a moderate number of target audiences that are readily available.

1 Point The site is suitable for few target audiences that are available.

0 Points The site is so remote or inaccessible that it is not suitable for any target audience.

IV. Acquisition and Management Considerations

Acquisition, Facilities, and Proximity

A. *Land Ownership*. This is a measure of the degree to which the property is divided (e.g., divided into only a few parcels or owned by many individuals). The assumption is that a candidate site with fewer property owners will be easier to acquire or control.

3 Points The property is relatively undivided.

2 Points The property is divided with few property owners.

1 Point The property is divided with many property owners.

B. *Publicly Owned Lands and Feasibility of Land Acquisition.* This is a measure of the degree to which the land within the site is currently owned by the state, federal government, or local governments, or environmental interest groups, and the degree to which there is interest in donating or selling property by its owners. The assumption is that the degree of control needed to maintain the site in relatively

pristine conditions increases with publicly owned land and lands controlled by environmental groups, and that the chances of purchasing additional areas increase with private property owners who are willing to sell.

3 Points A large percentage (more than 50 percent) of the candidate site is currently owned by the state, federal, or local governments, or environmental groups, and these entities have an interest in participating in a research reserve.

2 Points State, federal, or local governments, or environmental groups own 25 to 50 percent of the candidate site with the remainder in the hands of a few owners who have an interest in participating in a research reserve.

1 Point State, federal, or local governments or environmental groups own less than 25 percent of the site with the remainder in the hands of a few owners who have an interest in participating in a research reserve.

0 Points The site is owned by a large number of owners with little potential interest in sale or donation.

C. *Availability of Facilities*. The degree to which there are existing facilities or potential sites for future facilities that can be used by staff, researchers, classes, and training groups (e.g., administrative building space, dormitories, labs, interpretive centers, trails and boardwalks, boat ramps, etc.). The assumption is that, due to limited reserve construction funds, a candidate site with existing facilities can meet the objectives of the Reserve System program sooner and more completely than a site without existing facilities. The availability of other sources of construction funds should be considered as part of this criterion.

3 Points The site has established structures and facilities that can be used for reserve activities.

2 Points The site has limited established structures or facilities that can be used for reserve activities.

1 Point The site has excellent potential for the development of facilities for reserve activities.

0 Points The site has limited potential for the development facilities for reserve activities.

D. *Proximity and Accessibility of Site to Researchers, Educators, and Resource Management Decision Makers.* This is a measure of (1) the relative proximity of the site to urban centers, K-12 schools, research and education institutions, and resource management agencies that may routinely utilize the site and (2) the adequacy of the roads or points for boat access at the site. The underlying assumption is that the proximity and accessibility of the site will enhance its utilization for education, research, monitoring, and resource protection purposes.

3 Points The candidate site can be utilized by the above-listed entities during a single day trip. There are good roads or points for boat access at the site.

2 Points The candidate site is relatively isolated and utilization would require an overnight stay from any of the above-listed entities, but accommodations are readily available. There are adequate roads or points for boat access at the site.

1 Point The candidate site is relatively isolated and reasonable accommodations for an overnight stay to utilize the site are limited. There are limited roads or points for boat access at the site.

0 Points The candidate site is extremely isolated and accommodations to utilize the site are not available. There are inadequate or no roads, or points for boat access at the site.

Management Considerations

E. *Controlled Land and Water Access*. This is a measure of the degree to which land and water access to the candidate site can be controlled and limited. It is based on size, geography, proximity to adjacent development, and historical controls. The assumption is that the integrity and security of a potential reserve site can be better maintained with a higher level of controlled land and water access.

3 Points The candidate site is relatively isolated and of a size that can be controlled. Historically, access has been controlled, and can easily be controlled in the future due to the presence of limited access points by boat or vehicle.

2 Points The candidate site is not very isolated, but has a limited number of access points. Historically, site access has not been controlled, but the site is of a size that it can be controlled in the future.

1 Point Site access will be difficult to control due to the large number of access points or the size of the area. Historically, site access has not been controlled and it is unclear whether it can be controlled in the future.

0 Points Site access cannot be controlled due to the large number of access points, lack of historical controls, the size of the area, or dense adjacent development.

F. *Compatibility with Existing Management Practices and Consumptive and Non-Consumptive Uses*. This is a measure of the degree to which existing management practices (e.g., habitat manipulations, best management practices) and historic and current consumptive and non-consumptive uses might be in conflict with foreseeable management practices implemented under a research reserve program. The assumption is that sites with fewer conflicts are more likely to maintain both public support and the integrity of the site.

NOTE: This factor should be measured in light of special circumstances (such as the presence of unique habitats or of listed species) that might cause the state to limit what is now unlimited use or practices by groups or individuals and, in the process, cause some conflict in regard to designation of a reserve site. It should be measured with an eye toward balancing protection of critical sites or resources against reasonable access to other parts of the site.

3 Points Existing management practices and consumptive and non-consumptive uses would not be in conflict with any foreseeable management policy of a research reserve.

2 Points Due to the presence of proportionately small areas of unique habitat and endangered species or threats to the integrity of the ecosystem, there is the potential for limited restrictions on existing management practices or consumptive and non-consumptive

uses of a site.

1 Point — Due to the presence of areas of unique habitat and endangered species and threats to the integrity of the ecosystem, some restrictions on existing management practices or consumptive and non-consumptive uses of a site are likely.

0 Points — Large areas of unique habitat and threats to the integrity of the ecosystem will require restrictions on existing management practices or consumptive and non-consumptive uses of a site.

G. *Compatibility with Adjacent Land Use*. This is a measure of the potential conflicts between management practices on a research reserve site with land-use practices on adjacent lands. It is also a measure of the adequacy of land-use regulations, plans, or other controls to sustain the site's resources for long-term research, education, and resource protection. The assumption is that a candidate site with compatible land-use practices on adjacent lands is more likely to maintain the integrity of the reserve.

NOTE: As with the previous factor, this issue should be evaluated with an eye toward the potential for present or future conflicts with adjacent lands and the potential to designate buffer zones around a site.

3 Points — A large percentage of the land adjacent to the site is not currently used for activities that might impact the site (and therefore, may be obtainable as a buffer) or the land-use practices on adjacent lands would not have any negative impacts on a possible research reserve.

2 Points — A large to moderate percentage of the land adjacent to the site is not currently used for activities that might negatively impact the site, or the land-use practices on adjacent lands either could be negotiated or would have only minor impacts a possible research reserve.

1 Point — Some of the land adjacent to the site is currently used for activities that would have negative impacts on a possible research reserve and may not be negotiable.

0 Points — A large percentage of the land adjacent to the site is currently used for activities that would have negative impacts on a possible research reserve and would lead to conflicts.

H. *Future Development Plans*. This is a measure of the potential level of future development in areas on or adjacent to a candidate site that would impact the site. The assumption is that a candidate site with minimal to no development plans on-site and on adjacent lands is more likely to maintain the integrity of the reserve.

NOTE: Even more so than the previous factor, this issue involves the degree to which adjacent lands are currently being used or may be attainable as buffer areas for the research reserve.

3 Points — A large percentage (more than 50 percent) of the land adjacent to the site is currently undeveloped or is, for whatever reason, very unlikely to be developed in the near future (e.g., consisting of marginally developable property, such as wetlands, which could be obtained as buffer).

2 Points A moderate percentage (between 25 and 50 percent) of the land adjacent to the site is currently undeveloped or is not likely to be developed in the near future.

1 Point A small to moderate percentage (10 to 25 percent) of the land adjacent to the site is currently undeveloped or is not likely to be developed in the near future, with limited levels of development on other lands.

0 Points A large percentage (more than 50 percent) of the land adjacent to the site is developed and the area is likely to continue to be developed in the future.

V. Additional State Criteria (Optional and Process Specific)

In many cases, the state's site-selection-related committees and teams have added additional site-selection criteria that reflect specific and unique state or regional characteristics or management considerations. Any additional state developed criteria must be approved by NOAA as part of the suite of site-selection criteria that will be applied to the process of determining a possible site for nomination as a research reserve. Some examples of criteria developed by other states are provided below:

A. *Coastal Resilience Research*. This consideration is important for the reserve site in order to be able to assess climate and coastal change impacts on the area.

3 Points The site's ecological resources will be affected by climate change impacts including erosion, sea-level rise, etc., and these impacts will be able to be well-documented.

2 Points The site's ecological resources will be affected by climate change impacts including erosion, sea-level rise, etc., and these impacts may be able to be documented.

1 Point The site's ecological resources will be affected by climate change impacts including erosion, sea-level rise, etc., and these impacts will probably not be able to be documented.

B. *Natural Community Diversity*. This is a measure of the diversity of representative natural community types present within the boundaries of the site (see criterion 1A for a list of representative natural community types in the Superior Coastal Plain Ecological Landscape). This criterion is based on the assumption that sites that have a high diversity of representative natural community types are of higher relative "value" for protection and management than those with a low diversity of representative natural community types. Evaluation of this criterion will rely on the best professional judgment of Site-Selection Technical Team members and potential supplemental analysis using aerial photography, topographic maps, National Hydrography dataset, and other existing resources.

3 Points The candidate site has a high number of representative natural communities present, i.e., it is in the top-quarter when the candidate sites are evaluated on the number of natural communities present.

2 Points The site has a moderate number of representative natural communities present, i.e., it is in the top-half when the candidate sites are evaluated on the number of natural communities present.

1 Point The site has a low number of representative natural communities present, i.e., it is in the bottom half when the candidate sites are evaluated on the number of natural communities present.

0 Points The site has a very low number of representative natural communities present, i.e., it is in the bottom quarter when the candidate sites are evaluated on the number of natural communities present.

C. *Extent of Lake Superior Intrusion and Seiche Influence*. This criterion recognizes the importance of Great Lakes water intrusion and seiche influence to freshwater estuary structure and function. The criterion assumes that sites with observable, frequent Lake Superior intrusion and seiche influence will best demonstrate the associated physicochemical gradients (e.g., specific conductivity, turbidity, and temperature) that are intrinsic to freshwater estuaries. Evaluation of this criterion will rely on the best professional judgment of Site-Selection Technical Team members, and, when possible, will be supported through a review of existing sources of information.

3 Points The site has significant Lake Superior intrusion and seiche influence.

2 Points The site has moderate Lake Superior intrusion and seiche influence.

1 Point The site has minimal Lake Superior intrusion and seiche influence.

0 Points The site has no Lake Superior intrusion and seiche influence.

D. *Value of Site for Environmental Education and Interpretation Programs*. It is likely that sites with existing education programs have the necessary infrastructure in place to further expand their programs, thus it is valuable to rate sites based on the presence of these programs. However, in an area as large and relatively pristine as the Lake Superior shoreline, numerous excellent sites exist where virtually no education or interpretation programs have been developed. Thus, the potential for education and interpretation program development should be considered as well according to the diversity and quality of educational and interpretive program opportunities.

3 Points The site has a long history of education and interpretation, or the site offers excellent potential for future education and interpretation program development.

2 Points The site has a good but short history of education and interpretation, but is otherwise well suited for education and interpretation program development, or the site offers good potential for future education and interpretation program development.

1 Point The site has had only a minor amount of education and interpretation being conducted, or the site offers fair potential for future education and interpretation program development.

0 Points The site offers no significant potential for education and interpretation program development.

E. *Drainage Basin and Freshwater Inflow Interface*. In Western Gulf of Mexico estuaries, a critical

physical factor in ecosystem function is the presence and amount of riverine influence. Thus, it is imperative that a site encompass a river, stream, bayou, or deltaic network of features with sources of freshwater inflow from adjacent drainage basins.

3 Points The site has significant freshwater inflow.

0 Points The site does not have significant freshwater inflow.

E. Overall Site-Selection Process and Nomination

Once NOAA determines that it can accept a new nomination submission, the lead agency may submit an application to NOAA for site-selection funding (50:50 match requirement). A state is eligible for a total of $100,000 in federal funds for pre-designation activities, which include site selection, preparation of the draft environmental impact statement and draft management plan, and final statement and plan, and a limited basic characterization of the physical, chemical, and biological characteristics of the site. It is recommended that the preliminary application for the site-selection phase request $25,000 to $40,000.

The previously detailed set of site-selection criteria is a model for states that plan to propose new sites for the National Estuarine Research Reserve System. A state may choose to modify them in consultation with the Office for Coastal Management to reflect regional differences in the ecological characteristics of the habitats to be considered. In addition, the relative "values" placed upon the criteria can be modified as appropriate.

The governor submits to the NOAA administrator a site-selection document and a nomination letter identifying the proposed site and confirming the lead state agency. NOAA reviews the site-selection document and sends a letter to the governor accepting, rejecting, or suggesting modifications to the nomination.

The nomination must identify the site-selection agency, the potential managing agency, and a proposed site-selection process that incorporates public participation. Steps for selecting a site include the following:

- The state develops a process for selecting a site that includes site-selection criteria, and implements the process. NOAA recommends that the state establish a site-selection committee composed of key interested individuals (e.g., scientists, educators, resource managers, nongovernmental organizations) for this purpose.
- The site-selection process should cover the entire biogeographic sub-region within the state and then narrow down the options. A site must contribute to the biogeographic and typological balance of the National Estuarine Research Reserve System, and be adequately protected for long-term research, education, and stewardship.
- Contacts must be made with affected landowners, potentially affected adjacent resource users, local governments, and state and federal agencies.
- The state, in conjunction with NOAA, holds a public meeting in the vicinity of the site or sites being considered. The meeting must be publicized in a local newspaper and in the *Federal Register* at least 15 days before being held.

- The state normally submits preliminary and final site-selection documents. NOAA may request additional information or suggest changes to the nomination.

5. Boundary Delineation

A. Introduction to Boundary Delineation

NOAA has identified 11 distinct biogeographic regions and 29 sub-regions in the U.S., each of which contains several types of estuarine ecosystems (15 C.F.R. Part 921, Appendix I and II). As of 2017, the system includes 29 reserves and three state in the process of designating a reserve.

Reserve boundaries will vary depending on the nature of the ecosystem. Boundaries must include an adequate portion of the key land and water areas of the natural system to approximate an ecological unit and to ensure effective conservation.

Criteria for setting boundaries are contained in Reserve System regulations (Title 15 of the *Code of Federal Regulations* Part 921, Section 921.11). The main factor in delineating reserve boundaries is a determination that the site's boundaries "*encompass an adequate portion of the **key land and water areas** of the natural system to approximate an ecological unit and to assure effective conservation*." The regulations intend that environmental and scientific factors be given primary consideration in the initial delineation of proposed boundaries.

North Inlet-Winyah Bay National Estuarine Research Reserve Boundaries

North Inlet-Winyah Bay National Estuarine Research Reserve

Once a site is selected by a state, the delineation of proposed boundaries is the next important step before approval of the site by NOAA. The establishment of final boundaries is a difficult process that requires consideration of many factors, environmental and administrative. Boundary size will vary greatly depending on the size of the ecosystem.

A balance must be sought in determining the overall size of a reserve between encompassing enough area to include an ecosystem large enough to make long-term estuarine research viable, and having a discrete contiguous area that can be effectively managed. The reserve boundary must provide protection for the ecosystem but may not be arbitrary (i.e., based on the availability of property nearby which may be available for purchase). This is, in part, an effort to ensure that property interests purchased in an effort to establish adequate state control of a reserve are actually required for the integrity of the reserve.

National Estuarine Research Reserves may include existing federal or state lands already in a protected status where mutual benefit can be enhanced. Limits do apply, however, to the extent of federal lands that can be included in a reserve. NOAA will not approve a site that is dependent primarily upon the inclusion of federal lands in order to meet the requirements for reserve status (such as key land and water areas). Generally, federal lands included within a reserve should serve as a buffer or for other ancillary purposes; and may be included, subject to NOAA approval, as a limited portion of the core area.

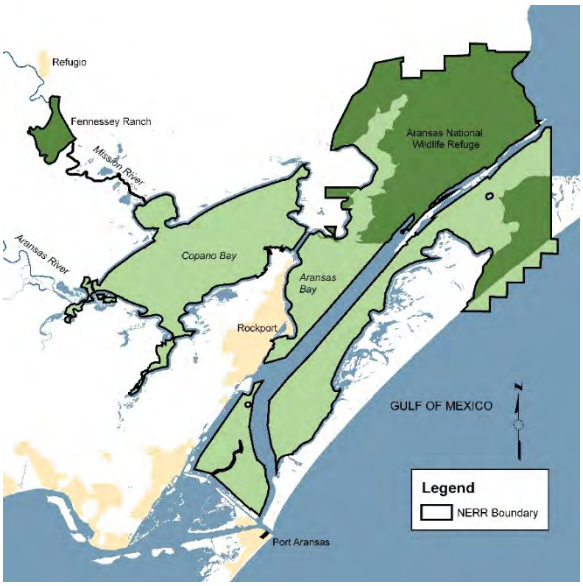
B. General Principles

Boundaries of reserves connote some degree of control by the managing entity over human activities and the natural resources occurring within the reserve. Generally, reserve boundaries will include two areas: key land and water areas, or a "core" area, and a buffer zone. Control on the landward side may involve direct ownership or jurisdiction by the agency that manages the core area; it may also mean control exercised by administrative action, easements, or by other means. Federal and state lands contiguous with the reserve may be included within the boundaries only after formal agreements approved by NOAA have been established through proper administrative or legal measures.

C. Basic Scientific Principles for Establishing Reserve Boundaries

- Reserve boundaries are proposed by the lead state agency through a site-nomination document for consideration by NOAA. It is preferable that boundaries include contiguous land and water areas that are essential to the reserve, i.e., to establish a natural field laboratory capable of supporting Reserve System long-term research, stewardship, and educational objectives.

- Boundaries should encompass an entire ecological unit (habitats and communities), including adjacent terrestrial areas, especially watersheds and drainage areas. However, protecting a whole watershed will, in most cases, be extraordinarily difficult and prohibitive in cost. The solution is to establish and protect a core area incorporating the critical portions of the estuarine ecosystem.



- Key land and water areas make up a core area to preserve, for research purposes, a full range of significant physical, chemical, and biological factors contributing to the diversity of fauna, flora, and natural processes occurring within the estuary.

- The determination of which water and land areas are "key" to a particular reserve must be based upon specific scientific knowledge of the area. A basic principle to follow when deciding upon key land and water areas is that they should encompass resources that are representative of the total ecosystem and which, if compromised, could endanger the research objectives of the reserve.

- An area adjacent to or surrounding the core, and on which the integrity of the core area depends, is the buffer zone. Buffer zones protect the core and provide additional protection for estuarine-dependent species. The buffer zone may also include an area best suited for facilities required for research and interpretation. Additionally, buffers must encompass an area sufficient to accommodate the shift of the core in case of biological, ecological, or geomorphologic change.

- Buffers are usually of the same biome as the core and may accommodate NOAA-approved manipulative research that should not be carried out in the core. They may encompass wetlands

not in the core area, ecotones, and upstream effects where practical, as well as shoreland and contiguous ocean or bay water.

- Determination of the landward boundary of a reserve is difficult because of transitional zones, the slope of the upland, the size of the estuary, and other factors. At a minimum, the landward boundary should encompass wetlands that contribute to estuarine processes. Wetlands may be defined in terms of vegetation, and the upland limit of wetlands can be defined accordingly. There is generally a transitional zone (ecotone) in which vegetative types from two or more ecological groups mix together. Ecotones combine the characteristics of the communities they join and often have an unusually high abundance and diversity of life and serve a unique function to the ecosystem. The emergence of upland vegetation will indicate in general terms where the landward boundary of a reserve should be drawn. However, how much, if any, of the uplands are included in the proposed boundary must be determined on the basis of scientific judgment and not property lines or the availability of land for acquisition.

- Estuarine resources do not necessarily end at the shoreline, but may include adjacent open water areas.

D. Recommended General Procedure for Proposed Boundary Delineation

I. Conduct a scientific survey of the proposed site

*Identify proposed **land boundaries***

- ✓ Vegetation types
- ✓ Landform/physical (natural or man-made)
- ✓ Land uses
- ✓ Estuarine-dependent physical processes, biological components, or combination

*Identify proposed **water boundaries***

- ✓ Natural delineation between discrete or separable landforms
- ✓ Natural delineation between discrete or separable water bodies or portions of the same water body.

II. Identify key land and water areas (Core Area)

- ✓ Within boundaries established by a scientific survey (see I above), identify, and rank in order of their importance, the most important ecological units of the proposed area, i.e., those units most important to the integrity of the area and its resources. (Refer to the list of basic principles listed in this sub-section C.)
- ✓ Consider the following when ranking:
  - ❖ Why are these units important?
  - ❖ What is the minimum land and water area needed to protect these highest priority ecological units?

III. Identify buffer areas

- ✓ Within the boundary established for the scientific survey (see I above) and in consideration of the core area identified in II, identify the minimum buffer area required to
  - ❖ Ensure the long-term viability of the core area for research purposes, and
  - ❖ Provide sites for needed research or educational support facilities and infrastructure (i.e., trails, boardwalks, boat launches).

Note that core and buffer areas "will likely require significantly different levels of control (see Reserve System Regulations Sec. 921.13(a) (7))." Key aspects of core and buffer areas are listed in the table 4 below.

Table 4. Core and Buffer Zones of a Research Reserve

CORE	BUFFER
For national estuarine research reserves, the term "core area" refers to key land and water areas.	The term "buffer zone" refers to an area adjacent to or surrounding key land and water areas and essential to their integrity.
The term "key land and water areas" refers to that core area within the reserve that is so vital to the functioning of the estuarine ecosystem that it must be under a level of control sufficient to ensure the long-term viability of the reserve for research on natural processes.	Buffer zones protect the core area and provide additional protection for estuarine-dependent species, including those that are rare or endangered.
Those ecological units of a natural estuarine system which preserve, for research purposes, a full range of significant physical, chemical, and biological factors contributing to the diversity of fauna, flora, and natural processes occurring within the estuary.	When determined appropriate by the state and approved by NOAA, the buffer zone may also include areas necessary for facilities required for research and interpretation.
The determination of which land and water areas are "key" to a particular reserve must be based on specific scientific knowledge of the area. A basic principle to follow when deciding upon key land and water areas is that they should encompass resources representative of the total ecosystem, and which if compromised could endanger the research objectives of the reserve.	Additionally, buffer zones should be established sufficient to accommodate shifts of the core area because of biological, ecological, or geomorphological change that reasonably could be expected to occur.

E. Multi-Component Reserves

A multi-component reserve has two or more noncontiguous protected areas, or components, that are under the managerial jurisdiction of the reserve. Multiple components are appropriate when a state has a complex coast that makes it impossible for a single component to represent the habitat diversity in a biogeographic region. They should not be considered solely as a means for increasing protected land within a state.

A multi-component reserve as shown in Figure 9 is "treated as one reserve in terms of financial

assistance and development of an overall management framework and plan" (Reserve System regulations, §921.10b). It is subject to the same funding limits as single-component reserves, and it must function as one unit and not as individual "mini" reserves. When reviewing a multi-component site considered by the lead state agency, NOAA will look for strong administrative, educational, research, and monitoring plans that establish an identity for the reserve and the national system. A state may choose to develop a multi-component reserve at any time during designation or operation of the reserve. The number of components is not limited, but the benefit of additional components must be balanced against increased management responsibility and program dilution. NOAA and the lead state agency will determine the feasibility of planned components with each reserve on a case-by-case basis. Since 2000, lead state agencies have considered multi-component reserves but not pursued this option because of the prohibitive operational costs and coordination needs involved in managing this type of reserve.

Figure 9. North Carolina Research Reserve – Multi Components

6. Developing an Environmental Impact Statement and Reserve Management Plan

A. Introduction

The development of an environmental impact statement and reserve management plan is the most comprehensive and time-intensive part of a reserve designation process. According to Reserve System regulations §921.12, upon NOAA approval of the site nomination, the state and NOAA must develop a draft management plan and prepare a draft environmental impact statement. Reserve System regulations clearly define the roles of NOAA and the state partner in this process.

- ✓ NOAA is the primary lead in developing the draft environmental impact statement to meet its NEPA obligations. And the lead state partner supports NOAA's preparation of the draft environmental impact statement by collecting relevant information and providing it to NOAA.
- ✓ The lead state partner is the primary lead for developing a draft management plan, including the drafting of a NOAA–state MOU and any additional MOUs between state partners. NOAA provides guidance to assist in the development of the management plan and MOUs.

The lead state partner and NOAA should begin to prepare a draft environmental impact statement and draft management plan immediately following the approval of the notice of intent to prepare those documents. The basic milestones in the development of the draft statement and plan are shown in

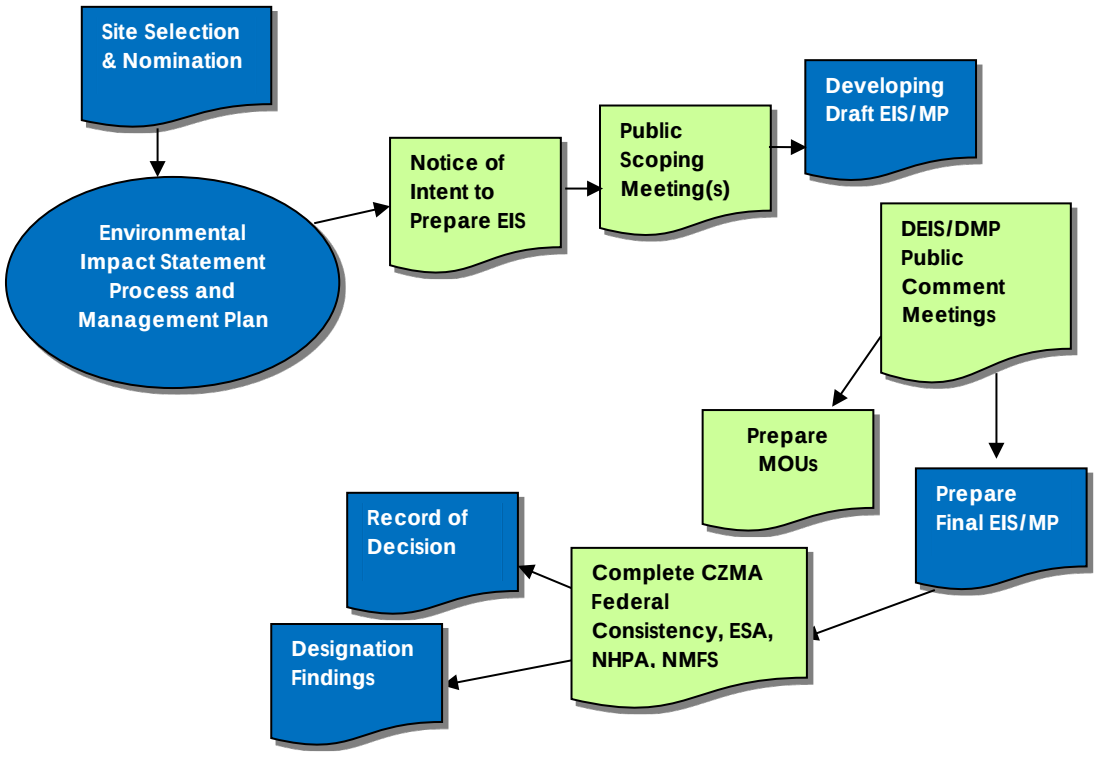


Figure 10.

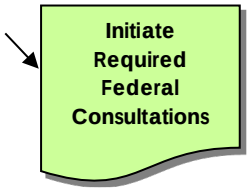


Figure 10. Basic Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) and Management Plan (MP) Development Processes, 2017

B. NEPA Process

The National Environmental Policy Act of 1969, as amended, requires that federal agencies consider the environmental impacts of major federal actions. The designation of a reserve is considered a major federal action and requires a NEPA review before NOAA can officially designate a reserve. As required by National Estuarine Research Reserve System regulations (§ 921.13), an environmental impact statement and management plan must be developed to assess the possible environmental impacts of the proposed designation and to identify future management strategies if the proposed reserve is designated.

NEPA is triggered when a proposal for a major federal action exists. Council of Environmental Quality regulations define major federal actions to include adoption of official policy, such as rules and regulations; adoption of formal plans; adoption of programs; and approvals of specific projects. Normally, the key question from §102(2) (C) is – "*Does the proposed action significantly affect the quality of the human environment?".* However, Reserve System regulations §921.12 require the development of an environmental impact statement for the designation of a national estuarine research reserve.

NOAA must meet NEPA requirements whenever NOAA's decision on a proposal for action would result in a physical effect on the human environment, even when the effect would be beneficial, and regardless of who proposes the action or where it would take place (40 C.F.R. 1508.18).

After NOAA approval of the site nomination document, the lead state agency may submit an application

to NOAA, limited to the unallocated portion of the $100,000, for development of the draft environmental impact statement/draft management plan, Final environmental impact statement/final management plan, and other basic characterization studies. The state application for post-site-selection funding must include

- A Draft Management Plan outline, including milestones and timeline, and
- An outline of a draft memorandum of understanding between the lead state agency and NOAA detailing the federal and state roles in reserve management (as well as additional MOUs with land-owning [or-leasing] or managing partners, if applicable).

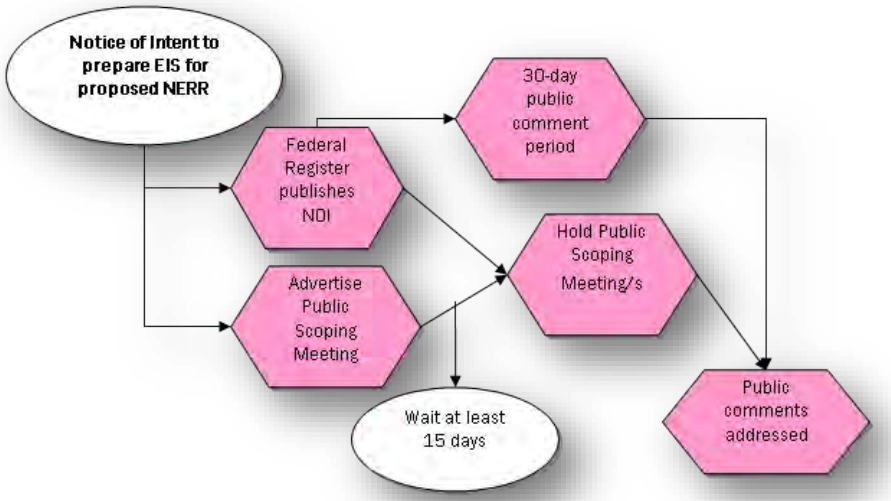
C. Starting the NEPA Process for a Reserve Designation

Before preparation of the draft environmental impact statement and draft management plan, NOAA publishes a ***notice of intent*** to prepare an environmental impact statement in the *Federal Register*. The notice should

- Describe the proposed action and possible alternatives
- Provide information on planned scoping meetings or hearings
- Provide contact information
- Provide a minimum 30-day public comment period

The lead state partner, with assistance from NOAA, holds a scoping meeting(s) to solicit the views of the public regarding the proposed project before the draft environmental impact statement and management plan are prepared. NOAA must publish the notice of intent in the *Federal Register* at least 15 days before the scoping meeting. Concurrent to the NOAA action, the lead state partner must both advertise the scoping meeting in local media outlets (newspapers at least 15 days before the scheduled scoping meeting) and send letters to potential stakeholders about the scoping (Figure 11). An example notice of intent is found in Appendix F.

Figure 11. Notice of Intent (NOI) for environmental impact statement (EIS) and Scoping



The formal ***public scoping*** process begins after the notice is published in the *Federal Register*, but can in practice begin before that notice is published. The purpose of a scoping process is to help the lead state partner and NOAA determine the range of issues associated with the designation of a national estuarine research reserve based on the site nomination document.

The scoping process may be conducted using several formats, including

- Internal meetings between NOAA and state-level stakeholders
- Formal public hearings where the public provides testimonial that is recorded into the official record
- Informal public meetings with at-large or invited individuals to discuss the proposed designation
- Solicitation of public comment through various media (mass mailings, newspapers, internet, phone conversations)

Although a public meeting is not a typical requirement, Reserve System regulations § 921.11 (c) require NOAA to hold a public scoping meeting with the lead state partner in the area or areas most affected by the proposed reserve designation. This meeting is required to be held no earlier than 15 days after the notice of intent is published in the *Federal Register*.

The goal of a public scoping meeting is to determine the range of issues regarding the proposed designation by engaging a broad group of interested private and public parties. The process helps NOAA and the lead state partner to be responsive to information and concerns that may arise (See Appendix J, "Important Questions and Answers for Public Meetings"). The process helps determine the relevant stakeholders; identify significant environmental issues; strengthen stakeholder support for reserve designation; and identify information gaps or other actions that may affect designation. During the scoping meeting(s), comments are accepted from the public and eventually considered and addressed in the draft environmental impact statement and draft management plan as they are developed.

Previous reserve-designation-related scoping meetings have identified multiple benefits for the process:

- The lead state partner found these meetings very useful for providing a venue for NOAA to engage with partners who want to better understand what it really means to be part of a research reserve.

- Provides an opportunity for NOAA to communicate face to face with partners and stakeholders the differences between a national estuarine research reserve and other types of protected areas (i.e., national marine sanctuary).

- Alleviates concerns from stakeholders and partners about new regulations regarding the management of the lands and waters within the reserve. NOAA regulations § 921.11 (c) (3) note that the core areas of a proposed reserve "must be under a level of control sufficient to ensure the long-term viability of the Reserve for research on natural process." As such, these controls must already be in place using existing state regulations for designation of a reserve to occur.

Note: Scoping is an iterative process and continues throughout the development of the environmental impact statement until the final version is published in the* Federal Register*.

D. Developing a Draft Environmental Impact Statement

Upon the publishing of the notice of intent in the *Federal Register*, NOAA, with support from the lead state partner, begins developing a draft environmental impact statement to support an environmental analysis of the proposed reserve designation. The analysis process that produces an environmental impact statement allows the NOAA administrator to make an informed decision about whether to designate the proposed reserve into the Reserve System.

For a reserve designation, the development of a draft environmental impact statement can typically be a

6-12 month project. The lead state partner is advised to begin collecting information for the environmental impact statement before the publishing of the notice of intent. For the lead state partner, this includes

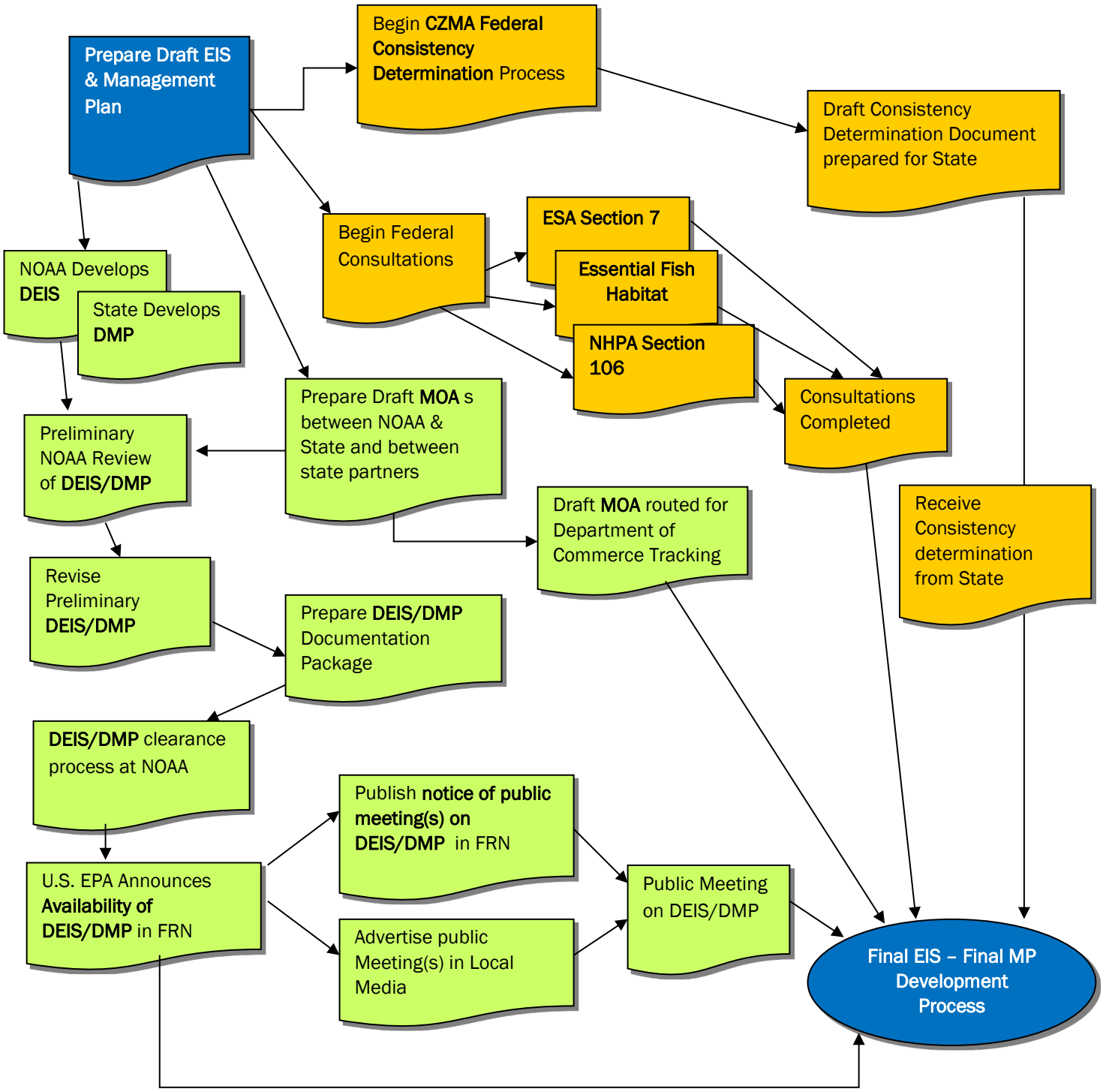
- Leveraging the work of the various teams and committees that was used in the nomination document previously submitted to NOAA for acceptance;
- Utilizing mapping products and documents that were contracted out in support of the site-selection and nomination process; and
- Leveraging partner knowledge and information about the site.

Most importantly, the environmental impact statement preparers must remember to address stakeholder concerns or comments identified during the scoping meetings when developing the draft. Figure 12 provides a detailed roadmap of the process NOAA and the lead state partner follow in preparing a draft environmental impact statement and associated draft management plan for a new reserve. Additional guidance can be found within the Companion Manual for NOAA Administrative Order 216-6A at https://www.nepa.noaa.gov/docs/NOAA-NAO-216-6A-Companion-Manual-01132017.pdf

Important considerations regarding the development of the draft environmental impact statement include the following.

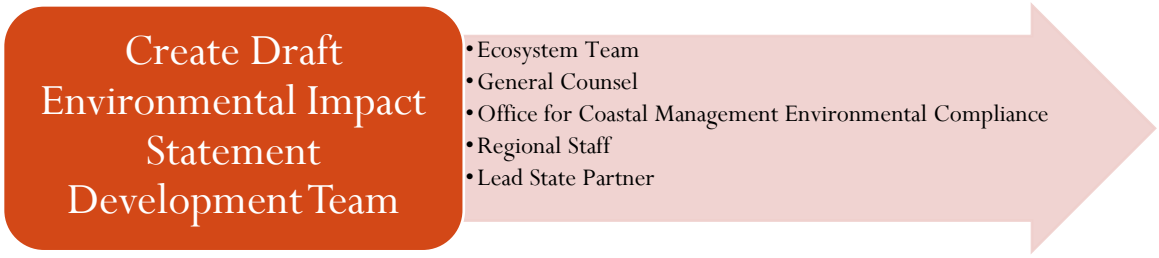
- NOAA taking the lead in developing the draft, with the lead state partner and associated stakeholder committees or teams taking a supporting role.
- Identifying a small team within the Office for Coastal Management to support the development of the draft. At a minimum, include representation from the Office for Coastal Management's Ecosystems Team, General Counsel, and Environmental Compliance Team, and an Office for Coastal Management lead.

Figure 12. Overall process for preparing a Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) and Draft Management Plan (DMP)

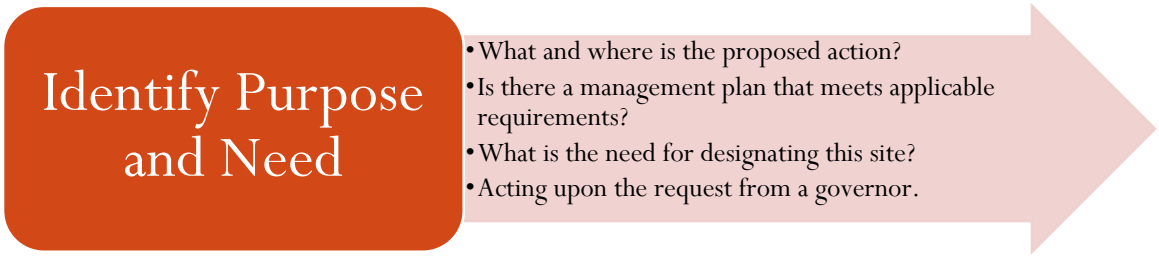


- NOAA and the lead state partner must work together throughout this process and ensure that partners and stakeholders are engaged throughout.
- Partner and stakeholder concerns identified through the public engagement process (i.e., scoping meetings) must be addressed in the document.
- If tribes are involved, make sure to have specific targeted engagement with them from sovereign nation to nation.
- Concurrently, initiate consultations with federal agencies for applicable federal statutes (i.e., Endangered Species Act Section 7, Marine Mammal Protection Act, National Historic Preservation Act, etc.).
- NOAA and the lead state partner develop a draft environmental impact statement development timeline.
- Leverage the Office for Coastal Management for facilitation and geospatial support for developing the draft statement and draft management plan.
- An internal NOAA review and clearance process for environmental impact statements is incorporated into this review process. The NOAA clearance process for approving a draft EIS for public comment includes both a preliminary review and formal clearance.

After completing the initial scoping meetings, *the development of the draft environmental impact statement and associated environmental analysis* include the following:



This team is tasked with conducting the environmental analysis for the designation of a research reserve. To sustain continuity between the draft environmental impact statement and the final version, it is important that the team remain in place for the duration of the designation process. At a minimum, bi-weekly team meetings are recommended to ensure that actions and milestones are met.



The draft environmental impact statement development team needs to describe what NOAA and the state want to do, and identify where this action is going to occur. For a research reserve designation, the

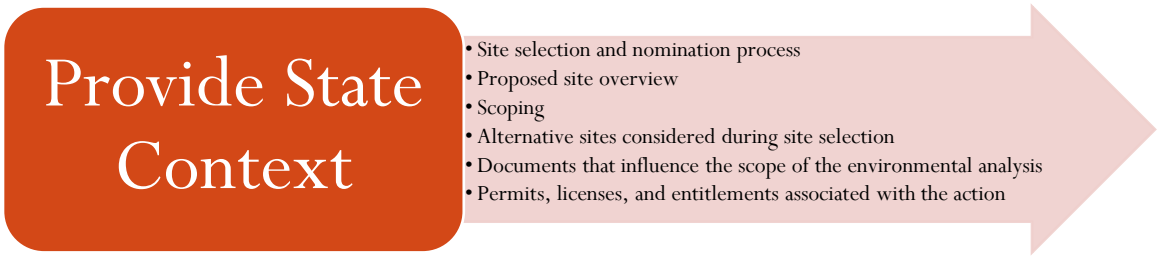
purpose of the proposed action includes both the designation of the proposed reserve and approval of the reserve management plan and its subsequent implementation of plan management elements resulting from the designation. This should answer the question, "Why is NOAA proposing to approve the reserve designation?"

Depending on the location of the proposed reserve, the need for the proposed action could either be

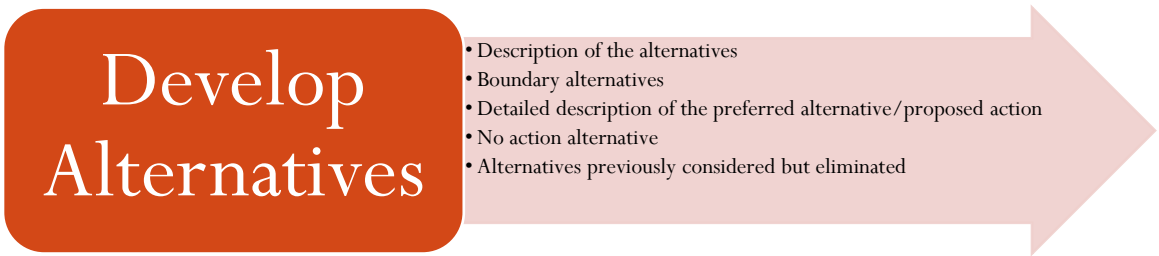
1. To fill a currently unrepresented gap in the national system furthering the national goal to ensure that the system reflects the wide range of estuarine types within the U.S. as described in Appendix 2 of the Section 921, or
2. Represent a significant addition to the Reserve System because of its unique estuarine type or habitats that are not represented in the system, or
3. Represent a coastal state currently not represented in the Reserve System.

Additionally, the team needs to note that NOAA is acting upon a nomination of the site by the state or territorial governor for inclusion within the national system.

The purpose and need serves as an important screening criterion for determining which alternatives to designation of the proposed reserve are reasonable. All reasonable alternatives examined in detail must meet the defined purpose and need.



To further support the purpose and need for the action to designate a reserve, the draft environmental impact statement development team should provide an overview of the public involvement in the process. The team should specifically summarize the site-selection and nomination process and identify relevant issues discovered during scoping. For a research reserve designation, it's important to provide a basic overview of proposed reserve and alternative sites considered during the site-selection process. Also, the draft environmental impact statement needs to identify any laws, regulations, and other documents that have influenced the scope of this analysis.



The draft environmental impact statement development team needs to describe the proposed action to designate a reserve and the range of alternatives to that action. According to Council of Environmental Quality regulations 40 CFR 1502.14, the process must

- ✓ Rigorously explore and objectively evaluate all reasonable alternatives, and for alternatives which were eliminated from detailed study, briefly discuss the reasons for their having been eliminated.
- ✓ Devote substantial treatment to each alternative considered in detail, including the proposed action so that reviewers may evaluate their comparative merits.
- ✓ Include reasonable alternatives such as alternative boundaries, sites, multiple sites or others.
- ✓ Include the no-action alternative. The no-action alternative is the most likely future that could be expected to occur in the absence of the project.
- ✓ Identify NOAA's preferred alternative or alternatives, if one or more exists.
- ✓ Include appropriate mitigation measures not already included in the proposed action or alternatives.

The team will need to provide objective descriptions of all reasonable alternatives under consideration by NOAA. It is recommended that NOAA and the lead state agency partner include short, concise summaries of the impacts of each alternative, provided in comparative form. This usually includes providing a matrix or table summarizing and comparing the alternatives in terms of environmental impacts and benefits. For a research reserve designation, the alternatives identified in this section are those that may be feasibly carried out based on technical, economic, environmental, and other factors, and meet the purpose and need for the proposed action. The range of alternatives must include

- ***No-Action Alternative*** – Analysis of the impacts of no reserve designation. It's a continuation of the status quo where the stated purpose and need for a reserve designation is not met.
- ***Preferred Alternative*** – **This is the proposed action of designating a reserve**. Note that this alternative may be different than the site nomination boundaries.
- ***Boundary Alternatives*** – Typically, different boundary configurations are considered as part of the analysis and one of these might be the preferred alternative.

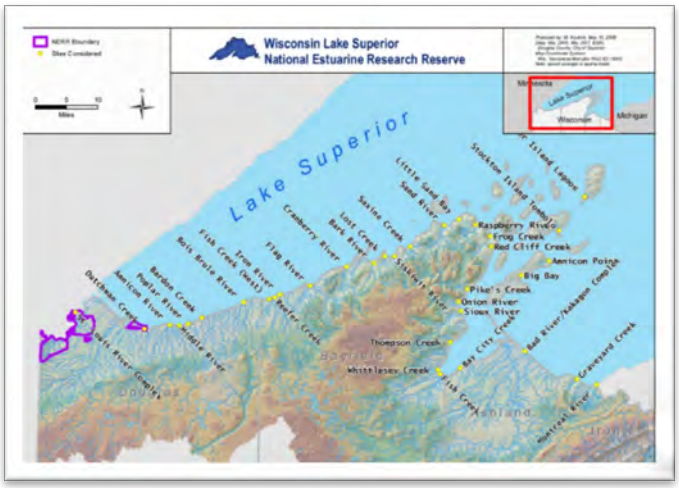


Figure 13. Examples of Sites Eliminated from Detailed Study

The draft environmental impact statement should also include a discussion of alternatives that were considered but not analyzed. During the site-selection stage of the designation process, the lead state agency may consider a number of alternatives that could be considered reasonable but are unlikely to accomplish the goal of designating a new reserve. Any alternatives considered but rejected for further analysis should be briefly discussed in a subsection of the draft environmental impact statement (i.e., "Alternatives Considered, but not Further Analyzed"). The team must briefly describe why other alternatives were eliminated from the more detailed review. This allows the draft to identify these alternatives, as shown in Figure 13, and to explain why they were not reasonable for achieving the purpose and need of designating a proposed reserve.

This draft should also include a detailed description of the proposed action or preferred alternative. Within this description, include the total acres for each component of the proposed site that is described, as well as a map that depicts the core and buffer areas within the proposed boundary, as shown in Figure 14.

Figure 14. Example Preferred Alternative Core and Buffer Areas detailed study

Additionally, providing a brief description of the anticipated environmental impacts or consequences of the proposed action and alternatives on the affected environment is important to include when comparing alternatives. A more detailed analysis of the impacts of each alternative is to be discussed in the "Environmental Consequences" section of the draft environmental impact statement.

Describe the Affected Environment

- Description of the natural environment that includes:
  - Phyiscal characteristics (hydrology, water quality, climate, etc…)
  - Biological characteristics (habitats, living resources, T&E Species, etc.)
- Description of the human environment that includes:
  - Economic setting (economy, demographics, infrastructure, etc…)
  - Historic and cultural setting (historical sites, cultural resources, archaeological features, land uses, human uses, etc.)

The "Affected Environment" section describes the existing and historical environment in and around the proposed reserve boundaries. Federal regulations 40 CFR 1502.15 describe this requirement as follows:

"The environmental impact statement shall succinctly describe the environment of the area(s) to be affected or created by the alternatives under consideration. The descriptions shall be no longer than is necessary to understand the effects of the alternatives. Data and analyses in a statement shall be commensurate with the importance of the impact, with less important material summarized, consolidated, or simply referenced. Agencies shall avoid useless bulk in statements and shall concentrate effort and attention on important issues. Verbose descriptions of the affected environment are themselves no measure of the adequacy of an environmental impact statement."

This section of the draft environmental impact statement is typically divided into subsections that address two major categories of resources affected by the research reserve designation. These are the natural environment and the human environment. For example, previous reserve designation environmental impact statements have used subsections describing biological resources (including endangered and threatened species), socioeconomic resources, habitat, cultural resources, and historical resources. Other ideas for subsections are hydrology, geology, existing infrastructure, climate.

Under the "Natural Environment" section, the team should summarize the current conditions of the resources and environment in the geographic area. Under "Physical Resources," make sure to include specifics about special status or listed species that are found in the area.

For the "Human Environment" section make sure to provide sufficient information regarding the current condition and or presence of historical and cultural resources.

Details on the location and range of both the species and historical or cultural resource will be very important toward meeting the requirements of other federal statues like the Endangered Species Act or the National Historic Preservation Act during the designation process. Only include information pertaining to existing conditions; impact analyses occur in later parts of the draft environmental impact statement.

Note that each resource described in the "Affected Environment" section must also receive a parallel discussion in the "Environmental Consequences" section of the draft environmental impact statement. Additionally, incorporating by reference other environmental impact statements and environmental assessments may be useful for adding specific information about the affected environment without adding length to the document.

The core environmental impacts analysis of a "federal action," such as a research reserve designation, is the "Environmental Consequences" section. The team must provide a detailed analysis and description

of any general or specific environmental impacts or effects resulting from reserve designation or the reasonable alternatives that have been considered. **This analysis must mirror each part of the natural and human environments described in the "Affected Environment" section.**

Impacts and effects can include ecological (such as the effects on natural resources and on the components, structures, and functioning of affected ecosystems), aesthetic, historic, cultural, economic, social, or health, whether direct, indirect, or cumulative. They may also include those resulting from actions that may have both beneficial and detrimental effects, even if on balance the agency believes that the effect will be beneficial.

In addition to any direct or indirect impacts to individual resources described in the affected environment, the team must also include an analysis of the cumulative impacts. The cumulative impacts of the proposed action (e.g., reserve designation) include both direct and indirect effects on the resources, ecosystems, and human community described in the "Affected Environment" section. The team should note that cumulative impacts can result from individually minor but collectively significant actions taking place over a period of time. To help support this analysis, cumulative effects analysis recommendations and tips are provided in Appendix F.

Furthermore, the team must review how the establishment of the proposed reserve affects known state, local, and regional plans or policies for areas within the reserve boundaries. Referencing the proposed reserve management plan and the various agreements between parties, the analysis should look at how the lands and waters are managed within the proposed boundaries in relationship to other relevant plans and polices within the same areas.

NEPA also requires consideration of the relationship between local short-term uses of the environment and the maintenance and enhancement of long-term productivity. For reserve designations, the analysis is expected to show that short-term uses of the environment relating to a research reserve site are expected to result in overall improvements to the health and quality of the affected natural and socioeconomic environments. Any adverse effects are expected to be predominantly short-term (e.g., during the restoration or construction process). Such short-term, adverse effects are also expected to coincide with long-term benefits to ecosystem services and productivity.

To close out this section, NEPA requires an analysis of the extent to which the proposed action's direct and indirect effects would commit operational resources to uses that cannot be recovered or that future generations would be unable to reverse. Resource commitments are considered irreversible or irretrievable when impacts from their use or consumption would limit future use options and those changes could not be reversed, reclaimed, or repaired. Irreversible commitments generally occur to nonrenewable resources such as minerals or cultural resources, and to those resources that are renewable only over long time spans, such as soil productivity, while irretrievable commitments generally apply to the loss of production, harvest, or natural resources and are not necessarily irreversible. Typically for a reserve designation, implementation of the reserve management plan should result in few irreversible or irretrievable commitments of resources.

The team should organize this section to show the following:

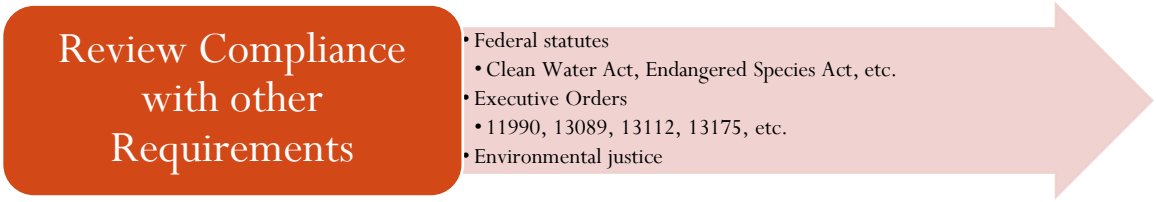
- ✓ The overall or general impacts of reserve designation and the significance of these impacts.
- ✓ Specific impacts or effects of reserve designation and their significance as related to the sections

described in the "Affected Environment" section.

- ✓ Possible conflicts between the reserve designation and applicable federal, regional, state, and local plans, programs, or controls for the proposed reserve site.
- ✓ Unavoidable adverse environmental or socioeconomic impacts that may result from reserve designation.
- ✓ The cumulative impacts of reserve designation and alternatives on activities occurring in the area or environment affected by the action.
- ✓ If identified, mitigation measures (measures that avoid, reduce or minimize the effects of designating a research reserve) should be included in the analysis of each alternative. A table can be used to show mitigation measures for each alternative identified in the environmental impact statement. Mitigation measures may include the following actions:
    - o Avoidance of impacts associated with the preferred action or its alternatives
    - o Minimizing the degree or magnitude of the reserve designation and its implementation
    - o Compensating for the impact of reserve designation

Note: resource manipulation and restoration activities described within the reserve management plan may address mitigation by detailing actions planned to restore affected environments or habitats.

Overall, designation of a research reserve is typically an administrative function, and the environmental consequences are positive because designation brings the development of research, education, and stewardship programs; economic benefits to local communities; and the potential for strengthened environmental protections implemented by the state. =



The environmental impact analysis must also include a review of the proposed action's compliance with other statutory, regulatory, or administrative requirements. Provide a basic overview of each relevant requirement and a short description of how the reserve designation is in compliance with that requirement. Relevant requirements to review include the following:

- ✓ Clean Air Act (42 U.S.C. §§ 7401 et seq.)
- ✓ Clean Water Act (33 U.S.C. §§ 1251 et seq.)
- ✓ Coastal Zone Management Act (16 U.S.C. §§ 1451, et seq.)
- ✓ Endangered Species Act (16 U.S.C. §§ 1531, et seq.)
- ✓ Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act (16 U.S.C. §§ 1801 et seq.)
- ✓ Marine Mammal Protection Act (16 U.S.C. §§ 1361 et seq.)
- ✓ Migratory Bird Treaty Act (16 U.S.C. §§ 715 et seq.)
- ✓ National Historic Preservation Act (16 U.S.C. §§ 470 et seq.)
- ✓ National Marine Sanctuaries Act (16 U.S.C. §§ 1431 et seq.)
- ✓ Environmental Justice and Executive Order 12948
- ✓ Executive Order 11990 – Protection of Wetlands

- ✓ Executive Order 13690 – Establishing a Federal Flood Risk Management Standard and a Process for Further Soliciting and Considering Stakeholder Input
- ✓ Executive Order 13089 – Coral Reef Protection
- ✓ Executive Order 13112 – Invasive Species
- ✓ Executive Order 13158 – Marine Protected Areas
- ✓ Executive Order 13175 – Consultation and Coordination with Indian Tribal Governments

Required Components of an Environmental Impact Statement

Figure 15. Required Draft Environmental Impact Statement Contents

NEPA regulations (40 CFR 1502.10) require all environmental impact statement documents to contain the following contents as shown in Figure 15. More detail regarding this content is provided below.

Cover Sheet

Every environmental impact statement must have a one-page cover sheet that includes the following information:

- ✓ A list of the responsible agencies, including the lead agency and any cooperating agencies. In the case of reserve designation, these include the U.S. Department of Commerce, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, National Ocean Service, Office for Coastal Management, and their addresses.
- ✓ The title of the proposed action that is the subject of the statement, together with the state and county, or counties (or other jurisdiction if applicable), where the action is located. Recent examples include

Final Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement
Federal Approval of the Texas National Estuarine Research Reserve and Management Plan: The Mission-Aransas Estuary

He'eia National Estuarine Research Reserve
Final Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement

Final Environmental Impact Statement and Final Management Plan
to Establish the San Francisco Bay National Estuarine Research Reserve

- ✓ The name, address, and telephone number of the person at the NOAA who can supply further information.
- ✓ A designation of the statement as a draft, final, or draft or final supplement.
- ✓ A one-paragraph abstract of the statement.

Executive Summary

The executive summary must accurately summarize the substantive parts of the environmental impact statement and should be no more than a few pages in length. The summary shall include

- ✓ A brief summary of the major conclusions
- ✓ A description of any areas of controversy (including issues raised by agencies and the public)
- ✓ The major issues (including the choice among alternatives) that are discussed in the statement

Table of Contents

The table of contents organizes the environmental impact statement and should include a list of tables, figures, and acronyms, in addition to the major sections of the document. Other recommended components referenced in the table of contents include a list of preparers or acknowledgments, list of persons or organizations receiving the document, references, and a list of attachments and appendices.

Purpose and Need

An environmental impact statement must contain a purpose and need statement. Council of Environmental Quality regulations 40 CFR 1502.13 state, "*The statement shall briefly specify the underlying purpose and need to which the agency is responding in proposing the alternatives including the proposed action*." The purpose and need specifies the underlying purpose and need to which NOAA is responding and sets the overall direction of the environmental analysis process.

Description of Proposed Action and Alternatives

As required by Section 102 (2) (E) of NEPA, every environmental impact statement must contain a

detailed description of the proposed action and alternatives. This section describes the proposed action and each alternative that will accomplish the purpose and need for reserve designation. Identifying the proposed action will inform reviewers of the reserve designation being considered. The proposed action is also call the *preferred alternative* of all the alternatives NOAA has identified for the environmental impact statement. NOAA selects a preferred alternative based on environmental, economic, technical, and other considerations.

The Affected Environment

This section is a description of the current state of the environment in which the proposed action and alternatives are considered. Current conditions within the boundaries of the proposed reserve and its vicinity are described in detail and serve as a baseline for comparison of alternatives and their associated impacts.

Environmental Consequences

An environmental impact statement must have a detailed description and analysis of the anticipated environmental consequences of the proposed action and alternatives (including the no-action alternative) on the resources described in the "Affected Environment" section. In this section, NOAA and the state partner provide a detailed analysis and description of any general or specific environmental impacts or effects resulting from research reserve designation or the reasonable alternatives that have been considered.

List of Preparers

The environmental impact statement must include a list of persons involved or consulted in the preparation of the document. This section should include any person who was primarily responsible for preparing the document or background papers, or who provided substantial information. This includes NOAA staff members and state partner staff members.

Distribution List

The environmental impact statement must include a distribution list that includes other agencies, organizations, and individuals who have requested the document. An asterisk or some kind of notation should be included for those organizations or individuals who commented on the draft document.

Index and Appendices

The environmental impact statement must contain an index. The index should include an alphabetical list of key words and their associated page numbers that will allow the reader to find information easily within the document. The index should focus on subject matter and not be a simple repeat of the table of contents. Any appendices to support the environmental impact statement should also be included. There are several mandatory appendices or attachments:

- ✓ Reserve management plan
- ✓ Reserve–NOAA memorandum of understanding
- ✓ Reserve–Local partner memorandum of understanding (i.e., multi-party MOU)
- ✓ Public comments to the environmental impact statement and responses to those comments
- ✓ Concurrence letters as per other legal requirements
- ✓ Federal consistency

Other materials best consolidated into the appendix:

- ✓ Lengthy technical discussions, baseline studies, etc…
- ✓ Materials likely to be understood by technically trained individuals

E. Developing a Draft Reserve Management Plan

Estuarine sites nominated for the Reserve System, including current research reserve sites, face multiple anthropogenic and natural stressors. These sites must plan for the continued protection and use of the reserve for research, education, and public access. Developing a comprehensive management plan will provide a foundation for addressing the challenges of protecting and managing the future reserve. Therefore, the purpose of a reserve management plan is to

- ❖ Provide the vision and framework to guide reserve activities during a five-year period;
- ❖ Present opportunities to discuss reserve niche and strategic collaborations with partners;
- ❖ Communicate how the reserve is addressing priority coastal management issues through their stated goals, objectives, and strategies;
- ❖ Highlight reserve priorities and staff capabilities to address those priorities;
- ❖ Demonstrate how Reserve System programs are locally relevant and nationally significant;
- ❖ Enable the reserve and NOAA to track progress and determine opportunities for growth; and
- ❖ Position the reserve to acquire facilities construction and land acquisition funds.

Per federal regulations, 15 C.F.R. Part 921.13 (a), management plans must describe the reserve's most pressing coastal management issues; goals, objectives, and actions for addressing those issues; plans for administration, research, education and interpretation, public access, construction, acquisition, and resource protection; and restoration and habitat manipulation, if applicable—and they must include a memorandum of understanding between NOAA and the state agency. Required and optional components for management plans are listed below in Table 5. Additional information, including a

checklist for each required component, can be found in Part 2, "Guidance for Reserve Management Plan Components."

The draft management plan developed during the reserve designation process serves as

- Part of the draft environmental impact statement as an attachment or appendix, and
- As a stand-alone management plan document

Detailed guidance on each of the components of a research reserve management plan can be found in the "*Reserve System Management Plan Guidelines and Resources – 2019.*"

Table 5. Reserve System Management Plan Components

Executive Summary (approximately 1-2 pages)	Describe plan purpose and scope, designation date and acreage of reserve, threats and stressors and priority management issues, reserve niche
Introduction to the Reserve System (approximately 3 pages)	Standard language
Introduction to the Reserve (approximately 5 pages)	❖ Synopsis of history, as well as ecological, social, and cultural value to community (reference site profile or other documents for more extensive background, this is simply an overview to set context) ❖ Overview of threats and stressors ❖ Description of boundary o Core and buffer description o Boundary map with core and buffer; land ownership map; habitat map
Program Foundations (approximately 6 pages – 2 per system-wide program)	❖ Research and Monitoring; Education; Coastal Training (standard system-wide language) ❖ Program context, capacities, needs, and opportunities (and as possible evaluation strategies)
Reserve Strategic Plan (variable)	❖ Goals, objectives, and actions for research, monitoring, education, training, and stewardship
Administrative Plan (approximately 5 pages)	❖ Organizational framework and chart ❖ Staffing needs and plan ❖ Advisory committees and purpose ❖ Key partnerships and opportunities for administration (optional volunteer plan, vessel and vehicle plan, and communications plan)
Public Access and Visitor Use Plan (approximately 5 pages)	❖ Description of public access points, as well as challenges ❖ Map of public access points
Resource Protection Plan (approximately 5 pages)	❖ Description of management authorities ❖ Description and map of allowable uses ❖ Surveillance and enforcement, as well as challenges
Facility Development and Improvement Plan (approximately 5 pages)	❖ Overview of current facilities, uses, and challenges ❖ Description of facility needs
Acquisition Plan (approximately 5 pages)	❖ Acquisition target areas and description of value and purpose ❖ Map of acquisition areas ❖ Acquisition strategy
Resource Manipulation Plan (If applicable)	

Restoration Plan (If applicable)	
Appendices	❖ MOU between NOAA and state and other multi-party MOUs ❖ Federal Consistency determination ❖ Public comments and description of how they were addressed ❖ Additional plans of reference as appropriate

Based on the *Companion Guide for NERR Management Plan Guidance* found on the Reserve System intranet**.**

The state (e.g., lead state partner), with assistance by NOAA, prepares a preliminary and final draft management plan, including an MOU identifying the state and NOAA roles in managing the reserve. The state submits the preliminary and final versions of the draft management plan and its supporting documents to NOAA for review before a decision to move the process to public comment.

For a reserve, the management plan is the primary long-term planning document, which is required for the designation of a research reserve site. For a lead state agency, the development of a management plan is a process that can take a year or more. For a lead state partner, feedback and lessons learned from other states that have led a successful management plan development process as part of a research reserve designation can provide important insights. The following graphic (Figure 16) summarizes feedback about the management planning process from the most recent reserve designations.

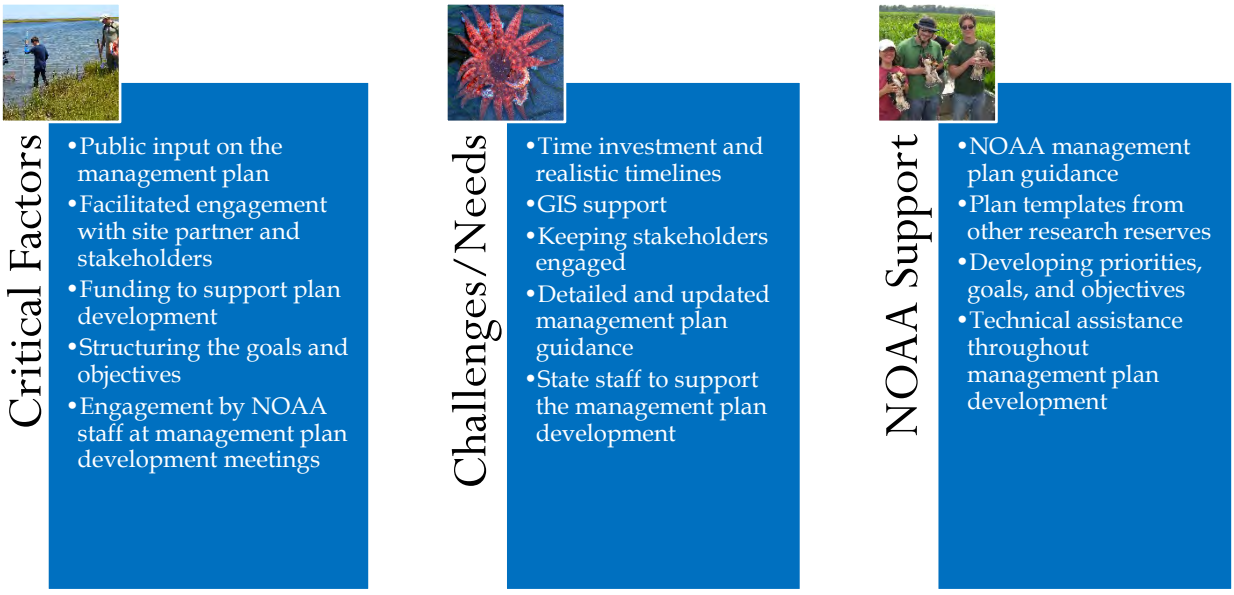


Figure 16. Management Plan Development Tips from State Leads

NOAA has a number of resources that can support the management plan development process:

- ✓ Reserve System Management Plan Guidelines and Resources, 2013

- ✓ Preparing to Write Your Strategic Plan, Social Science Tools for Coastal Programs, 2011
- ✓ Introduction to Planning and Facilitating Effective Meetings, 2010.
- ✓ NOAA Habitat Blueprint: A Framework to Improve Habitat for Fisheries, Marine Life, and Coastal Communities (2012), NOAA Office of Habitat Conservation, National Marine Fisheries Service.
- ✓ NOAA's Habitat Priority Planner: A GIS Tool to Help Identify and Prioritize Areas for Conservation, Restoration, and Planning.

For additional tools and information visit *https://coast.noaa.gov/digitalcoast/*

F. Environmental Impact Statement and Management Plan Milestones

As previously outlined in *Section 2,* "Designation Process Overview," and per federal regulations, 15 C.F.R. Part 921.13, NOAA and the lead state partner have specific milestones to achieve as part of the designation process. The following *required* milestones are specific to the development of the environmental impact statement (EIS) and management plan (MP).


NOAA Milestones
Prepare a notice of intent to assemble a draft EIS/MP, with a minimum public comment period of 30 days before the release of the draft EIS, to be published in the Federal Register.
Prepare, with assistance from the state, a preliminary and final draft EIS.
File a completed draft EIS/draft MP with the U.S. EPA and prepare a 45 day notice of availability for public comment to be published in the Federal Register. The Notice of Availability is published no less than 30 days prior to a public meeting(s) on the draft EIS/draft MP.
Prepare a notice announcing a public meeting(s) on the draft EIS/MP to be published in the Federal Register.
Address comments received on the draft EIS/MP and file a completed final EIS/MP with the U.S. EPA. Notice of Availability for the final EIS/MP is published in the Federal Register no less than 30 days before issuing a Record of Decision.
Prepare a notice announcing the designation of the new reserve and the availability of the NEPA Record of Decision to be published in the Federal Register.
State Milestones
Conduct a scoping meeting(s) to solicit public comment on the proposed reserve prior to preparing the draft EIS/draft MP. Advertise the meeting(s) in local media at least 15 prior to the meeting(s) being held.
Prepare, with assistance from NOAA, a preliminary and final draft MP to NOAA. The draft MP must contain a draft MOA(s) between the state and NOAA.
Publish a notice in local media of the public hearings to review the draft EIS/draft MP. The hearings should be held 30-45 days after NOAA announces the availability of the draft EIS/draft MP in the Federal Register.
Prepare, with assistance from NOAA, a preliminary and a final EIS/MP and submit to NOAA. The final EIS/MP must respond to all comments received on the draft EIS/MP, as well as a final MOA between the state and NOAA and any other MOAs developed with local partners (see Appendix A).
Submit all relevant MOAs signed by the state and all applicable partners. NOAA must receive copies of the signed MOAs prior to the NOAA administrator signing the designation findings and certificate that officially designates the reserve.
Publish a notice in local media announcing the official designation of the new reserve.

G. Public Comment and Review for the Draft Environmental Impact Statement

As per Reserve System regulations, 15 C.F.R. Part 921.13 (d), NOAA, through the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, announces the availability of the draft environmental impact statement and draft management plan in the *Federal Register*. The date of publication begins the 45-day comment period on the draft environmental statement and management plan. The public comment period must include a public meeting in the vicinity of the proposed action.

For Reserve System designations, the lead state partner and NOAA jointly hold this public meeting, or meetings, between 30-45 days after the *Federal Register* announcement. NOAA also must publish a notice of the public meeting in the *Federal Register* 15 days before the meeting.

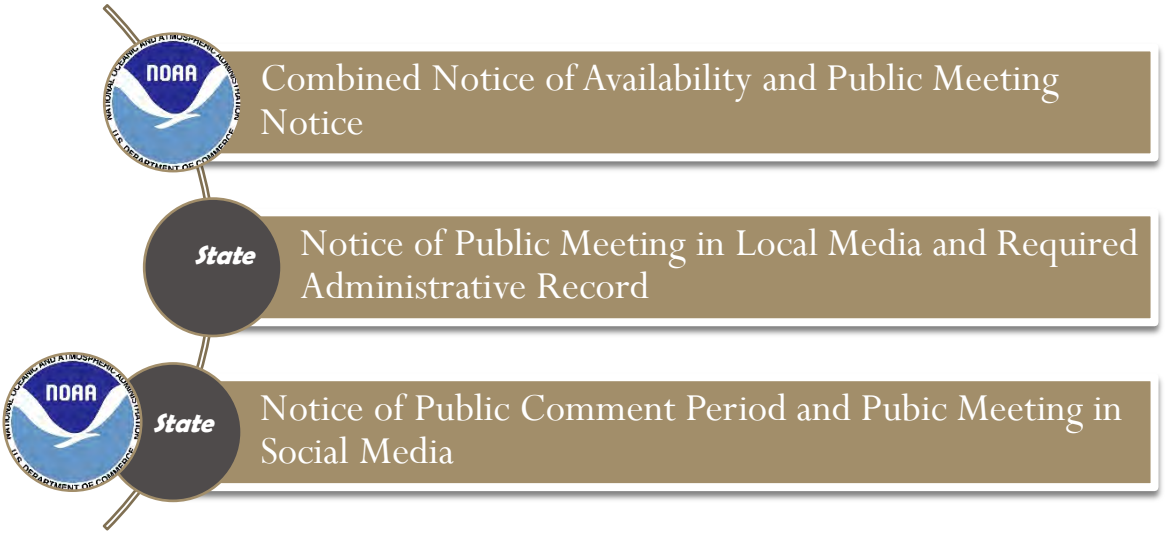


Figure 17. Informing the Public – NOAA AND State Roles

In most cases, NOAA publishes the notice of availability of the draft environmental impact statement and draft management plan, and the notice of the public meeting together as one combined notice in the *Federal Register* as listed in Figure 17. Concurrently, the lead state partner publishes a notice of the public meeting in various local media and its required administrative record to ensure that local stakeholders are informed of the public meeting. It is also recommended that the lead state agency use social media to inform local stakeholders and those that have participated in the designation process to date.

❖ Hosting a Public Meeting on the Draft Environmental Impact Statement and Draft Management Plan

NOAA relies on the lead state partner to host a public meeting about the draft environmental impact

statement and the draft management plan. In most cases, NOAA publishes the notice of availability of the draft documents and the notice of the public meeting together as one combined notice in the *Federal Register* as listed in Figure 17. Concurrently, the lead state partner publishes a notice of the public meeting in various local media to ensure that local stakeholders are informed. It is also recommended that the lead state agency use social media to inform local stakeholders and those that have participated in the designation process to date. In planning the public meeting be sure to

- ✓ Develop a process agenda for the meeting that details the roles of NOAA, lead state partner, and others during the meeting.
- ✓ Prepare official NOAA remarks introducing the meeting and giving instructions on how to provide comment to the audience. Example is provided in Appendix K.
- ✓ Have all participants sign in so that in the future you can communicate the release of the final documents to them.
- ✓ Provide appropriate handouts about the site and the Reserve System.
- ✓ Show maps of the site and the alternatives for participants to see.

NOTE: At the public meeting, NOAA is accepting public comments, not responding to them. Responses will be provided in the final environmental impact statement and final management plan.

❖ Gathering Public Comments

There are multiple ways to ensure that written comments on the draft environmental impact statement and draft management plan are captured by NOAA to support the development of final versions. These include

- ✓ Filling out the comment sheet and placing it in the comment box on the table near the entrance to the meeting before you depart

- ✓ Making oral comments at public meeting(s)

- ✓ Making comments through the federal e-rulemaking portal. See

  www.regulations.gov/docket

  Once the appropriate document for comment is accessed, the commenter must click the ‘‘Comment Now!’’ icon, complete the required fields, and enter or attach comments.

- ✓ By mailing comments directly to

  [ADD APPROPRIATE CONTACT PERSON]
  OFFICE FOR COASTAL MANAGEMENT
  NATIONAL OCEAN SERVICE, NOAA
  1305 EAST WEST HIGHWAY, N/ORM2, ROOM 10622
  SILVER SPRING, MD 20910

IMPORTANT NOTE: Written comments will be accepted until [the closing date identified in the *Federal Register* Notice]. Comments sent by any other method, to any other address or individual, or received after the end of the comment period, may not be considered by NOAA.

❖ Review of Public Comments

At the conclusion of the public comment period, NOAA and the lead state partner will compile and review the comments on the draft environmental impact statement and draft plan for the proposed reserve designation. NOAA and the lead state partner will create a final environmental impact statement and final management plan that address the relevant comments from the public comment period. Furthermore, any subsequent changes identified by NOAA and the lead state partner that did not make it into the published draft documents can be incorporated into the final environmental impact statement. **Each public comment must be listed with a specific response and placed in an appendix of the final environmental impact statement and management plan document.**

If, during the comment period, NOAA determines that some critical information was omitted in the draft environmental impact statement that would have a bearing on the decision to designate a reserve, a supplement may need to be published to incorporate this new information.

H. Developing a Final Environmental Impact Statement and Final Reserve Management Plan

Upon closure of the public comment period for the draft environmental impact statement and draft management plan, NOAA and the lead state partner begin preparing a final environmental impact statement and plan to support a designation decision by the NOAA administrator. It is recommended that two months be allocated to develop these documents before beginning the official review and clearance process. Developing the final versions requires:

- ❖ NOAA to work collaboratively with the lead state partner in compiling and responding to comments on the draft documents. Comments and responses are included in an appendix to the final documents.

- ❖ NOAA and the state make necessary changes to the draft documents and submit preliminary and final documents to NOAA for review. The final documents must include these appendices:

  - ✓ Proposed MOU between NOAA and the state (not signed)

  - ✓ Draft or final MOU(s) among reserve partners establishing roles and responsibilities (these must be finalized before designation but should not be signed in the final environmental impact statement and management plan)

- ✓ Public comments and responses.

- ❖ Upon approval, NOAA, or in some cases the lead state partner, provides electronic copies of the final environmental impact statement and management plan to those who provided comments, to other interested parties, and to the NEPA distribution list posted on the Council on Environmental Quality website.

- ❖ Upon approval, NOAA, or in some cases the lead state partner, may also print the environmental impact statement and management plan and distribute it to those who provided comments, to other interested parties, or to the NEPA distribution list posted on the Council on Environmental Quality website and available from the NOAA Office of Public and Constituent Affairs.

- ❖ NOAA, through the U.S. EPA, publishes a *Federal Register* notice announcing the availability of the final environmental impact statement and management plan. The date of publication begins the 30-day "cooling-off" period. During this time, NOAA may receive comments but is not obligated to respond to them. This is essentially a time to address any minor issues or major litigious issues.

I. Considerations for Federally Recognized Tribes

A critical consideration during the development of the environmental impact statement and supporting reserve management plan is the consultation and coordination with Indian tribal governments in accordance with Executive Order 13175 and the subsequent NOAA policy that "*establishes the manner in which the Department works with federally recognized Indian tribes when developing Department policies that have tribal implications.*" The policy reaffirms the unique government-to-government relationship that exists between Indian tribes and NOAA. NOAA continues its commitment to support tribes in the development of strong and stable economies able to participate in today's national and global marketplace.

As a result, the Office for Coastal Management will work to identify local tribes and tribal associations that are affected by the designation of a research reserve. Figure 18 provides recommendations on tribal consultations during a reserve designation.

Some of the *key concerns* that should be addressed in the designation process include:

- ✓ **Off-reservation treaty rights** – Rights to hunt, fish, and gather on state lands. Recognized tribes have access to these lands and self-regulate their ability to hunt, fish, and gather on them. These rights were never given up by the tribes, and they retain them according to treaty. Are these compatible with Reserve System regulations?
- ✓ **Delegated authorities** – Tribal associations may have delegated authorities from federally recognized tribes. These associations or commissions protect member tribes' interests in exercising their reserved treaty rights and manage natural resources.

- ✓ **Unique sovereign relationship** – Tribes maintain a unique sovereign relationship with the federal government. As such, the tribes expect government-to-government consultation directly with NOAA and request that the lead state partner not interfere with or usurp this tribal–federal relationship.
- ✓ **Cultural Groups** – Cultural groups, such as native Hawaiian's, may have significant social and governance powers in coastal communities. As such, NOAA should make every effort to consult with these groups and consider them key stakeholders in the designation process.

Figure 18. Tribal Consultation Recommendations

NOAA and the lead state partner must also account for what the expectations of tribes and cultural groups are for their engagement and participation in the research reserve designation process. Some of these may include the following:

- ✓ Any future research reserve designation within the ceded territories must not modify, alter, or in any way affect treaty rights. This, by necessity, includes access to and availability of harvested resources. For the tribes, protecting water bodies and associated shorelines includes the protection of treaty rights.
- ✓ The tribes, as sovereign governments, require consultation through consensus-based government-to-government discussions.
- ✓ Tribes maintain a unique sovereign relationship with the federal government. As such, the tribes expect government-to-government consultation directly with NOAA. Tribes are not a public but rather a foreign government requiring government-to-government consultations.
- ✓ Consultation of all individual tribes and specific cultural groups identified in the process.

J. Federal Consultations

Under NEPA, the environmental impact statement is an umbrella that integrates related environmental review and consultation requirements (e.g., Endangered Species Act, Clean Water Act, National Historic Preservation Act, etc.). These requirements are discussed on pages 22-24 of the Companion Manual for NOAA Administrative Order 216-6A at *http://www.nepa.noaa.gov/docs/NOAA-NAO-216-6A-Companion-Manual-03012018.pdf*.

These reviews and consultations should be prepared concurrently with the environmental impact statement and be integrated into the final version. Furthermore, the environmental impact statement needs to identify all federal requirements and licenses, as well as relevant state requirements. The key federal consultations (*Figure 19*) include the following:

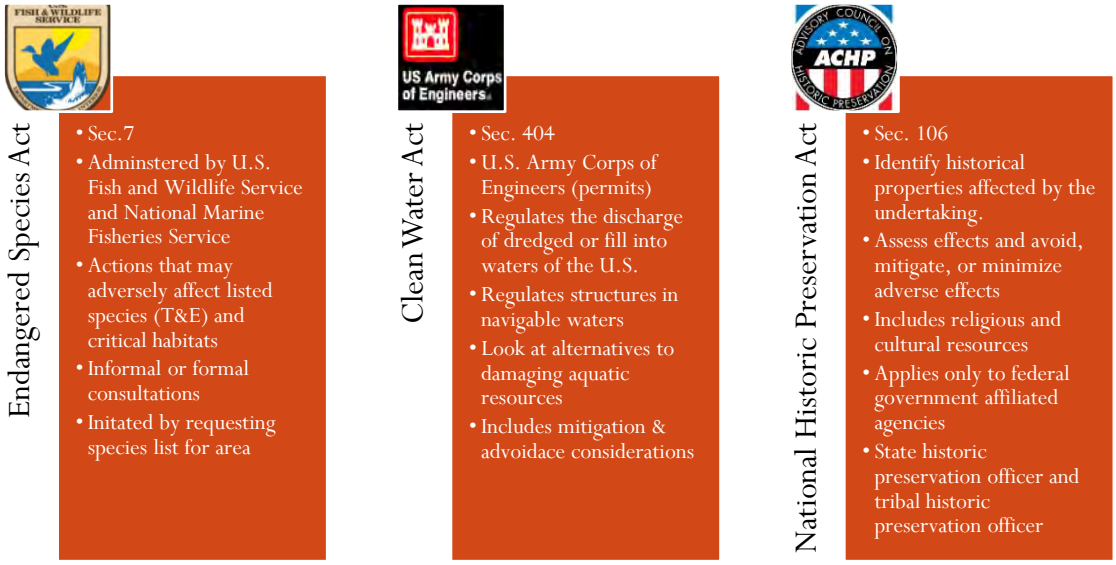


Figure 19. Key EIS Consultations

Endangered Species Act (16 U.S.C. §§ 1531, et seq.)

The purpose of the Endangered Species Act (ESA) is to protect animal and plant species from extinction and direct all federal agencies to conserve endangered and threatened species and the ecosystems upon which they depend. Under the act, NOAA's National Marine Fisheries Service and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (collectively, the services) publish lists of endangered, threatened, candidate, and other species with special status under the act. The services also may designate critical habitat for endangered or threatened species. As described in the Companion Manual, section 7(a)(2) of the ESA states, "*Each Federal agency shall ensure that any action authorized, funded, or carried out . . . is not likely to jeopardize the continued existence of any endangered species or threatened species or result in the destruction or adverse modification of [critical] habitat*."

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) has primary responsibility for terrestrial and freshwater organisms, and the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) has primary responsibility for marine species. Some species fall under both agencies, depending on location of the effect (i.e., sea turtles).

When a federal agency action may affect a protected species or its critical habitat, that agency is required to consult with NMFS or the USFWS, depending upon the protected species potentially affected.

Under this statute, NOAA must

- ✓ Determine whether listed or proposed species or designated or proposed critical habitat may be in the action area;
- ✓ Determine the effects of the action on the species or critical habitat;
- ✓ Explore ways to modify the action to reduce or remove adverse effects or benefit the species or critical habitat; and
- ✓ Make a determination if the project will have "no effect" or whether informal or formal consultation is required.

The general consultation process is described below in Figure 20.

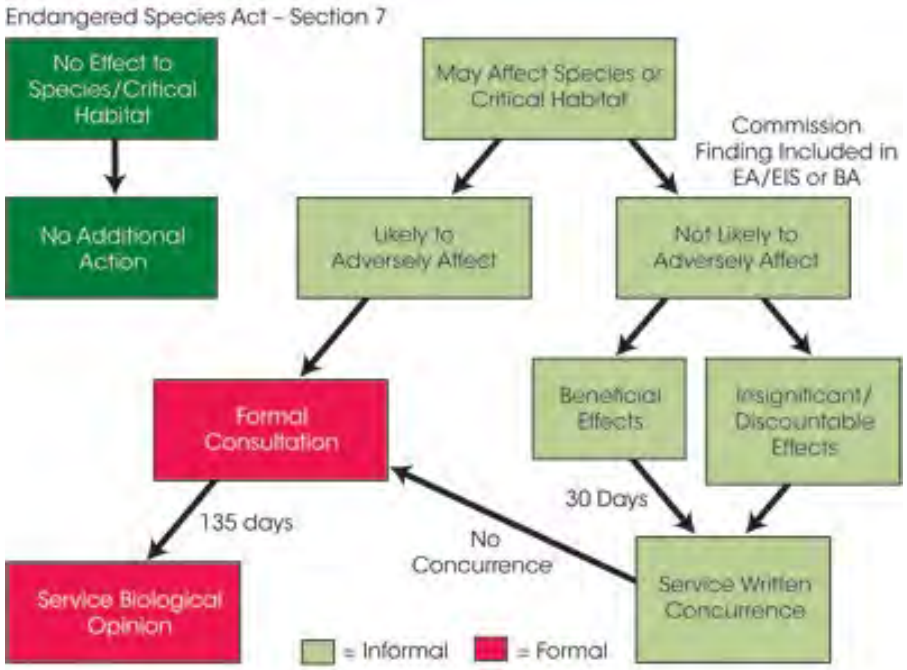


Figure 20. ESA Section 7 Consultation Process

A more detail description of the ESA consultation process for the designation of a research reserve is found in Appendix N.

Clean Water Act (33 U.S.C. §§ 1251 et seq.)

The Clean Water Act (33 U.S.C. §§ 1251 et seq.) is the principal federal law governing water quality. The act's objective is to restore and maintain the chemical, physical, and biological integrity of the nation's waters. The act regulates both the direct (sometimes called point source) and indirect (sometimes called nonpoint source) discharge of pollutants. Section 404 authorizes a permit program, administered by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, for the discharge of dredged or fill material into the waters of the U.S. Section 401 of the act requires applicants for federal licenses or permits to conduct activities that may result in a discharge of pollution into navigable waters to obtain certification of compliance with applicable state water quality standards and goals (or a waiver from the state). Other sections of the act govern point source and nonpoint source pollution. Figure 21 provides a graphically representation of the waters that the corps has jurisdiction over under different parts of the act.

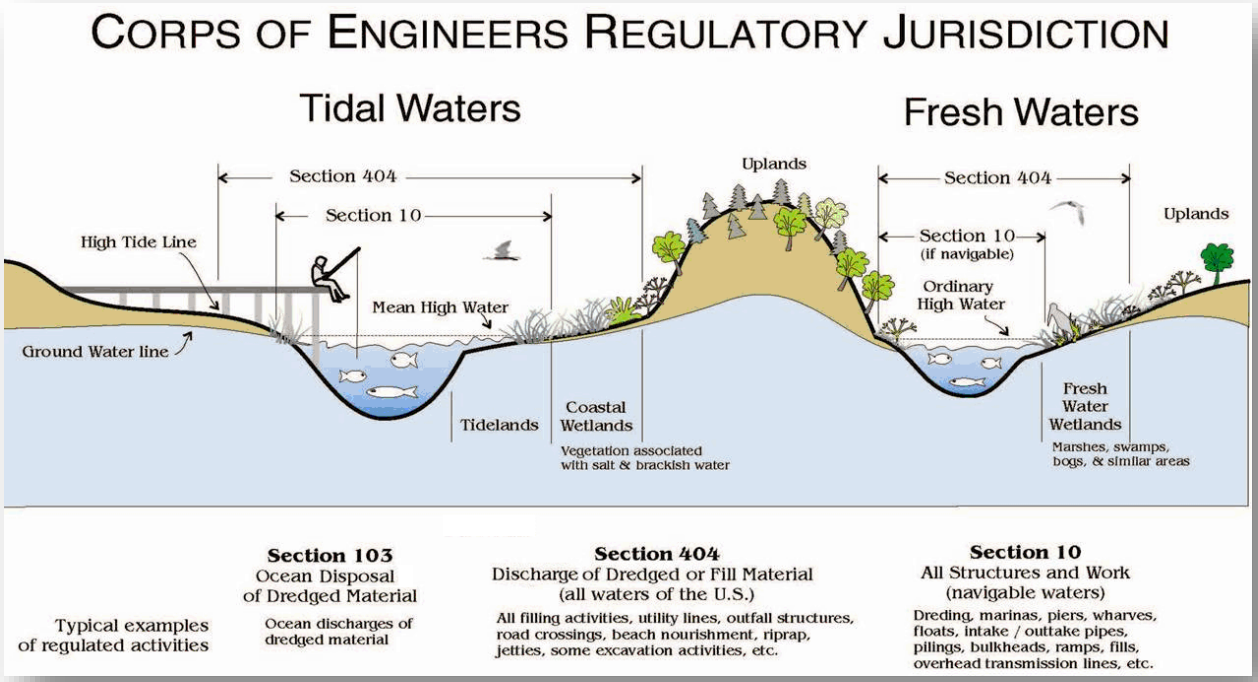


Figure 21. U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Regulatory Jurisdiction

The designation of a research reserve may include activities, as described in the reserve management plan, work in jurisdictional waters of the U.S. that could discharge (dump, place, deposit) dredged or fill material in waters of the U.S., including wetlands. The team should consult with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers to determine if such activities require permits under section 404 of the Clean Water Act. The specific impacts of the proposed activities to tidal and fresh waters will determine what permit type is required.

Under this statute, NOAA must

- ✓ Determine if the proposed activities would neither degrade nor have of the effect of degrading the jurisdictional waters in the area;
- ✓ Determine if activities identified in the reserve management plan require permits under section 404 of the Clean Water Act;
- ✓ If applicable, determine the type of permit needed (i.e., nationwide, regional general, programmatic general, individual; and
- ✓ Describe the best management practices that the proposed reserve or partners are planning to implement to avoid or mitigate impacts related to activities identified in the management plan.

National Historic Preservation Act (16 U.S.C. §§ 470 et seq.)

The National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA) of 1966 established a comprehensive program to preserve the historical and cultural foundation of the nation as a living part of community life. Section 106 of the NHPA is a crucial part of that program that requires consideration of historic preservation in the many projects with federal involvement that take place every day across the nation.

For a research reserve designation, complying with Section 106 is the responsibility of NOAA. While the lead state partner may be asked to provide pertinent information needed for completing a Section 106 consultation, NOAA remains responsible for all findings and determinations. The team will need to consider the effects on historic properties of a research reserve designation ("undertakings" as defined by 36 CFR 800.16).

Figure 22. NHPA Section 106 Consultation Process

The Section 106 consultation process, as outlined in Figure 22, requires the team to identify and evaluate historic properties with the proposed research reserve boundaries and make an initial determination of the effects of their undertakings on historic properties or resources. NOAA is required to prepare a findings determination letter for the state or tribal historic preservation officer.

A more detail description of the NHPA consultation process for the designation of a research reserve is found in Appendix O.

K. Federal Consistency

The Coastal Zone Management Act (CZMA) (16 U.S.C. §§ 1451, et seq.) was established to preserve, protect, develop, and, where possible, restore and enhance the nation's coastal resources. Under the act, Section 307 requires that any federal action inside or outside of a state's coastal zone that affects any land or water use or natural resources of the coastal zone to be consistent, to the maximum extent practicable, with the enforceable policies of approved state management programs. In the case of the designation of a research reserve, the state Coastal Zone Management Program must certify that the proposed reserve is consistent with the state's approved coastal management program. Section 921.4(b) of the Reserve System regulations provide additional guidance.

Under this statute, NOAA must

- ✓ Draft a CZMA federal consistency determination document, in cooperation with Office for Coastal Management federal consistency staff, for the applicable state coastal program;
- ✓ Send the determination letter to the state for review and concurrence; and
- ✓ Complete this review at least 90 days before the expected record of decision by the NOAA administrator.

7. Navigating the NOAA Review and Clearance Process

A. Introduction

A significant part of the process to designate a research reserve site is internal to NOAA. Oversight of the National Estuarine Research Reserve System is through the Office for Coastal Management within the National Ocean Service (NOS). Both the Office for Coastal Management and NOS are deeply involved in the review and clearance of the new research reserve site prior to a decision by the NOAA administrator to officially designate or not.

Periodically, some details in the review and clearance process change, and policies and procedures are updated. The process described below was recently used in 2016-17 for the He'eia Research Reserve designation process. This process can span several years of the approximately 5 years, on average, required to designate a reserve.

B. Review and Clearance Process Overview

There are four distinct review and clearance points during the designation process as described in Figure 23. These include:

- Nomination Review and Approval
- Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS)/Draft Management Plan(DMP) Review and Clearance
- Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS)/Final Management Plan (FEIS) Review and Clearance
- NOAA Findings of Designation

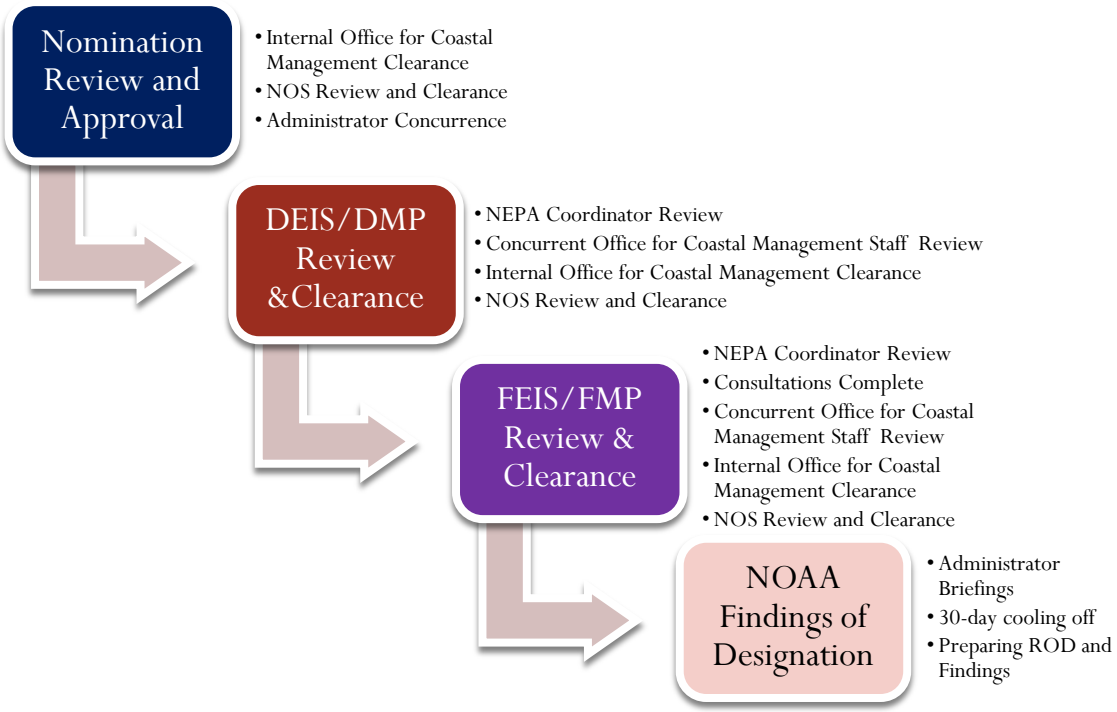


Figure 23. Major NOAA Review and Clearance

Understanding the process and accounting for it within a designation timeline is critical for the coordination of the process between NOAA and the lead state partner. With a clear timeline and associated milestones, the partners will be better able to coordinate and make the necessary resource commitments to ensure successful process. A more detailed step-by-step process is provided in Appendix M.

C. Nomination Review and Approval

Plan for a 3.5 month review and approval of a proposed research reserve site nomination from the state or territorial governor developed by the lead state partner. The review and clearance process must include appropriate briefings and associated materials, including 3-things memo, talking points, designation timeline, a site map, summary of alternatives, and a review of issues of concern. In preparation for the NOAA brief and decisional, prepare a letter from the NOAA administrator to the state or territorial governor informing them of NOAA's decision to move forward or not. Figure 24 below provides a step-by-step overview of this NOAA decisional process.

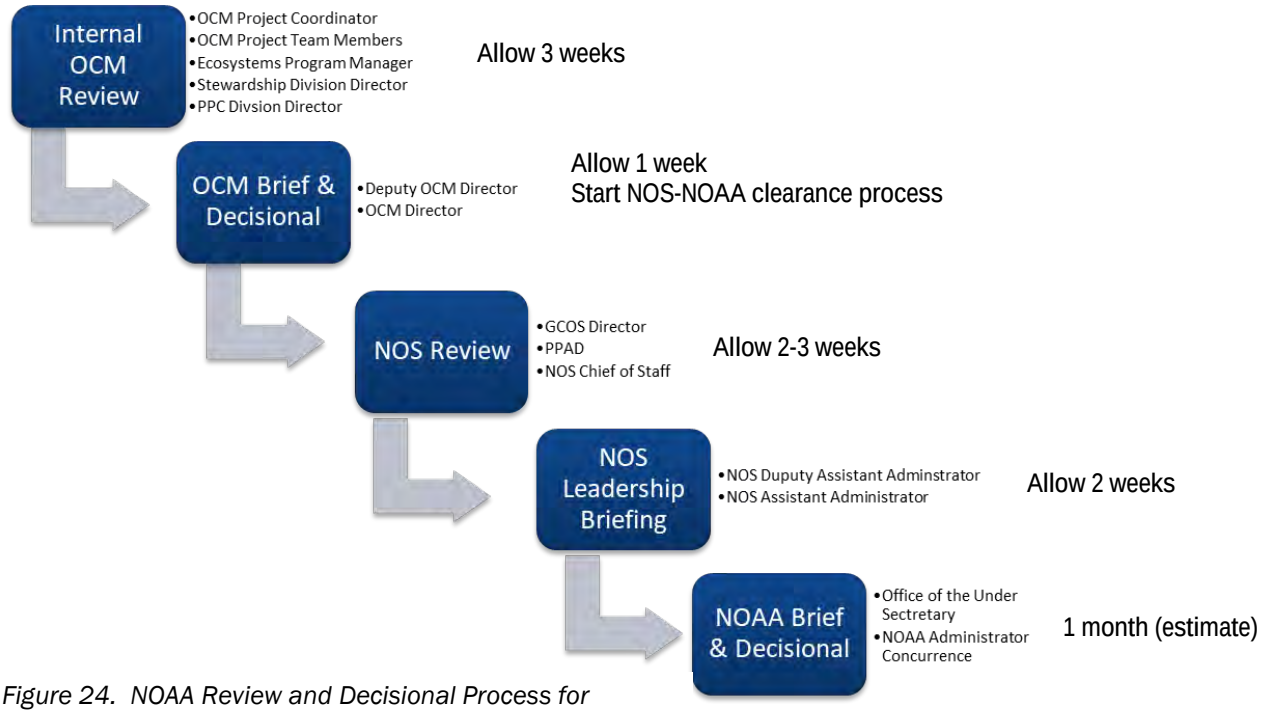


Figure 24. NOAA Review and Decisional Process for Reserve System Site Nominations

Nomination Documentation Requirements for a Research Reserve Nomination Review

Based on Sec. 921.11 of the Reserve System regulations, the site nomination document must include

➲ A description of the proposed site(s) and its (their) major resources, including location, proposed boundaries, and adjacent land uses.

➲ A description of the proposed site-selection process, including an analysis of how the proposed site contributes to the biogeographical and typological balance of the Reserve System.

➲ A description of the proposed site's ecological characteristics, including its biological productivity and diversity of flora and fauna. The site should also, to the maximum extent possible, be an estuarine ecosystem minimally affected by human activity or influence as per Sec. 921.12(e) of the Reserve System regulations.

➲ Identification of the site-selection agency and the potential reserve management agency.

➲ A description of the public participation process used to support site selection that

- Describes how the state sought the views of affected landowners, local governments, other state and federal agencies and other parties who are interested in the area(s) being considered for selection as a potential National Estuarine Research Reserve.
- Provide evidence that at least one public meeting in the vicinity of the proposed site was held and that notice the meeting, including the time, place, and relevant subject matter, was given through the area's principal newspaper at least 15 days before the date of the meeting.
- Captures the views of interested parties by including a summary of public comments, and, if interstate issues are involved, documentation that the governor(s) of the other affected state(s) has been contacted.
- Provides copies of all correspondence, including contact letters to all affected landowners.

➲ A list of all sites considered and a brief statement of the reasons why a site was not preferred.

➲ A discussion of the proposed site(s) capacity to attract a broad range of research and educational interests.

➲ A description of the site's suitability for long-term estuarine research, including ecological factors and demonstrate proximity to existing research facilities and educational institutions.

➲ Appropriate maps and a description of the proposed site's boundaries. The proposed boundaries should encompass an adequate portion of the key land and water areas of the natural system to approximate an ecological unit and to ensure effective conservation.

NOTE: For research reserve designations, boundary size will vary greatly depending on the nature of the ecosystem (e.g., Kachemak Bay, AK - 366,100 acres vs. Old Woman Creek, OH at 573 acres). In general, reserve boundaries must encompass the area within which adequate control has or will be established by the managing entity over human activities occurring within the identified boundaries. Reserve boundaries will encompass two areas: key land and water areas (known as the "*core area*") and a buffer zone. The core and buffer zones will likely require significantly different levels of control (see Sec. 921.13(a) (7)). See more on core and buffer areas in *Section IV. Boundary Delineation*.

➲ Identifying within the proposed boundaries, any existing federal or state lands already in a protected status where mutual benefit can be enhanced. Federal lands and waters identified within the proposed boundary **cannot exceed 49 percent of the total area**. NOAA will not approve a site for potential national estuarine research reserve status that is dependent primarily upon the inclusion of currently protected federal lands in order to meet the requirements for reserve status (such as key land and water areas).

NOTE: If such lands are included within a proposed reserve's boundary, it may be included, subject to NOAA approval, as a limited portion of the core area.

➲ A description of the site's compatibility with existing and potential land and water uses in contiguous areas as well as approved coastal and estuarine management plans.

➲ A brief discussion of the site's relevance and importance to education and interpretive efforts, consistent with the need for continued protection of the natural system.

Appendix D, "Site Nomination Checklist," will help you evaluate the Reserve System site nomination for consistency with Reserve System regulations and requirements. Comments should be relevant to the review criteria and assist the NOAA administrator in his or her decision to accept the nomination or return it to the state for additional action. Other comments related to opportunities or connections to ongoing NOAA activities and plans are welcome.

D. Draft Environmental Impact Statement and Draft Management Plan Review and Clearance

Preliminary Review and Clearance

Plan for a 3-month preliminary review of the draft environmental impact statement and draft management plan. Included in the preliminary review are briefings for the Office for Coastal Management stewardship director and program manager, and the NOS and Office for Coastal Management NEPA coordinators. These briefings must include briefing documents (e.g., 3-things memo, talking points, designation timeline, site map, summary of alternatives, and any issues of concern). As part of these briefings, prepare an overview of this research reserve designation process and NOAA's internal review and clearance process. The Reserve Reserve Designation Team lead is typically responsible for setting up these briefings. Additionally, these documents will support future briefings for the Office for Coastal Management director and the NOAA assistant administrator during the formal Office for Coastal Management and NOS clearance process.

Start the preliminary review after briefing Office for Coastal Management leadership and the NEPA coordinators. Following these briefings, allow a **2-week period** for the Office for Coastal Management and NOS NEPA coordinators to review the preliminary draft environmental impact statement and draft management plan.

After the NEPA coordinator review, allow 3 weeks for the draft documents to be reviewed internally and concurrently by the Office for Coastal Management:

For the Draft Environmental Impact Statement and Draft Management Plan

- Lead state partner
- Office for Coastal Management (OCM) Ecosystems Program manager
- OCM regional team lead
- OCM Stewardship Division director

For the Draft Management Plan Only

- OCM Reserve System research coordinator
- OCM Reserve System education coordinator
- OCM Reserve System stewardship coordinator

- OCM Reserve System Coastal Training Program coordinator

Allow for a 21-day internal Office for Coastal Management review period.

Concurrent with the Office for Coastal Management clearance, the NOS NEPA coordinator will request a **technical assistance review** with appropriate National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) staff.

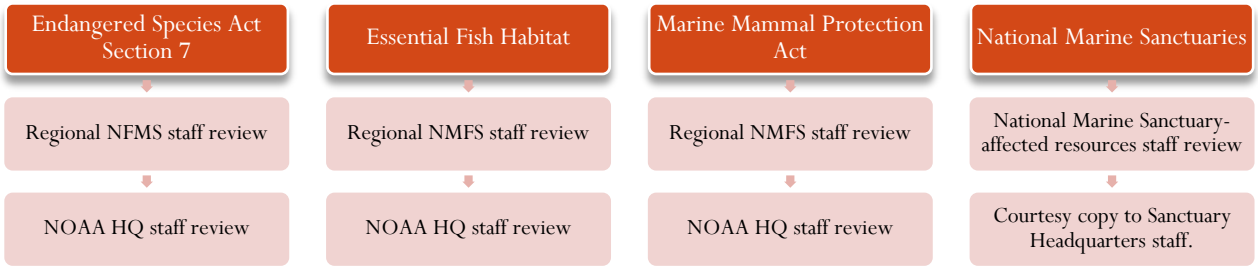


Figure 25. NMFS Technical Assistance Review Components

The breadth of a **technical assistance review** with NMFS staff is shown in Figure 25. Allow up to 30 days for this review to be completed. The final review is by NOAA's Office of General Counsel–Ocean and Coasts Section (GCOS). The Oceans and Coasts Section provides legal counsel to the National Ocean Service, including the National Marine Sanctuary Program, the Office for Coastal Management, and the Office of Coast Survey. In these roles, the office helps implement the National Marine Sanctuaries Act, the Coastal Zone Management Act, the Coast Survey Act, and other statutes. GCOS is provided with 1-2 weeks to complete their review of the preliminary DEIS/DMP.

Upon receipt of comments from the Office for Coastal Management, NEPA Coordinator, and others obtained during the preliminary review process, NOAA and the lead state partner revise the preliminary DEIS/DMP in preparation for the formal document review process. NOAA takes the lead in preparing the final DEIS with assistance from the lead state partner. Similarly, The lead state partner, with assistance from NOAA, prepares a final DMP, including an MOU identifying the state and NOAA roles in managing the reserve. Time allotted to complete revisions to the DEIS/DMP is based on the breadth and depth of the comments received during the preliminary review process. Expect to allot 4-6 weeks for a revised DEIS/DMP to be ready to start the Formal DEIS/DMP review and clearance process.

Note: Consider a 1-week in-person meeting with the lead state partner to hammer out changes to the draft environmental impact statement and draft management plan.

Formal Draft Environmental Impact Statement and Draft Management Plan Review and Clearance

The formal review and clearance process required by NOAA, as shown in Figure 26, allows for official clearance of the draft environmental impact statement (DEIS) and draft management plan (DMP) by the Office for Coastal Management and NOS. Upon completion of a revised DEIS/DMP based on comments

received from the preliminary review and clearance process, Office for Coastal Management Communications staff provide a final editorial review of the executive summary of the environmental impact statement. If possible, complete this step before beginning the formal NOAA clearance process. Tips for writing and formatting large documents are found in Appendix P.

NOTE: Provide Office for Coastal Management Communications with the draft executive summary in Microsoft Word format.

Once a revised version of the DEIS/DMP and supporting documents are ready for the official clearance process, work with administrative staff to enter the documents into the controlled correspondence routing system. In preparation for moving the DEIS/DMP through the formal NOAA review and clearance process, the following documents (paper and digital) need to be included in the Data by Design Routing (controlled correspondence):

- ✓ 3-things memo (prep for the meeting with Office for Coastal Management director and NOS assistant administrator)
- ✓ Transmittal memos (NOS environmental compliance coordinator to EPA)
- ✓ Dear reviewer letter (NOS Environmental Compliance to EPA)
- ✓ DEIS/DMP

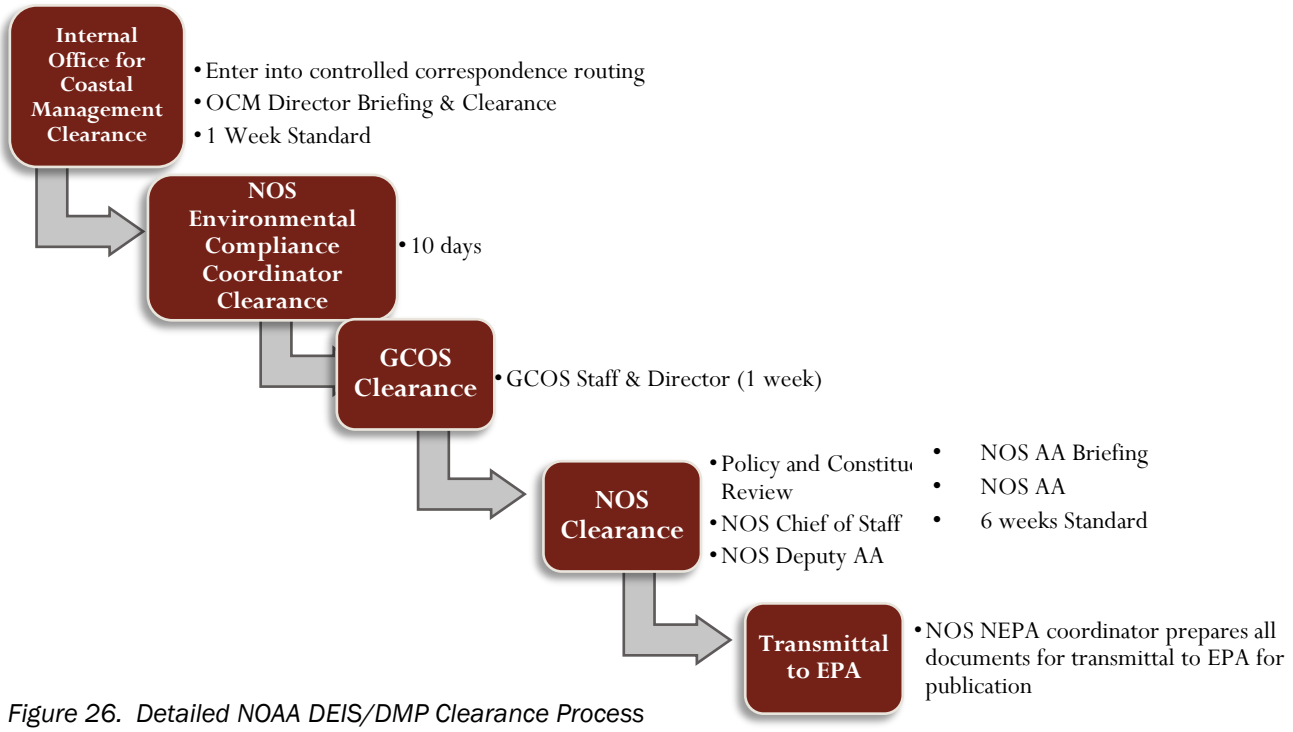


Figure 26. Detailed NOAA DEIS/DMP Clearance Process

Key considerations during the Review and Clearance Process

For the formal review of the reserve designation DEIS/DMP, there are multiple steps to follow within the Office for Coastal Management and NOS clearance process. There are several very important steps for the Office for Coastal Management reserve designation team lead to pursue during this review and clearance period.

1. Work with the Office for Coastal Management administrative staff in the Business Division and the NOS assistant administrator correspondence unit to **ensure that the documents are entered into controlled correspondence and routed correctly**.
2. **Look into Office for Coastal Management leadership availability for meetings and briefings** about the designation and the DEIS/DMP with the NOAA Reserve Development Team and state partners. The times available for leadership to meet may be limited so plan accordingly.
3. Seek Office for Coastal Management leadership support and Planning, Policy, and Communication Division assistance in developing **courtesy political leadership briefings** about the reserve designation process.
4. Provide copies of the revised DEIS/DMP to known formal reviewers before the start of the formal review process for the purpose of **pre-review** (e.g., Office for Coastal Management NEPA coordinator, Stewardship director, GCOS, Office for Coastal Management director, Policy and Constituent Affairs Division, NOS chief of staff, NOS assistant administrator)
5. Coordinate with Planning, Policy, and Communication Division on their efforts to **develop a rollout plan** for the DEIS/DMP.
6. Ensure that **external consultations** (i.e., Endangered Species Act, Marine Mammal Protection Act, etc.) are moving forward.

Some important considerations for Office for Coastal Management leadership at this time:

1. Make time for review of the DEIS/DMP and availability to participate in briefings regarding the designation process.
2. Assist in preparing NOS for a concise approval process.
3. Breakthrough unforeseen Office for Coastal Management–NOS obstacles to timely clearance.

Step 1 – Internal Office for Coastal Management clearance of the DEIS/DMP
This includes a briefing for the Office for Coastal Management director and deputy director to clear the document for NOS. Expect to provide a one-week window to prepare for the briefing, allowing the Office for Coastal Management director and deputy director to review the documents, hold a briefing, and answer questions. Official clearance occurs in the online system. The Office for Coastal Management administrative staff and the NOS Correspondence Unit create the official review and clearance routing in the online system as well as a hard-copy control sheet.

Step 2 – NOS environmental compliance coordinator clearance
Provide the NOS environmental compliance coordinator with a copy of the DEIS/DMP for review. Any NEPA-related actions that require NOS assistant administrator clearance must be reviewed by the NOS environmental compliance coordinator. This step provides the coordinator with an opportunity to review the document and will facilitate the timely processing of the document within NOS.

Step 3 – GCOS clearance
Following clearance by the Office for Coastal Management, transmit the document to GCOS for legal

review and clearance. Since the NOAA designation team includes legal counsel from GCOS, most legal issues should have already been addressed earlier in the process. However, GCOS review and clearance officially occurs outside of the controlled correspondence online system; therefore, a hard copy must be provided, and clearance is provided through signature on a hard-copy control sheet.

NOTE: This step should only need a week to complete. Check in with GCOS periodically to ensure that their review and clearance of the document is completed.

Step 4 – NOS clearance

After GCOS clears the DEIS/DMP package, the NOS controlled correspondence unit officially manages the NOS clearance process. The package is transmitted to the NOS Policy and Constituent Affairs Division for review. In addition to Policy and Constituent Affairs Division, the NOS chief of staff and NOS deputy assistant administrator review and clear the package before clearance by the NOS assistant administrator. This includes a briefing for the NOS assistant administrator. Relevant NOS and Office for Coastal Management leadership will most likely participate in this meeting. Therefore, schedule this briefing as soon as the final DEIS/DMP is ready for review. Expect to provide a four-week review within NOS, allowing NOS leadership time to review the documents and to hold a briefing. Note: The supporting materials prepared for the Office for Coastal Management leadership briefing are typically used for the NOS briefing.

NOS Controlled Correspondence Control Sheet

- ✓ NOS Correspondence Unit
- ✓ NOS Environmental Compliance Coordinator
- ✓ NOS Correspondence Unit
- ✓ GCOS
- ✓ NOS Correspondence Unit
- ✓ Policy and Constituent Affairs Division
- ✓ NOS Correspondence Unit
- ✓ NOS Chief of Staff
- ✓ NOS Correspondence Unit
- ✓ NOS Deputy AA
- ✓ NOS AA
- ✓ NOS Correspondence Unit

Step 5 – Transmittal to EPA

After the briefing, the NOS assistant administrator will have the option to clear the package. Any additional corrections to the DEIS can be made at this time. Once cleared by the NOS assistant administrator, scan the signed documents, enclose them with the DEIS/DMP, and forward to the NOS environmental compliance coordinator for clearance. The Office for Coastal Management environmental compliance coordinator finalizes the transmittal letter and dear reviewer letter for forwarding to U.S. Environmental Protection Agency electronically.

Before transmitting the Federal Register Notice to EPA, the Office for Coastal Management sends the DEIS/DMP package to the NOS Office of Legislative Affairs representative introducing the project, map, web link, and note that says that we would like to set up courtesy briefings with the state delegation and authorized natural resource committees.

Once cleared, the document is expected to be published in the *Federal Register* as the designation process moves to a required 45-day public comment period.

Concurrent Federal Register Notice Review and Clearance Process

As the package is being reviewed by the Policy and Constituent Affairs Division, the NOAA designation team can begin a concurrent process for both the Office for Coastal Management review and clearance of the *Federal Register* notice of availability for the public comment period and the Federal Register Notice for the public meeting as per Reserve System regulations. The formal review and clearance process required by NOAA, as shown in Figure 27, allows for official clearance of the DEIS/DMP by the Office for Coastal Management and NOS.

As described in Reserve System regulations, 15 C.F.R. Part 921.13 (d), NOAA announces the availability of the DEIS/DMP for public comment in the *Federal Register* through a notice of availability. The date of the Federal Register Notice publication begins the 45-day comment period on the DEIS/DMP. Separately and concurrently, a second Federal Register Notice as required by Reserve System regulations is used to give notice of the required public meeting(s) to be held at least 15 days after publication of the notice of availability and public comment period. In most cases, NOAA and EPA work to publish the notice of availability of the DEIS/DMP and the notice of the public meeting *concurrently* in the *Federal Register*.

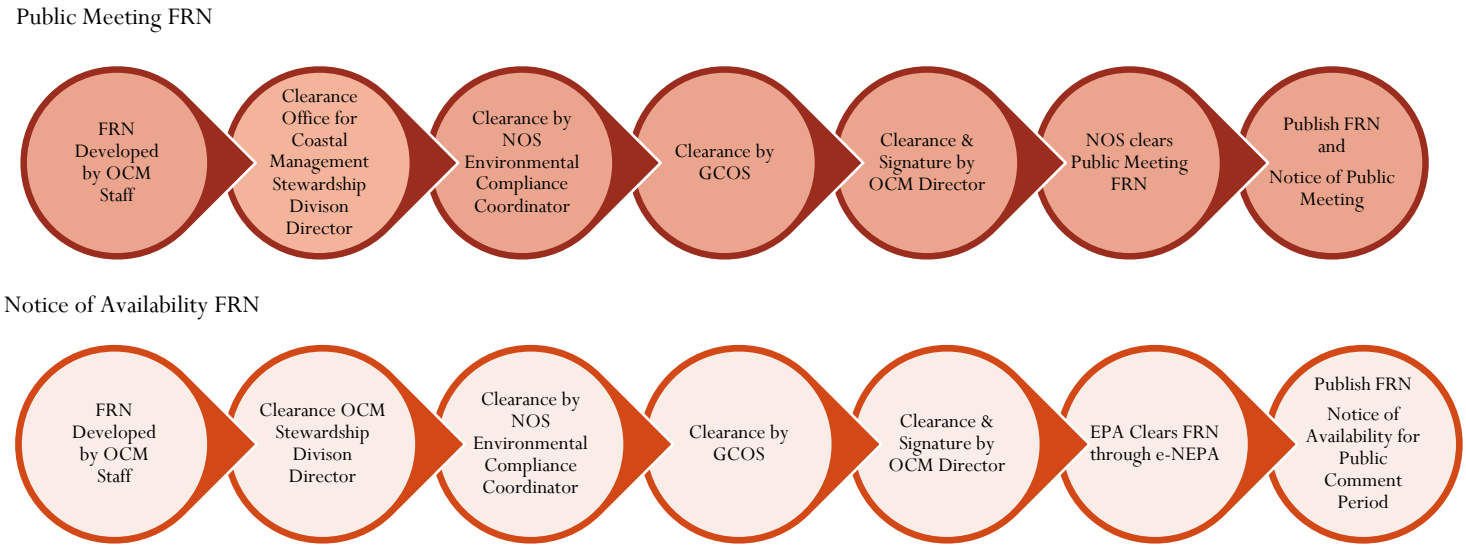


Figure 27. Concurrent DEIS/DMP Notice of Availability and Public Meeting Federal Register Notice

Some key actions when developing a Federal Register Notice announcing the DEIS/DMP public comment period area are as follows:

- Determine the point of contact for receiving public comments on DEIS/DMP. The notice should also direct commenters to submit comments through the federal e-rulemaking portal. Go to: *http://www.regulations.gov*

- Make sure to set up an account in the Federal Docket Management System (FDMS.gov). This allows you to post documents for review on regulations.gov and have a central location to capture and archive comments from the public.

- Work with the lead state partner and regional staff to determine a public meeting date.

- Prepare *Federal Register* notice text announcing public meeting on DEIS/DMP.

- Send the draft federal register notice through the clearance process described in Figure 27. Reviewers (in order) Ecosystems program manager – clearance; Stewardship director – clearance; Office for Coastal Management or NOS environmental compliance coordinator – review; GCOS – clearance; Office for Coastal Management deputy director – clearance; Office for Coastal Management director – clearance and signature. **Federal register notice signatory authority resides with the Office for Coastal Management director.**

- **Submission of the federal register notice to EPA is concurrent with NOS assistant administrator approval of the DEIS/DMP.**

- The complete DEIS package that is transmitted electronically to EPA through the e-NEPA electronic filing system (Central Data Exchange, or CDX). The federal register notice will be filed on Friday (if delivered before 2 p.m.) and published the following Friday.

- Work with the lead state partner to develop a DEIS/DMP distribution list.

- Mail the DEIS/DMP to interested parties concurrent with transmittal of the federal register notice to EPA. Send electronic copies to interested parties and to the NEPA distribution list posted on the Council of Environmental Quality website.

Overall Designation Concurrent Processes Reminder

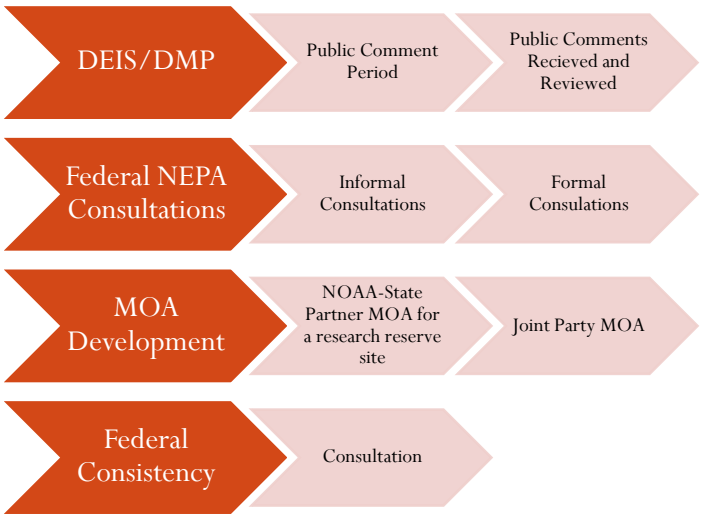


Figure 28. What's happening concurrently in the national estuarine research reserve designation process at this time?

E. Final Environmental Impact Statement and Final Management Plan Review and Clearance

As described in Section 6. Subsection H, a final environmental impact statement (FEIS) and final management plan (FMP) is developed based on the comments received during the public comment period. Combined with the results of the different ongoing and concurrent consultations, the FEIS/FMP is used to support a designation decision by the NOAA administrator. Some additions to the FEIS/FMP that was not part of the DEIS/DMP include the following:

- An appendix documenting the public comments and responses
- Final MOUs between NOAA and the state and the multi-party (unsigned)
- Distribution list for the DEIS/DMP
- Federal consistency determination documentation
- Correspondence for other federal consultations
- Consultations with tribal or other cultural groups, if applicable

Note: External consultations with appropriate USFWS, NMFS, state historic preservation officer or tribal historic preservation officer, and other officials, and a federal consistency review must be completed and enclosed in the FEIS before the start of the formal review and clearance process.

A step-by-step overview of the detailed NOAA review and clearance process laid out in Figure 29 allows for official clearance of the FEIS/FMP by the Office for Coastal Management and NOS. Once the FEIS/FMP and supporting documents are ready for the official clearance process, work with Office for

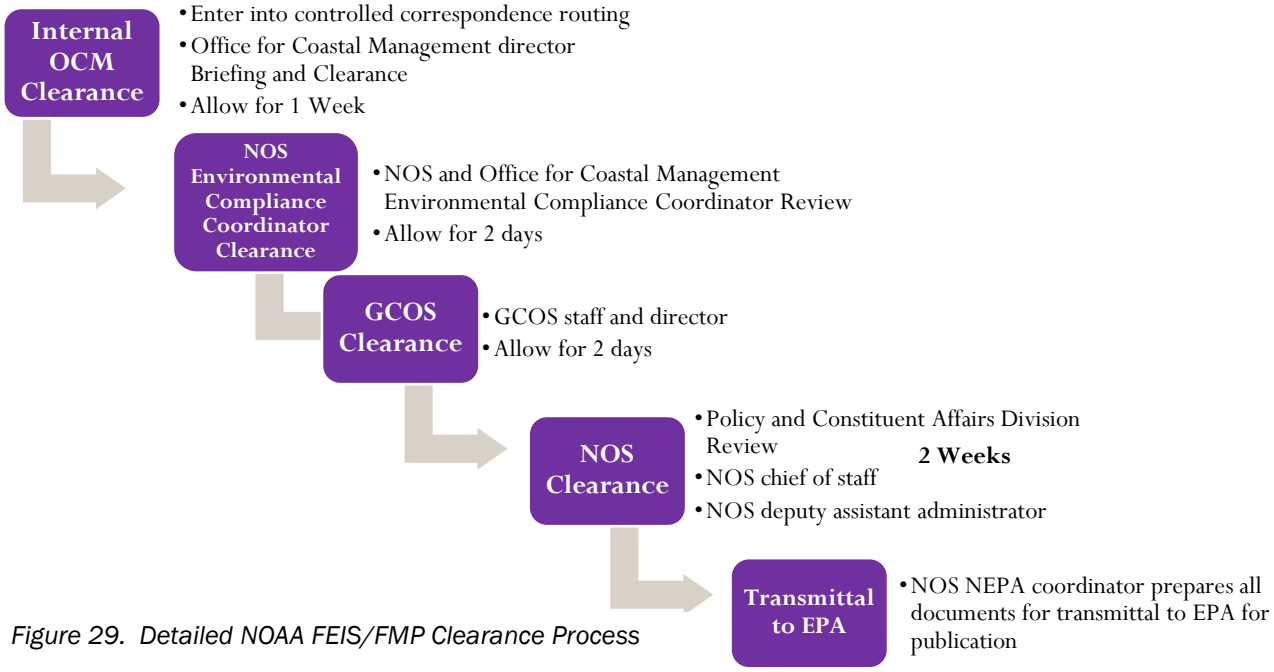


Figure 29. Detailed NOAA FEIS/FMP Clearance Process

Coastal Management administrative staff to enter the documents into the controlled correspondence routing system.

In preparation for moving the FEIS/FMP through the formal NOAA review and clearance process, the following documents (paper and digital) need to be included in the Data by Design Routing (controlled correspondence):

- ✓ Three-things memo (prep for the meeting with Office for Coastal Management director and NOS assistant administrator)
- ✓ Transmittal memos (NOS environmental compliance coordinator to EPA)
- ✓ Dear reviewer letter (NOS environmental compliance to EPA)
- ✓ FEIS/FMP
- ✓ Rollout plan

Anticipate a shorter Office for Coastal Management and NOS review of the FEIS/FMP (1-month combined total) as the reviewers have already seen the draft version and during the DEIS/DMP clearance process. Once cleared, a mandatory 30-day cooling-off period must occur before bringing the research reserve designation to the NOAA administrator for consideration and a possible record of decision and designation findings.

Note – Rollout plan and invitations for the NOAA administrator to attend the designation ceremony

need to be made 3 months before designation! Fill out an event request form and contact NOS Program Coordination Office and Policy and Constituent Affairs Division staff.

Key considerations during the FEIS/FMP Review and Clearance Process

For the formal review of the reserve designation FEIS/FMP, there are multiple steps to follow within the Office for Coastal Management and NOS clearance process. There are several very important steps for the Office for Coastal Management reserve designation team lead to pursue during this review and clearance period.

1. Work with the Office for Coastal Management administrative staff in the Business Division and the NOS assistant administrator correspondence unit to **ensure that the documents are entered into controlled correspondence and routed correctly**.
2. **Arrange briefing with Office for Coastal Management and NOS leadership** about the FEIS/FMP and the closing steps of the designation process. This includes briefing for the NOAA administrator and a record of decision with the NOAA Reserve Development Team and state partners. The times available for leadership to meet may be limited, so plan soon after the public comment period for the DEIS/DMP ends.
3. Seek Office for Coastal Management leadership support and Planning, Policy, and Communication Division assistance in developing **courtesy political leadership briefings** about the reserve designation via the rollout plan.
4. Prepare and clear ***Federal Register*** **notice of availability** of the FEIS/FMP concurrent with the FEIS/FMP review.

Some important considerations for Office for Coastal Management and NOS leadership at this time include the following:

1. Make time to participate in FEIS clearance briefings
2. Work with NOAA downtown to schedule NOAA administrator briefing and decisional
3. Break through unforeseen Office for Coastal Management–NOS obstacles to timely clearance

The details of the FEIS/FMP clearance process mirror the DEIS/DMP clearance process described in subsection D but include a shorter review period at each step. The FEIS/FMP review occurs concurrently with the *Federal Register* notice of availability review, as shown in Figure 30.

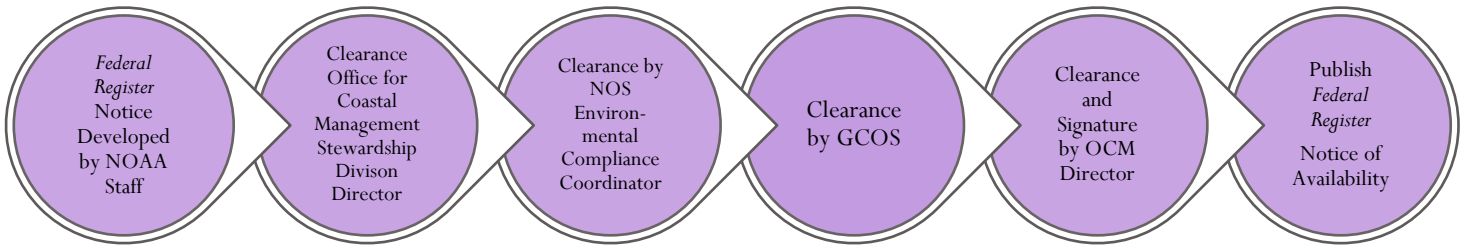


Figure 30. FEIS/FMP Notice of Availability

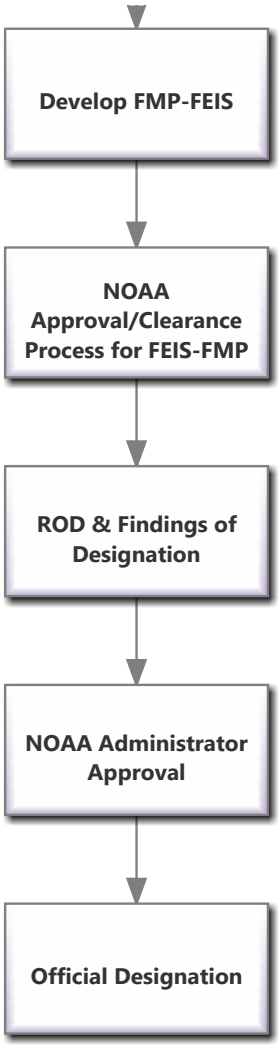
Once cleared by NOS, the Office for Coastal Management Communications staff makes final edits to the executive summary of the FEIS. The *Federal Register* notice and the document should be made available electronically through Regulations.gov. NOAA or state partner may print copies of FEIS/FMP for distribution to those persons that provided comment, to other interested parties, and to the NEPA distribution list posted on the Council of Environmental Quality website. Concurrently, publishing in the *Federal Register* officially starts the mandatory 30-day cooling-off period before any record of decision by the NOAA administrator. This is essentially a time to address any minor issues or major litigious issues.

Note: A complete FEIS package that is transmitted electronically to EPA through the e-NEPA electronic filing system (Central Data Exchange, or CDX, includes the dear-EPA letter, the FEIS/FMP, and the *Federal Register* notice.

F. 30-Day Cooling-Off Period

During the cooling-off period the Reserve Designation Team follows these steps:

- Ensure the final MOU signed by NOAA and state partner. Five copies are signed by the Office for Coastal Management director and sent to appropriate state official for signature. State partner returns three signed copies to the Office for Coastal Management.
- Receive a signed copy of the separate multi-party MOU signed by state partner and other key reserve partners.
- The lead state partner begins to organize a designation ceremony with assistance from Office for Coastal Management Policy, Planning and Communication division staff.
- Work with Office for Coastal Management and NOS leadership to schedule a briefing for the NOAA administrator to consider designation of the proposed research reserve.
- Prepare materials for the NOAA administrator briefings. Repurpose briefing materials from the NOS leadership FEIS/FMP clearance process.
- Prepare formal National Estuarine Research Reserve designation package that goes to the NOAA administrator



G. NOAA Findings of Designation

In preparation for a research reserve designation decision by the NOAA administrator, the Designation Team prepares a *Federal Register* notice announcing the designation of a reserve under consideration, a findings of designation (Appendix C), and the NEPA record of decision regarding the designation decision (Appendix H).

Note *This Federal Register notice is channeled through NOAA, not EPA.*

Another critical component is coordinating with the Office for Coastal Management Policy, Planning and Communications staff to implement a communications strategy (press release (reviewed by NOAA Communications, web rollout, etc.). Policy, Planning and Communications staff should also engage with Office for Coastal Management leadership and the lead state partner to prepare for a designation ceremony and in assembling a briefing package (e.g., designation findings package) for NOAA administrator.

Note: When preparing briefing materials for the NOAA administrator be sure to use the briefing templates or contact the NOS Program Coordination Office directly for guidance.

The formal review and clearance process required for the Designation Findings Package is shown in Figure 31. Controlled correspondence routing for the package includes the NOAA Administrator Decision and allows for official clearance of the package by the Office for Coastal Management and NOS. Although there is no set timeframe for a decision by the NOAA administrator, plan for 1 month clearance process for the package.

Figure 31. Formal NOAA Designation Findings Review and Clearance Process

Office for Coastal Management leadership and staff will brief the NOAA administrator on the proposed action to designate a research reserve and provide the findings package. The complete designation findings package for the NOAA administrator's signature includes – record of decision, findings of designation, and designation notice, and possibly the ceremonial designation certificates (Appendix C). If the NOAA administrator decides to accept and approve a NOAA recommendation to designate a research reserve, two parts require his or her signature.

- ✓ To complete the NEPA requirements of the federal action, the record of decision must be signed. See Appendix H for an example.
- ✓ To fulfill the CZMA requirements for designation, the findings of designation must be signed and noted in the *Federal Register*. Sometimes a ceremonial certificate of designation is also signed. See Appendix C for an example.

Note: The NOAA-state MOU is signed by the Office for Coastal Management director and does not become effective until the NOAA administrator signs the findings of designation.

Another important planning consideration is related to a designation ceremony at the research reserve site. Sometime after official designation by NOAA, a designation ceremony is held at the new reserve site. The NOAA administrator or other NOAA leadership may attend along with members of the state congressional delegation. For the ceremony, consider sending a NOAA flag, printing a ceremonial certificate, and obtaining a gift for the site (e.g., map), among other considerations.

8. Guidelines for MOUs

A. Introduction

Memorandums of understanding (MOU) are made to form partnerships and work with other federal agencies, universities, states, local and international governments, tribes, private institutions, and other organizations. The process of initiating, extending, or modifying these agreements involves clearance of the official MOU and required supporting documentation, which can often be time-consuming. Approval and clearance signatures are obtained during a controlled routing of the MOU package through the program office, NOS senior management, NOAA General Counsel, and if required the Office of the Executive Secretary, and Department of Commerce General Counsel. As a general rule, if you are trying to establish a relationship with any party outside of NOAA, and it involves the use of money, property, or employee time, you should contact the Department of Commerce General Law Division (202-482-5391) as early as possible to get some guidance. Information on agreements is also available online at *www.ogc.doc.gov/ogc/admin/general.html*.

Several steps need to be taken to process agreements:

- Advanced planning
- Choosing the right type of agreement
- Drafting the terms and conditions
- Reviewing and clearing the agreement
- Executing the agreement
- Administering the agreement

B. Choosing the Correct Authority and Type of Agreement

The name memorandum of agreement, or MOU, carries no legal authority, but is simply a way to refer to an agreement with another organization. However, it is important to choose the correct authority and type of agreement for the relationship you are about to establish. Agreements between NOAA and other agencies are important for several management and legal reasons. You may want to keep track of funds, justify program activities, or ensure that a job gets done. There are also legal reasons such as 31 U.S.C. §1301, “only for purpose of appropriation,” 31 U.S.C. § 1501, “obligation only when in writing,” and 31 U.S.C. §1532, “no transfer without authority.” If you feel that drafting an agreement with another agency is needed, you must first determine what type of agreement is necessary.

There are essentially five types of agreements:

1. Contracts
2. Economy Act Agreements (31 U.S.C. § 1535)
3. Joint Projects (15 U.S.C. § 1525)
4. Grants and Cooperative Agreements
5. Other Types of MOUs and Agreements

Other types of MOUs and Agreements

Some relationships are formed because of unique statutory authority or because they do not involve expenditure of funds or property. The Office of General Counsel is available to help draft these types of agreements and can offer advice on traps for the unwary.

A template for the aforementioned agreements can be viewed on the Department of Commerce Office of General Counsel website at https://ogc.commerce.gov/. Please consult this website before you draft a document.

C. MOU Clearance Process

For a National Estuarine Research Reserve MOU, an Office of General Counsel-approved template is available in Appendix A. This template is well drafted and contains all necessary supporting documentation. Usually, the NOAA Reserve Designation Team members include legal counsel from GCOS. GCOS pre-clears the MOU before the Office for Coastal Management's MOU coordinator enters it into the NOS Agreements Database.

NOS has created an electronic MOU Agreements Database that serves as a repository for MOU documents and tracks their status. The NOS MOU point of contact is Martin Freeman or Rachel Keylon. Martin Freeman can be reached at (301) 713-3070 or at *Martin.Freeman@noaa.gov*. His office is located on the 13th floor of SSMC4. He ensures that the MOU moves through the clearance process. Below are the steps required to process a research reserve MOU. NOTE: You will want to start with at least five copies of your original document for signature. The research reserve state lead partner will keep two

Figure 32. Basic Research Reserve MOU Clearance Process

copies and the Office for Coastal Management will keep two copies. You may want more copies if there are several partners.

Step 1. A new record must be created in the MOU Database Tracking System by the Office for Coastal Management staff.

Once the MOU language has been agreed upon by all parties, email the MOU to the Office for Coastal Management MOU coordinator for entering the agreement into the Notice of Availability Database. The MOU coordinator is located in the Business Management Division (*Christopher.Katalinas@noaa.gov*).

Step 4. A hard copy of the MOU must be submitted to the NOS MOU official for clearance.

Once all required signatures are obtained, the package should be delivered to the NOS MOU coordinator. As previously noted, the NOS MOU point of contact is Martin Freeman or Rachel Keylon. They ensure that the MOU moves through the NOS clearance process. Once the NOS chief financial officer signs the NOS approval memo, the NOS MOU coordinator forwards the MOU to the Office for Coastal Management MOU coordinator for Office for Coastal Management clearance and signature.

Step 2. The MOU package is routed through the Office for Coastal Management for clearance and signature.

Upon receipt of the cleared MOU from NOS, the MOU coordinator works with the Office for Coastal Management Director's Office for clearance and signature and includes the folder containing the MOU paperwork and supporting documentation. Once signed by the director, the Director's Office will send the signed MOU to Stewardship liaison.

Step 3. State partner signatures are obtained for the MOU.

The Office for Coastal Management emails the MOU package to the state partner for co-signature. Following signature by the state lead agency, the executed agreement will be emailed back to the Office for Coastal Management.

Step 5. The approved agreement is entered into the NOS MOU database.

The Office for Coastal Management emails the fully signed version of the MOU to the NOS MOU official to upload the executed version into the database to make it a permanent part of the system. It is at this point that the agreement will be assigned an official MOU tracking code. A hard copy is retained for official record.

Appendix A – MOU Examples

NOAA-State Partner MOU Template

Memorandum of Understanding

Between the

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration And

The (state agency)

Detailing the state-federal roles in the Management of the (name of reserve)

This Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) establishes the framework for the cooperative management of (name of reserve) in the State of (said state), between (state partner agency) and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, Office for Coastal Management (NOAA). This MOU supersedes the previous Memorandum of Understanding between NOAA and (state partner agency) regarding (name of reserve) made on (date of last MOU).

I. BACKGROUND

A. The State of (said state) has determined the waters and related coastal habitats of (state reserve areas) provide unique opportunities for study of natural and human processes to contribute to the science of estuarine ecosystem processes, enhance environmental education opportunities and public understanding of estuarine areas, and provide a stable environment for research through the long-term protection of reserve resources.

B. The State of (said state) has determined that the resources of the (name of reserve) and the values they represent to the citizens of (said state) and the United States will benefit from the management of these resources as part of the National Estuarine Research Reserve System.

C. The (state agency), as the agency designated by the Governor of (said state), is responsible for maintaining, operating and managing the (name of reserve) in accordance with Section 315 of the CZMA and acknowledges the value of state-federal cooperation for the long-term management and protection of the reserve in a manner consistent with the purpose of its designation.

D. NOAA finds that the State of (said state) has satisfied the legal and procedural requirements for designation and, pursuant to its authority under Section 315 of the Coastal Zone Management Act of 1972, as amended (CZMA, 16 U.S.C. § 1461), and in accordance with implementing regulations at 15 C.F.R. Part 921, has designated the (name of reserve).

E. The (name of reserve) management plan approved by NOAA describes the goals, objectives, strategies/actions, administrative structure, and institutional arrangements for the reserve, including this MOU and others. In consideration of the mutual agreements herein, NOAA and (state agency) agree to the following roles indicated in Section II of this agreement.

II. STATE-FEDERAL ROLES IN RESERVE MANAGEMENT

A. (state agency) Role in Reserve Management The (state agency) shall:

1. be responsible for compliance with all federal laws and regulations, and ensure that the (name of reserve) management plan is consistent with the provisions of the CZMA and implementing regulations;

2. ensure protection of the natural and cultural resources of the reserve, and ensure enforcement of the provisions of state law and regulations aimed at protecting the reserve;

3. ensure adequate, long-term protection and management of lands and waters included within the reserve boundary;

4. apply for, budget, allocate, and expend funds in accordance with federal and state laws, the reserve management plan, and annual funding guidance for reserve operations, research and monitoring, education and stewardship, and, as necessary, land acquisition and reserve facility construction;

5. conduct and coordinate research and monitoring programs that encourage scientists from a variety of institutions to work together to understand the ecology of the reserve ecosystem to improve coastal management;

6. conduct and maintain programs that disseminate research results via materials, activities, workshops, and conferences to resource users, state and local agencies, school systems, general public, and other interested parties;

7. provide staff and endeavor to secure state funding for the manager, education coordinator, and research coordinator;

8. secure facilities and equipment required to implement the provisions within the reserve management plan;

9. ensure adequate funding for facilities operation and maintenance;

10. maintain effective liaison with local, regional, state, and federal policy makers, regulators and the general public;

11. serve as principal contact for issues involving proposed boundary changes and/or amendments to the reserve management plan; and

12. respond to NOAA's requests for information made pursuant to Section 312 of the CZMA, particularly cooperative agreement and grant progress reports and evaluation findings, including necessary actions and recommendations.

B. Federal Role in Reserve Management NOAA's Office for Coastal Management shall:

1. administer the provisions of the Sections 312 and 315 of the CZMA to ensure that the reserve operates in accordance with goals of the Reserve System and the (name of reserve) reserve management plan;

2. review and process applications for financial assistance from the (state agency), consistent with 15 C.F.R. Part 921, for management and operation of the reserve, and, as appropriate, land acquisition and facility construction;

3. advise (state agency) of existing and emerging national and regional issues that have bearing on the reserve and Reserve System;

4. maintain an information exchange network among reserves, including available research and monitoring data and educational materials developed within the Reserve System; and

5. to the extent possible, facilitate the allocation of NOAA resources and capabilities in support of reserve goals and programs.

C. General Provisions

1. Nothing in this agreement or subsequent financial assistance awards shall obligate either party in the expenditure of funds, or for future payments of money, in excess of appropriations authorized by law.

2. Upon termination of this agreement or any subsequent financial assistance awards to (state agency), any equipment purchased for studies to further this agreement will be disposed of in accordance with applicable federal law, regulations, and the terms and conditions, including special award conditions, applicable to financial assistance awards.

3. A free exchange of research and assessment data between the parties is encouraged and is necessary to ensure success of cooperative studies.

D. Other Provisions

1. Nothing in this agreement diminishes the independent authority or coordination responsibility of either party in administering its respective statutory obligations. Nothing in this agreement is intended to conflict with current

written directives or policies of either party. If the terms of this agreement are inconsistent with existing written directives or policies of either party entering this agreement, then those portions of the agreement which are determined to be inconsistent with such written directives or policies shall be invalid; but the remaining terms not affected by the inconsistency shall remain in full force and effect. In the event of the discovery of such inconsistency, and at the first opportunity for revision of this agreement, the parties shall seek to amend or terminate the agreement in accordance with the provisions of subsection V of this agreement.

2. Any disagreement on the interpretation of a provision, amendment, or other matter related to this agreement shall be resolved informally at the lowest operating level of each party's respective organization. If such disagreement cannot be resolved, then the area(s) of disagreement shall be stated in writing and presented to the other party for further consideration. If agreement is not reached within thirty (30) days of presentation, then the parties shall forward the written presentation of the disagreement to their respective higher official for appropriate resolution.

III. REAL PROPERTY ACQUIRED FOR PURPOSE OF THE RESERVE

The (state agency) agrees to fully comply with conditions set forth at 15 C.F.R. § 921.21(e), which establishes legal documentation requirements concerning the use and disposition of real property acquired for reserve purposes with federal funds under Section 315 of the CZMA.

IV. PROGRAM EVALUATION

NOAA's Office for Coastal Management will schedule periodic evaluations of (state agency) performance in meeting the terms of this agreement, financial assistance awards, and the reserve management plan. Where findings of deficiency occur, NOAA may initiate action in accordance with the interim sanctions or withdrawal of designation procedures established by the CZMA and applicable regulations at 15 C.F.R. Part 921, Subpart E.

V. EFFECTIVE DATE, REVIEW, AMENDMENT AND TERMINATION

A. This agreement is effective on the date of the last signature on this agreement and shall be in effect until terminated by either party.

B. This agreement will be reviewed periodically by both parties and may only be amended by the mutual written consent of both parties.

C. This agreement may be terminated by mutual consent of both parties or by unilateral termination by either party. Termination of this agreement may provide grounds for NOAA (at its discretion) to withdraw designation of the reserve from the Reserve System, pursuant to applicable provisions of the CZMA and its implementing regulations as described under 15 C.F.R. Parts 921 (Subpart E) and 923 (Subpart L). Section 315 of the CZMA provides that NOAA may withdraw designation of a National Estuarine Research Reserve if: 1) NOAA finds that any of the criteria for establishing the reserve no longer exist; or 2) a substantial portion of the research conducted

within the reserve fails to meet Reserve System guidelines. In making any decision to withdraw designation, NOAA will take into consideration factors set forth in 15 C.F.R. § 921.40.

D. Should this agreement be terminated or designation of the reserve be withdrawn by NOAA, reimbursement of unexpended funds from financial assistance awards shall be determined on a pro rata basis according to the amount of work done by the parties at the time of termination or withdrawal. Additionally, reimbursement for land purchased and facilities constructed with NOAA funds shall be consistent with terms and special award conditions of financial assistance awards.

E. If any clause, sentence or other portion of this MOU shall become illegal, null, or void for any reason, the remaining portions of this MOU shall remain in full force and effect.

F. No waiver of right by either party of any provision of this MOU shall be binding unless expressly confirmed in writing by the party giving the waiver.

IN WITNESS THEREOF, the parties have caused this agreement to be executed.

_____	_____
Name	Name
Director	Director
Office for Coastal Management	State Agency Department
National Ocean Service	
National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration	
U.S. Department of Commerce	
_____	_____
Date	Date

Tribal Consultation Letter Example

WISCONSIN DEPARTMENT OF ADMINISTRATION

JIM DOYLE
GOVERNOR
MICHAEL L. MORGAN
SECRETARY
Division of Intergovernmental Relations
Post Office Box 8944
Madison, WI 53708-8944
Voice (608) 266-0288
Fax (608) 267-6917

March 20, 2008

Acting-Chairman Peter Lemieux
Bad River Band of Lake Superior Chippewa
P.O. Box 39
Odanah, WI 54861

Dear Acting-Chairman Lemieux:

I want to update you on the initiative to nominate a National Estuarine Research Reserve (NERR) on Lake Superior within the State of Wisconsin. After input from the initiative's site evaluation and public involvement advisory teams, the Wisconsin State Agency Liaison Team will be recommending to Governor Doyle the nomination of the St. Louis River as a National Estuarine Research Reserve (NERR).

The Department of Administration and its state agency partners will host an Open House on April 3 from 6:00 – 8:00 p.m. in Superior at the Wisconsin Indianhead Technical College. The event's purpose will be to gather public comments on the recommendation and answer questions related to the proposed St. Louis River NERR site. An informational presentation will begin at 7:00 p.m.

Staff from the Great Lakes Indian Fish and Wildlife Commission (GLIFWC) has participated in the site evaluation process. We have invited their continued involvement in the next steps for this process. Formal input from GLIFWC will be requested for the draft Management Plan and draft Environmental Impact Statement (EIS). We anticipate that the management plan and EIS process will start later in 2008 and run for 18-24 months.

If you have any specific questions regarding the Wisconsin Lake Superior NERR project, please contact Travis Olson of the Wisconsin Coastal Management Program at 608-266-3687 (email travis.olson@wisconsin.gov).

As always, any further questions regarding State-Tribal relations can be directed to either me at 608-261-7520 (email harald.jordahl@wisconsin.gov) or Dawn Vick, leader of the State-Tribal Relations initiative on my staff at 608-266-7043 (email dawn.vick@wisconsin.gov). We welcome your government's continued involvement as we take the next steps leading the way to formal designation of the Lake Superior NERR.

Sincerely,

Harald "Jordy" Jordahl
Acting Administrator
Division of Intergovernmental Relations

cc: Ervin Soulier, Bad River Band of Lake Superior Chippewa
Mike Friis, Wisconsin Coastal Management Program
Dawn Vick, Wisconsin Department of Administration
Matt Chasse, U.S. NOAA
Karen Danielsen, GLIFWC

Wisconsin.gov

Cooperating Agency Memorandum of Agreement–Memorandum of Understanding Example

COOPERATING AGENCY AGREEMENT

and

MEMORANDUM OF AGREEMENT

THE FOND DU LAC BAND OF LAKE SUPERIOR CHIPPEWA

and the

THE NATIONAL OCEANIC AND ATMOSPHERIC ADMINISTRATION

OFFICE FOR COASTAL MANAGEMENT

This Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) is entered into by The Fond du Lac Band of Lake Superior Chippewa (Fond du Lac), a federally recognized Indian tribe, and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's (NOAA) Office for Coastal Management (OCM) (hereinafter the Parties). The MOA provides a framework for cooperation and coordination throughout the preparation and completion of the procedures required by the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 (NEPA), 42 U.S.C. § 4321 et seq., for OCM's proposed action to designate a national estuarine research reserve (NERR) on the St. Louis River near Superior, Wisconsin (hereinafter the Proposed Action). The MOA is consistent with the guidance and regulations of the Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) at 40 C.F.R. Parts 1500-1508.

Whereas, NOAA OCM is the lead agency for the Proposed Action to establish a National Estuarine Research Reserve on the St. Louis River, in and adjacent to Superior, Wisconsin;

Whereas the Fond du Lac Band of Lake Superior Chippewa is a sovereign entity that enjoys government-to-government relationship with the United States;

Whereas NOAA OCM recognizes the special expertise of the Fond du Lac Band of Chippewa in evaluating any impacts that the Proposed Action may have on the Fond du Lac's exercise of its treaty rights, treaty trust resources, and cultural and historic resources related to the Fond du Lac;

The Parties agree as follows:

I. PARTIES and AUTHORITIES

NOAA Estuarine Reserves Division enters into this MOA pursuant to the Coastal Zone Management Act (CZMA), 16 U.S.C. §§ 1451, 1461, and its implementing regulations; the National Environmental Policy Act, 42 U.S.C. § 4321 et seq. (NEPA), and its implementing regulations; and Executive Order No. 13175, Consultation and Coordination with Indian Tribal Governments, 65 Fed. Reg. 67249-52 ((November 9, 2000).

Fond du Lac Band of Lake Superior Chippewa enters into this MOA pursuant to its inherent authority pursuant to its sovereignty, created by the La Point Treaty of September 30, 1854, 10 Stat. 1109; the sovereign obligation of the Fond du Lac Reservation Business Committee, as the governing body of the Fond du Lac Band, under the Indian Reorganization Act, 25 U.S.C. § 461 et seq., and in accordance with the Indian Self-Determination Act, 25 U.S.C, § 450 et seq.; the Executive Office of the President memorandum to the Council on Environmental Quality, dated July 28, 1999; and the cooperating agency status responsibilities found in 40 C.F.R. § 1501.6.

II. OBJECTIVES

The Parties enter into this MOA to memorialize their responsibilities and expectations and to further coordination and cooperation during the preparation of an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) analyzing the impacts to the human environment of the Proposed Action to establish a National estuarine research reserve (NERR) near the St. Louis River and Superior, Wisconsin.

III. RESPONSIBILITIES

NOAA Estuarine Reserves Division is the lead agency for the purposes of NEPA, with obligations for fulfilling the requirements of NEPA. NOAA OCM will provide necessary and appropriate expertise and coordination and will ensure all information relevant to the Proposed Action is included and analyzed in the NEPA documents in accordance with the requirements of NEPA and the CEQ regulations;

NOAA Estuarine Reserves Division will work cooperatively with Fond du Lac to ensure full access to non-privileged data, information, analysis, expertise, and public comments received during and until the conclusion of the NEPA process;

Fond du Lac will use its best efforts to act as a cooperating agency and will review and identify information relevant to the Proposed Action with particular attention to historic and past use of the relevant area, associated historical and cultural information, habitat characterization, and its expertise in the treaty resources in and around the area proposed for designation as a NERR.

IV. CONFLICT RESOLUTION

Every effort will be made by the Parties to reach mutual agreement regarding issues addressed and analyzed during the NEPA process. In the event a conflict arises between the Parties, the following procedures will be followed:

1) The designated Points of Contact for each Party will use their best efforts to resolve the dispute;

2) In the event the Points of Contact are unable to resolve the dispute, the immediate supervisor within the government or agency of each Point of Contact shall meet and use their best efforts to resolve the dispute;

3) In the event the second level of dispute resolution is unsuccessful, either Fond du Lac or NOAA OCM may request formal government-to-government consultation in such a format as is acceptable to both Fond du Lac and NOAA OCM to resolve their concerns.

V. AMENDMENT AND TERMINATION

This MOA may be amended by written agreement signed by all of the Parties.

Any Party may withdraw and terminate its participation in this MOA upon 30 days written notice to each of the other Parties. This MOA will remain in effect until the Record of Decision concluding the NEPA process for the Proposed Action is signed by the designated NOAA official.

VI. NO FUNDS WILL BE TRANSFERRED

This MOA does not authorize or effect any transfer of funds. In addition, all obligations of NOAA OCM pursuant to this MOA are subject to and dependent upon the availability of funds. Nothing in this MOA creates any right, benefit, or legal obligation, substantive, procedural, or enforceable by any Party or non-party to the MOA.

SIGNATURES

For the Fond du Lac Band of Lake Superior Chippewa:

_____ Date:_____

Karen R. Diver, Chairwoman, Fond du Lac Reservation Business Committee

For NOAA Estuarine Reserves Division:

_____Date _____

Laurie McGilvray, Division Chief

Cultural Consultation Letter Example

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE
National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration
Office for Coastal Management
Silver Spring Metro Center, Building 4
1305 East-West Highway
Silver Spring, Maryland 20910

18 June 2015

G. Umi Kai
'Aha Kāne
P.O. Box 31303
Honolulu, HI 96820-1303

Dear Mr. Kai:

The State of Hawai'i nominated the He'eia estuary within the He'eia Ahupua'a and the Kāhe'ohe Bay watershed to be established as a National Estuarine Research Reserve (NERR). The NERR System is a federal-state partnership administered by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA). NERR sites are managed in order to facilitate long-term research and monitoring, education and training, and stewardship of coastal resources. The proposed reserve would be managed by the Hawai'i Institute of Marine Biology, in collaboration with local partners, and with oversight by NOAA. NOAA also provides states with technical assistance, guidance, and funding. Funding supports such program purposes as research, monitoring, facility construction and operation, teacher training, education, restoration, and stewardship activities.

The nominated site is shown on the enclosed map. The area of potential effects include: He'eia State Park (18.5 acres) on its northern coast; He'eia fishpond (88 acres) at its estuarine border (where traditional Hawaiian aquaculture takes place); the He'eia wetlands (where an ongoing wetlands restoration project aims to restore traditional agricultural uses) at the proposed site's upland end (405 acres); and the Hawai'i Institute of Marine Biology (28 acres) on Moku o Lo'e (Coconut Island). An additional 530 acres of water area include patch and fringing reefs. Just outside the site is a barrier reef. The total acreage of the proposed site is 1,070 acres.

Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA) requires that federal agencies identify historic properties that may be impacted by a federal undertaking, and seek to protect those properties that are listed, or eligible for listing, on the National Register of Historic Places. NHPA regulations at 36 CFR Part 800 identify a process to determine site eligibility, to evaluate potential impacts, and to identify impact avoidance or mitigation actions.

NOAA, which approves the designation of proposed NERRs, is currently evaluating the nominated site. Designation as a NERR would constitute an "undertaking" under the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA). See 36 Code of Federal Regulations (C.F.R.) § 800.16(y). Pursuant to the NHPA, we are seeking your assistance in identifying properties within the area of potential effects that may be eligible for the National Register listing, and providing us with any information you may have relating to religious or cultural significance that your organization attaches to the property that might be affected by designation of the NERR in Hawai'i. If you have any information you wish to share with us about the site, please contact me. We would also like to take this opportunity to request your assistance in identifying any additional Native Hawaiian Organizations that may be interested in commenting on this action. If you would like to participate as a consulting party, submit your request in writing to me at the mailing address provided in this letter (below). *See* 36 CFR 800.3(f).

In addition, as part of the evaluation process associated with Designation of the proposed reserve, an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) will be prepared in accordance with the National Environmental Policy Act. Once drafted, the EIS will be released for public comment, likely this autumn. There will be a 45-day public comment period, including a public hearing, to solicit input on the draft EIS from interested parties.

For more information about the NERR designation process, see 15 C.F.R., Part 921, Subpart D. See also the Hawai'i Office of Planning website at http://planning.hawaii.gov/czm/initiatives/nerrs-site-proposal-process.

Please do not hesitate to contact me if you have any questions or comments. I can be reached via telephone at (301) 563-1127, via mail at patmarie.nedelka@noaa.gov, or via mail addressed to my attention and sent to: NOAA Office for Coastal Management, 1305 East West Hwy, 11th Floor, N/OCM-1, Silver Spring, Maryland 20910.

Sincerely,

Patmarie S. Nedelka
NEPA and Environmental Compliance Coordinator

Enclosure

Appendix B – Governor Letter of Interest Examples

EXECUTIVE CHAMBERS

HONOLULU

NEIL ABERCROMBIE
GOVERNOR

July 26, 2012

Dr. Jane Lubchenco
Administrator
National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration
1401 Constitution Avenue, NW
Washington, D.C. 20230

Re: Hawaii National Estuarine Research Reserve Site Selection

Dear Dr. Lubchenco:

I have long admired the National Estuarine Research Reserve (NERR) network and I am writing to inform you of the State of Hawaii's interest in establishing a Hawaii NERR site. A coordinated partnership between Hawaii and the NERR program will provide much needed information for the NERR information network for paleotropical estuarine processes and enhance our state efforts to protect Hawaii's unique environment.

Hawaii is the most remote set of islands in the world and its estuarine ecosystems are relatively new in geological time. Thus, their formation and function will provide essential information in understanding the biogeochemical processes for healthy estuarine ecosystems. The Hawaiian marine environment probably houses more endemic species than any other part of the United States, and it is the only representative of the paleotropical ecosystem in the United States. These unique features make it very important to establish a NERR in Hawaii and are consistent with state and federal efforts to conserve Hawaii's coastal environments.

The establishment of a NERR in Hawaii meets the guidelines of your current policy regarding system expansion:

1. Create a NERR in a state currently not represented in the program.
2. Add important estuary types not represented in the nationwide NERR system.
3. Complete the nationwide NERR system by siting a reserve in the Hawaii and former U.S. Trust Pacific Islands region.
4. Create opportunities for a multi-state or state-tribal partnership through NERR programs.

Moreover, Hawaii is uniquely qualified to join the nationwide network of NERR. The University of Hawaii (UH) system, a potential partner in the Hawaii NERR, has a long history of conducting research on coastal and marine ecosystems. UH also has research in public policy and informal/formal education opportunities which provides training in the stewardship of the coastal reefs and fisheries. Moreover, the UH extension service and UH Sea Grant have extensive experience transferring the science of resource management to practical solutions for the local coast communities. These integrated components would make UH an important partner for any Hawaii NERR.

The State of Hawaii would greatly benefit from technical assistance and a commitment to guide our state through the site selection process. The Office of Planning, led by Director Jesse Souki, is willing and more than capable of being the lead state agency in selecting a NERR site in Hawaii. I also invite you to visit Hawaii to gain firsthand experience of its estuarine environments.

I look forward to working with you and your staff on this scientifically important and exciting project. If there is any further information I can provide, please do not hesitate to contact me or Wendy Clerinx, my Director of Policy, at 808-586-0225 with any questions.

Sincerely,

NEIL ABERCROMBIE
Governor, State of Hawaii

Cc: The Honorable Daniel K. Inouye, U.S. Senator
The Honorable Daniel K. Akaka, U.S. Senator
The Honorable Mazie K. Hirono, U.S. Representative
The Honorable Colleen Hanabusa, U.S. Representative
Laurie McGilvray, Chief, Estuarine Reserves Division, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration
William Aila, Jr., Director, Department of Land and Natural Resources
Jesse Souki, Director, Office of Planning

OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR

RICK PERRY
GOVERNOR

September 26, 2001

Scott B. Gudes
Acting Under Secretary of Oceans and Atmosphere
National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration
Department of Commerce
Herbert C. Hoover Building, Room 5128
14th and Constitution Avenue NW
Washington, D.C. 20230

Dear Secretary Gudes:

The State of Texas is interested in participating in the National Estuarine Research Reserve System (NERRS) as administered by your agency under Section 315 of the Coastal Zone Management Act. Federal statute and regulation allow states to nominate one site in each biogeographic region. The State of Texas contains eight different biogeographic zones associated with coastal watershed and estuarine-bay complexes.

I am pleased to submit a nomination and request for financial assistance to begin the site selection process for our first NERRS site in the Nueces biogeographic region. I designate the University of Texas at Austin, Marine Science Institute (UTMSI) as the lead agency under this program. The Texas General Land Office administers the Coastal Management Program, and will pass through funds and provide general oversight to UTMSI during the site selection process. Please contact Dr. Paul Montagna at UTMSI with future correspondence on this program.

Sincerely,

Rick Perry

Rick Perry
Governor

cc: The Honorable Solomon Ortiz, United States House of Representatives
Dr. Paul A. Montagna, The University of Texas at Austin, Marine Science Institute
750 Channelview Drive, Port Aransas, TX 78373
Laurie McGilvray, NOAA, Office of Ocean and Coastal Resource Management, Sanctuaries and Reserves Division; 18285 Connecticut Avenue, NW, Washington, D.C. 20235

POST OFFICE BOX 12428 AUSTIN, TEXAS 78711 (512) 463-2000 (VOICE)/(512) 475-3165 (TDD)

JIM DOYLE
GOVERNOR
STATE OF WISCONSIN

March 1, 2004

Vice Admiral Conrad C. Lautenbacher, Jr., Administrator
National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration
1401 Constitution Avenue, NW
Washington, D.C. 20230

RE: Wisconsin National Estuarine Research Reserve Site Selection

Dear Vice Admiral Lautenbacher:

I am pleased to notify your office of Wisconsin's interest in establishing a National Estuarine Research Reserve (NERR) in our Lake Superior coastal area. Wisconsin's Coastal Management Program and the NERR Program share common goals of improving coastal decision making, increasing awareness of coastal resources through education and promoting stewardship of estuarine natural areas. A coordinated partnership between Wisconsin and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) will benefit the Great Lakes and the NERR system.

Wisconsin is distinctively qualified to join the nationwide network of NERRs. The University of Wisconsin System, a potential partner in a Lake Superior NERR, has a long history of conducting research for the advancement of public policy through what is known as the "Wisconsin Idea". UW-Extension, UW Sea Grant and many of our UW campuses have extensive experience transferring the science of resource management to practical solutions for the local coastal communities.

The Great Lakes are an invaluable state and national resource. Seven coastal wetlands on Lake Superior are designated as State Natural Areas. Lake Superior has been designated and international clean water demonstration area by the United States, Canada and all bordering states and provinces. This designation recognizes the high quality of Lake Superior waters and coastal ecosystems and the need to prevent future problems. Establishing a NERR in Wisconsin is consistent with these and other state efforts to protect Great Lakes estuaries.

The establishment of a NERR in Wisconsin meets the guidelines of your current policy regarding system expansion:

1. Complete the nationwide NERR system by siting a reserve in the Lake Superior subregion.
2. Create a NERR in a state currently not represented in the program.
3. Add important estuary types not represented in the nationwide NERR system.

P.O. BOX 7863, MADISON, WISCONSIN 53707-7863 • (608) 266-1212 • FAX: (608) 267-8983 •
WWW.WISGOV.STATE.WI.US

4. Create opportunities for a multi-state or state-tribal partnership through NERR programs.

The State of Wisconsin formally seeks federal funds, technical assistance and commitment to guide our state through the site selection process. The Wisconsin Coastal Management Program in the Department of Administration, working closely with the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources and the partners identified above, will serve as the lead agency for establishing a NERR. I also invite you to visit Wisconsin's Lake Superior region to gain firsthand experience of its internationally important estuarine systems.

I look forward to working with you and your staff on this exciting project. Thank you.

Sincerely,

Jim Doyle
Governor

cc: Wisconsin Congressional Delegation

Marc Marotta, Secretary
Wisconsin Department of Administration

Scott Hassett, Secretary
Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources

Kevin P. Reilly, Chancellor
University of Wisconsin Extension

Arlen Leholm, Cooperative Extension Dean
University of Wisconsin-Extension

Laurie McGilvray, Chief
Estuarine Reserves Division, OCRM

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Appendix C – Designation Findings Examples

He'eia National Estuarine Research Reserve

Findings of Designation

On May 21, 2014, the Governor of the State of Hawai'i nominated He'eia estuary as a National Estuarine Research Reserve. As the Under Secretary of Commerce for Oceans and Atmosphere and Administrator of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), I have reviewed the record concerning the establishment of the He'eia National Estuarine Research Reserve, including the attached Final Environmental Impact Statement and Final Management Plan (FEIS/FMP) issued in December 2016. Based on that review, I am designating the He'eia estuary as part of the National Estuarine Research Reserve System pursuant to Section 315 of the Coastal Zone Management Act (CZMA) of 1972, as amended, 16 U.S.C. § 1461, and its implementing regulations at 15 C.F.R. Part 921.

Findings resulting from my review are:

A. *Section 315(b)(2)(A) of the CZMA and 15 C.F.R. § 921.30(a)(1), require that the area is a representative estuarine ecosystem that is suitable for long-term research and contributes to the biogeographic and typological balance of the National Estuarine Research Reserve System.*

The proposed area being considered for a He'eia National Estuarine Research Reserve is a representative estuarine ecosystem of the Hawaiian Islands sub-region of the Insular biogeographic region. No other National Estuarine Research Reserve is currently designated in this biogeographic region; therefore, the addition of this site contributes to the biogeographic and typological balance of the System. The He'eia estuary, located within the Kāne'ohe Bay region on the windward side of O'ahu, is highly suitable for long-term research on the physical, chemical, and biological processes of estuaries in part because it contains many different estuarine characteristics, or typologies, representative of the Hawaiian Islands sub-region of the Insular biogeographic region. The 1,385-acre site encompasses a diverse range of habitats including uplands (e.g., open areas and forests), wetlands (e.g., streams, ponds, and freshwater and estuarine wetlands), and marine habitats (e.g., patch reefs, sandy bottoms, and seagrass beds). Each are affected to varying degrees by invasive species and other anthropogenic factors. Significant historic and cultural resources are also found within this habitat mosaic, including He'eia fishpond, one of the largest intact historical fishponds in the Hawaiian Islands, along with the practice of traditional native Hawaiian taro cultivation. The native flora and fauna, rich cultural traditions and practices, historical attributes, diverse habitats, and the existing and potential future impacts of multiple coastal stressors come together to create a compelling addition to the National Estuarine Research Reserve System.

The proposed Reserve will be operated by the Hawai'i Institute of Marine Biology (HIMB) in partnership with numerous local partners. As a premier institute of scientific study, the HIMB has been conducting ecological research and monitoring in Kāne'ohe Bay since its establishment in 1951. Located within the Reserve boundaries, HIMB offers key research capabilities and scientific expertise that support long-term research that provide data and information to support the management of coastal ecosystems.

Page 1 of 4

Designation of the area as a reserve will serve not only to enhance public awareness and understanding of the estuary and its associated habitats but also to educate visitors and local communities about traditional Hawaiian cultural practices. The He'eia estuary's ecological and cultural resources provide suitable opportunities for public education and interpretation.

B. *Section 315(b)(2)(B) of the CZMA requires that the law of the coastal state provides long-term protection for Reserve resources to ensure a stable environment for research.*

Existing state laws provide long-term protection for reserve resources that ensure a stable environment for research. In addition, coordination between federal, state, and local agencies with regulatory responsibilities in the Reserve is designed to ensure a comprehensive approach to management of the Reserve and its resources. All land-holding entities, either owners or leases, within the proposed boundaries are signatories to a voluntary multi-party charter agreement describing the roles and responsibilities of each party within the administrative boundary of the He'eia Reserve. This agreement allows University of Hawai'i HIMB, which is the lead State Agency, to coordinate programmatic and strategic activities with these partners to ensure future actions are consistent with the Reserve's management plan and with National Estuarine Research Reserve System, local, state, or federal regulations.

State ownership and/or existing regulatory authorities and management programs guide resource protection and management of existing and/or future uses within the Reserve boundary. The Hawai'i Department of Lands and Natural Resources (DLNR) has jurisdiction over the proposed Reserve core area. For example, within these marine waters, DLNR requires that HIMB have a special activities permit from DLNR for the collection of marine organisms for the 64 acre Hawai'i Marine Laboratory Refuge surrounding Moku o Lo'e.

Portions of the He'eia Reserve are located within various land use districts that establish allowable uses and permit requirements that provide long-term state protections. Most important among these is the State Land Use Conservation District (CDUP). Pursuant to Hawai'i Revised Statute Chapter 183C and Hawai'i Administrative Rules Title 13, Chapter 5, a CDUP identifies areas needed for the preservation of the State's fragile natural ecosystems and the sustainability of the State's water supply. DLNR promulgates rules to govern uses within CDUPs to conserve, protect and preserve the important natural resources of the State. A majority of the Reserve is within a CDUP including Coconut Island and its surrounding waters, He'eia fishpond, and the upland forests within the Hawai'i Community Development Authority parcel. Other land-use districts that apply to the lands and waters within the proposed boundaries include the He'eia Community Development District, and the City and County of Honolulu's Special Management Area.

The Hawai'i Office of Planning is authorized to coordinate review of proposed activities in the He'eia estuary for consistency with the Federally-approved state coastal management program. The State has provided a determination that the proposed Reserve is consistent to the maximum extent practicable with the enforceable policies of the Hawai'i coastal zone management program.

Finally, the Kāne'ohe Bay Master Plan (1992), the Sustainable Communities Plan for the Ko'olau Poko planning area (2016), the Ko'olau Poko Watershed Management Plan (2016), the Hawai'i's Shoreline Protection Act (1975), the Multi-party Charter between University of Hawai'i Institute of Marine Biology and its partner organizations (Appendix C of the FEIS), and the land use leases between the Hawai'i Community Development Authority and the local non-profit Kāko'o 'Ōiwi (2010) and between Kamehameha Schools and Paepae o He'eia (2001) provide the institutional framework and plans and policies that collectively serve to ensure that the activities on the major land and water components of the Reserve will be managed in conformance with the goals of Section 315 of the CZMA.

C. *Section 315(b)(2)(C) of the CZMA and 15 C.F.R. § 921.30(a)(3) require that designation of the area as a reserve will serve to enhance public awareness and understanding of estuarine areas, and provide suitable opportunities for public education and interpretation.*

Education and outreach are tools that Reserve staff will use to address the human dimension of resource issues. Combined with research and stewardship, education and outreach are key elements of resource protection in the National Estuarine Research Reserve System. Major public awareness and understanding goals of the Reserve are to:

- Increase understanding of the effects of human activities and natural events and inform decision-making affecting the He'eia estuary, coastal ecosystems, and ultimately the entire ahupua'a of He'eia;
- Inspire and educate the community about estuaries, coastal ecosystems, and traditional Hawaiian practices, such as lo'i (taro patches) and loko i'a (fishponds), that mālama (nurture) these systems sustainably; and
- Create opportunities for collaboration to practice and promote stewardship that sustains cultural, biological, and natural resources.

The FMP describes an education/interpretation/outreach plan for the Reserve that is focused on improved understanding and stewardship of coastal resources through education. This plan is expected provide suitable opportunities for public education and interpretation.

D. *Section 315(b)(2)(D) of the CZMA requires that the coastal state in which the area is located comply with the requirements of any regulations issued by the Secretary of Commerce to implement Section 315.*

The State of Hawai'i has met the specific requirements of the implementing regulations (15 C.F.R. § 921.30) for designation of a National Estuarine Research Reserve. In addition to the requirements noted in A-C above, the State of Hawai'i has complied with the following requirements:

(1) *Key land and water areas must be under adequate state control sufficient to provide long-term protection for reserve resources to ensure a stable environment for research (15 C.F.R. § 921.30(a)(2)).*

Refer to information previously discussed in part B of the findings.

(2) *A final management plan has been approved by NOAA (15 C.F.R. § 921.30(a)(4)).*

The final management plan was approved by NOAA as part of the FEIS and noticed in the *Federal Register* on December 16, 2016. (81 Fed. Reg. 91137).

(3) *A Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) has been signed between the state partner (HIMB) and NOAA ensuring a long-term commitment by the state to the effective operation and implementation of the area as a National Estuarine Research Reserve (15 C.F.R. § 921.30(a)(5)).*

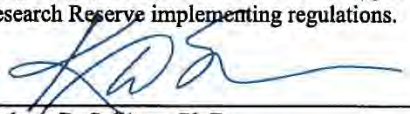
The attached MOU was signed by the Director of the Hawai'i Institute of Marine Biology, Dean, School of Ocean and Earth Sciences and Technology, Chancellor of the University of Hawai'i, Mānoa, and the Director of NOAA's Office for Coastal Management.

(4) *All MOU's necessary for reserve management (i.e., with relevant federal, state, and local agencies and/or private organizations) must be signed (15 C.F.R. § 921.30(a)(6)).*

All MOU's have been signed and are on file with NOAA and the State.

(5) *The coastal state in which the area is located must have complied with the requirements of 15 C.F.R. Part 921, Subpart B, Site Selection, Post Site Selection and Management Plan Development (15 C.F.R. § 921.30(a)(7)).*

The State has complied with all requirements of Subpart B including providing documentation regarding the site's contribution to the biogeographical and typological balance of the Reserve System; assurance that the site's boundaries encompass an adequate portion of the key land and water areas of the natural system to approximate an ecological unit and to ensure effective conservation; evidence that the site is suitable for long-term research and compatible with existing and potential land and water uses in contiguous areas. NOAA received certification from the State of Hawai'i's Office of Planning on November 2, 2016, that Reserve designation is consistent to the maximum extent practicable with approved coastal management program. The State duly prepared a draft management plan and a final management plan, and provided opportunities for public participation in the designation process consistent with the applicable requirements of the National Estuarine Research Reserve implementing regulations.



Kathryn D. Sullivan, Ph.D.
Under Secretary for Oceans and Atmosphere

1-18-17

Date

Appendix D – Site Nomination Review Checklist

Fulfillment of National Estuarine Research Reserve System Program Regulations 15CFR 921.11

The following is a checklist that will be used by Office for Coastal Management staff to ensure that a site nomination package fulfills the Reserve System program regulation requirements.

Contents of the Site Nomination Package in

Fulfillment of 15 CFR 921.11 (b) and (d)

❒ Nomination of the proposed site by the governor

❒ Description of the site-selection process

❒ Identification of the site-selection agency and potential management agency

❒ List of all sites considered

❒ Brief statement of the reasons why a site was not preferred

❒ Description of the proposed site in relationship to each of the guiding principles (15 CFR 921.11 (c))

❒ Analysis of the proposed site based on the biogeographic scheme/typology

❒ Description of the proposed site and its major resources.

- ❒ location
- ❒ proposed boundaries

- ❒ adjacent land uses
- ❒ maps

❒ Description of the public participation process

❒ Summary of public comments

❒ Documentation that governor(s) of other affected state(s) has been contacted if interstate issues are involved

❒ Copies of all correspondence, including contact letters to affected landowners

Fulfillment of Procedural Requirements in 15 CFR 921.11 (b) and (d)

❒ The state sought the views of:

- ❒ Affected landowners
- ❒ Local governments
- ❒ Other state agencies
- ❒ Federal agencies
- ❒ Other parties interested in the area

❒ The state held at least one public meeting in the vicinity of the proposed site

❒ Fifteen days before the meeting, notice of the meeting was placed:

- ❒ in the area's principal newspaper

❒ by NOAA in the *Federal Register*

Conformity of the Proposed Site with Guiding Principles in 15 CFR 921.11(c)

____ The site contributes to the biogeographic and typological balance of the Reserve System.

____ The site is located in a biogeographic region and sub-region not represented in the system.

____ The site is a representative estuarine ecosystem.

____ The site's ecological characteristics will attract a broad range of research interests.

____ The site is suitable for long-term estuarine research based on ecological factors and proximity to research facilities and educational institutions.

____ The site's ecological characteristics will attract a broad range of educational interests.

____ The site is important to education and interpretive efforts.

____ The site is, to the maximum extent possible, minimally affected by human activity or influence.

____ The site is compatible with existing and potential land and water uses in contiguous areas.

____ The site is compatible with approved coastal and estuarine management plans.

____ The site boundaries encompass an adequate portion of key land and water areas to approximate an ecological unit.

____ The site boundaries encompass an adequate portion of key land and water areas to ensure effective conservation.

____ Less than 50 percent of the proposed reserve is currently federally protected.

____ The managing entity has or will establish adequate control over human activities occurring within the area.

Conformity of State's Request for Funds for EIS and Management Plan with 15 CFR 12

____ Request for funds for EIS and management plan

(Amount: $_____)

____ Request for funds for limited site characterization

(Amount: $_____)

____ Draft management plan outline

____ Outline of draft MOU between state and NOAA

Appendix E – Historical Reserve Designations

Reserve	Bio Region	Bio Sub-Region	Designation Date
Connecticut	Virginian	Southern New England	EST 2018-19
He'eia	Insular	Hawaiian Islands	January 18, 2017
Lake Superior	Great Lakes	Lake Superior	October 18, 2010
Mission-Aransas	Louisianian	Western Gulf	May 1, 2006
San Francisco Bay	Californian	San Francisco Bay	October 10, 2003♦
GTM	Carolinian	East Florida	August 20, 1999
Grand Bay	Louisianian	Mississippi Delta	June 16, 1999
Kachemak Bay	Fjord	Aleutian Island	February 12, 1999
Jacques Cousteau	Virginian	Southern New England	April 3, 1998
Delaware	Virginian	Middle Atlantic	July 21, 1993
North Inlet-Winyah Bay	Carolinian	South Atlantic	August 30, 1992
ACE Basin	Carolinian	South Atlantic	August 27, 1992
Chesapeake Bay, VA	Virginian	Chesapeake Bay	June 14, 1991
Great Bay	Acadian	Southern Gulf of Maine	October 3, 1989
Waquoit Bay	Virginian	Southern New England	June 20, 1988
Wells	Acadian	Southern Gulf of Maine	August 31, 1986♦
Weeks Bay	Louisianian	Panhandle Coast	February 19, 1986
North Carolina	Carolinian	North Carolinas	1985#
Chesapeake Bay, MD	Virginian	Chesapeake Bay	July 1985#
Hudson River	Virginian	Southern New England	September 27, 1982
Jobos Bay	West Indian	Caribbean	September 1981
Tijuana River	Californian	Southern California	1982
Apalachicola	Louisianian	Panhandle	November 1, 1980
Old Woman Creek	Great Lakes	Lake Erie	September 5, 1980♦
Narragansett Bay	Virginian	Southern New England	August 1980
Padilla Bay	Columbian	Puget Sound	1980
Elkhorn Slough	Californian	Central California	1979
Rookery Bay	Louisianian	West Florida	September 12, 1978
Waimanu Valley	Insular	Hawaiian Islands	1978*
Sapelo Island	Carolinian	South Atlantic	December 22, 1976
South Slough	Columbian	Middle Pacific	1974

♦DEDICATION CEREMONY DATES

*WAIMANU VALLEY RESEARCH RESERVE DE-DESIGNATED JUNE 10, 1996

#MULTI-COMPONENT DESIGNATIONS:

Chesapeake Bay, MD
- Monie Bay – July 1985
- Jug Bay –- Sept. 22, 1985
- Otter Point Creek – Oct. 4, 1990

North Carolina
- Currituck Banks – 1985
- Rachel Carson –- 1985
- Zeke's Island – 1985
- Masonboro Island – designation: Jan. 4, 1991

Appendix F – Environmental Impact Statement Structure

The NEPA regulations (40 CFR 1502.10) require all EIS documents to contain the following contents.

Required EIS Contents	
Cover Sheet	Executive Summary
Table of Contents	Purpose and Need
Description of Proposed Action	Alternatives to Proposed Action
Affected Environment	Environmental Consequences
Mitigation Methods	List of Preparers
Distribution List	Index and Appendices

a. Cover Sheet

Every EIS must have a one-page cover sheet that includes the following information:

- A list of the responsible agencies including the lead agency and any cooperating agencies. In the case of reserve designation, *U.S. Department of Commerce; National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration; National Ocean Service; Office of Ocean and Coastal Resource Management; Estuarine Reserves Division; and address*
- The title of the proposed action that is the subject of the statement, together with the state and county(ies) (or other jurisdiction if applicable) where the action is located. Recent examples include:
  Final Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement

  Federal Approval of the Texas National Estuarine Research Reserve

  and Management Plan: The Mission-Aransas Estuary

  Final Environmental Impact Statement and Final Management Plan

  to establish the San Francisco Bay National Estuarine Research Reserve

- The name, address, and telephone number of the person at the NOAA who can supply further information.
- A designation of the statement as a draft, final, or draft or final supplement.
- A one-paragraph abstract of the statement.

b. Summary

The summary must accurately summarize the substantive parts of the EIS. It may also be called the executive summary and should be no more than a few pages in length. The summary shall include:

- A brief summary of the major conclusions.
- A description of any areas of controversy (including issues raised by agencies and the public).
- The major issues (including the choice among alternatives) that will be discussed in the EIS.

c. Table of Contents

The table of contents provides organization to the EIS and should include a list of tables, figures, and acronyms in addition to the major sections, described below, of the document. Other recommended components referenced in the table of contents include a list of preparers or acknowledgments, list of persons or organizations receiving the document, references, and a list of attachments and appendices.

d. Purpose and Need

An EIS must contain a purpose and need statement. Council of Environmental Quality regulations 40 CFR 1502.13 state, "*The statement shall briefly specify the underlying purpose and need to which the agency is responding in proposing the alternatives including the proposed action.*" This section presents a brief statement explaining why the action (i.e., reserve designation) is being considered. The purpose and need specifies the underlying purpose and need to which NOAA is responding and sets the overall direction of the environmental analysis process. The purpose and need section should answer the question, "Why is NOAA proposing to approve the reserve designation?" An example is that the reserve is "representative of an estuarine ecosystem suitable for long-term research and education." A proposed reserve should be in a biogeographic region that is currently unrepresented in the national system and/or have a unique ecosystem type(s) or physical characteristics described in Appendix 2 of the Sec. 921, or are from a state currently not represented in the Reserve System.

The purpose and need serves as an important screening criterion for determining which alternatives to designation of the proposed reserve are reasonable. All reasonable alternatives examined in detail must meet the defined purpose and need.

The purpose and need statement must:

- Be broadly to address the number of alternatives to be considered.
- Describe the goal or end result of the action not the manner in which to accomplish the end result.
- Be short and concise manner that describes the driving force behind NOAA's desire to designate the proposed reserve.

e. Description of Proposed Action and Alternatives

As required by Section 102 (2) (E) of NEPA, every EIS must contain a detailed description of the proposed action and alternatives. Considered the heart of the EIS, this section describes the proposed action and each alternative that will accomplish the purpose and need for reserve designation. Identifying the proposed action will inform reviewers of the reserve designation being considered. The proposed action is also call the preferred alternative of all the alternatives NOAA has identified for the EIS. NOAA selects a preferred alternative based on environmental, economic, technical, and other considerations.

In addition to the proposed action, this section should provide objective descriptions of all reasonable alternatives under consideration by NOAA. It is recommended that NOAA and the state partner include short, concise summaries of the impacts of each alternative, provided in comparative form. Previous reserve designation EIS documents have used a tabular format to depict each alternative and their impacts as shown in Figure 1. A more detailed analysis of the impacts of each alternative should be discussed in the "Environmental Consequences" section of the EIS.

Figure 1. Example tabular format of Alternatives and their Impacts

Table 4. Summary of alternatives. Abbreviations in the table: GIWW=Gulf Intracoastal Water Way, MHT=Mean High Tide, MP=Management Plan.

Alternatives	Action	Alternative Size	Social Impacts	Environmental Impacts	Research, Education
Preferred Alternative	Approve nominated site and implementation of management plan	185,708 acres[1]	Minor impacts to communities and uses adjacent to Reserve	Minor impacts related to sampling studies, construction of associated facilities	Positive new opportunities for conducting research
Boundary Alternative A	Include the GIWW and all transportation corridors	236,641 acres	Additional permit burden for future dredging operations[3]	Minor impacts related to sampling studies, construction of associated facilities	Positive new opportunities for conducting research related to dredging activities or best use sites
Boundary Alternative B	Extend the Reserve boundary an additional 1,000 feet to MHT Line	207,043 acres	Additional permit burden for applicants for new piers and docks[3]	Minor impacts related to sampling studies, construction of associated facilities	Additional opportunities for research along shorelines, i.e., seagrass habitats

The alternatives identified in this section are those that may be feasibly carried out based on technical, economic, environmental and other factors, and meets the purpose and need for the proposed action. A no-action alternative must be included as one of the alternatives described in this section.

According to Council of Environmental Quality regulations 40 CFR 1502.14 the Proposed Action and Alternatives section should:

- Rigorously explore and objectively evaluate all reasonable alternatives, and for alternatives which were eliminated from detailed study, briefly discuss the reasons for their having been eliminated.
- Devote substantial treatment to each alternative considered in detail including the proposed action so that reviewers may evaluate their comparative merits.
- Include reasonable alternatives such as alternative boundaries, sites, multiple sites or others.
- Include the No-Action Alternative. The No-Action Alternative is the most likely future that could be expected to occur in the absence of the project.
- Identify NOAA's preferred alternative or alternatives, if one or more exists.
- Include appropriate mitigation measures not already included in the proposed action or alternatives.

Refer to the NOAA, December 16, 2002, *Memorandum for Legal Guidance on Determining Related Actions and Developing Reasonable Alternatives for Inclusion in a Single EIS* at http://www.nepa.noaa.gov/reasonable_alts.pdf for more information on development of alternatives.

Determining the Number of Alternatives to Include

The number of alternatives considered reasonable will vary depending on the nature of the purpose and need for the action. The alternatives described in this section should be representative of all of those possible actions that can be reasonably expected to satisfy the purpose and need.

At a minimum, NOAA must include a description of two alternatives: the proposed action or preferred alternative and the no-action alternative. However, in the case of national estuarine research reserve designation, NOAA and the state partner should look at several alternatives including:

- Alternative reserve boundaries
- Alternative reserve sites
- Alternative management options

In many instances there are potentially a very large number of possible alternatives. NOAA should only analyze and compare a reasonable range of alternatives in the EIS to meet the purpose and need for designating a new reserve.

What is the No-Action Alternative?

NOAA must include a no-action alternative as part of the EIS for reserve designation. The no-action alternative is simply the continuation of the status quo and the proposed National Estuarine Research Reserve is not designated. In this alternative, NOAA will not meet the stated purpose and need of the action. The alternative should accurately describe what would happen if the reserve designation did not take place without being overly speculative. Additionally, this alternative provides a baseline comparison with the proposed action and any alternatives.

Alternatives Considered but Not Analyzed

During the initial stages of the designation process, NOAA and the state partner may consider a number of alternatives that could be considered reasonable but are unlikely to accomplish the goal of designating a new reserve. For example, during the site-selection process an alternative site was looked at but was not considered reasonable because the site lacked adequate state control and was dropped from consideration.

Any alternatives considered but rejected for further analysis should be briefly discussed in a subsection of the EIS (i.e., "Alternatives Considered, but not Further Analyzed"). This allows NOAA to identify these alternatives and to explain why they were not reasonable for achieving the purpose and need of designating a proposed reserve.

Summarizing the Environmental Consequences

Within this section, NOAA and the state partner should briefly describe the anticipated environmental consequences of reserve designation and alternatives on the affected environment. A detailed analysis of these environmental consequences will be found in the Environmental Consequences section of the EIS.

Designation of a research reserve is typically an administrative function and the environmental consequences are positive as designation brings the development of research, education, and stewardship programs; economic benefits to local communities; and the potential for strengthened environmental protections implemented by the state. Some explanation of the environmental consequences of future reserve infrastructure should be described, if applicable.

f. The Affected Environment

This section is a description of the environment in which the proposed action and alternatives are considered. Current conditions of the proposed reserve and its vicinity are described in detail and serve as a baseline for comparison of each alternative and their associated impacts.

Federal regulations 40 CFR 1502.15 describe this requirement as follows:

> *The environmental impact statement shall **succinctly** describe the environment of the area(s) to be affected or created by the alternatives under consideration. The descriptions shall be no longer than is necessary to understand the effects of the alternatives. Data and analyses in a statement shall be commensurate with the importance of the impact, with less important material summarized, consolidated, or simply referenced. Agencies shall avoid useless bulk in statements and shall concentrate effort and attention on important issues. Verbose descriptions of the affected environment are themselves no measure of the adequacy of an environmental impact statement.*

This section is typically divided into subsections that address major categories of resources affected by the research reserve designation. For example, previous research reserve designation EIS's have used subsections describing biological resources (including endangered and threatened species), socioeconomic resources, habitat, cultural resources, and historical resources. Other ideas for subsections include the following as well as other areas of interest specific to the proposed reserve:

Hydrology	*Geology*
Zoning	*Pollution Sources*
Existing Infrastructure	*Climate*

Each resource described in the Affected Environment Chapter must also receive a parallel discussion in the Environmental Consequences Chapter. Additionally, incorporating by reference other environmental impact statements and environmental assessments may be used to add information about the affected environment without adding length to the document. This is especially useful if existing infrastructure or land acquisition projects are ongoing during the designation process.

g. Environmental Consequences

An EIS must have a detailed description of the anticipated environmental consequences of the research reserve designation and alternatives (including the No-Action Alternative) on the resources described in the Affected Environment section. In this section, NOAA and the state partner describe the scientific and analytic basis for the comparison of the proposed research reserve designation and alternatives. The section must provide a detailed analysis and description of any general or specific environmental impacts or effects resulting from research reserve designation or the reasonable alternatives.

Effects can include ecological (such as the effects on natural resources and on the components, structures, and functioning of affected ecosystems), aesthetic, historic, cultural, economic, social, or health, whether direct, indirect, or cumulative. Effects may also include those resulting from actions which may have both beneficial and detrimental effects, even if on balance the agency believes that the effect will be beneficial.

The section should be organized to show the following:

- The overall or general impacts of research reserve designation and the significance of these impacts.
- Specific impacts or effects of research reserve designation and their significance as related to the sections described in the Affected Environment section.
- Possible conflicts between the research reserve designation and applicable federal, regional, state, and local plans, programs, or controls for the proposed reserve site. This includes but is not limited to the:
    - Endangered Species Act
    - Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act
    - National Historic Preservation Act
    - Coastal Zone Management Act
- Unavoidable adverse environmental or socioeconomic impacts that may result from research reserve designation.

- The cumulative impacts of research reserve designation and alternatives on activities occurring in the area/environment affected by the action. Cumulative impacts can result from individually minor but collectively significant actions taking place over a period of time.

h. Mitigation Measures

In some examples, alternatives, including the preferred alternative, reference measures that avoid, reduce or minimize the effects of designating a research reserve. If identified, these mitigation measures should be included in the analysis of each alternative in the Environmental Consequences section. A table can be used to show mitigation measures as related to each alternative identified in the EIS.

Mitigation measures may include the following actions:

- Avoidance of impacts associated with the preferred action or its alternatives
- Minimizing the degree or magnitude of the research reserve designation and its implementation
- Compensating for the impact of research reserve designation
- Restoring affected environments or habitats. The resource manipulation/ restoration part of the management plan may address mitigation in detail.

i. List of Preparers

The EIS must include a list of persons involved or consulted in the preparation of the document. This section should include any person that was primarily responsible for preparing the document, background papers, or provided substantial information. This includes NOAA staff and state partner staff.

j. Distribution List

The EIS must include a distribution list that includes other agencies, organizations, and individuals who have requested the document. An asterisk or some kind of notation should be included for those organizations or individuals who commented on the draft document.

k. Index and Appendices The EIS must contain an index. The index should include an alphabetical list of key words and their associated page numbers that will allow the reader to find information easily within the EIS. The index should focus on subject matter not a simple repeat of the table of contents. Any appendices to support the EIS should also be included. One mandatory appendix or attachment is the Reserve Management Plan. Other materials that are best consolidated into the appendix are:

- Lengthy technical discussions, baseline studies, etc…
- Materials likely to be understood by technically trained individuals
- Comments to the EIS and responses to those comments
- Concurrence letters as per other legal requirements
- Reserve – NOAA Memorandum of Understanding
- Reserve – Local partner Memorandum of Understanding

Appendix G – Cumulative Effects Analysis Recommendations and Tips

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration
Created March 21, 2008
Updated October 17, 2017

Cumulative Effects Analysis Recommendations and Tips

The Council on Environmental Quality's Regulations for Implementing NEPA defines *cumulative impact* as:

> *the impact on the environment which results from the incremental impact of the action when added to other past, present, and reasonably foreseeable future actions regardless of what agency (federal or non-federal) or person undertakes such other actions. Cumulative impacts can result from individually minor but collectively significant actions taking place over a period of time.* (40 CFR 1508.7)

Although there is no universal guidance explaining how to conduct cumulative effects analyses, the Council of Environmental Quality and several federal agencies have developed a handbook to assist a NEPA practitioner with the analysis of cumulative effects. This document, derived from several different sources regarding cumulative effects analysis, will provide tips and recommendations for developing a cumulative effects analysis for a NOAA major federal action.

In general, the level of cumulative effects analysis needs to be aligned with the degree of direct and indirect effects of the proposed action or preferred alternative on the environment. Developing a cumulative effects analysis should be seen as an iterative process, in that the analysis may shed light on resources that were not discovered during the scoping process, requiring the analyst to add them to the affected resources and reanalyze a portion of the cumulative impacts.

Scoping for Cumulative Impacts:

The purpose of scoping is to determine whether the resources, ecosystems, and human communities of concern have already been affected by past or present activities and whether other agencies or the public have plans that may affect the resources in the future.

Step 1: Identify the significant cumulative effects issues associated with the proposed action and define the assessment goals[2]

To identify the significant cumulative effects issues, an analyst must define (a) the direct and indirect effects of the proposed action, (b) the resources, ecosystems, and human communities that will be affected, and (c) which effects on these resources are important from a cumulative effects perspective. Table 2 lists questions that should be considered to identify all pertinent significant cumulative effects issues.

Step 2: Establish the geographic scope for the analysis

To establish the geographic scope for analysis, analysts should:

- determine the area that will be affected by the action (This is the project impact zone.)
- make a list of the resources within that zone that could be affected by the proposed action

[2] The eleven step process is taken directly from the Council on Environmental Quality's *Considering Cumulative Effects*, which is referenced at the end of this document.

• determine the geographic areas occupied by those resources outside of the project impact zone (In most cases, the largest of these areas will be the appropriate area for the analysis of cumulative effects.)
• determine the affected institutional jurisdictions, both for the lead agency and other agencies or groups

Step 3: Establish the time frame for the analysis
To identify the time frame for the analysis, analysts should consider:
• the nature of the proposed action
• the resource(s) of concern
• the point in time at which further cumulative effects (or, if appropriate, their discounted present value) are expected to become inconsequential
• the period for which useful predictions can be made

Step 4: Identify other actions affecting the resources, ecosystems, and human communities of concern
This is also known as identifying the past, present, and reasonably foreseeable future actions.
Effective cumulative effects analysis requires close coordination among agencies so that all past, present, and future actions are considered. The availability of data often determines how far back past effects can be analyzed. Identifying present actions is easier than identifying past or future actions, but it can still be a difficult task. The first step in identifying future actions is to investigate the plans of the proponent agency and other agencies in the area. In general, future actions can be excluded if: (a) the action is outside the geographic boundaries or time frame established for the analysis, (b) the action will not affect resources that are the subject of the analysis, (c) including the action would be considered arbitrary, or (d) the action is not reasonably foreseeable (e.g., not formally proposed, planned, permitted, authorized, or funded).

Describing the Affected Environment:

The purpose of describing the affected environment is to describe the baseline conditions to provide the context for evaluating environmental consequences of the cumulative effects.

Step 5: Characterize the resources, ecosystems, and human communities identified in scoping in terms of their response to change and capacity to withstand stresses
The existing conditions for resources and ecosystems can best be described by first establishing an environmental baseline, or point of reference, for each resource/ecosystem. Likewise, the relative well-being of human communities can be judged on the basis of demographic, geographic, economic, social, and health indicators. The baseline should describe the status of the resource/ecosystem, taking into account the conditions, trends, and past actions that have resulted in the current condition. Appropriate indicator measures should be selected to represent each resource/ecosystem.

Step 6: Characterize the stresses affecting these resources, ecosystems, and human communities and their relation to regulatory thresholds
Environmental impact assessment is an attempt to characterize the relationship between human activities and the resultant environmental and social effects; therefore, the next step in describing the affected environment is to compile data on stress factors pertaining to each resource, ecosystem, and human community. Two types of information should be used to describe stress factors contributing to cumulative effects. First, the analyst

should identify the types, distribution, and intensity of key social and economic activities within the region. Data on these socioeconomic "driving variables" can identify cumulative effects problems in the project area.[3] Second, the analyst should look for individual indicators of stress on specific resources, ecosystems, and human communities. Like the familiar "canary in the coal mine," changes in certain resources can serve as an early warning of impending environmental or social degradation.[4] The goal of characterizing stresses is to determine whether the resources, ecosystems, and human communities of concern are approaching conditions where additional stresses will have an important cumulative effect.

Step 7: Define a baseline condition for the resources, ecosystems, and human communities

This baseline will provide the analyst with the necessary information to properly evaluate the environmental consequences of cumulative effects. However, obtaining information to describe the affected environment can be expensive and time-consuming. Analysts should determine which data are essential for a specific analysis and compare that with the data sets that are readily available. There are many sources of data available on the internet, from federal agency websites to local or regional planning organization websites. For example, Census Bureau data can be helpful for providing demographic, housing, and socioeconomic data.

Determining the Environmental Consequences:

Step 8: Identify the important cause-and-effect relationships between human activities and resources, ecosystems, and human communities

It is important to link the various stresses and the resources they affect. Cause-and-effect relationships can be simple (linear) or complex (non-linear). The relationship between the percent of fine sediment and in a stream bed and the emergence of salmon fry is an example of a model of cause and effect that can be useful for identifying the cumulative effects on a specific resource. This model describes the response of the resource to a change in its environment. To determine the consequences of the proposed action on the resource, the analyst must determine which cumulative environmental changes will result from the proposed action and other actions.

Using information gathered to describe the affected environment, the factors that affect resources (i.e., the causes in the cause-and-effect relationships) can be identified and a conceptual model of cause and effect can be developed. The model can be developed even if the exact mechanism or magnitude of the cause-and-effect relationship is not known. Because models can become quite complex with several relationships that cannot be quantified with known data, the analyst should restrict the model to include only important relationships that can be supported with information.

The next step is to quantify the effect on the resource for each identified relationship using available data. If cause-and-effect relationships cannot be quantified, or if quantification is not needed to adequately characterize the consequences of each alternative, qualitative evaluation procedures can be used. The analyst may categorize the magnitude of effects into a set number of classes (e.g., high, medium, or low) or provide a descriptive narrative of the types of effects that may occur. Often, the analyst will be limited to qualitative evaluations of effects because cause and-effect relationships are poorly understood or because few site-specific data are available.

[3] McCabe, G, C Orians, C Clavate, and K Branch. 1991. Driving variables that impact environmental quality. Battelle Pacific Northwest National Laboratory, Richland, WA.

[4] Reid, WV, JA McNeely, DB Tunstall, and D Bryant. 1991. Indicators of Biodiversity Conservation. World Resources Institute, Washington, D.C.

Even when the analyst cannot quantify cumulative effects, a useful comparison of relative effects can enable a decision-maker to choose among alternatives. The cause-and-effect relationships for each resource are used to determine the magnitude of the cumulative effect resulting from all actions included in the analysis.

Step 9: Determine the magnitude and significance of cumulative effects

The analyst's primary goal is to determine the magnitude and significance of the environmental consequences of the proposed action in the context of the cumulative effects of other past, present, and future actions. The critical element in reaching this goal is defining an appropriate baseline or threshold condition of the resource, ecosystem, and human community beyond which adverse or beneficial change would cause significant degradation or enhancement of the resource, respectively.

Initially, the analyst will determine the separate effects of past, present, proposed, and other future actions. Once each group of effects is determined, cumulative effects can be calculated.

The cumulative effects of a specific resource will not necessarily be the sum of the effects of all actions. Knowing how a particular resource responds to environmental change is essential for determining the cumulative effect of multiple actions.

The significance of effects should be determined based on context and intensity. In its implementing regulations for NEPA, the Council of Environmental Quality states that "the significance of an action must be analyzed in several contexts such as society as a whole (human, national), the affected region, the affected interests, and the locality" (40 CFR 1508.27). Significance may vary with the setting of the proposed action.

Step 10: Modify or add alternatives to avoid, minimize, or mitigate significant cumulative effects

If it is determined that significant cumulative effects would occur as a result of a proposed action, the project proponent should avoid, minimize, or mitigate adverse effects by modifying or adding alternatives. The decision-maker should not overlook opportunities to enhance resources when adverse cumulative effects are not significant. By analyzing the cause-and-effect relationships resulting in cumulative effects, strategies to mitigate effects or enhance resources can be developed. For each resource, ecosystem, and human community of concern, the key to developing constructive mitigation strategies is determining which of the cause-and-effect pathways results in the greatest effect. Although mitigation of significant effects is an option, in most cases avoidance or minimization are more effective than remediating detrimental effects.

Step 11: Monitor the cumulative effects of the selected alternative and adapt management

Due to the complex nature of cumulative effects analysis, uncertainties in the analysis will always exist. Therefore, monitoring is essential to analyzing the actual effects of the proposed action and mitigation measures on the environment. Important components of a monitoring program for assessing cumulative effects include the following:

- measurable indicators of the magnitude and direction of ecological and social change
- appropriate timeframes and spatial scales
- means of assessing causality and measuring mitigation efficacy
- provisions for adaptive management

Adaptive management is a useful tool in these situations to provide a way to continually adjust management and mitigation measures in the face of new information regarding effects on the environment and should use the data gained in monitoring to inform new decisions.

References

Council on Environmental Quality. 1997. *Considering Cumulative Effects Under the National Environmental Policy Act*.
Council on Environmental Quality. June 24, 2005 Memorandum regarding *Guidance on the Consideration of Past Actions in Cumulative Effects Analysis*.
Council on Environmental Quality. 2007. *A Citizen's Guide to the NEPA*.
National Marine Fisheries Service, Northeast Regional Office. 2012. *Guidance on Cumulative Effects Analysis in Environmental Assessments and Environmental Impact Statements*.

Appendix H – Record of Decision

2017 Example

He'eia National Estuarine Research Reserve
Record of Decision

PROPOSED ACTION:

To designate sections of the He'eia estuary within the Kāne'ohe Bay region on the windward side of O'ahu in Hawai'i as a National Estuarine Research Reserve. The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) works with coastal states to establish National Estuarine Research Reserves, thereby fulfilling its mission of establishing and managing a national system of reserves that represent the various biogeographic regions and subregions of estuarine types in the United States.

DECISION:

NOAA has decided to designate the He'eia National Estuarine Research Reserve (the Reserve), the boundary of which is identified in the Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS) and the Final Management Plan and is the preferred alternative. NOAA believes that by adhering to the best management practices identified in Appendix I of the FEIS (noted in several of the approved Management Plan's objectives and actions), and by complying with the applicable requirements of the National Estuarine Research Reserve program, all practicable means to avoid or minimize environmental harm from the alternative selected have been adopted.

ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED:

1. NO ACTION - Under this alternative, NOAA would not designate the He'eia National Estuarine Research Reserve. Not designating the Reserve would ignore a need identified by the citizens of the State of Hawai'i during the designation process for the Reserve to enable better understanding and management of the coastal ecosystems of Hawai'i and to bring these areas under a more collaborative, coordinated, and unified management program. In addition, NOAA would not fulfill its goal to establish a national system of reserves that are representative of estuaries within each biogeographic region of the United States.

2. ALTERNATIVE BOUNDARIES - In addition to the No Action Alternative, NOAA considered alternative boundaries for the proposed Reserve. Specifically, NOAA considered: (a) including additional upland areas, specifically the entire Hawai'i Community Development Authority (HCDA) parcel, the City and County of Honolulu parcel, and the town pier; (b) including additional marine water areas centered around Kāne'ohe Bay reefs 7, 8, 9, and 10; and (c) limiting the boundary of the Reserve to the original nominated site boundaries.

The first of these alternative boundaries was rejected for several reasons. The 210-acre City and County of Honolulu parcel is partially zoned for residential development. The future residential development within the Reserve would be inconsistent with goals and

requirements of the National Estuarine Research Reserve System. In addition, the He'eia Kea Small Boat Harbor has multiple current commercial entities using the facilities and requires periodic maintenance dredging to keep boat access open for commercial fishing and ecotourism vessels. These uses would need to be regularly reevaluated for consistency with the applicable NOAA regulations.

The second alternative, which contains marine waters which are also included in the preferred alternative, was dismissed because it omitted terrestrial areas determined appropriate for inclusion within the designated boundary. In this alternative, the upland areas were found to be insufficient in geographic size and habitat diversity to allow for the study of different ecosystem based management approaches to address one of the Reserve's primary research questions. Specifically, the area available to support the study of native upland forest restoration approaches to ecosystem based management was not included in this alternative.

The final alternative, the original site nomination boundary, was rejected because it failed to include specific water areas and uplands that are critical for providing the Reserve with the ability to research and test different approaches to ecosystem based management that is central to the Reserve's primary research. By omitting the marine areas that included Reefs 7,8,9 and 10 and the forested uplands of the HCDA parcel, the nominated Reserve was deemed to be insufficient in size to allow for the adequate study and monitoring of different ecosystem based management approaches over time.

ENVIRONMENTALLY PREFERABLE ALTERNATIVES

All of the boundary alternatives, including the preferred alternative, are expected to result in overall beneficial impacts to the environment within the designated boundaries as the ongoing restoration and cultural practices being conducted by the site partners will benefit from the important coordinated research, long-term monitoring and educational functions enabled by a Reserve designation. Accordingly, NOAA has determined that each of the boundary alternatives above constitute an environmentally preferable alternative.

COMMENTS RECEIVED ON THE FINAL ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT

None.

PERMITS AND OTHER AUTHORIZATIONS REQUIRED

Designation of the Reserve does not require any federal permits, however, it should be noted that specific reserve projects conducted by site partners following designation may have regulatory compliance requirements under the Clean Water Act or other applicable laws. NOAA intends to coordinate, as appropriate, with the Reserve and other parties to facilitate compliance with any such requirements. . Designation of the Reserve has been deemed to be consistent with the federally approved Hawai'i Coastal Management Program. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and NOAA's National Marine Fisheries

Service determined that designation will likely have no effect on federally listed species or habitats. NOAA consulted with the Hawai'i state historic preservation officer, as required by National Historic Preservation Act, providing a no adverse effect to historic properties determination for designation of the Reserve and approval of the final management plan. The Office for Coastal Management presumed concurrence since there is no response within 30 days of receipt of letter (36 C.F.R. § 800.3(c)(4)). Additionally, NOAA sought consultations with representative Native Hawaiian organizations pursuant to National Historic Preservation Act. None requested to be a consulting party in the designation.

SIGNED: _____ DATE: 1-18-17

Kathryn D. Sullivan, Ph.D.
Under Secretary of Commerce for Oceans and Atmosphere

2010 Example

Lake Superior National Estuarine Research Reserve
Record of Decision

PROPOSED ACTION:

To designate sections of the lower St. Louis River estuary along Lake Superior in northern Wisconsin as a National Estuarine Research Reserve. The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) works with coastal states to establish National Estuarine Research Reserves, thereby fulfilling its mission of establishing and managing a national system of reserves that represent the various biogeographic regions and subregions of estuarine types in the United States.

DECISION:

NOAA has decided to designate the Lake Superior National Estuarine Research Reserve (the Reserve), the boundary of which is identified in the final environmental impact statement and the final management plan and is the preferred alternative.

ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED:

1. NO ACTION - Under this alternative, NOAA would not designate the Lake Superior National Estuarine Research Reserve. Not designating the Reserve would ignore a need repeatedly identified by the citizens of the State of Wisconsin during the designation process for the Reserve to better understand and manage the coastal ecosystems of Wisconsin and to bring these areas under a more collaborative, coordinated, and unified management program. In addition, NOAA would not be able to fulfill its mission to establish a national system of reserves that are representative of estuaries within each biogeographic region of the United States.

2. ALTERNATIVE BOUNDARIES - Several alternatives were identified in the environmental impact statements as follows: (a) remove the Pokegama-Carnegie Component; (b) include additional water areas; (c) include Hog Island and Newton Creek; and (d) remove the Wisconsin Point component.

The first of these alternative boundaries was rejected because the Pokegama-Carnegie component is rich with native vegetative habitats that would benefit from improved and coordinated stewardship. The second alternative was dismissed because including additional water areas would increase potential conflict with the future activities of the Port of Superior. The third alternative was rejected because Hog Island is geographically isolated from the key components of the reserve and the area has experienced extensive ecological changes as a result of human activities associated with the activities of the Port of Superior and the Murphy Oil Refinery at the headwaters of Newton Creek. Such changes to the area's ecological characteristics do not contribute to the representativeness of the estuarine system. Elements of this alternative remain viable in the future, where restoration activities are feasible and could expand the representative characteristics of the estuary. The final alternative, the removal of Wisconsin Point was also rejected

because inclusion of Wisconsin Point will expand opportunities for Great Lakes estuarine research with its unique geomorphology, as well as its wetland and xeric dune habitats and their status as protected state, county, or city lands. In addition, the presence of a historic Ojibwe burial ground also provides a great opportunity to highlight the rich cultural resources of the area.

COMMENTS RECEIVED ON THE FINAL ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT

None.

PERMITS AND OTHER AUTHORIZATIONS REQUIRED

Designation of the Reserve does not require any federal permits. Designation of the Reserve has been deemed to be consistent with the federally approved Wisconsin Coastal Management Program. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service has determined that designation will likely have no effect on federally listed species. The Wisconsin state historic preservation and representative tribal historic preservation officers have determined that no historic properties will be adversely affected by designation.

SIGNED: _____ DATE: OCT 18 2010

Jane Lubchenco, Ph.D.
Under Secretary of Commerce
for Oceans and Atmosphere

Appendix I – Certification of Findings

2010 Example

DESIGNATION OF THE
LAKE SUPERIOR NATIONAL ESTUARINE RESEARCH RESERVE

Consistent with the provisions of Section 315 of the Coastal Zone Management Act of 1972, as amended, 16 U.S.C. 1461, the State of Wisconsin has met the following conditions to establish the Lake Superior National Estuarine Research Reserve:

1) The St. Louis River freshwater estuary is a representative estuarine ecosystem that is suitable for long-term research and contributes to the biogeographical and typological balance of the National Estuarine Research Reserve System.

2) Wisconsin state law provides long-term protection for National Estuarine Research Reserve resources to ensure a stable environment for research.

3) Designation of lands and waters within the St. Louis River freshwater estuary as a Reserve will serve to enhance public awareness and understanding of estuarine areas and provide suitable opportunities for public education and interpretation.

4) The State of Wisconsin has complied with the requirements of the regulations relating to designation of a National Estuarine Research Reserve.

Accordingly, I hereby designate the Lake Superior National Estuarine Research Reserve, the boundary of which is specified in the final management plan.

OCT 18 2010

Jane Lubchenco, Ph.D.
Under Secretary of Commerce
for Oceans and Atmosphere

Appendix J – Important Questions and Answers for Public Meetings

QUESTION: How will the proposed reserve affect current public uses at the site?
ANSWER: Designation will not, in-and-of-itself change the current public uses of the lands and waters within a reserve. State authorities manage public uses on state lands and waters, and site land owners make decisions about the permissible uses of their land consistent with applicable state authorities. The state and/or site land owners may decide to change or modify to uses to meet specific reserve management plan goals and objectives for the site or at some future time for reasons that have yet to be determined or foreseen.

QUESTION: Will designation of the proposed reserve result in new federal regulations?
ANSWER: The designation, in-and-of-itself, will not result in any new federal regulations for the area. There are, however, existing regulatory requirements which guide how the site would be managed as a reserve. Decisions regarding land uses in the area will be determined through the reserve management plan process and be implemented by respective landowners consistent with the overall guidance provided by the Reserve System implementing regulations. As part of this process, land uses may change over time provided they are consistent with the applicable Reserve System regulations.

QUESTION: Will NOAA consider comments submitted by a Stakeholder after the close of the comment period provided in the Federal Register notice?
ANSWER: NOAA can only guarantee that relevant comments submitted during the comment period will be considered. Although NOAA retains discretion to consider relevant comments submitted outside the comment period, to ensure that comments are considered, the public should submit any comments before the (Date) close of the comment period.

QUESTION: What are the benefits of having a research reserve at the site?
ANSWER: The benefits of a reserve generally include the following:

- bringing new scientists and students from all over the U.S. to study at the site
- providing opportunity to apply for funds for facilities and land acquisition
- providing an opportunity to apply for operational funds that are currently restricted to Reserve System sites
- additional opportunities to educate k-12 students about the estuary, science, and cultural knowledge
- improved science-based information becomes available to support local decision makers
- fostering collaborations and partnerships to solve local and regional problems

QUESTION: What is the difference between Nomination and Designation for National Estuarine Research Reserves?
ANSWER: The governor of a state submits a nomination of a proposed site for a reserve to NOAA for consideration. The nomination package must include a detailed site-selection process and a description of the public participation process used to support site selection. Designation of a reserve is considered by NOAA after a NEPA review is completed and a management plan is developed for the proposed site. Designation officially recognizes the site as a reserve in the national system of estuarine research reserves, while nomination simply starts the formal process toward designation.

QUESTION: What is the difference between the federal vs. state roles in a reserve?

ANSWER: (Lead state partner) would be NOAA's partner in the day to day operation and management of the reserve. NOAA provides national programmatic support, funding, and coordination for the national estuarine research Reserve System.

QUESTION: What is the difference between a National Estuarine Research Reserve and a National Marine Sanctuary?

ANSWER: Reserve sites are operated by a state partner (i.e., state agency or University) in partnership with NOAA's Office for Coastal Management with a70-30 funding match for annual operations support using cooperative agreements. National marine sanctuaries are managed by NOAA's Office of National Marine Sanctuaries. In some instances NOAA works closely with state co-managers in national marine sanctuaries that include state waters, but as part of a national marine sanctuary, the areas are under federal protection. Reserves are established under the Coastal Zone Management Act, while National Marine Sanctuaries are established under the National Marine Sanctuaries Act. Research Reserves generally consist of state lands and waters and may include uplands, beaches and dry land associated with the estuaries. Marine sanctuaries may include state and federal waters and the submerged lands under them but do not include any dry land. Although the systems do have different legislation and purposes, they serve similar goals of place-based conservation, fostering science-based management, and working on the ground with local communities. Within the National Ocean Service, these programs are increasingly working together to share lessons across the two systems.

QUESTION: How is a research reserve site nomination different from the Sanctuary nomination process?

ANSWER: Research reserve site nominations and National Marine Sanctuary nominations are two different processes run under different authorities (Coastal Zone Management Act and National Marine Sanctuaries Act). The National Estuarine Research Reserve designation process begins with a specific nomination request from the Governor of a state to NOAA. An interested state conducts a detailed site-selection and nomination process with community input to identify the most appropriate sites for a future estuarine research reserve. The Governor of the state would then submit the nomination of a proposed reserve site to NOAA for consideration. If the nomination is accepted by NOAA, the state then develops a management plan for the site and NOAA completes an environmental review of the proposed designation, culminating in designation of a new National Estuarine Research Reserve. Sanctuaries may be either nominated by the public or established by Congress through legislation (e.g., Humpback Whale National Marine Sanctuary). The Sanctuary Nomination Process is a community-based, grassroots process that allows interested individuals and organizations to nominate marine and Great Lakes areas for NOAA to consider as a national marine sanctuary. The Governor of a state or a state agency may be part of the community that submits a national marine sanctuary nomination. Once a Sanctuary Nomination is received, NOAA will review to consider whether to add the nominated site to an inventory of areas for possible national marine sanctuary designation through a public process outlined in the National Marine Sanctuaries Act. For more information on the sanctuary nomination process visit: *www.nominate.noaa.gov*.

QUESTION: What are the next steps after the public comment period?

ANSWER: Upon completion of the public comment period of the proposed reserve's Draft Environmental Impact Statement and Draft Management Plan, NOAA and lead state partner would proceed to the next phase of the reserve designation process, which includes considering and responding to the relevant comments received from the public. If NOAA determines that designation is appropriate, a final version of the reserve management plan and environmental impact statement would be released, along with NOAA's response to any public comments received.

Concurrently, NOAA and the lead state partner also would finalize a memorandum of understanding that will guide the federal-state partnership and the University will have a similar arrangement with all the key partners at the state level governing those partnerships. Upon completion of the NEPA review and the development of a final reserve management plan, the NOAA Administrator will review the final package and decide whether to issue a finding of designation officially designating the reserve.

QUESTION: What is NOAA's plan to provide funding for the new reserve site?
ANSWER: Once a reserve is designated, it is eligible to receive funds from NOAA under the Coastal Zone Management Act, which are allocated by equal share amounts among operational reserves. Funds from NOAA for any newly designated reserve, however, are not guaranteed and depend on appropriation levels from Congress and priority to ensure operation of existing reserves. NOAA will consider the resource needs of the whole research Reserve System in planning for future years' budget requests.

Appendix K – NOAA Introductory Remarks for Draft Environmental Impact Statement and Draft Management Plan Public Meeting

PUBLIC HEARING INTRODUCTORY REMARKS

He‘eia National Estuarine Research Reserve

(6:00 PM, Thursday, October 6, 2016)

GOOD EVENING LADIES AND GENTLEMEN. I’D LIKE TO WELCOME YOU TO THIS PUBLIC HEARING WHICH HAS BEEN CALLED FOR THE PURPOSE OF RECEIVING TESTIMONY ON THE PROPOSAL TO ESTABLISH THE HE’EIA NATIONAL ESTUARINE RESEARCH RESERVE, ON THE DRAFT ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT DISCUSSING THIS PROPOSAL AND THE PLAN THAT WILL BE USED TO MANAGE THE RESEARCH RESERVE.

MY NAME IS JOHN KING AND I AM A DEPUTY DIRECTOR OF NOAA’S OFFICE FOR COASTAL MANAGEMENT, AN AGENCY OF THE NATIONAL OCEANIC AND ATMOSHPERHIC ADMINISTRATION, IN THE U.S. DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE AND WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH THE STATE OF HAWAI’I’S OFFICE OF PLANNING. THE OFFICE FOR COASTAL MANAGEMENT IS RESPONSIBLE FOR ADMINISTERING THE PROVISIONS OF THE FEDERAL COASTAL ZONE MANAGEMENT ACT OF 1972 THAT PROVIDES IN PART, THE AUTHORITY TO DESIGNATE AND SUPPORT THE STATE MANAGEMENT OF ESTUARINE RESEARCH RESERVES.

WITH ME TODAY ARE MS. JOELLE GORE, THE DIRECTOR OF THE STEWARDSHIP DIVISION IN THE OFFICE FOR COASTAL MANAGEMENT, UNDER WHICH FEDERAL SUPPORT FOR THE PROPOSED HE’EIA RESEARCH RESERVE RESIDES. MS. GORE WILL HAVE AN OPPORTUNITY TO ADDRESS YOU SHORTLY.

THIS MEETING IS BEING HELD PURSUANT TO SECTION 921.13(d) OF THE ESTUARINE RESERCH RESERVE REGULATIONS WHICH YOU CAN SEE ON IN APPENDIX A ON PAGE 1-10 OF THE DRAFT MANAGEMENT PLAN. THE HEARING ALSO SATISFIES PART OF THE PROCEDURES OF THE NATIONAL ENVIRONMENTAL POLICY ACT OF 1969, WHICH CALLS FOR THE PREPARATION OF DRAFT AND FINAL ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENTS CONCERNING PROPOSED MAJOR FEDERAL ACTIONS THAT MAY SIGNIFICANTLY AFFECT THE ENVIRONMENT. IN THIS CASE, THE FEDERAL ACTION INCLUDES THE DESIGNATION OF THE HE’EIA RESERVE UNDER THE PROVISIONS OF THE COASTAL ZONE MANAGEMENT ACT OF 1972 ENSURING A JOINT STATE-FEDERAL PARTNERSHIP AND THE APPROVAL OF A MANAGEMENT FRAMEWORK DESCRIBED IN THE MANAGEMENT PLAN FOR THE RESEARCH RESERVE.

THIS PUBLIC MEETING IS BEING HELD AS PART OF THE PROCESS TO CONSIDER THE ENVIRONMENI'AL EFFECTS OF THE PROPOSED RESEARCH RESERVE. The Office for Coastal Management AWARDED A PREVIOUS FINANCIAL GRANT TO THE STATE OF HAWAI'I'S OFFICE OF PLANNING TO CONDUCT A PRE-DESIGNATION PLANNING STUDY AND TO COORDINATE WITH LOCAL, STATE, AND FEDERAL AGENCIES AND PUBLIC INTEREST GROUPS FOR THE CREATION OF A RESEARCH RESERVE MANAGEMENT PLAN. THIS OFFICE, THE OFFICE OF PLANNING, AND THE UNIVERSITY OF HAWAI'I INSTITUTE OF MARINE BIOLOGY HAVE PREPARED THE DRAFT ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT THAT IS THE SUBJECT OF THIS HEARING.

ATERNATIVES TO FEDERAL APPROVAL, BOUNDARIES, ALTERNATIVE SITES AND TAKING NO ACTION ARE PRESENTED AND EVALUATED IN THE ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT ALONG WITH THEIR POTENTIAL ENVIRONMENTAL CONSEQUENCES. THE PREFERRED ALTERNATIVE PRESENTED FOR THE HE'EIA ESTUARINE RESEARCH RESERVE DOES NOT REPRESENT A FINAL DECISION. THIS HEARING PROVIDES AN OPPORTUNITY FOR ALL INTERESTED PARTIES TO PRESENT THEIR VIEWS ON THE ADEQUACY OF THE ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT AND THE PREFERRED RESERVE DESIGNATION ALTERNATIVE.

NOTICE OF AVAILABILITY OF THE DRAFT ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT AND A NOTICE OF THIS PUBLIC MEETING WAS PRINTED IN THE *FEDERAL REGISTER* ON FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 2. NEWSPAPER ANNOUNCEMENTS ON THIS HEARING APPEARED IN X LOCAL NEWSPAPERS:

ELECTRONIC COPIES OF THE DRAFT ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT WERE MADE AVAILABLE TO INDIVIDUALS AND INTERESTED PARTIES IN ADVANCE OF THIS HEARING AT *COAST.NOAA.GOV/CZM/COMPLIANCE*. THERE ARE A LIMITED NUMBER OF COPIES AVAILABLE FOR YOU TO VIEW TODAY AT THE STORY TABLES.

COMMENTS RECEIVED DURING THIS HEARING, AND WRITTEN COMMENTS RECEIVED BY OCTOBER 17, WILL BE FULLY CONSIDERED BY APPROPRIATE NOAA DECISION MAKERS IN DETERMINING WHETHER OR NOT TO ESTABLISH THE ESTUARINE RESEARCH RESERVE. RESPONSES TO ALL COMMENTS WILL BE PROVIDED IN THE FINAL ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT. AGAIN, THE PERIOD FOR RECEIVING PUBLIC COMMENTS ON THIS DOCUMENT CLOSES ON OCTOBER 17TH.

WRITTEN COMENTS MAY BE SUBMITTED USING ONE OF THREE METHODS. THESE INCLUDE ELECTRONICALLY, BY SUBMITTING COMMENTS THROUGH THE FEDERAL E-RULEMAKING PORTAL. BY MAILING COMMENTS SHOULD BE DIRECTED TO THE PROGRAM OFFICIAL IDENTIFIED BELOW. OR LASTLY BY FILLING IN THE COMMENT SHEETS PROVIDED AND DEPOSITING THEM IN THE COMMENT BOX ON THE TABLE IN THE BY THE ENTRANCE. I CAN PROVIDE THIS INFORMATION AGAIN LATER FOLLOWING THE MEETING FOR ANYONE WHO MAY BE INTERESTED IN SENDING WRITTEN COMMENTS ON THE ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT.

JOELLE GORE, STEWARDSHIP DIVISION CHIEF

OFFICE FOR COASTAL MANAGEMENT

NATIONAL OCEAN SERVICE, NOAA

1305 EAST WEST HIGHWAY, N/ORM2, ROOM 10622

SILVER SPRING, MD 20910.

BEFORE RECEIVING YOUR COMMENTS ON THIS ESTUARINE RESEARCH RESERVE PROPOSAL, I WOULD LIKE TO ASK MS. JOELLE GORE TO PROVIDE YOU WITH A BRIEF BACKGROUND ON THE NATIONAL ESTUARINE RESEARCH RESERVE PROGRAM AND A SUMMARY OF THE IMPACTS WE ANTICIPATE WITH APPROVAL OF THE LAKE SUPERIOR NATIONAL ESTUARINE RESEARCH RESERVE AND ANNUAL FINANCIAL GRANTS TO ASSIST WITH IMPLEMENTATION OF THE PROGRAM.

HERE ARE THE PROCEDURES WE INTEND TO USE FOR THIS MEETING. ALL PERSONS HAVE BEEN ASKED TO SIGN ATTENDANCE CARDS AND INDICATE IF THEY WOULD LIKE TO MAKE A STATEMENT. IF YOU HAVE NOT FILLED ONE OF THESE OUT, PLEASE RAISE YOUR HAND AND WE WILL PROVIDE ONE. WE WOULD LIKE EACH SPEAKER TO MAKE THEIR PRESENTATION FROM THE TABLE SO WE AND THE AUDIENCE AND THE RECORDER CAN HEAR YOU MORE CLEARLY.

A VERBATIM TRANSCRIPT OF THIS HEARING WILL BE TAKEN AND WILL BE USED TO ASSIST IN THE PREPARATION OF A MEETING SUMMARY. IF YOU HAVE A PREPARED STATEMENT, I WOULD APPRECIATE A COPY FOR OUR RECORDS.

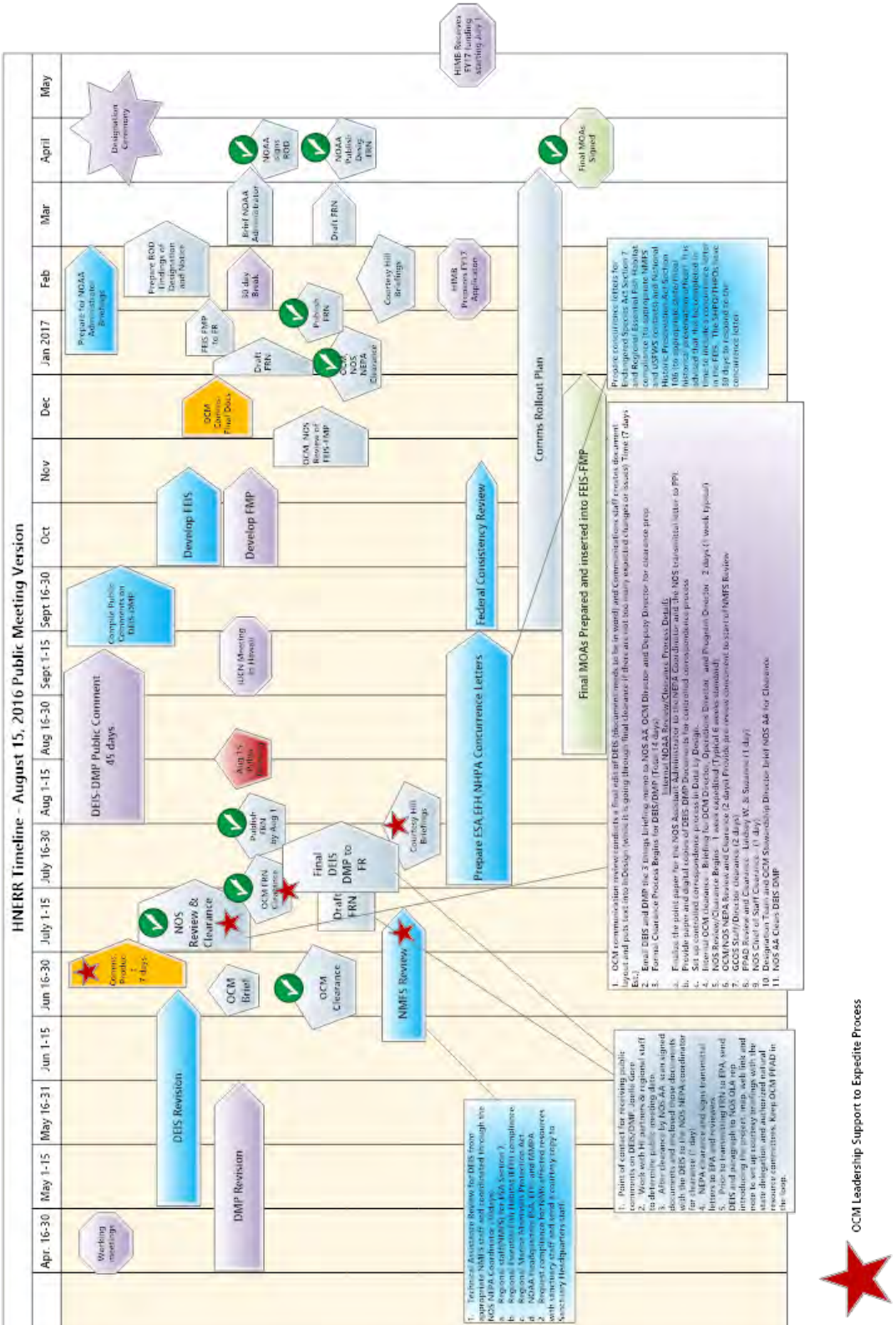
ONLY THOSE MAKING STATEMENTS OR SENDING COMMENTS WILL RECEIVE COPIES OF THE FINAL ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT OR YOU MAY SPECIFICALLY REQUEST A COPY BEFORE YOU LEAVE TODAY.

IT IS IMPORTANT TO REMEMBER THAT THIS MEETING IS FOR THE PURPOSE OF RECEIVING YOUR COMMENTS ONLY. THERE WILL BE NO RESPONSE TO YOUR COMMENTS ON BEHALF OF THE OFFICE FOR COASTAL MANAGEMENT, OP, OR HIMB AT THIS TIME. THAT BEING SAID, YOUR COMMENTS ARE IMPORTANT IN BETTER UNDERSTANDING POTENTIAL IMPACTS OF A RESEARCH RESERVE SITE. RESPONSES TO ALL COMMENTS WILL BE PROVIDED AFTER THEIR FULL CONSIDERATION IN THE FINAL ANALYSIS AND DECISION-MAKING PROCESS AND YOU WILL SEE THOSE RESPONSES IN THE FINAL ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT. SHOULD YOU HAVE ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS OR REQUESTS FOR CLAIRIFICATIONS, ROB, MYSELF OR THE OTHER STAFF PRESENT MAY ASSIST YOU AFTER THE FORMAL PART OF THE HEARING.

WE APPRECIATE YOUR ATTENDANCE HERE TODAY AND LOOK FORWARD TO YOUR COMMENTS, OBSERVATIONS, AND EXPRESSION OF SUPPORT OR CONCERN. ARE THERE ANY QUESTIONS REGARDING THE PROCEDURES OF THIS HEARING?

IF NOT, WE CAN PROCEED WITH THE FIRST SPEAKER. PLEASE STATE YOUR NAME AND AFFILIATION FOR THE RECORD.

Appendix L – Detailed Designation Timeline Example



Appendix M – Detailed Designation Process

National Estuarine Research Reserve Designation

Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) and Draft Management Plan (DMP) Step-by-step Process

1. Site Nomination document approved by NOAA
2. Notice of intent (Attachment 1) to prepare draft Environmental Impact Statement/Management Plan and notice of scoping meeting is created by Office for Coastal Management staff for publication in the *Federal Register* Notice. The notice of intent should:
    a. Described the proposed action
    b. Provide information in planned scoping mtgs. or hearings
    c. Provide contact information
3. Publish a notice of intent in the *Federal Register* at least 15 days before scoping meeting.
4. State partner advertises in local media outlets, newspapers, and administrative requirements and sends letters to potential stakeholders about the scoping meeting concurrently with federal action.
5. Public scoping meeting is held
6. State partner, in collaboration with NOAA, develops and prepares a Draft EIS and Draft MP. An EIS contains (see NOAA NEPA guidance for further details):
    a. Cover sheet
    b. Summary or Executive summary
    c. Table of Contents
    d. Purpose and Need statement – brief statement explaining why this EIS is being developed
    e. Description of proposed actions and alternatives (remember to include "No-Action Alternative") Also, identify the preferred alternative
    f. Affected Environment
    g. Environmental Consequences
    h. Mitigation measures (if applicable)
    i. List of Preparers
    j. Distribution List
    k. Index
    l. Appendices
7. State partner and NOAA address stakeholder concerns identified in scoping meetings in development of Draft EIS and Draft Management Plan
8. Send state or tribal historic preservation officer preliminary Sect 106 contact letter –NOS NEPA Coordinator
9. Review team conducts an internal edit of the draft document
10. Determine the need for printed versions of the draft EIS document for distribution (local determination).
11. Work with state partner to get distribution list for the DEIS/DMP
12. **Preliminary NOAA review for DEIS/DMP (Total 3 months)**
13. Set up meetings to brief Office for Coastal Management director and NOS assistant administrator for Office for Coastal Management and NOS clearance process
14. NOS NEPA Coordinator Review of draft DEIS/DMP (**2 weeks**)
15. Create draft the briefing documents (e.g., three-things memo) for Office for Coastal Management Director and NOS Administrator. Be sure to include the following attachments: talking points, a sitemap, summary of alternatives, and any issues of concern.
16. Brief Ecosystems Program Manager and Stewardship Division Director on DEIS/DMP Review
17. Office for Coastal Management review by Ecosystems Program Manager, Stewardship Division director, Planning, Policy, and Communication Division director – **3 weeks maximum –** Additional documents for review include the 3-things briefing memo with note of briefings scheduled
18. Revise DEIS/DMP based on preliminary Office for Coastal Management comments

19. Request a Technical Assistance Review for DEIS from appropriate NMFS staff and coordinated through the NOS environmental compliance coordinator (30days) this was a change from previously required 2 weeks
    a. Regional contacts (NMFS) for Endangered Species Act Section 7,
    b. Regional contacts for Essential Fish Habitat compliance,
    c. Regional contacts for Marine Mammal Protection Act.
    d. NOAA Headquarters ESA, Essential Fish Habitat, and Marine Mammal Protection Act contacts
20. Concurrent with NMFS Technical Review - Request compliance with National Marine Sanctuary-affected resources with sanctuary staff and send a courtesy copy to Sanctuary Headquarters staff.
21. Revise DEIS/DMP based on NMFS Technical Review comments
22. General Counsel–Ocean and Coasts Section (GCOS) Review of the DEIS/DMP (**1 week**)
23. Revise DEIS/DMP based on preliminary GCOS comments
24. Office for Coastal Management communication review conducts a final edit of the executive summary (needs to be in word) Time (**14-21 days Est.)**
25. Email DEIS and DMP and the 3-things briefing memo to NOS assistant administrator, Office for Coastal Management director and deputy director, and GCOS with note of briefings scheduled
26. **Formal Clearance Process Begins for DEIS/DMP (Total 7 weeks)**
27. Enter document into Data by Design
28. Internal Office for Coastal Management clearance process – Briefing for Office for Coastal Management director and deputy director – **1 week**
29. NOS Review/Clearance Begins (**Total 6 weeks standard**)
30. NOS environmental compliance coordinator Pre-review (**2 weeks**)
31. GCOS staff/director clearance (**1 week**)
32. Policy and Constituent Affairs Division Review and Clearance - (**1 week**)
33. NOS chief of staff clearance – **(1 week)**
34. Designation Team and Ecosystems Program Manager brief NOS assistant administrator for clearance
35. Internal NOAA Review/Clearance Process Details
    a. Finalize the point paper from the NOS assistant administrator to the NOS environmental compliance coordinator.
    b. Documents
    c. Set up controlled correspondence process in *Data by Design* with NOS correspondence Unit. Reviewers should be:
        i. Correspondence Unit
        ii. GCOS
        iii. Correspondence Unit
        iv. PPAD
        v. Correspondence Unit
        vi. NOS Chief of Staff
        vii. Correspondence Unit
        viii. NOS deputy assistant administrator
        ix. NOS assistant administrator
        x. PPAD Contact
        xi. NOS NEPA Coordinator
        NOTE: after NOS assistant administrator *signs it, make corrections to the DEIS and then work with Office for Coastal Management and NOS environmental compliance coordinator with transmittal letter and Dear Reviewer letter*
        xii. Enclose the point paper and transmittal letter.
        xiii. Office for Coastal Management or NOS environmental compliance coordinator prepares all documents that accompany the DEIS – that is, 1) the "Dear Reviewer" letter and 2) the "EPA" [Environmental Protection Agency] letter. These can be found at *www.intranet.nepa.noaa.gov*. When those are ready, forward them electronically to *ppi.nepa@noaa.gov* to review.
36. NOS assistant administrator clearance
37. Official NOS environmental compliance coordinator Clearance- After clearance by NOS assistant administrator, scan signed documents and enclose those documents with the DEIS to the NOS environmental compliance coordinator and send a copy to Office for Coastal Management environmental compliance coordinator staff and the Ecosystems Program Manager for official 14 day review period (**2 weeks**)
38. NOS environmental compliance coordinator clearance and signs transmittal letters to EPA and reviewers

39. Before transmitting *Federal Register* Notice to EPA electronically, Office for Coastal Management sends DEIS and paragraph to NOS OLA rep introducing the project, map, web link and note that says that we would like to set up courtesy briefings with the state delegation and authorized natural resource committees. Keep the Office for Coastal Management's Policy and Constituent Affairs Division liaison in the loop.
40. Prepare concurrence letters for Endangered Species Act Section 7 and Regional Essential Fish Habitat compliance (to appropriate NMFS and USFWS contacts) and National Historic Preservation Act Section 106 (to appropriate state or tribal historical preservation officer). It is advised that this be done in time to include the concurrence letter in the FEIS. *The state or tribal historic preservation officers have 30 days to respond to the concurrence letter.*
41. Determine who will be the point of contact for receiving public comments on DEIS/DMP. Office for Coastal Management Stewardship Division Director or Designee
42. Work with partners and regional staff to determine public meeting date.
43. Prepare *Federal Register* Notice text announcing public meeting on DEIS/DMP. Only the *Federal Register* text is necessary. Signatory authority resides with the Office for Coastal Management Director.
    a. Reviewers (in order) Ecosystems program manager – clearance; GCOS – clearance, Stewardship Division director – clearance, Office for Coastal Management deputy director – clearance, Office for Coastal Management director – clearance and signature.
44. The *Federal Register* notice needs to be delivered electronically to EPA (not NOAA) for publication. *https://www.epa.gov/nepa/environmental-impact-statement-filing-guidance* If the *Federal Register* Notice will be filed on Friday (if delivered before 2pm) and published the following Friday
45. Make sure you are ready to email DEIS/DMP to interested parties concurrent with delivery to EPA. File *Federal Register* Notice and email copies to interested parties and to the NEPA distribution list posted on the Council of Environmental Quality (CEQ) website.
46. **EPA announces availability of DEIS/DMP** in *Federal Register* Notice (**45-day minimum public comment period**) at least 15 days before meeting date. State partner advertises public meeting in local media outlets concurrently with NOAA notice.
47. Public meeting(s) held at least 15 days after Federal Register notice publishes.
48. Public meeting(s) comments received by the closing date (45days after Federal Register notice published) are incorporated into Final EIS/FMP. Add appendix with public comments to the document.
49. NOAA drafts a CZMA federal consistency determination document. Send federal consistency determination to state for review and concurrence. Try to complete at least 90 days before the federal action. If the timing is less than 90 days, get an email confirmation from the state that the adjusted timeframe is acceptable.
50. State creates a draft/final MOU(s) between state partner and reserve partners establishing roles and responsibilities (must be finalized before designation but should not be signed in the FEIS/FMP). Enter MOU into NOS MOU database.
51. Office for Coastal Management staff compiles public comments. Add an appendix to EIS that contains scanned copies of all public comments.
52. Note –Rollout Plan and invitations for the NOAA assistant administrator to attend the designation ceremony need to be made 3 months before designation! Fill out an event request form and contact NOS Program Coordination Office and Policy and Constituent Affairs Division staff.
53. Office for Coastal Management staff prepares final draft of Final EIS/Management Plan incorporating responses to public comments by state partner with the help of NOAA (**2 months**)
54. NOAA Review of draft FEIS/FMP (**4 months or less**)
55. Office for Coastal Management environmental compliance coordinator review of draft FEIS/FMP (Ecosystems Program manager, Stewardship director/deputy, GCOS, Policy and Constituent Affairs Division, NOS environmental compliance coordinator, etc. as noted above) **2 weeks maximum**.
56. The Final EIS/MP includes an unsigned Memorandum of Agreement between NOAA and the state partner and ideally, signed concurrence for ESA and NHPA requirements. If there are any issues re: endangered species, historical preservation, and/or fed consistency, these concurrence letters should be included in the FEIS. Otherwise it is not mandatory, but still encouraged.
57. ESA section 7 and NHPA section 106 consultations complete and concurrence letters received from appropriate USFWS, NMFS, state or tribal historic preservation officer and other officials.
58. Upon complete of NOAA review. Office for Coastal Management Communications staff makes final edits to the executive summary. (14 days)
59. After a final review by NOAA, NOAA or state partner prints some copies of FEIS/Final Management Plan for distribution but makes the document available electronically to those persons that provided comment, to other interested parties, and to the NEPA distribution list posted on the Council of Environmental Quality website.
60. Final package includes:
    a. FEIS/FMP that incorporates:

i. DEIS comments
ii. MOUbetween NOAA and state partner, unsigned
iii. MOU(s) between state partner and other reserve partners, unsigned
iv. Concurrence letters for ESA and NHPA (ideally) and Federal Consistency Letter
v. List of persons receiving the FEIS/FMP
vi. Index and appendices, as appropriate
vii. Cover sheet that states the document is an EIS consolidated with a Management Plan

61. After package is reviewed (**14 days**) and signed off by NOS environmental compliance coordinator, the package must be uploaded to e-NEPA at EPA for filing. See https://www.epa.gov/nepa/environmental-impact-statement-filing-guidance for help. The Federal Register notice will be filed on Friday (if delivered before 2pm) and published the following Friday
62. FEIS/FMP is emailed to those persons that provided comment, to other interested parties, and to the NEPA distribution list posted on the Council of Environmental Quality website.
63. **EPA publishes the Notice of Availability of FEIS/FMP** in the *Federal Register* Notice. The date of publishing starts a 30 day public "cooling-off" period.
64. During cooling-off period:
    a. Final MOU signed by NOAA and state partner. Five copies are signed by Office for Coastal Management Director and sent to appropriate state official for signature. State partner returns three signed copies to the Office for Coastal Management.
    b. Separate MOU(s) signed by state partner and other reserve partners. NOAA receives a signed copy
    c. State begins to organize a designation ceremony with assistance from Office for Coastal Management Policy, Planning and Communications staff.
65. After cooling-off period: Office for Coastal Management prepares record of decision, findings of designation, notice of designation.
66. **NOAA prepares *Federal Register* Notice** from NOAA announcing Reserve Designation, the Consistency Determination, and the NEPA Record of Decision. This *Federal Register* notice is channeled through NOAA, not EPA.
67. Schedule briefings with the NOAA Administrator
68. Coordinate with Office for Coastal Management Policy, Planning and Communications to develop a communications strategy (press release (reviewed by NOAA PA, web rollout, etc). Communications person will also help prepare for the ceremony, assembling a briefing package for NOAA Admin re: the ceremony, sending a NOAA flag, printing ceremonial certificate, obtaining a gift for the site (map), etc.
69. Prepare briefing materials and brief NOAA administrator on designation and the ceremony, may require 1-3 briefings. Be sure to use the briefing templates provided at http://www.dco.noaa.gov/correspondence.html or contact the NOS Program Coordination Office
70. NOAA Administrator briefed and signs Record of Decision and Findings of Designation making the site officially a National Estuarine Research Reserve.
71. NOAA publishes a notice in the *Federal Register* announcing the Reserve Designation, the Consistency Determination, and the NEPA Record of Decision.
72. Designation ceremony is held and state partner announces designation in local media outlets.

Appendix N – Compliance with the Endangered Species Act

Compliance with the Endangered Species Act
May 2017
The purpose of the Endangered Species Act (ESA) is to protect and recover imperiled species and the ecosystems upon which they depend. It is administered by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) and the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS). The USFWS has primary responsibility for terrestrial and freshwater organisms, while the NMFS has primary responsibility for marine species. Some species fall under both agencies, depending on location of affect (i.e. sea turtles).

Under the ESA, species may be listed as either endangered or threatened. "Endangered" means a species is in danger of extinction throughout all or a significant portion of its range. "Threatened" means a species is likely to become endangered within the foreseeable future. All species of plants and animals, except pest insects, are eligible for listing as endangered or threatened. For the purposes of the ESA, Congress defined species to include subspecies, varieties, and, for vertebrates, distinct population segments.

Overview of the Section 7 Interagency Consultation Process
Section 7(a)(2) of the ESA states, "Each Federal agency shall ensure that any action authorized, funded, or carried out . . . is not likely to jeopardize the continued existence of any endangered species or threatened species or result in the destruction or adverse modification of [critical] habitat . . **".** Under ESA Sec. 7., federal agencies must:

- Determine whether listed/proposed species or designated/proposed critical habitat may be in the action area;
- Determine the effects of the action on the species/critical habitat;
- Explore ways to modify the action to reduce, remove adverse effects or benefit the species/critical habitat; and
- Make a determination if the project will have no effect or there is informal or formal consultation required

Step 1: Determining the Action Area:
To ensure ESA compliance, NOAA must evaluate all areas or locations to be affected directly or indirectly by the federal action. The "action area" can be much larger than the immediate project area involved in the action. To determine the "action area" for ESA consultation related to grants and funded projects or actions within the Office for Coastal Management and the Coral Reef Conservation Program, the federal program office or Office for Coastal Management Coral Reef Conservation Program point of contact will
1. Identify the range of impacts from the proposed activity, such as

- Ground disturbance (including access roads)
- Changes in water quality and quantity (both surface and underground water)
- Air quality
- Lighting effects
- Noise disturbance

2. Draw a line around all of the affected areas identified under action #1 to define the action area.

High-resolution maps can be Generate from the U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) webpage (https://viewer.nationalmap.gov/basic/#startUp). Select "USGS topo" as the data set on the upper left, 7.5 minute

(i.e., 1:24,000) will be preselected in the right, upper legend. Drag a box using the box icon within the map to select an area (or enter coordinates, or zoom in, etc.) and then press the "Find Maps" button on the upper left hand corner under "Datasets." All of the available 1:24,000 maps in that selected area will pop up.

Step 2: Making an Initial Determination (i.e., No Effect, May Affect, Not Likely to Adversely Affect or Likely to Adversely Affect):

Once the action area has been identified, staff is expected to obtain a list of potential endangered or threatened species in that location using the search function on the USFWS' Endangered Species webpage (http://www.fws.gov/endangered/index.html) and/or contacting the appropriate NMFS regional office.

The USFWS webpage includes species habitat preferences and life history for listed species in the 50 states and is searchable by state, county or species.

For projects in the territories, staff should contact the NMFS or USFWS office in that jurisdiction to solicit this information.

Using this information, and other information/documentation that you may have about the project (including permits), consider the following questions:

1. Is the proposed action going to be in or affecting the habitat type(s) preferred by the endangered or threatened species?
2. If so, will the species be exposed to project impacts?
3. If so, will the action potentially affect the species?

You will make one of the following conclusions: **(*)**

1*. There are **no listed species** or critical habitat in your project area.

2*. There **may be listed species** or critical habitat in your project area, but there will be **no adverse effect** on them because

a. The project will be conducted in the off-season;

b. The methods being implemented will not affect the listed species; or

c. The applicant has a valid ESA permit for the activity that details the allowable activities.

3*. There **are listed species** or critical habitat in your project area, but there will be **no adverse effect** on **them because proper best management practices** will be used.

4*. There **are listed species** or critical habitat in your project area, and there **will be an adverse effect** on them or critical habitat.

Once you have made your conclusion, you will proceed with the consultation process.

Step 3: Conducting the Consultation Process

If you conclude 1*, this is a **No Effect** determination. Document with a Memo to the Record, including information to support this conclusion (why is there no effect to species or habitat). Upload the memo into Grants Online or C-Request or maintain with the administrative record for the action. Nothing else is required.

If you conclude 2* or 3*, this is a **May affect but not likely to adversely affect (MANLAA)** determination and includes beneficial, discountable, or insignificant effects to species or habitat. This determination requires written concurrence from NMFS or USFWS, as applicable.

1. Send an email or formal letter to the appropriate regional NMFS or USFWS office requesting concurrence. Provide the following information:

- Project description
- Action area, maps, diagrams
- Listed species
- Project effects on each species, and reason, including those that are discountable, insignificant, discountable or wholly beneficial.

2. The NMFS or USFWS office will generally respond promptly and agree with NOAA's initial determination. Occasionally, they may ask for additional information.

3. Infrequently, NMFS or USFWS will respond with a concurrence as long as certain best management practices or other conditions are followed to ensure no adverse effects. In this case, staff must work with the state, grantee, or principal investigator to ensure they understand the additional requirements and receive written agreement that best management practices will be followed.

4. Upload the original letter to NMFS or USFWS, as well as their concurrence document and other supporting documents, into Grants Online or C-Request or maintain with the administrative record for the action.

If you conclude 4*, **OR** NMFS or USFWS does not concur, you have a **Likely to Adversely Affect** determination and you must request Formal Consultation with NMFS or USFWS. Historically, the Office for Coastal Management has not funded projects that required formal consultation for a number of reasons, including the lack of staff resources necessary to complete the consultation. You should consult leadership and work with the state or awardee to identify another project that can be completed without the added requirements of formal consultation. Formal Consultation can take many months to complete and the process is as follows.

1. Once you have provided a complete project description, the NMFS or USFWS has 30 days to determine if the request is complete. If not, you will need to provide the specific information needed.
2. If the request is complete, the NMFS or USFWS has 90 days from the receipt of request to complete formal consultation and 45 days to prepare the biological opinion (135 days total) BEFORE the project may proceed.
3. Upload the completed biological opinion, and other correspondence, into Grants Online or C-Request or maintain with the administrative record for the action.

For more information, see the ESA Section 7 Consultation Handbook: *www.fws.gov/**endangered**/esa-library/pdf/esa_section7_**handbook**.pdf*
USFWS - https://www.fws.gov/endangered/what-we-do/consultations-overview.htm
USFWS IPaC - https://ecos.fws.gov/ecp/
NMFS - http://www.nmfs.noaa.gov/pr/laws/esa/

Appendix O – Compliance with the National Historic Preservation Act

Compliance with the National Historic Preservation Act, May 2017
The National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA) of 1966 established a comprehensive program to preserve the historical and cultural foundation of the nation as a living part of community life. Section 106 of the NHPA is a crucial part of that program that requires consideration of historic preservation in the many projects with federal involvement that take place every day across the nation.

Complying with Section 106 is a federal agency responsibility and, while applicants may be asked to carry out some of the tasks for completing a Section 106 review, the federal agency remains responsible for all findings and determinations.

Overview of the NHPA Section 106 Consultation Process
Section 106 requires federal agencies to consider the effects on historic properties of projects they carry out, assist, permit, license, or approve ("undertakings" as defined by 36 CFR 800.16). Federal agencies must also provide the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation a reasonable opportunity to comment on such undertakings before the approval of the expenditure of any federal funds on the undertaking or before the issuance of any license. Agencies comply with Section 106 through the process in the implementing regulations, "Protection of Historic Properties" (36 CFR Part 800).

Historic properties are any prehistoric or historic districts, sites, buildings, structures, or objects that are listed in the National Register of Historic Places, which is maintained by the National Park Service. Historic properties may also be eligible for listing depending on the property's age, integrity and significance. Also included are any artifacts, records, and remains (surface or subsurface) that are related to and located within historic properties and any properties of traditional religious and cultural importance to tribes or Native Hawaiian organizations.

A fundamental goal of the Section 106 process is to ensure that federal agencies consult with interested parties to identify and evaluate historic properties, assess the effects of their undertakings on historic properties or resources, and attempt to negotiate an outcome that will balance project needs and historic preservation values.

Conducting the Section 106 Process

Step 1: Establish if Federal Action is an Undertaking
The first step in the Section 106 review process requires the federal agency to determine whether the proposed project is an undertaking (36 CFR 800.3(a)).
An undertaking is defined as "a project, activity, or program funded in whole or in part by a federal agency, including those carried out by or on behalf of a federal agency, those carried out with federal financial assistance, and those requiring a federal permit, license, or approval." (36 CFR 800.16) Once a federal agency determines it has an undertaking, it must determine whether that undertaking is a type of activity that has the potential to affect historic properties, assuming such properties are present. The following questions can help an agency determine whether it has an undertaking that may require Section 106 review.

- Is a federally owned or federally controlled property involved in the project, such as a military base, park, forest, office building, post office, or courthouse? Will approval be required to use federal lands for a right-of-way or associated activity?
- Will a project that is receiving federal funds, grants, or loans involve any bricks and mortar activities? Will it involve ground or sediment disturbance or excavation? Will it change or restrict existing land use in the future?
- Does the project require a federal permit, license, or approval to cross wetlands, operate a dam or wind turbines, or to site a telecommunications tower? Does the project involve filling wetlands or affect navigable waterways that requires a Corps of Engineers permit?
- Does a privately funded undertaking require the use of federal lands to connect a linear activity such as a gas or oil pipeline or broadband? Has the applicant been advised to obtain a federal permit, approval, or license?

It the answer is "no" to all of the above, the action is not an undertaking. Document your conclusion in a memo to the file and upload into Grants Online or C-Request or maintain with in the administrative record for the action. No further action is required to comply with Section 106.

If the answer is "yes" to any of the above, the action is an undertaking. In general, the Office for Coastal Management provides federal funds to support program implementation. These financial assistance awards include a variety of different project types. It is recommended that the Office for Coastal Management consider federal funding to be an "undertaking." Continue with Step 2.

Step 2: Making the Initial Determination

If the action has no potential to cause effects on historic properties or resources, even assuming that such historic properties were present, no further Section 106 review is required.

1. Example activities that have no potential to cause effects include: staffing, planning, administration, feasibility studies, engineering design, preparation of bid documents or permit applications.
2. Document your determination in a memo for the record and upload into Grants Online or C-Request or maintain in the administrative record for the project.

All other determinations will require written consultation.

Step 3: Identification of Historic Properties or Resources, including Tribal

1. Define the Area of Potential Effect for the project. The Area of Potential Effect is a geographic area within which a project may directly or indirectly affect historic properties. It should include areas that may result in ground disturbance; visible or audible disturbances; or changes in public access, traffic patterns or land use. The Area of Potential Effect may be larger than the project area.
    a. Provide this information on a high-resolution map (1:24,000 or USGS quad map)
2. Identify any historic properties in the Area of Potential Effect. Historic properties can be found through a variety of methods, including state or tribal databases, local historic societies, libraries or local government archives.
3. The National Park Service maintains the listing of every property listed in the National Register. They may also have information on properties that have been determined to be eligible for listing and have been nominated for, but not yet listed on the National Register. (*http://www.nps.gov/nr/*)

a. The National Park Service also supports a mapping tool to assist with identification of public, non-restricted sites (*www.nps.gov/maps/full.html?mapId=7ad17cc9-b808-4ff8-a2f9-a99909164466*)

4. Some state historic preservation offices have searchable databases – these can also provide useful information for identifying historic properties, especially those eligible for listing.

Step 4: Assess Effects and Prepare Consultation Letter

1. Identify the appropriate state historic preservation officer or tribal historic preservation officer. Tribal historic preservation officer information can be found on the following websites:
    a. Individual state historic agency website.
    b. The National Association of Tribal Historic Preservation Officers (http://nathpo.org/wp/thpos/find-a-thpo/)
    c. Bureau of Indian Affairs (https://www.bia.gov/WhoWeAre/BIA/OIS/TribalGovernmentServices/TribalDirectory/)
2. Prepare a letter to the state or tribal historic preservation officer that describes the determination (see below) and request concurrence. The state or tribal historic preservation officer has 30 days in which to respond. After that time, the Office for Coastal Management may presume concurrence. Typically, state historic preservation officers require hard-copy requests, but *may* accept advance courtesy copies by email or FAX.
    a. Consultation letters should provide the following:
        i. Project description
        ii. Map of the Area of Potential Effect
            1. Provide USGS quad maps or similar scale.
                a. Obtain from applicants
                b. Generate from USGS webpage (https://viewer.nationalmap.gov/basic/#startUp)
                    i. Select "USGS topo" as the data set on the upper left, 7.5 minute (i.e., 1:24,000) will be preselected in the right, upper legend. Drag a box using the box icon within the map to select an area (or enter coordinates, or zoom in, etc.) and then press the "Find Maps" button on the upper left hand corner under "Datasets." All of the available 1:24,000 maps in that selected area will pop up.
        iii. High-quality photos and diagrams
        iv. Description of all known National Register-listed (or eligible) properties, including description of search methods
        v. Assess effects of undertaking on listed sites and make determination.
            1. Generally, one of the following determinations are made:
                a. If no historic properties or resources are found, the determination is typically **No Historic Properties Affected**.
                b. If there are historic properties or resources within the Area of Potential Effect, the determination will either be **No Adverse Effect** or **Adverse Effect**. (36 CFR 800.5)
                    i. A **No Adverse Effect** determination is appropriate for: planning, education, and outreach activities; certain restoration activities on historic properties (historic lighthouses); landscaping; or certain curatorial work. This determination may also be appropriate if the historic property is too far away to be affected by the action.

ii. An **Adverse Effect** determination would include activities that involve physical destruction or removal/relocation of historic property or resource.

3. The state or tribal historic preservation officer has 30 days to respond to consultation letter. If the state or tribal historic preservation officer does not respond, the Office for Coastal Management can presume concurrence.
    a. Keep in mind that postal system and mail rooms may affect when the state or tribal historic preservation officer actually receive the request AND when the Office for Coastal Management receives a response.
        i. Provide exact mailing address details for response – on Office for Coastal Management letterhead that does not include address.
4. Staff should upload the initial correspondence and the state historic preservation officer's response (or a memorandum to the file indicating that no response was received within 30 days and the historic preservation officer's concurrence is presumed) into Grants Online, C-Request or maintain in the administrative record for the project. These documents and all supporting documentation must be made publically available. The Office for Coastal Management's NEPA and Environmental Compliance webpage is one location for satisfying this requirement. Work with the Office for Coastal Management's NEPA environmental compliance coordinator for further advice.

If the state or tribal historic preservation officer objects to the Office for Coastal Management's determination, the officer may invite the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation to participate in any future consultations, including the development of a memorandum of agreement (MOU). *Note:* An MOU can take months to complete the NOAA clearance process. Given the significant level of effort required, staff should consult with the Office for Coastal Management's NEPA environmental compliance coordinator regarding a path forward for the project. Typically, the office has worked with the state to identify alternate solutions or project options.

Special Consideration for Native Hawaiian Organizations

Indian tribes and Native Hawaiian organizations are entitled to consult on undertakings that may affect historic properties of religious and cultural significance to them, regardless of location. A federal agency must conduct government-to-government consultation with federally recognized Indian tribes and such consultation should be conducted in a sensitive manner respectful of tribal sovereignty. Indian tribes and Native Hawaiian organizations possess special expertise in identifying and assessing the eligibility of properties that may possess religious and cultural significance to them for the National Register of Historic Places, whether located on and off tribal lands. They also possess expertise in assessing effects to these resources. (*www.achp.gov/docs/consultation-indian-tribe-handbook.pdf and http://www.achp.gov/Native%20Hawaiian%20Consultation%20Handbook.pdf*)

NOAAs Tribal Consultation Procedures

NOAA has additional information for tribal consultations, and issued a handbook in 2013. This Handbook is intended to improve coordination and consultation with Indian tribal governments. It assists NOAA, including its regional and field staff, in conducting effective government-to-government consultations and fulfills NOAA's obligations under E.O. 13175 and Department Administrative Order 218-8 on Consultation and Coordination with Indian Tribal Governments, and the Department of Commerce Tribal Consultation and Coordination Policy. (*www.legislative.noaa.gov/tribalrelations.html*)

Additional Information

The regulations implementing Section 106 can be found on the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation's Web site at *www.achp.gov/regs-rev04.pdf*.

National Conference of State Historic Preservation Officers – *http://ncshpo.org/*

Appendix P – NOAA Document Editing Tips

Writing and Formatting Large Documents

- **No acronyms.** The policy of our office is to eliminate acronyms from all documents, no matter the intended audience. After introducing a full name or term, use a shortened version, pronoun, or synonym for following references.
- **Minimize jargon.** Law, science, government, and educational and technical fields, to name a few, all have specialized language that might as well be an unknown tongue. Allow others into your specialized culture by avoiding jargon, or by using it judiciously.
- **Don't go crazy with capitalization.** Readers become fatigued when unnecessary words are called out for special attention. A few examples: Federal, State, the Reserve, the Committee.
- **Avoid repetition.** Your reader's time is limited. If your message is so important, say it really well and repeat it only when warranted.
- **Sentence length.** Vary the length and structure of your sentences to keep your reader's interest. Reading a paragraph aloud will often help you shape your sentences.
- **Write a final draft.** Text with typos and other simple errors is essentially a rough draft. Make your best effort before you submit your work so that the editor can concentrate on improvements rather than corrections to your document.
- **Keep layout simple.**
    - Use Calibri as your font.
    - Use only three or four heading levels, or you will risk confusing your reader.
    - Use section and page breaks sparingly and consistently—or you will likely confuse Word!
    - Use graphics only when they add to the message, and then use only simple tables or graphics.
    - Keep your report cover simple.

WORKSHEETS TO MODIFY NOAA CRITERIA for LaNERR SITE SELECTION PROCESS

The TABLES below have four topical areas of criteria recommended by NOAA to evaluate potential NERR sites: (1) Environmental Representativeness, (2) Research, Monitoring & Resource Protection, (3) Education and Interpretation, and (4) Acquisition, Management Consideration.

The Criteria Subcommittee will be responsible for modifying the NOAA Site Selection Criteria and scoring approach for evaluating the merits of candidate sites as a NERR in the Mississippi River Delta.

- Criteria, as revised by the Criteria Subcommittee, will be submitted to NOAA for review and approval.
- Approved criteria will be used to evaluate LaNERR candidate site proposals as we move closer to identifying and refining a specific candidate site for nomination as a LaNERR.

The Site Criteria Subcommittee is asked to make modifications to this FIRST DRAFT of screening criteria to develop a SECOND DRAFT by SDC Meeting #5 that will be held in late April/early May. Again, these Site Criteria will be used to evaluate specific candidate sites for nomination as a LaNERR.

This word file is a worksheet for you to suggest modifications in FIRST DRAFT LaNERR screening Criteria Questions adopted from specific NOAA Criteria in their January 2020 guidelines. The SECOND DRAFT will be developed by modifying the FIRST DRAFT of NOAA criteria in column on the RIGHT.

The Designation Leadership Team has made slight modifications to the NOAA Site Selection Criteria to better reflect terminology used in coastal Louisiana and Louisiana specific conditions. You can also comment on whether a criterion is not applicable to coastal Louisiana and therefore should not be used, as well as add any additional criteria that you think should be included in this proces

The modifications of Site Criteria will be used to submit a FINAL DRAFT of Site Criteria that will be submitted to NOAA for approval for LaNERR site selection.

	Proposed SECOND DRAFT of LaNERR Criteria	Proposed FIRST DRAFT of LaNERR Site Criteria
	Environmental Representativeness (ER)	
ER		<u>1.1 Ecosystem composition:</u> A measure of the diversity of ecosystem types present within the boundaries of the site. This criterion is based on the assumption that sites that have a high diversity of major ecosystem types are of higher relative "value" for protection and management than those with low ecosystem diversity (unless the ecosystem in consideration is rare or unique). 3 Points The site has a high diversity of habitat composition within its major ecosystem type, i.e., it contains three or more habitat types or subtypes within its major ecosystem type (e.g., site consists of a combination of swamps, coastal marshes, and mud flats) or has a combination of multiple coastal marsh types (e.g., high, mid, and low marsh zones). 2 Points The site has a moderate diversity of habitat composition within its major ecosystem type, i.e., it contains only two habitat types or subtypes within its major ecosystem type (e.g., consists of a combination of swamps and a single coastal marsh type). 1 Point The site has a low diversity of habitat composition within its major ecosystem type, i.e., its major ecosystem type consists of a single habitat type (e.g., maritime forest or Juncus marsh). These are the suggested Ecosystem Types to be used in the LaNERR evaluation: **Group I- Shorelands** Maritime forest- woodland Coastal Shrublands Coastal Cheniers **Group II- Transition areas** Coastal Forested Wetlands Coastal Floating Marshes Coastal Freshwater Marsh Coastal Intermediate Marsh Coastal Brackish Marsh Coastal Salt Marsh Coastal Mangroves Intertidal beaches and dunes Intertidal mud and sand flats **Group III- Submerged Bottoms** Subtidal hard bottoms Subtidal soft bottoms

ER		1.2 Balanced Ecosystem Composition: A measure of the relative composition of ecosystem types within the boundaries of a site. This criterion is based on the assumption that sites with a balanced proportion of ecosystem types are of higher relative "value" for protection and management. High, moderate, and low values are assigned to sites that contain variations in the proportions of all three ecosystem types. A value of zero is assigned to a site that is dominated by one ecosystem type or contains less than three ecosystem types. 3 Point. The site contains representative upland, intertidal, and subtidal habitats in relatively equal proportions (i.e. areal cover of any one ecosystem type not less than 25 percent of the total area) 2 Point. The site contains representative upland, intertidal, and subtidal habitats, with the areal cover of any one type not less than 10 percent of the total area. 1 Point. The site contains representative upland, intertidal, and subtidal habitats, with the areal cover of any one type less than 10 percent of the total area 0 Points the site contains representative upland, intertidal and subtidal habitats, with the areal cover of two types being less than 10 percent of the total area *or* the site consists of habitats from only one or two of the three major ecosystem types
ER		1.3 Habitat Composition and Complexity: A measure of the diversity of habitat types present within the major ecosystem type found within the boundaries of the site. This criterion is based on the assumption that sites that have a high diversity of habitat types are of higher relative "value" for protection and management than those with a low diversity of habitat types. Major ecosystem type is defined here as that type that comprises approximately 40 percent of the site. Use the habitat type designations listed above for "ecosystem composition." 3 Points The site has a high diversity of habitat composition within its major ecosystem type, i.e., it contains three or more habitat types or subtypes within its major ecosystem type (e.g., site consists of a combination of swamps, coastal marshes, and reefs) or has a combination of multiple coastal marsh types (e.g., tidal freshwater, brackish, salt marsh zones including mangroves). 2 Points The site has a moderate diversity of habitat composition within its major ecosystem type, i.e., it contains only two habitat types or subtypes within its major ecosystem type (e.g., consists of a combination of swamps and a single coastal marsh type). 1 Point The site has a low diversity of habitat composition within its major ecosystem type, i.e., its major ecosystem type consists of a single habitat type (e.g., brackish marsh or tidal freshwater wetlands).

		<u>1.4 Habitat uniqueness of the Site:</u> A measure of the presence of rare or unique habitat types within a candidate site. This criterion recognizes the importance of emphasizing unique areas in the selection process, in addition to the representativeness of the candidate site in terms of ecosystem and habitat diversity. Unique habitat is defined here as a habitat type of "limited" known occurrence within the biogeographic region or sub-region. This criterion can be a simple "yes/no" question.
ER		<u>1.5 Significant faunal and floral support:</u> A measure of the degree to which a site supports significant faunal or floral components. This criterion focuses on a site's contribution (i.e., function) toward supporting the activities (e.g., feeding, nesting) of the following suite of significant faunal or floral components. The list of components includes groups or organisms that are known to be dependent upon estuarine habitats for the entire or a crucial part of their life cycle. ● Fish and Shellfish Spawning and Nursery Grounds (includes use by either freshwater, estuarine, or estuarine-dependent marine species) ● Migratory Bird or Waterfowl Use ● Bird Nesting or Roosting Area ● Critical Mammal Habitat ● Non-Game Animals (amphibians, reptiles, etc.) ● State or federally Listed Species (animal or plant – including candidate species) 3 Points. The candidate site supports or serves as an important site for a wide range of the faunal or floral components listed above (4 of 6) or is extremely important site for any threatened or endangered species. 2 Points The site supports or serves as an important site for a moderate range and diversity of the significant faunal or floral components listed above (3 of 6). 1 point The site supports or serves as an important site for one or two of the significant faunal or floral components listed above. 0 point The site does not support significant faunal or floral components

	Proposed SECOND DRAFT of LaNERR Criteria	Proposed FIRST DRAFT of LaNERR Site Criteria
	Environmental Representativeness (ER)	
ER		1.6 Site's relationship to its influenced drainage basin: A measure of juxtaposition of a site's strategic position relative to the greater drainage basin to which it belongs. This factor assumes that location in the watershed is important in preserving the ecosystem values of a healthy, functioning watershed, specifically the following: storm-water storage for flood protection of nearby communities; tropical storm surge buffering for nearby communities; reduces nonpoint source runoff into already impaired waterbodies; provides headwater storage to slow or absorb downstream runoff. Aerial photos, hydrologic information, and detailed topographic maps should be used for judging this criterion. 3 Points. The site preserves a strategically significant region of the drainage basin to which it belongs and provides two or more of the above listed functions. 2 Points The site is situated in an area with moderate influence on 2 or more of the above listed ecosystem functions. 1 Point The site is situated in an area with moderate influence on 1 or more on the ecosystem functions of the drainage basin to which it belongs. . 0 Points The site is situated in an area with limited to no influence on the ecosystem functions of the drainage basin to which it belongs.
ER		1.7 Geologic representativeness, Diversity, and Uniqueness of the Site: A measure of the representativeness, diversity, and uniqueness of the deltaic geologic characteristics that define part or the whole of a candidate site. This criterion attempts to consider both the surface and subsurface geologic formations that may be representative or unique within a site, particularly as they affect or define associated biotic habitats. Included in these considerations are the ways that local geology affects surface hydrology, such as drainage systems, and subsurface hydrology, such as shallow-water aquifers. Geologic and hydrologic maps should be used to evaluate this criterion. 3 Points The site has numerous deltaic geologic characteristics, two or more unique geologic characteristics, and contains a high diversity of formation types or strata within its boundaries. 2 Points The site has a moderate number of representative geologic characteristics and at least one unique geologic characteristic, and contains a moderate diversity of formation types or strata within its boundaries.

		1 Point The site has a moderate number of geologic characteristics, no unique geologic characteristics, or contains a moderate diversity of formation types or strata within its boundaries. 0 Points. The site has few or only one representative geologic characteristics, no unique geologic characteristics, or contains few or only one formation type or strata within its boundaries.
ER		1.8 Salinity Gradient A measure of the range of salinity within a candidate site's boundaries. This criterion recognizes the effect of salinity on the biotic structure of estuarine habitats (including the plant communities and faunal components that inhabit them). It makes the assumption that a site with a greater range of salinity will support a broader range of habitat types and organisms. 3 Points The site encompasses > 15 parts per thousand (ppt) or greater range of salinity within its boundaries. 2 Points The site encompasses a 10-15 ppt range of salinity within its boundaries. 1 Point The site encompasses a 5-10 ppt range of salinity within its boundaries . 0 Points The site encompasses < 5 ppt range of salinity within its boundaries
ER		1.9 Degree Developed and Potential impacts to water quality: A measure of the degree to which the site and its surrounding area are developed and the relative impacts to surface waters from human activities. This criterion is based on the assumption that human impacts to a site are directly proportional to the degree of development. Exceptions to this assumption may need to be considered where development at a site and its surrounding area have been subject to high levels of control. Data on land use and water quality measurements from local, county, and state government agencies should be used to judge this criterion. 3 Points The site is relatively undisturbed and the watershed contains low intensity development (e.g., few residences, minimal agricultural or silvicultural activity) or the land is in protected status. 2 Points The site is relatively undisturbed and the watershed contains moderate development (e.g., relatively few residences, moderate agricultural or silvicultural activity, minimal commercial development). 1 Point The site has been moderately disturbed and the watershed contains relatively intensive development (e.g., moderate density of residences, or the presence of industrial activity). 0 Points The site has been extremely disturbed and the watershed contains very intensive development (e.g., high density residential, or commercial or industrial activity).

	Proposed SECOND DRAFT of LaNERR Criteria	Proposed FIRST DRAFT of LaNERR Site Criteria
	Research, Monitoring & Resource Protection (RMRP)	
RMRP		2.1 Value of site for research: A measure of the opportunities offered by characteristics of the site for research, such as a high diversity of ecosystem and habitat types, a balanced habitat composition, a wide salinity range, biotic or geologic representativeness of the site, known historic uses or archaeological sites, and unique opportunities to conduct applied research regarding important local, state, and regional coastal management issues (including past and potential management activities). The assumption is that a site with representative, unique, and highly diverse characteristics will provide greater research, monitoring, and resource protection opportunities than one lacking these characteristics. Ratings generated for these factors under previous selection criteria can be used as a guide for rating this overall factor. 3 Points The site has (1) a high diversity of ecosystem and habitat types, (2) moderate salinity range, (3) representative biotic and geologic sites or characteristics, (4) state and federally listed species, (5) historic and archaeological significance, and (6) opportunities to address important habitat or resource management issues. 2 Points The site has four or five of the six above. 1 Point The site has two or three of the six above. 0 Points The site has one or none of the six above.
RMRP		2.2 Previous research and monitoring efforts: A measure of the degree to which the site has been used for past research and monitoring, including considerations of the diversity of inquiry (fields of research), and the availability of data (the form and availability of documentation, e.g., peer-reviewed papers, grey literature, inventory reports). The assumption is that an area with previously established research and monitoring interest offers greater opportunity for future projects than an area that has not sparked such an interest in the past. 3 Points The site has a long history of well-documented research and monitoring projects in a wide variety of topics. Data are readily available. 2 Points The site has had major and well-documented research and monitoring efforts, generating data that are readily available. It has not had a long history of research and monitoring. 1 Point The site has had only minor research and monitoring projects generating limited data (e.g., inventories) that may be difficult to obtain. 0 Points The site has no known history of research and monitoring.

	Proposed SECOND DRAFT of LaNERR Criteria	Proposed FIRST DRAFT of LaNERR Site Criteria
	Research, Monitoring & Resource Protection (RMRP)	
RMRP		2.3 Suitability of site for environmental baseline monitoring: A measure of the suitability of the site as a reference area for assessing long-term resource trends or ecological characteristics, based on the degree to which the site has been altered by land-use practices on or near the site. The assumption is that a site that has relatively pristine land areas and waters will be a more valuable reference area to generate baseline monitoring information than a site that has been extensively altered. 3 Points The site has outstanding areas to generate environmental baseline data to assess long-term resource trends or ecological characteristics for a wide range of needs. 2 Points The site has adequate areas to generate environmental baseline data to assess long- term resource trends or ecological characteristics for many needs. 1 Point The site has marginal areas to generate environmental baseline data to assess long-term resource trends or ecological characteristics. 0 Points The site has been so extensively altered by past activities that it is unsuitable for generating environmental baseline data.
RMRP		2.4 Coastal Resilience Research: This consideration is important for the reserve site in order to be able to assess climate and coastal change impacts on the area. 3 Points The site's ecological resources will be affected by climate change impacts including erosion, sea-level rise, etc., and these impacts will be able to be well-documented. 2 Points The site's ecological resources will be affected by climate change impacts including erosion, sea-level rise, etc., and these impacts may be able to be documented. 1 Point The site's ecological resources will be affected by climate change impacts including erosion, sea-level rise, etc., and these impacts will probably not be able to be documented.

RMRP		2.5. Ability to address key local, state, and regional coastal management issues: A measure of the degree to which the site is appropriate for investigating issues relevant to coastal management at the local, state, and regional levels. Solutions to these issues may require either the application of land management practices or habitat manipulations in order to perform meaningful research and assessment. As such, the site should offer both adequate control areas plus areas where demonstration projects and habitat manipulations can be accommodated in order to study many of the issues of concern. The assumption is that a site where coastal management issues arise and can be addressed will be of greater value from a resource protection standpoint than sites where these issues do not arise. The significant issues should be identified for each region and may include the following: • Wetlands development • Wetlands mitigation, restoration, creation • Dredging and spoil disposal • Beneficial uses of dredged materials • Shoreline erosion • Commercial or recreational fisheries • Waterfowl and other wildlife management • Best management practices for habitat protection or management (e.g., wildlife management) • Best management practices to limit impacts from agricultural, silvicultural, or development activities • Effects of pollutants on water quality and living resources • Impacts of relative sea-level rise • Prehistoric and early historic settlement and land use 3 Points. The site is highly appropriate for investigating coastal zone management issues 2 Points. The site is appropriate for investigating coastal zone management issues 1 Point. The site is minimally appropriate for investigating coastal zone management issues 0 points The site is not appropriate for investigating coastal zone management issues

	Proposed SECOND DRAFT of LaNERR Criteria	Proposed FIRST DRAFT of LaNERR Site Criteria
	Education and Interpretation (EI)	
EI		3.1 Diversity and quality of training education and interpretation of opportunities : A measure of the variety and quality of training, education, and interpretation opportunities (i.e., ecological, archaeological, cultural, historical, etc.) provided by the site for the different target audiences. The assumption is that a candidate site with a diversity of such opportunities of high quality will be utilized to a greater extent than one with fewer opportunities. 3 Points The site has numerous different training, education, and interpretation opportunities of high quality. 2 Points The site has several significantly different educational opportunities of good quality. 1 Point The site has few significant educational opportunities. 0 Points The site has insignificant educational opportunities.
EI		3.2 Diversity and availability of target audiences: A measure of the diversity and availability of target audiences (e.g., user groups, resource managers, residents, environmental groups, decision makers, teachers and students, the general public) which may routinely utilize the site for training, education, and interpretation. The assumption is that a candidate site with a variety of available target audiences will be utilized to a greater extent than one with fewer target audiences. 3 Points. The site is suitable for a variety of target audiences that are readily available 2 Points. The site is suitable for a moderate number of target audiences that are readily available 1 Point The site is suitable for few target audiences that are available 0 Point The site is so remote or inaccessible that it is not suitable for any target audience.

	Proposed SECOND DRAFT of LaNERR Criteria	Proposed FIRST DRAFT of LaNERR Site Criteria
	Education and Interpretation (EI)	
EI		3.3 Availability of facilities: The degree to which there are existing facilities or potential sites for future facilities that can be used by staff, researchers, classes, and training groups (e.g., administrative building space, dormitories, labs, interpretive centers, trails and boardwalks, boat ramps, etc.). The assumption is that, due to limited reserve construction funds, a candidate site with existing facilities can meet the objectives of the Reserve System program sooner and more completely than a site without existing facilities. The availability of other sources of construction funds should be considered as part of this criterion. 3 Points The site has established structures and facilities that can be used for reserve activities. 2 Points The site has limited established structures or facilities that can be used for reserve activities. 1 Point The site has excellent potential for the development of facilities for reserve activities. 0 Points The site has limited potential for the development facilities for reserve activities.
EI		3.4 Proximity and accessibility of site to Researchers, Educators, and Resource Management decision makers: A measure of (1) the relative proximity of the site to urban centers, K-12 schools, research and education institutions, and resource management agencies that may routinely utilize the site and (2) the adequacy of the roads or points for boat access at the site. The underlying assumption is that the proximity and accessibility of the site will enhance its utilization for education, research, monitoring, and resource protection purposes. 3 Points The candidate site can be utilized by the above-listed entities during a single day trip. There are good roads or points for boat access at the site. 2 Points The candidate site is relatively isolated and utilization would require an overnight stay from any of the above-listed entities, but accommodations are readily available. There are adequate roads or points for boat access at the site. 1 Point The candidate site is relatively isolated and reasonable accommodations for an overnight stay to utilize the site are limited. There are limited roads or points for boat access at the site. 0 Points The candidate site is extremely isolated and accommodations to utilize the site are not available. There are inadequate or no roads, or points for boat access at the site.

	Proposed SECOND DRAFT of LaNERR Criteria	Proposed FIRST DRAFT of LaNERR Site Criteria
	Education and Interpretation (EI)	
EI		3.5 Value of Site for Environmental Education and Interpretation Programs: It is likely that sites with existing education programs have the necessary infrastructure in place to further expand their programs, thus it is valuable to rate sites based on the presence of these programs. However, in an area as large as the Louisiana Coastal Area, numerous excellent sites exist where virtually no education or interpretation programs have been developed. Thus, the potential for education and interpretation program development should be considered as well according to the diversity and quality of educational and interpretive program opportunities. 3 Points The site has a long history of education and interpretation, or the site offers excellent potential for future education and interpretation program development. 2 Points The site has a good but short history of education and interpretation, but is otherwise well suited or offers good potential for future education and interpretation program development. 1 Point The site has had only a minor amount of education and interpretation being conducted, or the site offers fair potential for future education and interpretation program development. 0 Points The site offers no significant potential for education and interpretation program development.

	Proposed SECOND DRAFT of LaNERR Criteria	Proposed FIRST DRAFT of LaNERR Site Criteria
	Acquisition and Management Consideration (AMC)	
AMC		<u>4.2 Publicly owned lands and feasibility of land acquisition</u> A measure of the degree to which the land within the site is currently owned by the state, federal government, or local governments, or environmental interest groups, and the degree to which there is interest in donating or selling property by its owners. The assumption is that the degree of control needed to maintain the site in relatively pristine conditions increases with publicly owned land and lands controlled by environmental groups, and that the chances of purchasing additional areas increase with private property owners who are willing to sell. 3 Points A large percentage (more than 50 percent) of the candidate site is currently owned by the state, federal, or local governments, or environmental groups, and these entities have an interest in participating in a research reserve. 2 Points State, federal, or local governments, or environmental groups own 25 to 50 percent of the candidate site with the remainder in the hands of a few owners who have an interest in participating in a research reserve. 1 Point State, federal, or local governments or environmental groups own less than 25 percent of the site with the remainder in the hands of a few owners who have an interest in participating in a research reserve 0 Points The site is owned by a large number of owners with little potential interest in sale or donation.
AMC		<u>4.4. Compatibility with existing management practices and consumptive and non-consumptive uses</u> A measure of the degree to which existing management practices (e.g., habitat manipulations, best management practices) and historic and current consumptive and non-consumptive uses might be in conflict with foreseeable management practices implemented under a research reserve program. The assumption is that sites with fewer conflicts are more likely to maintain both public support and the integrity of the site. NOTE: This factor should be measured in light of special circumstances (such as the presence of unique habitats or of listed species) that might cause the state to limit what is now unlimited use or practice by groups or individuals and, in the process, cause some conflict in regard to designation of a reserve site. It should be measured with an eye toward balancing protection of critical sites or resources against reasonable access to other parts of the site.

		3 Points Existing management practices and consumptive and non-consumptive uses would not be in conflict with any foreseeable management policy of a research reserve 2 Points Due to the presence of proportionately small areas of unique habitat and endangered species or threats to the integrity of ecosystem, there is the potential for limited restrictions on existing management practices or consumptive and non-consumptive uses of a site 1 Point Due to the presence of areas of unique habitat and endangered species and threats to the integrity of the ecosystem, some restrictions on existing management practices or consumptive and non-consumptive uses of a site are likely 0 Points Large areas of unique habitat and threats to the integrity of the ecosystem will require restrictions on existing management practices or consumptive and non-consumptive uses of a site.
AMC		4.5 Compatibility with adjacent land use: A measure of the potential conflicts between management practices on a research reserve site with land-use practices on adjacent lands. It is also a measure of the adequacy of land-use regulations, plans, or other controls to sustain the site's resources for long-term research, education, and resource protection. The assumption is that a candidate site with compatible land-use practices on adjacent lands is more likely to maintain the integrity of the reserve. NOTE: This issue should be evaluated with an eye toward the potential for present or future conflicts with adjacent lands and the potential to designate buffer zones around a site. 3 Points A large percentage of the land adjacent to the site is not currently used for activities that might impact the site (and therefore, may be obtainable as a buffer) or the land-use practices on adjacent lands would not have any negative impacts on a possible research reserve 2 Points A large to moderate percentage of the land adjacent to the site is not currently used for activities that might negatively impact the site, or the land-use practices on adjacent lands either could be negotiated or would have only minor impacts a possible research reserve 1 Point Some of the land adjacent to the site is currently used for activities that would have negative impacts on a possible research reserve and may not be negotiable 0 Points A large percentage of the land adjacent to the site is currently used for activities that would have negative impacts on a possible research reserve and would lead to conflicts.

	Proposed SECOND DRAFT of LaNERR Criteria	Proposed FIRST DRAFT of LaNERR Site Criteria
	Acquisition and Management Consideration (AMC)	
AMC		4.1 Land ownership A measure of the degree to which the property is divided (e.g., divided into only a few parcels or owned by many individuals). The assumption is that a candidate site with fewer property owners will be easier to acquire or control. 3 Points The property is relatively undivided 2 Points The property is divided with few property owners. 1 Point The property is divided with many property owners
AMC		4.3. Controlled land and water access: A measure of the degree to which land and water access to the candidate site can be controlled and limited. It is based on size, geography, proximity to adjacent development, and historical controls. The assumption is that the integrity and security of a potential reserve site can be better maintained with a higher level of controlled land and water access. 3 Points The candidate site is relatively isolated and of a size that can be controlled. Historically, access has been controlled, and can easily be controlled in the future due to the presence of limited access points by boat or vehicle. 2 Points The candidate site is not very isolated, but has a limited number of access points. Historically, site access has not been controlled, but the site is of a size that it can be controlled in the future. 1 Point Site access will be difficult to control due to the large number of access points or the size of the area. Historically, site access has not been controlled and it is unclear whether it can be controlled in the future. 0 Points Site access cannot be controlled due to the large number of access points, lack of historical controls, the size of the area, or dense adjacent development.
AMC		4.6. Future development plans A measure of the potential level of future development in areas on or adjacent to a candidate site that would impact the site. The assumption is that a candidate site with minimal to no development plans on-site and on adjacent lands is more likely to maintain the integrity of the reserve. NOTE: this issue involves the degree to which adjacent lands are currently being used or may be attainable as buffer areas for the research reserve 3 Points A large percentage (more than 50 percent) of the land adjacent to the site is currently undeveloped or is, for whatever reason, very unlikely to be developed in the near future (e.g., consisting of marginally developable property, such as wetlands, which could be obtained as buffer).

		2 Points A moderate percentage (between 25 and 50 percent) of the land adjacent to the site is currently undeveloped or is not likely to be developed in the near future. 1 Point A small to moderate percentage (10 to 25 percent) of the land adjacent to the site is currently undeveloped or is not likely to be developed in the near future, with limited levels of development on other lands. 0 Points A large percentage (more than 50 percent) of the land adjacent to the site is developed and the area is likely to continue to be developed in the future.

LaNERR – Louisiana National Estuarine Research Reserve

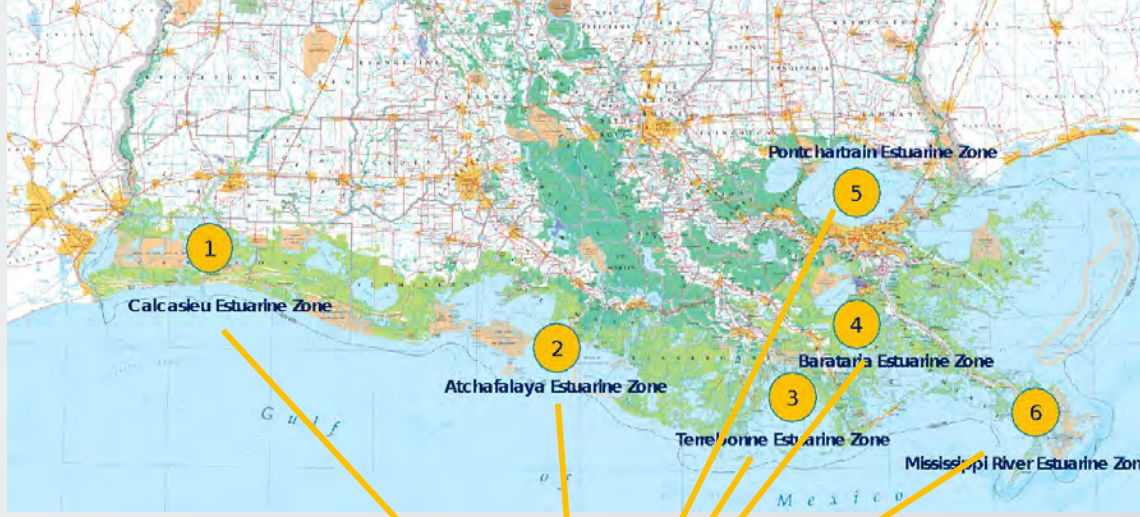
Site Development Committee Meeting #4

March 30 and 31, 2021 (two sessions)

Time	Topic
5 min	Welcome
10 min	Overview of Estuarine Zone voting & address SDC comments
15 min	Draft Site Selection Criteria & Charge to Criteria Subcommittee
15 min	Example preliminary candidate sites (core & buffer areas) in approved Estuarine Zones
5 min	*Pontchartrain Estuarine Zone*
5 min	*Barataria Estuarine Zone*
5 min	*Atchafalaya Estuarine Zone*
40 min	Proposal Teams and developing Phase 1 Candidate Site Proposals ∀ Team Members and relevant expertise in addressing four NOAA topical areas ∀ Visual of anticipated LaNERR site, including draft core and buffer areas ∀ Brief explanation of proposal development plan ∀ Due end of April
5 min	Wrap up and next steps: ∀ Criteria Subcommittee & Screening Subcommittee ∀ SDC complete Qualtrics survey to schedule Meeting #5

How will Louisiana determine where to establish a LaNERR?

1. Develop **pre-screening criteria** that reflect LaNERR goals;
2. **Establish generalized zones** within which to identify candidate sites;
3. Use proposed zones to **modify NOAA site criteria** to help identify sites for consideration and final nomination;
4. Evaluate proposed LaNERR Zones to **select candidate sites** that define preferred goals;
5. **Generate public support and partnerships** for proposed final site to NOAA.



Pre-screening

Proposed LaNERR Zones (generalized boundary)

Evaluation

Candidate LaNERR Sites (site boundary & evaluation)

Nomination

Nominate LaNERR Site (prepare package to NOAA)

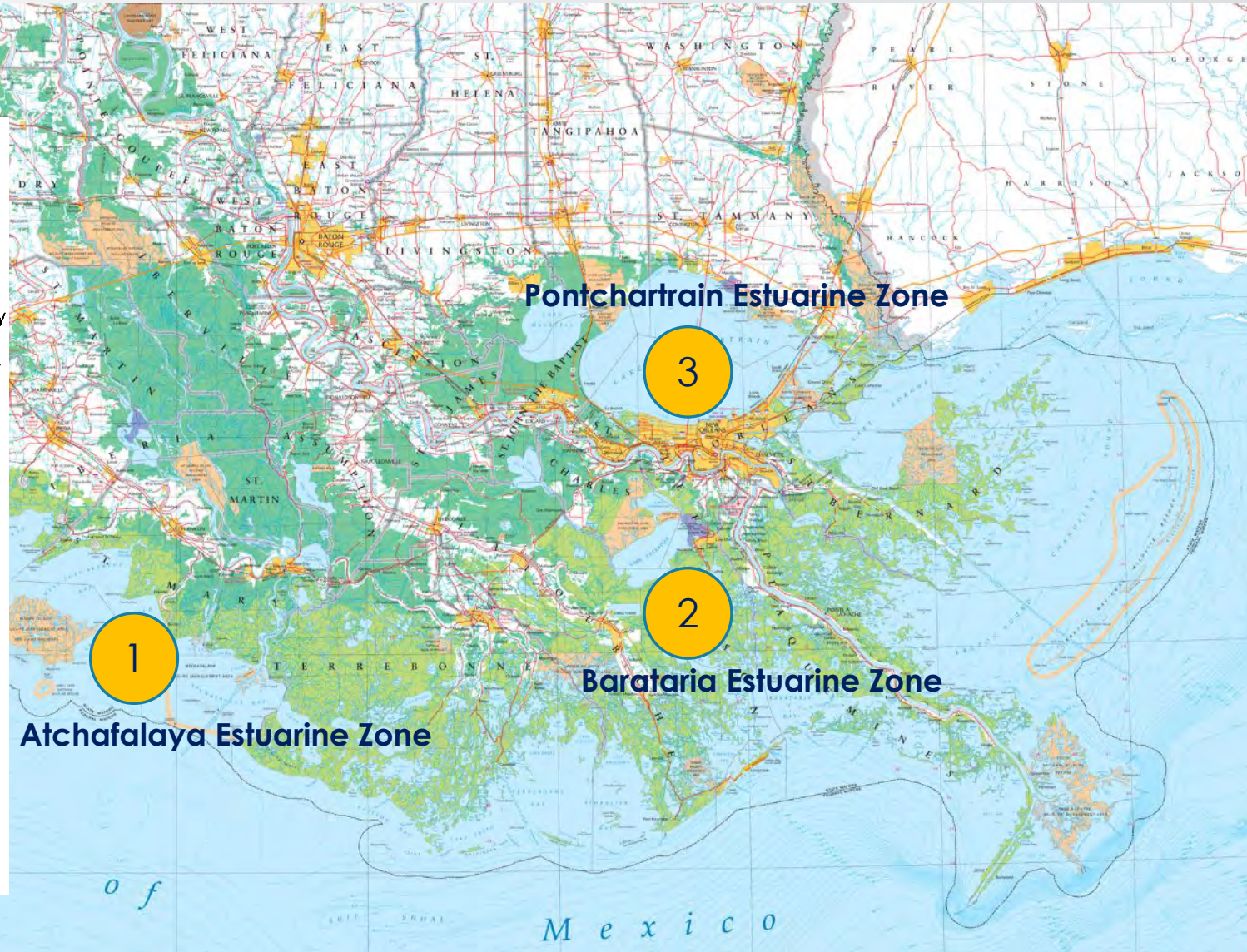
Three LaNERR Estuarine Zones for candidate site proposals.

Results of Site Development Committee Preliminary Screening and Voting on Six Estuarine Zones

March 2021

Following the Site Development Committee Meeting #3 on February 25 and 26, 2021, a Qualtrics survey was provided to the SDC so members could vote on whether each Estuarine Zone should be considered further for the development of candidate NERR sites. A total of **53** votes were received, and a summary of the results is provided in the following table. Considering majority vote, the Atchafalaya, Barataria, and Pontchartrain Estuarine Zones will move forward for further consideration in developing candidate NERR sites for nomination to NOAA.

	Yes
Calcasieu Estuarine Zone	2%
Atchafalaya Estuarine Zone	**96 %**
Terrebonne Estuarine Zone	26 %
Barataria Estuarine Zone	**70%**
Mississippi River Estuarine Zone	26 %
Pontchartrain Estuarine Zone	**83 %**



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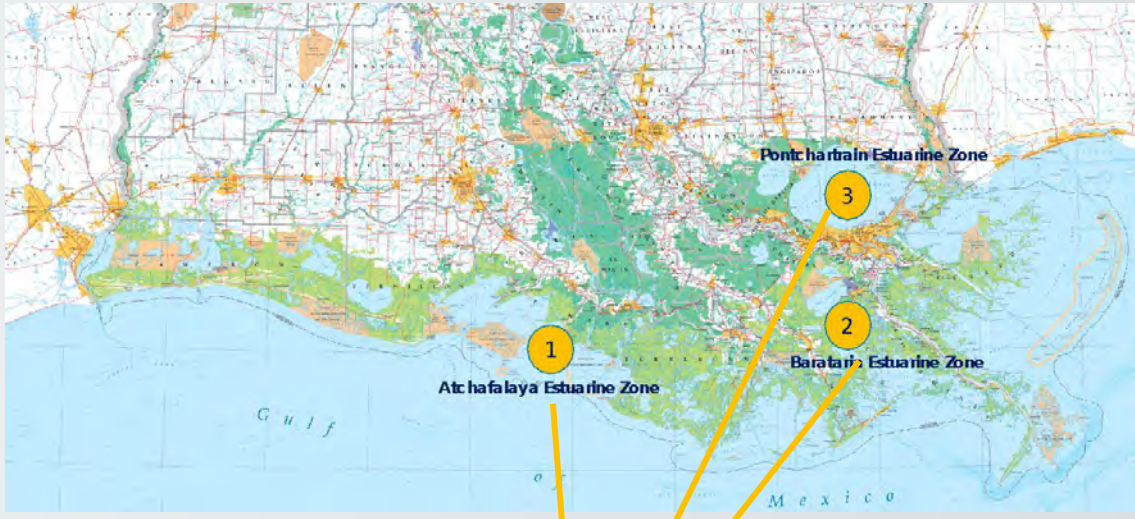


Pre-screening

Proposed LaNERR Zones (generalized boundary)

Evaluation

Candidate LaNERR Sites (site boundary & evaluation)

Nomination

Nominate LaNERR Site (prepare package to NOAA)

Table of the Five Pre-Screening Criteria used to Evaluate the Six Estuarine Zones along with Pre-Screening Recommendation by Designation Leadership Team (DLT).

Pre-Screening Criteria #1 Unique Coastal Setting	Pre-Screening Criteria #2 State-Owned Lands	Pre-Screening Criteria #3 Land Integrity	Pre-Screening Criteria #4 Change in Habitat Diversity	Pre-Screening Criteria #5 Hydrologic Manipulations	Pre-Screening Recommendation by DLT
1. Are there potential core areas (state-owned lands and waters) in this Estuarine Zone that represent unique habitats, coastal processes and salinity gradients of a delta estuary in comparison to the other NERR sites in Louisianian Biogeographic Zone of NERR System (sections 11, 12, 13). Unique environmental representativeness is important to the research and education mission of a NERR. Description: Current distribution of habitat types, based on 2017 Coastal Master Plan initial condition vegetation, was used to define salinity zones in each Estuarine Zone. Habitat types are shown in outlined areas of state-owned land in red.	2. Is there currently sufficient area of state-owned lands within this Estuarine Zone conducive to developing LaNERR Candidate Sites that meet National Estuarine Reserve System objectives? Description: Majority of publicly-owned land used as core areas within a candidate site cannot be federal lands. Further, the state must demonstrate adequate management control for core areas to be designated as a NERR. NOAA requires that state lands be available in the initial designation of a NERR site since the agreement is a NOAA-state MOU.	3. Is the integrity of the wetlands that may serve as potential core (state-owned land) and buffer areas that provide the unique features of the NERR (see criterion #1) maintained in perpetuity within this Estuarine Zone, which would allow for development of facilities and programs (research & education)? Description: Land change was measured by comparing the 2017 Coastal Master Plan initial condition vegetation to the year 50 projected vegetation under the medium scenario with implementation of the plan. A reduction of 50% in wetland area from initial to projected was considered sufficient to question the integrity of a zone.	4. Do the wetlands that would serve as potential core (state-owned land) and buffer areas currently support a diversity of habitats along a salinity gradient representative of a delta estuary. Do these wetland areas maintain a diversity of habitats in perpetuity (maintain integrity) within this Estuarine Zone over the next 50 years? Description: Changes that demonstrate Significant Habitat Diversity change represent conflict with foreseeable program development in research & education to meet the mission of a NERR. Change in habitat diversity was measured by comparing the 2017 Coastal Master Plan initial condition vegetation to the year 50 projected vegetation under the medium scenario with implementation of the plan. Insignificant change (fresh or saline habitat change <-25%); Moderate change (fresh or saline habitat change -25 to -65%); Significant change (fresh or saline habitat change > -65%.	5. Do existing or anticipated operations of water control structures and levees (including marsh impoundments) by federal and state authorities with sole purpose of manipulating hydrology in coastal basins for either flood control, marsh management, or coastal restoration have the potential to impact the integrity of potential core or buffer areas thus causing potential conflicts between LaNERR objectives (environmental representativeness, research & education)?	The following columns contain summary statements and recommendations for each Estuarine Zone prepared by the Designation Leadership Team.

Criteria from the NOAA guidelines to establish a LaNERR site in the Mississippi River Delta.

National Estuarine Research Reserve Designation Guidance

Site Selection, Nomination, and Designation

February 1, 2020

Authored by NOAA

Stewardship Division
Office for Coastal Management
National Ocean Service
National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

I. Environmental Representativeness

II. Value of the Site for Research, Monitoring, and Resource Protection

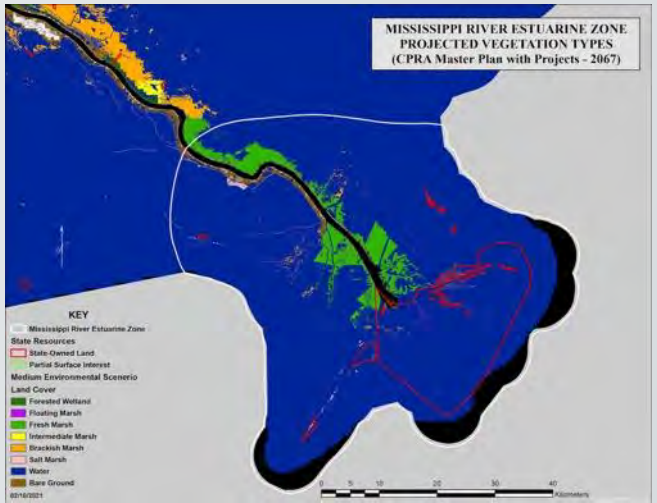
III. Suitability of the Site for Education and Interpretation

IV. Acquisition and Management Considerations

Unique Environment– Unique, as referred to in terms of NERR designation, refers to limited known occurrence of a habitat type, process, landscape feature, endangered or threatened species, etc. in the biogeographic region or sub-region.

Core and buffer Areas – NOAA regulations define key or "core" land and water areas which contain "ecological units of a natural estuarine system which preserves, for research purposes, a full range of significant physical, chemical, and biological factors contributing to the diversity of fauna, flora and natural processes occurring within the estuary."

Integrity – Ecosystem integrity is generally used to refer to the completeness, functionality, and health of an ecosystem. Declines in integrity reduce habitat quality for native biota, disrupt ecological processes and functions, and diminish ecosystem resilience and capacity to sustain species and many ecosystem services. Significant declines in ecosystem integrity could jeopardize the NERR system goal of long-term research.



Site Criteria Subcommittee

Criteria Subcommittee Members
Andy Fischer
Brian Roberts
Gary Shaffer
Heather Stone
Honora Buras
Ilya Tietzel
John Nyman
Jonathan Foret
Julie Whitbeck
Justin Lemoine
Kristi Trail
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Mark Tobler
Michael Pasquier
Natalie Snider
Rebecca Triche
Robert Moreau
T. Erin Cox
Thomas Robert
Tracy Quirk

- The Designation Leadership Team (DLT) made minor modifications to the NOAA Site Selection Criteria which represents the 1st draft of the LaNERR Site Selection Criteria. The 2nd draft is due to the DLT at the end of April.
- Customizing NOAA Site Selection Criteria for use in screening and scoring candidate LaNERR site proposals is not intended to be a major or wholesale revision, but rather a review of the criteria with a focus on terminology that is so drastically unapplicable to coastal Louisiana and the uniqueness of our habitats that it cannot be applied as is in the LaNERR process.
- For example, we suggested changing the use of "high, mid, and low marsh zones" to "tidal freshwater, brackish, salt marsh zones including mangroves," as this is more characteristic of Louisiana's coastal systems. You may also suggest the addition of new criteria if unique coastal Louisiana features and/or areas of focus or importance are lacking from the list as provided.
- Prior to using the revised criteria to screen and score candidate site proposals, NOAA must review and approve the revisions.

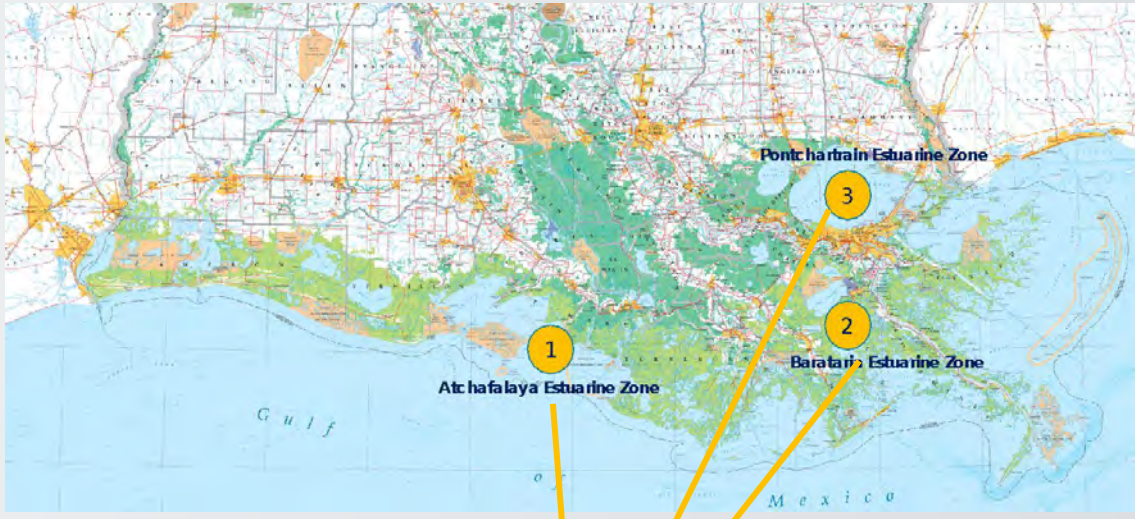
	Proposed SECOND DRAFT of LaNERR Criteria	Proposed FIRST DRAFT of LaNERR Site Criteria
		Environmental Representativeness (ER)
ER		1.1 Ecosystem composition: A measure of the diversity of ecosystem types present within the boundaries of the site. This criterion is based on the assumption that sites that have a high diversity of major ecosystem types are of higher relative "value" for protection and management than those with low ecosystem diversity (unless the ecosystem in consideration is rare or unique). 3 Points The site has a high diversity of habitat composition within its major ecosystem type, i.e., it contains three or more habitat types or subtypes within its major ecosystem type (e.g., site consists of a combination of swamps, coastal marshes, and mud flats) or has a combination of multiple coastal marsh types (e.g., high, mid, and low marsh zones). 2 Points The site has a moderate diversity of habitat composition within its major ecosystem type, i.e., it contains only two habitat types or subtypes within its major ecosystem type (e.g., consists of a combination of swamps and a single coastal marsh type). 1 Point The site has a low diversity of habitat composition within its major ecosystem type, i.e., its major ecosystem type consists of a single habitat type (e.g., maritime forest or Juncus marsh). These are the suggested Ecosystem Types to be used in the LaNERR evaluation: Group I- Shorelands Maritime forest- woodland Coastal Shrublands Coastal Cheniers Group II- Transition areas Coastal Forested Wetlands Coastal Floating Marshes Coastal Freshwater Marsh Coastal Intermediate Marsh Coastal Brackish Marsh Coastal Salt Marsh Coastal Mangroves Intertidal beaches and dunes Intertidal mud and sand flats Group III- Submerged Bottoms Subtidal hard bottoms Subtidal soft bottoms

	Proposed SECOND DRAFT of LaNERR Criteria	Proposed FIRST DRAFT of LaNERR Site Criteria
		Environmental Representativeness (ER)
ER		1.2 Balanced Ecosystem Composition: A measure of the relative composition of ecosystem types within the boundaries of a site. This criterion is based on the assumption that sites with a balanced proportion of ecosystem types are of higher relative "value" for protection and management. High, moderate, and low values are assigned to sites that contain variations in the proportions of all three ecosystem types. A value of zero is assigned to a site that is dominated by one ecosystem type or contains less than three ecosystem types. 3 Point. The site contains representative upland, intertidal, and subtidal habitats in relatively equal proportions (i.e. areal cover of any one ecosystem type not less than 25 percent of the total area) 2 Point. The site contains representative upland, intertidal, and subtidal habitats, with the areal cover of any one type not less than 10 percent of the total area. 1 Point. The site contains representative upland, intertidal, and subtidal habitats, with the areal cover of any one type less than 10 percent of the total area 0 Points the site contains representative upland, intertidal and subtidal habitats, with the areal cover of two types being less than 10 percent of the total area or the site consists of habitats from only one or two of the three major ecosystem types
ER		1.3 Habitat Composition and Complexity: A measure of the diversity of habitat types present within the major ecosystem type found within the boundaries of the site. This criterion is based on the assumption that sites that have a high diversity of habitat types are of higher relative "value" for protection and management than those with a low diversity of habitat types. Major ecosystem type is defined here as that type that comprises approximately 40 percent of the site. Use the habitat type designations listed above for "ecosystem composition." 3 Points The site has a high diversity of habitat composition within its major ecosystem type, i.e., it contains three or more habitat types or subtypes within its major ecosystem type (e.g., site consists of a combination of swamps, coastal marshes, and reefs) or has a combination of multiple coastal marsh types (e.g., tidal freshwater, brackish, salt marsh zones including mangroves). 2 Points The site has a moderate diversity of habitat composition within its major ecosystem type, i.e., it contains only two habitat types or subtypes within its major ecosystem type (e.g., consists of a combination of swamps and a single coastal marsh type). 1 Point The site has a low diversity of habitat composition within its major ecosystem type, i.e., its major ecosystem type consists of a single habitat type (e.g., brackish marsh or tidal freshwater wetlands)

	Proposed SECOND DRAFT of LaNERR Criteria	Proposed FIRST DRAFT of LaNERR Site Criteria
	Environmental Representativeness (ER)	
		1.4 Habitat uniqueness of the Site: A measure of the presence of rare or unique habitat types within a candidate site. This criterion recognizes the importance of emphasizing unique areas in the selection process, in addition to the representativeness of the candidate site in terms of ecosystem and habitat diversity. Unique habitat is defined here as a habitat type of "limited" known occurrence within the biogeographic region or sub-region. This criterion can be a simple "yes/no" question.
ER		1.5 Significant faunal and floral support: A measure of the degree to which a site supports significant faunal or floral components. This criterion focuses on a site's contribution (i.e., function) toward supporting the activities (e.g., feeding, nesting) of the following suite of significant faunal or floral components. The list of components includes groups or organisms that are known to be dependent upon estuarine habitats for the entire or a crucial part of their life cycle. • Fish and Shellfish Spawning and Nursery Grounds (includes use by either freshwater, estuarine, or estuarine-dependent marine species) • Migratory Bird or Waterfowl Use • Bird Nesting or Roosting Area • Critical Mammal Habitat • Non-Game Animals (amphibians, reptiles, etc.) • State or federally Listed Species (animal or plant – including candidate species) 3 Points. The candidate site supports or serves as an important site for a wide range of the faunal or floral components listed above (4 of 6) or is extremely important site for any threatened or endangered species. 2 Points The site supports or serves as an important site for a moderate range and diversity of the significant faunal or floral components listed above (3 of 6). 1 point The site supports or serves as an important site for one or two of the significant faunal or floral components listed above. 0 point The site does not support significant faunal or floral components

How will Louisiana determine where to establish a LaNERR?

1. Develop **pre-screening criteria** that reflect LaNERR goals;
2. **Establish generalized zones** within which to identify candidate sites;
3. Use proposed zones to **modify NOAA site criteria** to help identify sites for consideration and final nomination;
4. Evaluate proposed LaNERR Zones to **select candidate sites** that define preferred goals;
5. **Generate public support and partnerships** for proposed final site to NOAA.



Pre-screening

Proposed LaNERR Zones (generalized boundary)

Evaluation

Candidate LaNERR Sites (site boundary & evaluation)

Nomination

Nominate LaNERR Site (prepare package to NOAA)

Proposal Subcommittees

Atchafalaya
Brian Roberts
Justin Lemoine
Quenton Fontenot

Pontchartrain
David Podgorski
Kristi Trail
John Nyman
Traci Erin Cox
Martin O'Connell
Thomas Robert
Robert Moreau
Gary Shaffer

Barataria
John Nyman
Tracy Quirk
Julie Whitbeck
Quenton Fontenot

Cheston Hill	Consultant for any of the teams to help with candidate site proposals
Pat Arnould	Consultant for any of the teams to help with candidate site proposals

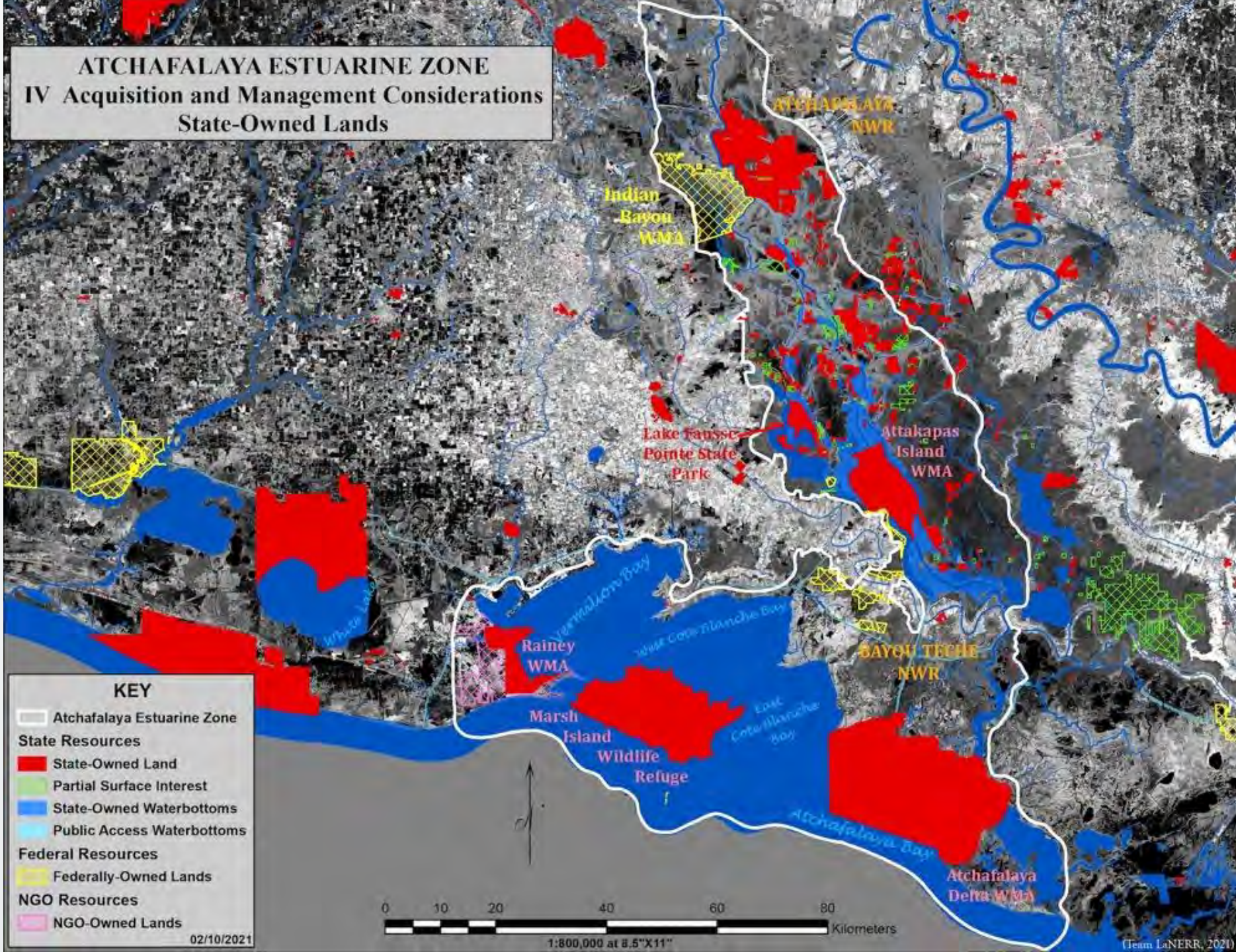
Proposal Teams - Developing Phase 1 Candidate Site Proposals

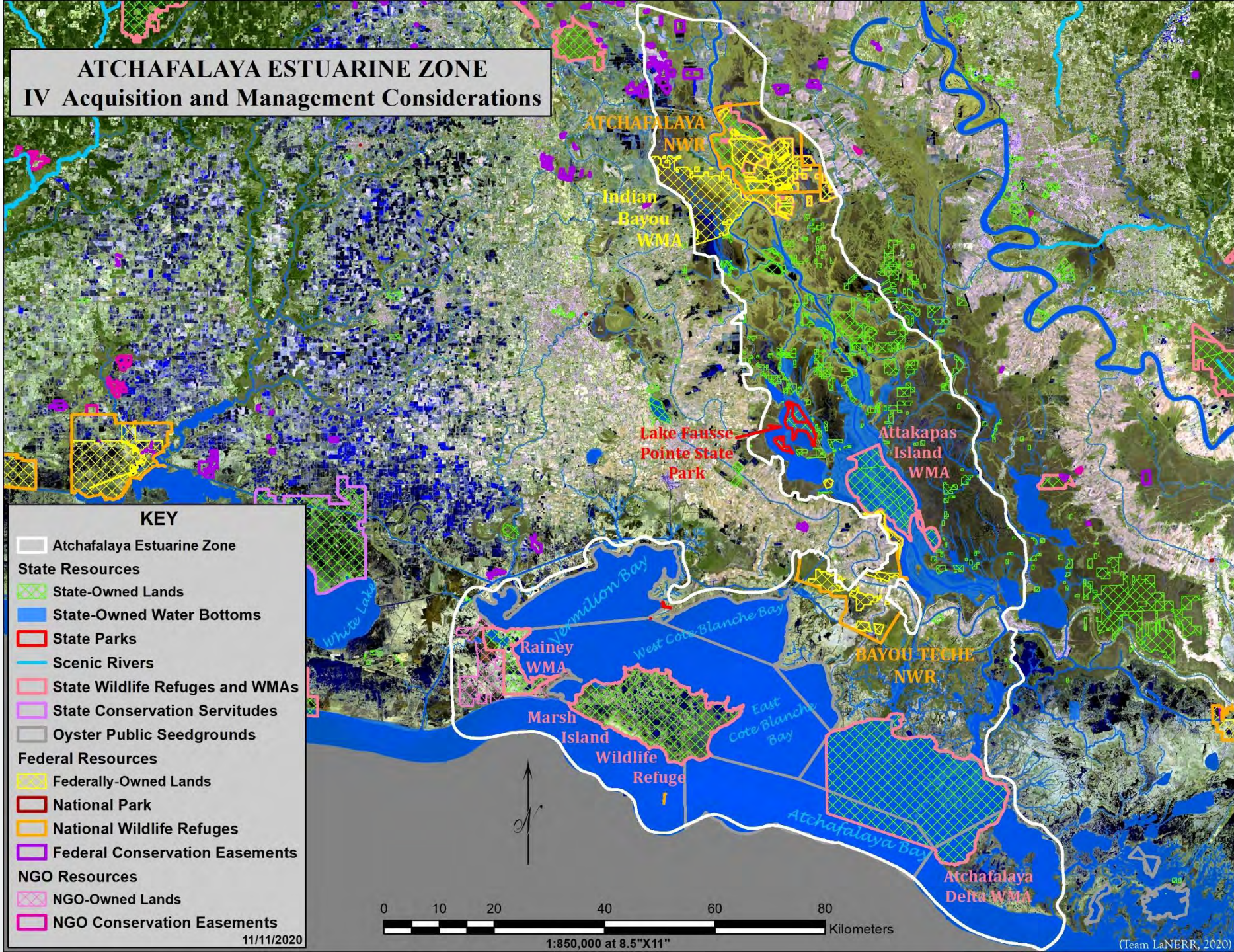
- Team Members and relevant expertise in addressing four NOAA topical areas (Environmental, Research, Education, Management);
- Visual of anticipated LaNERR site, including draft core and buffer areas;
- Brief explanation of proposal development plan including
  - team members (recruit members outside SDC to cover the four criteria topical areas);
  - Meeting format and process;
  - Needs to proposal implementation;
- Format of proposal is pdf and a powerpoint to present to SDC Meeting #5;
- Due end of April for SDC Meeting #5 planned for first week in May;

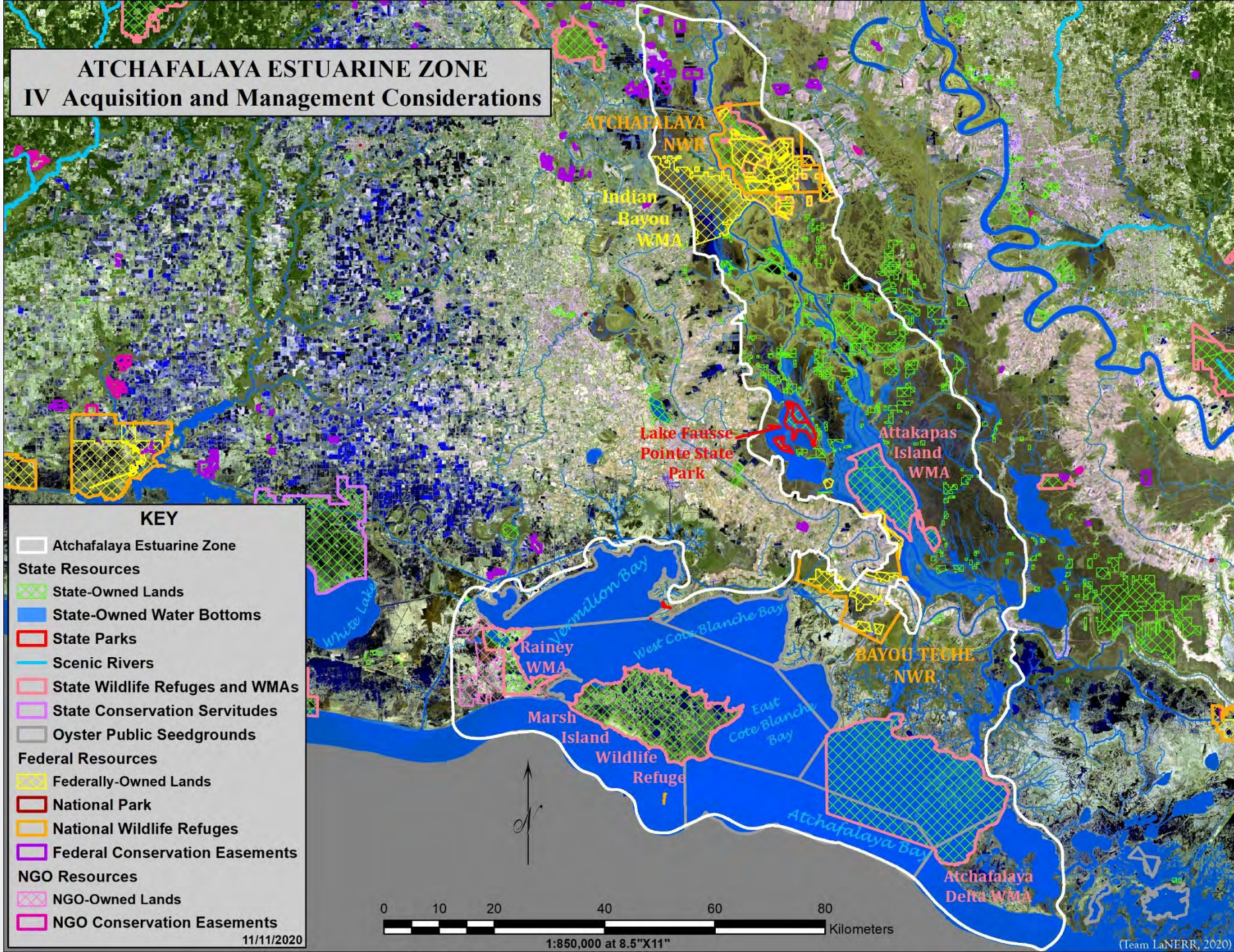
Proposal Teams – Support for Proposal Development from DLT

- Consultants from SDC have been identified to help with specific issues
- DLT will make available all shape files, data, and powerpoint productions that have been used for the pre-screening process;
- DLT is available for meetings to support Proposal Team efforts and answer questions (schedule with LaTosha Mullins);
- DLT is willing to set up share point folders for team interactions and sharing information;
- ????

The process from generalized boundaries of Estuarine Zones to the more specific composites of Candidate Sites to the final core areas of a LaNERR Nominated Site.




ATCHAFALAYA ESTUARINE ZONE
IV Acquisition and Management Considerations
ATCHAFALAYA NWR
Indian Bayou WMA
Lake Fausse Pointe State Park
Attakapas Island WMA
BAYOU TECHE NWR
Rainey WMA
Marsh Island Wildlife Refuge
Atchafalaya Delta WMA
Vermilion Bay
West Cote Blanche Bay
East Cote Blanche Bay
Atchafalaya Bay
White Lake
KEY
Atchafalaya Estuarine Zone
State Resources
State-Owned Lands
State-Owned Water Bottoms
State Parks
Scenic Rivers
State Wildlife Refuges and WMAs
State Conservation Servitudes
Oyster Public Seedgrounds
Federal Resources
Federally-Owned Lands
National Park
National Wildlife Refuges
Federal Conservation Easements
NGO Resources
NGO-Owned Lands
NGO Conservation Easements
11/11/2020
0 10 20 40 60 80
Kilometers
1:850,000 at 8.5"X11"
(Team LaNERR, 2020)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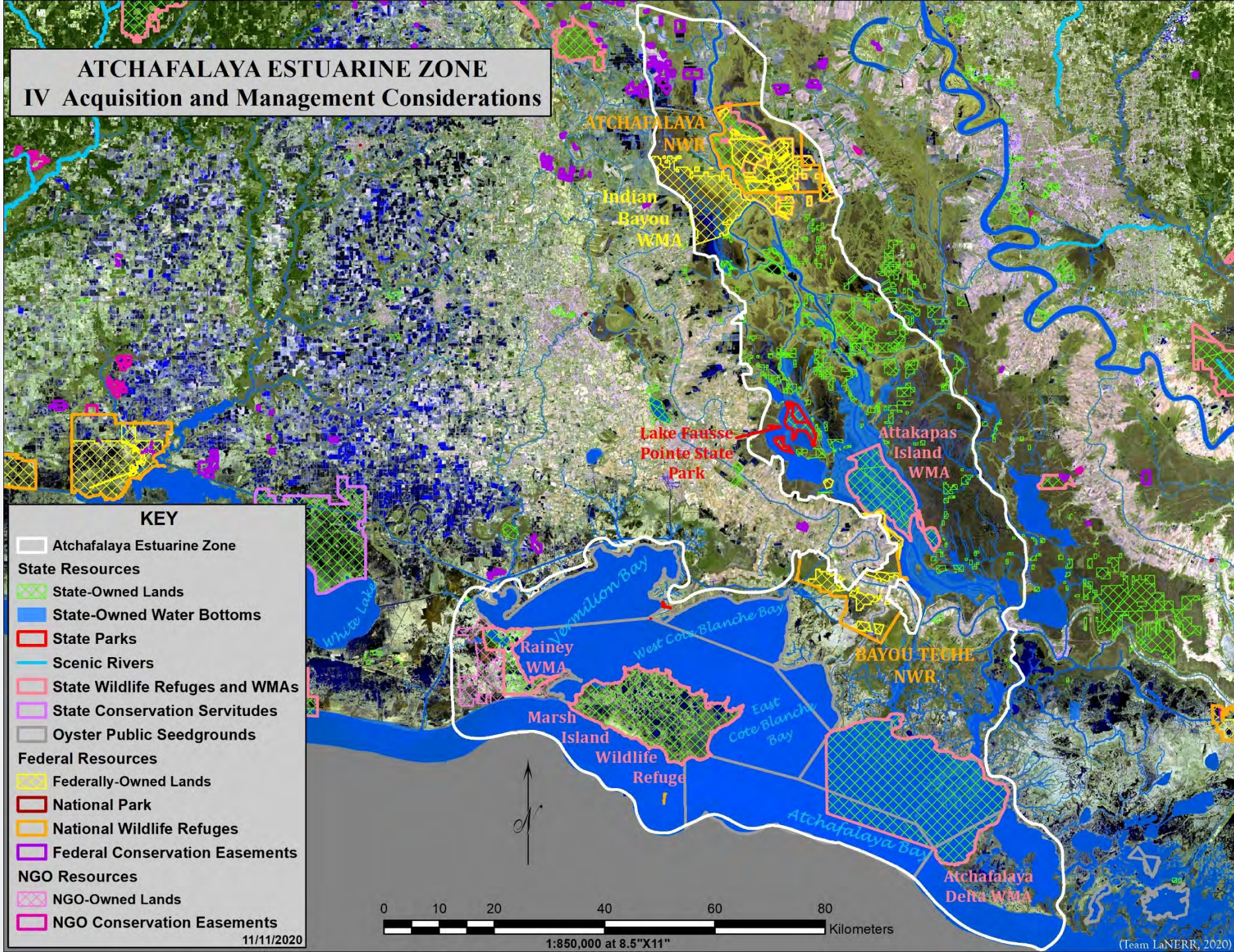
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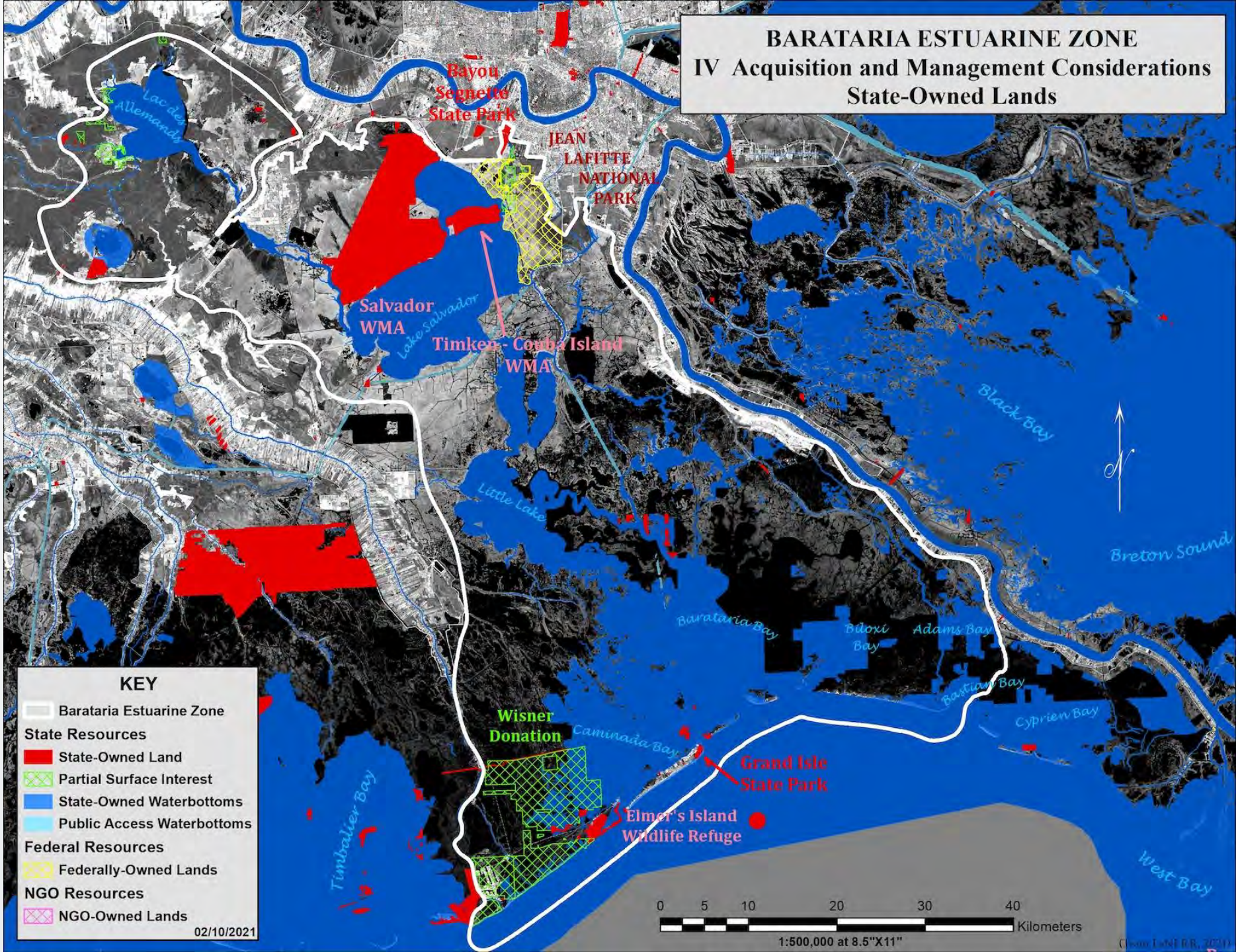
Kilometers
1:850,000 at 8.5"X11"
(Team LaNERR, 2020)

The process from generalized boundaries of Estuarine Zones to the more specific composites of Candidate Sites to the final core areas of a LaNERR Nominated Site.



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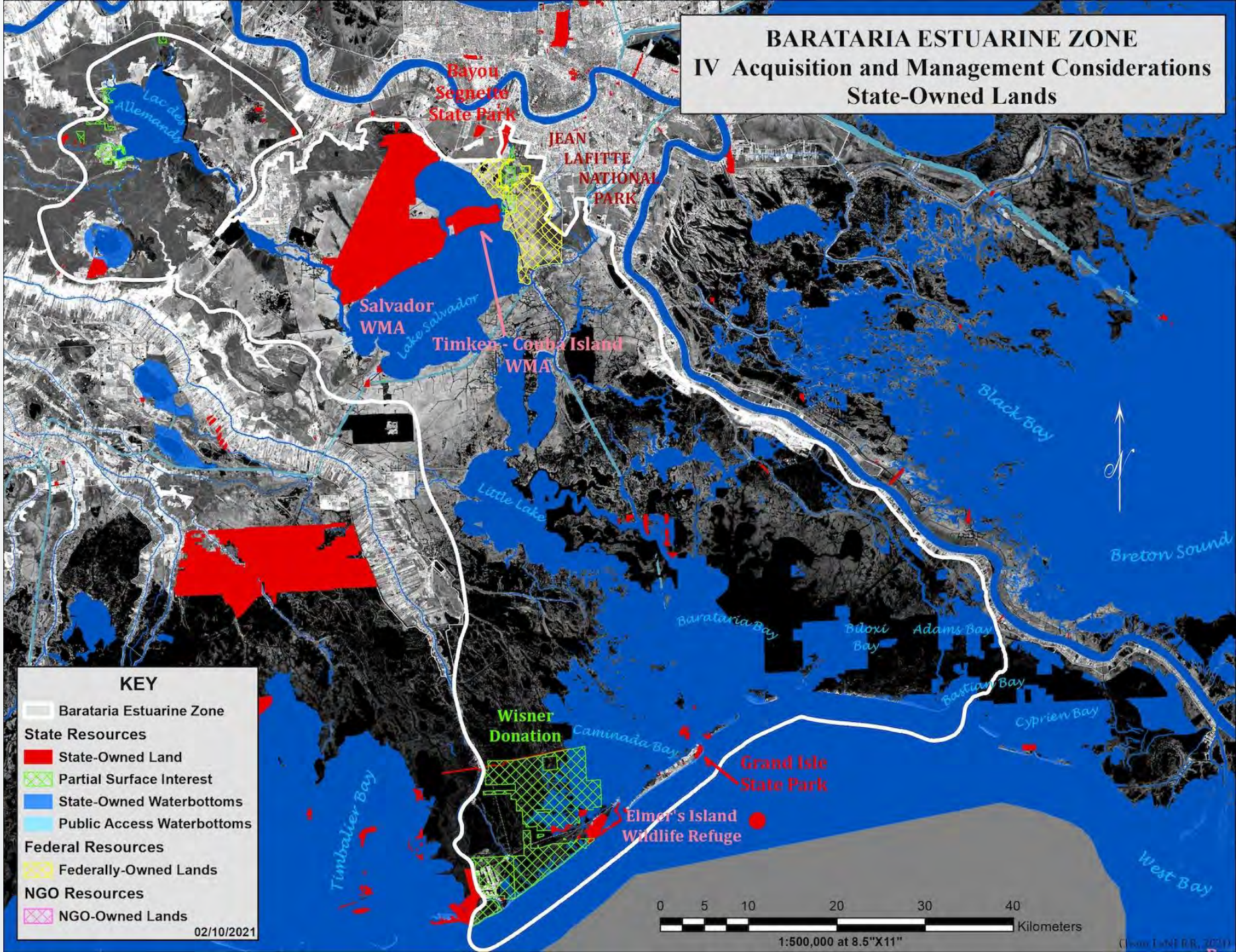

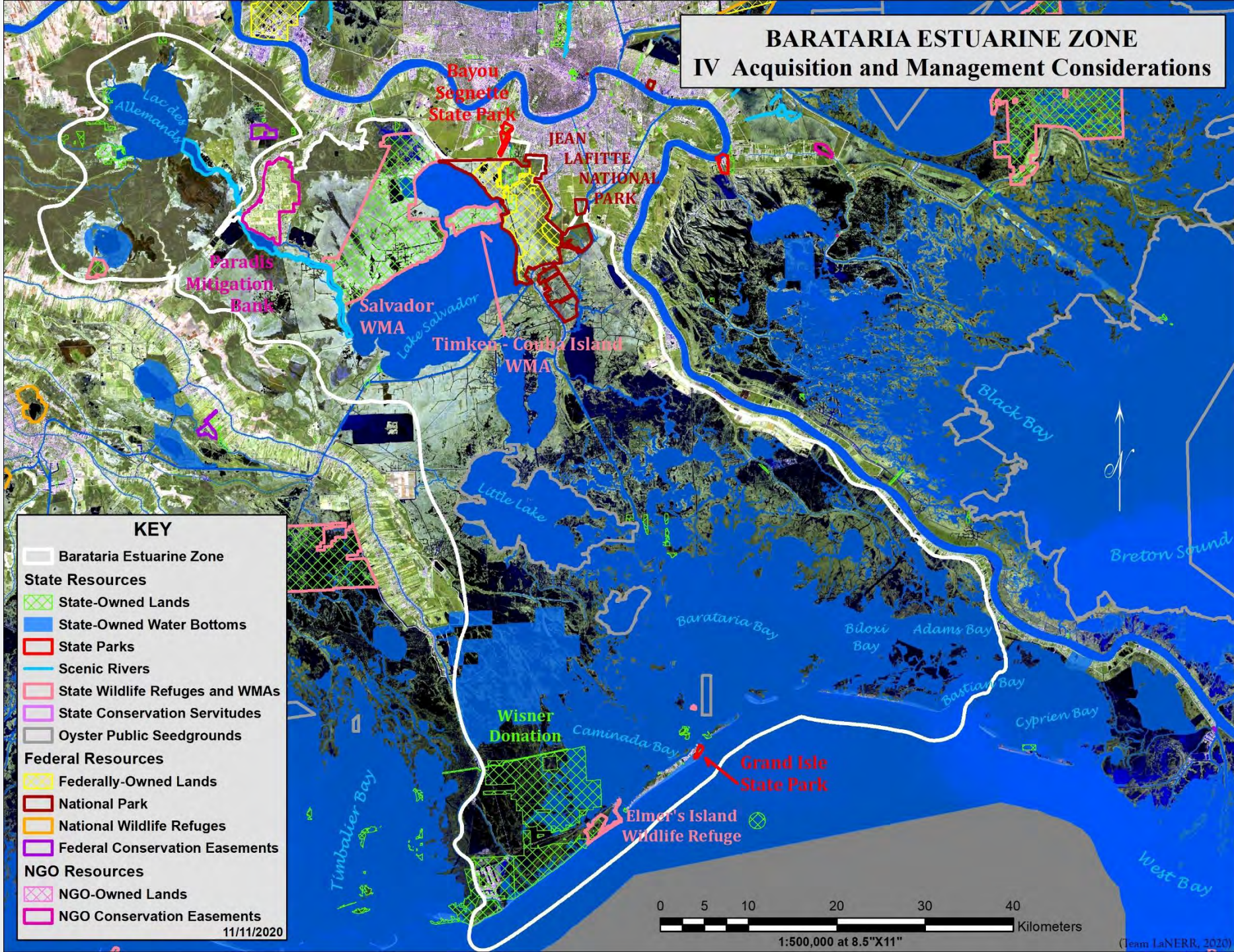
BARATARIA ESTUARINE ZONE
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JEAN LAFITTE NATIONAL PARK
Paradis Mitigation Bank
Salvador WMA
Timken - Couba Island WMA
Lac des Allemands
Lake Salvador
Little Lake
Black Bay
Breton Sound
Barataria Bay
Biloxi Bay
Adams Bay
Bastian Bay
Cyprien Bay
Caminada Bay
Timbalier Bay
West Bay
Wisner Donation
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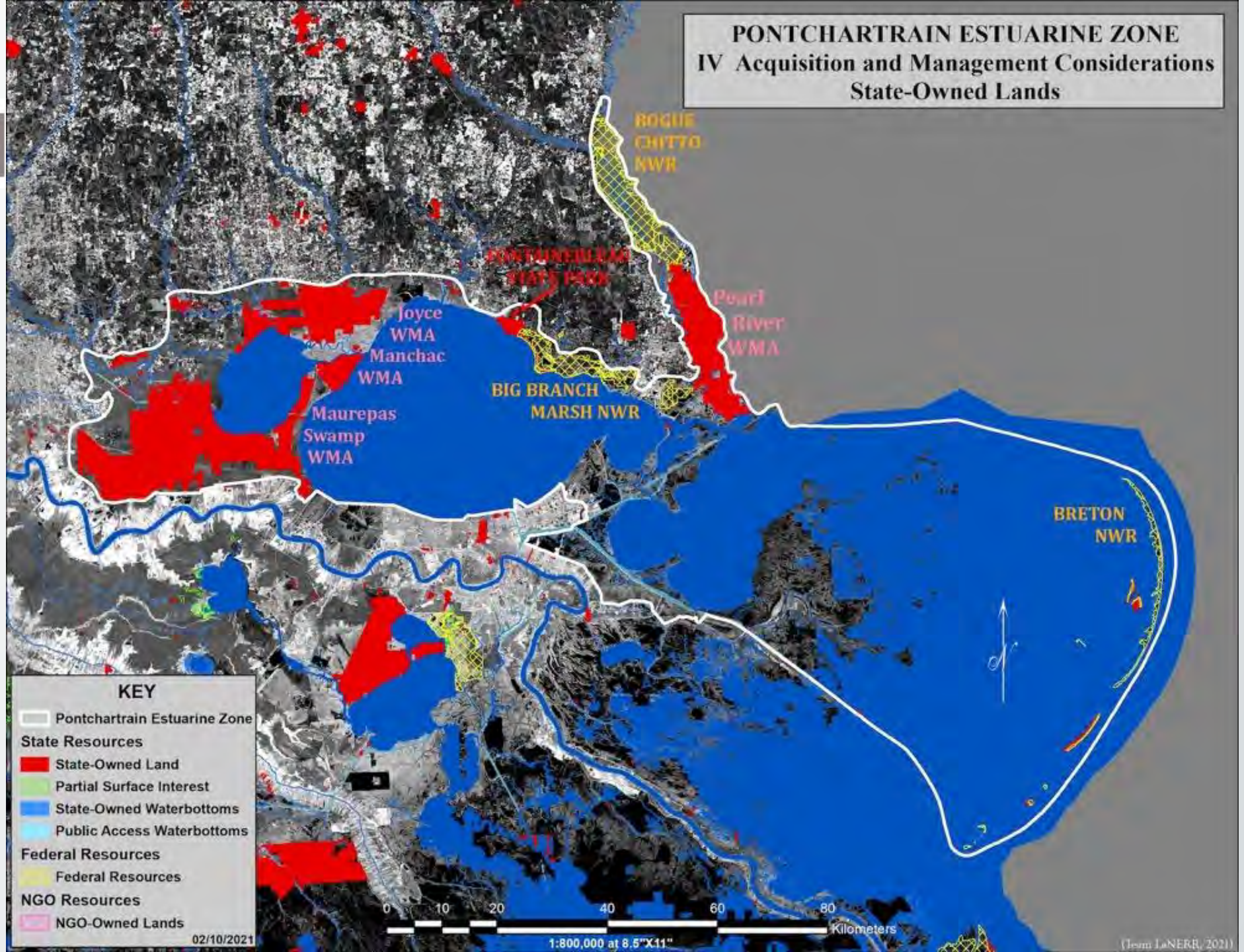
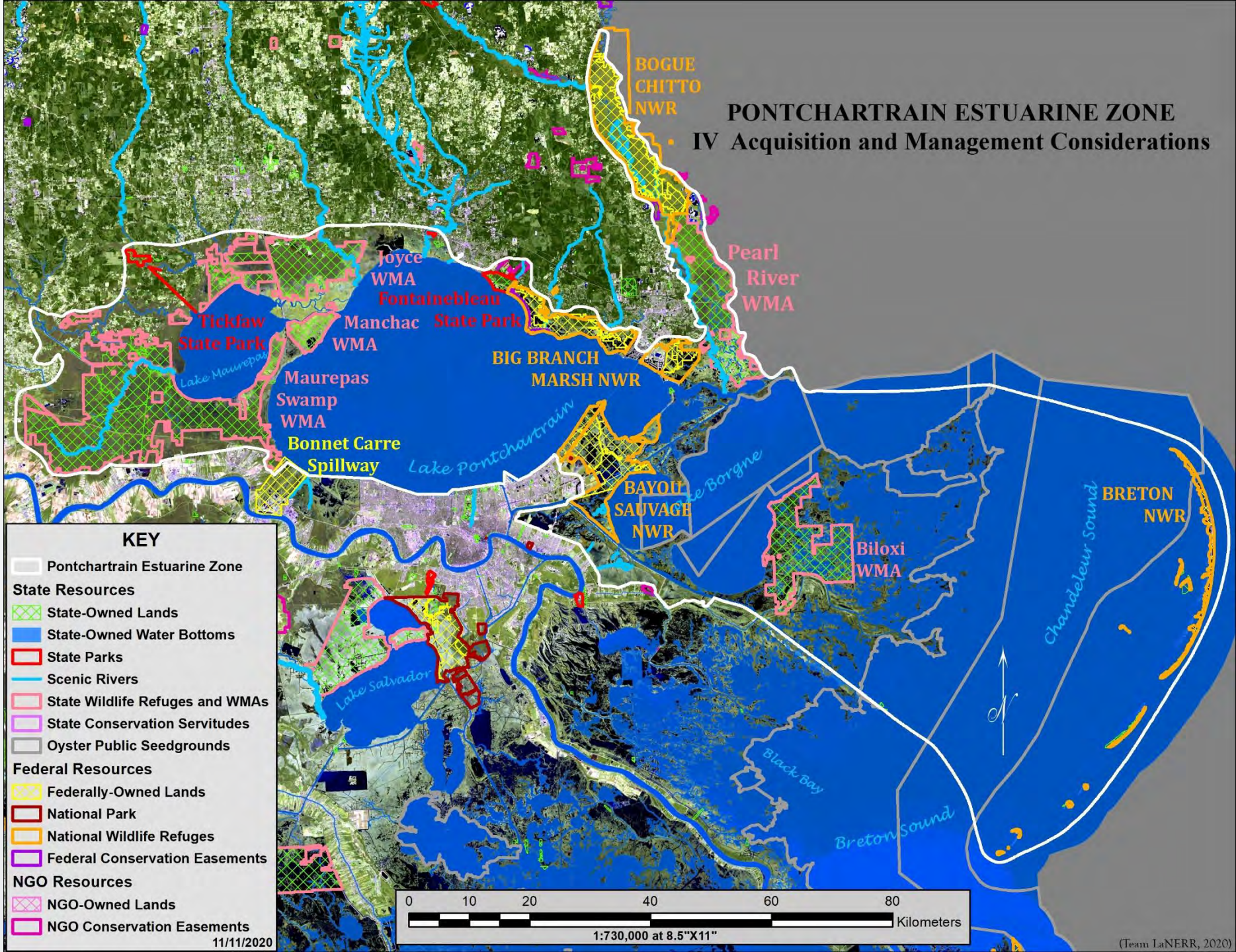


LaNERR SEARCH

IV. Acquisition and Management Considerations



LaNERR SEARCH

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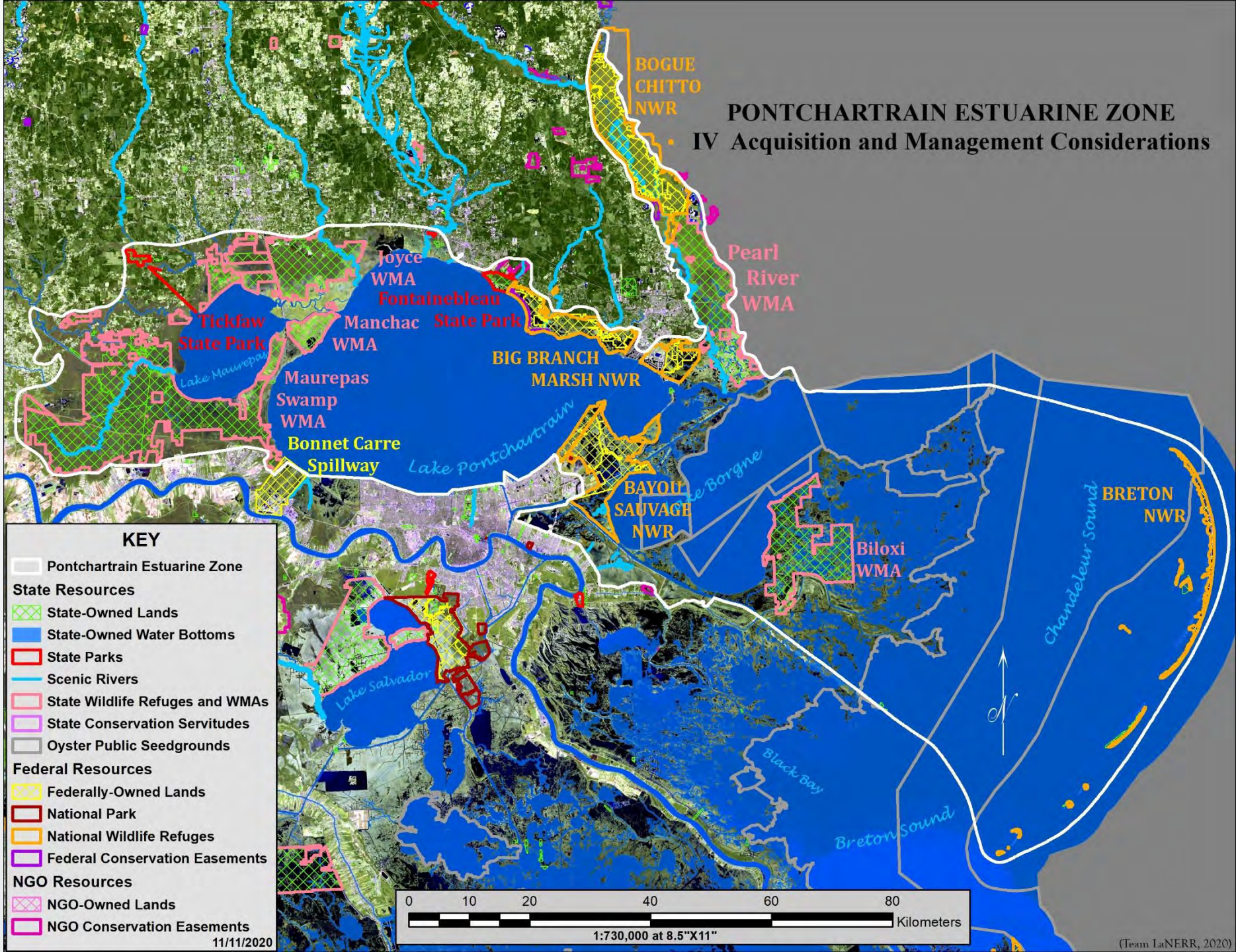

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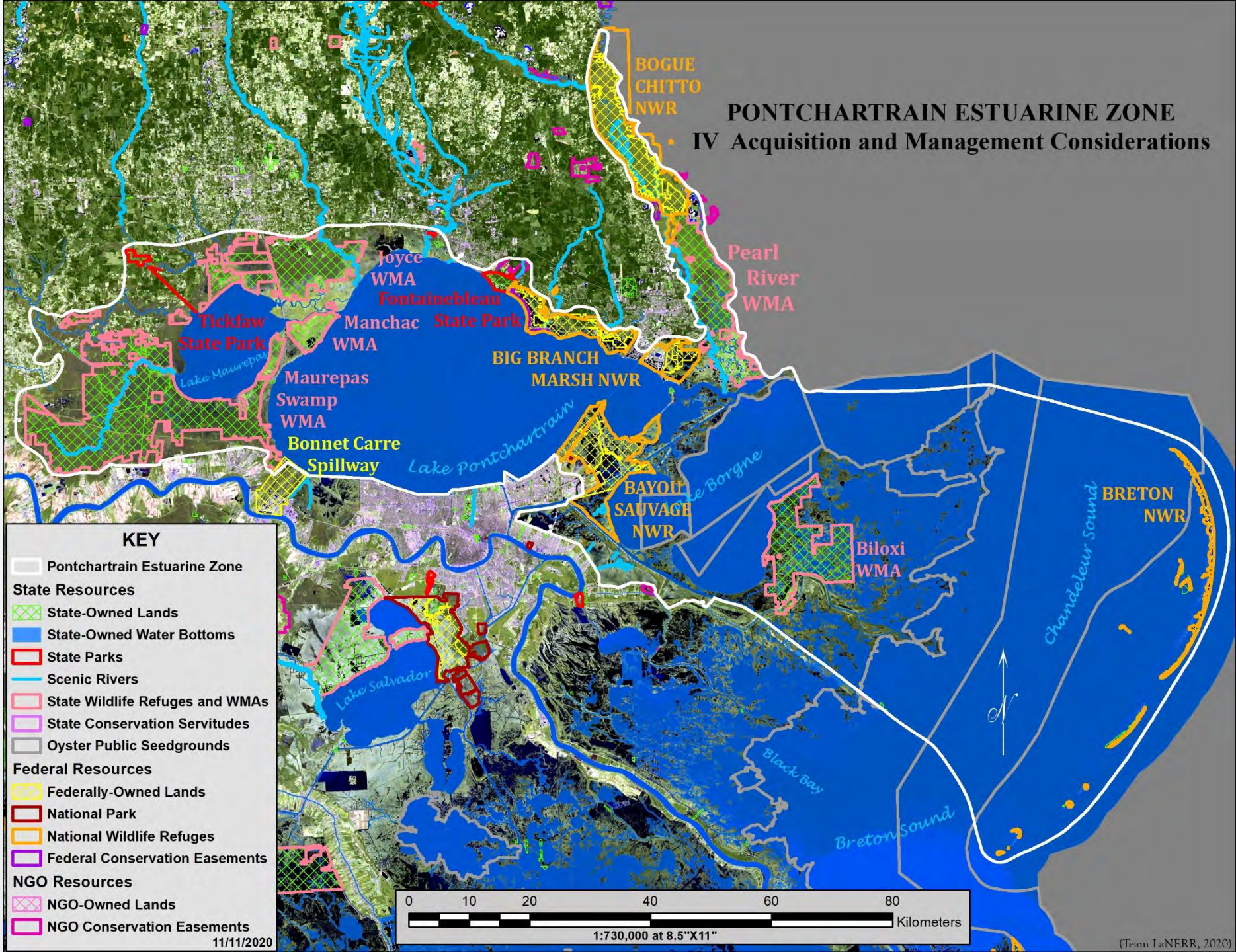

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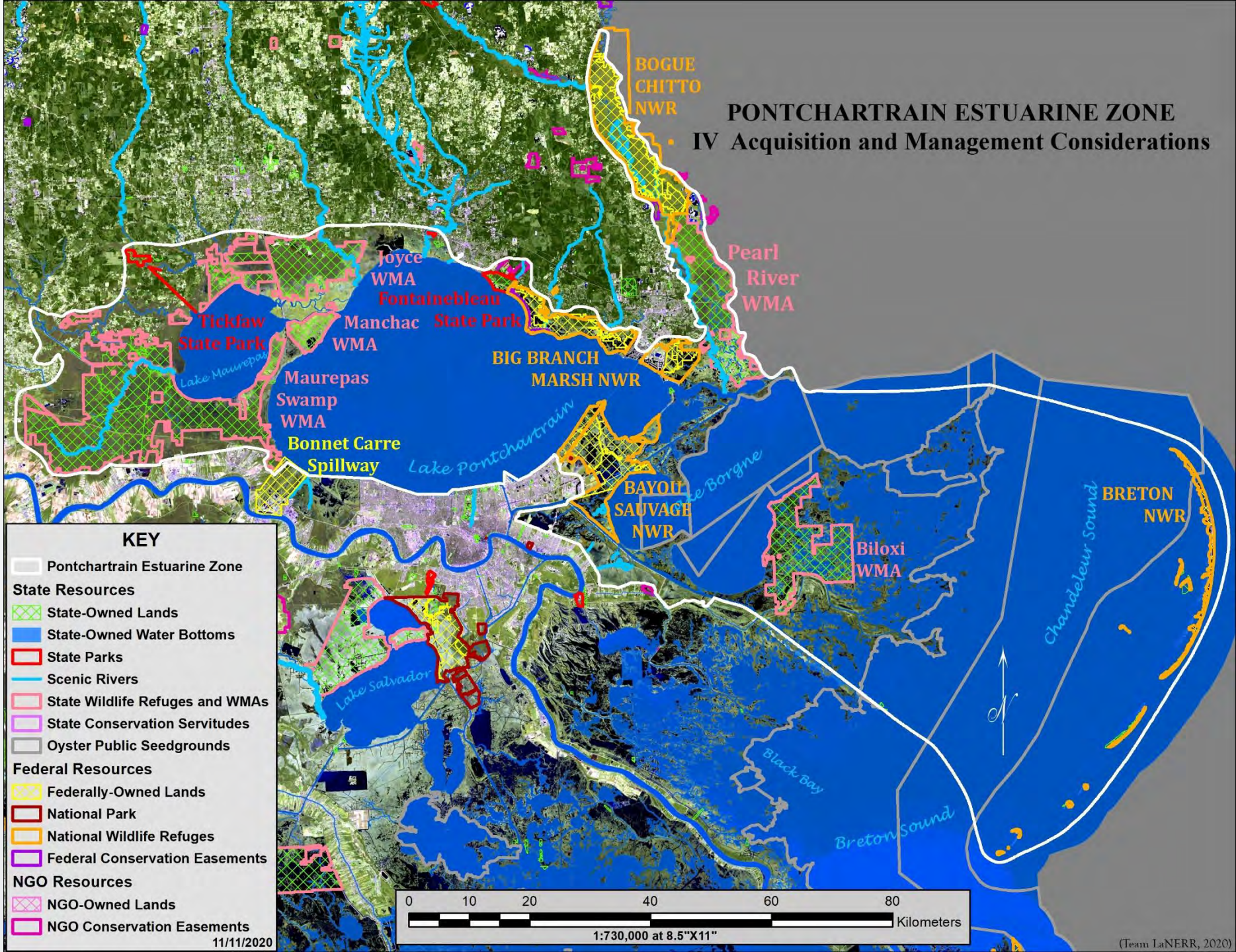

LaNERR SEARCH

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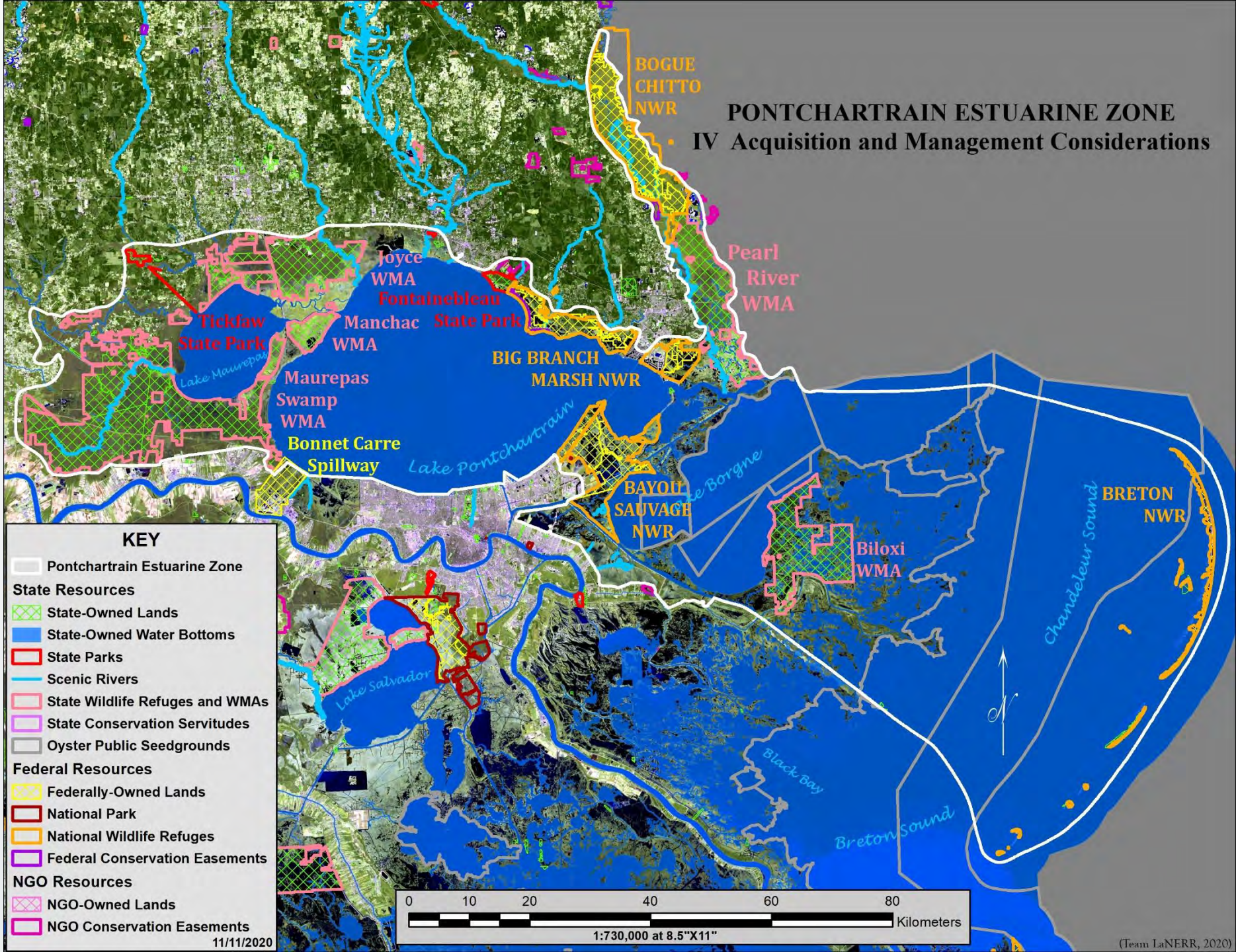


IV. Acquisition and Management Considerations

The specific core and buffer boundaries of the proposed LaNERR zone include **sufficient land and water area to maintain the integrity of the delta ecosystem**.

- The candidate site consists of publicly owned lands or demonstrates sufficient potential for land acquisition and adequate land-use control to meet Reserve System goals.
- There are Wildlife Management Areas, State Parks, National Parks, conservation easements, etc. in the LaNERR zone.
- The candidate site is suitable to address key **coastal management issues**.

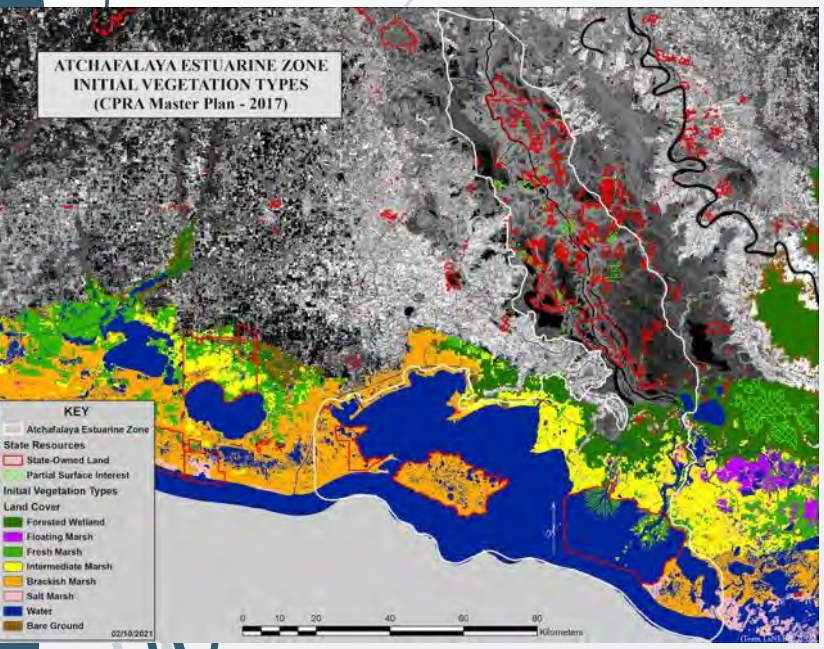
I. Environmental Representativeness

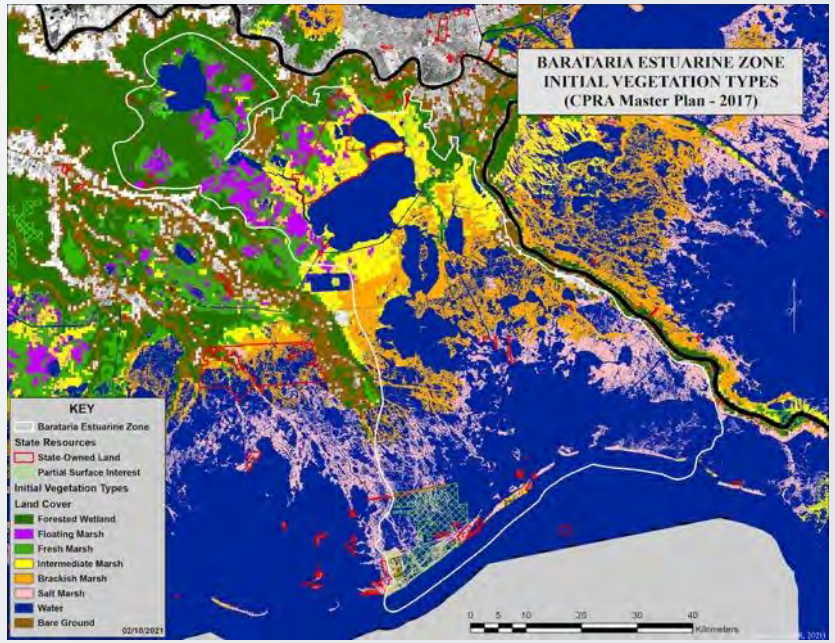
The candidate site is in the **Mississippi River Delta** that represents an active delta estuary.

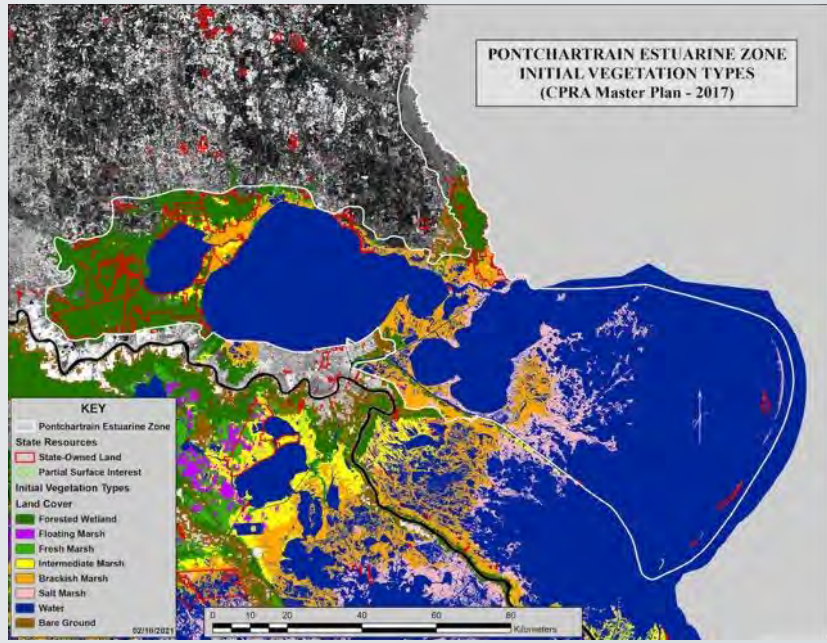
- Core and buffer areas describe the ecological features of a delta estuary such as the life cycles of estuarine-dependent species;
- Vegetation types include the delta estuary habitats from tidal freshwater to estuarine marshes and forested wetlands;
- Does the proposed delta estuary have habitat with unique and endangered species;

I. Environmental Representativeness

Distribution of current habitat types representing salinity zones based on 2017 Coastal Master Plan.







II. Value of the Site for Research, Monitoring, and Resource Protection

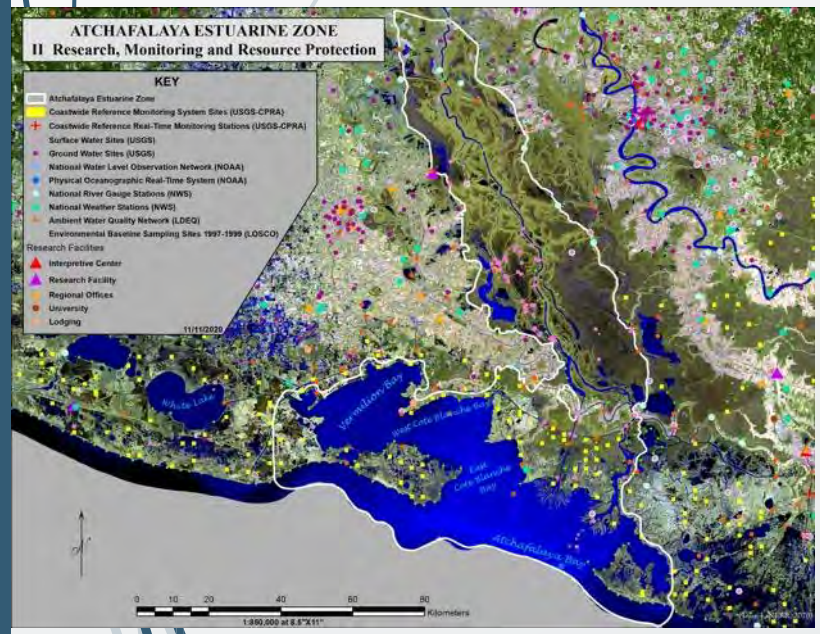
The candidate site is suitable for **research, monitoring, and resource protection** activities.

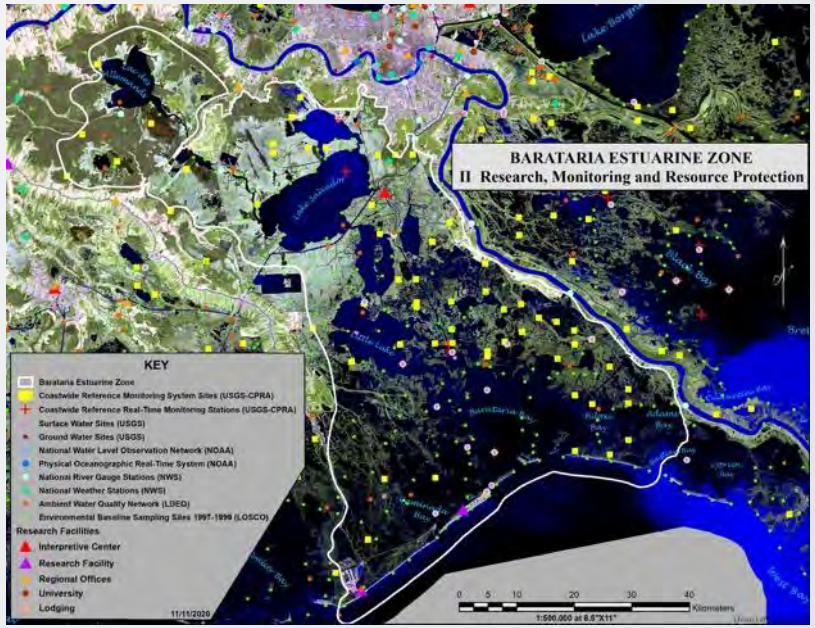
- The proposed zone has ecosystems suitable for monitoring processes of delta estuary; and has been site of long-term research efforts.
- There are research institutions and facilities in general area that can utilize the proposed site for research and monitoring programs;
- There is long-term sustainability and resilience to ecosystems in the proposed site; land use issues allow for resource protection.

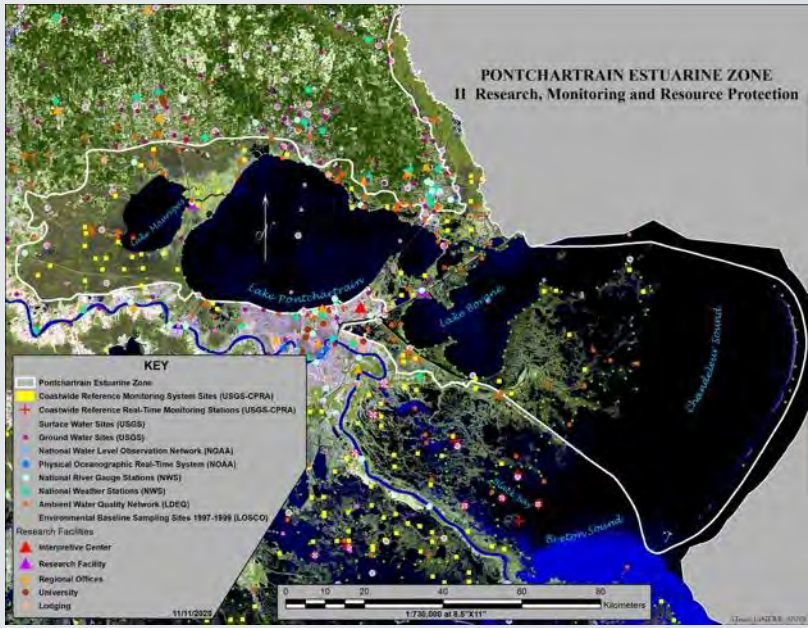
LaNERR SEARCH

II. Value of the Site for Research, Monitoring, and Resource Protection

Distribution of monitoring stations (including coastwide reference monitoring stations – CRMS).







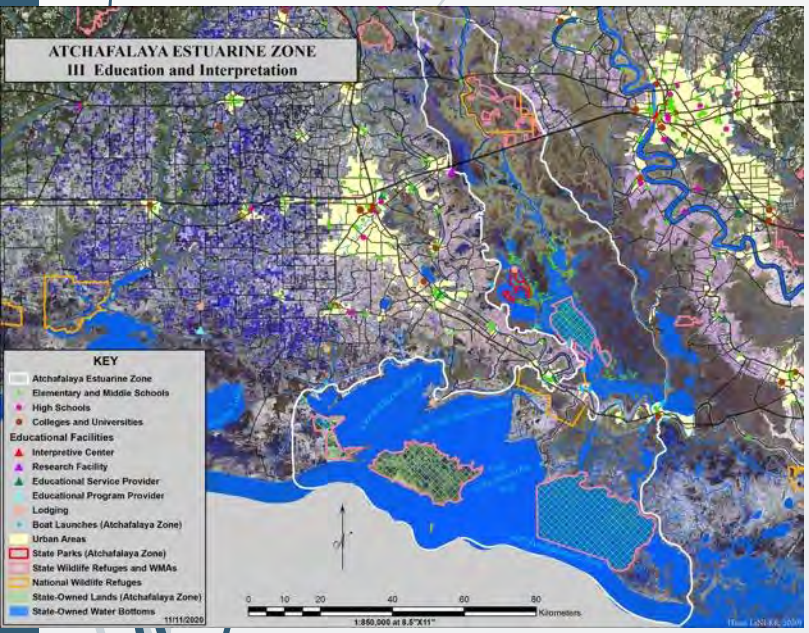
III. Suitability of the Site for Education and Interpretation

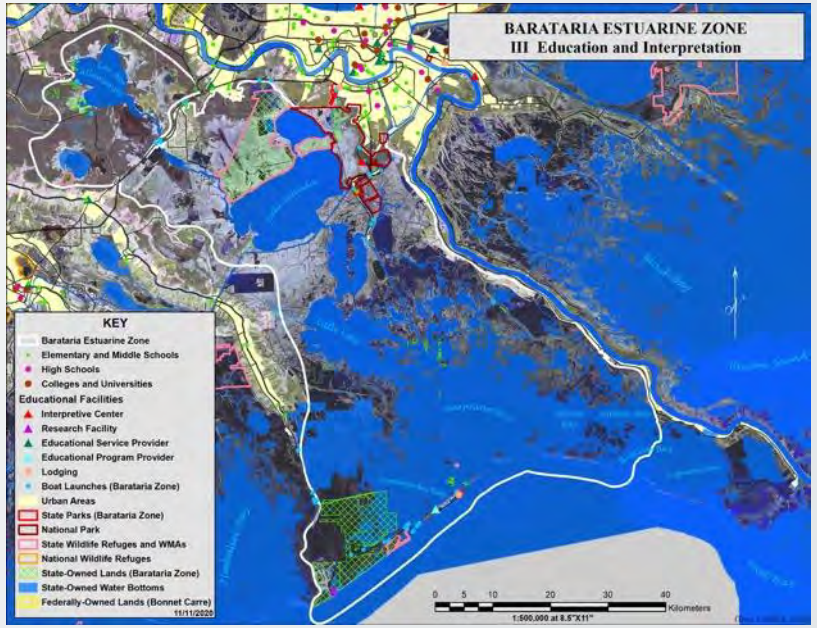
The candidate site is suitable for **education, training, and interpretation** activities.

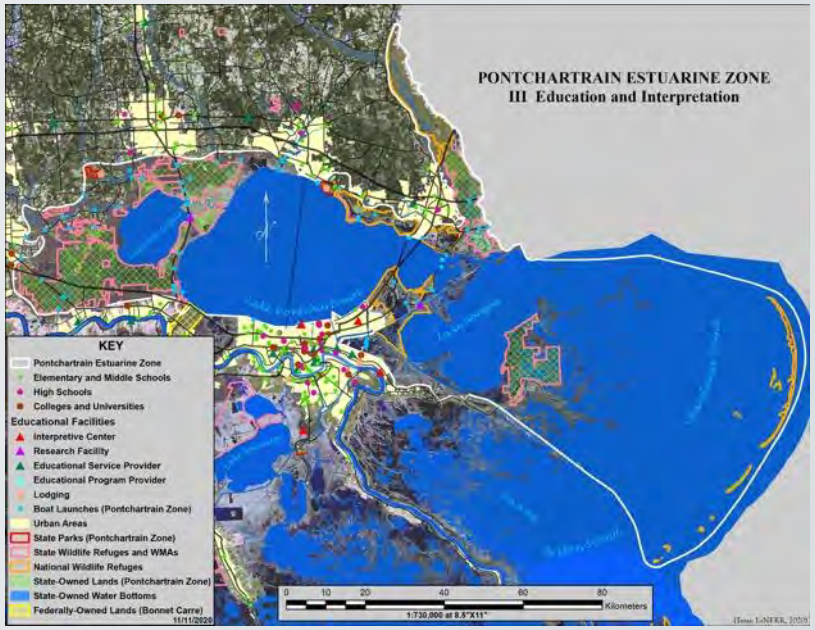
- Does the LaNERR zone have significant features such as Scenic and Historic Rivers, Scenic Byways, Indian mounds, Archeological sites, etc., that provide education and interpretation value;
- Are there schools and known educational and interpretive centers near the LaNERR zone;
- Is the proposed site accessible by normal modes of transportation. What roads and boat launches provide access points to waterways of the LaNERR zone.

III. Suitability of the Site for Education and Interpretation

Distribution of urban areas and schools along with access points in proximity of three Estuarine Zones.



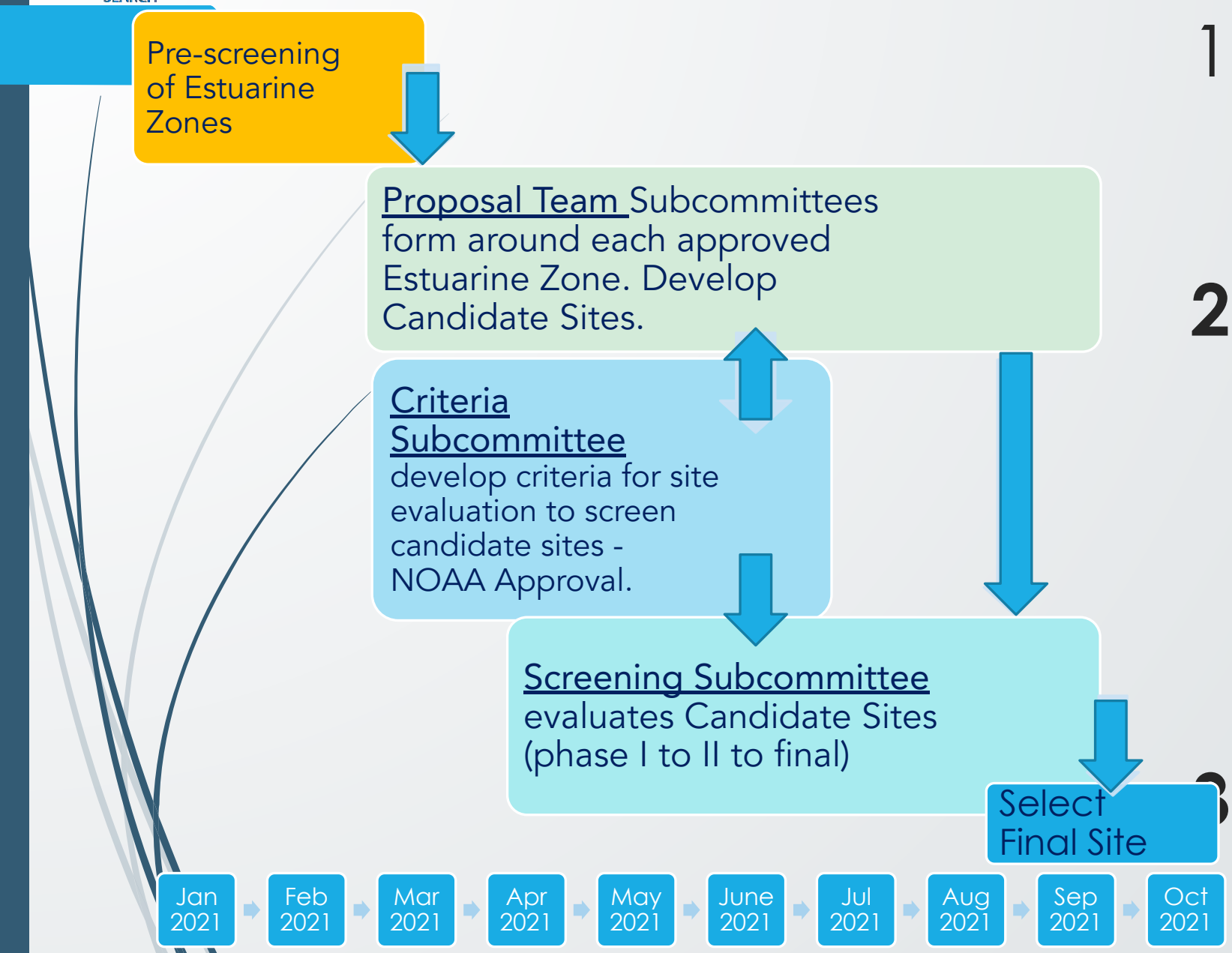




		DESIGNATION LEADERSHIP TEAM	SITE DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE	CRITERIA SUBCOMMITTEE	SCREENING SUBCOMMITTEE	PROPOSAL TEAMS
MAR	Early	Develop preliminary (example) candidate sites	SDC voted on 6 Estuarine Zones			
	Mid					
	Late	• Establish subcommittees • Provide 1st draft of Site Selection Criteria to Criteria Subcommittee	SDC Mtg 4: Review results of Estuarine Zone voting, example core/buffer areas, first draft Site Selection Criteria, and guidance for developing Phase 1 Candidate Site Proposals			
APR	Early			Working session		
	Mid			Working session		
	Late	Develop Phase 2 candidate site proposal template		Provide 2nd draft of Site Selection Criteria to DLT		Submit Phase 1 Candidate Site Proposals for DLT review
MAY	Early		SDC Mtg 5: Update on Phase 1 proposals, Expectations for Phase 2 proposals, Review 2nd draft of Site Selection Criteria			
	Mid			Provide 3rd draft of Site Selection Criteria to DLT		DLT check in w/Proposal Teams
	Late					
JUN	Early	Submit 3rd draft of Site Selection Criteria to NOAA for approval				
	Mid					DLT Check in w/Proposal Teams
	Late					Submit Phase 2 Candidate Site Proposals

		DESIGNATION LEADERSHIP TEAM	SITE DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE	CRITERIA SUBCOMMITTEE	SCREENING SUBCOMMITTEE	PROPOSAL TEAMS
JUL	Early	Receives approved Site Selection Criteria from NOAA				
	Mid				Screen Phase 2 Candidate Sites Proposals	
	Late		SDC Mtg 6: Review Results of Phase 2 Candidate Site Proposal Screening & vote to proceed to Final Candidate Site Proposals			
AUG	Early					
	Mid	Host Town Hall Meetings				Participate/present at Town Hall Meetings
	Late					
SEP	Early					Submit Final Candidate Site Proposals
	Mid				Screen Final Candidate Site Proposals	
	Late	Submit Final Candidate Site Proposal to Site Evaluation Committee for nomination to NOAA				

Site Development Committee Process.



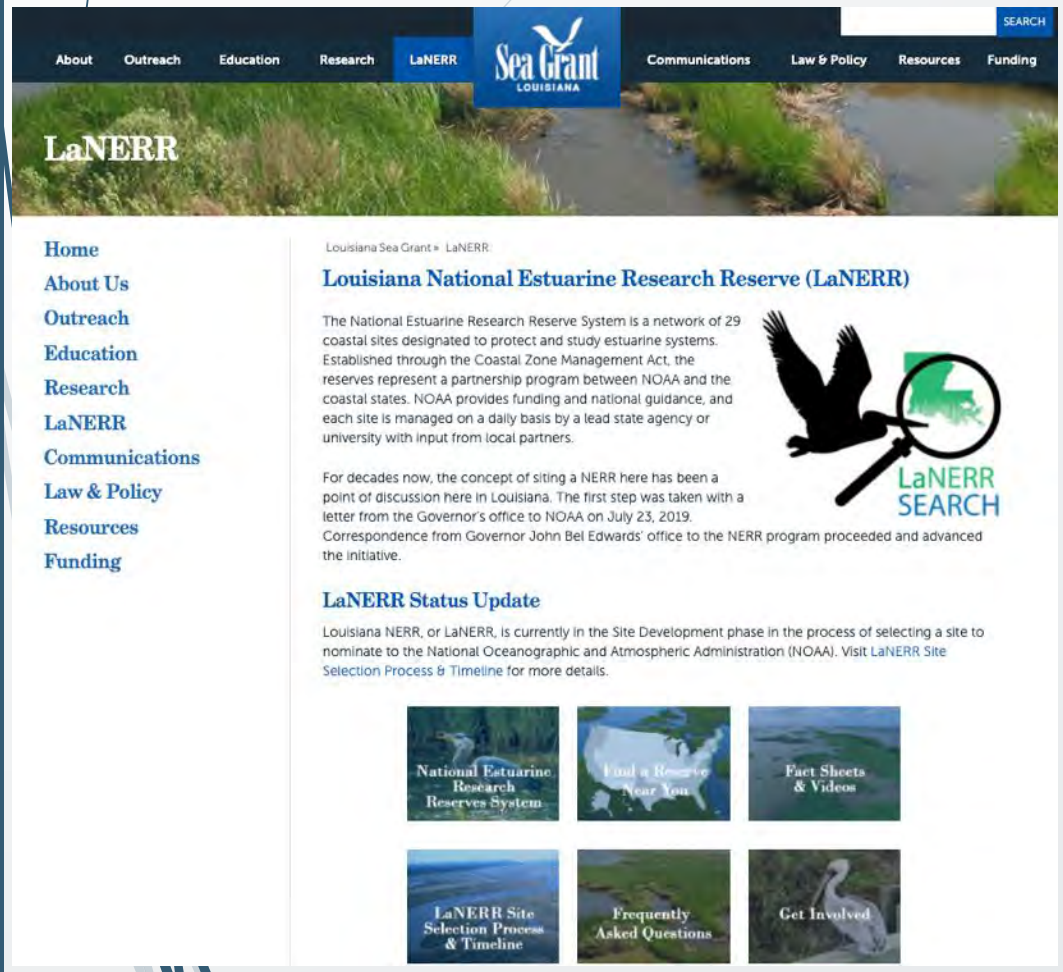
1. Evaluate the six proposed generalized estuarine zones as qualifications for a LaNERR.
2. Proposal Team Subcommittees develop more specific Candidate Sites for consideration for a LaNERR. Phase I to Phase II to Final Phase development with evaluation by Screening Subcommittee
3. Criteria Subcommittee develops drafts of Modified Site Criteria for Site

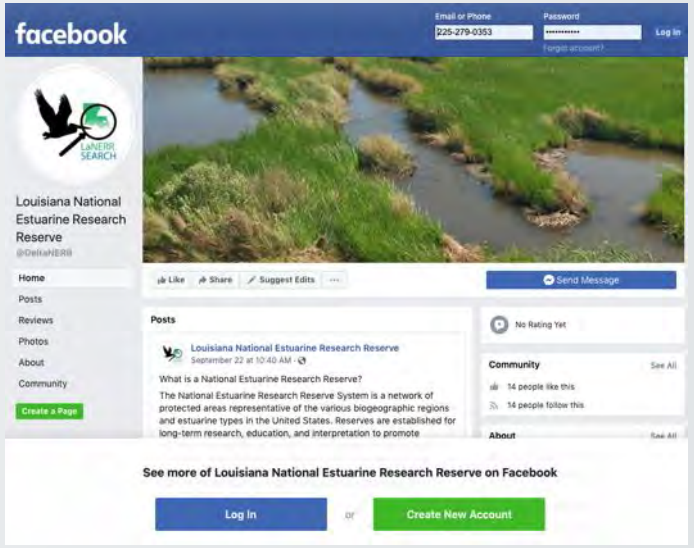
LaNERR

Louisiana
National Estuary Research Reserve

Questions?

How do I stay engaged in the process?



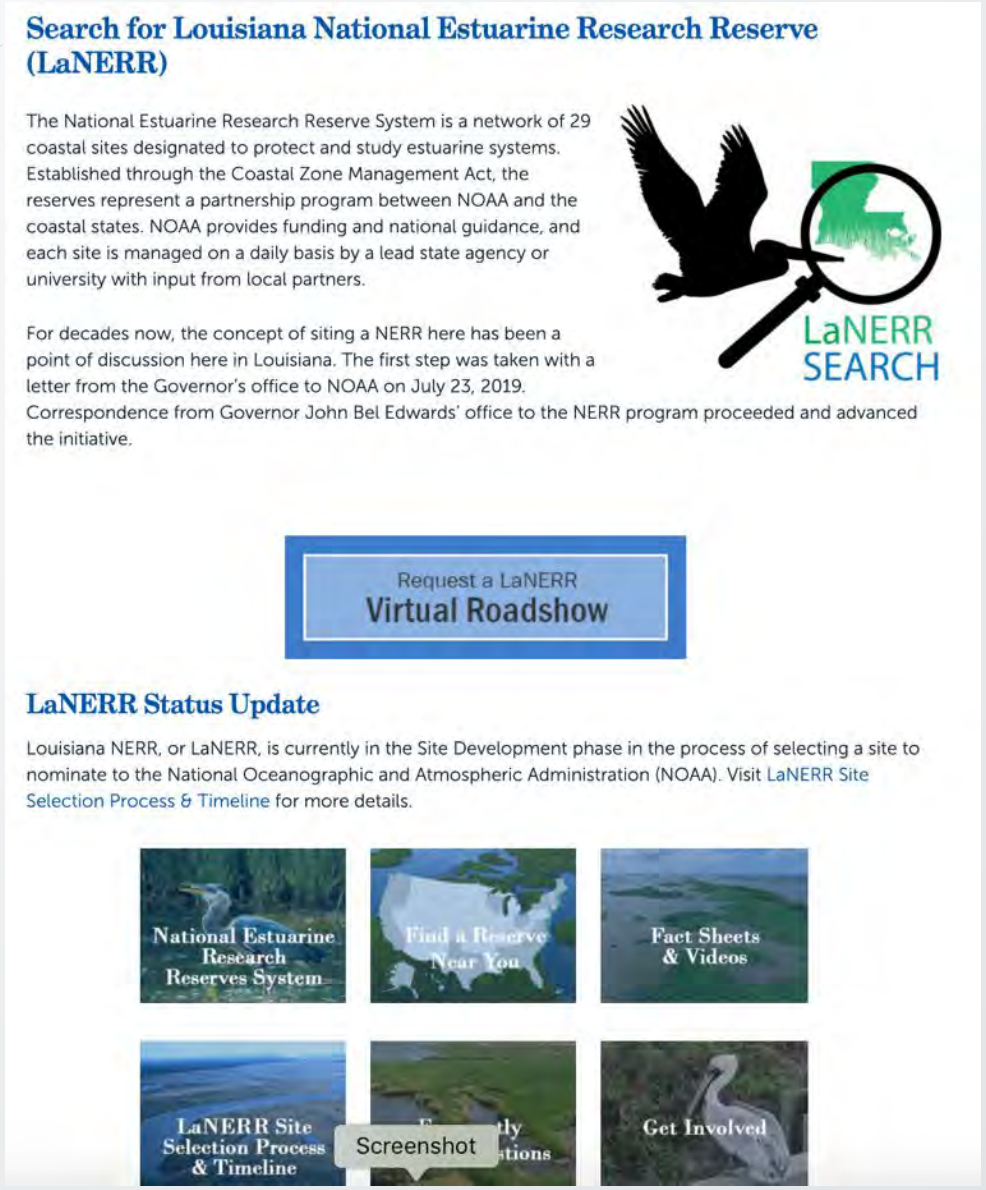


Contact

email deltanerr@lsu.edu

- Social Media:
  - **https://twitter.com/DeltaNERR**
- Website:
  - **http://www.laseagrant.org/deltanerr/**
- Facebook
  - **https://www.facebook.com/DeltaNERR/**

LaNERR Roadshow Presentation (www.laseagrant.org)



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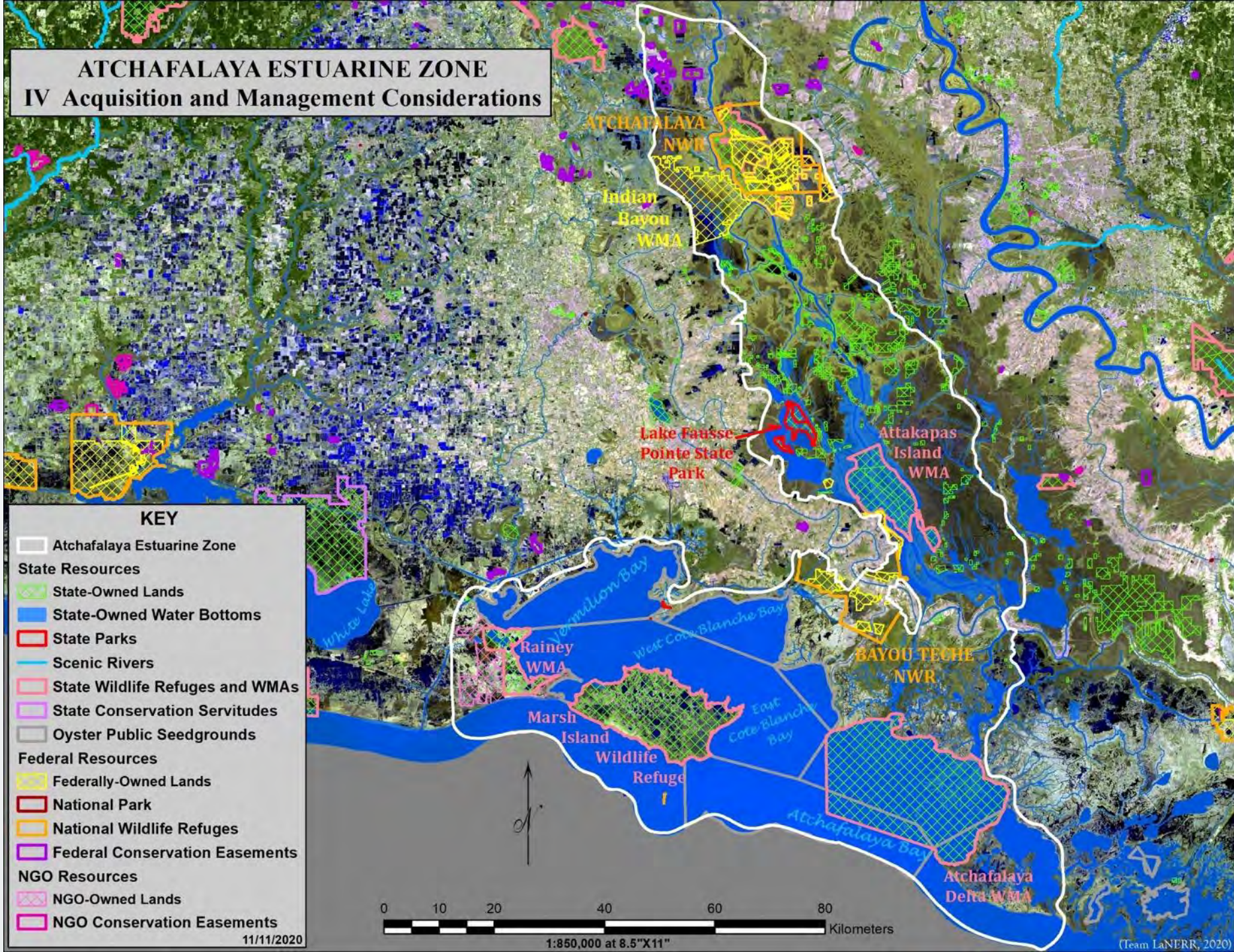
- Facebook **https://www.facebook.com/DeltaNERR/**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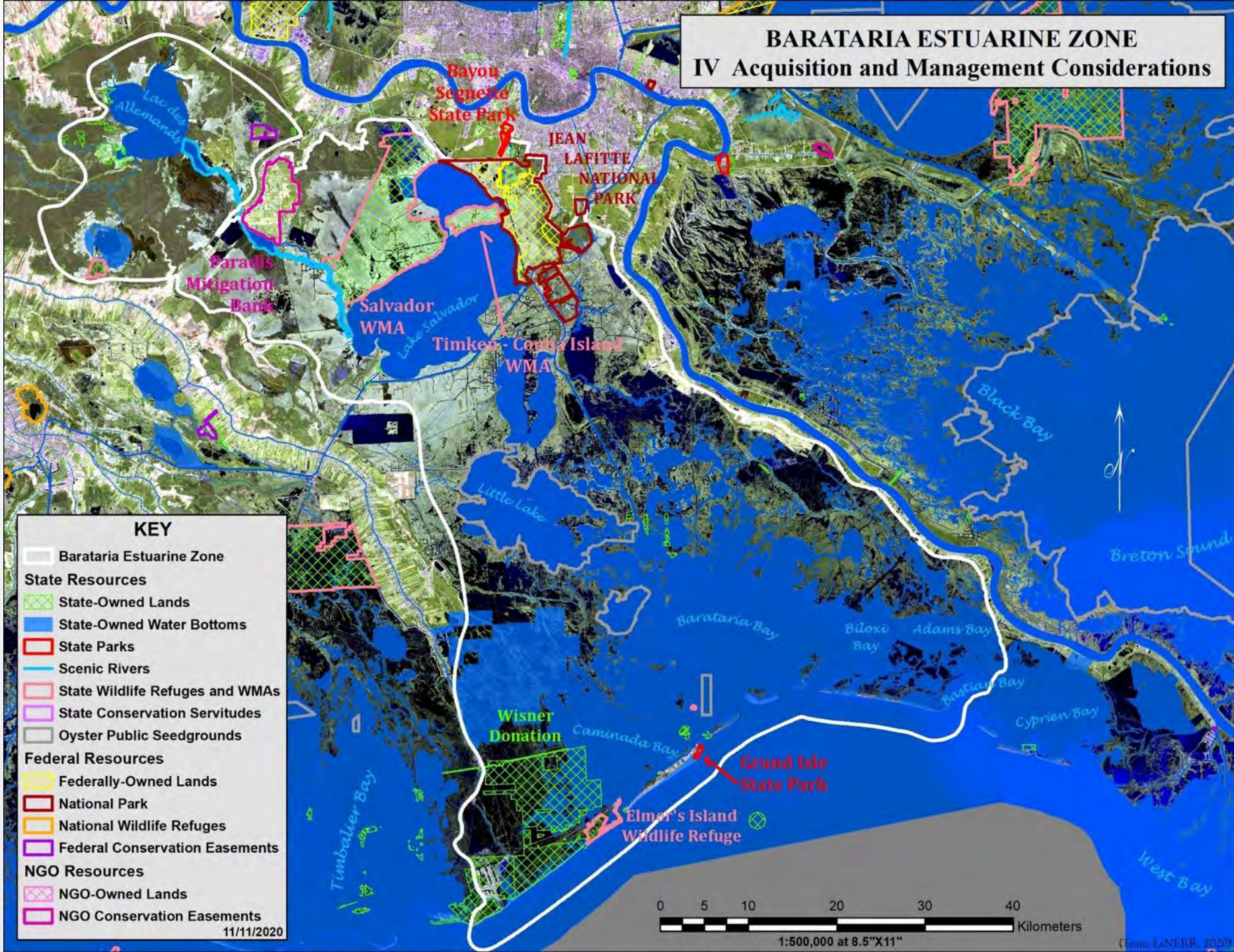
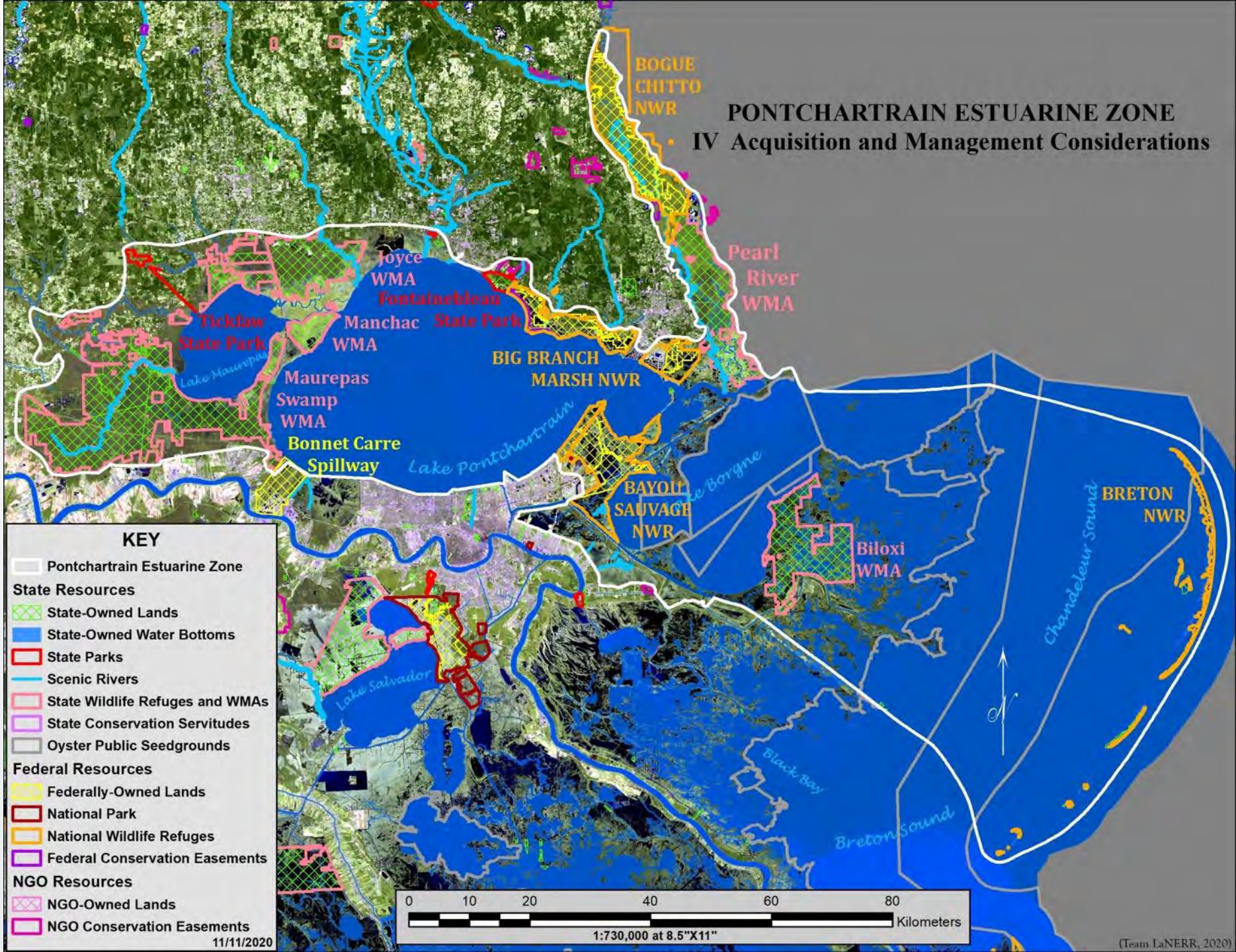
Atchafalaya Bay
White Lake
KEY
Atchafalaya Estuarine Zone
State Resources
State-Owned Lands
State-Owned Water Bottoms
State Parks
Scenic Rivers
State Wildlife Refuges and WMAs
State Conservation Servitudes
Oyster Public Seedgrounds
Federal Resources
Federally-Owned Lands
National Park
National Wildlife Refuges
Federal Conservation Easements
NGO Resources
NGO-Owned Lands
NGO Conservation Easements
11/11/2020
0 10 20 40 60 80
Kilometers
1:850,000 at 8.5"X11"
(Team LaNERR, 2020)

LaNERR SEARCH

IV. Acquisition and Management Considerations




PONTCHARTRAIN ESTUARINE ZONE
IV Acquisition and Management Considerations
BOGUE CHITTO NWR
Pearl River WMA
Joyce WMA
Fontainebleau State Park
Tickfaw State Park
Manchac WMA
BIG BRANCH MARSH NWR
Maurepas Swamp WMA
Bonnet Carre Spillway
Lake Pontchartrain
BAYOU SAUVAGE NWR
Biloxi WMA
BRETON NWR
Chandeleur Sound
Lake Maurepas
Lake Borgne
Lake Salvador
Black Bay
Breton Sound
KEY
Pontchartrain Estuarine Zone
State Resources
State-Owned Lands
State-Owned Water Bottoms
State Parks
Scenic Rivers
State Wildlife Refuges and WMAs
State Conservation Servitudes
Oyster Public Seedgrounds
Federal Resources
Federally-Owned Lands
National Park
National Wildlife Refuges
Federal Conservation Easements
NGO Resources
NGO-Owned Lands
NGO Conservation Easements
11/11/2020
0 10 20 40 60 80
Kilometers
1:730,000 at 8.5"X11"
(Team LaNERR, 2020)

LaNERR Site Development Committee

Meeting #4

Session 1: Tuesday, March 30, 2021 (9:00 – 10:30 am)

Session 2: Wednesday, March 31, 2021 (1:00 – 2:30 pm)

Attendees

SDC Members - Session 1: Abigail Bockus, LUMCON; Andy Fischer, LDWF; Carol Wilson, LSU; Cheston Hill, OSL; Chip McGimsey, CRT; Craig Colten, LSU; Honora Buras, CPRA; Jill Trepanier, LSU; Justin Lemoine, CRT; Martin O'Connell, UNO; Matthew Hiatt, LSU; Nathan Corley, LDOE; Navid Jafari, LSU; Pat Arnould, GOIA; Robert Mahon, UNO; Sara Krupa, LDNR; Scott Hemmerling, WI; Seth Blitch, TNC; Thomas Gresham, LDOE; Tracy Quirk, LSU; Kevin Ringelman, LSU; John Nyman, LSU; Beth Stauffer, ULL; James Nelson, ULL; Kyle Piller, SELU; Greg Steyer, USGS; Danielle Keller, USACE; Kenny Ribbeck, LDWF; Erik Johnson, Audubon; David Muth, NWF; Michael Pasquier, LSU; Jennifer Hill, Louisiana Tech; Brian Roberts, LUMCON

Site Development Committee (SDC) Members - Session 2: Alex Kolker, LUMCON; Claire Anderson, Ripple Effect; Dean Blanchard, BTNEP; Erin Cox, UNO; Gina Campo, OCD; Julie Whitbeck, NPS; Maida Owens, CRT; Robert Thomas, Loyola; Dinah Maygarden, UNO; Kacie Wright, USGS; Robert Moreau, SELU; Kristi Trail, PC; David Podgorski, UNO; Honora Buras, CPRA; Kenny Ribbeck, LDWF; Mike Carloss, DU; Patty Ferguson Bohnee, ASU; Ron Boustany, NRCS; Brian Gautreau, LSU AgCenter; Corey Miller, CRCL; Rebecca Triche, LWF; Mark Davis, Tulane; Mark Tobler, Loyola; Donata Henry, Tulane; Alternates: Ridgely Myers, PC; Gary Shaffer, SELU

Designation Leadership Team (DLT): Robert Twilley, LA Sea Grant; LaTosha Mullins, LA Sea Grant; Morgan Crutcher, GOCA; Kristin Ransom, NOAA

Royal Engineers & Consultants (LA Sea Grant Support): Kirk Rhinehart, Alaina Grace, Mandy Green

SDC Members Unable to Attend: Aimee Hollander, NSU; Andy Dolan, USFWS; Bryan Piazza, TNC; Cindy Brown, LTL; Emad Habib, ULL; John Tirpak, USFWS; Ken Krauss, USGS; Mark Kulp, UNO; Megan La Peyre, USGS; Mitchell Aleshire, CRT; Morgan Kelly, LSU; Shirell Parfait-Dardar, GCDBCC; Natalie Snider, EDF; Gary Lafleur, NSU; Giovanna McClenachan, NSU; Liz Skilton, ULL; Chuck Hunter, USFWS; Illya Tietzel, UNO; Jonathan Foret, SLWDC; Malay Ghose Hajra, UNO; Simone Maloz, RoR; Joey Breaux, LDAF; Quenton Fontenot, NSU; Heather Stone, ULL

Summary

Welcome

The key objectives of the meeting were to provide an overview of Site Development Committee (SDC) member voting on the six Estuarine Zones, discuss plans to move from the first to second draft of the Site Selection Criteria and the charge to the Site Criteria Subcommittee, review example candidate sites

(core and buffer areas), and discuss next steps for formalizing Proposal Teams and developing Phase I Candidate Site Proposals.

Site Development Committee Voting Results in Six Estuarine Zones

An overview was provided of the voting results in the six Estuarine Zones. As a result of the preliminary screening criteria used and 53 SDC member votes, the Pontchartrain, Barataria, and Atchafalaya Estuarine Zones were nominated for further consideration for developing Candidate Site Proposals.

Site Selection Criteria and Site Criteria Subcommittee

An overview was provided of the NOAA guidelines to establish a LaNERR site, including discussion of several commonly used NERR-related definitions (i.e., unique environment, core and buffer areas, and integrity). The parallel process of modifying NOAA Site Selection Criteria while Proposal Teams begin drafting Preliminary Candidate Site Proposals was discussed. It was noted that modifications are not intended to represent a wholesale revision of the criteria but rather to modify the criteria to make them applicable to coastal Louisiana (if they are not applicable as they are).

A preliminary list of SDC members that volunteered to serve on the Site Criteria Subcommittee was presented, along with a brief overview of their charge to help move from the first to second draft of the Site Selection Criteria for use in screening Candidate Site Proposals. To aid in workflow, members of the Site Criteria Subcommittee were asked to volunteer to serve as a Chair or Co-chair. An email will be sent to members of the Site Criteria Subcommittee with instructions on how to access the shared / collaborative working site through OneDrive / SharePoint as well as a link for scheduling two working meetings before April 30, 2021. The second draft Site Selection Criteria are due to the Designation Leadership Team (DLT) by April 30, 2021.

The SDC was reminded that NOAA must review and approve Site Selection Criteria before they can be used to screen and score final Candidate Site Proposals. At this time, the DLT anticipates that the third draft of the Site Selection Criteria will be sent to NOAA for review/approval in early June 2021. Last, a brief overview was given of the Site Selection Criteria worksheet that subcommittee members will be asked to use to document suggested modifications to the criteria.

Proposal Teams

A preliminary list of SDC members who have volunteered to serve as a Team Lead, Co-lead, Member, or Consultant for a Proposal Team in the Pontchartrain, Barataria, and Atchafalaya Estuarine Zones was presented. An overview of content and format needed for Phase 1 Candidate Site Proposals was presented, and it was noted that Phase I proposals are due to the DLT by April 30, 2021. Proposal Team leads are expected to present their Phase I proposal to the full SDC during SDC Meeting #5 (anticipated to be scheduled in early May).

A brief overview was given regarding support the DLT can provide (e.g., establish a collaborative / shared workspace, make data and files needed for mapping and proposal development available, schedule a 'Q&A' meeting, etc.); however, it was noted that Proposal Teams will largely be expected to 'self-organize' under a team chair or co-chairs. Additional information and guidance are forthcoming. SDC members can submit questions to deltanerr@lsu.edu.

Developing Phase I Candidate Site Proposals

Maps of example candidate sites, including core and buffer areas were presented along with a high-level overview of NOAA's four primary topics related to NERR designation. Phase I Candidate Site proposals are intended to assist with team member identification and organization as well as identifying areas of interest (e.g., core and buffer areas) and outlining a plan for proposal development. It was recommended that Proposal Team members look at other NERRs, such as Weeks Bay NERR in Alabama or Mission-Aransas NERR in Texas to get an idea of how core and buffer areas are designated. The SeaGrant LaNERR website (https://www.laseagrant.org/deltanerr/) can be used as a resource for locating information on other NERRs.

Phase I Candidate Site Proposals will go to the Screening Committee (not to screen proposals out but to provide feedback to Proposal Teams). The second draft of the Site Selection Criteria will be made available to Proposal Teams as they begin developing their Phase II Candidate Site Proposals. Additional details are forthcoming to both the Proposal Teams and to the Screening Committee.

The session was opened for discussion, and key points raised are provided below:

- Information provided to SDC members is considered open and available for sharing with non-SDC members who are asked to participate on Proposal Teams.
- Guidance to Proposal Teams regarding MOUs, cooperative endeavors, etc.
    - The DLT is planning to formalize a Gulf NERRs Advisory Panel to provide guidance regarding their experience with MOUs, cooperative endeavors, day-to-day activities, etc. from other NERRS, especially regarding public lands. The DLT will provide additional guidance to the Proposal Teams, which may be in the form of example proposal templates and nomination package templates that have been submitted to NOAA from other NERRs and an informational presentation.
    - Proposal Teams were reminded that every NERR is unique; contracting and agreements can raise unexpected issues, but experience from other NERRs can provide general information regarding management responsibilities.
- Phases of Proposal development and associated requirements
    - Proposal Teams do not need to obtain fiscal commitments or transfer of land ownership at this phase of proposal development, but it is important to indicate state ownership of potential core areas in the Phase I Candidate Site Proposals. It may also be beneficial to open dialogue with agencies that might serve as the reserve's managing entity.
    - The importance of demonstrating support for Candidate Sites in proposals was noted. Having support, advocates, and identifying a potential managing entity will make a stronger case for NERR proposals to move through the screening process. All letters of support would be welcomed as part of a proposal, this could include form letters, formal documentation, etc. as they show engagement and ownership of the community.
    - SDC members were reminded that the LaNERR process is currently in the 'nomination' phase; following the nomination of one site to NOAA for approval, the process would enter the 'designation' phase, which requires an EIS and Management Plan. It is through the process of developing those documents that formal MOUs and cooperative agreements are established; however, it is important to begin thinking about this now and begin reaching out to interested parties.

- Phases of Proposal screening
    - Proposals will go to the Screening Subcommittee for review and scoring. This subcommittee will use the Site Selection Criteria to review proposals at each phase. The DLT anticipates that feedback to Proposal Teams will be in the form of a single report – one report for each phase (Phase I, Phase II, and Final proposal) from the Screening Subcommittee.
    - Phase I proposal screening will be much more generic than later phases (i.e., review and feedback rather than scoring).
    - Phase II proposals will have more depth and content. During screening of Phase II proposals, it is possible that one or more proposals may be screened out from further consideration. The remaining proposals will proceed to the Final Proposal phase.
    - The SDC was reminded that it would be a conflict of interest to serve on both the Screening Subcommittee and on a Proposal Team.
- Town Halls
    - Presentations will need to be customized for Town Halls; they may not be in the same format or include the same content as those provided to the DLT or SDC. There will be time for Proposal Teams to prepare for Town Halls.
    - Soliciting feedback during Town Hall events is very important, as this is a key way to capture stakeholder feedback. The DLT will likely provide a standardized presentation template to ensure equity in type and extent of content presented across teams. Feedback from Town Halls may be in the form of surveys, comment cards, etc. and will be used to gauge the level of community enthusiasm.
    - The DLT will provide additional guidance on how to prepare for Town Halls.

Workplan and Schedule

The LaNERR workflow and schedule was reviewed.

Wrap Up and Next Steps

The SDC Meeting #4 recordings and a copy of the presentation will be posted to the SDC site, as will the revised workplan and schedule. An email will be sent to schedule SDC Meeting #5 (anticipated for early May). Meeting #5 will focus on Phase I Candidate Site presentations from Proposal Teams and review of suggested edits to the NOAA Site Selection Criteria.

Separate emails will be provided to Site Criteria Subcommittee and Proposal Team members with next steps for their respective tasks.

Site Development Committee Meeting 5

May 13, 2021

LaNERR Site Development Committee

Meeting #5

Thursday, May 13 (10:00 am – 12:00 pm)

Zoom link: https://lsu.zoom.us/j/93974049108?pwd=SU5OVHJNa2d4QWJCRmpGNGxYL0wydz09
Meeting ID: 939 7404 9108
Passcode: 025841
Mobile Dial In: 312-626-6799

Pre-meeting Materials:

1. Pontchartrain LaNERR Team Phase I Proposal (PDF)
2. Barataria LaNERR Team Phase I Proposal (PDF)
3. Atchafalaya LaNERR Team Phase I Proposal (PDF)
4. Second Draft of Site Criteria (PDF)
5. Phase II and Final Candidate Site Proposal Guidance (PDF)
6. Update of LaNERR Designation Workflow & Schedule (PDF)

Objectives:

- Discuss Phase I Proposals (presentations by Proposal Teams)
- Discuss 2nd Draft Site Selection Criteria
- Discuss Phase II and Final Candidate Site Proposal Guidance

Agenda:

Time	Topic
5 min	Welcome
60 min	Phase I Proposal Presentations
20 min	*Pontchartrain Estuarine Zone*
20 min	*Barataria Estuarine Zone*
20 min	*Atchafalaya Estuarine Zone*
30 min	2nd Draft Site Selection Criteria
15 min	Phase II and Final Candidate Site Proposal Guidance
10 min	Wrap up and next steps: • Screening Subcommittee Meeting – Early June • Criteria Subcommittee Meeting – Late May • Proposal Team Check In – Late May and Mid June • Phase II Proposals Due – June 30 • SDC Meeting #6 – Late July

Post-meeting follow up from DLT:

- Recording of meeting
- Meeting summary

Atchafalaya Basin
LA NERR Phase 1 Site Proposal

Atchafalaya Basin NERR Candidate Site Proposal

1. Team Leads: Brian Roberts (LUMCON) and Jimmy Nelson (ULL)

- Environmental Representativeness / Research, Monitoring and Resource Protection

2. Core Team Members:

- Julian Lemoine (Atchafalaya National Heritage Area)
  - Resource Protection / Acquisition and Management Consideration
- Craig Colten (LSU)
  - Education and Interpretation
- Brian Gautreau (LSU Ag Center Youth Wetlands and Outreach Program)
  - Education and Interpretation
- Dani DiIullo (Louisiana Sea Grant Communications Coordinator)
  - Education and Interpretation
- Murt Conover (LUMCON Education and Outreach)
  - Education and Interpretation
- Erik Johnson (Audubon Louisiana)
  - Research, Monitoring and Resource Protection

Atchafalaya Basin NERR Proposal Development Plan

Overall vision for and approach to the development of the Atchafalaya NERR:

Include all of the key habitats/ecosystems looked at in the NERR selection progress with the idea being that the Atchafalaya basin provides a unique river delta NERR that encompasses ***all key relevant habitats*** *found in Louisiana. This is highlighted in the following maps which include our preliminary vision for the NERR site; focusing on parallel core and buffer areas within each of the following regions of the basin: 1) alluvial floodplains, 2) active river deltas / fresh marshes and 3) brackish/salt marshes; with associated subaerial waters of the river and estuaries included.*

3. a. Proposal Team meeting format and process:

- *Series of zoom meetings focused on the following topical areas (with email exchanges between meetings)*
  1) Overarching themes and integration of Atchafalaya NERR
  2) Environmental Representativeness
  3) Education and Interpretation
  4) Research, Monitoring, and Resource Protection
  5) Acquisition and Management Consideration

b. Needs for proposal implementation:

- Assistance in identifying key contacts for resource protection / acquisition and management consideration; GIS support;

4. Visual representation of anticipated Atchafalaya Basin NERR Site

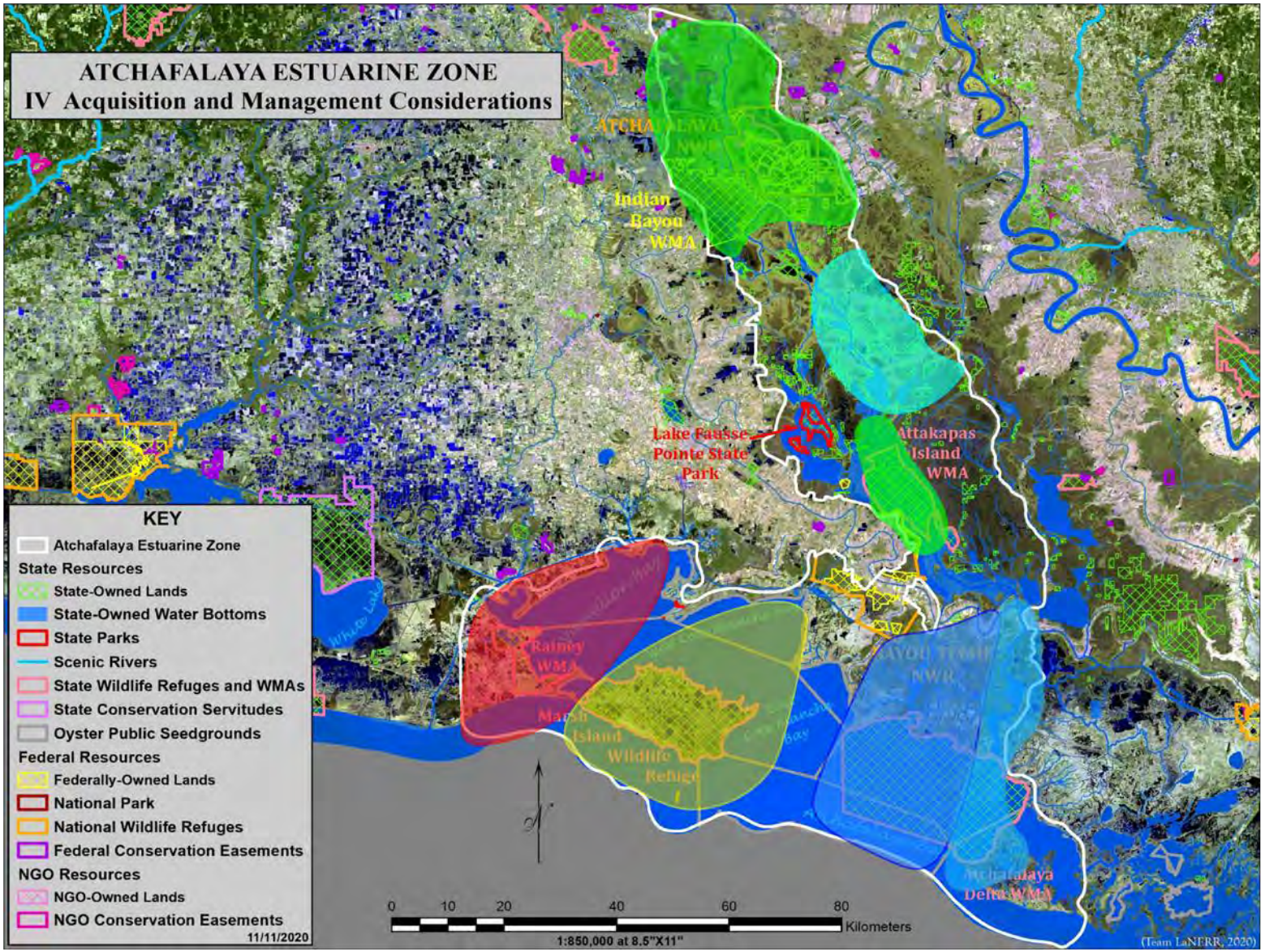
Within each of three habitat regions, we suggest having parallel Core and Buffer Areas

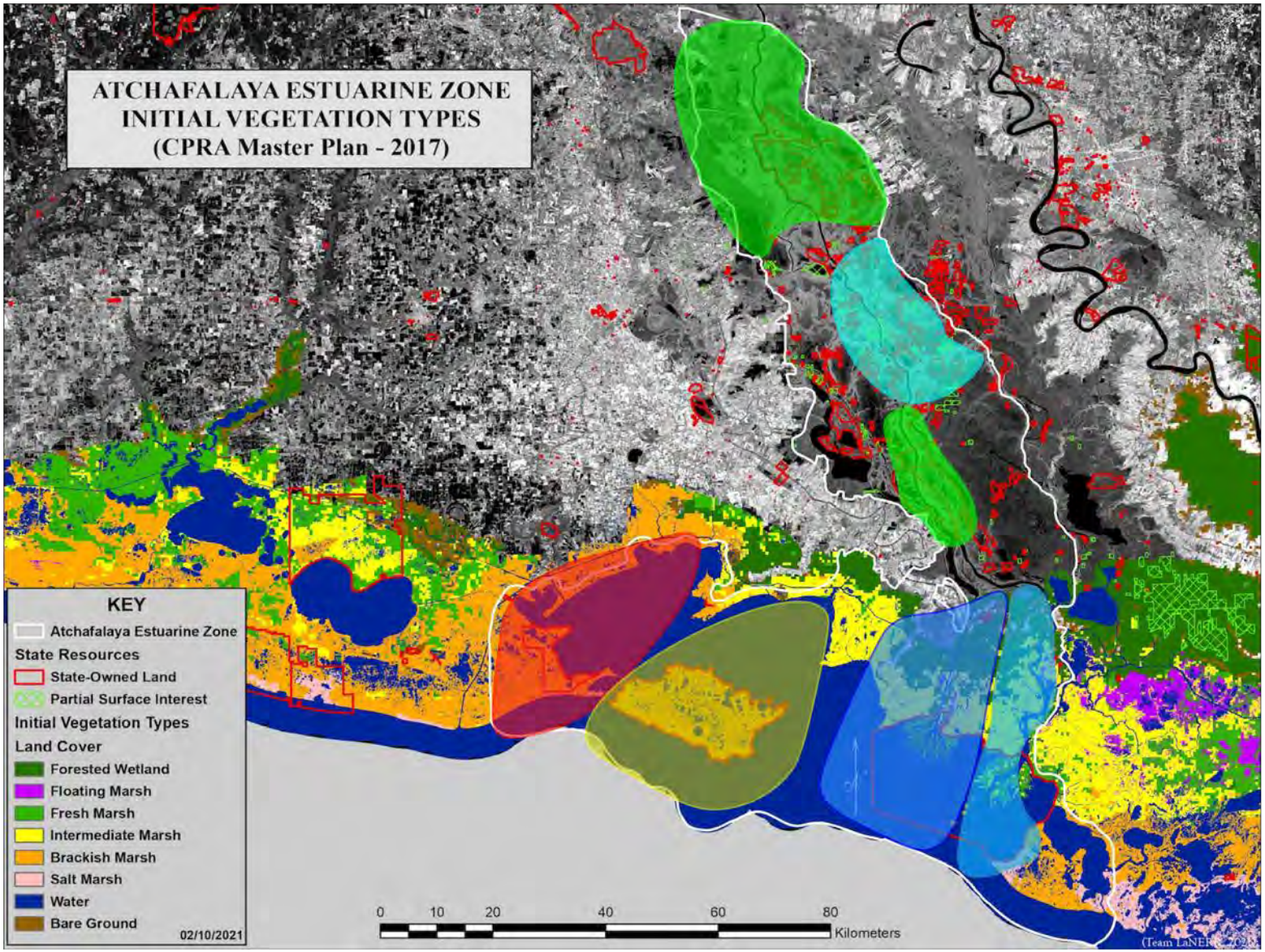
- Alluvial Floodplain Zone
- River Delta and Fresh Marsh Zone
- Brackish and Salt Marsh Zone

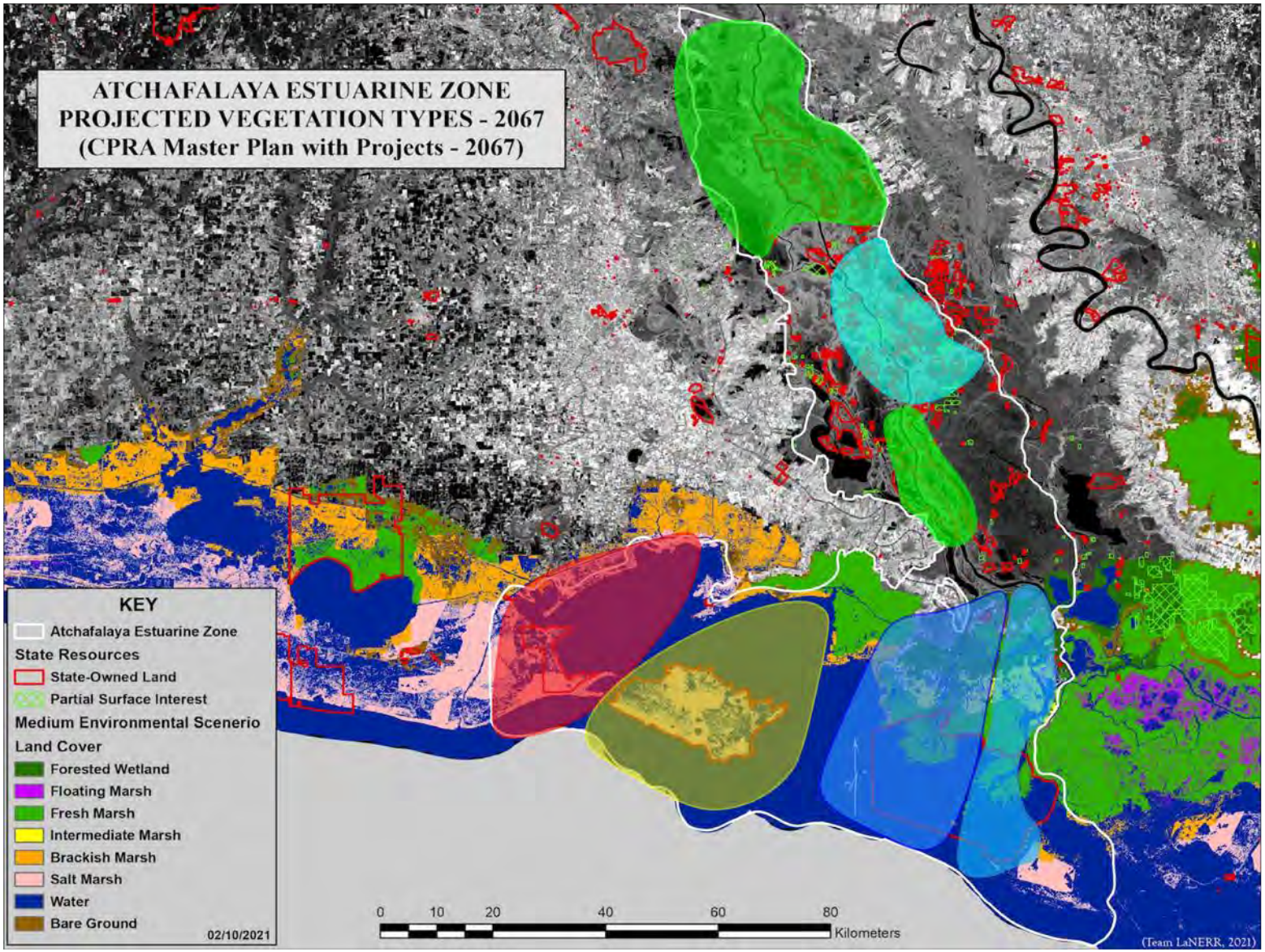
Within each of these Core and Buffer Areas, we suggest including large areas of submerged bottom and overlying water habitats

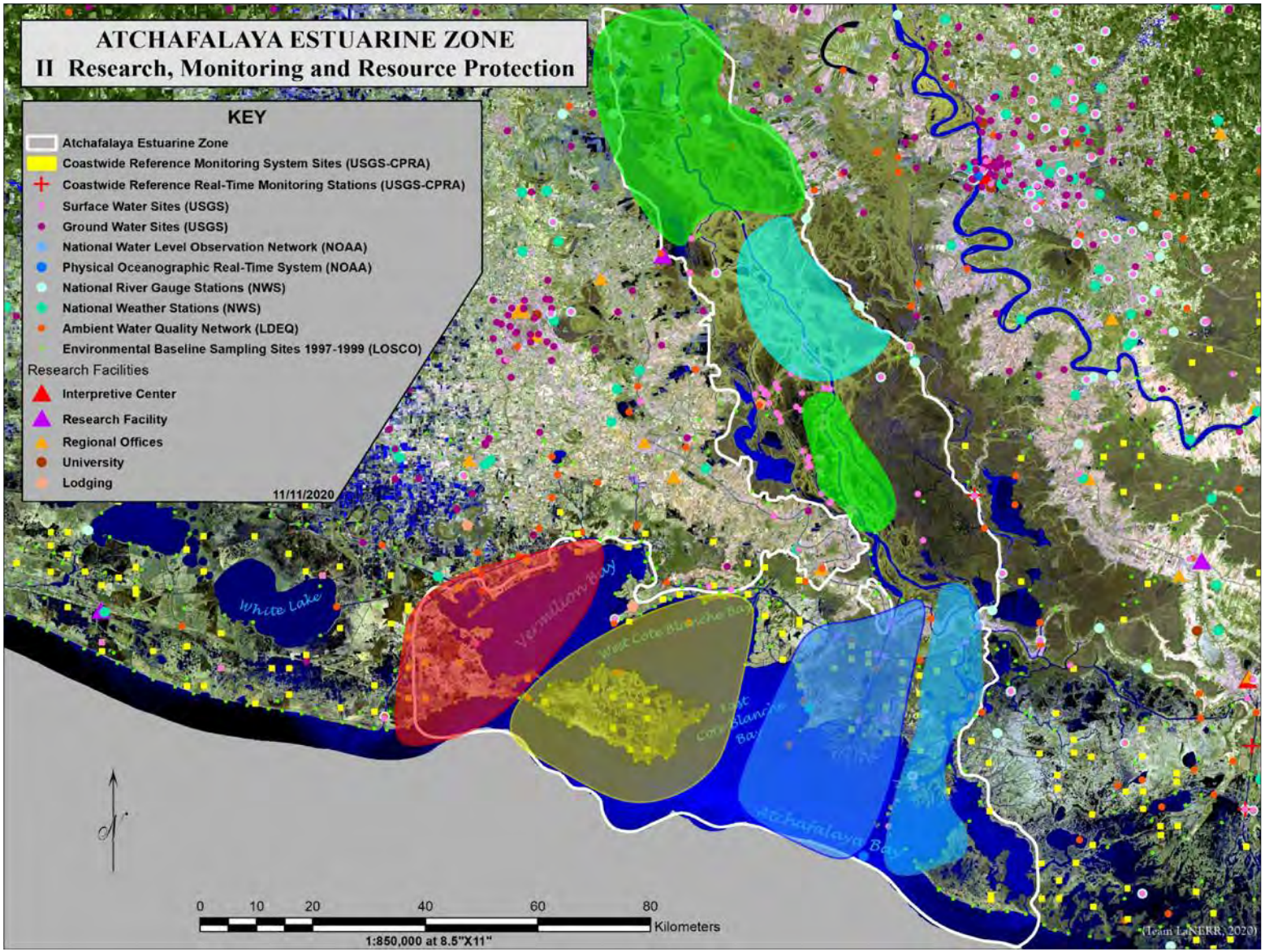
- River (and lakes)
- Estuarine waters


Alluvial Floodplain Core Area
Alluvial Floodplain Buffer Area
Saltmarsh Buffer Area
Saltmarsh Core Area
Marsh Island
River Delta Core Area
River Delta Buffer Area
Atchafalaya River
Ville Platte
Mamou
Eunice
Opelousas
Krotz Springs
New Roads
Zachary
Pine Grove
Tickfaw
Central
Denham Springs
Livingston
Hammond
Covington
Baton Rouge
Ponchatoula
Grosse Tete
Mandeville
Iota
Carencro
Breaux Bridge
Lafayette
Crowley
Plaquemine
Prairieville
Gonzales
Akers
Youngsville
Broussard
Donaldsonville
Laplace
Gueydan
New Iberia
Vacherie
New Orleans
Erath
Jeanerette
Napoleonville
Thibodaux
Morgan City
Gray
Pecan Island
Houma
Cut Off
Galliano
Golden Meadow
Dulac
3D


ATCHAFALAYA ESTUARINE ZONE
IV Acquisition and Management Considerations
Indian Bayou WMA
Lake Fausse Pointe State Park
Attakapas Island WMA
Rainey WMA
Marsh Island Wildlife Refuge
Atchafalaya Delta WMA
KEY
Atchafalaya Estuarine Zone
State Resources
State-Owned Lands
State-Owned Water Bottoms
State Parks
Scenic Rivers
State Wildlife Refuges and WMAs
State Conservation Servitudes
Oyster Public Seedgrounds
Federal Resources
Federally-Owned Lands
National Park
National Wildlife Refuges
Federal Conservation Easements
NGO Resources
NGO-Owned Lands
NGO Conservation Easements
11/11/2020
0 10 20 40 60 80
Kilometers
1:850,000 at 8.5"X11"
(Team LaNERR, 2020)


ATCHAFALAYA ESTUARINE ZONE
INITIAL VEGETATION TYPES
(CPRA Master Plan - 2017)
KEY
Atchafalaya Estuarine Zone
State Resources
State-Owned Land
Partial Surface Interest
Initial Vegetation Types
Land Cover
Forested Wetland
Floating Marsh
Fresh Marsh
Intermediate Marsh
Brackish Marsh
Salt Marsh
Water
Bare Ground
02/10/2021
0 10 20 40 60 80
Kilometers


ATCHAFALAYA ESTUARINE ZONE
PROJECTED VEGETATION TYPES - 2067
(CPRA Master Plan with Projects - 2067)
KEY
Atchafalaya Estuarine Zone
State Resources
State-Owned Land
Partial Surface Interest
Medium Environmental Scenerio
Land Cover
Forested Wetland
Floating Marsh
Fresh Marsh
Intermediate Marsh
Brackish Marsh
Salt Marsh
Water
Bare Ground
02/10/2021
0 10 20 40 60 80
Kilometers
(Team LaNERR, 2021)


ATCHAFALAYA ESTUARINE ZONE
II Research, Monitoring and Resource Protection
KEY
Atchafalaya Estuarine Zone
Coastwide Reference Monitoring System Sites (USGS-CPRA)
Coastwide Reference Real-Time Monitoring Stations (USGS-CPRA)
Surface Water Sites (USGS)
Ground Water Sites (USGS)
National Water Level Observation Network (NOAA)
Physical Oceanographic Real-Time System (NOAA)
National River Gauge Stations (NWS)
National Weather Stations (NWS)
Ambient Water Quality Network (LDEQ)
Environmental Baseline Sampling Sites 1997-1999 (LOSCO)
Research Facilities
Interpretive Center
Research Facility
Regional Offices
University
Lodging
11/11/2020
White Lake
Vermilion Bay
West Cote Blanche Bay
East Cote Blanche Bay
Atchafalaya Bay
N
0 10 20 40 60 80
Kilometers
1:850,000 at 8.5"X11"
(Team LaNERR, 2020)

LaNERR - Phase I Candidate Site Proposal: Barataria - West Pointe a-la-Hache

3 May, 2021

1. Team Lead (or Co-Leads): John Andrew Nyman, School of Renewable Natural Resources, LSU, Baton Rouge, LA

2. Team member names and relevant expertise in addressing four NOAA topical areas (teams can recruit members outside SDC to cover the four criteria topical areas):
   a. Education and Interpretation
      Dominique Seibert, Louisiana Sea Grant, Belle Chasse, LA
   b. Environmental Representativeness
      John Andrew Nyman, LSU AgCenter, Baton Rouge, LA
   c. Research, Monitoring, and Resource Protection
      John Andrew Nyman, LSU AgCenter, Baton Rouge, LA
   d. Acquisition and Management Consideration
      John Helmers, Director, Department of Coastal Resources, Plaquemines Parish Government
   e. Extended Team
      Quenton Fontenot, Nicholls University
      Simone Maloz, Nicholls University
      Richie Blink, Plaquemines Parish Counci
      Carlton La France, Plaquemines Parish Council
      Mark Cognevich, Plaquemines Parish Council

3. Brief explanation of proposal development plan including:
   a. Proposal Team meeting format and process –

   Communication has been sporadic until now but will increase in frequency.

   After preliminary discussions with Plaquemines Parish Council Members Richie Blink and Carlton La France, Andy Nyman made a presentation to the Plaquemines Parish Council at their meeting on 11 March. The Council supports the idea and the use of its lands for the NERR. It also appointed John Helmers, Director of the Plaquemines Parish Department of Coastal Resources as their point of contact with Council Members Richie Blink and Carlton La France also contributing.

   On 18 March, Plaquemines Parish offered 10-acres between the Mississippi River levee and Highway 23 for use as a NERR headquarters. This is the site of the former LSU AgCenter Citrus/Coastal Research Station.

   The owner of the batture between the levee and the Mississippi River is supportive and indicated that they would allow a boat ramp through their land into the river, which would allow researchers and educators to access Mardi Gras Pass via boat (<7 miles downstream).

   The proposed HQ site is 1.25 miles from a boat launch into the marshes of Barataria Basin, and 1.7 miles from the West Pointe-a-la-Hache Ferry.

Table 1. Distances between tentative NERR HQ and the planned Mid-Barataria Basin Sediment Diversion.

Place relative to West Pointe-a-la-Hache HQ	Water miles	Road miles
Jackson Square, New Orleans	44	42
Mardi Gras Pass	7	8.3 (ferry)
Mid-Barataria Diversion Structure	10.2	10.5
Mid-Barataria Diversion Outfall Channel	16	
Mid-Barataria Diversion Wetland Development	8 (1.3 miles to boat launch)	

b. Needs for proposal implementation – GIS support.

4. Visual of anticipated LaNERR site, including draft core and buffer areas

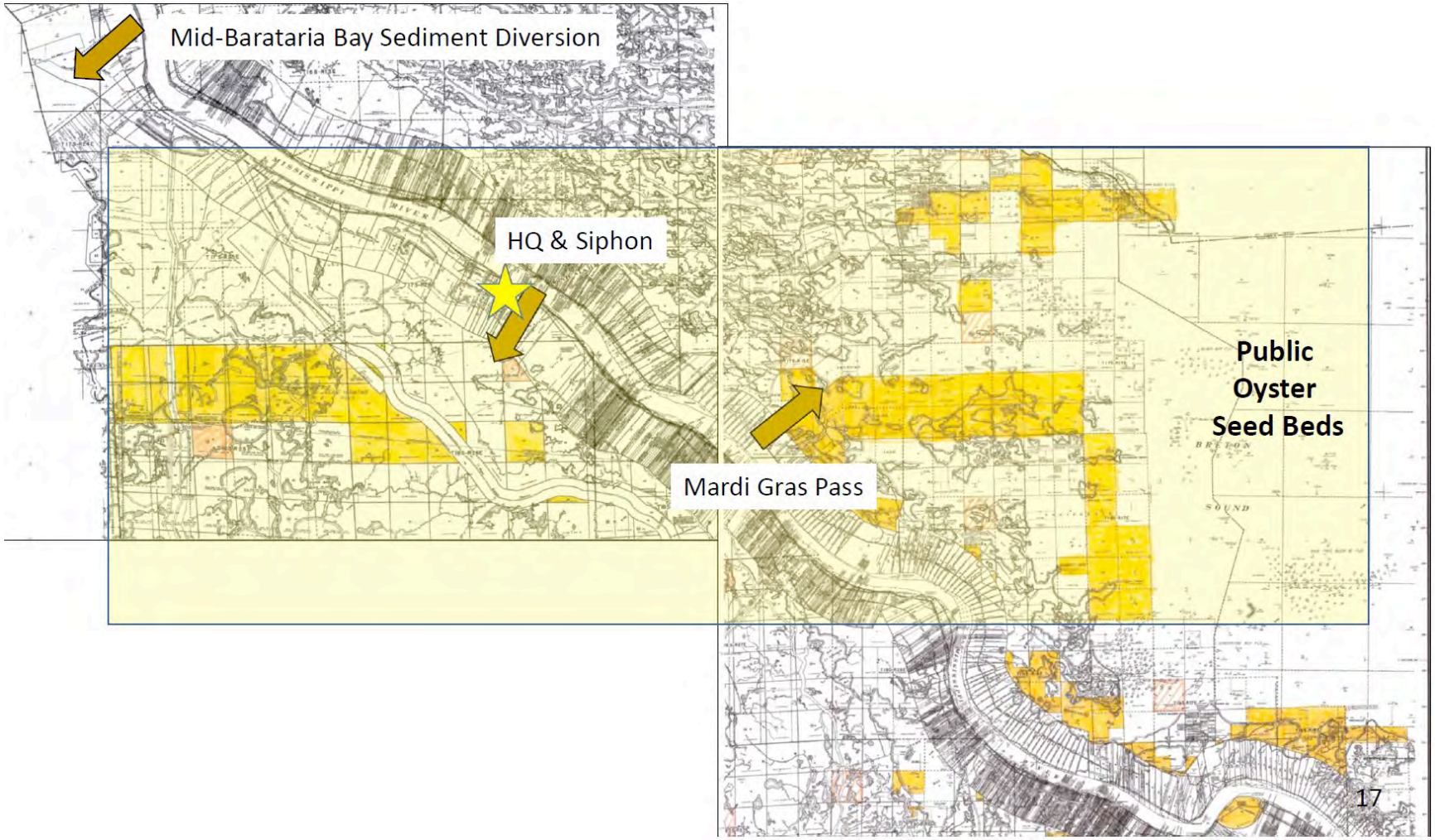


Figure 1. Map showing sections owned by Plaquemines Parish, which have been offered for inclusion in a NEER (dark yellow sections), a natural river diversion (Mardi Gras Pass), managed freshwater diversion (West Pointe-a-la-Hache Siphons), a planned managed sediment diversion (Mid-Barataria Bay). The proposed HQ is less than 40 miles from downtown New Orleans, and .

LaNERR - Phase I Candidate Site Proposal: Barataria - Lafitte

3 May 2021

Barataria Basin- Jefferson Parish

Please provide the following in PDF and PowerPoint format to the Designation Leadership Team (DLT) deltanerr@lsu.edu no later than 5:00 pm (CT) Monday, May 3, 2021.

1. Team Lead (or Co-Leads)

Tracy Quirk, Associate Professor, Department of Oceanography and Coastal Sciences, LSU, conducts field research in Barataria Bay, LA and other coastal areas in the US, helped to establish a wetland monitoring program in the mid-Atlantic, US (Mid-Atlantic Coastal Wetland Assessment)

J. Andy Nyman, Professor, School of Renewable Natural Resources, LSU, coastal wetland researcher who has worked with wetland managers and restoration planners since the 1990s.

2. Team member names and relevant expertise in addressing four NOAA topical areas (teams can recruit members outside SDC to cover the four criteria topical areas):
    a. Education and Interpretation
        - Donata Henry, Senior Professor of the Practice, Ecology and Evolutionary Biology, Tulane University. Runs university field trips to the JLNHPP Barataria Unit and has coordinated an ongoing Ecology Lab study on orb-web spider niche partitioning in bottomland hardwoods. Has also operated a Monitoring Avian Productivity and Survivorship (MAPS) station in a bottomland hardwood forest (PRWMA) for 16 years.

    b. Environmental Representativeness
        - Tracy Quirk, Associate Professor, Department of Oceanography and Coastal Sciences, LSU, conducts field research in Barataria Bay, LA and other coastal areas in the US, helped to establish a wetland monitoring program in the mid-Atlantic, US (Mid-Atlantic Coastal Wetland Assessment)

    c. Research, Monitoring, and Resource Protection
        - Tracy Quirk, Associate Professor, Department of Oceanography and Coastal Sciences, LSU, conducts field research in Barataria Bay, LA and other coastal areas in the US, helped to establish a wetland monitoring program in the mid-Atlantic, US (Mid-Atlantic Coastal Wetland Assessment)

        - Carol Wilson, Assistant Professor, Department of Geology and Geophysics, LSU, conducts field research in Barataria Bay, LA and other coastal and deltaic areas in

the US and abroad (Bangladesh), active researcher in the Plum Island and Sapelo Island LTER

- Julie Whitbeck, Ecologist, US NPS – Jean Lafitte National Historical Park and Preserve (JELA), Resource Management Division; provides sound science guidance for natural resource management of JELA's Barataria Preserve for present day and plans for future conditions, designs & conducts monitoring of key environmental and ecological parameters; maintains independent forested wetland ecosystem ecology research at the Barataria Preserve and other coastal swamps.

d. Acquisition and Management Consideration
   - J. Andy Nyman, Professor, School of Renewable Natural Resources, LSU, coastal wetland researcher who has worked with wetland managers and restoration planners since the 1990s
   - Michelle Gonzales, CFM Director Ecosystem and Coastal Management, Jefferson Parish Government (Extended team member)
   - David Illgen and Jason Smith, Jefferson Parish Government (potential future participants)

3. Brief explanation of proposal development plan including:
   a. Proposal Team meeting format and process –Regular communication will occur via email during the week with weekly Zoom calls among the core group. Communication to the extended group will be as needed via phone or Zoom calls and through email.

      Andy Nyman will provide status updates on the Team's behalf.

      The proposed Barataria Basin Reserve is comprised of geographic areas that would be dedicated to education, training, research, stewardship, and resource protection.

      Advantages of this site most pertinent to the proposal are:
      i) Proximity to New Orleans and other metro centers in southeast LA and schools (Jefferson, Orleans, Plaquemines, St Bernard parishes) [population ~1.3 million]
      ii) Co-location with the Lafitte Wetland Education Center (currently under construction) for education on the ecological and economic importance of the estuary/basin
      iv) Site of major LA Coastal Master Plan restoration efforts (Mid-Barataria Sediment Diversion), projected cost ~$2 billion
      v) Encompasses a diverse array of ecosystems and habitats along an estuarine salinity gradient

Core area includes: 1) waterbottoms of Bayou Barataria, Lake Salvador, and bayous Rigolettes, Perot, and Gauche; 2) Salvador Wildlife Management Area and portions of John Lafitte National Park, and 3) wetlands (mix of private, and state?) near the townships of Lafitte, Jean Lafitte, Myrtle Grove.

Table 1. Distances between tentative NERR HQ and the planned Mid-Barataria Basin Sediment Diversion.

Place relative to Jean Lafitte HQ	Water miles	Road miles
Jackson Square, New Orleans		27
Mid-Barataria Diversion Outfall Channel	11 (3.5 miles to boat launch)	
Mid-Barataria Diversion Wetland Development	5 ((3.5 miles to boat launch)	

b. Needs for proposal implementation –
   - Map of Jefferson parish lands
   - Acquisition of private land
   - NOAA's support of Lafitte Wetland Education Center (under construction) for LaNERR headquarters

4. Visual of anticipated LaNERR site, including draft core and buffer areas: SEE NEXT PAGE

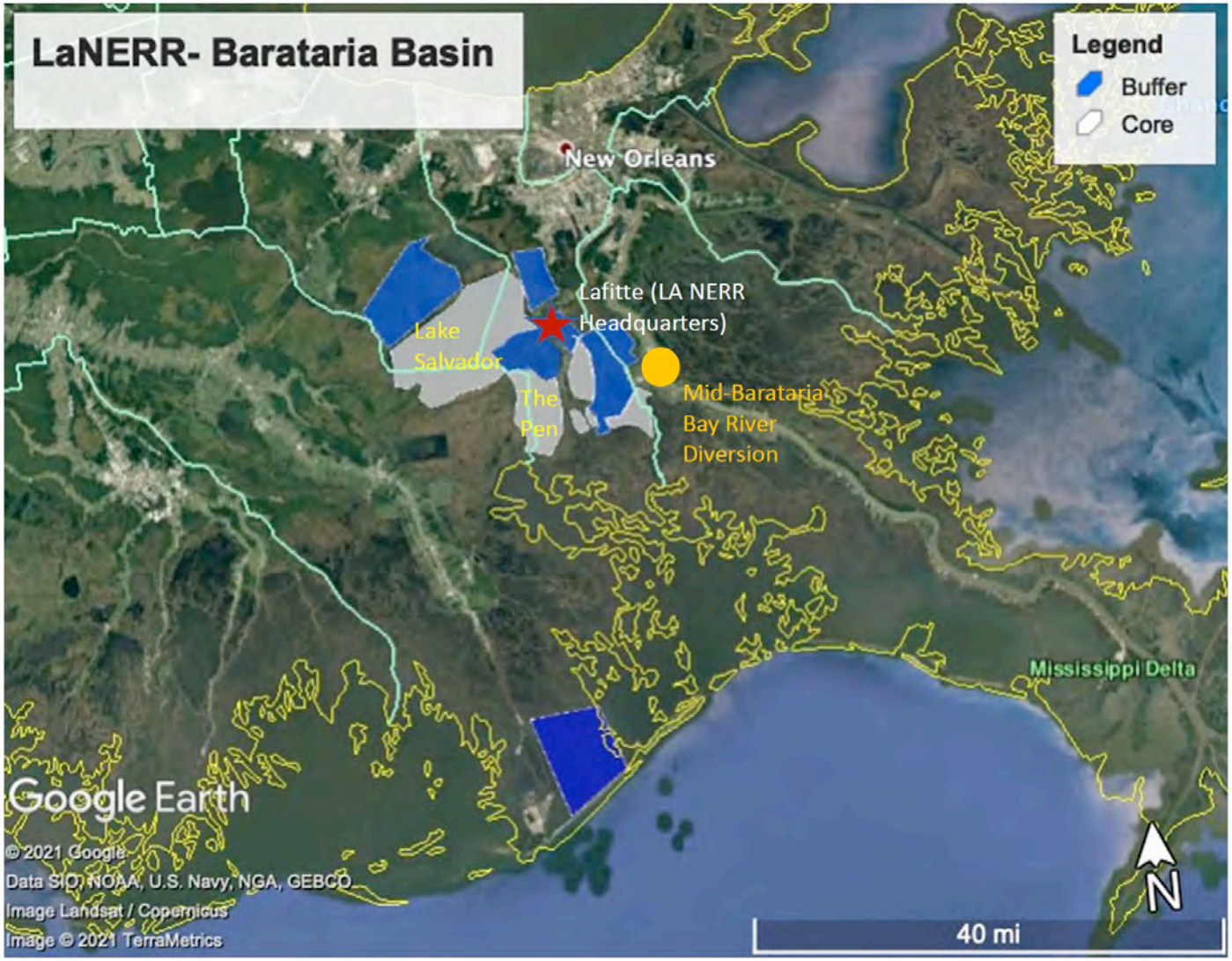


Figure 1. Tentative Buffer and Core areas for a National Estuarine Research Reserve with a Headquarters in Lafitte, Louisiana.

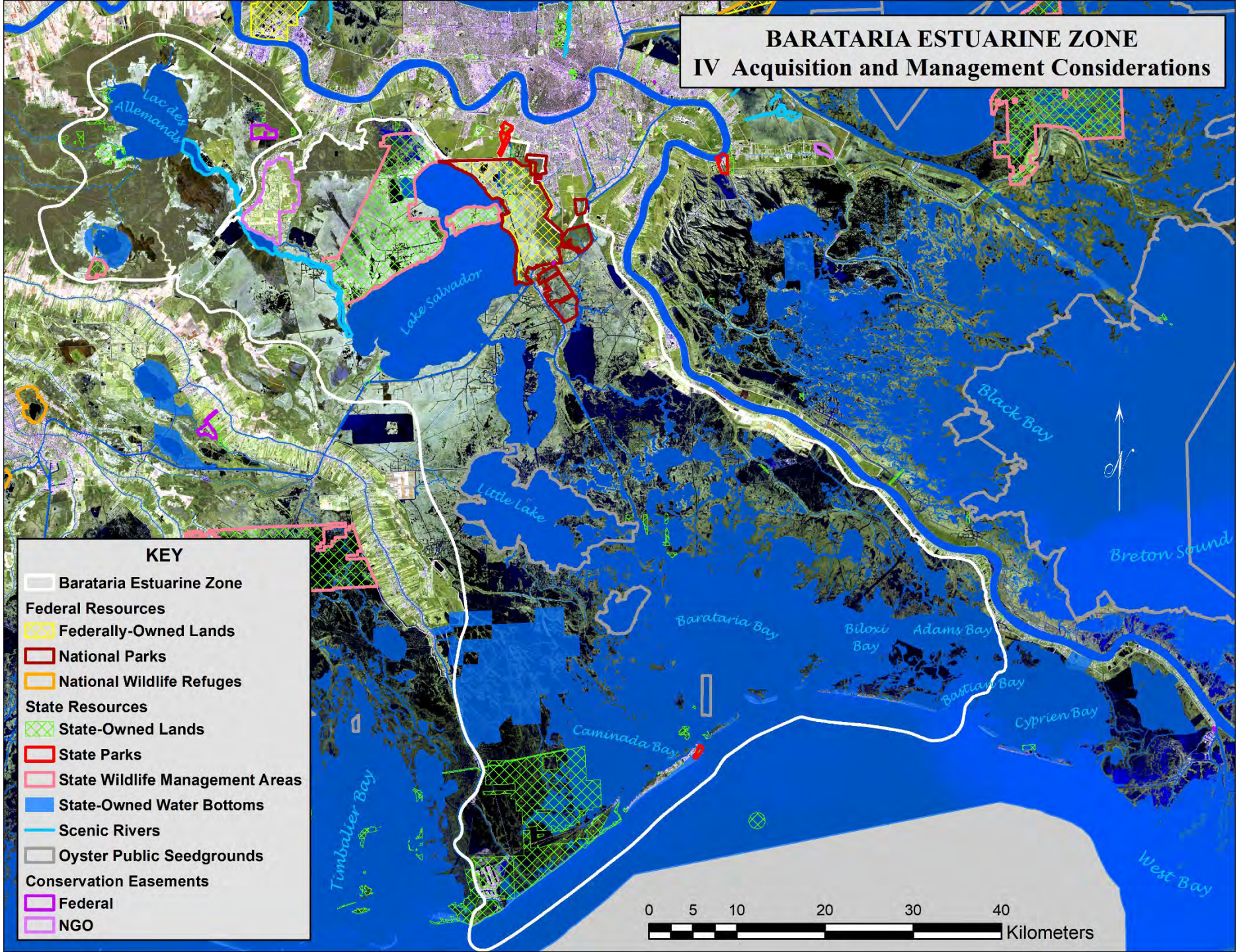
National Estuarine Research Reserve:
Barataria Basin Options

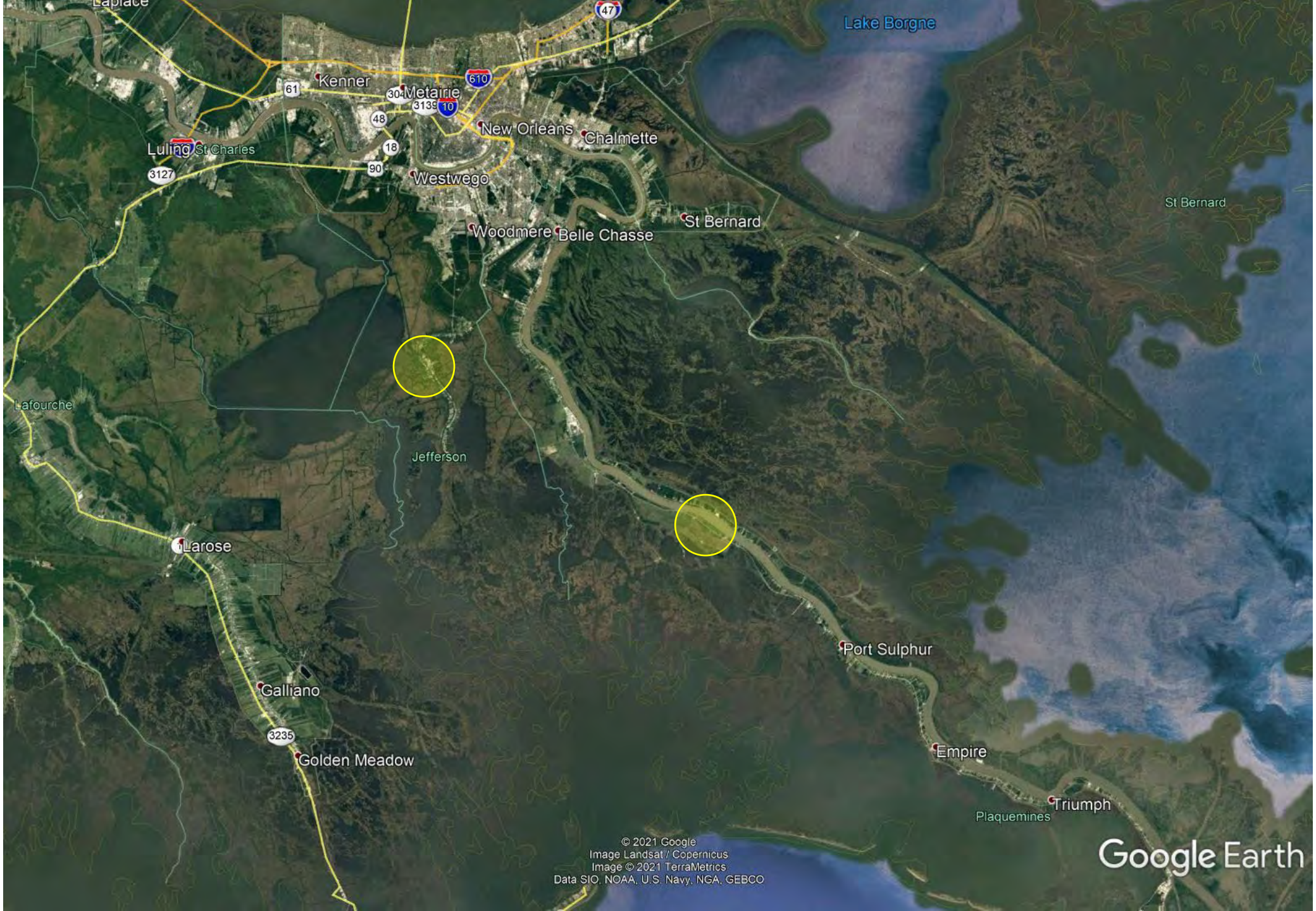
Options:

1. HQ in Lafitte
2. HQ in Pointe-a-la-Hache
3. Combined marshlands, HQ to be decided.

Barataria Basin Site Development Committee

- Pat Arnould, Governor's Office of Indian Affairs
- Richie Blink, Plaquemines Parish government
- Mark "Hobbo" Cognevich, Plaquemines Parish government
- Quenton Fontenot, coastal researcher
- Cheston Hill, Louisiana Office of State Lands
- Carlton LaFrance, Plaquemines Parish government
- Simone Maloz, coastal NGO
- Andy Nyman, coastal researcher
- Tracy Quirk, coastal researcher
- Julie Whitbeck, coastal researcher
- Carol Wilson, coastal researcher


BARATARIA ESTUARINE ZONE
IV Acquisition and Management Considerations
Lac des Allemands
Lake Salvador
Little Lake
Black Bay
Breton Sound
Barataria Bay
Biloxi Bay
Adams Bay
Bastian Bay
Cyprien Bay
Caminada Bay
Timbalier Bay
West Bay
KEY
Barataria Estuarine Zone
Federal Resources
Federally-Owned Lands
National Parks
National Wildlife Refuges
State Resources
State-Owned Lands
State Parks
State Wildlife Management Areas
State-Owned Water Bottoms
Scenic Rivers
Oyster Public Seedgrounds
Conservation Easements
Federal
NGO
0 5 10 20 30 40
Kilometers


Lake Borgne
Kenner
Metairie
New Orleans
Chalmette
Luling
St Charles
Westwego
St Bernard
Woodmere
Belle Chasse
Lafourche
Jefferson
Larose
Galliano
Golden Meadow
Port Sulphur
Empire
Triumph
Plaquemines
© 2021 Google
Image Landsat / Copernicus
Image © 2021 TerraMetrics
Data SIO, NOAA, U.S. Navy, NGA, GEBCO
Google Earth

If 1% of tourists visiting New Orleans visited a NERR, the NERR would have 197,500 visitors in addition to traditional K-12 visits.

N.O. Tourism Spending Breaks Records in 2019

05/11/2020 by Rich Collins

NEW ORLEANS – A new report from D.K. Shifflet & Associates says that, in 2019, New Orleans welcomed 19.75 million visitors, which is a 6.7 percent increase in visitors compared to the previous year. Visitors to New Orleans in 2019 spent $10.05 billion, a 10.3 percent increase over 2018.

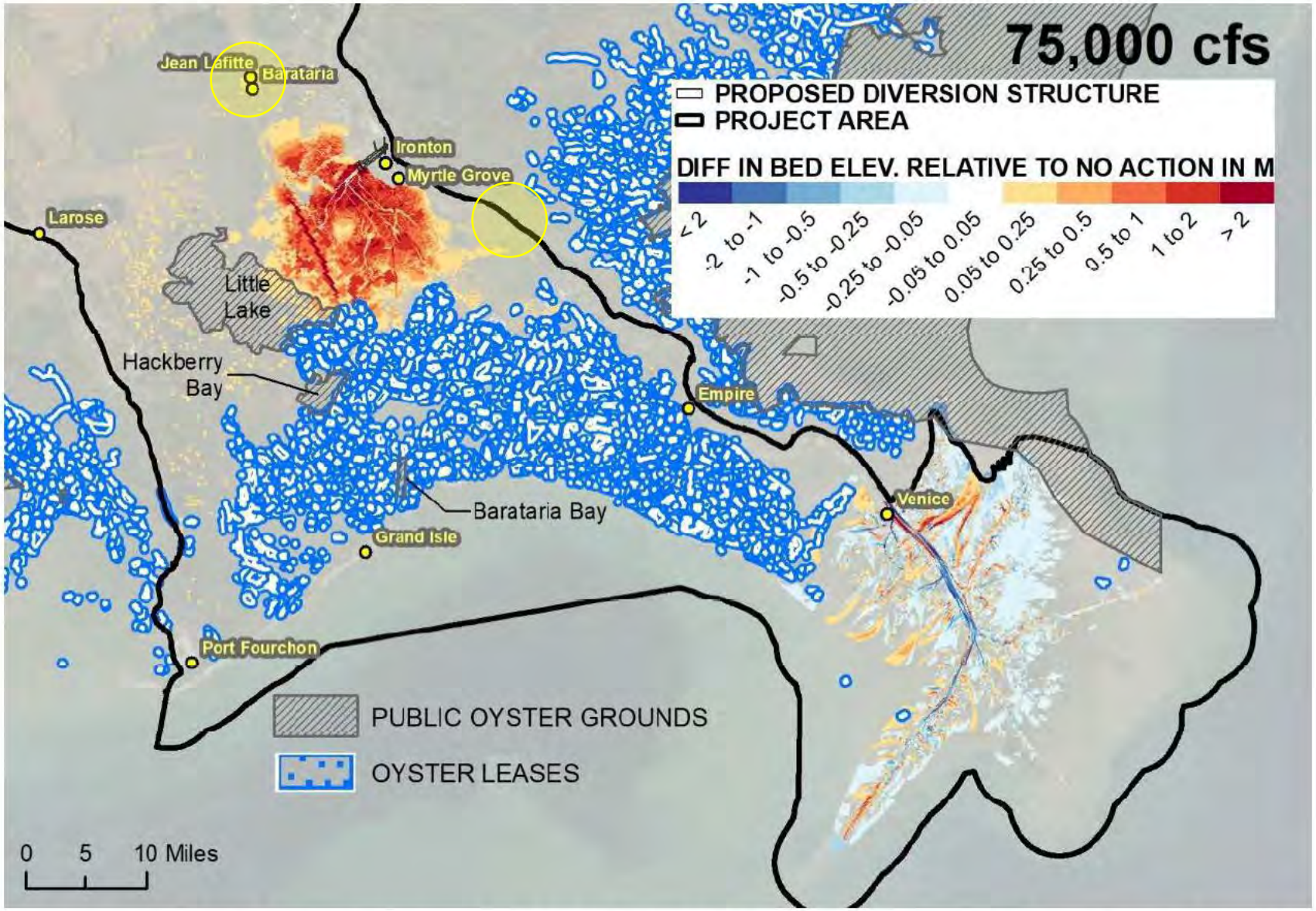
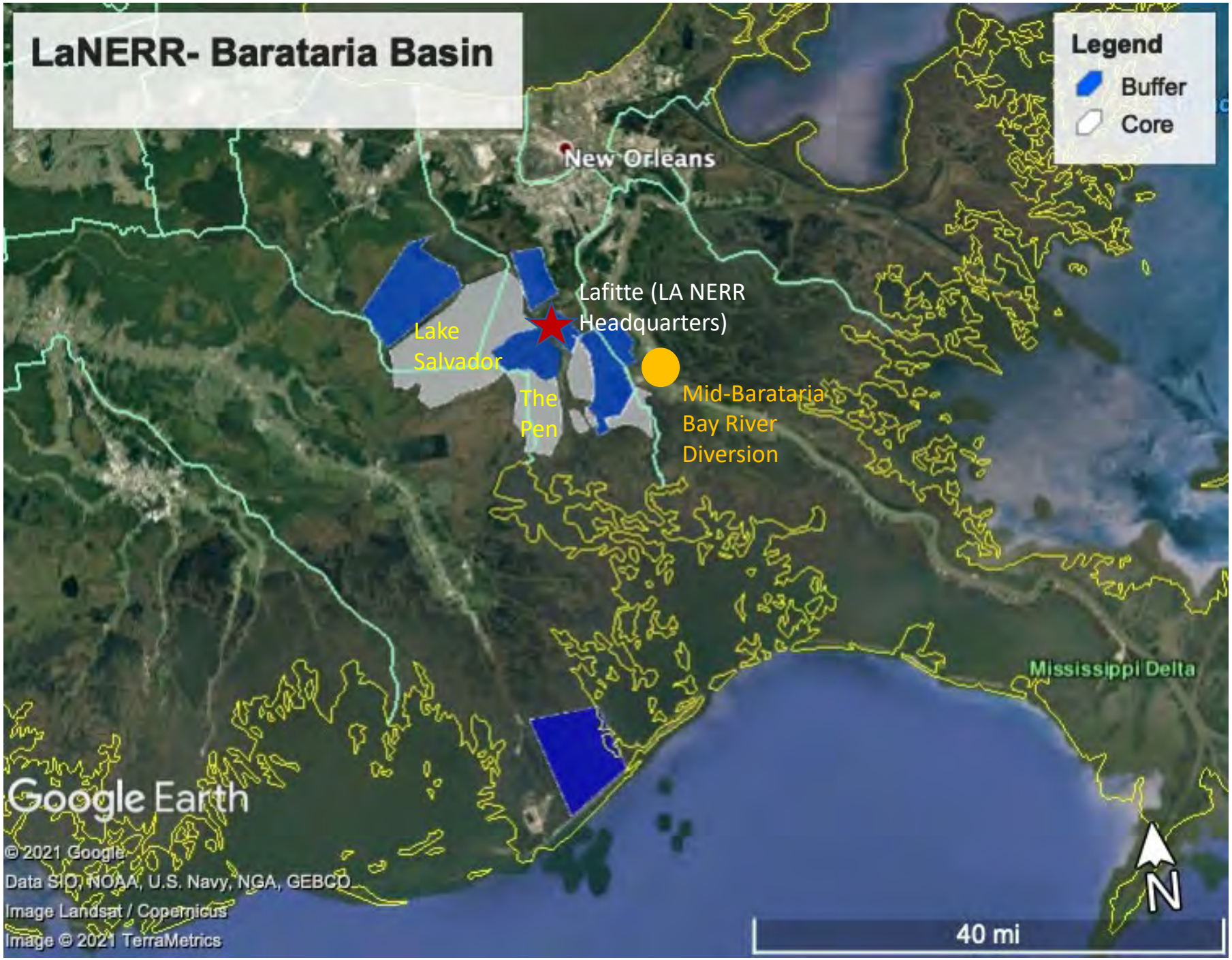


Figure 4.10-6. **Bed Elevation Over Public Oyster Grounds from the Applicant's Preferred Alternative in 2070 as Compared to the No Action Alternative.**

West Pointe-a-la-Hache

- 1. Team Lead: Tracy Quirk, LSU
- 2. Team members:
  - Education and Interpretation
    - Julie Whitbeck, Jean Lafitte National Park and Preserve
    - Donata Henry, Tulane University
  - Environmental Representativeness
    - Tracy Quirk, LSU
  - Research, Monitoring, and Resource Protection
    - Tracy Quirk, LSU
  - Acquisition and Management Consideration
    - Andy Nyman, LSU AgCenter


LaNERR- Barataria Basin
Legend
Buffer
Core
New Orleans
Lafitte (LA NERR Headquarters)
Lake Salvador
The Pen
Mid-Barataria Bay River Diversion
Mississippi Delta
Google Earth
© 2021 Google
Data SIO, NOAA, U.S. Navy, NGA, GEBCO
Image Landsat / Copernicus
Image © 2021 TerraMetrics
N
40 mi

West Pointe-a-la-Hache

- 1. Team Lead: John Andrew Nyman, LSU, Baton Rouge, LA
- 2. Team members:
  - Education and Interpretation
    - Dominique Seibert, Louisiana Sea Grant, Belle Chasse, LA
  - Environmental Representativeness
    - John Andrew Nyman, LSU AgCenter, Baton Rouge, LA
  - Research, Monitoring, and Resource Protection
    - John Andrew Nyman, LSU AgCenter, Baton Rouge, LA
  - Acquisition and Management Consideration
    - John Helmers, Director, Department of Coastal Resources, Plaquemines Parish Government

West Pointe-a-la-Hache

- Extended Team
  - Quenton Fontenot, Nicholls University
  - Simone Maloz, Nicholls University
  - Richie Blink, Plaquemines Parish Counci
  - Carlton La France, Plaquemines Parish Council
  - Mark Cognevich, Plaquemines Parish Council

West Pointe-a-la-Hache

- Presentation at Plaquemines Parish Meeting, 11 March
  - Parish offered its marshlands for inclusion in a NERR
- Parish offered 10 acres between Highway 23 and the Mississippi River for use a NERR headquarters

Plaquemines Parish offered 10 acres of the former AgCenter Citrus/Coastal Research Station for use as NERR HQ

Plaquemines Parish offered 10 acres of the former AgCenter Citrus/Coastal Research Station for use as NERR HQ

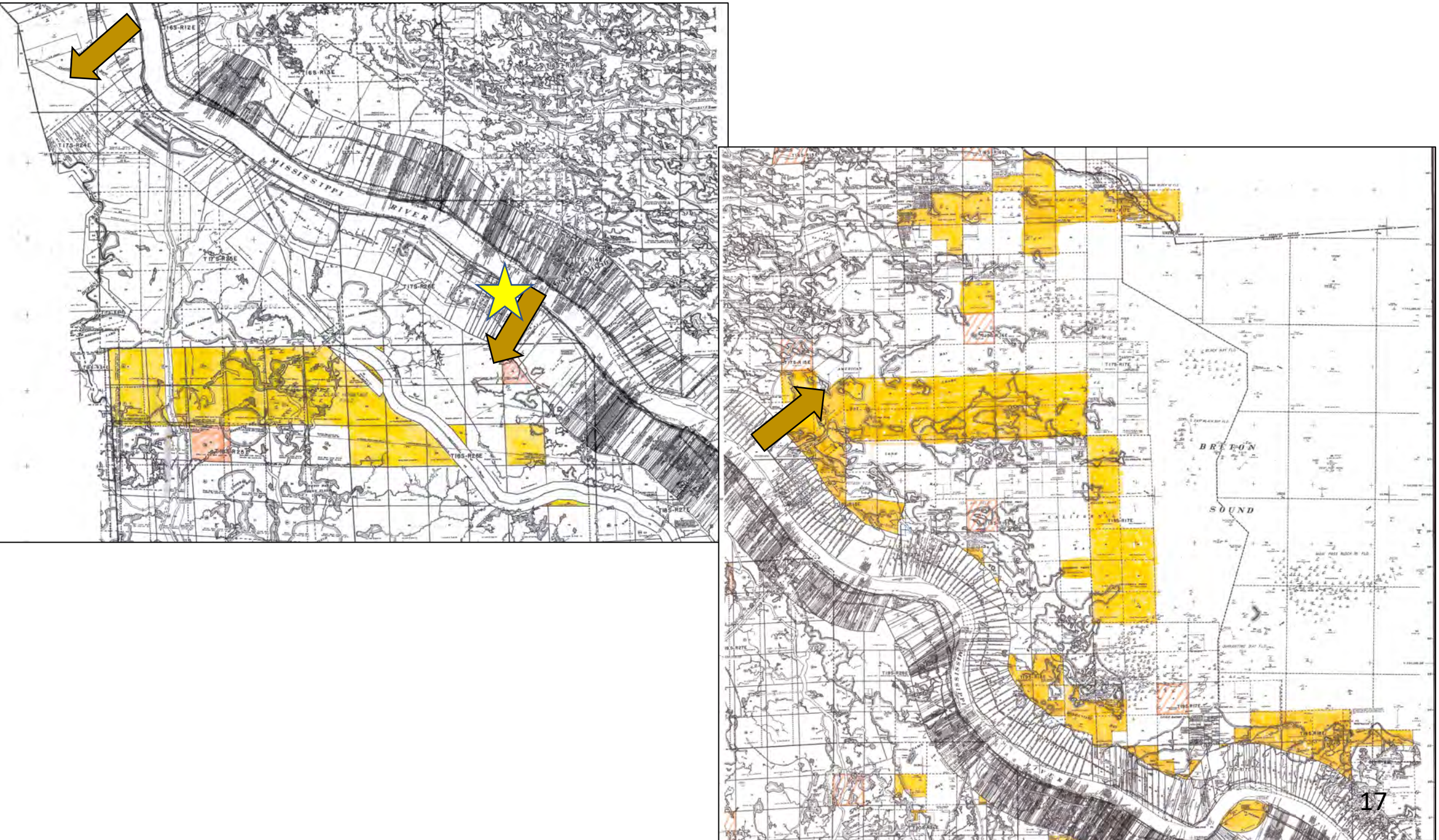
Mailing Addr	P O BOX 69 BELLE CHASSE LA 70037-0069
Block	
Lot	
Subdivision	Alliance to W Pointe ala HaWU
Assessed Value	173,021
Homestead Value	173,021
Est. Parish Tax	0.00
Est. City Tax	0.00
Legal	EXPERIMENTAL STATION LAND & IMP = 80A AG2 & 20A MISC. GREENHOUSE, AGRICULTURAL RESEARCH, REST ROOM,...

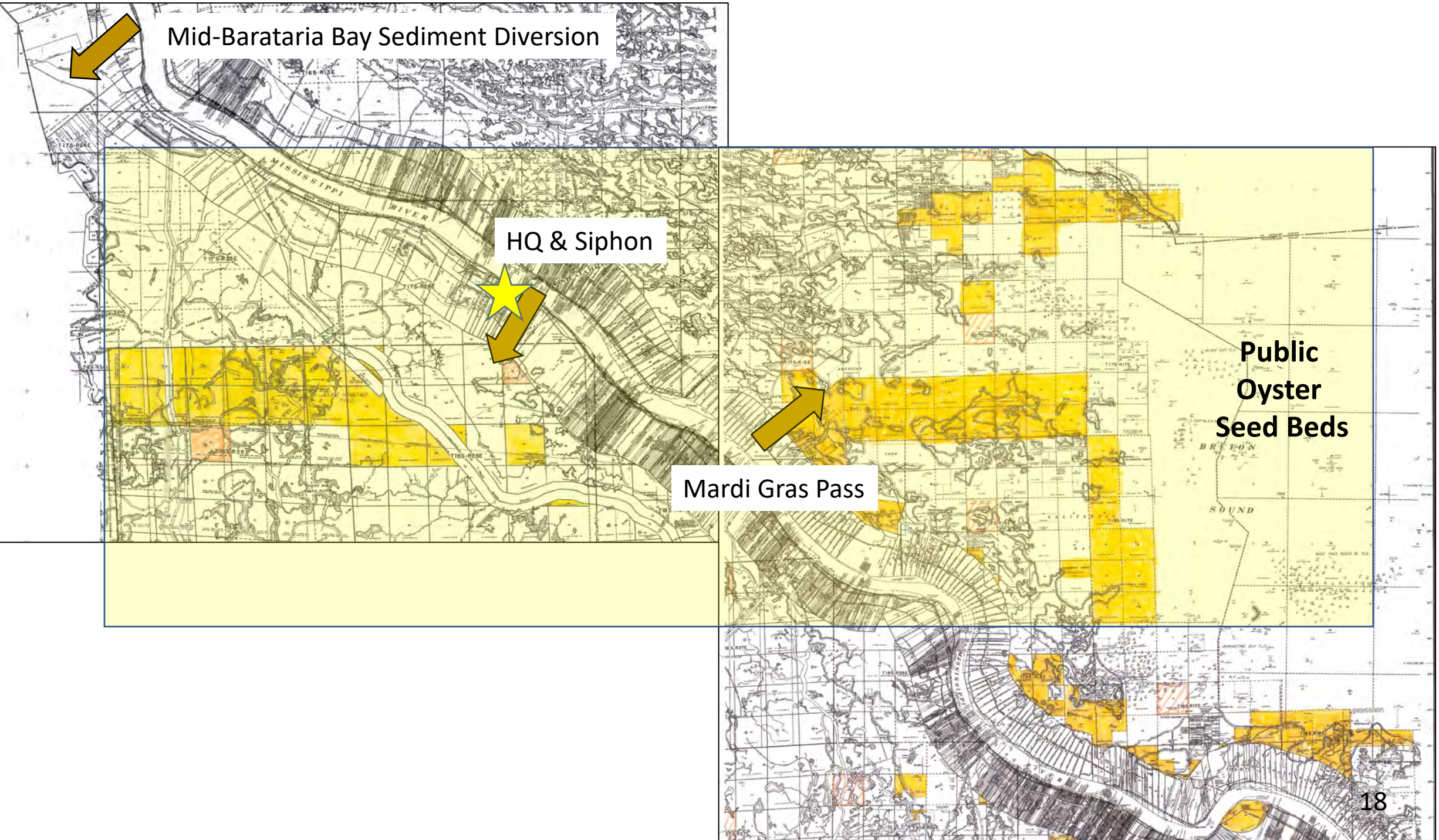
Property Class	Assmt.	Units
Rural Acreage -Westbank (3+acres)	137,730	91.82
Commercial Building	6,048	1.00
Commercial Building	19,008	1.00
Commercial Building	10,235	1.00

Show Area Sales in last 3 years

Close


Mid-Breton Diversion
Delacroix Island
Mid Barataria Diversion
Deer Island
Jessies Island
Gallega Island
Former Citrus/Coastal Station
Siphon
Mardi Gras Pass
Drum Island
© 2021 Google
Google Earth
Port Sulphur
Pointe A La Hache Relief Outlet


MISSISSIPPI RIVER
BRETON SOUND


Mid-Barataria Bay Sediment Diversion
HQ & Siphon
Mardi Gras Pass
Public
Oyster
Seed Beds

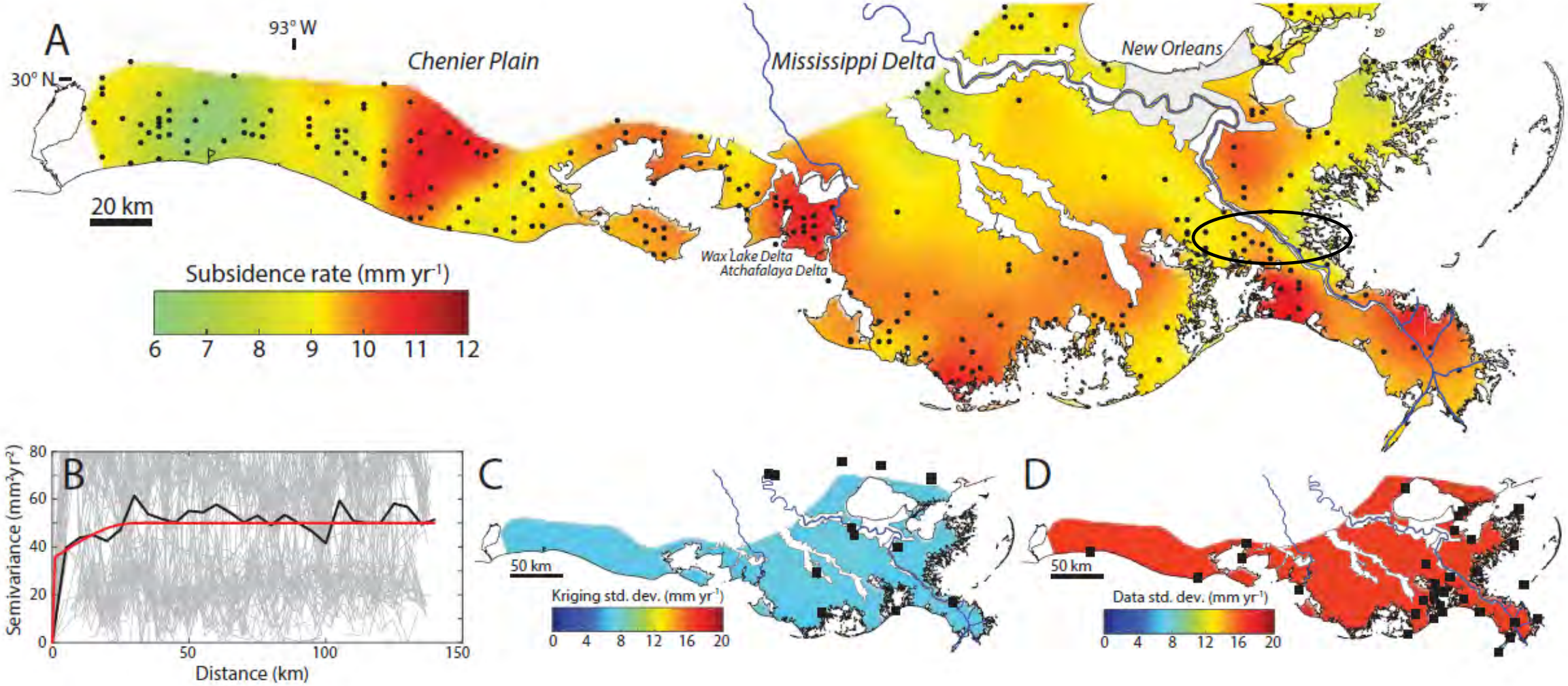
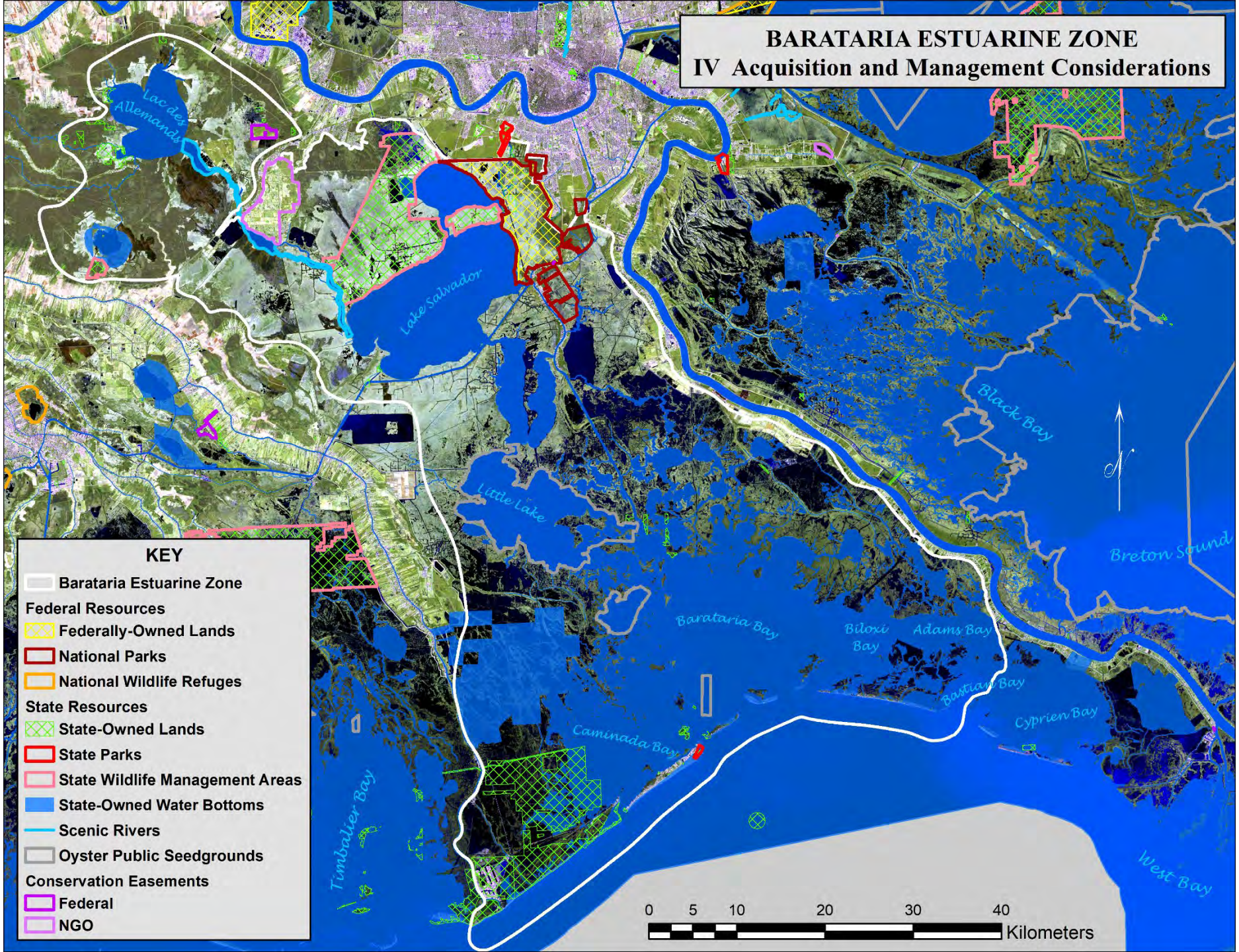


Figure 1. (A) Subsidence map for coastal Louisiana based on geostatistical interpolation (kriging) of 274 observations (black dots) of land-surface subsidence rates over the past 6–10 years. Areas in white and gray are agricultural and urban, respectively, and located outside of the wetlands. (B) Semivariogram of the data using 100 draws from different kriging options (gray), the data mean (black), and the kriging model (red). (C) Uncertainty (standard deviation) of the kriging estimate. Black squares show GPS stations. (D) Uncertainty (standard deviation) of the underlying data. Black squares show National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) tide gauges. Note that the subsidence map can easily be converted into a relative sea-level rise map by adding the climate-driven sea-level component.


BARATARIA ESTUARINE ZONE
IV Acquisition and Management Considerations
Lac des Allemands
Lake Salvador
Little Lake
Black Bay
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Barataria Bay
Biloxi Bay
Adams Bay
Bastian Bay
Cyprien Bay
Caminada Bay
Timbalier Bay
West Bay
KEY
Barataria Estuarine Zone
Federal Resources
Federally-Owned Lands
National Parks
National Wildlife Refuges
State Resources
State-Owned Lands
State Parks
State Wildlife Management Areas
State-Owned Water Bottoms
Scenic Rivers
Oyster Public Seedgrounds
Conservation Easements
Federal
NGO
0 5 10 20 30 40
Kilometers

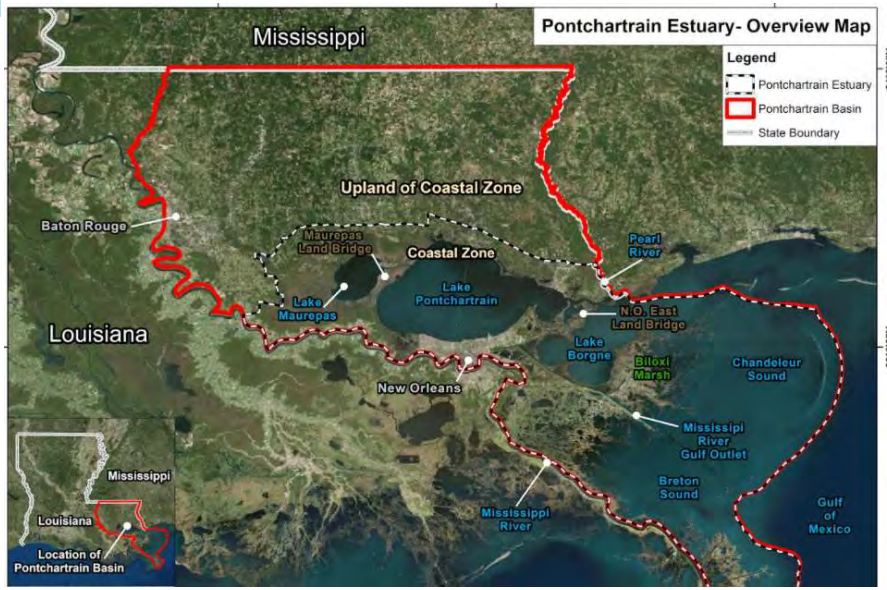
Pontchartrain Estaurine Site Phase 1 Proposal

May 3, 2021

PONTCHARTRAIN BASIN

Here is an overview map of the Basin

- **The Pontchartrain basin**
- **The Pontchartrain estuary.**



Pontchartrain Proposal Team

List of Personnel, Participating Institutions, Area(s) of Expertise & Team Role

First Name	Last Name	Institution	Area(s) of Expertise	Team Role
Kristi	Trail	Pontchartrain Conservancy	• Education and Interpretation • Environmental Representativeness • Research, Monitoring, and Resource Protection	Team Lead
Adam	Songy	Pontchartrain Conservancy	• Environmental Representativeness • Research, Monitoring, and Resource Protection	Support Role
Brady	Skaggs	Pontchartrain Conservancy	• Research, Monitoring, and Resource Protection	Support Role
Andy	Nyman	LSU	• Environmental Representativeness • Research, Monitoring, and Resource Protection	Core Member of Team
Bob	Thomas	Loyola	• Education and Interpretation • Environmental Representativeness • Research, Monitoring, and Resource Protection	Team Co-Lead
Mark	Tobler	Loyola	• Environmental Representativeness • Research, Monitoring, and Resource Protection	Support Role
Aimee	Thomas	Loyola	• Education and Interpretation	Support Role
Frank	Jordan	Loyola	• Education and Interpretation • Research, Monitoring, and Resource Protection	Support Role
Craig	Hood	Loyola	• Education and Interpretation • Research, Monitoring, and Resource Protection	Support Role
Don	Hauber	Loyola	• Research, Monitoring, and Resource Protection	Support Role
Philip	Bucolo	Loyola	• Education and Interpretation • Environmental Representativeness • Research, Monitoring, and Resource Protection	Support Role
Rob	Moreau	Southeastern	• Education and Interpretation • Acquisition and Management Consideration	Team Co-Lead
Debbie	Dardis	Southeastern	• Education and Interpretation	Core Member of Team

Pontchartrain Proposal Team

List of Personnel, Participating Institutions, Area(s) of Expertise & Team Role (cont)

First Name	Last Name	Institution	• Area(s) of Expertise	Team Role
Eva	Hillmann	Southeastern (& PC)	• Environmental Representativeness • Research, Monitoring, and Resource Protection	Core Member of Team
Sam	Hyde	Southeastern	• Environmental Representativeness • Research, Monitoring, and Resource Protection	Support Role
Kyle	Piller	Southeastern	• Research, Monitoring, and Resource Protection	Core Member of Team
Gary	Shaffer	Southeastern	• Environmental Representativeness • Research, Monitoring, and Resource Protection	Core Member of Team
Chris	Murray	Southeastern	• Education and Interpretation • Research, Monitoring, and Resource Protection	Support Role
Cliff	Fontenot	Southeastern	• Environmental Representativeness • Research, Monitoring, and Resource Protection	Support Role
Chris	Beachy	Southeastern	• Research, Monitoring, and Resource Protection	Support Role
Teague	O'Mara	Southeaster	• Education and Interpretation • Research, Monitoring, and Resource Protection	Support Role
Chuck	Crabtree	NTCC	• Education and Interpretation	Support Role
Chris	Montgomery	NTCC	• Education and Interpretation	Support Role
Mark	Davis	Tulane	• Acquisition and Management Consideration	Team Co-Lead
David	Pogorski	UNO	• Research, Monitoring, and Resource Protection	Team Co-Lead
Erin	Cox	UNO	• Environmental Representativeness • Research, Monitoring, and Resource Protection	Support Role
Mark	Kulp	UNO	• Environmental Representativeness	Support Role
Robert	Mahon	UNO	• Education and Interpretation • Environmental Representativeness • Research, Monitoring, and Resource Protection	Support Role

Pontchartrain Proposal Team

List of Personnel, Participating Institutions, Area(s) of Expertise & Team Role (cont)

First Name	Last Name	Institution	• Area(s) of Expertise	Team Role
Dinah	Maygarden	UNO	• Education and Interpretation • Environmental Representativeness	Core Member of Team
Marty	O'Connell	UNO	• Environmental Representativeness • Research, Monitoring, and Resource Protection	Core Member of Team
Mike	Poirrier	UNO	• Environmental Representativeness • Research, Monitoring, and Resource Protection	Support Role
Kelly	Boyle	UNO	• Education and Interpretation • Environmental Representativeness • Research, Monitoring, and Resource Protection	Support Role
Amy	Lesen	Dillard	• Education and Interpretation • Environmental Representativeness	Core Member of Team
Harish	Ratnayaka	Xavier	• Education and Interpretation • Environmental Representativeness	Support Role
Blaise	Pezold	Meraux Fdn	• Acquisition and Management Consideration	Core Member of Team
Marty	Floyd	--	• Acquisition and Management Consideration	Support Role
John	Lane	St Bernard Parish	• Acquisition and Management Consideration	Support Role
Rene	Pastorek	St John Parish	• Acquisition and Management Consideration	Support Role

Pontchartrain Proposal Team:

Pontchartrain Team Meeting and Document Maintenance Procedures

Overall Team and Leadership Team

The Pontchartrain Proposal Team consists of all entities and their respective individuals who participate in the drafting of the proposal that will ultimately be submitted to the Development Leadership Team (DLT). A sub-group of the Pontchartrain Proposal Team is the "Pontchartrain Proposal Leadership Team (PPLT)," which consists of one member each from the five primary representative entities of the overall team. To avoid confusion, only the PPLT will be referred to in acronym form. The PPLT entities and their representatives are identified below:

(lead) Pontchartrain Conservancy (Kristi Trail)
(co-lead) Loyola University of New Orleans (Robert Thomas)
(co-lead) Southeastern Louisiana University (Robert Moreau)
(co-lead) Tulane University (Mark Davis)
(co-lead) University of New Orleans (David Podgorski)

Pontchartrain Proposal Team:

Pontchartrain Team Meeting and Document Maintenance Procedures (cont)

Overall Team and Leadership Team (cont)

In addition, most participating institutions will have its own sub-group. For example, there will be a Pontchartrain Conservancy Proposal Team, a Loyola Pontchartrain Proposal Team, a Southeastern Pontchartrain Proposal Team, a Tulane Pontchartrain Proposal Team, and a UNO Pontchartrain Proposal Team. In general, it will be the responsibility of the co-lead person of each institution (on the PPLT) to maintain proper communication within their own institutional sub-groups. This is further discussed in the next section.

Pontchartrain Proposal Team:

Pontchartrain Team Meeting and Document Maintenance Procedures (cont)

Responsibilities of the PPLT

The PPLT will be responsible for organizing, coordinating and directing proposal writing responsibilities and tasks to the larger overall Pontchartrain Proposal Team, and will do so utilizing two primary email distribution lists and/or virtual platforms (e.g., Google Meet): (1) PPLT group, and; (2) overall Pontchartrain Proposal Team group. The process will be similar to what has happened to date in the proposal process, whereby the PPLT will communicate regularly during the week among itself, culminating in either a group email or virtual meeting in order to determine what specific tasks should be assigned to individuals (at the appropriate institution) as part of the overall proposal process. Regular emails to the larger overall group will update the entire Pontchartrain Proposal Team on the process. In addition, each member of the PPLT will be responsible for maintaining proper communication with other members of their own institutions, as deemed appropriate by those institutions.

Pontchartrain Proposal Team:

Pontchartrain Team Meeting and Document Maintenance Procedures (cont)

Document Maintenance and Integrity

Documents produced by the entire Pontchartrain Proposal Team and synthesized by the PPLT will be compiled and maintained by the Pontchartrain Conservancy (PC), as it is the lead entity of the PPLT, within a shared filing system (likely Google Docs or SharePoint). This framework will maintain standardization, accessibility, integrity and preservation of all documents associated with the proposal process, and will be accessible by all involved for continual process and content improvement.

Pontchartrain Proposal Team:

Pontchartrain Team Meeting and Document Maintenance Procedures (cont)

Timeline and Deliverables

The primary deliverable dates are as follows:

(1) May 3rd, 2021: Phase 1 Deliverables

- -Pontchartrain Leadership Team Information
- -List of Participating Institutions and Persons
- -Pontchartrain Team Meeting and Document Maintenance Procedures (this document)
- -Visual of anticipated LaNERR site, including draft core and buffer areas

Pontchartrain Proposal Team:

Team Needs

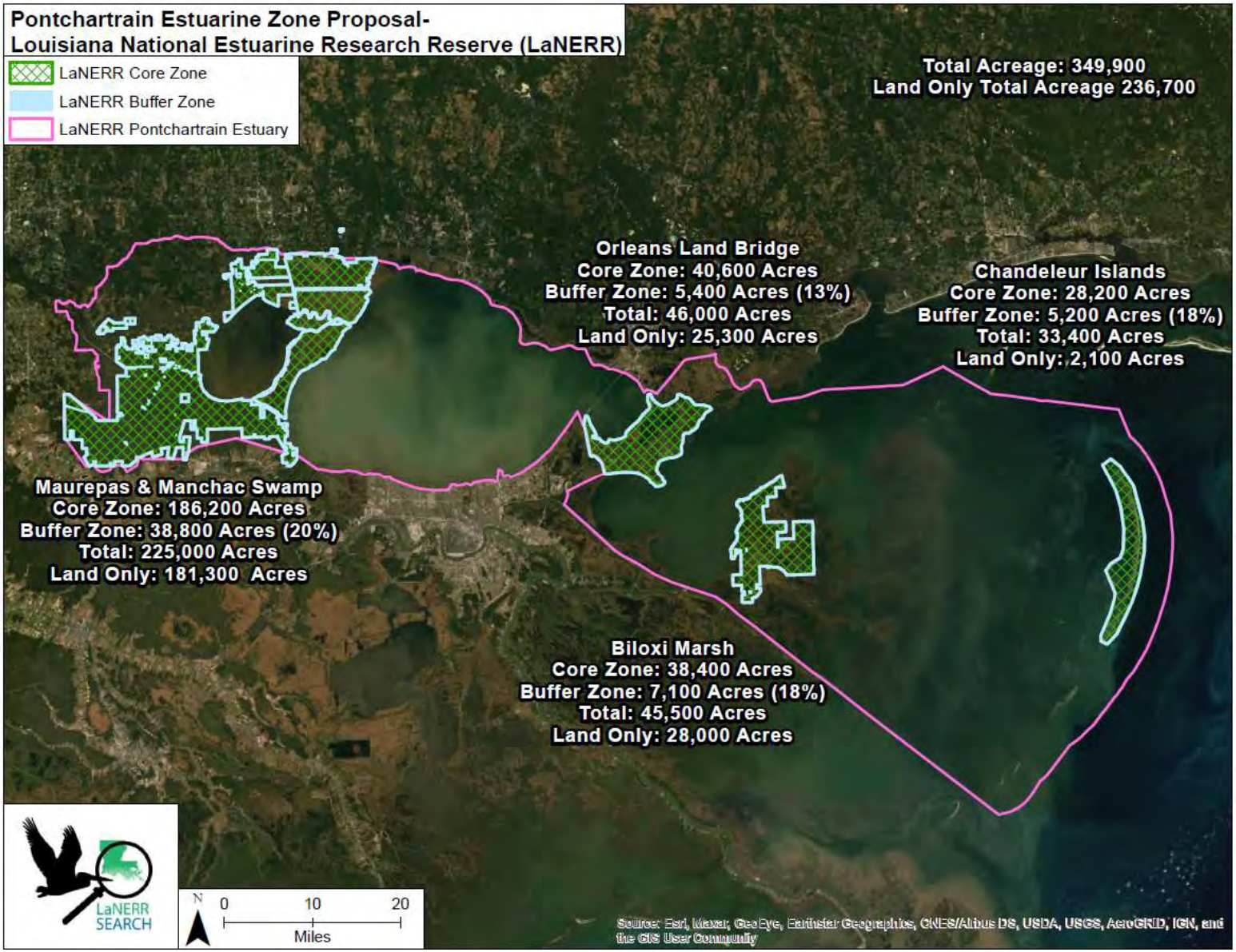
-GIS Shape Files for all maps

-a SharePoint Site for our Pontchartrain team

-list of any other shared state/federal agency personnel who will be on all teams

-Request the DLT to set up zoom call with North Carolina NERR to talk to us about pros and cons of a "Multi Component NERR" (i.e., multiple lands, non contiguous, connected by water)

-guidance from DLT/NOAA on a multi-component site



Proposed Map of Pontchartrain Estuarine Zone:

Note that the team seeks the DLT's feedback on this proposed map

Thank you

WORKSHEETS TO MODIFY NOAA CRITERIA for LaNERR SITE SELECTION PROCESS

The TABLES below have four topical areas of criteria recommended by NOAA to evaluate potential NERR sites: (1) Environmental Representativeness, (2) Research, Monitoring & Resource Protection, (3) Education and Interpretation, and (4) Acquisition, Management Consideration.

The Criteria Subcommittee will be responsible for modifying the NOAA Site Selection Criteria and scoring approach for evaluating the merits of candidate sites as a NERR in the Mississippi River Delta.

- Criteria, as revised by the Criteria Subcommittee, will be submitted to NOAA for review and approval.
- Approved criteria will be used to evaluate LaNERR candidate site proposals as we move closer to identifying and refining a specific candidate site for nomination as a LaNERR.

The Site Criteria Subcommittee is asked to make modifications to this FIRST DRAFT of screening criteria to develop a SECOND DRAFT by SDC Meeting #5 that will be held in late April/early May. Again, these Site Criteria will be used to evaluate specific candidate sites for nomination as a LaNERR.

This word file is a worksheet for you to suggest modifications in FIRST DRAFT LaNERR screening Criteria Questions adopted from specific NOAA Criteria in their January 2020 guidelines. The SECOND DRAFT will be developed by modifying the FIRST DRAFT of NOAA criteria in column on the RIGHT.

The Designation Leadership Team has made slight modifications to the NOAA Site Selection Criteria to better reflect terminology used in coastal Louisiana and Louisiana specific conditions. You can also comment on whether a criterion is not applicable to coastal Louisiana and therefore should not be used, as well as add any additional criteria that you think should be included in this proces

The modifications of Site Criteria will be used to submit a FINAL DRAFT of Site Criteria that will be submitted to NOAA for approval for LaNERR site selection.

	Proposed SECOND DRAFT of LaNERR Criteria	Proposed FIRST DRAFT of LaNERR Site Criteria
	Environmental Representativeness (ER)	
ER	1.1 Ecosystem composition: A measure of the diversity of ecosystem types present within the boundaries of the site. This criterion is based on the assumption that sites that have a high diversity of major ecosystem types are of higher relative "value" for protection and management than those with low ecosystem diversity (unless the ecosystem in consideration is rare or unique). 3 Points The site has a high diversity of habitat composition within its major ecosystem type, i.e., it contains three or more habitat types or subtypes within its major ecosystem type (e.g., site consists of a combination of swamps, coastal marshes, and mud flats) or has a combination of multiple coastal marsh types (e.g., tidal freshwater, brackish, salt marsh zones). 2 Points The site has a moderate diversity of habitat composition within its major ecosystem type, i.e., it contains only two habitat types or subtypes within its major ecosystem type (e.g., consists of a combination of forested wetlands and a single coastal marsh type). 1 Point The site has a low diversity of habitat composition within its major ecosystem type, i.e., its major ecosystem type consists of a single habitat type (e.g., tidal freshwater marsh or brackish marsh, or forested wetland). These are the suggested Ecosystem Types to be used in the LaNERR evaluation: **Group I- Uplands** Alluvial Forested Wetlands Maritime Forest- Woodland Coastal Prairie Coastal Shrublands and Cheniers **Group II- Intertidal areas** Coastal Forested Wetlands Coastal Floating Marshes Coastal Freshwater Marsh Coastal Intermediate Marsh Coastal Brackish Marsh Coastal Salt Marsh Coastal Mangroves	1.1 Ecosystem composition: A measure of the diversity of ecosystem types present within the boundaries of the site. This criterion is based on the assumption that sites that have a high diversity of major ecosystem types are of higher relative "value" for protection and management than those with low ecosystem diversity (unless the ecosystem in consideration is rare or unique). 3 Points The site has a high diversity of habitat composition within its major ecosystem type, i.e., it contains three or more habitat types or subtypes within its major ecosystem type (e.g., site consists of a combination of swamps, coastal marshes, and mud flats) or has a combination of multiple coastal marsh types (e.g., high, mid, and low marsh zones). 2 Points The site has a moderate diversity of habitat composition within its major ecosystem type, i.e., it contains only two habitat types or subtypes within its major ecosystem type (e.g., consists of a combination of swamps and a single coastal marsh type). 1 Point The site has a low diversity of habitat composition within its major ecosystem type, i.e., its major ecosystem type consists of a single habitat type (e.g., maritime forest or Juncus marsh). These are the suggested Ecosystem Types to be used in the LaNERR evaluation: **Group I- Shorelands** Maritime forest- woodland Coastal Shrublands Coastal Cheniers **Group II- Transition areas** Coastal Forested Wetlands Coastal Floating Marshes Coastal Freshwater Marsh Coastal Intermediate Marsh Coastal Brackish Marsh Coastal Salt Marsh Coastal Mangroves Intertidal beaches and dunes Intertidal mud and sand flats **Group III- Submerged Bottoms** Subtidal hard bottoms Subtidal soft bottoms

	Intertidal Beaches and Dunes Intertidal Mud and Sand Flats **Group III- Submerged Bottoms** Subtidal hard bottoms/reefs Subtidal soft bottoms Subtidal Plants (SAV)	
ER	1.2 Balanced Ecosystem Composition: A measure of the relative composition of ecosystem types within the boundaries of a site (buffer plus core areas). This criterion is based on the assumption that sites with a balanced proportion of ecosystem types are of higher relative "value" for protection and management. High, moderate, and low values are assigned to sites that contain variations in the proportions of all three ecosystem types. A value of zero is assigned to a site that is dominated by one ecosystem type or contains less than three ecosystem types. 3 Point. The site contains representative upland, intertidal, and subtidal habitats in relatively equal proportions (i.e. areal cover of any one ecosystem type not less than 25 percent of the total area) 2 Point. The site contains representative upland, intertidal, and subtidal habitats, with the areal cover of any one type not less than 10 percent of the total area. 1 Point. The site contains representative upland, intertidal, and subtidal habitats, with the areal cover of any one type less than 10 percent of the total area 0 Points the site contains representative upland, intertidal and subtidal habitats, with the areal cover of two types being less than 10 percent of the total area *or* the site consists of habitats from only one or two of the three major ecosystem types	1.2 Balanced Ecosystem Composition: A measure of the relative composition of ecosystem types within the boundaries of a site (buffer plus core areas). This criterion is based on the assumption that sites with a balanced proportion of ecosystem types are of higher relative "value" for protection and management. High, moderate, and low values are assigned to sites that contain variations in the proportions of all three ecosystem types. A value of zero is assigned to a site that is dominated by one ecosystem type or contains less than three ecosystem types. 3 Point. The site contains representative upland, transition ~~intertidal~~, and subtidal habitats in relatively equal proportions (i.e. areal cover of any one ecosystem type not less than 25 percent of the total area) 2 Point. The site contains representative upland, intertidal, and subtidal habitats, with the areal cover of any one type not less than 10 percent of the total area. 1 Point. The site contains representative upland, intertidal, and subtidal habitats, with the areal cover of any one type less than 10 percent of the total area 0 Points the site contains representative upland, intertidal and subtidal habitats, with the areal cover of two types being less than 10 percent of the total area *or* the site consists of habitats from only one or two of the three major ecosystem types
ER	1.3 Habitat Composition and Complexity: A measure of the diversity of habitat types present within the major ecosystem type found within the boundaries of the site. This criterion is based on the assumption that sites that have a high diversity of habitat types are of higher relative "value" for protection and management than those with a low diversity of habitat types. Major ecosystem type is defined here as that type that	1.3 Habitat Composition and Complexity: A measure of the diversity of habitat types present within the major ecosystem type found within the boundaries of the site. This criterion is based on the assumption that sites that have a high diversity of habitat types are of higher relative "value" for protection and management than those with a low diversity of habitat types. Major ecosystem type is defined here as that type that

	comprises approximately 40 percent of the site. Use the habitat type designations listed above for "ecosystem composition." 3 Points The site has a high diversity of habitat composition within its major ecosystem type, i.e., it contains three or more habitat types or subtypes within its major ecosystem type (e.g., site consists of a combination of swamps, coastal marshes, and reefs) or has a combination of multiple coastal marsh types (e.g., tidal freshwater, brackish, salt marsh zones including mangroves). 2 Points The site has a moderate diversity of habitat composition within its major ecosystem type, i.e., it contains only two habitat types or subtypes within its major ecosystem type (e.g., consists of a combination of swamps and a single coastal marsh type). 1 Point The site has a low diversity of habitat composition within its major ecosystem type, i.e., its major ecosystem type consists of a single habitat type (e.g., brackish marsh or tidal freshwater wetlands).	comprises approximately 40 percent of the site. Use the habitat type designations listed above for "ecosystem composition." 3 Points The site has a high diversity of habitat composition within its major ecosystem type, i.e., it contains three or more habitat types or subtypes within its major ecosystem type (e.g., site consists of a combination of swamps, coastal marshes, and reefs) or has a combination of multiple coastal marsh types (e.g., tidal freshwater, brackish, salt marsh zones including mangroves). 2 Points The site has a moderate diversity of habitat composition within its major ecosystem type, i.e., it contains only two habitat types or subtypes within its major ecosystem type (e.g., consists of a combination of swamps and a single coastal marsh type). 1 Point The site has a low diversity of habitat composition within its major ecosystem type, i.e., its major ecosystem type consists of a single habitat type (e.g., brackish marsh or tidal freshwater wetlands).
	1.4 Habitat uniqueness of the Site: A measure of the presence of rare or unique habitat types within a candidate site relative to other NERR sites in Louisiana Biogeographic Region. This criterion recognizes the importance of emphasizing unique areas in the selection process, in addition to the representativeness of the candidate site in terms of ecosystem and habitat diversity. Unique habitat is defined here as a habitat type of "limited" known occurrence within the biogeographic region or sub-region. This criterion can be a simple "yes/no" question.	1.4 Habitat uniqueness of the Site: A measure of the presence of rare or unique habitat types within a candidate site relative to other NERR sites in Louisiana Biogeographic Region. This criterion recognizes the importance of emphasizing unique areas in the selection process, in addition to the representativeness of the candidate site in terms of ecosystem and habitat diversity. Unique habitat is defined here as a habitat type of "limited" known occurrence within the biogeographic region or sub-region. This criterion can be a simple "yes/no" question.
ER	1.5 Significant faunal and floral support: A measure of the degree to which a site supports significant faunal or floral components. This criterion focuses on a site's contribution (i.e., function) toward supporting the activities (e.g., feeding, nesting) of the following suite of significant faunal or floral components. The list of components includes groups or organisms that are known to be dependent upon estuarine habitats for the entire or a crucial part of their life cycle.	1.5 Significant faunal and floral support: A measure of the degree to which a site supports significant faunal or floral components. This criterion focuses on a site's contribution (i.e., function) toward supporting the activities (e.g., feeding, nesting) of the following suite of significant faunal or floral components. The list of components includes groups or organisms that are known to be dependent upon estuarine habitats for the entire or a crucial part of their life cycle.

	• Fish and Shellfish Spawning and Nursery Grounds (includes use by either freshwater, estuarine, or estuarine-dependent marine species) • Migratory Bird or Waterfowl Use • Bird Nesting or Roosting Area • Critical Mammal Habitat • Non-Game Animals (amphibians, reptiles, etc.) • State or federally Listed Species or of concern (animal or plant – including candidate species) • Other biodiversity support as representative of ecosystem services (such as invertebrates .... 3 Points. The candidate site supports or serves as an important site for a wide range of the faunal or floral components listed above (4 of 6) or is extremely important site for any threatened or endangered species. 2 Points The site supports or serves as an important site for a moderate range and diversity of the significant faunal or floral components listed above (3 of 6). 1 point The site supports or serves as an important site for one or two of the significant faunal or floral components listed above. 0 point The site does not support significant faunal or floral components	• Fish and Shellfish Spawning and Nursery Grounds (includes use by either freshwater, estuarine, or estuarine-dependent marine species) • Migratory Bird or Waterfowl Use • Bird Nesting or Roosting Area • Critical Mammal Habitat • Non-Game Animals (amphibians, reptiles, etc.) • State or federally Listed Species or of concern (animal or plant – including candidate species) • Other biodiversity support as representative of ecosystem services (such as invertebrates .... 3 Points. The candidate site supports or serves as an important site for a wide range of the faunal or floral components listed above (4 of 6) or is extremely important site for any threatened or endangered species. 2 Points The site supports or serves as an important site for a moderate range and diversity of the significant faunal or floral components listed above (3 of 6). 1 point The site supports or serves as an important site for one or two of the significant faunal or floral components listed above. 0 point The site does not support significant faunal or floral components

	Proposed SECOND DRAFT of LaNERR Criteria	Proposed FIRST DRAFT of LaNERR Site Criteria
	Environmental Representativeness (ER)	
ER		~~1.6 Site's relationship to its influenced drainage basin: A measure of juxtaposition of a site's strategic position relative to the greater drainage basin to which it belongs. This factor assumes that location in the watershed is important in preserving the ecosystem values of a healthy, functioning watershed, specifically the following: storm-water storage for flood protection of nearby communities; tropical storm surge buffering for nearby communities; reduces nonpoint source runoff into already impaired waterbodies; provides headwater storage to slow or absorb downstream runoff. Aerial photos, hydrologic information, and detailed topographic maps should be used for judging this criterion.~~

		~~3 Points. The site preserves a strategically significant region of the drainage basin to which it belongs and provides two or more of the above listed functions.~~ ~~2 Points The site is situated in an area with moderate influence on 2 or more of the above listed ecosystem functions.~~ ~~1 Point The site is situated in an area with moderate influence on 1 or more on the ecosystem functions of the drainage basin to which it belongs. .~~ ~~0 Points The site is situated in an area with limited to no influence on the ecosystem functions of the drainage basin to which it belongs.~~
ER	1.7 Geologic representativeness, Diversity, and Uniqueness of the Site: A measure of the representativeness, diversity, and uniqueness of the deltaic geologic characteristics that define part or the whole of a candidate site. This criterion attempts to consider both the surface and subsurface geologic formations that may be representative or unique within a site, particularly as they affect or define associated biotic habitats. Included in these considerations are the ways that local geology affects surface hydrology, such as drainage systems, and subsurface hydrology, such as shallow-water aquifers. Geologic and hydrologic maps should be used to evaluate this criterion. 3 Points The site has numerous deltaic geologic characteristics, two or more unique geologic characteristics, and contains a high diversity of formation types or strata within its boundaries. 2 Points The site has a moderate number of representative geologic characteristics and at least one unique geologic characteristic, and contains a moderate diversity of formation types or strata within its boundaries. 1 Point The site has a moderate number of geologic characteristics, no unique geologic characteristics, or contains a moderate diversity of formation types or strata within its boundaries. 0 Points. The site has few or only one representative geologic characteristics, no unique geologic characteristics, or contains few or only one formation type or strata within its boundaries.	1.7 Geologic representativeness, Diversity, and Uniqueness of the Site: A measure of the representativeness, diversity, and uniqueness of the deltaic geologic characteristics that define part or the whole of a candidate site. This criterion attempts to consider both the surface and subsurface geologic formations that may be representative or unique within a site, particularly as they affect or define associated biotic habitats. Included in these considerations are the ways that local geology affects surface hydrology, such as drainage systems, and subsurface hydrology, such as shallow-water aquifers. Geologic and hydrologic maps should be used to evaluate this criterion. 3 Points The site has numerous deltaic geologic characteristics, two or more unique geologic characteristics, and contains a high diversity of formation types or strata within its boundaries. 2 Points The site has a moderate number of representative geologic characteristics and at least one unique geologic characteristic, and contains a moderate diversity of formation types or strata within its boundaries. 1 Point The site has a moderate number of geologic characteristics, no unique geologic characteristics, or contains a moderate diversity of formation types or strata within its boundaries. 0 Points. The site has few or only one representative geologic characteristics, no unique geologic characteristics, or contains few or only one formation type or strata within its boundaries.

ER	1.8 Salinity Gradient A measure of the seasonal and spatial range of salinity over multiple years within a candidate site's boundaries. This criterion recognizes the effect of salinity on the biotic structure of estuarine habitats (including the plant communities and faunal components that inhabit them). It makes the assumption that a site with a greater range of salinity will support a broader range of habitat types and organisms. 3 Points: The site encompasses > 10 parts per thousand (ppt) or greater range of salinity within its boundaries. 2 Points: The site encompasses a 5-10 ppt range of salinity within its boundaries. 1 Point: The site encompasses a 2-5 ppt range of salinity within its boundaries . 0 Points: The site encompasses < 2 ppt range of salinity within its boundaries	1.8 Salinity Gradient A measure of the seasonal and spatial range of salinity over multiple years within a candidate site's boundaries. This criterion recognizes the effect of salinity on the biotic structure of estuarine habitats (including the plant communities and faunal components that inhabit them). It makes the assumption that a site with a greater range of salinity will support a broader range of habitat types and organisms. 3 Points The site encompasses > 15 parts per thousand (ppt) or greater range of salinity within its boundaries. 2 Points The site encompasses a 10-15 ppt range of salinity within its boundaries. 1 Point The site encompasses a 5-10 ppt range of salinity within its boundaries . 0 Points The site encompasses < 5 ppt range of salinity within its boundaries
ER	1.9 Degree Developed and Potential impacts to water quality: A measure of the degree to which the hydrologic basins (see reference map) are developed and the relative impacts to surface waters from human activities. This criterion is based on the assumption that human impacts to a site are directly proportional to the degree of development. Exceptions to this assumption may need to be considered where development at a site and its surrounding area have been subject to high levels of control. Data on land use and water quality measurements from local, county, and state government agencies should be used to judge this criterion. 3 Points: The site is relatively undisturbed and the hydrologic basins contains low intensity development (e.g., few residences, minimal agricultural or silvicultural activity) or the land is in protected status. 2 Points: The site is relatively undisturbed and the hydrologic basins contains moderate development (e.g., relatively few residences, moderate agricultural or silvicultural activity, minimal commercial development).	1.9 Degree Developed and Potential impacts to water quality: A measure of the degree to which the hydrologic basins are developed and the relative impacts to surface waters from human activities. This criterion is based on the assumption that human impacts to a site are directly proportional to the degree of development. Exceptions to this assumption may need to be considered where development at a site and its surrounding area have been subject to high levels of control. Data on land use and water quality measurements from local, county, and state government agencies should be used to judge this criterion. 3 Points The site is relatively undisturbed and the hydrologic basins contains low intensity development (e.g., few residences, minimal agricultural or silvicultural activity) or the land is in protected status. 2 Points The site is relatively undisturbed and the watershed contains moderate development (e.g., relatively few residences, moderate agricultural or silvicultural activity, minimal commercial development). 1 Point The site has been moderately disturbed and the watershed contains relatively intensive development (e.g., moderate density of residences, or the presence of industrial activity). 0 Points The site has been extremely disturbed and the watershed contains very intensive development (e.g., high density residential, or commercial or industrial activity).

	1 Point: The site has been moderately disturbed and the hydrologic basins contains relatively intensive development (e.g., moderate density of residences, or the presence of industrial activity). 0 Points: The site has been extremely disturbed and the hydrologic basins contains very intensive development (e.g., high density residential, or commercial or industrial activity).	

	Proposed SECOND DRAFT of LaNERR Criteria	Proposed FIRST DRAFT of LaNERR Site Criteria
	Research, Monitoring & Resource Protection (RMRP)	
RMRP	2.1 Value of site for research: A measure of the opportunities offered by characteristics of the site for research, such as a high diversity of ecosystem and habitat types, a balanced habitat composition, a wide salinity range (see criterion 1.8), biotic or geologic representativeness of the site, known historic uses or archaeological sites, and unique opportunities to conduct applied research regarding important local, state, and regional coastal management issues (including past and potential management activities). The assumption is that a site with representative, unique, and highly diverse characteristics will provide greater research, monitoring, and resource protection opportunities than one lacking these characteristics. Ratings generated for these factors under previous selection criteria can be used as a guide for rating this overall factor. 3 Points: The site has (1) a high diversity of ecosystem and habitat types, (2) moderate salinity range, (3) representative biotic and geologic sites or hydrologic characteristics, (4) state and federally listed species, (5) historic and archaeological significance, and (6) opportunities to address important habitat or resource management issues. 2 Points: The site has four or five of the six above. 1 Point: The site has two or three of the six above. 0 Points: The site has one or none of the six above.	2.1 Value of site for research: A measure of the opportunities offered by characteristics of the site for research, such as a high diversity of ecosystem and habitat types, a balanced habitat composition, a wide salinity range, biotic or geologic representativeness of the site, known historic uses or archaeological sites, and unique opportunities to conduct applied research regarding important local, state, and regional coastal management issues (including past and potential management activities). The assumption is that a site with representative, unique, and highly diverse characteristics will provide greater research, monitoring, and resource protection opportunities than one lacking these characteristics. Ratings generated for these factors under previous selection criteria can be used as a guide for rating this overall factor. 3 Points The site has (1) a high diversity of ecosystem and habitat types, (2) moderate salinity range, (3) representative biotic and geologic sites or characteristics, (4) state and federally listed species, (5) historic and archaeological significance, and (6) opportunities to address important habitat or resource management issues. 2 Points The site has four or five of the six above. 1 Point The site has two or three of the six above. 0 Points The site has one or none of the six above.

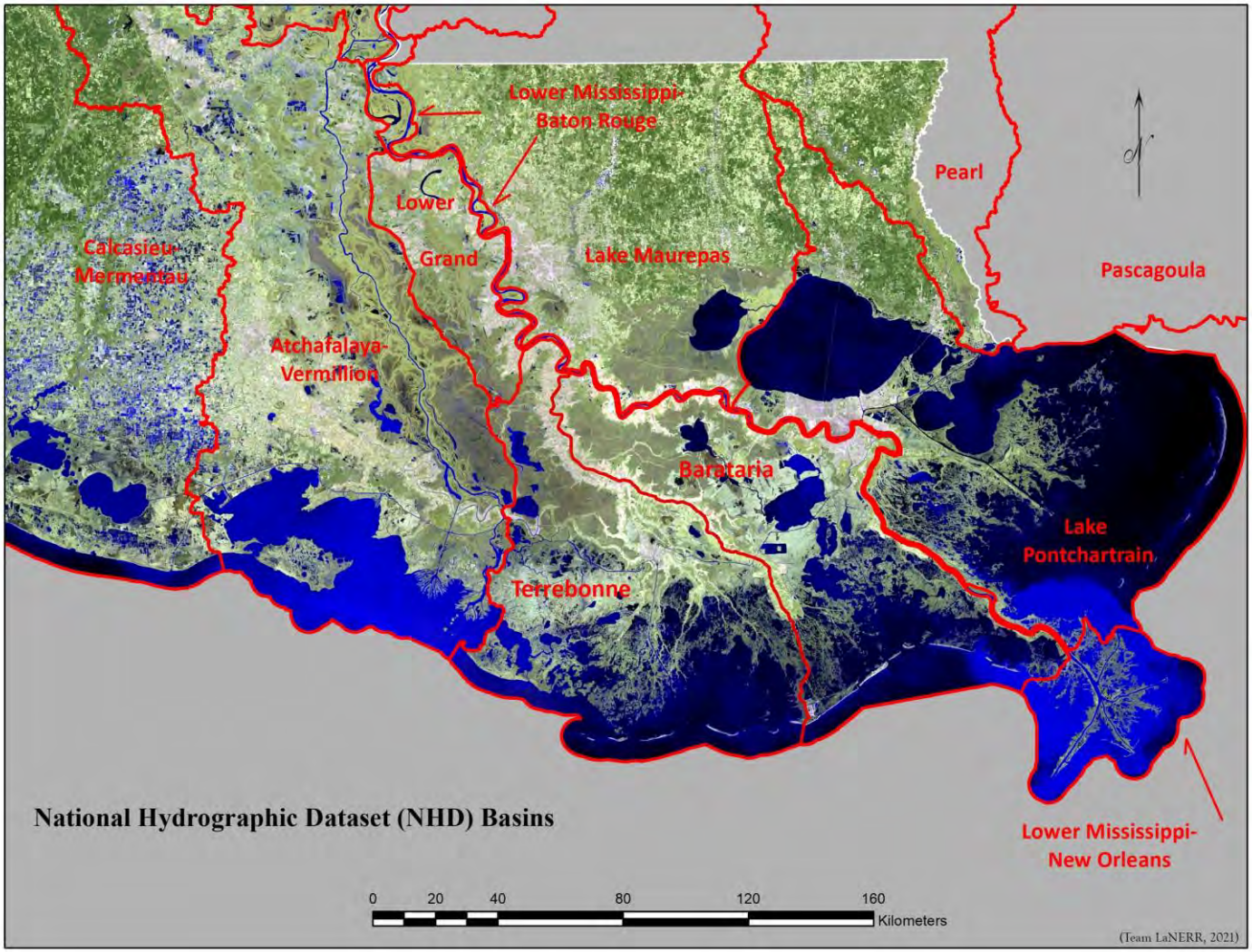
RMRP	2.2 Previous research and monitoring efforts: A measure of the degree to which the site (including the hydrologic basin) has been used for past research and monitoring, including considerations of the diversity of inquiry (fields of research), and the availability of data (the form and availability of documentation, e.g., peer-reviewed papers, grey literature, inventory reports). The assumption is that an area with previously established research and monitoring interest offers greater opportunity for future projects than an area that has not sparked such an interest in the past. 3 Points: The site has a long history of well-documented research and monitoring projects in a wide variety of topics. Data are readily available. 2 Points: The site has had major and well-documented research and monitoring efforts, generating data that are readily available. It has not had a long history of research and monitoring. 1 Point: The site has had only minor research and monitoring projects generating limited data (e.g., inventories) and/or these data may be difficult to obtain. 0 Points: The site has no known history of research and monitoring.	2.2 Previous research and monitoring efforts: A measure of the degree to which the site has been used for past research and monitoring, including considerations of the diversity of inquiry (fields of research), and the availability of data (the form and availability of documentation, e.g., peer-reviewed papers, grey literature, inventory reports). The assumption is that an area with previously established research and monitoring interest offers greater opportunity for future projects than an area that has not sparked such an interest in the past. 3 Points The site has a long history of well-documented research and monitoring projects in a wide variety of topics. Data are readily available. 2 Points The site has had major and well-documented research and monitoring efforts, generating data that are readily available. It has not had a long history of research and monitoring. 1 Point The site has had only minor research and monitoring projects generating limited data (e.g., inventories) that may be difficult to obtain. 0 Points The site has no known history of research and monitoring.

	Proposed SECOND DRAFT of LaNERR Criteria	Proposed FIRST DRAFT of LaNERR Site Criteria
	Research, Monitoring & Resource Protection (RMRP)	
RMRP	2.3 Suitability of site for environmental baseline monitoring: A measure of the suitability of the site as a reference area for assessing long-term natural resource trends or ecological characteristics, based on the degree to which the site has not been altered by land-use practices on or near the site. The assumption is that a site with uninterrupted habitat patches that provide landscape continuity (not interrupted by developed or disturbed lands & waters) will be a more valuable reference area to generate baseline monitoring information than a site that has been extensively altered.	2.3 Suitability of site for environmental baseline monitoring: A measure of the suitability of the site as a reference area for assessing long-term resource trends or ecological characteristics, based on the degree to which the site has been altered by land-use practices on or near the site. The assumption is that a site that has relatively pristine land areas and waters will be a more valuable reference area to generate baseline monitoring information than a site that has been extensively altered. 3 Points The site has outstanding areas to generate environmental baseline data to assess long-term resource trends or ecological characteristics for a wide range of needs. 2 Points The site has adequate areas to generate environmental baseline data to assess long- term resource trends or ecological characteristics for many needs.

	3 Points: The site has outstanding areas to generate environmental baseline data to assess long- term resource trends or ecological characteristics for a wide range of needs. 2 Points: The site has adequate areas to generate environmental baseline data to assess long- term resource trends or ecological characteristics for many needs. 1 Point: The site has marginal areas to generate environmental baseline data to assess long-term resource trends or ecological characteristics. 0 Points: The site has been so extensively altered by past activities that it is unsuitable for generating environmental baseline data.	1 Point The site has marginal areas to generate environmental baseline data to assess long-term resource trends or ecological characteristics. 0 Points The site has been so extensively altered by past activities that it is unsuitable for generating environmental baseline data.
RMRP	2.4 Coastal Resilience Research: How suitable is the site (and hydrologic basin it is found) to support research on coastal resilience including both natural and social resources. This includes how climate change may amplify land-use change and vulnerability of candidate site (and hydrologic basin) to relative sea level rise to natural and social systems including both impacts to each, but also degree of adaptations of each system to biogeophysical changes. 3 Points: The candidate site (and hydrologic basin) demonstrates high value in how both natural and social resources that can be the focus of research on how climate change will amplify impacts of land-use and relative sea level rise including research on adaptations. 2 Points: The candidate site (and hydrologic basin) demonstrates moderate value in how both natural and social resources that can be the focus of research on how climate change will amplify impacts of land-use and relative sea level rise including research on adaptations.. 1 Point: The candidate site (and hydrologic basin) demonstrates low value in how both natural and social resources that can be the focus of research on how climate	2.4 Coastal Resilience Research: This consideration is important for the reserve site in order to be able to assess climate and coastal change impacts on the area. 3 Points The site's ecological resources will be affected by climate change impacts including erosion, sea-level rise, etc., and these impacts will be able to be well-documented. 2 Points The site's ecological resources will be affected by climate change impacts including erosion, sea-level rise, etc., and these impacts may be able to be documented. 1 Point The site's ecological resources will be affected by climate change impacts including erosion, sea-level rise, etc., and these impacts will probably not be able to be documented.

	change will amplify impacts of land-use and relative sea level rise including research on adaptations.	
RMRP	2.5. Ability to address key local, state, and regional coastal management issues: A measure of the degree to which the site is appropriate for investigating issues relevant to coastal management at the local, state, and regional levels. Solutions to these issues may require either the application of land management practices or habitat manipulations to perform meaningful research and assessment. As such, the site should offer both adequate control areas plus areas where demonstration projects and habitat manipulations (such as coastal restoration projects) can be accommodated to study many of the issues of concern. The assumption is that a site where diverse coastal management issues are evident and can be addressed will be of greater value from research and resource management standpoint than sites where these issues do not arise. The diversity and significance of coastal management issues should be identified for the hydrologic basin as it may influence core and buffer areas proposed. The following list are suggestions that may be included in the description of the sites ability to address key local, state and regional coastal management issues. • Wetland loss and habitat change; • Wetland loss mitigation, restoration, creation; • Dredging and spoil disposal; • Beneficial uses of dredged materials; • Shoreline erosion; • Commercial or recreational fisheries; • Waterfowl and other wildlife management; • Best management practices for habitat protection or management (e.g., wildlife management); • Best management practices to limit impacts from agricultural, silvicultural, or development activities; • Effects of pollutants on water quality and living resources (including oil spills, nutrients; harmful algal blooms, bacteria contamination, etc.)	2.5. Ability to address key local, state, and regional coastal management issues: A measure of the degree to which the site is appropriate for investigating issues relevant to coastal management at the local, state, and regional levels. Solutions to these issues may require either the application of land management practices or habitat manipulations in order to perform meaningful research and assessment. As such, the site should offer both adequate control areas plus areas where demonstration projects and habitat manipulations can be accommodated in order to study many of the issues of concern. The assumption is that a site where coastal management issues arise and can be addressed will be of greater value from a resource protection standpoint than sites where these issues do not arise. The significant issues should be identified for each region and may include the following: • Wetlands development • Wetlands mitigation, restoration, creation • Dredging and spoil disposal • Beneficial uses of dredged materials • Shoreline erosion • Commercial or recreational fisheries • Waterfowl and other wildlife management • Best management practices for habitat protection or management (e.g., wildlife management) • Best management practices to limit impacts from agricultural, silvicultural, or development activities • Effects of pollutants on water quality and living resources • Impacts of relative sea-level rise • Prehistoric and early historic settlement and land use 3 Points. The site is highly appropriate for investigating diversity of coastal zone management issues 2 Points. The site is appropriate for investigating coastal zone management issues 1 Point. The site is minimally appropriate for investigating coastal zone management issues 0 points The site is not appropriate for investigating coastal zone management issues

	• Impacts of relative sea-level rise; • Prehistoric and early historic settlement and land use; • Unique connections in cultural and natural resources within the site (language, customs, land-use, etc.); 3 Points: The site is highly appropriate for investigating diversity of coastal zone management issues 2 Points: The site is appropriate for investigating coastal zone management issues 1 Point. The site is minimally appropriate for investigating coastal zone management issues 0 points: The site is not appropriate for investigating coastal zone management issues	


Lower Mississippi-
Baton Rouge
Pearl
Lower
Grand
Lake Maurepas
Calcasieu-
Mermentau
Pascagoula
Atchafalaya-
Vermilion
Barataria
Lake
Pontchartrain
Terrebonne
National Hydrographic Dataset (NHD) Basins
Lower Mississippi-
New Orleans
0 20 40 80 120 160
Kilometers
(Team LaNERR, 2021)

	Proposed SECOND DRAFT of LaNERR Criteria	Proposed FIRST DRAFT of LaNERR Site Criteria
	Education and Interpretation (EI)	
EI	3.1 Diversity and quality of training education and interpretation of opportunities: A measure of the variety and quality of training, education, and interpretation opportunities (i.e., ecological, archaeological, cultural, historical, etc.) provided by the site (core and buffer areas) for the different target audiences. The assumption is that a candidate site with a diversity of such opportunities of high quality will be utilized to a greater extent than one with fewer opportunities. 3 Points: The site has numerous different training, education, and interpretation opportunities of high quality. 2 Points: The site has several significantly different educational opportunities of good quality. 1 Point: The site has few significant educational opportunities. 0 Points: The site has insignificant educational opportunities.	3.1 Diversity and quality of training education and interpretation of opportunities: A measure of the variety and quality of training, education, and interpretation opportunities (i.e., ecological, archaeological, cultural, historical, etc.) provided by the site (core and buffer areas) for the different target audiences. The assumption is that a candidate site with a diversity of such opportunities of high quality will be utilized to a greater extent than one with fewer opportunities. 3 Points The site has numerous different training, education, and interpretation opportunities of high quality. 2 Points The site has several significantly different educational opportunities of good quality. 1 Point The site has few significant educational opportunities. 0 Points The site has insignificant educational opportunities.
EI	3.2 Diversity and availability of target audiences: A measure of the diversity and availability of target audiences (e.g., user groups, resource managers, residents, environmental groups, decision makers, teachers and students, the general public) which may routinely utilize the site for training, education, and interpretation. The assumption is that a candidate site with a variety of available target audiences will be utilized to a greater extent than one with fewer target audiences. 3 Points: The site is suitable for a variety of target audiences that are readily available; 2 Points: The site is suitable for a moderate number of target audiences that are readily available; 1 Point: The site is suitable for few target audiences that are available 0 Point: The site is so remote or inaccessible that it is not suitable for any target audience.	3.2 Diversity and availability of target audiences: A measure of the diversity and availability of target audiences (e.g., user groups, resource managers, residents, environmental groups, decision makers, teachers and students, the general public) which may routinely utilize the site for training, education, and interpretation. The assumption is that a candidate site with a variety of available target audiences will be utilized to a greater extent than one with fewer target audiences. 3 Points. The site is suitable for a variety of target audiences that are readily available; 2 Points. The site is suitable for a moderate number of target audiences that are readily available; 1 Point The site is suitable for few target audiences that are available 0 Point The site is so remote or inaccessible that it is not suitable for any target audience.

	Proposed SECOND DRAFT of LaNERR Criteria	Proposed FIRST DRAFT of LaNERR Site Criteria
	Education and Interpretation (EI)	
EI	3.3 Availability of facilities: The degree to which the site (core and buffer areas) have existing facilities or potential sites for future facilities that can be used by staff, researchers, classes, and training groups (e.g., administrative building space, dormitories, labs, interpretive centers, trails and boardwalks, boat ramps, etc.). The assumption is that, due to limited reserve construction funds, a candidate site with existing facilities can meet the objectives of the Reserve System program sooner and more completely than a site without existing facilities. The availability of other sources of construction funds should be considered as part of this criterion. 3 Points: The site has established structures and facilities that can be used for reserve activities. 2 Points: The site has limited established structures or facilities that can be used for reserve activities. 1 Point: The site has excellent potential for the development of facilities for reserve activities. 0 Points : The site has limited established structures limited potential for the development facilities for reserve activities.	3.3 Availability of facilities: The degree to which the site (core and buffer areas) have existing facilities or potential sites for future facilities that can be used by staff, researchers, classes, and training groups (e.g., administrative building space, dormitories, labs, interpretive centers, trails and boardwalks, boat ramps, etc.). The assumption is that, due to limited reserve construction funds, a candidate site with existing facilities can meet the objectives of the Reserve System program sooner and more completely than a site without existing facilities. The availability of other sources of construction funds should be considered as part of this criterion. 3 Points The site has established structures and facilities that can be used for reserve activities. 2 Points The site has limited established structures or facilities that can be used for reserve activities. 1 Point The site has excellent potential for the development of facilities for reserve activities. 0 Points The site has limited established structures limited potential for the development facilities for reserve activities.
EI	3.4 Proximity and accessibility of site to Researchers, Educators, and Resource Management decision makers: A measure of (1) the relative proximity of the site to urban centers, K-12 schools, research and education institutions, and resource management agencies that may routinely utilize the site and (2) the adequacy of the roads or points for boat access at the site. The underlying assumption is that the proximity and accessibility of the site will enhance its utilization for education, research, monitoring, and resource protection purposes.	3.4 Proximity and accessibility of site to Researchers, Educators, and Resource Management decision makers: A measure of (1) the relative proximity of the site to urban centers, K-12 schools, research and education institutions, and resource management agencies that may routinely utilize the site and (2) the adequacy of the roads or points for boat access at the site. The underlying assumption is that the proximity and accessibility of the site will enhance its utilization for education, research, monitoring, and resource protection purposes. 3 Points The candidate site can be utilized by the above-listed entities during a single day trip. There are good roads or points for boat access at the site. 2 Points The candidate site is relatively isolated and utilization would require an overnight stay from any of the above-listed entities, but accommodations are readily available. There are adequate roads or points for boat access at the site.

	3 Points: The candidate site can be utilized by the above-listed entities during a single day trip. There are good roads or points for boat access at the site. 2 Points: The candidate site is relatively isolated and utilization would require an overnight stay from any of the above-listed entities, but accommodations are readily available. There are adequate roads or points for boat access at the site. 1 Point: The candidate site is relatively isolated and reasonable accommodations for an overnight stay to utilize the site are limited. There are limited roads or points for boat access at the site. 0 Points: The candidate site is extremely isolated and accommodations to utilize the site are not available. There are inadequate or no roads, or points for boat access at the site.	1 Point The candidate site is relatively isolated and reasonable accommodations for an overnight stay to utilize the site are limited. There are limited roads or points for boat access at the site. 0 Points The candidate site is extremely isolated and accommodations to utilize the site are not available. There are inadequate or no roads, or points for boat access at the site.
	Proposed SECOND DRAFT of LaNERR Criteria	Proposed FIRST DRAFT of LaNERR Site Criteria
	Education and Interpretation (EI)	
EI	3.5 Value of Site for Environmental Education and Interpretation Programs: It is likely that sites with existing education programs have the necessary infrastructure in place to further expand their programs, thus it is valuable to rate sites based on the presence of these programs. However, in an area as large as the Louisiana Coastal Area, numerous excellent sites exist where virtually no education or interpretation programs have been developed. Thus, the potential for education and interpretation program development should be considered as well according to the diversity and quality of educational and interpretive program opportunities. 3 Points: The site has a long history of education and interpretation, or the site offers excellent potential for future education and interpretation program development. 2 Points: The site has a good but short history of education and interpretation, but is otherwise well suited or offers	3.5 Value of Site for Environmental Education and Interpretation Programs: It is likely that sites with existing education programs have the necessary infrastructure in place to further expand their programs, thus it is valuable to rate sites based on the presence of these programs. However, in an area as large as the Louisiana Coastal Area, numerous excellent sites exist where virtually no education or interpretation programs have been developed. Thus, the potential for education and interpretation program development should be considered as well according to the diversity and quality of educational and interpretive program opportunities. 3 Points The site has a long history of education and interpretation, or the site offers excellent potential for future education and interpretation program development. 2 Points The site has a good but short history of education and interpretation, but is otherwise well suited or offers good potential for future education and interpretation program development. 1 Point The site has had only a minor amount of education and interpretation being conducted, or the site offers fair potential for future education and interpretation program development. 0 Points The site offers no significant potential for education and interpretation program development.

	good potential for future education and interpretation program development. 1 Point: The site has had only a minor amount of education and interpretation being conducted, or the site offers fair potential for future education and interpretation program development. 0 Points: The site offers no significant potential for education and interpretation program development.	

	Proposed SECOND DRAFT of LaNERR Criteria	Proposed FIRST DRAFT of LaNERR Site Criteria
	Acquisition and Management Consideration (AMC)	
AMC	4.1 Publicly owned lands and feasibility of land acquisition The degree of control on activities allowed on proposed land and waters of the candidate site (core and buffer areas) is regulated by conditions of land ownership. Land ownership by state, federal government, or local governments, or environmental interest groups, and the degree to which owners have an interest in participating in a research reserve are important to realize the missions of a LaNERR. The assumption is that the degree of control needed to maintain the site to meet the missions of a NERR increases with publicly and privately owned land, along with the chances of purchasing additional areas, increase value of a NERR candidate site. 3 Points: A large percentage (more than 50 percent) of the candidate site (core and buffer areas) is currently owned by the state, federal, or local governments, or environmental groups, and these entities have an interest in participating in a research reserve. 2 Points: State, federal, or local governments, or environmental groups own 25 to 50 percent of the candidate site with the remainder in the hands of a few owners who have an interest in participating in a research reserve. 1 Point: State, federal, or local governments or environmental groups own less than 25 percent of the site with the remainder in	4.1 Publicly owned lands and feasibility of land acquisition A measure of the degree to which the land within the site is currently owned by the state, federal government, or local governments, or environmental interest groups, and the degree to which there is interest in donating or selling property by its owners. The assumption is that the degree of control needed to maintain the site in relatively pristine conditions increases with publicly owned land and lands controlled by environmental groups, and that the chances of purchasing additional areas increase with private property owners who are willing to sell. 3 Points A large percentage (more than 50 percent) of the candidate site (core and buffer areas) is currently owned by the state, federal, or local governments, or environmental groups, and these entities have an interest in participating in a research reserve. 2 Points State, federal, or local governments, or environmental groups own 25 to 50 percent of the candidate site with the remainder in the hands of a few owners who have an interest in participating in a research reserve. 1 Point State, federal, or local governments or environmental groups own less than 25 percent of the site with the remainder in the hands of a few owners who have an interest in participating in a research reserve 0 Points The site is owned by a large number of owners with little potential interest in sale or donation.

	the hands of a few owners who have an interest in participating in a research reserve 0 Points: The site is owned by a large number of owners with little potential interest in sale or donation.	
AMC	4.2. Compatibility with existing management practices and consumptive and non-consumptive uses A measure of the degree to which existing management practices (e.g., habitat manipulations, restoration projects, best management practices, wildlife management areas, leased bottoms, conservation easements, etc.) and historic and current consumptive and non-consumptive uses might conflict with planned and future management practices implemented under a research reserve program. The assumption is that sites with fewer conflicts are more likely to maintain both public support and the integrity of the site (core and buffer areas). NOTE: This factor should be measured with focus on how present management practices for both land and water in core and buffer areas support both the mission of a NERR and reduce potential conflict with how the public expectations align with the expected usage of the candidate site to meet the mission of a research reserve site. It should be measured with a balance of how the site protects natural and cultural resources against reasonable access by the public to other areas of the site. 3 Points: Existing management practices and consumptive and non-consumptive uses of the candidate site would not conflict with any foreseeable management policy of a research reserve 2 Points: Due to the presence of proportionately small areas of unique habitat and endangered species or threats to the integrity of ecosystem, there is the potential for limited restrictions on existing management practices or consumptive and non-consumptive uses of a site 1 Point: Due to the presence of areas of unique habitat and endangered species and threats to the integrity of the ecosystem, some restrictions on existing management practices or consumptive and non-consumptive uses of a site are likely 0 Point: Large areas of unique habitat and threats to the integrity of the ecosystem will require restrictions on existing	4.2. Compatibility with existing management practices and consumptive and non-consumptive uses A measure of the degree to which existing management practices (e.g., habitat manipulations, best management practices, Coastal Master Plan...) and historic and current consumptive and non-consumptive uses might be in conflict with foreseeable management practices implemented under a research reserve program. The assumption is that sites with fewer conflicts are more likely to maintain both public support and the integrity of the site. NOTE: This factor should be measured in light of special circumstances (such as the presence of unique habitats or of listed species) that might cause the state to limit what is now unlimited use or practice by groups or individuals and, in the process, cause some conflict in regard to designation of a reserve site. It should be measured with an eye toward balancing protection of critical sites or resources against reasonable access to other parts of the site. 3 Points Existing management practices and consumptive and non-consumptive uses would not be in conflict with any foreseeable management policy of a research reserve 2 Points Due to the presence of proportionately small areas of unique habitat and endangered species or threats to the integrity of ecosystem, there is the potential for limited restrictions on existing management practices or consumptive and non-consumptive uses of a site 1 Point Due to the presence of areas of unique habitat and endangered species and threats to the integrity of the ecosystem, some restrictions on existing management practices or consumptive and non-consumptive uses of a site are likely 0 Points Large areas of unique habitat and threats to the integrity of the ecosystem will require restrictions on existing management practices or consumptive and non-consumptive uses of a site.

	management practices or consumptive and non-consumptive uses of a site.	
AMC	4.3 Compatibility with adjacent land use: A measure of the potential conflicts between management practices on a candidate site (core and buffer areas) with land-use practices on adjacent lands to the site. It is also a measure of the adequacy of land-use regulations, plans, or other risk management controls (e.g. sufficient regulatory control in the event of an impact) to sustain the site's natural resources for long-term research, education, and resource protection. The assumption is that a candidate site with compatible land-use practices on adjacent lands is more likely to maintain the integrity of the reserve. NOTE: This issue should be evaluated relative to the potential for present or future conflicts with adjacent lands and the potential to designate buffer areas around a site. 3 Points A large percentage of the land adjacent to the site is not currently used for activities that might impact the site (and therefore, may be obtainable as a buffer) or the land-use practices on adjacent lands would not have any negative impacts on a possible research reserve 2 Points A large to moderate percentage of the land adjacent to the site is not currently used for activities that might negatively impact the site, or the land-use practices on adjacent lands either could be negotiated or would have only minor impacts a possible research reserve 1 Point Some of the land adjacent to the site is currently used for activities that would have negative impacts on a possible research reserve and may not be negotiable 0 Points A large percentage of the land adjacent to the site is currently used for activities that would have negative impacts on a possible research reserve and would lead to conflicts.	4.3 Compatibility with adjacent land use: A measure of the potential conflicts between management practices on a candidate site (core and buffer areas) with land-use practices on adjacent lands ~~(hydrologic basins??)~~. It is also a measure of the adequacy of land-use regulations, plans, or other controls to sustain the site's resources for long-term research, education, and resource protection. The assumption is that a candidate site with compatible land-use practices on adjacent lands is more likely to maintain the integrity of the reserve. NOTE: This issue should be evaluated with an eye toward the potential for present or future conflicts with adjacent lands and the potential to designate buffer zones around a site. 3 Points A large percentage of the land adjacent to the site is not currently used for activities that might impact the site (and therefore, may be obtainable as a buffer) or the land-use practices on adjacent lands would not have any negative impacts on a possible research reserve 2 Points A large to moderate percentage of the land adjacent to the site is not currently used for activities that might negatively impact the site, or the land-use practices on adjacent lands either could be negotiated or would have only minor impacts a possible research reserve 1 Point Some of the land adjacent to the site is currently used for activities that would have negative impacts on a possible research reserve and may not be negotiable 0 Points A large percentage of the land adjacent to the site is currently used for activities that would have negative impacts on a possible research reserve and would lead to conflicts.

	Proposed SECOND DRAFT of LaNERR Criteria	Proposed FIRST DRAFT of LaNERR Site Criteria
	Acquisition and Management Consideration (AMC)	
AMC	4.4 Land ownership A measure of the degree to which the property used to establish core and buffer areas of a candidate site is divided among land owners (e.g., divided into fewer parcels or owned by many agencies/individuals). The assumption is that a candidate site with fewer property owners will be easier to control types and levels of activities, and also offer opportunity for future acquisitions. 3 Points: The property is relatively undivided among agencies or individuals; 2 Points: The property is divided among few property owners. 1 Point: The property is divided among many property owners	4.4 Land ownership A measure of the degree to which the property used to establish core and buffer areas of a site is divided (e.g., divided into only a fewer parcels or owned by many individuals). The assumption is that a candidate site with fewer property owners will be easier to acquire or control. 3 Points The property is relatively undivided 2 Points The property is divided with few property owners. 1 Point The property is divided with many property owners
AMC	4.5. Controlled land and water access: A measure of the degree to which land and water access to the candidate site can be controlled to limit the types and levels of activities that are inconsistent with the management plans described in Site Criterion 4.2 above. This degree of control is based on size, geography, proximity to adjacent residential development and present management practices and controls. The assumption is that the integrity and security of a potential research reserve site can be better maintained with a higher level of enforcement of management practices (such as a wildlife management area) that protects the consistency with how land and water access will promote the mission of a NERR. 3 Points: The candidate site is relatively isolated and of a size that can be controlled. Historically, access has been controlled, and can easily be controlled in the future due to the presence of limited access points by boat or vehicle. 2 Points: The candidate site is not very isolated, but has a limited number of access points. Historically, site access	4.5. Controlled land and water access: A measure of the degree to which land and water access to the candidate site can be controlled and limited. It is based on size, geography, proximity to adjacent development, and historical controls. The assumption is that the integrity and security of a potential reserve site can be better maintained with a higher level of controlled land and water access. 3 Points The candidate site is relatively isolated and of a size that can be controlled. Historically, access has been controlled, and can easily be controlled in the future due to the presence of limited access points by boat or vehicle. 2 Points The candidate site is not very isolated, but has a limited number of access points. Historically, site access has not been controlled, but the site is of a size that it can be controlled in the future. 1 Point Site access will be difficult to control due to the large number of access points or the size of the area. Historically, site access has not been controlled and it is unclear whether it can be controlled in the future. 0 Points Site access cannot be controlled due to the large number of access points, lack of historical controls, the size of the area, or dense adjacent development.

	has not been controlled, but the site is of a size that it can be controlled in the future. 1 Point : Site access will be difficult to control due to the large number of access points or the size of the area. Historically, site access has not been controlled and it is unclear whether it can be controlled in the future. 0 Points: Site access cannot be controlled due to the large number of access points, lack of historical controls, the size of the area, or dense adjacent development. Examples of WMA to manage access...putting bounds on how lands and waters – activities allowed... Protect infrastructure.... Controls over waterways...activities on waterways...access to activity management at access points.	
AMC	4.6. Future urban and industrial development plans A measure of the potential level of future impacts of land development (urban and industry) in areas on or adjacent to a candidate site that would impact core and buffer areas. The assumption is that a candidate site with minimal to no development plans on-site and on adjacent lands to the candidate site is more likely to maintain the integrity of the reserve. NOTE: This issue involves the degree to which adjacent lands are currently being used or may be attainable as buffer areas for the research reserve 3 Points: A large percentage (more than 50 percent) of the land adjacent to the candidate site is currently undeveloped or is not inclined to be developed for industrial usage (based on present industrial activity). This large percentage of adjacent lands is very unlikely to be developed in the near future for urban and industrial development (e.g., consisting of marginally developable property, such as wetlands, which could be obtained as buffer). 2 Points: A moderate percentage (between 25 and 50 percent) of the land adjacent to the candidate site is	4.6. Future urban and industrial development plans A measure of the potential level of future impacts of urban development (urban and industry) in areas on or adjacent to a candidate site that would impact the site. The assumption is that a candidate site with minimal to no development plans on-site and on adjacent lands is more likely to maintain the integrity of the reserve. NOTE: this issue involves the degree to which adjacent lands are currently being used or may be attainable as buffer areas for the research reserve 3 Points A large percentage (more than 50 percent) of the land adjacent to the site is currently undeveloped or is, for whatever reason, very unlikely to be developed in the near future (e.g., consisting of marginally developable property, such as wetlands, which could be obtained as buffer). 2 Points A moderate percentage (between 25 and 50 percent) of the land adjacent to the site is currently undeveloped or is not likely to be developed in the near future. 1 Point A small to moderate percentage (10 to 25 percent) of the land adjacent to the site is currently undeveloped or is not likely to be developed in the near future, with limited levels of development on other lands. 0 Points A large percentage (more than 50 percent) of the land adjacent to the site is developed and the area is likely to continue to be developed in the future.

	currently undeveloped or is not inclined to be developed for industrial usage (based on present industrial activity). The adjacent lands are unlikely to be developed in the near future for urban and industrial development (e.g., consisting of marginally developable property, such as wetlands, which could be obtained as buffer). 1 Point: A small to moderate percentage (10 to 25 percent) of the land adjacent to the candidate site is currently undeveloped or is not inclined to be developed for industrial usage (based on present industrial activity). 0 Points: A large percentage (more than 50 percent) of the land adjacent to the site is developed (urban or industrial) and the area is likely to continue to be developed in the future.	

LaNERR Phase II and Final Candidate Site Proposal Guidelines (11 May 2021)

Phase II Proposals – DUE JUNE 30, 2021

1.0 Physical Description of the Site (one page maximum): Adequacy of Site's Core and Buffer Areas to merit NOAA-State Partnership: (a) boundaries should encompass an adequate portion of the key land and water areas of the natural system; (b) key land and water areas should encompass environmental resources that are representative of a delta estuary ecosystem; (c) boundaries must balance the overall size of a reserve by covering an ecosystem large enough to make long-term estuarine research viable yet having a discrete contiguous area that can be effectively managed with resources available to support a NERR.

1.1 Include map of Core and Buffer Areas (provided by Team LaNERR GIS Support; see instructions to proposal teams for providing information on polygons of proposed core and buffer areas; polygons are due by **June 1, 2021, by sending to deltanerr@lsu.edu / SEE SECTION 4.0 BELOW FOR DETAILS OF SUBMISSION**)

1.2 Include land-owner names and contact information for CORE and BUFFER AREAS including state, parish, federal, and private lands

1.3 What percentage of the total CORE AREA is owned by the state: _____%

1.4 Have candidate site CORE AREA land-owners been contacted?

1.5 Have candidate site BUFFER AREA land-owners been contacted?

2.0 Ecological Characteristics of the Site (one page maximum): Use the listing of habitats in the second draft of LaNERR Site Criteria to describe the habitats proposed in the core and buffer areas that capture the ecological characteristics of a delta estuary. Include a statement that also defines the proposed core and buffer areas as unique contributions to the Biogeographic Zone compared to the other NERR sites in the Gulf of Mexico.

2.1 Include map of Vegetation Types in the general region of the Core and Buffer Areas (provided by Team LaNERR GIS Support (deltanerr@lsu.edu); see instructions in section 4.0 for team responsibility in providing information on polygons of proposed core and buffer areas)

2.2 List examples of habitat types in the general area of the Core and Buffer Zones based on the SECOND DRAFT of SITE CRITERIA;

2.3 Significant Fauna and Flora in the general area of the Core and Buffer Areas.

3.0 Narrative describing the candidate site's qualities around each of the following topics. Use the SECOND DRAFT of the LaNERR Site Criteria for guidance on what constitute qualities of a site in each of the three areas below (there is 500-word limit on narrative for each of the three areas – a listing may also be used).

3.1 Suitability for Research, Monitoring and Resource Protection: Is there a history of research activities at the site? If so, can they be generally described? If there is not a history, can the site support a research program? What are some examples/reasons? Are there any obvious limitations or concerns?

3.2 Suitability for Education, Interpretation, and Training: Is there a history of educational activities at the site? If so, can they be described? If there is not a history, can the site support educational activities? What are some examples/reasons? Are there any obvious limitations or concerns?

3.3 Site's Compatibility with Coastal Management Issues: Since most of these may be already under some level of protection, this is more geared toward what functional roles they provide (e.g., bird habitat, wildlife management, etc.). Are there any obvious limitations or concerns?

i. Existing and future land and water uses and manipulations
ii. Land use projections in core and buffer areas
iii. Consumptive uses in the proposed LaNERR
iv. Contributions to coastal stewardship

4.0 Maps and Tables to Document Sections 1-3: The Team LaNERR GIS Support will provide TWO maps and quantitative estimates for each of the Proposal Teams as outlined below.

4.1 Two standardized Site GIS Maps will be generated for each team for Phase II. The Thematic GIS Maps will be generated for each Site based on geospatial polygons submitted by each respective Proposal Team of the CORE and BUFFER areas proposed by the teams. The polygons will be used by Team LaNERR GIS Support to generate information based on EXISTING GIS Data Layers for each of the three Estuarine Zones (Atchafalaya, Barataria, Pontchartrain; see base maps below that the polygons will be placed). **Each polygon needs to be uniquely identified (e.g. core-#1, core-#2, buffer-#1, buffer-#2, or use specific place names for each core or buffer polygon, etc.) and are due June 1, 2021, by sending to deltanerr@lsu.edu . Please also include contact information for person managing geospatial data for each respective proposal team.**

4.2 Thematic GIS Map ONE: A GIS map that depicts the candidate site's CORE and BUFFER AREAS. Data will be generated as follows for each of the CORE and BUFFER polygons:

a. total area of each polygon;
b. total area of state-owned lands of each polygon;
c. total area of state-owned water bottoms of each polygon;
d. other area that is not state-owned (land plus water bottoms) of each polygon;

4.3 Thematic GIS Map TWO: A GIS map of the CPRA initial vegetation types and distribution described in sections 2.0 above. Data will be generated as follows for each of the CORE and BUFFER polygons:

a. acreage of each wetland typology of CPRA initial vegetation in each CORE AREA polygon (if vegetation types are included in CPRA data);

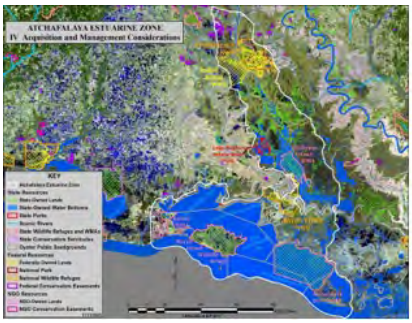
b. acreage of each wetland typology of CPRA initial vegetation in each BUFFER AREA polygon (if vegetation types are included in CPRA data);

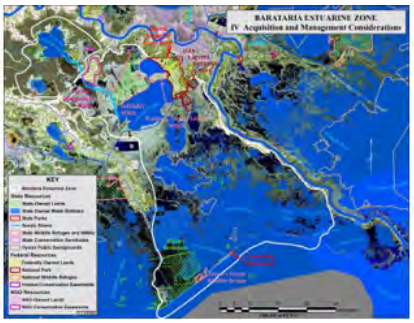
5.0 Optional Sections Encouraged (two-page maximum).

- Facilities in the region that may help to support the research, education, and training mission of the proposed LaNERR.
- Bibliography of past research, data, or reports documenting candidate site's resources

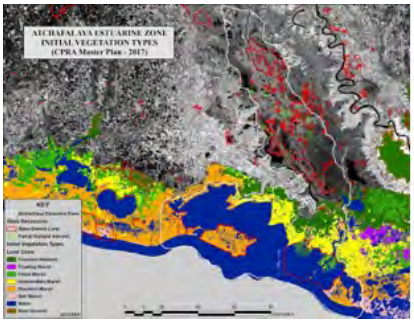
MAPS to be generated by Team LaNERR GIS Support: see instructions above for Phase II and below for Final Proposal

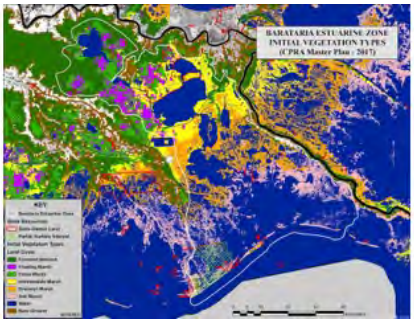
These are the base maps that polygons of core and buffer areas will be placed for Map #1.

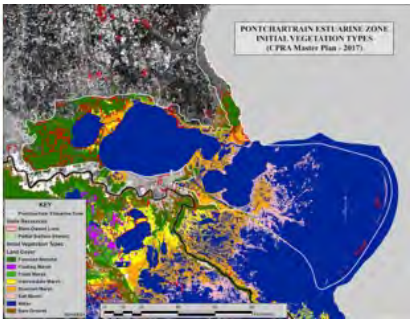




These are the base maps that polygons of core and buffer areas will be placed and vegetation typology acreage calculated for Map #2.







Final Phase Proposals: Due on September 24, 2021.

Instructions: There are four sections to the Final Phase proposals.

Section 1 is an update from Phase II Proposals on information concerning the physical description of the site.

Section 2 requests details on how the site addresses each of the Site Criteria using the worksheet provided in Appendix 1.

Sections 3 and 4 request additional information on public support and engagement from community in support of the Candidate Site Proposal. This information will be used to score the proposal that will be used along with other information such as physical description and letters of support (public engagement) to determine which candidate site will be used to develop a nomination package from Governor Edwards to NOAA.

1.0 Physical Description of the Site: Adequacy of Site's Core and Buffer Areas to merit NOAA-State Partnership: (a) boundaries should encompass an adequate portion of the key land and water areas of the natural system; (b) key land and water areas should encompass environmental resources that are representative of a delta estuary ecosystem; (c) boundaries must balance the overall size of a reserve by covering an ecosystem large enough to make long-term estuarine research viable yet having a discrete contiguous area that can be effectively managed.

1.1 Include map of Core and Buffer Areas that were generated by Team LaNERR GIS Support per Phase II instructions.
1.2 Include land-owners name and contact information for Core and Buffer Areas including state, parish, federal, and private lands
1.3 What percentage of the total CORE area is owned by the state: _____%
1.4 Have candidate site Core Area land owners been contacted:
1.5 Have candidate site Buffer Area Land Owners Been Contacted:

2.0 The narrative should address each topic and subtopic of the four categorical criteria (Environment, Research, Education, Management) as defined in the THIRD VERSION of the SITE SELECTION CRITERIA. The worksheet that will be used to provide the narrative along with tables and maps (see Section 3.0 on additional maps to those provided in Phase II that will be provided by Team LaNERR GIS Support to document the narrative. (See Worksheet in Appendix 1 of this proposal package).

3.0 Maps and Tables to Document Sections 1-2: The Team LaNERR GIS Support will provide FOUR additional maps and quantitative estimates to those provided in Phase II for each of the Proposal Teams as outlined below. **Any specific requests for the FOUR additional maps described below and/or final adjustments to core and buffer polygons are due to Team LaNERR GIS Support by July 23, 2021, by sending to deltanerr@lsu.edu**

3.1 Include the two standardized Site GIS Maps will be generated for each team for Phase II. The Thematic GIS Maps will be generated for each Site based on geospatial polygons submitted by each respective Proposal Team of the CORE and BUFFER areas proposed by the teams.The polygons will be used by Team LaNERR to generate information based on

EXISTING GIS Data Layers for each of the three Estuarine Zones (Atchafalaya, Barataria, Pontchartrain).

3.2 Map 3: GIS Map of Monitoring/Research Stations per maps used in Pre-Screening Process with Core and Buffer Polygons included for respective Estuarine Zone

3.3 Map 4: GIS Map of Education/Interpretation Centers per maps used in Pre-Screening Process with CORE and BUFFER Polygons included for respective Estuarine Zone (1:850,000 scale)

3.4 Maps 5 and 6 (based on request from Proposal Team): A maximum of TWO MAPs of CHOICE (two days of effort per map by Team LaNERR GIS Support maximum) – work with proposal team to generate two maps of GIS data layers provided by the Proposal Team to assist with documenting elements of the SITE CRITERIA. Site proposal teams can option to generate their own two maps of choice or with limited assistance from Team LaNERR GIS Support.

4.0 Letters of Land-Owner Support Attached to Support Management Plan

- Letters of support for inclusion of CORE AREAS
- Letter of support for inclusion of BUFFER AREAS

5.0 Potential Partnerships, Advisors, Contributors (Final Phase)

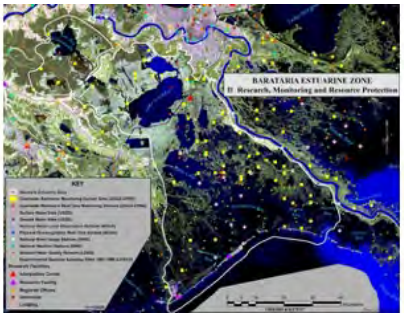
3.1 Proposed Management and Operational Partners

3.2 Friends of the Proposed LaNERR

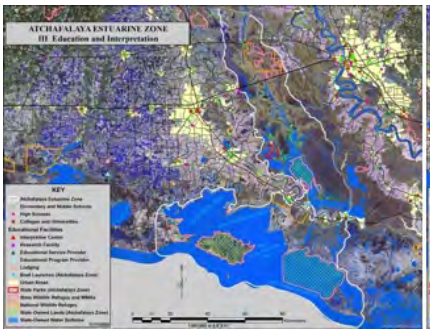
3.3 Users of the Proposed LaNERR

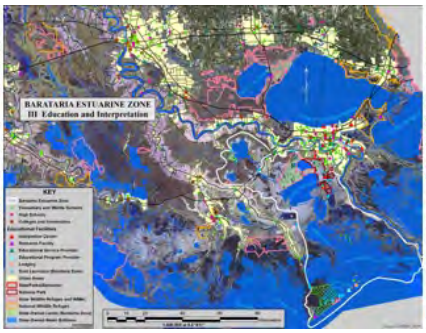
3.4 Support for the LaNERR Nomination

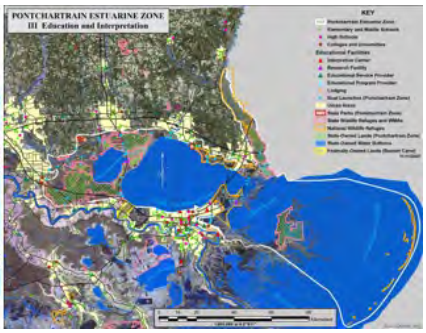
These are the base maps that polygons for core and buffer areas will be placed for Map #3.



These are the base maps that polygons for core and buffer areas will be placed for Map #4.







Two Maps of Choice Will be added at request of proposal teams for total of Six Maps in Final Proposal.

Appendix 1:

WORKSHEETS TO PROPOSAL TEAMS: Narrative for each site criteria – Final Phase Proposals

The TABLES below have four topical areas of criteria recommended by NOAA to evaluate potential NERR sites: (1) Environmental Representativeness, (2) Research, Monitoring & Resource Protection, (3) Education and Interpretation, and (4) Acquisition, Management Consideration.

The Proposal Teams are asked to provide a narrative and other information (tables and figures) that support the qualifications of a candidate site as applied to the THIRD DRAFT of the Site Criteria. Initial scores in each of the criteria topics will be used to evaluate the qualifications of specific candidate sites for nomination as a LaNERR.

(NOTE: This worksheet presently has the SECOND DRAFT of the Site Criteria. This will be replaced with the THIRD DRAFT of Site Criteria as that information is developed.)

	FINAL PHASE Candidate Site Proposal Narrative **NAME OF SITE**	Proposed SECOND DRAFT of LaNERR Site Criteria
	Environmental Representativeness (ER)	
ER		1.1 Ecosystem composition: A measure of the diversity of ecosystem types present within the boundaries of the site. This criterion is based on the assumption that sites that have a high diversity of major ecosystem types are of higher relative "value" for protection and management than those with low ecosystem diversity (unless the ecosystem in consideration is rare or unique). 3 Points The site has a high diversity of habitat composition within its major ecosystem type, i.e., it contains three or more habitat types or subtypes within its major ecosystem type (e.g., site consists of a combination of swamps, coastal marshes, and mud flats) or has a combination of multiple coastal marsh types (e.g., tidal freshwater, brackish, salt marsh zones). 2 Points The site has a moderate diversity of habitat composition within its major ecosystem type, i.e., it contains only two habitat types or subtypes within its major ecosystem type (e.g., consists of a combination of forested wetlands and a single coastal marsh type). 1 Point The site has a low diversity of habitat composition within its major ecosystem type, i.e., its major ecosystem type consists of a single habitat type (e.g., tidal freshwater marsh or brackish marsh, or forested wetland). These are the suggested Ecosystem Types to be used in the LaNERR evaluation: **Group I- Uplands** Alluvial Forested Wetlands Maritime Forest- Woodland Coastal Prairie Coastal Shrublands and Cheniers **Group II- Intertidal areas** Coastal Forested Wetlands Coastal Floating Marshes Coastal Freshwater Marsh Coastal Intermediate Marsh

		Coastal Brackish Marsh Coastal Salt Marsh Coastal Mangroves Intertidal Beaches and Dunes Intertidal Mud and Sand Flats **Group III- Submerged Bottoms** Subtidal hard bottoms/reefs Subtidal soft bottoms Subtidal Plants (SAV)
ER		1.2 Balanced Ecosystem Composition: A measure of the relative composition of ecosystem types within the boundaries of a site (buffer plus core areas). This criterion is based on the assumption that sites with a balanced proportion of ecosystem types are of higher relative "value" for protection and management. High, moderate, and low values are assigned to sites that contain variations in the proportions of all three ecosystem types. A value of zero is assigned to a site that is dominated by one ecosystem type or contains less than three ecosystem types. 3 Point. The site contains representative upland, intertidal, and subtidal habitats in relatively equal proportions (i.e. areal cover of any one ecosystem type not less than 25 percent of the total area) 2 Point. The site contains representative upland, intertidal, and subtidal habitats, with the areal cover of any one type not less than 10 percent of the total area. 1 Point. The site contains representative upland, intertidal, and subtidal habitats, with the areal cover of any one type less than 10 percent of the total area 0 Points the site contains representative upland, intertidal and subtidal habitats, with the areal cover of two types being less than 10 percent of the total area *or* the site consists of habitats from only one or two of the three major ecosystem types
ER		1.3 Habitat Composition and Complexity: A measure of the diversity of habitat types present within the major ecosystem type found within the boundaries of the site. This criterion is based on the assumption that sites that have a high diversity of habitat types are of higher relative "value" for protection and management than those with a low diversity of habitat

		types. Major ecosystem type is defined here as that type that comprises approximately 40 percent of the site. Use the habitat type designations listed above for "ecosystem composition." 3 Points The site has a high diversity of habitat composition within its major ecosystem type, i.e., it contains three or more habitat types or subtypes within its major ecosystem type (e.g., site consists of a combination of swamps, coastal marshes, and reefs) or has a combination of multiple coastal marsh types (e.g., tidal freshwater, brackish, salt marsh zones including mangroves). 2 Points The site has a moderate diversity of habitat composition within its major ecosystem type, i.e., it contains only two habitat types or subtypes within its major ecosystem type (e.g., consists of a combination of swamps and a single coastal marsh type). 1 Point The site has a low diversity of habitat composition within its major ecosystem type, i.e., its major ecosystem type consists of a single habitat type (e.g., brackish marsh or tidal freshwater wetlands).
		<u>1.4 Habitat uniqueness of the Site:</u> A measure of the presence of rare or unique habitat types within a candidate site relative to other NERR sites in Louisiana Biogeographic Region. This criterion recognizes the importance of emphasizing unique areas in the selection process, in addition to the representativeness of the candidate site in terms of ecosystem and habitat diversity. Unique habitat is defined here as a habitat type of "limited" known occurrence within the biogeographic region or sub-region. This criterion can be a simple "yes/no" question.
ER		<u>1.5 Significant faunal and floral support:</u> A measure of the degree to which a site supports significant faunal or floral components. This criterion focuses on a site's contribution (i.e., function) toward supporting the activities (e.g., feeding, nesting) of the following suite of significant faunal or floral components. The list of components includes groups or organisms that are known to be dependent upon estuarine habitats for the entire or a crucial part of their life cycle.

		● Fish and Shellfish Spawning and Nursery Grounds (includes use by either freshwater, estuarine, or estuarine-dependent marine species) ● Migratory Bird or Waterfowl Use ● Bird Nesting or Roosting Area ● Critical Mammal Habitat ● Non-Game Animals (amphibians, reptiles, etc.) ● State or federally Listed Species or of concern (animal or plant – including candidate species) ● Other biodiversity support as representative of ecosystem services (such as invertebrates .... 3 Points: The candidate site supports or serves as an important site for a wide range of the faunal or floral components listed above (4 of 6) or is extremely important site for any threatened or endangered species. 2 Points: The site supports or serves as an important site for a moderate range and diversity of the significant faunal or floral components listed above (3 of 6). 1 point: The site supports or serves as an important site for one or two of the significant faunal or floral components listed above. 0 point: The site does not support significant faunal or floral components

	FINAL PHASE Candidate Site Proposal Narrative **NAME OF SITE**	Proposed SECOND DRAFT of LaNERR Site Criteria
	Environmental Representativeness (ER)	
ER		1.6 Geologic representativeness, Diversity, and Uniqueness of the Site: A measure of the representativeness, diversity, and uniqueness of the deltaic geologic characteristics that define part or the whole of a candidate site. This criterion attempts to consider both the surface and subsurface geologic formations that may be representative or unique within a site, particularly as they affect or define associated biotic habitats. Included in these considerations are the ways that local geology affects surface hydrology, such as drainage systems, and subsurface hydrology, such as shallow-water aquifers. Geologic and hydrologic maps should be used to evaluate this criterion.

		3 Points The site has numerous deltaic geologic characteristics, two or more unique geologic characteristics, and contains a high diversity of formation types or strata within its boundaries. 2 Points The site has a moderate number of representative geologic characteristics and at least one unique geologic characteristic, and contains a moderate diversity of formation types or strata within its boundaries. 1 Point The site has a moderate number of geologic characteristics, no unique geologic characteristics, or contains a moderate diversity of formation types or strata within its boundaries. 0 Points. The site has few or only one representative geologic characteristics, no unique geologic characteristics, or contains few or only one formation type or strata within its boundaries.
ER		1.7 Salinity Gradient A measure of the seasonal and spatial range of salinity over multiple years within a candidate site's boundaries. This criterion recognizes the effect of salinity on the biotic structure of estuarine habitats (including the plant communities and faunal components that inhabit them). It makes the assumption that a site with a greater range of salinity will support a broader range of habitat types and organisms. 3 Points: The site encompasses > 10 parts per thousand (ppt) or greater range of salinity within its boundaries. 2 Points: The site encompasses a 5-10 ppt range of salinity within its boundaries. 1 Point: The site encompasses a 2-5 ppt range of salinity within its boundaries 0 Points: The site encompasses < 2 ppt range of salinity within its boundaries
ER		1.8 Degree Developed and Potential impacts to water quality: A measure of the degree to which the hydrologic basins (see reference map) are developed and the relative impacts to surface waters from human activities. This criterion is based on the assumption that human impacts to a site are directly proportional to the degree of development. Exceptions to this assumption may need to be considered where development at a site and its surrounding area have been subject to high levels of control. Data on land use and water quality measurements from local, county, and state government agencies should be used to judge this criterion.

		3 Points: The site is relatively undisturbed and the hydrologic basins contains low intensity development (e.g., few residences, minimal agricultural or silvicultural activity) or the land is in protected status. 2 Points: The site is relatively undisturbed and the hydrologic basins contains moderate development (e.g., relatively few residences, moderate agricultural or silvicultural activity, minimal commercial development). 1 Point: The site has been moderately disturbed and the hydrologic basins contains relatively intensive development (e.g., moderate density of residences, or the presence of industrial activity). 0 Points: The site has been extremely disturbed and the hydrologic basins contains very intensive development (e.g., high density residential, or commercial or industrial activity).

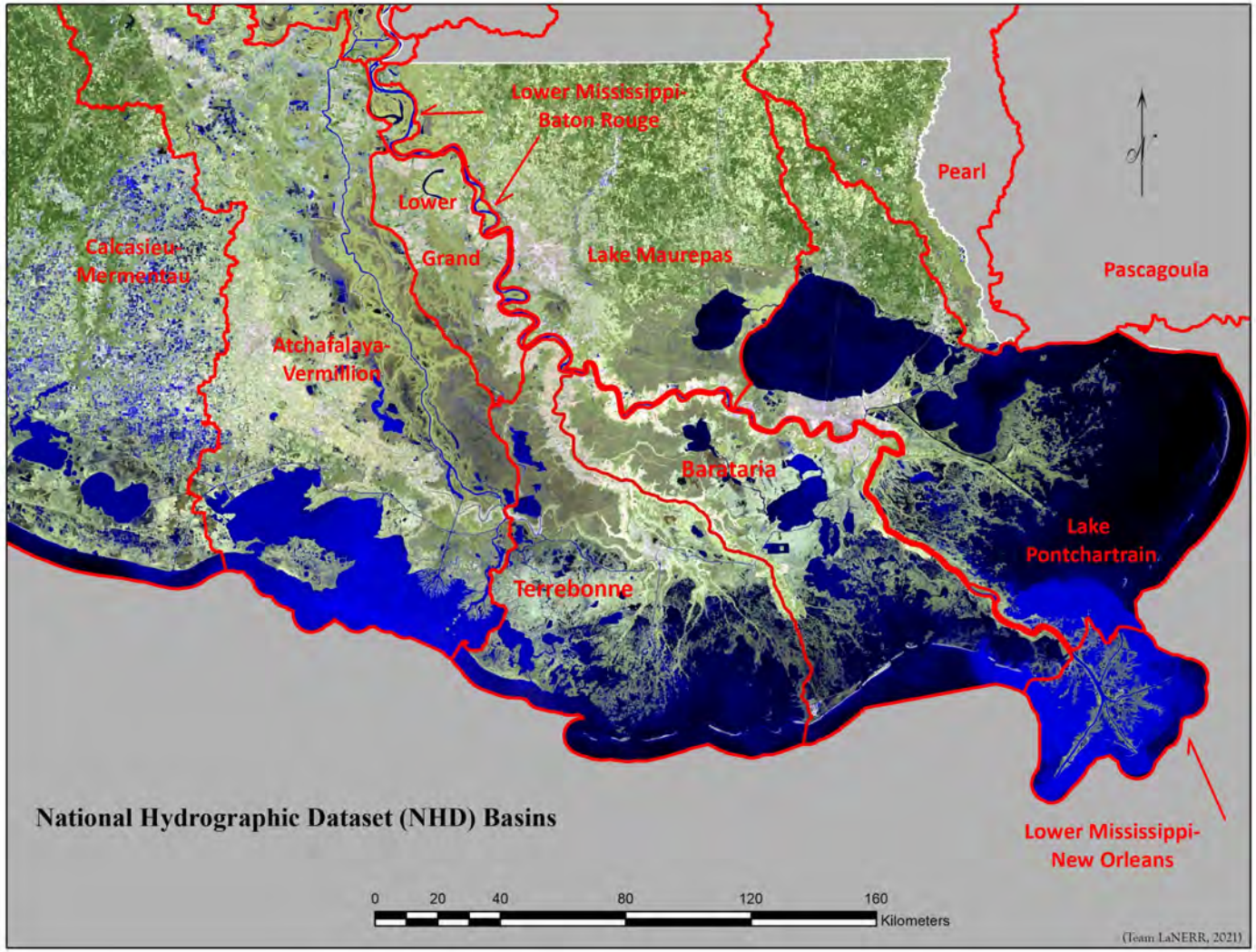
	FINAL PHASE Candidate Site Proposal Narrative **NAME OF SITE**	Proposed SECOND DRAFT of LaNERR Site Criteria
	Research, Monitoring & Resource Protection (RMRP)	
RMRP		2.1 Value of site for research: A measure of the opportunities offered by characteristics of the site for research, such as a high diversity of ecosystem and habitat types, a balanced habitat composition, a wide salinity range (see criterion 1.8), biotic or geologic representativeness of the site, known historic uses or archaeological sites, and unique opportunities to conduct applied research regarding important local, state, and regional coastal management issues (including past and potential management activities). The assumption is that a site with representative, unique, and highly diverse characteristics will provide greater research, monitoring, and resource protection opportunities than one lacking these characteristics. Ratings generated for these factors under previous selection criteria can be used as a guide for rating this overall factor. 3 Points: The site has (1) a high diversity of ecosystem and habitat types, (2) moderate salinity range, (3) representative biotic and geologic sites or hydrologic characteristics, (4) state and federally listed species, (5) historic and archaeological significance, and (6) opportunities to address important habitat or resource management issues. 2 Points: The site has four or five of the six above. 1 Point: The site has two or three of the six above. 0 Points: The site has one or none of the six above.

RMRP		2.2 Previous research and monitoring efforts: A measure of the degree to which the site (including the hydrologic basin) has been used for past research and monitoring, including considerations of the diversity of inquiry (fields of research), and the availability of data (the form and availability of documentation, e.g., peer-reviewed papers, grey literature, inventory reports). The assumption is that an area with previously established research and monitoring interest offers greater opportunity for future projects than an area that has not sparked such an interest in the past. 3 Points: The site has a long history of well-documented research and monitoring projects in a wide variety of topics. Data are readily available. 2 Points: The site has had major and well-documented research and monitoring efforts, generating data that are readily available. It has not had a long history of research and monitoring. 1 Point: The site has had only minor research and monitoring projects generating limited data (e.g., inventories) and/or these data may be difficult to obtain. 0 Points: The site has no known history of research and monitoring.

	FINAL PHASE Candidate Site Proposal Narrative **NAME OF SITE**	Proposed SECOND DRAFT of LaNERR Site Criteria
	Research, Monitoring & Resource Protection (RMRP)	
RMRP		2.3 Suitability of site for environmental baseline monitoring: A measure of the suitability of the site as a reference area for assessing long-term natural resource trends or ecological characteristics, based on the degree to which the site has not been altered by land-use practices on or near the site. The assumption is that a site with uninterrupted habitat patches that provide landscape continuity (not interrupted by developed or disturbed lands & waters) will be a more valuable reference area to generate baseline monitoring information than a site that has been extensively altered. 3 Points: The site has outstanding areas to generate environmental baseline data to assess long- term resource trends or ecological characteristics for a wide range of needs. 2 Points: The site has adequate areas to generate environmental baseline data to assess long- term resource trends or ecological characteristics for many needs.

		1 Point: The site has marginal areas to generate environmental baseline data to assess long-term resource trends or ecological characteristics. 0 Points: The site has been so extensively altered by past activities that it is unsuitable for generating environmental baseline data.
RMRP		2.4 Coastal Resilience Research: How suitable is the site (and hydrologic basin it is found) to support research on coastal resilience including both natural and social resources. This includes how climate change may amplify land-use change and vulnerability of candidate site (and hydrologic basin) to relative sea level rise to natural and social systems including both impacts to each, but also degree of adaptations of each system to biogeophysical changes. 3 Points: The candidate site (and hydrologic basin) demonstrates high value in how both natural and social resources that can be the focus of research on how climate change will amplify impacts of land-use and relative sea level rise including research on adaptations. 2 Points: The candidate site (and hydrologic basin) demonstrates moderate value in how both natural and social resources that can be the focus of research on how climate change will amplify impacts of land-use and relative sea level rise including research on adaptations.. 1 Point: The candidate site (and hydrologic basin) demonstrates low value in how both natural and social resources that can be the focus of research on how climate change will amplify impacts of land-use and relative sea level rise including research on adaptations.
RMRP		2.5. Ability to address key local, state, and regional coastal management issues: A measure of the degree to which the site is appropriate for investigating issues relevant to coastal management at the local, state, and regional levels. Solutions to these issues may require either the application of land management practices or habitat manipulations to perform meaningful research and assessment. As such, the site should offer both adequate control areas plus areas where demonstration projects and habitat manipulations (such as coastal restoration projects) can be accommodated to study many of the issues of concern. The assumption is that a site where diverse coastal management issues are evident and can be addressed will be of greater value from research and resource management standpoint than sites where these issues do not arise. The diversity and significance of coastal management issues should be identified for the hydrologic basin as it may influence core and buffer areas proposed. The following list are suggestions that may be included in the

		description of the sites ability to address key local, state and regional coastal management issues. • Wetland loss and habitat change; • Wetland loss mitigation, restoration, creation; • Dredging and spoil disposal; • Beneficial uses of dredged materials; • Shoreline erosion; • Commercial or recreational fisheries; • Waterfowl and other wildlife management; • Best management practices for habitat protection or management (e.g., wildlife management); • Best management practices to limit impacts from agricultural, silvicultural, or development activities; • Effects of pollutants on water quality and living resources (including oil spills, nutrients; harmful algal blooms, bacteria contamination, etc.) • Impacts of relative sea-level rise; • Prehistoric and early historic settlement and land use; • Unique connections in cultural and natural resources within the site (language, customs, land-use, etc.); 3 Points: The site is highly appropriate for investigating diversity of coastal zone management issues 2 Points: The site is appropriate for investigating coastal zone management issues 1 Point. The site is minimally appropriate for investigating coastal zone management issues 0 points: The site is not appropriate for investigating coastal zone management issues


Lower Mississippi-
Baton Rouge
Lower
Grand
Calcasieu-
Mermentau
Atchafalaya-
Vermilion
Lake Maurepas
Pearl
Pascagoula
Barataria
Lake
Pontchartrain
Terrebonne
Lower Mississippi-
New Orleans
National Hydrographic Dataset (NHD) Basins
0 20 40 80 120 160
Kilometers
(Team LaNERR, 2021)

	FINAL PHASE Candidate Site Proposal Narrative **NAME OF SITE**	Proposed SECOND DRAFT of LaNERR Site Criteria
	Education and Interpretation (EI)	
EI		3.1 Diversity and quality of training education and interpretation of opportunities: A measure of the variety and quality of training, education, and interpretation opportunities (i.e., ecological, archaeological, cultural, historical, etc.) provided by the site (core and buffer areas) for the different target audiences. The assumption is that a candidate site with a diversity of such opportunities of high quality will be utilized to a greater extent than one with fewer opportunities. 3 Points: The site has numerous different training, education, and interpretation opportunities of high quality. 2 Points: The site has several significantly different educational opportunities of good quality. 1 Point: The site has few significant educational opportunities. 0 Points: The site has insignificant educational opportunities.
EI		3.2 Diversity and availability of target audiences: A measure of the diversity and availability of target audiences (e.g., user groups, resource managers, residents, environmental groups, decision makers, teachers and students, the general public) which may routinely utilize the site for training, education, and interpretation. The assumption is that a candidate site with a variety of available target audiences will be utilized to a greater extent than one with fewer target audiences. 3 Points: The site is suitable for a variety of target audiences that are readily available; 2 Points: The site is suitable for a moderate number of target audiences that are readily available; 1 Point: The site is suitable for few target audiences that are available 0 Point: The site is so remote or inaccessible that it is not suitable for any target audience.

	FINAL PHASE Candidate Site Proposal Narrative **NAME OF SITE**	Proposed SECOND DRAFT of LaNERR Site Criteria
	Education and Interpretation (EI)	
EI		3.3 Availability of facilities: The degree to which the site (core and buffer areas) have existing facilities or potential sites for future facilities that can be used by staff, researchers, classes, and training groups (e.g., administrative building space, dormitories, labs, interpretive centers, trails and boardwalks, boat ramps, etc.). The assumption is that, due to limited reserve construction funds, a candidate site with existing facilities can meet the objectives of the Reserve System program sooner and more completely than a site without existing facilities. The availability of other sources of construction funds should be considered as part of this criterion. 3 Points: The site has established structures and facilities that can be used for reserve activities. 2 Points: The site has limited established structures or facilities that can be used for reserve activities. 1 Point: The site has excellent potential for the development of facilities for reserve activities. 0 Points : The site has limited established structures limited potential for the development facilities for reserve activities.
EI		3.4 Proximity and accessibility of site to Researchers, Educators, and Resource Management decision makers: A measure of (1) the relative proximity of the site to urban centers, K-12 schools, research and education institutions, and resource management agencies that may routinely utilize the site and (2) the adequacy of the roads or points for boat access at the site. The underlying assumption is that the proximity and accessibility of the site will enhance its utilization for education, research, monitoring, and resource protection purposes. 3 Points: The candidate site can be utilized by the above-listed entities during a single day trip. There are good roads or points for boat access at the site. 2 Points: The candidate site is relatively isolated and utilization would require an overnight stay from any of the above-listed entities, but accommodations

		are readily available. There are adequate roads or points for boat access at the site. 1 Point: The candidate site is relatively isolated and reasonable accommodations for an overnight stay to utilize the site are limited. There are limited roads or points for boat access at the site. 0 Points: The candidate site is extremely isolated and accommodations to utilize the site are not available. There are inadequate or no roads, or points for boat access at the site.
	FINAL PHASE Candidate Site Proposal Narrative **NAME OF SITE**	Proposed SECOND DRAFT of LaNERR Site Criteria
	Education and Interpretation (EI)	
EI	.	3.5 Value of Site for Environmental Education and Interpretation Programs: It is likely that sites with existing education programs have the necessary infrastructure in place to further expand their programs, thus it is valuable to rate sites based on the presence of these programs. However, in an area as large as the Louisiana Coastal Area, numerous excellent sites exist where virtually no education or interpretation programs have been developed. Thus, the potential for education and interpretation program development should be considered as well according to the diversity and quality of educational and interpretive program opportunities. 3 Points: The site has a long history of education and interpretation, or the site offers excellent potential for future education and interpretation program development. 2 Points: The site has a good but short history of education and interpretation, but is otherwise well suited or offers good potential for future education and interpretation program development. 1 Point: The site has had only a minor amount of education and interpretation being conducted, or the site offers fair potential for future education and interpretation program development. 0 Points: The site offers no significant potential for education and interpretation program development

	FINAL PHASE Candidate Site Proposal Narrative **NAME OF SITE**	Proposed SECOND DRAFT of LaNERR Site Criteria
	Acquisition and Management Consideration (AMC)	
AMC		4.1 Publicly owned lands and feasibility of land acquisition The degree of control on activities allowed on proposed land and waters of the candidate site (core and buffer areas) is regulated by conditions of land ownership. Land ownership by state, federal government, or local governments, or environmental interest groups, and the degree to which owners have an interest in participating in a research reserve are important to realize the missions of a LaNERR. The assumption is that the degree of control needed to maintain the site to meet the missions of a NERR increases with publicly and privately owned land, along with the chances of purchasing additional areas, increase value of a NERR candidate site. 3 Points: A large percentage (more than 50 percent) of the candidate site (core and buffer areas) is currently owned by the state, federal, or local governments, or environmental groups, and these entities have an interest in participating in a research reserve. 2 Points: State, federal, or local governments, or environmental groups own 25 to 50 percent of the candidate site with the remainder in the hands of a few owners who have an interest in participating in a research reserve. 1 Point: State, federal, or local governments or environmental groups own less than 25 percent of the site with the remainder in the hands of a few owners who have an interest in participating in a research reserve 0 Points: The site is owned by a large number of owners with little potential interest in sale or donation.
AMC		4.2. Compatibility with existing management practices and consumptive and non-consumptive uses A measure of the degree to which existing management practices (e.g., habitat manipulations, restoration projects, best management practices, wildlife management areas, leased bottoms, conservation easements, etc.) and historic and current consumptive and non-consumptive uses might conflict with planned and future management practices implemented under a research reserve program. The assumption is that sites with fewer conflicts are more likely to maintain both public support and the integrity of the site (core and buffer areas). NOTE: This

		factor should be measured with focus on how present management practices for both land and water in core and buffer areas support both the mission of a NERR and reduce potential conflict with how the public expectations align with the expected usage of the candidate site to meet the mission of a research reserve site. It should be measured with a balance of how the site protects natural and cultural resources against reasonable access by the public to other areas of the site. 3 Points: Existing management practices and consumptive and non-consumptive uses of the candidate site would not conflict with any foreseeable management policy of a research reserve 2 Points: Due to the presence of proportionately small areas of unique habitat and endangered species or threats to the integrity of ecosystem, there is the potential for limited restrictions on existing management practices or consumptive and non-consumptive uses of a site 1 Point: Due to the presence of areas of unique habitat and endangered species and threats to the integrity of the ecosystem, some restrictions on existing management practices or consumptive and non-consumptive uses of a site are likely 0 Point: Large areas of unique habitat and threats to the integrity of the ecosystem will require restrictions on existing management practices or consumptive and non-consumptive uses of a site.
AMC		4.3 Compatibility with adjacent land use: A measure of the potential conflicts between management practices on a candidate site (core and buffer areas) with land-use practices on adjacent lands to the site. It is also a measure of the adequacy of land-use regulations, plans, or other risk management controls (e.g. sufficient regulatory control in the event of an impact) to sustain the site's natural resources for long-term research, education, and resource protection. The assumption is that a candidate site with compatible land-use practices on adjacent lands is more likely to maintain the integrity of the reserve. NOTE: This issue should be evaluated relative to the potential for present or future conflicts with adjacent lands and the potential to designate buffer areas around a site. 3 Points A large percentage of the land adjacent to the site is not currently used for activities that might impact the site (and therefore, may be

		obtainable as a buffer) or the land-use practices on adjacent lands would not have any negative impacts on a possible research reserve 2 Points A large to moderate percentage of the land adjacent to the site is not currently used for activities that might negatively impact the site, or the land-use practices on adjacent lands either could be negotiated or would have only minor impacts a possible research reserve 1 Point Some of the land adjacent to the site is currently used for activities that would have negative impacts on a possible research reserve and may not be negotiable 0 Points A large percentage of the land adjacent to the site is currently used for activities that would have negative impacts on a possible research reserve and would lead to conflicts.

	FINAL PHASE Candidate Site Proposal Narrative **NAME OF SITE**	Proposed SECOND DRAFT of LaNERR Site Criteria
	Acquisition and Management Consideration (AMC)	
AMC		4.4 Land ownership A measure of the degree to which the property used to establish core and buffer areas of a candidate site is divided among land owners (e.g., divided into fewer parcels or owned by many agencies/individuals). The assumption is that a candidate site with fewer property owners will be easier to control types and levels of activities, and also offer opportunity for future acquisitions. 3 Points: The property is relatively undivided among agencies or individuals; 2 Points: The property is divided among few property owners. 1 Point: The property is divided among many property owners
AMC		4.5. Controlled land and water access: A measure of the degree to which land and water access to the candidate site can be controlled to limit the types and levels of activities that are inconsistent with the management plans described in Site Criterion 4.2 above. This degree of control is based on size, geography, proximity to adjacent residential development and present management practices and controls. The assumption is that the integrity and security of a potential research reserve site can be better maintained with a higher level of enforcement of

		management practices (such as a wildlife management area) that protects the consistency with how land and water access will promote the mission of a NERR. 3 Points: The candidate site is relatively isolated and of a size that can be controlled. Historically, access has been controlled, and can easily be controlled in the future due to the presence of limited access points by boat or vehicle. 2 Points: The candidate site is not very isolated, but has a limited number of access points. Historically, site access has not been controlled, but the site is of a size that it can be controlled in the future. 1 Point : Site access will be difficult to control due to the large number of access points or the size of the area. Historically, site access has not been controlled and it is unclear whether it can be controlled in the future. 0 Points: Site access cannot be controlled due to the large number of access points, lack of historical controls, the size of the area, or dense adjacent development. Examples of WMA to manage access...putting bounds on how lands and waters – activities allowed... Protect infrastructure.... Controls over waterways...activities on waterways...access to activity management at access points.
AMC		<u>4.6. Future urban and industrial development plans</u> A measure of the potential level of future impacts of land development (urban and industry) in areas on or adjacent to a candidate site that would impact core and buffer areas. The assumption is that a candidate site with minimal to no development plans on-site and on adjacent lands to the candidate site is more likely to maintain the integrity of the reserve. NOTE: This issue involves the degree to which adjacent lands are currently being used or may be attainable as buffer areas for the research reserve 3 Points: A large percentage (more than 50 percent) of the land adjacent to the candidate site is currently undeveloped or is not inclined to be developed for industrial usage (based on present industrial activity). This large percentage of adjacent lands is very unlikely to be developed in the near future for urban and industrial development (e.g., consisting of marginally developable property, such as wetlands, which could be obtained as buffer).

		2 Points: A moderate percentage (between 25 and 50 percent) of the land adjacent to the candidate site is currently undeveloped or is not inclined to be developed for industrial usage (based on present industrial activity). The adjacent lands are unlikely to be developed in the near future for urban and industrial development (e.g., consisting of marginally developable property, such as wetlands, which could be obtained as buffer). 1 Point: A small to moderate percentage (10 to 25 percent) of the land adjacent to the candidate site is currently undeveloped or is not inclined to be developed for industrial usage (based on present industrial activity). 0 Points: A large percentage (more than 50 percent) of the land adjacent to the site is developed (urban or industrial) and the area is likely to continue to be developed in the future.

LaNERR Site Selection and Nomination Workflow Overview and Schedule

May 7, 2021

		DESIGNATION LEADERSHIP TEAM	SITE DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE	CRITERIA SUBCOMMITTEE	SCREENING SUBCOMMITTEE	PROPOSAL TEAMS
FEB	Early					
	Mid	Evaluate 6 Estuarine Zones				
	Late	Develop 1st draft of Site Selection Criteria	**SDC Mtg 3:** Overview of Site Selection process; DLT's recommendations on Estuarine Zones based on preliminary screening criteria			
MAR	Early	Develop preliminary (example) candidate sites	SDC voted on 6 Estuarine Zones			
	Mid					
	Late	• Establish subcommittees • Provide 1st draft of Site Selection Criteria to Criteria Subcommittee	**SDC Mtg 4:** Review results of Estuarine Zone voting, example core/buffer areas, first draft Site Selection Criteria, and guidance for developing Phase 1 Candidate Site Proposals			
APR	Early			Working session #1		
	Mid					Q&A Check-in with Proposal Teams
	Late	Develop Phase 2 candidate site proposal template, including mapping data		• Working session #2 •		
MAY	Early			• Working session #3 • Provide 2nd draft of Site Selection Criteria to DLT		Submit Phase 1 Candidate Site Proposals for DLT review
	Mid		**SDC Mtg 5:** Update on Phase 1 proposals, Expectations for Phase 2 proposals, Review 2nd draft of Site Selection Criteria			

	Late			• Working Session #4 • Provide 3rd draft of Site Selection Criteria to DLT		DLT check in w/Proposal Teams
JUN	Early	Submit 3rd draft of Site Selection Criteria to NOAA for approval			Meeting #1: Comments on Phase 1 Candidate Site Proposals	
	Mid					DLT Check in w/Proposal Teams
	Late					Submit Phase 2 Candidate Site Proposals
JUL	Early	*Receives approved Site Selection Criteria from NOAA*				
	Mid				Screen Phase 2 Candidate Sites Proposals	
	Late		**SDC Mtg 6:** Review Results of Phase 2 Candidate Site Proposal Screening & vote to proceed to Final Candidate Site Proposals			
AUG	Early					
	Mid	Host Town Hall Meetings				Participate/present at Town Hall Meetings
	Late					Participate/present at Town Hall Meetings
SEP	Early					
	Mid					Submit Final Candidate Site Proposals
	Late				Screen Final Candidate Site Proposals	
Oct	Early	Submit Final Candidate Site Proposal to Site Evaluation Committee for nomination to NOAA				

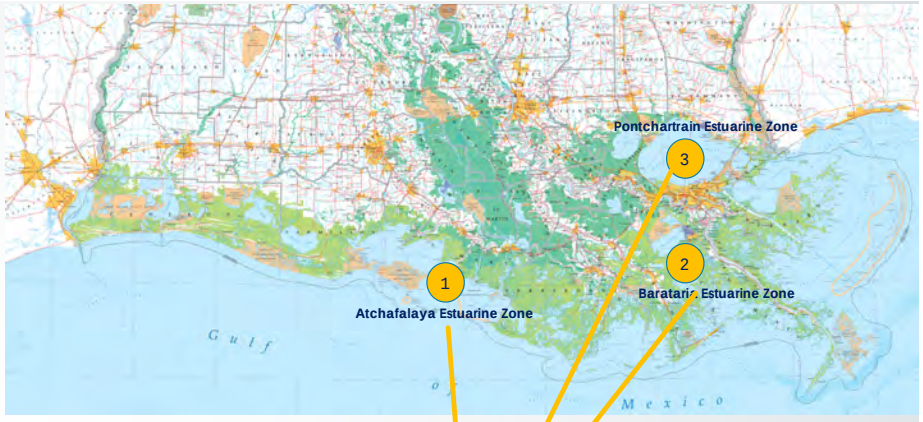
LaNERR – Louisiana National Estuarine Research Reserve

Site Development Committee Meeting #5

May 13, 2021

How will Louisiana determine where to establish a LaNERR?

1. Develop **pre-screening criteria** that reflect LaNERR goals;
2. **Establish generalized zones** within which to identify candidate sites;
3. Use proposed zones to **modify NOAA site criteria** to help identify sites for consideration and final nomination;
4. Evaluate proposed LaNERR Zones to **select candidate sites** that define preferred goals;
5. **Generate public support and partnerships** for proposed final site to NOAA.



Pre-screening

Proposed LaNERR Zones (generalized boundary)

Evaluation

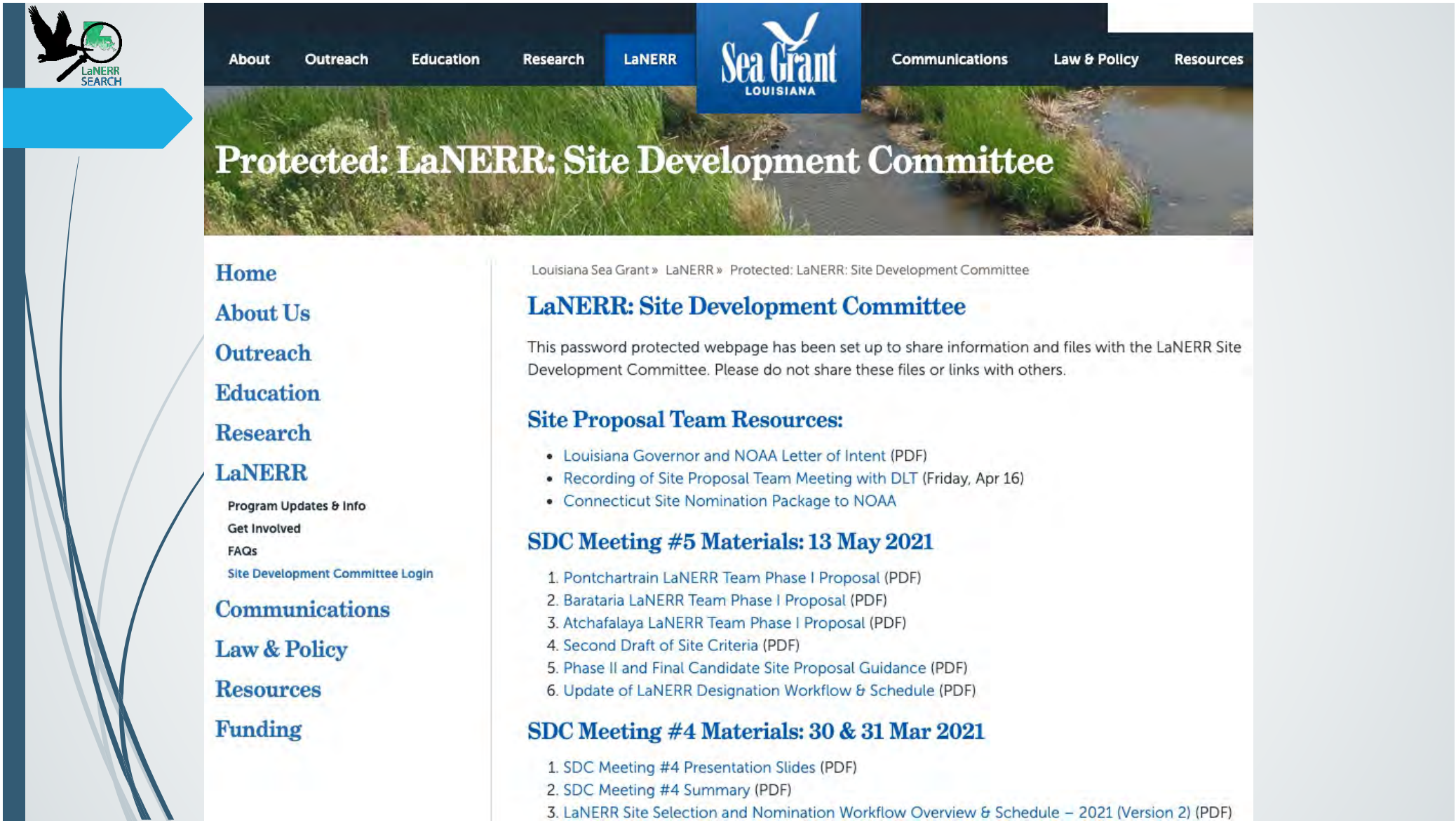
Candidate LaNERR Sites (site boundary & evaluation)

Nomination

Nominate LaNERR Site (prepare package to NOAA)

Agenda:

Time	Topic
5 min	Welcome
60 min	Phase I Proposal Presentations
20 min	Pontchartrain Estuarine Zone
20 min	Barataria Estuarine Zone
20 min	Atchafalaya Estuarine Zone
30 min	2nd Draft Site Selection Criteria
15 min	Phase II and Final Candidate Site Proposal Guidance
10 min	Wrap up and next steps: • Screening Subcommittee Meeting – Early June • Criteria Subcommittee Meeting – Late May • Proposal Team Check In – Late May and Mid June • Phase II Proposals Due – June 30 • SDC Meeting #6 – Late July


LaNERR SEARCH
About
Outreach
Education
Research
LaNERR
Sea Grant LOUISIANA
Communications
Law & Policy
Resources
Protected: LaNERR: Site Development Committee
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About Us
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FAQs
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Communications
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Resources
Funding
Louisiana Sea Grant » LaNERR » Protected: LaNERR: Site Development Committee
LaNERR: Site Development Committee
This password protected webpage has been set up to share information and files with the LaNERR Site Development Committee. Please do not share these files or links with others.
Site Proposal Team Resources:
Louisiana Governor and NOAA Letter of Intent (PDF)
Recording of Site Proposal Team Meeting with DLT (Friday, Apr 16)
Connecticut Site Nomination Package to NOAA
SDC Meeting #5 Materials: 13 May 2021
1. Pontchartrain LaNERR Team Phase I Proposal (PDF)
2. Barataria LaNERR Team Phase I Proposal (PDF)
3. Atchafalaya LaNERR Team Phase I Proposal (PDF)
4. Second Draft of Site Criteria (PDF)
5. Phase II and Final Candidate Site Proposal Guidance (PDF)
6. Update of LaNERR Designation Workflow & Schedule (PDF)
SDC Meeting #4 Materials: 30 & 31 Mar 2021
1. SDC Meeting #4 Presentation Slides (PDF)
2. SDC Meeting #4 Summary (PDF)
3. LaNERR Site Selection and Nomination Workflow Overview & Schedule – 2021 (Version 2) (PDF)

Objectives:

1. Discuss Phase I Proposals
2. Discuss 2nd Draft Site Selection Criteria
3. Discuss Phase II and Final Candidate Site Proposal Guidance

Post-meeting follow up from DLT:

1. Recording of meeting

2. Meeting summary

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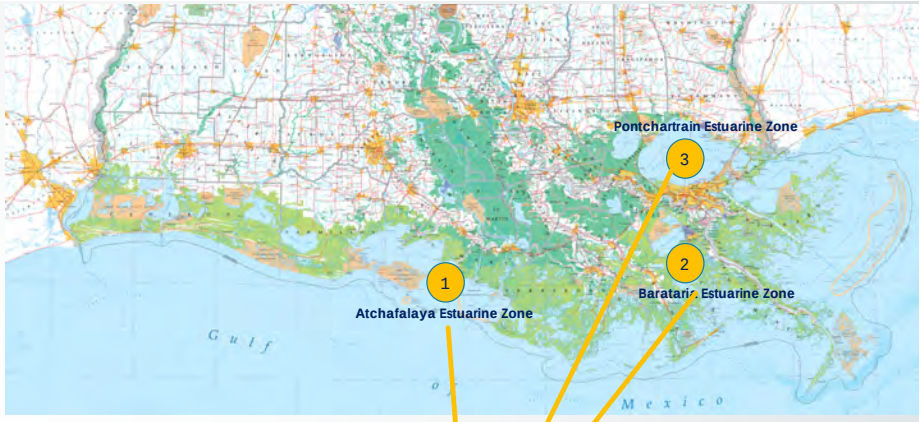

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Proposed LaNERR Zones (generalized boundary)

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Candidate LaNERR Sites (site boundary & evaluation)

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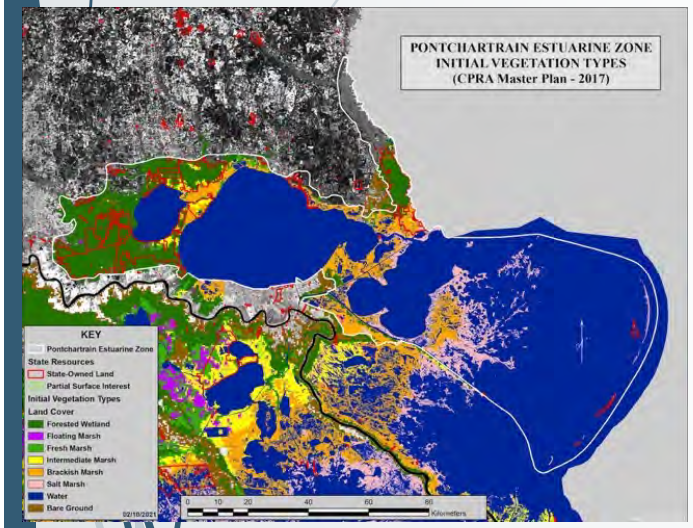
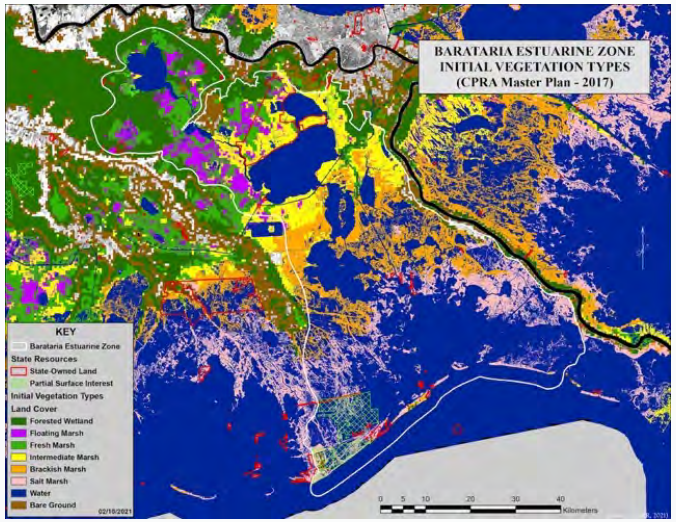
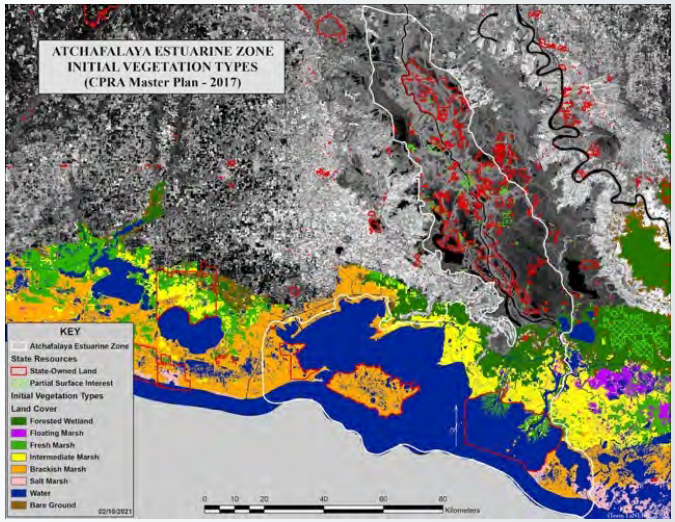
Nominate LaNERR Site (prepare package to NOAA)

Candidate Site Proposals: Phase I Presentations to Site Development Committee







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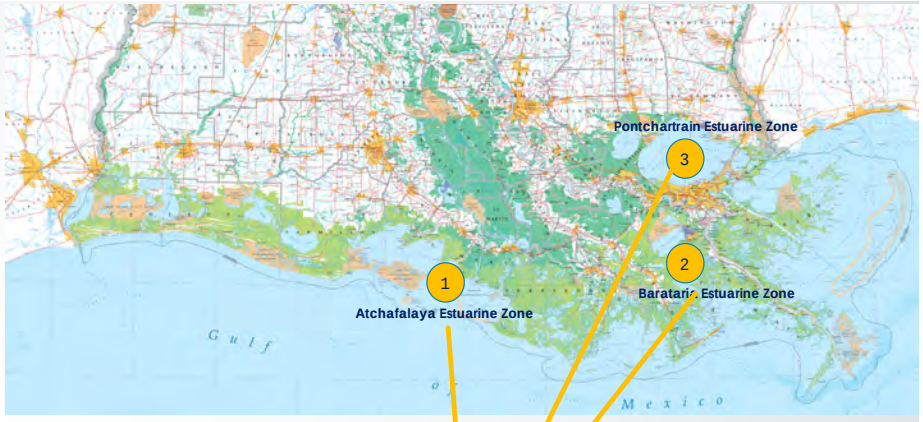

Pre-screening

Proposed LaNERR Zones (generalized boundary)

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Candidate LaNERR Sites (site boundary & evaluation)

Nomination

Nominate LaNERR Site (prepare package to NOAA)

Criteria from the NOAA guidelines to establish a LaNERR site in the Mississippi River Delta.

National Estuarine Research Reserve Designation Guidance

Site Selection, Nomination, and Designation

February 1, 2020

Authored by NOAA

Stewardship Division
Office for Coastal Management
National Ocean Service
National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

I. Environmental Representativeness

II. Value of the Site for Research, Monitoring, and Resource Protection

III. Suitability of the Site for Education and Interpretation

IV. Acquisition and Management Considerations

Site Criteria Subcommittee

Criteria Subcommittee Members
Andy Fischer
Brian Roberts
Gary Shaffer
Heather Stone
Honora Buras
Ilya Tietzel
John Nyman
Jonathan Foret
Julie Whitbeck
Justin Lemoine
Kristi Trail
Maida Owens
Mark Tobler
Michael Pasquier
Natalie Snider
Rebecca Triche
Robert Moreau
T. Erin Cox
Thomas Robert
Tracy Quirk

- The Designation Leadership Team (DLT) made minor modifications to the NOAA Site Selection Criteria which represents the 1st draft of the LaNERR Site Selection Criteria. The 2nd draft is due to the DLT at the end of April.
- Customizing NOAA Site Selection Criteria for use in screening and scoring candidate LaNERR site proposals is not intended to be a major or wholesale revision, but rather a review of the criteria with a focus on terminology that is so drastically unapplicable to coastal Louisiana and the uniqueness of our habitats that it cannot be applied as is in the LaNERR process.
- For example, we suggested changing the use of "high, mid, and low marsh zones" to "tidal freshwater, brackish, salt marsh zones including mangroves," as this is more characteristic of Louisiana's coastal systems. You may also suggest the addition of new criteria if unique coastal Louisiana features and/or areas of focus or importance are lacking from the list as provided.
- Prior to using the revised criteria to screen and score candidate site proposals, NOAA must review and approve the revisions.

ER

Environmental Representativeness (ER)

Proposed SECOND DRAFT of LaNERR Site Criteria

1.1 Ecosystem composition: A measure of the diversity of ecosystem types present within the boundaries of the site. This criterion is based on the assumption that sites that have a high diversity of major ecosystem types are of higher relative "value" for protection and management than those with low ecosystem diversity (unless the ecosystem in consideration is rare or unique).

3 Points The site has a high diversity of habitat composition within its major ecosystem type, i.e., it contains three or more habitat types or subtypes within its major ecosystem type (e.g., site consists of a combination of swamps, coastal marshes, and mud flats) or has a combination of multiple coastal marsh types (e.g., tidal freshwater, brackish, salt marsh zones).

2 Points The site has a moderate diversity of habitat composition within its major ecosystem type, i.e., it contains only two habitat types or subtypes within its major ecosystem type (e.g., consists of a combination of forested wetlands and a single coastal marsh type).

1 Point The site has a low diversity of habitat composition within its major ecosystem type, i.e., its major ecosystem type consists of a single habitat type (e.g., tidal freshwater marsh or brackish marsh, or forested wetland).

These are the suggested Ecosystem Types to be used in the LaNERR evaluation:

Group I- Uplands
- Alluvial Forested Wetlands
- Maritime Forest- Woodland
- Coastal Prairie
- Coastal Shrublands and Cheniers

Group II- Intertidal areas
- Coastal Forested Wetlands
- Coastal Floating Marshes
- Coastal Freshwater Marsh
- Coastal Intermediate Marsh
- Coastal Brackish Marsh
- Coastal Salt Marsh
- Coastal Mangroves
- Intertidal Beaches and Dunes
- Intertidal Mud and Sand Flats

Group III- Submerged Bottoms
- Subtidal hard bottoms/reefs
- Subtidal soft bottoms
- Subtidal Plants (SAV)

ER

Environmental Representativeness (ER)

Proposed SECOND DRAFT of LaNERR Site Criteria

1.2 Balanced Ecosystem Composition: A measure of the relative composition of ecosystem types within the boundaries of a site (buffer plus core areas). This criterion is based on the assumption that sites with a balanced proportion of ecosystem types are of higher relative "value" for protection and management. High, moderate, and low values are assigned to sites that contain variations in the proportions of all three ecosystem types. A value of zero is assigned to a site that is dominated by one ecosystem type or contains less than three ecosystem types.

3 Point. The site contains representative upland, intertidal, and subtidal habitats in relatively equal proportions (i.e. areal cover of any one ecosystem type not less than 25 percent of the total area)

2 Point. The site contains representative upland, intertidal, and subtidal habitats, with the areal cover of any one type not less than 10 percent of the total area.

1 Point. The site contains representative upland, intertidal, and subtidal habitats, with the areal cover of any one type less than 10 percent of the total area

0 Points the site contains representative upland, intertidal and subtidal habitats, with the areal cover of two types being less than 10 percent of the total area *or* the site consists of habitats from only one or two of the three major ecosystem types

ER

Environmental Representativeness (ER)

Proposed SECOND DRAFT of LaNERR Site Criteria

1.2 Balanced Ecosystem Composition: A measure of the relative composition of ecosystem types within the boundaries of a site (buffer plus core areas). This criterion is based on the assumption that sites with a balanced proportion of ecosystem types are of higher relative "value" for protection and management. High, moderate, and low values are assigned to sites that contain variations in the proportions of all three ecosystem types. A value of zero is assigned to a site that is dominated by one ecosystem type or contains less than three ecosystem types.

3 Point. The site contains representative upland, intertidal, and subtidal habitats in relatively equal proportions (i.e. areal cover of any one ecosystem type not less than 25 percent of the total area)

2 Point. The site contains representative upland, intertidal, and subtidal habitats, with the areal cover of any one type not less than 10 percent of the total area.

1 Point. The site contains representative upland, intertidal, and subtidal habitats, with the areal cover of any one type less than 10 percent of the total area

0 Points the site contains representative upland, intertidal and subtidal habitats, with the areal cover of two types being less than 10 percent of the total area *or* the site consists of habitats from only one or two of the three major ecosystem types

ER

Environmental Representativeness (ER)

Proposed SECOND DRAFT of LaNERR Site Criteria

1.3 Habitat Composition and Complexity: A measure of the diversity of habitat types present within the major ecosystem type found within the boundaries of the site. This criterion is based on the assumption that sites that have a high diversity of habitat types are of higher relative "value" for protection and management than those with a low diversity of habitat types. Major ecosystem type is defined here as that type that comprises approximately 40 percent of the site. Use the habitat type designations listed above for "ecosystem composition."

3 Points The site has a high diversity of habitat composition within its major ecosystem type, i.e., it contains three or more habitat types or subtypes within its major ecosystem type (e.g., site consists of a combination of swamps, coastal marshes, and reefs) or has a combination of multiple coastal marsh types (e.g., tidal freshwater, brackish, salt marsh zones including mangroves).

2 Points The site has a moderate diversity of habitat composition within its major ecosystem type, i.e., it contains only two habitat types or subtypes within its major ecosystem type (e.g., consists of a combination of swamps and a single coastal marsh type).

1 Point The site has a low diversity of habitat composition within its major ecosystem type, i.e., its major ecosystem type consists of a single habitat type (e.g., brackish marsh or tidal freshwater wetlands).

ER

Environmental Representativeness (ER)

Proposed SECOND DRAFT of LaNERR Site Criteria

1.4 Habitat uniqueness of the Site:

A measure of the presence of rare or unique habitat types within a candidate site relative to other NERR sites in Louisiana Biogeographic Region. This criterion recognizes the importance of emphasizing unique areas in the selection process, in addition to the representativeness of the candidate site in terms of ecosystem and habitat diversity. Unique habitat is defined here as a habitat type of "limited" known occurrence within the biogeographic region or sub-region. This criterion can be a simple "yes/no" question.

ER

Environmental Representativeness (ER)

Proposed SECOND DRAFT of LaNERR Site Criteria

1.5 Significant faunal and floral support: A measure of the degree to which a site supports significant faunal or floral components. This criterion focuses on a site's contribution (i.e., function) toward supporting the activities (e.g., feeding, nesting) of the following suite of significant faunal or floral components. The list of components includes groups or organisms that are known to be dependent upon estuarine habitats for the entire or a crucial part of their life cycle.

- Fish and Shellfish Spawning and Nursery Grounds (includes use by either freshwater, estuarine, or estuarine-dependent marine species)
- Migratory Bird or Waterfowl Use
- Bird Nesting or Roosting Area
- Critical Mammal Habitat
- Non-Game Animals (amphibians, reptiles, etc.)
- State or federally Listed Species or of concern (animal or plant – including candidate species)
- Other biodiversity support as representative of ecosystem services (such as invertebrates ....

3 Points: The candidate site supports or serves as an important site for a wide range of the faunal or floral components listed above (4 of 6) or is extremely important site for any threatened or endangered species.

2 Points: The site supports or serves as an important site for a moderate range and diversity of the significant faunal or floral components listed above (3 of 6).

1 point: The site supports or serves as an important site for one or two of the significant faunal or floral components listed above.

0 point: The site does not support significant faunal or floral components

ER

Environmental Representativeness (ER)

Proposed SECOND DRAFT of LaNERR Site Criteria

1.6 Geologic representativeness, Diversity, and Uniqueness of the Site: A measure of the representativeness, diversity, and uniqueness of the deltaic geologic characteristics that define part or the whole of a candidate site. This criterion attempts to consider both the surface and subsurface geologic formations that may be representative or unique within a site, particularly as they affect or define associated biotic habitats. Included in these considerations are the ways that local geology affects surface hydrology, such as drainage systems, and subsurface hydrology, such as shallow-water aquifers. Geologic and hydrologic maps should be used to evaluate this criterion.

3 Points The site has numerous deltaic geologic characteristics, two or more unique geologic characteristics, and contains a high diversity of formation types or strata within its boundaries.

2 Points The site has a moderate number of representative geologic characteristics and at least one unique geologic characteristic, and contains a moderate diversity of formation types or strata within its boundaries.

1 Point The site has a moderate number of geologic characteristics, no unique geologic characteristics, or contains a moderate diversity of formation types or strata within its boundaries.

0 Points. The site has few or only one representative geologic characteristics, no unique geologic characteristics, or contains few or only one formation type or strata within its boundaries.

ER

Environmental Representativeness (ER)

Proposed SECOND DRAFT of LaNERR Site Criteria

1.7 Salinity Gradient A measure of the seasonal and spatial range of salinity over multiple years within a candidate site's boundaries. This criterion recognizes the effect of salinity on the biotic structure of estuarine habitats (including the plant communities and faunal components that inhabit them). It makes the assumption that a site with a greater range of salinity will support a broader range of habitat types and organisms.

3 Points: The site encompasses > 10 parts per thousand (ppt) or greater range of salinity within its boundaries.
2 Points: The site encompasses a 5-10 ppt range of salinity within its boundaries.
1 Point: The site encompasses a 2-5 ppt range of salinity within its boundaries
0 Points: The site encompasses < 2 ppt range of salinity within its boundaries

ER

Environmental Representativeness (ER)

Proposed SECOND DRAFT of LaNERR Site Criteria

1.8 Degree Developed and Potential impacts to water quality: A measure of the degree to which the hydrologic basins (see reference map) are developed and the relative impacts to surface waters from human activities. This criterion is based on the assumption that human impacts to a site are directly proportional to the degree of development. Exceptions to this assumption may need to be considered where development at a site and its surrounding area have been subject to high levels of control. Data on land use and water quality measurements from local, county, and state government agencies should be used to judge this criterion.

3 Points: The site is relatively undisturbed and the hydrologic basins contains low intensity development (e.g., few residences, minimal agricultural or silvicultural activity) or the land is in protected status.

2 Points: The site is relatively undisturbed and the hydrologic basins contains moderate development (e.g., relatively few residences, moderate agricultural or silvicultural activity, minimal commercial development).

1 Point: The site has been moderately disturbed and the hydrologic basins contains relatively intensive development (e.g., moderate density of residences, or the presence of industrial activity).

0 Points: The site has been extremely disturbed and the hydrologic basins contains very intensive development (e.g., high density residential, or commercial or industrial activity).

RMRP

Research, Monitoring & Resource Protection (RMRP)

Proposed SECOND DRAFT of LaNERR Site Criteria

2.1 Value of site for research: A measure of the opportunities offered by characteristics of the site for research, such as a high diversity of ecosystem and habitat types, a balanced habitat composition, a wide salinity range (see criterion 1.8), biotic or geologic representativeness of the site, known historic uses or archaeological sites, and unique opportunities to conduct applied research regarding important local, state, and regional coastal management issues (including past and potential management activities). The assumption is that a site with representative, unique, and highly diverse characteristics will provide greater research, monitoring, and resource protection opportunities than one lacking these characteristics. Ratings generated for these factors under previous selection criteria can be used as a guide for rating this overall factor.

3 Points: The site has (1) a high diversity of ecosystem and habitat types, (2) moderate salinity range, (3) representative biotic and geologic sites or hydrologic characteristics, (4) state and federally listed species, (5) historic and archaeological significance, and (6) opportunities to address important habitat or resource management issues.
2 Points: The site has four or five of the six above.
1 Point: The site has two or three of the six above.
0 Points: The site has one or none of the six above.

LaNERR SEARCH

RMRP

Research, Monitoring & Resource Protection (RMRP)

Proposed SECOND DRAFT of LaNERR Site Criteria

2.2 Previous research and monitoring efforts: A measure of the degree to which the site (including the hydrologic basin) has been used for past research and monitoring, including considerations of the diversity of inquiry (fields of research), and the availability of data (the form and availability of documentation, e.g., peer-reviewed papers, grey literature, inventory reports). The assumption is that an area with previously established research and monitoring interest offers greater opportunity for future projects than an area that has not sparked such an interest in the past.

3 Points: The site has a long history of well-documented research and monitoring projects in a wide variety of topics. Data are readily available.
2 Points: The site has had major and well-documented research and monitoring efforts, generating data that are readily available. It has not had a long history of research and monitoring.
1 Point: The site has had only minor research and monitoring projects generating limited data (e.g., inventories) and/or these data may be difficult to obtain.
0 Points: The site has no known history of research and monitoring.

LaNERR SEARCH

RMRP

Research, Monitoring & Resource Protection (RMRP)

Proposed SECOND DRAFT of LaNERR Site Criteria

2.3 Suitability of site for environmental baseline monitoring: A measure of the suitability of the site as a reference area for assessing long-term natural resource trends or ecological characteristics, based on the degree to which the site has not been altered by land-use practices on or near the site. The assumption is that a site with uninterrupted habitat patches that provide landscape continuity (not interrupted by developed or disturbed lands & waters) will be a more valuable reference area to generate baseline monitoring information than a site that has been extensively altered.

3 Points: The site has outstanding areas to generate environmental baseline data to assess long- term resource trends or ecological characteristics for a wide range of needs.
2 Points: The site has adequate areas to generate environmental baseline data to assess long- term resource trends or ecological characteristics for many needs.
1 Point: The site has marginal areas to generate environmental baseline data to assess long-term resource trends or ecological characteristics.
0 Points: The site has been so extensively altered by past activities that it is unsuitable for generating environmental baseline data.

RMRP

Research, Monitoring & Resource Protection (RMRP)

Proposed SECOND DRAFT of LaNERR Site Criteria

2.4 Coastal Resilience Research: How suitable is the site (and hydrologic basin it is found) to support research on coastal resilience including both natural and social resources. This includes how climate change may amplify land-use change and vulnerability of candidate site (and hydrologic basin) to relative sea level rise to natural and social systems including both impacts to each, but also degree of adaptations of each system to biogeophysical changes.

3 Points: The candidate site (and hydrologic basin) demonstrates high value in how both natural and social resources that can be the focus of research on how climate change will amplify impacts of land-use and relative sea level rise including research on adaptations.

2 Points: The candidate site (and hydrologic basin) demonstrates moderate value in how both natural and social resources that can be the focus of research on how climate change will amplify impacts of land-use and relative sea level rise including research on adaptations..

1 Point: The candidate site (and hydrologic basin) demonstrates low value in how both natural and social resources that can be the focus of research on how climate change will amplify impacts of land-use and relative sea level rise including research on adaptations.

LaNERR SEARCH

RMRP

Research, Monitoring & Resource Protection (RMRP)

Proposed SECOND DRAFT of LaNERR Site Criteria

2.5. Ability to address key local, state, and regional coastal management issues: A measure of the degree to which the site is appropriate for investigating issues relevant to coastal management at the local, state, and regional levels. Solutions to these issues may require either the application of land management practices or habitat manipulations to perform meaningful research and assessment. As such, the site should offer both adequate control areas plus areas where demonstration projects and habitat manipulations (such as coastal restoration projects) can be accommodated to study many of the issues of concern. The assumption is that a site where diverse coastal management issues are evident and can be addressed will be of greater value from research and resource management standpoint than sites where these issues do not arise. The diversity and significance of coastal management issues should be identified for the hydrologic basin as it may influence core and buffer areas proposed. The following list are suggestions that may be included in the description of the sites ability to address key local, state and regional coastal management issues.

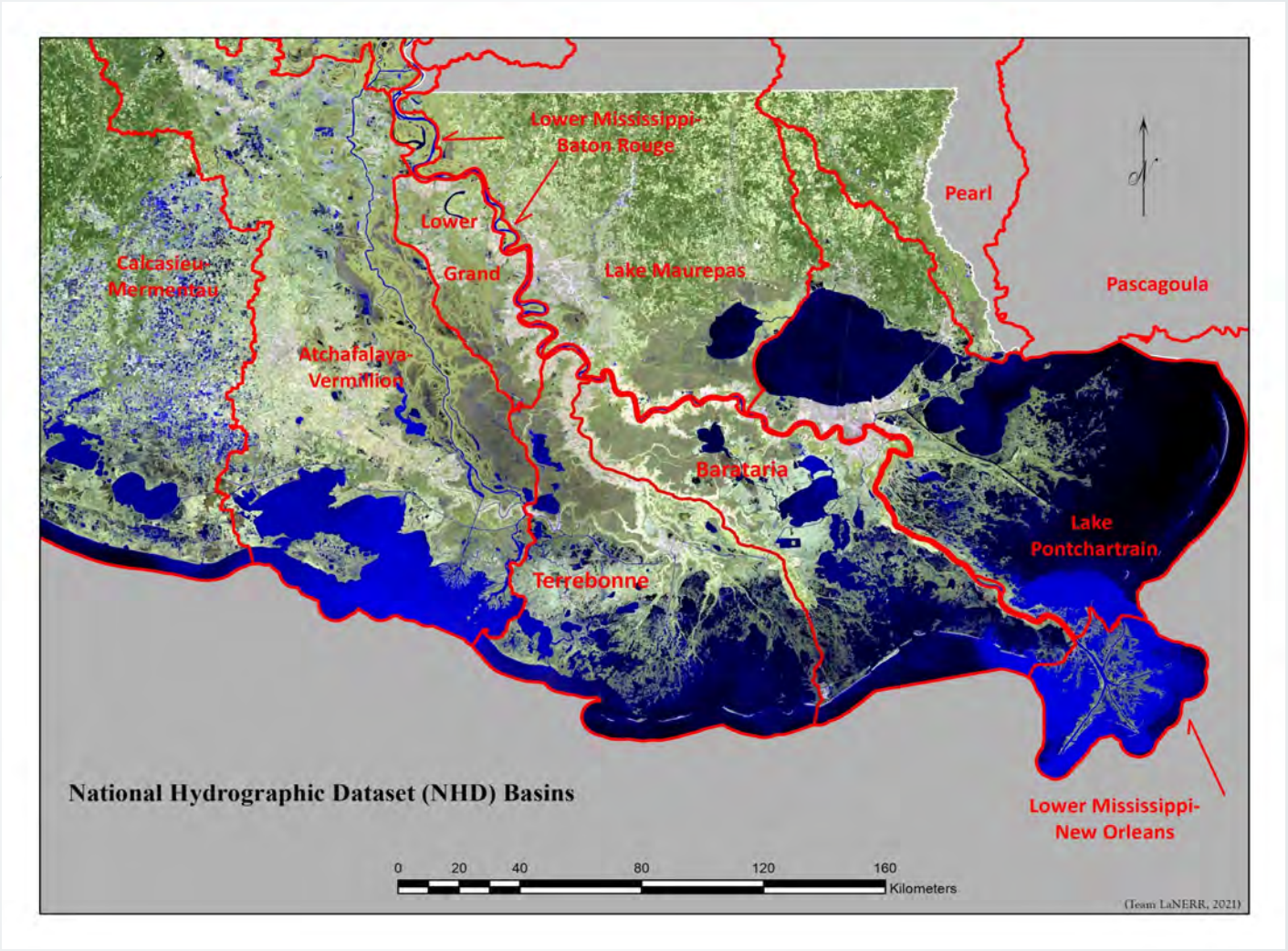
- Wetland loss and habitat change;
- Wetland loss mitigation, restoration, creation;
- Dredging and spoil disposal;
- Beneficial uses of dredged materials;
- Shoreline erosion;
- Commercial or recreational fisheries;
- Waterfowl and other wildlife management;
- Best management practices for habitat protection or management (e.g., wildlife management);
- Best management practices to limit impacts from agricultural, silvicultural, or development activities;
- Effects of pollutants on water quality and living resources (including oil spills, nutrients; harmful algal blooms, bacteria contamination, etc.)
- Impacts of relative sea-level rise;
- Prehistoric and early historic settlement and land use;
- Unique connections in cultural and natural resources within the site (language, customs, land-use, etc.);

3 Points: The site is highly appropriate for investigating diversity of coastal zone management issues
2 Points: The site is appropriate for investigating coastal zone management issues
1 Point. The site is minimally appropriate for investigating coastal zone management issues
0 points: The site is not appropriate for investigating coastal zone management issues

LaNERR SEARCH

RMRP

Research, Monitoring & Resource Protection (RMRP)



EI

Education and Interpretation (EI)

Proposed SECOND DRAFT of LaNERR Site Criteria

3.1 Diversity and quality of training education and interpretation of opportunities: A measure of the variety and quality of training, education, and interpretation opportunities (i.e., ecological, archaeological, cultural, historical, etc.) provided by the site (core and buffer areas) for the different target audiences. The assumption is that a candidate site with a diversity of such opportunities of high quality will be utilized to a greater extent than one with fewer opportunities.

3 Points: The site has numerous different training, education, and interpretation opportunities of high quality.
2 Points: The site has several significantly different educational opportunities of good quality.
1 Point: The site has few significant educational opportunities.
0 Points: The site has insignificant educational opportunities.

EI

Education and Interpretation (EI)

Proposed SECOND DRAFT of LaNERR Site Criteria

3.2 Diversity and availability of target audiences: A measure of the diversity and availability of target audiences (e.g., user groups, resource managers, residents, environmental groups, decision makers, teachers and students, the general public) which may routinely utilize the site for training, education, and interpretation. The assumption is that a candidate site with a variety of available target audiences will be utilized to a greater extent than one with fewer target audiences.

3 Points: The site is suitable for a variety of target audiences that are readily available;
2 Points: The site is suitable for a moderate number of target audiences that are readily available;
1 Point: The site is suitable for few target audiences that are available
0 Point: The site is so remote or inaccessible that it is not suitable for any target audience.

EI

Education and Interpretation (EI)

Proposed SECOND DRAFT of LaNERR Site Criteria

3.3 Availability of facilities: The degree to which the site (core and buffer areas) have existing facilities or potential sites for future facilities that can be used by staff, researchers, classes, and training groups (e.g., administrative building space, dormitories, labs, interpretive centers, trails and boardwalks, boat ramps, etc.). The assumption is that, due to limited reserve construction funds, a candidate site with existing facilities can meet the objectives of the Reserve System program sooner and more completely than a site without existing facilities. The availability of other sources of construction funds should be considered as part of this criterion.

3 Points: The site has established structures and facilities that can be used for reserve activities.
2 Points: The site has limited established structures or facilities that can be used for reserve activities.
1 Point: The site has excellent potential for the development of facilities for reserve activities.
0 Points : The site has limited established structures limited potential for the development facilities for reserve activities.

EI

Education and Interpretation (EI)

Proposed SECOND DRAFT of LaNERR Site Criteria

3.4 Proximity and accessibility of site to Researchers, Educators, and Resource Management decision makers: A measure of (1) the relative proximity of the site to urban centers, K-12 schools, research and education institutions, and resource management agencies that may routinely utilize the site and (2) the adequacy of the roads or points for boat access at the site. The underlying assumption is that the proximity and accessibility of the site will enhance its utilization for education, research, monitoring, and resource protection purposes.

3 Points: The candidate site can be utilized by the above-listed entities during a single day trip. There are good roads or points for boat access at the site.
2 Points: The candidate site is relatively isolated and utilization would require an overnight stay from any of the above-listed entities, but accommodations are readily available. There are adequate roads or points for boat access at the site.
1 Point: The candidate site is relatively isolated and reasonable accommodations for an overnight stay to utilize the site are limited. There are limited roads or points for boat access at the site.
0 Points: The candidate site is extremely isolated and accommodations to utilize the site are not available. There are inadequate or no roads, or points for boat access at the site.

EI

Education and Interpretation (EI)

Proposed SECOND DRAFT of LaNERR Site Criteria

3.5 Value of Site for Environmental Education and Interpretation Programs: It is likely that sites with existing education programs have the necessary infrastructure in place to further expand their programs, thus it is valuable to rate sites based on the presence of these programs. However, in an area as large as the Louisiana Coastal Area, numerous excellent sites exist where virtually no education or interpretation programs have been developed. Thus, the potential for education and interpretation program development should be considered as well according to the diversity and quality of educational and interpretive program opportunities.

3 Points: The site has a long history of education and interpretation, or the site offers excellent potential for future education and interpretation program development.
2 Points: The site has a good but short history of education and interpretation, but is otherwise well suited or offers good potential for future education and interpretation program development.
1 Point: The site has had only a minor amount of education and interpretation being conducted, or the site offers fair potential for future education and interpretation program development.
0 Points: The site offers no significant potential for education and interpretation program development

AMC

Acquisition and Management Consideration (AMC)

Proposed SECOND DRAFT of LaNERR Site Criteria

4.1 Publicly owned lands and feasibility of land acquisition

The degree of control on activities allowed on proposed land and waters of the candidate site (core and buffer areas) is regulated by conditions of land ownership. Land ownership by state, federal government, or local governments, or environmental interest groups, and the degree to which owners have an interest in participating in a research reserve are important to realize the missions of a LaNERR. The assumption is that the degree of control needed to maintain the site to meet the missions of a NERR increases with publicly and privately owned land, along with the chances of purchasing additional areas, increase value of a NERR candidate site.

3 Points: A large percentage (more than 50 percent) of the candidate site (core and buffer areas) is currently owned by the state, federal, or local governments, or environmental groups, and these entities have an interest in participating in a research reserve.
2 Points: State, federal, or local governments, or environmental groups own 25 to 50 percent of the candidate site with the remainder in the hands of a few owners who have an interest in participating in a research reserve.
1 Point: State, federal, or local governments or environmental groups own less than 25 percent of the site with the remainder in the hands of a few owners who have an interest in participating in a research reserve
0 Points: The site is owned by a large number of owners with little potential interest in sale or donation.

AMC

Acquisition and Management Consideration (AMC)

Proposed SECOND DRAFT of LaNERR Site Criteria

4.2. Compatibility with existing management practices and consumptive and non-consumptive uses A measure of the degree to which existing management practices (e.g., habitat manipulations, restoration projects, best management practices, wildlife management areas, leased bottoms, conservation easements, etc.) and historic and current consumptive and non-consumptive uses might conflict with planned and future management practices implemented under a research reserve program. The assumption is that sites with fewer conflicts are more likely to maintain both public support and the integrity of the site (core and buffer areas). NOTE: This factor should be measured with focus on how present management practices for both land and water in core and buffer areas support both the mission of a NERR and reduce potential conflict with how the public expectations align with the expected usage of the candidate site to meet the mission of a research reserve site. It should be measured with a balance of how the site protects natural and cultural resources against reasonable access by the public to other areas of the site.

3 Points: Existing management practices and consumptive and non-consumptive uses of the candidate site would not conflict with any foreseeable management policy of a research reserve

2 Points: Due to the presence of proportionately small areas of unique habitat and endangered species or threats to the integrity of ecosystem, there is the potential for limited restrictions on existing management practices or consumptive and non-consumptive uses of a site

1 Point: Due to the presence of areas of unique habitat and endangered species and threats to the integrity of the ecosystem, some restrictions on existing management practices or consumptive and non-consumptive uses of a site are likely

0 Point: Large areas of unique habitat and threats to the integrity of the ecosystem will require restrictions on existing management practices or consumptive and non-consumptive uses of a site.

AMC

Acquisition and Management Consideration (AMC)

Proposed SECOND DRAFT of LaNERR Site Criteria

4.3 Compatibility with adjacent land use: A measure of the potential conflicts between management practices on a candidate site (core and buffer areas) with land-use practices on adjacent lands to the site. It is also a measure of the adequacy of land-use regulations, plans, or other risk management controls (e.g. sufficient regulatory control in the event of an impact) to sustain the site's natural resources for long-term research, education, and resource protection. The assumption is that a candidate site with compatible land-use practices on adjacent lands is more likely to maintain the integrity of the reserve. NOTE: This issue should be evaluated relative to the potential for present or future conflicts with adjacent lands and the potential to designate buffer areas around a site.

3 Points A large percentage of the land adjacent to the site is not currently used for activities that might impact the site (and therefore, may be obtainable as a buffer) or the land-use practices on adjacent lands would not have any negative impacts on a possible research reserve
2 Points A large to moderate percentage of the land adjacent to the site is not currently used for activities that might negatively impact the site, or the land-use practices on adjacent lands either could be negotiated or would have only minor impacts a possible research reserve
1 Point Some of the land adjacent to the site is currently used for activities that would have negative impacts on a possible research reserve and may not be negotiable
0 Points A large percentage of the land adjacent to the site is currently used for activities that would have negative impacts on a possible research reserve and would lead to conflicts.

AMC

Acquisition and Management Consideration (AMC)

Proposed SECOND DRAFT of LaNERR Site Criteria

4.4 Land ownership A measure of the degree to which the property used to establish core and buffer areas of a candidate site is divided among land owners (e.g., divided into fewer parcels or owned by many agencies/individuals). The assumption is that a candidate site with fewer property owners will be easier to control types and levels of activities, and also offer opportunity for future acquisitions.

3 Points: The property is relatively undivided among agencies or individuals;
2 Points: The property is divided among few property owners.
1 Point: The property is divided among many property owners

AMC

Acquisition and Management Consideration (AMC)

Proposed SECOND DRAFT of LaNERR Site Criteria

4.5. Controlled land and water access: A measure of the degree to which land and water access to the candidate site can be controlled to limit the types and levels of activities that are inconsistent with the management plans described in Site Criterion 4.2 above. This degree of control is based on size, geography, proximity to adjacent residential development and present management practices and controls. The assumption is that the integrity and security of a potential research reserve site can be better maintained with a higher level of enforcement of management practices (such as a wildlife management area) that protects the consistency with how land and water access will promote the mission of a NERR.

3 Points: The candidate site is relatively isolated and of a size that can be controlled. Historically, access has been controlled, and can easily be controlled in the future due to the presence of limited access points by boat or vehicle.

2 Points: The candidate site is not very isolated, but has a limited number of access points. Historically, site access has not been controlled, but the site is of a size that it can be controlled in the future.

1 Point : Site access will be difficult to control due to the large number of access points or the size of the area. Historically, site access has not been controlled and it is unclear whether it can be controlled in the future.

0 Points: Site access cannot be controlled due to the large number of access points, lack of historical controls, the size of the area, or dense adjacent development.

AMC

Acquisition and Management Consideration (AMC)

Proposed SECOND DRAFT of LaNERR Site Criteria

4.6. Future urban and industrial development plans A measure of the potential level of future impacts of land development (urban and industry) in areas on or adjacent to a candidate site that would impact core and buffer areas. The assumption is that a candidate site with minimal to no development plans on-site and on adjacent lands to the candidate site is more likely to maintain the integrity of the reserve. NOTE: This issue involves the degree to which adjacent lands are currently being used or may be attainable as buffer areas for the research reserve

3 Points: A large percentage (more than 50 percent) of the land adjacent to the candidate site is currently undeveloped or is not inclined to be developed for industrial usage (based on present industrial activity). This large percentage of adjacent lands is very unlikely to be developed in the near future for urban and industrial development (e.g., consisting of marginally developable property, such as wetlands, which could be obtained as buffer).

2 Points: A moderate percentage (between 25 and 50 percent) of the land adjacent to the candidate site is currently undeveloped or is not inclined to be developed for industrial usage (based on present industrial activity). The adjacent lands are unlikely to be developed in the near future for urban and industrial development (e.g., consisting of marginally developable property, such as wetlands, which could be obtained as buffer).

1 Point: A small to moderate percentage (10 to 25 percent) of the land adjacent to the candidate site is currently undeveloped or is not inclined to be developed for industrial usage (based on present industrial activity).

0 Points: A large percentage (more than 50 percent) of the land adjacent to the site is developed (urban or industrial) and the area is likely to continue to be developed in the future.

Louisiana
National Estuary Research Reserve

Site Criteria Comments?

Proposal Teams - Developing Phase 2 Candidate Site Proposals

Phase 2 Proposals – DUE JUNE 30, 2021

1.0 Physical Description of the Site (one page maximum): Adequacy of Site's Core and Buffer Areas to merit NOAA-State Partnership: (a) boundaries should encompass an adequate portion of the key land and water areas of the natural system; (b) key land and water areas should encompass environmental resources that are representative of a delta estuary ecosystem; (c) boundaries must balance the overall size of a reserve by covering an ecosystem large enough to make long-term estuarine research viable yet having a discrete contiguous area that can be effectively managed with resources available to support a NERR.

1.1 Include map of Core and Buffer Areas (provided by Team LaNERR GIS Support; see instructions to proposal teams for providing information on polygons of proposed core and buffer areas; polygons are due by **June 1, 2021, by sending to** deltanerr@lsu.edu **/ SEE SECTION 4.0 BELOW FOR DETAILS OF SUBMISSION**)

1.2 Include land-owner names and contact information for CORE and BUFFER AREAS including state, parish, federal, and private lands

1.3 What percentage of the total CORE AREA is owned by the state: _____%

1.4 Have candidate site CORE AREA land-owners been contacted?

1.5 Have candidate site BUFFER AREA land-owners been contacted?

Proposal Teams - Developing Phase 2 Candidate Site Proposals

Phase 2 Proposals – DUE JUNE 30, 2021

2.0 Ecological Characteristics of the Site (one page maximum): Use the listing of habitats in the second draft of LaNERR Site Criteria to describe the habitats proposed in the core and buffer areas that capture the ecological characteristics of a delta estuary. Include a statement that also defines the proposed core and buffer areas as unique contributions to the Biogeographic Zone compared to the other NERR sites in the Gulf of Mexico.

2.1 Include map of Vegetation Types in the general region of the Core and Buffer Areas (provided by Team LaNERR GIS Support (deltanerr@lsu.edu); see instructions in section 4.0 for team responsibility in providing information on polygons of proposed core and buffer areas)

2.2 List examples of habitat types in the general area of the Core and Buffer Zones based on the SECOND DRAFT of SITE CRITERIA;

2.3 Significant Fauna and Flora in the general area of the Core and Buffer Areas.

Proposal Teams - Developing Phase 2 Candidate Site Proposals

3.0 Narrative describing the candidate site's qualities around each of the following topics. Use the SECOND DRAFT of the LaNERR Site Criteria for guidance on what constitute qualities of a site in each of the three areas below (there is 500-word limit on narrative for each of the three areas – a listing may also be used).

3.1 Suitability for Research, Monitoring and Resource Protection: Is there a history of research activities at the site? If so, can they be generally described? If there is not a history, can the site support a research program? What are some examples/reasons? Are there any obvious limitations or concerns?

3.2 Suitability for Education, Interpretation, and Training: Is there a history of educational activities at the site? If so, can they be described? If there is not a history, can the site support educational activities? What are some examples/reasons? Are there any obvious limitations or concerns?

3.3 Site's Compatibility with Coastal Management Issues: Since most of these may be already under some level of protection, this is more geared toward what functional roles they provide (e.g., bird habitat, wildlife management, etc.). Are there any obvious limitations or concerns?

i. Existing and future land and water uses and manipulations
ii. Land use projections in core and buffer areas
iii. Consumptive uses in the proposed LaNERR
iv. Contributions to coastal stewardship

Proposal Teams - Developing Phase 2 Candidate Site Proposals

4.0 Maps and Tables to Document Sections 1-3: The Team LaNERR GIS Support will provide TWO maps and quantitative estimates for each of the Proposal Teams as outlined below.

4.1 Two standardized Site GIS Maps will be generated for each team for Phase II. The Thematic GIS Maps will be generated for each Site based on geospatial polygons submitted by each respective Proposal Team of the CORE and BUFFER areas proposed by the teams. The polygons will be used by Team LaNERR GIS Support to generate information based on EXISTING GIS Data Layers for each of the three Estuarine Zones (Atchafalaya, Barataria, Pontchartrain; see base maps below that the polygons will be placed). **Each polygon needs to be uniquely identified (e.g. core-#1, core-#2, buffer-#1, buffer-#2, or use specific place names for each core or buffer polygon, etc.) and are due June 1, 2021, by sending to** deltanerr@lsu.edu **. Please also include contact information for person managing geospatial data for each respective proposal team.**

4.2 Thematic GIS Map ONE: A GIS map that depicts the candidate site's CORE and BUFFER AREAS. Data will be generated as follows for each of the CORE and BUFFER polygons:

a. total area of each polygon; b. total area of state-owned lands of each polygon; c. total area of state-owned water bottoms of each polygon; d. other area that is not state-owned (land plus water bottoms) of each polygon;

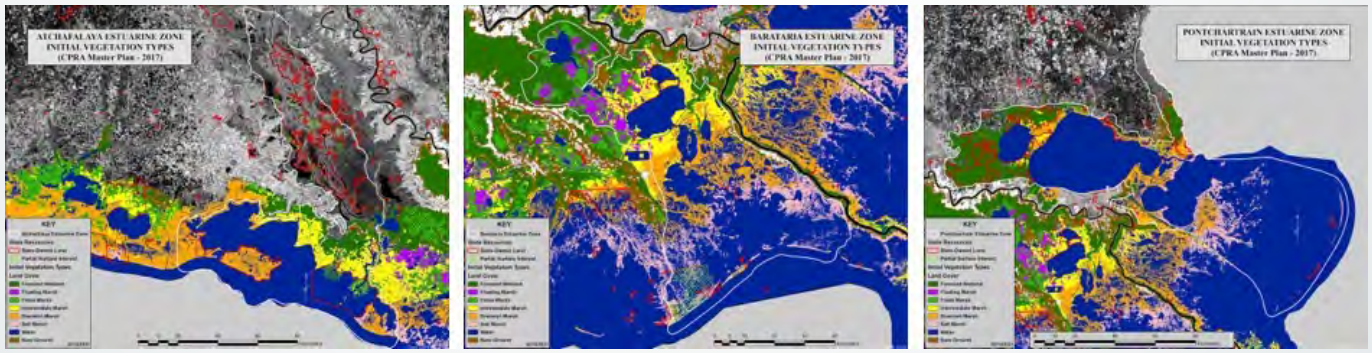
4.3 Thematic GIS Map TWO: A GIS map of the CPRA initial vegetation types and distribution described in sections 2.0 above. Data will be generated as follows for each of the CORE and BUFFER polygons:

a. acreage of each wetland typology of CPRA initial vegetation in each CORE AREA polygon (if vegetation types are included in CPRA data); b. acreage of each wetland typology of CPRA initial vegetation in each BUFFER AREA polygon (if vegetation types are included in CPRA data);

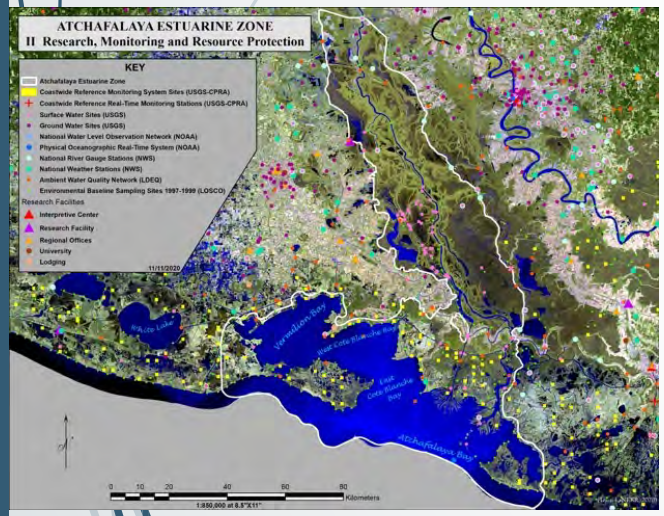
MAPS to be generated by Team LaNERR GIS Support: see instructions above for Phase II and below for Final Proposal

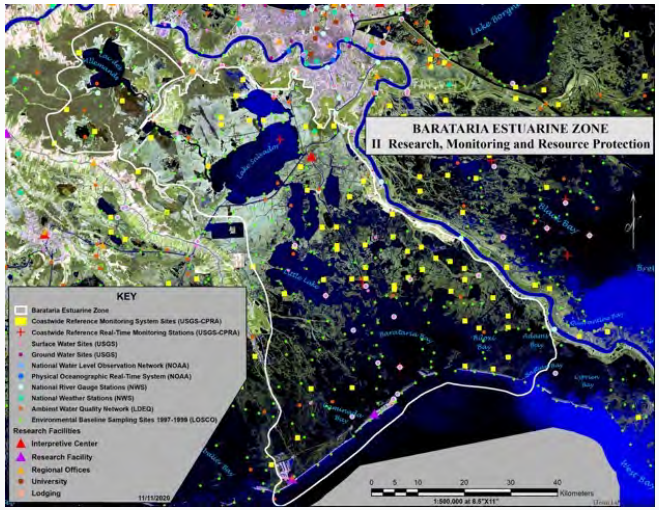
These are the base maps that polygons of core and buffer areas will be placed for Map #1.

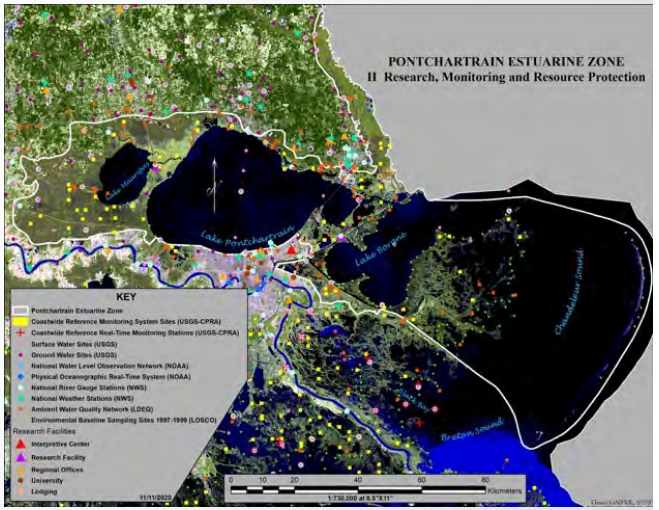
These are the base maps that polygons of core and buffer areas will be placed and vegetation typology acreage calculated for Map #2.



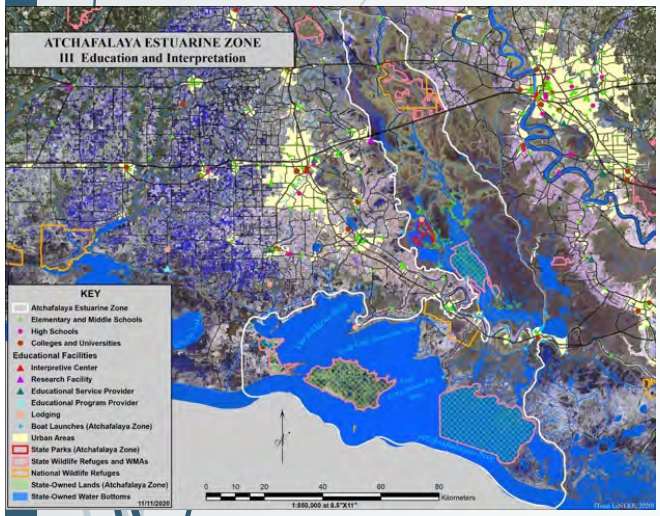
Distribution of monitoring stations (including coastwide reference monitoring stations – CRMS).

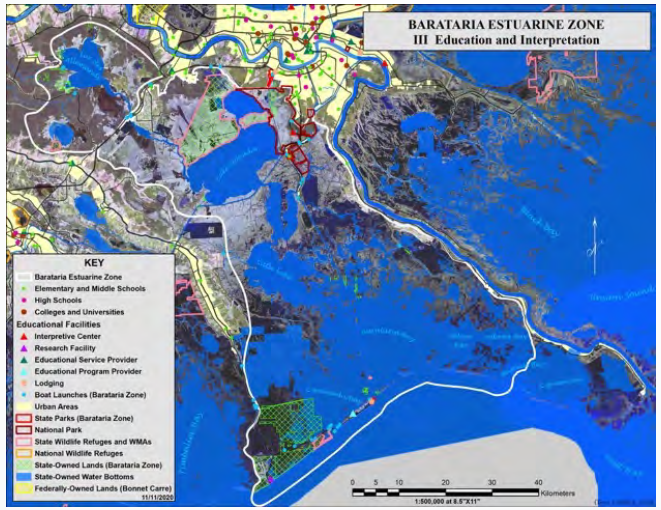


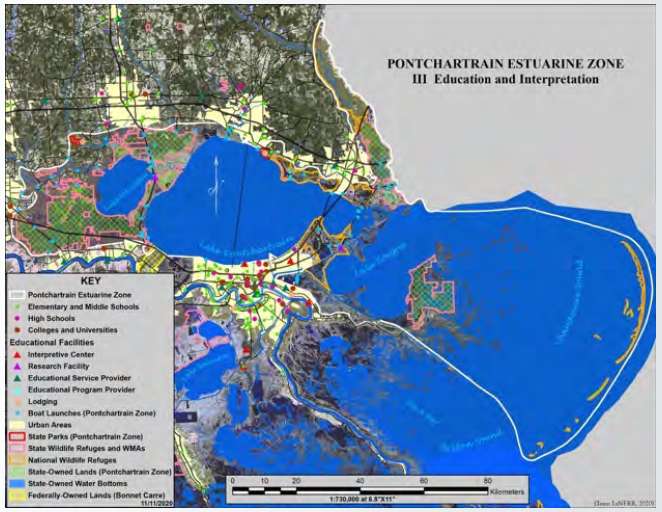




Distribution of urban areas and schools along with access points in proximity of three Estuarine Zones.







Proposal Teams - Developing Phase 2 Candidate Site Proposals

5.0 Optional Sections Encouraged (two-page maximum).

- Facilities in the region that may help to support the research, education, and training mission of the proposed LaNERR.
- Bibliography of past research, data, or reports documenting candidate site's resources

Final Phase Proposals: Due on September 24, 2021.

Instructions: There are four sections to the Final Phase proposals.

Section 1 is an update from Phase II Proposals on information concerning the physical description of the site.

Section 2 requests details on how the site addresses each of the Site Criteria using the worksheet provided in Appendix 1.

Sections 3 and 4 request additional information on public support and engagement from community in support of the Candidate Site Proposal. This information will be used to score the proposal that will be used along with other information such as physical description and letters of support (public engagement) to determine which candidate site will be used to develop a nomination package from Governor Edwards to NOAA.

		DESIGNATION LEADERSHIP TEAM	SITE DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE	CRITERIA SUBCOMMITTEE	SCREENING SUBCOMMITTEE	PROPOSAL TEAMS
MAY	Early					
	Mid		SDC Mtg 5: Update on Phase 1 proposals, Expectations for Phase 2 proposals, Review 2nd draft of Site Selection Criteria			
	Late			Provide 3rd draft of Site Selection Criteria to DLT		DLT check in w/Proposal Teams
JUN	Early	Submit 3rd draft of Site Selection Criteria to NOAA for approval			Review Phase I Site Proposals	
	Mid					DLT Check in w/Proposal Teams
	Late					Submit Phase 2 Candidate Site Proposals
JUL	Early	*Receives approved Site Selection Criteria from NOAA*				
	Mid				Screen Phase 2 Candidate Sites Proposals	
	Late		**SDC Mtg 6:** Review Results of Phase 2 Candidate Site Proposal Screening & vote to proceed to Final Candidate Site Proposals			

		DESIGNATION LEADERSHIP TEAM	SITE DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE	CRITERIA SUBCOMMITTEE	SCREENING SUBCOMMITTEE	PROPOSAL TEAMS
AUG	Early	Host Town Hall Meetings				
	Mid					Participate/present at Town Hall Meetings
	Late					Participate/present at Town Hall Meetings
SEP	Early					
	Mid					
	Late					Submit Final Candidate Site Proposals
OCT	Early				Screen Final Candidate Site Proposals	
	Mid	Submit Final Candidate Site Proposal to Site Evaluation Committee for nomination to NOAA				
	Late					

LaNERR

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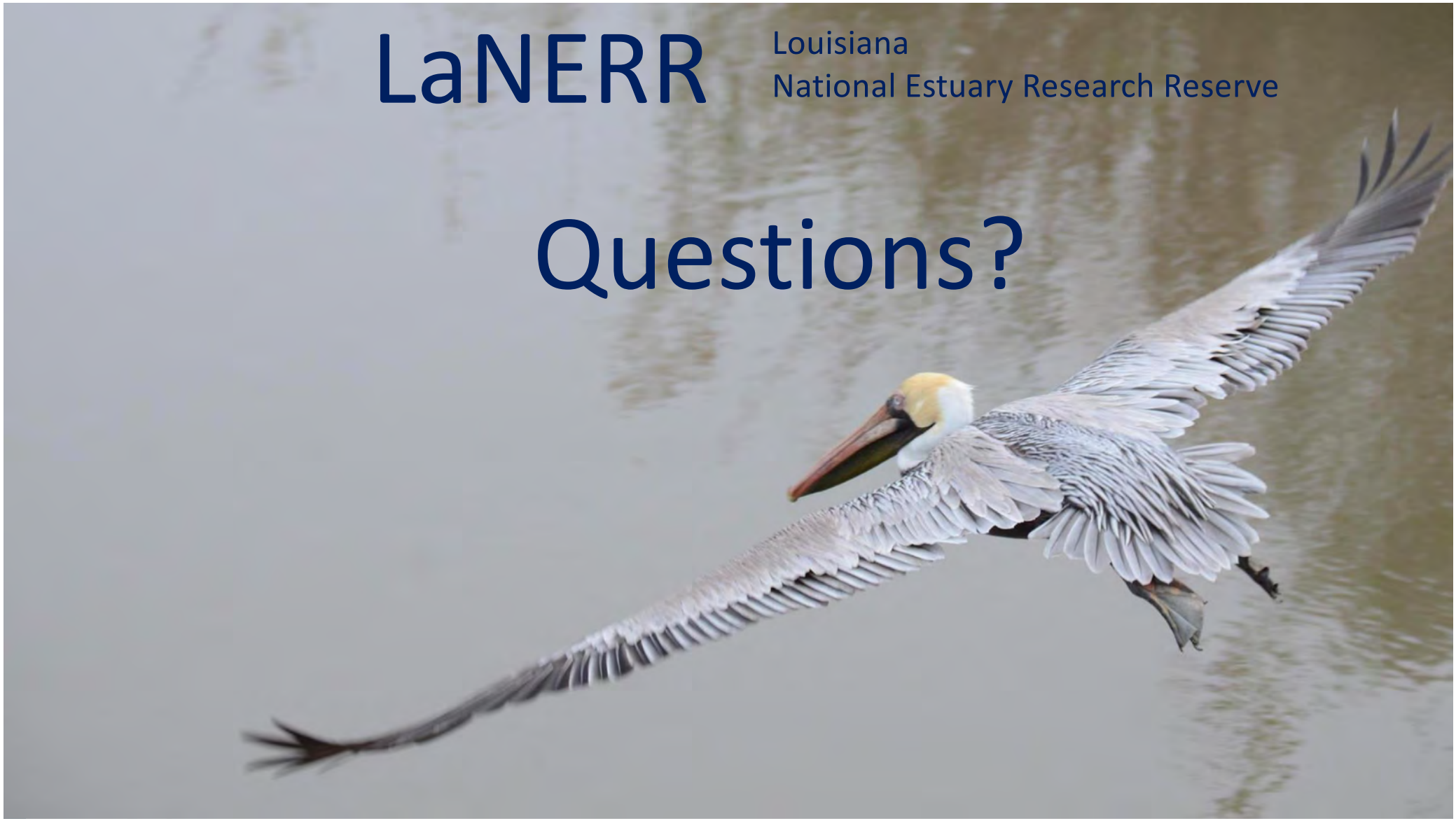
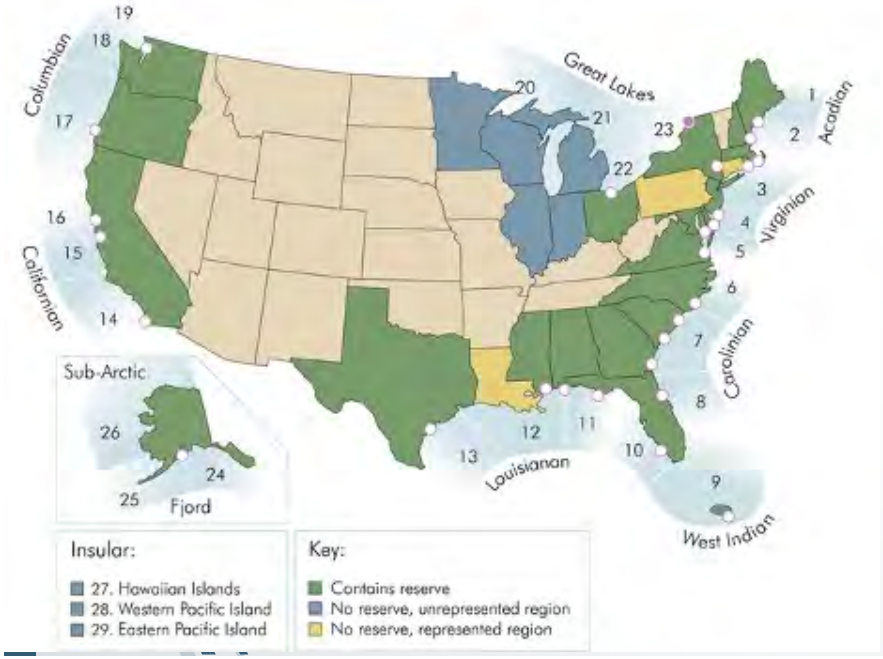
Questions?

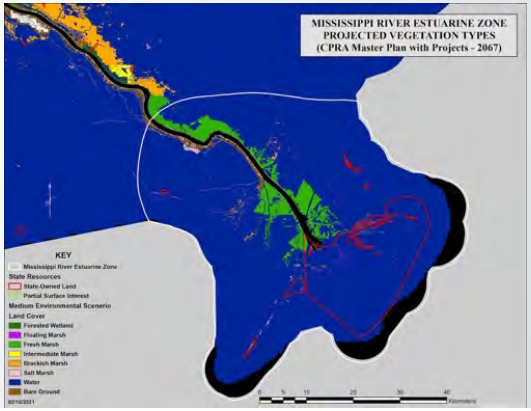


Unique Environment– Unique, as referred to in terms of NERR designation, refers to limited known occurrence of a habitat type, process, landscape feature, endangered or threatened species, etc. in the biogeographic region or sub-region.

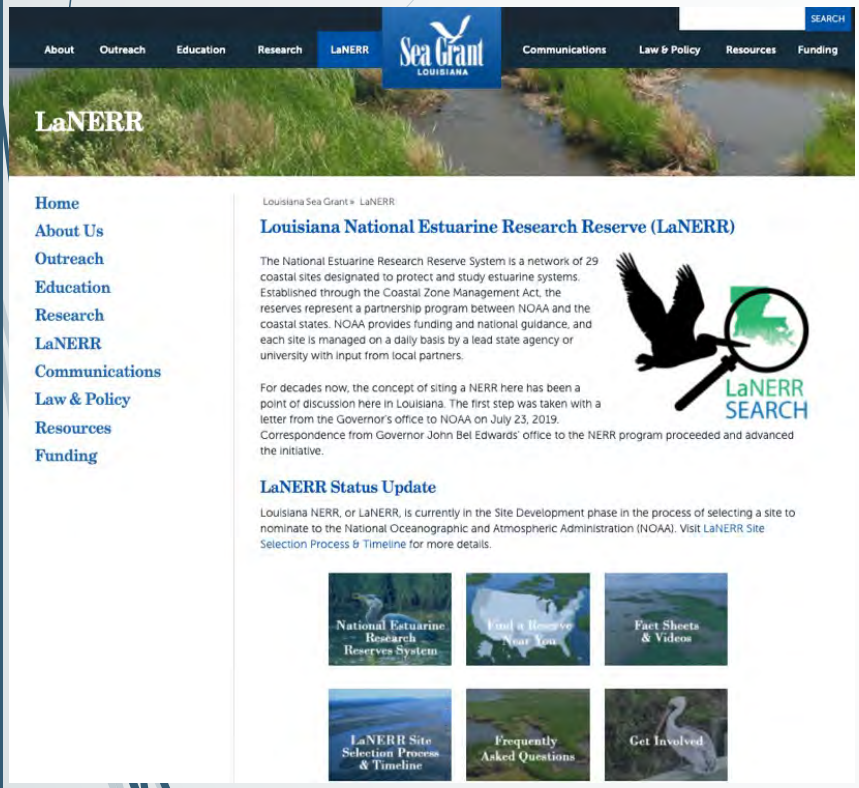


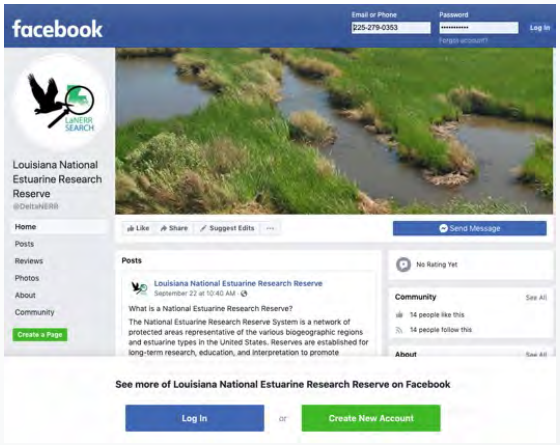
Core and buffer Areas – NOAA regulations define key or "core" land and water areas which contain "ecological units of a natural estuarine system which preserves, for research purposes, a full range of significant physical, chemical, and biological factors contributing to the diversity of fauna, flora and natural processes occurring within the estuary."

Integrity – Ecosystem integrity is generally used to refer to the completeness, functionality, and health of an ecosystem. Declines in integrity reduce habitat quality for native biota, disrupt ecological processes and functions, and diminish ecosystem resilience and capacity to sustain species and many ecosystem services. Significant declines in ecosystem integrity could jeopardize the NERR system goal of long-term research.



How do I stay engaged in the process?



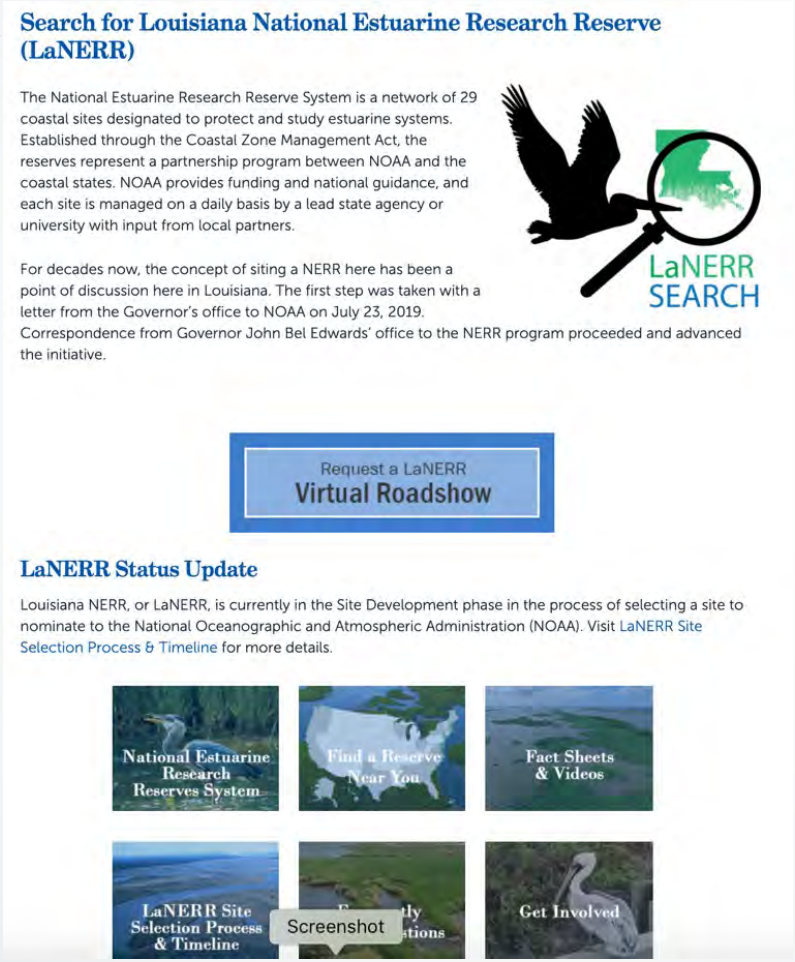


Contact

email deltanerr@lsu.edu

- Social Media:
  - **https://twitter.com/DeltaNERR**
- Website:
  - **http://www.laseagrant.org/deltanerr/**
- Facebook
  - **https://www.facebook.com/DeltaNERR/**

LaNERR Roadshow Presentation (www.laseagrant.org)



Contact

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- Social Media: **https://twitter.com/DeltaNERR**
- Website: **http://www.laseagrant.org/deltanerr/**
- Facebook **https://www.facebook.com/DeltaNERR/**

LaNERR Site Development Committee

Meeting #5

Thursday, May 13, 2021 (10:00 am – 12:00 pm)

Attendees

SDC Members - Abigail Bockus, LUMCON; Carol Wilson, LSU; Chip McGimsey, CRT; Craig Colten, LSU; Honora Buras, CPRA; Jill Trepanier, LSU; Justin Lemoine, CRT; Pat Arnould, GOIA; Sara Krupa, LDNR; Seth Blitch, TNC; Tracy Quirk, LSU; Kevin Ringelman, LSU; John Nyman, LSU; James Nelson, ULL; Kyle Piller, SELU; Greg Steyer, USGS; David Muth, NWF; Jennifer Hill, Louisiana Tech; Brian Roberts, LUMCON; Gina Campo, OCD; Julie Whitbeck, NPS; Robert Thomas, Loyola; Dinah Maygarden, UNO; Kacie Wright, USGS; Robert Moreau, SELU; Kristi Trail, PC; David Podgorski, UNO; Kenny Ribbeck, LDWF; Patty Ferguson Bohnee, ASU; Ron Boustany, NRCS; Brian Gautreau, LSU AgCenter; Mark Tobler, Loyola; Ken Krauss, USGS; Quenton Fontenot, NSU; Cindy Brown, LTL; Cheston Hill, OSL; Gary Shaffer, SELU

Other Attendees: Eva Hillman, PC; Marty Floyd, Louisiana Wildlife Federation; Amy Dixon, USACE; Caroline Byrne, Atchafalaya National Heritage Area; Deborah Dardis, SELU; Glenn Constant, USFWS; Amy Lesen, Dillard University; Dominique Seibert, LA Sea Grant; Daniel Breaux, USFWS; Phil Bucolo, Loyola; *JFortun (unsure who this is; name and affiliation were not provided in the chat)*

Designation Leadership Team: Robert Twilley, LA Sea Grant; LaTosha Mullins, LA Sea Grant, Kristin Ransom, NOAA; Unavailable (Morgan Crutcher, GOCa)

Royal Engineers & Consultants (LA Sea Grant Support): Mandy Green, Kirk Rhinehart; Unavailable (Alaina Grace)

SDC Members Unable to Attend: Aimee Hollander, NSU; Andy Dolan, USFWS; Bryan Piazza, TNC; Emad Habib, ULL; John Tirpak, USFWS; Mark Kulp, UNO; Megan La Peyre, USGS; Mitchell Aleshire, CRT; Morgan Kelly, LSU; Shirell Parfait-Dardar, GCDBCC; Natalie Snider, EDF; Gary Lafleur, NSU; Giovanna McClenachan, NSU; Liz Skilton, ULL; Chuck Hunter, USFWS; Illya Tietzel, UNO; Jonathan Foret, SLWDC; Malay Ghose Hajra, UNO; Simone Maloz, RoR; Joey Breaux, LDAF; Heather Stone, ULL; Andy Fischer, LDWF; Martin O'Connell, UNO; Matthew Hiatt, LSU; Nathan Corley, LDOE; Navid Jafari, LSU; Robert Mahon, UNO; Scott Hemmerling, WI; Thomas Gresham, LDOE; Beth Stauffer, ULL; Danielle Keller, USACE; Erik Johnson, Audubon; Michael Pasquier, LSU; Alex Kolker, LUMCON; Claire Anderson, Ripple Effect; Dean Blanchard, BTNEP; Erin Cox, UNO; Maida Owens, CRT; Mike Carloss, DU; Corey Miller, CRCL; Rebecca Triche, LWF; Mark Davis, Tulane; Donata Henry, Tulane

Summary

Welcome

The key objectives of the meeting were to discuss Phase I proposals, the 2nd draft of Site Selection Criteria, and Phase II and Final Candidate Site proposal guidance. Site Development Committee website content was reviewed.

Phase I Proposal Presentations

Presentations were provided by proposal team leads/co-leads for each of the three estuarine zones.

Pontchartrain Estuarine Zone

Kristi Trail provided an overview of the Phase I Pontchartrain proposal, which included a map of the Pontchartrain Basin as well as a list of personnel, participating institutions, areas of expertise and team roles. The team leads reached out to academic institutions to ensure geographic coverage across the basin as well as broad expertise.

The Pontchartrain proposal team has a five member leadership team named the Pontchartrain Proposal Leadership Team (PPLT). Each institution represented on the PPLT has its own sub-team. The PPLT helps keep the team organized and ensures regular email communication. Team documents have been uploaded to the SharePoint site provided by the DLT, but the team is also using Google Drive.

The team identified the following needs: GIS shapefiles for all previously provided SDC maps; a SharePoint site; a list of any other shared state/federal agency personnel who will be on all teams; a zoom call with the North Carolina NERR to discuss pros/cons of multi-component NERR; and guidance from DLT/NOAA on a multi-component site.

Eva Hillman from PC/SELU reviewed the proposed core and buffer area maps. The proposed site will be multi-component and spans from the Maurepas and Manchac Swamps to the Chandeleur Islands (seagrasses) and includes Big Branch National Wildlife Refuge, the Orleans Land Bridge, and Biloxi Marsh. Total site acreage is approximately 373,000 acres with approximately 251,500 acres of land.

The Pontchartrain proposal team confirmed that they have not yet selected a location for the NERR headquarters or decided on a state partner. The team is open to considering other areas for inclusion in their site but realize that their proposed site is already extensive.

Barataria Estuarine Zone

Andy Nyman provided an overview of the Phase I Barataria proposals. The team is proposing two options at this time with the possibly of a third hybrid option. The team member list was shared. One of the strengths of having a Barataria NERR is its proximity to New Orleans. If 1% of tourist that visit New Orleans annually would visit the NERR, number of annual visitors would be close to 20,000. Proximity to the Mid-Barataria Diversion is also reason to focus on Barataria. NERR headquarters are proposed for either Jean Lafitte or West Pointe a la Hache (WPALH).

The Lafitte proposal team is led by Tracy Quirk. State owned lands within the proposed site include Salvador WMA; federal lands include Jean Lafitte National Park; Wisner Foundation property near Grand Isle is also included. For the Lafitte site, formal communication has occurred with Jefferson Parish

government to provide lands for the NERR. Oil spill funding is being used to construct the Lafitte Wetland Education Center, which should be completed in approximately 2 years. The Town of Lafitte is working on waterways to take visitors out directly from the center. Having the education center serve as the NERR headquarters could broaden its reach and focus.

Andy Nyman is leading the WPALH proposal team. Plaquemines Parish Government (PPG) offered 10 acres of property for a NERR headquarters (former LSU AgCenter citrus research station), which is approximately 40 miles from New Orleans. The location of the PPG property would allow development of a boat launch directly into the Mississippi River. The proposed site has close proximity to the WPALH siphon, a ferry, Mardi Gras Pass, and the Mid-Barataria Diversion. The site avoids the higher subsidence rates found in some locations within the Mississippi River Delta.

The Barataria proposal team confirmed that Nicholls State University and the Barataria-Terrebonne National Estuary Program (BTNEP) are engaged in proposal development. The team was asked to consider adding areas of floating marsh to the proposed site as well as to seek input from Native American community members. The WPALH site would encompass approximately 50,000 acres of marsh land plus another 100,000 or 200,000 acres of state water bottoms. Acreage would be split between core and buffer. The NPS' Barataria Preserve would add approximately 27,000 acres of predominantly freshwater wetlands, approximately 18,000 acres of marsh (freshwater flotant & some established on mineral substrates) and 9,000 acres of swamp (bald cypress + bottomland hardwood) to either of the proposed Barataria sites.

Atchafalaya Estuarine Zone

Brian Roberts provided an overview of the Phase I Atchafalaya proposal. The Atchafalaya Zone is in close proximity to Lafayette, Baton Rouge, Morgan City, and Thibodaux as well as multiple universities. Brian discussed how the LaNERR would fit into the overall NERR network. A list of team members and their expertise were discussed, and to date, the team has met via a series of zoom meetings. The team is trying to identify a site that provides a unique river delta setting that encompasses all key relevant habitats found in Louisiana. Three distinct zones were identified for the Atchafalaya site: alluvial floodplain, river delta and fresh marsh, and brackish and salt marsh. Maps showing core and buffer areas for each zone were discussed. The buffer area for the alluvial floodplain zone would be the main stem of the Atchafalaya River. Boundaries for each zone could be modified to follow boundaries of state/federal lands more closely (e.g., Marsh Island WMA). There are several interpretative sites throughout the zone that may be available to serve as the headquarters. The team has chosen to focus the NERR on highlighting the ability, within a contained area, to have great diversity of habitats representative of the state of Louisiana. Team needs include assistance in identifying key contacts for resource protection and acquisition and management as well as GIS support.

The Atchafalaya site would include approximately 175,000 acres of core alluvial, 210,000 acres of core marsh, and 268,000 acres of core river delta. Buffer areas are similar in size.

Second Draft Site Selection Criteria

There have been two meetings of the site criteria subcommittee. The DLT plans to submit site selection criteria to NOAA in early June with the goal of having it approved by NOAA in early July. Proposal teams would then have the final site selection criteria while they are working on Final Phase proposals.

The second draft of the site criteria was provided as a send-ahead for SDC Meeting #5 and was briefly discussed during the meeting. Longleaf pine savanna was confirmed to be included as part of the upland land class. SDC members were asked to provide feedback on the second draft site selection criteria; feedback will be considered at the next working meeting of the site criteria subcommittee.

Phase II and Final Candidate Site Proposal Guidance

Phase II and Final Candidate Site Proposal Guidance was discussed. Phase II proposals are due 6/30/21, and Final Phase Proposals are due 9/24/21. One key modification to previously discussed guidance was that the team providing GIS Support would like to provide a standard set of maps to each team rather than the GIS data underlying maps previously produced for the SDC. The GIS team has proposed to provide a total of six maps for each team (4 standard maps and 2 maps based on specific proposal team requests). Map requests should be provided to the GIS team via email to deltanerr@lsu.edu by 6/1/21.

Wrap Up and Next Steps

The revised LaNERR timeline was discussed. The DLT is scheduling the next site criteria committee meeting and a 'check in' meeting with proposal teams. Organization of the screening subcommittee is a high priority, and the DLT will be scheduling the first subcommittee meeting in early June. SDC Meeting #6 will be held in late July to discuss Phase II proposals, feedback from the screening subcommittee, and provide any update on Final Phase proposal guidance. Town Hall meetings will be held in August for proposal teams to solicit feedback from the public on their proposals.

The SDC Meeting #5 recording and meeting summary will be posted to the SDC site following the meeting.

Site Development Committee Meeting 6

July 14, 2021

LaNERR Site Development Committee

Meeting #6

Wednesday, July 14 (10:00 – 11:30 am)

Zoom link: https://lsu.zoom.us/j/5720227912?from=addon
Meeting ID: 572 022 7912
Mobile Dial In: 646-876-9923

Pre-meeting Materials:

1. Revised LaNERR Workflow and Schedule
2. Phase II proposals

Objectives:

- Review Revised LaNERR Workflow and Schedule
- Discuss Phase II Proposals
- Updates on
    - NOAA feedback on LaNERR site criteria
    - Next steps for screening subcommittee
    - Preparing for Town Halls

Agenda:

Time	Topic
5 min	Welcome
5 min	Revised LaNERR Workflow and Schedule
10 min	NOAA feedback on Site Selection Criteria
45 min	Phase II Proposal Presentations
15 min	*Atchafalaya Estuarine Zone*
15 min	*Pontchartrain Estuarine Zone*
15 min	*Barataria Estuarine Zone*
10 min	Screening Subcommittee (next steps)
10 min	Town Halls
5 min	Wrap up and next steps

Post-meeting follow up from DLT:

- Recording of meeting
- Meeting summary

LA NERR Phase II Proposal: Atchafalaya Basin

Team Members:

Brian Roberts (LUMCON), Team Lead
Jimmy Nelson (ULL), Team Co-Lead
Justin Lemoine (Atchafalaya National Heritage Area), Team Co-Lead

Craig Colten (LSU)
Brian Gautreau (LSU Ag Center Youth Wetlands and Outreach Program)
Dani DiIullo (Louisiana Sea Grant Communications Coordinator)
Murt Conover (LUMCON Education and Outreach)
Erik Johnson (Audubon Louisiana)
Bryan Piazza (The Nature Conservancy)
Joseph Baustian (The Nature Conservancy)
Ken Krauss (USGS)
Simone Maloz (Restore or Retreat, Inc)
Victoria Sagrera (Restore or Retreat, Inc)

1.0 <u>Physical Description of Site</u>:

The Atchafalaya River system serves as a repository for approximately 30% of the combined flows of the Mississippi and Red Rivers making it the 5th largest river in the North America in mean annual discharge and during floods it can become the 2nd largest discharging river on the continent. Because the Atchafalaya River includes flows from both the Mississippi River and the Red River (one of the major mid-continental rivers in North America), it has the largest drainage basin in North America and shares with the Mississippi the distinction of having the third largest drainage basin in the world. The system extends from the Old River Control Structure near Simmesport, Louisiana in the north to the Gulf of Mexico in the south where it empties into Vermillion, West Cote Blanche, and Atchafalaya Bays via the main stem and Wax Lake deltas. The Atchafalaya River Basin (ARB) represents all of the coastal habitats found within Louisiana and is a complete delta estuary ecosystem that will be a unique addition to the NERR network.

The upper portion of the ARB contains species-rich and structurally diverse bottomland hardwood forests with the middle region composed of cypress-tupelo swamps reflecting decreased relative elevation and increased flooding. These two regions comprise the alluvial floodplain and represent the largest block of floodplain forest in the US (Ford and Nyman 2011). The lower region consists of the delta plain where the Atchafalaya River meets the Gulf of Mexico. The Atchafalaya and Wax Lake deltas are an actively growing delta system at the mouth of the Atchafalaya, dominated by willows, lotus, and other emergent freshwater vegetation. From the river deltas to the west, the system transitions from freshwater to smooth cordgrass dominated brackish and saltmarshes along the shallow Vermillion and West Cote Blanche bays. Altogether the Atchafalaya basin consists of approximately 2 million acres (7,000 km^2) of land, waterways, and coastal waters.

1.1. Core and Buffer Area Map: See section 4.0 below.

1.2. Land-owner names and contact information: LDWF manages the proposed sites

1.3. What percentage of total CORE AREA is owned by the state: 100%. As a result of the state owning such large discrete contiguous areas within each of the target zones of the proposed Atchafalaya NERR, the plan would be to initially establish all of the core and buffer areas within the NERR on state lands. This would include Indian Bayou WMA in the upper portion of the alluvial floodplain (representing largely bottomland hardwood forests), Attakapas Island WMA in the lower portion of the alluvial floodplain (representing cypress-tupelo swamps), Atchafalaya Delta WMA representing the active river delta wetland habitats and emergent wetlands and bays, and Marsh Island Wildlife Refuge and Louisiana State WMA and Game Preserve (on the south shore of Vermillion Bay) (representing the brackish and salt marsh wetland habitats) with the associated state owned water bottoms connecting the core and buffer areas of the system from the north of the watershed through the estuary to offshore of the barrier islands. Over time, the goal would be to work with federal (e.g., multiple NWRs) and other organizational (e.g., TNC, Audubon) and private land-owner partners to expand the NERR.

1.4. Have candidate site CORE AREA land-owners been contacted? Yes

1.5. Have candidate site BUFFER AREA land-owners been contacted? Yes

2.0. Ecological Characteristics of Site:

The Atchafalaya Basin NERR in nearly every ecological sense is representative of the major habitats and ecosystems in Louisiana. From the alluvial flood plains of the upland river to the active river delta transitioning to brackish and saltmarsh system, the Atchafalaya NERR is a microcosm to study all the important ecological dynamics that drive change in Louisiana and other major river deltas. Unlike any other NERR site the Atchafalaya Basin is an actively growing river delta. The Atchafalaya and Wax Lake deltas, where the AR empties into the Gulf of Mexico contains over 50,000 ha of the most recently created land in North America. The basin and coastal marshes exhibit disproportionately high levels of native biodiversity (Calhoun 1999).

The current distribution and maintenance of the basin's wetland habitats are driven by past and present seasonal water flow and sedimentary processes (Piazza 2014). Bottomland hardwood forests (150,138 ha) span the northern section of the basin, where the land is highest and overbank flooding is infrequent with species composition varying based on flooding frequency, depth, and duration. Cypress-tupelo swamps (106,000 ha) exist in the middle portion of the basin, where flooding frequency, depth, and duration are greatest. Dominated by bald cypress and water tupelo, these species can persist under near constant flooding, although regeneration requires periodic, prolonged low-water periods during the growing season. In some areas with high levels of growing-season flooding, a scrub-shrub community exists where scattered cypress trees and flood-tolerant water-elm, swamp-privet, and buttonbush dominate (Piazza 2014). Near where the AR meets the Gulf of Mexico, vegetation transitions from cypress-tupelo swamp to emergent delta marsh wetlands of Atchafalaya and Wax Lake Deltas and open water of coastal bays. Natural delta islands are chevron-shaped, with the upstream tip of each island colonized by stands of black willow and an understory of nonnative elephant ear, rice cutgrass, climbing hempweed, and smartweed. As elevation decreases, tidal freshwater marsh vegetation dominates. Moving east and west away from the river deltas, the estuaries are fringed with brackish and salt marsh habitats and to a lesser extent black mangrove patches. Submerged aquatic vegetation is found in low intertidal and subtidal areas.

2.1. Map of Vegetation Types: See section 4.0 below, but note that map doesn't include vegetation in alluvial floodplain areas of NERR.

2.2. List examples of habitat types in the general area of the Core and Buffer Zones: The Core and Buffer zones of the Atchafalaya NERR contain all of Louisiana's habitat types. These include upland (group I) habitats of bottomland hardwood forests and cypress-tupelo swamps; intertidal (group II) habitats of coastal forested wetlands; floating, fresh, intermediate, and salt marshes; mangroves; intertidal beaches/dunes and mud/sand flats; and submerged bottom (group III) habitats of subtidal hard bottoms/reefs, soft bottoms, and subtidal plants (SAV).

2.3. Significant Fauna and Flora in the general area of the Core and Buffer Areas. The ARB contains extensive fish and wildlife resources (Piazza 2014, Appendix 2 includes 13 pages of tables). These resources include 17 plant and animal species of conservation concern, including seven distinct natural plant communities, five species of plants, seven species of birds, two species of mammals, and three species of fish (full list and review in Piazza 2014, Table 5.1.).

3.0. Narrative

3.1 Suitability for Research, Monitoring and Resource Protection:

The proposed Atchafalaya reserve would be the only active river delta estuarine system in the NERR network. As such, it would substantially enhance the biogeographical and typological balance of the network and provide new and unique opportunities for research, monitoring, and resource protection (15 CFR 921.11(c) (1)). Specifically, the bald cypress dominated alluvial floodplains in the upper Atchafalaya Basin and the actively prograding Wax Lake delta habitats cannot be found in other reserves. Research topics in these habitats could focus on flood/water management impacts, responses to storm events, natural processes that influence delta formation, successional patterns and expansion of species into newly formed habitats, and much more. Each of these topics would be a new facet of investigation not found in any other NERR site. Simultaneously, the site creates valuable opportunities to conduct comparative research, particularly in the coastal marsh zone, between network estuarine systems (e.g. Grand Bay and Weeks Bay) and non-network systems (e.g. Mobile Bay).

There is a long and rich history of research activities in the ARB that span across all of the core areas of the Atchafalaya NERR and diverse disciplines. Many of these activities were summarized in *The Atchafalaya River Basin: History and Ecology of an American Wetland* (Piazza 2014) which includes 26 pages of literature cited from the basin. Since the book's publication, almost 5000 additional publications for "Atchafalaya" can be found in Google Scholar indicating the rich history of diverse research activities that have taken place in the Atchafalaya River Basin. The close proximity of the basin to numerous colleges, universities, and research institutions combined with the importance of the system has and will likely continue to facilitate this extensive investment in research within the basin.

The proposed reserve would leverage existing monitoring opportunities that would use physical monitoring stations maintained by USGS, NWS, and LDEQ in the alluvial portion of the system. In active delta and marsh systems there are numerous Coastwide Reference Monitoring locations that are maintained by USGS and CPRA. These sites provide physical and biological monitoring in fresh, floating, brackish, and saltmarsh systems. Additionally, NOAA real time physical oceanographic stations monitor physical water parameters in the Atchafalaya Bay portion of the site. The Atchafalaya Basin has been the host to over 20 Coastal Wetlands Planning, Protection and Restoration Act (CWPPRA) restoration sites which provide further research and monitoring opportunities.

3.2 Suitability for Education, Interpretation, and Training:

The Atchafalaya region, centrally located along the Louisiana coast is the site of active delta-building processes. The Atchafalaya delta provides relatively short travel distances from all of Louisiana's major coastal zone cities and most of Louisiana's major universities. Whether observing the changing botanical diversity on a transect of the Wax Lake delta islands, studying the fauna surrounding Marsh Island, learning about local residents' adaptation to living with water in the region, or observing the water management structures that influence the region's

development, the Atchafalaya offers varied learning opportunities. It is the ideal coastal classroom for all audiences.

The Atchafalaya River provides the nation's largest active land-building river delta and thus, has been the site of scientific and engineering studies for decades. Changing flora and fauna habitats, sediment deposition patterns, coastal protection technologies, and water management methods have been studied by public agencies and universities. While abundant in natural and cultural resources, the region lacks some of the infrastructure needed to support large groups within some of the more remote reaches of the coast. Restrooms, large-group dorms and meeting facilities would be beneficial additions to facilitate more isolated areas of the region. Planned facilities in Morgan City, Henderson, Bayou Sorrel, and a number of other sites spaced throughout the area could potentially leverage the NERR designation on top of existing investments to stimulate education and research when properly coordinated across the wide array of public, non-profit, and private stakeholders.

The hardwood swamps within the Atchafalaya Floodway represent an opportunity to learn about the evolution of an ecological system in the face of water management for the sake of flood control. Brackish marshes around western Vermilion Bay and the growing coast around the mouth of Atchafalaya River and Wax Lake Outlet are exceptional opportunities for collaborative learning with early childhood and university partners. They provide the potential for education about the dynamic coastal conditions in the region and how they compare to the rate of land loss across the east and west sections of the vast Louisiana coastline. The relative stability of the estuarine lands and water bodies provides a consistent site for field study, while the ever-changing nature of the sections of growing coastline provides new and challenging learning opportunities as it evolves over time.

When visiting the region, K-12 students have a plethora of field trips to engage in hands-on learning with topics ranging from ornithological studies, coastal biology, engineering, geologic processes to resource management, US history, and cultural anthropology. These activities would be aligned to state and national standards.

Much of coastal Louisiana is engineered and the Atchafalaya is an ideal place to discuss these systems and their impact on communities. From the Old River Control Structure in Concordia Parish controlling the volumes of water in the Atchafalaya and Mississippi Rivers, to the Morganza floodway levees' management of floodwaters, to the levees and floodwalls that protect the coastal communities, there are valuable assets worth studying the impact of engineering on the state and its economy.

3.3 Site's Compatibility with Coastal Management Issues *(500 words)*:
The ARB area is the largest example of intact delta (lacustrine and bayhead) in the country and houses the largest stand of coastal cypress forest left. Because of its large, intact nature it provides a wealth of natural services including fish and wildlife habitat and hurricane protection. Its future health will be determined by the management of water flows, which are controlled. While we don't think that development conversion is a threat in this basin, it is

extremely susceptible to threats related to basinwide flow management, land subsidence, and sea level rise. For these reasons, it is imperative for conservation and restoration efforts to address water flows and its interaction with hydrologic restoration efforts in the basin, and research and monitoring of the effects across all natural services are critical to these efforts.

To address issues related to modifications to the natural flow regime of the AR and the resulting sedimentation and water quality issues within the basin and how they affect the coastal communities, Governor Edwards created the Atchafalaya River Basin Restoration & Enhancement Task Force (ARBRE Task Force). The Task Force brings stakeholders from diverse perspectives together to work through the ongoing challenges in the basin and help identify opportunities and is presenting an initial report to the CPRA Board in September 2021. The ARBRE Task Force is comprised of 20 key state and local stakeholders as well as five federal nonvoting members. The ARBRE Task Force is chaired and staffed by the Governor's Office of Coastal Activities (GOCA) and has considerable overlap with the partner network already identified for the Atchafalaya NERR site.

There are more than a dozen threatened or endangered species that occupy the proposed reserve including the piping plover and other bird species of concern, west Indian manatee, pallid sturgeon, and at least five species of sea turtles. The entire system lies within a major flyway for migratory birds and has been declared critical bird habitat by the Audubon Society. The alluvial floodplain core area contains two (~30,000 acres each) wildlife management areas (WMAs) that provide critical habitats for Louisiana black bear, neotropical migratory birds, American alligators, and freshwater fish and invertebrate species. The Atchafalaya and Wax Lake delta region is also a WMA containing more than 15,000 acres of freshwater and floating marsh habitats and ~100,000 acres of brackish and saltmarsh habitats are included in two WMAs at the southern ends of Vermillion and West Cote Blanche bays the latter of which provide critical habitat to numerous waterfowl, wading birds, manatees, and sea turtles and nursery habitats for commercially important species such as shrimp and blue crabs. The Atchafalaya Basin has also been the host to over 20 CWPPRA restoration sites.

The Atchafalaya River Basin is the nation's largest river swamp and holds significant ecological and cultural significance for Louisiana and the nation. The Basin produces the largest wild caught crawfish harvest in the nation, supports thriving finfish and shellfish fisheries and hosts a unique and diverse array of plants and animals. The Basin also serves as a critical relief valve for extreme flood events on the Mississippi River and is home to the Port of Morgan City, a critical connection point for inland and coastal shipping routes.

4.0 <u>Maps and Tables to Document Sections 1-3</u>: The Team LaNERR GIS Support provided TWO maps and quantitative estimates for each of the Proposal Teams as outlined below.

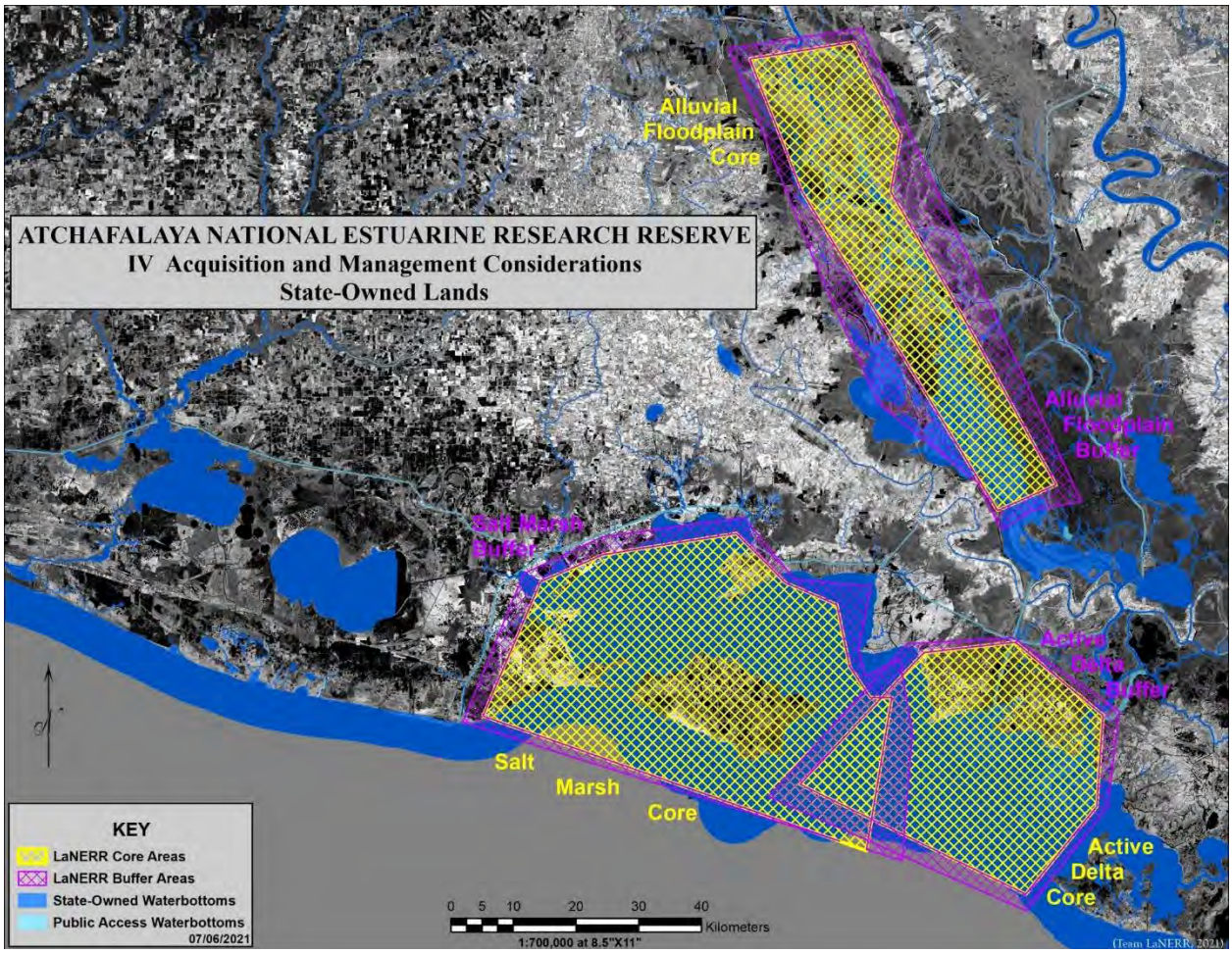
Notes on draft maps on statistics presented in this phase of the proposal:

1) *Given the extensive size of contiguous plots of state lands in both sections of the alluvial floodplain (bottomland hardwood forests and cypress-tupelo swamps), the active river delta and the brackish-salt marsh wetland regions and the associated state bottom water*

regions of the areas included in the maps below, it is our initial intention to only include the state lands in the core and buffer areas and not the entire shaded areas included in the maps and calculations.

2) *There is an obvious mismatch in the geo-referencing between the polygons provided and the generated maps that have created a confusing overlap between the active delta and brackish-salt marsh core subregions.*
3) *The vegetation base map needs to be updated to include critical information on the alluvial floodplain core subregion of the proposed NERR site as it includes unique and critical habitats of the NERR site.*

4.2 Thematic GIS Map ONE: A GIS map that depicts the candidate site's CORE and BUFFER AREAS. Data will be generated as follows for each of the CORE and BUFFER polygons:



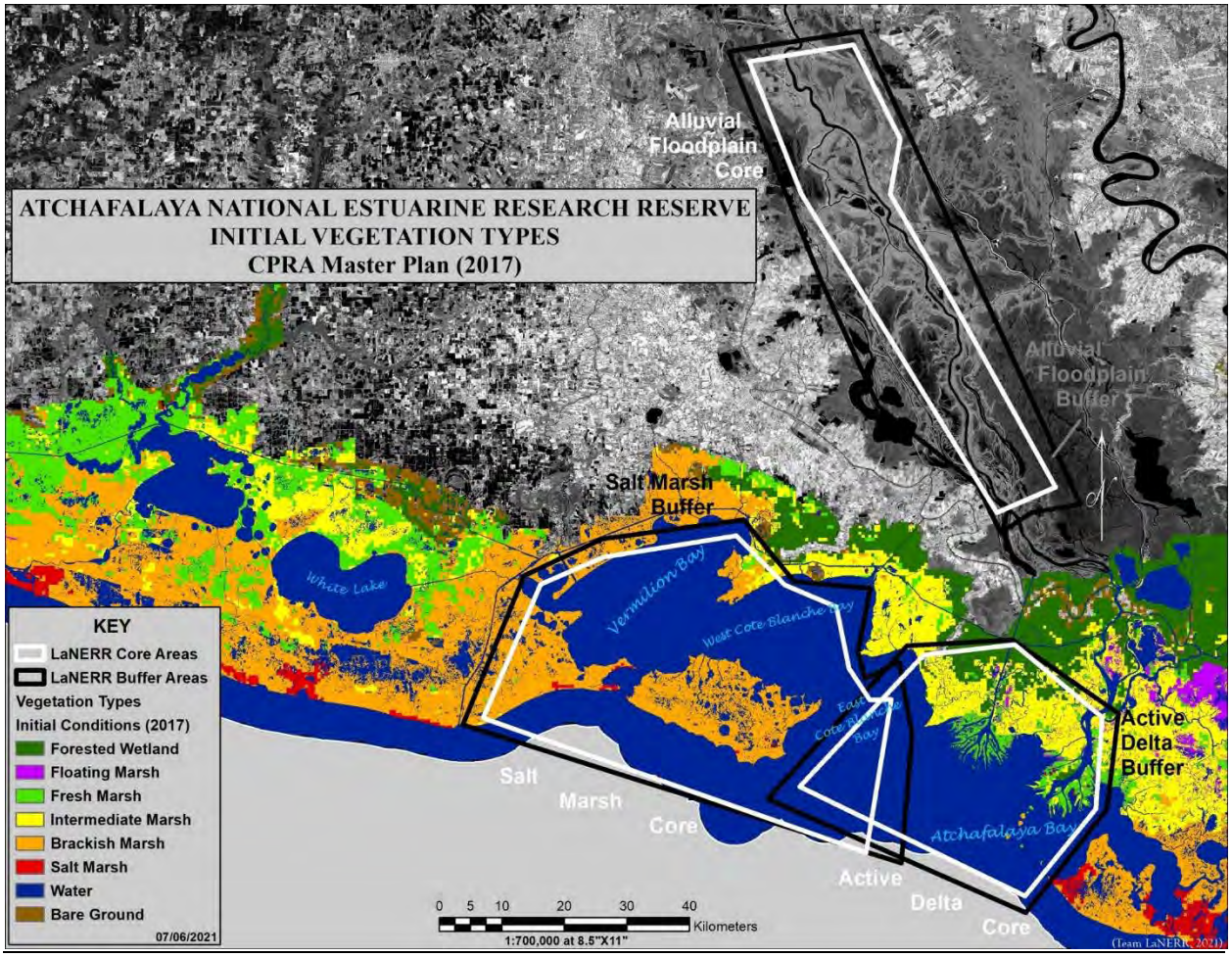
Atchafalaya LaNERR Alternative					
CORE AREAS	Total Area	State Lands	State Waters	Non-state area	Comments
Salt Marsh Core	500,600.6	85,610.6	394,626.5	20,363.5	Overlapping polygons
Active Delta Core	295,184.8	121,287.9	253,602.7	0.0	Overlapping polygons in State Waters only. St_Lnd_Acr calculation is Atch Delta WMA (land & water)
Alluvial Floodplain Core	257,917.4	70,885.9	55,862.6	131,169.0	
Atchafalaya LaNERR Alternative					
BUFFER AREAS	Total Area	State Lands	State Waters	Non-state area	Comments
Salt Marsh Buffer	113,054.5	1.1	25,397.2	87,656.2	Overlapping Polygons
Active Delta Buffer	79,908.9	7,116.8	33,030.6	39,761.5	Overlapping Polygons
Alluvial Floodplain Buffer	170,929.5	26,490.7	32,174.0	112,264.8	

4.3 Thematic GIS Map TWO: A GIS map of the CPRA initial vegetation types and distribution described in sections 2.0 above. Data will be generated as follows for each of the CORE and BUFFER polygons:

a. acreage of each wetland typology of CPRA initial vegetation in each CORE AREA polygon (if vegetation types are included in CPRA data);

b. acreage of each wetland typology of CPRA initial vegetation in each BUFFER AREA polygon (if vegetation types are included in CPRA data);

Note: The Alluvial Floodplain core and buffer area acreage is not included in this preliminary assessment because they are not included in the CPRA vegetation maps.



ATCHAFALAYA CORE ZONES (Acres)

Vegetation	Active Delta	Salt Marsh	Alluvial
Forested Wetlands	18,145.0	170.6	
Fresh Marsh	18,113.0	686.3	
Intermediate Marsh	47,255.8	2,595.8	
Brackish Marsh	650.3	100,630.2	
Salt Marsh	293.1	1,604.4	
Water	206,000.9	381,090.1	
Bare Ground	196.4	1.3	
Floating Marsh	3,977.8	44.3	
No Data	550.0	13,783.2	
Total	295,182.2	500,606.0	

ATCHAFALAYA BUFFER ZONES Perimeter (Acres)

Vegetation	Active Delta	Salt Marsh	Alluvial
Forested Wetlands	5,374.6	633.6	
Fresh Marsh	1,552.3	182.4	
Intermediate Marsh	7,005.9	2,144.1	
Brackish Marsh	14.9	22,121.9	
Salt Marsh	55.4	15.6	
Water	50,124.3	76,677.6	
Bare Ground	143.7	219.3	
Floating Marsh	799.3	24.5	
No Data	14,840.6	10,940.3	
Total	79,911.0	112,959.1	

5.0 Optional Sections.

- **Facilities in the region that may help to support the research, education, and training mission of the proposed LaNERR.**

The ARB is a short commute from most of Louisiana's major coastal research universities as well as number of other research and education institutions that can be leveraged to achieve the research, education, and training mission of the proposed Atchafalaya NERR. This combined with already existing partnerships with the Atchafalaya National Heritage Area (and all of its commission), Audubon Louisiana, The Nature Conservancy, LA Sea Grant, LUMCON, Barataria-Terrebonne National Estuary Program (BTNEP), USGS, and Restore and Retreat, Inc. provide a number of resources to aid in this mission. These include the Atchafalaya Heritage Area Welcome Center and TNC's Atchafalaya Conservation Center, a 120' barge complex located on 9 acres of land along Bayou Sorrel, that is a meeting space for scientists, students, community members, and others interested in furthering conservation in the Basin. Located in the area of Bayou Sorrel, it serves as a base of operations for TNC's Atchafalaya Basin Preserve and a center for outreach and research in the Basin. Additional planned facilities in Morgan City, Henderson, Bayou Sorrel, and a number of other sites spaced throughout the area could potentially leverage the NERR designation on top of existing investments to stimulate education and research when properly coordinated across the wide array of public, non-profit, and private stakeholders. The region also contains a large number of state parks and boat launches in and near the core and buffer areas of the proposed NERR that will great aid in achieving its mission.

- **Bibliography of past research, data, or reports documenting candidate site's resources**

Much of the important literature relevant to the Atchafalaya Basin NERR up through 2013 is summarized in Piazza 2014 and its 26 pages of literature cited.

Piazza, B. P. (2014). The Atchafalaya River Basin: History and ecology of an American wet land. College Station: Texas A&M University Press. 305pp.

Since that time, an additional ~5000 publications can include "Atchafalaya" can be found in Google Scholar. A few representative papers from this period include:

Twilley RR, Day JW, Bevington AE, Castañeda-Moya E, Christensen A, Holm G, Heffner LR, Lane R, McCall A, Aarons A, Li S, Freeman A, Rovai AS. 2019. Ecogeomorphology of coastal deltaic floodplains and estuaries in an active delta: insights from the Atchafalaya Coastal Basin. Estuarine, Coastal, and Shelf Science 227: 106341

Roberts BJ, Doty SM. 2015. Spatial and temporal patterns of benthic respiration and net nutrient fluxes in the Atchafalaya River Delta Estuary. Estuaries and Coasts 38(6):1918-1936. DOI: 10.1007/s12237-015-9965-z.

Mossa J. 2016. The changing geomorphology of the Atchafalaya River, Louisiana: A historical perspective. Geomorphology 252: 112-127.

Piazza BP, Allen YC, Martin R, Bergan JF, King K. 2015. Floodplain conservation in the Mississippi River Valley: combining spatial analysis, landowner outreach, and market

assessment to enhance land protection for the Atchafalaya River Basin, Louisiana, USA. Restoration Ecology: 23: 65-74.

Bennett MG, Kozak JP. 2016. Spatial and temporal patterns in fish community structure and abundance in the largest U.S. river swamp, the Atchafalaya River floodplain, Louisiana. Ecology of Freshwater Fish 25: 577-589.

Shaw JB, Mohrig D, Whitman SK. 2013. The morphology and evolution of channels on the Wax Lake Delta, Louisiana, USA. Journal of Geophysical Research: Earth Surface, 118: 1562-1584.

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Barataria Bay NERR Phase II Proposal

1.0 Physical Description of the Site

1.1 Map of Core and Buffer Areas (see section 4.1 below)

1.2 Land-owner names and contact information

State Lands

Lake Salvador Wildlife Management Area; Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries, P.O. Box 98000; 2000 Quail Drive, Baton Rouge, LA 70898; 225-765-2800

Timken Wildlife Management Area; Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries leases from the City Park Commission of New Orleans

Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries Grand Isle Fisheries Research Lab

Elmer's Island Wildlife Refuge; Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries; Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries, P.O. Box 98000; 2000 Quail Drive, Baton Rouge, LA 70898; 225-765-2800

Grand Isle State Park; Admiral Craik Drive, Grand Isle, LA 70358; 985-787-2559; grandisle@crt.la.gov

Federal Lands

John Lafitte National Historic Park and Preserve (Barataria Preserve); 419 Decatur St. New Orleans, LA 70130; 504-589-3882

*Barataria-Terrebonne National Estuary Program; Nicholls State University; 320 Audubon; N. Babington Hall, Rm 105, Thibodaux, LA 70301; 985-447-0868 (*jurisdiction vs land-ownership)

Other Public and Parish Lands

The Edward Wisner Donation Trust; City of New Orleans; 935 Gravier St # 825, New Orleans, LA 70112; 504-210-1152

Jefferson Parish Louisiana Wetlands Education Center, Lafitte, LA; Jefferson Parish Government; 1221 Elwood Pk Blvd, Suite 310, Jefferson, LA 70123; 504-736-6653

Plaquemines Parish Government; 333 F Edward Hebert Blvd, Belle Chasse, LA 7003; 504-934-6000

Private Lands

The Nature Conservancy – Grand Isle, Louisiana; PO Box 4125, Baton Rouge, LA 70821; 225-338-1040

Atakapas-Ishak/Chawasha tribe in Grand Bayou; The tribe's leader is Rosina Philippe; rpatakapa@yahoo.com; 304-266-9047

1.3 Percent CORE AREA State Owned: 100%

1.4 Have CORE AREA land-owners been contacted? We are in the process of contacting core area land-owners.

1.5 Have BUFFER AREA land-owners been contacted? Several of the buffer area land-owners have been contacted and/or have representatives included on our team.

2.0 Ecological Characteristics of the Site

2.1 Vegetation Type Map (see section 4.2 below)

2.2 Habitat Types

Buffer Areas:

Bottomland hardwood forest
Large stands of cypress tupelo swamp
Old natural stream levees once distributary channels of the Mississippi River
Coastal Freshwater floating marsh
Coastal Freshwater emergent attached marsh
Coastal Intermediate salinity (aka oligohaline) emergent marsh
Coastal Brackish marsh
Coastal Salt marsh
Coastal Salt marsh/mangrove ecotone
Barrier Island Maritime Forest
Back barrier salt marsh and mangrove
Caminada Headland – beach and dune restoration
Coastal dunes, beach ridge, and beach habitat

Core Areas:

Bayous
Freshwater lakes and ponds
Freshwater and estuarine submerged aquatic vegetation
Estuarine back bay
Seagrass beds
Oyster beds
Subtidal soft bottoms

2.3 Significant Fauna and Flora

Fauna - American alligator, wading birds, songbirds, woodpeckers, ducks, bottle nosed dolphin, nine-banded armadillos, swamp rabbits, cayote, bobcats, white-tailed deer, minks, river otter, bats, tree frogs, anoles, over 20 species of snakes, fin fish, blue crabs, gar fish, over 50 species of amphibians.

Flora – Taxodium distichum (bald cypress), P*anicum hemitomon, Hydrocotyle sp., Eichornia crassipes, Pontederia cordata, Sagittaria lancifolia, Spartina patens, Vigna repens, Scirpus californicus, Echinochloa walteri, Sagittaria sp., Cladium jamaicense and Spartina patens, Scirpus olneyi, Scirpus robustus, Eleocharis parvula, and Ruppla maritima, Spartina alterniflora, Juncus roemerianus, Batis maritima, Avicennia nitida and Distichlis spicata, Halodule wrightii, Thalassia testudinum, Valisineria.*

Endangered/Threatened Species: West Indian Manatee, Red Knot, Piping Plover, Eastern black rail, Sturgeon, green sea turtle, hawksbill sea turtle, Kemp's Ridley sea turtle, Leatherback sea turtle, loggerhead sea turtle

3.0 Quality of the Site

3.1 Suitability for Research, Monitoring, and Resource Protection

Barataria Basin is one of the interdistributary sub-estuaries of the Mississippi deltaic plain. Habitats in the basin are diverse and range from hardwood forest, cypress tupelo swamp to marine marshes, beaches, and submerged habitats. The basin and associated Core and Buffer Areas has a long history of research. Ecosystem studies began in the basin in 1960's with studies in the saline marshes and water bodies of the lower basin, which expanded to freshwater forested wetlands in the headwaters of the basin and fresh and brackish marshes in mid-Barataria Bay. As the focal area of the first large Mississippi River Sediment Diversion, the Mid-Barataria Bay Sediment Diversion, which will reconnect the River to adjacent marshes and bay, new and ongoing research on baseline data is being collected through Louisiana Center of Excellence Awards administered through The Water Institute of the Gulf and the Louisiana Coastal Protection and Restoration Authority. This research and monitoring initiative is designed to provide pre-diversion baseline data and post-diversion monitoring, assessment and adaptive management information. The new habitat created by the diversion will include emergent freshwater deltaic marsh, channels, and ridges and will provide a number of research opportunities for examining deltaic wetland and estuarine processes through river reconnection.

3.2 Suitability for Education, Interpretation, and Training

There are a number of existing educational and outreach operations that would be in support of the LaNERR including Barataria-Terrebonne National Estuary Program (BTNEP), John Lafitte National Park, Jefferson Parish Louisiana Wetland Education Center (under development), and Ripple Effect New Orleans.

The Barataria-Terrebonne NEP is a partnership of government, business, scientists, conservation organizations, and individuals for the preservation, protection, and restoration of the BTNEP in southeast Louisiana. BTNEP provides K-12 curriculum and activities for formal and informal educators aligned with the State of Louisiana Science Standard Lessons. The BTNEP hosts teacher workshops, and continuing education programs. A number of outreach and volunteer activities hosted by the BTNEP include Estuary Artworks, Paddle Bayou Lafourche, and Tribal Intergenerational Camp, and environmental clean-ups.

John Lafitte NP hosts summer camps, citizens science projects, volunteer programs, and provides curriculum materials for educators in the New Orleans metropolitan area, and stakeholders within St Bernard, Jefferson, and Plaquemines Parishes.

Ripple Effect in New Orleans is a nonprofit environmental education organization that fosters water literacy through professional training and standards-aligned curricula for teachers, with the intent to train educators to incorporate real-world, climate-related water issues into everyday science instruction.

3.3 Compatibility with Coastal Management Issues

i. Existing and future land and water uses and manipulations

The most significant future land use manipulation will be the Mid-Barataria Bay River Sediment Diversion which is a restoration technique designed to reduce the rate of wetland loss in the basin by connecting the Mississippi River to the Barataria wetland and estuarine basin.

ii. Land use projections in core and buffer areas

The land use is relatively stable in the core and buffer areas as the they are protected management areas or state and national parks or foundation lands.

iii. Consumptive uses in the proposed LaNERR

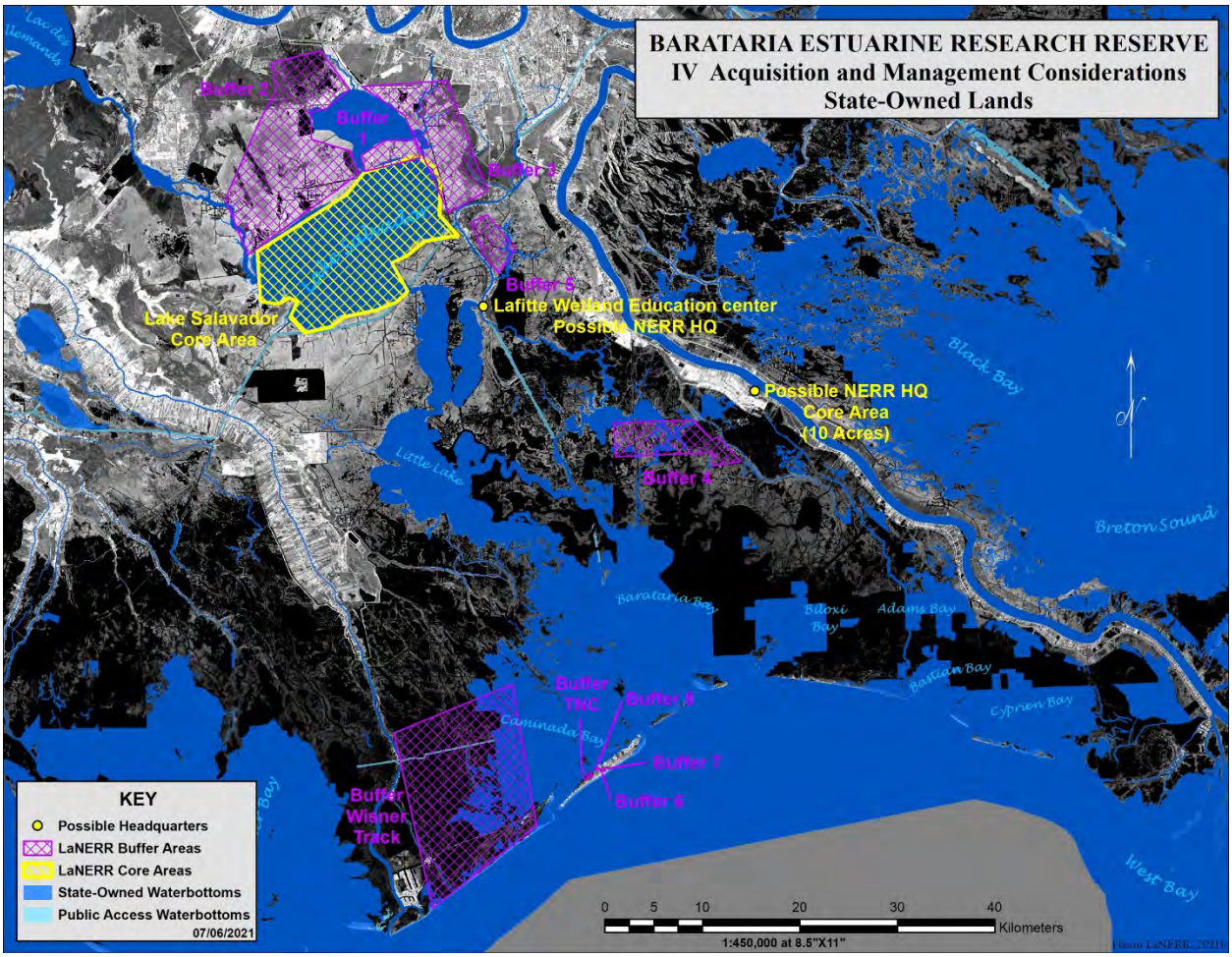
Activities include commercial and recreational fishing, hunting, and trapping.

iv. Contributions to coastal stewardship

The BTNEP engages in coastal stewardship and community engagement through public-private partnerships such as the SMART Project- Saving Marsh and Ridges Together for ridge and marsh vegetation restoration projects.

4.0 Maps and Tables

4.1 Thematic GIS Map ONE: A GIS map of Barataria LaNERR candidate site's CORE and BUFFER AREAS.

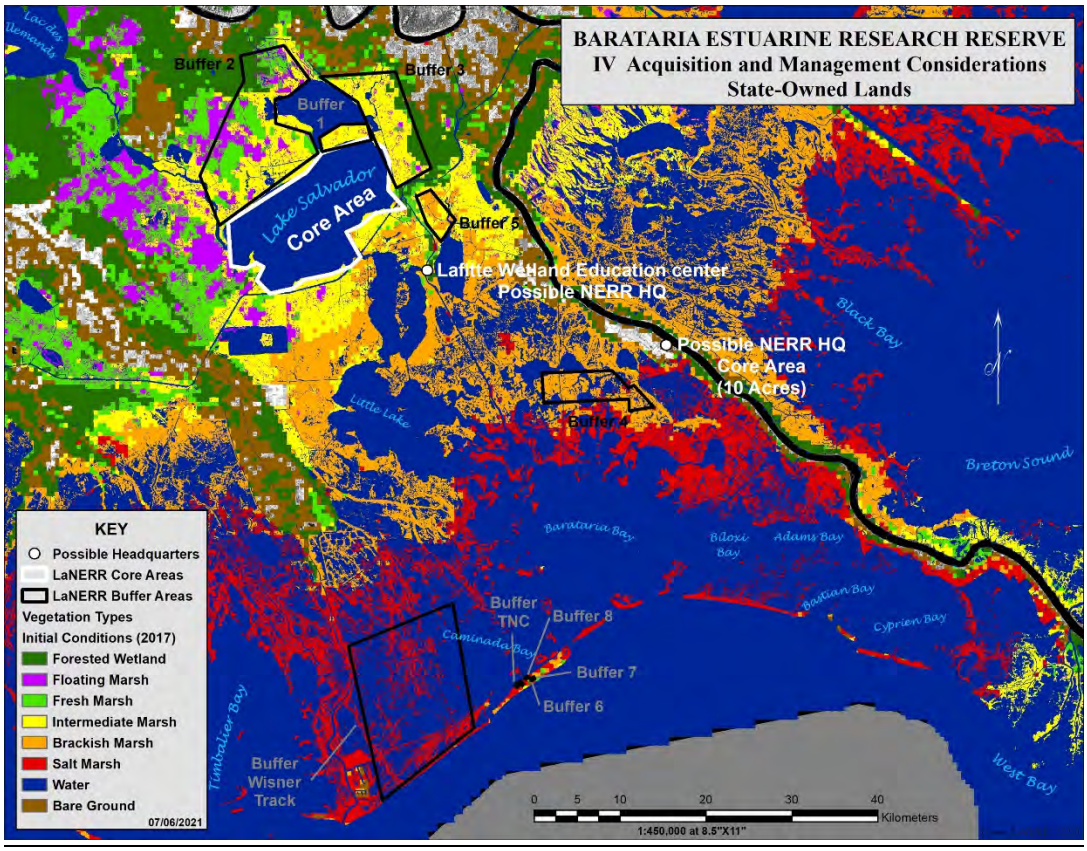


Here, we defined Core Areas as estuarine water bodies and subtidal areas and Buffer Areas as adjacent emergent marsh, swamp, dune, and beach habitat. Additional core areas are subtidal areas north of Elmers Island and Grand Isle that have yet to be delineated.

Table 1. Area of core and buffer polygons.

Barataria LaNERR Alternative				
CORE AREAS	Total Area	State Lands	State Waters	Non-state area
Lake Salavador Core Area,	49,716.40	141.4	48,265.80	1,309.30
Total Core Area	49,716.40	141.40	48,265.80	1,309.30
BUFFER AREAS	Total Area	State Lands	State Waters	Non-state area
10 Acre NERR HQ Core Area	11	0	0	11
Buffer TNC	82.4	0	2.8	79.5
Lake Salavador Core Area,	49,716.40	141.4	48,265.80	1,309.30
Buffer 8	26.1	2.5	0	23.6
Buffer 7	11.6	0	0	11.6
Buffer 6	5.6	0	0	5.6
Buffer 4	9,195.30	0	1,414.00	7,781.20
Buffer 3	17,499.40	1,866.10	1,126.30	14,506.90
Buffer 5	3,322.90	0	195.6	3,127.30
Buffer Wisner Track	51,058.00	27,462.10	13,305.70	10,290.20
Buffer 2	36,728.70	28,849.50	350.8	7,528.30
Buffer 1	3,182.90	2,646.60	471.2	65.1
Total Buffer Area	170,840.30	60,968.20	65,132.20	44,739.60

4.2 Thematic GIS Map TWO: A GIS map of the CPRA vegetation types and distribution in proposed core and buffer areas of Barataria LaNERR as described in sections 2.0 above.



BARATARIA ZONES (Acres)						
Vegetation Class	**10 Acre NERR HQ Core Area**	**Buffer 1**	**Buffer 2**	**Buffer 3**	**Buffer 4**	**Buffer 5**
Forested Wetlands	0	0	2,445.50	2,728.60	0	0
Fresh Marsh	0	0.4	9,311.20	792.2	0	48.3
Intermediate Marsh	0	2,475.70	15,061.00	11,162.70	0	1,339.00
Brackish Marsh	0	52.3	44	84.3	5,408.00	1,645.10
Salt Marsh	0	0	0	0	258	0
Water	0	365.4	2,299.10	1,158.50	3,524.50	265.5
Bare Ground	11.1	0	0	82.7	0	0
Floating Marsh	0	106.1	7,567.70	1,147.60	0	25.1
No Data	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total	11.1	2,999.90	36,728.50	17,156.40	9,190.50	3,323.00

BARATARIA ZONES (Acres)

Vegetation Class	Buffer 6	Buffer 7	Buffer 8	Buffer TNC Land	Buffer Wisner Track	Lake Salvador Core Area
Forested Wetlands	0	0	0	0	0	64.9
Fresh Marsh	5.3	11.6	2.4	0	0	27.8
Intermediate Marsh	0	0	0	0	0	1,231.00
Brackish Marsh	0	0	3.3	0	1.1	124.5
Salt Marsh	0	0	18.7	74.1	11,511.40	0
Water	0	0	1.3	7.6	39,544.10	48,213.00
Bare Ground	0	0	0	0	2	0
Floating Marsh	0	0	0	0	0	55.4
No Data	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total	5.3	11.6	25.8	81.6	51,058.60	49,716.60

5.0 Optional

5.1 Facilities

Louisiana Wetlands Education Center, Lafitte, LA

The Louisiana Wetland Education Center is a public services/education project located in the southern area of the Parish in the Town of Lafitte. The Louisiana Wetlands Education Center will be an educational asset serving students and families in the region, with programming for all ages, including a research outpost and meeting location for agencies and institutions. The Center will promote preservation, conservation, and adaptation related to wetland ecosystems, using its location in the Jean Lafitte area as an outdoor classroom. Future phases would include an expanded fishing village to teach visitors about coastal community traditions, a treetop ropes course, water taxis to Grand Isle, kayak and canoe rental, and overnight cabins. The Center is complementary to the existing Jean Lafitte Fisheries Market and adjacent to the Auditorium, Nature Trail, and Multi-Purpose Facility and Museum. $2M has been awarded through NRDA for recreation projects . Phase I creation of the Multipurpose Resource Facility is complete. LA SAFE has estimated their investment of up to $6.5M for the Wetland Center with the remainder of potential funding sources to be identified.

Jefferson Parish Ecotourism Ferry from Lafitte to Grand Isle, LA

As part of the Louisiana Wetlands Education Center, an ecotourism ferry connecting Lafitte to Grand Isle, Louisiana will allow visitors and students to learn about and appreciate the ecosystems of the Barataria Bay which range from emergent marsh and bays to coastal dunes.

Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries Grand Isle Fisheries Research Lab

LDWF's state of the art fisheries research lab is located on the north shore of Grand Isle, Louisiana's only inhabited barrier island. This location provides the lab's dedicated staff the unique opportunity to conduct offshore sampling, tagging, and a number of other research projects. These projects are critical for gathering the data needed to effectively manage the diverse marine resources in Louisiana's waters and throughout the Gulf of Mexico. Staff also collaborate with other states, federal agencies, and some of the nation's top research institutions,

educate the public about their research, and even assist in recovery efforts after natural and manmade disasters.

5.2 Bibliography of research, data, etc.

Adams, R.D., Barrett, B.B., Blackman, J.H., Gane, B.W., and McIntyre, W.G., 1976. Barataria Basin: Geologic processes and framework. Louisiana Coastal Resources Program, NOAA, LA SeaGrant Publication No LSU-T-76-008, 104 p.

Conner, WH and J W Day. 1987. The Ecology of Barataria Basin, Louisiana: An Estuarine Profile. Biological Report 85(7.13) Fish and Wildlife Service, US Department of the Interior

Gosselink, J.G., 1984. The ecology of delta marshes of coastal Louisiana: a community profile. National Coastal Ecosystems Team, Division of Biological Services, Research Development, Fish and Wildlife Service, US Department of the Interior.

Peyronnin, N.S., Caffey, R.H., Cowan, J.H., Justic, D., Kolker, A.S., Laska, S.B., McCorquodale, A., Melancon, E., Nyman, J.A., Twilley, R.R. and Visser, J.M., 2017. Optimizing sediment diversion operations: working group recommendations for integrating complex ecological and social landscape interactions. Water, 9(6), p.368.

More to come...

Pontchartrain LaNERR

Phase II Proposal

BY

PONTCHARTRAIN TEAM

July 8, 2021

Contents

Pontchartrain LaNERR Phase II Proposal

DEAR MEMBERS OF THE LANERR DLT,

Enclosed is the Phase 2 Draft document from the Pontchartrain Proposal Leadership Team. We believe the Pontchartrain Basin and associated wetlands, with special consideration of the history of wide-ranging base-line ecological research activity and decades of environmental education focused on its overall ecology, is the perfect candidate for the LaNERR site. The proposal discusses the many supportive factors that make this the ideal location, but very important is the availability of base-line ecological evaluation, the multitude of actual environmentally focused facilities, and the large, concentrated human population (about 1.2 million) that has long considered it to be the sacrosanct ecosystem in the region.

As we move to the next level of consideration, we have a wealth of activities and a host of colleagues to add to the justification. We know that of all the excellent proposed sites, and we love and respect them all, a Lake Pontchartrain Basin LaNERR will be easily – and daily – accessed by a multitude of citizens.

Mark S. Davis, J.D., MLT, Eugenie Schwartz Professor of River and Coastal Studies, Tulane University (and directors of Tulane's Institute on Water Resources Law and Policy, Tulane Center for Environmental Law, and Tulane ByWater Institute).

Robert Moreau, Ph.D., Manager, Southeastern Louisiana University's Turtle Cove Environmental Research Station

David C. Podgorski, Ph.D., Assistant Professor, Pontchartrain Institute for Environmental Sciences and Department of Chemistry, University of New Orleans

Robert A. Thomas, Ph.D., Professor and Loyola Distinguished Scholar Chair in Environmental Communication, Director Loyola's Center for Environmental Communication

Kristi L. Trail, P.E., Executive Director, Pontchartrain Conservancy

SECTION 1

Physical Description of the Site:

The Pontchartrain Estuary LaNERR proposal site is a 365,579.5 acre, multi-component site stratified across the estuarine environmental gradient, from freshwater Maurepas Swamp in the northwest to the marine waters off the Chandeleur Islands to the southeast. The estuary is water-dominated and includes Lakes' Maurepas, Pontchartrain, Borgne, and Chandeleur Sound. The proposal site contains Core Habitat (312,694 acres) and Buffer Habitat (52,948.5 acres), and five sub-areas across both habitat types. Sub-areas are described below in more detail:

AREA #1: Maurepas and Manchac Swamps surround Lake Maurepas. Core Habitat equals 186,093 acres; Buffer Habitat equals 31,475 acres (17% of Core). Approximately 70% of Core Habitat (land and water) IS state owned; 77% of Buffer habitat is NOT state owned. Core and Buffer Habitat consist of Uplands (Alluvial Forested Wetlands), Intertidal Areas (Coastal Forested Wetlands, Coastal Freshwater and Intermediate Marshes), and Subtidal and Submerged Bottoms (subtidal soft bottoms and SAV).

AREA #2: Big Branch NWR is located on the northeastern edge of Lake Pontchartrain. Core Habitat equals 19,418 acres; Buffer Habitat equals 3,943 acres (20% of Core). Approximately 94% of Core Habitat is NOT state owned (land and water); 70% of Buffer Habitat is NOT state owned. The majority of Core and Buffer Habitat is federally owned, and consists of Uplands (Longleaf Pine Savanna and Maritime Forest), Intertidal Areas (Coastal Intermediate and Brackish Marshes), and Subtidal and Submerged Bottoms (subtidal soft bottoms and SAV).

AREA #3: Orleans Land Bridge is located between Lakes' Pontchartrain and Borne, and contains Lake St. Catherine. Core Habitat equals 40,551 acres; Buffer Habitat equals 5,422 acres (13% of Core). Approximately 75% of Core Habitat is NOT state owned (land and water), and 67% of Buffer Habitat is also NOT state owned. The remaining Core Habitat is federally and privately owned, and consists of Uplands (Maritime Forest), Intertidal Areas (Coastal Intermediate, Brackish and Saline Marshes), and Subtidal and Submerged Bottoms (subtidal soft bottoms, and SAV).

AREA #4: Biloxi Marsh is located between Lake Borgne to the west and Chandeleur Sound to the east. Core Habitat equals 38,368 acres; Buffer Habitat equals 6,994 acres (18% of Core). Only 2% of Core Habitat IS state owned (land and water), and 30% of Buffer Habitat IS also state owned. Core and Buffer Habitat consist of Intertidal Areas (Coastal Brackish and Saline Marshes, Intertidal Mud and Sand Flats), and Subtidal and Submerged Bottoms (subtidal soft bottoms, hard bottoms and SAV).

AREA #5: Chandeleur Islands are located between Chandeleur Sound to the west and the Gulf of Mexico to the east. Core Habitat equals 28,187 acres; Buffer Habitat equals 5,124 acres (18% of Core). Approximately 86% of Core Habitat is state owned (mostly water bottoms), and 0% of Buffer Habitat IS state owned. The majority of Core (land) Habitat is federally owned. Core and Buffer Habitat consist of Intertidal Areas (Coastal Saline Marshes, Coastal Mangroves, Intertidal Beaches and Dunes), and Subtidal and Submerged Bottoms (subtidal soft bottoms, hard bottoms, SAV), including the only location in Louisiana with true seagrasses.

Have candidate site CORE AREA land-owners been contacted? YES

Have candidate site BUFFER AREA land-owners been contacted? YES

Land owners/managers for both CORE and BUFFER areas that have been contacted include:

Maurepas WMA; Manchac WMA; Joyce WMA; Biloxi Marsh WMA

Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries
Kenny Ribbeck: Administrator of Wildlife Management Areas
Office of Wildlife
2000 Quail Drive
Baton Rouge, LA 70898
Ph: (225)765-2942
kribbeck@wlf.la.gov

Other State Lands/State Water Bottoms

Office of State Lands
Cheston S. Hill
Public Lands Administrator
Office of State Lands
Division of Administration
Phone: 225.219.9454
P. O. Box 44124
Baton Rouge, LA 70804
cheston.hill@la.gov

Southeastern Foundation Bulk (research-related) Lands

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Vice President University Advancement
Executive Director Southeastern Foundation
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Port Manchac Lands

Patrick Dufresne, Director
South Tangipahoa Parish Port Commission
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Federal Lands

Daniel Breaux
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61389 Hwy 434,
Lacombe, LA
985-882-2030
daniel_breaux@fws.gov

SECTION 2

Ecological Characteristics of the Site:

The Pontchartrain Estuary LaNERR proposal site is a multi-component site stratified across the estuarine gradient, which exhibits a high degree of habitat/species biodiversity. This reflects the measure of environmental representativeness within the estuary and considers the Ecosystem Types, subtypes and services provided – described in more detail below:

The proposal site contains three Ecosystem Types (Uplands, Intertidal, Subtidal), with 3 – 9 subtypes within each Type (1.1). Further, each Ecosystem Type has an ecological foot print >10% (upland 42%, intertidal 41%, subtidal 17%) (1.2). Two of these Ecosystem Types (Uplands, Intertidal) are considered a Major Ecosystem Type (>40% extent) within the proposal site and consist of >3 habitat subtypes (1.3). The Upland Ecosystem Type consists of Alluvial Forest, Longleaf Pine Savanna and Maritime Forest. The Intertidal Ecosystem Type consists of Coastal Forested Wetlands, Coastal Floating, Fresh, Intermediate, Brackish and Saline Marshes, Coastal Mangroves, Intertidal Beaches and Dunes and Intertidal Mud and Sand Flats. Even the non-major Ecosystem Type (Subtidal) contains three possible subtypes (Subtidal Hard Bottoms, Soft Bottoms, SAV). Ecosystem Subtypes support significant faunal and floral components, including spawning/nursery grounds for fish/shellfish (Spotted Seatrout, Sand Seatrout, Southern Flounder, Atlantic Croaker, Spot, Gulf Menhaden, Striped Mullet, White Mullet, Gulf Killifish, Anchovies, Blue Crab, White Shrimp, Brown Shrimp, Lemon Sharks, etc.), shorebird, migratory and waterfowl use, bird nesting areas (i.e. Big Branch NWR area: white ibis, Mississippi Kite, Tufted Titmouse, Northern Parula, Yellow-throated and Prothonotary Warblers; Chandeleurs: Brown Pelican, etc.), critical mammal habitat (West Indian Manatees), habitat for non-game animals (Eastern Spotted Skunk, Long Tailed Weasel, American Woodcock, Golden Eagle), threatened and endangered species (West Indian Manatee, Red Knot, Piping Plover, Eastern Black Rail, Atlantic (Gulf subspecies) Sturgeon, Pallid Sturgeon, Green Sea Turtle, Sea Hawksbill Turtle, Kemp's Ridley Sea Turtle, Leatherback Sea Turtle, Loggerhead Sea Turtle, Alabama Heelsplitter Mussel, Louisiana Quillwort, and Gopher Tortoise and Red-cockaded), and reef habitat (Eastern oyster) (1.4).

This proposal site contains a diverse set of geological characteristics. It represents a complete geological continuum from the Pleistocene to the present, which is unique to this estuary. The most geologically significant features include faults, surficial and buried barrier islands, and extensive fluvial deposits, which dominate the modern landscape (1.5). Upland portions of the proposal site contain diverse strata types, including clay, silt and sand deposits which span a wide range of thicknesses and environments including fluvial, marsh and swamp. In addition, the thickness of the Holocene ranges from non-existent in the upland region to nearly 100 m. Marine portions are dominated by 1) shoreline processes (e.g. barrier island processes) and 2) riverine processes (e.g. the Mississippi River), which has generated several distinct hydrologic sub-basins. Also unique to this estuary, the proposal site spans the complete salinity gradient, ranging from fresh in Area #1 (~ 0.1 ppt) to the Gulf of Mexico east of Area #5 (~25 ppt), and all salinity values in between depending on wind, storms, and tidal action (1.6).

Although areas in the vicinity of the proposal site (and its sub-parts) are highly developed, the actual proposal site is relatively undisturbed. There is a moderate amount of development in Areas #1, 2 and 3 (mainly homes, recreational camps and some shoreline armoring), but Areas #4 and 5 are free from development and industry (1.7).

SECTION 3

Narrative describing the candidate site's qualities.

3.1 Suitability for Research, Monitoring and Resource Protection:

The history of scientific research in the proposed Pontchartrain LaNERR site extends back to the mid 20th Century and spans the entire estuary from Lake Maurepas in the northwest to the Chandeleur Islands in the southeast. From 2000 – 2011 thousands of forested wetland trees and 200 herbaceous plots were monitored for aboveground productivity and survivorship by Dr. Shaffer (SLU) to gather baseline data for comparison with said after re-introduction of the Mississippi River, construction of which will begin soon as will a new monitoring effort. In addition, decades of wetland and fungal research have been conducted behind the Turtle Cove Environmental Research Station.

From 2007-2014 Dr. Bossart (SLU) conducted multiple, multi-year surveys of benthic insect communities at wetland sites scattered around Lake Maurepas. Insects are ideal ecological indicators of ecosystem health, and data collected from these surveys identified species associated with intact versus degraded wetlands. These studies also showed that insect communities tend to change in tandem with ecosystem decline, largely because of the shifts in vegetative cover that result from this decline.

In the late 1950s Dr. Suttkis (Tulane) collected environmental and fish data in Lake Pontchartrain as did Drs. Thompson (LSU), Hastings (SLU), and O'Connell (UNO) several decades later for meta-analytical comparison of changes in fish assemblages over a half century. Similar collections by LDWF are ongoing and have been extended to Lake Borgne and the Chandeleur Islands (UNO, LDWF) and include invertebrates and sea turtles. The Chandeleur Islands are home to the Diamondback Terrapins, as well as the Loggerhead, & Kemp's Ridley sea turtles studied by Dr. Valverde (SLU). Most recently, Dr. Piller (SLU) is conducting eDNA surveys of several artificial reefs in Lake Pontchartain to assess fish community compositions and non-native fishes associated with these structures. From the 1970s until 2015, Dr. Poirrier (UNO) conducted numerous studies of Rangia Clams, sponges, SAV, and hypoxia in Lake Pontchartrain.

Recent work by Dr. Murray (SLU) indicates that the Pontchartrain drainage harbors many unique evolutionary lineages yet to be discovered. Our core areas present a natural clinal mesocosm to study the effects of hydrologic changes, wetland degradation and natural aquatic ecotones on reptile and amphibian ecology, evolution and conservation including using alligators as 'sentinel' species. Historically, alligator snapping turtles have been used as models for anthropogenic overharvesting.

The Pontchartrain Conservancy has a continuous record of basic water quality measurements back to 2001. Haralampides summarized the present water quality impacts on the Lake Pontchartrain estuarine system. The USGS and USACE have sampled water from Lake Pontchartrain, Lake Borgne, and the Mississippi Sound prior, during, and after each spillway opening from 2008 to present. Drs. Zito and Podgorski (UNO) are currently monitoring emerging contaminates in the estuary.

The Pontchartrain Basin is an avifauna migration hotspot well studied by LDWF, non-profits, and universities (Tulane, SLU, UNO, LSU). Four areas in this region carry Audubon Important Bird Area designation. Research on mammals includes small mammal inventories. Game (deer) and pests (nutria, feral hogs) are monitored by LDWF and have been studied by universities.

Pontchartrain LaNERR is a proposed multi-component reserve that will provide a wide array of education, outreach, research, training, and stewardship opportunities across a variety of habitats. In fact, the site already does all of these things, benefiting from a range of existing facilities and infrastructures that provide relatively easy access to many areas and entry points along the site (especially the upper two thirds of it). Much of the site is within relatively short driving distance from the major population centers of New Orleans, the Northshore and Baton Rouge, and has a long and distinguished record of environmental education and interpretation from the research conducted by the major universities within this zone. Accessibility for education-related activities is one of the greatest benefits of the proposed Pontchartrain LaNERR site.

We have identified at least 22 facilities and/or programs throughout the span of the Pontchartrain, categorized by 10 major research/educational facilities and another 12, parks, refuges and programs of interest. The 10 primary facilities and their associated assets include: Southeastern's Turtle Cove Classroom on Galva Canal and the Turtle Cove Environmental Research Station (on Pass Manchac); Lake Pontchartrain Basin Maritime Museum (LPBMM); UNO's Shea Penland Coastal Education and Research Facility (CERF); Pontchartrain Conservancy's New Canal Lighthouse Museum and Education Center; Tulane River and Coastal Center; Arlene Meraux River Observation Center; Big Branch Marsh National Wildlife Refuge; Tulane's A Studio in the Woods; and, Port Manchac, which is interested in possibly repurposing some of its facilities to community sustainability efforts such as the proposed LaNERR (see attached Appendix for more information on these facilities).).

Collectively, these sites provide a high diversity of habitats, including open water, barrier islands, salt, brackish and fresh water marshes, wetland forests, pine savannas and riverine environments in both rural and urban settings. Likewise, the facilities and programs themselves are readily accessible and within close proximity to the ethnically, racially, socioeconomically and geographically diverse target audiences in the region, which includes hundreds of thousands of K-12 and college students and educators, environmental professionals and groups, the general public and other stakeholders. The facilities most involved in education are ideally located for a single-day field trip where visitors can spend several hours exploring the environment and learning about the cultural and historical significance of the area, but return to school (or town) by the end of the day.

Currently, many of the sites within Pontchartrain LaNERR routinely provide a variety of both formal and informal educational activities, and partner with nature centers and museums in the region to provide education outreach. There are also scenic rivers and state parks in the zone that serve to increase the range of experiences. Although many sites are currently focused on educational outreach, research integration and stewardship, there is excellent potential for future expansion to serve the public even better.

Pontchartrain LaNERR's ecologically diverse sites provide excellent educational opportunities to increase the knowledge and awareness of estuarine and coastal ecosystems and the issues associated with the need to maintain and protect these resources.

3.3 Site's Compatibility with Coastal Management Issues:

Area #1: Maurepas/Manchac Swamp – comprised of three (Joyce, Manchac, Maurepas Swamp) Wildlife Management Areas (WMA's) consisting of freshwater and transitional swamp and freshwater and intermediate marsh. These WMA's are managed by LDWF. Existing land/water uses include hunting (deer, hog, waterfowl, rabbit, and squirrel), fishing (bass, sunfish, and catfish), birding (bald eagles, osprey, neo-tropical migrants, and resident waterfowl, including hooded mergansers and wood, mottled, and black-bellied whistling ducks), wildlife viewing (alligators and other reptiles can be viewed from several swamp boardwalks), boating and kayaking (multiple public boat launches), camping (on New River Canal and Reserve Canal) and hiking (1/2 mile nature trail north of Laplace). Coastal management and future land/water uses include a recently funded River re-introduction into southwestern Maurepas.

Area #2: Big Branch NWR – managed by USFWS, consisting of lake shoreline, near shore grass beds, freshwater and brackish marsh, freshwater swamp, hardwood forest hammocks, and long-leaf pine savanna. Existing uses include trapping, hunting, fishing (including crabbing and crawfishing), birding (shorebirds, wading birds, raptors, waterfowl, and songbirds, brown pelicans and the endangered red-cockaded woodpecker), boating and kayaking (multiple public boat launches), observing nature (Boy Scout Road boardwalk), and youth activities (Eric Lorenz Outdoor Classroom). Coastal management and future land use include marsh creation and shoreline armoring projects.

Area #3: Orleans Land Bridge separates Lakes' Pontchartrain and Borgne and is comprised of Bayou Sauvage NWR, and privately held property, and consisting of bottomland hardwoods (including live oak hackberry forests), freshwater and brackish marshes, lagoons, canals, borrow pits, and natural bayous. The NWR is located within the City of New Orleans. Existing uses include hunting, fishing, birding, boating and kayaking; this area also provides urban dwellers access to nature (trails and boardwalks). Coastal management and future land use include armoring the shoreline of Lake Borgne with recycled concrete from the I-10 twin-spans.

Area #4: Biloxi Marsh along the southeastern shoreline of Lake Borgne is comprised of the Biloxi WMA in St. Bernard Parish, Louisiana. Biloxi WMA consists of low brackish to saline marsh; major vegetation includes marsh hay cordgrass, black rush, hog cane, smooth cordgrass, salt grass, glasswort, three square and live oak hackberry forest on abandoned deltaic ridges. Widgeon grass is the main SAV. The area is home to an abundance of oysters, fish, shrimp, crabs, waterfowl, and furbearers. Existing uses include hunting, trapping, fishing, birding, and boating. Future coastal management activities include shoreline retreat and oyster reef restoration.

Area #5: Chandeleur Islands is an uninhabited barrier island chain at the eastern most point in Louisiana and part of the Breton NWR. The islands contain sand/shell beaches, black mangrove, wax myrtle, marsh, dune grasses, and seagrasses. The islands are also the most northern pupping grounds for Lemon Sharks, habitat for sea turtles, seabirds, wading birds, and wintering shorebirds, including waterfowl. Existing land uses include fishing (redfish, speckled trout) and other recreational activities (photography, birding, etc). Future activities may include habitat restoration through dedicated dredge material and marsh planting.

SECTION 4 - MAPS & TABLES

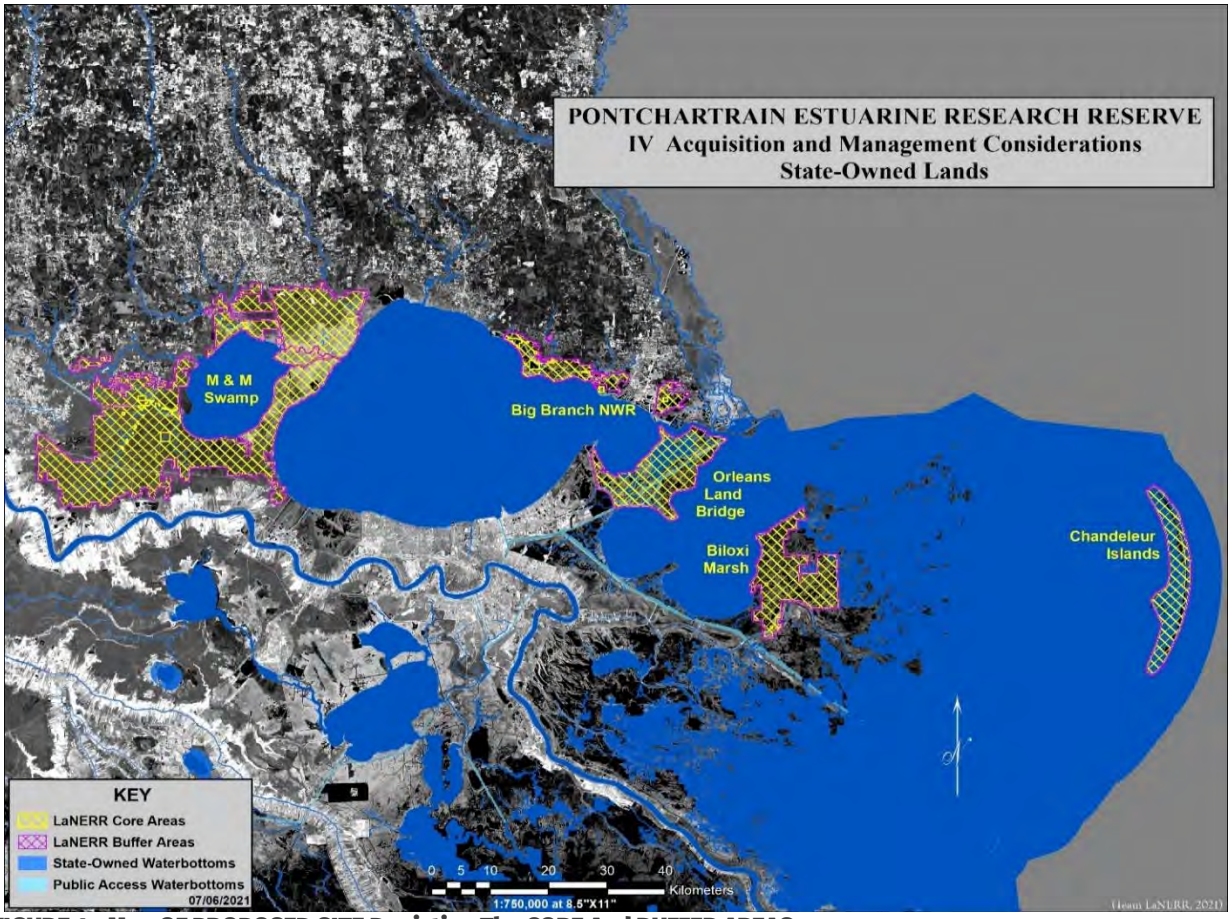


FIGURE 1 - Map OF PROPOSED SITE Depicting The CORE And BUFFER AREAS.

Pontchartrain LaNERR Alternative

CORE AREAS	Total Area	State Lands	State Waters	Non-state area
Big Branch NWR	19429.5	937.8	229.0	18262.6
Biloxi Marsh*	38364.5	0.0	708.9	37655.6
Chandeleur Islands	28192.2	827.8	23510.1	3854.3
M&M Swamp	186092.7	128000.4	2698.5	55393.9
Orleans Land Bridge	40552.1	89.2	9951.0	30511.9

*Biloxi Marsh has been Eliminated from State Lands in both Core and Buffer areas – need to revisit this at a later time

Pontchartrain LaNERR Alternative

Buffer AREAS	Total Area	State Lands	State Waters	Non-state area
Big Branch NWR	3928.7	58.7	1106.7	2763.3
Biloxi Marsh*	6994.5	0.0	2107.5	4887.0
Chandeleur Islands	5117.8	0.0	0.0	5117.8
M&M Swamp	31492.6	818.5	6454.6	24219.6
Orleans Land Bridge	5414.9	23.9	1219.7	4171.3

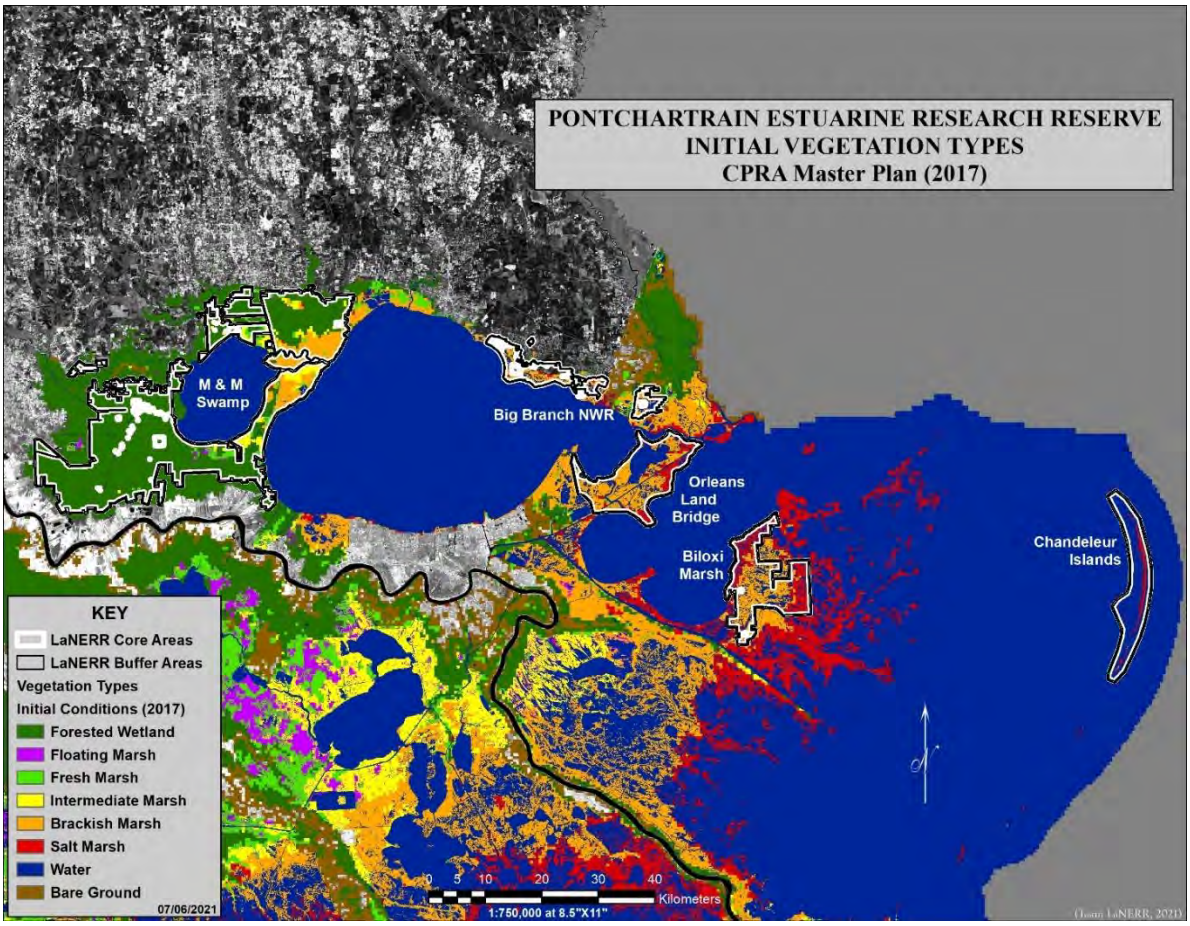


Figure 2: GIS map of the CPRA initial vegetation types and distribution

PONTCHARTRAIN CORE ZONES (Acres)

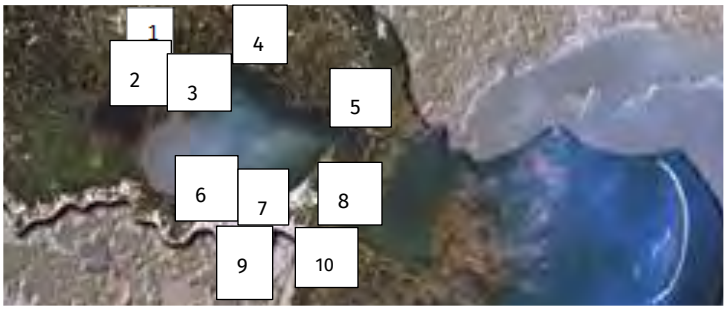
Vegetation Class	Big Branch NWR	Biloxi Marsh	Chandeleur Islands	M&M Swamp	Orleans Land Bridge
Forested Wetlands	318	0	0	144712	0
Fresh Marsh	286	0	0	6121	121
Intermediate Marsh	0	0	4	9774	8
Brackish Marsh	9729	15334	39	20125	19098
Salt Marsh	313	11214	2397	219	6521
Water	4204	11820	25706	3026	14800
Bare Ground	167	0	40	0	0
Floating Marsh	8	0	0	1286	2
No Data	4391	0	0	822	0
Total	19418	38368	28187	186085	40551

PONTCHARTRAIN BUFFER ZONES Perimeter (Acres)

Vegetation Class	Big Branch NWR	Biloxi Marsh	Chandeleur Islands	M&M Swamp	Orleans Land Bridge
Forested Wetlands	91	0	0	20125	0
Fresh Marsh	185	0	0	826	11
Intermediate Marsh	0	0	0	980	0
Brackish Marsh	1081	1899	0	949	1019
Salt Marsh	13	1574	0	75	234
Water	1273	3521	5124	6570	4147
Bare Ground	163	0	0	6	0
Floating Marsh	3	0	0	262	12
No Data	1134	0	0	1682	0
Total	3943	6994	5124	31475	5422

APPENDIX A

Facilities, Infrastructure and Other Programs in the region that may help to support the research, education, and training mission of the proposed Pontchartrain LaNERR.



PRIMARY FIELD STATIONS for Research, Education and Outreach Activities

1. Port Manchac (31450 Highway 51 South, Manchac, LA 70421, www.portmanchac.com). Port Manchac is an inter-modal state-facility on 140 acres at the head of North Pass. The facility contains barge docks, boat launches, and thousands of square feet of available space, and is one minute from the Manchac Exit on I-55 and interested in repurposing some assets for the LaNERR.

2. Turtle Cove Boatshed/Classroom/Parking Facility on Galva Canal (87 Alligator Lane, Akers/Manchac, LA 70421, www.southeastern.edu/turtlecove). The "Galva Boatshed/Classroom" is a Southeastern Louisiana University facility that serves as the meeting place/departure point for all users of the Turtle Cove Environmental Research Station. The facility is located on LDWF-Manchac WMA land one minute from the Manchac exit on I-55, and includes an LDWF boat launch, 20 vessels of all shapes and sizes, a classroom/conference/office space 20 ft above MSL with observation deck, bathroom, phone, electricity, water well and satellite internet service.

3. Turtle Cove Environmental Research Station (located on 10,000 acres of the Manchac WMA on Pass Manchac 5 miles east from the Galva Boatshed and 2 miles from L. Pontchartrain: www.southeastern.edu/turtlecove). Turtle Cove ERS is a facility and program of Southeastern Louisiana University whose mission is to facilitate a better understanding of the coastal wetland environment through scholarly research, university education, public outreach and training workshops, and restoration activities. Facilities consist of a fully restored 3-story hunting lodge, overnight accommodations for 15, satellite internet service, half-mile long boardwalk with 50+ interpretive signs, 2700 ft of bulkhead, various supplies/equipment for research and education activities, and a fleet of boats described in the Galva facility above. Pre-pandemic, Turtle Cove averaged 2500 user days of activity annually.

4. Lake Pontchartrain Basin Maritime Museum (133 Mabel Dr., Madisonville, LA 70447, www.lpbmm.org). Located on the banks of the Tchefuncte River, the mission of the LPBMM is "bringing Louisiana's maritime history to life" through unique interpretive programs, exhibits and collections, publications, and special events. The museum attracts over 6000 visitors annually. Facilities include 100 feet of frontage on the Tchefuncte River; 3000 sq ft dock; 6000 sq ft of meeting/event space, conference rooms; 12,000 sq ft of exhibit space; and 10,000 sq ft of wood working/boat building space and a research library.

5. Southeast Louisiana Refuges Complex – near Big Branch Marsh NWR (61389 Highway 434, Lacombe, LA 70445, https://www.fws.gov/refuge/Big_Branch_Marsh/). Big Branch Marsh NWR, established in 1994, encompasses 18,000 acres of habitat along Lake Pontchartrain, and includes habitats ranging from pine savanna flat-wood areas to forested wetlands to marsh environments. Big Branch accommodates over 125,000 visitors annually.

6. New Canal Lighthouse Museum and Education Center (8001 Lakeshore Drive, New Orleans, LA 70124, https://scienceforourcoast.org). Reconstructed in 2013 from the original 1890 structure, the New Canal Lighthouse is located on the South Shore of Lake Pontchartrain and is accessible from both I-10 and I-610.

The site includes a NOAA Weather Tower, EPA Water Quality Monitoring station, Lakefront Learning Lab, green infrastructure demonstration gardens, and historical and environmental exhibits. The site averages 12,000 visitors/year, and includes full and part-time staff, restrooms, and is ADA accessible.

7. Tulane River and Coastal Center (1370 Port of New Orleans Pl, New Orleans, LA 70130, https://bywater.tulane.edu/). Tulane's ByWater Institute exemplifies Tulane's commitment to interdisciplinary studies of the river and coast. The River and Coastal Center is a key component of that work and is being developed in phases, with the first phase including new laboratory, educational, and conference facilities, along with staging areas for field operations.

8. Shea Penland Coastal Education and Research Facility ("CERF": 1815 Marques Rd., New Orleans, LA 70129, https://www.uno.edu/pontchartrain-institute/coastal-education-program). CERF is located on Chef Menteur Pass at the Highway 90 bridge. It is the science education field component of UNO's Pontchartrain Institute for Environmental Science. Infrastructure at CERF includes 4,000 square feet of space for use by researchers, educators, and students, including office, classroom, meeting, and kitchen spaces. Covered docks accommodate boat storage. UNO research vessels are kept on campus but docked at CERF as needed. Surrounding leased property is planted with native species and used in educational programing. Annual use of facilities has averaged approx.1,000 students per year for field workshops.

9. A Studio in the Woods (13401 Patterson Rd, New Orleans, LA 70131, http://www.astudiointhewoods.org/). A Studio in the Woods is a program of Tulane's ByWater Institute, and one of the leading artistic and academic residency programs in the Region. The mission of the Studio is to foster creative responses to the challenges of our time by providing retreat to artists, scholars, and the public in our protected forest on the Mississippi River.

10. Arlene Meraux River Observation Center ("AMROC," 5128 E. St. Bernard Hwy, Violet, LA, 70092, https://merauxfoundation.org/arlene-meraux-river-observation-center/). AMROC is a program of the Meraux Foundation, and consists of a four-story educational facility that features a classroom, community meeting spaces, and a fifth-floor observation deck overlooking the Mississippi River, as well as a state-of-the-art greenhouse dedicated to coastal restoration activities. The building will open next year, & AMROC marks the latest enhancement to the 130 acre Docville Farm that the Meraux Foundation dedicated to charity as a center for culture and learning. In recent non-pandemic years, the Foundation has had 7,000 visitors annually.

ADDITIONAL FACILITIES/PROGRAMS/LOCATIONS for Environmental Education and Outreach

(Orleans Parish)

Bucktown Harbor
City Park
Common Ground Relief
CSED Bayou Bienvenue Wetlands Platform
Bayou Sauvage NWR
(Lower 9)
Sankofa Wetland Park and Nature Trail
(Lower 9)

(St. Bernard Parish)

40 Arpent Wetlands Observatory
River House at Crevasse 22
Saint Bernard State Park

(St. Charles Parish)

Labranche Wetland Watchers Park and Program

(St. Tammany Parish)

Fontainebleu State Park
Northlake Nature Center

APPENDIX B

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App B

LaNERR Site Selection and Nomination Workflow Overview and Schedule

July 6, 2021

		DESIGNATION LEADERSHIP TEAM	SITE DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE	CRITERIA SUBCOMMITTEE	SCREENING SUBCOMMITTEE	PROPOSAL TEAMS
FEB 2021	Early					
	Mid	Evaluate 6 Estuarine Zones				
	Late	Develop 1st draft of Site Selection Criteria	**SDC Mtg 3:** Overview of Site Selection process; DLT's recommendations on Estuarine Zones based on preliminary screening criteria			
MAR 2021	Early	Develop preliminary (example) candidate sites	SDC voted on 6 Estuarine Zones			
	Mid					
	Late	• Establish subcommittees • Provide 1st draft of Site Selection Criteria to Criteria Subcommittee	**SDC Mtg 4:** Review results of Estuarine Zone voting, example core/buffer areas, first draft Site Selection Criteria, and guidance for developing Phase 1 Candidate Site Proposals			
APR 2021	Early			Working session #1		
	Mid					Q&A Check-in with Proposal Teams
	Late	Develop Phase 2 candidate site proposal template & mapping data		Working session #2		
MAY 2021	Early			• Working session #3 • Provide 2nd draft of Site Selection Criteria to DLT		Submit Phase 1 Candidate Site Proposals for DLT review
	Mid		**SDC Mtg 5:** Update on Phase 1 proposals, guidance for Phase 2 proposals, review 2nd draft of Site Selection Criteria			
	Late			• Working Session #4 • Provide 3rd draft of Site Selection Criteria to DLT		

		DESIGNATION LEADERSHIP TEAM	SITE DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE	CRITERIA SUBCOMMITTEE	SCREENING SUBCOMMITTEE	PROPOSAL TEAMS
JUN 2021	Early	Submit 3rd draft of Site Selection Criteria to NOAA for approval			Meeting #1: Orientation to subcommittee	DLT check in w/Proposal Teams
	Mid					
	Late					
JUL 2021	Early	• Receives NOAA comments on Site Selection Criteria • Schedule Executive Committee meeting • Provide Town Hall guidance to Proposal Teams				• DLT check in w/ Proposal Teams (Town Hall planning) • Submit Phase 2 Candidate Site Proposals
	Mid	Set Town Hall dates and book locations	**SDC Mtg 6:** Presentation of Phase 2 Candidate Site Proposals, NOAA feedback on Site Criteria, Town Hall prep		Check-in call to discuss proposal review process	
	Late	• Advertise Town Hall meetings *(continue until first meeting)* • Meet with Executive Committee			Review and comment on Phase 2 Candidate Sites Proposals	
AUG 2021	Early					DLT check-in w/ Proposal Teams (screening feedback)
	Mid	Present at CPRA Board meeting				
	Late					
SEPT 2021	Early	Host Town Hall Meetings				Participate/ present at Town Hall Meetings
	Mid	Host Town Hall Meetings *(continued if needed)*				Participate/ present at Town Hall Meetings
	Late					DLT check-in w/ Proposal Teams (Town Halls feedback)
OCT 2021	Early					
	Mid					
	Late					Submit *(draft)* Final Candidate Site Proposals

		DESIGNATION LEADERSHIP TEAM	SITE DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE	CRITERIA SUBCOMMITTEE	SCREENING SUBCOMMITTEE	PROPOSAL TEAMS
NOV 2021	Early		**SDC Mtg #7 (TBD):** Presentation of *(draft)* Final Candidate Site Proposals			
	Mid				Screen and score *(draft)* Final Candidate Site Proposals	
	Late					
DEC 2021	Early					
	Mid					
	Late					Submit Final Candidate Site Proposals to DLT
JAN 2022	Early	Provide Final Candidate Site Proposals, scores, and scoring rationale to Executive Committee				
	Mid					
	Late	Executive Committee nominates one site to the Governor (i.e., site proposal & cover letter)				

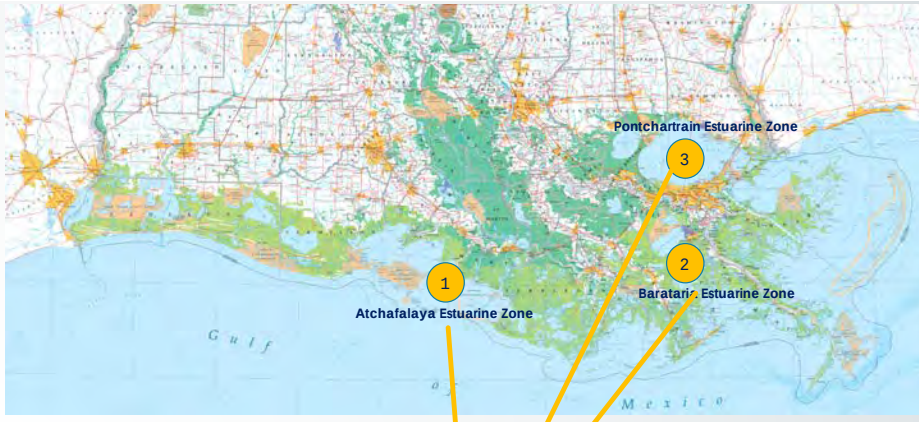
LaNERR – Louisiana National Estuarine Research Reserve

Site Development Committee Meeting #6

July 13, 2021

How will Louisiana determine where to establish a LaNERR?

1. Develop **pre-screening criteria** that reflect LaNERR goals;
2. **Establish generalized zones** within which to identify candidate sites;
3. Use proposed zones to **modify NOAA site criteria** to help identify sites for consideration and final nomination;
4. Evaluate proposed LaNERR Zones to **select candidate sites** that define preferred goals;
5. **Generate public support and partnerships** for proposed final site to NOAA.



Pre-screening

Proposed LaNERR Zones (generalized boundary)

Evaluation

Alternative LaNERR Sites (site boundary & evaluation)

Nomination

Nominate LaNERR Site (prepare package to NOAA)

Agenda:

Time	Topic
5 min	Welcome
5 min	Revised LaNERR Workflow and Schedule
10 min	NOAA feedback on Site Selection Criteria
45 min	Phase I Proposal Presentations
15 min	Barataria Estuarine Zone
15 min	Atchafalaya Estuarine Zone
15 min	Pontchartrain Estuarine Zone
10 min	Screening Subcommittee (next steps)
10 min	Town Halls
5 min	Wrap up and next steps:

Objectives:

- Review Revised LaNERR Workflow and Schedule
- NOAA feedback on LaNERR Site Criteria
- Discuss Phase 2 Proposals – Presentations from Alternative Site Teams
- Updates on
  - Next steps for screening subcommittee
  - Preparing for Town Halls

Pre-meeting Materials:

1. Pontchartrain LaNERR Team Phase 2 Proposal (PDF)
2. Barataria LaNERR Team Phase 2 Proposal (PDF)
3. Atchafalaya LaNERR Team Phase 2 Proposal (PDF)
4. Final Draft of Site Criteria with comments from NOAA (PDF)
5. Update of LaNERR Designation Workflow & Schedule (PDF)

LaNERR: Site Development Committee

This password protected webpage has been set up to share information and files with the LaNERR Site Development Committee. Please do not share these files or links with others.

Site Proposal Team Resources:

- Louisiana Governor and NOAA Letter of Intent (PDF)
- Recording of Site Proposal Team Meeting with DLT (Friday, Apr 16)
- Connecticut Site Nomination Package to NOAA

SDC Meeting Materials:

- **Meeting #6 : 14 July 2021 (to be posted)**

1. Pontchartrain LaNERR Team Phase 2 Proposal (PDF)
2. Barataria LaNERR Team Phase 2 Proposal (PDF)
3. Atchafalaya LaNERR Team Phase 2 Proposal (PDF)
4. Final Draft of Site Criteria with edits from NOAA (PDF)
5. Update of LaNERR Designation Workflow & Schedule (PDF)

- **Meeting #5 : 13 May 2021**

1. Pontchartrain LaNERR Team Phase 1 Proposal (PDF)
2. Barataria LaNERR Team Phase 1 Proposal (PDF)
3. Atchafalaya LaNERR Team Phase 1 Proposal (PDF)
4. Second Draft of Site Criteria (PDF)
5. Phase II and Final Candidate Site Proposal Guidance (PDF)
6. Update of LaNERR Designation Workflow & Schedule (PDF)
7. SDC Meeting #5 Presentation Slides (PDF)
8. SDC Meeting #5 Summary (PDF)
9. Recording of SDC Meeting #5 (Thursday, May 13)

LaNERR Site Selection and Nomination Workflow Overview and Schedule

July 6, 2021

LaNERR Site Selection and Nomination Workflow Overview and Schedule

July 6, 2021

		DESIGNATION LEADERSHIP TEAM	SITE DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE	CRITERIA SUBCOMMITTEE	SCREENING SUBCOMMITTEE	PROPOSAL TEAMS
FEB 2021	Early					
	Mid	Evaluate 6 Estuarine Zones				
	Late	Develop 1st draft of Site Selection Criteria	**SDC Mtg 3:** Overview of Site Selection process; DLT's recommendations on Estuarine Zones based on preliminary screening criteria			
MAR 2021	Early	Develop preliminary (example) candidate sites	SDC voted on 6 Estuarine Zones			
	Mid					
	Late	• Establish subcommittees • Provide 1st draft of Site Selection Criteria to Criteria Subcommittee	**SDC Mtg 4:** Review results of Estuarine Zone voting, example core/buffer areas, first draft Site Selection Criteria, and guidance for developing Phase 1 Candidate Site Proposals			
APR 2021	Early			Working session #1		
	Mid					Q&A Check-in with Proposal Teams
	Late	Develop Phase 2 candidate site proposal template & mapping data		Working session #2		
MAY 2021	Early			• Working session #3 • Provide 2nd draft of Site Selection Criteria to DLT		Submit Phase 1 Candidate Site Proposals for DLT review
	Mid		**SDC Mtg 5:** Update on Phase 1 proposals, guidance for Phase 2 proposals, review 2nd draft of Site Selection Criteria			
	Late			• Working Session #4 • Provide 3rd draft of Site Selection Criteria to DLT		

		DESIGNATION LEADERSHIP TEAM	SITE DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE	CRITERIA SUBCOMMITTEE	SCREENING SUBCOMMITTEE	PROPOSAL TEAMS
MAY	Early					
	Mid		SDC Mtg 5: Update on Phase 1 proposals, Expectations for Phase 2 proposals, Review 2nd draft of Site Selection Criteria			
	Late			Provide 3rd draft of Site Selection Criteria to DLT		DLT check in w/Proposal Teams
JUN	Early	Submit 3rd draft of Site Selection Criteria to NOAA for approval			Review Phase I Site Proposals	
	Mid					DLT Check in w/Proposal Teams
	Late					Submit Phase 2 Candidate Site Proposals
JUL	Early	*Receives comments on Site Selection Criteria from NOAA*				
	Mid		**SDC Mtg 6: SDC Mtg 6:** Review Results of Phase 2 Candidate Site Proposal Screening & vote to proceed to Final Candidate Site Proposals		**Check-in call to discuss proposal review process**	
	Late	• **Advertise Town Hall meetings (continue until first meeting)**			**Review and comment on Phase 2**	

		DESIGNATION LEADERSHIP TEAM	SITE DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE	CRITERIA SUBCOMMITTEE	SCREENING SUBCOMMITTEE	PROPOSAL TEAMS
AUG 2021	Early					DLT check-in w/ Proposal Teams (screening feedback)
	Mid	Present at CPRA Board meeting				
	Late					
SEP 2021	Early	Host Town Hall Meetings				Participate/present at Town Hall Meetings
	Mid	Host Town Hall Meetings (continued if needed)				Participate/present at Town Hall Meetings
	Late					DLT check-in w/ Proposal Teams (Town Halls feedback)
OCT 2021	Early					
	Mid					
	Late					Submit *(draft)* FinalCandidate Site Proposals

		DESIGNATION LEADERSHIP TEAM	SITE DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE	CRITERIA SUBCOMMITTEE	SCREENING SUBCOMMITTEE	PROPOSAL TEAMS
NOV 2021	Early		SDC Mtg #7 (TBD): Presentation of (draft) Final Alternative Site Proposals			
	Mid				Screen and score (draft) Final Alternative Site Proposals	
	Late					
DEC 2021	Early					
	Mid					
	Late					Submit Final Alternative Site Proposals to DLT
JAN 2022	Early	Submit Final Alternative Site Proposal to Site Evaluation Committee for nomination to Governor to submit to NOAA				
	Mid					
	Late	Executive Committee nominates one site to the Governor (i.e., site proposal & cover letter)				

Criteria from the NOAA guidelines to establish a LaNERR site in the Mississippi River Delta.

National Estuarine Research Reserve Designation Guidance

Site Selection, Nomination, and Designation

February 1, 2020

Authored by NOAA

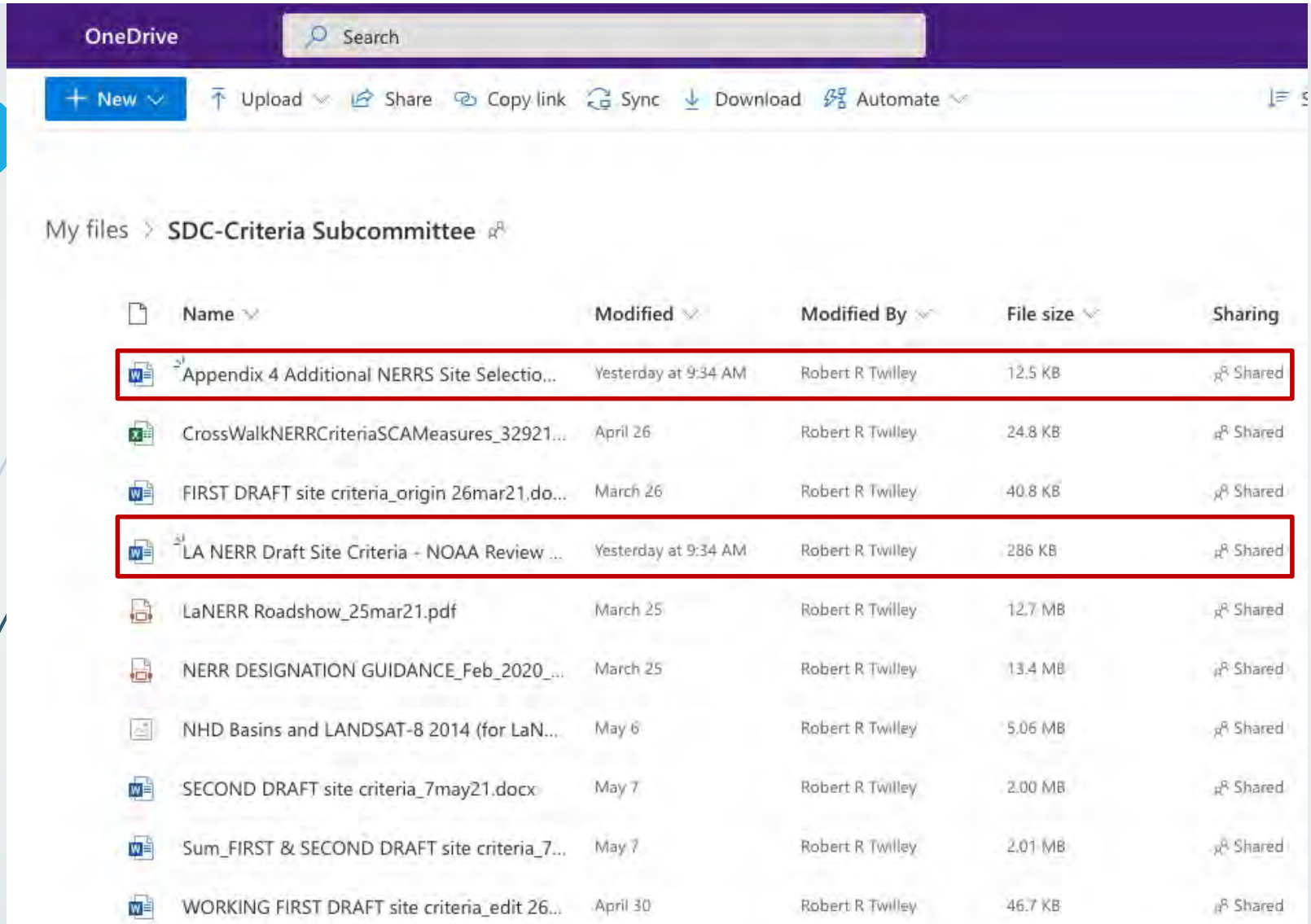
Stewardship Division
Office for Coastal Management
National Ocean Service
National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

I. Environmental Representativeness

II. Value of the Site for Research, Monitoring, and Resource Protection

III. Suitability of the Site for Education and Interpretation

IV. Acquisition and Management Considerations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Proposed FINAL DRAFT of LaNERR Site Criteria

5.0 Ability to accommodate climate change

5.1 Coastal resilience research: How suitable is the site (and hydrologic basin it is found) to support research on coastal resilience including both natural, cultural, and social systems. This includes how climate change may amplify impacts of land-use change and increase the vulnerability of a LaNERR site (and hydrologic basin) to relative sea level rise. Research focuses on discovery of adaptations of natural, cultural, and social systems to biogeophysical change.

3 Points. The site (and hydrologic basin) demonstrates high value in discovering adaptation of natural, cultural, and social systems to climate change and relative sea level rise including research on adaptations that reduce vulnerability.

2 Points. The site (and hydrologic basin) demonstrates moderate value in discovering adaptation of natural and social systems to climate change and relative sea level rise including research on adaptations that reduce vulnerability.

1 Point. The site (and hydrologic basin) demonstrates low value in discovering adaptation of natural and social systems to climate change and relative sea level rise including research on adaptations that reduce vulnerability.

Proposed FINAL DRAFT of LaNERR Site Criteria

5.0 Ability to accommodate climate change

5.2 This criterion focuses on the ability to accommodate shifts in habitat as sea level, inundation or other climate induced change occurs. Is there sufficient ability of the system to accommodate these shifts and is there an ability to acquire land further up the watershed to allow for maintenance of an ecological unit. This includes consideration for boundary expansion.

3 points. Reserve boundary allows for habitat migration and several areas adjacent to the boundary provide an option for expansion to accommodate habitat shifts and boundary expansion.
2 points. Reserve boundary allows for some habitat migration and some areas adjacent to the boundary provide an option for expansion to accommodate habitat shifts and boundary expansion.
1 point. Reserve boundary allows for little habitat migration and little to no areas adjacent to the boundary provides an option for expansion to accommodate habitat shifts and boundary expansion.
0 points. Reserve boundary does not allow for habitat migration and there are no areas adjacent to the boundary that provides an option for expansion to accommodate habitat shifts and boundary expansion.

Proposed FINAL DRAFT of LaNERR Site Criteria

5.0 Ability to accommodate climate change

5.3 Infrastructure and Access: A changing climate is resulting in a variety of impacts that differ based on geography and conditions within geography. Reserves are designated to ensure a stable platform for research, address significant coastal management issues, enhance public awareness and understanding and promote use of the reserves consistent with the purposes outlined. Access to infrastructure that supports these purposes is key to achieving the mission of the reserve system. This criterion focuses on the expected vulnerability of existing facilities (including visitor centers, labs, storage facilities) proposed for use by the reserve to remain viable and accessible taking into account the most relevant climate change stressors in the locale. This accounts for adaptive strategies that are and/or may be in place to mitigate anticipated stressors.

3 points. Facility(ies) resilient and adaptable under high impact climate change scenarios given current understanding of vulnerability
2 points. Facilities resilient and adaptable under medium impact climate change stressor/threat scenarios
1 point. Facilities unlikely to be resilient and adaptable under medium/low impact climate change stressor/threat scenarios
0 points. Facilities vulnerable and not resilient under any climate change scenarios

Proposed FINAL DRAFT of LaNERR Site Criteria

5.0 Ability to accommodate climate change

5.4. Public Access Resilience: This criterion focuses on the ability to access the resources of the reserve. This includes access to water via docks and boat launches; access to interpretive and educational experiences via trails, pavilions, amphitheaters, as well as access to existing recreational and professional opportunities in the resource.

3 points. Public access infrastructure is resilient and adaptable under high impact climate change scenarios given current understanding of vulnerability
2 points. Public access infrastructure resilient and adaptable under medium impact climate change stressor/threat scenarios
1 point. Public access infrastructure unlikely to be resilient and adaptable under medium/low impact climate change stressor/threat scenarios
0 points. Public access infrastructure vulnerable and not resilient under any climate change scenarios

6.0 LaNERR Partnerships:

Partnerships should be relevant and aid the program in achieving their goals, reaching target audiences, and developing and delivering key messages. They increase the resilience of the reserve and its ability to work with the local community to address climate change and impacts from other important stressors. Partnerships can increase the ability to address research needs and gaps, reach education and public engagement goals, and provide access to facilities and field opportunities. Institutional partnerships can also provide administrative services, support leveraging of resources, and reduce program costs. These organizations or third parties can also assist with fund-raising, grant development and management, and management of program income (ex. Friends Groups and NERRA). The strength of the reserve's partnerships and potential for partnerships will be evaluated based on the following:

6.1 Potential to develop partnerships: This criterion focuses on the site's ability to create new partnerships and strengthen existing partnerships to achieve their goals, reach target audiences, develop and deliver key messages, and address relevant coastal management issues. This can be demonstrated by potential partner interest, geography, etc. with a focus on the outcomes of the partnership, not the number or name of organizations. This will be measured by the following metrics:

- Existing MOUs or agreements explaining shared resources such as facilities and salaries
- Memberships of key individuals to professional organizations such as National Marine Educators Association, Coastal and Estuarine Research Federation, Society of Wetland Scientists, other state professional organizations, research organizations, local or regional consortiums, etc.
- Recent history of key personnel participation in multi-institutional grants, publications, and projects
- Letters from existing informal partners about past projects, their outcomes, and organizational structure
- Letters from potential partners focusing on how the partner could complement or contribute to the reserve goals. This letter should include information such as historical context for partnership and their vision for contributing to the reserve mission.

Proposed FINAL DRAFT of LaNERR Site Criteria

6.2 Internal NOAA Partnerships: This is a measure of the number and quality of partnerships with other NOAA entities that already exist within a program or that have the potential to develop based on common goals, geographic proximity, etc. The assumption is that a candidate site with a high diversity of existing partnerships and partnership potential will have opportunities to leverage support and create sustainable programs more so than one with fewer partnerships. Some examples include Sea Grant, Coastal Programs, Marine Sanctuaries, Weather Service, Climate Office and other line offices of NOAA. This will be measured by the following metrics:

- Existing MOUs or agreements explaining shared resources such as facilities and salaries
- Recent history of key personnel participation in grants, publications, and projects with NOAA

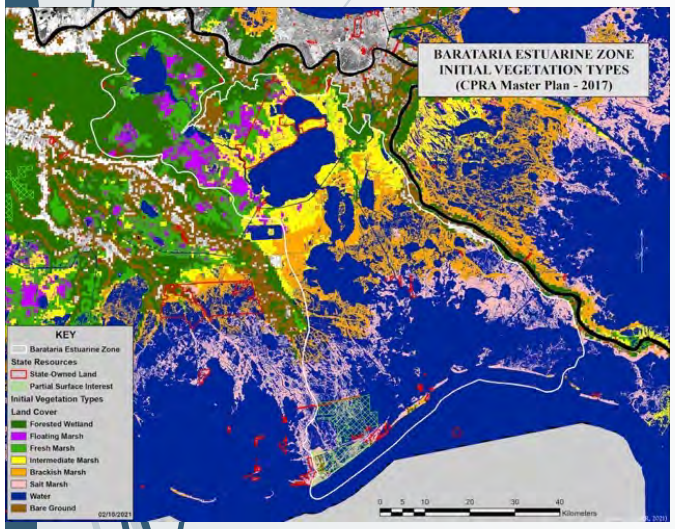
3 Points. The site has a history of NOAA partnerships and there is strong potential to develop and strengthen new and existing ones of high quality evidenced by the metrics stated above.
2 Points. The site has several partnerships in place and there is potential for new partnerships of good quality to develop.
1 Point. The site has potential for partnership development.
0 Points. The site has insignificant potential for partnerships.

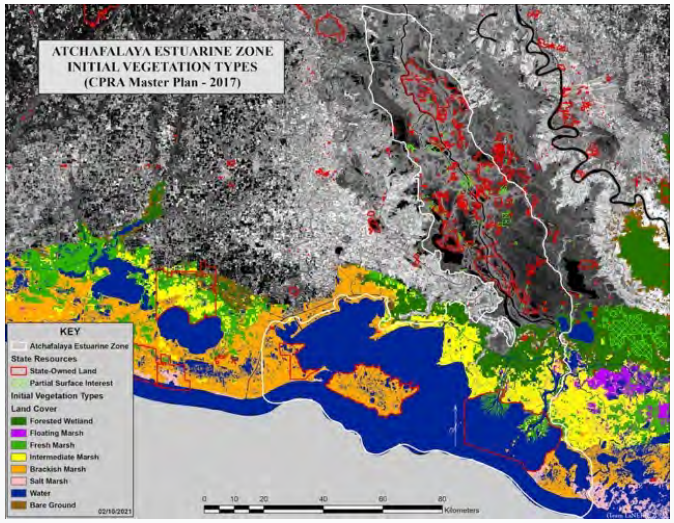
Proposed FINAL DRAFT of LaNERR Site Criteria

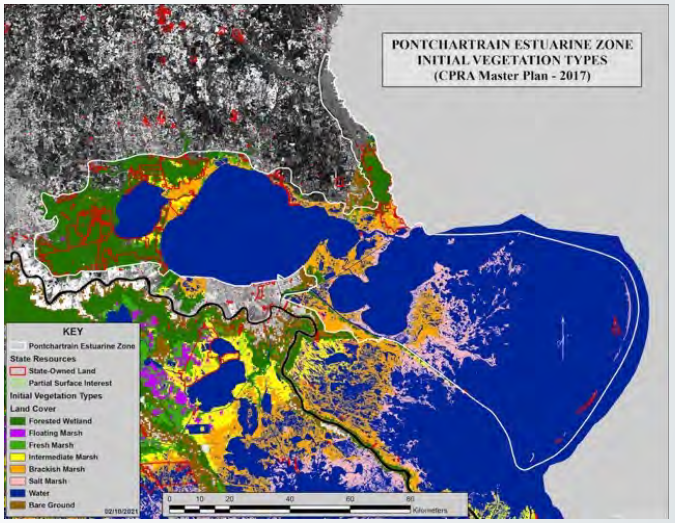
6.3 Diversity of Partnerships: This is a measure of the ability to reach diverse audiences through existing partnerships or potential partnerships based on common goals and geographic proximity. The assumption is that a candidate site with a high diversity of existing partnerships and partnership potential will have opportunities to leverage support and create sustainable programs more so than one with fewer partnerships. These partnerships should increase the candidate site's ability to address relevant coastal management issues, address research needs and gaps, and reach diverse audiences. These partner organizations should range in diversity such as federal agencies (ex. National Estuary Programs, National Wildlife Refuges, National Parks), state agencies and parks, local organizations (Marine Labs and Land Trusts), NGOs, and umbrella groups (national, regional or local). These partnerships should help bridge the gap between the NERRS and new audiences that the NERRS has not typically engaged (e.g. urban audiences) or that could help the NERRS become more effective at reaching intended audiences (e.g. national municipal association to facilitate reaching local officials). The focus of these partnerships should be the outcomes, not the number or name of organizations. This will be measured by the following metrics:

- Existing MOUs or agreements explaining shared resources such as facilities and salaries
- Recent history of key personnel participation in multi-institutional grants, publications, projects
- Letters from existing informal partners about past projects, outcomes, and organizational structure
- Letters from potential partners focusing on how the partner could complement or contribute to the reserve goals. This letter should include historical context and vision for partnership contributing to the reserve mission.

Alternative Site Proposals: Phase 2 Presentations to Site Development Committee







Screening Subcommittee	
Seth Blitch, Chair	The Nature Conservancy
Alisha Renfro	National Wildlife Federation
Scott Hemmerling	Water Institute of the Gulf
Ron Boustany	USDA/NRCS
Sara Krupa	LADNR Office of Coastal Management
Rebecca Triche	LA Wildlife Federation
Pat Arnould	Gov Office of Indian Affairs
Mike Carloss	Ducks Unlimited
Kenny Ribbeck	La Dept Wildlife & Fisheries
Glenn Constant	US Fish & Wildlife Service
Honora Buras	Coastal Protection & Restoration Authority
Greg Steyer	USGS
Gina Campo	Office of Community Development
Melissa Baustian	Water Institute of the Gulf
Sam Bentley	LSU, Vice President for Research
Mead Allison	Tulane University
Shirley Laska	UNO Emeritus
Jenneke Visser	UL Lafayette Emeritus

TOWN HALL MEETINGS

Town Hall Planning. 7/13/21

1.0 General Information

1.1 Town Hall Meeting Overview

- To be hosted September 6-17 (over a two week period)
- Deadline for returning Town Hall Dates, Times, and Locations by July 23, 2021. Other elements of planning such as invite list and two-pager will be due at another deadline.

1.2 Number/Format of Town Hall Meetings

- Minimum of 1 in-person/hybrid Town Hall meeting per zone where only proposals for that zone are presented. Need to consider time of day that this in-person/hybrid Town Hall meeting is scheduled relative to virtual Town Hall meeting (see next bullet).
- Host 1 virtual Town Hall meeting per zone at a date and time different from the in-person/hybrid Town Hall meeting.
- The Designation Leadership Team will present to the CPRA Board and Gov Coastal Commission to provide overviews of all proposals and an update of the designation process.

Town Hall Planning. 7/13/21

1.3 Locations of/Logistics for Town Hall Meetings

- Work with Designation Leadership Team (DLT) to determine location of Town Hall meetings.
- Use accessible options that are free such as public Libraries, public meeting areas, accommodations that provide Sea Grant free access.

1.4 Potential Invitees

- DLT and La Sea Grant to develop meeting announcement of Town Hall meeting schedules (in-person/hybrid and virtual) for each alternative site and send out to list of potential invitees identified (see list information below).
- Proposal teams to identify stakeholders in their zones and provide to Sea Grant by August 6
- Sea Grant to post meeting notice on LaNERR page by August 6.
- Sea Grant to broadcast meeting announcement via social media by August 6 then again 1 week prior to each planned Town Hall meeting.

Town Hall Meetings:

The proposal team leads should provide the following information by July 23:

1. Suggested number of Town Halls in their zone
2. Suggested dates and times
3. Suggested locations
4. List of additional invitees

Post-meeting follow up from DLT:

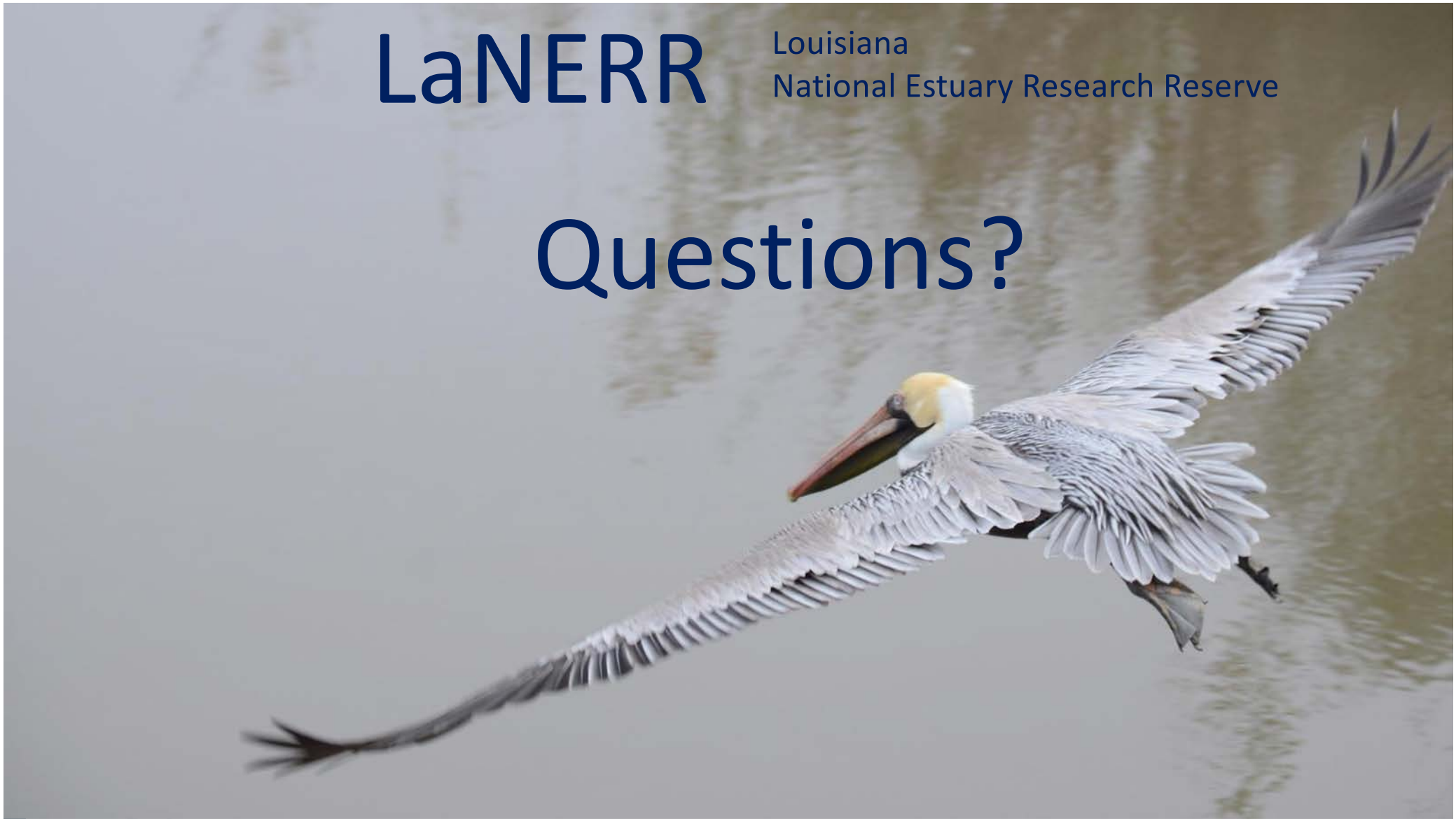
1. Recording of meeting

2. Meeting summary

LaNERR

Louisiana
National Estuary Research Reserve

Questions?



LaNERR Site Development Committee

Meeting #6

Wednesday, July 14, 2021 (10:00 – 11:30 am)

Attendees

SDC Members - Carol Wilson, LSU; Chip McGimsey, CRT; Craig Colten, LSU; Justin Lemoine, CRT; Tracy Quirk, LSU; James Nelson, ULL; David Muth, NWF; Brian Roberts, LUMCON; Julie Whitbeck, NPS; Kacie Wright, USGS; Robert Moreau, SELU; Kristi Trail, PC; David Podgorski, UNO; Patty Ferguson Bohnee, ASU; Mark Tobler, Loyola; Quenton Fontenot, NSU; Cheston Hill, OSL; Natalie Snider, EDF; Giovanna McClenachan, NSU; Chuck Hunter, USFWS; Simone Maloz, RoR; Andy Fischer, LDWF; Martin O'Connell, UNO; Matthew Hiatt, LSU; Nathan Corley, LDOE; Navid Jafari, LSU; Beth Stauffer, ULL; Erik Johnson, Audubon; Claire Anderson, Ripple Effect; Dean Blanchard, BTNEP; Mark Davis, Tulane; Amy Dixon, (formerly) USACE;

Screening Subcommittee (SDC Members)): Seth Blitch, TNC; Alisha Renfro, NWF; Scott Hemmerling, WI; Ron Boustany, NRCS; Rebecca Triche, LWF; Pat Arnould, GOIA; Mike Carloss, DU; Kenny Ribbeck, LDWF; Glenn Constant, USFWS; Honora Buras, CPRA; (unable to attend: Sara Krupa, LDNR; Greg Steyer, USGS; Gina Campo, OCD)

Screening Subcommittee (non-SDC Members): Melissa Baustian, WI; Mead Allison, Tulane; Shirley Laska, UNO; Jenneke Visser, ULL; (unable to attend: Sam Bentley, LSU)

Other Attendees: Eva Hillmann, PC; Deborah Dardis, SELU; Teague O'Mara, SELU; Blaise Pezold, The Meraux Foundation; Chris Haines, The Meraux Foundation

Designation Leadership Team: Robert Twilley, LSU; Sandy Parfait, LSU; Julie Lively, LA Sea Grant; Kristin Ransom, NOAA; (unable to attend: LaTosha Mullins, LA Sea Grant)

Royal Engineers & Consultants (LA Sea Grant Support): Alaina Grace, Shelby Barrett; (unable to attend: Mandy Green, Kirk Rhinehart)

SDC Members Unable to Attend: Abigail Bockus, LUMCON; Jill Trepanier, LSU; Kevin Ringelman, LSU; John Nyman, LSU; Kyle Piller, SELU; Jennifer Hill, Louisiana Tech; Robert Thomas, Loyola; Dinah Maygarden, UNO; Brian Gautreau, LSU AgCenter; Ken Krauss, USGS; Cindy Brown, LTL; Aimee Hollander, NSU; Andy Dolan, USFWS; Bryan Piazza, TNC; Emad Habib, ULL; Mark Kulp, UNO; Megan La Peyre, USGS; Mitchell Aleshire, CRT; Morgan Kelly, LSU; Shirell Parfait-Dardar, GCDBCC; Gary Lafleur, NSU; Liz Skilton, ULL; Illya Tietzel, UNO; Jonathan Foret, SLWDC; Malay Ghose Hajra, UNO; Joey Breaux, LDAF; Heather Stone, ULL; Robert Mahon, UNO; Thomas Gresham, LDOE; Danielle Keller, USACE; Michael Pasquier, LSU; Alex Kolker, LUMCON; Erin Cox, UNO; Maida Owens, CRT; Corey Miller, CRCL; Donata Henry, Tulane

Summary

Welcome

Robert Twilley opened the meeting and noted that the meeting is being recorded for anyone unable to attend. The last meeting of the LaNERR Site Development Committee was May 13, 2021, to discuss Phase I proposals (presentations), the 2nd draft of Site Selection Criteria, and Phase II and Final Candidate Site proposal guidance.

The key objectives of the meeting today are to review the revised LaNERR Workflow and Schedule (dated July 6, 2021), review NOAA feedback on the revised Site Selection Criteria, discuss Phase II proposals (presentations), get updates on the next steps for the Screening Subcommittee, and discuss preparations for Town Halls.

Materials will continue to be provided to the SDC as they are developed. The public facing Sea Grant LaNERR website will also be updated periodically.

Revised LaNERR Workflow and Schedule

An overview of the file dated July 6, 2021, was presented. The timeline has been expanded to allow for more time to prepare and advertise for the Town Halls as well as more time for proposal teams to incorporate feedback from the Town Halls into their Final Site Proposals. Refer to the revised Workflow and Schedule that is available in the SDC website for specific details.

NOAA Feedback on Draft Site Selection Criteria

In early July 2021, the DLT received comments from NOAA regarding the modified Site Selection Criteria. NOAA was generally pleased with the modifications that were made and how the DLT and Site Criteria Subcommittee recommended changes specific for Louisiana. A new appendix was added to the NOAA guidance document, which includes additional criteria. From the new appendix, two new criteria categories have been added to the LaNERR Site Selection Criteria, including "ability to accommodate climate change" and "LaNERR Partnerships." The DLT has made the changes requested by NOAA and will circulate the 'final' version to the Site Criteria Subcommittee for feedback before returning the revisions to NOAA for final review. These materials are available on the SDC website.

Phase II Proposal Presentations

Presentations were given by proposal team leads/co-leads for each of the three estuarine zones. A copy of each Phase II proposal is available on the SDC website. Proposal Teams were asked to submit a copy of their presentation to Robert Twilley so they could be provided to the Screening Subcommittee. The DLT will update the deadline for map requests in the proposal guidance document to reflect the new schedule.

Barataria Estuarine Zone

Tracy Quirk of LSU presented the Phase II Barataria Site Proposal. The presentation included an overview of team members, an overview of their tentative core and buffer areas, and the merits of their

candidate site as it relates to NOAA's NERR Site Selection Criteria. She mentioned the importance of the proximity to New Orleans and the number of residents and tourists. She highlighted LDWF, CPRA, and TNC as being important contacts moving forward and gave an overview of land ownership in their draft site boundaries (e.g., over 80,000 acres; 80% state owned). Specifically, they are interested in places such as (but not limited to): Lake Salvador/Timken, Jean Laffite NHP, Barataria Preserve, TNC-owned land, and potentially the Wisner Trust Land (City of NO). There are two options for the headquarters, including the Laffite Wetland Center (under development) or a facility on state-owned lands further south in the basin. She highlighted the array of habitat types included in their candidate site and mentioned several groups and organizations already working to protect the natural resources and habitats in this basin. She spoke of the site's suitability for research, monitoring, and resource protection by highlighting the amount of monitoring currently taking place and the opportunity to capitalize on future monitoring that is anticipated in relation to the Mid-Barataria Sediment Diversion. She also spoke to the site's suitability for education, interpretation, and training by highlighting several active groups with programs already in place, including (but not limited to): Ripple Effect in New Orleans, JLNHP, Lake Salvador WMA, Barataria-Terrebonne National Estuary Program, LA Wetlands Education Center and Ecotourism Ferry to Grand Isle (in development), LUMCON, and the Sea Grant Oyster Lab on Grand Isle. Last, she highlighted their team's opportunities to engage with both private land owners and CPRA. For additional details, refer to the Phase II Barataria Site Proposal that is available on the SDC website.

Atchafalaya Estuarine Zone

Brian Roberts of LUMCON presented the Phase II Atchafalaya Site Proposal. The presentation included a review of team members, and overview of their tentative core and buffer areas, and the merits of their candidate site as it relates to NOAA's NERR Site Selection Criteria. He briefly mentioned "what is a NERR and what it means to have one," to highlight the importance of these reserves and the significance of having one in Louisiana. He highlighted the merit of the Atchafalaya Basin due to its centralized location, accessibility to metropolitan areas such as Lafayette and Baton Rouge, including several major universities. At this phase, their team is proposing a site that would only require use of state-owned lands (very large patches/lands actively being managed primarily by LDWF). A longer term goal would be to work with federal, organizational (NGOs), and private land owners to expand the NERR. Brian highlighted the array of habitat types in the Atchafalaya Basin as well as land areas of current interest (including, but not limited to): Indian Bayou WMA, Attakapas Island WMA, state river bottoms, Atchafalaya Delta WMA, Marsh Island WMA, State Wildlife Refuge (incorrectly labeled as Rainey on maps), as well as state estuarine and offshore water bottoms. He highlighted a number of species, critical and/or threatened and endangered, that reside in or migrate through the Atchafalaya Basin as well as the extensive monitoring already in place for baselines (CRMS sites) and active research currently underway. Last, he highlighted a number of specific reasons why their proposed site is compatible with management issues, including their proposed area containing: the largest intact, active delta in country, the largest remaining stand of coastal cypress forest, priority status for Governor John Bell Edwards, a major flyway for migratory birds, critical habitat for numerous species, nursery habitat for commercially and recreationally important species, over 20 CWPPRA restoration sites, a critical relief valve for extreme flood events on the river, critical connection points for inland and coastal shipping routes, thriving finfish and shellfish fisheries, and the largest wild caught crawfish harvest in the nation. For additional details, refer to the Phase II Atchafalaya Site Proposal that is available on the SDC website.

Pontchartrain Estuarine Zone

Kristi Trail and Eva Hillman of PC and Rob Moreau of SELU presented the Phase II Pontchartrain Site Proposal. The presentation included the tentative core and buffer areas and the merits of their candidate site as it relates to NOAA's NERR Site Selection Criteria.

Kristi provided an overview of the site, mentioning that the proposed site does not include the entire Basin. She specified that their approach is focused on a multi-component site, with 5 sub-areas. Overall, their team thinks the Pontchartrain Basin is a perfect candidate for a LaNERR site – lots of baseline ecological data, facilities, and large human population focused in the center of basin with easy access points.

Eva Hillman of PC gave an overview of the anticipated core and buffer areas, associated habitats, and species of interest associated with each of their five 'Sub-areas' of interest. The sub-areas include Maurepas and Manchac swamp areas, Big Branch NWR, Orleans Land Bridge, Biloxi Marsh, and Chandeleur Islands.

Rob Moreau of SELU presented an overview of Pontchartrain Basin vegetation maps and tabular summary by habitat type. He highlighted the benefit of this location for a NERR due to its proximity to the Greater New Orleans metro area. He specifically focused on the many access points, existing education/outreach/research/ecotourism facilities, and noted that their team has identified 22 facilities and programs to date.

During the open question period, an SDC member suggested this team also highlight the proximity to Baton Rouge and consider hosting a Town Hall meeting there.

For additional details, refer to the Phase II Pontchartrain Site Proposal that has been provided on the SDC website.

Screening Subcommittee

Robert Twilley noted that Seth Blitch of TNC, former manager of Apalachicola NERR will serve as the chair for this subcommittee. The subcommittee has been formalized (primarily with SDC members and now four people to represent academia). Member names and affiliations were presented. Seth Blitch briefly covered the role of the subcommittee, noting that their primary role in reviewing the Phase II proposals is to provide constructive feedback to help Proposal Teams improve upon their existing proposals as they move toward their Final phase proposals. Seth will organize an upcoming instructional meeting with this subcommittee, and feedback will be provided to the Proposal Teams by the end of July 2021.

Town Halls Guidance

Robert Twilley reiterated the importance of maximizing public participation and the reasoning for postponing the Town Halls from August to September. Guidance has already been provided to Proposal Teams and additional guidance is forthcoming. The most urgent need at this time is for Proposal Teams to provide the suggested number of, location(s) for, and dates/times for the September 2021 Town Halls

(by July 23, 2021), as well as a list of additional invitees. The DLT will assist with confirming/securing locations for Town Halls once the suggested locations and dates/times are received. The DLT will provide guidance but would like to hear each Proposal Team's thoughts for Town Hall format. The teams were reminded that the Town Halls will need to be both in person but also contain a virtual option to maximize participation. The DLT will host check-in calls with Proposal Teams to answer questions and lend assistance.

Wrap Up and Next Steps

The SDC Meeting #6 recording and a meeting summary will be posted to the SDC site following the meeting. Recording: https://lsu.zoom.us/rec/share/H7UauaD8n3t-uugc3_7n1lAU1k25oOYall3bjmsQcJEHZGppx-hO5VQFUTaoX9Dy.vTNw6gv6MU3U_LU6.

The SDC was reminded that the next meeting will be in November, and the DLT anticipates having feedback from the Town Halls for that meeting.

The DLT will provide the full list of the new NOAA criteria (Appendix 4) to the SDC, provide the revised LaNERR Site Criteria to the Site Criteria Subcommittee, return the revised LaNERR Site Criteria to NOAA, provide additional Town Hall Guidance to Proposal Teams, and update the proposal guidance document to reflect the new deadline for map requests for Final phase proposals.

Proposal Teams will provide a PDF copy of their Phase II proposal presentation so they can be shared with the Screening Subcommittee. Teams will also provide the suggested number of, location(s) for, and dates/times for the September 2021 Town Halls, as well as a list of additional invitees.

Seth Blitch will schedule a Phase II Proposal Review (instructional) meeting in July with the Screening Subcommittee and ensure feedback is provided to Proposal Teams by the end of July.

Site Development Committee Meeting 7

November 29, 2021

LaNERR Site Development Committee

Meeting #7

Monday, November 29, 2021 (1:00 – 3:00 pm)

Zoom link: https://lsu.zoom.us/j/5720227912?from=addon
Meeting ID: 572 022 7912
Mobile Dial In: 646-876-9923

Pre-meeting Materials:

- LaNERR Questionnaire
- Town Hall FAQs
- Final Site Criteria
- Revised LaNERR Workflow and Schedule (Nov 22, 2021)

Objectives:

- Mock Town Hall
- Review Revised LaNERR Workflow and Schedule
- Advertise Town Halls (Feb 1 – 11, 2022)

Agenda:

Time	Topic
5 min	Welcome
105 min	Mock Town Hall
10 min	*National Estuarine Research Reserve System – Kristin Ransom, NOAA*
15 min	*Introduction to LaNERR Process – Robert Twilley, Professor, LSU*
20 min	*Pontchartrain Estuarine Zone / Q&A*
20 min	*Barataria Estuarine Zone / Q&A*
20 min	*Atchafalaya Estuarine Zone / Q&A*
20 min	*Review and complete questionnaire*
10 min	Wrap up and next steps
5 min	*Revised LaNERR Workflow and Schedule*
5 min	*Advertise days/times/locations for Town Halls*

Post-meeting follow up from DLT:

- Recording of meeting
- Meeting summary

Candidate Site Alternatives for Louisiana National Estuarine Research Reserve

The National Estuarine Research Reserve (NERR) System is a network of 29 coastal sites covering over 1.3 million acres of estuaries focused on promoting stewardship, research, training, and education. Established through the Coastal Zone Management Act, the reserves represent a partnership program between NOAA and the coastal states. Each site is managed on a daily basis by a lead state agency or university with input from local partners while NOAA provides funding and national guidance.

The concept of establishing a NERR has been discussed for decades here in Louisiana, one of the few coastal states without a NERR site. Louisiana Governor John Bel Edwards changed the nature of the conversation on July 23, 2019, when he sent a request for consideration to the Undersecretary of the NOAA who responded affirmatively in December that same year. In his letter to NOAA, Governor Edwards identified Louisiana Sea Grant as the lead agency in the designation process, that along with the Governor's Office of Coastal Activities, would initiate a process to nominate a Louisiana NERR (LaNERR) to NOAA.

Identifying alternative sites that would represent appropriate site criteria for a NOAA proposal is but one milestone in the 3-5 year designation process. This critical first step requires a collaborative process of identifying a site that meet the standards of NERR sites across the nation and represent a unique addition to the NERR System from the Mississippi River Delta. Public engagement is a critical part of this process, and we hope that you will participate in this survey to help provide feedback on what alternative site may be the most appropriate as our first NERR in Louisiana.

This survey will help you to participate in the evaluation of candidate site alternatives to establish a LaNERR. We are asking the public to discuss how best alternative sites meet the mission of a NERR. In rounds of Town Hall meetings, the public will share ideas about what is the mission of a NERR, how a NERR site in the Mississippi River Delta meets the national program needs, and what qualities of a site in Louisiana best fit the NOAA criteria. An information pamphlet on each of the candidate site alternatives provides an overview of LaNERR program as well as summaries of NOAA criteria.

By completing the questionnaire, you can register your opinions about candidate site alternatives for a LaNERR relative to NOAA criteria. You can also suggest ideas and recommendations for partnerships and support to individual LaNERR candidate sites.

We will use the responses to provide feedback to the respective Site Proposal Teams.

You can keep up with progress of the LaNERR initiative by following us on **laseagrant.org/deltanerr/**.

Thank you.

1. **What type of organization below BEST describes you?**
   (Please check only ONE.)

   - o State Agency/Government
   - o Federal Agency/Government
   - o Tribal Agency/Government
   - o County Agency/Government
   - o Local Agency/Government
   - o Regional Agency/Government
   - o Educator: K-12
   - o Educator: Higher Education
   - o Non-Profit Organization
   - o Privately employed
   - o Industry/Business
   - o Other (please describe)

2. **Would you be willing to provide the following information in the case we would like to follow up on your interest in supporting the LaNERR candidate site alternative?**

   Name:
   Email address:
   Other contact information:

3. **Have you visited the LaNERR web site at laseagrant.org/deltanerr/ to review the mission of the NERR system and examples of NERR sites.?**

   - o No
   - o Yes

4. **In which of the following areas do you live?**
   (Please check only ONE.)

   - Pontchartrain
   - Breton Sound
   - Mississippi Delta
   - Barataria
   - Terrebonne
   - Atchafalaya
   - Teche/Vermilion
   - Mermentau
   - Calcasieu/Sabine

5. **Which of the LaNERR candidate site alternatives are you responding in this survey?**
   (Please check only ONE.)

   - o Pontchartrain Basin
   - o Atchafalaya Basin
   - o Barataria Basin

6. **Please indicate the extent to which you think the following missions of a proposed LaNERR are important to supporting Coastal Zone Management.**

Research and Monitoring Mission
- o Very Important
- o Somewhat Important
- o Not Important
- o Not Sure

Education and Interpretative Center Mission
- o Very Important
- o Somewhat Important
- o Not Important
- o Not Sure

Coastal Zone Management Mission
- o Very Important
- o Somewhat Important
- o Not Important
- o Not Sure

7. **How well does the LaNERR proposal that you reviewed (see Question 5) develops the criteria outlined in the following four categories required for a NERR designation.**

Environmental Representativeness
- o Strongly Develops
- o Somewhat Develops
- o Uncertain
- o Development is Unclear
- o Does not Develop

Research and Monitoring
- o Strongly Develops
- o Somewhat Develops
- o Uncertain
- o Development is Unclear
- o Does not Develop

Education, Interpretation, and Culture
- o Strongly Develops
- o Somewhat Develops
- o Uncertain
- o Development is Unclear
- o Does not Develop

Coastal Zone Management Issues

- Strongly Develops
- Somewhat Develops
- Uncertain
- Development is Unclear
- Does not Develop

8. **Please indicate which response below best describes your likelihood to participate in each mission of a NERR proposed in your region.**

Research and Monitoring Mission
- Very Likely
- Somewhat Likely
- Uncertain
- Unlikely
- Very Unlikely

Education and Interpretative Center Mission
- Very Likely
- Somewhat Likely
- Uncertain
- Unlikely
- Very Unlikely

Coastal Zone Management Mission
- Very Likely
- Somewhat Likely
- Uncertain
- Unlikely
- Very Unlikely

9. **Please indicate which response below best describes your likelihood to participate in the missions of a NERR proposed in another region of Louisiana coastal zone.**

Research and Monitoring Mission
- Very Likely
- Somewhat Likely
- Uncertain
- Unlikely
- Very Unlikely

Education and Interpretative Center Mission
- Very Likely
- Somewhat Likely
- Uncertain
- Unlikely
- Very Unlikely

Coastal Zone Management Mission

- Very Likely
- Somewhat Likely
- Uncertain
- Unlikely
- Very Unlikely

10. **How likely would you consider the importance of a NERR in your community to ecotourism?**
    - Very Likely
    - Somewhat Likely
    - Uncertain
    - Somewhat Unlikely
    - Very Unlikely

11. **Please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following statement Are you concerned that the proposed NERR in your region would limit or restrict the opportunities to recreate or otherwise utilize the natural resources beyond the current management restrictions?**

    Recreational fishing and hunting
    - Strongly Agree
    - Somewhat Agree
    - Neutral or No Impact
    - Somewhat Disagree
    - Strongly Disagree

    Commercial fishing
    - Strongly Agree
    - Somewhat Agree
    - Neutral or No Impact
    - Somewhat Disagree
    - Strongly Disagree

    Boating or other aquatic activities
    - Strongly Agree
    - Somewhat Agree
    - Neutral or No Impact
    - Somewhat Disagree
    - Strongly Disagree

    Changes in ownership
    - Strongly Agree
    - Somewhat Agree
    - Neutral or No Impact
    - Somewhat Disagree
    - Strongly Disagree

    Navigation

- Strongly Agree
- Somewhat Agree
- Neutral or No Impact
- Somewhat Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

Oil and gas activities

- Strongly Agree
- Somewhat Agree
- Neutral or No Impact
- Somewhat Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

Other: Please describe.

- Strongly Agree
- Somewhat Agree
- Neutral or No Impact
- Somewhat Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

12. **Please indicate the extent to which you support or oppose the development of the NERR described in Question #5 in your community:**

- Strongly Support
- Somewhat Support
- Neutral
- Somewhat Oppose
- Strongly Oppose

13. **Does the proposal develop the ability to access the resources (such as facilities) and programs of the NERR?**

- Strongly Develops
- Somewhat Develops
- Uncertain
- Development is Unclear
- Does Not Develop

14. **What support and partnerships would you recommend that the LaNERR proposal team contact? Would you be willing to assist in making the contact?**

Contact:

Willing to Help?

Yes
No

15. **Are you interested in joining and participating on a 'friends of the NERR' support group that would serve to connect the development of a NERR to your community?**

    - o Yes
    - o No
    - o Not Sure

16. **Please provide any additional comments you might have related to the search for a NERR site in coastal Louisiana.**

Designating a National Estuarine Research Reserve in Louisiana: Frequently Asked Questions

Site Selection Process: Definitions, Criteria, and Nomination Process

Q: What is a NERR?

A: The National Estuarine Research Reserve System is a network of 29 protected areas representative of the various biogeographic regions and estuarine types in the United States. Reserves are established for long-term research, education, training, and stewardship, and to promote informed management of the nation's estuaries and coastal habitats. A reserve represents a partnership between NOAA and coastal states. NOAA provides funding and national guidance, and each site is managed on a daily basis by a lead state agency with input from local partners. The reserve system covers 1.3 million acres and focus on four key sectors: Research, Education, Stewardship, and Training. (see https://coast.noaa.gov/nerrs/ and https://coast.noaa.gov/nerrs/about/ for more information)

- Stewardship: Each site undertakes the initiatives needed to keep the estuary healthy.
- Research: Reserve-based research and monitoring data are used to aid conservation and management efforts on local and national levels.
- Training: Local and state officials are better equipped to introduce local data into the decision-making process as a result of reserve training efforts.
- Education: Thousands of children and adults are served through hands-on laboratory and field-based experiences. School curriculums are provided online.

Q: What Is an Estuary?

A: Estuaries and their surrounding wetlands are bodies of water usually found where rivers meet the sea. Estuaries are home to unique plant and animal communities that have adapted to brackish water—a mixture of fresh water draining from the land and salty seawater. Learn More.

Q: What programs and benefits do research reserves offer?

A: Reserves apply science and education to improve the management of estuaries. Each reserve brings together local stakeholders, scientists, land management professionals, and educators to understand coastal management issues and generate local, integrated solutions. In addition to collecting and disseminating national and locally relevant data, reserves also provide the trainers and educators needed to bring the reserve-generated data and information to students, local citizens, and decision makers. Reserves further benefit their surrounding community by leveraging existing NOAA resources and bringing in federal funding that is only available to designated sites.

Q: Why should coastal Louisiana have a NERR?

A: The Mississippi River Delta and Chenier Plain represent the seventh largest river delta in the world and one of the most unique environmental, economic, and cultural landscapes in the United

States. This coastal region is also one of the most threatened natural resources in the world with historic wetland loss and flooding issues that challenge these economic and cultural assets of the region. Establishing a National Estuarine Research Reserve (NERR) will provide another tool in the toolbox to complement a concerted effort by the state of Louisiana to solve these challenges and build a more resilient delta landscape. A NERR in Louisiana (LaNERR) would be a place with research and education mission that would benefit students, the public and decision-makers with information on how a delta works – and what it takes to fix our present problems. The health of the Mississippi River delta ecosystem and the many human uses that depend on it would benefit from establishing a National Estuarine Research Reserve.

Q: Will the state have to purchase land for a Louisiana reserve?
A: No. Louisiana is considering sites from existing publicly owned lands and adjacent public trust waters. Additionally, the Louisiana NERR site could expand with municipal and non-profit property; and with donated or purchased land.

Q: Will a new reserve involve NOAA taking land from the State?
A: The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) does not own or manage the land within a reserve, nor does the designation of a reserve add new state or federal regulations. Memoranda of Agreement are used to articulate roles and responsibilities between relevant partners and landowners in the state, and NOAA.

Q: Will the federal government run the reserve?
A: The Louisiana NERR will be a partnership between NOAA and the state of Louisiana. The state is responsible for day-to-day management of a reserve. State responsibilities include land ownership and management; reserve staff members; program implementation; and 30% of funding for the reserve operations. NOAA administers the entire reserve system. NOAA responsibilities include establishing standards for designing and operating reserves; national policy and program guidance; technical assistance; program coordination; and 70% of funding reserve operations.

Q: Does the designation of a reserve bring more rules and regulations?
A: The designation of a Louisiana NERR will not add any new regulations to state-owned lands. NERR designation also does not impose regulations on privately-owned lands. NOAA will examine whether a proposed site is adequately managed for long-term research and education by existing state authorities. There are no federal regulations imposed as a result of reserve designation. Each reserve develops a management plan which takes into consideration the beneficial consumptive (resource harvesting such as fishing, shell fishing, etc.) and non-consumptive uses (recreational such as hiking, birdwatching, biking etc.) and the compatibility with adjacent land uses. These management plans use existing state laws and regulations on lands proposed for a LaNERR to be used to meet the NOAA criteria for a Reserve.

Q: Are there certain criteria that a site must meet to be eligible to be designated as a research reserve site?

A: Yes. Reserve sites are chosen to reflect regional variations and ecosystem types, termed "biogeographic regions," and unique estuarine habitat features within each biogeographic region. NOAA gives priority consideration to designation proposals that establish a reserve in a biogeographic region or sub-region that is not currently represented by the Reserve system or that incorporates unique habitat types that are not represented by the NERR System. NOAA will also evaluate the site based on whether it would be adequately managed for long-term research, education, and stewardship. Since Louisiana is in a biogeographic region that is represented in the Reserve system, this site should include unique habitat types that are not currently represented in the system.

Q: Is recreational hunting and fishing as well as commercial fishing allowed on NERR sites?
A: Designation of a reserve does **not** preclude existing uses and does **not** result in the total preservation of the area. Each reserve develops a management plan which takes into consideration the beneficial consumptive (resource harvesting such as fishing, shell fishing, etc.) and non-consumptive uses (recreational such as hiking, birdwatching, biking etc.) and the compatibility with adjacent land uses. NOAA relies on state regulatory mechanisms to manage those uses within the Reserve boundary.

Q: Will oil and gas exploration and drilling still be allowed?
A: The designation of a Reserve will not change any existing uses on that land/water. The site designation process is essential to identifying a proposed site where the goals of the NERR program (providing a stable environment for long-term research, education, and interpretation) do not conflict with existing uses at the site. NOAA relies on the state to identify a core area where existing uses would not have the potential to adversely impact the proposed site. NOAA relies on state regulatory mechanisms to determine how existing uses will be managed within the buffer areas of the Reserve. When considering new activities and uses proposed within the Reserve boundary (combined core and buffer), NOAA will continue to rely on state regulatory mechanisms to ensure that the siting of new activities will not adversely affect the Reserve site. When considering the uses present at a proposed NERR site, those activities should be considered in light of future impacts and how potential changes to the environment could impact the Reserve site once designated.

Ultimately, NOAA relies on state regulatory mechanisms for the management and siting of new and existing uses. However, NOAA does have to be consulted on the uses at a Reserve through the management planning process and relies on the Memorandum of Understanding/Memorandum of Agreement established between the state managing partner and NOAA at the time of site designation to guide the review of activities at a Reserve site.

Within the Reserve system there are examples of sites that have active oil and gas activities within the Reserve boundary. Mission-Aransas Reserve (located in the Coastal Bend of Texas) has current oil and gas production happening within the Reserve boundary, but this activity occurs within the buffer zone and not the core boundary. During the site designation process, the state mapped out the existing oil and gas activity in the area to determine where to place the core and

buffer boundaries to avoid oil and gas impacts within the core boundary of the Reserve. In other Reserves there is active oil and gas refining activity that occurs directly next to the boundary of the Reserve, and they are great partners for the reserve.

Q: How long does the designation process take?
A: The length of time it takes to designate a National Estuarine Research Reserve is not prescribed by NOAA, but rather depends on the time it takes for the state to accomplish the steps and tasks outlined in the regulations. The site selection and nomination process involve a number of steps and public engagement. Once a site is nominated the state and is approved by NOAA, the next steps involve preparation of an environmental impact statement and management plan for the site. Both of these steps require public engagement and input. It takes significant time to develop documentation, engage experts and the public, and execute the review and approval process. Robust stakeholder engagement, which is essential to ensure that the most appropriate site for all Louisiana stakeholders is designated, is imperative to a well-executed designation process.

Q: What funding from NOAA supports the Louisiana designation process?
A: A state is eligible for a total of $100,000 in federal funds for pre-designation activities, which include site selection, a limited basic characterization of the physical, chemical, and biological characteristics of the site, preparation of the required management plan, and providing data and information to NOAA for development of the draft and final Environmental Impact Statements. The Louisiana State University requested $48,000 in FY20 (70% federal and 30% state match requirement). The state may request up to $52,000 for the remainder of the designation process.

Q: If we have a potential reserve site in mind, is it necessary to use the formal selection process?
A: Yes. The state is responsible for developing a site selection process that examines potential sites and applies objective criteria to strategically identify and rank the most suitable locations for a NERR site. The site-selection process has been proven valuable in clarifying issues and priorities and in engaging interested and affected parties.

Q: What is the difference between the Pre-screening Criteria and the full NOAA criteria?
A: The purpose of the pre-screening criteria is to allow the Site Development Committee to narrow its focus to only those areas of the coast that meet the minimum requirements for a NERR. Site Development Committee members are asked to recognize that most sites could be good sites, but the criteria are meant to identify the best site for the stated goals of the NOAA program and the state's needs. Modification of the full criteria allow us to identify the optimal site for a NERR. The Site Development Committee has sent draft modifications of the full criteria to NOAA for review and approval. We hope to have those site criteria approved in time for Town Hall meetings of the three proposed sites for a Louisiana NERR.

Q: Are the criteria equally weighted?
A: The Pre-screening criteria are equally weighted however the final modified site criteria do not have to be. The draft site criteria for a LaNERR submitted by the Site Development Committee to

NOAA has equal weight to all criteria in six different categories (see http://www.laseagrant.org/deltanerr/updates/ for copy of the draft site criteria).

Q: What is the optimal size for a Louisiana NERR?

A: The smallest NERR in the system is in Ohio at a little less than 500 acres and the largest is in Alaska at more than 350,000 acres. The majority of NERRs are less than 50,000 acres. Three of the top five largest NERRs are in the Gulf states – two in Florida and one in Texas. Depending on how the site selection committee identifies a potential site, a Louisiana NERR site has the potential to be quite large. The site selection process will use factors such as the amount of state land immediately available, anticipated cost increases due to management of larger parcels, and others to develop the boundary of the potential NERR site. There is no optimal size for a Reserve site, rather the site's boundaries should be drawn in such a way as to allow for the long-term monitoring and research of a complete ecological unit of key estuarine habitats.

One important factor to note is that the Reserve boundary cannot be composed of more than 50% federal lands.

Q: Can Louisiana have more than one coastal basin included in a LaNERR site?

A: It is allowable for Louisiana to nominate a site with multiple components, and there are examples of sites in the Reserve system with multiple components. One consideration for a site with multiple components is that the funding available for that site stays the same, no matter how many components there are in the site. Multiple components necessarily increase the management needs for the Reserve, which can have a significant impact on the utility of the federal funding available. These considerations will be weighed against other factors during the site selection process.

Q: Can the managing entity be a consortium or a partnership of entities?

A: Once a site is designated, the state managing entity and the associated roles and responsibilities will be outlined in a Memorandum of Understanding and in the draft site management plan. There are several different examples of state managing entities, but the most common are either state agencies or state public universities. Ultimately, the state managing entity must identify and/or establish the mechanisms by which the state has control over the designated site and the management of that site for the life of the Reserve.

Q: What timeline should be used to evaluate the life of a NERR?

A: The goal of a NERR site is for longitudinal research. The oldest NERR site has been on the ground now since 1974, 46 years old already. NERR sites are focused on long-term research and monitoring, and sites are intended to exist indefinitely. This is why siting the NERR, developing public support, and establishing a managing entity is vital to its long-term success.

Q: How does the site selection process take into account the environmental changes happening along our coast and the efforts to address it through the Coastal Master Plan?

A: NOAA recognizes that many areas that could potentially be designated as a Reserve have undergone ecological change as a result of human activities, and such changes may have diminished the historical character of and integrity of a site. NERRS are located in dynamic zones, and the coasts are changing constantly. We recognize that as a conversation within the System and understand that new designations will have to consider these issues as the state moves through the designation process. NERRS regulations do permit the restoration of these areas to improve the representative character of and integrity of a Reserve, but these restoration activities *must* be carefully planned and approved by the state and NOAA through the Reserve management planning process. An activity that can be expected to have a significant adverse impact on the resources or habitats of a Reserve resulting in a change to the representative character and integrity of a Reserve is prohibited.

Manipulative activities taking place at a proposed site must meet the goals of the NERRS program, which are to provide long-term research, education, and interpretation. This includes providing a stable environment for research through the longer-term protection of NERR resources, as well as addressing coastal management issues identified as significant through coordinated research.

The site designation criteria used to identify a potential Reserve site will take these considerations into account, and it will be the role of the Site Development and Site Evaluation committees to weigh those criteria against the other non-restoration related criteria to determine the best potential site for Louisiana. The Coastal Master Plan will be an essential resource for the committees as they navigate these discussions, and the committee will be asked to consider landscape changes over the next 50 years, both with and without Coastal Master Plan projects.

It is also important to note that NOAA is involved in the site development process and regularly communicates with the team leading the site development process for Louisiana, and that any issues that arise for potential sites where Coastal Master Plan projects are planned will be discussed long before the site nomination package is finalized and submitted to NOAA for approval.

Q: Is it preferable to have a site that is closer to urban populations so that more people will use it?

A. This is a difficult question to answer definitively, as it is ultimately the outcome and decision of the site designation process managed by the state. NOAA has defined criteria that are required to be considered during the development and nomination of a potential Reserve site. Those criteria require the site development process to balance the benefits of a large nearby population that can access the Reserve site with the potential impacts that nearby development pressures can have on the long-term integrity of a Reserve site. This balancing act will be the responsibility of the Site Development and Site Evaluation committees, and NOAA relies on the expertise and knowledge of the state team and stakeholders to inform that decision. The site criterion uses one-day travel for education field trips as optimum location for schools and educational institutions to participate in a LaNERR.

Within the NERR system there are examples of both types of Reserves, each with its benefits and challenges. For example, the Tijuana River NERR in southern California is located close to the large population centers of San Diego, CA and Tijuana, Mexico. This site has robust public attendance at Reserve events and the ability to easily connect with other resources in the area. However, the Reserve has to focus significant resources on issues of water quality and urban runoff within the Reserve boundary that are direct impacts from the nearby population centers.

An opposite example is the Sapelo Island reserve site in Georgia. The habitats at this reserve site are relatively unimpacted and allow for research and stewardship without having to deal with concerns related to habitat degradation. However, it is located in a very remote location, requiring boat access to visit, which makes it difficult to host education and training events at the site. This results in staff having to travel outside of the Reserve boundary to engage with the communities in the surrounding area.

Q: Is something less than full ownership allowed?
A: Yes. There are examples throughout the NERR system of Reserves where the boundary includes lands dedicated through conservation easements and other agreements where the private property owner retains some rights to the property. Whatever the mechanism, it is required that the state managing partner has control over the use of the parcel that is to be included as part of the Reserve. The state managing partner is responsible for developing any conservation easements or other agreements that outline the management of the property and ensuring that those activities align with the goals of the Reserve, as well as receiving consent from NOAA that we approve the conservation easement or agreement as part of the management plan of the Reserve.

Q: If a private landowner wanted to participate in another federal easement program (for example, the Natural Resources Conservation Service Agricultural Reserve Program), could they also participate in a conservation easement and include that property in the Reserve boundary?
A: The answer to this question is dependent upon the specific programs involved, but essentially this is an existing land use question. If a landowner is participating in a conservation easement program, the state managing partner and NOAA would look at the uses included in the conservation easement and ensure that those uses are in line with the goals of the NERR program. Those existing uses would also be considered for any potential impacts that they may have on the integrity of the Reserve site before the agreement could be finalized and included in the Reserve boundary and management plan.

Q: Why is the Site Development Committee not considering donations of land from private interests at this time?
A. NOAA requires a minimum level of state control over the property to ensure long-term management as part of the NOAA-state partnership. Donations can take years and thus we cannot depend upon the precarious nature of land acquisition transactions to initiate a NERR site

in Louisiana. Donations will be considered later in the process as lagniappe. Additions to the reserve boundary can also be made once the reserve has been designated and as potential acquisition opportunities emerge. In fact, the availability of lands for future acquisition is a criterion in the site evaluation process.

Post Site Nomination Process

Q: If NOAA accepts the Louisiana nomination, when could a Reserve be designated?
A: Should NOAA accept the state's nomination, it would kick off the next step in the process , as required under NEPA, to consider the state's recommended site and other options as they develop a Draft Environmental Impact Statement; the state's development of a draft management plan for NOAA's review; and additional public meetings and opportunities for public comment. Once the drafts are open for public comment, NOAA and the state move to finalize these documents and develop a record of decision for approval of the designation. This could take 12 to 24 months.

Q: What happens if NOAA rejects the Louisiana site nomination?
A: If NOAA rejects the state's site nomination, the designation process would not advance to the next phase. NOAA would not proceed with the development of an EIS nor would it support the state's development of a draft management plan. NOAA could decide to revisit or reconsider the state's site nomination at any point in the future.

Q: If NOAA accepts Louisiana's site nomination, does this mean that NOAA has decided to designate a new reserve in Louisiana?
A: No. NOAA's decision to accept the state's site nomination and proceed to the next phase does not imply support for a new designation nor does it compel the agency to support a new reserve upon completion of the EIS and draft management plan.

Reserve Site Operation Post-Designation

Q: How much does each NERR site receive from the federal government annually, how much do we have to invest, where can that come from, and to what extent does NOAA dictate how that money has to be spent?
A: This answer differs depending on what the funding is being used for, and the amount of federal funding available each NERR within the System (depending upon the approved federal budget for the relevant fiscal year). Eligible managing state partners can apply for federal funding for the operation and management of the Reserve, as well as for acquisition of lands/waters and facilities construction. The portion of federal funding available to Reserve sites for operations are distributed in an equal share across all eligible sites.

Federal funds are available for the operation and management of the Reserve once it has been formally designated. Federal funds for the operation and management of a Reserve site may not exceed 70% of the total cost of operating and managing the Reserve for any one year. No more

than 10% of the total amount (state and federal shares) of each operation and management award may be used for construction-type activities.

Federal funds are also competitively available for facilities construction and for the acquisition of lands or waters, or interests therein, to be included in the boundary of an eligible Reserve site. Construction and acquisition funding is allocated through a competitive award process, and this fund changes annually based on federal budget appropriations and NERR System priorities. Federal funding for acquisition projects may not exceed an amount equal to 50 percent of the costs of the lands, waters, and interests therein or $5,000,000, whichever amount is less. For construction projects, federal funding may not exceed 70 percent of the total costs. Eligible construction and acquisition projects need to be outlined in the acquisition and construction section of Reserve site management plan.

The state share can be made up of a number of different sources. NOAA works with the state managing partner to identify the most appropriate sources of state match.

Q: If a private landowner wants to sell his property to the state as a part of the NERR program, what rights could he or she maintain?

A: If a private property owner sells their parcel to the state to be included in the Reserve boundary, they would retain whatever rights the public has to the land - no more, no less. If a private landowner enters into an agreement with the state to include their land in the NERR boundary as part of a conservation easement or some other agreement, the private landowner's rights would be outlined in that agreement, which will be included in the Reserve boundary with NOAA's consent.

LaNERR Site Criteria

August 25, 2021

The following section identifies the detailed Site Criteria used for evaluating potential Louisiana NERR (LaNERR)sites. LaNERR Site Criteria include six topical areas to evaluate potential NERR candidate sites: (1) Environmental Representativeness, (2) Research, Monitoring & Resource Protection, (3) Education and Interpretation, (4) Acquisition, Management Consideration, (5) Ability to conduct research on resilience and climate change, and (6) LaNERR Partnerships.

These LaNERR criteria are based on modifications to the NOAA Site Criteria Guidelines to better reflect terminology used in coastal Louisiana and Louisiana specific conditions as well as the addition of two new topical areas (#5 and #6 above) provided by NOAA. Changes to the original criteria are based on meetings of the Site Criteria Subcommittee on April 9, April 30, May 7, and May 21, 2021. In addition, final comments from the Site Criteria Subcommittee were solicited on changes proposed following recommendations from NOAA.

1.0 Environmental Representativeness

1.1 Ecosystem composition: A measure of the diversity of ecosystem types present within the boundaries of the site. This criterion assumes that sites that have a high diversity of major ecosystem types are of higher relative "value" for protection and management than those with low ecosystem diversity (unless the ecosystem in consideration is rare or unique).

3 Points. The site has a high diversity of habitat composition within its major ecosystem type, i.e., it contains three or more habitat types or subtypes within its major ecosystem type (e.g., site consists of a combination of swamps, coastal marshes, and mud flats) or has a combination of multiple coastal marsh types (e.g., tidal freshwater, brackish, salt marsh zones).

2 Points. The site has a moderate diversity of habitat composition within its major ecosystem type, i.e., it contains only two habitat types or subtypes within its major ecosystem type (e.g., consists of a combination of forested wetlands and a single coastal marsh type).

1 Point. The site has a low diversity of habitat composition within its major ecosystem type, i.e., its major ecosystem type consists of a single habitat type (e.g., tidal freshwater marsh or brackish marsh, or forested wetland).

These are the suggested Ecosystem Types to be used in the LaNERR evaluation:

Group I- Uplands

Alluvial Forested Wetlands
Longleaf Pine Savannahs/Pine Flatwoods
Maritime Forest- Woodland

Coastal Prairie/bogs
Coastal Shrublands and Cheniers

Group II- Intertidal areas

Coastal Forested Wetlands
Coastal Floating Marshes
Coastal Freshwater Marsh
Coastal Intermediate Marsh
Coastal Brackish Marsh
Coastal Salt Marsh
Coastal Mangroves
Intertidal Beaches and Dunes
Intertidal Mud and Sand Flats

Group III- Subtidal and Submerged Bottoms

Subtidal hard bottoms/reefs
Subtidal soft bottoms
Subtidal Plants (SAV)

1.2 Balanced ecosystem composition: A measure of the relative composition of ecosystem types within the boundaries of a site (buffer plus core areas). This criterion assumes that sites with a balanced proportion of ecosystem types are of higher relative "value" for protection and management. High, moderate, and low values are assigned to sites that contain variations in the proportions of all three ecosystem types. A value of zero is assigned to a site that is dominated by one ecosystem type or contains less than three ecosystem types.

3 Points. The site contains representative upland, intertidal, and subtidal habitats in relatively equal proportions (i.e. areal cover of any one ecosystem type not less than 25 percent of the total area).

2 Points. The site contains representative upland, intertidal, and subtidal habitats, with the areal cover of any one type not less than 10 percent of the total area.

1 Point. The site contains representative upland, intertidal, and subtidal habitats, with the areal cover of any one type less than 10 percent of the total area.

0 Points. The site contains representative upland, intertidal, and subtidal habitats, with the areal cover of two types being less than 10 percent of the total area *or* the site consists of habitats from only one or two of the three major ecosystem types.

1.3 Habitat composition and complexity: A measure of the diversity of habitat types present within the major ecosystem type found within the boundaries of the site. This criterion assumes that sites that have a high diversity of habitat types are of higher relative "value" for protection and management than those with a low diversity of habitat types. Major ecosystem type is defined here as that type that comprises approximately 40 percent of the site. Use the habitat type designations listed above for "ecosystem composition."

3 Points. The site has a high diversity of habitat composition within its major ecosystem type, i.e., it contains three or more habitat types or subtypes within its major ecosystem type (e.g., site consists of a combination of swamps, coastal marshes, and reefs) or has a combination of multiple coastal marsh types (e.g., tidal freshwater, brackish, salt marsh zones including mangroves).

2 Points. The site has a moderate diversity of habitat composition within its major ecosystem type, i.e., it contains only two habitat types or subtypes within its major ecosystem type (e.g., consists of a combination of swamps and a single coastal marsh type).

1 Point. The site has a low diversity of habitat composition within its major ecosystem type, i.e., its major ecosystem type consists of a single habitat type (e.g., brackish marsh or tidal freshwater wetlands).

1.4 Significant faunal and floral support: A measure of the degree to which a site supports significant faunal or floral components. This criterion focuses on a site's contribution (i.e., function) toward supporting the activities (e.g., feeding, nesting) of the following suite of significant faunal or floral components. The list of components includes groups or organisms that are known to be dependent upon estuarine habitats for the entire or a crucial part of their life cycle.

- Fish and Shellfish Spawning and Nursery Grounds (includes use by either freshwater, estuarine, or estuarine-dependent marine species)
- Migratory Bird or Waterfowl Use
- Bird Nesting or Roosting Area
- Critical Mammal Habitat
- Non-Game Animals (amphibians, reptiles, etc.)
- State or federally Listed Species or of concern (animal or plant – including candidate species)
- Other biodiversity support as representative of ecosystem services (such as invertebrates, reef environments...).

3 Points. The site supports or serves as an important site for a wide range of the faunal or floral components listed above (4 of 6) or is an extremely important site for any threatened or endangered species.

2 Points. The site supports or serves as an important site for a moderate range and diversity of the significant faunal or floral components listed above (3 of 6).

1 point. The site supports or serves as an important site for one or two of the significant faunal or floral components listed above.

0 point. The site does not support significant faunal or floral components.

1.5 Geologic representativeness, diversity, and uniqueness of the site: A measure of the representativeness, diversity, and uniqueness of the geologic characteristics that define part or the whole of a candidate site. This criterion attempts to consider both the surface and subsurface geologic formations that may be representative or unique within a site, particularly

as they affect or define associated biotic habitats. Included in these considerations are the ways that local geology affects surface hydrology, such as drainage and fluvial systems, and subsurface hydrology, such as shallow-water aquifers. Geologic and hydrologic maps should be used to evaluate this criterion.

3 Points. The site has numerous geologic characteristics, two or more unique geologic characteristics, and contains a high diversity of formation types or strata within its boundaries.
2 Points. The site has a moderate number of representative geologic characteristics and at least one unique geologic characteristic and contains a moderate diversity of formation types or strata within its boundaries.
1 Point. The site has a moderate number of geologic characteristics, no unique geologic characteristics, or contains a moderate diversity of formation types or strata within its boundaries.
0 Points. The site has few or only one representative geologic characteristic, no unique geologic characteristics, or contains few or only one formation type or strata within its boundaries.

1.6 Salinity gradient A measure of the seasonal and spatial range of salinity over multiple years within a candidate site's boundaries. This criterion recognizes the effect of salinity on the biotic structure of estuarine habitats (including the plant communities and faunal components that inhabit them). It assumes that a site with a greater range of salinity will support a broader range of habitat types and organisms.

3 Points. The site encompasses > 10 parts per thousand (ppt) or greater range of salinity within its boundaries.
2 Points. The site encompasses a 5-10 ppt range of salinity within its boundaries.
1 Point. The site encompasses a 2-5 ppt range of salinity within its boundaries.
0 Points. The site encompasses < 2 ppt range of salinity within its boundaries.

1.7 Degree developed and potential impacts to water quality: A measure of the degree to which the site (core and buffer) is developed and the relative impacts to surface waters from human activities upstream in its associated hydrologic basin (see reference map). This criterion assumes that human impacts to a site are directly proportional to the degree and type of development on site and upstream. Exceptions to this assumption may need to be considered where development at a site and its surrounding area have been subject to high levels of control. Density of development (e.g., no industrial activity or commercial development, few residences, minimal agricultural or silvicultural activity), water quality status within the site, or whether the land is in protected status are points of consideration for this criterion.

3 Points. The site is relatively undisturbed and the hydrologic basin contains low intensity development upstream (e.g., no industrial or commercial development, few residences, minimal agricultural or silvicultural activity) or the land is in protected status.

2 Points. The site is relatively undisturbed and the hydrologic basin contains moderate development upstream (e.g., relatively few residences, moderate agricultural or silvicultural activity, minimal commercial or industrial development).

1 Points. The site has been moderately disturbed and the hydrologic basins contains relatively intensive development (e.g., moderate density of residences, or the presence of industrial activity).

0 Points: The site has been extremely disturbed and the hydrologic basins contains very intensive development (e.g., high density residential, or commercial or industrial activity).

2.0. Research, Monitoring & Resource Protection

2.1 Value of site for research: A measure of the opportunities offered by characteristics of the site for research, such as a high diversity of ecosystem and habitat types, a balanced habitat composition, a wide salinity range (see criterion 1.7), biotic or geologic representativeness of the site, known historic uses or archaeological sites, and unique opportunities to conduct applied research regarding important local, state, and regional coastal management issues (including past and potential management activities). The assumption is that a site with representative, unique, and highly diverse characteristics will provide greater research, monitoring, and resource protection opportunities than one lacking these characteristics. Ratings generated for these factors under previous selection criteria can be used as a guide for rating this overall factor.

3 Points. The site has (1) a high diversity of ecosystem and habitat types, (2) moderate salinity range, (3) representative biotic and geologic sites or hydrologic characteristics, (4) state and federally listed species, (5) historic and archaeological significance, and (6) opportunities to address important habitat or resource management issues.

2 Points. The site has four or five of the six above.

1 Point. The site has two or three of the six above.

0 Points. The site has one or none of the six above.

2.2 Previous research and monitoring efforts: A measure of the degree to which the site (including the hydrologic basin) has been used for past research and monitoring, including considerations of the diversity of inquiry (fields of research), and the availability of data (the form and availability of documentation, e.g., peer-reviewed papers, grey literature, inventory reports). The assumption is that an area with previously established research and monitoring interest offers greater opportunity for future projects than an area that has not sparked such an interest in the past.

3 Points. The site has a long history of well-documented research and monitoring projects in a wide variety of topics. Data are readily available.

2 Points. The site has had major and well-documented research and monitoring efforts, generating data that are readily available. It has not had a long history of research and monitoring.

1 Point. The site has had only minor research and monitoring projects generating limited data (e.g., inventories) and/or these data may be difficult to obtain.

0 Points. The site has no known history of research and monitoring.

2.3 Suitability of site for environmental baseline monitoring: A measure of the suitability of the site as a reference area for assessing long-term natural resource trends or ecological characteristics, based on the degree to which the site has not been fragmented by land-use practices on or near the site. The assumption is that a site with contiguous habitats that provide landscape continuity (not interrupted by developed or disturbed lands & waters) will be a more valuable reference area to generate baseline monitoring information than a site that has been extensively altered.

3 Points. The site has outstanding areas to generate environmental baseline data to assess long- term resource trends or ecological characteristics for a wide range of needs.

2 Points. The site has adequate areas to generate environmental baseline data to assess long- term resource trends or ecological characteristics for many needs.

1 Point. The site has marginal areas to generate environmental baseline data to assess long-term resource trends or ecological characteristics.

0 Points. The site has been so extensively altered by past activities that it is unsuitable for generating environmental baseline data.

2.4. Ability to address key local, state, and regional coastal management issues: A measure of the degree to which the site is appropriate for investigating issues relevant to coastal management at the local, state, and regional levels. Solutions to these issues may require either the application of land management practices or habitat manipulations to perform meaningful research and assessment. As such, the site should offer both adequate control areas plus areas where demonstration projects and habitat manipulations (such as coastal restoration projects) can be accommodated to study many of the issues of concern. The assumption is that a site where diverse coastal management issues are evident and can be addressed will be of greater value from research and resource management standpoint than sites where these issues do not arise. The diversity and significance of coastal management issues should be identified for the hydrologic basin as it may influence core and buffer areas proposed. The following list are suggestions that may be included in the description of the sites ability to address key local, state, and regional coastal management issues.

- Wetland loss and habitat change;
- Wetland loss mitigation, restoration, and creation;
- Dredging and spoil disposal;
- Beneficial uses of dredged materials;
- Shoreline erosion;

- Commercial or recreational fisheries;
- Waterfowl and other wildlife management;
- Best management practices for habitat protection or management (e.g., wildlife management);
- Best management practices to limit impacts from agricultural, silvicultural, or development activities;
- Effects of pollutants on water quality and living resources (including oil spills, nutrients, harmful algal blooms, bacteria contamination, etc.)
- Impacts of relative sea-level rise;
- Prehistoric and early historic settlement and land use;
- Unique connections in cultural and natural resources within the site (language, customs, land-use, etc.);
- Fire management, invasive species;
- Hydrologic restoration;

3 Points. The site is highly appropriate for investigating a diversity of coastal zone management issues.
2 Points. The site is appropriate for investigating coastal zone management issues.
1 Point. The site is minimally appropriate for investigating coastal zone management issues.
0 Points. The site is not appropriate for investigating coastal zone management issues.

3.0. Education and Interpretation

3.1 Diversity and quality of training education and interpretation of opportunities: A measure of the variety and quality of training, education, and interpretation opportunities (i.e., ecological, archaeological, cultural, historical, etc.) provided by the site (core and buffer areas) for the different target audiences. The assumption is that a candidate site with a diversity of such opportunities of high quality will be utilized to a greater extent than one with fewer opportunities.

3 Point. The site has numerous different training, education, and interpretation opportunities of high quality.
2 Points. The site has several significantly different educational opportunities of good quality.
1 Point. The site has few significant educational opportunities.
0 Points. The site has insignificant educational opportunities.

3.2 Diversity and availability of target audiences: A measure of the diversity and availability of target audiences (e.g., user groups, resource managers, residents, environmental groups, decision makers, teachers and students, and the general public) which may routinely utilize the site (accessible during a single day trip) for training, education, and interpretation. The

assumption is that a candidate site with a variety of available target audiences will be utilized to a greater extent than one with fewer target audiences.

3 Points. The site is suitable for a variety of target audiences that are readily available (accessible during a single day trip).
2 Points. The site is suitable for a moderate number of target audiences that are readily available (accessible during a single day trip).
1 Point. The site is suitable for few target audiences that are available (accessible during a single day trip).
0 Points. The site is so remote or inaccessible that it is not suitable for any target audience.

3.3 Availability of facilities: The degree to which the site (core and buffer areas) has existing facilities or potential sites for future facilities that can be used by staff, researchers, classes, and training groups (e.g., administrative building space, dormitories, labs, interpretive centers, trails and boardwalks, boat ramps, etc.). The assumption is that, due to limited reserve construction funds, a candidate site with existing facilities can meet the objectives of the Reserve System program sooner and more completely than a site without existing facilities. The availability of other sources of construction funds should be considered as part of this criterion.

3 Points. The site has established structures and facilities that can be used for reserve activities.
2 Points. The site has limited established structures or facilities that can be used for reserve activities.
1 Point. The site has excellent potential for the development of facilities for reserve activities.
0 Points. The site has limited established structures and limited potential for the development facilities for reserve activities.

3.4 Proximity and accessibility of site to researchers, educators, and resource management decision makers: A measure of (1) the relative proximity of the site to urban centers, K-12 schools, research and education institutions, and resource management agencies that may routinely utilize the site and (2) the adequacy of the roads or points for boat access at the site. The underlying assumption is that the proximity and accessibility of the site will enhance its utilization for education, research, monitoring, and resource protection purposes.

3 Points. The site can be utilized by the above-listed entities during a single day trip. There are good roads or points for boat access at the site.
2 Points. The site is relatively isolated, and utilization would require an overnight stay from any of the above-listed entities, but accommodations are readily available. There are adequate roads or points for boat access at the site.
1 Point. The site is relatively isolated and reasonable accommodations for an overnight stay to utilize the site are limited. There are limited roads or points for boat access at the site.

0 Points. The site is extremely isolated and accommodations to utilize the site are not available. There are inadequate or no roads, or points for boat access at the site.

3.5 Value of site for environmental education and interpretation programs: It is likely that sites with existing education programs have the necessary infrastructure in place to further expand their programs, thus it is valuable to rate sites based on the presence of these programs. However, in an area as large as the Louisiana Coastal Area, numerous excellent sites exist where virtually no education or interpretation programs have been developed. Thus, the potential for education and interpretation program development should be considered as well according to the diversity and quality of educational and interpretive program opportunities. Some suggestions to evaluate potential for education and interpretation program development include the following:

- Number of educational institutions in the watershed of the proposed alternative;
- Existing educational programs in the area that would likely take advantage of a NERR site;
- Level of ability to access a proposed alternative by school groups; or
- Existing facilities to host classroom education and training events.

3 Points. The site has a long history of education and interpretation, or the site offers excellent potential for future education and interpretation program development.

2 Points. The site has a good but short history of education and interpretation but is otherwise well suited or offers good potential for future education and interpretation program development.

1 Point. The site has had only a minor amount of education and interpretation being conducted, or the site offers fair potential for future education and interpretation program development.

0 Points. The site offers no significant potential for education and interpretation program development

4.0. Acquisition and Management Consideration

4.1 Publicly owned lands and feasibility of land acquisition: The degree of control on activities allowed on proposed land and waters of the candidate site (core and buffer areas) is regulated by conditions of land ownership. Land ownership by state, federal government, or local governments, or environmental interest groups, and the degree to which owners have an interest in participating in a research reserve are important to realize the missions of a LaNERR. The assumption is that the degree of control needed to maintain the site to meet the missions of a NERR increases with publicly and privately owned land, along with the chances of purchasing additional areas, increase value of a NERR candidate site. In the combination of ownership described below, no more than 49% of the area within the boundary can be federal lands.

3 Points. A large percentage (more than 50 percent) of the site (core and buffer areas) is currently owned by the state, federal, or local governments, or environmental groups, representing significant opportunities for future land acquisition.

2 Points. State, federal, or local governments, or environmental groups own 25 to 50 percent of the site with the remainder in the hands of a few owners representing some degree of opportunities for future land acquisition.

1 Point. State, federal, or local governments or environmental groups own less than 25 percent of the site with the remainder in the hands of a few owners representing limited opportunities for future land acquisition.

0 Points. The site is owned by a large number of owners with little potential interest in supporting opportunities for future land acquisition.

4.2. Compatibility with existing management practices and consumptive and non-consumptive uses: A measure of the degree to which existing management practices (e.g., habitat manipulations, restoration projects, best management practices, wildlife management areas, leased bottoms, conservation easements, etc.) and historic and current consumptive and non-consumptive uses might conflict with planned and future management practices implemented under a research reserve program. The assumption is that sites with fewer conflicts are more likely to maintain both public support and the integrity of the site (core and buffer areas). NOTE: This factor should be measured with focus on how present management practices for both land and water in core and buffer areas support both the mission of a NERR and reduce potential conflict with how the public expectations align with the expected usage of the candidate site to meet the mission of a research reserve site. It should be measured with a balance of how the site protects natural and cultural resources against reasonable access by the public to other areas of the site.

3 Points. Existing management practices and consumptive and non-consumptive uses of the site would not conflict with any foreseeable management policy of a research reserve

2 Points. Due to the presence of proportionately small areas of unique habitat and endangered species or threats to the integrity of ecosystem, there is the potential for limited restrictions on existing management practices or consumptive and non-consumptive uses of a site

1 Point. Due to the presence of areas of unique habitat and endangered species and threats to the integrity of the ecosystem, some restrictions on existing management practices or consumptive and non-consumptive uses of a site are likely

0 Points. Large areas of unique habitat and threats to the integrity of the ecosystem will require restrictions on existing management practices or consumptive and non-consumptive uses of a site.

4.3 Compatibility with adjacent land use: A measure of the potential conflicts between management practices on a candidate site (core and buffer areas) with land-use practices on

adjacent lands to the site (core and buffer areas). It is also a measure of the adequacy of land-use regulations, plans, or other risk management controls (e.g. sufficient regulatory control in the event of an impact) to sustain the site's natural resources for long-term research, education, and resource protection. The assumption is that a candidate site with compatible land-use practices on adjacent lands is more likely to maintain the integrity of the reserve. NOTE: This issue should be evaluated relative to the potential for present or future conflicts with adjacent lands and the potential to designate buffer areas around a site.

3 Points. A large percentage of the land adjacent to the site is not currently used for activities that might impact the site (and therefore, may be obtainable as a buffer) or the land-use practices on adjacent lands would not have any negative impacts on a possible research reserve.

2 Points. A large to moderate percentage of the land adjacent to the site is not currently used for activities that might negatively impact the site, or the land-use practices on adjacent lands either could be negotiated or would have only minor impacts a possible research reserve.

1 Point. Some of the land adjacent to the site is currently used for activities that would have negative impacts on a possible research reserve and may not be negotiable.

0 Points. A large percentage of the land adjacent to the site is currently used for activities that would have negative impacts on a possible research reserve and would lead to conflicts.

4.4 Land ownership A measure of the degree to which the property used to establish core and buffer areas of a candidate site is divided among landowners (e.g., divided into fewer parcels or owned by many agencies/individuals). The assumption is that a candidate site with fewer property owners will be easier to control types and levels of activities and offers opportunity for future acquisitions.

3 Points. The property is relatively undivided among agencies or individuals.

2 Points. The property is divided among few property owners.

1 Point. The property is divided among many property owners.

4.5. Enforcement and protection of site area management practices: A measure of the degree to which land and water ownership has enforcement capabilities to protect and limit the types and levels of activities that are inconsistent with the management plans described in Site Criterion 4.2 above. This degree of control is based on size, geography, proximity to adjacent residential development and present management practices and controls. The assumption is that the integrity and security of a potential research reserve site can be better maintained with a higher level of enforcement and protection of core habitat areas to enforce management practices (such as a wildlife management area, or guidelines associated with private lands) that protects the consistency with how land and water will promote the mission of a NERR.

3 Points. Site areas are strongly protected and enforced to the degree necessary to meet management practices.

2 Points. Site areas are moderately protected and enforced to the degree necessary to meet management practices.

1 Point. Site areas are minimally protected and enforced to the degree necessary to meet management practices.

0 Point. Site areas are not protected and enforced to the degree necessary to meet management practices.

4.6. Land and water access: A measure of the degree to which land and water access to the site support visitation and recreational value within guidelines of existing management plans. This degree of access is based on points of access (present and proposed), size, geography, proximity to adjacent residential development and present management practices and controls.

3 Points. The site has many existing and planned access points to support visitation and recreation that are very consistent with the management plans.

2 Points. The site has several existing and planned access points to support visitation and recreation that are very consistent with the management plans..

1 Point. The site has few existing and planned access points to support visitation and recreation that are very consistent with the management plans.

0 Points. The site has no existing and planned access points to support visitation and recreation that are very consistent with the management plans.

4.7. Future urban and industrial development plans A measure of the potential level of future impacts of land development (urban and industry) in areas on or adjacent to a candidate site that would impact core and buffer areas. The assumption is that a candidate site with minimal to no development plans on-site and on adjacent lands to the candidate site is more likely to maintain the integrity of the reserve. NOTE: This issue involves the degree to which adjacent lands are currently being used or may be attainable as buffer areas for the research reserve.

3 Points.: A large percentage (more than 50 percent) of the land adjacent to the site is currently undeveloped or is not likely to be developed for urban and industrial usage (based on present urban and industrial activity). This large percentage of adjacent lands is very unlikely to be developed in the near future for urban and industrial development (e.g., consisting of marginally developable property, such as wetlands, which could be obtained as buffer).

2 Points. A moderate percentage (between 25 and 50 percent) of the land adjacent to the site is currently undeveloped (urban and industrial) or is not likely to be developed for urban or industrial usage (based on present or expected activity). The adjacent lands are unlikely to be developed in the near future for urban and industrial development (e.g., consisting of marginally developable property, such as wetlands, which could be obtained as buffer).

1 Point. A small to moderate percentage (10 to 25 percent) of the land adjacent to the site is currently undeveloped or is not likely to be developed for urban or industrial usage (based on present or expected activity).

0 Points. A large percentage (more than 50 percent) of the land adjacent to the site is developed (urban or industrial) and the area is likely to continue to be developed in the future.

5.0 Ability to conduct research on resilience and climate change impacts

5.1 Coastal resilience research: How suitable is the site (and hydrologic basin where it is found) to support research on coastal resilience including both natural, cultural, and social systems. This includes how climate change may amplify impacts of land-use change, increases in the vulnerability of the habitats of the site (and hydrologic basin) to relative sea level rise, and other climate change impacts. Research focuses include adaptations of natural, cultural, and social systems to climate change impacts, including restoration and protection projects.

3 Points. The site (and hydrologic basin) demonstrates high value in researching adaptation of natural, cultural, and social systems to climate change and relative sea level rise including research on adaptations that reduce vulnerability.

2 Points. The site (and hydrologic basin) demonstrates moderate value in researching adaptation of natural, cultural, and social systems to climate change and relative sea level rise including research on adaptations that reduce vulnerability.

1 Point. The site (and hydrologic basin) demonstrates low value in researching adaptation of natural, cultural, and social systems to climate change and relative sea level rise including research on adaptations that reduce vulnerability.

5.2 This criterion focuses on the ability to accommodate shifts in habitat as sea level, inundation or other climate-change impacts occur. Is there sufficient ability of the system to accommodate these shifts within the site boundaries and/or is there an ability to expand the boundaries to allow for maintenance of an ecological unit. This includes consideration for additional property acquisition.

3 points. Reserve boundary allows for habitat migration and several areas adjacent to the boundary provide an option for expansion to accommodate habitat shifts and boundary expansion.

2 points. Reserve boundary allows for some habitat migration and some areas adjacent to the boundary provide an option for expansion to accommodate habitat shifts and boundary expansion.

1 point. Reserve boundary allows for little habitat migration and little to no areas adjacent to the boundary provides an option for expansion to accommodate habitat shifts and boundary expansion.

0 points. Reserve boundary does not allow for habitat migration and there are no areas adjacent to the boundary that provide an option for expansion to accommodate habitat shifts and boundary expansion.

5.3 Infrastructure and Access: A changing climate is resulting in a variety of impacts that differ based on geography and conditions within geography. Reserves are designated to ensure a stable platform for research, address significant coastal management issues, enhance public awareness and understanding and promote use of the reserves consistent with the purposes outlined. Access to infrastructure that supports these purposes is key to achieving the mission of the reserve system. This criterion focuses on the expected vulnerability of existing facilities (including visitor centers, labs, storage facilities) proposed for use by the reserve to remain viable and accessible taking into account the most relevant climate change stressors in the locale. This accounts for adaptive strategies that are and/or may be in place to mitigate anticipated stressors.

3 points. Facility(ies) resilient and adaptable under high impact climate change scenarios given current understanding of vulnerability

2 points. Facilities resilient and adaptable under medium impact climate change stressor/threat scenarios

1 point. Facilities unlikely to be resilient and adaptable under medium/low impact climate change stressor/threat scenarios

0 points. Facilities vulnerable and not resilient under any climate change scenarios

5.4. Public Access Resilience: This criterion focuses on the ability to access the resources of the reserve. This includes access to water via docks and boat launches; access to interpretive and educational experiences via trails, pavilions, amphitheaters, as well as access to existing recreational and professional opportunities in the resource.

3 points. Public access infrastructure is resilient and adaptable under high impact climate change scenarios given current understanding of vulnerability

2 points. Public access infrastructure resilient and adaptable under medium impact climate change stressor/threat scenarios

1 point. Public access infrastructure unlikely to be resilient and adaptable under medium/low impact climate change stressor/threat scenarios

0 points. Public access infrastructure vulnerable and not resilient under any climate change scenarios

6.0 LaNERR Partnerships:

Partnerships should be relevant and aid the program in achieving their goals, reaching target audiences, and developing and delivering key messages. They increase the resilience of the

reserve and its ability to work with the local community to address climate change and impacts from other important stressors. Partnerships can increase the ability to address research needs and gaps, reach education and public engagement goals, and provide access to facilities and field opportunities. Institutional partnerships can also provide administrative services, support leveraging of resources, and reduce program costs. These organizations or third parties can also assist with fund-raising, grant development and management, and management of program income (ex. Friends Groups and NERRA). The strength of the reserve's partnerships and potential for partnerships will be evaluated based on the following:

6.1 Potential to develop partnerships: This criterion focuses on the site's ability to create new partnerships and strengthen existing partnerships to achieve their goals, reach target audiences, develop and deliver key messages, and address relevant coastal management issues. This can be demonstrated by potential partner interest, geography, etc. with a focus on the outcomes of the partnership, not the number or name of organizations. This will be measured by the following metrics:

- Existing MOUs or agreements explaining shared resources such as facilities and salaries
- Memberships of key individuals to professional organizations such as National Marine Educators Association, Coastal and Estuarine Research Federation, Society of Wetland Scientists, other state professional organizations, research organizations, local or regional consortia, etc.
- Recent history of key personnel participation in multi-institutional grants, publications, and projects
- Letters from existing informal partners about past projects, their outcomes, and organizational structure
- Letters from potential partners focusing on how the partner could complement or contribute to the reserve goals. This letter should include information such as historical context for partnership and their vision for contributing to the reserve mission.

3 Points. The site has strong potential to develop and strengthen new and existing partnerships of high quality evidenced by metrics stated above.
2 Points. The site has potential for new partnerships of good quality to develop.
1 Point. The site has potential for partnership development.
0 Points. The site has insignificant potential for partnerships.

6.2 Internal NOAA Partnerships: This is a measure of the number and quality of partnerships with other NOAA entities that already exist within a program or that have the potential to develop based on common goals, geographic proximity, etc. The assumption is that a candidate site with a high diversity of existing partnerships and partnership potential will have opportunities to leverage support and create sustainable programs more so than one with fewer partnerships. Some examples include Sea Grant, Coastal Programs, Marine Sanctuaries, Weather Service, Climate Office and other line offices of NOAA. This will be measured by the following metrics:

- Existing MOUs or agreements explaining shared resources such as facilities and salaries
- Recent history of key personnel participation in grants, publications, and projects with NOAA

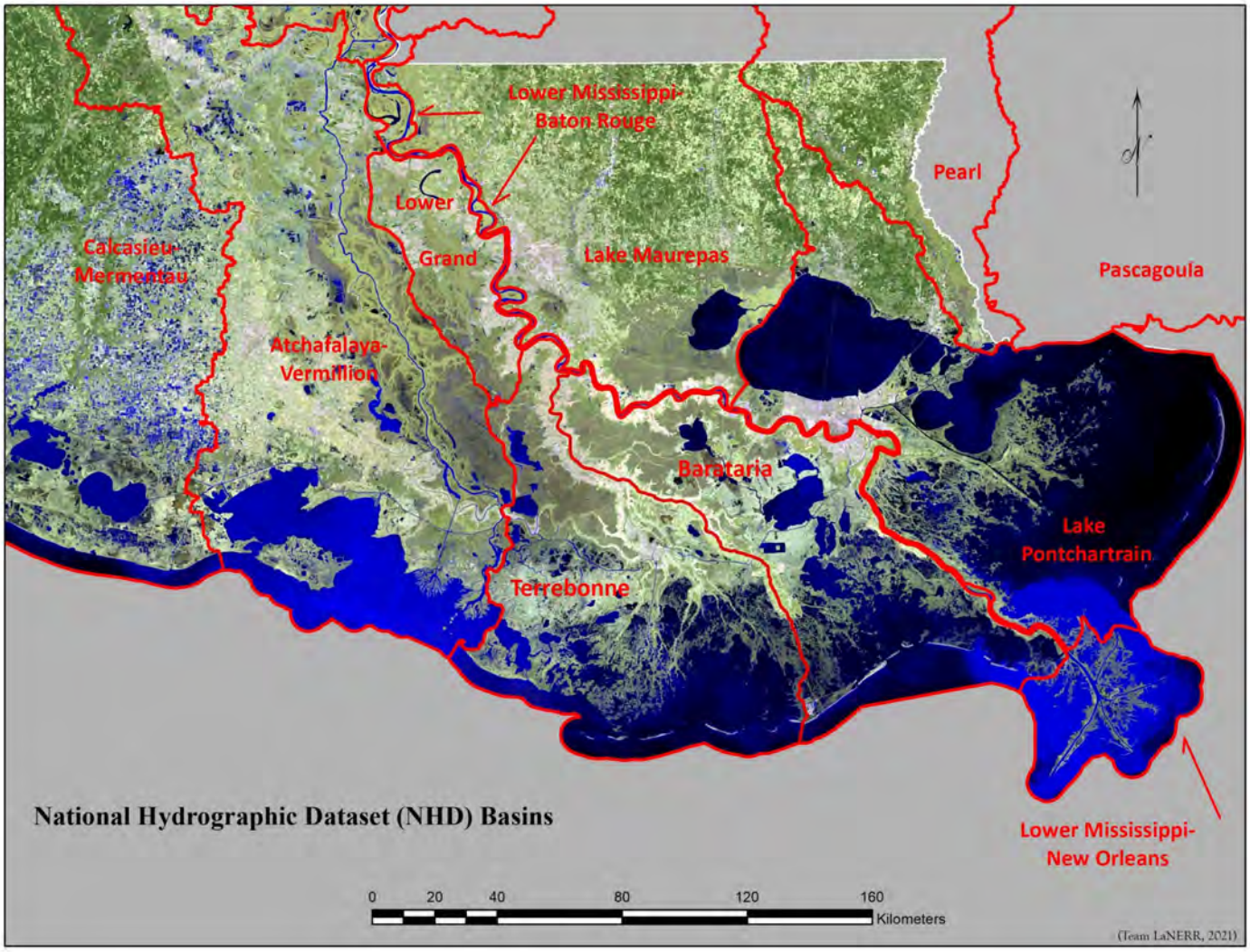
3 Points. The site has a history of NOAA partnerships and there is strong potential to develop and strengthen new and existing ones of high quality evidenced by the metrics stated above.
2 Points. The site has several partnerships in place and there is potential for new partnerships of good quality to develop.
1 Point. The site has potential for partnership development.
0 Points. The site has insignificant potential for partnerships.

6.3 Diversity of Partnerships: This is a measure of the ability to reach diverse audiences through existing partnerships or potential partnerships based on common goals and geographic proximity. The assumption is that a candidate site with a high diversity of existing partnerships and partnership potential will have opportunities to leverage support and create sustainable programs more so than one with fewer partnerships. These partnerships should increase the candidate site's ability to address relevant coastal management issues, address research needs and gaps, and reach diverse audiences. These partner organizations should range in diversity such as federal agencies (ex. National Estuary Programs, National Wildlife Refuges, National Parks), state agencies and parks, local organizations (Marine Labs and Land Trusts), NGOs, and umbrella groups (national, regional or local). These partnerships should help bridge the gap between the NERRS and new audiences that the NERRS has not typically engaged (e.g., urban audiences) or that could help the NERRS become more effective at reaching intended audiences (e.g., national municipal association to facilitate reaching local officials). The focus of these partnerships should be the outcomes, not the number or name of organizations. This will be measured by the following metrics:

- Existing MOUs or agreements explaining shared resources such as facilities and salaries
- Recent history of key personnel participation in multi-institutional grants, publications, projects
- Letters from existing informal partners about past projects, outcomes, and organizational structure
- Letters from potential partners focusing on how the partner could complement or contribute to the reserve goals. This letter should include historical context and vision for partnership contributing to the reserve mission.

3 Points. The site has many diverse partnerships and there is strong potential to develop and strengthen new and existing ones of high quality evidenced by metrics stated above.
2 Points. The site has several diverse partnerships in place and there is potential for new partnerships of good quality to develop.

1 Point. The site has potential for partnership development.
0 Points. The site has insignificant potential for partnerships.


Lower Mississippi-
Baton Rouge
Lower
Grand
Pearl
Lake Maurepas
Pascagoula
Calcasieu-
Mermentau
Atchafalaya-
Vermilion
Barataria
Lake
Pontchartrain
Terrebonne
Lower Mississippi-
New Orleans
National Hydrographic Dataset (NHD) Basins
0
20
40
80
120
160
Kilometers
(Team LaNERR, 2021)

LaNERR Site Selection and Nomination Workflow Overview and Schedule

November 22, 2021

		DESIGNATION LEADERSHIP TEAM	SITE DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE	CRITERIA SUBCOMMITTEE	SCREENING SUBCOMMITTEE	PROPOSAL TEAMS
FEB 2021	Early					
	Mid	Evaluate 6 Estuarine Zones				
	Late	Develop 1st draft of Site Selection Criteria	**SDC Mtg 3:** Overview of Site Selection process; DLT's recommendations on Estuarine Zones based on preliminary screening criteria			
MAR 2021	Early	Develop preliminary (example) candidate sites	SDC voted on 6 Estuarine Zones			
	Mid					
	Late	• Establish subcommittees • Provide 1st draft of Site Selection Criteria to Criteria Subcommittee	**SDC Mtg 4:** Review results of Estuarine Zone voting, example core/buffer areas, first draft Site Selection Criteria, and guidance for developing Phase 1 Candidate Site Proposals			
APR 2021	Early			Working session #1		
	Mid					Q&A Check-in with Proposal Teams
	Late	Develop Phase 2 candidate site proposal template & mapping data		Working session #2		
MAY 2021	Early			• Working session #3 • Provide 2nd draft of Site Selection Criteria to DLT		Submit Phase 1 Candidate Site Proposals for DLT review
	Mid		**SDC Mtg 5:** Update on Phase 1 proposals, guidance for Phase 2 proposals, review 2nd draft of Site Selection Criteria			
	Late			• Working Session #4 • Provide 3rd draft of Site Selection Criteria to DLT		

		DESIGNATION LEADERSHIP TEAM	SITE DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE	CRITERIA SUBCOMMITTEE	SCREENING SUBCOMMITTEE	PROPOSAL TEAMS
JUN 2021	Early	Submit 3rd draft of Site Selection Criteria to NOAA			Meeting #1: Orientation to subcommittee	DLT check in w/Proposal Teams
	Mid					
	Late					
JUL 2021	Early	Receive NOAA comments on Site Selection Criteria				• DLT check in w/ Proposal Teams (Town Hall planning) • Submit Phase 2 Candidate Site Proposals
	Mid		**SDC Mtg 6:** Presentation of Phase 2 Candidate Site Proposals, NOAA feedback on Site Criteria, Town Hall prep		Check-in call to discuss proposal review process	
	Late	Submit final draft of Site Selection Criteria to NOAA for review			Review and comment on Phase 2 Candidate Sites Proposals	
AUG 2021	Early	Receive NOAA approval of Site Selection Criteria				DLT check-in w/ Proposal Teams (Screening feedback)
	Mid					
	Late					
SEPT 2021	Early	***Many LaNERR activities, including Town Halls, were postponed due to Hurricane Ida impacts/recovery***				DLT check-in w/ Proposal Teams (Post-hurricane status)
	Mid					
	Late					
OCT 2021	Early					
	Mid					DLT check-in w/ Proposal Teams (Revised schedule)
	Late					
NOV 2021	Early	Schedule Town Halls (3 per Estuarine Zone)				
	Mid	Schedule Executive Committee meeting (mid-Dec)				
	Late	Provide Town Hall guidance to Proposal Teams	**SDC Mtg 7:** Revised LaNERR schedule & mock Town Hall presentations			
	Early					

		DESIGNATION LEADERSHIP TEAM	SITE DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE	CRITERIA SUBCOMMITTEE	SCREENING SUBCOMMITTEE	PROPOSAL TEAMS
DEC 2021	Mid	• Meet with Executive Committee • Advertise Town Halls				
	Late					
JAN 2022	Early					DLT check-in w/ Proposal Teams (Prepare for Town Halls)
	Mid	Present at CPRA Board Meeting				
	Late					
Feb 2022	Early	Host Town Halls (3 per estuarine zone)				Present at Town Halls
	Mid					DLT check-in w/ Proposal Teams (Town Halls feedback)
	Late		**SDC Mtg 8:** Town Halls Debrief			
Mar 2022	Early					Submit *(draft)* Final Candidate Site Proposals (due March 11)
	Mid					
	Late				Submit outcomes from screening and scoring *(draft)* Final Candidate Site Proposals	
Apr 2022	Early		**SDC Mtg 9:** Outcomes of screening & scoring			
	Mid					
	Late	Provide Final Candidate Site Proposals, scores, and rationale to Executive Committee (Apr 29)				Submit Final Candidate Site Proposals (due Apr 22)
May 2022	Early					
	Mid					
	Late	Executive Committee nominates one site to the Governor (i.e., site proposal & cover letter)				
June 2022	Early					
	Mid					
	Late	Governor submits site nomination package to NOAA	DLT notify SDC of site nomination decision			

LaNERR – Louisiana National Estuarine Research Reserve

Site Development Committee Meeting #7

November 29, 2021

Agenda:

Time	Topic
5 min	Welcome Back…
5 min	Revised LaNERR Workflow and Schedule
5 min	Final Site Criteria and Final Proposals
105 min	Mock Town Hall Presentations
10 min	Kristen Ransom, What is a NERR?
15 min	Robert Twilley, LaNERR Process
20 min	Pontchartrain Estuarine Zone
20 min	Barataria Estuarine Zone
20 min	Atchafalaya Estuarine Zone
5 min	Next Steps: Press Release of LaNERR Town Halls

		DESIGNATION LEADERSHIP TEAM	SITE DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE	CRITERIA SUBCOMMITTEE	SCREENING SUBCOMMITTEE	PROPOSAL TEAMS
SEPT 2021	Early	***Many LaNERR activities, including Town Halls, were postponed due to Hurricane Ida impacts/recovery***				DLT check-in w/ Proposal Teams (Post-hurricane status)
	Mid					
	Late					
OCT 2021	Early					
	Mid					DLT check-in w/ Proposal Teams (Revised schedule)
	Late					
NOV 2021	Early	Schedule Town Halls (3 per Estuarine Zone)				
	Mid	Schedule Executive Committee meeting (mid-Dec)				
	Late	Provide Town Hall guidance to Proposal Teams	**SDC Mtg 7:** Revised LaNERR schedule & mock Town Hall presentations			

		DESIGNATION LEADERSHIP TEAM	SITE DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE	CRITERIA SUBCOMMITTEE	SCREENING SUBCOMMITTEE	PROPOSAL TEAMS
DEC 2021	Early					
	Mid	• Meet with Executive Committee • Advertise Town Halls				
	Late					
JAN 2022	Early					DLT check-in w/ Proposal Teams (Prepare for Town Halls)
	Mid	Present at CPRA Board Meeting				
	Late					
Feb 2022	Early	Host Town Halls (3 per estuarine zone)				Present at Town Halls
	Mid					DLT check-in w/ Proposal Teams (Town Halls feedback)
	Late		**SDC Mtg 8:** Town Halls Debrief			

		DESIGNATION LEADERSHIP TEAM	SITE DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE	CRITERIA SUBCOMMITTEE	SCREENING SUBCOMMITTEE	PROPOSAL TEAMS
Mar 2022	Early					Submit *(draft)* Final Candidate Site Proposals (due March 11)
	Mid					
	Late				Submit outcomes from screening and scoring *(draft)* Final Candidate Site Proposals	
Apr 2022	Early		**SDC Mtg 9:** Outcomes of screening & scoring			
	Mid					
	Late	Provide Final Candidate Site Proposals, scores, and rationale to Executive Committee (Apr 29)				Submit Final Candidate Site Proposals (due Apr 22)

		DESIGNATION LEADERSHIP TEAM	SITE DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE	CRITERIA SUBCOMMITTEE	SCREENING SUBCOMMITTEE	PROPOSAL TEAMS
May 2022	Early					
	Mid					
	Late	Executive Committee nominates one site to the Governor (i.e., site proposal & cover letter)				
June 2022	Early					
	Mid					
	Late	Governor submits site nomination package to NOAA	DLT notify SDC of site nomination decision			

Criteria from the NOAA guidelines to establish a LaNERR site in the Mississippi River Delta.

LaNERR Site Criteria (25 August 2021)

LaNERR Site Criteria include six topical areas to evaluate potential NERR candidate sites: (1) Environmental Representativeness, (2) Research, Monitoring & Resource Protection, (3) Education and Interpretation, (4) Acquisition, Management Consideration, (5) Ability to conduct research on resilience and climate change, and (6) LaNERR Partnerships.

These LaNERR criteria are based on modifications to the NOAA Site Selection Criteria Guidelines to better reflect terminology used in coastal Louisiana and Louisiana specific conditions as well as the addition of two new topical areas (#5 and #6 above) provided by NOAA. Changes to the original criteria are based on meetings of the Site Criteria Subcommittee on April 30, May 7, and May 21, 2021. In addition, final comments from the Site Criteria Subcommittee were solicited on changes proposed following recommendations from NOAA. The total value of all criteria is 102 points with equal weight to each criterion.

1.0 Environmental Representativeness

2.0. Research, Monitoring & Resource Protection

3.0. Education and Interpretation

4.0. Acquisition and Management Consideration

5.0 Ability to conduct research on resilience and climate change impacts

6.0 LaNERR Partnerships:

I. Environmental Representativeness

II. Value of the Site for Research, Monitoring, and Resource Protection

III. Suitability of the Site for Education and Interpretation

IV. Acquisition and Management Considerations

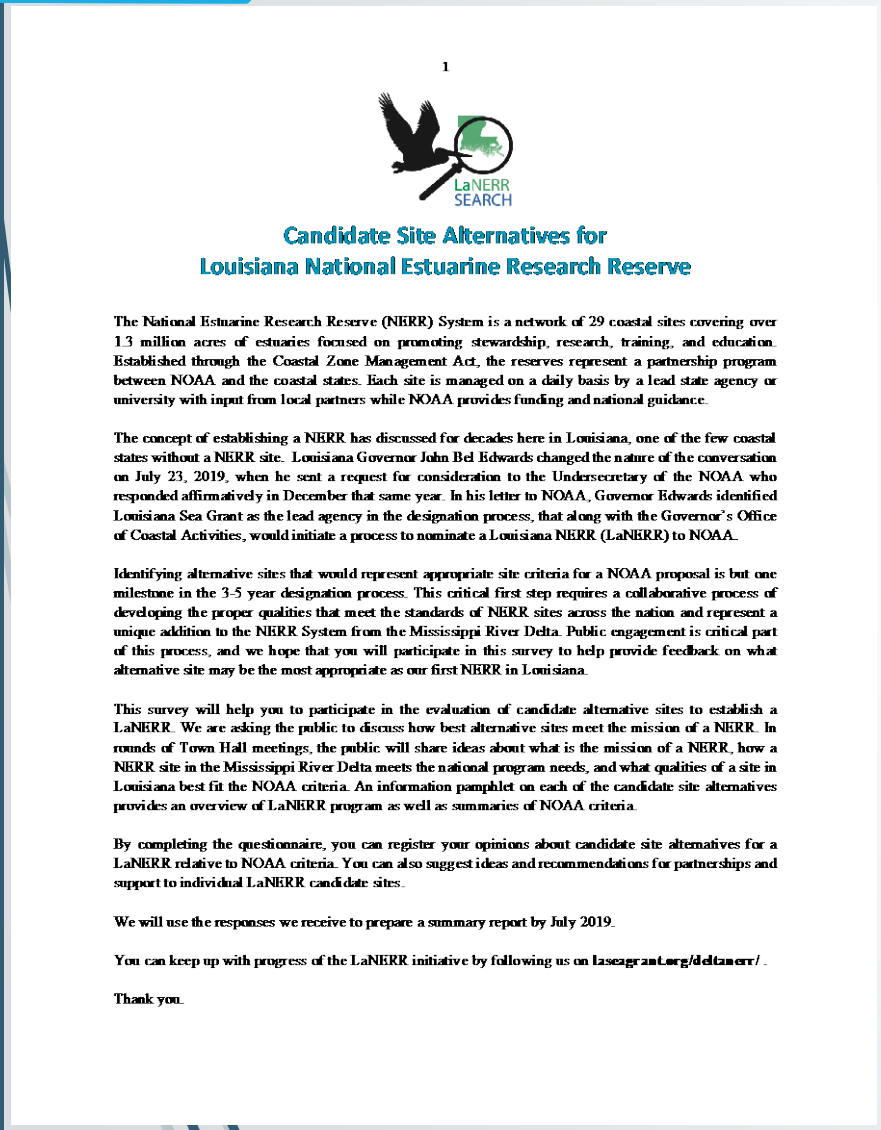
- CLIMATE CHANGE
- PARTNERSHIPS

	LaNERR Criteria	Proposal Justification - Site Criteria
	Environmental Representativeness (ER)	
ER	**1.0 Environmental Representativeness** 1.1 Ecosystem composition: A measure of the diversity of ecosystem types present within the boundaries of the site. This criterion assumes that sites that have a high diversity of major ecosystem types are of higher relative "value" for protection and management than those with low ecosystem diversity (unless the ecosystem in consideration is rare or unique). 3 Points. The site has a high diversity of habitat composition within its major ecosystem type, i.e., it contains three or more habitat types or subtypes within its major ecosystem type (e.g., site consists of a combination of swamps, coastal marshes, and mud flats) or has a combination of multiple coastal marsh types (e.g., tidal freshwater, brackish, salt marsh zones). 2 Points. The site has a moderate diversity of habitat composition within its major ecosystem type, i.e., it contains only two habitat types or subtypes within its major ecosystem type (e.g., consists of a combination of forested wetlands and a single coastal marsh type). 1 Point. The site has a low diversity of habitat composition within its major ecosystem type, i.e., its major ecosystem type consists of a single habitat type (e.g., tidal freshwater marsh or brackish marsh, or forested wetland). These are the suggested Ecosystem Types to be used in the LaNERR evaluation: **Group I- Uplands** Alluvial Forested Wetlands Longleaf Pine Savannahs/Pine Flatwoods Maritime Forest- Woodland Coastal Prairie/bogs → Coastal Shrublands and Cheniers **Group II- Intertidal areas** → Coastal Forested Wetlands → Coastal Floating Marshes → Coastal Freshwater Marsh → Coastal Intermediate Marsh → Coastal Brackish Marsh → Coastal Salt Marsh → Coastal Mangroves → Intertidal Beaches and Dunes → Intertidal Mud and Sand Flats **Group III- Subtidal and Submerged Bottoms** → Subtidal hard bottoms/reefs → Subtidal soft bottoms Subtidal Plants (SAV) Subtidal Plants (SAV)	

FEEDBACK –

Surveys are available for your input

Town Hall Location	Date	Time	Information
Atchafalaya Basin	Wednesday, February 2	12-2 pm	VIRTUAL:
Atchafalaya Basin	Tuesday, February 8	6-8 pm	In person meeting; Location TBA
Atchafalaya Basin	Thursday, February 10	6-8 pm	In person meeting; Location TBA
Barataria Basin	Monday, February 7	6-8 pm	In person meeting; Location TBA
Barataria Basin	Wednesday, February 9	12-2 pm	VIRTUAL:
Barataria Basin	Wednesday, February 9	6-8 pm	VIRTUAL:
Pontchartrain Basin	Tuesday, February 1	6-8 pm	In person meeting; Location TBA
Pontchartrain Basin	Thursday, February 3	6-8 pm	In person meeting; Location TBA
Pontchartrain Basin	Friday, February 11	12-2 pm	VIRTUAL:



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LaNERR SEARCH

Candidate Site Alternatives for
Louisiana National Estuarine Research Reserve

The National Estuarine Research Reserve (NERR) System is a network of 29 coastal sites covering over 1.3 million acres of estuaries focused on promoting stewardship, research, training, and education. Established through the Coastal Zone Management Act, the reserves represent a partnership program between NOAA and the coastal states. Each site is managed on a daily basis by a lead state agency or university with input from local partners while NOAA provides funding and national guidance.

The concept of establishing a NERR has discussed for decades here in Louisiana, one of the few coastal states without a NERR site. Louisiana Governor John Bel Edwards changed the nature of the conversation on July 23, 2019, when he sent a request for consideration to the Undersecretary of the NOAA who responded affirmatively in December that same year. In his letter to NOAA, Governor Edwards identified Louisiana Sea Grant as the lead agency in the designation process, that along with the Governor's Office of Coastal Activities, would initiate a process to nominate a Louisiana NERR (LaNERR) to NOAA.

Identifying alternative sites that would represent appropriate site criteria for a NOAA proposal is but one milestone in the 3-5 year designation process. This critical first step requires a collaborative process of developing the proper qualities that meet the standards of NERR sites across the nation and represent a unique addition to the NERR System from the Mississippi River Delta. Public engagement is critical part of this process, and we hope that you will participate in this survey to help provide feedback on what alternative site may be the most appropriate as our first NERR in Louisiana.

This survey will help you to participate in the evaluation of candidate alternative sites to establish a LaNERR. We are asking the public to discuss how best alternative sites meet the mission of a NERR. In rounds of Town Hall meetings, the public will share ideas about what is the mission of a NERR, how a NERR site in the Mississippi River Delta meets the national program needs, and what qualities of a site in Louisiana best fit the NOAA criteria. An information pamphlet on each of the candidate site alternatives provides an overview of LaNERR program as well as summaries of NOAA criteria.

By completing the questionnaire, you can register your opinions about candidate site alternatives for a LaNERR relative to NOAA criteria. You can also suggest ideas and recommendations for partnerships and support to individual LaNERR candidate sites.

We will use the responses we receive to prepare a summary report by July 2019.

You can keep up with progress of the LaNERR initiative by following us on laseagrant.org/deltanerr/ .

Thank you.

Surveys are available for your input:

1. Hard copies at in person Town Hall Meetings ;
2. Download surveys during virtual Town Hall meetings. http://lsu.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_9uGKURaxmdmHx8W
3. Surveys available at LaNERR Web Site (**http://www.laseagrant.org/deltanerr/**)

Town Hall Planning. 11/29/21

1.0 General Information

1.1 Town Hall Meeting Overview

- To be hosted February 1-11, 2022(over a two week period)
- Deadline for returning Town Hall Dates, Times, and Locations by Dec 3, 2021. Use invite list and press release formats as in August 2021.

1.2 Number/Format of Town Hall Meetings

- Minimum of 1 in-person Town Hall meeting per region at 6-8 pm where only proposals for that zone are presented. Need final plans for locations.
- Host 1 virtual Town Hall meeting per zone from 12 to 2 pm. Registration is required. We are sending updates to those that had previously registered.
- The Designation Leadership Team will present to the CPRA Board in Jan 2022. Also, LaNERR Executive Committee meeting in December 2021 to provide an update of the designation process.

Town Hall Planning. 11/29/21

1.3 Locations of/Logistics for Town Hall Meetings

- Use accessible options that are free such as public Libraries, public meeting areas, accommodations that provide Sea Grant free access.
- Proposal teams are responsible for hand-out materials associated with proposal and logistics for presentations (computer, projector, screen). LaNERR LDT will provide summary of LaNERR process and copies of questionnaire. Responses of Questionnaire to be
- Should be sign-in table that has hand-outs on LaNERR Process (two-pager), LaNERR Questionnaire, Proposal Team Presentation (Summary)

1.4 Potential Invitees

- CPRA, GOCA and La Sea Grant will do press release of Town Hall meeting schedule.
- We will send information to members of Site Development Team to circulate in your listservs and other means of promotion
- Use local support networks as developed in original promotion plan.

We are scheduling a Proposal Team Follow Up meeting:

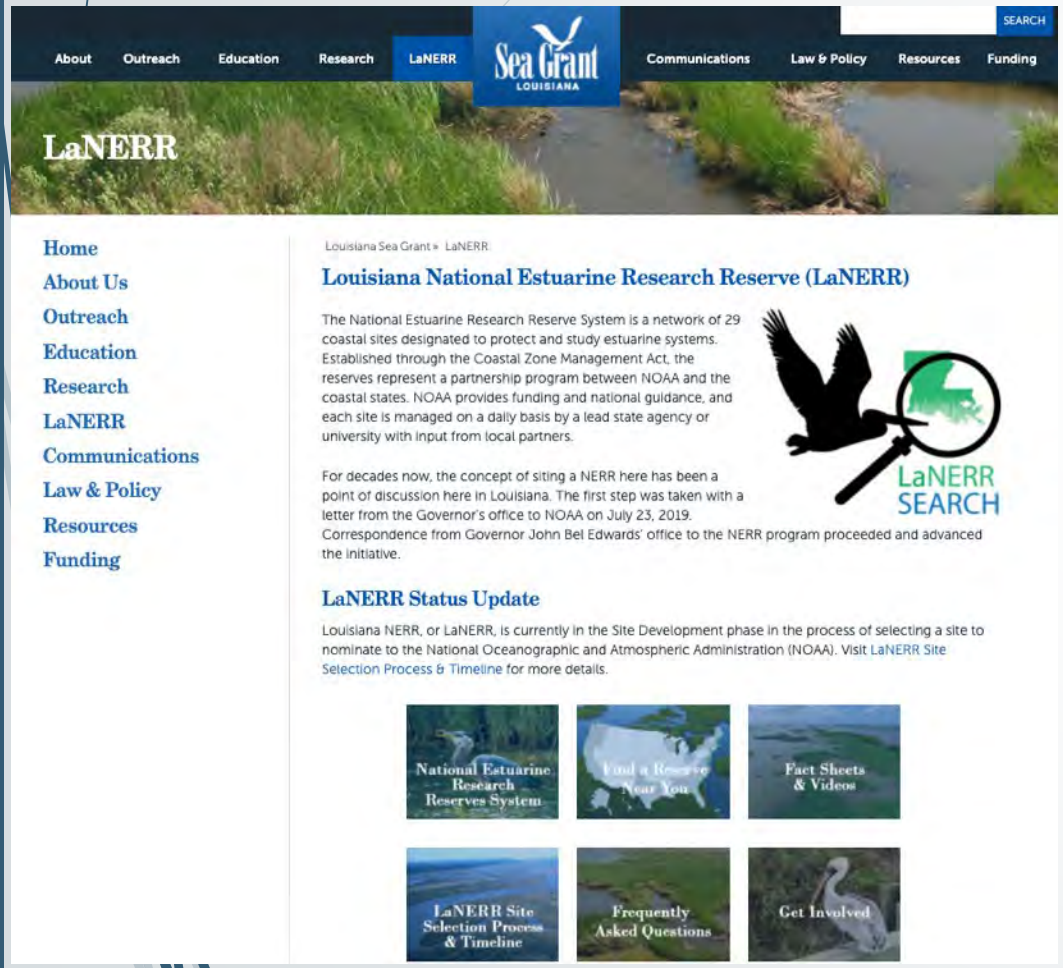
1. Town Hall Guidance...virtual and in person meetings
2. Final Proposal Guidance...provide them with RFP guidelines
3. Follow Up Discussions on Maps for Town Hall...and final proposal...
4. How should we be engaging local support and what does a local support letter look like?
5. Other items that are apparent from the discussion today. (send email to rtwilley@lsu.edu)

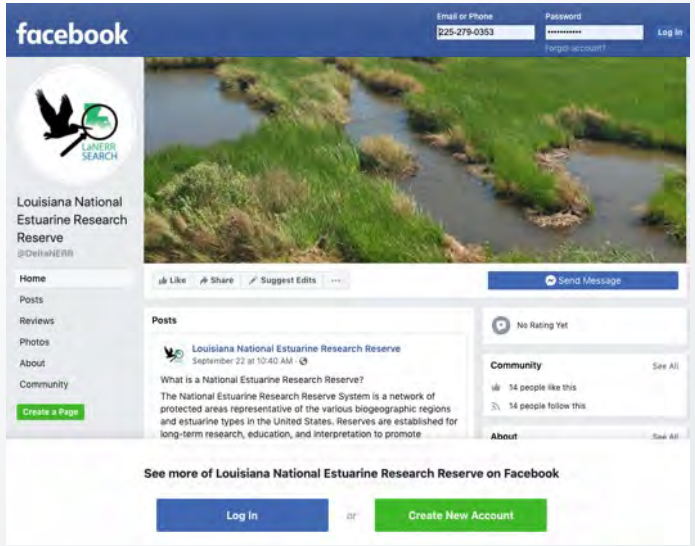
LaNERR

Louisiana
National Estuary Research Reserve

Questions?

How do I stay engaged in the process?



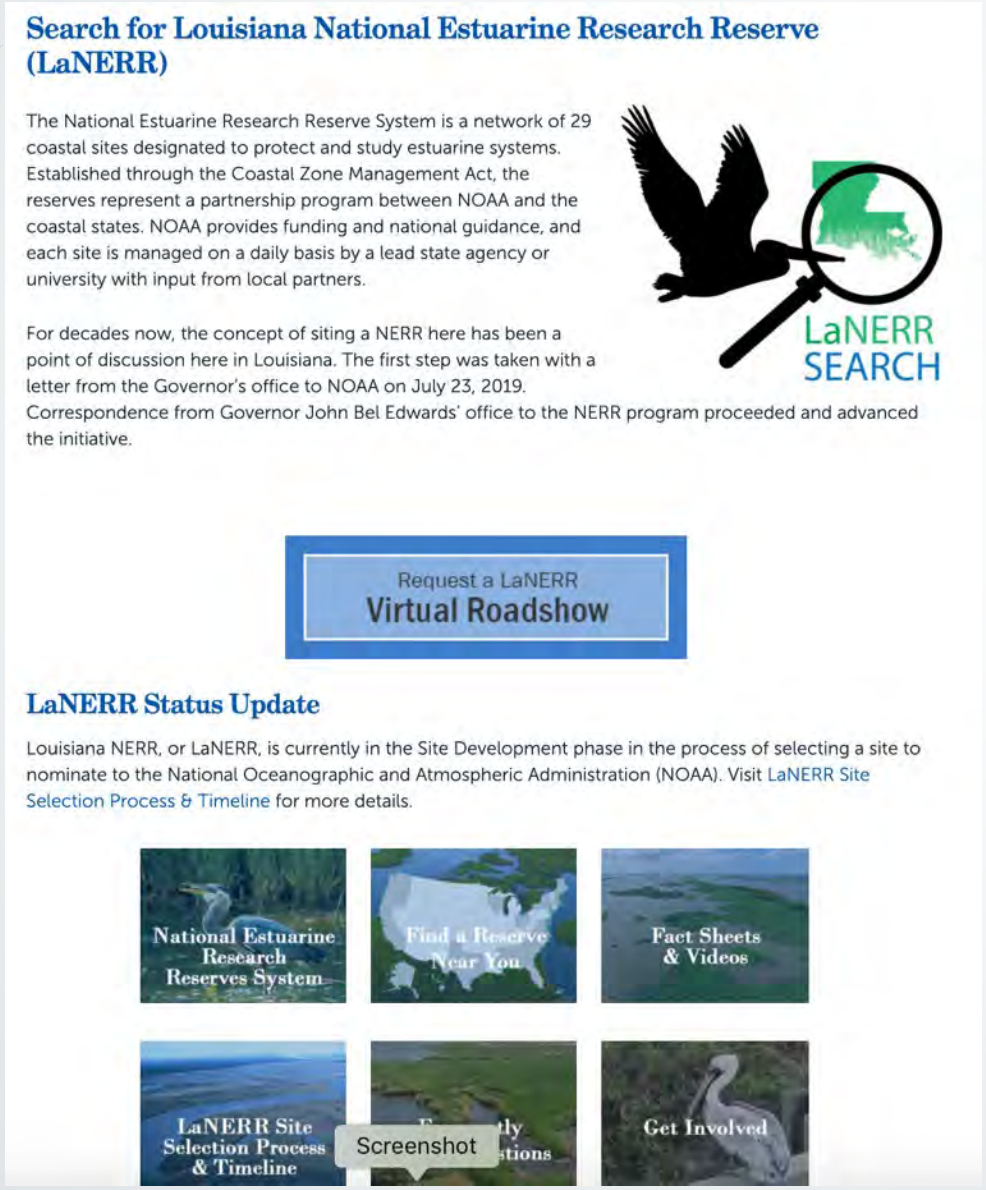


Contact

email deltanerr@lsu.edu

- Social Media:
  - **https://twitter.com/DeltaNERR**
- Website:
  - **http://www.laseagrant.org/deltanerr/**
- Facebook
  - **https://www.facebook.com/DeltaNERR/**

LaNERR Roadshow Presentation (www.laseagrant.org)



Search for Louisiana National Estuarine Research Reserve (LaNERR)

The National Estuarine Research Reserve System is a network of 29 coastal sites designated to protect and study estuarine systems. 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 on a daily basis by a lead state agency or university with input from local partners.

For decades now, the concept of siting a NERR here has been a point of discussion here in Louisiana. The first step was taken with a letter from the Governor's office to NOAA on July 23, 2019. Correspondence from Governor John Bel Edwards' office to the NERR program proceeded and advanced the initiative.

Request a LaNERR
Virtual Roadshow

LaNERR Status Update

Louisiana NERR, or LaNERR, is currently in the Site Development phase in the process of selecting a site to nominate to the National Oceanographic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA). Visit LaNERR Site Selection Process & Timeline for more details.

Contact

email
deltanerr@lsu.edu

- Social Media: **https://twitter.com/DeltaNERR**
- Website: **http://www.laseagrant.org/deltanerr/**
- Facebook **https://www.facebook.com/DeltaNERR/**

LaNERR Site Development Committee

Meeting #7

Monday, November 29, 2021 (1:00 – 3:00 pm)

Attendees

SDC Members: Chip McGimsey, CRT; Craig Colten, LSU; Justin Lemoine, CRT; Tracy Quirk, LSU; James Nelson, ULL; David Muth, NWF; Brian Roberts, LUMCON; Julie Whitbeck, NPS; Kacie Wright, USGS; Robert Moreau, SELU; Kristi Trail, PC; David Podgorski, UNO; Mark Tobler, Loyola; Cheston Hill, OSL; Devyani Kar, EDF; Martin O'Connell, UNO; Matthew Hiatt, LSU; Navid Jafari, LSU; Beth Stauffer, ULL; Erik Johnson, Audubon; Amy Dixon, USACE; Jill Trepanier, LSU; Kevin Ringelman, LSU; John Nyman, LSU; Robert Thomas, Loyola; Dinah Maygarden, UNO; Gary Lafleur, NSU; Liz Skilton, ULL; Illya Tietzel, UNO; Joey Breaux, LDAF; Corey Miller, CRCL; Gary Shaffer, SELU; *Not available: Carol Wilson, LSU; Donata Henry, Tulane; Heather Stone, ULL; Robert Mahon, UNO; Thomas Gresham, LDOE; Danielle Keller, formerly USACE; Michael Pasquier, LSU; Alex Kolker, LUMCON; Erin Cox, UNO; Maida Owens, CRT; Jonathan Foret, SLWDC; Malay Ghose Hajra, UNO; Patty Ferguson Bohnee, ASU; Natalie Snider, EDF; Giovanna McClenachan, NSU; Chuck Hunter, USFWS; Simone Maloz, RMRD; Andy Fischer, LDWF; Quenton Fontenot, NSU; Nathan Corley, LDOE; Claire Anderson, Ripple Effect; Dean Blanchard, BTNEP; Mark Davis, Tulane; Abigail Bockus, LUMCON; Kyle Piller, SELU; Jennifer Hill, LA Tech; Brian Gautreau, LSU AgCenter; Ken Krauss, USGS; Cindy Brown, LTL; Aimee Hollander, NSU; Andy Dolan, USFWS; Bryan Piazza, TNC; Emad Habib, ULL; Mark Kulp, UNO; Megan La Peyre, USGS; Mitchell Aleshire, CRT; Morgan Kelly, LSU; Shirell Parfait-Dardar, GCDBCC;*

Screening Subcommittee (SDC Members): Seth Blitch, TNC; Alisha Renfro, NWF; Scott Hemmerling, WI; Ron Boustany, NRCS; Rebecca Triche, LWF; Mike Carloss, DU; Kenny Ribbeck, LDWF; Glenn Constant, USFWS; Sara Krupa, LDNR; Greg Steyer, USGS; Gina Campo, OCD; *Not available: Pat Arnould, GOIA*

Screening Subcommittee (non-SDC Members): Melissa Baustian, WI; Shirley Laska, UNO; *Not available: Jenneke Visser, ULL; Sam Bentley, LSU; Mead Allison, Tulane*

Other Attendees: Matt Chasse, NOAA; Caroline Byrne, Atchafalaya National Heritage Area; DeWitt Braud, LSU; Hampton Peele, LSU

Designation Leadership Team: Robert Twilley, LSU; Sandy Parfait, LSU; Julie Lively, LA Sea Grant; Kristin Ransom, NOAA; Everett Craddock, LSU

Royal Engineers & Consultants (LA Sea Grant Support): Alaina Grace, Mandy Green

Summary

Welcome

Robert Twilley opened the meeting and noted that the meeting is being recorded for anyone unable to attend. The last meeting of the LaNERR Site Development Committee (SDC) was in July 2021.

The key objectives of the meeting today are to review the revised LaNERR Workflow and Schedule (dated November 22, 2021) and assist proposal teams in preparing for the February 2022 Town Halls by having a 'Mock Town Hall' to gather SDC feedback.

Revised LaNERR Workflow and Schedule

The timeline has been expanded by approximately four months to accommodate Hurricane Ida recovery efforts. See table below and refer to the revised Workflow and Schedule (November 22, 2021).

Town Halls	February 1-11, 2022
Draft Final Candidate Site Proposals due	March 11, 2022
Screening and scoring	Mid March – Early April 2022
Final Candidate Site Proposals due	April 22, 2022
DLT provide proposals to Executive Committee	April 29, 2022
Executive Committee nominates site to the Governor	Late May 2022

Final Site Selection Criteria and Final Candidate Site Proposals

Final Site Selection Criteria were provided to the proposal teams and to the full SDC. Climate Change and Partnership categories were added per NOAA guidance. The Designation Leadership Team (DLT) will develop the Final Candidate Site Proposal template and send it to the screening subcommittee for review. Screening subcommittee feedback will be used to finalize the Final Candidate Site Proposal format, and it will be provided to proposal teams in late December 2021 or early January 2022. *Draft* Final Candidate Site Proposals will be screened and scored using a worksheet based on the Site Selection Criteria. The DLT will follow up with proposal teams in December to prepare for Town Halls (including engaging local support and requesting local support letters) and discuss developing Final Candidate Site Proposals (including mapping needs).

Town Halls Guidance/Advertising

Town Halls will run from February 1 – 11, 2022. Each proposal team will host three Town Halls in a mix of in-person and virtual formats. Town Halls will occur from 12:00 – 2:00 pm and from 6:00 – 8:00 pm to maximize public participation. The DLT suggested a minimum of one in-person Town Hall per region at 6:00 – 8:00 pm.

In-person Town Halls

Proposal teams are urged to use accessible options such as public libraries, public meeting areas, or accommodations that provide Sea Grant free access. Proposal teams are responsible for hand-out materials associated with their Town Halls and presentation logistics (computer, projector, screen, etc.).

The DLT will provide a summary of the NERR system and specifics of the LaNERR process. In-person Town Halls should have a sign-in table to document participants as well as hand-outs on the LaNERR Process (two-pager), LaNERR Questionnaire, and a copy of the Proposal Team Presentation (Summary). Proposal teams were asked to provide the locations of the in-person Town Hall meetings by Dec 3, 2021, so the DLT can finalize the guidance document and create a Press Release.

Virtual Town Halls

Registration will be required for virtual Town Halls, and the link to an online Qualtrics questionnaire will be provided to all participants. Feedback will be compiled by the DLT and provided to proposal teams for documentation in their Final Candidate Site Proposals.

Advertising and Invitees

Upon completion of the Press Release, advertisement will begin in December and continue through January. CPRA, GOCA, and La Sea Grant will distribute a Press Release of the Town Hall schedule. SDC members are encouraged to broadcast the Press Release to associated organizations and listservs. Proposal teams are urged to use local support networks as developed in their original promotion plan and keep a record of invitees and others they reach out to for documentation of community engagement in the Final Candidate Site Proposals.

The DLT will meet with the LaNERR Executive Committee in December 2021 to provide an update of the nomination process and will present this information to the CPRA Board in January 2022.

Mock Town Hall

Presentations were given by Kristin Ransom (What is a NERR), Robert Twilley (LaNERR Process), and the proposal team leads/co-leads for each of the three estuarine zones. Proposal teams are asked to submit comments if there are additional topics that should be covered in Kristin or Robert's presentations. Recordings of these presentations will be provided to proposal teams for use in Town Halls. SDC members are encouraged to provide feedback directly to proposal team leads/co-leads or to Robert Twilley for dissemination to all teams.

Pontchartrain Estuarine Zone

Kristi Trail of PC presented a draft of the Pontchartrain Town Hall presentation. She provided a physical description of the proposed site and showed maps of various site components, which are currently divided into five geographic areas. She described the benefits of each area and how they relate to Site Selection Criteria.

There were several SDC comments. First, it was suggested that this team consider including Pearl River WMA in Area #2. The team was reminded to consider not going too large with the geographic scale of their proposed site due to funding limitations and other management considerations. Another SDC member suggested the team speak on how each of the public lands are currently used as it might help people understand that additional regulations would not be applied if the area were to become a NERR.

Barataria Estuarine Zone

Andy Nyman of LSU presented the draft Barataria Town Hall presentation. He showed the geographic areas of consideration and noted that they have downsized their areas of consideration due to funding limitations and management concerns. They also excluded areas with highest subsidence rates. He spoke to site characteristics that are complementary to the Site Selection Criteria, including monitoring and data that have already been collected in this estuarine zone. Andy indicated two potential locations that could serve as a headquarter (one located in Lafitte, and another located in Plaquemine Parish).

An SDC member suggested that the Town Hall presentations be geared for public consumption with only high-level discussion of the Site Selection Criteria.

Atchafalaya Estuarine Zone

Brian Roberts of LUMCON presented the draft Atchafalaya Town Hall presentation. He highlighted the relevance of their candidate site with regard to meeting not only the mission of a NERR but also the delta component that is not yet included in any other NERR. He highlighted areas of interest for inclusion in their candidate site as well as the associated habitat and monitoring that has been conducted to date. He spoke to merits of their candidate site to meeting each of the Site Selection Criteria. Their team has had several offers from locations/facilities to serve as the headquarters.

Several SDC members noted several revisions needed for land area labeling on the maps.

Questionnaire

A questionnaire was provided to SDC members via a Qualtrics link: http://lsu.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_9uGKURaxmdmHx8W. SDC members were asked to complete it after the meeting for one or all candidate sites. Feedback from the SDC will be provided to the proposal teams. SDC members are also encouraged to provide feedback on questions or wording that could help improve the questionnaire. This survey will be revised and provided to Town Hall participants. The intent is to provide it electronically and via print copy at in-person Town Halls.

Wrap Up and Next Steps

- The SDC Meeting #7 recording and summary will be provided following the meeting. Recording: https://lsu.zoom.us/rec/share/PzMt5zz8H6tMFwchi4m4SrHouaB47apoHYdJ4rdwpY62X2_J4HZFF8NC0H8ZM0i_.5SKpj_BtXR0yjFfM
- SDC members are asked to complete the Qualtrics questionnaire for one or all candidate sites and provide feedback on questions or wording. http://lsu.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_9uGKURaxmdmHx8W.
- Proposal teams should send in-person Town Hall locations by Dec 3 to sandyparfait@lsu.edu
- The DLT will schedule a follow up meeting with proposal teams in December.
- SDC is asked to broadcast the Town Hall Press Release to maximize community engagement.
- The full SDC will be reconvened in late February to receive a debrief from the Town Halls.

Site Development Committee Meeting 8

May 3, 2022

LaNERR Site Development Committee

Meeting #8

Tuesday, May 3, 2022 (1:30 – 2:30 pm)

Zoom link: https://lsu.zoom.us/j/5720227912?from=addon
Meeting ID: 572 022 7912
Mobile Dial In: 646-876-9923

Pre-meeting Materials:

- N/A

Objectives:

- Update on LaNERR site proposal process
- Outcomes of proposal screening and scoring

Agenda:

Time	Topic
5 min	Welcome
20 min	Update on LaNERR site proposal process
30 min	Outcomes of proposal screening and scoring
	Pontchartrain Estuarine Zone
	Barataria Estuarine Zone
	Atchafalaya Estuarine Zone
5 min	Wrap up and next steps

Post-meeting follow up from DLT:

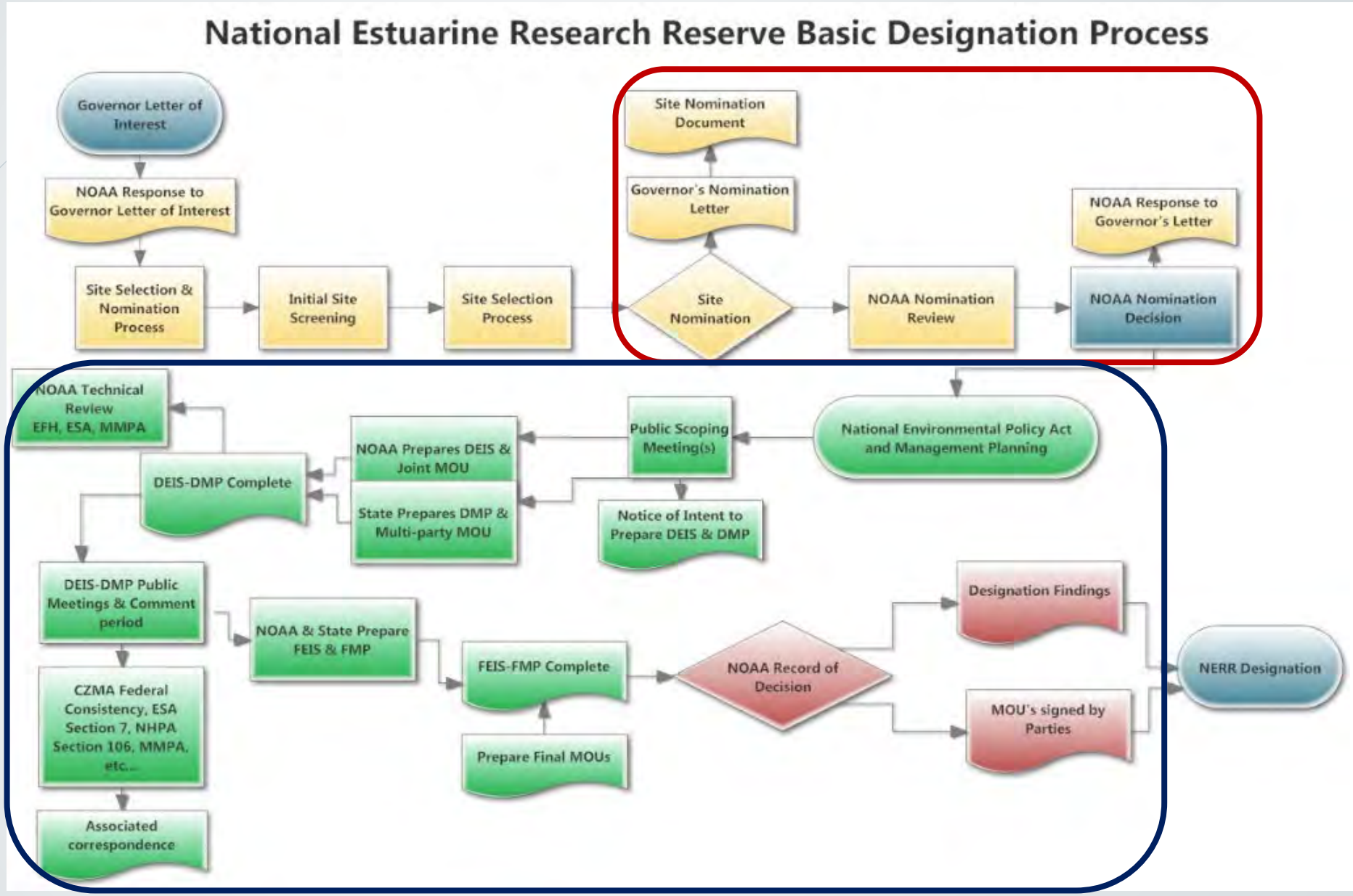
- Recording of meeting
- Meeting summary

LaNERR – Louisiana National Estuarine Research Reserve

SDC Meeting #8 Update

May 2022

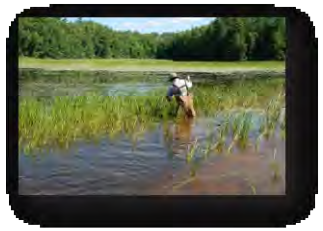
Pre-designation Process



Criteria from the NOAA guidelines to establish a LaNERR site in the Mississippi River Delta.

National Estuarine Research Reserve Designation Guidance

Site Selection, Nomination, and Designation



February 1, 2020

Authored by NOAA

Stewardship Division
Office for Coastal Management
National Ocean Service
National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

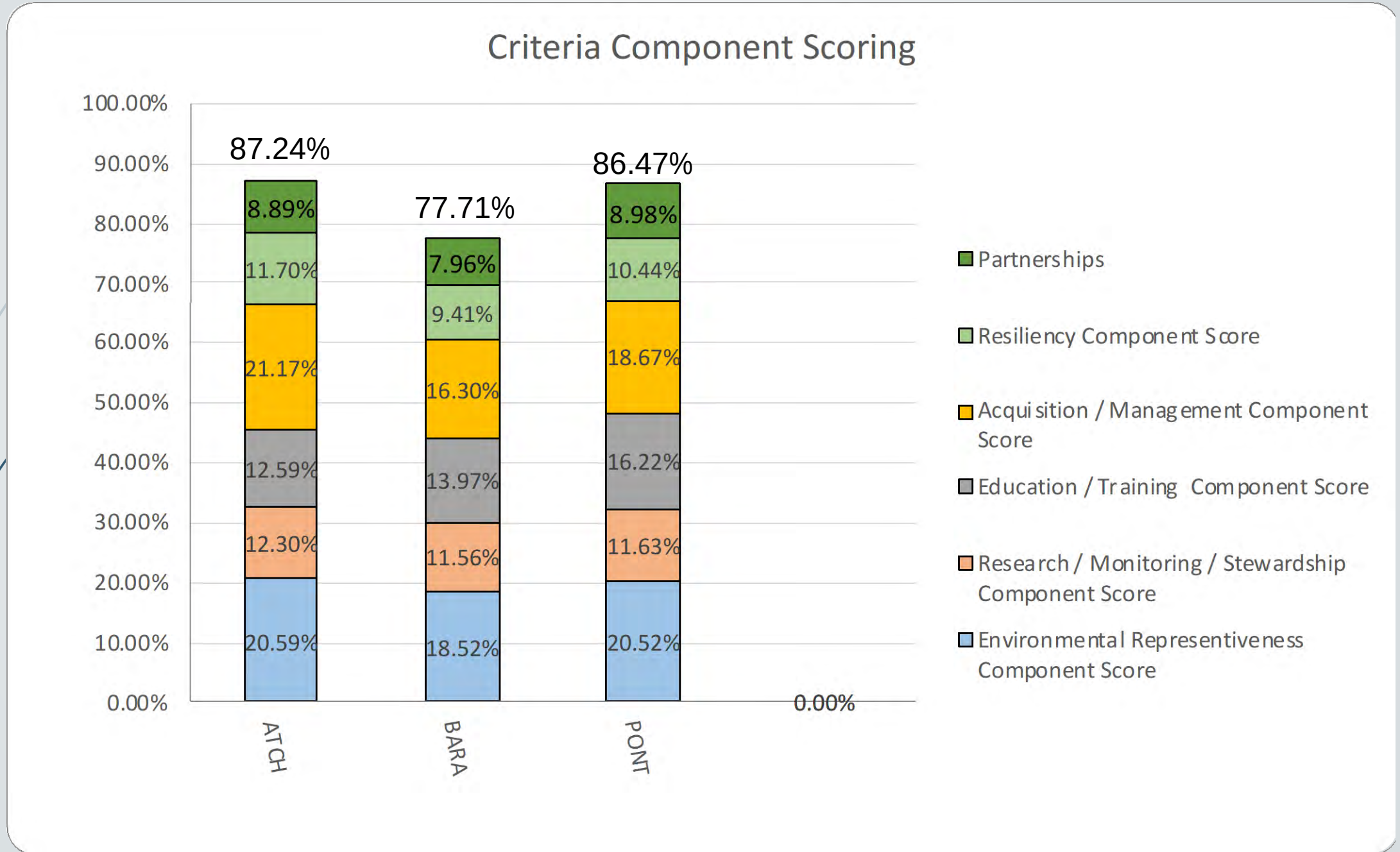
I. Environmental Representativeness

II. Value of the Site for Research, Monitoring, and Resource Protection

III. Suitability of the Site for Education and Interpretation

IV. Acquisition and Management Considerations

- CLIMATE CHANGE
- PARTNERSHIPS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80.00%
70.00%
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50.00%
40.00%
30.00%
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10.00%
0.00%
87.24%
77.71%
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8.89%
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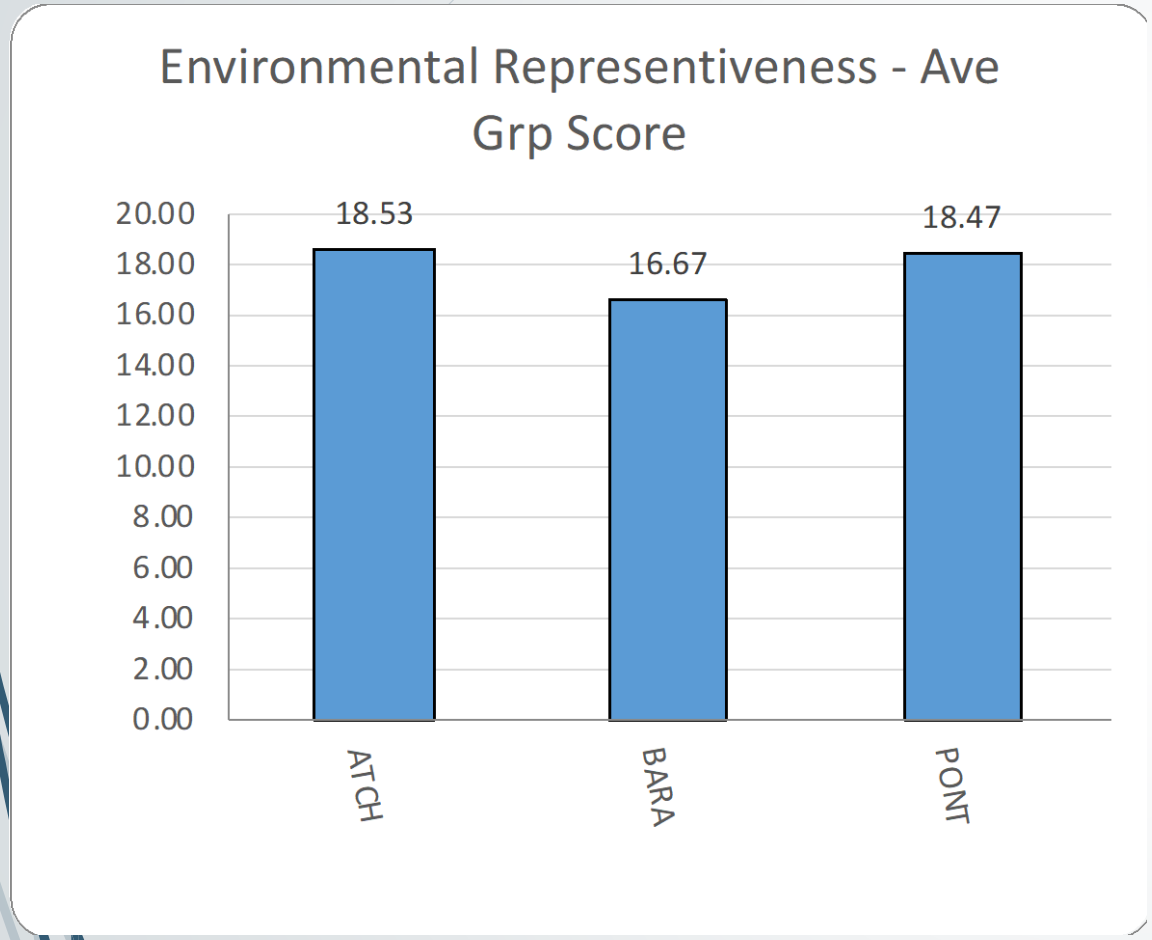
21.17%
12.59%
12.30%
20.59%
7.96%
9.41%
16.30%
13.97%
11.56%
18.52%
8.98%
10.44%
18.67%
16.22%
11.63%
20.52%
ATCH
BARA
PONT
Partnerships
Resiliency Component Score
Acquisition / Management Component Score
Education / Training Component Score
Research / Monitoring / Stewardship Component Score
Environmental Representiveness Component Score


Environmental Representiveness - Ave Grp Score
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18.00
16.00
14.00
12.00
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8.00
6.00
4.00
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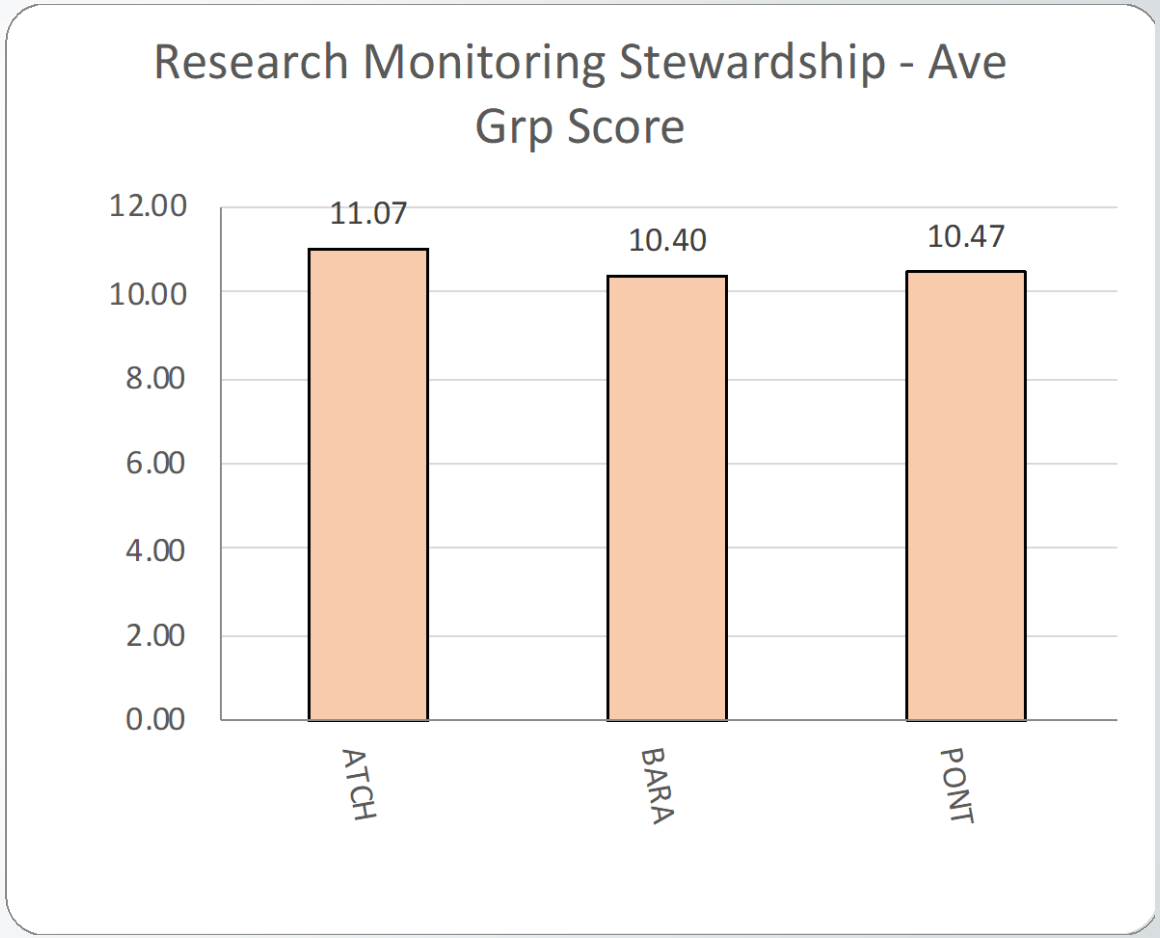
18.53
16.67
18.47
ATCH
BARA
PONT


Research Monitoring Stewardship - Ave Grp Score
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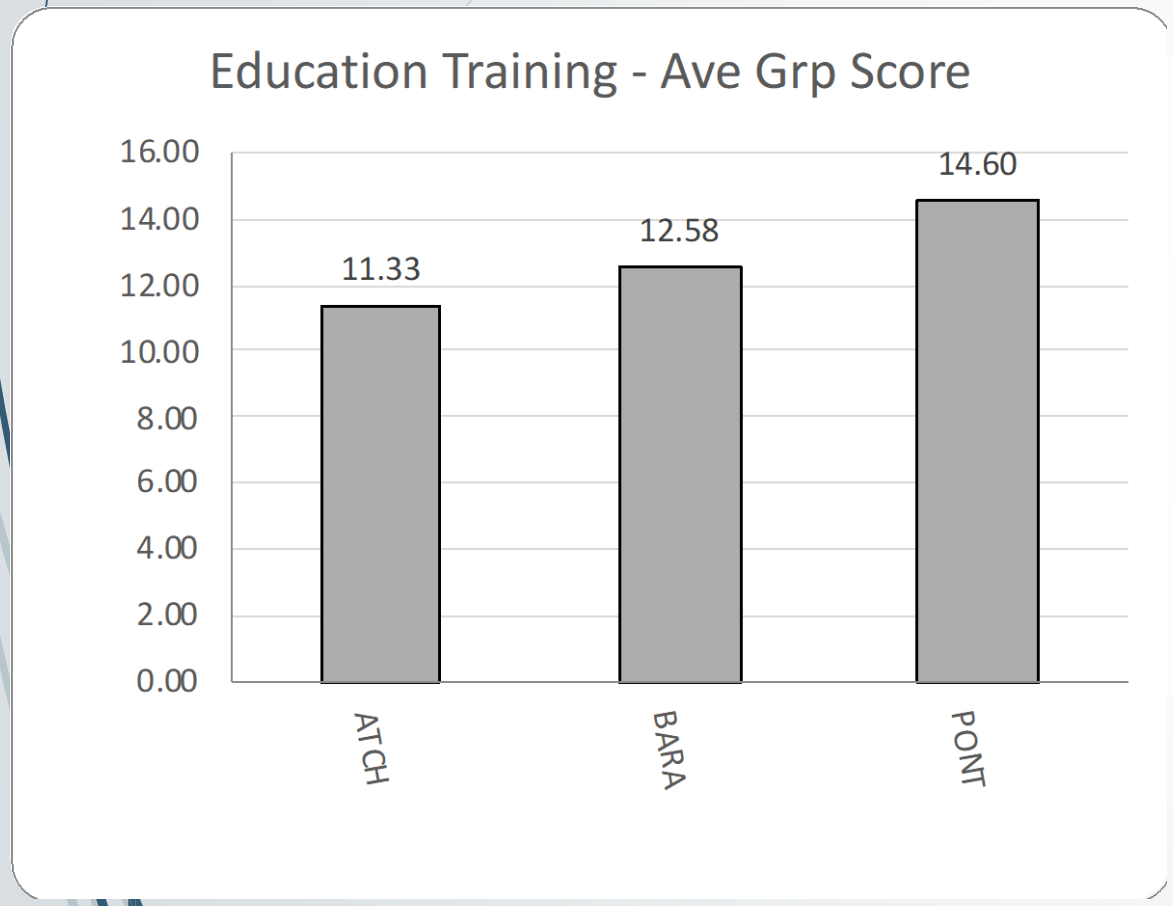
10.00
8.00
6.00
4.00
2.00
0.00
11.07
10.40
10.47
ATCH
BARA
PONT


Education Training - Ave Grp Score
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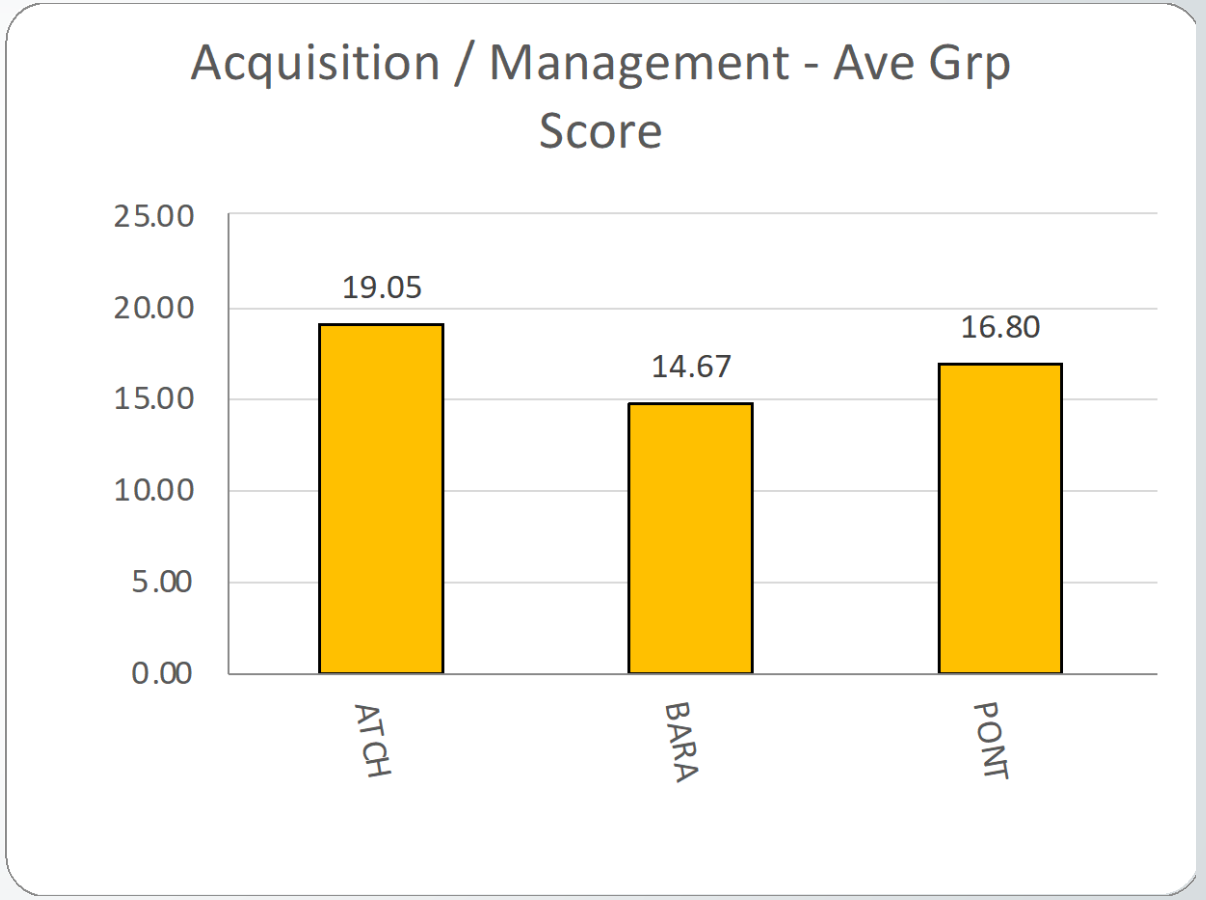
14.00
12.00
10.00
8.00
6.00
4.00
2.00
0.00
11.33
12.58
14.60
ATCH
BARA
PONT


Acquisition / Management - Ave Grp Score
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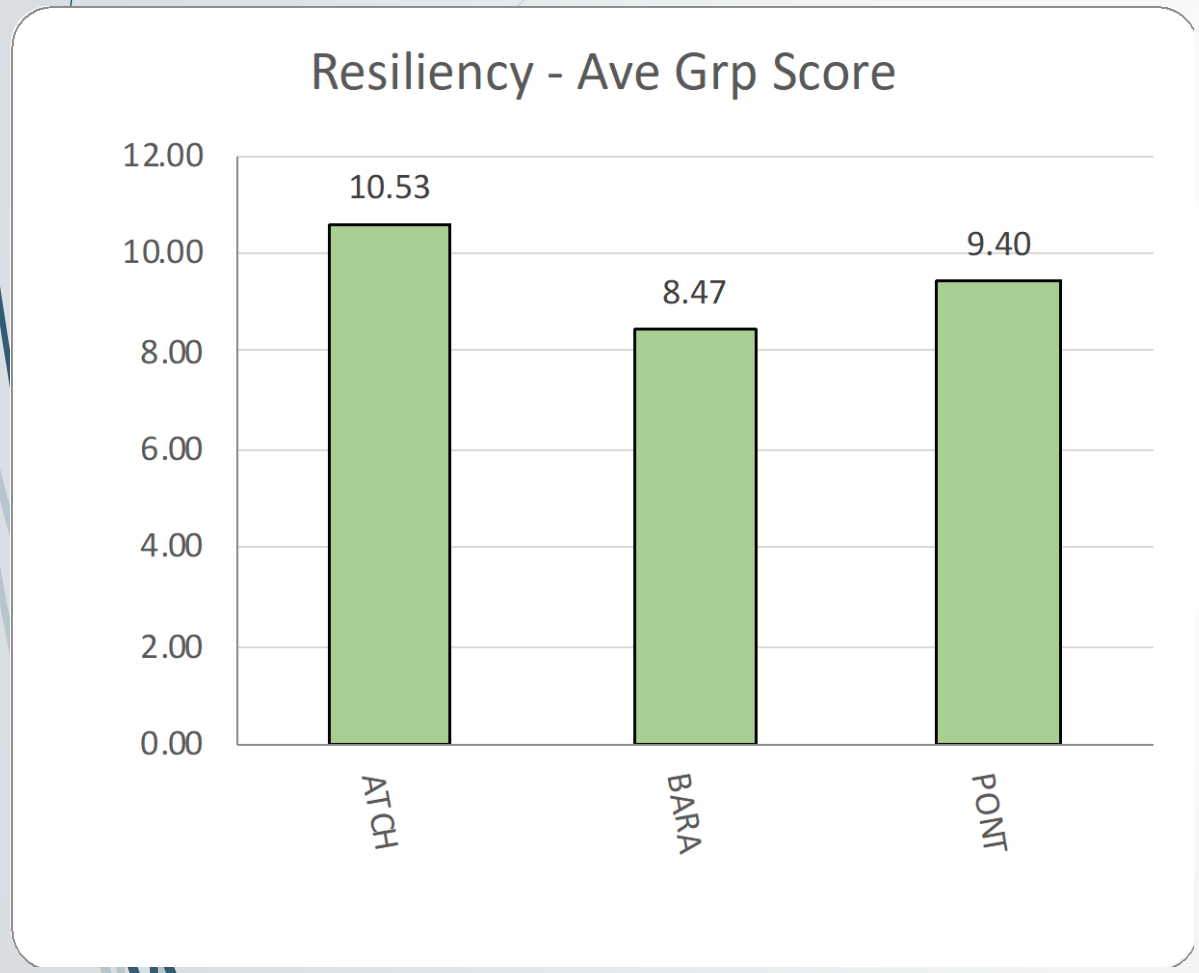
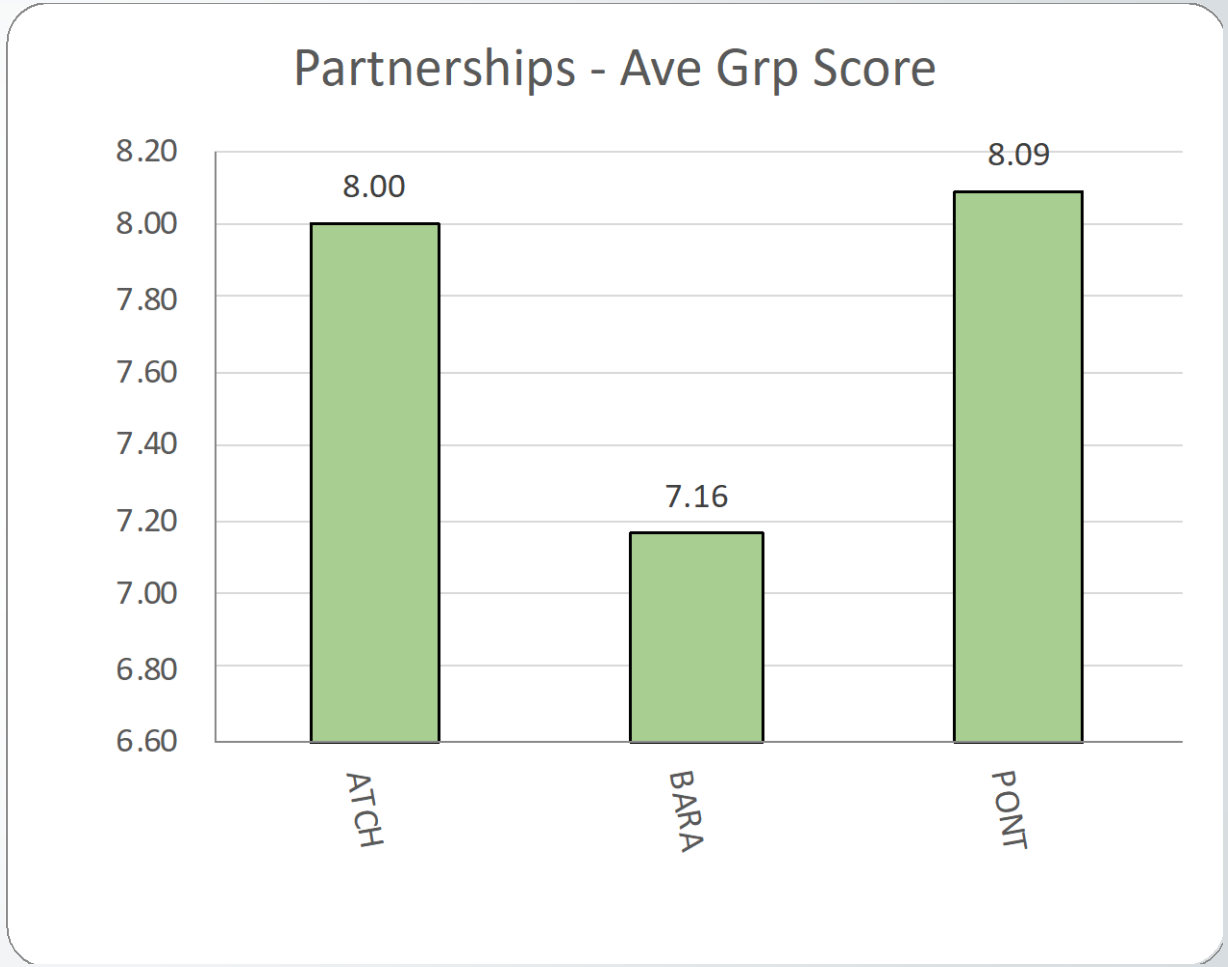
20.00
15.00
10.00
5.00
0.00
19.05
14.67
16.80
ATCH
BARA
PONT


Resiliency - Ave Grp Score
12.00
10.00
8.00
6.00
4.00
2.00
0.00
10.53
8.47
9.40
ATCH
BARA
PONT


Partnerships - Ave Grp Score
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8.00
7.80
7.60
7.40
7.20
7.00
6.80
6.60
8.00
7.16
8.09
ATCH
BARA
PONT

Average Rank Scoring of Criteria Groups						
	Environmental Representiveness Ave Group Score Rank	Research / Monitoring / Stewardship Ave Group Score Rank	Education / Training Ave group Score Rank	Acquisition / Management Ave Group Score Rank	Resiliency Ave Group Score Rank	Partnerships
ATCH	1	1	3	1	1	2
BARA	3	3	2	3	3	3
PONT	2	2	1	2	2	1

LaNERR: Town Hall Meetings

The search for a **National Estuarine Research Reserve** in Louisiana wants to involve you!

click to enlarge

The LaNERR Site Development Committee will host a series of town hall meetings to provide information on three possible sites: Atchafalaya Basin, Barataria Basin and Pontchartrain Basin. Three town hall meetings (virtual and hybrid) have been organized for each site. Webinar links below are specific to each town hall meeting. The public is encouraged to participate.

Virtual meetings are strictly online. Hybrid town hall meetings can be attended either in-person or online. Registration is required for online participation. To register, click the link of the meeting you want to attend.

Town Hall Schedule:

Atchafalaya Basin

Date	Time	Attendance Info
Wednesday, February 2	12-2pm	Join this Webinar (virtual only)
Tuesday, February 8	6-8pm	Join this Webinar OR Join in-person at Morgan City Municipal Auditorium – 728 Myrtle St. in Morgan City
Thursday, February 10	6-8pm	Join this Webinar OR Join in-person at Siman Theatre for the Performing Arts – 129 E. Main St. in New Iberia

Barataria Basin

Date	Time	Attendance Info
Monday, February 7	6-8pm	Join this Webinar OR Join in-person at Lafitte Barataria Museum & Wetland Trace – 4917 City Park Drive in Lafitte
Wednesday, February 9	12-2pm	Join this Webinar (virtual only)
Wednesday, February 9	6-8pm	Join this Webinar (virtual only)

Pontchartrain Basin

Date	Time	Attendance Info
Tuesday, February 1	6-8pm	Join this Webinar OR Join in-person at Southeastern Student Union Annex – Theater (2nd floor) in Hammond (parking at the corner of Ned McGehee Drive and North Oak Street)
Thursday, February 3	6-8pm	Join this Webinar (virtual only)
Friday, February 11	12-2pm	Join this Webinar OR Join in-person at the Geoghegan Grand Ballroom located at UNO's Homer Hitt Alumni and Visitors Center in New Orleans

Agenda for Each Town Hall Meeting:

1. What is a National Estuarine Research Reserve System – Kristin Ransom, NOAA
2. Introduction to LaNERR Process – Robert Twilley, Professor, LSU
3. Presentation by the specific LaNERR Alternative Site Team
4. Public Q&A; Also questionnaire for public to provide feedback
5. Adjourn

Town Hall Updates:

Resources & Information

1. LaNERR factsheet
2. Twilley and Ransom overviews of LaNERR
3. Town Hall Summaries
4. Updated Timeline

Alternative Site Proposals Information

1. Proposal factsheets (two)
2. Powerpoint slides of three proposals

Town Hall Participation:

1. Atchafalaya Proposal
    1. In Person: **130**
    2. On Line: **285**
2. Barataria Proposal
    1. In Person: **24**
    2. On Line: **113**
3. Pontchartrain Proposal
    1. In Person: **34**
    2. On Line: **214**
4. Total
    1. In Person: **188**
    2. On Line: **612**
    3. Total: **800**

LaNERR

Louisiana
National Estuary Research Reserve

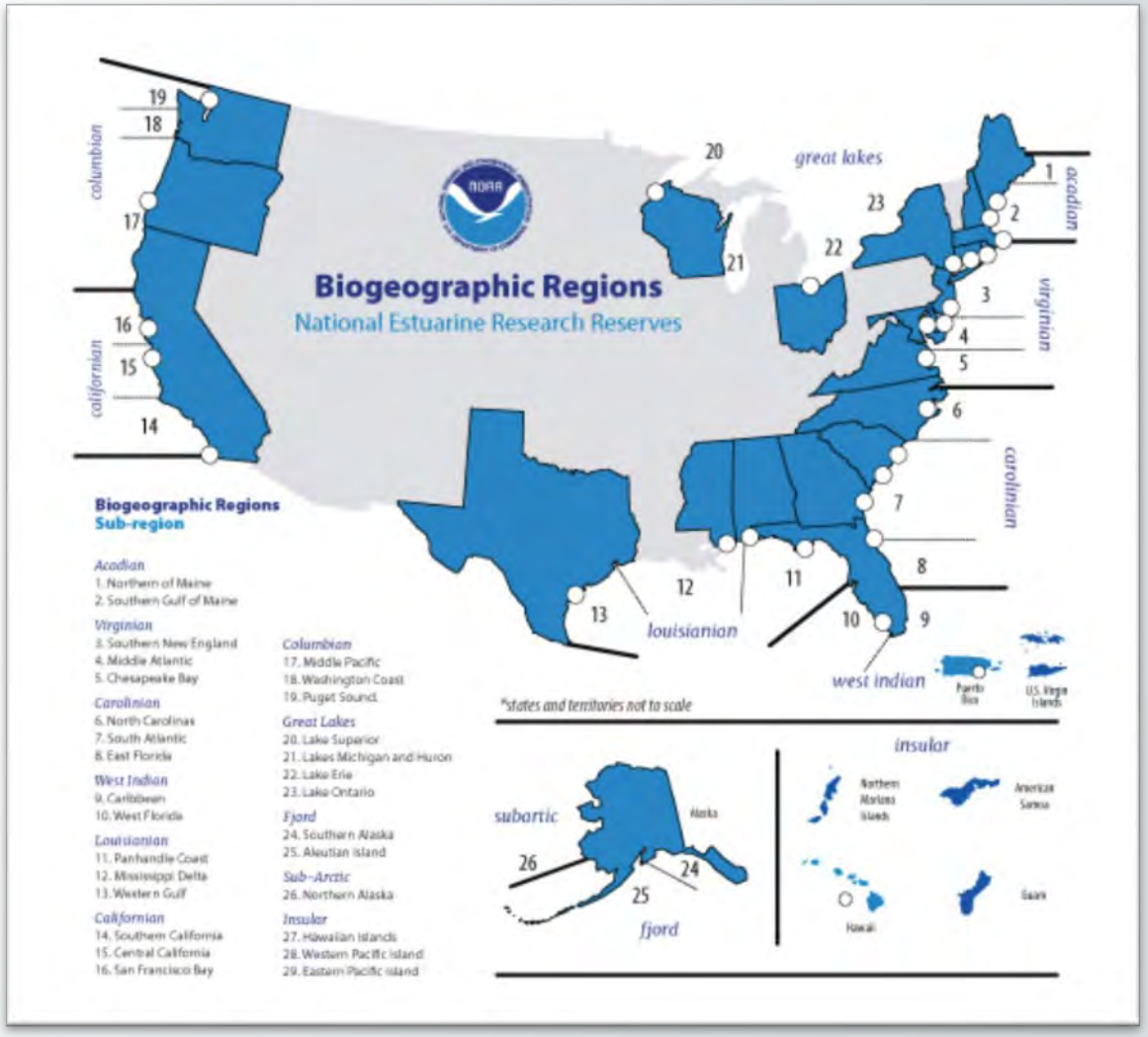
Questions?

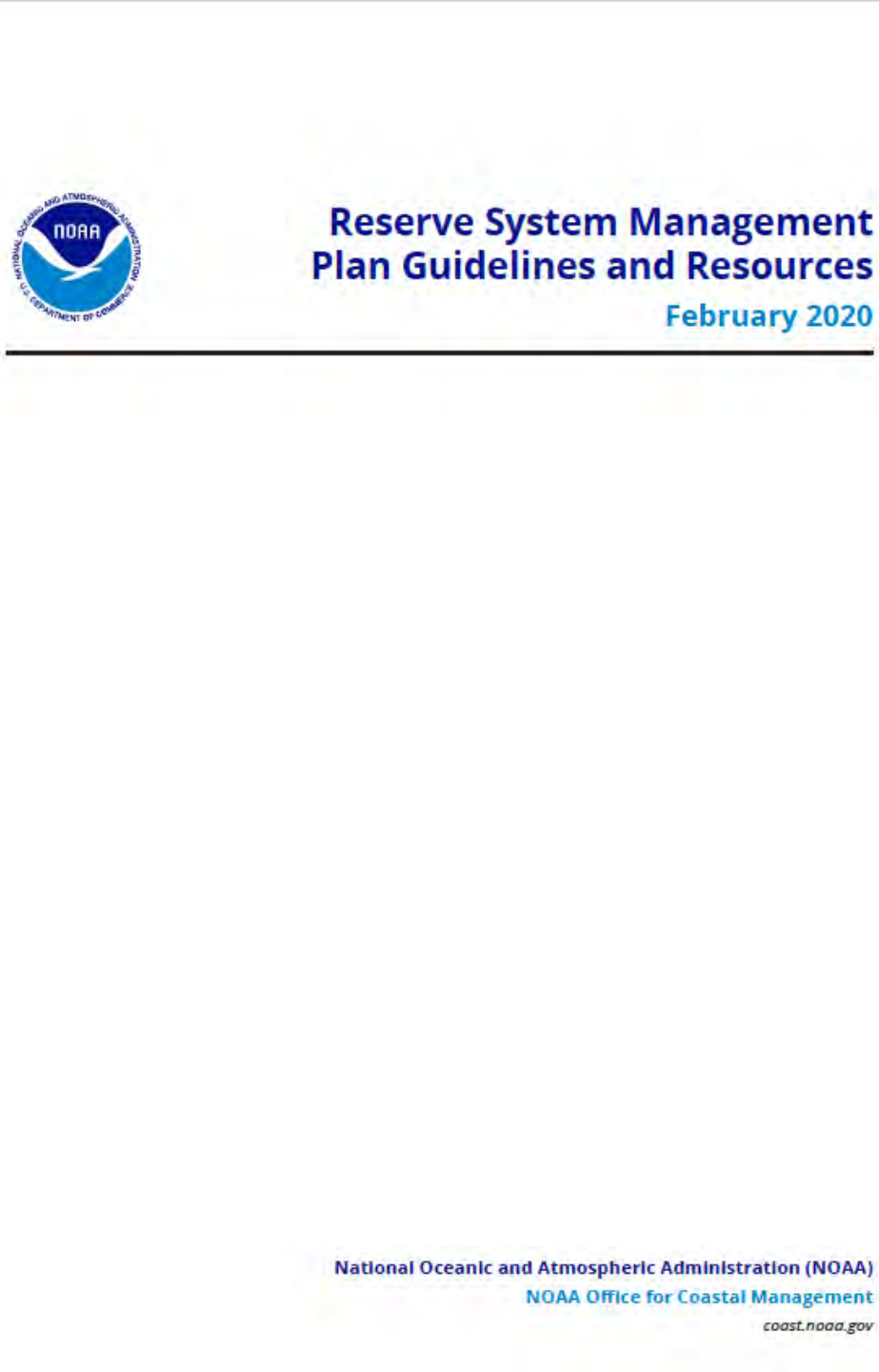
A Louisiana National Estuarine Research Reserve– Participating in a National Network to Tell our Story

National Estuarine Research Reserve System (NERRS)

network of protected areas representative of the various biogeographic regions and estuarine types in the United States.

Reserves are established as state-NOAA partnership for long-term research, education, and stewardship to promote informed management of the nation's estuaries and coastal habitats.





Monthly meetings with NOAA Advisory Group and LaNERR Leadership Team:

- Erica Seidon, Manager, Ecosystems and NERRS Program, NOAA, Silver Spring, MD
- Kristen Ransom, NOAA, Program Officer, New Orleans, LA
- Heidi Stiller, South Regional Director, OCM, NOAA, St. Petersburg, FL
- Matthew Chasse, Federal Program Officer, OCM, NOAA, Silver Spring, MD

LaNERR Site Development Committee

Meeting #8

Tuesday, May 3, 2022 (1:30 – 2:30 pm)

Attendees

SDC Members: Craig Colten, LSU; Justin Lemoine, CRT; Tracy Quirk, LSU; James Nelson, ULL; Julie Whitbeck, NPS; Kacie Wright, USGS; Robert Moreau, SELU; Kristi Trail, PC; David Podgorski, UNO; Patty Ferguson Bohnee, ASU; Maida Owens, CRT; Cheston Hill, OSL; Giovanna McClenachan, NSU; Chuck Hunter, USFWS; Gary Lafleur, NSU; Joey Breaux, LDAF; Illya Tietzel, UNO; Matthew Hiatt, LSU; Brian Gautreau, LSU AgCenter; Jill Trepanier, LSU; John Nyman, LSU AgCenter; **Not available** (Carol Wilson, LSU; David Muth, NWF; Brian Roberts, LUMCON; Chip McGimsey, CRT; Mark Tobler, Loyola; Quenton Fontenot, NSU; Devyani Kar, EDF; Heather Stone, ULL; Robert Mahon, UNO; Thomas Gresham, LDOE; Danielle Keller, formerly USACE; Michael Pasquier, LSU; Alex Kolker, LUMCON; Erin Cox, UNO; Corey Miller, CRCL; Donata Henry, Tulane; Liz Skilton, ULL; Jonathan Foret, SLWDC; Malay Ghose Hajra, UNO; Simone Maloz, RoR; Andy Fischer, LDWF; Martin O'Connell, UNO; Nathan Corley, LDOE; Navid Jafari, LSU; Beth Stauffer, ULL; Erik Johnson, Audubon; Claire Anderson, Ripple Effect; Dean Blanchard, BTNEP; Mark Davis, Tulane; Amy Dixon, USACE; Abigail Bockus, LUMCON; Kevin Ringelman, LSU; Kyle Piller, SELU; Jennifer Hill, Louisiana Tech; Robert Thomas, Loyola; Dinah Maygarden, UNO; Ken Krauss, USGS; Cindy Brown, LTL; Aimee Hollander, NSU; Andy Dolan, USFWS; Bryan Piazza, TNC; Emad Habib, ULL; Mark Kulp, UNO; Megan La Peyre, USGS; Mitchell Aleshire, CRT; Morgan Kelly, LSU; Shirell Parfait-Dardar, GCDBCC)

Screening Subcommittee (SDC Members): Alisha Renfro, NWF; Mike Carloss, DU; Kenny Ribbeck, LDWF; Glenn Constant, USFWS; Sara Krupa, LDNR; Greg Steyer, USGS; Gina Campo, OCD; Rebecca Triche, LWF; Not available (Seth Blitch, TNC; Scott Hemmerling, WI; Ron Boustany, NRCS; Pat Arnould, GOIA)

Screening Subcommittee (non-SDC Members): Mead Allison, Tulane; Jenneke Visser, ULL; Not available (Sam Bentley, LSU; Shirley Laska, UNO; Melissa Baustian, WI)

Other Attendees: DeWitt Braud, LSU; Hampton Peele, LSU; Caroline Byrne, CRT; Rachel Rhode, EDF

Designation Leadership Team: Robert Twilley, LSU; Sandy Parfait, LSU; Kristin Ransom, NOAA; Everett Craddock, LSU; Not available (Julie Lively, LA Sea Grant)

Royal Engineers & Consultants (LA Sea Grant Support): Alaina Grace; Not available (Mandy Green)

Summary

Welcome

Robert Twilley opened the meeting and noted that the meeting is being recorded for anyone unable to attend. The last meeting of the LaNERR Site Development Committee was in November 2021, to allow Proposal Teams the opportunity to present their proposal presentations in a mock Town Hall setting as well as to review the revised LaNERR workflow and schedule.

The key objectives of the meeting today are to provide an overview of the LaNERR Site Selection and Nomination process to date, review the outcomes of the screening and scoring conducted by the Screening Subcommittee, and to discuss the remaining steps needed for a NERR to be nominated in Louisiana.

Robert thanked everyone that has participated in the LaNERR process. Of special note was Sea Grant for hosting the website and supporting the process; the late Morgan Crutcher for the engagement and connectivity she provided to the Governor's office; the Site Development Committee (SDC) members for their involvement and engagement; the SDC members that volunteered to serve on the Site Criteria Subcommittee, the Screening Subcommittee, and the Proposal Teams; and NOAA for their support and engagement in the process. He also thanked support staff for assistance with logistics and coordination.

Overview & Updates on the LaNERR Site Selection and Nomination Process

Robert provided an overview of the process to date from pre-screening six estuarine zones down to three, to developing the final Site Criteria, to developing three candidate site proposals, and last an overview of the screening and scoring process. He noted that the Designation Leadership Team (DLT) meets monthly with NOAA NERR leadership (Heidi Stiller, Erica Seldon, Matt Chasse, and Kristin Ransom), and has also met with the staff of other Gulf NERRs and with the Connecticut and Green Bay teams recently / currently undertaking their own NERR designation process.

Since the last SDC meeting, nine **Town Halls** were hosted (February 1 – 11, 2022). They were well attended and were an avenue for community feedback. It also came to light that additional advertising could have been done, which will be considered for future outreach and engagement efforts. Town Hall summaries were provided to the SDC via email and posted on the LaNERR website. Additional information, including the outcomes of the questionnaire will also be made available. A summary of Town Hall participation follows:

- Atchafalaya (In Person: **130**; Virtual: **285**)
- Barataria (In Person: **24**; Virtual **113**)
- Pontchartrain (In Person: **34**; Virtual **214**)
- Total (In Person: **188**; Virtual: **612**)
    - Total Participants: **800**

Outcomes of Candidate Site Proposal Screening and Scoring

Proposal teams submitted Draft Final Candidate Site proposals to the DLT on March 25, 2022. The Screening Subcommittee reviewed the proposals and used Qualtrics forms to score each one against the Site Criteria. They also had an option to write explanatory comments for their scores. Below is the summation of the scores, with estuarine zones in alphabetical order. Robert noted that summation followed the format used by the Connecticut NERR team during their Site Nomination process.

Component Scoring: Contribution of each Criteria Group to the Overall Score

	Environmental Representativeness Component Score	Research / Monitoring / Stewardship Component Score	Education / Training Component Score	Acquisition / Management Component Score	Resiliency Component Score	Partnerships Component Score	Overall Score
ATCH	20.59%	12.30%	12.59%	21.17%	11.70%	8.89%	87.24%
BARA	18.52%	11.56%	13.97%	16.30%	9.41%	7.96%	77.71%
PONT	20.52%	11.63%	16.22%	18.67%	10.44%	8.98%	86.47%

Robert wants to ensure that everyone on the SDC feels completely confident that the process was transparent and that they agree with the process that was followed before anything goes to the Executive Committee. He explained that neither the SDC nor the DLT selects a site; these groups were charged with developing and executing a process, whereas the Executive Committee is charged with deciding on a site. No additional screening or scoring will be done on candidate sites, but the proposal teams can draft a two-page letter to respond to outcomes from the Screening Subcommittee. Robert noted that the Executive Committee may make a relatively quick decision, or it may take them time to deliberate. Robert will notify the SDC when the Executive Committee selects a site.

Public comments can be submitted to Proposal Team leads for incorporation into their Final Proposals before May 4. Once NOAA makes a nomination, public comments will be accepted into the Federal Register and again during the draft and final EIS and Management Plan phase.

An SDC member asked if it is possible that the Executive Committee would select a candidate site other than the one that scored the highest. Robert noted that Screening Subcommittee scores are based on the Site Criteria, but there may be other considerations (outside the DLT purview) that the state agencies have to account for outside of the criteria (e.g., state lands, lead agency, state funding match, etc.). If the Executive Committee chooses a site other than the highest scoring site, they will have to document their reasoning.

Several SDC members gave favorable responses to the LaNERR process including their appreciation for having been part of the process, accolades for the work that has gone into it, and praise for it having been "… an inclusive, transparent, and structured process."

Wrap Up and Next Steps

Robert gave an overview of the steps remaining in the LaNERR Site Nomination process, as detailed in the table below, along with a tentative schedule.

Final Proposals due to the DLT	May 4, 2022
Final Proposals and screening outcomes provided to the Executive Committee	May 6, 2022
Executive Committee Meeting (screening outcomes and Proposal Team presentations)	May 11, 2022
Executive Committee nominates a site to the Governor	Late May 2022
Governor's office submits the nomination package to NOAA	TBD (Summer 2022)
Develop the draft and final EIS and Management Plan	TBD (~18 months)

Last, the SDC Meeting #8 recording and a meeting summary will be provided following the meeting.

Louisiana National Estuarine Research Reserve (LaNERR)
Site Selection & Nomination Report

November 2022

APPENDIX 8:

Screening Subcommittee Comments on Phase II Candidate Site Proposals:

Atchafalaya

Barataria

Pontchartrain

NOTE: Because Phase II Proposals were considered draft versions of the Final Proposals, they are not included herein. The Final Proposals are included in Appendix 9.

LaNERR Phase II Proposal Review Feedback: ***Atchafalaya***
August 13, 2021

Q1 - Section 1.0 Physical Site Description - Please enter comments below.

- Both proposal and presentation provide an excellent site description, qualitative and quantitative.
- This needs to provide specific details on the proposed site, not just the basin as a whole.
- As this section is developed consider discussing the connectivity among all the habitats mentioned in the ARB. Also, if you are going to state that the ARB represents all coastal systems in LA may want to mention (if they exist) beaches and developing mangrove (if they exist) stands.
- Giving more context would strengthen this section. The Atchafalaya is the last major distributary of the Mississippi River. Also adding in more information about what the Old River Control is, why it is, and how it's managed would help better set up elements that are covered in other parts of the proposal. In addition, introducing the other flood protection features, Morganza and West Atchafalaya Floodway. This system is not only unique and interesting because of the natural processes that are playing out, but because there are also very important, highly managed features that impact this basin. Also, the when and why Wax Lake Outlet was dredged.
- Good Description though focused mainly on the size of the watershed.
- Well written. Add one more sentence about the massive amount of open water habitat for fisheires.
- Atchafalaya. Excellently written.
- I would suggest emphasizing a bit more how your core areas represent both N-S and E-W gradients, and the connectivity among them related to the distribution of water, sediment, nutrients and organisms.
- Include (AR) after Atchafalaya River in first sentence. 1st para: Vermillion misspelled (Vermilion) as well as a few other places in doc. Include East, with West Cote Blanche Bay.
- this could be better explained to illustrate the importance of the site for the NERR location, better description of significant features
- No doubt that being an active river delta makes this basin a very strong suite for this being selected as a LaNERR but the challenge is one of scale and accessibility. You are going to have to be much more specific on how this thing would be laid out for specific activities such as research, education, tourism, etc. because this is such a large area. If you were to travel through the entire area from the Upper Atchafalaya Basin down to Red Fish Point it would be a little over 130 miles and encompasses some 1.5 million acres. I agree there are plenty of excellent locations for research but how is this all going to be logically/logistically laid out as a research reserve. Also, students will have to travel a good distance just to get to the access locations and logistically getting to the ecological sites could be a challenge. So practical concerns of access, logistics are where I see the challenges will be. Obviously, there is going to need to be several locations for facilities.

Q2 - Section 1.1 Core and Buffer Area Map - Please enter comments below.

- Maps are fine.
- It is hard to tell what specific state lands and waters are included in the individual core and buffer areas from these generalized polygons
- I would recommend that the team uses public lands as their core area and uses the remaining area of their rough polygons as buffer areas
- n/a
- Atchafalaya NWR and Bayou Teche NWR are not included in the core or buffer area. Bayou Tech seems to be omitted from the footprint, but Atchafalaya NWR is within your core area. It is unclear why that is, but if the intent is only to include state owned lands, then I suggest providing a more accurate core and buffer area illustrations in the map. State land shapefiles are available from state land office and other places.
- Adding in a layer with the locations of the state-owned lands in the region would be helpful.
- Good maps showing state owned lands and types of vegetation clearly.
- Thematic GIS map one is a little confusing and map two is great.
- No comment.
- I would suggest extending the buffer area in West Cote Blanche North to capture the delivery of sediment from the GIWW into the Jaws and West Cote Blanche. The connectivity of the core and buffer areas would allow a better understanding of system level loadings and responses of the natural and human ecosystem.
- better illustrate core and buffer areas to illustrate significance of area

Q3 - Section 1.2 Land Owner Names and Contact Information- Please enter comments below.

- Mostly State/Federal ownership
- LDWF is not the only owner of public lands. In the presentation federal wildlife refuges were also mentioned.
- Owned by the state and managed by LDWF, right? A distinction that may eventually need to be made. Are any of the lands public but unassigned to an agency to manage? Might be worth stating that no private lands are within the boundary of the NERR. Obviously, contact info will need to be included.
- Add USFWS to the list of landowners if including NRWs.
- Contact information is needed here
- if i heard correctly in the presentation, there was some discrepancy in ownership of public lands. It would behoove all groups to confirm public land ownership with the DOA's State Lands Office in Baton Rouge.
- States that the state of Louisiana is main landowner.
- Great!
- As mentioned in 4.1, map needs to only include LDWF managed lands, if that is the final decision.

Q4 - Section 1.3 Percentage of the Core Area Owned by the State - Please enter comments below.

- This is a major benefit for this site: nearly all lands proposed for core and buffer are state/federal.
- The CPRA Coastal Forest Conservation Initiative has conservation easements on several high-quality sites that might be considered as partner additions in the future Also consider adding a salt dome such as Cote Blanche.
- Will want to clearly delineate all the LDWF WMA's on the map to illustrate how they are both discrete and contiguous. For the final draft it will also be good to delineate the properties (NWR, TNC, Audubon, etc.) where future expansion is being considered – and note whether they are private or public lands and waters.
- Seems a little premature to talk about possibly expanding the NERR. There's already a large area covered by state lands to start with.
- 100%
- 100% and great explanation.
- Again, as mentioned in 4.1, need to make sure lands included are indeed 100% state owned. Indian Bayou is not a state WMA but COE public land. Louisiana State WMA is wrong, it's actually State Wildlife Refuge. It is bordered by Paul J. Rainey (Audubon) and included in maps but understand this may be understood. Could include Shell Keys NWR, just S of Marsh Island Refuge, if federal lands end up being included.
- good plan
- This site has a lot of good area to work with as far as state lands.

Q5 - Section 1.4 Contact of Candidate Site Landowners for the Core Area - Please enter comments below.

- Who? And their title.
- I am not aware that LDWF land managers in the Office of Wildlife have been communicated with in regard to this proposal.
- States that landowners have been contacted. i assume this means the state. not very specific.
- Great!

Q6 - Section 1.5 Contact of Candidate Site Land Owners for the Buffer Area - Please enter comments below.

- Who? And their title.
- States that buffer area owners have been contacted. again, not a lot of detail.
- Great!

Q7 - Section 2.0 Ecological Characteristics of the Site - Please enter comments below.

- This site possesses exceptionally diverse and important habitats that are the most representative of a deltaic system, of any of the three proposed sites.
- Could elaborate more on the geology and hydrology, including aquifers.
- I would not abbreviate Atchafalaya River as AR in the final draft. Parenthetically include the scientific names of the plants listed. Good section, and the full proposal will need much more description of these habitats. Also, beyond how one habitat type transitions to another, how are they connected (energy flow, delivery of freshwater sediment, range of plant and animal species) and how might that be a continuum of habitats? The opening sentence says the ARB represents nearly all major habitats and ecosystems in LA, but no upland habitats are mentioned in the narrative. So either that's wetland habitats or there should be examples of any upland types that are present.
- One thing to note here is that the Atchafalaya is a managed system with dredging, but the Wax is not, providing a contrast.
- an active delta system, but heavily manipulated by anthropogenic desires controlled by the strongest political reach at the time. My concern is how these constant manipulations may impact research projects attempting to discern impacts of one treatment when another treatment occurs too soon due to political influence.
- Good description provided.
- Another sentence about important of open water to fisheries. The tables show large area of open water habitat and that needs to be discussed and relevant to fresh to estuarine fisheries, including crawfish.
- I would suggest explaining a bit more about the importance of the sediment dynamics in this system. Also, the write up focused on the N-S gradient and didn't mention much of the ecological characteristics associated with Vermilion and West Cote Blanche.
- This section should include the beneficial use of dredge materials (BUDMAT) habitat on ADWMA ARD. Most of the emergent land on this delta is a result of COE BUDMAT in coordination w/ LDWF. For example, Big Island (approx. 1,500 acres was planted over 25 years ago w/ a variety of hardwoods, now mast producing. Area is as high as 10' in elevation in some parts and most dredged islands are built to a +4'. Also, HQ/Campground Island (200 acres) is high and planted in hardwoods, etc.
- No doubt that being an active river delta makes this basin a very strong suite for this being selected as a LaNERR but the challenge is one of scale and accessibility. You are going to have to be much more specific on how this thing would be laid out for specific activities such as research, education, tourism, etc. because this is such a large area. If you were to travel through the entire area from the Upper Atchafalaya Basin down to Red Fish Point it would be a little over 130 miles and encompasses some 1.5 million acres. I agree there are plenty of excellent locations for research but how is this all going to be logically/logistically laid out as a research reserve. Also, students will have to travel a good distance just to get to the access locations and logistically getting to the ecological sites could be a challenge. So practical concerns of access, logistics are where I see the challenges will be. Obviously, there is going to need to be several locations for facilities.

Q8 - Section 2.1 Map of Vegetation Types - Please enter comments below.

- Maps are fine
- Not sure if the classifications used fit appropriately.
- Map is good though does not include types in alluvial floodplain.
- Map looks good.
- A clear delineation of sites.

Q9 - Section 2.2 Habitat Types in the General Area of the Core and Buffer Zones - Please enter comments below.

- The full spectrum of deltaic habitat types are represented in the core and buffer zones, all in public lands. Again, the best representation of deltaic ecology and biogeography of any of the proposed sites.
- Which habitat types are not currently represented in the NERR system or this bioregion/subregion?
- Glad to see uplands mentioned in this section, but they are not reflected in either the Core or Buffer table. I recognize the phase II proposal is meant to be brief – having a table of habitats and species will be helpful in the final draft. Existing NERR Management Plans and/or Site Profiles may be good examples to draw from – not that exhaustively of course.
- Would it be helpful to encompass a bit of the accretionary mudflat habitat west of Freshwater Bayou? Distinct ecological area and probably within state water bottoms.
- Description is adequate but not a lot of detail.
- Consider discussing pelagic waters.
- more explanation here to illustrate significance of the site

Q10 - Section - 2.3 Significant Fauna and Flora in the General Area of the Core and Buffer Zones - Please enter comments below.

- A large number of threatened and important species occur in the Atch system, and the condition and likely future of the system is such that these species and their habitats are likely to remain safe.
- I would mention the importance of the area around Morgan City as Bald Eagle nesting habitat, the importance of the basin for migrating neotropical migrants, and the importance of the deltas as wintering waterfowl habitat.
- As mentioned in your narrative, Bryan's book is an excellent source for species lists and tables. Would include that list as an appendix (beyond only referencing it) in the final draft.
- Adding a table of the species of conservation concern would be helpful.
- migratory birds may be the most significant fauna to consider in this proposal, as the basin is a significant migration corridor for birds of North America
- Description provides a good bit of information on species.
- Well written and explain the fish here so up above the open water needs to be stressed.
- 17 plant and animal species of conservation concern seems low; need to coordinate w/ the latest LDWF State Wildlife Action Plan (2015) and or relative staff.
- more explanation here to illustrate significance of the site

Q11 - Section 3.1 Site Quality Narrative: Suitability for Research, Monitoring and Resource Protection- Please enter comment below.

- Of the three candidate sites, the Atch Basin has by far the best representation of a deltaic system, and also possesses extensive natural resources that should be preserved and can be preserved owing to the relatively unaltered state (compared to the rest of the coastline) of the various ecosystems. As pointed out in the presentation and proposal, NOAA guidance suggests that we should identify a system that adds new types of biogeographic systems to the existing NERR network, and the Atch deltaic system does a wonderful job of providing that added diversity. It is the only candidate site that contains a living, breathing, growing delta, which is a paramount consideration it seems.
- Should elaborate on specific programs and Universities, etc.
- This section is particularly strong. The brief examples of the types for research are monitoring that are or could be done are wholly consistent with what NERR's do. Also, the mention of both partnerships and comparative work among NERR's (there is already the System Wide Monitoring Program that is done by all NERR's and the examples you have will bolster that) is great. Expanding on those and maybe going deeper with an example or two will, I believe, enhance the final draft. More specific mention of CRMS sites would be useful as well.
- Add in more historical perspective of this system, such as management actions (closing other major distributaries of the Mississippi, ORCS, spillways and floodways, dredging Wax Lake Outlet) would help highlight just how important and unique this system is compared to so many others in both Louisiana and in the country. Additionally, because this basin is an integral part of the flood protection system, in also elevates the importance of understanding what is happening to the system.
- Very good narrative provided.
- Consider adding monitoring by SWAMP = system wide assessment and monitoring program led by CPRA
- Very well written, style and content. Midcontinent precipitation increases driven by climate change are going to present flood challenges to the Atchafalaya that can benefit other areas that will be subject to similar events. Q: Why would such a unique area be important to study when it is the only one in the country with regard to other estuaries?
- Again, I would suggest emphasizing research on the ecological gradients and ability to look at nearfield and far-field effects. Suggest that you also emphasize the LDWF facilities that can be used as research, logistics and training hubs
- The challenge will be working out where to access and facilities necessary to support these activities because the area is so big. But researchers have a lot more flexibility to travel and spend time accessing areas. Nevertheless, and organized NERR is going to have to have a defined plan.

Q12 - Section 3.2 Site Quality Narrative: Suitability for Education, Interpretation and Training - Please enter comment below.

- Although the Atch delta and basin do contain some of the most remote habitats of any site proposed for the LANERR, the basin is also close to and surrounded by a number of Louisiana's largest cities, and universities. This proximity makes it highly accessible in terms of travel time from many important locations. For example, a trip to the edge and back of the Wax Lake Delta from Baton Rouge can be accomplished in less than a full work day, and the time from Houma, Lafayette, or Morgan City is even shorter. The region probably has fewer established educational and interpretive centers than do the other two proposed sites. However, substantial funding is likely to be available for expanding such facilities, based on the existing budget proposal for expanding the NERR network, by the Biden Administration. In this sense, selecting the Atch Basin might do more to produce a net expansion of educational and interpretive facilities in the coastal zone, which would be to the benefit of the state.

- Can you estimate how many students would have access for a day trip? is it thousands? tens of thousands? What population centers are near -- urban areas, towns, cities? Helps give a sense of who it is serving locally. I like mention of nearness for researchers. But there does not seem to be existing facilities identified. Are there none to say? The proposals is clear that "the region lacks some of the infrastructure needed to support large groups within some of the more remote reaches." Mentioning what does exist might help balance what seems to be little interpretive or education space noted in the proposal. 5.0 does mention some of this. Mention 5.0 in 3.2 section may help.
- Should elaborate on specific existing programs, educational and housing facilities, access from population centers, cultural resources, etc.
- The coastal sustainability studio at UL Lafayette has been working with the boy scouts on a canoe trail through the basin. This can illustrate some of the educational opportunities. Right now this is the weakest part of the proposal
- This section is good. You did address this, but my feeling is that because of the remoteness of many areas of the ARB where studies and opportunities for education and training exist, you'll want to go into more detail on access and maybe even speculate a bit more on programmatic outcomes (consistency with state education criteria, in-service training, etc.). Ultimately NERRS are local and although there will be may opportunities to host students and others from afar, expanding on how education and training will be available to and benefit the most immediate communities is important.
- This section capture the importance of this area for flood management. While not in the basin itself, work in this basin could be used to develop materials for the River Center in Baton Rouge which would help reach a wider audience.
- This may be the weakness of this area, as it is more remote and limited to access for educational focused users.
- Very good description provided.
- well written
- Very well written - style and content.
- Include BUDMAT info as mentioned in 2.0.
- site accessibility would be challenging, more thought on how to get K-12 involved
- This will likely require a very specific location with easy access that is within a relatively reasonable distance to work. Going to need to work to get this figured out.

Q13 - Section 3.3 Site Quality Narrative: Compatibility with Coastal Management Issues - Please enter comment below.

- Atch Basin has huge value in terms of natural services provided by the extensive habits that are relatively secure from loss due to human interference. Overall, the river swamp and delta are already of national significance in terms of ecological value.
- Other Coastal management issues should be considered such as sediment management and beneficial use of dredged materials from the navigation channel.
- How realistic is the habitat provision for manatee and sea turtles? As a reviewer mentioning species that rarely use the area would turn me off. To me it seems mentioning the low land loss and actually land gain in the face of sea-level rise makes for a more compelling argument for using the Atchafalaya Basin
- Again, a good section that can be built upon with detail and examples in the final draft. Although folks from LA are reviewing these drafts, I would say what CWPPRA is (name and purpose) since it is not a program found in other states. Also, how does have a NERRA designated here support/compliment both the Governor's Climate Goals and the Coastal Master Plan? Examples would strengthen this section.
- Section mentions ARBRE. Stakeholder engagement--Corps, Port of Morgan City and Berwick, etc. is going to be critical for targeting research. The existence of this group is a great building block. It would be

useful in the final version if you could find a way to get the participants listed so reviewers can see who that brings onboard.

- Description of site quality and compatibility is very good and extra points for the work cited of the ARBRE.
- Mention that the ARB is being considered to be added to the coastal zone for future coastal master plans and that coordination with Atchafalaya NERR, CPRA and CMP can be expected.
- That high water threatens Morgan City is a coastal management issue given the controlled nature of the water way. I don't see mention of human coastal management issues. Should this one not be mentioned?
- Forgot to mention in last comments: in 3rd para. it states "The Atchafalaya and Wax Lake delta region.....containing more than 15,000 acres of freshwater and floating marsh habitats ....this is substantially low, probably more like 40,000 acres but should be discussed w/ LDWF managers.
- Add red knot and eastern black rail to T&E species of birds in area
- Probably a strong suite as it is defined in the criterial because this NERR location would have exactly what would be attractive for using this area. But again, how to make it work in such a large remote location will be the challenge. I think this needs to made in into a tangible proposal where people can visualize exactly how it would work. I don't envy the challenge but I think some discreet ideas can move this forward.

Q14 - Section 4.0 – Maps and Tables - Please enter comment below.

- Good maps and tables.
- should provide map of future habitats as well as current
- In both the narrative of this phase II proposal and the presentation the team made clear the maps would be refined. Having the LDWF lands clearly delineated and any waters of the state to be included in the boundary of the NERR will help visually clarify much of the previous explanation and give reviewers a more solid idea of the ecological and governance connectivity. Also, and again, uplands are mentioned in the narrative as being represented in the ARB (maybe not the NERR boundary), but do not show in the tables. In a separate map maybe include lands that may eventually be included within the boundary like the TNC and Audubon properties, etc. That will help visualize the potential facilities narrative.
- Adding in location of state lands as a layer in core and buffer map would be helpful. Maybe also add in an inset map marking the location of ORCS, Morganza, West Atchafalaya. Table for species of concern
- The maps and table are good. Would have liked to have seen a little more detail in the areas covered by the maps.
- Consider removing "Alluvial" from the tables as those columns are blank and confusing.
- agree with "notes on draft maps", show better connection to communities for engagement

Q15 - Section 5.0 – Optional Information/ Appendix

- Add a bit of detail about university research facilities nearby
- Good options. Since most of the facilities mentioned are not within the proposed boundary (not uncommon in NERR's) the map mentioned above and additional narrative describing possible activities on these sites and access to the NERR itself will be useful. Also, all NERR's have a state partner. Since only lands belonging to LDWF are included in the initial boundary some informed discussion of LDWF's willingness to be the state partner (including providing/reallocating staff, ability and willingness to meet the 30% annual match required by NOAA, etc.) would benefit the final draft. I recognize that the decision of state managing partner will be made at a higher level/different point in the process, but having some foundation for those discussions would, in my view, be beneficial.

- I was left wondering about a few things about the proposal. Why such a large core area in the interior basin if the research focus is in the estuary? I don't know if that's the correct way to think about a NERR, but my initial thought was that the leveed portion of the floodway system is highly regulated by the USACE and there is no mention of how research in the NERR would be limited or influenced by that management. It may be best to address that issue in the proposal prior to the final review. It may be that the nature and location of research is not greatly interrupted or altered by USACE management actions, but the current configuration of the core and buffer areas does leave that in question, at least that was an answer I was looking for in my initial read.
- Literature looks great.

Q16 - Additional Comments

- My understanding is that we are seeking to designate a NERR that adds new ecological diversity to the NERR network, in the form of a river delta. Given that, this proposal and presentation make a compelling case that this is without doubt the best location for our LANERR. While there will be needs for developing new infrastructure for education, research, and interpretation, those needs are manageable, and the resulting investments will be greatly beneficial to the state.
- overall a proposal with good details that explained the benefits of selecting this site
- While the thought of having actively building deltas in the heart of a NERR is exciting, the practicality of this area meeting the educational component of a NERR may be the most limited.
- Well done!
- Before I undertook this formal review, I exchanged a communication with Robert about my concern that another severe storm could destroy the infrastructure of the selected region, thus rendering Louisiana's NERR incapable of functioning. While I appreciate through that communication that funding needs to be obtained one area at a time, it may be possible to broach this concern in the first recommendation and to suggest ways to assure that the other two regions are "supported" in whatever ways possible in case such a catastrophe happens. Given that the program has posed climate change challenges to Louisiana's application, such a recognition of future impacts may be necessary in order to have Louisiana's application respond to climate change challenges.
- May think of other comments but overall a good draft proposal.
- this area has been significantly impacted by humans being part of a floodway, the use of Old River, and the levee system - I think it would be appropriate to mention this as any changes to that system could have impacts to the NERR
- The strong suites for this area are the low land loss, actively accreting riverine delta complex. The difficulties are going to be how to make it work. Going to have to focus efforts on how to make this work in terms of logistics and access.

LaNERR Phase II Proposal Review Feedback: ***Barataria***
August 13, 2021

Q1 - Section 1.0 Physical Site Description - Please enter comments below.

- The site description in the proposal is mostly facts and figures. The presentation provided much more insight into the extent and value of site charateristics.
- The list of property sites was helpful and seemed to summarize 1.1 and 1.2 nicely. Please add an introductory summary narrative.
- This section is missing
- I'm sure this is planned, but there should be some narrative here detailing each of the sites in the final draft of this proposal.
- Add more detail
- In the physical site description should include the geologic history the area, the distribution of habitat types in the basin, the 2010 oil spill, and the all of the restoration efforts in the basin.
- Description is adequate.
- Barataria.There is no physical description of the site. Before reading the requirements when I was just reading for content I felt a lack of appreciation of the site by virtue of no textual description.
- Remove Lake from Salvador WMA
- Text regarding physical description would be helpful, explanation of significance of selection of core area and address lack of geographic connectivity, discussion regarding selection of HQ
- Probably could have the physical description more in a narrative form. There seems to be plenty of public lands but seems somewhat limited on State-owned lands. Will need to make a strong case for how to tie all of these locations together. From Lake Salvador to Grand Isle is quite an expansive area and if these are broken up by miles is going to make it difficult to access. Spend some time working this out.

Q2 - Section 1.1 Core and Buffer Area Map - Please enter comments below.

- Good maps. It looks like extensive lands in and around the core and buffer areas are privately owned, which is not ideal.
- I think it is a mistake to follow the weeksbay example. There are other examples of NERs that have separate core areas. My suggestion would be to use all public lands in the basin as core areas and only select buffer areas outside of this for special regions of interest like your buffer 4 area or areas owned by NGOs
- Why not include the area in the Davis Pond outfall? It is part of the Salvador WMA and would be great place to invest in scientific investigation to study that system as well as the Mid-Barataria area.
- I was surprised not to see a core area associated with the buffer area around the headland/barrier shoreline complex. By only having a core area around Lake Salvador, it suggests that the headland is not an integral feature in understanding the dynamics of this ecosystem.
- Maps clearly show core and buffer areas and are very helpful.
- Not clear why only Lake Salvador (not the WMA) is the only part of core area?
- Looks fine

Q3 - Section 1.2 Landowner Names and Contact Information- Please enter comments below.

- Adequate data provided
- Beyond the name and location of the site, the point(s) of contact would be helpful here as well.
- Please refer to DOA's State Lands Office for public land ownership verification.
- This information is provided and meets the requirement.
- Looks great!
- Good information.

Q4 - Section 1.3 Percentage of the Core Area Owned by the State - Please enter comments below.

- The core area appears to be largely state owned. Buffer areas have a greater extent of private ownership.
- I would get this as close to 100% as possible but include federal lands as well.
- 100%.
- 100%, great info
- Limited to mostly the upper basin.

Q5 - Section 1.4 Contact of Candidate Site Landowners for the Core Area - Please enter comments below.

- Adequate data
- Core area does not include any land, only water. This is a weakness of the proposal.
- As above, name of point(s) of contact as well as sites, ownership, management, etc.
- Not aware of appropriate contact by group with public land managers
- Not evident from the proposal that this contact has occurred.
- Are in process of contacting, which is great.
- I assume that many more of the contacts have been made in the interim of the report and this evaluation

Q6 - Section 1.5 Contact of Candidate Site Land Owners for the Buffer Area - Please enter comments below.

- Adequate data
- As above, name of point(s) of contact as well as sites, ownership, management, etc.
- Not evident that this contact has occurred.
- Great info.
- I assume that many more of the contacts have been made in the interim of the report and this evaluation

Q7 - Section 2.0 Ecological Characteristics of the Site - Please enter comments below.

- The ecological diversity of the proposed site is extensive, impressive, and undoubtedly valuable. There is no doubt that the region has value for conservation. That said, many of the habitats are intensely altered and under threat from various types of forces including sea level rise and development. All of this being said, the system does not have an active river delta, and the likely development of the Middle Barataria Diversion does not alter that fact. My understanding is that NOAA is looking for relatively unaltered ecosystems, and the entire basin is one great big example of intense anthropogenic alteration, beginning with the cutoff of Bayou LaFourche since well before the cutoff of Bayou LaFourche from the MR in 1904.
- No description is provided on the ecological characteristics (including geology, hydrology, aquifers, etc.). Just a map
- This needs to be more than a series of lists. A general description of the basin should precede the specifics in subsequent sections. This is probably the most studied estuary in Louisiana. Some history of research in the area would illustrate that.
- Some introductory narrative will be crucial here in the final draft.
- A little more of a narrative description of the ecology may help to provide reviewers with better insight to the possible research applications for the site.
- More detailed description of the ecological characteristics would be helpful. The areas identified cover a wide variety of habitat types, this is an area that has experience a lot of land loss and shift due to storm events, rising sea levels, and oil spills.
- I suggest additional emphasis on the geologic diversity and features within the system that provide it's uniqueness relative to other NERRs (barrier headland, faults, deep organics) and all of which need to be better understood relative to sustainability and resilience of the Barataria System.
- with the proposed diversion of the MR into this proposed NERR, a focus on prior site conditions and post diversion changes could be extremely beneficial to the State; if state and federal managers of the public lands are intimately involved with the research.
- Good information is provided on this though not expansive.
- This area has a good salinity gradient stretching from Davis Pond Diversion through to Grand Isle. This should be emphasized as an area that offers all aspects of the NERR objective of a location that has primarily active deltaic features spanning through the entire gradient to salt marsh. Probably need to also play upon the future Mid Barataria Diversion as one of the largest restoration projects in history and a great opportunity for research and education on the front end.

Q8 - Section 2.1 Map of Vegetation Types - Please enter comments below.

- Good maps.
- Would be helpful to show the map of habitats in the future
- Map is descriptive and meets requirement.
- Not clear.
- looks good.

Q9 - Section 2.2 Habitat Types in the General Area of the Core and Buffer Zones - Please enter comments below.

- The core zones do seem to contain key habitat types for the region, except for an active delta. The core areas are discontinuous and surrounded by what seems to be extensive private land. I am not sure how much this matters, but it does not seem ideal.
- Should discuss the habitats in each core and buffer area and which are unique in the NERR system bioregion or subregion.
- Good, and seemingly complete list of habitat types. Will eventually need not only descriptors of these habitat types, but also of how they relate to one another in space and ecologically (will support what the map illustrates and lend credence to the uniqueness of the site and how that supports it being designated as a NERR).
- Adequate information is included.
- All great habitats and good list
- Core area is depicted in map as primarily Lake Salvador, and additional 10 acres and there is mention under map of other areas not yet delineated, so difficult to comment as of now.
- explanation of importance of the site
- The core area is mostly fresh marsh but has some areas identified throughout that span the entire salinity gradient.

Q10 - Section - 2.3 Significant Fauna and Flora in the General Area of the Core and Buffer Zones - Please enter comments below.

- The facts and figures in the proposal indicate a number of threatened species.
- Need more information on how the site provides significant habitat/resources for the listed species. Look at the list of suggestions in the criterion for additional possible items to include. Significant nesting or rookery sites, for example.
- Don't mention all the threatened and endangered species in Louisiana. Show which species have significant use of the area. The reintroduction of Brown Pelican in the basin is a great example of effective wildlife management.
- Again, good species lists, but would greatly benefit from a narrative to their significance to the sites and relationships to the habitats found within the boundary. That’s foundational for research, monitoring, education and training vision.
- Adequate information is included.

- Great list of flora, fauna and endangered/threatened species

- No comment.

- Should include more info. like species and habitats of concern from LDWF 2015 State Wildlife Action Plan (and 2019 addendum).

Q11 - Section 3.1 Site Quality Narrative: Suitability for Research, Monitoring and Resource Protection- Please enter comment below.

- The potential for research is extensive, building on many decades of historical research. Much of this research must be focused on engineering and anthropogenic aspects of the system, owing to the degree of alteration. That is important however, because the only way to save the coast is to devise appropriate engineering solutions, not let everything go back to nature.
- mention a bit more detail how much this area has been studied in past for long history of research to make the case stronger
- More details on other research, monitoring and resource protection beyond the Mid-Barataria Diversion would be desirable. The project has not been approved for construction (and cannot be assured), and reliance solely on that project for research opportunities is unnecessarily limiting. There are many other research topics which should be described. Mention of research facilities (BR, Thibodaux, NO, etc) and types of research and monitoring should be included.
- Very good connection to the diversions. But much of the science and studies described will likely happen whether or not a NERR is designated in this location. Detailing he research vision for the reserve and how it is complimentary to, and/or supports the Coastal Master Plan and NOAA's interests in restoring deltaic systems will really beef up this section. Also, what other unaddressed, applied science and monitoring questions exist for this area – i.e. what are the envisioned role of a NERR here?
- It may be beneficial to include a broader array of the specific type of research opportunities that might be unique to this site.
- In addition to the Mid-Barataria Diversion, there's been a lot of investment in other types of restoration in this basin, including marsh creation, ridge restoration, freshwater diversions, barrier islands. The diversity of habitats along with the concentrated restoration efforts in this area make this basin a strong site candidate. CRMS and USGS sites in the region, NRDA-related studies, and other studies in the basin have provided some historical context and background conditions that future research monitoring can build off of to understand changes in the system, and restoration project success.
- I would suggest being a bit more specific on the robust monitoring, modeling, and long-term research studies (such as Turners transect) that exist in the Basin (emphasize the suitability of existing baseline data). Suggest using monitoring location graphics out of the Monitoring and Adaptive Management Plan for the Mid Barataria Sediment Diversion project.

- as noted in previous comment, tremendous potential.

- There is some good information but, again, the description is limited.

- Consider to add BTNEP program? Add SWAMP = system wide assessment and monitoring program led by CPRA
- B Initial sentences should go into first part of proposal description. What will be the suitability for research, monitoring and resource protection before the diversion has an effect given the expectations that positive impacts will take so long?

- Seems past (and maybe near future) restoration projects should be mentioned here.

- this is good, may want to emphasize this in other sections as well

- This location could present a wealth of research opportunity and there is already much monitoring and resource protection going on. Continue to highlight that enormous amount of information gathering already in place.

Q12 - Section 3.2 Site Quality Narrative: Suitability for Education, Interpretation and Training - Please enter comment below.

- Educational opportunities are extensive using the existing facilities and preserves within the region. The proximity to New Orleans is a plus, in terms of public exposure and student educational opportunities.
- when you mention something "under development" be sure to note reader can learn more in 5.0 section. It left me with questions about Jefferson Parish Louisiana Wetland Education Center and when that might be an actual site because currently, it is only being developed. Give an estimate of possible K-12 students who might be able to experience a one-day field trip. thousands? Tens of thousands? What about mentioning nearby urban or city areas to get a sense access by nearby populations. What about researchers?
- Should incorporate more information on schools, interpretive programs, facilities (and how they would access the site) that would use the site (consider the Greater Baton Rouge, Houma, and NO areas)
- This is one of the best sections of the report
- Good list of potential partners and what they do in the area. But what is envisioned for the NERR? What types of education and training opportunities would a NERR bring to this area that are not covered by these entities. NERR's almost always have partners, but also offer unique education and training events. Who would come to the NERR, and who would NERR personnel reach out to? K-12? Parish and municipal environmental and permitting staff? Adjacent universities? Etc.
- Point out that this basin is in close proximity to a large population center which provides a lot of opportunities and tourism-based education. While not in the basin, things learned in this basin could be incorporated in the River Studies Center in Baton Rouge which would expend the research of education.
- Again, another fairly limited access area for Educational purposes.
- There are some examples of opportunities listed. Would like to have seen more information about each.
- Looks great.
- mention of historical CRMS data, other datasets that are of significance
- Access is always a challenge to coastal areas in Louisiana. This area should be someone accessible to large population areas but going to need to layout a definitive plan on how exactly this can all work. I would think that a vision for easy access by at least high school students would need to be developed. The more accessible to the general public, the more attractive this location would be.

Q13 - Section 3.3 Site Quality Narrative: Compatibility with Coastal Management Issues - Please enter comment below.

- Research and management in the Barataria Basin are critical to the future of south Louisiana. This basin guards the western side of the Mississippi River and the southern approaches to New Orleans. However, it is not clear to me that these observations make it appropriate for a NERR, owing to the lack of an active river delta, and the deeply altered nature of the system.
- mention a bit more about studies, baseline data available already.
- Additional Coastal Management issues beyond the Mid-Barataria diversion should be incorporated. Should describe the types of coastal management issues that the diversion would create/address should be described.

- Again, a good list of coastal management issues. But how is a NERR compatible with them? How do a NERR's science, education and stewardship programs engage with and inform these efforts in a way that is collaborative, integrated, and distinct to the operation and function of a Reserve program?
- While yes, the Mid-Barataria Diversion would significantly change existing and future land and water use, other restoration efforts, including the Davis Pond Diversion should be noted. Additionally, pointing out the trajectory of expected land loss in this basin should be added (see Mid-Barataria draft EIS).
- I would suggest emphasizing how research in this basin is best positioned to address coastal resiliency and adaptation from both a natural resource and social science perspective and management/stakeholder expectations over short and long-timeperiods.
- the proposed diversion itself seems to have developed polarizing camps on the benefits that may accrue.
- Information is good but not expansive or detailed.
- Good explanations.
- Could be stronger with specific anticipated management issues rather than generic?
- mention of sea level rise, erosion, subsidence, storm impacts, etc.
- There is a lot of potential strength for this location relative to Coastal Management, especially if the diversion is put in place. There are plenty of coastal restoration and coastal resilience work done and being done in this basin. One negative is the rates of land loss but I think this can be overcome with the present and future work in the area.

Q14 - Section 4.0 – Maps and Tables - Please enter comment below.

- fine
- Are all state waters included in the overall NERR boundary delineated on Map 4.1? Good job illustrating the discreet managed areas, but the narrative could better reflect them and how they will operationally function as a NERR beyond their current management mandates and objectives.
- These pieces of the proposal are good and easy to understand.
- Map one and two are clear and easy to understand.
- may want to include a general map of the proposed diversion location since there is a connection to the site

Q15 - Section 5.0 – Optional Information/ Appendix

- 5.1 facilities section: When will future plans for a water taxi or ferry be completed?
- More facilities in the area should be included.
- These existing and planned facilities and activities seem like they'd mesh nicely with a NERR program. What is the extent of the discussions in this regard? This proposal is a good start, and there remains a lot to flesh out. A theme is how is the designation of NERR site in Barataria both unique and supportive of existing programs in the area – like BTNEP for instance? What is the overall vision of a NERR here beyond what existing agencies are already doing? Also, all NERR's have a state partner. Since mostly state lands are included in the initial boundary some informed discussion with the agencies charged with managing those lands on the willingness to be the state partner (including providing/reallocating staff, ability and willingness to meet the 30% annual match required by NOAA, etc.) would benefit the final draft. I recognize that the decision of state managing partner will be made at a higher level/different point in the designation process, but having some foundation for those discussions would, in my view, be beneficial.

- Listing of facilities is provided and assists in bolstering the description of the area and opportunities to leverage.
- Great list of other facilities. More literature should be cite, maybe 5-7 more papers that show the diversity of education, monitoring and research in the area. Consider adding the 2017 CMP that describes the sediment diversion.
- No comment.

Q16 - Additional Comments

- The presentation makes a relatively compelling case for this site. The written proposal does not. This is an important region with important and substantial ecological variability, and important species and habitats. However, from my understanding of NOAA criteria, it seems to be too altered and too lacking in active, natural, progradational deltaic processes to be considered a deltaic NERR candidate site.
- Needs a title page with proposal name, team members. No more than 1 or 2 pages. Also, could use a bit more "style" througout with section titles in bold and perhaps using diffent font sizes. To help reader with transitions.
- Overall, I believe the proposal would be much better if included some lands in its proposed core area, not just relying on Lake Salvador. The significance/unique qualities of Lake Salvador for the NERR system have not been demonstrated without incorporation of at least some of the buffer areas, such as the WMAs and Jean Lafitte National Historic Park, which provide a stronger balance of habitats, especially floating marsh, intertidal and upland. The overall proposal needs more detail in most sections to be competitive.
- The outline is good. but there needs to be a lot more meat on these bones
- In general, I think a little more detail would help in separating this site from the other sites.
- The proposal is a little lean on some information right now, but the presentation that was given made a compelling case for this basin.
- I would suggest some discussions pre final submission with BTNEP to work out a methodology for partnering (and writeup in final docs) for joint goals and additive value. This can be a bonus since its the only one of the three finalists that is also a NEP area but it needs to be spelled out what the valued added would be IMO.
- Perhaps provide more history and focus on the development of this basin and how a NERR can further our scientific understanding of the processes occurring in this highly impacted environment, allowing a more realistic view of consequences associated with action or no action today.
- Great job!
- Before I undertook this formal review, I exchanged a communication with Robert about my concern that another severe storm could destroy the infrastructure of the selected region, thus rendering Louisiana’s NERR incapable of functioning. While I appreciate through that communication that funding needs to be obtained one area at a time, it may be possible to broach this concern in the first recommendation and to suggest ways to assure that the other two regions are “supported” in whatever ways possible in case such a catastrophe happens. Given that the program has posed climate change challenges to Louisiana’s application, such a recognition of future impacts may be necessary in order to have Louisiana’s application respond to climate change challenges.
- overall seems like a good start to the proposal, include more about why this site is significant and add some "meat to the bones" of the document for those unfamiliar with the landscape
- The project has enormous advantages for research but lacks somewhat in access to a broader audience. It is the nature of coastal Louisiana but make a strong case that this can be overcome.

LaNERR Phase II Proposal Review Feedback: ***Pontchartrain***
August 13, 2021

Q1 - Section 1.0 Physical Site Description - Please enter comments below.

- The physical description in the proposal and presentation are quite nice.
- Many potential areas seem to be left out, even if only as buffer. Not clear if waterways (should include list) and lakes are core or buffer. For example, area 2 could include Fontainebleau State Park, Fairview Riverside State Park, TNC and other conservation lands. What about South shore of lake P? Could include other lands in buffer area such as Wetland Watchers Park, Bonnet Carre Spillway. Area 3 is unclear; descriptions do not match map. Why is B. Sauvage NWR not included? What about Pearl R?
- One of the great advantages in the Pontchartrain basin are the sharp environmental gradients that are ideal for addressing climate change/sea-level rise questions. This should be more emphasized.
- I like that the sites are broken up into subareas and include a brief description. I believe it would be useful to address the relationship and connectivity among these sites as well in the final proposal. It is not always clear who the owner/manager agency is when it is not the state, so please clarify with additional narrative and/or table. Existing tables in Section 4 are great, but clarifying who the “non-state) entities are would be useful. Also, the numbering system useful in the Site Criteria are more or less followed in this and the next section, but are not clearly used. That would be helpful to have for the evaluation of the final proposal.
- A brief geologic history of the region would be helpful to add here. While this proposal is well written, the format of this proposal doesn't outline the individual sections as clearly as others making it a little hard to follow and make sure the criteria is all being adequately addressed. There also needs to be more emphasis on what would make this site unique compared to other NERRs. Yes, there are a variety of environments and a lot of work has been done in this region, but the
- I am perplexed with the broad reach of this NERR site, yet it excludes another major river system impacting the bottom end of the area; the Pearl River.
- Very good overall description of the NERR proposed area.
- Good descriptions.
- Pontchartrain.. Does not include history of how the area was formed. Because it is a bay rather than a distributary, the formation should be included and linked to any qualities that make it different from a distributary, no?
- I know this is not part of the site criteria but would be good to have entire Team listed as other proposals did. Well done; especially like the breakdown of core vs buffer in acres and %. Should be consistent in Areas like Area #2 w/ mention of Big Branch NWR. Area #1 should list Maurepas, Manchac and Joyce WMAs. Area #3 Bayou Sauvage NWR, Area #4 Biloxi Marsh WMA, Area#5 Breton NWR.
- GOOD!
- Good site description. Organized and to the point. Provides a very good general idea of proposed area with the 5 subareas consistently described.

Q2 - Section 1.1 Core and Buffer Area Map - Please enter comments below.

- Good maps.
- Maps need work. They do not clearly delineate boundaries, especially of buffer lands - they appear as line around core lands. How are waters delineated, especially south of NO. Do not seem to match well with text in section 1.0. Example - Orleans LB

- The different habitats captured in the buffer areas are varied and interesting. There are also restoration efforts in many of these location which would be a compelling argument for this area being selected as a NERR.
- Perhaps the team, like entities like LPBF/PC, should consider capturing part of upper Breton Sound as part of the core/buffer area. This would allow the impacts of planned Mid-Breton diversion to be within the key research areas. Obviously will have critical impact that will also extend into the presently defined core/buffer area
- Again, I believe the inclusion of Bogue Chitto NWR and Pearl River WMA is appropriate for this NERR.
- Good maps. Clear and provide adequate information.
- Good descriptions.
- Looks good.

Q3 - Section 1.2 Landowner Names and Contact Information- Please enter comments below.

- No/few private landowners are listed. Biloxi Marsh Lands corporation is a big one. I suppose that these landowners have all been contacted.
- This is incomplete.
- Very nice layout of the property name, managing entity and specific point of contact.
- All information is provided. Very Good.
- Yes, great info
- A start

Q4 - Section 1.3 Percentage of the Core Area Owned by the State - Please enter comments below.

- This seems to vary from mostly private to mostly state owned, which might create complications.
- Unclear if lakes and other waterways are included in core or buffer.
- I would provide information on how much area is federal land.
- As with other proposals, I recommend all groups ascertain public land ownership with DOA's State Lands Office in Baton Rouge.
- Except of Area #1, the majority of the total area is not state owned.
- Yes, great info
- Most of the state-owned land is in the Area #1 core habitat but a large portion of the other core areas are federally owned. I think this could work because there would most certainly be full cooperation and access to those area by the federal partners.

Q5 - Section 1.4 Contact of Candidate Site Landowners for the Core Area - Please enter comments below.

- The list is not complete, but it is probably a long list that is shortened here.
- incomplete - landowners of Orleans land bridge not included
- Yes.
- Adding the sub-section numbers would help us follow along the format of the proposal for section 2
- Given the large percentages of the core and buffer that are not owned by the state, the number of contacts listed seems very limited.
- The cooperation in the area according to the presentation appears to be strong among numerous landowners and potential partners.

Q6 - Section 1.5 Contact of Candidate Site Landowners for the Buffer Area - Please enter comments below.

- incomplete
- Yes.
- Adding the sub-section numbers would help us follow along the format of the proposal for section 2
- See 1.4
- Some of the areas may lack cooperation due to private land use and desire to restrict access. But contacting private property owners and requesting specific use generally works out on a limited basis.

Q7 - Section 2.0 Ecological Characteristics of the Site - Please enter comments below.

- The ecological variability of the site is extensive and includes many important habitats that are characteristic of coastal riverine, wetland, and estuarine settings. The site does not include an actively prograding river delta, which seems to be an important criterion, considering that NOAA seems to want to add a deltaic system.
- To the compilers of these notes -General format of proposal does not correspond with the following Section numbers (2.1-2.3) and this also does not match with criteria numbering. Tried to match as best I could. Geological description should also discuss hydrology, including aquifers and surface. Should also consider predicted future of landscape (with Master Plan) as well as current in determining boundaries, especially of core areas.
- Good start to build from for the final proposal. Would suggest including scientific names too when listing plant and animal species. As mentioned above, and maybe this is a better place to include, some description of how these habitats relate to one another/are connected would be useful and demonstrating the workings and ecological gradient of the proposed site from uplands to the Gulf. Also, mentioning any ecological, recreational, and/or commercial significance of species will help support the value of a NERR in this location.
- the Gulf Coastal Plain landscape around this 'basin' has tremendous impact on health of this ecosystem, as did the MRGO prior to its closure. The human population surrounding this are is most likely the highest of any of the LaNERR proposals, thus potentially most impactful in several ways.
- Good description

- Subtidal subtypes is a great point
- Good but should add mention of species and habitats of concern (LDWF) State Wildlife Action Plan 2015 (w/ 2019 addendum)
- The proposed area is very diverse and captures most of the objectives of the LaNERR in that there is a full range of salinity gradient throughout and all habitats are represented. The one thing lacking is there is relatively little actively accreting deltaic wetland areas. I think with the planned Mauripas Diversion, this could be remedied but it is going to be hard to make a case to compare to the Atchafalaya Delta. The strong suites are that there is or will be some actively accreting habitat and the salinity gradient ranges from fresh to fully marine waters. The other strong point is that this area includes the only true seagrass habitat in the state of Louisiana on the Chandeleur Islands.

Q8 - Section 2.1 Map of Vegetation Types - Please enter comments below.

- Good maps.
- Should also show map of future habitats and shifts/migration. Would be good to include maps of each core area with more detail on each, and potentially the corresponding buffer areas associated with each unless all connected to each other. All that was delineated was the core areas
- Good map.
- Yes, it shows the veg types in Fig 2
- Not clear delineation of sites.
- fine

Q9 - Section 2.2 Habitat Types in the General Area of the Core and Buffer Zones - Please enter comments below.

- As noted above, the habitat types are largely typical of coastal riverine estuaries, and do not include an actively prograding river delta. Construction of the MIddle Breton Diversion would not really alter this condition.
- This does not seem to have been covered. FYI - The Crusel tract of the Maurepas Swamp WMA includes unique spruce pine/hardwoods on Indian mounds. Unclear how habitats of buffer zones are determined/calculated as map only shows core, apparently. How are waters incorporated?
- Very good descriptive information provided on
- Adding the sub-section numbers would help us follow along the format of the proposal for section 2
- Differentiate between core and buffer areas.

Q10 - Section - 2.3 Significant Fauna and Flora in the General Area of the Core and Buffer Zones - Please enter comments below.

- A range of important flora and fauna are found here, including threatened species.
- Needs more info to say what is important in each area and how each area provides something special. Should mention oyster seed grounds, Audubon classification of Maurepas Swamp as Important Bird Habitat, etc.

- LDWF Wildlife Diversity Program can provide most up to date info on this component, as well as info on identified threats and potential actions necessary for abatement.
- Good.
- Well described. Adding the sub-section numbers would help us follow along the format of the proposal for section 2.
- See comments above, also should be mention of importance of Breton NWR for colonial seabird, wading bird and pelican nesting colonies. USFWS has info as well as LDWF/other, latest aerial survey data.
- Differentiate between core and buffer areas.

Q11 - Section 3.1 Site Quality Narrative: Suitability for Research, Monitoring and Resource Protection- Please enter comment below.

- This site has an extensive record of research, and research will continue because of the importance of this region to the survival of New Orleans and southeastern Louisiana in general. However, this is not a suitable site for the study of active coastal deltaic processes.
- Mention cultural resources such as Native American mounds, Forts, interpretive museums, etc. Need to include Greater Baton Rouge facilities and populations.
- Nice job of summarizing research and monitoring efforts that have taken, or are taking place within the proposed bounds of the NERR. What applied science questions/needs are there that it is envisioned that a NERR would address? How would the science and monitoring done by the NERR be unique, support the efforts mentioned, and be complimentary to what other programs are already doing? i.e. Being able to describe the value added imagined by designating a NERR here will help the proposal.
- I would suggest mentioning the State's commitment to long-term monitoring in the Basin under the CRMS (2006-2039)
- Impacts from the human population surrounding this NERR proposed site provide tremendous opportunity for current research to address improvements for the health maintenance of the system. sewerage treatment alone is a big factor of impact to this area that needs more scrutiny to understand the benefits and detriments of existing disposal systems, and to explore different mechanisms for improving and lessening impacts to this ecosystem.
- Very good and detailed description of the history and present status of research in this area.
- Great history of research and monitoring activity. Consider adding SWAMP program - system wide assessment and monitoring program by CPRA
- Suggest adding fish data of the Chandeleurs 1970s (“Fishes of the Chandeleur Islands,” A. Laska, PhD 1973, Tulane) to show even more expanse of research.
- Well done.
- There is plenty of ongoing research, monitoring and resource protection already going on in the basin. There is significant infrastructure existing in all of the state and federal resources established throughout the basin. I think this area has somewhat an advantage in that there is much more readily accessible infrastructure in place and there is quite a bit of potentially converted infrastructure available to start a NERR. Also, these locations are relatively close to a very large population of people. Universities and other educational institutions can access a lot of the entry points to these habitats fairly easily. The only core area of limited accessibility is the Chandeleur Islands.

Q12 - Section 3.2 Site Quality Narrative: Suitability for Education, Interpretation and Training - Please enter comment below.

- This is a wonderful setting for education and outreach, owing to the accessibility and large population centers and existence of ongoing education programs. However, these programs cannot include demonstration projects for active river deltas, because such systems to not really exist in the Site.
- Similar to 3.1. Need to include GBR populations and resources. Cultural resources.
- This section is very well developed and does a nice job of imagining how existing institutions and programs could be rolled into the NERR's education and training efforts. In the final proposal more detail on what those programs are envisioned to be is recommended. Because there are so many education and training opportunities in the Pontchartrain region what are some of those "opportunities for expansion to serve the public even better"? How is the NERR complimentary to existing programs and not redundant?
- I believe this site has the best potential to meet this component of a NERR, as it is much more accessible and has current suitable infrastructure to meet these important attributes of a successful NERR. Collaboration with more of these focused players across this landscape may be necessary.
- Really good narrative. A lot of strong already existing opportunities for education and training, etc. Strong point for this proposal.
- Identified at least 22 facilities, which is a great point. What about ecotourism guides out of NOLA?
- Very impressive opportunities and well written.
- Well done.
- Of the three LaNERR areas proposed, this is by far the most advantageous area for education and training opportunities by just simply the location to a large metropolitan area. There is existing modal infrastructure to access almost any area by a relatively short drive. The other advantage is that because of the proximity to a large population, the site is more likely to be used by more people.

Q13 - Section 3.3 Site Quality Narrative: Compatibility with Coastal Management Issues - Please enter comment below.

- This is an important region in terms of coastal management issues. In that sense, excluding the issue of active modern deltaic processes, this is important for coastal management.
- Need to look at full list of example CM issues and others of the site, not just restoration projects. There are many CM issues relevant to this area, especially those dealing with land use of buffer (describe)
- Good description of what these public lands currently are and the activities they support. So how does having them included in the boundary of a NERR impact their ability to address resource management issues? What do the research, stewardship, outreach and training opportunities inherent in a NERR program do to aid these public lands in resource management issues like adapting to climate change, managing fishery stocks, conserving threatened and endangered species, adjusting for diversions, improving the visitation experience of the public, etc.?
- Maurepas/Manchac - yes on Maurepas Diversion. There are also some future planned diversions that could come online, e.g., Union, Manchac that are potentially being examined for not only restoration, but as additional flood management outlets. Chandeleur - there may also be seagrass restoration efforts to restore areas damaged by the oil spill.
- I would suggest emphasizing that your gradient of core/buffer sites all have existing or planned restoration that TOGETHER will change the larger system dynamics of the basin and research conducted will be able to address changes in resilience trajectories over time.
- Development of the West Lake Pontchartrain levee protection system will have impacts to the western end of this proposed NERR; an opportunity for further research and understanding of anthropogenic manipulations to the landscape.
- Good narrative with specific projects by area within the NERR.
- All great points.

- Answer to 3.3 is at the end of each area. Perhaps more of the answer should be directed to the management issues and less to the flora and fauna of the areasArea 5. The impact of storms on the islands and their surrounding submersed sand gives an opportunity to understand deterioration of barrier islands benefitting restoration.
- Should list or mention prior and planned coastal restoration work.
- Like the Barataria Basin, this basin has its challenges. But there is a lot of restoration planned for the area that should improve the rates at which some of the land is being lost. There is constant attention to improving the area and many restoration plans planned and implemented. I don't think there is anything lacking relative to the other areas on Coastal Managment efforts.

Q14 - Section 4.0 – Maps and Tables - Please enter comment below.

- Fine.
- Very confusing. need to clarify what is actually included and have text/maps/tables match up better
- I would add information on federally owned land in core and buffer areas. IS southeastern's land considered as state owned land, since it is a state university?
- Good. Provides needed information as requested.
- Maps and tables look great.
- Good core and buffer areas
- perhaps include a map illustrating the proposed river diversion
- Looks fine.

Q15 - Section 5.0 – Optional Information/ Appendix

- Appendix A should include the Greater Baton Rouge Area facilities, research and educational programs. LSU, Southern, The Water Institute of the Gulf, schools, community colleges, and the State agency headquarters should be incorporated into the narrative. Research on the Bonnet Carre spillway openings, BP oil spill related research would be good to highlight too.
- Clearly there are a lot of excellent sites in the area that could help support the mission of a NERR and be host sites for particular activities or even NERR staff. This section lays that out very nicely. Also, all NERR's have a state partner. Since mostly state lands are included in the initial boundary some informed discussion with the agencies charged with managing those lands on the willingness to be the state partner (including providing/reallocating staff, ability and willingness to meet the 30% annual match required by NOAA, etc.) would benefit the final draft. I recognize that the decision of state managing partner will be made at a higher level/different point in the designation process, but having some foundation for those discussions would, in my view, be beneficial.
- Appendix has a lot of good information to supplement the proposal.
- Appendix A with nice map of facilities; Appendix B with a great list of references. Please alphabetize them next time.
- Good additional info, other 2 proposals should be as extensive.

Q16 - Additional Comments

- The presentation and to a lesser extent the written proposal make relatively compelling cases for this site. This is an important region with important and substantial ecological variability, and important species and habitats. There are large human communities and many educational sites available. However, from my understanding of NOAA criteria, it seems to be too altered and too lacking in active, natural, progradational deltaic processes to be considered a deltaic NERR candidate site.

- comprehensive proposal that explained the NERR benefits well. Make the cover page 1, maximum 2 pages.

- Overall, there is a lot of good information, but the actual areas being proposed for core and buffer and what is in each for scoring according to the criteria is very confusing. The overall proposal would be stronger if the Greater Baton Rouge population, research and educational facilities (LSU, especially), were included. The role of the Maurepas Swamp in protecting the Greater Baton Rouge area contrasted with the role of levees protecting New Orleans and other aspects of raising awareness of the importance of multiple lines of defense should be highlighted. Should also mention facilities on the South Shore of Lake Pontchartrain in the text..

- Excellent start. This is the most complete proposal of the three.

- The map showing the locations of the field stations is impressive.

- Good detail overall in the proposal. Besides the benefits to National Wildlife Refuge conservation interests , I will add that the Pontchartrain estuary is growing in interest to USFWS for threatened Gulf sturgeon. Much of it is critical habitat for the species and habitat restoration needs includes increasing habitat diversity like hard bottom substrates and SAV bed. Any research into determining improving sustainability of those habitats would be of interest to the Service.

- This site has the best potential to meet all requirements of a NERR, while excelling in the educational component that NERRs serve to the general populace.

- Well written and organized. I liked the format and the colors. Easy to read.

- Before I undertook this formal review, I exchanged a communication with Robert about my concern that another severe storm could destroy the infrastructure of the selected region, thus rendering Louisiana's NERR incapable of functioning. While I appreciate through that communication that funding needs to be obtained one area at a time, it may be possible to broach this concern in the first recommendation and to suggest ways to assure that the other two regions are "supported" in whatever ways possible in case such a catastrophe happens. Given that the program has posed climate change challenges to Louisiana's application, such a recognition of future impacts may be necessary in order to have Louisiana's application respond to climate change challenges.

- Overall very well done, this format (in spite of not numbering consistently w. site criteria) was the better of the three in my opinion.

- This basin has some distinct advantages in the proximity to a very large population along with a lot of existing infrastructure that makes access relatively easy. It lacks in actively accreting deltaic wetlands but there are some areas that fit this description and plans for the future. From and practical point of view, it seems this may be a most logical area to set up a NERR but that other areas certainly have some advantages too.

Louisiana National Estuarine Research Reserve (LaNERR)
Site Selection & Nomination Report

November 2022

APPENDIX 9:

Final Candidate Site Proposals

Atchafalaya

Barataria

Pontchartrain

LA NERR Final Proposal: Atchafalaya Basin

Team Members:
Brian Roberts (LUMCON), Team Lead
Jimmy Nelson (ULL), Team Co-Lead
Justin Lemoine (Atchafalaya National Heritage Area), Team Co-Lead

Joseph Baustian (The Nature Conservancy)
Craig Colten (Louisiana State University)
Murt Conover (LUMCON Education and Outreach)
Dani DiIullo (Louisiana Sea Grant Communications Coordinator)
Quenton Fontenot (Nicholls State University)
Brian Gautreau (LSU Ag Center Youth Wetlands and Outreach Program)
Erik Johnson (Audubon Delta)
Ken Krauss (Unites States Geological Survey)
Simone Maloz (Restore the Mississippi River Coalition)
Tammie Moore (South Louisiana Community College)
Bryan Piazza (The Nature Conservancy)
Victoria Sagrera (Restore or Retreat, Inc)

Submitted 2022.05.04

RE: LANERR Site Scoring Report

To the executive committee,

Louisiana has a tremendous opportunity to join a network of over 30 coastal reserves within the National Estuarine Research Reserve system that will provide federal support in a partnership with the state to establish a reserve for long-term stewardship, research, education, and training. In Governor John Bel Edward's letter to NOAA, he stated "Louisiana would like to nominate a site in the Delta biogeographic region for inclusion in the NERRS". The NERR system does not currently include a large river delta reserve which provides Louisiana a unique opportunity to not only gain a NERR site but also bring special attention to our state as it will enhance the overall network in ways unlike any other individual reserve in the network. An ideal delta NERR should include 3 main components or zones: a river and its alluvial floodplain, an active river delta, and the surrounding estuarine ecosystem. We feel that the Atchafalaya Basin is essentially a small-scale version of Louisiana representing all of the habitats found within the state and is a model for how the state and other deltaic systems are formed and therefore an ideal location for a deltaic NERR.

Our team was very pleased with the overall rankings the Atchafalaya Basin proposal received, scoring as the top potential site in four of the six components. As the only active river delta site under consideration, we strongly feel the Atchafalaya NERR would be a truly unique addition to the NERR network. The committee acknowledged this fact and noted that nearly all of the diverse habitats are contained on large tracts of state owned lands across the river delta system, allowing for cohesive core and buffer areas for each of the main habitat zones. The proposed site's scoring for environmental representativeness was high relative to the other potential sites, but we feel that it was actually underscored in this category especially when considering the representativeness on state lands that can actually be included in the NERR core and buffer areas and when that representativeness is consider within the context of the broader NERR network. Other major strengths of the proposed Atchafalaya NERR are that it is largely undeveloped, has high research capacity as an active delta, high likelihood of long-term resilience, and overwhelming support from a large number of local and state partners.

One of the few perceived weaknesses of the site noted by some reviewers was fewer educational opportunities than other proposed sites. The primary reasons given for this was the perceived remoteness of the basin and lack of access. We specifically address the educational potential below but first wish to address the perception of the remoteness of the Atchafalaya Basin. Compared to the vast majority of reserves currently within the NERR network, an Atchafalaya Basin reserve is actually significantly closer to population centers as a focus of NERRs is that reserves are viable for long-term research / study in natural ecosystems. Geographically, the Atchafalaya NERR site is most centrally located of all of the proposed Louisiana reserves. The alluvial floodplain region of the Atchafalaya Basin is located between the second (Baton Rouge) and fourth (Lafayette) largest population centers in the state with each city being less than 75 miles from any point in the proposed NERR and Lafayette being located within the Vermilion basin if that were to be part of the NERR. New Orleans is within 85 miles of any point in the NERR and smaller cities of Houma, Thibodaux, and Morgan City are closer with Morgan City within the basin. These cities are home to communities that represent the diversity of Louisiana's citizenry – including significant African American, Acadian, and Native Americans. The proposed site will encompass a total ~3.3 million people within 100 miles and ~2.2 million people within 75 miles which is estimated as a reasonable day trip for school groups. These populations are comparable, and in many

cases significantly higher, than most NERR sites within the network. There are 860 schools with > 456,000 students located within 75 miles of the Atchafalaya Basin. Along the basin there are more than 150 public boat ramps and access points that can be reached by ground transportation that stretch from the northern most reaches of the proposed site to the norther shore of the Vermillion bay, providing access to the full gradient in salinity to educational groups. One of our partner organizations, the McIlhenny Corporation (see letter of support), hosts more than half a million visitors annually on Avery Island in the southwest portion of the proposed NERR from all over the globe. Although some of the proposed core and buffer areas may be more remote we view this as a strength. While accessing the site is easy for the public in a general way the areas proposed for research will not be as heavily impacted by public use. In this way researchers sites can remain secure while providing maximal public and educational benefit.

It is true that the proposed Atchafalaya NERR site lacks the existing infrastructure and is underdeveloped compared to other proposed sites, but that perception is both misleading and invalid in terms of its potential as a NERR. The quality and future growth of education programming that the Atchafalaya offers cannot be replicated anywhere else in the state. In fact, the location is already being used for education programming by many organizations (Audubon, Barataria-Terrebonne National Estuary Program, Louisiana Sea Grant, LSU EnvironMentors, LUMCON, the Nature Conservancy, etc.). This alone confirms that locally and nationally highly regarded organizations understand the impact of experiences within the proposed site are highly valuable and impactful. The undeveloped nature of the site allows learners to explore a diversity of habitats, observe plant and animal species in a relatively unimpacted state, and examine the interconnectedness of the system to the state and surrounding communities. The region also lacks the crowded landscape of education programs that the more urban-based sites have compounding the limited access to high-quality programs for those communities. By the numbers, a NERR at the proposed location means impacting a tremendously diverse K-12 audience with traditionally underserved and underrepresented groups representing 64% of the population. There is also high need among this population, with 71% considered economically disadvantaged. By delivering education programming an Atchafalaya NERR can have a significant impact on those that need it most in the short-term, but also is easily reached by audiences from further distances. The development and expansion potential of the site increases in the long-term by building networks, collaborations, and partnerships that help increase the infrastructure that is more adaptable, flexible, and scalable than a site that must rely on existing infrastructure.

Finally, establishing Louisiana's NERR in the Atchafalaya will have the most impact for the region, the state, and the overall NERR network. The level of enthusiasm and support for an Atchafalaya NERR cannot be matched whether one considers the diversity of already established partners, the turnout of public support in town hall meetings, the development of t-shirts by community members, the overwhelming numbers of support letters from school children, private residents, fisherman, local businesses, public officials at all levels, universities, and non-profits. The bottom line is the establishment of an Atchafalaya NERR will impact the broadest diversity of Louisiana residents and stakeholders.

Sincerely,

Atchafalaya NERR Proposal Team

SECTION 1: Physical Description of Site:

The Atchafalaya River system serves as a repository for approximately 30% of the combined flows of the Mississippi and Red Rivers making it the 5th largest river in the North America in mean annual discharge and during floods it can become the 2nd largest discharging river on the continent. Because the Atchafalaya River includes flows from both the Mississippi River and the Red River (one of the major mid-continental rivers in North America), it has the largest drainage basin in North America and shares with the Mississippi the distinction of having the third largest drainage basin in the world. The system extends from the Old River Control Structure near Simmesport, Louisiana in the north to the Gulf of Mexico in the south where it empties into Vermillion, West and East Cote Blanche, and Atchafalaya Bays via the main stem and Wax Lake deltas. The Atchafalaya River Basin (ARB) represents all of the coastal habitats found within Louisiana and is a complete delta estuary ecosystem that will be a unique addition to the NERR network.

The upper portion of the ARB contains species-rich and structurally diverse bottomland hardwood forests with the middle region composed of cypress-tupelo swamps reflecting decreased relative elevation and increased flooding. These two regions comprise the alluvial floodplain and represent the largest block of floodplain forest in the US (Ford and Nyman 2011). The lower region consists of the delta plain where the Atchafalaya River meets the Gulf of Mexico. The Atchafalaya and Wax Lake deltas are an actively growing delta system at the mouth of the Atchafalaya, dominated by willows, lotus, and other emergent freshwater vegetation. From the river deltas to the west and east, the system transitions from freshwater to smooth cordgrass dominated brackish and saltmarshes along the shallow Vermillion and West Cote Blanche bays to the west and Fourleague Bay to the east. The Basin contains extensive areas of open water (and associated subtidal and submerged bottom) habitats spanning from the river to the open Gulf of Mexico. Altogether the Atchafalaya basin consists of approximately 2 million acres (7,000 km^2) of land, waterways, and coastal waters.

In Governor John Bel Edward's letter to NOAA, he stated "Louisiana would like to nominate a site in the Delta biogeographic region for inclusion in the NERRS". When developing a proposed NERR site in the Atchafalaya Basin, we asked ourselves "How do we best design a Delta NERR site?" concluding that a delta NERR should include 3 main components or zones: the river and its alluvial floodplain, the river delta, and the estuarine ecosystem. Overall vision for and approach to the development of the Atchafalaya NERR is to include all of the key habitats/ecosystems looked at in the NERR selection process with the idea being that the Atchafalaya basin provides a unique river delta NERR that encompasses all key relevant habitats found in Louisiana. The Atchafalaya Basin is essentially a small-scale version of Louisiana representing all of the habitats found within the state and is a model for how the state and other deltaic systems are formed.

This overall vision for the Atchafalaya NERR, like other NERR sites, is to establish locations for long-term stewardship, research, education, and training. The Atchafalaya NERR will use current monitoring efforts and restoration activities to increase physical and biological monitoring in riverine, and fresh, floating, brackish, and salt marshes (stewardship), provide vital research opportunities and access becoming the only active delta estuarine system in the NERR network adding value to the significance of the research conducted at the site (research), offer a variety of opportunities for learning to diverse audiences by providing relatively short travel distances from major coastal zone cities and universities (education), and be an ideal place to discuss the interconnectedness of engineering, ecology, and its impacts on communities (training).

SECTION 2: Site Criteria Qualifications

	FINAL Candidate Site Proposal Narrative **NAME OF SITE: Atchafalaya Basin**	LaNERR Site Criteria
SCORE	**1.0 Environmental Representativeness**	
	The Atchafalaya Basin NERR in nearly every ecological sense is representative of the major habitats and ecosystems in Louisiana. From the alluvial flood plains of the upland river to the active river delta transitioning to brackish and saltmarsh system, the Atchafalaya NERR is a microcosm to study all the important ecological dynamics that drive change in Louisiana and other major river deltas. Unlike any other NERR site the Atchafalaya Basin is an actively growing river delta. The Atchafalaya and Wax Lake deltas, where the AR empties into the Gulf of Mexico contains over 50,000 ha of the most recently created land in North America. The basin and coastal marshes exhibit disproportionately high levels of native biodiversity (Calhoun 1999). The current distribution and maintenance of the basin's wetland habitats are driven by past and present seasonal water flow and sedimentary processes (Piazza 2014). Bottomland hardwood forests (150,138 ha) span the northern section of the basin, where the land is highest and overbank flooding is infrequent with species composition varying based on flooding frequency, depth, and duration. Cypress-tupelo swamps (106,000 ha) exist in the middle portion of the basin, where flooding frequency, depth, and duration are greatest. Dominated by bald cypress and water tupelo, these species can persist under near constant flooding, although regeneration requires periodic, prolonged low-water periods during the growing season. In some areas with high levels of growing-season flooding, a scrub-shrub community exists where	1.1 Ecosystem composition: A measure of the diversity of ecosystem types present within the boundaries of the site. This criterion assumes that sites that have a high diversity of major ecosystem types are of higher relative "value" for protection and management than those with low ecosystem diversity (unless the ecosystem in consideration is rare or unique). 3 Points. The site has a high diversity of habitat composition within its major ecosystem type, i.e., it contains three or more habitat types or subtypes within its major ecosystem type (e.g., site consists of a combination of swamps, coastal marshes, and mud flats) or has a combination of multiple coastal marsh types (e.g., tidal freshwater, brackish, salt marsh zones). 2 Points. The site has a moderate diversity of habitat composition within its major ecosystem type, i.e., it contains only two habitat types or subtypes within its major ecosystem type (e.g., consists of a combination of forested wetlands and a single coastal marsh type). 1 Point. The site has a low diversity of habitat composition within its major ecosystem type, i.e., its major ecosystem type consists of a single habitat type (e.g., tidal freshwater marsh or brackish marsh, or forested wetland). These are the suggested Ecosystem Types to be used in the LaNERR evaluation: **Group I- Uplands** Alluvial Forested Wetlands Longleaf Pine Savannahs/Pine Flatwoods

	scattered cypress trees and flood-tolerant water-elm, swamp-privet, and buttonbush dominate (Piazza 2014). Near where the AR meets the Gulf of Mexico, vegetation transitions from cypress-tupelo swamp to emergent delta marsh wetlands of Atchafalaya and Wax Lake Deltas and open water of coastal bays. Natural delta islands are chevron-shaped, with the upstream tip of each island colonized by stands of black willow and an understory of nonnative elephant ear, rice cutgrass, climbing hempweed, and smartweed. As elevation decreases, tidal freshwater marsh vegetation dominates. Moving east and west away from the river deltas, the estuaries are fringed with brackish and salt marsh habitats and to a lesser extent black mangrove patches. Submerged aquatic vegetation is found in low intertidal and subtidal areas. The proposed NERR contains extensive areas of open water (and associated subtidal and submerged bottom) habitats spanning from the river to the open Gulf of Mexico. The NERR site can be divided into three zones: 1) Alluvial Floodplain Zone, 2) River Delta and Fresh Marsh Zone, and 3) Brackish and Salt Marsh Zone that contain all of Louisiana's habitat types. These include upland (group I) habitats of bottomland hardwood forests and cypress-tupelo swamps; intertidal (group II) habitats of coastal forested wetlands; floating, fresh, intermediate, and salt marshes; mangroves; intertidal beaches/dunes and mud/sand flats; and submerged bottom (group III) habitats of subtidal hard bottoms/reefs, soft bottoms, and subtidal plants (SAV).	Maritime Forest- Woodland Coastal Prairie/bogs Coastal Shrublands and Cheniers **Group II- Intertidal areas** Coastal Forested Wetlands Coastal Floating Marshes Coastal Freshwater Marsh Coastal Intermediate Marsh Coastal Brackish Marsh Coastal Salt Marsh Coastal Mangroves Intertidal Beaches and Dunes Intertidal Mud and Sand Flats **Group III- Subtidal and Submerged Bottoms** Subtidal hard bottoms/reefs Subtidal soft bottoms Subtidal Plants (SAV)
	One of the great advantages of the Atchafalaya Basin as a potential NERR site, is the extensive, intact tracts of state-owned lands and waters spanning across the diversity of ecosystem types described in section 1.1. As a result, it is	1.2 Balanced ecosystem composition: A measure of the relative composition of ecosystem types within the boundaries of a site (buffer plus core areas). This criterion assumes that sites with a balanced proportion of ecosystem types are of higher relative "value" for protection and management. High, moderate, and low values are

	possible to select a final NERR site that contains equal proportions of upland, intertidal, and subtidal habitats with virtually any combination of sub-habitat types that are desired for the NERR. This is one of the strengths of the Atchafalaya Basin as the LaNERR site selection.	assigned to sites that contain variations in the proportions of all three ecosystem types. A value of zero is assigned to a site that is dominated by one ecosystem type or contains less than three ecosystem types. 3 Points. The site contains representative upland, intertidal, and subtidal habitats in relatively equal proportions (i.e. areal cover of any one ecosystem type not less than 25 percent of the total area). 2 Points. The site contains representative upland, intertidal, and subtidal habitats, with the areal cover of any one type not less than 10 percent of the total area. 1 Point. The site contains representative upland, intertidal, and subtidal habitats, with the areal cover of any one type less than 10 percent of the total area. 0 Points. The site contains representative upland, intertidal, and subtidal habitats, with the areal cover of two types being less than 10 percent of the total area *or* the site consists of habitats from only one or two of the three major ecosystem types.
	This is clearly one of the greatest strengths of the Atchafalaya Basin as a NERR site. There is an extremely high diversity of habitat types found within each of the major ecosystem types found within the state-owned lands in the potential NERR site. Once again, these include the following: upland (group I) habitats of bottomland hardwood forests and cypress-tupelo swamps; intertidal (group II) habitats of coastal forested wetlands; floating, fresh, intermediate, and salt marshes; mangroves; intertidal beaches/dunes and mud/sand flats; and submerged bottom (group III) habitats of subtidal hard bottoms/reefs, soft bottoms, and subtidal plants (SAV).	<u>1.3 Habitat composition and complexity:</u> A measure of the diversity of habitat types present within the major ecosystem type found within the boundaries of the site. This criterion assumes that sites that have a high diversity of habitat types are of higher relative "value" for protection and management than those with a low diversity of habitat types. Major ecosystem type is defined here as that type that comprises approximately 40 percent of the site. Use the habitat type designations listed above for "ecosystem composition." 3 Points. The site has a high diversity of habitat composition within its major ecosystem type, i.e., it contains three or more habitat types or subtypes within its major ecosystem type (e.g., site consists of a combination of swamps, coastal marshes, and reefs) or has a combination of multiple coastal marsh types (e.g., tidal freshwater, brackish, salt marsh zones including mangroves). 2 Points. The site has a moderate diversity of habitat composition within its major ecosystem type, i.e., it contains only two habitat types or subtypes within its major ecosystem type (e.g., consists of a combination of swamps and a single coastal marsh type). 1 Point. The site has a low diversity of habitat composition within its major ecosystem type, i.e., its major ecosystem type consists of a single habitat type (e.g., brackish marsh or tidal freshwater wetlands)

	The extensive and diverse flora found throughout the basin are covered in sections 1.1 – 1.3 above. The ARB contains extensive fish and wildlife resources (Piazza 2014, Appendix 2 includes 13 pages of tables). These resources include 17 plant and animal species of conservation concern, including seven distinct natural plant communities, five species of plants, seven species of birds, two species of mammals, and three species of fish (full list and review in Piazza 2014, Table 5.1.). Threatened Natural Communities in the proposed NERR site include: Salt Dome Hardwood Forest (G1/S1), Live Oak Forest (G2/S1), Freshwater Marsh (G3G4/S2), Vegetated Pioneer Emerging Delta (G3G4, S2), Intermediate Marsh (G4/S3), Brackish Marsh (G4/S3), Salt Marsh (G5/S3S4), Bottomland Hardwood Forest (G4G5/S4), Cypress Swamp (G4G5/S4), and Cypress-tupelo Swamp (G3G5/S4). Most of the ~320 regularly occurring birds found in Louisiana can be found breeding, wintering, or migrating through the Atchafalaya Basin and Delta. Conservation priority birds include Snowy Plover (G3/S2N), Wilson's Plover (G5/S2B,S1N), Swallow-tailed Kite (G5/S1S2B), and Bald Eagle (G5/S3) with the basin being declared as critical bird habitat. One of our key partners, Audubon, has multiple Coastal Bird Survey sites in the Delta area to monitor non-breeding shorebirds. The state conducts colonial breeding surveys of multiple rookeries in the system as well as Mid-Winter Waterfowl Surveys. The alluvial floodplain zone includes critical habitats for Louisiana black bear, American alligators, and diverse freshwater fish and invertebrate species. The estuarine regions of the basin provide critical habitat to numerous waterfowl, wading birds, manatees, and sea turtles and nursery habitats for commercially important species such as shrimp and blue crabs as well as oyster reefs. In summary, an Atchafalaya	1.4 Significant faunal and floral support: A measure of the degree to which a site supports significant faunal or floral components. This criterion focuses on a site's contribution (i.e., function) toward supporting the activities (e.g., feeding, nesting) of the following suite of significant faunal or floral components. The list of components includes groups or organisms that are known to be dependent upon estuarine habitats for the entire or a crucial part of their life cycle. • Fish and Shellfish Spawning and Nursery Grounds (includes use by either freshwater, estuarine, or estuarine-dependent marine species) • Migratory Bird or Waterfowl Use • Bird Nesting or Roosting Area • Critical Mammal Habitat • Non-Game Animals (amphibians, reptiles, etc.) • State or federally Listed Species or of concern (animal or plant – including candidate species) • Other biodiversity support as representative of ecosystem services (such as invertebrates, reef environments...). 3 Points. The site supports or serves as an important site for a wide range of the faunal or floral components listed above (4 of 6) or is an extremely important site for any threatened or endangered species. 2 Points. The site supports or serves as an important site for a moderate range and diversity of the significant faunal or floral components listed above (3 of 6). 1 point. The site supports or serves as an important site for one or two of the significant faunal or floral components listed above. 0 point. The site does not support significant faunal or floral components.

	NERR would support all of the faunal and floral components listed in the LaNERR criteria.	
	The ARB contains lacustrine and coastal delta systems that have experienced rapid sedimentation ever since the Atchafalaya River began to capture flow from the Mississippi River. The ARB is one of the major historic inter-distributary basins in the Mississippi River delta plain, and soil cores document 30 m (100 ft) of deltaic sedimentation that corresponds to at least four sedimentary starvation-deposition cycles (sediment starvation and compaction-induced subsidence followed by lacustrine-delta deposition and aggradation) during the construction of multiple major marine Holocene delta complexes in the Mississippi River delta plain. The oldest deposits in the ARB are related to the Sale-Cypremort and Teche delta systems, and the most recent lacustrine delta deposits were precursors to the development of the marine Atchafalaya Delta. The current geological transition of the ARB represents an interaction between natural riverine (MR flow capture) and sedimentary processes and human forcing that exacerbated those processes (e.g., logjam removal, Shreve's cut, levees, channel training). Because the ARB was the site of Mississippi River distributaries in the past, sediment entered lake basins through numerous relict distributary channels that existed within prior deltas (hyperpycnal underflows), building new lacustrine deltas. Water and sediment entered lake basins through these relict channels and delta progradation began with a long period of subaqueous (below water surface) prodelta platform formation, created through deposition of fine-grained sediments. Rapid subaerial (above water surface) delta building resulted from subsequent deposition of coarse-grained sediments, which eventually led to abandonment of the newly created delta. The protection levees	<u>1.5 Geologic representativeness, diversity, and uniqueness of the site</u>: A measure of the representativeness, diversity, and uniqueness of the geologic characteristics that define part or the whole of a candidate site. This criterion attempts to consider both the surface and subsurface geologic formations that may be representative or unique within a site, particularly as they affect or define associated biotic habitats. Included in these considerations are the ways that local geology affects surface hydrology, such as drainage and fluvial systems, and subsurface hydrology, such as shallow-water aquifers. Geologic and hydrologic maps should be used to evaluate this criterion. 3 Points. The site has numerous geologic characteristics, two or more unique geologic characteristics, and contains a high diversity of formation types or strata within its boundaries. 2 Points. The site has a moderate number of representative geologic characteristics and at least one unique geologic characteristic and contains a moderate diversity of formation types or strata within its boundaries. 1 Point. The site has a moderate number of geologic characteristics, no unique geologic characteristics, or contains a moderate diversity of formation types or strata within its boundaries. 0 Points. The site has few or only one representative geologic characteristic, no unique geologic characteristics, or contains few or only one formation type or strata within its boundaries.

	also severed the connection to riverine processes outside the levees, initiating a slower phase of the delta cycle whereby landscape change would become dominated by subsidence processes. Lake Fausse Pointe Delta is an example of a once-growing area that experienced severing of significant sediment input because of the protection levees. Its growth was stopped, and its geological development was frozen in time. This delta formed between 1919 and 1932 and was fed by Grand Bayou, a small distributary channel of the Atchafalaya River. The delta grew rapidly for 13 years until the West Atchafalaya Protection Levee severed its connection to Grand Bayou, cutting off its sediment supply, and stopping its growth. Today, that delta exists as the 2,428 ha (6,000 acre) Lake Fausse Point State Park. This system contains two archetypal coastal geologic formations in the Louisiana coast – lacustrine delta and bayhead delta. The different ages of the deltas correspond to a diversity of floodplain forest types from BLH forest examples on highest aggraded land to cypress-tupelo swamps in the lowest (newer) areas to finally, coastal marsh in the newest aggraded areas. Sediment transport from this system westward builds the geologic formation of the Chenier plain.	

	The proposed Atchafalaya Basin NERR supports a broad range of habitat types and organisms (sections 1.1 – 1.4) as a result of its salinity gradient and hydrologic complexity. The river and its floodplain remain fresh conditions but the coastal estuarine and offshore areas of the northern Gulf of Mexico within the proposed NERR experience temporally and spatially dynamic salinity conditions. Surface water in and near river deltas tend to be close to fresh conditions outside of storm fronts and hurricanes but as water moves away from the surface plume (inshore-offshore, east and west away from plumes and below stratification depth) salinities increase. Surface waters towards the southern extent of Atchafalaya Bay routinely exceed salinities of 15 during lower river flow periods (Sweet et al. 2022) and bottom waters in the region regularly exceed salinities of 20 when stratification is strong (Roberts and Doty 2015). The estuaries of the basin are fringed by brackish and salt marshes (with some patches of black mangrove) with even higher porewater salinities than observed in open waters further indicating a broad range of salinities within the proposed NERR.	1.6 Salinity gradient A measure of the seasonal and spatial range of salinity over multiple years within a candidate site's boundaries. This criterion recognizes the effect of salinity on the biotic structure of estuarine habitats (including the plant communities and faunal components that inhabit them). It assumes that a site with a greater range of salinity will support a broader range of habitat types and organisms. 3 Points. The site encompasses > 10 parts per thousand (ppt) or greater range of salinity within its boundaries. 2 Points. The site encompasses a 5-10 ppt range of salinity within its boundaries. 1 Point. The site encompasses a 2-5 ppt range of salinity within its boundaries. 0 Points. The site encompasses < 2 ppt range of salinity within its boundaries.
	The Atchafalaya Basin does not contain extensive development (industrial activity/commercial development, residences, agriculture/silviculture) with much of it restricted to a narrow corridor around Highway 90 near Morgan City, LA. As a result, a very low proportion of the Basin has any development and even the development that does exist is at a comparatively low density. The proposed NERR would only contain state-owned lands/water bodies that do not contain development and will not likely have any in the future. The upstream regions of the proposed NERR do not contain development. All of Louisiana is part of the Mississippi-Atchafalaya watershed so impacts of the development in the watershed that can impact water quality are	1.7 Degree developed and potential impacts to water quality: A measure of the degree to which the site (core and buffer) is developed and the relative impacts to surface waters from human activities upstream in its associated hydrologic basin (see reference map). This criterion assumes that human impacts to a site are directly proportional to the degree and type of development on site and upstream. Exceptions to this assumption may need to be considered where development at a site and its surrounding area have been subject to high levels of control. Density of development (e.g., no industrial activity or commercial development, few residences, minimal agricultural or silvicultural activity), water quality status within the site, or whether the land is in protected status are points of consideration for this criterion. 3 Points. The site is relatively undisturbed and the hydrologic basin contains low intensity development upstream (e.g., no industrial or commercial development, few residences, minimal agricultural or silvicultural activity) or the land is in protected status.

	felt across the region. However, the large alluvial floodplain swamps in the upper regions of the proposed Atchafalaya Basin NERR does have some capacity to dampen water quality impacts within the lower regions of the potential NERR.	2 Points. The site is relatively undisturbed and the hydrologic basin contains moderate development upstream (e.g., relatively few residences, moderate agricultural or silvicultural activity, minimal commercial or industrial development). 1 Points. The site has been moderately disturbed and the hydrologic basins contains relatively intensive development (e.g., moderate density of residences, or the presence of industrial activity). 0 Points: The site has been extremely disturbed and the hydrologic basins contains very intensive development (e.g., high density residential, or commercial or industrial activity).
SCORE	**2.0 Research, Monitoring & Resource Protection**	
	The proposed Atchafalaya reserve would be the only active river delta estuarine system in the NERR network. As such, it would substantially enhance the biogeographical and typological balance of the network and provide new and unique opportunities for research, monitoring, and resource protection (15 CFR 921.11(c) (1)). Specifically, the bald cypress dominated alluvial floodplains in the upper Atchafalaya Basin and the actively prograding Wax Lake delta habitats cannot be found in other reserves. Research topics in these habitats could focus on flood/water management impacts, responses to storm events, natural processes that influence delta formation, successional patterns and expansion of species into newly formed habitats, and much more. Each of these topics would be a new facet of investigation not found in any other NERR site. Simultaneously, the site creates valuable opportunities to conduct comparative research, particularly in the coastal marsh zone, between network estuarine systems (e.g. Grand Bay and Weeks Bay) and non-network systems (e.g. Mobile Bay). The Atchafalaya Basin meets all of the criteria of a valuable site for research including 1) a high diversity of ecosystem and habitat types (see section 1 above and Map 3.4), 2) freshwater habitats through estuarine waters connecting to offshore marine	2.1 Value of site for research: A measure of the opportunities offered by characteristics of the site for research, such as a high diversity of ecosystem and habitat types, a balanced habitat composition, a wide salinity range (see criterion 1.7), biotic or geologic representativeness of the site, known historic uses or archaeological sites, and unique opportunities to conduct applied research regarding important local, state, and regional coastal management issues (including past and potential management activities). The assumption is that a site with representative, unique, and highly diverse characteristics will provide greater research, monitoring, and resource protection opportunities than one lacking these characteristics. Ratings generated for these factors under previous selection criteria can be used as a guide for rating this overall factor. 3 Points. The site has (1) a high diversity of ecosystem and habitat types, (2) moderate salinity range, (3) representative biotic and geologic sites or hydrologic characteristics, (4) state and federally listed species, (5) historic and archaeological significance, and (6) opportunities to address important habitat or resource management issues. 2 Points. The site has four or five of the six above. 1 Point. The site has two or three of the six above. 0 Points. The site has one or none of the six above.

	salinity habitats, 3) representative biotic and geologic sites AND hydrologic characteristics (see section 2.1 above), 4) critical habitat for Louisiana black bear, neotropical migratory birds, American alligators, fish and invertebrates including more than a dozen threatened or endangered species, 5) multiple sites of historic and/or archaeological significance as the area has been inhabited for a millenia including Native American communities, enslaved populations, and European settlers, and 6) multiple opportunities to address important habitat or resource management issues (see sections 2.1 and 2.4).	
	There is a long and rich history of research activities in the ARB that span across all of the core areas of the Atchafalaya NERR and diverse disciplines. Many of these activities were summarized in *The Atchafalaya River Basin: History and Ecology of an American Wetland* (Piazza 2014) which includes 26 pages of literature cited from the basin. Since the book's publication, almost 5000 additional publications for "Atchafalaya" can be found in Google Scholar indicating the rich history of diverse research activities that have taken place in the Atchafalaya River Basin. The close proximity of the basin to numerous colleges, universities, and research institutions combined with the importance of the system has and will likely continue to facilitate this extensive investment in research within the basin. A few representative papers from 2014- present include: Twilley RR, Day JW, Bevington AE, Castañeda-Moya E, Christensen A, Holm G, Heffner LR, Lane R, McCall A, Aarons A, Li S, Freeman A, Rovai AS. 2019. Ecogeomorphology of coastal deltaic floodplains and estuaries in an active delta: insights from the Atchafalaya Coastal Basin. Estuarine, Coastal, and Shelf Science 227: 106341	2.2 Previous research and monitoring efforts: A measure of the degree to which the site (including the hydrologic basin) has been used for past research and monitoring, including considerations of the diversity of inquiry (fields of research), and the availability of data (the form and availability of documentation, e.g., peer-reviewed papers, grey literature, inventory reports). The assumption is that an area with previously established research and monitoring interest offers greater opportunity for future projects than an area that has not sparked such an interest in the past. 3 Points. The site has a long history of well-documented research and monitoring projects in a wide variety of topics. Data are readily available. 2 Points. The site has had major and well-documented research and monitoring efforts, generating data that are readily available. It has not had a long history of research and monitoring. 1 Point. The site has had only minor research and monitoring projects generating limited data (e.g., inventories) and/or these data may be difficult to obtain. 0 Points. The site has no known history of research and monitoring.

	Roberts BJ, Doty SM. 2015. Spatial and temporal patterns of benthic respiration and net nutrient fluxes in the Atchafalaya River Delta Estuary. Estuaries and Coasts 38(6):1918-1936. DOI: 10.1007/s12237-015-9965-z. Mossa J. 2016. The changing geomorphology of the Atchafalaya River, Louisiana: A historical perspective. Geomorphology 252: 112-127. Piazza BP, Allen YC, Martin R, Bergan JF, King K. 2015. Floodplain conservation in the Mississippi River Valley: combining spatial analysis, landowner outreach, and market assessment to enhance land protection for the Atchafalaya River Basin, Louisiana, USA. Restoration Ecology: 23: 65-74. Bennett MG, Kozak JP. 2016. Spatial and temporal patterns in fish community structure and abundance in the largest U.S. river swamp, the Atchafalaya River floodplain, Louisiana. Ecology of Freshwater Fish 25: 577-589. Shaw JB, Mohrig D, Whitman SK. 2013. The morphology and evolution of channels on the Wax Lake Delta, Louisiana, USA. Journal of Geophysical Research: Earth Surface, 118: 1562-1584. Shaw JB, Mohrig D. 2014. The importance of erosion in distributary channel network growth, Wax Lake Delta, Louisiana, USA. Geology, 42: 31-34. Olliver EA, Edmonds DA, Shaw JB. 2020. Influence of floods, tides, and vegetation on sediment retention in Wax Lake Delta, Louisiana, USA. Journal of Geophysical Research: Earth Surface, 125: e2019JF005316. Shaw JB, Ayoub F, Jones CE, Lamb MP, Holt B, Wagner RW, Mohrig D. 2016. Airborne radar imaging of subaqueous channel	

	evolution in Wax Lake Delta, Louisiana, USA. Geophysical Research Letters 43: 5035-5042. Carle MV, Sasser CE, Roberts HH. 2015. Accretion and vegetation community change in the Wax Lake Delta following the historic 2011 Mississippi River flood. Journal of Coastal Research 31: 569-587. DeLaune RD, Sasser CE, Evers-Hebert E, White JR, Roberts HH. 2016. Influence of the Wax Lake Delta sediment diversion on aboveground plant productivity and carbon storage in deltaic island and mainland coastal marshes. Estuarine, Coastal and Shelf Science 177: 83-89. Alam RQ, Benson BC, Visser JM, Gang DD. 2016. Response of estuarine phytoplankton to nutrient and spatio-temporal pattern of physico-chemical water quality parameters in Little Vermilion Bay, Louisiana. Ecological Informatics 32: 79-90.	
	The proposed reserve would leverage existing monitoring opportunities that would use physical monitoring stations maintained by USGS, NWS, and LDEQ in the alluvial portion of the system. In active delta and marsh systems there are numerous Coastwide Reference Monitoring locations that are maintained by USGS and CPRA. These sites provide physical and biological monitoring in fresh, floating, brackish, and saltmarsh systems. Additionally, NOAA real time physical oceanographic stations monitor physical water parameters in the Atchafalaya Bay portion of the site. The Atchafalaya Basin has been the host to over 20 Coastal Wetlands Planning, Protection and Restoration Act (CWPPRA) restoration sites which provide further research and monitoring opportunities. These state and federal monitoring networks do not include the extensive historic and current monitoring programs conducted and	2.3 Suitability of site for environmental baseline monitoring: A measure of the suitability of the site as a reference area for assessing long-term natural resource trends or ecological characteristics, based on the degree to which the site has not been fragmented by land-use practices on or near the site. The assumption is that a site with contiguous habitats that provide landscape continuity (not interrupted by developed or disturbed lands & waters) will be a more valuable reference area to generate baseline monitoring information than a site that has been extensively altered. 3 Points. The site has outstanding areas to generate environmental baseline data to assess long- term resource trends or ecological characteristics for a wide range of needs. 2 Points. The site has adequate areas to generate environmental baseline data to assess long- term resource trends or ecological characteristics for many needs. 1 Point. The site has marginal areas to generate environmental baseline data to assess long-term resource trends or ecological characteristics.

	maintained by individual researchers, universities and research institutions, NGOs and other entities that feed into the research history detailed in section 2.2 above.	0 Points. The site has been so extensively altered by past activities that it is unsuitable for generating environmental baseline data.
	The Atchafalaya Basin is the largest example of intact delta (lacustrine and bayhead) in the country and contains the largest stand of coastal cypress forest left. Because of its large, intact nature it provides a wealth of natural services including fish and wildlife habitat and hurricane protection. Its future health will be determined by the management of water flows, which are controlled. While we don't think that development conversion is a threat in this basin, it is extremely susceptible to threats related to basinwide flow management, land subsidence, and sea level rise. For these reasons, it is imperative for conservation and restoration efforts to address water flows and its interaction with hydrologic restoration efforts in the basin, and research and monitoring effects across all natural services are critical to these efforts. To address issues related to modifications to the natural flow regime of the AR and the resulting sedimentation and water quality issues within the basin and how they affect the coastal communities, Governor Edwards created the Atchafalaya River Basin Restoration & Enhancement (ARBRE) Task Force, composed of 20 key state and local stakeholders as well as five federal non-voting members, which brings stakeholders from diverse perspectives together to work through the ongoing challenges in the basin and help identify opportunities. It is chaired and staffed by the Governor's Office of Coastal Activities (GOCA) and has considerable overlap with the partner network already identified for the Atchafalaya NERR site.	2.4. Ability to address key local, state, and regional coastal management issues: A measure of the degree to which the site is appropriate for investigating issues relevant to coastal management at the local, state, and regional levels. Solutions to these issues may require either the application of land management practices or habitat manipulations to perform meaningful research and assessment. As such, the site should offer both adequate control areas plus areas where demonstration projects and habitat manipulations (such as coastal restoration projects) can be accommodated to study many of the issues of concern. The assumption is that a site where diverse coastal management issues are evident and can be addressed will be of greater value from research and resource management standpoint than sites where these issues do not arise. The diversity and significance of coastal management issues should be identified for the hydrologic basin as it may influence core and buffer areas proposed. The following list are suggestions that may be included in the description of the sites ability to address key local, state, and regional coastal management issues. • Wetland loss and habitat change; • Wetland loss mitigation, restoration, and creation; • Dredging and spoil disposal; • Beneficial uses of dredged materials; • Shoreline erosion; • Commercial or recreational fisheries; • Waterfowl and other wildlife management; • Best management practices for habitat protection or management (e.g., wildlife management); • Best management practices to limit impacts from agricultural, silvicultural, or development activities;

	In addition to water management, the Atchafalaya has the potential to play an important role in sediment management as the river carries high loads of sediment, which is in stark contrast to the adjacent sediment starved Terrebonne estuary. The Atchafalaya could provide a significant source of sediment for coastal management and restoration activities. Additionally, the Wax Lake delta is a model for delta formation and serves as an important reference for diversion projects elsewhere in coastal Louisiana and other deltaic systems. The Rainey Sanctuary has been used to develop demonstration restoration projects, including most recently the utility of small dredges and tall terraces. Resources have been developed for land managers regarding fire management and 404 permit applications in coastal wetlands based on these programs. There are more than a dozen threatened or endangered species that occupy the proposed reserve including the piping plover and other bird species of concern, west Indian manatee, pallid sturgeon, and at least five species of sea turtles. The entire system lies within a major flyway for migratory birds and has been declared critical bird habitat by the Audubon Society. The alluvial floodplain core area contains multiple wildlife management areas (WMAs) that provide critical habitats for Louisiana black bear, neotropical migratory birds, American alligators, and freshwater fish and invertebrate species. The Atchafalaya and Wax Lake delta region is also a WMA containing more than 15,000 acres of freshwater and floating marsh habitats and ~100,000 acres of brackish and saltmarsh habitats are included in WMAs at the southern ends of Vermillion and West and East Cote Blanche bays the latter of which provide critical habitat to numerous waterfowl, wading birds, manatees, and sea turtles and nursery habitats for commercially important	• Effects of pollutants on water quality and living resources (including oil spills, nutrients, harmful algal blooms, bacteria contamination, etc.) • Impacts of relative sea-level rise; • Prehistoric and early historic settlement and land use; • Unique connections in cultural and natural resources within the site (language, customs, land-use, etc.); • Fire management, invasive species; • Hydrologic restoration; 3 Points. The site is highly appropriate for investigating a diversity of coastal zone management issues. 2 Points. The site is appropriate for investigating coastal zone management issues. 1 Point. The site is minimally appropriate for investigating coastal zone management issues. 0 Points. The site is not appropriate for investigating coastal zone management issues.

	species such as shrimp and blue crabs. The Atchafalaya Basin has also been the host to over 20 CWPPRA restoration sites. The Atchafalaya River Basin is the nation's largest river swamp and holds significant ecological and cultural significance for Louisiana and the nation. The Basin produces the largest wild caught crawfish harvest in the nation, supports thriving finfish and shellfish fisheries and hosts a unique and diverse array of plants and animals. The Basin also serves as a critical relief valve for extreme flood events on the Mississippi River and is home to the Port of Morgan City, a critical connection point for inland and coastal shipping routes. In summary, the proposed ARB NERR would be able to address virtually every one of the example management issues/topics listed in the LaNERR site criteria 2.4.	
Score	**3.0 Education and Interpretation**	
	The Atchafalaya Basin has many rich and extremely diverse habitats that would provide the basis for education programs that are unique to the region, state, and nation. Beyond the benefits of the natural setting, this site also benefits from being located in a heritage area with cultural significance and historical value. Without question, the combined value of the ecological assets and resources, the cultural significance, and the proximity to some of Louisiana's largest and most diverse populations means that any education and interpretation would be unique, impactful, and significant to any interested learner. Education opportunities serving a variety of youth and adult audiences could easily meet the needs and interests of communities that use the site. Whether observing the changing botanical diversity on a transect of the Wax Lake delta islands,	3.1 Diversity and quality of training education and interpretation of opportunities: A measure of the variety and quality of training, education, and interpretation opportunities (i.e., ecological, archaeological, cultural, historical, etc.) provided by the site (core and buffer areas) for the different target audiences. The assumption is that a candidate site with a diversity of such opportunities of high quality will be utilized to a greater extent than one with fewer opportunities. 3 Point. The site has numerous different training, education, and interpretation opportunities of high quality. 2 Points. The site has several significantly different educational opportunities of good quality. 1 Point. The site has few significant educational opportunities.

	studying the fauna surrounding Marsh Island, learning about local residents' adaptation to living with water in the region, or observing the water management structures that influence the region's development, the Atchafalaya offers varied learning opportunities. For example, the hardwood swamps within the Atchafalaya Floodway represent an opportunity to learn about the evolution of an ecological system in the face of water management for the sake of flood control. Brackish marshes around western Vermilion Bay and the growing coast around the mouth of Atchafalaya River and Wax Lake Outlet are exceptional opportunities for collaborative learning with early childhood and university partners. They provide the potential for education about the dynamic coastal conditions in the region and how they compare to the rate of land loss across the east and west sections of the vast Louisiana coastline. The relative stability of the estuarine lands and water bodies provides a consistent site for field study, while the ever-changing nature of the sections of growing coastline provides new and challenging learning opportunities as it evolves over time. When visiting the region, K-12 students have a wide range of field trips to engage in hands-on learning with topics ranging from ornithological studies, coastal biology, engineering, geologic processes to resource management, US history, US geography, and cultural anthropology. Much of coastal Louisiana is engineered and the Atchafalaya is an ideal place to discuss the complex relationships of society and natural systems. From the Old River Control Structure in Concordia Parish controlling the volumes of water in the Atchafalaya and Mississippi Rivers, to the Morganza floodway levees' management of floodwaters, to the levees and floodwalls that protect the coastal communities, huge investments in the	0 Points. The site has insignificant educational opportunities.

	interest of managing natural systems have fundamentally altered the hydrology and ecology of the basin and altered livelihoods for surrounding communities. Based on the facts laid out above, there is no doubt that the Atchafalaya is an ideal natural outdoor classroom for all audiences. Programming designed for this site would offer meaningful place-based education and interpretation that just cannot be done anywhere else and thus have a substantial value.	
	The Atchafalaya region, centrally located along the Louisiana coast is the site of active delta-building processes. The Atchafalaya delta provides relatively short travel distances from all of Louisiana's major coastal zone cities and most of Louisiana's major universities and largest school districts. The alluvial floodplain region of the Atchafalaya Basin is located between Lafayette and Baton Rouge with each city being less than 75 miles from any point in the proposed NERR and Lafayette being located with the Vermilion basin if that were to be part of the NERR. New Orleans is within 85 miles of any point in the NERR and smaller cities of Houma, Thibodaux are closer with Morgan City within the basin. These cities are home to communities that represent the diversity of Louisiana's citizenry – including significant African American, Acadian, and Native Americans. The proposed site will encompass a total ~3.3 million people within 100 miles and ~2.2 million people within 75 miles which is estimated as a reasonable day trip for school groups. There are 860 schools with > 456,000 students located within 75 miles of the Atchafalaya Basin. This population includes some of Louisiana's largest universities (including	3.2 Diversity and availability of target audiences: A measure of the diversity and availability of target audiences (e.g., user groups, resource managers, residents, environmental groups, decision makers, teachers and students, and the general public) which may routinely utilize the site (accessible during a single day trip) for training, education, and interpretation. The assumption is that a candidate site with a variety of available target audiences will be utilized to a greater extent than one with fewer target audiences. 3 Points. The site is suitable for a variety of target audiences that are readily available (accessible during a single day trip). 2 Points. The site is suitable for a moderate number of target audiences that are readily available (accessible during a single day trip). 1 Point. The site is suitable for few target audiences that are available (accessible during a single day trip). 0 Points. The site is so remote or inaccessible that it is not suitable for any target audience.

	HBCUs), community and technical colleges, K-12 school districts, major urban and rural population centers, and popular tourist centers and attractions.	
	The Atchafalaya River is the nation's largest active land-building river delta and thus, has been the site of scientific and engineering studies for decades. Changing flora and fauna habitats, sediment deposition patterns, coastal protection technologies, and water management methods have been studied by public agencies and universities. While abundant in natural and cultural resources, the region lacks some of the infrastructure needed to support large groups within some of the more remote reaches of the coast. Restrooms, large-group dorms and meeting facilities would be beneficial additions to facilitate more isolated areas of the region. Planned facilities in Morgan City, Henderson, Bayou Sorrel, and a number of other sites spaced throughout the area could potentially leverage the NERR designation on top of existing investments to stimulate education and research when properly coordinated across the wide array of public, non-profit, and private stakeholders. This combined with already existing partnerships with the Atchafalaya National Heritage Area (and all of its commission), Audubon Delta, The Nature Conservancy, LA Sea Grant, LUMCON, multiple universities and community/technical colleges, Barataria-Terrebonne National Estuary Program (BTNEP), USGS, Restore and Retreat, Inc., Restore the Mississippi River Coalition, Boy Scouts of America, St. Mary Excel, and the municipalities within the Basin provide a number of resources to aid in this mission (See letters of support). These include the Atchafalaya Heritage Area Welcome Center (I-10, exit 121), TNC's Atchafalaya Conservation Center, a 120' barge complex located on 9 acres of land along Bayou Sorrel, that is a meeting	3.3 Availability of facilities: The degree to which the site (core and buffer areas) has existing facilities or potential sites for future facilities that can be used by staff, researchers, classes, and training groups (e.g., administrative building space, dormitories, labs, interpretive centers, trails and boardwalks, boat ramps, etc.). The assumption is that, due to limited reserve construction funds, a candidate site with existing facilities can meet the objectives of the Reserve System program sooner and more completely than a site without existing facilities. The availability of other sources of construction funds should be considered as part of this criterion. 3 Points. The site has established structures and facilities that can be used for reserve activities. 2 Points. The site has limited established structures or facilities that can be used for reserve activities. 1 Point. The site has excellent potential for the development of facilities for reserve activities. 0 Points. The site has limited established structures and limited potential for the development facilities for reserve activities.

	space for scientists, students, community members, and others interested in furthering conservation in the Basin, and camp at Audubon's Rainey Sanctuary. Existing facilities in Morgan City (e.g. Cajun Coast Visitors Center, Port, etc.) have been offered to the NERR with additional current and planned facilities (described above) distributed throughout the basin could provide a series of locations, facilities, and access points for an Atchafalaya NERR. The region also contains a large number of state parks and boat launches in and near the proposed NERR that will great aid in achieving its mission.	
	It is a common perception that the Atchafalaya Basin is "remote" which was highlighted in the above discussion (section 1.7) of there being limited development within the basin. However, many might be surprised to learn that an Atchafalaya Basin NERR site will actually be highly accessible to researchers, educators, and resource management decision makers. The alluvial floodplain region of the Atchafalaya Basin is located between Lafayette and Baton Rouge with each city being less than 75 miles from any point in the proposed NERR and Lafayette being located with the Vermilion basin if that were to be part of the NERR. New Orleans is within 85 miles of any point in the NERR and smaller cities of Houma, Thibodaux are closer with Morgan City within the basin. These cities are home to the largest research universities in the state (University of Louisiana Lafayette, Louisiana State University in Baton Rouge, Tulane University, University of New Orleans, Nicholls State University), multiple HBCUs (Dillard, University, Xavier University, Southern University Baton Rouge, and Southern University New Orleans) and the Louisiana Universities Marine Consortium (LUMCON).	3.4 Proximity and accessibility of site to researchers, educators, and resource management decision makers: A measure of (1) the relative proximity of the site to urban centers, K-12 schools, research and education institutions, and resource management agencies that may routinely utilize the site and (2) the adequacy of the roads or points for boat access at the site. The underlying assumption is that the proximity and accessibility of the site will enhance its utilization for education, research, monitoring, and resource protection purposes. 3 Points. The site can be utilized by the above-listed entities during a single day trip. There are good roads or points for boat access at the site. 2 Points. The site is relatively isolated, and utilization would require an overnight stay from any of the above-listed entities, but accommodations are readily available. There are adequate roads or points for boat access at the site. 1 Point. The site is relatively isolated and reasonable accommodations for an overnight stay to utilize the site are limited. There are limited roads or points for boat access at the site. 0 Points. The site is extremely isolated and accommodations to utilize the site are not

	The USGS is also located in Lafayette and several agencies and NGOs have a large presence including NERR partners Audubon Delta and TNC. Interstate I-10 passes through the upper basin between Lafayette and Baton Rouge and the Atchafalaya National Heritage Area Welcome Center and a public boat launch are located just off the interstate. Highway 90 runs through the lower part of the basin passing through Morgan City, Franklin, New Iberia between Houma and Lafayette with several boat launches available along the route. In total there are ~150 boat launches within the basin including several on state and/or public lands throughout the proposed NERR.	available. There are inadequate or no roads, or points for boat access at the site.
	The Atchafalaya Basin is a short commute from most of Louisiana's major coastal research universities as well as number of other research and education institutions (K-12, community and technical colleges, agency, and NGOs) with well-established and proven programs that can be leveraged to achieve the research, education, and training mission of the proposed Atchafalaya NERR. Within the area, there are a number of existing interpretive signage programs including the Water Heritage Trail (http://waterheritage.atchafalaya.org/) [which includes hiking, birding, paddling, driving tours, etc.] and interpretive signs within the state parks and Wildlife Management Areas. There is a tremendous opportunity for education and interpretation around the connectivity of the upper basin to the active land-building delta and the value of land preservation for water management, water quality, and water literacy. Through the town hall process it became clear that even in areas like Morgan City and St. Mary's parish that have tremendous interest and support for locating a NERR in the Atchafalaya Basin, there is a	3.5 Value of site for environmental education and interpretation programs: It is likely that sites with existing education programs have the necessary infrastructure in place to further expand their programs, thus it is valuable to rate sites based on the presence of these programs. However, in an area as large as the Louisiana Coastal Area, numerous excellent sites exist where virtually no education or interpretation programs have been developed. Thus, the potential for education and interpretation program development should be considered as well according to the diversity and quality of educational and interpretive program opportunities. Some suggestions to evaluate potential for education and interpretation program development include the following: • Number of educational institutions in the watershed of the proposed alternative; • Existing educational programs in the area that would likely take advantage of a NERR site; • Level of ability to access a proposed alternative by school groups; or • Existing facilities to host classroom education and training events.

	great need for more opportunities to learn about and have access to the diversity of the region. Research, monitoring, restoration, and education activities are being conducted throughout the proposed NERR by public and private universities but also by state and federal agencies (e.g. LDWF, LA DNR, CPRA, LA Sea Grant, USGS, BTNEP, etc.) and NGOs (e.g. Audubon Delta, The Nature Conservancy, etc.). Many of these groups have well established education and outreach activities currently taking place within the basin and have expressed interest in engaging with a NERR. Additionally, Atchafalaya NERR partner LUMCON serves as both the state's marine science lab and as host to the consortium of all of the public and private universities and colleges including community and technical colleges) in Louisiana with interests in coastal and marine science research and education and has a long track record of funded projects that focus on broader impact activities. Additionally, the Nicholls State University Coastal Center and the Boy Scouts of America Education and Research Center currently being designed represent tremendous investments in facilities and programming that will provide value for expanding education and interpretation within the NERR.	3 Points. The site has a long history of education and interpretation, or the site offers excellent potential for future education and interpretation program development. 2 Points. The site has a good but short history of education and interpretation but is otherwise well suited or offers good potential for future education and interpretation program development. 1 Point. The site has had only a minor amount of education and interpretation being conducted, or the site offers fair potential for future education and interpretation program development. 0 Points. The site offers no significant potential for education and interpretation program development
Score	**4.0 Acquisition and Management Consideration**	
	One of the great advantages of the Atchafalaya Basin as a NERR site is that it only require state lands. There are > 10 state or federally designated wildlife areas throughout the basin that contain large, intact parcels that are not divided among landowners (see Map 3.1). Of the ~1.6 million acres designated as the Atchafalaya Estuarine Zone by the LaNERR selection process, there are ~750,000 acres of state-owned lands and ~300,000 acres of state-owned water bodies. These state-	4.1 Publicly owned lands and feasibility of land acquisition: The degree of control on activities allowed on proposed land and waters of the candidate site (core and buffer areas) is regulated by conditions of land ownership. Land ownership by state, federal government, or local governments, or environmental interest groups, and the degree to which owners have an interest in participating in a research reserve are important to realize the missions of a LaNERR. The assumption is that the degree of control needed to maintain the site to meet the missions of a NERR increases with publicly and privately owned land, along with the chances of purchasing additional areas, increase value of a NERR candidate site. In the

	owned lands and water bodies account for > 65% of the total area in the Basin and span its entire N-S and E-W gradients. An Atchafalaya Basin NERR would not contain all of these lands/waters but the state ownership of potential lands makes the development of a NERR very straightforward.	combination of ownership described below, no more than 49% of the area within the boundary can be federal lands. 3 Points. A large percentage (more than 50 percent) of the site (core and buffer areas) is currently owned by the state, federal, or local governments, or environmental groups, representing significant opportunities for future land acquisition. 2 Points. State, federal, or local governments, or environmental groups own 25 to 50 percent of the site with the remainder in the hands of a few owners representing some degree of opportunities for future land acquisition. 1 Point. State, federal, or local governments or environmental groups own < 25 percent of the site with the remainder in the hands of a few owners representing limited opportunities for future land acquisition. 0 Points. The site is owned by a large number of owners with little interest in supporting opportunities for future land acquisition.
	The establishment of a NERR site in the Atchafalaya Basin will be compatible with existing management practices and consumptive and non-consumptive uses in the proposed lands and water bodies of the NERR. The extensive number and size of state-owned lands/waters of the target ecosystem types available to be included within an Atchafalaya Basin NERR also the selection of those that are best suited for the NERR system. The majority of the state lands proposed for potential inclusion in a NERR are Wildlife Management Areas operated by the Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries (LDWF). The following rules and regulations concerning the management, protection and harvest of wildlife have been officially approved and adopted by the Louisiana Wildlife and Fisheries Commission in accordance with the authority provided in Louisiana Revised Statutes of 1950, Section 109 of Title 56. Failure to comply with these regulations will subject the individual to citation and/or expulsion from the WMA. Persons using WMAs or other LDWF administered lands for any purpose other than hunting must possess one of the following: a valid Wild Louisiana Stamp, a valid Louisiana fishing license, or a valid Louisiana hunting	4.2. Compatibility with existing management practices and consumptive and non-consumptive uses: A measure of the degree to which existing management practices (e.g., habitat manipulations, restoration projects, best management practices, wildlife management areas, leased bottoms, conservation easements, etc.) and historic and current consumptive and non-consumptive uses might conflict with planned and future management practices implemented under a research reserve program. The assumption is that sites with fewer conflicts are more likely to maintain both public support and the integrity of the site (core and buffer areas). NOTE: This factor should be measured with focus on how present management practices for both land and water in core and buffer areas support both the mission of a NERR and reduce potential conflict with how the public expectations align with the expected usage of the candidate site to meet the mission of a research reserve site. It should be measured with a balance of how the site protects natural and cultural resources against reasonable access by the public to other areas of the site. 3 Points. Existing management practices and consumptive and non-consumptive uses of the site would not conflict with any foreseeable management policy of a research reserve 2 Points. Due to the presence of proportionately small areas of unique habitat and endangered species or threats to the integrity of ecosystem, there is the potential for limited restrictions on existing management practices or consumptive and non-consumptive uses of a site

	license with persons younger than 16 or older than 60 years of age being exempt from this requirement. Monitoring, data collection, and education and interpretation are all compatible with existing uses on WMAs and on state lands and as part of the site's inclusion in a NERR will involve agency coordination for any activities proposed for these public lands. The designation of a Louisiana NERR will not add any new regulations to state-owned lands or impose regulations on privately-owned lands.	1 Point. Due to the presence of areas of unique habitat and endangered species and threats to the integrity of the ecosystem, some restrictions on existing management practices or consumptive and non-consumptive uses of a site are likely 0 Points. Large areas of unique habitat and threats to the integrity of the ecosystem will require restrictions on existing management practices or consumptive and non-consumptive uses of a site.
	The Atchafalaya Basin contains numerous, large state-owned lands and waters that can be included in a potential NERR site. The size of these tracts would allow for inclusion of both core and buffer areas to be completely (100%) within state lands/waters which would greatly aid in sustaining the site's natural resources for long-term research, education, and resource protection. Should the decision be made in the final design of the reserve to only include core areas within the state lands, then the Atchafalaya Basin still has many advantages. First, as described in section 1.7 above, the Basin has very limited development within it and most of it is restricted to a limited region of the basin that will not likely be adjacent to core areas in a LaNERR. Further, the core and buffer areas identified for inclusion within the NERR are public lands bordered by private lands. Because of their location within the floodway and coastal zone, the majority of these adjacent private lands are operated in a method compatible with NERR activities on public lands. The Atchafalaya NERR team intends to continue to build relationships with private landowners (many of whom have already expressed interest in working with the NERR—see attached letters) to maintain quality and quantity of programming on the initial NERR site and to work toward	<u>4.3 Compatibility with adjacent land use:</u> A measure of the potential conflicts between management practices on a candidate site (core and buffer areas) with land-use practices on adjacent lands to the site (core and buffer areas). It is also a measure of the adequacy of land-use regulations, plans, or other risk management controls (e.g. sufficient regulatory control in the event of an impact) to sustain the site's natural resources for long-term research, education, and resource protection. The assumption is that a candidate site with compatible land-use practices on adjacent lands is more likely to maintain the integrity of the reserve. NOTE: This issue should be evaluated relative to the potential for present or future conflicts with adjacent lands and the potential to designate buffer areas around a site. 3 Points. A large percentage of the land adjacent to the site is not currently used for activities that might impact the site (and therefore, may be obtainable as a buffer) or the land-use practices on adjacent lands would not have any negative impacts on a possible research reserve. 2 Points. A large to moderate percentage of the land adjacent to the site is not currently used for activities that might negatively impact the site, or the land-use practices on adjacent lands either could be negotiated or would have only minor impacts a possible research reserve. 1 Point. Some of the land adjacent to the site is currently used for activities that would have negative impacts on a possible research reserve and may not be negotiable. 0 Points. A large percentage of the land adjacent to the site is currently used for activities that would have negative impacts on a possible research reserve and would lead to conflicts.

	potential expansion of activities into areas valuable for research, monitoring, & education.	
	One of the great advantages of the Atchafalaya Basin as a potential NERR site is that a reserve only requires state lands. There are > 10 state or federally designated wildlife areas throughout the basin that contain large, intact parcels that are not divided among landowners (see Map 3.1). Of the ~1.6 million acres designated as the Atchafalaya Estuarine Zone by the LaNERR selection process, there are ~750,000 acres of state-owned lands and ~300,000 acres of state-owned water bodies. These state-owned lands and water bodies account for > 65% of the total area in the Basin and span its entire N-S and E-W gradients. An ARB NERR would not contain all of these lands/waters but the state ownership of potential lands makes the development of a NERR very straightforward.	4.4 Land ownership A measure of the degree to which the property used to establish core and buffer areas of a candidate site is divided among landowners (e.g., divided into fewer parcels or owned by many agencies/individuals). The assumption is that a candidate site with fewer property owners will be easier to control types and levels of activities and offers opportunity for future acquisitions. 3 Points. The property is relatively undivided among agencies or individuals. 2 Points. The property is divided among few property owners. 1 Point. The property is divided among many property owners.
	Any LaNERR site within the Atchafalaya Basin will have its core (and likely buffer) areas completely located within located on state-owned lands and water bodies. Wildlife Enforcement Agents routinely patrol public lands and waters and Wildlife Management Areas to enforce proper uses and ensure public safety. These agents monitor access to permitted sites and ensure adequate licensure based upon prescribed activity, and that proper wildlife harvesting techniques and quantities are being followed. With these activities in place already, adequate protection of core (and buffer) areas for the proposed Atchafalaya NERR site currently exists.	4.5. Enforcement and protection of site area management practices: A measure of the degree to which land and water ownership has enforcement capabilities to protect and limit the types and levels of activities that are inconsistent with the management plans described in Site Criterion 4.2 above. This degree of control is based on size, geography, proximity to adjacent residential development and present management practices and controls. The assumption is that the integrity and security of a potential research reserve site can be better maintained with a higher level of enforcement and protection of core habitat areas to enforce management practices (such as a wildlife management area, or guidelines associated with private lands) that protects the consistency with how land and water will promote the mission of a NERR. 3 Points. Site areas are strongly protected and enforced to the degree necessary to meet management practices. 2 Points. Site areas are moderately protected and enforced to the degree necessary to meet management practices. 1 Point. Site areas are minimally protected and enforced to the degree necessary to meet management practices.

		0 Points. Site areas are not protected and enforced to the degree necessary to meet management practices.
	A LaNERR site located in the Atchafalaya Basin is one that is highly accessible to a large number of diverse stakeholders as described in other sections of the proposal. Specifically, the basin has many existing access points to support NERR programs as well as visitation and recreation activities though the level of access is not as high in some of the more remote regions of the basin. In general, most of the proposed NERR (spanning from the alluvial floodplain region in the north to the river deltas and northern edge of many of the estuaries are highly accessible by well over 100 public and private boat launches spanning from Krotz Springs in St. Landry Parish to Burns Point Recreational Area on East Cote Blanche Bay and Cypremort Point on Vermilion Bay. Recreational boating, along with ecotourism through private tour operators is common from the north to the south ends of the basin. Proximity of access points to populated areas varies greatly within the region, as most of the population does not live within the levees of the floodway. In most cases, boat access is within a few miles of municipalities. Water access points are readily accessible and well-signed from roads and major highways.	4.6. Land and water access: A measure of the degree to which land and water access to the site support visitation and recreational value within guidelines of existing management plans. This degree of access is based on points of access (present and proposed), size, geography, proximity to adjacent residential development and present management practices and controls. 3 Points. The site has many existing and planned access points to support visitation and recreation that are very consistent with the management plans. 2 Points. The site has several existing and planned access points to support visitation and recreation that are very consistent with the management plans.. 1 Point. The site has few existing and planned access points to support visitation and recreation that are very consistent with the management plans. 0 Points. The site has no existing and planned access points to support visitation and recreation that are very consistent with the management plans.
	The vast majority of the Atchafalaya Basin is either state or federally owned land with little urban or industrial development. As described above, the limited development that exists in the basin is largely restricted to a narrow strip near highway 90. The lands proposed for possible inclusion in the Atchafalaya NERR exist within the floodway and coastal zone that sees tremendous temporal and spatial variation in water levels. The annual flood pulse limits development within the region to areas outside of the flood zone and levees. As a result, the pattern of development over the last several decades has been outside of the levees with most occurring on previously agricultural land. This trend is not	4.7. Future urban and industrial development plans A measure of the potential level of future impacts of land development (urban and industry) in areas on or adjacent to a candidate site that would impact core and buffer areas. The assumption is that a candidate site with minimal to no development plans on-site and on adjacent lands to the candidate site is more likely to maintain the integrity of the reserve. NOTE: This issue involves the degree to which adjacent lands are currently being used or may be attainable as buffer areas for the research reserve. 3 Points.: A large percentage (more than 50 percent) of the land adjacent to the site is currently undeveloped or is not likely to be developed for urban and industrial usage (based on present urban and industrial activity). This large percentage of adjacent lands is very unlikely to be developed in the near future for urban and industrial

	likely to change in the future as the water, sediment and other resources in the watershed are highly managed. The proposed lands and water bodies for the Atchafalaya NERR and its programs and activities are all state-owned with buffer areas also being state or federally-owned. These lands are therefore not anticipated to see impacts from additional land development in the future. Most private lands within the floodway and along coastal Atchafalaya are also expected to remain as they are today with minimal impacts due to their locations in areas at risk due to flood hazard with many of the largest landowners already expressing an interest in being part of a NERR as well.	development (e.g., consisting of marginally developable property, such as wetlands, which could be obtained as buffer). 2 Points. A moderate percentage (between 25 and 50 percent) of the land adjacent to the site is currently undeveloped (urban and industrial) or is not likely to be developed for urban or industrial usage (based on present or expected activity). The adjacent lands are unlikely to be developed in the near future for urban and industrial development (e.g., consisting of marginally developable property, such as wetlands, which could be obtained as buffer). 1 Point. A small to moderate percentage (10 to 25 percent) of the land adjacent to the site is currently undeveloped or is not likely to be developed for urban or industrial usage (based on present or expected activity). 0 Points. A large percentage (more than 50 percent) of the land adjacent to the site is developed (urban or industrial) and the area is likely to continue to be developed in the future.
	<u>5.0 Ability to conduct research on resilience and climate change impacts</u>	
	Few places on earth are experiencing such rapid change as coastal Louisiana. Home to nearly half of the wetlands in the continental United States, Louisiana is losing more than 45 km^2 of wetland habitat to subsidence and sea level rise annually. This unprecedented coastal change is matched only by the human effort to abate it. To date, the CPRA has sponsored over 100 projects to restore or create marsh habitats using more than 120,000,000 m^3 of dredged sediment to build nearly 20,000 hectares of new land. The Atchafalaya Basin has been the host to over 20 Coastal Wetlands Planning, Protection and Restoration Act (CWPPRA) restoration sites and is home to numerous Coastwide Reference Monitoring locations that are maintained by USGS and CPRA. With more than $21 billion in secured funding for restoration over the next decade, human manipulation of the coastal environment will also be an important driver of coastal change for the foreseeable future,	<u>5.1 Coastal resilience research</u>: How suitable is the site (and hydrologic basin where it is found) to support research on coastal resilience including both natural, cultural, and social systems. This includes how climate change may amplify impacts of land-use change, increases in the vulnerability of the habitats of the site (and hydrologic basin) to relative sea level rise, and other climate change impacts. Research focuses include adaptations of natural, cultural, and social systems to climate change impacts, including restoration and protection projects. 3 Points. The site (and hydrologic basin) demonstrates high value in researching adaptation of natural, cultural, and social systems to climate change and relative sea level rise including research on adaptations that reduce vulnerability. 2 Points. The site (and hydrologic basin) demonstrates moderate value in researching adaptation of natural, cultural, and social systems to climate change and relative sea level rise including research on adaptations that reduce vulnerability. 1 Point. The site (and hydrologic basin) demonstrates low value in researching adaptation of natural, cultural, and social systems to climate change and relative sea level rise including research on adaptations that reduce vulnerability.

	touching every aspect of life in Louisiana from culture to economy. The Atchafalaya NERR offers an incredible opportunity to support these massive restoration efforts by providing the archetype for a future with action. As the only active land building delta proposed as a NERR site, the Atchafalaya and Wax Lake delta system will provide a deeper understanding of how major restoration efforts such as the mid-Barataria diversion will operate under changing climate change. The site will provide research and experimental opportunities to understand the land building process and how deltas respond to rising seas and storm events. With the highly managed flow regimes it will provide managers. To address issues related to modifications to the natural flow regime of the AR and the resulting sedimentation and water quality issues within the basin and how they affect the coastal communities, Governor Edwards created the Atchafalaya River Basin Restoration & Enhancement Task Force (ARBRE Task Force) which is comprised of 20 key state and local stakeholders as well as five federal nonvoting members.	
	The Atchafalaya river, alluvial floodplain, and associated deltaic and estuarine system is one of the few systems in Louisiana not experiencing rapid land and habitat loss due to climate change, sea level rise and subsidence. In fact, many of the habitats that define this region have expanded and remain resilient since the ladder part of the 20th century. The baldcypress and bottomland hardwood habitats that dominate the alluvial flood plain portion of the system have expanded since the 1980s. During that same period, large freshwater marsh and deltaic habitats have formed in and around the Wax Lake outlet. Since 2001 there has been an 82% increase in forested wetlands and 65% increase in freshwater marsh habitats in the region. While some portion of	5.2 This criterion focuses on the ability to accommodate shifts in habitat as sea level, inundation or other climate-change impacts occur. Is there sufficient ability of the system to accommodate these shifts within the site boundaries and/or is there an ability to expand the boundaries to allow for maintenance of an ecological unit. This includes consideration for additional property acquisition. 3 points. Reserve boundary allows for habitat migration and several areas adjacent to the boundary provide an option for expansion to accommodate habitat shifts and boundary expansion. 2 points. Reserve boundary allows for some habitat migration and some areas adjacent to the boundary provide an option for expansion to accommodate habitat shifts and boundary expansion.

	salt marsh habitats have been converted to freshwater marsh since 2001, the relative proportion of habitats in the lower part of the basin have remained static and overall the system has gained approximately 50 km2 of land since the installation of the major water control structures on the Atchafalaya River. Map 3.5 shows how the proposed Atchafalaya NERR site allows for the study of marsh loss with some regions displaying losses in fringing wetlands, but the rate of loss over the past century is much slower than in many other regions of Louisiana with some areas gaining land as a result of the river outlets. This combination of changes over time make the Atchafalaya an ideal location for a NERR focused on studying climate change impacts as its boundaries allow for habitat migration and shifts within the reserve.	1 point. Reserve boundary allows for little habitat migration and little to no areas adjacent to the boundary provides an option for expansion to accommodate habitat shifts and boundary expansion. 0 points. Reserve boundary does not allow for habitat migration and there are no areas adjacent to the boundary that provide an option for expansion to accommodate habitat shifts and boundary expansion.
	As described in section 5.2 above, the ecosystems of the Atchafalaya Basin are not experiencing climate change induced habitat and land loss to the extent of other regions in Louisiana and in fact are gaining land in many areas of the Basin. This higher degree of habitat stability is an important asset to providing reliable platforms for NERR programs and activities. At this stage of the LaNERR site selection progress, the identification of specific reserve facilities and infrastructure has not been conducted but the proposed site having comparably low rates of land and habitat loss (even extensive areas of gain) bodes well for likelihood to identify locations for facilities that will be resilient and adaptable to climate change. These are important considerations when the NERR facilities/locations are ultimately chosen.	5.3 Infrastructure and Access: A changing climate is resulting in a variety of impacts that differ based on geography and conditions within geography. Reserves are designated to ensure a stable platform for research, address significant coastal management issues, enhance public awareness and understanding and promote use of the reserves consistent with the purposes outlined. Access to infrastructure that supports these purposes is key to achieving the mission of the reserve system. This criterion focuses on the expected vulnerability of existing facilities (including visitor centers, labs, storage facilities) proposed for use by the reserve to remain viable and accessible taking into account the most relevant climate change stressors in the locale. This accounts for adaptive strategies that are and/or may be in place to mitigate anticipated stressors. 3 points. Facility(ies) resilient and adaptable under high impact climate change scenarios given current understanding of vulnerability 2 points. Facilities resilient and adaptable under medium impact climate change stressor/threat scenarios 1 point. Facilities unlikely to be resilient and adaptable under medium/low impact climate change stressor/threat scenarios 0 points. Facilities vulnerable and not resilient under any climate change scenarios

	Public access infrastructure within a LaNERR site located in the Atchafalaya Basin is as resilient and adaptable to climate change as any location in coastal Louisiana can be as it is one of the most buffered location to climate change impacts (e.g. suffered least land loss and actually has areas of significant land gain) in Louisiana (also see Map 3.5). An additional reason public access is likely to remain viable in an Atchafalaya NERR is that many of the boat launches are associated with the large flood protection levees in the basin.	5.4. Public Access Resilience: This criterion focuses on the ability to access the resources of the reserve. This includes access to water via docks and boat launches; access to interpretive and educational experiences via trails, pavilions, amphitheaters, as well as access to existing recreational and professional opportunities in the resource. 3 points. Public access infrastructure is resilient and adaptable under high impact climate change scenarios given current understanding of vulnerability 2 points. Public access infrastructure resilient and adaptable under medium impact climate change stressor/threat scenarios 1 point. Public access infrastructure unlikely to be resilient and adaptable under medium/low impact climate change stressor/threat scenarios 0 points. Public access infrastructure vulnerable and not resilient under any climate change scenarios
	6.0 LaNERR Partnerships:	Partnerships should be relevant and aid the program in achieving their goals, reaching target audiences, and developing and delivering key messages. They increase the resilience of the reserve and its ability to work with the local community to address climate change and impacts from other important stressors. Partnerships can increase the ability to address research needs and gaps, reach education and public engagement goals, and provide access to facilities and field opportunities. Institutional partnerships can also provide administrative services, support leveraging of resources, and reduce program costs. These organizations or third parties can also assist with fund-raising, grant development and management, and management of program income (ex. Friends Groups and NERRA). The strength of the reserve's partnerships and potential for partnerships will be evaluated based on the following:
	The proposed Atchafalaya NERR is supported by a growing number of partnerships. The diversity of viewpoints sought to understand what makes a good deltaic LaNERR site and how it best serves not only the national network of NERR sites but also the interests and needs of the local communities is highlighted by the construction of the Atchafalaya Basin NERR proposal	6.1 Potential to develop partnerships: This criterion focuses on the site's ability to create new partnerships and strengthen existing partnerships to achieve their goals, reach target audiences, develop and deliver key messages, and address relevant coastal management issues. This can be demonstrated by potential partner interest, geography, etc. with a focus on the outcomes of the partnership, not the number or name of organizations. This will be measured by the following metrics:

	development team. The team consists of members representing Louisiana Universities Marine Consortium, Atchafalaya National Heritage Area, University of Louisiana Lafayette, The Nature Conservancy, Louisiana State University Baton Rouge, Louisiana Sea Grant, Nicholls State University, LSU Ag Center Wetlands and Outreach Program, Audubon Delta, USGS, Restore the Mississippi River Coalition, South Louisiana Community College, and Restore or Retreat, Inc with members that focus on diverse fields of research, education and outreach, communications, social science, conservation, and coalition and team building, among other backgrounds. These organizations formed the initial core of the growing number of partners in support of the development of LaNERR in the Atchafalaya Basin. The current list of formal partners also includes St. Mary Excel, Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries, Barataria-Terrebonne National Estuary Program (BTNEP), Boy Scouts of America, Purple Martin Conservation Initiative, McIlhenny Company, Rainey Conservation Alliance (Vermilion Corporation, McIlhenny Company, Audobon, Sagrera Estates), Atchafalaya River Basin Restoration & Enhancement (ARBE) Task Force, and municipalities and organizations located in the basin (see letters). The ARBE Task Force further includes members of CPRA, the Governor's Policy Director, Secretary of the Department of Wildlife and Fisheries, Secretary of the Department of Natural Resources, Governor's Advisory Commission, two representatives (east and west basin), two landowners, two representatives of conservation organizations, one representative from energy transportation, one representative from the navigation sector, executive director of the Port of Morgan City, two representatives of the commercial fishing industry (east and west basin), one representative from the	• Existing MOUs or agreements explaining shared resources such as facilities and salaries • Memberships of key individuals to professional organizations such as National Marine Educators Association, Coastal and Estuarine Research Federation, Society of Wetland Scientists, other state professional organizations, research organizations, local or regional consortia, etc. • Recent history of key personnel participation in multi-institutional grants, publications, and projects • Letters from existing informal partners about past projects, their outcomes, and organizational structure • Letters from potential partners focusing on how the partner could complement or contribute to the reserve goals. This letter should include information such as historical context for partnership and their vision for contributing to the reserve mission. 3 Points. The site has strong potential to develop and strengthen new and existing partnerships of high quality evidenced by metrics stated above. 2 Points. The site has potential for new partnerships of good quality to develop. 1 Point. The site has potential for partnership development. 0 Points. The site has insignificant potential for partnerships.

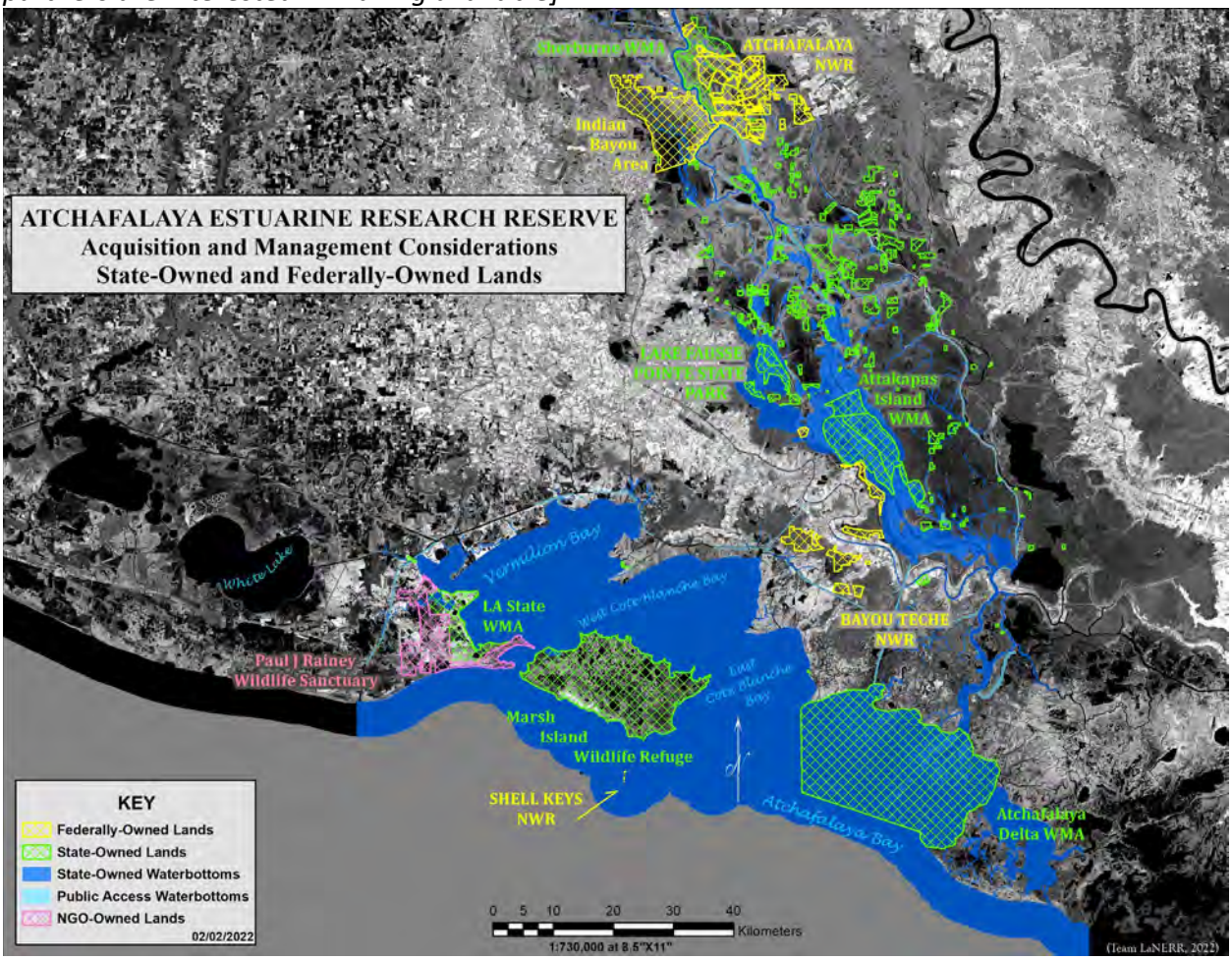
	recreational fishing industry, and one representative from academia along with 5 non-voting members of federal agencies (USACE, USFWS, NRCS, USGS, and EPA). Our core proposal team, and more broadly through our partners, have a long and rich history of collaborating on formal and informal projects and represent a wide range of memberships in relevant groups, organizations, panels, societies. In summary, the partnerships for the Atchafalaya NERR are already diverse and a strength of the proposal and continue to grow as the network continues to communicate and interact with a broader audience of stakeholders.	
	The Atchafalaya NERR proposal team includes LA Sea Grant staff and has been working extensively with LA Sea Grant extension staff to reach diverse stakeholders and community members of the Atchafalaya Basin as the proposed site develops. Many members of the leadership team have a long history of conducting funded research and collaborating on publications and projects with Louisiana and National Sea Grant. Additionally, many members have had similar long histories of working with NOAA and divisions of NOAA (e.g. NOAA RESTORE) on grants, projects, reports and publications. We also have a history of conducting research and completing projects in and publishing papers and reports with members of other NERR sites including several projects that involve collaborations across the NERR network. Our team and the future NERR will continue to work with the Gulf of Mexico Coastal Ocean Observing System (GCOOS) whose funding is competitively awarded through the US IOOS office (under NOAA). The current leadership team and the future Atchafalaya NEER will continue to work with the NOAA Weather Service and Climate Office.	6.2 Internal NOAA Partnerships: This is a measure of the number and quality of partnerships with other NOAA entities that already exist within a program or that have the potential to develop based on common goals, geographic proximity, etc. The assumption is that a candidate site with a high diversity of existing partnerships and partnership potential will have opportunities to leverage support and create sustainable programs more so than one with fewer partnerships. Some examples include Sea Grant, Coastal Programs, Marine Sanctuaries, Weather Service, Climate Office and other line offices of NOAA. This will be measured by the following metrics: • Existing MOUs or agreements explaining shared resources such as facilities and salaries • Recent history of key personnel participation in grants, publications, and projects with NOAA 3 Points. The site has a history of NOAA partnerships and there is strong potential to develop and strengthen new and existing ones of high quality evidenced by the metrics stated above. 2 Points. The site has several partnerships in place and there is potential for new partnerships of good quality to develop. 1 Point. The site has potential for partnership development. 0 Points. The site has insignificant potential for partnerships.

	The proposed Atchafalaya NERR already has developed a large and diverse group of partners as described above which already is a strength of the Atchafalaya Basin as a potential addition to the NERR network. Many of these are detailed in sections 6.2 and 6.3. To date, the focus has largely been on developing within state partnerships. These will continue to grow as the site development process continues with likely targets for partner expansion being increased engagement with state agencies, state parks, and local organizations and groups. At the federal level, the NERR team already has developed a partnership with the Barataria-Terrebonne National Estuary Program, various programs in NOAA, as well as other federal agencies. Given the extensive presence of large tracts of state-owned lands in the proposed Atchafalaya NERR, we have not yet reached out to the number of federal lands in the basin which includes National Wildlife Refuges and Parks. There is a great potential for the Atchafalaya NERR to have a very diverse set of partners that will provide opportunities to leverage support and create and sustain important programs and activities to achieve the goals and mission of the Atchafalaya NERR.	6.3 Diversity of Partnerships: This is a measure of the ability to reach diverse audiences through existing partnerships or potential partnerships based on common goals and geographic proximity. The assumption is that a candidate site with a high diversity of existing partnerships and partnership potential will have opportunities to leverage support and create sustainable programs more so than one with fewer partnerships. These partnerships should increase the candidate site's ability to address relevant coastal management issues, address research needs and gaps, and reach diverse audiences. These partner organizations should range in diversity such as federal agencies (ex. National Estuary Programs, National Wildlife Refuges, National Parks), state agencies and parks, local organizations (Marine Labs and Land Trusts), NGOs, and umbrella groups (national, regional or local). These partnerships should help bridge the gap between the NERRS and new audiences that the NERRS has not typically engaged (e.g., urban audiences) or that could help the NERRS become more effective at reaching intended audiences (e.g., national municipal association to facilitate reaching local officials). The focus of these partnerships should be the outcomes, not the number or name of organizations. This will be measured by the following metrics: • Existing MOUs or agreements explaining shared resources such as facilities and salaries • Recent history of key personnel participation in multi-institutional grants, publications, projects • Letters from existing informal partners about past projects, outcomes, and organizational structure • Letters from potential partners focusing on how the partner could complement or contribute to the reserve goals. This letter should include historical context and vision for partnership contributing to the reserve mission. 3 Points. The site has many diverse partnerships and there is strong potential to develop and strengthen new and existing ones of high quality evidenced by metrics stated above. 2 Points. The site has several diverse partnerships in place and there is potential for new partnerships of good quality to develop. 1 Point. The site has potential for partnership development. 0 Points. The site has insignificant potential for partnerships.

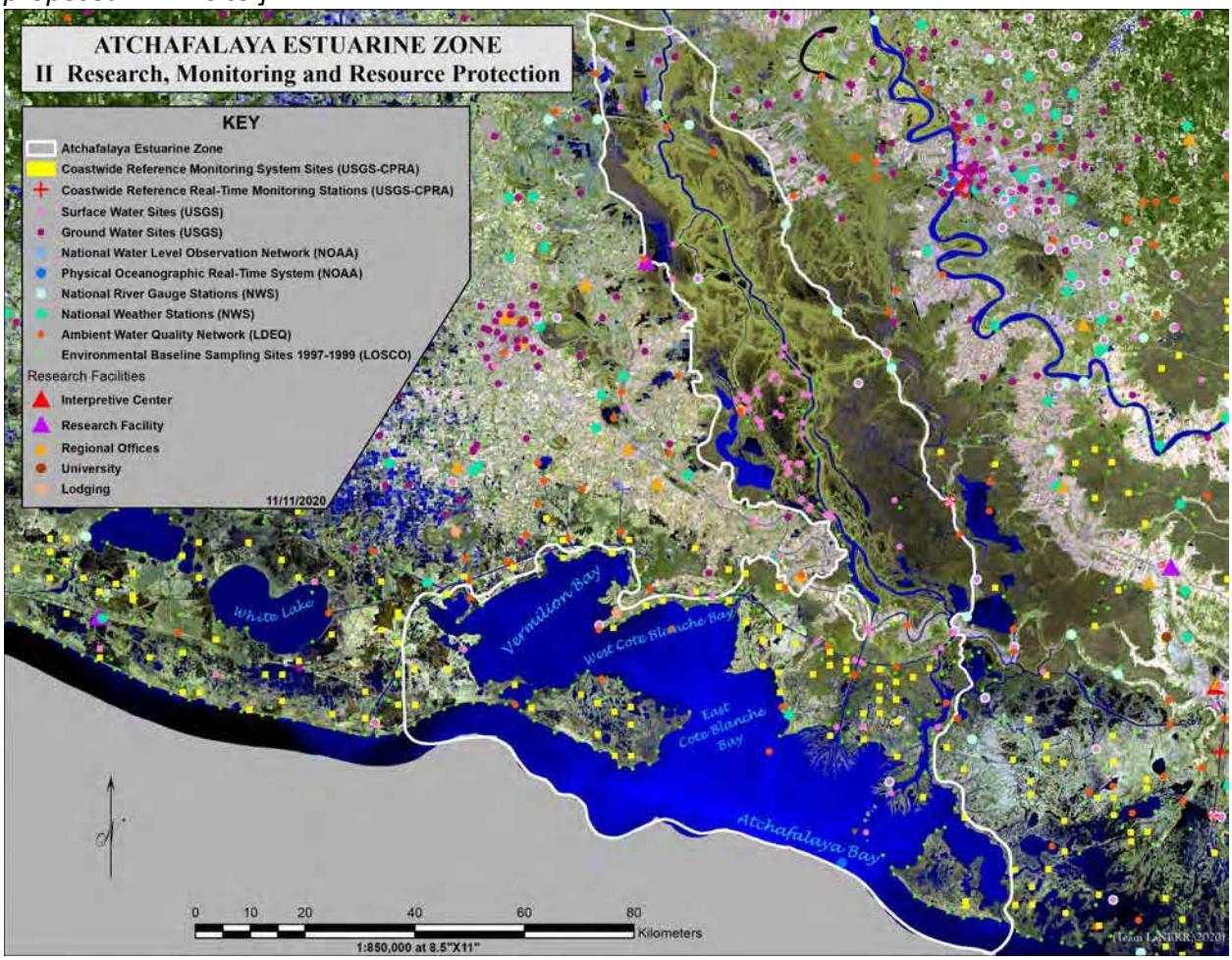
SECTION 3: Maps

3.1: Site GIS Map generated for the Town Hall meetings

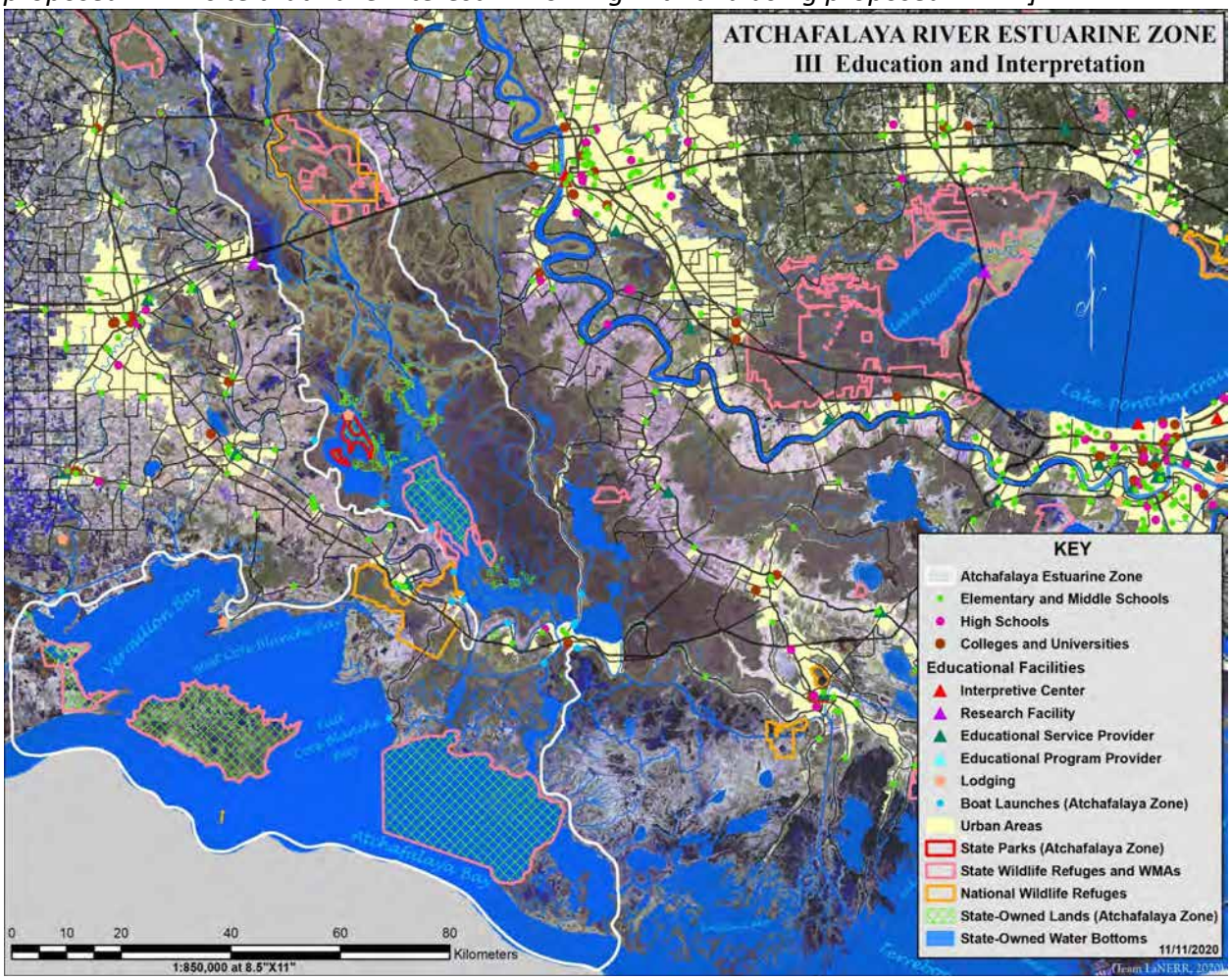
[Note: This map only contains state and federally owned lands (and one example of NGO (Audubon)-owned lands) in the outlined Atchafalaya Basin but does not include lands in Vermilion watershed that might be a logical part of a NERR or private lands that current partners are interested in making available]



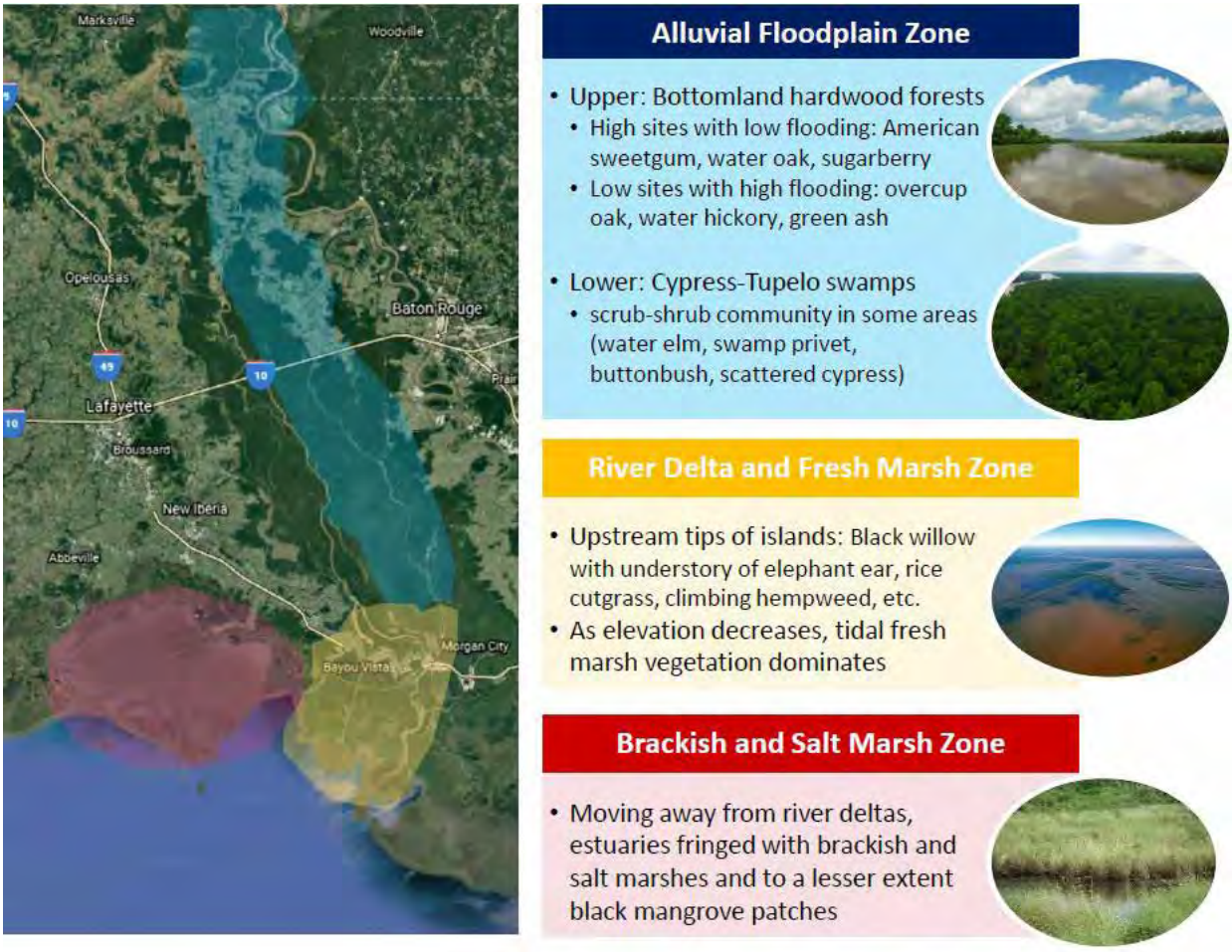
3.2. GIS Map of Monitoring/Research Stations per maps used in Pre-Screening Process
[Note: Underestimate of Research, Monitoring, and Resource Protection in and adjacent to proposed NERR site.]



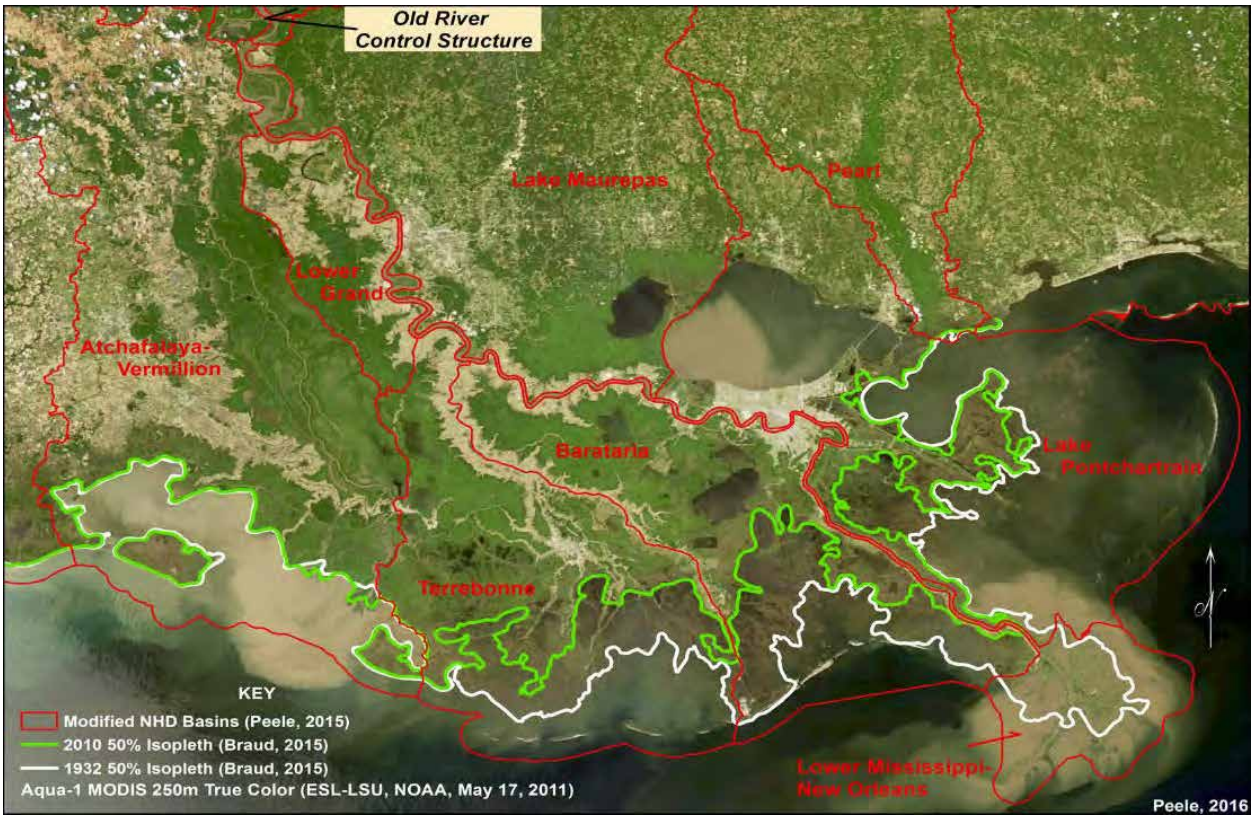
3.3. GIS Map of Education/Interpretation Centers per maps used in Pre-Screening Process
[Note: Underestimate of Education/Interpretation Centers and Groups in and adjacent to proposed NERR site that have interest in working with and using proposed NERR.]



3.4. Map of Atchafalaya Basin highlighting different zones (and dominant vegetation habitats within them) of proposed NERR site.



3.5. Map displaying 1932 (white) and 2010 shorelines in different basins of coastal LA.
[Map shows that while an Atchafalaya Basin NERR would provide locations and opportunities to study coastal land loss, it has experienced slower rates of loss than other basins and includes areas of extensive land gain.]



SECTION 4: Public Support and Engagement from Community

The public interest, support and engagement throughout the Atchafalaya Basin NERR proposal development process has been impressive. This support began with the enthusiastic and engaged involvement of a large team from diverse organizations on the proposal development team. It has continued to expand through the increasing growth of partnerships detailed in section 6 of the criteria table above. During February 2022, our leadership team held 3 town halls on the LaNERR process and what an Atchafalaya Basin NERR site might look like. The first two hall was completely virtual latter two were hybrid taking place first in Morgan City and then in New Iberia. Approximately 400 people were engaged either in person or on-line in these town hall meetings highlighted by ~150 people in person at the Morgan City Municipal Auditorium where the public kept us engaged in conversation for over an hour and a half.

The interest in learning about a Louisiana NERR site is one encouraging but what is even more inspired is the strong desire of diverse stakeholders to not only see a NERR site come to the Atchafalaya Basin but to see the extensive pledges of support and commitment to the future NERR and the programs and activities that will come with its arrival. In the attached appendix we have included 408 pages of support letters that have been collected to date. These letters represent support from diverse stakeholders that range from grade school through high school students, to educators, research institutions, NGOs, organizations, companies, individual residents, municipalities, city and parish councils, mayors, parish presidents, university officials just to name a few. We have organized the letters into categories to make them easier to scan and evaluate.

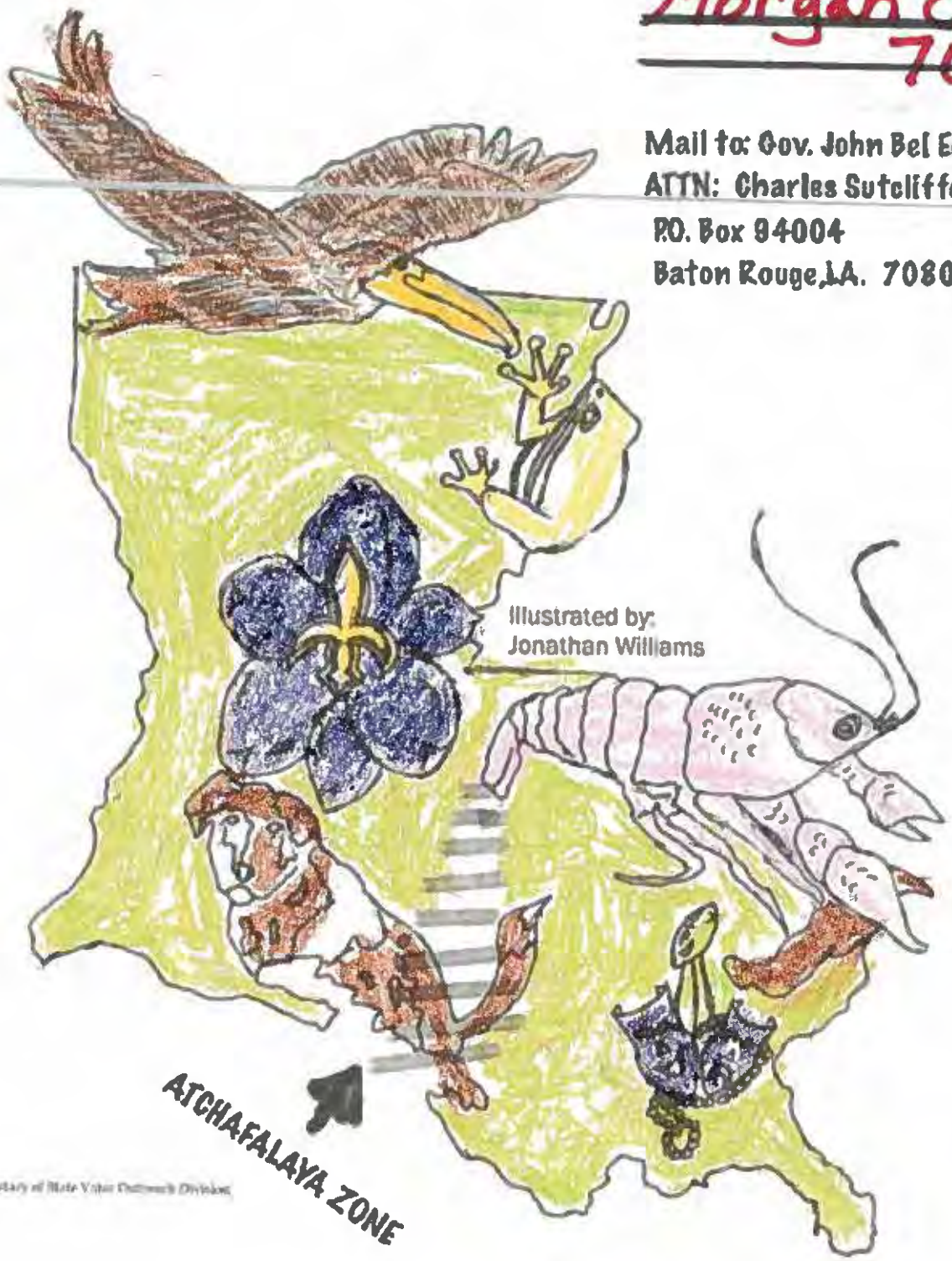
Overall, the outpouring of support has been both impressive and inspiring and it demonstrates how much the communities and stakeholders from the Atchafalaya Basin want to not only have the NERR in the region but truly want to be engaged with it. The enthusiasm in the communities in and around the basin is highlighted by the t-shirts (pictured in the student letter section of the appendix) that have been made and worn proudly at events in the region this spring. This engagement and support further shows the tremendous impact it will have on the area and why the Atchafalaya Basin is an ideal location for Louisiana to add a delta NERR to the national network.

Student Letters

"All I want for Christmas is for the Atchafalaya Zone to be named the
Louisiana National Estuarine Research Reserve!"

Name Karen Laughlin
Address 3008 Mark
Morgan City, LA
70380

Mail to: Gov. John Bel Edwards
ATTN: Charles Sutcliffe
P.O. Box 94004
Baton Rouge, LA. 70804

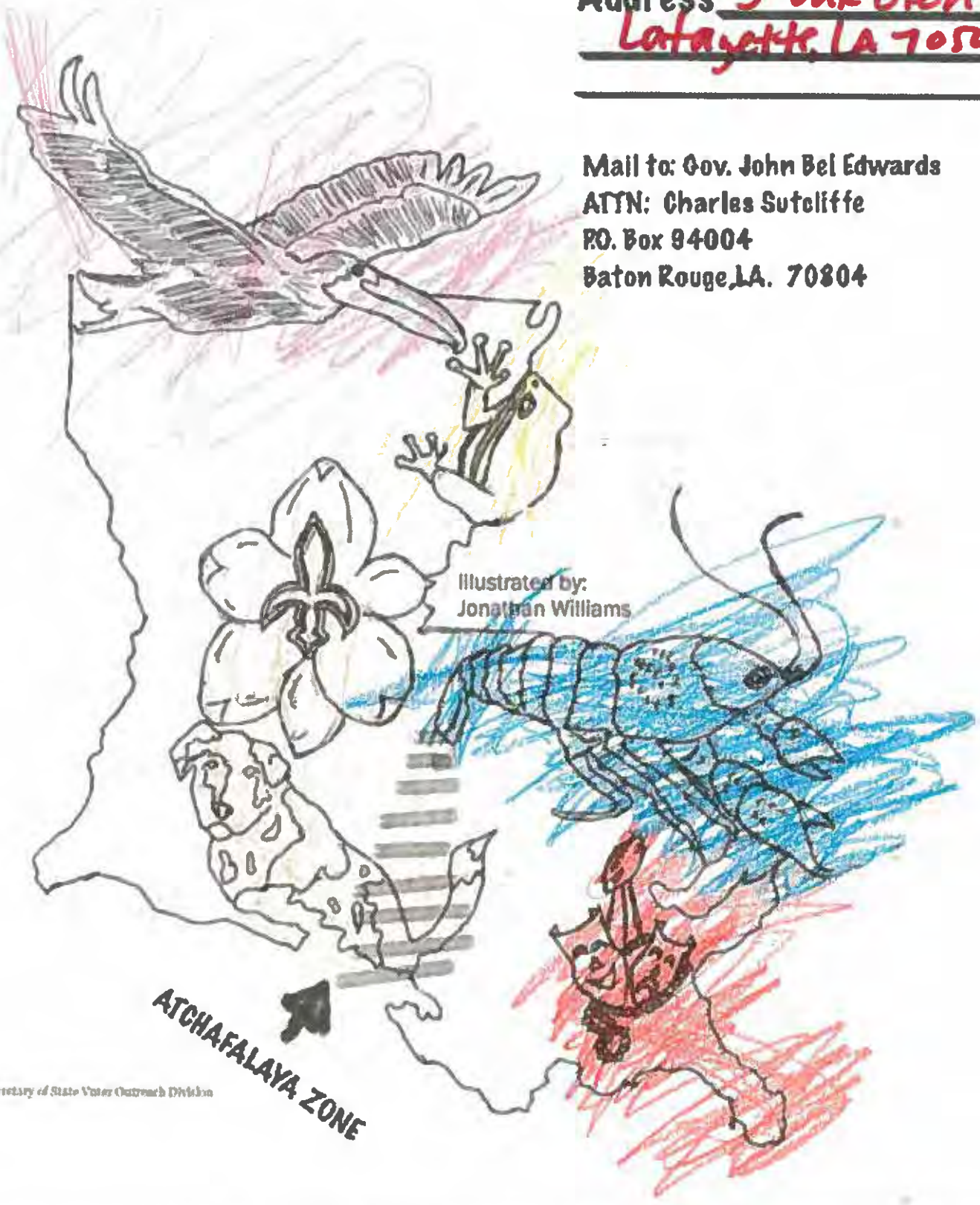


Provided by:
Louisiana Secretary of State Voter Outreach Division

"All I want for Christmas is for the Atchafalaya Zone
to be named the
Louisiana National Estuarine Research Reserve!"

Name Lesley Mancuso
Address 5 Oak Glen Dr.
Lafayette, LA 70503

Mail to: Gov. John Bel Edwards
ATTN: Charles Sutcliffe
P.O. Box 94004
Baton Rouge, LA. 70804



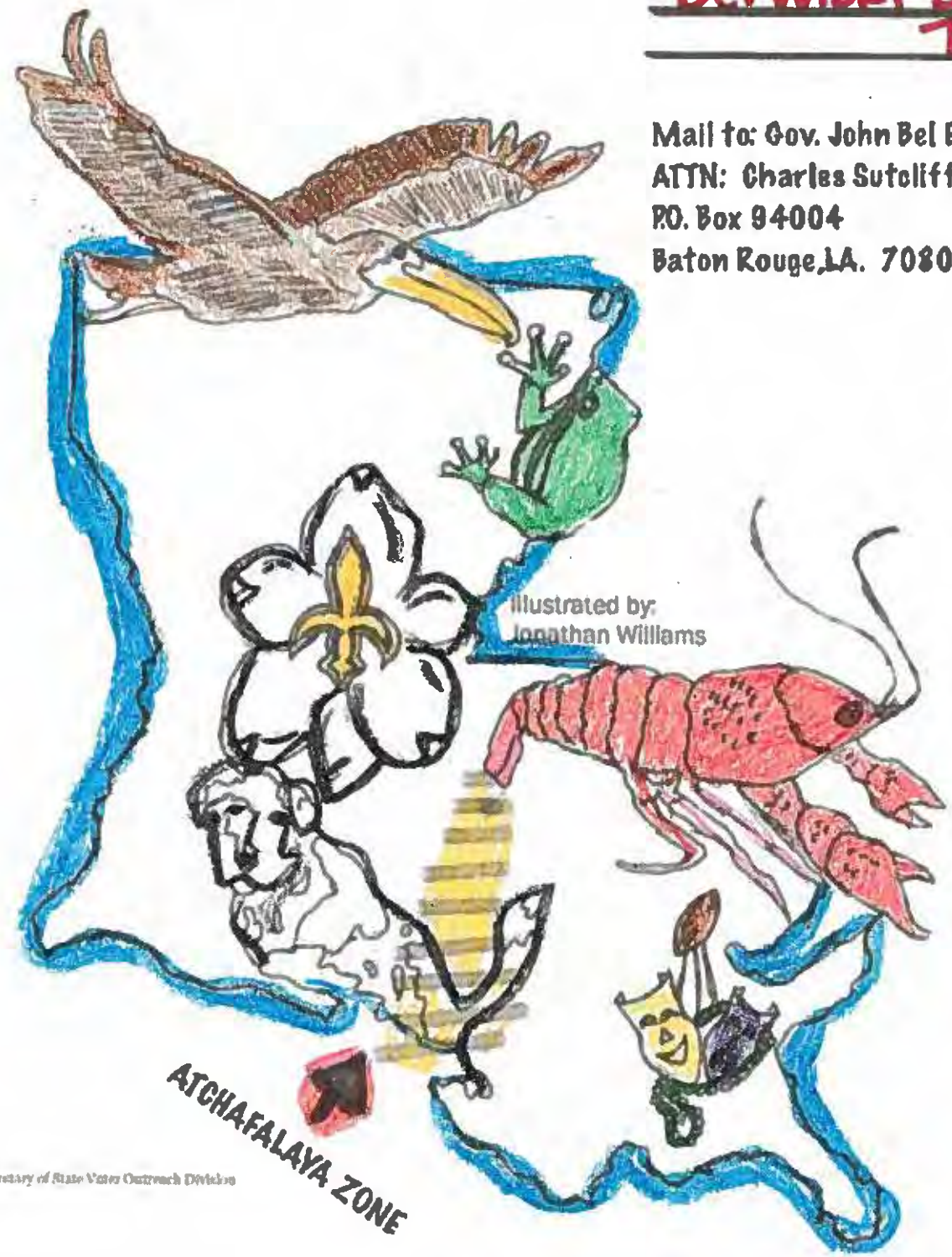
Illustrated by:
Jonathan Williams

Provided by:
Louisiana Secretary of State Voter Outreach Division

"All I want for Christmas is for the Atchafalaya Zone to be named the Louisiana National Estuarine Research Reserve!"

Name Brennan White
Address 107 Brighton Ln
Berwick, LA
70342

Mail to: Gov. John Bel Edwards
ATTN: Charles Sutcliffe
P.O. Box 94004
Baton Rouge, LA. 70804



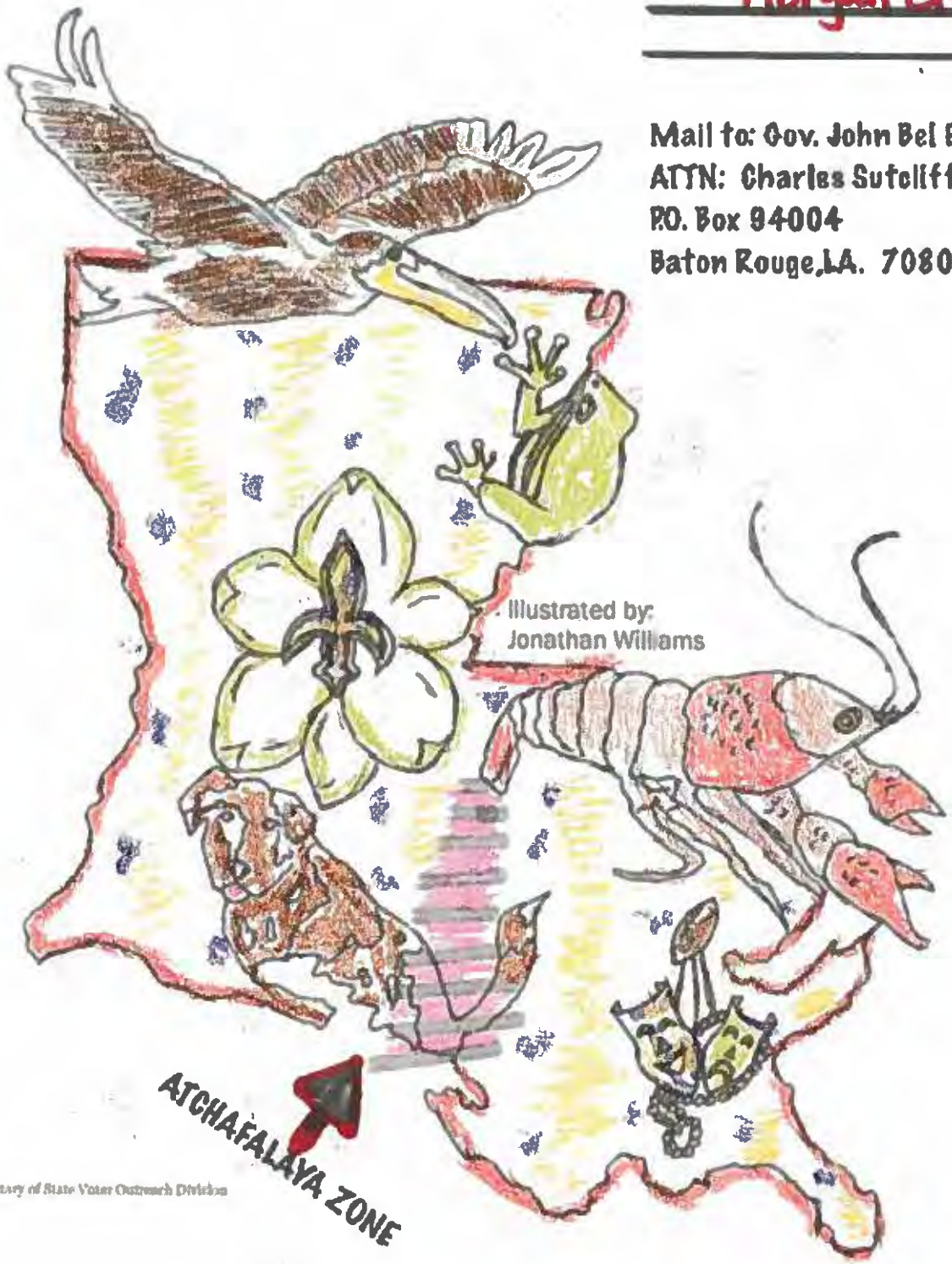
Provided by:
Louisiana Secretary of State Voter Outreach Division

"All I want for Christmas is for the Atchafalaya Zone to be named the Louisiana National Estuarine Research Reserve!"

Name M. Mancuso

Address 11 Marquis Manor
Morgan City LA
70380

Mail to: Gov. John Bel Edwards
ATTN: Charles Sutcliffe
P.O. Box 94004
Baton Rouge, LA. 70804



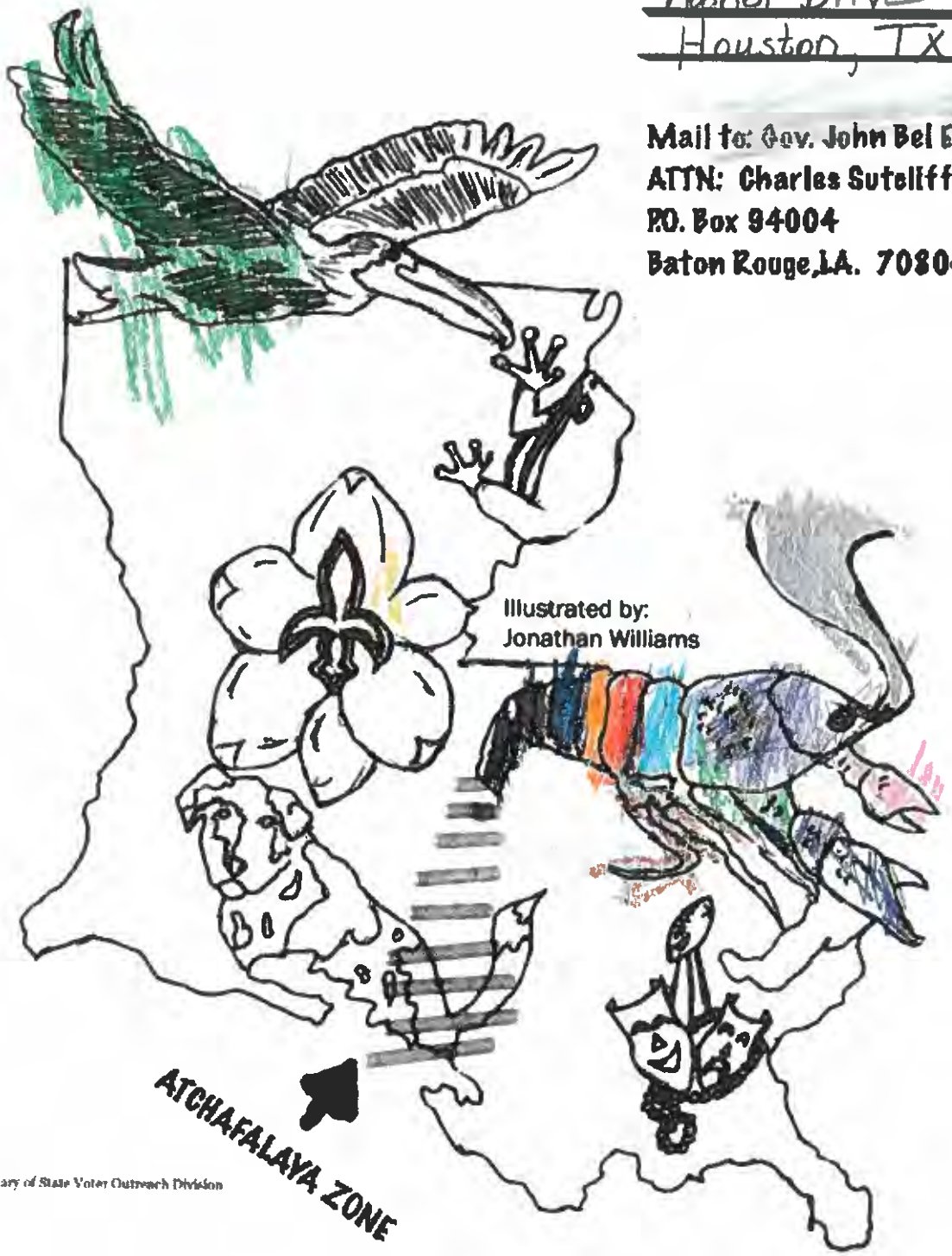
Provided by:
Louisiana Secretary of State Voter Outreach Division

"All I want for Christmas is for the Atchafalaya Zone to be named the Louisiana National Estuarine Research Reserve!"

Name Knox Urban

Address 11806 Legend Manor Drive
Houston, TX 77082

Mail to: Gov. John Bel Edwards
ATTN: Charles Sutcliffe
P.O. Box 94004
Baton Rouge, LA. 70804



Provided by
Louisiana Secretary of State Voter Outreach Division

"All I want for Christmas is for the Atchafalaya Zone to be named the Louisiana National Estuarine Research Reserve!"

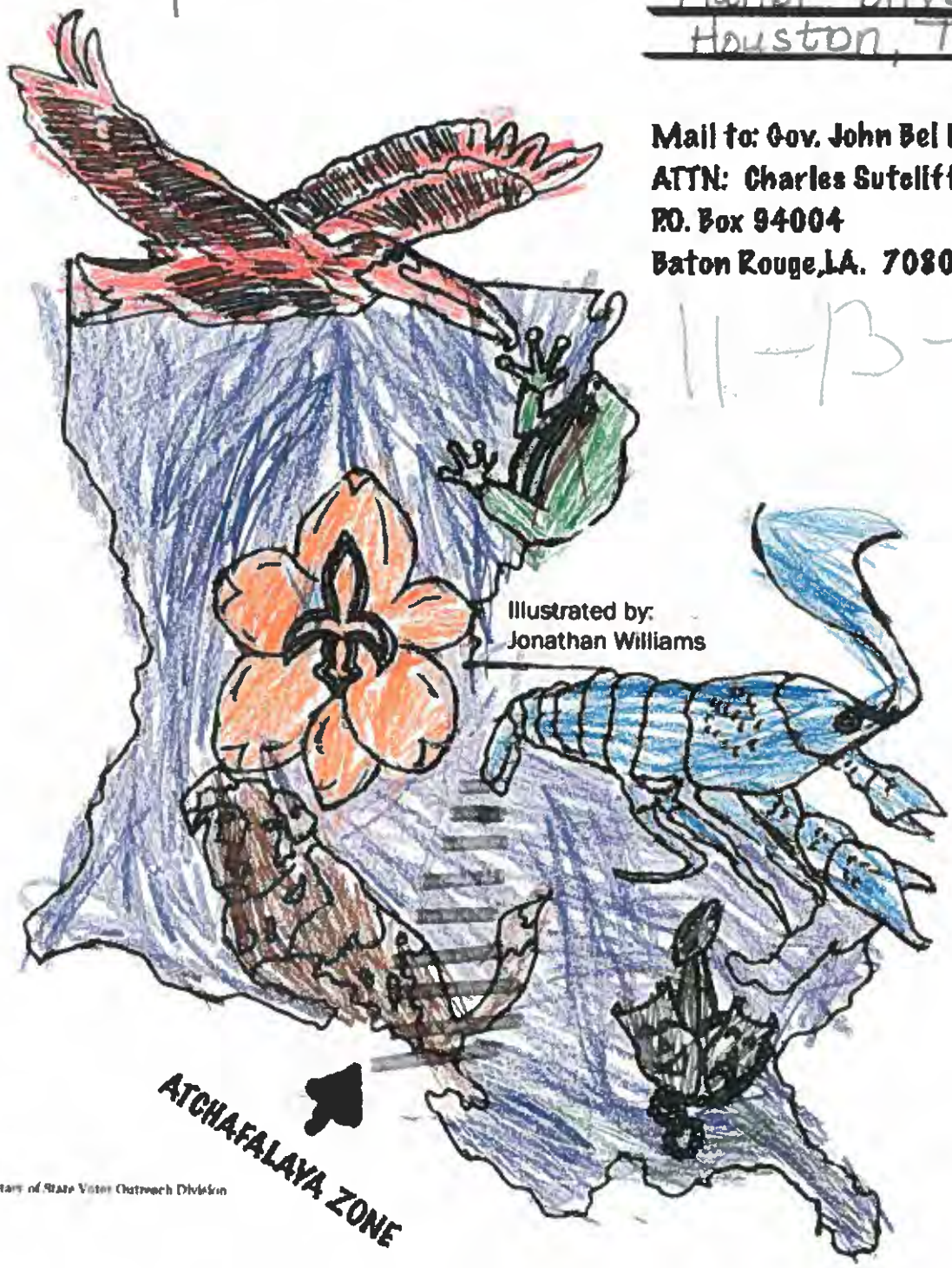
11-14-2021

Name Ehic Urban

Address 11806 Legend Manor Drive Houston, Tx 77082

Mail to: Gov. John Bel Edwards
ATTN: Charles Sutcliffe
P.O. Box 94004
Baton Rouge, LA. 70804

11-13-20



Provided by:
Louisiana Secretary of State Voter Outreach Division

Berwick High School
700 Pattie Drive
Berwick, LA 70342
March 28, 2022

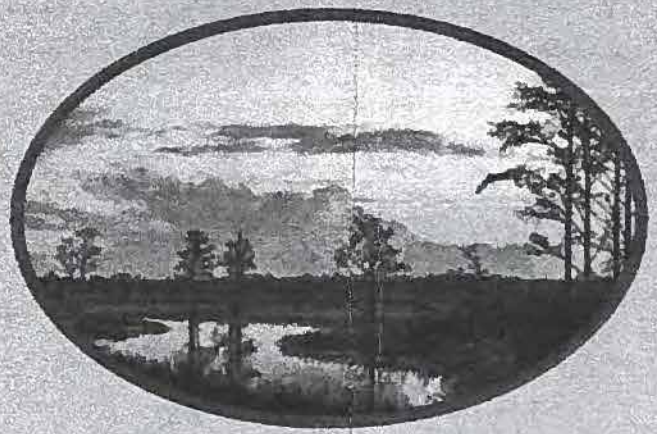
Dear Mr. Roberts:

Berwick High School students started a social media campaign to get LaNERR here shortly after we heard from Mrs. Margaret Theriot informing us about LaNERR. We would love for this amazing NERR to be housed in the Atchafalaya region. Enclosed are copies of our flyer to get the word out and a picture of our group presenting at a Rotary Club function supporting LaNERR here!

Thank you!

Mrs. Kimberly Vasquez

BHS Librarian



Follow and Support the LaNERR on:

- **Twitter**
- **Instagram**
- **TikTok**

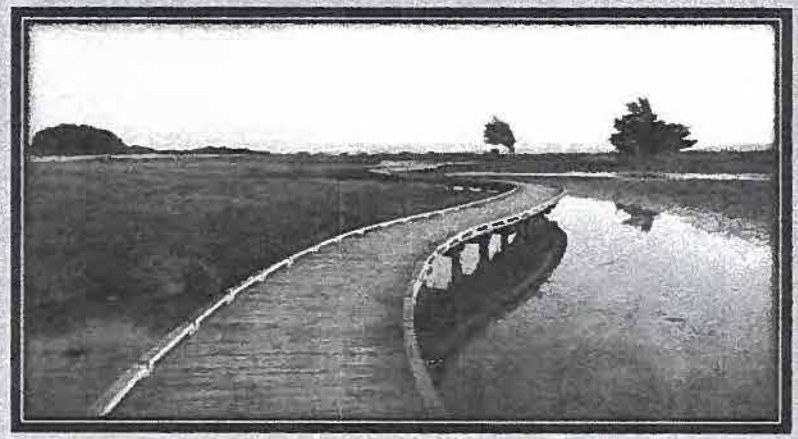
Using @stmarylaneer

You Can Use

#ComeHereLaNERR

On your social media

To show support



Dr. Brian Roberts
Atchafalaya Team NERR Lead
LUMCON
8124 LA-56,
Chauvin, LA 70344

DATE 3/25/22

Dear Dr. Roberts,

I am writing to add my support for the **Atchafalaya Zone** to be named as the site for the Louisiana National Estuarine Research Reserve (LANERR). I make this request for several reasons.

St. Mary Parish includes the cities of Morgan City and Berwick, located at the mouth of the Atchafalaya River—home to the parish's business infrastructure with water and rail, and nearby Patterson that supplies air transportation, as well as the Bayou Teche National Wildlife Refuge in West St. Mary Parish.

A national research reserve would fit well within the 137,695-acre Atchafalaya Delta Wildlife Management Area already located at the mouths of the Atchafalaya River and Wax Lake Outlet in St. Mary Parish. The Atchafalaya Basin is home to the largest wetland in the United States, the vitality of which is critical to the current and future prosperity of ecological sustainability of Louisiana generally and more specifically St. Mary Parish.

Research activities associated with NERR would be ideally situated in the Atchafalaya Estuarine Zone to:

attract scholars on a national and international stage, provide employment opportunities to the region,

provide stronger connectivity to the rest of Louisiana, the Gulf Coast, and United States, and inject money into the local coastal economy.

The presence of the NERR would impact youth and young adults currently enrolled in Louisiana 's schools and contribute to an appreciation for Louisiana's natural resources amidst enjoying the area's quality-of life and opportunities that the NERR provides. An Atchafalaya Zone NERR would potentially shape decisions about where young Louisianans choose to live, work, learn, as well as raise families.

Finally, **a NERR in the Atchafalaya Zone** would support your announced focus on restoring and enhancing the Atchafalaya Basin. Therefore, I encourage the selection of the Atchafalaya Zone as the Louisiana National Estuarine Research Reserve.

Isabella Floyd

BHS student

Dr. Brian Roberts
Atchafalaya Team NERR Lead
LUMCON
8124 LA-56,
Chauvin, LA 70344

DATE 3-24-22

Dear Dr. Roberts,

I am writing to add my support for the **Atchafalaya Zone** to be named as the site for the Louisiana National Estuarine Research Reserve (LANERR). I make this request for several reasons.

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LaDasha Coates

Dr. Brian Roberts
Atchafalaya Team NERR Lead
LUMCON
8124 LA-56,
Chauvin, LA 70344

DATE 3-24-22

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Chloé Rhodes

Dr. Brian Roberts
Atchafalaya Team NERR Lead
LUMCON
8124 LA-56,
Chauvin, LA 70344

DATE 3-24-22

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Raven Mendy

Dr. Brian Roberts
Atchafalaya Team NERR Lead
LUMCON
8124 LA-56,
Chauvin, LA 70344

DATE 3-24-22

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Dr. Brian Roberts
Atchafalaya Team NERR Lead
LUMCON
8124 LA-56,
Chauvin, LA 70344

DATE 3-24-2022

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Jakob Dworaczyk

Governor John Bel Edward

ATTN: Chief Resilience Officer, Charles Sutcliffe

Officer of the Governor

PO Box 94004

Baton Rouge, LA 70804

October 7, 2021

Dear Govern Edwards,

I am a senior from Morgan city High School. I am writing to you today too provide my support for the Atchafalaya Zone to be a site for the Louisiana National Estuarine Research Reserve (LANERR). I'm making this request to help our community for older generations, current generations, and future generations.

The Louisiana National Estuarine Research Reserve would be able to have a suitable place in St. Mary Parish. Being situated near the basin of the Atchafalaya River with acers of land provided to be built. This local LANERR could bring a lot of attractions for tourists to learn about our history, culture, and development. It could also bring local communities together to learn more, not only about our culture but our environment, too. This local sight could bring more companies opportunities to grow, more shops available, more support from other communities, and more possibilities. With these additional advantages to this community, Morgan City will grow bigger every day with new bike trails in our area already starting to develop now and benefiting our community.

I, being seventeen, have lived in this town my whole life. I feel my peers and I have not experienced the full beauty of the Atchafalaya River. Many people live by the water but do not have access to go in the water. A LANERR could help people who have lived here their whole life and tourists see the true beauty of the Atchafalaya River. Not just for myself, but for older and future generations as well. With new activities to do like fishing, boat riding, kayaking, bike riding, and even hands-on education for the youth to learn more of where they live. A LANERR could bring communities and families together.

The St. Mary Parish area is so unique as I have read from a website called "World of Change: Growing Deltas in the Atchafalaya Bay." A recent discovery of lands forming on its own in the Atchafalaya Bay we have known today. This discovery can create benefits for scientists to research this discovery, if we build the LANEER. Creating a research reserve for scientists to study these new developments happening. With endless opportunities with this local site, LANERR could bring many people from different areas to know the historical attractions in our parish and know Morgan city's development over the years creating an amazing experience for those who comes across and lives in Morgan City St. Mary Parish.

Sincerely, Lindsay Miller

2400 Tiger Dr, Morgan City, LA

Governor John Bel Edwards
ATTN: Chief Resilience Officer, Charles Sutcliffe
Office of the Governor
PO Box 94004
Baton Rouge, LA 70804

Date: October 1, 2021

Dear Governor Edwards

My name is Daniel Fernandez, and in my English IV class we had a presentation by representatives from St. Mary Excel who came to talk to us about the possibility of having a NERR here in our area. They explained what a NERR would bring for our community and our parish. I was intrigued and excited with the possibilities that a LANERR could bring to the St Mary Parish Area.

St. Mary is a diverse and gorgeous parish from the city of Amelia past Patterson and houses the end of the beautiful Atchafalaya River, which is home to a strange and under-researched phenomenon. Unlike the rest of Louisiana, which is slowly but surely decreasing in landmass, the Atchafalaya is slowly naturally rebuilding lost land and then some. This makes the Atchafalaya Basin a wonderful and perfectly-suited place to build a NERR; this would ensure we have some long-term goals already established on figuring out exactly how this phenomenon occurs.

Morgan City and the surrounding towns are all small towns and have a certain charm to them. But a problem with all small towns is that eventually, things for the youth and the young adults run out; you can only go to the park or movie theatres so many times before they lose some appeal. This leads most youths and young adults to go to the farther, but bigger, cities. This does not have to be the case. With the construction of a NERR in our small, but charming, town, we would pull the youth to a place where they can connect with nature and be close to home.

This also would have more effects besides the youth, the NERR would bring several visitors and tourists who are looking to see the beauty of South Louisiana; it would also bring economic prosperity to our area. Along with this prosperity, it would also cause an influx of jobs. From the construction of actual facilities and the paths that would connect to the people who would get hired to deal with the influx of people coming to St. Mary Parish

The NERR would be an amazing opportunity for us here in the Atchafalaya Basin, it would bring jobs, economic prosperity. A LANERR could make a place for the youths to go to enjoy themselves and have something to say they are proud to have the LANERR in our town.

Sincerely

Daniel Fernandez

Daniel Fernandez

(985)-518-1214

2602 Lake Plourde Rd. Morgan City Louisiana

Governor John Bel Edwards

ATTN: Chief Resilience Officer, Charles Sutcliffe

Office of the Governor

PO Box 94000

Baton Rouge, LA 7080

October 21, 2021

Dear Governor Edwards,

My name is Mariah Pleasant, a class of 2022 senior at Morgan City High-school, and I am advocating for your help to place LANEER in my community. At this moment you must be wondering "why here in the Atchafalaya Zone"? You have seen the statistics and know that this could help our location, but I am here to tell you exactly why.

I have lived in St. Mary Parish for over 15 years of my life, and if one thing could describe the parish as a whole it would be the family-oriented community ties. Having family members whose source of income comes from our waterfront, a LaNERR would broaden perspectives for younger generations and incoming tourists shall keep the economy boost from falling. As a teenager living in a small town like Morgan City, we are surrounded by water. A prime example includes the Atchafalaya River is in a location by our shopping, downtown historical buildings and exc.

How does this and LANEER correlate with one another? Well, the answer to that is everything. St. Mary Parish is known for its Petroleum, fishing, and agriculture. With that being said LANEER is perfect for this area. We need you to stand with us and help fight for a cause that will leave a positive impact for generations to come. This may not affect my generation now, but the opportunity for new jobs and exploration of the beauty of the unseen waterfront would all be worth it.

Sincerely,

Mariah Pleasant Signature

Mariah Pleasant Name

3025 Allison Street Address

Morgan City Louisiana City, State

Governor John Bel Edwards
ATTN: Chief Resilience Officer. Charles Sutcliffe
Office of the Governor
PO Box 94004
Baton Rouge, LA, 70804

October 01, 2021

Dear Governor Edwards,

My name is Antonio Oscar Zavala, and I have lived in Morgan City my whole life. I am currently in my senior year of high school and have begun to develop some ideas to make my town more appealing to our townspeople. Living here has granted me a perspective which, to my surprise, not everyone shares. Lake End Park and the Morgan City seawall are both some of the most beautiful areas in St. Mary Parish, yet I feel as though our town has so much more to offer. So, I write this letter to advocate my support for the Atchafalaya Delta to be the site for the Louisiana National Estuarine Reserve (LANERR) for multiple reasons.

Morgan City can see numerous benefits through NERR's implementation. The creation of NERR in the area can give citizens of all backgrounds a place to visit. Students and children specifically would benefit the most from this potential recreational center. Schools from all around could bring their students to field trips to the NERR where students could learn about the ecosystem. This hands-on experience with nature would instill young students with an appreciation for their environment that they couldn't get in a classroom. The NERR could even open older students' eyes to new passions, which would stick with them for the rest of their lives. This effect with the youth would create a generation of children who seek to improve upon their community instead of leaving it. I would personally like to see my children experience St. Mary Parish for all it has to offer. Such a dream can only become a reality if the people of our community can see the potential of our parish. Furthermore, the NERR would promote active lifestyles through the development of nature trails, boost the economy through job opportunities, and overall help people open their eyes to the beauty of St. Mary Parish!

The Atchafalaya Delta is also a great place for a national research reserve. For one, the Atchafalaya Delta Wildlife Management Area spans a massive 137,695 acres. This area would provide researchers with more than enough land to study climate change and our ecosystem among other things. The Atchafalaya Delta's most defining feature, however, is its ability to create land! This fact made it that much more shocking to find out that Louisiana is the only Gulf Coast state without a NERR. This is important because estuaries provide flood protection to their areas, yet ours exist entirely unprotected. Nonetheless, shouldn't the Atchafalaya Delta's unique ability to create land be enough to merit its preservation and appreciation? I think so.

In conclusion, I would like to see our community come together and improve St. Mary Parish. Hopefully I have convinced you to bring LANERR to my community and make a new generation of kids who love their community as much as I do!

Sincerely,

Antonio Zavala

Antonio Zavala
(985)255-6253
2400 Tiger Dr
Morgan City, Louisiana, 70380

Governor John Bel Edwards
ATTN: Chief Resilience Officer, Charles Sutcliffe
Office of the Governor
PO Box 94004
Baton Rouge, LA 70804

10/4

Dear Governor Edwards,

My name is Abigail, and I am a senior at Morgan City high school. I am writing this to show my support for the site of the National Estuarine Research Reserve to be in the Atchafalaya Zone. Morgan City is truly a beautiful place and that needs to be known. I am requesting this for several reasons but mainly for the sake of the next generation.

I have lived in Morgan City for 12 years and in Bayou Vista for the past 5 years. Morgan City has its own small-town charm, but it could use some upgrading. Most people's idea of getting out of the house is going to our sea wall or going to fast food places. As someone who has been through the struggle of finding something to do, I think the NERR would create another place to go observe the natural beauty of Morgan City. When I was younger, I had a lot of access to the water. My dad owned a camp and a boat, so we went out frequently on the weekends. After we sold our camp and boats though, I no longer did. Since then, I have had very limited access to the water. The NERR could give us access to in-the-water classes and experiences.

For the next and future generations, the NERR would give us new ways to teach children and even adults about our area. Many people still do not know much about our water, or even land. Children would likely be more motivated to get out and learn about the place they are growing up. Having a first-hand learning experience could bring interest to Morgan City. Not only would this help us learn about our area, but it would also bring tourism which would better our economy. We currently have a very small amount of tourism. If we had more, we could upgrade our city: fixing roads, opening more businesses, or having more events to bring people together.

Finally, these are the reasons I think the National Estuarine Research Reserve should be here. The NERR would give us so many opportunities to enhance our way of living. We have a very welcoming community ready and waiting to see what the future may hold.

Sincerely,

Abigail Duhon

Abigail Duhon
2400 Tiger Drive
Morgan City, LA, 70380

Governor John Bel Edwards

ATTN: Chief Resilience Officer, Charles Sutcliffe

Office of the Governor

PO Box 94004

Baton Rouge, LA 70804

Dear Governor John Bel Edwards,

My name is Ashlyn Babin, I am a senior at Morgan City High School, and I am sincerely honored to be able to write this letter to you. Our hometown here in Morgan City, where I was born and raised, is filled with admirable coastlines, ones that many people travel from around the world to see. While we have these beautiful sights, the only people who are able to experience it are ones with water transportation, which according to a small poll was only 1/30 students in my class! This statistic is heartbreaking, but not without a solution, one that's in your hands.

This NERR would bring in countless education opportunities: K-12 hands-on experience with the environment surrounding them, (encouraging an endless array of future careers) field trips from other parishes bringing in business to our gas stations, restaurants, and other local businesses, job opportunities for invested locals, and even possible internships for college students. I want these opportunities not only for myself, but for my cousins, my nieces and nephews, and for a long line of generations to come.

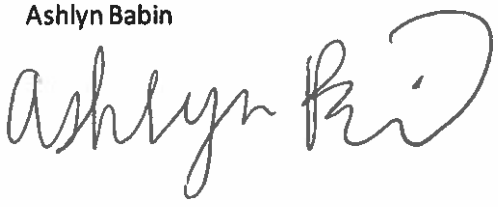
Speaking for the youth, we have ONE place that we can just hangout and relax while being outside and by the water: the seawall. While this is a convenient place to be with friends, there are a lot of questionable people that come to this area making us, along with our parents, hesitant to be there, especially for an extended period of time.

Imagine trying to cross a major highway on a bike, well, that's how residents feel while trying to cross Victor II, along with other busy areas, because of the lack of trails/sidewalks available to us. It has come to my attention that this NERR funding can include biker/walking trails and I am telling you from experience that our town needs this more than anyone else.

Our area was once a booming town and I am certain that, with your help, it could become that again. We, as a community, welcome NERR with open arms and are hopeful that you choose us!

Sincerely,

Ashlyn Babin



Governor John Bel Edwards

ATTN: Chief Resilience Officer, Charles Sutcliffe

Office of the Governor

PO Box 94004

Baton Rouge, LA 70804

October 21, 2021

Dear Governor Edwards,

My name is Hunter Bella; I am a senior at Morgan City High School. I am writing to help support the Louisiana Nation Estuarine Research Reserve (LANERR) in the Atchafalaya Zone.

A National Estuarine Research Reserve or a NERR would be great in the Atchafalaya Zone because of all the different waterways and wildlife that we have in our area. With all our other small waterways, the Atchafalaya Basin is the largest wetland in the whole country which will be beneficial to have a research center for future growth of ecological studies and education.

Activities and reasons why a NERR would be great in the Atchafalaya Zone:

- connect people from around the country
- grow the economy and nature
- open more jobs for people
- provide education and attract scholars

If the NERR was in the Atchafalaya Zone, it would have a significant impact on the youth and students. With kids being in schools it could teach them more about our area and broaden their minds. There could be more hands-on teaching with the research center being so close, and it would help kids to be active. With older students, it could provide scholarships and inspire them to work into that branch of education. Having the NERR would better the education for all, young and old.

Finally, having an NERR in the Atchafalaya Zone would be wonderful, and would better the future for the Atchafalaya Basin and the community by providing education and economic growth. Therefore, I would appreciate the selection of the Atchafalaya Zone as the designated position for the Louisiana National Estuarine Research Reserve.

Sincerely,

Hunter Bella

Hunter Bella

125 Glenwood St.

Morgan City, LA 70380

Governor Bel Edwards

ATTN: Chief Resilience Officer, Charles Sutcliffe

Office of the Governor

PO Box 94004

Baton Rouge, LA 70804

Dear Governor Edwards

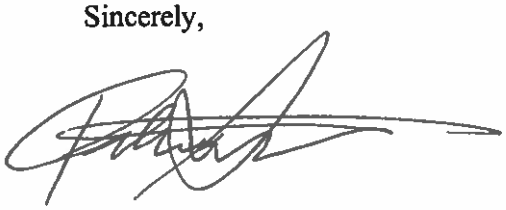
My name is Paola Sanchez, as a high school senior at Morgan City High, I am writing to you for my support for the National Estuarine Research Reservoir (NERR) to be located at the **Atchafalaya Zone**. I had been living in Louisiana for 16 years, and I have visited many places along the years; Audubon Zoo, Audubon Aquarium, French Quarter, Grand Isle, Mall of Louisiana, Avery Island, and many more. Besides all these fun places, I prefer my hometown here in Morgan City. These are some of the reasons why the Atchafalaya Zone would be an excellent location for the National Estuarine Research Reservoir:

Here in Morgan City, we are a unique community, but not a lot of people see that and when someone Googles "Things to do in Morgan city" not a lot of things pops up. Because of this, I believe that the research center should be here in St. Mary so that our economy can expand more. This also allows small businesses to have more opportunities to grow, and more businesses can be built here. More importantly we as a community can come together and have more outside events just like the annual Shrimp and Petroleum Festival.

Furthermore, the presence of the NERR would also impact the minds of the youth and young adults currently enrolled in Louisiana 's schools. The students can interact and embrace the beauty of our home and its natural resources. Kids that could not visit some parts of the Atchafalaya zone can visit freely with this project. This could help shape their minds on where they would like to be in the future from all the memories they have made here.

I strongly believe that NERR could be strongly influenced in our hometown where not only will it help our ecosystem, but the future generations. I ask if we can have your support to make this project into reality.

Sincerely,



Paola Sanchez

2400 Tiger Dr

Morgan City, LA 70380

Governor John Bel Edwards

ATTN: Chief Resilience Officer, Charles Sutcliffe

Office of the Governor

PO Box 94004

Baton Rouge, LA 70804

Dear Governor Edwards,

September 28, 2021

My name is Zoe Wilson; I am 17 years old attending my last year of high school at Morgan City High School. I am writing to add my support for the Atchafalaya Zone to be named as the site for the Louisiana National Estuarine Research Reserve (LANERR). I make this request for several reasons.

Having a first glimpse of Morgan City is underwhelming at first. You're driving on the bridge and see this exit to a small town that is most likely to be passed up. In all honesty, I don't know what to make out of this city. Even though I been here my whole life, I haven't even viewed the Atchafalaya basin.

Although this is the reality,what I can say is that there are many friendly faces and multiple people involved with helping the community. Since it's a small town, it's difficult not to run into these people multiple times.

Louisiana is filled with water, so it's very unusual to find out that we are without an estuary. Surrounded by all this water I still have nothing such as a boat to get across. Many hurricanes and storms hit Louisiana, which causes the lack of land and flooding. With an estuary, Louisiana would benefit by becoming safer.

Research reserves have an importance to the guidance of estuaries. With the help of communities responding to natural resource issues, they become more educated and understanding as to why this is so important. For many people who are interested in our community can look into job opportunities just by going on the website.

Finally, a NERR in the Atchafalaya Zone would support your announced focus on restoring and enhancing the Atchafalaya Basin. Therefore, I encourage the selection of the Atchafalaya Zone as the Louisiana National Estuarine Research Reserve. I hope this helps with your decision for the better so I can say I have help to better my community in some way.

Sincerely,

Zoe Wilson

Zoe Wilson

Morgan City, LA

Governor John Bel Edwards

ATTN: Chief Resilience Officer, Charles Sutcliffe

Office of the Governor

PO Box 94004

Baton Rouge, LA 70804

October 1, 2021

Dear Governor Edwards,

My name is Adrian Zuniga, and I am a senior of the class of 2022 at Morgan City High School. I am writing this letter to add my support in naming the Atchafalaya Zone as the site for the next National Estuarine Research Reserve. There are many reasons for which I am making this request.

I personally believe that the research reserve would best fit here in the St. Mary Parish area residing within the Atchafalaya Delta. The Atchafalaya Basin itself is quite a wonder as it has been producing more land rather than losing land like the area surrounding Houma. It would be quite useful to have the facility here as scientists would be able to see what exactly is so special about the basin is that it gains land rather than loses it.

Another reason for which it would help is because of the number of opportunities it could bring to Morgan City and St. Mary Parish as a whole. For starters, it would give a place for future generations of kids to have an amazing hands-on learning experience. The youth as well as young adults would be impacted. It gives them a chance to be outdoors and see the land which surrounds them. They would not have to bother needing a boat to get around, they could simply use the paths provided by the facility, which would encourage them to be more active and be outside. Another thing that can help the community is the number of tourists it can bring in.

Normally when tourists type into google asking what there is to do in Morgan City, not much pops up, so they tend to pass right over us. If a Nerr were to be built here, it would give people a reason to stop by and check out Morgan City, which also gives small businesses a chance to flourish. The installation of a Nerr also gives more job opportunities as it concerns a vast array of professional workers from those that would build the research facility to those that run the facility, and the researchers that would work to study the environment.

Overall, the facility would bring a number of opportunities to St. Mary Parish. The community would be welcoming towards the building of the facility and would bring broaden the perspective of those that could get a chance to truly experience what nature is like here in the St. Mary Parish. It would be greatly appreciated if we were to be selected as the site for the next NERR facility here in my hometown of Morgan City.

Sincerely,

Adrian Zuniga

Adrian Zuniga

2400 Tiger Dr

Morgan City, LA

Governor John Bel Edwards

ATTN: Chief Resilience Officer, Charles Sutcliffe

Office of the Governor

PO Box 94004

Baton Rouge, LA 70804

September 29, 2021

Dear Governor Edwards,

My name is Charlie Wells, and I am a senior at Morgan City High School. I am writing this letter to show my support and explain why the Atchafalaya Zone should be chosen as the site for LANEER project. I have only been living in Morgan City for 2 years now. Morgan City is a part of the Atchafalaya Zone, along with the cities of Berwick and Patterson. When I first moved to Morgan City, I felt welcomed. The environment had a feeling of safeness and comfortability. People may think that this community is boring and bland, which somewhat of that is true, but that's not the big idea behind it. When we have chances as a community to come together and celebrate, we embrace them chances.

The LANEER project is a perfect opportunity for us to come together as a community. Having the LANEER project here at the Atchafalaya Zone, will not only initiate our economy, but also local economies. It also will impact the younger generation by bringing them together. I have 8 brothers and sisters, so personally I think the LANEER project would be the best attraction for them to keep them out of trouble and danger. The LANEER project could bring in entertainment options for not only the people living here, but outsiders also. This would change the view that people have of Morgan City being boring and bland. Most importantly, the LANEER project could shape the lives of people living here. The LANEER project could open job opportunities for people who need them.

It's not all about each person in the community; we want to benefit the people surrounding us also. Therefore, I encourage you to make the selection of the Atchafalaya Zone being the site for the LANEER project.

Sincerely,

Charlie Wells

Charlie Wells

2400 Tiger Dr, Morgan City, La

Governor John Bell Edwards

ATTN: Chief Resilience Officer, Charles Sutcliffe

Office of the Governor

PO Box 94004

Baton Rouge, LA 70804

Dear Governor Edwards,

My name is Kaitlyn Waguespack, and I am writing in support for the Atchafalaya Zone to be declared as the site for the Louisiana National Estuarine Research Reserve.

I am currently a senior at Morgan City High School, in St. Mary Parish, where we believe in the importance of bayou life and research. St. Mary is home to cities that bring business to the Atchafalaya. In our area, we are fortunate enough to have daily encounters with the nature and wildlife that the Atchafalaya region has to offer. However, others in the state of Louisiana are not as fortunate. We have travelers who come to our area to explore our wetlands, but they are met with limited access. By naming the Atchafalaya Zone as the new LaNERR site, our community will be able to provide greater opportunities for unforgettable experiences and hands on learning.

If the research reserve is established in the Atchafalaya zone, there will be numerous educational opportunities for citizens of all ages. For example, those in school will be able to take fieldtrips to the newly established zone. Our younger generation will have an unforgettable experience witnessing our beautiful ecosystems up close, leading to some of them wanting to work in wetland research and conservation in the future. Opening a research reserve will also present the need for more overnight lodging and opportunities for employment, ultimately bringing more income to the area. It will also provide chances for family activities such as biking and nature walks.

The NERR would undoubtedly provide a positive impact for our community. Louisiana's population would be provided with learning opportunities and resources for enjoying and appreciating nature like never before. The establishment of the NERR in the Atchafalaya Zone would greatly influence the future of our hometown, bringing families and working opportunities to our area.

It is known that you desire to help preserve the Atchafalaya. By selecting the Atchafalaya Zone as the location of the first LaNERR, you would be taking the first step to setting your plan in motion. The Atchafalaya Zone is a top contender for the Louisiana National Estuarine Research Reserve that I hope you strongly consider.

Sincerely,

Kaitlyn Waguespack

Kaitlyn Waguespack

2400 Tiger Dr.

Morgan City, LA 7-380

985-384-1754

Governor John Bel Edwards
ATTN: Chief Resilience Officer, Charles Sutcliffe
Office of the Governor
PO Box 94004
Baton Rouge, LA 70804

October 01, 2021

Dear Governor Edwards,

My name is Janaa Coulon, and I am a senior at Morgan City High School. I have lived here all my 17 years and 2 months, born and raised in Morgan City, Louisiana. As a teenager, the number of outdoor activities we can do in my hometown is very limited.

Before I begin, I want you to know a little about the St. Mary Parish region, specifically the Morgan City area. Morgan City is a place of tradition, love, family, and most of all home. Morgan City is a moderately small town made up of 11,206 citizens; it is a place where no matter how far you go you always come back to. Morgan City is known worldwide for fresh and saltwater fishing, hunting, and some of the top Cajun cuisine.

The reason I'm writing this letter is that Morgan City needs something to awaken and change the individuals who reside in this town, such as an estuary. The Atchafalaya is the perfect place to locate an estuary. The 137-mile-long river is the gateway to the Gulf of Mexico for the shrimping and oilfield industries. The Atchafalaya River is one of the very few deltas creating its land. The Atchafalaya zone deserves to be named the site for the Louisiana National Estuarine Research Reserve (LANERR).

What can we gain by receiving the NERR:

- Attract tourists and create more local businesses
- Increase the number of jobs, lowering the unemployment rate
- Boost the educational ranking of Louisiana
- Give both the youth and adults an area to interact with others
- Research of wildlife and ecosystem
- Provide stronger connectivity to the rest of Louisiana, the gulf coast, and the United States

In my hometown, we have a slim number of places for teenagers to go, but one of the most popular among the youth is the 22-foot seawall. Located on the coast of the Atchafalaya Basin, which is over 500,000 acres, the Atchafalaya covers 1/3 of Louisiana, and is the largest overflow swamp in the United States. The Atchafalaya is an ideal place for the NERR. Residents will be able to fully appreciate all that St. Mary Parish has to offer while gaining jobs, education, and enjoyment. Our youth have access to very few jobs as well as recreational centers, an estuary would provide attraction which would create many jobs.

Louisiana has one of the most distinct cultures in all the United States. If we can bring herds of people to Morgan City for the Shrimp and Petroleum festival, imagine the endless possibilities of a Louisiana National Estuarine Research Reserve (LANERR). Change in this parish is necessary and will improve everyone's lifestyle! Please support the placement of a LaNerr in St. Mary Parish.

Sincerely,

Janaa Coulon
2400 Tiger Dr
Morgan City, Louisiana, 70380

Governor John Bel Edwards
ATTN: Chief Resilience Officer, Charles Sutcliffe
Office of the Governor
PO Box 94004
Baton Rouge, LA, 70804

October 3, 2021

Dear Governor Edwards,

My name is Ainsley Fontenot, and I am a high school senior from Morgan City, Louisiana. My classmates and I are writing our own individual letters to endorse the Atchafalaya Delta to be your ultimate pick for the Louisiana National Estuarine Research Reserve (LANERR).

What is so special about the Atchafalaya Delta? Unlike the other candidates, rather than losing land, the Atchafalaya Delta is creating it! Along with creating land, the Atchafalaya Delta has the potential to create more job opportunities; having the LANERR in St. Mary Parish will substantially boost the economy and local businesses. People from around the nation would come to visit the LANERR, therefore pulling in more customers into the area. As someone who personally wants to be a business owner, I would admire knowing that I have a stable place to start a business that can thrive.

The LANERR is not only an amazing business opportunity, but it is also great for K-12 students! Students from all around, more specifically St. Mary Parish, can have hands-on experiences with the wildlife and nature through field trips. I wish I had a place like the LANERR to visit and learn more about the area in which I live. Having this reserve would allow students to learn about and see ecosystems they may have never known about. Middle and high school students could possibly find their passions in life through the LANERR and have experience in the field they plan to study after graduation.

There are not many accessible areas for the public to fully take advantage all the Atchafalaya Delta has to offer. For example, I deeply enjoy nature trails, but have none near my home. The LANERR would allow me to experience all our delta has to offer. Although I am leaving soon to attend college, I want to leave my area better than before.

In the end, I want to be able to say that I made a difference in my community, and I want to have a hometown to come back to that is better than ever. Hopefully, this letter, alongside my fellow classmates' letters, will drive you to bring the LANERR to our home in St. Mary Parish and help bring light to the Atchafalaya Delta.

Sincerely,
Ainsley Fontenot

Ainsley Fontenot

(985)518-3435
2400 Tiger Dr.
Morgan City, Louisiana, 70380

Governor John Bel Edwards

ATTN: Chief Resilience Officer, Charles Sutcliffe

Office of the Governor

PO Box 94004

Baton Rouge, LA 70804

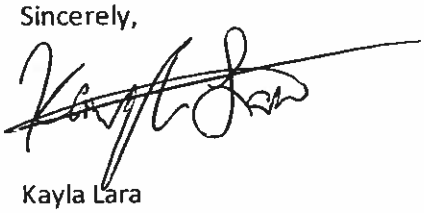
Dear Governor Edwards,

I am Kayla Lara and a senior at Morgan City High School. I was unaware of what Louisiana National Estuarine Research Reserve (LANERR) was, until Margaret Theriot and Kelly Boudreaux came to my school and talked to my fellow classmates and me about this opportunity. I am writing this letter in support for the Atchafalaya Zone to be the site for LANERR.

I live in an area where I do not believe I can fully appreciate what my environment has to offer. I think if LANERR were to be put in our area, people would not have to go far to learn about the environment. If it is placed in my area, I think it will offer jobs for students as well as classes for teachers to take and study or learn about the area. I feel LANERR would also help bring more people to the area. In Louisiana, there are over three million acres of wetlands wherein people can come to fish and hunt. This would provide many economic benefits for our area such as tourists would be staying in hotels in the area, spending money at restaurants, etc. LANERR could help St. Mary Parish in a positive way because it would help improve the local businesses and the economy.

We could build additional bike and walking trails and provide more for citizens and tourists to do. This would also make a wonderful place for field trips for schools. These are just some of the reasons that I believe LANERR should be in the Atchafalaya Delta area.

Sincerely,



Kayla Lara

2400 Tiger Dr. Morgan City LA

(936) 870-6844

Governor John Bel Edwards
ATTN: Chief Resilience Officer, Charles Sutcliffe
Office of the Governor
PO Box 94004
Baton Rouge, LA 70804

October 7th, 2021

Dear Governor John Bel Edwards,

My name is Elizabeth Hartman. I am a senior attending Morgan City High School. In our lovely town of Morgan City, Louisiana, we have a wonderful environment. Though, most people do not get to enjoy our environment. We would like to have LaNERR come to our town and make a change. The building that would be created would allow the citizens and visitors to have a hands-on educational site. The LaNERR facility could be built on the Atchafalaya River Delta and would provide hiking trails, information about our wildlife, and other valuable information. Being built on an estuary would give perfect views of the wildlife around us. It would be nice to have a place to go and learn more about our environment.

These are some reasons why I think LaNERR should be here:

- Green Living
- Hands-on Learning
- Would Bring Community and Visitors Together

LaNERR would help towards greener living. We can live a better lifestyle by understanding what we can do to help our environment. Recycling and reducing pollutable waste can help protect the world around us. The younger generations will have a strong impact in the future, by learning about greener living now.

The hands-on learning is a fantastic way for people of all ages to get together. Do you know that most people do not know what animals are lurking around Louisiana? Having LaNERR come here would give everyone a bigger mindset of what could be found. Going on a hiking trail can allow citizens to explore wildlife lands. This is also a safer way to explore since there will be more of an enclosed hiking trail. Also, having all kinds of information and classes inside the LaNERR facility will allow a bigger perspective of what Louisiana has to offer.

In our small town of Morgan City, most would say that there is nothing to do here. There is a movie theater, bowling alley, and a few small shops. If LaNERR would build its facility in St. Mary Parish, everyone would have "Stuff to do." Having LaNERR here would bring in people from out of town, boosting our economy and bringing in new jobs. This will boost our economy because the people who come in from out of town will use our hotels, gas stations, and grocery stores. Wouldn't it be great to have more people come to the Atchafalaya Basin? We ask that you allow this for the people of Louisiana.

Sincerely,

E Hartman

Elizabeth Hartman
1504 Walnut Dr.
Morgan City, La, 70380
985 992 6060

Governor John Bel Edwards
ATTN: Chief Resilience Officer, Charles Sutcliffe
Office of the Governor
PO Box 94004
Baton Rouge, LA 70804

September 01, 2021

Dear Governor Edwards,

My name is Tyanna Gregorieff; I am a senior at Morgan City High School. I am writing this in support for Louisiana National Estuarine Research Reserve (LaNERR) to be placed in the Atchafalaya zone. As my graduation nears, I realize Morgan City has more to offer then just a few stores. I believe that LaNERR would help bring more and more people here, increasing our economy.

An estuarine here in Morgan City would help bring tourists. These tourists would be here using our hotels and spending money at our stores. Margaret Theriot and Kelly Boudreaux came to our school and shared a PowerPoint about how Louisiana isn't as bad as we thought. Also, the Atchafalaya Delta-here in St. Mary Parish, Louisiana is the only state that is creating land from our waters. They mentioned that a researcher was in our waters already studying more Southwest; we are hoping that he would continue his studies of our area in our Atchafalaya Delta.

As I was growing up, I did not enjoy it here because:

- There is nothing here to motive me to focus on my education
- We do not have many things here for kids of all ages to do for fun.
- There is nothing here to keep us from getting into all the trouble surrounding us.

We all truly believe that Morgan City has more to offer, but as of now most seniors are not planning on coming back. When Margaret and Kelly came visit us, we realized that Morgan City could be a great place. It all starts with our community working together to make our city a place people mark on their maps of places they would like to go.

LaNERR would make our little area a better place to where many people will know about us. Tourists will come visit our amazing new land growing right out of our great Atchafalaya Delta, once we have this Estuarine here.

I was not even sure what an Estuarine was until these ladies came see us at school. After seeing them in class and learning about what an estuarine was I began thinking on how it would really be nice to have something as cool as this. I was always interested in science and how our body and the environment can open many studies and create new studies to observe. Please consider placing the LaNERR here in the Atchafalaya Zone.

Sincerely,

Tyanna Gregorieff

Tyanna Gregorieff
Morgan City High School
(985)-384-1754
2400 Tiger Dr, Morgan City
Louisiana 70380

Governor John Bel Edwards
ATTN: Chief Resilience Officer, Charles Sutcliffe
Office of the Governor
PO Box 94004
Baton Rouge, LA 70804

5 October 2021

Dear Governor Edwards,

I am writing this letter to you to formally voice my support for the Atchafalaya Zone to be your choice as the site for the Louisiana National Estuarine Research Reserve (LANERR).

It was not until two ladies with St. Mary Excel, Kelly Lind Boudreaux and Margaret Metz Theriot, walked into my English IV class last week that I had learned about the concept of an estuary (seriously, I did not know what that was). Before that day, I had been unaware that something like a NERR existed and was even more shocked to find out that a LANERR could ever come here to St. Mary Parish. Now, I am sure this is not the first letter to inform you of the benefits of a LANEER on the Atchafalaya Basin. But, as a current Morgan City High senior, I do wish to offer you and members of the site selection committee a unique perspective to consider.

Stuck in the shadow of its former glory as an offshore boomtown and home to the Shrimp and Petroleum Festival, some may say Morgan City has passed its prime. But, like many other residents of Morgan City, I know that this small town nestled right onside of the Atchafalaya River has something special. From its spirit to its abundance of culture and rich history, Morgan City is just waiting for that something that will rekindle that spark. That is where the Atchafalaya Zone comes in, and with it, and a host of new possibilities for St. Mary Parish.

Atchafalaya Delta has the ability to create jobs, which in hand will stimulate both the local and state-wide industries and economy. As someone whose father is an avid fisher, it saddens me to know that he had few opportunities to fish as a child due to his financial conditions. With a LANEER, any child from any walk of life will be able to have access to what Louisiana naturally has to offer, including at-risk and disenfranchised youth just like my father. Our underfunded communities will now have access to public, hands-on education and will, in turn, be offered a jumpstart to a potential career. But besides this, anyone can find something in a LANEER to look forward to, whether that be biking and walking trails, a growth in eco-consciousness and greener companies, or just seeing a boost in morale in the community.

While I am currently planning to leave for university next fall, I hope to come back to a city whose spirit has been revitalized by the effects of an Atchafalaya Estuarine Zone. I trust that you and your fellow constituents will allow myself and my entire community to leave behind something for future generations that goes beyond ourselves.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

With gratitude,

Christina Williams

Christina Williams
806 South Everett St.
Morgan City, LA 70380
(985) 518-3110

Governor John Bel Edwards
ATTN: Chief Resilience officer, Charles Sutcliffe
Office of the Governor
P.O. Box 94404
Baton Rouge, La 70804
September 29, 2021

Dear Governor Edwards,

I am writing to you to aid my support for the Atchafalaya Zone to be the chosen place for the Louisiana National Estuarine Research Reserve (LANERR). There are multiple reasons for this choice and my preposition.

All throughout the Gulf Coast states, they all have estuaries and Louisiana is the only one that does not. Not to mention, all the diverse life that Louisiana has in its' ecosystem compared to other states is mind boggling. Many people would love to see the wildlife that we are able to experience every day.

This would bring me to my second point, extra tourism and revenue. People who visit would have a place to eat, stay and get repairs. Exposure to local businesses would be great because as of now they do not have much business but bringing people to Louisiana will help significantly

I have grown up on the water, experiencing it all my life and I feel that even though where Morgan City is located, many people do not get the opportunity to see the outdoor ecosystem we have in our back yard. Opening a Estuarine would offer countless fun activities for families to enjoy together. It would give people a chance to experience activities like fishing and trail riding.

Here are some other benefits:

- Possible internships for returning college students
- Hands on learning for students K-12
- Boost morale for leaving college students and leaves a a reason to come back
- Delta is creating land on its own

This would leave something for college students who leave for education and come back home. They could get a job or just have it for a summer, either way, it still adds a reason to come back to your roots. I am sure that these are some of the most beneficial points on why the Estuarine should be built in the Atchafalaya zone.

Sincerely,

Braiden Gaudet

Braiden Gaudet
(985-714-9510)

Governor John Bel Edwards

ATTN: Chief Resilience Officer, Charles Sutcliffe

Office of the Governor

PO Box 94004

Baton Rouge, LA 70804

10/1/21

Dear Governor Edwards,

I am a senior from Morgan City High School. I am writing this letter to show my support for the Louisiana National Estuarine Research Reserve. Our lovely community, filled with 11,206 people, is located at the mouth of the Atchafalaya River. A national research reserve would fit extremely well within the 137,695-acre Atchafalaya Delta Wildlife Management Area.

Having no access to water, I know that the NERR project could help bring our community out and help our area prosper to a greater extent. As a teenager whose parents' income is from the Boat Building industry in Morgan City, I know our area would be perfect for this reserve since the majority of our community would welcome the sanctuary with open arms. This reserve can help motivate people to go fishing, hiking, swimming, and get to know the area more. Further research could be done concerning our wildlife and water and allow families to get together and enjoy being outside. NERR could influence many youth and future generations, by bringing more field trips to schools, providing more money into the area coastal economy, and providing more jobs in the area. The opportunities NEER can bring to our economy is endless, seeing the NERR reserve at the Atchafalaya River would show a change in our community as most of us who live here barely go outside and enjoy the water.

Being a teenager in Morgan City I know that many young people have no access to water and don't have the ability to go out and have fun due to how small the city is, which is why I completely support the NERR project in the Atchafalaya Zone.

Sincerely, Stefanie Martinez

Stefanie Martinez

Stefanie Martinez

Morgan City High School

Morgan city, LA

Governor John Bel Edwards

ATTN: Chief Resilience Officer, Charles Sutcliffe

Officer of the Governor

PO Box 94004

Baton Rouge LA 70804

Dear Governor Edwards,

My name is Nyla Morse, and I am a senior at Morgan City High School. Imagine the beautiful sight of Morgan city's Atchafalaya area with a NEER where our citizens can explore and learn new things. Many people say our town is full of beautiful sights, but having been born and raised here, I have yet to see them because there is not a lot to do. The National Estuarine Research Reserve (NEER) system will be able to assist with the Atchafalaya zone.

Many individuals leave Morgan City because it is "bland and boring." We want our people to feel compelled to return, to feel valued, and to pass on their experiences to their children and future generations. The NEER in the Atchafalaya zone will bring a tremendous movement to our tiny community and brighten it up.

The Atchafalaya River is intensively exploited for transportation and manufacturing, and decades of climatic manipulation have resulted in changed river flows. Now, large swaths of backswamp floodplain have been cut off from the river. However, having the NEER project on our side can help us prevent this and strengthen our systems. It can also innovate research, teaching, water quality, and training via the use of a place-based system of protected spaces. Our community will be inspired with optimism and growth because of this initiative, and our people will want to call this place home. The NEER may be our greatest hope at safeguarding our areas and increasing the desire of residents to return.

Building an estuary along with the Atchafalaya area could be a location where our community can fall in love. This project can inspire our people to continue fishing, boating, and hiking. It has the potential to strengthen our public and entice others to come and see this beautiful sight we can call home. NEER can allow family and friends to enjoy the fresh air and water, as well as to include preparations for coastal storm protection and educational activities for schools around the region. The estuary can also act as a precious reserve offering natural experiments for scientists and engaging the touchy feeling for children.

To conclude, I believe that The National Estuarine Research Reserve (NEER) system would offer people the desire to want to visit our region on a regular basis, as well as give families the opportunity to learn new things and explore the living nature of life. It can greatly improve our economy by providing employees with new jobs and allowing them to start their own companies. This is a place we call home. This is a location where we want our people to feel at ease.

Nyla Morse

Sincerely, Nyla Morse

Governor John Bel Edwards
ATTN: Chief Resilience Officer, Charles Sutcliffe
Office of the Governor
PO Box 94004
Baton Rouge, LA 70804

DATE, 7 October 2021

Dear Governor Edwards,

Morgan City, Louisiana has been a place I call home for almost 15 years. My name is Madison Connolly, and I am a senior at Morgan City High School. I am originally from Jeanerette, but I moved here when I was about 3 years old. Morgan City has the potential to be well known by many. The city I call home truly is a beautiful place. However, I feel as if we are missing an aspect to make things better here. A National Estuarine Research Reserve would put Morgan City on the map.

As a teenager living here in Morgan City, I have come to realize this town has been on a downhill over the years. Long ago, Morgan City was booming! Now, with a bowling alley that is rarely open and a select few fast-food joints, there is not much for us to do. Morgan City has a gorgeous historical district that many should come to admire. We truly are a beautiful town with extremely passionate citizens. This NERR could pick this town up for the better! The NERR would attract many people from out of town; thus, creating an admiration for our small city. The Atchafalaya Basin has so many great aspects and many, including our own citizens, could learn more about our hometown. With me being 17 years old, I have been raised to believe that we have a unique culture and so much to learn about. So, why am I not educated on our animals? Our grass? Our water? Future generations could also grow an appreciation for this town. I feel as if we all need a better appreciation for Morgan City: and this is the place to start!

It truly disappoints me that younger generations are stuck inside on mobile devices. Our culture truly is a melting pot of a culture. Not many of us know much about our land besides going sit at the Sea Wall when we are bored. This is even worse for the younger children. With this LANERR, the children can have hands on learning and can grow a better appreciation for their culture and this research facility. All of the students my age are coming together to prove our worthiness and our concern for our city. All in all, my main goal is to ensure myself, along with my fellow classmates, can remember how we made a difference in our quaint town we call home and cause change for the better! We cannot do this without your help. This is worth the consideration as we all prove Morgan City is worth the NERR.

Sincerely,
Madison Connolly

Madison Connolly

2400 Tiger Lane
Morgan City, Louisiana, 70380

Governor John Bel Edwards
ATTN: Chief Resilience Officer, Charles Sutcliffe
Office of the Governor
PO Box 94004
Baton Rouge, LA 70804

October 1, 2021

Dear Governor Edwards,

I am a senior at Morgan City High School and am writing to you to give my support for the National Estuarine Research Reserve to be placed in the Atchafalaya Zone. I believe that this National Estuarine Research Reserve would be beneficial, not only for the Atchafalaya area, but for the state of Louisiana as a whole. As you might know, the Atchafalaya River is unique in the fact that it is building land, unlike the rest of Louisiana which is losing it. A NERR in the Atchafalaya Zone would allow extensive research to be done. In addition to having useful research being conducted, it would also bring much needed jobs to the area.

Another reason the NERR should be in the Atchafalaya Zone is because of the beauty of the Atchafalaya area. The area we live in is so alluring and charming and yet, it goes largely unnoticed by the youth of the community. I have constantly heard friends of mine complain that there is nothing to do in Morgan City. The research reserve could show the beauty of this area to adolescents, kids, and adults alike. It would bring much needed tourism to the area, benefiting local businesses and bringing attention to the loving community that we live in. The seawall and the lake, which are the most popular places to go, could be enhanced and bring out more of the inner charm that this area has to offer.

I wish that I could experience the opportunities presented to the youth; however if the future generations could get to experience it at the very least, I would be happy. The kids in elementary who learn about sea life in a classroom could experience it firsthand by taking a fieldtrip to the NERR. Teenagers who have nothing to do could go to events that are sponsored by the NERR and keep out of trouble. These events could even go on to inspire teenagers and kids to seek a life dedicated to helping marine life or just helping people in general.

In summary, I believe that a National Estuarine Research Reserve in this area would unite the people of this area and inspire the community to take charge of the lovely area we live. With this opportunity given, it could bring out all the things that make this community special.

Sincerely

Victor Cardenas
Morgan City, Louisiana
2400 Tiger Lane

Governor John Bel Edwards
ATTN: Chief Resilience Officer, Charles Sutcliffe
Office of the Governor
PO Box 94004
Baton Rouge, LA 70804

October 3, 2021

Dear Governor Edwards,

My family is from Mexico, and like many other immigrant families that came to the United States for a better life, they settled in Morgan City, LA to start their very own family. Growing up I never really understood what caused my parents to choose Morgan City to settle in out of the whole country. Interested, I asked my parents what made this place so special, but I was never given an exact answer. All they said was that they appreciated the nature around them. As time went by and I started school, my peers and teachers would constantly talk about how wonderful this area was with all the wetlands and rivers. However, I have no way of reaching these places they spoke of. Of course, I could easily "Google" it, but that could never defeat an in-person experience.

Many people who also struggle obtaining access to the environment, can finally experience and explore a world that is a few inches away from reach through the Atchafalaya Zone. The national research reserve could benefit in a variety of ways:

- Knowledge growth about the wetland's expansion at the mouth of the Atchafalaya,
- Numerous job opportunities, and
- Supporting money resulting in economic growth.

Regardless of age, anyone could gain from this national research reserve. For example, children could use the NERR (National Estuarine Research Reserve) for hands-on learning experiences instead of researching through the Internet like I once did. As the young ones grow up, they will learn to appreciate where they live because of their own familiarity and will choose this area to grow and start their own family. This estuary would be a great eye opener to most.

As you can see, an estuary would be a great benefit to the St. Mary Parish community, and I, as well as many others, would love to be able to see the area they grew up in come to life. Generations will be able to share the beauty of their hometown to anyone who decides to visit instead of keeping it hidden.

Sincerely,

Lesly Calderon

Lesly Calderon

2400 Tiger Drive

Morgan City, LA

Governor John Bel Edwards

ATTN: Chief Resilience Officer, Charles Sutcliffe

Officer of the Governor

PO Box 94004

Baton Rouge LA 70804

21 October 2021

Dear Governor Edwards,

Morgan City of St. Mary Parish is where I call home. I've lived here all my life. Our economy is thriving as we know it, but it could be greater. This project the National Estuarine Research Reserve (NERR) system can help. This is why I support this program for the Atchafalaya Zone. This program can help our communities unite into a better way of living.

Many industries, transports, and supplies are located in St. Mary parish, which is located at the mouth of the Atchafalaya River. Due to the fact it is rich in nutrients, needed for sedimentation and soil, the Atchafalaya is a great sight for developing and spreading land. It also has a lot of potential for agriculture.

This national research reserve would be a big transformation for this area in Louisiana. It would boost our economy. This NEER system can allow farmers to invest in improved crops or equipment, receive profits on those investments, and pass land on to their children; making it is easier to obtain money to finance agricultural or industrial projects. This can allow farmers to pursue their own businesses.

Neer can also contribute to improve our ecosystems. It can provide an ecosystem that is healthy with clean water, purified air, maintained soil. This can contribute to a regulated climate, nutrients being recycled, and supply us with food. This saves money for the economy.

NERR's presence would have an impact on Louisiana's youth and young adults, helping to an awareness for Louisiana's natural resources while enjoying the area's life quality and opportunities that the NERR can offer. This program can provide knowledge on how to improve our communities for the better for both youth and young adults.

Finally, a NERR in the Atchafalaya Zone would help you reach your ultimate purpose of restoring and improving the Atchafalaya River. As a conclusion, I support the Atchafalaya Zone's establishment as a Louisiana National Estuarine Research Reserve.

Sincerely,

Cierra Poole

Governor John Bel Edwards

ATTN: Chief Resilience Officer, Charles Sutcliffe

Office of the Governor

PO Box 94004

Baton Rouge, LA 70804

October 4, 2021

Dear Governor Edwards,

I am writing to you today to state my support for the Atchafalaya Zone to be chosen as the site for the Louisiana National Estuarine Research Reserve (LANERR). Upon being first introduced to the idea, I was immediately drawn to the prospect of the reserve bettering our community in ways that have been desperately needed for years.

I have lived in Morgan City for all 17 years of my life. In my time here, I have witnessed, with sadness, the community in the Atchafalaya River area growing more pessimistic about the conditions and future of our parish. This area requires intense attention and care to realize its full potential, which a LANERR estuary could provide.

Located at the mouth of the Atchafalaya River and Wax Lake Outlet lies the 137,695-acre Atchafalaya Delta Wildlife Management Area, which is significantly more space than necessary to fit such a project. In addition, the Atchafalaya Basin contains the largest wetland in the United States and, alone, contributes immensely to the state of Louisiana.

As the only coastal state in the continental United States to not contain a location for NERR activities, our great area is missing out on the vast opportunities and perks that such activities provide. These include job opportunities, tourist/student attraction, stimulation of the economy that has been so harmed by the virus and recent hurricane, and a sense of community and interconnectivity among the citizens in the area.

For all the reasons listed above, I encourage the selection of the Atchafalaya Zone as the location for the Louisiana National Estuarine Research Reserve.

Sincerely,

Tyler Besse

Tyler Besse

(985) 384-1754

2400 Tiger Drive

Morgan City, LA

Governor John Bel Edwards

ATTN: Chief Resilience Officer, Charles Sutcliffe

Office of the Governor

PO Box 94004

Baton Rouge, LA 70804

October 4, 2021

Dear Governor Edwards,

I want to express my support for the Louisiana National Estuarine Research Reserve program being in the Atchafalaya Delta. I feel that it could improve the surrounding area by providing jobs, education, and facilitating experiences that could bring more appreciation to the beautiful environment.

The estuary would allow for the education of people on the Atchafalaya Delta. Many don't understand how special our Delta is, unlike most coasts we are gaining significant portions of land, a major research topic for scientific research. The educational aspect could also bring in many tourists, as it does in other NERR estuaries around the country.

Another facet of the estuary would be that, considering that many people lack access to and knowledge of the swamps, it could help people appreciate the area. The attitude of some in our community regarding the areas surrounding our towns and the fact that there are people who don't get to experience the beauty of our land is saddening.

By supporting this project, we could bring income to the areas around the Atchafalaya, along with improving education on and appreciation of the land.

Sincerely,

Aidden Radsick

Aidden Charles Radsick

197 Elaine Street

985-498-6344

Governor John Bel Edwards
ATTN: Chief Resilience Officer, Charles Sutcliffe
Office of the Governor
PO Box 94004
Baton Rouge, LA 70804

October 1, 2021

Dear Governor Edwards,

My name is Olivia Baio, and I am a senior at Morgan City High School. I live in Stephensville, located near Morgan City, and I have an entire ecosystem in my backyard. I am fortunate enough to experience the beauty of my area every day, but most of my peers do not have that same opportunity. Very few residents of Morgan City live on or near a bayou. Having a Louisiana National Estuarine Research Reserve (LANERR) in the Atchafalaya Zone would allow many people, and myself, to feel more connected to the community.

Recently, two people came to speak to my class on the importance of our wetlands and how we need to protect them. The Atchafalaya Basin is home to the largest wetland in the United States and protection is vital to the growth of my town and the economy. Also, our Atchafalaya Delta is creating land, making it more worthy of protection.

I am grateful to have had first-hand experience of wetlands almost my whole life, and I hope everyone can experience it as well. Sure, people who own a boat could go out for a ride but with a limited amount of access. Scientists can collect samples, study, and publish data, but what if the public could experiment with samples for themselves? Having a hands-on center would allow people from home as well as visitors to experience the natural beauty and wonders of our ecosystem. Personally, I could have a place to fulfill my childhood dream to explore nature--without having to leave my hometown.

A NERR could bring my community closer together with activities such as walking and biking trails, a place to host annual events, or sight-seeing tours to observe the estuaries around us. Here, it could steer tourists towards a place to work, learn, raise families, and spend quality time in our region.

A NERR center in the Morgan City/ Berwick area would not only improve my community but would also contribute to restoring the Atchafalaya Basin. For these reasons, I support the selection of the Atchafalaya Zone as the Louisiana National Estuarine Research Reserve.

Sincerely,

Olivia Baio

Olivia Baio
(985)-519-7823
2400 Tiger Drive
Morgan City, LA 70380

ATTN: Chief Resilience Officer, Charles Sutcliffe

Office of the Governor

PO Box 94004

Baton Rouge, LA 70804

October 04, 2021

Dear Governor Edwards,

My name is Jerson Flores, and I am a senior at Morgan City High School. I have resided in St. Mary Parish for 11 years. During my time here, I have noticed the locals' appreciation for St. Mary Parish's nature. However, majority of the public have minimal public access besides Lake End Park and the Morgan City seawall, so I am writing this letter to advocate my support for the Atchafalaya Zone to be named the site for the Louisiana National Estuarine Research Reserve (LANERR). I make this request for multiple reasons:

St. Mary Parish is an area with a population of nearly fifty thousand and has plenty of history in the shrimp and petroleum sphere. In addition, the parish includes the cities of Morgan City and Berwick, located at the mouth of the Atchafalaya River. The Atchafalaya River is the base of the parish's shipping channel, business infrastructure, and water transportation. Nonetheless, the region has dipped in prestige and retention for its current citizens and visitors in recent years. I firmly believe that this is an issue because the locals underappreciate such a diverse and historic area.

Surprisingly, Louisiana is the only Gulf Coast state without a NEER. A national research reserve would fit well within the 137,695-acre Atchafalaya Delta Wildlife Management Area in St. Mary Parish. Moreover, the Atchafalaya Basin is home to the largest wetland in the United States and is the only area growing more land. Logically, its maintenance is a critical factor for the health of this ever-growing ecosystem.

Research activities associated with NERR would be ideally situated in the Atchafalaya Estuarine Zone to

- Attract scholars on a national stage
- Provide employment opportunities to the region and inject money into the parish
- Provide more vital connectivity to the rest of Louisiana, the Gulf Coast, and the United States
- Preserve the habitat and inspect its water quality
- Study storm effects and climate change

The creation of a NERR in this area would revitalize the youth's sense of pride and appreciation for the beauty and culture of the St. Mary Parish area. By creating a sense of pride in the ecosystem, students could become interested in outdoor careers and jobs while promoting a greener lifestyle. In addition, the NEER would allow for tours and field trips, which in turn would create an influx in profit for local businesses, gas stations, and hotels. More so, a NEER can provide healthy living opportunities through the development of nature and bike trails that locals and visitors can enjoy. In essence, I am excited at the prospect of LANEER's potential to restore the Atchafalaya Basin to its former glory and make St. Mary Parish the best that it can be!

Sincerely,

Jerson Flores

Jerson Flores
(985) 312-1861
2400 Tiger Dr
Morgan City, Louisiana, 70380
Thank you for your time and have a wonderful day!

Governor John Bel Edwards

ATTN: Chief Resilience Officer, Charles Sutcliffe

Office of the Governor

PO Box 94004

Baton Rouge, LA 70804

Dear Governor Edwards,

I am Dalexandro Hernandez and I'm 17 years old, I go to Morgan City High School, and I was recently introduced to the LANEER project and the possibility of the Atchafalaya Zone to be a part of it; and I give my full support.

I am excited about the possibilities that this project can bring to my hometown of Morgan City and the surrounding areas. The businesses it can bring are endless and would be great for the economy down here, businesses down here constantly shut down because they don't bring in enough people, but if the LANEER project would be brought in this area people from all over would come and while they are down here, they might do some shopping, visit local businesses, stay at hotels, or eat out; business would be booming.

Financial aspects aside the LANEER project would educate people about the environment and how to protect it. Kids would be able to go on field trips to learn about the area they are in. Louisiana loses about a football field of land every hour; in contrast the Atchafalaya River delta is the only land making river in Louisiana. This area needs to be preserved and taught about because it's so unique.

When I first heard about the project, I thought it was boring and I didn't care but after plenty of thought and research on it I realize this area needs the LANEER project. Growing up I constantly heard people say they can't wait to leave, I didn't care then but this is my home and although I will leave soon it'll be something to be proud of, and something to look forward to when I come back in the far future. It'll be something many younger kids can be proud of. Other areas don't need this project as much as we do. The Ponchartrain area already has a great business area and things to do out there, all we have is a seawall and a movie theatre, nothing really exciting.

Sincerely,

Dalexandro Hernandez

Dalexandro Hernandez

985-384-1754

2400 Tiger Dr. Morgan City, LA 70380

Governor John Bel Edwards

ATTN: Chief Resilience Officer, Charles Sutcliffe

Office of the Governor

PO Box 94004

Baton Rouge, LA 70804

10/20/21

Dear Governor Edwards,

I would like to start off by introducing myself. My name is Keller, and I am a senior at Morgan City High School. I wanted to write to you about what could potentially make St. Mary Parish a place where people can come to visit for weeks at a time, rather than for just a few days like most people do. Tuesday September 28, 2021, my English class got the opportunity to listen to a guest speaker who talked to us about the Atchafalaya Zone. The Atchafalaya Zone is a potential site for the Louisiana National Estuarine Research Reserve (LANERR). LANERR is an organization that can give us hands-on education and could really make a difference to St. Mary Parish. It would give my generation and future generations get involved with activities in St. Mary Parish that people normally do not get involved with.

Now in my seventeen years of living in St. Mary parish I have never seen many people stay here for an extended period of time. People only come for the Shrimp and Petroleum Festival or for Mardi Gras, but never just for a vacation. We need more tourists in our community to help our economy grow. I have a job and when I get days off it would be nice to be able to do more things in my community. I would like to go out and enjoy the scenery of my hometown. LANERR could give our citizens and the tourists something to learn about the Atchafalaya heritage. It can give people of all ages something to take part in. They have places like this in Galveston, Texas and many more that people visit to learn about their heritage, and I would like to have the same in Morgan City. I hope you agree with the reasoning that was given to indicating that St. Mary Parish needs a special place for the community to enjoy A NERR.

Sincerely

Keller Berry

Keller Berry

2400 Tiger Drive Morgan City Louisiana 70380

Governor John Bel Edwards

ATTN: Chief Resilience Officer, Charles Sutcliffe

Office of the Governor

PO Box 94004

Baton Rouge, LA 70804

October 1,2020

Dear Governor Edwards,

My name is Makalen, I'm writing you to add my full support to establish a Louisiana National Estuarine Research Reserve also known as a LANERR to be placed in the Atchafalaya Basin, which includes the city I live in, Morgan City.

I have lived at Morgan City all my life, I was born and raised here. Morgan City has become a huge part of my life and I will never be able to forget it no matter where I go, many people let go of their hometown but ill never let go of Morgan City. Since my youth my community didn't have a hangout spot or something to make me feel more connected to my area. I do believe the addition of a NERR would defiantly make me and the residents of my community feel more connected to our area.

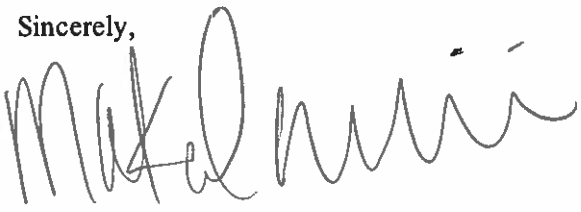
A NERR would fit perfectly along the Atchafalaya Basin, because it is the largest wetland in the United States, also the Atchafalaya Basin has many bayous, rivers, and streams. this will also help teach us the importance of conserving and responsibly managing our coastal wetlands.

We as a community have so much to offer when it comes down to production and research within our land and having a NERR would help us value our beautiful landscapes, and our very beautiful Atchafalaya River. LANEER would help us boost tourism, build more businesses, and help boost the economy.

If you grant us the opportunity to place the Estuarine in St. Mary Parish it would give people a place to access boats, bike trails, and provide affinity to the rest of Louisiana. It will also provide the younger generation with somewhere to socialize and hangout. It will also give the younger generation a chance to have hands on experience with our wetlands.

In conclusion, the presence of the Louisiana National Estuarine Research Reserve would have a huge impact on the youth and adults that live in our area. It can also let us appreciate the states' natural resources and help us make the right decisions on protecting our wetlands and wildlife. I deeply encourage you to select the Atchafalaya Delta as the new home of the LANERR.

Sincerely,



Makalen Williams

2400 Tiger Drive, Morgan City, LA

Governor John Bel Edwards
ATTN: Chief Resilience Officer, Charles Sutcliffe
Office of the Governor
PO Box 94004
Baton Rouge, LA 70804

October 20th, 2021

Dear Governor Edwards,

I am writing to you to fully add my support for the next Louisiana National Estuarine Research Reserve (LANERR) to be placed in the Atchafalaya Delta, which includes the St Mary Parish area.

I have lived in the St Mary Parish area for 17 years and counting. Morgan City is where I was born and raised. This city has become a part of me that I can never and will never be able to let go; many people tend to feel nothing for this place, it is said to just be somewhere to stay but there is a way others can feel more connected to the area: The addition of a NERR would allow residents to feel more connected to the natural beauty of our area.

A National Research Reserve would fit within the Atchafalaya River Delta-Land because it is said to be the largest wetland in the United States and the future prosperity of Louisiana depends on its vitality.

We, as a city, have so much to offer. With the production of the research reserve such as the beautiful landscapes and the well-known Atchafalaya River, St Mary Parish can use LANERR to boost tourism, build more businesses, and boost tax dollars.

If you decide to place the Estuarine in Morgan City, Louisiana, or the St Mary Parish area it would give people the access to boats, bike trails, and provide a vigorous affinity to the rest of Louisiana. Additionally, the Atchafalaya Delta would give researchers aid to develop more resilient lands within our state.

Finally, the presence of the Louisiana National Estuarine Research Reserve would impact the upcoming youth, adolescents, and adults who currently live in the designated area. It also forms appreciation towards the state of Louisiana's natural resources amid the admiration to make decisions on opportunities and the fulfillment of life. Therefore, I deeply encourage the selection of the Atchafalaya Delta as the place for a new LANERR.

Yours Truly,

Anacia Madise

Anacia Madise
2400 Tiger Drive, Morgan City, LA 70380
985-519-6397

Governor John Bel Edwards
ATTN: Chief Resilience Officer, Charles Sutcliffe
Office of the Governor
PO Box 94004
Baton Rouge, LA 70804

Dear Governor Edwards,

As someone who has lived in St. Mary Parish for the entirety of their life, having a Louisiana National Estuarine Research Reserve (LANERR) research facility in the Atchafalaya zone would boost the attention that the smaller, less noteworthy towns will get, and it will increase the number of tourists not to mention boost the economy overall. It would also likely give more reasons to build popular attractions to make these locations more noteworthy. These attractions could include research of the Atchafalaya River and the history of the region as it could educate those who live in the region as well as the tourists who may travel to see the new attractions. Since the river has the unique trait to make land it would likely draw attention from many different people, peaking their interests in the river's natural phenomenon.

Expanding on this, it would start growth in the economy and help small communities with the extra attention to develop building more stores and social gatherings which would subsequently create an influx of revenue for all workers in the region. This could help reduce the amount of unemployment as well as increase the amount of variety in the job choices in the smaller cities. These improvements could give the funding to perform repairs and improvements to the parks that had poor maintenance due to low funding which could also attract tourists as a result. The multitude of improvements, large and small, would undeniably help small towns, making the LANERR research facility an essential part of our community.

Something else to mention, the improvements could potentially lower prices at nearby stores and restaurants by the increasing amounts of demand generated for the business owners and keeping prices reasonably lower for customers. These changes would benefit the future generations of the less populated communities. I think the LANERR facility should be in Morgan City since it is one of the closest towns to the Atchafalaya River and it would restore the variety of attractions and tourist locales for all to enjoy. This opportunity would give this community a chance to move forward and grow bigger and better with more popular attractions and the data that could be used to slow the erosion of the coast lines. This would majorly increase the popularity and population of Morgan City too which would overall strengthen the economy against things like hurricanes and natural disasters giving more money and data for the needed cushion against the damage that may be done.

Lex Richard

Sincerely,
Lex Richard
1306 Front Street
Morgan City, Louisiana

Governor John Bel Edwards
ATTN: Chief Resilience Officer, Charles Sutcliffe
Office of the Governor
PO Box 94004
Baton Rouge, LA 70804

October 4th, 2021

Dear Governor Edwards,

I am a high school senior in the Morgan City, Louisiana area, and I am writing this to add my support and aid in the creation of a new Louisiana National Estuarine Research Reserve (LANERR) site in the Atchafalaya Zone area.

St. Mary Parish is extremely underrated, and not too many people know of its beauty. I have lived here all 17 years of my life and have been out in the water very often. Through my experiences I believe that we have some of the most beautiful landscapes in the world in the Atchafalaya Basin. Every day other areas and parishes of Louisiana are losing land, while we are gaining just as much in the St. Mary Parish area each day. We need an Estuary research facility in our Morgan City area to investigate this unique, natural phenomenon, and to offer our community, as well as tourists, access to our area's natural beauty.

The people here also have a great sense of community, and they would undoubtedly support the creation of a LANERR facility. The creation of new jobs would also benefit the people in our town and would stimulate our local economy. It would attract scholars on the national and international scale, and it would provide a greater connection to the rest of the United States.

A LANERR facility in our area would give our youth hands-on education on how to better our community and on the beautiful landscapes that exist around us that many of them can't even see without access into the Atchafalaya River. We also certainly have the space in our 137,695 acre Atchafalaya wildlife area already located at the mouth of our Atchafalaya River.

Overall, a NERR in our area would support your national focus on restoring and educating others on our Atchafalaya basin. With that said, Morgan City, Louisiana would be the best area for a LANERR facility.

Sincerely,

x_____ Signature

Alaijah Voisin

465 Wilson Street

Berwick, Louisiana

October 5, 2021

Governor John Bel Edwards

ATTN: Chief Resilience Officer, Charles Sutcliffe

Office of the Governor
PO Box 94004
Baton Rouge, LA 7080

Dear Governor Edwards:

I am a Senior at Morgan City High School and, today I am writing to you to express my opinions on the LANEER Project and the Atchafalaya Zone. From the options for where the LANEER Project is being considered I think the Atchafalaya Zone should be the most considered. In the Morgan City and Berwick area the economy is declining, every year the population drops when it should be steadily growing. In this area there is a lack of things to occupy the minds of the members of our community. There are bars and clubs that adults can visit but the youth are left stuck at home. I live by the power plant and when I get bored I either watch the smoke pump from it. If the Levee is open that can always be visited or when Lake and Park is not charging, that is always a treat. It still lacks options and doing the same thing over and over leaves the youth bored and unmotivated.

If the LANEER Project were to be put in the Atchafalaya Zone it could bring more people to our town and with that will come more heathy and safe opportunities for the youth, families, and the community. However, if you were to approve the project in a place like Baton Rouge or New Orleans then the likelihood it would help people in a smaller community grow decreases. Big cities like that already have things available to them so I personally think it would be unwise and overall better to have it here in the Atchafalaya Zone instead.

I believe if the project was approved for the Atchafalaya Zone, we as a community can grow and thrive. We have plenty of water around that with the LENEER project may be able to make it possible for the people to have more access to. As people who live on this amazing planet Earth, which is made up of mostly water, we are drawn to the beauty of the water. We have a unique occurrence in the Delta that can be beneficial to study. Instead of losing land over time it is slowly building. If we can find out how this is happening it may be to use it to rebuild lost portions of land. I really appreciate your consideration, we all do. Thank You.

Sincerely,

Kurston Simmons

P.O. Box 1445, Morgan City, LA 70381

Governor John Bel Edwards

ATTN: Chief Resilience Officer, Charles Sutcliffe

Office of the Governor

PO Box 94004

Baton Rouge, LA 70804

DATE 10/21/2021

Dear Governor Edwards,

Hello, my name is Dylan, an honors student at Morgan City Senior High, and I am pleased to express my interest on my states plan for my parish. The Atchafalaya Zone is in consideration to be named a Louisiana National Estuarine Research Reserve (LANERR). As land deposits decrease in the Atchafalaya Basin, an estimated football field of wetland is washed away every hour according to an article from https://www.nola.com/news/environment/article_0e726373-c67b-5727-9dce-0af5fdbb2556.html. Building an estuary avoids soil erosion and helps prevent land loss from threats like storms, floods, and other natural or man-made incidents such as boat wakes. In the swamps of where many St. Mary Parish residents (like myself) reside around, we think nature taking its course is excellent, but helping the environment regain what was lost throughout the years and now is great.

Transforming the Atchafalaya Zone into an estuary could reverse water quality and increase nutrient and algal blooms. Not all algal blooms are bad for the environment. From my research, algal blooms are good sites to see to prove the estuary is working because they show environmental change on both (in our case) land and bayous. Morgan City and other surrounding areas (Berwick and Patterson) are all key cities along the coast for industries such as shrimping and oyster farming. As a family member of a biologist who works for BTNEP, I learned there will always be some resistance from the environment such as more nutrients or algal blooms in water than needed. As a resident of Louisiana, I know families, communities, and organizations all around the state will do whatever they can to help each other and the environment around them. There are ways to maintain estuaries if there are organizations like St. Mary Excel and the NOAA and students like me to express their love for the estuary to the state so they can fund money to support and manage the reserve.

So, is naming the Atchafalaya Zone an Estuary in my opinion worth it? Of course! Estuaries are known to be Biologically Productive from my previous reference https://www.epa.gov/nep/basic-information-about-estuaries. Estuaries provide a habitat for species of all kinds that are critical to commercial and recreational hunter and fisherman. Cleaner water and land help migratory birds and other species of animals in the area like alligators, deer, and rabbits by protecting them with sheltered surroundings and a place to reproduce and nurse without any threats.

The naming of a LANERR in the Louisiana Atchafalaya Zone would provide multiple opportunities for our ecosystem, families, tourist, workers, and economy. Although there are downsides to any plan, restoring and rebuilding our environment to become greater than it already is would be widely appreciated among our beautiful state we call home.

Thank You,

Dylan Duval

Dylan Duval

Morgan City Senior High

Morgan City, Louisiana

Governor John Bel Edwards

ATTN: Chief Resilience Officer, Charles Sutcliffe

Office of the Governor

PO Box 94004

Baton Rouge, LA 70804

Dear Governor Edwards,

My name is Kirsten Legendre. I am a senior at Morgan City High School, and I strongly support the idea of St. Mary Parish getting an estuary. Receiving an estuary will allow the citizens to fully appreciate the things that St. Mary Parish of Louisiana has to offer.

In the small-town of Morgan City, Louisiana, the things we have to offer are not fully accessible for most people. This can cause issues with residents trying to get out of their normal routine when they want to see the full potential of Louisiana. The people of St. Mary Parish would benefit from an estuary by being able to fully provide things to do for the people and the tourists. I also feel having an estuary would help the people embrace where we live more than we already do.

I support St. Mary Parish getting a estuary to give residents a chance to walk their pets, to go kayaking, and canoeing. This could also be beneficial to tourists who would want to learn something about Louisiana. Having an estuary could also provide a calming place to go for when someone wants to read, draw, write, or just to simply have a break from the world. Personally, if Louisiana had an estuary, I would often go to have a break from the stress of life.

Overall, I feel like having a chance to have an estuary in my parish would open opportunities for everyone including jobs, internships, learning opportunities, and even for food businesses. I didn't know about an estuary and all its benefits until Mrs. Linda Boudreaux and Mrs. Margret Metz Theriot with St. Mary Excel came talk to my senior English class about the LaNERR project.

Sincerely,

Kirsten Legendre

Kirsten Legendre

209 Jeffery Street, Patterson La 70392

985-992-6009

Governor John Bel Edwards

ATTN: Chief Resilience Officer, Charles Sutcliffe

Office of the Governor

PO Box 94004

Baton Rouge, LA 70804

10/1/2021

Dear Governor Edwards,

My support for the Louisiana National Estuarine Research Reserve (LANEER) to claim ground in the Atchafalaya Zone is fully backed up in this letter. The benefits that it would bring to not only St. Mary Parish citizens, but citizens who would travel from other parishes to visit this estuary, are far too great to pass up.

Many people could agree that there are vast benefits to estuaries. Some include acting like buffers to protect land from crashing waves and storms, aiding in preventing soil erosion, soaking up excess flood and tidal surges, and contributing to important feeding and nursery habitat for commercially and ecologically important fish, invertebrates, and migrating birds. Estuaries not only bestow beneficial traits upon the ecosystem, but also the community as well. These are just some of the reasons why your interest should be in providing a national research reserve for St. Mary Parish:

- It would attract many scholars to the area
- Greater employment opportunities
- Impactful to the youth and millennials
- Spark an interest in Louisiana and its natural resources
- Shape decisions about Louisiana, its citizens, and its future

Therefore, the Atchafalaya Zone as the Louisiana National Estuarine Research Reserve seems like the best and only option. It truly has countless avails and would also show your support and focus on bettering the Atchafalaya Basin. This is something that not only you would benefit from, but all the citizens of Louisiana as well. This is me, showing my support and encouragement for the Atchafalaya Zone to get chosen as the Louisiana National Estuarine Research Reserve.

Sincerely,

Alexis Lewis

2400 Tiger Dr.

Morgan City, Louisiana

Governor John Bel Edwards

ATTN: Chief Resilience Officer, Charles Sutcliffe

Office of the Governor

PO Box 94004

Baton Rouge, LA 70804

October 1, 2021

Dear Governor Edwards,

Hi, my name is Allie Mayon, and I am an honors student at Morgan City High School. While I have always lived in South Louisiana and been a part of the community, I have not always lived in Morgan City. As a young child, I lived in Stephenville. We enjoyed a boat and a Sea-doo. We fished all the time. The whole family was always outside. We took for granted how pleasurable direct water access could be. At seven-years-old we moved ten minutes down the road to Morgan City. Crossing parish lines truly was a life change. Every day I miss the water.

While I understand that it is not feasible for most people to own a water craft or to live on water, that does not mean that everyone should not receive the opportunity to go on the water and experience the relaxation, joy, and sights. Majority of Saint Mary Parish citizens do not feel connected to this beautiful ecosystem we hear so much of. As a 17-year-old who's lived here my whole life, there are not many things to do outside. Our main opportunities to connect with nature are to sit at the seawall or the lake, but even then, typically, we remain in our cars. The limited spaces to partake in nature-based activities truly have a negative impact on the health of our community.

Morgan City is an old town with a lot of history. With the right resources, we could share our story, for years and years. But not only would it be helpful for the younger generation, it would benefit ALL our citizens. While it may raise some reservations or concerns from fishermen or craw fishers, it would clean their water ways allowing for better fishing and product. Not only that but our Atchafalaya Delta is building land and little islands. This is incredible considering the rest of our coast is losing miles and miles of land to erosion every day. The deposits deserve to be considered.

St. Mary Parish is home to some of the kindest people you could meet. We are a community. This program would be welcomed with open arms. Seeing a positive impact in our area that would benefit generations to come would be a beautiful thing. Wherever the LaNERR is decided upon, we respect your decision and appreciate your consideration, but we really hope it will be located in the Atchafalaya zone

Kindest Regards,

Allie Mayon

Morgan City High School

Dr. Brian Roberts
Atchafalaya Team NERR Lead
LUMCON
8124 LA-56,
Chauvin, LA 70344

DATE 3-17-22

Dear Dr. Roberts,

I am writing to add my support for the **Atchafalaya Zone** to be named as the site for the Louisiana National Estuarine Research Reserve (LANERR). I make this request for several reasons.

St. Mary Parish includes the cities of Morgan City and Berwick, located at the mouth of the Atchafalaya River—home to the parish's business infrastructure with water and rail, and nearby Patterson that supplies air transportation, as well as the Bayou Teche National Wildlife Refuge in West St. Mary Parish.

A national research reserve would fit well within the 137,695-acre Atchafalaya Delta Wildlife Management Area already located at the mouths of the Atchafalaya River and Wax Lake Outlet in St. Mary Parish. The Atchafalaya Basin is home to the largest wetland in the United States, the vitality of which is critical to the current and future prosperity of ecological sustainability of Louisiana generally and more specifically St. Mary Parish.

Research activities associated with NERR would be ideally situated in the Atchafalaya Estuarine Zone to:

attract scholars on a national and international stage, provide employment opportunities to the region,

provide stronger connectivity to the rest of Louisiana, the Gulf Coast, and United States, and inject money into the local coastal economy.

The presence of the NERR would impact youth and young adults currently enrolled in Louisiana 's schools and contribute to an appreciation for Louisiana's natural resources amidst enjoying the area's quality-of life and opportunities that the NERR provides. An Atchafalaya Zone NERR would potentially shape decisions about where young Louisianans choose to live, work, learn, as well as raise families.

Finally, **a NERR in the Atchafalaya Zone** would support your announced focus on restoring and enhancing the Atchafalaya Basin. Therefore, I encourage the selection of the Atchafalaya Zone as the Louisiana National Estuarine Research Reserve.

Jase Mender
Berwick High School
100% of my Support

Dr. Brian Roberts
Atchafalaya Team NERR Lead
LUMCON
8124 LA-56,
Chauvin, LA 70344

DATE 3-17-22

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Daniela Gonzalez BHS student

Really good idea

was amazing. !!

Dr. Brian Roberts
Atchafalaya Team NERR Lead
LUMCON
8124 LA-56,
Chauvin. LA 70344

DATE_____

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Finally, **a NERR in the Atchafalaya Zone** would support your announced focus on restoring and enhancing the Atchafalaya Basin. Therefore, I encourage the selection of the Atchafalaya Zone as the Louisiana National Estuarine Research Reserve.

Kaitlyn Kapp

Kaitlyn Kapp

I am a Berwick High school kid and I would love to have this for more education.

Dr. Brian Roberts
Atchafalaya Team NERR Lead
LUMCON
8124 LA-56,
Chauvin, LA 70344

DATE 3/17/22

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Matthew Klein Morgan

Berwick High School

I Support this

Dr. Brian Roberts
Atchafalaya Team NERR Lead
LUMCON
8124 LA-56,
Chauvin, LA 70344

DATE 3/17/22

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Miley Hotard

BHS would love to have this in our area!

Dr. Brian Roberts
Atchafalaya Team NERR Lead
LUMCON
8124 LA-56,
Chauvin, LA 70344

DATE 3-17-17

Dear Dr. Roberts,

I am writing to add my support for the **Atchafalaya Zone** to be named as the site for the Louisiana National Estuarine Research Reserve (LANERR). I make this request for several reasons.

St. Mary Parish includes the cities of Morgan City and Berwick, located at the mouth of the Atchafalaya River—home to the parish's business infrastructure with water and rail, and nearby Patterson that supplies air transportation, as well as the Bayou Teche National Wildlife Refuge in West St. Mary Parish.

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Kaylie Gardner Kaylin Gardner - BHS Student

LaNERR PLZ ♡

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Atchafalaya Team NERR Lead
LUMCON
8124 LA-56,
Chauvin, LA 70344

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Alyssa Domangue
Alyssa Domangue

Berwick High School Student

Put the LANERR Here! ♡

Dr. Brian Roberts
Atchafalaya Team NERR Lead
LUMCON
8124 LA-56,
Chauvin, LA 70344

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Kinsten Skipper

We will love to have our NERR here. Sincerely Berwick Highschool Student

Dr. Brian Roberts
Atchafalaya Team NERR Lead
LUMCON
8124 LA-56,
Chauvin, LA 70344

DATE 3.17.22

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BHS Student
Mallory Menard
Mallory Menard

Please Put the NERR here!

Dr. Brian Roberts
Atchafalaya Team NERR Lead
LUMCON
8124 LA-56,
Chauvin, LA 70344

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Alli Crappell Alli M. Crappell

We need this here

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Atchafalaya Team NERR Lead
LUMCON
8124 LA-56,
Chauvin, LA 70344

DATE 3/17/22

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Jayde Lasseigne
Jayde Lasseigne
ST. MARY PARISH NEEDS THIS!

Dr. Brian Roberts
Atchafalaya Team NERR Lead
LUMCON
8124 LA-56,
Chauvin, LA 70344

DATE 3/17/22

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Please Please Please!
We would love this ♡

Dr. Brian Roberts
Atchafalaya Team NERR Lead
LUMCON
8124 LA-56,
Chauvin, LA 70344

DATE 3-17-2022

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Sydney Somers

Berwick High student, we'd love this

Dr. Brian Roberts
Atchafalaya Team NERR Lead
LUMCON
8124 LA-56,
Chauvin, LA 70344

DATE 3/11/22

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Mikah M. Ortiz

WE Want the LANERR Here!

Berwick High School

Dr. Brian Roberts
Atchafalaya Team NERR Lead
LUMCON
8124 LA-56,
Chauvin, LA 70344

DATE 3/17/22

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Alivia Crappell
BHS student - Hope this works out

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Atchafalaya Team NERR Lead
LUMCON
8124 LA-56,
Chauvin, LA 70344

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I want this here!

- Berwick Highschool Student,
Kaylee Jones

Kaylee Jones

Dr. Brian Roberts
Atchafalaya Team NERR Lead
LUMCON
8124 LA-56,
Chauvin, LA 70344

DATE 3/17/22

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Kate Bailey

Would love to have A NERR!!!

BHS student

Dr. Brian Roberts
Atchafalaya Team NERR Lead
LUMCON
8124 LA-56,
Chauvin, LA 70344

DATE 3-17-22

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Chloe Leonard

the presentation was awesome!

Berwick High School

Dr. Brian Roberts
Atchafalaya Team NERR Lead
LUMCON
8124 LA-56,
Chauvin, LA 70344

DATE 3/17/22

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Shelby Kemp
Berwick high
Student

- hope it works
would love to have
that here!

Dr. Brian Roberts
Atchafalaya Team NERR Lead
LUMCON
8124 LA-56,
Chauvin, LA 70344

DATE 3/17/22

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Annabelle Ruiz

Annabelle Ruiz

I think this is a great idea and would stay in LA if it happened.

Dr. Brian Roberts
Atchafalaya Team NERR Lead
LUMCON
8124 LA-56,
Chauvin, LA 70344

DATE 3-17-22

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Grace Mestle

I would love to have this program in our area!

Dr. Brian Roberts
Atchafalaya Team NERR Lead
LUMCON
8124 LA-56,
Chauvin, LA 70344

DATE 3-17-11

Dear Dr. Roberts,

I am writing to add my support for the **Atchafalaya Zone** to be named as the site for the Louisiana National Estuarine Research Reserve (LANERR). I make this request for several reasons.

St. Mary Parish includes the cities of Morgan City and Berwick, located at the mouth of the Atchafalaya River—home to the parish's business infrastructure with water and rail, and nearby Patterson that supplies air transportation, as well as the Bayou Teche National Wildlife Refuge in West St. Mary Parish.

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Brynn Robicheaux
Brynn Robicheaux

Would love to come back

Dr. Brian Roberts
Atchafalaya Team NERR Lead
LUMCON
8124 LA-56,
Chauvin, LA 70344

DATE 3.17.2022

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Kali Lasseigne - BHS

Dr. Brian Roberts
Atchafalaya Team NERR Lead
LUMCON
8124 LA-56,
Chauvin, LA 70344

DATE 3/17/2022

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Victoria Nguyen
Berwick High School

Victoria Nguyen

Dr. Brian Roberts
Atchafalaya Team NERR Lead
LUMCON
8124 LA-56,
Chauvin, LA 70344

DATE 03/17/22

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Chernsh Lewis
Cherish Lewis
Berwick High Student

Dr. Brian Roberts
Atchafalaya Team NERR Lead
LUMCON
8124 LA-56,
Chauvin, LA 70344

DATE 3/17/22

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Jaidan Preston

Berwick High

Student

Dr. Brian Roberts
Atchafalaya Team NERR Lead
LUMCON
8124 LA-56,
Chauvin, LA 70344

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Michael Hartenstine

Berwick High School

Dr. Brian Roberts
Atchafalaya Team NERR Lead
LUMCON
8124 LA-56,
Chauvin, LA 70344

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Mia Dupuy
Berwick High student

Dr. Brian Roberts
Atchafalaya Team NERR Lead
LUMCON
8124 LA-56,
Chauvin, LA 70344

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Rodrigo Millan

Berwick High School

Dr. Brian Roberts
Atchafalaya Team NERR Lead
LUMCON
8124 LA-56,
Chauvin, LA 70344

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Natalie Gonzalez
Natalie Gonzalez
Berwick High Student

Dr. Brian Roberts
Atchafalaya Team NERR Lead
LUMCON
8124 LA-56,
Chauvin, LA 70344

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Zachary Campbell

Zachary Campbell

Berwick High School Student

Dr. Brian Roberts
Atchafalaya Team NERR Lead
LUMCON
8124 LA-56,
Chauvin, LA 70344

DATE 3-17-22

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Gaven Mendez - BITS Student

Gaven Mendez

Dr. Brian Roberts
Atchafalaya Team NERR Lead
LUMCON
8124 LA-56,
Chauvin, LA 70344

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Faith DeRouen

Faith DeRouen

Dr. Brian Roberts
Atchafalaya Team NERR Lead
LUMCON
8124 LA-56,
Chauvin, LA 70344

DATE March 17

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Chloe Leal
Chloe Leal
Berwick
high

Dr. Brian Roberts
Atchafalaya Team NERR Lead
LUMCON
8124 LA-56,
Chauvin, LA 70344

DATE 3/17/22

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Paulina Trejo

Paulina Trejo, Berwick High Student

Dr. Brian Roberts
Atchafalaya Team NERR Lead
LUMCON
8124 LA-56,
Chauvin, LA 70344

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X Kailynn Gaudet

Dr. Brian Roberts
Atchafalaya Team NERR Lead
LUMCON
8124 LA-56,
Chauvin, LA 70344

Christian
Nelson
Berwick
High

DATE 3-17-22

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LUMCON
8124 LA-56,
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Carson LeBlanc

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Berwick High School

Dr. Brian Roberts
Atchafalaya Team NERR Lead
LUMCON
8124 LA-56,
Chauvin, LA 70344

DATE 3/17/22

Dear Dr. Roberts,

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St. Mary Parish includes the cities of Morgan City and Berwick, located at the mouth of the Atchafalaya River—home to the parish's business infrastructure with water and rail, and nearby Patterson that supplies air transportation, as well as the Bayou Teche National Wildlife Refuge in West St. Mary Parish.

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Lylah Vice Lylah Vice

Berwick High Student

Dr. Brian Roberts
Atchafalaya Team NERR Lead
LUMCON
8124 LA-56,
Chauvin, LA 70344

DATE 3/17/23

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Abby Waters

Berwick High Student

Dr. Brian Roberts
Atchafalaya Team NERR Lead
LUMCON
8124 LA-56,
Chauvin, LA 70344

DATE 3/17/22

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Berwick high school student
Naiven Bennett NB

Dr. Brian Roberts
Atchafalaya Team NERR Lead
LUMCON
8124 LA-56,
Chauvin, LA 70344

DATE March 17, 2022

Dear Dr. Roberts,

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Berwick High School student
Autumn Francis
AJ

Dr. Brian Roberts
Atchafalaya Team NERR Lead
LUMCON
8124 LA-56,
Chauvin, LA 70344

DATE 3-17-22

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Paige Arnouville Berwick high Student

Dr. Brian Roberts
Atchafalaya Team NERR Lead
LUMCON
8124 LA-56,
Chauvin, LA 70344

DATE 3/17/12

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Winnie Mabile

Dr. Brian Roberts
Atchafalaya Team NERR Lead
LUMCON
8124 LA-56,
Chauvin, LA 70344

DATE 3/17/22

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Madison Morris
BHS Student

Dr. Brian Roberts
Atchafalaya Team NERR Lead
LUMCON
8124 LA-56,
Chauvin, LA 70344

DATE March 17

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Paityn Dykes Berwick High School

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Atchafalaya Team NERR Lead
LUMCON
8124 LA-56,
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Atchafalaya Team NERR Lead
LUMCON
8124 LA-56,
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Isaiah Berry

BHS

Dr. Brian Roberts
Atchafalaya Team NERR Lead
LUMCON
8124 LA-56,
Chauvin, LA 70344

DATE 3/17/2022

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Aylene Hernandez, Berwick high school Student

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Atchafalaya Team NERR Lead
LUMCON
8124 LA-56,
Chauvin, LA 70344

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Immogen Richard, Berwick High School

Dr. Brian Roberts
Atchafalaya Team NERR Lead
LUMCON
8124 LA-56,
Chauvin, LA 70344

DATE MARCH 17, 22

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Olivia Blanchard. BHS Student.

Dr. Brian Roberts
Atchafalaya Team NERR Lead
LUMCON
8124 LA-56,
Chauvin, LA 70344

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Berwick High School
Student

Violet Quain

Dr. Brian Roberts
Atchafalaya Team NERR Lead
LUMCON
8124 LA-56,
Chauvin, LA 70344

DATE 3-17-22

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Nevaeh Chauvin
NevaehChauvin

Dr. Brian Roberts
Atchafalaya Team NERR Lead
LUMCON
8124 LA-56,
Chauvin, LA 70344

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Breydon Robicheaux
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Dr. Brian Roberts
Atchafalaya Team NERR Lead
LUMCON
8124 LA-56,
Chauvin, LA 70344

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Finally, **a NERR in the Atchafalaya Zone** would support your announced focus on restoring and enhancing the Atchafalaya Basin. Therefore, I encourage the selection of the Atchafalaya Zone as the Louisiana National Estuarine Research Reserve.

Arda Richard

Berwick High School

Dr. Brian Roberts
Atchafalaya Team NERR Lead
LUMCON
8124 LA-56,
Chauvin, LA 70344

DATE 3-17-22

Dear Dr. Roberts,

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Breanna Guillot
Breanna Guillot
Berwick High School

Dr. Brian Roberts
Atchafalaya Team NERR Lead
LUMCON
8124 LA-56,
Chauvin, LA 70344

DATE 03/17/2022

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KAMY LOUSTEAU - BHS

Kamy Lousteau

Dr. Brian Roberts
Atchafalaya Team NERR Lead
LUMCON
8124 LA-56,
Chauvin, LA 70344

DATE March 17 2022

Dear Dr. Roberts,

I am writing to add my support for the **Atchafalaya Zone** to be named as the site for the Louisiana National Estuarine Research Reserve (LANERR). I make this request for several reasons.

St. Mary Parish includes the cities of Morgan City and Berwick, located at the mouth of the Atchafalaya River—home to the parish's business infrastructure with water and rail, and nearby Patterson that supplies air transportation, as well as the Bayou Teche National Wildlife Refuge in West St. Mary Parish.

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Harmony Jones
Harmony Jones

Berwick High School

Dr. Brian Roberts
Atchafalaya Team NERR Lead
LUMCON
8124 LA-56,
Chauvin, LA 70344

DATE 3/17/2022

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Sebastian Sustaita Berwick highschool / student

Dr. Brian Roberts
Atchafalaya Team NERR Lead
LUMCON
8124 LA-56,
Chauvin, LA 70344

DATE 3/17/18

Dear Dr. Roberts,

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leslie martinez
Leslie Martinez

berwick high school student.

Dr. Brian Roberts
Atchafalaya Team NERR Lead
LUMCON
8124 LA-56,
Chauvin, LA 70344

DATE 03/17/22

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Audrey-Jane Cheramie

Berwick High
Student

Dr. Brian Roberts
Atchafalaya Team NERR Lead
LUMCON
8124 LA-56,
Chauvin, LA 70344

DATE 3/17/22

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Reese Ledet

Dr. Brian Roberts
Atchafalaya Team NERR Lead
LUMCON
8124 LA-56,
Chauvin, LA 70344

DATE_____

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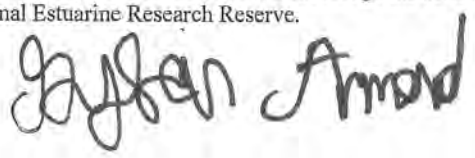

Dr. Brian Roberts
Atchafalaya Team NERR Lead
LUMCON
8124 LA-56,
Chauvin, LA 70344

DATE 3/17/22

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Cadyn Favre

Letters from Municipalities and Public Officials

Resolutions

LOUISIANA HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

423 Goode Street
Houma, LA 70360
Email: zeringuej@legis.la.gov
Office: 985.876.8823

JEROME "ZEE" ZERINGUE
State Representative ~ District 52

COMMITTEES:
Appropriations - Chairman
Joint Legislative Committee on the Budget - Chairman
Joint Legislative Committee on Capital Outlay
Legislative Budgetary Control Council
State Bond Commission
House Select Leadership Committee
Joint Select Committee on Louisiana Economic Recovery

Dr. Brian Roberts
Atchafalaya NERR Proposal Team Lead
Associate Director of Science
Louisiana Universities Marine Consortium
8124 Highway 56
Chauvin, LA 70344

Dear Dr. Roberts,

I am writing to add my support for the Atchafalaya Basin being named as the site for Louisiana's National Estuarine Research Reserve (LaNERR). Louisiana remains one of the few coastal states without a NERR despite being home to the country's largest river delta and nearly 40% of its coastal wetlands. The establishment of a NERR in Louisiana will be highly beneficial to our state in terms of our overall visibility on the national stage but also the establishment of long-term stewardship, research, education and training for the region.

The Atchafalaya Basin represents an ideal location for a LA NERR site because it holds tremendous ecological and cultural significance for Louisiana and the nation. It provides an active river delta that is not currently represented in the national reserve system and is essentially a mini-Louisiana that contains all of the habitats that define Louisiana including an alluvial floodplain with extensive bald cypress swamps, an active river delta with freshwater swamps, and estuarine brackish and salt marshes with state waterways connecting them all. An Atchafalaya NERR can be established that only requires the extensive state lands and waterways that span the region. The placement of Louisiana's NERR in the Atchafalaya Basin is the most impactful for the state of Louisiana. There is tremendous support at all levels both within the basin as well as in the surrounding areas for the establishment of an Atchafalaya NERR to provide education, research, stewardship and training opportunities to a critical region of the state. An Atchafalaya NERR would be located in the basin immediately adjacent to the existing Barataria-Terrebonne National Estuary Program (BTNEP) which would be both strategic and complementary to highlighting Louisiana on the national stage. Finally, I feel that the Louisiana Universities Marine Consortium (LUMCON) would be an ideal state agency to lead the Louisiana NERR given its complementary mission, staff expertise, and it structure of being a consortium of all the colleges and universities in the state.

Sincerely,

Jerome "Zee" Zeringue
State Representative District 52

LOUISIANA STATE SENATE

SENATE DISTRICT OFFICE
600 Main Street
Suite 1
Franklin, LA 70538
Office: (337) 828-9107
Office: (985) 850-2738
Fax: (337) 828-9108

R. L. "BRET" ALLAIN II

Senator - District 21

COMMITTEES
Revenue and Fiscal Affairs, Chairman
Agriculture, Forestry, Aquaculture and Rural Development
Natural Resources
Senate and Governmental Affairs
Finance, Ex-Officio
Joint Legislative Committee on the Budget
Joint Legislative Committee on Capital Outlay

June 3, 2021

Governor John Bel Edwards
ATTN: Chief Resilience Officer, Charles Sutcliffe
Office of the Governor
PO Box 94004
Baton Rouge, LA 70804

Dear Governor Edwards,

I am writing to add my support for the Atchafalaya Zone to be named as the site for the Louisiana National Estuarine Research Reserve (LANERR). I make this request for several reasons.

St. Mary Parish includes the cities of Morgan City and Berwick, located at the mouth of the Atchafalaya River—home to the parish's business infrastructure with water and rail, and nearby Patterson that supplies air transportation, as well as the Bayou Teche National Wildlife Refuge in West St. Mary Parish.

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Finally, a NERR in the Atchafalaya Zone would support your announced focus on restoring and enhancing the Atchafalaya Basin. Therefore, I encourage the selection of the Atchafalaya Zone as the Louisiana National Estuarine Research Reserve.

Sincerely,

R.L. "Bret" Allain II
State Senator
District 21

TOWN OF BERWICK

Phone: (985) 384-8858 • P. O. Box 486 • Fax: (985) 384-8873
Berwick, LA 70342
www.townofberwick.org

Governor John Bel Edwards
ATTN: Chief Resilience Officer, Charles Sutcliffe
Office of the Governor
PO Box 94004
Baton Rouge, LA 70804

DATE: 07 February 2022

Dear **Governor Edwards,**

The Mayor and Council for the City of Berwick is writing to add our support for the **Atchafalaya Zone** to be named as the site for the Louisiana National Estuarine Research Reserve (LANERR). We make this request for several reasons.

REASON #1: The Atchafalaya Basin is perfectly situated to offer a variety of opportunities for learning. Centrally located along the Coast, it provides relatively short travel distances from major coastal zone cities and universities.

REASON #2: The proposed Atchafalaya reserve would provide vital research opportunities and access. It would be the only active delta estuarine system in the NERR network adding value to the significance of the research conducted at the site.

REASON #3: The proposed Atchafalaya reserve could use current monitoring efforts and restoration activities to increase physical and biological monitoring in fresh, floating, brackish, and salt marshes.

REASON #4: Louisiana's Atchafalaya Basin is the largest wetlands in America; with over 137,695 acres of swamp and marsh. All the more reason to showcase the importance of this major region. The Atchafalaya Basin is actually a small-scale version of Louisiana.

Research activities associated with NERR would be ideally situated in the Atchafalaya Estuarine Zone to: attract scholars on a national and international stage, provide employment opportunities to the region, provide stronger connectivity to the rest of Louisiana, the Gulf Coast, and United States, and inject money into the local coastal economy.

The presence of the NERR would impact youth and young adults currently enrolled in Louisiana 's schools and contribute to an appreciation for Louisiana's natural resources. An Atchafalaya Zone NERR would potentially shape decisions about where young Louisianans choose to live, work, learn, as well as raise families. Having a NERR in the Atchafalaya Zone would support your announced focus on restoring and enhancing the Atchafalaya Basin. Therefore, I encourage the selection of the Atchafalaya Zone as the Louisiana NERR site.

Sincerely Yours,

Duval H. Arthur, Jr.
Mayor, Town of Berwick

Ludness Henry, Berwick Mayor Protem

Colleen Askew, Berwick Councilwoman

Kevin Hebert, Berwick Councilman

Raymond Price, Berwick Councilman

James Richard, Berwick Councilman

Freddie DeCourt Mayor
City of New Iberia

March 31, 2022

LSU Sea Grant
Louisiana State University
Baton Rouge, LA 70803

ATTENTION: National Estuarine Research Reserve (NERR) Nomination Committee

I'd like to offer my support for the nomination of the **Atchafalaya Basin** as the site for the designation of a National Estuarine Research Reserve (NERR) by NOAA in coastal Louisiana. I think that the Atchafalaya Basin has the best environments, facilities, and access to support the missions of a NERR as defined by NOAA; and in addition, I believe the Atchafalaya Basin represents all the habitats and systems found in the Louisiana from the swamps and forests of the upper river basin to the marshes and estuaries of the lower basin.

The Atchafalaya Basin is home to the largest wetland in the United States and the newest land being created at its river deltas. The vitality of the basin is critical to the current and future prosperity of ecological sustainability of Louisiana.

The presence of the NERR would impact youth and young adults currently enrolled in Louisiana's schools and contribute to an appreciation for Louisiana's natural resources amidst enjoying the area's quality-of life and opportunities that the NERR provides. An Atchafalaya Basin NERR would potentially shape decisions about where young Louisianans choose to live, work, learn, as well as raise families. Finally, a NERR based in the Atchafalaya Basin will support the state's announced focus on restoring and enhancing the Atchafalaya Basin.

I would be interested in working with NOAA, and the lead state agency and management team in Louisiana to help with the establishment of an Atchafalaya Basin NERR throughout the designation process. Thank you for considering my support as part of the proposal to **nominate the Atchafalaya Basin as a NERR in Louisiana**.

Sincerely,

Freddie DeCourt,
Mayor

GREATER IBERIA
CHAMBER of COMMERCE

April 1, 2022

LSU Sea Grant
Louisiana State University
Baton Rouge, LA 70803

I am writing to add my support for the nomination of the **Atchafalaya Basin** as the site for the designation of a National Estuarine Research Reserve (NERR) by NOAA in coastal Louisiana. I believe that the Atchafalaya Basin has the best environments, facilities, and access to support the missions of a NERR as defined by NOAA. Specifically, I believe the Atchafalaya Basin represents all of the habitats and systems found in the Louisiana from the swamps and forests of the upper river basin to the marshes and estuaries of the lower basin.

The Atchafalaya Basin is home to the largest wetland in the United States and the newest land being created at its river deltas. The vitality of the basin is critical to the current and future prosperity of ecological sustainability of Louisiana generally and more specifically to people and communities that reside within and/or use the basin.

Research activities associated with NERR would be ideally situated in the Atchafalaya Basin to attract scholars on a national and international stage, provide employment opportunities to the region, provide stronger connectivity to the rest of Louisiana, the Gulf Coast, and United States, and inject money into the local coastal economy. The presence of the NERR would impact youth and young adults currently enrolled in Louisiana's schools and contribute to an appreciation for Louisiana's natural resources amidst enjoying the area's quality-of life and opportunities that the NERR provides. An Atchafalaya Basin NERR would potentially shape decisions about where young Louisianans choose to live, work, learn, as well as raise families. Finally, a NERR based in the Atchafalaya Basin will support the state's announced focus on restoring and enhancing the Atchafalaya Basin.

I am very supportive of the existing proposal to locate a NERR in the Atchafalaya Basin. I would be interested in working with NOAA and the lead state agency and management team in Louisiana to help with the establishment of an Atchafalaya Basin NERR throughout the designation process.

Thank you for considering my support as part of the proposal to **nominate the Atchafalaya Basin as a NERR in Louisiana**.

Sincerely,

Thomas Falgout, President/CEO
Greater Iberia Chamber of Commerce

111 West Main Street, New Iberia, LA 70560.
Phone: 337.364.1836 Fax: 337.367.7405
www.iberiachamber.org

Eugene P. Foulcard
Mayor

City of Franklin
Louisiana
P.O. Box 567 • 300 Iberia Street, Franklin, La 70538
Phone: (337) 828-6350 • Fax: (337) 828-6359

April 1, 2022

LSU Sea Grant
Louisiana State University
Baton Rouge, LA 70803

I am writing to add my support for the nomination of the **Atchafalaya Basin** as the site for the designation of a National Estuarine Research Reserve (NERR) by NOAA in coastal Louisiana. I believe that the Atchafalaya Basin has the best environments, facilities, and access to support the missions of a NERR as defined by NOAA. Specifically, I believe the Atchafalaya Basin represents all of the habitats and systems found in the Louisiana from the swamps and forests of the upper river basin to the marshes and estuaries of the lower basin.

The Atchafalaya Basin is home to the largest wetland in the United States and the newest land being created at its river deltas. The vitality of the basin is critical to the current and future prosperity of ecological sustainability of Louisiana generally and more specifically to people and communities that reside within and/or use the basin.

Research activities associated with NERR would be ideally situated in the Atchafalaya Basin to attract scholars on a national and international stage, provide employment opportunities to the region, provide stronger connectivity to the rest of Louisiana, the Gulf Coast, and United States, and inject money into the local coastal economy. The presence of the NERR would impact youth and young adults currently enrolled in Louisiana's schools and contribute to an appreciation for Louisiana's natural resources amidst enjoying the area's quality-of life and opportunities that the NERR provides. An Atchafalaya Basin NERR would potentially shape decisions about where young Louisianans choose to live, work, learn, as well as raise families. Finally, a NERR based in the Atchafalaya Basin will support the state's announced focus on restoring and enhancing the Atchafalaya Basin.

I am very supportive of the existing proposal to locate a NERR in the Atchafalaya Basin. I would be interested in working with NOAA and the lead state agency and management team in Louisiana to help with the establishment of an Atchafalaya Basin NERR throughout the designation process.

Thank you for considering my support as part of the proposal to **nominate the Atchafalaya Basin as a NERR in Louisiana**.

Sincerely,

Eugene Foulcard

Mayor Eugene Foulcard
City of Franklin

VERMILION PARISH POLICE JURY

Courthouse Building
100 North State Street, Suite 200
Abbeville, LA 70510-5816
(337) 898-4300 | FAX: (337) 898-4310 | www.vppj.org

Dr. Brian Roberts
Atchafalaya Basin NERR Team Lead
LUMCON
8124 LA-56
Chauvin, LA 70344

Dear Dr. Roberts,

The Vermilion parish Police Jury supports the nomination of the Atchafalaya Basin and the adjacent bays in the region for the designation of a National Estuarine Research Reserve (NERR). The active delta of the Atchafalaya Basin is a prime example of deltaic formation of coastal marshland. The outflow of that basin also has a tremendous effect on the productivity of Vermilion Bay and the marshes here in Vermilion Parish.

The NERR designation for this western part of Louisiana's coast will help highlight the threats to this region by encouraging research efforts to identify and support coastal restoration efforts in Vermilion and our neighboring parishes of Iberia and St. Mary.

NERR will also draw public attention to the coastal resources that we enjoy and depend on both commercially and recreationally. Coastal erosion threatens our fisheries resources including shrimp, crabs and menhaden, our recreational species of redfish and speckled trout, and our wildlife resources including waterfowl and alligators. Any information that the NERR can generate showing the value of these resources in the region will help justify our efforts to garner coastal protection and restoration dollars.

The NERR will also offer some educational opportunities for the public and especially school children in the Acadiana region if an educational facility is built and staffed. Wetland field trips are memorable for young people and can sometimes guide their direction for future careers.

Louisiana's southeastern coast already has the Barataria Terrebonne National Estuary Program (BTNEP) and other designations around Lake Pontchartrain. It is time to give the central part of the coast more attention and research focus.

We support creating Louisiana's NERR in the Atchafalaya Basin and adjacent coastal bays. Please keep us informed of the progress of this effort.

Thank you,

Vermilion Parish Police Jury

ST. MARY PARISH GOVERNMENT

DAVID HANAGRIFF, PRESIDENT
FIFTH FLOOR - COURTHOUSE
FRANKLIN, LOUISIANA 70538-6198

HENRY "BO" LAGRANGE
CHIEF ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICER

DIRECTOR OF FINANCE
PAUL J. GOVERNALE, CPA, CGFO, CGFM

DIRECTOR OF PERSONNEL
JILLIAN E. FISHER

DIRECTOR OF PLANNING AND ZONING
TAMMY LUKE

DIRECTOR OF PUBLIC WORKS
JEAN PAUL BOURG

DIRECTOR OF ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT
EVAN D. BOUDREAUX

OFFICE OF HOMELAND SECURITY AND EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS
DAVID A. NAQUIN

FRANKLIN
(337) 828-4100

FAX (337) 828-4092

E-mail:
SMPGadmin@stmaryparishla.gov

OFFICE HOURS
8:00 A.M. TO 12:00 P.M.
1:00 P.M. TO 4:30 P.M.

February 21, 2022

Governor John Bel Edwards
c/o Dr. Brian Roberts
Atchafalaya Team NERR Lead
LUMCON
8124 LA-56,
Chauvin, LA 70344

Dear Governor Edwards,

The St. Mary Parish Council is submitting a letter of support for locating a National Estuarine Research Reserve (NERR) in the Atchafalaya Zone, but more specifically to share how St. Mary Parish is ready for such a feature.

First, St. Mary Parish passed a unanimous resolution of support after hearing a presentation by St. Mary Excel board members, Kelly Boudreaux and Margaret Metz Theriot, on the NERR process. The presenters used resources available from the LANERR site https://www.laseagrant.org/deltanerr/. They also shared personal experiences to highlight the importance of a NERR in the Atchafalaya Zone.

Second, St. Mary Parish has an abundance of state lands that can be used as an outdoor classroom for tourists and students alike in learning about the unique features of our Atchafalaya basin, delta, and river.

Third, St. Mary Parish government submitted a 2023 Atchafalaya Basin Plan Project grant application seeking over one million dollars to be used for two ferries, one to transport passengers into the basin and the other to transport them into the delta. Should the grant be funded, this addition would be an asset in student and tourist use.

Fourth, St. Mary Parish has encountered significant job loss in the oil and gas industry. The NERR would aid in meeting an economic diversification goal set by the parish's administration. Tourism and increased visits for sight-seeing, kayaking, nature walks and more bring more people to the area and thus increase tax revenues.

Fifth, St. Mary Parish is partnering with The Water Institute of the Gulf to detail an Atchafalaya Basin Resilience Lab at Coastal Morgan City. The parish is using federal RESTORE dollars in working on this plan. We recognize that the resilience lab will complement NERR offerings in our area.

Lastly, we offer the services of the parish administration, in detailing the NERR. We have dedicated and knowledgeable administrators that are ready and willing to help establish this area as one of the best sites for a NERR in the United States.

Sincerely,

David Hanagriff
St. Mary Parish President

RESOLUTION SUPPORTING A NATIONAL ESTUARINE RESEARCH RESERVE (NERR) DESIGNATION FOR THE ATCHAFALAYA ESTUARINE ZONE IN ST. MARY PARISH.

WHEREAS, the Atchafalaya Basin is home to the largest wetland in the United States, the vitality of which is critical to the current and future prosperity of ecological sustainability of Morgan City in St. Mary Parish and in the broader region impacted directly by the Atchafalaya River and Gulf of Mexico; and

WHEREAS, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration is currently exploring the feasibility of developing a National Estuarine Research Reserve (NERR) for the Gulf Coast of Louisiana; and

WHEREAS, research activities associated with NERR situated in the Atchafalaya Estuarine Zone will attract scholars on a national and international stage, provide employment opportunities to the region, stronger connectivity to the rest of Louisiana, the Gulf Coast, and United States, and ultimately inject money into the local economy; and

WHEREAS, many of the youth currently enrolled in public school's value Louisiana's natural resources for the quality of life opportunities that they provide, and that potentially shape decisions about where they live, seek employment, further their education and raise their families; and

WHEREAS, eco-tourism is an established and growing industry in St. Mary Parish and the Atchafalaya Basin and a research reserve would fit well within the 137,695-acre Atchafalaya Delta Wildlife Management Area already located at the mouths of the Atchafalaya River and Wax Lake Outlet in St. Mary Parish; and

WHEREAS, a NERR established here would support Louisiana Governor John Bel Edwards announced Task Force, which will focus on restoring and enhancing the Atchafalaya Basin, and a St. Mary Parish based NERR will enhance local identity, contributing directly to talent recruitment and retention efforts; and

WHEREAS, East St. Mary Parish includes the cities of Morgan City and Berwick, located at the mouth of the Atchafalaya River—home to the parish's business infrastructure with water and rail, and nearby Patterson that supplies air transportation, and West St. Mary Parish that also includes the Atchafalaya Estuarine Zone.

NOW, THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, by the St. Mary Parish Council hereby supports the location of the NERR in the Atchafalaya Estuarine Zone.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that should NERR designation be incurred for the Atchafalaya Estuarine Zone, the St. Mary Parish Council pledges its support and willingness to work with Louisiana Sea Grant and NOAA to make it a reality.

A copy of this resolution will be provided to St. Mary Parish Government, Governor John Bel Edwards, NOAA, the Louisiana Sea Grant, and state and federal government representatives representing St. Mary Parish.

ADOPTED AND APPROVED by the St. Mary Parish Council in regular session convened on this the 13th day of January 2021.

APPROVED:

DEAN S. ADAMS, CHAIRMAN
ST. MARY PARISH COUNCIL

ATTEST:

LISA C. MORGAN, CLERK
ST. MARY PARISH COUNCIL

PARISH OF ST. MARY
COUNCIL

St. Mary Excel

Advocating Economic Diversification for Educational and Cultural Advancement

Resolution supporting a National Estuarine Research Reserve (NERR) Designation for the Atchafalaya Zone in St. Mary Parish.

WHEREAS, the Atchafalaya Basin is home to the largest wetland in the United States, the vitality of which is critical to the current and future prosperity of ecological sustainability of Morgan City in St. Mary Parish and in the broader region impacted directly by the Atchafalaya River and Gulf of Mexico; and

WHEREAS, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration is currently exploring the feasibility of developing a National Estuarine Research Reserve (NERR) for the Gulf Coast of Louisiana; and

WHEREAS, research activities associated with NERR situated in the Atchafalaya Estuarine Zone will attract scholars on a national and international stage, provide employment opportunities to the region, stronger connectivity to the rest of Louisiana, the Gulf Coast, and United States, and ultimately inject money into the local economy; and

WHEREAS, many of the youth and young adults currently enrolled in public schools value Louisiana's natural resources for the quality of life opportunities that they provide, and that potentially shape decisions about where they live, seek employment, further their education and raise their families; and

506 1st St Morgan City, LA 70380. | 985-518-2009 | SaintMaryEXCEL@gmail.com

St. Mary Excel

Advocating Economic Diversification for Educational and Cultural Advancement

WHEREAS, eco-tourism is an established and growing industry in St. Mary Parish and the Atchafalaya Basin and a research reserve would fit well within the 137,695-acre Atchafalaya Delta Wildlife Management Area already located at the mouths of the Atchafalaya River and Wax Lake Outlet in St. Mary Parish.

WHEREAS, a NERR established here would support Louisiana Governor John Bel Edwards announced Task Force, which will focus on restoring and enhancing the Atchafalaya Basin, and a St. Mary Parish based NERR will enhance local identity, contributing directly to talent recruitment and retention efforts;

WHEREAS, East St. Mary Parish includes the cities of Morgan City and Berwick, located at the mouth of the Atchafalaya River—home to the parish's business infrastructure with water and rail, and nearby Patterson that supplies air transportation, and West St. Mary Parish that also includes the Atchafalaya Estuarine Zone;

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that **ST. MARY EXCEL** hereby supports the location of the NERR in the Atchafalaya Zone.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that should NERR designation be incurred for the Atchafalaya Zone, **ST. MARY EXCEL** pledges its support and willingness to work with Louisiana Sea Grant and NOAA to make it a reality.

A copy of this resolution will be provided to the Honorable Governor John Bel Edwards of the State of Louisiana.

Signed this day of 2nd Day of June, 2021.

Catherine P. Holcomb

Catherine P. Holcomb

(President)

506 1st St Morgan City, LA 70380. | 985-518-2009 | SaintMaryEXCEL@gmail.com

St. Mary Excel

Advocating Economic Diversification for Educational and Cultural Advancement

Governor John Bel Edwards
ATTN: Chief Resilience Officer, Charles Sutcliffe
Office of the Governor
PO Box 94004
Baton Rouge, LA 70804

June 7, 2021

Dear Governor Edwards,

St. Mary Excel, a Morgan City non-profit organization working for economic development for educational and cultural advancement, adds its support for locating a National Estuarine Research Reserve in the Atchafalaya Zone. The organization's board of directors passed a resolution of support in its June 1, 2021 meeting.

St. Mary Excel joins the Consolidated Government of St. Mary Parish, the City of Morgan City, Town of Berwick, Port of Morgan City, and St. Mary Parish School Board, all of which have passed similar resolutions of support and should be found within your office. Many individuals have also sent letters of support to your office.

For all the reasons listed in the St. Mary Excel Board of Directors' resolution, we respectfully request that the Atchafalaya Zone be named as the site for a National Estuarine Research Reserve.

Respectfully,

Monica L. Mancuso

Monica L. Mancuso, Ph. D.
Executive Director

506 1st St Morgan City, LA 70380. | 985-518-2009 | SaintMaryEXCEL@gmail.com

LEE DRAGNA
MAYOR
P. O. Box 1218
Morgan City, Louisiana 70381
Telephone: 985-385-1770
Fax: 985-384-7519
TDD: 985-385-1770
E-mail: g.bonner@cityofmc.com

February 18, 2022

Governor John Bel Edwards
c/o Dr. Brian Roberts
Atchafalaya Team NERR Lead
LUMCON
8124 LA-56,
Chauvin, LA 70344

Dear Governor John Bel Edwards:

I, along with the City of Morgan City Council, am writing in support of the Atchafalaya Zone being named Louisiana's National Estuarine Research Reserve. We make this request for the following reasons.

Reason One: The City of Morgan City welcomes the economic diversification that having tourists visit a NERR would bring. The diversification is needed as we hear the challenges that residents face when we lack diversification. For example, when the basin water is low, nets are not filled, and families are faced with meeting living expenses including necessary services of City electricity, water, and gas. We also learn of lifelong residents' desires to remain in the area when oil and gas jobs are downsized and relocated to Houston and places elsewhere.

The bottom line is few jobs exist for residents to provide for their families although our area is located within North Americas' largest and most magnificent swamp marshland.

Reason Two: As mayor and council, we are challenged when tax revenues are down because of the lack of diversification. The City must replace aging infrastructure of water lines, electrical poles, sewerage pumps and stations, road repairs and more with an eroding tax base when jobs go elsewhere. The jobs created by locating a NERR in the Morgan City, LA area can return tax revenues that will be used to keep the infrastructure updated and in good repair.

Reason Three: The City of Morgan City has resources to offer. The City recently purchased a school site that offers extensive square footage for K-12 student hands-on-activities. The school is a historic one and we want to preserve the buildings for an academic purpose. The NERR education K-12 experiences would be a perfect fit.

The City of Morgan City also has an early concept design for an Interpretive Center. The design was done when Sandra Thompson was in charge of the Department of Natural Resources and early plans were sought to tell the story of the Atchafalaya in the area of Lake End Park. Native son, Lucien Cutrera has many of the basin plans and concept maps.

Morgan City is also the home to the International Petroleum and Exposition, "The Mr. Charlie." The offering is the only authentic rig museum experience available in the world.
The City owns property along the river near the Mr. Charlie that may also be considered.

Reason Four: Our area is one that residents rate highly for safety. The police departments of Morgan City and Berwick along with the St. Mary Parish Sheriff's deputies communicate across agencies and mutually contribute to keep the area safe for residents and tourists alike.

Reason Five: Our area offers a safe harbor for shipping and industry investments when storms threaten. Because the City of Morgan City is located with an abundance of marshland to our south, the marshlands create a barrier that buffer assets located within our waterways and mainland. Estuary investments will be provided that same safe harbor protection.

Reason Six: Our area is defined by the people and culture of the community. Without our economy thriving, our greatest resource, our people, will have to seek employment elsewhere. This has been especially hard on our young adults. Although born and raised here, way too many of our young adults in order to pay back college debt and student loans, are offered positions in college towns that are quick to offer them positions that our rural community cannot replicate without a more diverse economy. We need the playing field to be leveled and having the NERR in St. Mary Parish would greatly aid in leveling the opportunities allowing our college graduated sons and daughters to return to our area.

We request that you look favorably upon our appeal by designating the Atchafalaya Zone as the selected site for Louisiana's National Estuarine Research Reserve.

Very truly yours,
CITY OF MORGAN CITY

Lee Dragna, Mayor

Timmy T. Hymel, District One Councilman

Mark Stephens, District Two Councilman

Ron Bias, District Three Councilman

Steve Domangue, Mayor Pro Tempore, District Four Councilman

Louis J. Tamporello, Jr. District Five Councilman

ST. MARY
CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

Governor John Bel Edwards
Attention: Chief Resilience Officer, Charles Sutcliffe
Office of the Governor
PO Box 94004
Baton Rouge, LA 70804

August 27, 2021

Dear Governor Edwards:

I am writing to add the support of the St. Mary Chamber of Commerce for the **Atchafalaya Zone** to be named as the site for the Louisiana National Estuarine Research Reserve (LANERR). I make this request for several reasons.

St. Mary Parish includes the cities of Morgan City and Berwick, located at the mouth of the Atchafalaya River—home to the parish's business infrastructure with water and rail, and nearby Patterson that supplies air transportation, as well as the Bayou Teche National Wildlife Refuge in West St. Mary Parish.

A national research reserve would fit well within the 137,695-acre Atchafalaya Delta Wildlife Management Area already located at the mouths of the Atchafalaya River and Wax Lake Outlet in St. Mary Parish. The Atchafalaya Basin is home to the largest wetland in the United States, the vitality of which is critical to the current and future prosperity of ecological sustainability of Louisiana generally and more specifically Morgan City/Berwick in St. Mary Parish.

Research activities associated with NERR would be ideally situated in the Atchafalaya Estuarine Zone to:

- attract scholars on a national and international stage,
- provide employment opportunities to the region,
- provide stronger connectivity to the rest of Louisiana, the Gulf Coast, and United States, and
- inject money into the local coastal economy.

The presence of the NERR would impact youth and young adults currently enrolled in Louisiana 's schools and contribute to an appreciation for Louisiana's natural resources amidst enjoying the area's quality-of-life and opportunities that the NERR provides. An Atchafalaya Zone NERR would potentially shape decisions about where young Louisianans choose to live, work, learn, as well as raise families.

Finally, **a NERR in the Atchafalaya Zone** would support your announced focus on restoring and enhancing the Atchafalaya Basin. Therefore, we encourage the selection of the Atchafalaya Zone as the Louisiana National Estuarine Research Reserve.

Sincerely,

Donna F. Meyer

Donna F. Meyer
President

Post Office Box 2606 Morgan City, Louisiana 70381
Phone: (985) 384-3830 E-mail: info@stmarychamber.com
Website: www.stmarychamber.com

LEE DRAGNA
MAYOR
P. O. Box 1218
Morgan City, Louisiana 70381
Telephone: 985-385-1770
Fax. 985-384-7519
TDD: 985-385-1770
E-mail: g.bonner@cityofmc.com

COUNCIL MEMBERS:
TIMMY T. HYMEL - District 1
MARK STEPHENS - District 2
RON BIAS - District 3
STEVE DOMANGUE - District 4
LOUIS J. TAMPORELLO, JR. - District 5

TRANSMITTAL

To: **Governor John Bel Edwards** **Date: September 8, 2021**
ATTN: Chief Resilience Officer, Charles Sutcliffe
Office of the Governor
PO Box 94004
Baton Rouge, Louisiana 70804

Re: **Atchafalaya Zone LA National Estuarine Research Preserve**

****

WE ARE ENCLOSING THE FOLLOWING:

☐	**Contract**	☐	**Change Order**	☐	**Mail**
☐	**Specifications**	☐	**Estimates**	☐	**Overnight**
☐	**Copy of Letter**	☒	**Correspondence**	☐	**Hand Deliver**

QTY	Description	For Review	For Signature
15	Letter of Support from Mayor, Councilmen &		
	Department Heads	X	

Remarks:

Distribution:
☐ **Field** ☒ **File** ☐ **Other**

By: **Genie G. Bonner**
Administrative Secretary

LEE DRAGNA
MAYOR
P. O. Box 1218
Morgan City, Louisiana 70381
Telephone: 985-385-1770
Fax: 985-384-7519
TDD: 985-385-1770
E-mail: g.bonner@cityofmc.com

August 26, 2021

Governor John Bel Edwards
ATTN: Chief Resilience Officer, Charles Sutcliffe
Office of the Governor
PO Box 94004
Baton Rouge, Louisiana 70804

Dear Governor Edwards,

I am writing to add my support for the **Atchafalaya Zone** to be named as the site for the Louisiana National Estuarine Research Reserve (LANERR). I make this request for several reasons.

St. Mary Parish included the cities of Morgan City and Berwick, located at the mouth of the Atchafalaya River – home to the parish's business infrastructure with water and rail, and nearby Patterson that supplies air transportation, as well as the Bayou Teche National Wildlife Refuge in West St. Mary Parish.

A national research reserve would fit well within the 137,695-acre Atchafalaya Delta Wildlife Management Area already located at the mouths of the Atchafalaya River and Wax Lake Outlet in St. Mary Parish. The Atchafalaya Basin is home to the largest wetland in the United States, the vitality of which is critical to the current and future prosperity of ecological sustainability of Louisiana generally and more specifically Morgan City/ Berwick in St. Mary Parish.

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- Attract scholars on a national and international stage,
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Finally, **a NERR in the Atchafalaya Zone** would support your announced focus on restoring and enhancing the Atchafalaya Basin. Therefore, I encourage the selection of the Atchafalaya Zone as the Louisiana National Estuarine Research Reserve.

Very truly yours,
CITY OF MORGAN CITY

Lee Dragna, Mayor

LEE DRAGNA
MAYOR
P. O. Box 1218
Morgan City, Louisiana 70381
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August 26, 2021

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Baton Rouge, Louisiana 70804

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Very truly yours,
CITY OF MORGAN CITY

Charlie Solar, Jr., CAO

LEE DRAGNA
MAYOR
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Morgan City, Louisiana 70381
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August 26, 2021

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Very truly yours,
CITY OF MORGAN CITY

Genie Bonner, Administrative Secretary

LEE DRAGNA
MAYOR
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August 26, 2021

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PO Box 94004
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Very truly yours,
CITY OF MORGAN CITY

Tim Hymel, District One Councilman

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August 26, 2021

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ATTN: Chief Resilience Officer, Charles Sutcliffe
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St. Mary Parish included the cities of Morgan City and Berwick, located at the mouth of the Atchafalaya River – home to the parish's business infrastructure with water and rail, and nearby Patterson that supplies air transportation, as well as the Bayou Teche National Wildlife Refuge in West St. Mary Parish.

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Finally, **a NERR in the Atchafalaya Zone** would support your announced focus on restoring and enhancing the Atchafalaya Basin. Therefore, I encourage the selection of the Atchafalaya Zone as the Louisiana National Estuarine Research Reserve.

Very truly yours,
CITY OF MORGAN CITY

Mark Stephens, District Two Councilman

LEE DRAGNA
MAYOR
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Morgan City, Louisiana 70381
Telephone: 985-385-1770
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E-mail: g.bonner@cityofmc.com

August 26, 2021

Governor John Bel Edwards
ATTN: Chief Resilience Officer, Charles Sutcliffe
Office of the Governor
PO Box 94004
Baton Rouge, Louisiana 70804

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Ron Bias, District Three Councilman

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Steve Domangue, District Four Councilman

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Louis Tamporello, Jr., District Five Councilman

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Sincerely,

James Blair
Chief of Police

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MAYOR
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Sincerely,

Alvin Cockerham
Fire Chief

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Sincerely,

Dwayne Barbier
Director of Recreation & Culture

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Sincerely,

Michael D. Loupe
Director of Public Works

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CITY OF MORGAN CITY

Deborah Garber, Finance Director

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Anthony Governale
Director of Planning & Zoning

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Sincerely,

William Cefalu, Jr.
Utilites Director

LOUISIANA STATE SENATE

SENATE DISTRICT OFFICE
600 Main Street
Suite 1
Franklin, LA 70538
Office: (337) 828-9107
Office: (985) 850-2738
Fax: (337) 828-9108

R. L. "BRET" ALLAIN II
Senator - District 21

COMMITTEES
Revenue and Fiscal Affairs, Chairman
Agriculture, Forestry, Aquaculture and Rural Development
Natural Resources
Senate and Governmental Affairs
Finance, Ex-Officio
Joint Legislative Committee on the Budget
Joint Legislative Committee on Capital Outlay

June 3, 2021

Governor John Bel Edwards
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Baton Rouge, LA 70804

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Sincerely,

R.L. "Bret" Allain II
State Senator
District 21

Partners

CONNECT | ENRICH | TRANSFORM

LaNERR Leadership Team
Louisiana Sea Grant College Program
Louisiana State University
Baton Rouge, Louisiana 70803

As the Executive Director of the Louisiana Universities Marine Consortium (LUMCON), I write this letter in overwhelming support of Louisiana establishing a National Estuarine Research Reserve (NERR) site. Louisiana remains one few coastal states without a NERR despite being home near 40% of all coastal wetlands in the United States.

LUMCON is particularly in favor of the NERR site being established in the Atchafalaya Basin. The Atchafalaya Basin represents an ideal location for a NERR site, providing an active river delta that is not currently represented in the national reserve system. The Atchafalaya Basin also encompasses a multitude of habitats—a majority of those seen in Louisiana—including an alluvial floodplain that includes bald cypress swamps, an active river delta including freshwater marshes, and estuarine brackish and salt marshes as well as the waterways connecting them.

The strength of the Atchafalaya NERR also benefits from its creation only requiring the extensive state lands and waterways that span the entire region. This gives an Atchafalaya NERR the benefit of longevity and stewardship not often possible with privately held lands.

An Atchafalaya NERR would also lie adjacent to the Barataria-Terrebonne National Estuary Program (BTNEP, letter of support is provided) administered by LUMCON. This partnership is both complementary and strategic. The Atchafalaya NERR would collaborate with BTNEP management, research, and education programs but leverage partnerships of government, business, scientists, conservation organizations, agricultural interests, and individuals for the preservation, protection, and restoration of the across coastal Louisiana.

Lastly, LUMCON would be an ideal state agency to lead the NERR. A future NERR and LUMCON have complementary missions and staff expertise. Many of the LUMCON scientists have worked actively in other NERRs throughout their careers. LUMCON environmental monitoring and research teams have decades of experience monitoring a variety of coastal and estuary habitats

Craig R. McClain | Executive Director
Louisiana Universities Marine Consortium
A Division of the Louisiana Board of Regents
8124 Highway 56 | Chauvin, LA 70344
985-851-2800, cmcclain@lumcon.edu

CONNECT | ENRICH | TRANSFORM

in Louisiana. LUMCON's facilities and partnerships would also provide the assets, e.g. environmental monitoring, small boats, research facilities, needed in support of a NERR. LUMCON also conducts one of the largest informal education programs in state and along the Gulf. Each year ~4000 K-12 students, ~2000 undergraduates, and ~3000 members of public engage with LUMCON's education and outreach. LUMCON also has experience administering large coastal programs including the Barataria-Terrebonne National Estuary Program and Gulf of Mexico Research Initiative's Coastal Water Consortium. Most importantly, LUMCON represents a consortium of all of the public and private colleges and universities in the state which will ensure that research and education both leverage expertise across the state and also serves diverse populations across the state.

Sincerely,

Craig R. McClain

Craig R. McClain | Executive Director
Louisiana Universities Marine Consortium
A Division of the Louisiana Board of Regents
8124 Highway 56 | Chauvin, LA 70344
985-851-2800, cmcclain@lumcon.edu

BTNEP
BARATARIA-TERREBONNE
NATIONAL ESTUARY PROGRAM

April 28, 2022

LaNERR Leadership Team
Louisiana Sea Grant College Program
Louisiana State University
Baton Rouge, Louisiana 70803

RE: Support for Atchafalaya Basin as National Estuarine Research Reserve (NERR)

Ladies and Gentlemen:

The Barataria-Terrebonne National Estuary Program (BTNEP), one of 28 Congressionally authorized estuary programs, works to protect and preserve the land, water, natural habitat, people and culture in the 4.2 million acres between the Atchafalaya and Mississippi Rivers in southeast Louisiana and extending beyond into the Terrebonne and Barataria bays.

After extensively examining and considering all of the potential sites in Louisiana, I believe the Atchafalaya Basin is best suited to support the missions of a National Estuarine Research (NERR) as defined by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA). The Atchafalaya Basin is home to the largest wetland in the United States and part of the deltaic region with the nation's most active and newest land formation. The vitality of the basin is critical to the current and future prosperity of ecological sustainability of Louisiana.

In addition, locating the NERR in the Atchafalaya Basin adjacent to the Barataria and Terrebonne basins that are home to the national estuary program would be particularly beneficial for the State and national estuarine effort. The NERR and NEP in close proximity and the resources they could leverage would work to attract scholars on a global scale, provide stronger connectivity to Louisiana and the Gulf Coast and inject increased funding into the local coastal economy.

In summary, I enthusiastically support the existing proposal to locate a NERR in the Atchafalaya Basin and am interested in working with NOAA and the management team in Louisiana to promote the success of this effort.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

T. Bradley Keith
Director
Barataria-Terrebonne National Estuary Program

BTNEP P.O. BOX 2663 NICHOLLS STATE UNIVERSITY CAMPUS THIBODAUX, LA 70310
Phone: 985.447.0868 Fax: 985.447.0870 Toll Free: 1.800.259.0869 WWW.BTNEP.ORG

BILLY NUNGESSER
LIEUTENANT GOVERNOR

State of Louisiana
OFFICE OF THE LIEUTENANT GOVERNOR
DEPARTMENT OF CULTURE, RECREATION & TOURISM
OFFICE OF CULTURAL DEVELOPMENT
ATCHAFALAYA NATIONAL HERITAGE AREA

KRISTIN P. SANDERS
ASSISTANT SECRETARY

March 1, 2022

LSU Sea Grant
Louisiana State University
Baton Rouge, LA 70803

I am writing to add my support for the nomination of the Atchafalaya Basin as the site for the designation of a National Estuarine Research Reserve (NERR) by NOAA in coastal Louisiana. I believe that the Atchafalaya Basin has the best environments, facilities, and access to support the missions of a NERR as defined by NOAA. Specifically, I believe the Atchafalaya Basin represents all of the habitats and systems found in the Louisiana from the swamps and forests of the upper river basin to the marshes and estuaries of the lower basin.

The Atchafalaya Basin is home to the largest wetland in the United States and the newest land being created at its river deltas. The vitality of the basin is critical to the current and future prosperity of ecological sustainability of Louisiana generally and more specifically to people and communities that reside within and/or use the basin.

Research activities associated with NERR would be ideally situated in the Atchafalaya Basin to attract scholars on a national and international stage, provide employment opportunities to the region, provide stronger connectivity to the rest of Louisiana, the Gulf Coast, and United States, and inject money into the local coastal economy. The presence of the NERR would impact youth and young adults currently enrolled in Louisiana's schools and contribute to an appreciation for Louisiana's natural resources amidst enjoying the area's quality-of life and opportunities that the NERR provides. An Atchafalaya Basin NERR would potentially shape decisions about where young Louisianans choose to live, work, learn, as well as raise families. Finally, a NERR based in the Atchafalaya Basin will support the state's announced focus on restoring and enhancing the Atchafalaya Basin. We're glad to be partners in this NERR proposal.

Thank you for considering my support as part of the proposal to nominate the Atchafalaya Basin as a NERR in Louisiana.

Justin K. Lemoine, PLA, ASLA
Executive Director
Atchafalaya National Heritage Area

University of Louisiana at Lafayette

OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT

P. O. Drawer 41008
Lafayette, LA 70504-1008
(337) 482-6203
Fax: (337) 482-5914
e-mail: president@louisiana.edu

Université des Acadiens

April 5, 2022

Dr. Brian Roberts
Atchafalaya Basin NERR Team Lead
LUMCON
8124 LA-56
Chauvin, LA 70344

Dear Dr. Roberts:

I am writing on behalf of the entire University of Louisiana Lafayette community to enthusiastically support the nomination of the **Atchafalaya Basin** as the site for the designation of a National Estuarine Research Reserve (NERR) by NOAA in coastal Louisiana. The Atchafalaya Basin's influence on the cultural and environmental heritage of the people and communities of Acadiana cannot be understated. Our University's values are deeply rooted in the Cajun and Creole cultures of our Acadiana region. These values strongly connect us to our environment and communities, and influence our inclination toward collaboration to solve problems. I believe that the Atchafalaya Basin has the best environments, facilities, and access to support the missions of a NERR as defined by NOAA. In addition, the goals of the NERR align with the research goals of the university to provide an enhanced knowledge base for improved coastal and water management, ecosystem restoration, policy making, and sustainability.

I would also like to highlight that the University of Louisiana Lafayette's Institute for Coastal and Water Research houses over 20 researchers from 4 colleges across the University addressing complex problems facing aquatic and coastal ecosystems throughout North America and beyond. These researchers address a wide variety of relevant research topics, from building sustainable communities to restoring coastal ecosystems, and are ideally positioned to support the goals of the NERR program and NOAA.

The vitality of the basin is critical to the current and future prosperity of ecological sustainability of Louisiana generally and more specifically to the people and communities of Acadiana and our University Family. The presence of the NERR would impact youth and young adults currently enrolled in Louisiana's schools and contribute to an appreciation for Louisiana's natural resources amidst enjoying the area's quality-of life and opportunities that the NERR provides. An Atchafalaya Basin NERR would potentially shape decisions about where young Louisianans choose to live, work, learn, as well as raise families. The University of Louisiana Lafayette is ready to support these students on their journey of learning and research to make stronger connections with their local environments and build better more resilient communities in the future.

I am very supportive of the existing proposal to locate a NERR in the Atchafalaya Basin. I would be interested in working with NOAA and the lead state agency and management team in Louisiana to help with the establishment of an Atchafalaya Basin NERR throughout the designation process.

Sincerely,

E. Joseph Savoie
President

UNIVERSITY of LOUISIANA LAFAYETTE

Office of the Vice President for Research, Innovation, and Economic Development
P.O. Box 43610 • Lafayette, LA 70504-3610
Office: (337) 482-5811
Fax: (337) 482-5102
Université des Acadiens

March 21, 2022

Dr. Brian Roberts
Atchafalaya Basin NERR Team Lead
LUMCON
8124 LA-56,
Chauvin, LA 70344

Dear Dr. Roberts,

I am writing on behalf of the entire University of Louisiana Lafayette community to enthusiastically support the nomination of the Atchafalaya Basin as the site for the designation of a *National Estuarine Research Reserve (NERR)* by NOAA in coastal Louisiana.

The Atchafalaya Basin's influence on the cultural and environmental heritage of the people and communities of Acadiana cannot be understated. Our University's values are deeply rooted in the Cajun and Creole cultures of our Acadiana region. These values strongly connect us to our environment and communities and influence our inclination toward collaboration to solve problems. I believe that the Atchafalaya Basin has the best environments, facilities, and access to support the missions of a NERR as defined by NOAA. In addition, the goals of the NERR align with the research goals of the university to provide an enhanced knowledge base for improved coastal and water management, ecosystem restoration, policy making, and sustainability.

I would also like to highlight that the University of Louisiana Lafayette's Institute for Coastal and Water Research (ICaWR) houses over 20 researchers from 4 colleges across the University addressing complex problems facing aquatic and coastal ecosystems throughout North America and beyond. These researchers address a wide variety of relevant research topics, from building sustainable communities to restoring coastal ecosystems, and are ideally positioned to support the goals of the NERR program and NOAA.

The vitality of the basin is critical to the current and future prosperity of ecological sustainability of Louisiana generally and more specifically to the people and communities of Acadiana and our University Family. The presence of the NERR would impact youth and young adults currently enrolled in Louisiana's schools and contribute to an appreciation for Louisiana's natural resources amidst enjoying the area's quality-of life and opportunities that the NERR provides. An Atchafalaya Basin NERR would potentially shape decisions about where young Louisianans choose to live, work, learn, as well as raise families.

The University of Louisiana Lafayette is ready to support these students on their journey of learning and research to make stronger connections with their local environments and build better more resilient communities in the future.

I am very supportive of the existing proposal to locate a NERR in the Atchafalaya Basin. Further, I am committed to working with you, NOAA, the lead state agency and management team in Louisiana to help with the establishment of an Atchafalaya Basin NERR throughout the designation process.

Sincerely yours,

Ramesh Kolluru, Ph.D.
Vice President for Research, Innovation, and Economic Development

CC:
Dr. Emad Habib, Interim Director, Institute for Coastal and Water Research
Dr. James Nelson, Interim Director, Ecology Center
Dr. Craig McClain, Executive Director, LUMCON
Dr. Kumer Das, Assistant VP for Research, Innovation, and Economic Development

Nicholls State University
Office of the President
P.O. Box 2001 | Thibodaux, LA 70310 | 985.448.4003 | 985.448.4920 [F]

March 24, 2022

The Honorable John Bel Edwards
Governor of Louisiana
ATTN: Chief Resilience Officer, Charles Sutcliffe
Office of the Governor
PO Box 94004
Baton Rouge, LA 70804

Dear Governor Edwards:

I am writing to add support for the Atchafalaya Zone as the future site of a Louisiana National Estuarine Research Reserve (LANERR). With its proximity to the Gulf of Mexico, the Atchafalaya Basin, the Barataria-Terrebonne estuary, and its service to local communities and the region, Nicholls State University has seen first-hand, how Louisiana's waterways affect regional and state economy, everyday life, and culture.

The Atchafalaya Basin is perfectly situated to offer a variety of opportunities for learning, and Nicholls has benefited over many years from the opportunity to utilize Atchafalaya's unique environment for teaching. In fact, a number of our science faculty and their students are well-known researchers in the basin. With an actively building delta centrally located along the coast, the basin is relatively short travel distances from Thibodaux, other major coastal zone cities, and a diversity of smaller communities which our university serves. Further, our state mandate to develop the Nicholls Coastal Center in support the state's Coastal Master Plan requires particular attention to the Atchafalaya Basin. For all these reasons and more, the university supports establishing the research reserve in the Atchafalaya.

Through the Coastal Center, and in collaboration with local government and economic development agencies including St. Mary Excel, Nicholls looks forward to taking an active role in developing and sustaining the Atchafalaya national estuarine research reserve.

Sincerely,

Jay Clune
President

College of Sciences & Technology

Office of the Dean
P.O. Box 2020
Thibodaux, LA 70310
985.448.4386

NICHOLLS
STATE UNIVERSITY
A MEMBER OF THE UNIVERSITY OF LOUISIANA SYSTEM

25 April 2022

The Honorable John Bel Edwards
Governor of Louisiana
ATTN: Chief Resilience Officer, Charles Sutcliffe
Office of the Governor
PO Box 94004
Baton Rouge, LA 70804

Dear Governor Edwards:

I am writing in support of the proposition that the Atchafalaya Zone serve as future site of a Louisiana National Estuarine Research Reserve (LaNERR).

An Atchafalaya LaNEER will serve as a substantial contribution to experiential learning for Nicholls students. The river basin is perfectly situated to offer a variety of teaching opportunities, and Nicholls has benefited over many years from the opportunity to utilize Atchafalaya's unique environment for this purpose. In fact, a number of our science faculty and their students are well-known researchers in the basin. With an actively building delta centrally located along the coast, the basin is relatively short travel distances from Thibodaux, other major coastal zone cities, and the diversity of smaller communities which our university serves.

Our state mandate to develop the Nicholls Coastal Center in support the state's Coastal Master Plan requires particular attention to the Atchafalaya Basin. Through the Coastal Center, and in collaboration with local government and economic development agencies, including St. Mary Excel, Nicholls looks forward to taking an active role in developing and sustaining the Atchafalaya LaNEER.

With its proximity to the Gulf of Mexico, the Atchafalaya Basin, the Barataria-Terrebonne estuary, and its service to local communities and the region, Nicholls is keenly aware of how Louisiana waterways affect regional, state, and national economies, everyday life, and culture. For all these reasons and more, the college and its faculty here at Nicholls support establishing a national research reserve in the Atchafalaya.

Sincerely yours,

John P. Doucet, Ph.D.
Dean, College of Sciences and Technology
Director of Coastal Initiatives
Alcee Fortier Distinguished Professor
McIlhenny Professor of Human and Environmental Genetics

SLCC
SOUTH LOUISIANA COMMUNITY COLLEGE

YOUNG MEMORIAL CAMPUS
Tammie L. Moore, M.Ed., Campus Director
900 Youngs Road
Morgan City, LA 70380
Phone (985) 380-2957
Fax (985) 380-2440

February 14, 2022

Governor John Bel Edwards
Office of the Governor
P.O. Box 94004
Baton Rouge, LA 70804

Dear Governor Edwards:

I represent the Education sector for South Louisiana Community College, St. Mary Parish School Board, St. Mary/Vermilion Community Action Agency Board and St. Mary Parish Chamber of Commerce.

I want to go on record and say that this opportunity has excitement, growth, and greatness written all over it. When I think about how the Atchafalaya National Estuarine research Reserve can and shall increase the quality of life for the citizens, students and visitors of St. Mary Parish, the connecting parishes, and local region, I get excited!

I get excited about the opportunity of new and hands-on learning experiences, as one of the presented videos mentions, such as outdoor classrooms, living and live laboratories for students and teachers. I hear and envision the opportunity for program additions and course offerings to the college and nearby universities. This can enhance the 2+2 transfer Biology degree SLCC offers in collaboration with Nicholls State University.

The greatness that would come from the Atchafalaya National Estuarine Research Reserve, speaks to the heart of our culture and region. Who would not want to maximize every opportunity of research an access to studying about human development, sea level rises, erosion, etc., that would provide scientific knowledge to increase opportunities in various sectors of society?

Overall, not only would the Atchafalaya National Estuarine Research Reserve benefit St. Mary Parish and Southern Louisiana, but it would have a great impact on the Nation. We all know that the waterways here are the perfect and priceless opportunity for such a Reserve. Remember, we are centered here at THE GATEWAY TO THE GULF!

Sincerely,

Tammie L. Moore, M.Ed.

C: Dr. Brian Roberts ✓
Atchafalaya Team NERR Lead
LUMCON

Audubon | DELTA

3801 Canal St.
New Orleans, LA 70119
www.audubon.org

23 March 2022

Dr. Brian Roberts
Atchafalaya Basin NERR Team Lead
LUMCON
8124 LA-56
Chauvin, LA 70344

Dear Dr. Roberts,

I am writing to offer the National Audubon Society's support for the nomination of the Atchafalaya Basin as the site for the designation of a National Estuarine Research Reserve (NERR) by NOAA in coastal Louisiana. The National Audubon Society is a nonprofit conservation organization, representing over 1.5 million members, whose mission is to protect birds and the places they need, today and tomorrow, throughout the Americas. Audubon has had a presence on the Gulf Coast for over a century, and in southeastern coastal Vermilion Parish, Audubon has owned and operated the Paul J. Rainey Wildlife Sanctuary since 1924, and we participate in a shared conservation mission with neighboring landowners through the Rainey Conservation Alliance. As such, we are deeply committed to improve the region's sustainability and investments in natural infrastructure for birds and people. Audubon staff are working to advance restoration, conservation, and land stewardship with the goal of having healthy and resilient coastal and marine ecosystems that support and sustain populations of birds, fish, wildlife, and people throughout Louisiana, the Gulf's five coastal states, and beyond.

We at Audubon firmly believe that the Atchafalaya Basin offers the most competitive suite of habitats, facilities, and access to support the development of a NERR as defined by NOAA. Specifically, the Atchafalaya Basin offers the full diversity of Louisiana's coastal habitats, systems, and ecosystem processes from the swamps and forests of the upper river basin to the marshes and estuaries of the lower basin.

I would also like to highlight that a potential NERR site in the Atchafalaya Basin is very important to service Louisiana's coastal communities, which are disproportionately underserved and minority compared to the national average. The NERR would offer increased and ironic opportunities to connect with the basin through facilities, access to the water and habitats, and education opportunities.

The Atchafalaya Basin is home to the largest wetland in the United States and the newest land being created at its river deltas. The region encompasses multiple Important Bird Areas (IBA), including the Atchafalaya Basin IBA, Chenier Plain IBA, and Atchafalaya Delta IBA, which support globally important populations of conservation priority species that include White Ibis,

Audubon | DELTA

3801 Canal St.
New Orleans, LA 70119
www.audubon.org

Northern Pintail, Canvasback, Mottled Duck, and Piping Plover. We also estimate that the Atchafalaya Basin alone supports roughly 5% of the global breeding population of Prothonotary Warblers, a conservation priority species. The vitality of the basin is critical to the current and future prosperity of ecological sustainability of Louisiana generally and more specifically to people and communities that reside within and/or use the basin.

Research activities associated with NERR would be ideally situated in the Atchafalaya Basin to attract scholars on a national and international stage, provide employment opportunities to the region, provide stronger connectivity to the rest of Louisiana, the Gulf Coast, and United States, and inject money into the local coastal economy. As such, we commit to offer Audubon's Rainey Sanctuary as a part of the landscape of research opportunities provided by an Atchafalaya NERR. The presence of the NERR would benefit youth and young adults currently enrolled in Louisiana's schools and contribute to an appreciation for Louisiana's natural resources amidst enjoying the area's quality-of life and opportunities that the NERR provides. An Atchafalaya Basin NERR would also potentially shape decisions about where young Louisianans choose to live, work, learn, as well as raise families. Retaining this intellectual knowledge in Louisiana is critical to the sustainability of coastal Louisiana. Finally, a NERR based in the Atchafalaya Basin will support the state's announced focus on restoring and enhancing the Atchafalaya Basin.

We at the National Audubon Society are very supportive of the existing proposal to locate a NERR in the Atchafalaya Basin. We are be interested in working with NOAA and the lead state agency and management team in Louisiana to help with the establishment of an Atchafalaya Basin NERR throughout the designation process.

Thank you for considering our support as part of the proposal to nominate the Atchafalaya Basin as a NERR in Louisiana.

Sincerely,

Dawn O'Neal
Vice President, National Audubon Society
Executive Director, Audubon Delta

St Mary Excel

Advocating Economic Diversification for Educational and Cultural Advancement

Governor John Bel Edwards
c/o Dr. Brian Roberts
Atchafalaya Team NERR Lead
LUMCON
8124 LA-56,
Chauvin, LA 70344

February 14, 2022

Dear Governor John Bel Edwards:

St. Mary Excel is writing in support of the Atchafalaya Zone being the site of Louisiana's National Estuarine Research Reserve. We offer this support and the insight of a 50-member non-profit organization operating in St. Mary Parish.

First, St. Mary Parish is ready for the reserve as evidenced by:

- attendance and the highest-level (by percentage of population) positive participation at the town hall meetings including fishermen, educators, elected officials, non-profit members, businessmen and women, museum and travel operators, and others.
- formal resolutions of support by the City of Morgan City, Town of Berwick, St. Mary Parish Council, St. Mary Parish School Board, The Port of Morgan City, and St. Mary Excel,
- the local creation of Youtube videos and PowerPoint presentations used in meetings with community groups such as Rotary, community foundation, and with K-12 students in the area,
- the local creation of a letter of support template for citizens to submit and color sheets for young students to submit,
- the work to include opportunities for <u>all students in Louisiana</u> to experience the Atchafalaya through work of a St. Mary Excel Residential Maritime High School Exploration Committee, and
- the creation of t-shirts to be worn to display our excitement at the wonderful opportunity a NERR would mean for our area.

Second, St. Mary Parish is ready for a NERR because you cannot move the river, basin, or delta. Resources should be placed in the impacted area. You access all three right in the Morgan City/Berwick area that is located in St. Mary Parish.

Let me explain. St. Mary Parish has the ecosystem that accompanies the Atchafalaya River, Delta, and Basin. Not everything that takes place with the water system is without challenges. St. Mary Parish experiences the shocks and

stresses that come when water levels are high and low, sediment-filled, oxygen-deprived, and more.
Not only is the ecosystem challenged during these times, but the people are also- a significant number of jobs are dependent on fishing, shrimping, crawfishing, and alligator hunting.
Because the area is impacted by the stresses, the economic benefits of federal and state support at NERR should also be here in the impacted area.

The increase in tourism and student field trips should also be here as it is our K-12 system that is relied upon to create opportunity for our Atchafalaya born and raised residents. Therefore, it is fitting that Atchafalaya resources such as what a NERR presents are returned to where people are impacted by those same ecosystems.

Third, we feel that St. Mary Parish residents are ready because we have conducted activities by reading about NERRs, interviewing people in other states involved in NERRs, engaging in live and FB conversations around the opportunity of a NERR for the purpose of engaging a diverse group of residents that echo the same sentiment, "We want an Atchafalaya NERR and we want it here in St. Mary Parish."

St. Mary Excel offers these three reasons why the Atchafalaya Zone should be selected as Louisiana's National Estuarine Research Reserve and we would highly recommend that the site designation committee begin in St. Mary Parish to identify what the Atchafalaya National Estuarine Reserve would initially include due to the deliberate engagement of St. Mary Parish's civic organizations, municipalities, parish and school governance boards, and its residents.

Thank-you for your consideration,

Monica L. Mancuso

Monica L. Mancuso
St. Mary Excel, Executive Director

St. Mary Excel

Advocating Economic Diversification for Educational and Cultural Advancement

Catherine P. Holcomb
President/Vice President

Margaret Metz Theriot
Secretary

Alice Pecoraro
Treasurer

Ruby Maize
Board Member

Kelly Lind Boudreaux
Board Member

506 1st St Morgan City, LA 70380. | 985-518-2009 | SaintMaryEXCEL@gmail.com

LaNERR Leadership Team
Louisiana Sea Grant College Program
Louisiana State University
Baton Rouge, LA. 70803

Dear Leadership Team,

This is a letter of support for the nomination of the Atchafalaya Basin as the site for the designation of a National Estuarine Research Reserve (NERR) by NOAA in coastal Louisiana. The Louisiana 4-H Youth Wetlands Program thinks that the Atchafalaya Basin has the best environments, facilities, and access to support the missions of a NERR as defined by NOAA. For example, this site not only provides educational and service learning opportunities for youth to engage in coastal issues such as marine debris and land loss, but also provides tremendous opportunities to participate in studies of the actively growing Wax Lake delta. The Atchafalaya Basin provides a centralized were both major population centers of Baton Rouge and Lafayette can easily travel to the site, expanding outdoor learning access for over 450,000 youth.

The Louisiana 4-H Youth Wetlands Program would also like to highlight why this potential NERR site is so important to our community. The Atchafalaya Basin NERR site includes communities that have a deep history of living, working, and playing in the wetlands. Through meeting with members of this community, it is clear that the enhanced study of the ecosystems within the site, increased tourism, and fostering of partnerships provided by this site's selection would create opportunities for these communities to thrive.

In addition, once the Atchafalaya Basin is approved by NOAA as the site to initiate the designation process, we would be interested in working with NOAA and the lead state agency and management team in Louisiana to pursue other more formal support of the Atchafalaya Basin as a NERR. The Louisiana 4-H Youth Wetlands Program work with classrooms and directly with youth to engage in service-learning projects. We are extremely interested working with NOAA to enhance these opportunities for youth while at the same time providing greater NERR access for the public and other education groups.

The Louisiana 4-H Youth Wetlands Program is very supportive of the existing proposal to locate a NERR in the Atchafalaya Basin. We would be interested in helping to serve as volunteers, advisory and friend organizations of support, and other possible opportunities that we would help define during the designation process.

Thank for considering our support as part of the proposal to nominate the Atchafalaya Basin as a NERR in Louisiana.

Respectfully yours,

Brian Gautreau, Director
Louisiana 4-H Youth Wetlands Program

College of Humanities & Social Sciences
Department of Geography & Anthropology

April 28, 2022

Dear Brian:

I would like to offer the support of the Department of Geography and Anthropology at LSU for the Atchafalaya Basin as the site for the Louisiana National Estuarine Research Reserve. Our department has deep and enduring ties to coastal studies in the state and also a strong commitment to field studies.

Our department has physical and human geographers who are actively engaged in the study of coastal geomorphology and fluvial geomorphology. The proposed reserve would offer an excellent and accessible field site for carrying out instruction and also field work for graduate students.

We had an anthropologist and a geographer assist with the early planning for the Atchafalaya Basin National Heritage Area. Since its designation in 2006, numerous graduate students and faculty have conducted field work in the area. Creation of the Atchafalaya Basin National Estuarine Research Reserve would add to the value of their work and also open new opportunities to carry out interdisciplinary research on nature-society relationships in the region.

The Atchafalaya Basin is a critical ecosystem in our state and harbors both distinctive cultural and geophysical attributes. We strongly support its selection as the future LANERR.

Sincerely,

Craig E. Colten, Ph.D.
Professor Emeritus

Louisiana State University
227 Howe-Russell-Kniffen Geoscience Complex
Baton Rouge, LA 70803

O 225-578-5942
F 225-578-4420
www.lsu.edu/ga

McIlhenny Company

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HAROLD G OSBORN
PRESIDENT, CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER

April 1, 2022

Dr. Brian Roberts
Atchafalaya Basin NERR Team Lead
LUMCON
8124 LA-56,
Chauvin, LA 70344

Dear Dr. Roberts:

I am writing to add my support for the nomination of the **Atchafalaya Basin** as the site for the designation of a National Estuarine Research Reserve (NERR) by NOAA in coastal Louisiana. I believe that the Atchafalaya Basin has the best environments, facilities, and access to support the missions of a NERR as defined by NOAA. Specifically, I believe the Atchafalaya Basin represents all of the habitats and systems found in the Louisiana from the swamps and forests of the upper river basin to the marshes and estuaries of the lower basin.

I would also like to highlight that a potential NERR site in the Atchafalaya Basin is very important to our community by providing increased opportunities to connect with the basin through facilities, access to the water and habitats, education opportunities.

The Atchafalaya Basin is home to the largest wetland in the United States and the newest land being created at its river deltas. The vitality of the basin is critical to the current and future prosperity of ecological sustainability of Louisiana generally and more specifically to people and communities that reside within and/or use the basin.

Research activities associated with NERR would be ideally situated in the Atchafalaya Basin to attract scholars on a national and international stage, provide employment opportunities to the region, provide stronger connectivity to the rest of Louisiana, the Gulf Coast, and United States, and inject money into the local coastal economy. The presence of the NERR would impact youth and young adults currently enrolled in Louisiana's schools and contribute to an appreciation for Louisiana's natural resources amidst enjoying the area's quality-of life and opportunities that the NERR provides. An Atchafalaya Basin NERR would potentially shape decisions about where young Louisianans choose to live, work, learn, as well as raise families. Finally, a NERR based in the Atchafalaya Basin will support the state's announced focus on restoring and enhancing the Atchafalaya Basin.

I am very supportive of the existing proposal to locate a NERR in the Atchafalaya Basin. I would be interested in working with NOAA and the lead state agency and management team in

Avery Island, Louisiana 70513
Phone # 337-365-8173 Fax # 337-369-6326

Louisiana to help with the establishment of an Atchafalaya Basin NERR throughout the designation process.

Thank you for considering my support as part of the proposal to **nominate the Atchafalaya Basin as a NERR in Louisiana**.

Sincerely,

Harold G. Osborn

BOY SCOUTS OF AMERICA
Evangeline Area Council

Knight Scout Service Center 2266 S. College, Suite E Lafayette, Louisiana 70508

Prepared. For Life.

February 7, 2022

Dr. Brian Roberts

REF: Proposed Atchafalaya National Heritage Area

As a representative of Troop 49 and Pack 438 of the Boy Scouts of America, we are please to support the Atchafalaya Zone being named as Louisiana's National Estuarine Research Reserve and our troop and pack looks for opportunities to offer assistance in its development.

Sincerely,

Dan Duplantis

Evangeline Area Council District Committee
Advancement Chair / Kuna Nisha District
P.O. Box 505
Morgan City, La 70381
Phone: 985-384-2168
Cell: 985-518-7486
Fax: 985-384-1421
E mail: dan@greenwoodmarine.com

LSU Sea Grant
Louisiana State University
Baton Rouge, LA 70803

To whom it may concern,

I am writing to add my support for the nomination of the **Atchafalaya Basin** as the site for the designation of a National Estuarine Research Reserve (NERR) by NOAA in coastal Louisiana. I believe that the Atchafalaya Basin has the best environments, facilities, and access to support the missions of a NERR as defined by NOAA. Specifically, I believe the Atchafalaya Basin represents all of the habitats and systems found in the Louisiana from the swamps and forests of the upper river basin to the marshes and estuaries of the lower basin.

The Atchafalaya Basin is home to the largest wetland in the United States and the newest land being created at its river deltas. The vitality of the basin is critical to the current and future prosperity of ecological sustainability of Louisiana generally and more specifically to people and communities that reside within and/or use the basin.

Research activities associated with NERR would be ideally situated in the Atchafalaya Basin to attract scholars on a national and international stage, provide employment opportunities to the region, provide stronger connectivity to the rest of Louisiana, the Gulf Coast, and United States, and inject money into the local coastal economy. The presence of the NERR would impact youth and young adults currently enrolled in Louisiana's schools and contribute to an appreciation for Louisiana's natural resources amidst enjoying the area's quality-of life and opportunities that the NERR provides. An Atchafalaya Basin NERR would potentially shape decisions about where young Louisianans choose to live, work, learn, as well as raise families. Finally, a NERR based in the Atchafalaya Basin will support the state's announced focus on restoring and enhancing the Atchafalaya Basin.

I am very supportive of the existing proposal to locate a NERR in the Atchafalaya Basin. I would be interested in working with NOAA and the lead state agency and management team in Louisiana to help with the establishment of an Atchafalaya Basin NERR throughout the designation process.

Thank you for considering my support as part of the proposal to **nominate the Atchafalaya Basin as a NERR in Louisiana**.

Sincerely,

Patti Holland
Executive Director of The TECHE Project

Patti Holland

Morgan City
Rotary
Club

NEW GENERATIONS FORUM

THURSDAY, MARCH 24, 2022

6:00 P.M.

MCHS

MULTIPURPOSE BUILDING

Our young Stakeholders will present ideas to affect positive change in our Communities, along with other Elected Officials who we ask to take Ownership with our young Stakeholders!

SERVE TO CHANGE LIVES

Businesses

Citizens

Organizations

Governor John Bel Edwards
ATTN: Chief Resilience Officer, Charles Sutcliffe
Office of the Governor
PO Box 94004
Baton Rouge, LA 70804

August 25, 2021

Dear Governor Edwards,

I am writing to add my support for the Atchafalaya Zone to be named as the site for the Louisiana National Estuarine Research Reserve (LANERR). I make this request for several reasons.

St. Mary Parish includes the cities of Morgan City and Berwick, located at the mouth of the Atchafalaya River—home to the parish's business infrastructure with water and rail, and nearby Patterson that supplies air transportation, as well as the Bayou Teche National Wildlife Refuge in West St. Mary Parish.

A national research reserve would fit well within the 137,695-acre Atchafalaya Delta Wildlife Management Area already located at the mouths of the Atchafalaya River and Wax Lake Outlet in St. Mary Parish. The Atchafalaya Basin is home to the largest wetland in the United States, the vitality of which is critical to the current and future prosperity of ecological sustainability of Louisiana generally and more specifically Morgan City/Berwick in St. Mary Parish.

Research activities associated with NERR would be ideally situated in the Atchafalaya Estuarine Zone to:

- attract scholars on a national and international stage,
- provide employment opportunities to the region,
- provide stronger connectivity to the rest of Louisiana, the Gulf Coast, and United States, and
- inject money into the local coastal economy.

The presence of the NERR would impact youth and young adults currently enrolled in Louisiana 's schools and contribute to an appreciation for Louisiana's natural resources amidst enjoying the area's quality-of-life and opportunities that the NERR provides. An Atchafalaya Zone NERR would potentially shape decisions about where young Louisianans choose to live, work, learn, as well as raise families.

Finally, a NERR in the Atchafalaya Zone would support your announced focus on restoring and enhancing the Atchafalaya Basin. Therefore, I encourage the selection of the Atchafalaya Zone as the Louisiana National Estuarine Research Reserve.

Sincerely,

Erik Lind
President

LAND & MARINE
FOOD DISTRIBUTORS INC
800.256.9187 • WWW.GJFOOD.COM • SALES@GJFOOD.COM
506 FRONT STREET, MORGAN CITY, LA 70380

LAD SERVICES OF LOUISIANA , L.L.C.

1043 East Stephensville Road

Stephensville, Louisiana 70380

February 17, 2022

Governor John Bel Edwards
c/o Dr. Brian Roberts
Atchafalaya Team NERR Lead
LUMCON
8124 LA-56,
Chauvin, LA 70344

Dear Governor John Bel Edwards:

I am writing in support of the Atchafalaya Zone being named Louisiana's National Estuarine Research Reserve. We make this request for the following reasons.

Reason One: The City of Morgan City welcomes the economic diversification that having tourists visit a NERR would bring. The diversification is needed as we hear the challenges that residents face when we lack diversification. For example, when the basin water is low, nets are not filled, and families are faced with meeting living expenses including necessary services of City electricity, water, and gas. We also learn of lifelong residents' desires to remain in the area when oil and gas jobs are downsized and relocated to Houston and places elsewhere.

The bottom line is few jobs exist for residents to provide for their families although our area is located within North Americas' largest and most magnificent swamp marshland.

Reason Two: As mayor and council, we are challenged when tax revenues are down because of the lack of diversification. The City must replace aging infrastructure of water lines, electrical

poles, sewerage pumps and stations, road repairs and more with an eroding tax base when jobs go elsewhere. The jobs created by locating a NERR in the Morgan City, LA area can return tax revenues that will be used to keep the infrastructure updated and in good repair.

Reason Three: The City of Morgan City has resources to offer. The City recently purchased a school site that offers extensive square footage for K-12 student hands-on-activities. The school is a historic one and we want to preserve the buildings for an academic purpose. The NERR education K-12 experiences would be a perfect fit.

The City of Morgan City also has an early concept design for an Interpretive Center. The design was done when Sandra Thompson was in charge of the Department of Natural Resources and early plans were sought to tell the story of the Atchafalaya in the area of Lake End Park. Native son, Lucien Cutrera has many of the basin plans and concept maps.

Morgan City is also the home to the International Petroleum and Exposition, "The Mr. Charlie." The offering is the only authentic rig museum experience available in the world.

The City owns property along the river near the Mr. Charlie that may also be considered.

Reason Four: Our area is one that resident's rate highly for safety. The police departments of Morgan City and Berwick along with the St. Mary Parish Sheriff's deputies communicate across agencies and mutually contribute to keep the area safe for residents and tourists alike.

Reason Five: Our area offers a safe harbor for shipping and industry investments when storms threaten. Because the City of Morgan City is located with an abundance of marshland to our south, the marshlands create a barrier that buffer assets located within our waterways and mainland. Estuary investments will be provided that same safe harbor protection.

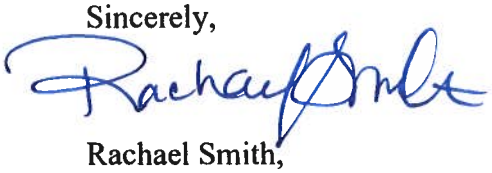
Reason Six: Our area is defined by the people and culture of the community. Without our economy thriving, our greatest resource, our people, will have to seek employment elsewhere.

This has been especially hard on our young adults. Although born and raised here, way too many of our young adults in order to pay back college debt and student loans, are offered positions in college towns that are quick to offer them positions that our rural community cannot replicate without a more diverse economy. We need the playing field to be leveled and having the NERR in St. Mary Parish would greatly aid in leveling the opportunities allowing our college graduated sons and daughters to return to our area.

We request that you look favorably upon our appeal by designating the Atchafalaya Zone as the selected site for Louisiana's National Estuarine Research Reserve.

Sincerely,

Sincerely,



Rachael Smith,
rsmith@ladcompanies.com
(985) 312-4516 Cell

Dr. Walter Guidroz
3113 Beechwood Lane
Falls Church, VA 22042

Dr. Brian Roberts
Atchafalaya Team NERR Lead
LUMCON
8124 LA-56
Chauvin, LA 70344

4 March 2022

Dr. Roberts,

My name is Walter Guidroz and I am a recently retired coastal scientist and energy resource manager with experience both in private industry as well as the Federal government. I'm also a native of Morgan City, Louisiana, and I'm writing today to add my support for the **Atchafalaya Zone** to be named as the site for the Louisiana National Estuarine Research Reserve (LANERR). I make this request for several reasons.

First, from a socioeconomic point of view an Atchafalaya Zone NERR would be proximal to the cities of Morgan City and Berwick, which are located near the mouth of the Atchafalaya River and are home to the parish's business infrastructure. These cities are located on the Gulf Intracoastal Waterway and therefore enable easily accessible water transport. The Burlington Northern Santa Fe Railroad runs through both cities, thereby providing transcontinental rail capability. A general aviation airport containing both asphalt and water runways is located at Patterson, only seven miles west of Morgan City.

Second, from an ecological point of view, the Bayou Teche National Wildlife Refuge is located nearby in western St. Mary Parish and is rich in bottomland forests and wildlife. The Atchafalaya Delta Wildlife Management Area is also located nearby at the mouths of the Atchafalaya River and Wax Lake Outlet in St. Mary Parish, which are actively aggrading with sediment and are one of the few places along the Louisiana coast in which that's taking place. An Atchafalaya Zone NERR would complement this 137,695-acre WMA very well. In addition, the Atchafalaya Basin is home to the largest wetland in the United States, the vitality of which is critical to the current and future prosperity of ecological sustainability of Louisiana generally and more specifically of Morgan City and Berwick in St. Mary Parish.

Third, from a scientific point of view research activities associated with NERR would be ideally situated in the Atchafalaya Estuarine Zone to:

- Attract scholars on a national and international stage
- Provide a location whereby scientists could conduct field studies in close proximity to and easily accessible from an Atchafalaya Zone NERR home base
- Provide employment opportunities to the region
- Provide stronger connectivity to the rest of Louisiana, the Gulf Coast, and United States, and inject money into the local coastal economy

- Impact youth and young adults currently enrolled in Louisiana 's schools and contribute to an appreciation for Louisiana's natural resources while enjoying the area's quality of life and opportunities that the NERR would provide. An Atchafalaya Zone NERR would potentially shape decisions about where young Louisianans choose to live, work, learn, as well as raise families.

Finally, **a NERR in the Atchafalaya Zone** would support your announced focus on restoring and enhancing the Atchafalaya Basin. Therefore, I encourage the selection of the Atchafalaya Zone as the Louisiana National Estuarine Research Reserve.

Sincerely,

Walter Guidroz

Walter Guidroz, Ph.D.
3113 Beechwood Lane
Falls Church, VA 22042

Dr. Brian Roberts
Atchafalaya Basin NERR Team Lead
LUMCON
8124 LA-56,
Chauvin, LA 70344

Date: 05/03/2022

Dear Dr. Roberts,

I am writing to add my support for the nomination of the **Atchafalaya Basin** as the site for the designation of a National Estuarine Research Reserve (NERR) by NOAA in coastal Louisiana. I believe that the Atchafalaya Basin has the best environments, facilities, and access to support the missions of a NERR as defined by NOAA. Specifically, I believe the Atchafalaya Basin represents all of the habitats and systems found in the Louisiana from the swamps and forests of the upper river basin to the marshes and estuaries of the lower basin.

I would also like to highlight that a potential NERR site in the Atchafalaya Basin is very important to our community by providing increased opportunities to connect with the basin through facilities, access to the water and habitats, education opportunities.

The Atchafalaya Basin is home to the largest wetland in the United States and the newest land being created at its river deltas. The vitality of the basin is critical to the current and future prosperity of ecological sustainability of Louisiana generally and more specifically to people and communities that reside within and/or use the basin.

Research activities associated with NERR would be ideally situated in the Atchafalaya Basin to attract scholars on a national and international stage, provide employment opportunities to the region, provide stronger connectivity to the rest of Louisiana, the Gulf Coast, and United States, and inject money into the local coastal economy. The presence of the NERR would impact youth and young adults currently enrolled in Louisiana's schools and contribute to an appreciation for Louisiana's natural resources amidst enjoying the area's quality-of life and opportunities that the NERR provides. An Atchafalaya Basin NERR would potentially shape decisions about where young Louisianans choose to live, work, learn, as well as raise families. Finally, a NERR based in the Atchafalaya Basin will support the state's announced focus on restoring and enhancing the Atchafalaya Basin.

I am very supportive of the existing proposal to locate a NERR in the Atchafalaya Basin. I would be interested in working with NOAA and the lead state agency and management team in Louisiana to help with the establishment of an Atchafalaya Basin NERR throughout the designation process.

Thank you for considering my support as part of the proposal to **nominate the Atchafalaya Basin as a NERR in Louisiana**.

Sincerely,

Brian Gautreau
187A Knapp Hall
Baton Rouge, LA 70803

Governor John Bel Edwards
ATTN: Chief Resilience Officer, Charles Sutcliffe
Office of the Governor
PO Box 94004
Baton Rouge, LA 70804

DATE 9/26/21

Dear Governor Edwards,

I am writing to add my support for the **Atchafalaya Zone** to be named as the site for the Louisiana National Estuarine Research Reserve (LANERR). I make this request for several reasons.

St. Mary Parish includes the cities of Morgan City and Berwick, located at the mouth of the Atchafalaya River—home to the parish's business infrastructure with water and rail, and nearby Patterson that supplies air transportation, as well as the Bayou Teche National Wildlife Refuge in West St. Mary Parish.

A national research reserve would fit well within the 137,695-acre Atchafalaya Delta Wildlife Management Area already located at the mouths of the Atchafalaya River and Wax Lake Outlet in St. Mary Parish. The Atchafalaya Basin is home to the largest wetland in the United States, the vitality of which is critical to the current and future prosperity of ecological sustainability of Louisiana generally and more specifically Morgan City/Berwick in St. Mary Parish.

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Finally, **a NERR in the Atchafalaya Zone** would support your announced focus on restoring and enhancing the Atchafalaya Basin. Therefore, I encourage the selection of the Atchafalaya Zone as the Louisiana National Estuarine Research Reserve.

Sincerely,

[signature] Signature

DIANA ACHMAN Name

5127 KAREN ST. Address

MORGAN CITY LA. City, State

Comment
(optional): ____________________

Dr. Brian Roberts
Atchafalaya Team NERR Lead
LUMCON
8124 LA-56,
Chauvin, LA 70344

DATE 2-21-2022

Dear Dr. Roberts,

I am writing to add my support for the **Atchafalaya Zone** to be named as the site for the Louisiana National Estuarine Research Reserve (LANERR). I make this request for several reasons.

St. Mary Parish includes the cities of Morgan City and Berwick, located at the mouth of the Atchafalaya River—home to the parish's business infrastructure with water and rail, and nearby Patterson that supplies air transportation, as well as the Bayou Teche National Wildlife Refuge in West St. Mary Parish.

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Finally, **a NERR in the Atchafalaya Zone** would support your announced focus on restoring and enhancing the Atchafalaya Basin. Therefore, I encourage the selection of the Atchafalaya Zone as the Louisiana National Estuarine Research Reserve.

Sincerely,

Patricia C. Metz (Patty) Signature
PATRICIA OMETZ Name
1933 Hwy 182 E Address
MORGAN CITY, LA 70380 City, State Zip

Other thoughts?
Sorry I wanted to have time to send this letter. I was disappointed that more members from the selection Committee did not attend our meeting.

Governor John Bel Edwards
ATTN: Chief Resilience Officer, Charles Sutcliffe
Office of the Governor
PO Box 94004
Baton Rouge, LA 70804

DATE 6-9-21

Dear Governor Edwards,

I am writing to add my support for the Atchafalaya Zone to be named as the site for the Louisiana National Estuarine Research Reserve (LANERR). I make this request for several reasons.

St. Mary Parish includes the cities of Morgan City and Berwick, located at the mouth of the Atchafalaya River—home to the parish's business infrastructure with water and rail, and nearby Patterson that supplies air transportation, as well as the Bayou Teche National Wildlife Refuge in West St. Mary Parish.

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Finally, a NERR in the Atchafalaya Zone would support your announced focus on restoring and enhancing the Atchafalaya Basin. Therefore, I encourage the selection of the Atchafalaya Zone as the Louisiana National Estuarine Research Reserve.

Sincerely,

Vincent & Gail Dupuis

Vincent Dupuis • Gail Dupuis
3213 Roselawn Dr.
Morgan City, La. 70380

Governor John Bel Edwards
ATTN: Chief Resilience Officer, Charles Sutcliffe
Office of the Governor
PO Box 94004
Baton Rouge, LA 70804

DATE June 7, 2021

Dear Governor Edwards,

I am writing to add my support for the Atchafalaya Zone to be named as the site for the Louisiana National Estuarine Research Reserve (LANERR). I make this request for several reasons.

St. Mary Parish includes the cities of Morgan City and Berwick, located at the mouth of the Atchafalaya River—home to the parish's business infrastructure with water and rail, and nearby Patterson that supplies air transportation, as well as the Bayou Teche National Wildlife Refuge in West St. Mary Parish.

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Finally, a NERR in the Atchafalaya Zone would support your announced focus on restoring and enhancing the Atchafalaya Basin. Therefore, I encourage the selection of the Atchafalaya Zone as the Louisiana National Estuarine Research Reserve.

Sincerely,

Debbie Pucett

Governor John Bel Edwards
ATTN: Chief Resilience Officer, Charles Sutcliffe
Office of the Governor
PO Box 94004
Baton Rouge, LA 70804

DATE 6/9/2021

Dear Governor Edwards,

I am writing to add my support for the Atchafalaya Zone to be named as the site for the Louisiana National Estuarine Research Reserve (LANERR). I make this request for several reasons.

St. Mary Parish includes the cities of Morgan City and Berwick, located at the mouth of the Atchafalaya River—home to the parish's business infrastructure with water and rail, and nearby Patterson that supplies air transportation, as well as the Bayou Teche National Wildlife Refuge in West St. Mary Parish.

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Finally, a NERR in the Atchafalaya Zone would support your announced focus on restoring and enhancing the Atchafalaya Basin. Therefore, I encourage the selection of the Atchafalaya Zone as the Louisiana National Estuarine Research Reserve.

Sincerely, Sonia M Prince

Sonia P

Governor John Bel Edwards
ATTN: Chief Resilience Officer, Charles Sutcliffe
Office of the Governor
PO Box 94004
Baton Rouge, LA 70804

DATE 6/9/2021

Dear Governor Edwards,

I am writing to add my support for the Atchafalaya Zone to be named as the site for the Louisiana National Estuarine Research Reserve (LANERR). I make this request for several reasons.

St. Mary Parish includes the cities of Morgan City and Berwick, located at the mouth of the Atchafalaya River—home to the parish's business infrastructure with water and rail, and nearby Patterson that supplies air transportation, as well as the Bayou Teche National Wildlife Refuge in West St. Mary Parish.

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Finally, a NERR in the Atchafalaya Zone would support your announced focus on restoring and enhancing the Atchafalaya Basin. Therefore, I encourage the selection of the Atchafalaya Zone as the Louisiana National Estuarine Research Reserve.

Sincerely,

Gary M. Pechotel

Governor John Bel Edwards
ATTN: Chief Resilience Officer, Charles Sutcliffe
Office of the Governor
PO Box 94004
Baton Rouge, LA 70804

DATE 6·9·21

Dear Governor Edwards,

I am writing to add my support for the Atchafalaya Zone to be named as the site for the Louisiana National Estuarine Research Reserve (LANERR). I make this request for several reasons.

St. Mary Parish includes the cities of Morgan City and Berwick, located at the mouth of the Atchafalaya River—home to the parish's business infrastructure with water and rail, and nearby Patterson that supplies air transportation, as well as the Bayou Teche National Wildlife Refuge in West St. Mary Parish.

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Finally, a NERR in the Atchafalaya Zone would support your announced focus on restoring and enhancing the Atchafalaya Basin. Therefore, I encourage the selection of the Atchafalaya Zone as the Louisiana National Estuarine Research Reserve.

Sincerely,

Sundra Deshotel

Governor John Bel Edwards
ATTN: Chief Resilience Officer, Charles Sutcliffe
Office of the Governor
PO Box 94004
Baton Rouge, LA 70804

DATE 8/27/21

Dear Governor Edwards,

I am writing to add my support for the **Atchafalaya Zone** to be named as the site for the Louisiana National Estuarine Research Reserve (LANERR). I make this request for several reasons.

St. Mary Parish includes the cities of Morgan City and Berwick, located at the mouth of the Atchafalaya River—home to the parish's business infrastructure with water and rail, and nearby Patterson that supplies air transportation, as well as the Bayou Teche National Wildlife Refuge in West St. Mary Parish.

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Finally, **a NERR in the Atchafalaya Zone** would support your announced focus on restoring and enhancing the Atchafalaya Basin. Therefore, I encourage the selection of the Atchafalaya Zone as the Louisiana National Estuarine Research Reserve.

Sincerely,

Kenneth L Theriot Signature
Kenneth L Theriot Name
19 Marquis Manor Address
Morgan City LA City, State
70380

Comment
(optional): _____

Governor John Bel Edwards
ATTN: Chief Resilience Officer, Charles Sutcliffe
Office of the Governor
PO Box 94004
Baton Rouge, LA 70804

DATE Aug 27 2021

Dear Governor Edwards,

I am writing to add my support for the **Atchafalaya Zone** to be named as the site for the Louisiana National Estuarine Research Reserve (LANERR). I make this request for several reasons.

St. Mary Parish includes the cities of Morgan City and Berwick, located at the mouth of the Atchafalaya River—home to the parish's business infrastructure with water and rail, and nearby Patterson that supplies air transportation, as well as the Bayou Teche National Wildlife Refuge in West St. Mary Parish.

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Finally, a **NERR in the Atchafalaya Zone** would support your announced focus on restoring and enhancing the Atchafalaya Basin. Therefore, I encourage the selection of the Atchafalaya Zone as the Louisiana National Estuarine Research Reserve.

Sincerely,

Patricia Gatlin Signature
Patricia Gatlin Name
405 Renwick Blvd Address
Berwick La City, State

Comment
(optional): _____

Dr. Brian Roberts
Atchafalaya Team NERR Lead
LUMCON
8124 LA-56,
Chauvin, LA 70344

DATE 2-21-2022

Dear Dr. Roberts,

I am writing to add my support for the **Atchafalaya Zone** to be named as the site for the Louisiana National Estuarine Research Reserve (LANERR). I make this request for several reasons.

St. Mary Parish includes the cities of Morgan City and Berwick, located at the mouth of the Atchafalaya River—home to the parish's business infrastructure with water and rail, and nearby Patterson that supplies air transportation, as well as the Bayou Teche National Wildlife Refuge in West St. Mary Parish.

A national research reserve would fit well within the 137,695-acre Atchafalaya Delta Wildlife Management Area already located at the mouths of the Atchafalaya River and Wax Lake Outlet in St. Mary Parish. The Atchafalaya Basin is home to the largest wetland in the United States, the vitality of which is critical to the current and future prosperity of ecological sustainability of Louisiana generally and more specifically Morgan City/Berwick in St. Mary Parish.

Research activities associated with NERR would be ideally situated in the Atchafalaya Estuarine Zone to:

attract scholars on a national and international stage, provide employment opportunities to the region,

provide stronger connectivity to the rest of Louisiana, the Gulf Coast, and United States, and inject money into the local coastal economy.

The presence of the NERR would impact youth and young adults currently enrolled in Louisiana 's schools and contribute to an appreciation for Louisiana's natural resources amidst enjoying the area's quality-of life and opportunities that the NERR provides. An Atchafalaya Zone NERR would potentially shape decisions about where young Louisianans choose to live, work, learn, as well as raise families.

Finally, **a NERR in the Atchafalaya Zone** would support your announced focus on restoring and enhancing the Atchafalaya Basin. Therefore, I encourage the selection of the Atchafalaya Zone as the Louisiana National Estuarine Research Reserve.

Sincerely,

Patricia C. Metz (Patty) Signature
PATRICIA C METZ Name
1933 Hwy 182 E Address
MORGAN CITY, LA 70381 City, State Zip

Other thoughts?

Sorry I waited so long to send this letter, I was disappointed that more members from the selection Committee did not attend our meeting.

Dr. Brian Roberts
Atchafalaya Team NERR Lead
LUMCON
8124 LA-56,
Chauvin, LA 70344

DATE 2-21-2022

Dear Dr. Roberts,

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Sincerely,

Patricia C. Metz (Patty) Signature
PATRICIA OMETZ Name
1933 Hwy 182 E Address
MORGAN CITY, LA 70380 City, State Zip

Other thoughts?
Sorry I wanted to have time to send this letter. I was disappointed that more members from the selection Committee did not attend our meeting.

Dr. Walter Guidroz
3113 Beechwood Lane
Falls Church, VA 22042

Dr. Brian Roberts
Atchafalaya Team NERR Lead
LUMCON
8124 LA-56
Chauvin, LA 70344

4 March 2022

Dr. Roberts,

My name is Walter Guidroz and I am a recently retired coastal scientist and energy resource manager with experience both in private industry as well as the Federal government. I'm also a native of Morgan City, Louisiana, and I'm writing today to add my support for the **Atchafalaya Zone** to be named as the site for the Louisiana National Estuarine Research Reserve (LANERR). I make this request for several reasons.

First, from a socioeconomic point of view an Atchafalaya Zone NERR would be proximal to the cities of Morgan City and Berwick, which are located near the mouth of the Atchafalaya River and are home to the parish's business infrastructure. These cities are located on the Gulf Intracoastal Waterway and therefore enable easily accessible water transport. The Burlington Northern Santa Fe Railroad runs through both cities, thereby providing transcontinental rail capability. A general aviation airport containing both asphalt and water runways is located at Patterson, only seven miles west of Morgan City.

Second, from an ecological point of view, the Bayou Teche National Wildlife Refuge is located nearby in western St. Mary Parish and is rich in bottomland forests and wildlife. The Atchafalaya Delta Wildlife Management Area is also located nearby at the mouths of the Atchafalaya River and Wax Lake Outlet in St. Mary Parish, which are actively aggrading with sediment and are one of the few places along the Louisiana coast in which that's taking place. An Atchafalaya Zone NERR would complement this 137,695-acre WMA very well. In addition, the Atchafalaya Basin is home to the largest wetland in the United States, the vitality of which is critical to the current and future prosperity of ecological sustainability of Louisiana generally and more specifically of Morgan City and Berwick in St. Mary Parish.

Third, from a scientific point of view research activities associated with NERR would be ideally situated in the Atchafalaya Estuarine Zone to:

- Attract scholars on a national and international stage
- Provide a location whereby scientists could conduct field studies in close proximity to and easily accessible from an Atchafalaya Zone NERR home base
- Provide employment opportunities to the region
- Provide stronger connectivity to the rest of Louisiana, the Gulf Coast, and United States, and inject money into the local coastal economy

- Impact youth and young adults currently enrolled in Louisiana 's schools and contribute to an appreciation for Louisiana's natural resources while enjoying the area's quality of life and opportunities that the NERR would provide. An Atchafalaya Zone NERR would potentially shape decisions about where young Louisianans choose to live, work, learn, as well as raise families.

Finally, **a NERR in the Atchafalaya Zone** would support your announced focus on restoring and enhancing the Atchafalaya Basin. Therefore, I encourage the selection of the Atchafalaya Zone as the Louisiana National Estuarine Research Reserve.

Sincerely,

Walter Guidroz

Walter Guidroz, Ph.D.
3113 Beechwood Lane
Falls Church, VA 22042

Governor John Bel Edwards
ATTN: Chief Resilience Officer, Charles Sutcliffe
Office of the Governor
PO Box 94004
Baton Rouge, LA 70804

DATE 8/24/21

Dear Governor Edwards,

I am writing to add my support for the **Atchafalaya Zone** to be named as the site for the Louisiana National Estuarine Research Reserve (LANERR). I make this request for several reasons.

St. Mary Parish includes the cities of Morgan City and Berwick, located at the mouth of the Atchafalaya River—home to the parish's business infrastructure with water and rail, and nearby Patterson that supplies air transportation, as well as the Bayou Teche National Wildlife Refuge in West St. Mary Parish.

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Finally, **a NERR in the Atchafalaya Zone** would support your announced focus on restoring and enhancing the Atchafalaya Basin. Therefore, I encourage the selection of the Atchafalaya Zone as the Louisiana National Estuarine Research Reserve.

Sincerely,

Jennifer Dragna Signature
Jennifer Dragna Name
1024 Palm St Address
Morgan City, LA 70380 City, State

Comment
(optional): _____

Governor John Bel Edwards
ATTN: Chief Resilience Officer, Charles Sutcliffe
Office of the Governor
PO Box 94004
Baton Rouge, LA 70804

DATE Aug 24, 2021

Dear Governor Edwards,

I am writing to add my support for the **Atchafalaya Zone** to be named as the site for the Louisiana National Estuarine Research Reserve (LANERR). I make this request for several reasons.

St. Mary Parish includes the cities of Morgan City and Berwick, located at the mouth of the Atchafalaya River—home to the parish's business infrastructure with water and rail, and nearby Patterson that supplies air transportation, as well as the Bayou Teche National Wildlife Refuge in West St. Mary Parish.

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Finally, **a NERR in the Atchafalaya Zone** would support your announced focus on restoring and enhancing the Atchafalaya Basin. Therefore, I encourage the selection of the Atchafalaya Zone as the Louisiana National Estuarine Research Reserve.

Sincerely,

BBarlar
Signature

Brittney Barlar
Name

2008 Keith St. Lot 34
Address

Morgan City, LA 70390
City, State

Comment
(optional):

Governor John Bel Edwards
ATTN: Chief Resilience Officer, Charles Sutcliffe
Office of the Governor
PO Box 94004
Baton Rouge, LA 70804

DATE 8-24-21

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Finally, **a NERR in the Atchafalaya Zone** would support your announced focus on restoring and enhancing the Atchafalaya Basin. Therefore, I encourage the selection of the Atchafalaya Zone as the Louisiana National Estuarine Research Reserve.

Sincerely,

J Edwards _____ Signature
Jennifer Edwards _____ Name
1200 McDermott Dr _____ Address
MC, LA 70380 _____ City, State

Comment
(optional): _____

Governor John Bel Edwards
ATTN: Chief Resilience Officer, Charles Sutcliffe
Office of the Governor
PO Box 94004
Baton Rouge, LA 70804

DATE 8-24-21

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Sincerely,

Signature

Jamie Navarro
Name

715 Belanger St.
Address

Morgan City, La 70380
City, State

Comment
(optional):

Governor John Bel Edwards
ATTN: Chief Resilience Officer, Charles Sutcliffe
Office of the Governor
PO Box 94004
Baton Rouge, LA 70804

DATE 8/24/21

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Sincerely,

Signature

Ronnie J. Washington
Name

307 Bush St.
Address

M.C. La. 70380
City, State

Comment
(optional):

REBECCA LEE WHALEN
712 DAVID STREET
PATTERSON, LA 70392

Governor John Bel Edwards
ATTN: Chief Resilience Officer, Charles Sutcliffe
Office of the Governor
PO Box 94004
Baton Rouge, LA 70804

August 31, 2021

Dear Governor Edwards,

I am writing to add my support for the Atchafalaya Zone to be named as the site for the Louisiana National Estuarine Research Reserve (LANERR). I make this request for several reasons.

St. Mary Parish includes the cities of Morgan City and Berwick, located at the mouth of the Atchafalaya River—home to the parish's business infrastructure with water and rail, and nearby Patterson that supplies air transportation, as well as the Bayou Teche National Wildlife Refuge in West St. Mary Parish.

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Sincerely,

Rebecca Whalen

REBECCA LEE WHALEN

Governor John Bel Edwards
ATTN: Chief Resilience Officer, Charles Sutcliffe
Office of the Governor
PO Box 94004
Baton Rouge, LA 70804

DATE 6/23/21

Dear Governor Edwards,

I am writing to add my support for the **Atchafalaya Zone** to be named as the site for the Louisiana National Estuarine Research Reserve (LANERR). I make this request for several reasons.

St. Mary Parish includes the cities of Morgan City and Berwick, located at the mouth of the Atchafalaya River—home to the parish's business infrastructure with water and rail, and nearby Patterson that supplies air transportation, as well as the Bayou Teche National Wildlife Refuge in West St. Mary Parish.

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Sincerely,

Carissa Kinkle _____ Signature
Carissa Kinkle _____ Name
727 Teche Road _____ Address
Morgan City La _____ City, State

Comment
(optional): _____

Governor John Bel Edwards
ATTN: Chief Resilience Officer, Charles Sutcliffe
Office of the Governor
PO Box 94004
Baton Rouge, LA 70804

DATE 8/25/21

Dear Governor Edwards,

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Sincerely,

Leslie "Les" Rulh — Signature
Leslie "Les" Rulh — Name
184 Foxglove Dr. — Address
Patterson LA 70392 — City, State

Comment
(optional): _____

Governor John Bel Edwards
ATTN: Chief Resilience Officer, Charles Sutcliffe
Office of the Governor
PO Box 94004
Baton Rouge, LA 70804

DATE 8/25/21

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Sincerely,

_____ Signature

Patrick T. Hebert Name

2027 Hwy 182-E Address

Morgan City, LA 70380 City, State

Comment
(optional):_____

_____

_____

Governor John Bel Edwards
ATTN: Chief Resilience Officer, Charles Sutcliffe
Office of the Governor
PO Box 94004
Baton Rouge, LA 70804

DATE 8/25/2021

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Sincerely,

Gwendolyn L Hidalgo Signature
Gwendolyn L Hidalgo Name
1219 Columbus Ave. Address
Morgan City, LA 70380 City, State

Comment
(optional):_____
_____
_____

Governor John Bel Edwards
ATTN: Chief Resilience Officer, Charles Sutcliffe
Office of the Governor
PO Box 94004
Baton Rouge, LA 70804

DATE 8/25/2021

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Sincerely,

_____ Signature
DEAN S. ADAMS Name
912 1st St Address
Morgan City LA City, State

Comment
(optional): _____
_____
_____

Governor John Bel Edwards
ATTN: Chief Resilience Officer, Charles Sutcliffe
Office of the Governor
PO Box 94004
Baton Rouge, LA 70804

DATE 8/31/21

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Finally, a NERR in the Atchafalaya Zone would support your announced focus on restoring and enhancing the Atchafalaya Basin. Therefore, I encourage the selection of the Atchafalaya Zone as the Louisiana National Estuarine Research Reserve.

Sincerely,

Lynette Fields
1116 Oak Harbor Dr.
Morgan City, LA 70380

Governor John Bel Edwards
ATTN: Chief Resilience Officer, Charles Sutcliffe
Office of the Governor
PO Box 94004
Baton Rouge, LA 70804

DATE 8/17/21

Dear Governor Edwards,

I am writing to add my support for the **Atchafalaya Zone** to be named as the site for the Louisiana National Estuarine Research Reserve (LANERR). I make this request for several reasons.

St. Mary Parish includes the cities of Morgan City and Berwick, located at the mouth of the Atchafalaya River—home to the parish's business infrastructure with water and rail, and nearby Patterson that supplies air transportation, as well as the Bayou Teche National Wildlife Refuge in West St. Mary Parish.

A national research reserve would fit well within the 137,695-acre Atchafalaya Delta Wildlife Management Area already located at the mouths of the Atchafalaya River and Wax Lake Outlet in St. Mary Parish. The Atchafalaya Basin is home to the largest wetland in the United States, the vitality of which is critical to the current and future prosperity of ecological sustainability of Louisiana generally and more specifically Morgan City/Berwick in St. Mary Parish.

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Sincerely,

Signature
David S Ralston
Name
127 Flamingo Rd
Address
Morgan City, LA 70380
City, State

Governor John Bel Edwards
ATTN: Chief Resilience Officer, Charles Sutcliffe
Office of the Governor
PO Box 94004
Baton Rouge, LA 70804

DATE 9/13/2021

Dear Governor Edwards,

I am writing to add my support for the **Atchafalaya Zone** to be named as the site for the Louisiana National Estuarine Research Reserve (LANERR). I make this request for several reasons.

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Sincerely,

Mary Grace Theriot _____ Signature
Mary Grace Theriot _____ Name
413 Renwick Blvd. _____ Address
Berwick, LA 70342 _____ City, State

Comment
(optional): _____

Governor John Bel Edwards
ATTN: Chief Resilience Officer, Charles Sutcliffe
Office of the Governor
PO Box 94004
Baton Rouge, LA 70804

DATE 8-26-2021

Dear Governor Edwards,

I am writing to add my support for the **Atchafalaya Zone** to be named as the site for the Louisiana National Estuarine Research Reserve (LANERR). I make this request for several reasons.

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Sincerely,

Charlotte B. Wise Signature
Charlotte B Wise Name
1003 Fig ST Address
Morgan City, LA. 70380 City, State

Comment
(optional): _____

Governor John Bel Edwards
ATTN: Chief Resilience Officer, Charles Sutcliffe
Office of the Governor
PO Box 94004
Baton Rouge, LA 70804

DATE 8-27-2021

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Sincerely,

Krista Reynaud Signature
Krista Reynaud Name
815 Susan Drive Address
Morgan City, LA 70380 City, State

Comment
(optional): _____

Governor John Bel Edwards
ATTN: Chief Resilience Officer, Charles Sutcliffe
Office of the Governor
PO Box 94004
Baton Rouge, LA 70804

DATE 8-27-2021

Dear Governor Edwards,

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Sincerely,

Signature

Thomas L. Mahfouz — Name

584 Fairview Drive — Address

Berwick, LA 70342 — City, State

Comment
(optional): _____

Governor John Bel Edwards
ATTN: Chief Resilience Officer, Charles Sutcliffe
Office of the Governor
PO Box 94004
Baton Rouge, LA 70804

DATE 8/27/21

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Sincerely,

Rita Acosta Signature
Rita Acosta Name
174 Patureau Drive Address
Morgan City, La. 70380 City, State

Comment (optional): _____

Governor John Bel Edwards
ATTN: Chief Resilience Officer, Charles Sutcliffe
Office of the Governor
PO Box 94004
Baton Rouge, LA 70804

DATE

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Sincerely,

Dianne Lind
Retired St. Mary Parish School Teacher

Governor John Bel Edwards
ATTN: Chief Resilience Officer, Charles Sutcliffe
Office of the Governor
PO Box 94004
Baton Rouge, LA 70804

DATE

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Michael G. Lind

Sincerely,

President G & J Land and Marine

Governor John Bel Edwards
ATTN: Chief Resilience Officer, Charles Sutcliffe
Office of the Governor
PO Box 94004
Baton Rouge, LA 70804

DATE 8-26-21

Dear Governor Edwards,

I am writing to add my support for the **Atchafalaya Zone** to be named as the site for the Louisiana National Estuarine Research Reserve (LANERR). I make this request for several reasons.

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Sincerely,

Charlotte Mahfouz Signature
CHARLOTTE MAHFOUZ Name
584 FAIRVIEW DR Address
BERWICK, LA 70342 City, State

Comment
(optional):_____
_____
_____

Governor John Bel Edwards
ATTN: Chief Resilience Officer, Charles Sutcliffe
Office of the Governor
PO Box 94004
Baton Rouge, LA 70804

DATE 9/8/21

Dear Governor Edwards,

I am writing to add my support for the **Atchafalaya Zone** to be named as the site for the Louisiana National Estuarine Research Reserve (LANERR). I make this request for several reasons.

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Sincerely,

Signature

Louis Tamporello, JR — Name

311 Chennault ST — Address

Morgan City, LA 70380 — City, State

Comment (optional): _____

August 26,2021

Governor John Bell Edwards
Attn: Chief Resilience Officer, Charles Sutcliffe
Office of the Governor Edwards
P.O. Box 94004
Baton Rouge, LA 70804

Dear Governor Edwards:

I am writing to add my support for the Atchafalaya Zone to be named as the site for the Louisiana National Estuarine Reserve (LANERR). I make this request for several reasons.

St. Mary Parish includes the cities of Morgan City and Berwick, located at the mouth of the Atchafalaya River, home to the parish's business infrastructure with water and rail, and nearby Patterson that supplies air transportation, as well as the Bayou Teche National Wildlife Refuge in West St. Mary Parish.

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Governor, I am aware of the efforts of the many individuals who assembled the above because I recognize the efforts, time and desire to support such an important endeavor. I am also aware of your recognition of the importance of the Atchafalaya River and it's basin. As you know the significance of and the potential the State of Louisiana has with such a magnificent River where marshland and coastline are it's contribution to Louisiana's growing coast. NERR would bring National attention to a State that has been neglected in the past!

Sincerely,

Cyrus Provost
Retired St. Mary Parish School's Assistant Supt.

925 Poplar St.
Morgan City, LA 70380

Governor John Bel Edwards
ATTN: Chief Resilience Officer, Charles Sutcliffe
Office of the Governor
PO Box 94004
Baton Rouge, LA 70804

DATE 8/27/21

Dear Governor Edwards,

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Sincerely,

Elizabeth Hollcumb Kournalakis Signature

ELIZABETH HOLLCUMB KOURNALAKIS Name

1203 EDWARDS ST Address

HOUSTON, TX 77007 City, State

Comment
(optional): _____

Governor John Bel Edwards
ATTN: Chief Resilience Officer, Charles Sutcliffe
Office of the Governor
PO Box 94004
Baton Rouge, LA 70804

DATE 9-9-2021

Dear Governor Edwards,

I am writing to add my support for the **Atchafalaya Zone** to be named as the site for the Louisiana National Estuarine Research Reserve (LANERR). I make this request for several reasons.

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Sincerely,

Alfred Longman — Signature
Alfred Longman — Name
2605 Elm St — Address
Morgan City, LA 70380 — City, State

Comment (optional): _____

Governor John Bel Edwards
ATTN: Chief Resilience Officer, Charles Sutcliffe
Office of the Governor
PO Box 94004 Baton Rouge, LA 70804

August 27, 2021

Dear Governor Edwards,

Thank you for your attention to the Atchafalaya Basin. Those of us, who have lived here and have reaped the benefits of its beauty, appreciate the efforts you and your administration have made to preserve and promote it.

We also feel that the **Atchafalaya Zone would be the best site for the National Estuarine Research Reserve (LANERR).** The cities of Morgan City and Berwick have a strong infrastructure at the mouth of the Atchafalaya River, providing water and rail transportation. Patterson is equipped with an airport. Also, the Atchafalaya Delta Wildlife Management Area and Wax Lake Outlet are both in St. Mary Parish.

It is centrally located and easy to access from all parts of Louisiana. It is a safe area that will benefit from further study and financial investment. We are excited also about the educational benefit a LANERR could provide to all our youth.

As a former 33-year public high school schoolteacher, lifelong resident of the area, fisherwoman and lover of nature, I strongly support the selection of the **Atchafalaya Zone as the Louisiana National Estuarine Research Reserve.**

Sincerely,

Catherine P. Holcomb

Catherine P. Holcomb
1712 Elk Street
Morgan City, LA 70380
catherinepholcomb@att.net

Governor John Bel Edwards
ATTN: Chief Resilience Officer, Charles Sutcliffe
Office of the Governor
PO Box 94004
Baton Rouge, LA 70804

DATE 9.6.21

Dear Governor Edwards,

I am writing to add my support for the **Atchafalaya Zone** to be named as the site for the Louisiana National Estuarine Research Reserve (LANERR). I make this request for several reasons.

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Sincerely,

Alma Robichaux Signature
Alma Robichaux Name
916 Sycamore St Address
Morgan City, La 70380 City, State

Comment
(optional): _____

Governor John Bel Edwards
ATTN: Chief Resilience Officer, Charles Sutcliffe
Office of the Governor
PO Box 94004
Baton Rouge, LA 70804

DATE 9/7/21

Dear Governor Edwards,

I am writing to add my support for the **Atchafalaya Zone** to be named as the site for the Louisiana National Estuarine Research Reserve (LANERR). I make this request for several reasons.

St. Mary Parish includes the cities of Morgan City and Berwick, located at the mouth of the Atchafalaya River—home to the parish's business infrastructure with water and rail, and nearby Patterson that supplies air transportation, as well as the Bayou Teche National Wildlife Refuge in West St. Mary Parish.

A national research reserve would fit well within the 137,695-acre Atchafalaya Delta Wildlife Management Area already located at the mouths of the Atchafalaya River and Wax Lake Outlet in St. Mary Parish. The Atchafalaya Basin is home to the largest wetland in the United States, the vitality of which is critical to the current and future prosperity of ecological sustainability of Louisiana generally and more specifically Morgan City/Berwick in St. Mary Parish.

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- attract scholars on a national and international stage,
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Finally, **a NERR in the Atchafalaya Zone** would support your announced focus on restoring and enhancing the Atchafalaya Basin. Therefore, I encourage the selection of the Atchafalaya Zone as the Louisiana National Estuarine Research Reserve.

Sincerely,

Ethel White Signature
Ethel White Name
1112 McDermott Dr. Address
Morgan City, La 70380 City, State

Comment
(optional): _____

Governor John Bel Edwards
ATTN: Chief Resilience Officer, Charles Sutcliffe
Office of the Governor
PO Box 94004
Baton Rouge, LA 70804

DATE 9-12-2021

Dear Governor Edwards,

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Finally, a NERR in the Atchafalaya Zone would support your announced focus on restoring and enhancing the Atchafalaya Basin. Therefore, I encourage the selection of the Atchafalaya Zone as the Louisiana National Estuarine Research Reserve.

Sincerely,

Mary Hughes **Signature**
Mary Hughes **Name**
309 Tournament Blvd **Address**
Berwick, La 70342 **City, State**

Comment (optional): _____

Governor John Bel Edwards
ATTN: Chief Resilience Officer, Charles Sutcliffe
Office of the Governor
PO Box 94004
Baton Rouge, LA 70804

DATE 9/13/21

Dear Governor Edwards,

I am writing to add my support for the **Atchafalaya Zone** to be named as the site for the Louisiana National Estuarine Research Reserve (LANERR). I make this request for several reasons.

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Sincerely,

Gerald M Kapp Signature
Gerald M Kapp Name
504 Crewshaw St Address
Berwick, La 70342 City, State

Comment
(optional): _____

Governor John Bel Edwards
ATTN: Chief Resilience Officer, Charles Sutcliffe
Office of the Governor
PO Box 94004
Baton Rouge, LA 70804

DATE 09/13/2021

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Sincerely,

Desiree H Kapp — Signature
Desiree H Kapp — Name
504 Crenshaw St. — Address
Berwick, LA 70342 — City, State

Comment
(optional): _____

Governor John Bel Edwards
ATTN: Chief Resilience Officer, Charles Sutcliffe
Office of the Governor
PO Box 94004
Baton Rouge, LA 70804

DATE 9-9-21

Dear Governor Edwards,

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Sincerely,

Antramese Wesley Signature
Antramese Wesley Name
710 Ash St. Address
Franklin, La. City, State

Comment
(optional): _____

Governor John Bel Edwards
ATTN: Chief Resilience Officer, Charles Sutcliffe
Office of the Governor
PO Box 94004
Baton Rouge, LA 70804

DATE 9-8-2021

Dear Governor Edwards,

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Finally, **a NERR in the Atchafalaya Zone** would support your announced focus on restoring and enhancing the Atchafalaya Basin. Therefore, I encourage the selection of the Atchafalaya Zone as the Louisiana National Estuarine Research Reserve.

Sincerely,

Brenda Bartley Signature
Brenda Bartley Name
1405 Bernice St Address
M.C. La 70380 City, State

Comment
(optional): _____

Governor John Bel Edwards
ATTN: Chief Resilience Officer, Charles Sutcliffe
Office of the Governor
PO Box 94004
Baton Rouge, LA 70804

DATE 9-9-24

Dear Governor Edwards,

I am writing to add my support for the **Atchafalaya Zone** to be named as the site for the Louisiana National Estuarine Research Reserve (LANERR). I make this request for several reasons.

St. Mary Parish includes the cities of Morgan City and Berwick, located at the mouth of the Atchafalaya River—home to the parish's business infrastructure with water and rail, and nearby Patterson that supplies air transportation, as well as the Bayou Teche National Wildlife Refuge in West St. Mary Parish.

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Sincerely,

Carla Dartez _____ Signature
Carla Dartez _____ Name
PO Box 512 _____ Address
Morgan City LA _____ City, State
71381

Comment
(optional): _____

Governor John Bel Edwards
ATTN: Chief Resilience Officer, Charles Sutcliffe
Office of the Governor
PO Box 94004
Baton Rouge, LA 70804

DATE 9-9-2021

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Sincerely,

Ruth Navarre Signature
RUTH NAVARRE Name
611 FRERET ST Address
MORGAN CITY LA City, State

Comment
(optional): _____

Governor John Bel Edwards
ATTN: Chief Resilience Officer, Charles Sutcliffe
Office of the Governor
PO Box 94004
Baton Rouge, LA 70804

DATE 9-9-21

Dear Governor Edwards,

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Sincerely,

Rita Marceaux Signature
RITA Marceaux Name
1111 Federal Ave. APT#8 Address
Morgan City, LA. 70380 City, State

Comment
(optional):_____

Governor John Bel Edwards
ATTN: Chief Resilience Officer, Charles Sutcliffe
Office of the Governor
PO Box 94004
Baton Rouge, LA 70804

DATE 9-11-21

Dear Governor Edwards,

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Sincerely,

Brandon Allen Signature
Brandon Allen Name
130 Oak Street Address
M.C., LA City, State

Comment
(optional):

Governor John Bel Edwards
ATTN: Chief Resilience Officer, Charles Sutcliffe
Office of the Governor
PO Box 94004
Baton Rouge, LA 70804

DATE 9-6-21

Dear Governor Edwards,

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Sincerely,

Jeannie Gaspard Signature
1824 Palm Name
Morgan City Address
Louisiana City, State

Comment
(optional):_____
_____
_____

Governor John Bel Edwards
ATTN: Chief Resilience Officer, Charles Sutcliffe
Office of the Governor
PO Box 94004
Baton Rouge, LA 70804

DATE 9/7/2021

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Sincerely,

LaSonja Prince Signature
LaSonja Prince Name
2206 Elm Street Address
Morgan City, LA 70380 City, State

Comment
(optional): _____

Governor John Bel Edwards
ATTN: Chief Resilience Officer, Charles Sutcliffe
Office of the Governor
PO Box 94004
Baton Rouge, LA 70804

DATE 9-9-2021

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Sincerely,

Rogers Bartley Sr. Signature
Rogers, Bartley Sr. Name
512 Catherine St. Address
Patterson, La. 70392 City, State

Comment
(optional): _____

Governor John Bel Edwards
ATTN: Chief Resilience Officer, Charles Sutcliffe
Office of the Governor
PO Box 94004
Baton Rouge, LA 70804

DATE 9-6-21

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Sincerely,

Vera D. Judycki — Signature
Vera D. Judycki — Name
3012 Lake Palourde Dr. — Address
Morgan City, LA 70380 — City, State

Comment (optional): _____

Governor John Bel Edwards
ATTN: Chief Resilience Officer, Charles Sutcliffe
Office of the Governor
PO Box 94004
Baton Rouge, LA 70804

DATE 9/10/21

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Sincerely,

Vera D Judycki Signature
Vera & Frank K Judycki Name
3012 Lake Palourde Dr. Address
Morgan City, LA 70380 City, State

Comment
(optional):

Governor John Bel Edwards
ATTN: Chief Resilience Officer, Charles Sutcliffe
Office of the Governor
PO Box 94004
Baton Rouge, LA 70804

DATE Sept 14 2021

Dear Governor Edwards,

I am writing to add my support for the **Atchafalaya Zone** to be named as the site for the Louisiana National Estuarine Research Reserve (LANERR). I make this request for several reasons.

St. Mary Parish includes the cities of Morgan City and Berwick, located at the mouth of the Atchafalaya River--home to the parish's business infrastructure with water and rail, and nearby Patterson that supplies air transportation, as well as the Bayou Teche National Wildlife Refuge in West St. Mary Parish.

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Finally, **a NERR in the Atchafalaya Zone** would support your announced focus on restoring and enhancing the Atchafalaya Basin. Therefore, I encourage the selection of the Atchafalaya Zone as the Louisiana National Estuarine Research Reserve.

Sincerely,

John Hroncich Signature
JOHN HRONCICH Name
216 S. RAILROAD AV Address
MORGAN CITY, LA City, State
70380

Comment (optional): _____

Governor John Bel Edwards
ATTN: Chief Resilience Officer, Charles Sutcliffe
Office of the Governor
PO Box 94004
Baton Rouge, LA 70804

DATE 9-14-21

Dear Governor Edwards,

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Sincerely,

Landon Fournier Signature
Landon Fournier Name
220 Pitlow St. Address
Morgan City La. City, State

Comment
(optional): _____

Governor John Bel Edwards
ATTN: Chief Resilience Officer, Charles Sutcliffe
Office of the Governor
PO Box 94004
Baton Rouge, LA 70804

DATE 9/14/21

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Sincerely,

Russell J. Hartman Signature

Russell J. Hartman Name

3005 Helen Dr. Address

Morgan City, LA 70380 City, State

Comment
(optional): _____

Governor John Bel Edwards
ATTN: Chief Resilience Officer, Charles Sutcliffe
Office of the Governor
PO Box 94004
Baton Rouge, LA 70804

DATE 9-14-21

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Sincerely,

Signature

Frank Utsunyacki
Name

3012 Lake Palourde Dr
Address

Morgan City LA 70380
City, State

Comment
(optional): _____

Governor John Bel Edwards
ATTN: Chief Resilience Officer, Charles Sutcliffe
Office of the Governor
PO Box 94004
Baton Rouge, LA 70804

DATE 09-22-2021

Dear Governor Edwards,

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Sincerely,

Dana Bruni Signature
Dana Bruni Name
604 Fairview Dr. Address
Berwick, La. 70342 City, State

Comment (optional): Great idea!

Governor John Bel Edwards
ATTN: Chief Resilience Officer, Charles Sutcliffe
Office of the Governor
PO Box 94004
Baton Rouge, LA 70804

DATE Oct 6, 2021

Dear Governor Edwards,

I am writing to add my support for the **Atchafalaya Zone** to be named as the site for the Louisiana National Estuarine Research Reserve (LANERR). I make this request for several reasons.

St. Mary Parish includes the cities of Morgan City and Berwick, located at the mouth of the Atchafalaya River—home to the parish's business infrastructure with water and rail, and nearby Patterson that supplies air transportation, as well as the Bayou Teche National Wildlife Refuge in West St. Mary Parish.

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Sincerely,

Sue Ledet Signature
Sue Ledet Name
524 Crenshaw Address
Berwick, la 70342 City, State

Comment
(optional): _____

Governor John Bel Edwards
ATTN: Chief Resilience Officer, Charles Sutcliffe
Office of the Governor
PO Box 94004
Baton Rouge, LA 70804

DATE 10/6/21

Dear Governor Edwards,

I am writing to add my support for the **Atchafalaya Zone** to be named as the site for the Louisiana National Estuarine Research Reserve (LANERR). I make this request for several reasons.

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Sincerely,

Kim Alcina Signature
Kim Alcina Name
1510 Southeast BLVD Address
Morgan City, LA 70380 City, State

Comment
(optional): _____

Governor John Bel Edwards
ATTN: Chief Resilience Officer, Charles Sutcliffe
Office of the Governor
PO Box 94004
Baton Rouge, LA 70804

DATE 9/30/21

Dear Governor Edwards,

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Sincerely,

Christine Gatte Signature
Christine Gatte Name
PO Box 732 Address
Baldwin, LA 70514 City, State

Comment
(optional):

Governor John Bel Edwards
ATTN: Chief Resilience Officer, Charles Sutcliffe
Office of the Governor
PO Box 94004
Baton Rouge, LA 70804

DATE 9-30-21

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Sincerely,

Michelle South _____ Signature
Michelle South _____ Name
P.O. Box 898 _____ Address
Patterson La _____ City, State

Comment
(optional): _____

Governor John Bel Edwards
ATTN: Chief Resilience Officer, Charles Sutcliffe
Office of the Governor
PO Box 94004
Baton Rouge, LA 70804

DATE 9-29-21

Dear Governor Edwards,

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Sincerely,

Signature

Becky Wiggins — Name

707 Belanger St. — Address

Morgan City, LA — City, State

Comment (optional): _____

Governor John Bel Edwards
ATTN: Chief Resilience Officer, Charles Sutcliffe
Office of the Governor
PO Box 94004
Baton Rouge, LA 70804

DATE 9-30-2021

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Sincerely,

Roxanne Smith Signature
Roxanne Smith Name
P.O. Box 344 Address
Baldwin, LA City, State

Comment
(optional): _____

Governor John Bel Edwards
ATTN: Chief Resilience Officer, Charles Sutcliffe
Office of the Governor
PO Box 94004
Baton Rouge, LA 70804

DATE 9/30/21

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Sincerely,

Martha Boudreaux Signature
Martha Boudreaux Name
3921 John St. Address
Berwick, LA 70342 City, State

Comment (optional): _____

Dr. Brian Roberts
Atchafalaya Team NERR Lead
LUMCON
8124 LA-56,
Chauvin, LA 70344

DATE 2/9/2022

Dear Dr. Roberts,

I am writing to add my support for the **Atchafalaya Zone** to be named as the site for the Louisiana National Estuarine Research Reserve (LANERR). I make this request for several reasons.

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Sincerely,

C. FLOYD SLOUTIER — Signature
C. Floyd Sloutier — Name
1125 SECOND ST. — Address
MORGAN CITY, LA. 70380 — City, State Zip

Other thoughts?

Dr. Brian Roberts
Atchafalaya Team NERR Lead
LUMCON
8124 LA-56,
Chauvin, LA 70344

DATE 2/8/2022

Dear Dr. Roberts,

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Sincerely,

[signature] Signature
Heath Hoffpauir Name
1620 Walnut Dr. Address
Morgan City, LA 70380 City, State Zip

Other thoughts?
We are the only Delta. This would be the only Estuary sites with a Delta

Dr. Brian Roberts
Atchafalaya Team NERR Lead
LUMCON
8124 LA-56,
Chauvin, LA 70344

DATE 2/8/22

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Sincerely,

Signature
Greg Green
Name
1120 Walnut
Address
Morgan City, LA 70380
City, State Zip
Other thoughts?
Thanks!

Dr. Brian Roberts
Atchafalaya Team NERR Lead
LUMCON
8124 LA-56,
Chauvin, LA 70344

DATE 2-8-22

Dear Dr. Roberts,

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St. Mary Parish includes the cities of Morgan City and Berwick, located at the mouth of the Atchafalaya River—home to the parish's business infrastructure with water and rail, and nearby Patterson that supplies air transportation, as well as the Bayou Teche National Wildlife Refuge in West St. Mary Parish.

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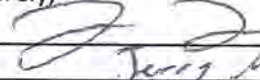
Signature

Terry Mayo
Name

PO Box 2
Address

Amelia, LA 70340
City, State Zip

Other thoughts?

Water Quality

Dr. Brian Roberts
Atchafalaya Team NERR Lead
LUMCON
8124 LA-56,
Chauvin, LA 70344

DATE 1/8/2022

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Sincerely,

Marcelle B. Hoskins _____ Signature
Marcelle B. Hoskins _____ Name
310 Adams St. _____ Address
Morgan City, La 70380 _____ City, State Zip

Other thoughts?

_____

_____

Dr. Brian Roberts
Atchafalaya Team NERR Lead
LUMCON
8124 LA-56,
Chauvin, LA 70344

DATE 02/08/2022

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Sincerely,

Manuel Herrera — Signature
MANUEL HERRERA — Name
1369 2nd St — Address
Morgan City, LA. 70380 — City, State Zip

Other thoughts? this is a great Place/Location.

Dr. Brian Roberts
Atchafalaya Team NERR Lead
LUMCON
8124 LA-56,
Chauvin, LA 70344

DATE 2/8/22

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Sincerely,

_____ Signature
WOODROW STARKEY Name
1308 2ND STREET Address
MORGAN CITY, LA 70380 City, State Zip

Other thoughts?

_____

_____

Dr. Brian Roberts
Atchafalaya Team NERR Lead
LUMCON
8124 LA-56,
Chauvin, LA 70344

DATE 2/8/22

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Sincerely,

Gwen Cain Signature
GWEN CAIN Name
424 JACOBS St. Address
Berwick, LA 70342 City, State Zip

Other thoughts?

_____

_____

Dr. Brian Roberts
Atchafalaya Team NERR Lead
LUMCON
8124 LA-56,
Chauvin, LA 70344

DATE 2/8/22

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Sincerely,

Joseph E Cain Signature
JOSEPH E. CAIN Name
424 JACOBS St. Address
Berwick, LA 70342 City, State Zip

Other thoughts?

Dr. Brian Roberts
Atchafalaya Team NERR Lead
LUMCON
8124 LA-56,
Chauvin, LA 70344

DATE 2-8-22

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Sincerely,

[signature] Signature
Eric Stone Name
722 Fourth St Address
Morgan City, LA City, State Zip

Other thoughts?
Please work with us commercial fishermen

Dr. Brian Roberts
Atchafalaya Team NERR Lead
LUMCON
8124 LA-56,
Chauvin, LA 70344

DATE 2/8/22

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Sincerely,

Herman L. Hartman Sr. Signature
HERMAN L. HARTMAN SR. Name
2608 HEMLOCK ST. Address
Morgan City LA. 70380 City, State Zip
Other thoughts? N/A

Dr. Brian Roberts
Atchafalaya Team NERR Lead
LUMCON
8124 LA-56,
Chauvin, LA 70344

DATE 7/26/22

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Sincerely,

Sarah Herrera — Signature
Sarah Herrera — Name
1309 2nd Street — Address
Morgan City LA, 70380 — City, State Zip

Other thoughts?

Dr. Brian Roberts
Atchafalaya Team NERR Lead
LUMCON
8124 LA-56,
Chauvin, LA 70344

DATE 2/8/22

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Sincerely,

Mark Dubon — Signature
Mark Dubon — Name
P.O. Box 1242 — Address
Amelia La 70340 — City, State Zip

Other thoughts?

Dr. Brian Roberts
Atchafalaya Team NERR Lead
LUMCON
8124 LA-56,
Chauvin, LA 70344

DATE 02/08/2022

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Sincerely,

Briant Dozar — Signature
Briant J. Dozar — Name
503 Renwick Blvd — Address
Berwick, LA 70342 — City, State Zip

Other thoughts?

Dr. Brian Roberts
Atchafalaya Team NERR Lead
LUMCON
8124 LA-56,
Chauvin, LA 70344

DATE Feb. 8, 2022

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Sincerely,

Laura H. Dozar — Signature
503 Renwick Blvd — Name
Berwick, LA 70342 — Address
Laura H. DOZAR — City, State Zip

Other thoughts?

Dr. Brian Roberts
Atchafalaya Team NERR Lead
LUMCON
8124 LA-56,
Chauvin, LA 70344

DATE 2-8-22

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Sincerely,

Ruby Maize — Signature
Ruby Maize — Name
711 General McArthur — Address
Morgan City, LA 70380 — City, State Zip

Other thoughts?

_____

_____

Dr. Brian Roberts
Atchafalaya Team NERR Lead
LUMCON
8124 LA-56,
Chauvin, LA 70344

DATE 2/8/2022

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Sincerely,

Dean Adams _____ Signature
DEAN ADAMS _____ Name
912 First St. _____ Address
Morgan City LA 70380 _____ City, State Zip

Other thoughts?

_____

_____

Dr. Brian Roberts
Atchafalaya Team NERR Lead
LUMCON
8124 LA-56,
Chauvin, LA 70344

DATE 8 Feb. 2020

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Sincerely,

Calvin Cognevich Signature

CALVIN COGNEVICH Name

1025 ~~MORGAN CITY~~ 2ND Address

MORGAN CITY, LA 70380 City, State Zip

Other thoughts?

Dr. Brian Roberts
Atchafalaya Team NERR Lead
LUMCON
8124 LA-56,
Chauvin, LA 70344

DATE 2-08-22

Dear Dr. Roberts,

I am writing to add my support for the **Atchafalaya Zone** to be named as the site for the Louisiana National Estuarine Research Reserve (LANERR). I make this request for several reasons.

St. Mary Parish includes the cities of Morgan City and Berwick, located at the mouth of the Atchafalaya River—home to the parish's business infrastructure with water and rail, and nearby Patterson that supplies air transportation, as well as the Bayou Teche National Wildlife Refuge in West St. Mary Parish.

A national research reserve would fit well within the 137,695-acre Atchafalaya Delta Wildlife Management Area already located at the mouths of the Atchafalaya River and Wax Lake Outlet in St. Mary Parish. The Atchafalaya Basin is home to the largest wetland in the United States, the vitality of which is critical to the current and future prosperity of ecological sustainability of Louisiana generally and more specifically Morgan City/Berwick in St. Mary Parish.

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Finally, **a NERR in the Atchafalaya Zone** would support your announced focus on restoring and enhancing the Atchafalaya Basin. Therefore, I encourage the selection of the Atchafalaya Zone as the Louisiana National Estuarine Research Reserve.

Sincerely,

Mary B Tamporello Signature
Mary B. Tamporello Name
31 Chennault St Address
Morgan City, La 70380 City, State Zip

Other thoughts?

Dr. Brian Roberts
Atchafalaya Team NERR Lead
LUMCON
8124 LA-56,
Chauvin, LA 70344

DATE 2-8-12

Dear Dr. Roberts,

I am writing to add my support for the **Atchafalaya Zone** to be named as the site for the Louisiana National Estuarine Research Reserve (LANERR). I make this request for several reasons.

St. Mary Parish includes the cities of Morgan City and Berwick, located at the mouth of the Atchafalaya River—home to the parish's business infrastructure with water and rail, and nearby Patterson that supplies air transportation, as well as the Bayou Teche National Wildlife Refuge in West St. Mary Parish.

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Sincerely,

John D Price _____ Signature
John D Price _____ Name
2923 Hwy 70 _____ Address
Morgan City LA 70380 _____ City, State Zip

Other thoughts?

_____

_____

Dr. Brian Roberts
Atchafalaya Team NERR Lead
LUMCON
8124 LA-56,
Chauvin, LA 70344

DATE 2/8/2022

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Sincerely,

Mary S. Wanous Signature
Mary S. Wanous Name
1805 Cedar St. Address
Morgan City, LA 70380 City, State Zip

Other thoughts?

Dr. Brian Roberts
Atchafalaya Team NERR Lead
LUMCON
8124 LA-56,
Chauvin, LA 70344

DATE 2/8/22

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Sincerely,

Norbert A.J. Wahnish III _____ Signature

Norbert A.J. Wahnish _____ Name

1805 Cedar Street _____ Address

Morgan City, LA 70380 _____ City, State Zip

Other thoughts?

_____

_____

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Atchafalaya Team NERR Lead
LUMCON
8124 LA-56,
Chauvin, LA 70344

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Sincerely,

Signature
Ken Conrad — Name
404 Woodbury Ln — Address
Berwick, LA 70342 — City, State Zip

Other thoughts?

Dr. Brian Roberts
Atchafalaya Team NERR Lead
LUMCON
8124 LA-56,
Chauvin, LA 70344

DATE_____

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Sincerely,
Dwayne Barbier _____Signature
Dwayne Barbier _____Name
1820 Date St. _____Address
Morgan City, LA. 70380 _____City, State Zip
Other thoughts?

_____

_____

Dr. Brian Roberts
Atchafalaya Team NERR Lead
LUMCON
8124 LA-56,
Chauvin, LA 70344

DATE 2/8/22

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Sincerely,

Christine Henry Signature
Christine Henry Name
3327 Second St. Address
Berwick, LA 70342 City, State Zip

Other thoughts?

Dr. Brian Roberts
Atchafalaya Team NERR Lead
LUMCON
8124 LA-56,
Chauvin, LA 70344

DATE 2/8/22

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Sincerely,

Signature

Ludness Henry
Name

3327 Second St.
Address

Berwick, LA 70342
City, State Zip

Other thoughts?

Governor John Bel Edwards
ATTN: Chief Resilience Officer, Charles Sutcliffe
Office of the Governor
PO Box 94004
Baton Rouge, LA 70804

DATE 8-27-21

Dear Governor Edwards,

I am writing to add my support for the **Atchafalaya Zone** to be named as the site for the Louisiana National Estuarine Research Reserve (LANERR). I make this request for several reasons.

St. Mary Parish includes the cities of Morgan City and Berwick, located at the mouth of the Atchafalaya River—home to the parish's business infrastructure with water and rail, and nearby Patterson that supplies air transportation, as well as the Bayou Teche National Wildlife Refuge in West St. Mary Parish.

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Sincerely,

Christopher Shirley _____ Signature
Christopher Shirley _____ Name
1720 Elk St. _____ Address
Morgan City, LA _____ City, State

Comment (optional): I am a principal in St. Mary Parish, and I believe the Atchafalaya zone should be named a LANEER site because it will promote commercial opportunities and provide recreational benefits.

Governor John Bel Edwards
ATTN: Chief Resilience Officer, Charles Sutcliffe
Office of the Governor
PO Box 94004
Baton Rouge, LA 70804

DATE 9/13/21

Dear Governor Edwards,

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Sincerely,

Conrad + Donna Poe Signature
Conrad + Donna Poe Name
901 Garden St Address
Morgan City, LA 70380 City, State

Comment (optional): Your support could help give this depressed area a much needed shot in the arm.

Governor John Bel Edwards
ATTN: Chief Resilience Officer, Charles Sutcliffe
Office of the Governor
PO Box 94004
Baton Rouge, LA 70804

DATE 9/14/21

Dear Governor Edwards,

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Sincerely,

Signature

Francis Scott Sicard
Name

408 Federal Ave
Address

Morgan City, LA 70380
City, State

Comment (optional): Please help our parish growth
& hurricane's & tremendous
loss of oil economy

Thank you.

Governor John Bel Edwards
ATTN: Chief Resilience Officer, Charles Sutcliffe
Office of the Governor
PO Box 94004
Baton Rouge, LA 70804

DATE 9/6/21

Dear Governor Edwards,

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Sincerely,

Brett White _____ Signature
Brett White _____ Name
107 Brighton Lane _____ Address
Berwick, LA 70342 _____ City, State

Comment (optional): By choosing Berwick/Morgan City this area can diversify beyond just oil and gas. This would also benefit the younger generation immensely.

Governor John Bel Edwards
ATTN: Chief Resilience Officer, Charles Sutcliffe
Office of the Governor
PO Box 94004
Baton Rouge, LA 70804

DATE 8/27/24

Dear Governor Edwards,

I am writing to add my support for the **Atchafalaya Zone** to be named as the site for the Louisiana National Estuarine Research Reserve (LANERR). I make this request for several reasons.

St. Mary Parish includes the cities of Morgan City and Berwick, located at the mouth of the Atchafalaya River—home to the parish's business infrastructure with water and rail, and nearby Patterson that supplies air transportation, as well as the Bayou Teche National Wildlife Refuge in West St. Mary Parish.

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Sincerely,

Carrie Stansbury — Signature
Carrie Stansbury — Name
1002 2nd Street — Address
Morgan City, LA 70381 — City, State

Comment (optional): Yeay Atchafalaya!

Governor John Bel Edwards
ATTN: Chief Resilience Officer, Charles Sutcliffe
Office of the Governor
PO Box 94004
Baton Rouge, LA 70804

DATE 9/26/21

Dear Governor Edwards,

I am writing to add my support for the **Atchafalaya Zone** to be named as the site for the Louisiana National Estuarine Research Reserve (LANERR). I make this request for several reasons.

St. Mary Parish includes the cities of Morgan City and Berwick, located at the mouth of the Atchafalaya River—home to the parish's business infrastructure with water and rail, and nearby Patterson that supplies air transportation, as well as the Bayou Teche National Wildlife Refuge in West St. Mary Parish.

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Sincerely,

Douglas Picou Signature

Douglas Picou Name

3201 Karen Dr. Address

Morgan City LA City, State

Comment (optional): Very good idea

32.71

Governor John Bel Edwards
ATTN: Chief Resilience Officer, Charles Sutcliffe
Office of the Governor
PO Box 94004
Baton Rouge, LA 70804

DATE 8-25-21

Dear Governor Edwards,

I am writing to add my support for the **Atchafalaya Zone** to be named as the site for the Louisiana National Estuarine Research Reserve (LANERR). I make this request for several reasons.

St. Mary Parish includes the cities of Morgan City and Berwick, located at the mouth of the Atchafalaya River—home to the parish's business infrastructure with water and rail, and nearby Patterson that supplies air transportation, as well as the Bayou Teche National Wildlife Refuge in West St. Mary Parish.

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Sincerely,

Charles Maize Signature
Charles Maize Name
711 Gen Mc Arthur Address
Morgan City, LA 70380 City, State

Comment (optional): I have lived most of my life in Morgan City. I'm retired from the Oil Industry. At this time in my life I enjoy fishing and working with the youth in recreational sports as well as High School and Junior High. Having the LANERR here would be beneficial to the education of our youth.

Governor John Bel Edwards
ATTN: Chief Resilience Officer, Charles Sutcliffe
Office of the Governor
PO Box 94004
Baton Rouge, LA 70804

DATE 9-13-21

Dear Governor Edwards,

I am writing to add my support for the **Atchafalaya Zone** to be named as the site for the Louisiana National Estuarine Research Reserve (LANERR). I make this request for several reasons.

St. Mary Parish includes the cities of Morgan City and Berwick, located at the mouth of the Atchafalaya River—home to the parish's business infrastructure with water and rail, and nearby Patterson that supplies air transportation, as well as the Bayou Teche National Wildlife Refuge in West St. Mary Parish.

A national research reserve would fit well within the 137,695-acre Atchafalaya Delta Wildlife Management Area already located at the mouths of the Atchafalaya River and Wax Lake Outlet in St. Mary Parish. The Atchafalaya Basin is home to the largest wetland in the United States, the vitality of which is critical to the current and future prosperity of ecological sustainability of Louisiana generally and more specifically Morgan City/Berwick in St. Mary Parish.

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Finally, **a NERR in the Atchafalaya Zone** would support your announced focus on restoring and enhancing the Atchafalaya Basin. Therefore, I encourage the selection of the Atchafalaya Zone as the Louisiana National Estuarine Research Reserve.

Sincerely,

Ethel Morrison Signature
Ethel Morrison Name
725 Leona St. Address
Morgan City LA 70380 City, State

Comment (optional): I am a retired State Employee please Consider Morgan City in your decision. Very interested in the Growth of Morgan City. Ethel Morrison

Governor John Bel Edwards
ATTN: Chief Resilience Officer, Charles Sutcliffe
Office of the Governor
PO Box 94004
Baton Rouge, LA 70804

DATE 8/25/21

Dear Governor Edwards,

I am writing to add my support for the **Atchafalaya Zone** to be named as the site for the Louisiana National Estuarine Research Reserve (LANERR). I make this request for several reasons.

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Sincerely,

Deborah Johnson Signature
Deborah Johnson Name
1410 Victor II Blvd. Address
Morgan City, LA 70380 City, State

Comment (optional): Morning Glory Ministries

Governor John Bel Edwards
ATTN: Chief Resilience Officer, Charles Sutcliffe
Office of the Governor
PO Box 94004
Baton Rouge, LA 70804

DATE 8/25/21

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Sincerely,

Hendry A. Johnson Signature
Hendry A. Johnson Name
1410 Victor II Blvd. Address
Morgan City, LA 70380 City, State

Comment (optional): Morning Glory Ministries

Governor John Bel Edwards
ATTN: Chief Resilience Officer, Charles Sutcliffe
Office of the Governor
PO Box 94004
Baton Rouge, LA 70804

DATE 6/25/2021

Dear Governor Edwards,

I am writing to add my support for the **Atchafalaya Zone** to be named as the site for the Louisiana National Estuarine Research Reserve (LANERR). I make this request for several reasons.

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Sincerely,

[signature] Signature
Edward Campbell Name
1662 Sanders Street Address
Morgan City, LA 70380 City, State

Comment (optional): [illegible] Owner of Flawless Printing & Flawless Wireless

Governor John Bel Edwards
ATTN: Chief Resilience Officer, Charles Sutcliffe
Office of the Governor
PO Box 94004
Baton Rouge, LA 70804

DATE 8/26/2021

Dear Governor Edwards,

I am writing to add my support for the **Atchafalaya Zone** to be named as the site for the Louisiana National Estuarine Research Reserve (LANERR). I make this request for several reasons.

St. Mary Parish includes the cities of Morgan City and Berwick, located at the mouth of the Atchafalaya River—home to the parish's business infrastructure with water and rail, and nearby Patterson that supplies air transportation, as well as the Bayou Teche National Wildlife Refuge in West St. Mary Parish.

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Sincerely,

Patricia L. Coulon Signature
Patricia L. Coulon Name
110 11th St Address
Morgan City LA City, State

Comment (optional): I'm a Bus Driver

Governor John Bel Edwards
ATTN: Chief Resilience Officer, Charles Sutcliffe
Office of the Governor
PO Box 94004
Baton Rouge, LA 70804

DATE 9-1-21

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Sincerely,

Ruby Maize — Signature
Ruby Maize — Name
711 Gen McArthur — Address
Morgan City, LA 70380 — City, State

Comment (optional): I welcome the LANERR to the Atchafala where our children & grandchildren would benefit From the education and experience it will bring.

Governor John Bel Edwards
ATTN: Chief Resilience Officer, Charles Sutcliffe
Office of the Governor
PO Box 94004
Baton Rouge, LA 70804

DATE 8-26-21

Dear Governor Edwards,

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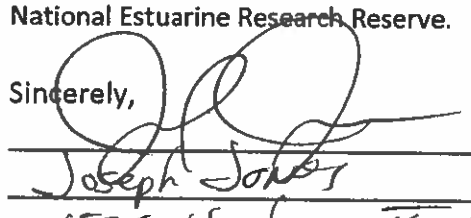
Sincerely,



Signature
Joseph Jones Name
1522 Victor II Blvd Address
Morgan City, LA. 70380 City, State

Comment (optional): I'm a lifelong citizen of Morgan City, LA. I have coached youth and high school children for the past 40 years. I look forward to having the LANERR on the Atchafalaya

Governor John Bel Edwards
ATTN: Chief Resilience Officer, Charles Sutcliffe
Office of the Governor
PO Box 94004
Baton Rouge, LA 70804

DATE 9-15-21

Dear Governor Edwards,

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Sincerely,

Chalon Maize — Signature
Chalon Maize — Name
625 General McArthur Dr. — Address
Morgan City, LA — City, State

Comment (optional): I have school Age children who would benefit by having A NERR where they can learn About our waterways & seafood

Governor John Bel Edwards
ATTN: Chief Resilience Officer, Charles Sutcliffe
Office of the Governor
PO Box 94004
Baton Rouge, LA 70804

DATE 9-13-21

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Sincerely,

Anna Carter Signature
ANNA CARTER Name
723 LEONA STREET Address
MORGAN CITY LA 70380 City, State

Comment
(optional): MORGAN CITY Need LANDERR. Please Consider Helping Us.
Ethel Morrison

Governor John Bel Edwards
ATTN: Chief Resilience Officer, Charles Sutcliffe
Office of the Governor
PO Box 94004
Baton Rouge, LA 70804

DATE 9/15/21

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Sincerely,

Audrey Morse Signature
Audrey X Morse Name
621 Glen Meadow Address
Morgan City, LA City, State
70380

Comment (optional): I think this would be very nice to have for our Gulf here

Governor John Bel Edwards
ATTN: Chief Resilience Officer, Charles Sutcliffe
Office of the Governor
PO Box 94004
Baton Rouge, LA 70804

DATE 9/27/21

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Sincerely,

Beverly Pisor Signature
Beverly Pisor Name
3201 Karen Dr Address
Morgan City LA City, State

Comment (optional): I agree we need More jobs in this area.

Governor John Bel Edwards
ATTN: Chief Resilience Officer, Charles Sutcliffe
Office of the Governor
PO Box 94004
Baton Rouge, LA 70804

DATE Sep/10/21

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Sincerely,

_____ Signature
Angel Sanchez Name
329 Glenwood St Address
Morgan City, LA City, State

Comment
(optional): We need more good jobs!

Governor John Bel Edwards
ATTN: Chief Resilience Officer, Charles Sutcliffe
Office of the Governor
PO Box 94004
Baton Rouge, LA 70804

DATE 9/16/2021

Dear Governor Edwards,

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Sincerely,

Anne M. Henry Signature
Anne M. Henry Name
1820 Elk Street Address
Morgan City, LA 70380 City, State

Comment (optional): St Mary Parish would welcome this opportunity in our area -

Governor John Bel Edwards
ATTN: Chief Resilience Officer, Charles Sutcliffe
Office of the Governor
PO Box 94004
Baton Rouge, LA 70804

DATE 9-16-21

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Sincerely,

Seth Henry — Signature
Seth Henry — Name
1820 Elk Street — Address
Morgan City, LA 70380 — City, State

Comment (optional): Having more employment opportunities will keep our young people in the area.

Governor John Bel Edwards
ATTN: Chief Resilience Officer, Charles Sutcliffe
Office of the Governor
PO Box 94004
Baton Rouge, LA 70804

DATE 8/27/21

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- attract scholars on a national and international stage,
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The presence of the NERR would impact youth and young adults currently enrolled in Louisiana 's schools and contribute to an appreciation for Louisiana's natural resources amidst enjoying the area's quality-of-life and opportunities that the NERR provides. An Atchafalaya Zone NERR would potentially shape decisions about where young Louisianans choose to live, work, learn, as well as raise families.

Finally, **a NERR in the Atchafalaya Zone** would support your announced focus on restoring and enhancing the Atchafalaya Basin. Therefore, I encourage the selection of the Atchafalaya Zone as the Louisiana National Estuarine Research Reserve.

Sincerely,

Marie H. Minton Signature
Marie H. Minton Name
1808 Dale St. Address
Morgan City, LA City, State

Comment (optional): Nerr in our area would be a great boost to our economy.

Governor John Bel Edwards
ATTN: Chief Resilience Officer, Charles Sutcliffe
Office of the Governor
PO Box 94004
Baton Rouge, LA 70804

DATE 8/24/21

Dear Governor Edwards,

I am writing to add my support for the **Atchafalaya Zone** to be named as the site for the Louisiana National Estuarine Research Reserve (LANERR). I make this request for several reasons.

St. Mary Parish includes the cities of Morgan City and Berwick, located at the mouth of the Atchafalaya River—home to the parish's business infrastructure with water and rail, and nearby Patterson that supplies air transportation, as well as the Bayou Teche National Wildlife Refuge in West St. Mary Parish.

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Finally, **a NERR in the Atchafalaya Zone** would support your announced focus on restoring and enhancing the Atchafalaya Basin. Therefore, I encourage the selection of the Atchafalaya Zone as the Louisiana National Estuarine Research Reserve.

Sincerely,

Signature

Jonathan C. PRICE — Name

611 Shadowlawn DR — Address

Berwick, LA 70342 — City, State

Comment (optional): OUR AREA Needs This!
Thank you for your consideration!

PEACE Candle Co.

(!)

Governor John Bel Edwards
ATTN: Chief Resilience Officer, Charles Sutcliffe
Office of the Governor
PO Box 94004
Baton Rouge, LA 70804

DATE 8/23/21

Dear Governor Edwards,

I am writing to add my support for the **Atchafalaya Zone** to be named as the site for the Louisiana National Estuarine Research Reserve (LANERR). I make this request for several reasons.

St. Mary Parish includes the cities of Morgan City and Berwick, located at the mouth of the Atchafalaya River—home to the parish's business infrastructure with water and rail, and nearby Patterson that supplies air transportation, as well as the Bayou Teche National Wildlife Refuge in West St. Mary Parish.

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Finally, **a NERR in the Atchafalaya Zone** would support your announced focus on restoring and enhancing the Atchafalaya Basin. Therefore, I encourage the selection of the Atchafalaya Zone as the Louisiana National Estuarine Research Reserve.

Sincerely,

Grace Eisenman — Signature
Grace Eisenman — Name
921 Del Mar Rd — Address
Morgan City LA — City, State

Comment (optional): I currently own a small business that houses 48 local craftsmen + Women & Without big "business" like this, our small businesses can't THRIVE!

Governor John Bel Edwards
ATTN: Chief Resilience Officer, Charles Sutcliffe
Office of the Governor
PO Box 94004
Baton Rouge, LA 70804

DATE 8-28-2021

Dear Governor Edwards,

I am writing to add my support for the **Atchafalaya Zone** to be named as the site for the Louisiana National Estuarine Research Reserve (LANERR). I make this request for several reasons.

St. Mary Parish includes the cities of Morgan City and Berwick, located at the mouth of the Atchafalaya River—home to the parish's business infrastructure with water and rail, and nearby Patterson that supplies air transportation, as well as the Bayou Teche National Wildlife Refuge in West St. Mary Parish.

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Finally, **a NERR in the Atchafalaya Zone** would support your announced focus on restoring and enhancing the Atchafalaya Basin. Therefore, I encourage the selection of the Atchafalaya Zone as the Louisiana National Estuarine Research Reserve.

Sincerely,

Edith P. Hover Signature
Same Name
1818 Sixth St Address
Morgan City, La. City, State

Comment (optional): It is with great support that the Atchafalaya Zone be chosen as the Estuarine Research Reserve

Governor John Bel Edwards
ATTN: Chief Resilience Officer, Charles Sutcliffe
Office of the Governor
PO Box 94004
Baton Rouge, LA 70804

DATE 9/27/2021

Dear Governor Edwards,

I am writing to add my support for the **Atchafalaya Zone** to be named as the site for the Louisiana National Estuarine Research Reserve (LANERR). I make this request for several reasons.

St. Mary Parish includes the cities of Morgan City and Berwick, located at the mouth of the Atchafalaya River—home to the parish's business infrastructure with water and rail, and nearby Patterson that supplies air transportation, as well as the Bayou Teche National Wildlife Refuge in West St. Mary Parish.

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Sincerely,

Alice Pecoraro Signature
ALICE PECORARO Name
220 BRAHMWELL COURT Address
LAFAYETTE, LA 70508 City, State

Comment (optional): 100% behind LA NERR being in the Atchafalaya Zone.

Governor John Bel Edwards
ATTN: Chief Resilience Officer, Charles Sutcliffe
Office of the Governor
PO Box 94004
Baton Rouge, LA 70804

DATE 08/26/2021

Dear Governor Edwards,

I am writing to add my support for the **Atchafalaya Zone** to be named as the site for the Louisiana National Estuarine Research Reserve (LANERR). I make this request for several reasons.

St. Mary Parish includes the cities of Morgan City and Berwick, located at the mouth of the Atchafalaya River—home to the parish's business infrastructure with water and rail, and nearby Patterson that supplies air transportation, as well as the Bayou Teche National Wildlife Refuge in West St. Mary Parish.

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Finally, **a NERR in the Atchafalaya Zone** would support your announced focus on restoring and enhancing the Atchafalaya Basin. Therefore, I encourage the selection of the Atchafalaya Zone as the Louisiana National Estuarine Research Reserve.

Sincerely,

Courtney Andrews — Signature
Courtney Andrews — Name
605 Shadowlawn Drive — Address
Berwick, LA 70342 — City, State

Comment
(optional): I am a life-long resident and a St. Mary Parish educator.

Governor John Bel Edwards
ATTN: Chief Resilience Officer, Charles Sutcliffe
Office of the Governor
PO Box 94004
Baton Rouge, LA 70804

DATE 8-27-2021

Dear Governor Edwards,

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Sincerely,

Kevin P. Hebert Signature

Kevin P. Hebert Name

502 Shadowlawn Dr. Address

Berwick, LA 70342 City, State

Comment
(optional): I am a local small business owner as well as a Berwick Town Councilman. I was born and raised here and I know this would have a positive impact on my town as well as my Parish. Thank you for your consideration.

Governor John Bel Edwards
ATTN: Chief Resilience Officer, Charles Sutcliffe
Office of the Governor
PO Box 94004
Baton Rouge, LA 70804

DATE 8/26/2021

Dear Governor Edwards,

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Sincerely,

Judy O. Hidalgo Signature
Judy O. Hidalgo Name
P.O. Box 455 Address
Patterson, LA City, State

Comment (optional): I think this would be wonderful for our area.

Governor John Bel Edwards
ATTN: Chief Resilience Officer, Charles Sutcliffe
Office of the Governor
PO Box 94004
Baton Rouge, LA 70804

DATE 08/26/2021

Dear Governor Edwards,

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Finally, **a NERR in the Atchafalaya Zone** would support your announced focus on restoring and enhancing the Atchafalaya Basin. Therefore, I encourage the selection of the Atchafalaya Zone as the Louisiana National Estuarine Research Reserve.

Sincerely,

Michelle Andrews Signature
Michelle Andrews Name
605 Shadowlawn Drive Address
Berwick, LA 70342 City, State

Comment
(optional): I am a life-long resident and employee of Conrad Shipyard.

Governor John Bel Edwards
ATTN: Chief Resilience Officer, Charles Sutcliffe
Office of the Governor
PO Box 94004
Baton Rouge, LA 70804

DATE 9/11/2021

Dear Governor Edwards,

I am writing to add my support for the **Atchafalaya Zone** to be named as the site for the Louisiana National Estuarine Research Reserve (LANERR). I make this request for several reasons.

St. Mary Parish includes the cities of Morgan City and Berwick, located at the mouth of the Atchafalaya River—home to the parish's business infrastructure with water and rail, and nearby Patterson that supplies air transportation, as well as the Bayou Teche National Wildlife Refuge in West St. Mary Parish.

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Finally, **a NERR in the Atchafalaya Zone** would support your announced focus on restoring and enhancing the Atchafalaya Basin. Therefore, I encourage the selection of the Atchafalaya Zone as the Louisiana National Estuarine Research Reserve.

Sincerely,

[signature] Signature
Niki Fryou Name
1628 Glenmont Dr Address
Morgan City, LA 70380 City, State

Comment (optional): As an educator of 30 years and I pray our community will be chosen as the LA NERR site.

Governor John Bel Edwards
ATTN: Chief Resilience Officer, Charles Sutcliffe
Office of the Governor
PO Box 94004
Baton Rouge, LA 70804

DATE 9/13/2021

Dear Governor Edwards,

I am writing to add my support for the **Atchafalaya Zone** to be named as the site for the Louisiana National Estuarine Research Reserve (LANERR). I make this request for several reasons.

St. Mary Parish includes the cities of Morgan City and Berwick, located at the mouth of the Atchafalaya River—home to the parish's business infrastructure with water and rail, and nearby Patterson that supplies air transportation, as well as the Bayou Teche National Wildlife Refuge in West St. Mary Parish.

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Finally, **a NERR in the Atchafalaya Zone** would support your announced focus on restoring and enhancing the Atchafalaya Basin. Therefore, I encourage the selection of the Atchafalaya Zone as the Louisiana National Estuarine Research Reserve.

Sincerely,

Clare Cheramie Signature
Clare Cheramie Name
219 Jones St Address
Berwick, LA 70342 City, State

Comment (optional): Our beautiful area is perfect for NERR!

Governor John Bel Edwards
ATTN: Chief Resilience Officer, Charles Sutcliffe
Office of the Governor
PO Box 94004
Baton Rouge, LA 70804

DATE 8/24/21

Dear Governor Edwards,

I am writing to add my support for the **Atchafalaya Zone** to be named as the site for the Louisiana National Estuarine Research Reserve (LANERR). I make this request for several reasons.

St. Mary Parish includes the cities of Morgan City and Berwick, located at the mouth of the Atchafalaya River—home to the parish's business infrastructure with water and rail, and nearby Patterson that supplies air transportation, as well as the Bayou Teche National Wildlife Refuge in West St. Mary Parish.

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Sincerely,

Greig Chauvin Signature
Greig Chauvin Name
1014 2nd Street Address
Morgan City, LA City, State
70380

Comment (optional): Having worked in education for over 20 years I know this would greatly benefit the young people of St. Mary Parish!

Governor John Bel Edwards
ATTN: Chief Resilience Officer, Charles Sutcliffe
Office of the Governor
PO Box 94004
Baton Rouge, LA 70804

DATE 9/7/21

Dear Governor Edwards,

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Sincerely,

Elise Sauce Signature
Elise Sauce Name
3000 Helen Dr. Address
Morgan City, La City, State

Comment (optional): Thanks for all the help you can do for our area

Governor John Bel Edwards
ATTN: Chief Resilience Officer, Charles Sutcliffe
Office of the Governor
PO Box 94004
Baton Rouge, LA 70804

DATE 9/4/21

Dear Governor Edwards,

I am writing to add my support for the **Atchafalaya Zone** to be named as the site for the Louisiana National Estuarine Research Reserve (LANERR). I make this request for several reasons.

St. Mary Parish includes the cities of Morgan City and Berwick, located at the mouth of the Atchafalaya River—home to the parish's business infrastructure with water and rail, and nearby Patterson that supplies air transportation, as well as the Bayou Teche National Wildlife Refuge in West St. Mary Parish.

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Sincerely,

[signature] Signature
Norbert J. Wawouice Name
1805 Cedar Street Address
Morgan City, LA 70380 City, State

Comment (optional): Been a Commercial Fisherman for 25 yrs & this would be great for our Area and the Environment.

Governor John Bel Edwards
ATTN: Chief Resilience Officer, Charles Sutcliffe
Office of the Governor
PO Box 94004
Baton Rouge, LA 70804

DATE 10/4/21

Dear Governor Edwards,

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Sincerely,

Joan D. Garber Signature
100 Chennault Name
Morgan City, Address
La. 70380 City, State

Comment (optional): We need this and would appreciate it more than any other city.
Please help us.
Thanks
Joan Garber

Governor John Bel Edwards
ATTN: Chief Resilience Officer, Charles Sutcliffe
Office of the Governor
PO Box 94004
Baton Rouge, LA 70804

DATE 10·6·21

Dear Governor Edwards,

I am writing to add my support for the **Atchafalaya Zone** to be named as the site for the Louisiana National Estuarine Research Reserve (LANERR). I make this request for several reasons.

St. Mary Parish includes the cities of Morgan City and Berwick, located at the mouth of the Atchafalaya River—home to the parish's business infrastructure with water and rail, and nearby Patterson that supplies air transportation, as well as the Bayou Teche National Wildlife Refuge in West St. Mary Parish.

A national research reserve would fit well within the 137,695-acre Atchafalaya Delta Wildlife Management Area already located at the mouths of the Atchafalaya River and Wax Lake Outlet in St. Mary Parish. The Atchafalaya Basin is home to the largest wetland in the United States, the vitality of which is critical to the current and future prosperity of ecological sustainability of Louisiana generally and more specifically Morgan City/Berwick in St. Mary Parish.

Research activities associated with NERR would be ideally situated in the Atchafalaya Estuarine Zone to:

- attract scholars on a national and international stage,
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Finally, a **NERR in the Atchafalaya Zone** would support your announced focus on restoring and enhancing the Atchafalaya Basin. Therefore, I encourage the selection of the Atchafalaya Zone as the Louisiana National Estuarine Research Reserve.

Sincerely,

Julie Lacoste Signature
Julie Lacoste Name
211 Fiesta Rd. Address
Morgan City, LA 70380 City, State

Comment (optional): I would love to see this new reserve strive!

Governor John Bel Edwards
ATTN: Chief Resilience Officer, Charles Sutcliffe
Office of the Governor
PO Box 94004
Baton Rouge, LA 70804

DATE 9/30/21

Dear Governor Edwards,

I am writing to add my support for the **Atchafalaya Zone** to be named as the site for the Louisiana National Estuarine Research Reserve (LANERR). I make this request for several reasons.

St. Mary Parish includes the cities of Morgan City and Berwick, located at the mouth of the Atchafalaya River—home to the parish's business infrastructure with water and rail, and nearby Patterson that supplies air transportation, as well as the Bayou Teche National Wildlife Refuge in West St. Mary Parish.

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Sincerely,

Karen C. Marin Signature
Karen C. Marin Name
1124 Main St. Address
Patterson, LA 70392 City, State

Comment (optional): We need this!!

Governor John Bel Edwards
ATTN: Chief Resilience Officer, Charles Sutcliffe
Office of the Governor
PO Box 94004
Baton Rouge, LA 70804

DATE 9/30/2021

Dear Governor Edwards,

I am writing to add my support for the **Atchafalaya Zone** to be named as the site for the Louisiana National Estuarine Research Reserve (LANERR). I make this request for several reasons.

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Sincerely,
Marianne L. Adams Signature
Marianne L. Adams Name
1124 Mary Lee St. Address
Franklin, LA 70538 City, State

Comment (optional): Please consider I am a retired Teacher with 36 years of successful experience all in St. Mary Parish. This would fantastic for our children

Governor John Bel Edwards
ATTN: Chief Resilience Officer, Charles Sutcliffe
Office of the Governor
PO Box 94004
Baton Rouge, LA 70804

DATE 9-12-21

Dear Governor Edwards,

I am writing to add my support for the **Atchafalaya Zone** to be named as the site for the Louisiana National Estuarine Research Reserve (LANERR). I make this request for several reasons.

St. Mary Parish includes the cities of Morgan City and Berwick, located at the mouth of the Atchafalaya River—home to the parish's business infrastructure with water and rail, and nearby Patterson that supplies air transportation, as well as the Bayou Teche National Wildlife Refuge in West St. Mary Parish.

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Sincerely,

Judith D. Weber — Signature
Judith G. Weber — Name
588 Fairview Dr. — Address
Berwick, LA 70342 — City, State

Comment (optional): I think we have the perfect location.

Governor John Bel Edwards
ATTN: Chief Resilience Officer, Charles Sutcliffe
Office of the Governor
PO Box 94004
Baton Rouge, LA 70804

DATE 10/7/21

Dear Governor Edwards,

I am writing to add my support for the **Atchafalaya Zone** to be named as the site for the Louisiana National Estuarine Research Reserve (LANERR). I make this request for several reasons.

St. Mary Parish includes the cities of Morgan City and Berwick, located at the mouth of the Atchafalaya River—home to the parish's business infrastructure with water and rail, and nearby Patterson that supplies air transportation, as well as the Bayou Teche National Wildlife Refuge in West St. Mary Parish.

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Sincerely,

Veronica Bovernale Signature
Veronica Bovernale Name
1408 Chatsworth Dr. Address
Morgan City, LA 70380 City, State

Comment (optional): Thank you for your consideration!

Governor John Bel Edwards

ATTN: Chief Resilience Officer, Charles Sutcliffe

Office of the Governor PO Box 94004 Baton Rouge, LA 70804

5/20/2021

Dear Governor Edwards,

I am writing to add my support for the Atchafalaya Zone to be named as the site for the Louisiana National Estuarine Research Reserve (LANERR). I make this request for several reasons.

St. Mary Parish includes the cities of Morgan City and Berwick, located at the mouth of the Atchafalaya River—home to the parish's business infrastructure with water and rail, and nearby Patterson that supplies air transportation, as well as the Bayou Teche National Wildlife Refuge in West St. Mary Parish.

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Sincerely,

William A. Cefalu, Jr.
706 1st Street
Morgan City, LA 70380

Governor John Bel Edwards
ATTN: Chief Resilience Officer, Charles Sutcliffe
Office of the Governor
PO Box 94004
Baton Rouge, LA 70804

06/03/2021

Dear Governor Edwards,

I am writing to add my support for the Atchafalaya Zone to be named as the site for the Louisiana National Estuarine Research Reserve (LANERR). I make this request for several reasons.

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Sincerely,

Ambre Wilson

Ambre Wilson
Junior Auxiliary of East St. Mary

Governor John Bel Edwards
ATTN: Chief Resilience Officer, Charles Sutcliffe
Office of the Governor
PO Box 94004
Baton Rouge, LA 70804

DATE 6/4/2021

Dear Governor Edwards,

I am writing to add my support for the Atchafalaya Zone to be named as the site for the Louisiana National Estuarine Research Reserve (LANERR). I make this request for several reasons.

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Sincerely,
Karen M. Laughlin
Karen M. Laughlin
3008 Mark Dr.
Morgan City, LA 70380

Governor John Bel Edwards
ATTN: Chief Resilience Officer, Charles Sutcliffe
Office of the Governor
PO Box 94004
Baton Rouge, LA 70804

DATE 06.04.21

Dear Governor Edwards,

I am writing to add my support for the Atchafalaya Zone to be named as the site for the Louisiana National Estuarine Research Reserve (LANERR). I make this request for several reasons.

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Sincerely,

DIVING & ROV HISTORICAL
PRESERVATION MUSEUM
MORGAN CITY LA.

Governor John Bel Edwards
ATTN: Chief Resilience Officer, Charles Sutcliffe
Office of the Governor
PO Box 94004
Baton Rouge, LA 70804

DATE 06/04/2021

Dear Governor Edwards,

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Sincerely, Margaret Merrill

Governor John Bel Edwards
ATTN: Chief Resilience Officer, Charles Sutcliffe
Office of the Governor
PO Box 94004
Baton Rouge, LA 70804

RECEIVED JUN 08 2021

DATE: 5/31/21

Dear Governor Edwards,

I am writing to add my support for the Atchafalaya Zone to be named as the site for the Louisiana National Estuarine Research Reserve (LANERR). I make this request for several reasons.

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Sincerely,

Signe Parsiola

Signe Parsiola

Governor John Bel Edwards
ATTN: Chief Resilience Officer, Charles Sutcliffe
Office of the Governor
PO Box 94004
Baton Rouge, LA 70804

DATE: 5/27/21

Dear Governor Edwards,

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Sincerely,

Melissa W Parrish

Governor John Bel Edwards
ATTN: Chief Resilience Officer, Charles Sutcliffe
Office of the Governor
PO Box 94004
Baton Rouge, LA 70804

DATE 6/10/21

Dear Governor Edwards,

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Sincerely,

Serenna Garrett

Governor John Bel Edwards
ATTN: Chief Resilience Officer, Charles Sutcliffe
Office of the Governor
PO Box 94004
Baton Rouge, LA 70804

DATE June 11 2021

Dear Governor Edwards,

I am writing to add my support for the Atchafalaya Zone to be named as the site for the Louisiana National Estuarine Research Reserve (LANERR). I make this request for several reasons.

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Sincerely,

Gloria Canova

Gloria Canova
3121 Diane Dr
Morgan City, La 70380

June 9, 2021

Governor John Bel Edwards
ATTN: Chief Resilience Officer, Charles Sutcliffe
Office of the Governor
PO Box 94004
Baton Rouge, LA 70804

Dear Governor Edwards,

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Sincerely,
Laura Dozar
Laura Dozar
Berwick, LA 70342
985-385-2983

Governor John Bel Edwards
ATTN: Chief Resilience Officer, Charles Sutcliffe
Office of the Governor
PO Box 94004
Baton Rouge, LA 70804

DATE 6-21-21

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I am writing to add my support for the Atchafalaya Zone to be named as the site for the Louisiana National Estuarine Research Reserve (LANERR). I make this request for several reasons.

St. Mary Parish includes the cities of Morgan City and Berwick, located at the mouth of the Atchafalaya River—home to the parish's business infrastructure with water and rail, and nearby Patterson that supplies air transportation, as well as the Bayou Teche National Wildlife Refuge in West St. Mary Parish.

A national research reserve would fit well within the 137,695-acre Atchafalaya Delta Wildlife Management Area already located at the mouths of the Atchafalaya River and Wax Lake Outlet in St. Mary Parish. The Atchafalaya Basin is home to the largest wetland in the United States, the vitality of which is critical to the current and future prosperity of ecological sustainability of Louisiana generally and more specifically Morgan City/Berwick in St. Mary Parish.

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Finally, a NERR in the Atchafalaya Zone would support your announced focus on restoring and enhancing the Atchafalaya Basin. Therefore, I encourage the selection of the Atchafalaya Zone as the Louisiana National Estuarine Research Reserve.

Sincerely,

Charlette Guidry
3821 Mount St
Berwick La 70342

June 03, 2021

Daniel Allen
331 Wise Street
Morgan City, LA. 70380

Governor John Bel Edwards
ATTN: Chief Resilience Officer, Charles Sutcliffe
Office of the Governor
PO Box 94004
Baton Rouge, LA 70804

Dear Governor Edwards,

I am writing to add my support for the Atchafalaya Zone to be named as the site for the Louisiana National Estuarine Research Reserve (LANERR). I make this request for several reasons.

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Sincerely,

Daniel Allen

Daniel Allen

June 03, 2021

Kayla Allen
331 Wise Street
Morgan City, LA. 70380

Governor John Bel Edwards
ATTN: Chief Resilience Officer, Charles Sutcliffe
Office of the Governor
PO Box 94004
Baton Rouge, LA 70804

Dear Governor Edwards,

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Sincerely,

Kayla Allen

Kayla Allen

Governor John Bel Edwards
ATTN: Chief Resilience Officer, Charles Sutcliffe
Office of the Governor
PO Box 94004
Baton Rouge, LA 70804

DATE 8/16/21

Dear Governor Edwards,

I am writing to add my support for the **Atchafalaya Zone** to be named as the site for the Louisiana National Estuarine Research Reserve (LANERR). I make this request for several reasons.

St. Mary Parish includes the cities of Morgan City and Berwick, located at the mouth of the Atchafalaya River—home to the parish's business infrastructure with water and rail, and nearby Patterson that supplies air transportation, as well as the Bayou Teche National Wildlife Refuge in West St. Mary Parish.

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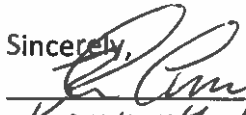
Sincerely,



Signature
Kenneth Conrad — Name
404 Woodburn Ln — Address
Berwick, LA 70342 — City, State

Governor John Bel Edwards
ATTN: Chief Resilience Officer, Charles Sutcliffe
Office of the Governor
PO Box 94004
Baton Rouge, LA 70804

August 16, 2021

Dear Governor Edwards,

I am writing to add my support for the **Atchafalaya Zone** to be named as the site for the Louisiana National Estuarine Research Reserve (LANERR). I make this request for several reasons.

St. Mary Parish includes the cities of Morgan City and Berwick, located at the mouth of the Atchafalaya River—home to the parish's business infrastructure with water and rail, and nearby Patterson that supplies air transportation, as well as the Bayou Teche National Wildlife Refuge in West St. Mary Parish.

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Finally, **a NERR in the Atchafalaya Zone** would support your announced focus on restoring and enhancing the Atchafalaya Basin. Therefore, I encourage the selection of the Atchafalaya Zone as the Louisiana National Estuarine Research Reserve.

Sincerely,

Jan LaRocca
601 Franklin St
Morgan City, LA. 70380

August 17, 2021

Governor John Bel Edwards
ATTN: Chief Resilience Officer, Charles Sutcliffe
Office of the Governor
PO Box 94004
Baton Rouge, LA 70804

Dear Governor Edwards,

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Sincerely,

Laura Dozar

Laura Dozar
503 Renwick Blvd., Berwick, LA 70342

Governor John Bel Edwards
ATTN: Chief Resilience Officer, Charles Sutcliffe
Office of the Governor
PO Box 94004
Baton Rouge, LA 70804

DATE 8/17/21

Dear Governor Edwards,

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Sincerely,

Kriss Ralston Signature
KRISS RALSTON Name
124 Flamingo Rd Address
Morgan City, LA 70380 City, State

Governor John Bel Edwards
ATTN: Chief Resilience Officer, Charles Sutcliffe
Office of the Governor
PO Box 94004
Baton Rouge, LA 70804

DATE 9/10/21

Dear Governor Edwards,

I am writing to add my support for the **Atchafalaya Zone** to be named as the site for the Louisiana National Estuarine Research Reserve (LANERR). I make this request for several reasons.

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Finally, **a NERR in the Atchafalaya Zone** would support your announced focus on restoring and enhancing the Atchafalaya Basin. Therefore, I encourage the selection of the Atchafalaya Zone as the Louisiana National Estuarine Research Reserve.

Sincerely,

Polly Verret Signature
Polly Verret Name
1012 Garden St Address
Morgan City, LA City, State

Comment
(optional): _____

Governor John Bel Edwards
ATTN: Chief Resilience Officer, Charles Sutcliffe
Office of the Governor
PO Box 94004
Baton Rouge, LA 70804

DATE Sept 7, 2021

Dear Governor Edwards,

I am writing to add my support for the **Atchafalaya Zone** to be named as the site for the Louisiana National Estuarine Research Reserve (LANERR). I make this request for several reasons.

St. Mary Parish includes the cities of Morgan City and Berwick, located at the mouth of the Atchafalaya River—home to the parish's business infrastructure with water and rail, and nearby Patterson that supplies air transportation, as well as the Bayou Teche National Wildlife Refuge in West St. Mary Parish.

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Finally, **a NERR in the Atchafalaya Zone** would support your announced focus on restoring and enhancing the Atchafalaya Basin. Therefore, I encourage the selection of the Atchafalaya Zone as the Louisiana National Estuarine Research Reserve.

Sincerely,

Mrs Chester Henry Jr Signature
Leda Henry Name
1413 Lakeview Dr. Address
Morgan City, La 70380 City, State

Comment
(optional): _____

Governor John Bel Edwards
ATTN: Chief Resilience Officer, Charles Sutcliffe
Office of the Governor
PO Box 94004
Baton Rouge, LA 70804

DATE Aug. 26, 2021

Dear Governor Edwards,

I am writing to add my support for the **Atchafalaya Zone** to be named as the site for the Louisiana National Estuarine Research Reserve (LANERR). I make this request for several reasons.

St. Mary Parish includes the cities of Morgan City and Berwick, located at the mouth of the Atchafalaya River—home to the parish's business infrastructure with water and rail, and nearby Patterson that supplies air transportation, as well as the Bayou Teche National Wildlife Refuge in West St. Mary Parish.

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Finally, **a NERR in the Atchafalaya Zone** would support your announced focus on restoring and enhancing the Atchafalaya Basin. Therefore, I encourage the selection of the Atchafalaya Zone as the Louisiana National Estuarine Research Reserve.

Sincerely,

Denise Bostic Signature
DENISE Bostic Name
2006 SIXTH ST. Address
MORGAN CITY, LA. 70380 City, State

Comment (optional): This would be great for the Atchafalaya and the whole area.

Governor John Bel Edwards
ATTN: Chief Resilience Officer, Charles Sutcliffe
Office of the Governor
PO Box 94004
Baton Rouge, LA 70804

DATE 8-27-21

Dear Governor Edwards,

I am writing to add my support for the **Atchafalaya Zone** to be named as the site for the Louisiana National Estuarine Research Reserve (LANERR). I make this request for several reasons.

St. Mary Parish includes the cities of Morgan City and Berwick, located at the mouth of the Atchafalaya River—home to the parish's business infrastructure with water and rail, and nearby Patterson that supplies air transportation, as well as the Bayou Teche National Wildlife Refuge in West St. Mary Parish.

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Finally, **a NERR in the Atchafalaya Zone** would support your announced focus on restoring and enhancing the Atchafalaya Basin. Therefore, I encourage the selection of the Atchafalaya Zone as the Louisiana National Estuarine Research Reserve.

Sincerely,

April Leonard Signature
April Leonard Name
1720 Elk St. Address
Morgan City, LA City, State

Comment (optional): I am an art teacher in St. Mary Parish, and I believe the Atchafalaya Zone should be named a LANEER site because the natural beauty of the Atchafalaya is unique and only found in our area.

Governor John Bel Edwards
ATTN: Chief Resilience Officer, Charles Sutcliffe
Office of the Governor
PO Box 94004
Baton Rouge, LA 70804

DATE Sept 22, 2021

Dear Governor Edwards,

I am writing to add my support for the **Atchafalaya Zone** to be named as the site for the Louisiana National Estuarine Research Reserve (LANERR). I make this request for several reasons.

St. Mary Parish includes the cities of Morgan City and Berwick, located at the mouth of the Atchafalaya River—home to the parish's business infrastructure with water and rail, and nearby Patterson that supplies air transportation, as well as the Bayou Teche National Wildlife Refuge in West St. Mary Parish.

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Sincerely,

Teresa A. Raffenmundt Signature

Teresa A. Raffenmundt Name

1804 Cedar St. Address

Morgan City, LA 70380 City, State

Comment
(optional): _____

Governor John Bel Edwards
ATTN: Chief Resilience Officer, Charles Sutcliffe
Office of the Governor
PO Box 94004
Baton Rouge, LA 70804

DATE Sept. 17, 2021

Dear Governor Edwards,

I am writing to add my support for the **Atchafalaya Zone** to be named as the site for the Louisiana National Estuarine Research Reserve (LANERR). I make this request for several reasons.

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Sincerely,

Katherine R. Devalcourt Signature
Katherine R. Devalcourt Name
145 Marcel Dr. Address
Morgan City, LA 70380 City, State

Comment (optional): _____

Governor John Bel Edwards
ATTN: Chief Resilience Officer, Charles Sutcliffe
Office of the Governor
PO Box 94004
Baton Rouge, LA 70804

DATE Sept 17, 2021

Dear Governor Edwards,

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Sincerely,

[signature] Signature
Dannie Devalcourt Name
145 Marcel Dr Address
Morgan City, LA 70380 City, State

Comment
(optional): _____

Governor John Bel Edwards
ATTN: Chief Resilience Officer, Charles Sutcliffe
Office of the Governor
PO Box 94004
Baton Rouge, LA 70804

DATE 9/21/21

Dear Governor Edwards,

I am writing to add my support for the **Atchafalaya Zone** to be named as the site for the Louisiana National Estuarine Research Reserve (LANERR). I make this request for several reasons.

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Sincerely,

Signature
BILL MARIN — Name
1124 MAIN ST — Address
PATTERSON, LA 70392 — City, State

Comment
(optional): _____

Governor John Bel Edwards
ATTN: Chief Resilience Officer, Charles Sutcliffe
Office of the Governor
PO Box 94004
Baton Rouge, LA 70804

DATE 9/20/21

Dear Governor Edwards,

I am writing to add my support for the **Atchafalaya Zone** to be named as the site for the Louisiana National Estuarine Research Reserve (LANERR). I make this request for several reasons.

St. Mary Parish includes the cities of Morgan City and Berwick, located at the mouth of the Atchafalaya River—home to the parish's business infrastructure with water and rail, and nearby Patterson that supplies air transportation, as well as the Bayou Teche National Wildlife Refuge in West St. Mary Parish.

A national research reserve would fit well within the 137,695-acre Atchafalaya Delta Wildlife Management Area already located at the mouths of the Atchafalaya River and Wax Lake Outlet in St. Mary Parish. The Atchafalaya Basin is home to the largest wetland in the United States, the vitality of which is critical to the current and future prosperity of ecological sustainability of Louisiana generally and more specifically Morgan City/Berwick in St. Mary Parish.

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Finally, **a NERR in the Atchafalaya Zone** would support your announced focus on restoring and enhancing the Atchafalaya Basin. Therefore, I encourage the selection of the Atchafalaya Zone as the Louisiana National Estuarine Research Reserve.

Sincerely,

Frances Doiron Signature

Frances Doiron Name

1029 Oak Harbor Dr Address

Morgan City LA 70380 City, State

Comment
(optional): _____

Governor John Bel Edwards
ATTN: Chief Resilience Officer, Charles Sutcliffe
Office of the Governor
PO Box 94004
Baton Rouge, LA 70804

DATE 9/8/21

Dear Governor Edwards,

I am writing to add my support for the **Atchafalaya Zone** to be named as the site for the Louisiana National Estuarine Research Reserve (LANERR). I make this request for several reasons.

St. Mary Parish includes the cities of Morgan City and Berwick, located at the mouth of the Atchafalaya River—home to the parish's business infrastructure with water and rail, and nearby Patterson that supplies air transportation, as well as the Bayou Teche National Wildlife Refuge in West St. Mary Parish.

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Sincerely,

Signature

Zachary Case
Name

1914 Elm St
Address

Morgan City, LA
City, State

Comment
(optional): _____

Governor John Bel Edwards
ATTN: Chief Resilience Officer, Charles Sutcliffe
Office of the Governor
PO Box 94004
Baton Rouge, LA 70804

DATE 9/8/21

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Sincerely,

Janet Taquino _____ Signature
Janet Taquino _____ Name
1007 Hilda St. _____ Address
Morgan City, LA. 70380 _____ City, State

Comment
(optional):_____
_____
_____

Governor John Bel Edwards
ATTN: Chief Resilience Officer, Charles Sutcliffe
Office of the Governor
PO Box 94004
Baton Rouge, LA 70804

DATE 9-09-21

Dear Governor Edwards,

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Sincerely,

Mary B. Tamborello Signature
Mary B. Tamborello Name
31 Chennault St. Address
Morgan City, La 70380 City, State

Comment (optional): _____

Governor John Bel Edwards
ATTN: Chief Resilience Officer, Charles Sutcliffe
Office of the Governor
PO Box 94004
Baton Rouge, LA 70804

DATE 09/08/21

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Sincerely,

Christa T. Mancuso Signature
Christina T. Mancuso Name
822 Walnut Drive Address
Morgan City, LA City, State

Comment
(optional): _____

Governor John Bel Edwards
ATTN: Chief Resilience Officer, Charles Sutcliffe
Office of the Governor
PO Box 94004
Baton Rouge, LA 70804

DATE 9/8/21

Dear Governor Edwards,

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Sincerely,

Signature

Name

Address

City, State

Comment
(optional):

Governor John Bel Edwards
ATTN: Chief Resilience Officer, Charles Sutcliffe
Office of the Governor
PO Box 94004
Baton Rouge, LA 70804

DATE 9-8-21

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Sincerely,

Marcia Bergeron Signature

Name

29 Chennault St Address

Morgan City, LA City, State

Comment
(optional): _____

Governor John Bel Edwards
ATTN: Chief Resilience Officer, Charles Sutcliffe
Office of the Governor
PO Box 94004
Baton Rouge, LA 70804

DATE Sept. 22, 2021

Dear Governor Edwards,

I am writing to add my support for the **Atchafalaya Zone** to be named as the site for the Louisiana National Estuarine Research Reserve (LANERR). I make this request for several reasons.

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Sincerely,

Paul Koppmeyer Signature
Paul Koppmeyer Name
1804 Cedar St Address
Morgan City, LA City, State

Comment
(optional): _____

Governor John Bel Edwards
ATTN: Chief Resilience Officer, Charles Sutcliffe
Office of the Governor
PO Box 94004
Baton Rouge, LA 70804

DATE 9-9-21

Dear Governor Edwards,

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Sincerely,

Signature

Lenny Cortez
Name

PO Box 512
Address

Morgan City LA 70384
City, State

Comment
(optional): _____

Governor John Bel Edwards
ATTN: Chief Resilience Officer, Charles Sutcliffe
Office of the Governor
PO Box 94004
Baton Rouge, LA 70804

DATE 9-7-2021

Dear Governor Edwards,

I am writing to add my support for the **Atchafalaya Zone** to be named as the site for the Louisiana National Estuarine Research Reserve (LANERR). I make this request for several reasons.

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Sincerely,

Veronica Allen Signature

Veronica Allen Name

130 Oak St Address

Morgan City, LA City, State

Comment
(optional): _____

Governor John Bel Edwards
ATTN: Chief Resilience Officer, Charles Sutcliffe
Office of the Governor
PO Box 94004
Baton Rouge, LA 70804

DATE 9-7-2021

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Sincerely,

Kenneth Lea Hebert Signature
Kenneth Lea Hebert Name
1821 Victor II Blvd Address
M.C., LA 70380 City, State

Comment
(optional): _____

Governor John Bel Edwards
ATTN: Chief Resilience Officer, Charles Sutcliffe
Office of the Governor
PO Box 94004
Baton Rouge, LA 70804

DATE Sept 7, 2021

Dear Governor Edwards,

I am writing to add my support for the **Atchafalaya Zone** to be named as the site for the Louisiana National Estuarine Research Reserve (LANERR). I make this request for several reasons.

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Sincerely,

[signature] Signature
CHESTER HENRY JR Name
1413 LAKEWOOD DR Address
MORGAN CITY LA City, State

Comment
(optional):______________________________

Governor John Bel Edwards
ATTN: Chief Resilience Officer, Charles Sutcliffe
Office of the Governor
PO Box 94004
Baton Rouge, LA 70804

DATE 9/9/2024

Dear Governor Edwards,

I am writing to add my support for the **Atchafalaya Zone** to be named as the site for the Louisiana National Estuarine Research Reserve (LANERR). I make this request for several reasons.

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Sincerely,

Heather Sutton — Signature
Heather Sutton — Name
1405 Walnut Dr. — Address
Morgan City LA — City, State

Comment (optional): _____

Governor John Bel Edwards
ATTN: Chief Resilience Officer, Charles Sutcliffe
Office of the Governor
PO Box 94004
Baton Rouge, LA 70804

DATE 9/13/2021

Dear Governor Edwards,

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Sincerely,

Jill M Tamporello Signature
Jill M Tamporello Name
413 Renwick Blvd. Address
Berwick, LA 70342 City, State

Comment
(optional): _____

Governor John Bel Edwards
ATTN: Chief Resilience Officer, Charles Sutcliffe
Office of the Governor
PO Box 94004
Baton Rouge, LA 70804

DATE_____

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Sincerely,

Marilyn Chenevert Signature
Marilyn Chenevert Name
900 Wytchwood Dr. Address
Morgan City, LA. 70380 City, State

Comment
(optional):_____
_____
_____

Governor John Bel Edwards
ATTN: Chief Resilience Officer, Charles Sutcliffe
Office of the Governor
PO Box 94004
Baton Rouge, LA 70804

DATE 9/7/21

Dear Governor Edwards,

I am writing to add my support for the **Atchafalaya Zone** to be named as the site for the Louisiana National Estuarine Research Reserve (LANERR). I make this request for several reasons.

St. Mary Parish includes the cities of Morgan City and Berwick, located at the mouth of the Atchafalaya River—home to the parish's business infrastructure with water and rail, and nearby Patterson that supplies air transportation, as well as the Bayou Teche National Wildlife Refuge in West St. Mary Parish.

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Finally, **a NERR in the Atchafalaya Zone** would support your announced focus on restoring and enhancing the Atchafalaya Basin. Therefore, I encourage the selection of the Atchafalaya Zone as the Louisiana National Estuarine Research Reserve.

Sincerely,

Donna Sauce Signature
Donna Sauce Name
204 Jeffery St. Address
Patterson, LA 70392 City, State

Comment
(optional): _____

Governor John Bel Edwards
ATTN: Chief Resilience Officer, Charles Sutcliffe
Office of the Governor
PO Box 94004
Baton Rouge, LA 70804

DATE 4-9-2021

Dear Governor Edwards,

I am writing to add my support for the **Atchafalaya Zone** to be named as the site for the Louisiana National Estuarine Research Reserve (LANERR). I make this request for several reasons.

St. Mary Parish includes the cities of Morgan City and Berwick, located at the mouth of the Atchafalaya River—home to the parish's business infrastructure with water and rail, and nearby Patterson that supplies air transportation, as well as the Bayou Teche National Wildlife Refuge in West St. Mary Parish.

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Sincerely,

Regina Guidry _____ Signature
Regina Guidry _____ Name
909 Dixon St. _____ Address
Morgan City, La. _____ City, State

Comment
(optional): _____
_____
_____

Governor John Bel Edwards
ATTN: Chief Resilience Officer, Charles Sutcliffe
Office of the Governor
PO Box 94004
Baton Rouge, LA 70804

DATE Sept 7, 2021

Dear Governor Edwards,

I am writing to add my support for the **Atchafalaya Zone** to be named as the site for the Louisiana National Estuarine Research Reserve (LANERR). I make this request for several reasons.

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Sincerely,

Clarisse C. Glynn Signature
CLARISSE C. GLYNN Name
802 Poplar St Address
Morgan City, La. 70380 City, State

Comment
(optional): _____

Governor John Bel Edwards
ATTN: Chief Resilience Officer, Charles Sutcliffe
Office of the Governor
PO Box 94004
Baton Rouge, LA 70804

DATE 9/5/21

Dear Governor Edwards,

I am writing to add my support for the **Atchafalaya Zone** to be named as the site for the Louisiana National Estuarine Research Reserve (LANERR). I make this request for several reasons.

St. Mary Parish includes the cities of Morgan City and Berwick, located at the mouth of the Atchafalaya River—home to the parish's business infrastructure with water and rail, and nearby Patterson that supplies air transportation, as well as the Bayou Teche National Wildlife Refuge in West St. Mary Parish.

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Sincerely,

Signature

BRIAN S. THERIOT
Name

402 CLOVERDALE DR.
Address

BERWICK, LA 70342
City, State

Comment
(optional):_____

Governor John Bel Edwards
ATTN: Chief Resilience Officer, Charles Sutcliffe
Office of the Governor
PO Box 94004
Baton Rouge, LA 70804

DATE 9/5/21

Dear Governor Edwards,

I am writing to add my support for the **Atchafalaya Zone** to be named as the site for the Louisiana National Estuarine Research Reserve (LANERR). I make this request for several reasons.

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Sincerely,

Anne H. Theriot Signature
Anne H. Theriot Name
402 Cloverdale Dr. Address
Berwick, LA 70342 City, State

Comment
(optional):_____
_____
_____

Governor John Bel Edwards
ATTN: Chief Resilience Officer, Charles Sutcliffe
Office of the Governor
PO Box 94004
Baton Rouge, LA 70804

DATE 9/7/21

Dear Governor Edwards,

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Sincerely,

Stephanie Lind Signature
Stephanie Lind Name
20 Marquis Manor Address
Morgan City, LA City, State

Comment
(optional): _____

Governor John Bel Edwards
ATTN: Chief Resilience Officer, Charles Sutcliffe
Office of the Governor
PO Box 94004
Baton Rouge, LA 70804

DATE 9-10-21

Dear Governor Edwards,

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Sincerely,

Gladys Rhoder Signature

Name

2420 Tupelo Address

Morgan City, La. City, State
70380

Comment
(optional): _____

Governor John Bel Edwards
ATTN: Chief Resilience Officer, Charles Sutcliffe
Office of the Governor
PO Box 94004
Baton Rouge, LA 70804

DATE 9-10-21

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Sincerely,

Maurice Rhodes Signature

_____ Name

2420 Tupelo Address

Morgan City, La. City, State

Comment
(optional): _____

Governor John Bel Edwards
ATTN: Chief Resilience Officer, Charles Sutcliffe
Office of the Governor
PO Box 94004
Baton Rouge, LA 70804

DATE 9/9/2021

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Sincerely,

Neysa Sauce Signature
Neysa Sauce Name
3000 Helen Dr. Address
Morgan City, LA 70380 City, State

Comment
(optional): _____

Governor John Bel Edwards
ATTN: Chief Resilience Officer, Charles Sutcliffe
Office of the Governor
PO Box 94004
Baton Rouge, LA 70804

DATE 9/17/21

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Sincerely,

Thomas Gegenheimer Signature
Thomas Gegenheimer Name
2263 Brady Rd. Address
Theriot, LA 70397 City, State

Comment
(optional): _____
_____
_____

Governor John Bel Edwards
ATTN: Chief Resilience Officer, Charles Sutcliffe
Office of the Governor
PO Box 94004
Baton Rouge, LA 70804

DATE 9-10-21

Dear Governor Edwards,

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Sincerely,

April Lionard Signature
April Lionard Name
1720 Elk Street Address
Morgan City, LA City, State

Comment (optional): _____

Governor John Bel Edwards
ATTN: Chief Resilience Officer, Charles Sutcliffe
Office of the Governor
PO Box 94004
Baton Rouge, LA 70804

DATE 9-8-21

Dear Governor Edwards,

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Sincerely,

Mary Jo Beadle Signature
Mary Jo Beadle Name
P.O. Box 807 Address
Berwick, LA 70342 City, State

Comment
(optional): _____

Governor John Bel Edwards
ATTN: Chief Resilience Officer, Charles Sutcliffe
Office of the Governor
PO Box 94004
Baton Rouge, LA 70804

DATE 8-29-21

Dear Governor Edwards,

I am writing to add my support for the **Atchafalaya Zone** to be named as the site for the Louisiana National Estuarine Research Reserve (LANERR). I make this request for several reasons.

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Sincerely,

Michael & Erin Patterson Signature
603 Tchefuncte Dr Name
Berwick, LA 70342 Address
_______________ City, State

Comment
(optional): _______________

Governor John Bel Edwards
ATTN: Chief Resilience Officer, Charles Sutcliffe
Office of the Governor
PO Box 94004
Baton Rouge, LA 70804

DATE 9/8/21

Dear Governor Edwards,

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Sincerely,

Katie Case Signature
Katie Case Name
1914 Elm Street Address
Morgan City, LA 70380 City, State

Comment
(optional): _____

Governor John Bel Edwards
ATTN: Chief Resilience Officer, Charles Sutcliffe
Office of the Governor
PO Box 94004
Baton Rouge, LA 70804

DATE 9/20/2021

Dear Governor Edwards,

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Sincerely,

_____ Signature
_____ Name
_____ Address
_____ City, State

Robert M. Bourgeois, MD, MPH
BOURGEOIS MEDICAL CLINIC
1201 Kenneth St.
Morgan City, LA 70380
(985) 384-3355
www.b-m-c.net

Comment (optional): _____

Governor John Bel Edwards
ATTN: Chief Resilience Officer, Charles Sutcliffe
Office of the Governor
PO Box 94004
Baton Rouge, LA 70804

DATE SEPT 23, 2021

Dear Governor Edwards,

I am writing to add my support for the **Atchafalaya Zone** to be named as the site for the Louisiana National Estuarine Research Reserve (LANERR). I make this request for several reasons.

St. Mary Parish includes the cities of Morgan City and Berwick, located at the mouth of the Atchafalaya River—home to the parish's business infrastructure with water and rail, and nearby Patterson that supplies air transportation, as well as the Bayou Teche National Wildlife Refuge in West St. Mary Parish.

A national research reserve would fit well within the 137,695-acre Atchafalaya Delta Wildlife Management Area already located at the mouths of the Atchafalaya River and Wax Lake Outlet in St. Mary Parish. The Atchafalaya Basin is home to the largest wetland in the United States, the vitality of which is critical to the current and future prosperity of ecological sustainability of Louisiana generally and more specifically Morgan City/Berwick in St. Mary Parish.

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Finally, **a NERR in the Atchafalaya Zone** would support your announced focus on restoring and enhancing the Atchafalaya Basin. Therefore, I encourage the selection of the Atchafalaya Zone as the Louisiana National Estuarine Research Reserve.

Sincerely,

Paul Vella Jr. Signature
PAUL VELLA JR. Name
808 HILDA STREET Address
MORGAN CITY, LA 7038[illegible] City, State

Comment
(optional): _____

Governor John Bel Edwards
ATTN: Chief Resilience Officer, Charles Sutcliffe
Office of the Governor
PO Box 94004
Baton Rouge, LA 70804

DATE 9/9/2021

Dear Governor Edwards,

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Sincerely,

Bret Blanco _____ Signature
Bret Blanco _____ Name
29 Chennault St _____ Address
Morgan City LA _____ City, State

Comment
(optional): _____

Governor John Bel Edwards
ATTN: Chief Resilience Officer, Charles Sutcliffe
Office of the Governor
PO Box 94004
Baton Rouge, LA 70804

DATE 9/13/2021

Dear Governor Edwards,

I am writing to add my support for the **Atchafalaya Zone** to be named as the site for the Louisiana National Estuarine Research Reserve (LANERR). I make this request for several reasons.

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Sincerely,

[signature] Signature
Nicholas L. Tamporello Name
413 Renwick Blvd. Address
Berwick, LA 70342 City, State

Comment
(optional): _____

Governor John Bel Edwards
ATTN: Chief Resilience Officer, Charles Sutcliffe
Office of the Governor
PO Box 94004
Baton Rouge, LA 70804

DATE 9/9/2021

Dear Governor Edwards,

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Sincerely,

Brooke Blanco Signature
Brooke Blanco Name
1405 Walnut Dr. Address
Morgan City LA City, State

Comment
(optional): _____

Governor John Bel Edwards
ATTN: Chief Resilience Officer, Charles Sutcliffe
Office of the Governor
PO Box 94004
Baton Rouge, LA 70804

DATE 10/4/21

Dear Governor Edwards,

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Sincerely,

Linda Thomas Signature
Linda Thomas Name
4309 Cantrell Dr. Address
Berwick, LA 70342 City, State

Comment
(optional):_____
_____
_____

Governor John Bel Edwards
ATTN: Chief Resilience Officer, Charles Sutcliffe
Office of the Governor
PO Box 94004
Baton Rouge, LA 70804

DATE 9/22/21

Dear Governor Edwards,

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Sincerely,

Charles R Arnold Signature
Charles R Arnold Name
902 Belanger St Address
Morgan City, La. City, State
70380

Comment
(optional): _____

Governor John Bel Edwards
ATTN: Chief Resilience Officer, Charles Sutcliffe
Office of the Governor
PO Box 94004
Baton Rouge, LA 70804

DATE 9/26/21

Dear Governor Edwards,

I am writing to add my support for the **Atchafalaya Zone** to be named as the site for the Louisiana National Estuarine Research Reserve (LANERR). I make this request for several reasons.

St. Mary Parish includes the cities of Morgan City and Berwick, located at the mouth of the Atchafalaya River—home to the parish's business infrastructure with water and rail, and nearby Patterson that supplies air transportation, as well as the Bayou Teche National Wildlife Refuge in West St. Mary Parish.

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Sincerely,

Shane Sauce Signature
Shane Sauce Name
3000 Helen Dr Address
Morgan City, La 70380 City, State

Comment
(optional): _____

Governor John Bel Edwards
ATTN: Chief Resilience Officer, Charles Sutcliffe
Office of the Governor
PO Box 94004
Baton Rouge, LA 70804

DATE 9/26/21

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Sincerely,

Katherine Mahler Signature
Katherine Mahler Name
205 Jones St Address
Berwick LA 70342 City, State

Comment
(optional): _____

Governor John Bel Edwards
ATTN: Chief Resilience Officer, Charles Sutcliffe
Office of the Governor
PO Box 94004
Baton Rouge, LA 70804

DATE 9/26/21

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Sincerely,

Michelle Aikman Signature
Michelle Aikman Name
3127 Raven Drive Address
Morgan City, LA, 70381 City, State

Comment
(optional): _____

Governor John Bel Edwards
ATTN: Chief Resilience Officer, Charles Sutcliffe
Office of the Governor
PO Box 94004
Baton Rouge, LA 70804

DATE 10.5.21

Dear Governor Edwards,

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Sincerely,

Michelle Dem Signature
Michelle Demming Name
1025 Sycamore St. Address
Morgan City, LA. 70380 City, State

Comment
(optional): _____

Governor John Bel Edwards
ATTN: Chief Resilience Officer, Charles Sutcliffe
Office of the Governor
PO Box 94004
Baton Rouge, LA 70804

DATE 10-1-21

Dear Governor Edwards,

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Sincerely, S R
_____ Signature
Sean Denning Name
1025 Sycamore Street Address
Morgan City, LA. City, State
70380

Comment
(optional):_____

Governor John Bel Edwards
ATTN: Chief Resilience Officer, Charles Sutcliffe
Office of the Governor
PO Box 94004
Baton Rouge, LA 70804

DATE_____

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Sincerely,

_____Signature
Joseph J Giordano Name
116 Windsor St. Address
Houma, LA 70360 City, State

Comment
(optional):_____
_____
_____

Governor John Bel Edwards
ATTN: Chief Resilience Officer, Charles Sutcliffe
Office of the Governor
PO Box 94004
Baton Rouge, LA 70804

DATE 10-1-21

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Sincerely,

[signature] Signature
Christopher Tart Name
1204 Second St Address
Morgan City LA 70380 City, State

Comment
(optional): _____

Governor John Bel Edwards
ATTN: Chief Resilience Officer, Charles Sutcliffe
Office of the Governor
PO Box 94004
Baton Rouge, LA 70804

DATE 9-30-21

Dear Governor Edwards,

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Sincerely,

[signature] Signature
ERIK SUSKEY Name
300 JACOBS ST Address
BERWICK LA 70342 City, State

Comment
(optional): _____

Governor John Bel Edwards
ATTN: Chief Resilience Officer, Charles Sutcliffe
Office of the Governor
PO Box 94004
Baton Rouge, LA 70804

DATE 10-1-21

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Sincerely,

Bill Acosta Signature
Bill Acosta Name
3017 Hwy 70 Address
Morgan City, La 70380 City, State

Comment
(optional): _____

Governor John Bel Edwards
ATTN: Chief Resilience Officer, Charles Sutcliffe
Office of the Governor
PO Box 94004
Baton Rouge, LA 70804

DATE 9/15/2021

Dear Governor Edwards,

I am writing to add my support for the **Atchafalaya Zone** to be named as the site for the Louisiana National Estuarine Research Reserve (LANERR). I make this request for several reasons.

St. Mary Parish includes the cities of Morgan City and Berwick, located at the mouth of the Atchafalaya River—home to the parish's business infrastructure with water and rail, and nearby Patterson that supplies air transportation, as well as the Bayou Teche National Wildlife Refuge in West St. Mary Parish.

A national research reserve would fit well within the 137,695-acre Atchafalaya Delta Wildlife Management Area already located at the mouths of the Atchafalaya River and Wax Lake Outlet in St. Mary Parish. The Atchafalaya Basin is home to the largest wetland in the United States, the vitality of which is critical to the current and future prosperity of ecological sustainability of Louisiana generally and more specifically Morgan City/Berwick in St. Mary Parish.

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Finally, **a NERR in the Atchafalaya Zone** would support your announced focus on restoring and enhancing the Atchafalaya Basin. Therefore, I encourage the selection of the Atchafalaya Zone as the Louisiana National Estuarine Research Reserve.

Sincerely,

Calvin Hull Signature
Johnny Hymel jr. Name
1138 Gen. Clark St. Address
Morgan City, LA 70380 City, State

Comment
(optional): _____

Governor John Bel Edwards
ATTN: Chief Resilience Officer, Charles Sutcliffe
Office of the Governor
PO Box 94004
Baton Rouge, LA 70804

DATE 9-14-21

Dear Governor Edwards,

I am writing to add my support for the **Atchafalaya Zone** to be named as the site for the Louisiana National Estuarine Research Reserve (LANERR). I make this request for several reasons.

St. Mary Parish includes the cities of Morgan City and Berwick, located at the mouth of the Atchafalaya River—home to the parish's business infrastructure with water and rail, and nearby Patterson that supplies air transportation, as well as the Bayou Teche National Wildlife Refuge in West St. Mary Parish.

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Sincerely,

Betty J. Pierce Signature
Betty J. Pierce Name
711 Gen. MacArthur St. Address
Morgan City, La. 70380 City, State

Comment
(optional):_____
_____
_____

Governor John Bel Edwards
ATTN: Chief Resilience Officer, Charles Sutcliffe
Office of the Governor
PO Box 94004
Baton Rouge, LA 70804

DATE 9/12/2021

Dear Governor Edwards,

I am writing to add my support for the **Atchafalaya Zone** to be named as the site for the Louisiana National Estuarine Research Reserve (LANERR). I make this request for several reasons.

St. Mary Parish includes the cities of Morgan City and Berwick, located at the mouth of the Atchafalaya River—home to the parish's business infrastructure with water and rail, and nearby Patterson that supplies air transportation, as well as the Bayou Teche National Wildlife Refuge in West St. Mary Parish.

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Sincerely,

Samuel J Jones Signature
Samuel J Jones Name
1106 2nd Street Address
Morgan City, La. 70380 City, State

Comment
(optional): _____

Governor John Bel Edwards
ATTN: Chief Resilience Officer, Charles Sutcliffe
Office of the Governor
PO Box 94004
Baton Rouge, LA 70804

DATE 9/22/21

Dear Governor Edwards,

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St. Mary Parish includes the cities of Morgan City and Berwick, located at the mouth of the Atchafalaya River—home to the parish's business infrastructure with water and rail, and nearby Patterson that supplies air transportation, as well as the Bayou Teche National Wildlife Refuge in West St. Mary Parish.

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Sincerely,

Jimmie D Sause Signature
Jimmie Sause Name
1921 River Road Lot #11 Address
Berwick, La 70342 City, State

Comment
(optional):

Governor John Bel Edwards
ATTN: Chief Resilience Officer, Charles Sutcliffe
Office of the Governor
PO Box 94004
Baton Rouge, LA 70804

DATE 9/30/21

Dear Governor Edwards,

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St. Mary Parish includes the cities of Morgan City and Berwick, located at the mouth of the Atchafalaya River—home to the parish's business infrastructure with water and rail, and nearby Patterson that supplies air transportation, as well as the Bayou Teche National Wildlife Refuge in West St. Mary Parish.

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Sincerely,

Paula R. Ingram Signature

Name

21 Magnus Manor Address

Morgan City, LA 70380 City, State

Comment (optional): _____

Governor John Bel Edwards
ATTN: Chief Resilience Officer, Charles Sutcliffe
Office of the Governor
PO Box 94004
Baton Rouge, LA 70804

DATE 10/1/2021

Dear Governor Edwards,

I am writing to add my support for the **Atchafalaya Zone** to be named as the site for the Louisiana National Estuarine Research Reserve (LANERR). I make this request for several reasons.

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Sincerely,

Barbara B. LeLeux Signature
Barbara B. LeLeux Name
592½ Fairview Dr. Address
Berwick, LA 70342 City, State

Comment
(optional): _____
_____
_____

Governor John Bel Edwards
ATTN: Chief Resilience Officer, Charles Sutcliffe
Office of the Governor
PO Box 94004
Baton Rouge, LA 70804

DATE 8/27/21

Dear Governor Edwards,

I am writing to add my support for the **Atchafalaya Zone** to be named as the site for the Louisiana National Estuarine Research Reserve (LANERR). I make this request for several reasons.

St. Mary Parish includes the cities of Morgan City and Berwick, located at the mouth of the Atchafalaya River—home to the parish's business infrastructure with water and rail, and nearby Patterson that supplies air transportation, as well as the Bayou Teche National Wildlife Refuge in West St. Mary Parish.

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Sincerely,

Tony Minton Signature
Tommy Minton Name
1808 Dale St. Address
Morgan City, LA City, State

Comment
(optional): _____

Governor John Bel Edwards
ATTN: Chief Resilience Officer, Charles Sutcliffe
Office of the Governor
PO Box 94004
Baton Rouge, LA 70804

DATE 9/19/21

Dear Governor Edwards,

I am writing to add my support for the **Atchafalaya Zone** to be named as the site for the Louisiana National Estuarine Research Reserve (LANERR). I make this request for several reasons.

St. Mary Parish includes the cities of Morgan City and Berwick, located at the mouth of the Atchafalaya River—home to the parish's business infrastructure with water and rail, and nearby Patterson that supplies air transportation, as well as the Bayou Teche National Wildlife Refuge in West St. Mary Parish.

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Sincerely,

Lee P. Holcomb — Signature
Lee P. Holcomb — Name
1712 Elk St. — Address
Morgan City, LA — City, State

Comment (optional): _____

Governor John Bel Edwards
ATTN: Chief Resilience Officer, Charles Sutcliffe
Office of the Governor
PO Box 94004
Baton Rouge, LA 70804

DATE 9/26/21

Dear Governor Edwards,

I am writing to add my support for the **Atchafalaya Zone** to be named as the site for the Louisiana National Estuarine Research Reserve (LANERR). I make this request for several reasons.

St. Mary Parish includes the cities of Morgan City and Berwick, located at the mouth of the Atchafalaya River—home to the parish's business infrastructure with water and rail, and nearby Patterson that supplies air transportation, as well as the Bayou Teche National Wildlife Refuge in West St. Mary Parish.

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Sincerely,

Monica Arnie Signature
Monica Arnie Name
902 Belanger ST Address
Morgan City, La. City, State
70380

Comment
(optional): _____

Governor John Bel Edwards
ATTN: Chief Resilience Officer, Charles Sutcliffe
Office of the Governor
PO Box 94004
Baton Rouge, LA 70804

DATE 8/24/2021

Dear Governor Edwards,

I am writing to add my support for the **Atchafalaya Zone** to be named as the site for the Louisiana National Estuarine Research Reserve (LANERR). I make this request for several reasons.

St. Mary Parish includes the cities of Morgan City and Berwick, located at the mouth of the Atchafalaya River—home to the parish's business infrastructure with water and rail, and nearby Patterson that supplies air transportation, as well as the Bayou Teche National Wildlife Refuge in West St. Mary Parish.

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Sincerely,

Signature

Mandy Miller
Name

709 Kent St
Address

Patterson, LA 70392
City, State

Comment
(optional): _____

Governor John Bel Edwards
ATTN: Chief Resilience Officer, Charles Sutcliffe
Office of the Governor
PO Box 94004
Baton Rouge, LA 70804

DATE 10/3/21

Dear Governor Edwards,

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Sincerely,

A. Fleury Signature
Ashley H. Fleury Name
403 Lawrence St Address
Morgan City, LA 70380 City, State

Comment
(optional):_____

Governor John Bel Edwards
ATTN: Chief Resilience Officer, Charles Sutcliffe
Office of the Governor
PO Box 94004
Baton Rouge, LA 70804

DATE 9·25·21

Dear Governor Edwards,

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Sincerely,

Carl P. Bgum Signature
CARL P. BGUM Name
3 MARQUIS MANOR Address
MORGAN CITY, LA 70380 City, State

Comment
(optional):

Governor John Bel Edwards
ATTN: Chief Resilience Officer, Charles Sutcliffe
Office of the Governor
PO Box 94004
Baton Rouge, LA 70804

DATE 10 | 3 | 21

Dear Governor Edwards,

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Sincerely,

[signature] Signature
Rynika Hebert Name
1821 Victor II Blvd Address
Morgan City, LA 70380 City, State

Comment
(optional): ______________________________

Governor John Bel Edwards
ATTN: Chief Resilience Officer, Charles Sutcliffe
Office of the Governor
PO Box 94004
Baton Rouge, LA 70804

DATE 10/4/21

Dear Governor Edwards,

I am writing to add my support for the **Atchafalaya Zone** to be named as the site for the Louisiana National Estuarine Research Reserve (LANERR). I make this request for several reasons.

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Sincerely,

Omar Flores Signature
OMAR FLORES Name
403 Lawrence St Address
Morgan City, LA 70380 City, State

Comment
(optional): _____

Barataria Bay NERR Final Proposal Team Members:

John A. Nyman (LSU), Team Lead

Tracy Quirk (LSU), Co-Lead

Julie Whitbeck (Jean Lafitte National Park)

Quenton Fontenot (Nicholls State University)

Simone Maloz (Nicholls State University)

Carol Wilson (LSU)

Donata Henry (Tulane)

John Helmers (Plaquemines Parish Government)

Richie Blink (Plaquemines Parish Government)

Carlton LaFrance (Plaquemines Parish Government)

Mark Cognevich (Plaquemines Parish Government)

Dominique Seibert (LSU Ag Center; LA Seagrant)

David Illgen (Jefferson Parish Government)

Michelle Gonzales (Jefferson Parish Government)

Jason Smith (Jefferson Parish Government)

College of the
Coast & Environment
Oceanography & Coastal Sciences

May 4, 2022

RE: Barataria Bay Louisiana National Estuarine Research Reserve Proposal

Dear La NERR Executive Committee:

There are many reasons why Barataria Basin should be the location of the Louisiana National Estuarine Research Reserve (NERR).

Barataria Basin occupies a wide salinity gradient with a diverse array of habitat types from bottomland hardwood forest, freshwater swamp, one of the largest areas of deltaic flotant in the world, and a large and productive estuarine system to barrier islands and marsh-mangrove ecotones. It has been the location of many historic (i.e., baseline) and current monitoring and research activities many of which we have added and detailed in this revised Final Report. A NERR will serve to strengthen and amalgamate the scientific, education, and outreach efforts in a basin that will be the location of the largest delta restoration project in the world to date, the Mid-Barataria Bay Sediment Diversion.

A site-specific NERR in Barataria Basin would support and enhance the ongoing effort to understand baseline conditions of the estuary and wetlands, the effects of human impacts, as well as the effects of coastal restoration efforts including a freshwater diversion (i.e., Davis Pond), marsh creation projects, and a major river diversion. The Louisiana Coastal Protection and Restoration Authority along with RESTORE Center of Excellence and The Water Institute have galvanized research and modeling initiatives that focus on providing data and information to inform the Louisiana Coastal Master Plans with much of the emphasis predicting the effects of a large sediment diversion on Barataria Basin. NOAA's Integrated Ecosystem Assessment also has a focus on the Barataria Basin to inform management decisions regarding the planned Mid-Barataria Sediment Diversion (MBSD) including an important socioeconomic human dimension aspect. NERR would provide an organized structure to support and continue this effort. The excellent education and outreach components of a NERR would also aid in bridging gaps between research, restoration, and stakeholder perspectives. Given that NERRs do not add regulations for management, site-specific research, education and monitoring efforts (strength of a NERR) can provide feedback to important stakeholders such as oyster- and fishermen.

A NERR in Barataria Basin would strengthen existing and new partnerships including Barataria - Terrebonne National Estuary Program, Louisiana Sea Grant, federal agencies such as NOAA, EPA, USACE, as well as University researchers building on work that is already underway in various entities. Important landowners including the Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries (e.g., Lake Salvador Wildlife Management Area and Timken Wildlife Management Area, Elmer's Island Wildlife Refuge), Grand Isle Fisheries Research Lab, Louisiana State Parks (e.g., Grand Isle State Park), the National Park Service (e.g., Jean Lafitte National Historic Park and Preserve) and The Nature Conservancy will also benefit from this federal-state partnership.

A Barataria NERR is in close proximity to New Orleans and has the potential to attract many visitors and educators. There are approximately 125 K-12 schools within 150 miles from Barataria, and 10 major universities in the greater New Orleans area.

We believe that this portion of Louisiana is more conducive to research than indicated by the Criteria Component Scores because hundreds of thousands of acres of privately owned emergent wetlands are as available to estuarine researchers as are emergent wetlands owned by the Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries. LDWF and numerous private landowners require researchers to submit descriptions of research activities, locations where research will be conducted, travel routes, types of boats, and likely dates of data collection. Permits generally are granted, often with restrictions on types of boats that can be used and dates when access is allowed, regardless of whether the landowner is private or public. For example, a single, ongoing study of secretive marsh birds in southeastern Louisiana has permission to conduct research on emergent wetlands owned by private companies such as Louisiana Land & Exploration Company LLC and Apache Louisiana Minerals LLC, who own ~906,000 acres between them. Other private landowners who own less than 100,000 each in this region of Louisiana and who currently are allowing estuarine researchers to access their lands include Rigolets Limited Partnership, and Rocmill, Inc. Thus, we believe that the tens of thousands of emergent wetlands that are owned by private landowners who are as accommodating at LDWF to estuarine researchers should be viewed as an advantage rather than a limitation.

We believe that this portion of Louisiana offers the best opportunity to focus research and outreach that focuses on oysters and oyster harvesters. Oysters are important because

- Louisiana continues to lead the nation in oyster production; much of which comes from almost 100,000 acres of oyster leases in this portion of Louisiana.
- A large portion of Louisiana's oyster harvesting community lives in Barataria Basin.
- The planned Mid-Barataria Basin Sediment Diversion will introduce tremendous uncertainty for many years while oysters and oyster harvester respond to changing salinity.
- The largest oyster research lab along the United States' Gulf of Mexico coast, based on larval rearing capacity is located within this portion of Louisiana: the Michael C. Voisin Oyster Hatchery on Grand Isle (see https://www.laseagrant.org/outreach/oyster-research-lab/).
- A growing interest by oyster harvesters and LDWF for the development of Alternative Oyster Culture practices (see https://www.wlf.louisiana.gov/page/alternative-oyster-culture).
- Oysters are affected by parameters outside those monitored by Louisiana's Coastwide Reference Monitoring System (CRMS), which focuses on the effects of water depth and water salinity on emergent vegetation. Thus, CRMS does not monitor water quality parameters other than salinity, such as dissolved oxygen, that might have helped explain a massive oyster die-off on the east side of Barataria Basin in January of 2021 that was noted in local news.

Thus, we believe that this portion of Louisiana's natural and human communities are in greatest need of additional research, of additional dialog between harvesters and researchers, and additional monitoring such as can be obtained and focused by a Louisianan National Estuarine Research Reserve.

Since the scoring of site proposal, we have added a number of important details to consider including:

- How the site would strengthen new and existing partnerships
- Additional information on geology and hydrology

- Ongoing monitoring and educational activities
- Facilities at Jean Lafitte NP and LUMCON
- Points of road and boat access
- Proximity to K-12 schools

Given the historic and future research and education efforts, partnerships, and the potential for understanding and communicating the importance and effects of large-scale coastal restoration in Louisiana, it is clear that we need a Barataria NERR!

Sincerely,

Tracy Quirk, Co-Chair Barataria Proposal Team
John A. Nyman, Chair of the Barataria Proposal Team

Section I. Physical description of state land and waters for consideration

The proposed Barataria Bay National Estuarine Research Reserve includes **State Land**s of Lake Salvador Wildlife Management Area, Timken Wildlife Management Area, Grand Isle Fisheries Research Lab, Elmer's Island Wildlife Refuge, Grand Isle State Park; **Federal Lands** of Jean Lafitte National Historic Park and Preserve (Barataria Preserve); **Other Public and Parish Lands** of Jefferson Parish Louisiana Wetlands Education Center; and **Private Lands** of The Nature Conservancy – Grand Isle, Louisiana and **State Waters and Water Bottoms** throughout the Barataria Basin. There are two offers for locating the Headquarters for the Barataria Bay LA NERR – one is in Lafitte, LA, The Louisiana Wetland Education Center. The town of Jean Lafitte is interested in hosting a NERR HQ on their land at the Wetland Education Center, which is a public services/education project that has initial investment for construction. Plaquemines Parish is interested in hosting a NERR HQ on 10 acre of their land several miles south of the proposed location of the Mid-Barataria Bay Diversion.

Barataria Basin allows numerous configurations for a NERR. These configurations can be classified into three categories. One category of configurations maximizes the area within a NERR by spanning from Salvador WMA in the north to Grand Isle in the south. A second category of configurations focuses NERR resources on publicly owned emergent wetlands; i.e., Salvador WMA and Jean Lafitte NP which happen to lie in fresher portions of the estuary. A third category of configurations is designed to focus NERR resources on public water bottoms that support commercial oyster harvest. This category lacks significant acres of publicly owned emergent wetlands but several large landowners there have granted long-term permits to allow data collection at CRMS sites and who also routinely grant annual permits to estuarine researchers. Presumably, they would continue to do so on a case-by-case basis if approached by NERR researchers.

	FINAL Candidate Site Proposal Narrative **NAME OF SITE**	LaNERR Site Criteria
SCORE	**1.0 Environmental Representativeness**	
	The proposed Barataria La NERR - Barataria Basin which is an interdistributary sub-estuary of the MR formed as part of two delta lobes from the MR – the western side from the Lafourche Delta which was active 2500 to 800 YBP and the eastern side from the Balize Delta active about 1000 YBP. The basin has since undergone delta abandonment and is currently experiencing marine transgression. It therefore has a large diversity of habitat types occurring along an estuarine salinity gradient from salt tolerant and marine species to freshwater organisms and habitats. In the northern part of the Basin, Lake Salvador Wildlife Management Area (WMA) is located along the northwestern shore of Lake	<u>1.1 Ecosystem composition:</u> A measure of the diversity of ecosystem types present within the boundaries of the site. This criterion assumes that sites that have a high diversity of major ecosystem types are of higher relative "value" for protection and management than those with low ecosystem diversity (unless the ecosystem in consideration is rare or unique). 3 Points. The site has a high diversity of habitat composition within its major ecosystem type, i.e., it contains three or more habitat types or subtypes within its major ecosystem type (e.g., site consists of a combination of swamps, coastal marshes, and mud flats) or has a

	Salvador. Lake Salvador WMA is primarily freshwater marsh with many scattered ponds. Common marsh plants are maiden cane, cattail, bull tongue, and numerous other aquatic plants. There are several large stands of cypress in the northern portions of the WMA. These stands of trees grow on old natural stream levees, which were once distributary channels of the Mississippi River. Jean Lafitte National Historic Park and Preserve (Barataria Preserve) includes 26,000 acres include bottomland hardwood forests, bayous, swamps, marshes, and forests. Significant habitats in the basin include large stands of cypress tupelo swamp, old natural stream levees once distributary channels of the Mississippi River, coastal freshwater floating marsh, coastal freshwater emergent attached marsh, coastal intermediate salinity emergent marsh, coastal brackish marsh, coastal salt marsh, coastal salt marsh/mangrove ecotone, barrier island maritime forest, back barrier salt marsh and mangrove, Caminada Headland – beach and dune restoration, coastal dunes, beach ridge, and beach habitat, and well as submerged and aquatic habitats including bayous, freshwater lakes and ponds, freshwater and estuarine submerged aquatic vegetation, estuarine back bay, oyster beds, and subtidal soft bottoms. **Group I habitats represented:** Alluvial forested wetlands (Jean Lafitte, Lake Salvador) Maritime Forest – woodland (TNC- Grand Isle and Grand Isle State Park) **Group II habitats represented:** Coastal Forested Wetlands (Jean Lafitte, Lake Salvador) Coastal Floating Marshes (Lake Salvador) Coastal Freshwater Marsh (Lake Salvador, Jean Lafitte) Coastal Intermediate Marsh (Lake Salvador, Jean Lafitte) Coastal Brackish Marsh (Lake Salvador, Jean Lafitte) Coastal Salt Marsh (Grand Isle State Park, TNC – Grand Isle) Coastal Mangroves ((Grand Isle State Park) Intertidal Beaches and Dunes (Elmer's Island Wildlife Refuge) **Group III habitats represented:** Subtidal hard bottoms/reefs (LA State water bottoms/oyster leases) Subtidal soft bottoms (LA State water bottoms)	combination of multiple coastal marsh types (e.g., tidal freshwater, brackish, salt marsh zones). 2 Points. The site has a moderate diversity of habitat composition within its major ecosystem type, i.e., it contains only two habitat types or subtypes within its major ecosystem type (e.g., consists of a combination of forested wetlands and a single coastal marsh type). 1 Point. The site has a low diversity of habitat composition within its major ecosystem type, i.e., its major ecosystem type consists of a single habitat type (e.g., tidal freshwater marsh or brackish marsh, or forested wetland). These are the suggested Ecosystem Types to be used in the LaNERR evaluation: **Group I- Uplands** Alluvial Forested Wetlands Longleaf Pine Savannahs/Pine Flatwoods Maritime Forest- Woodland Coastal Prairie/bogs Coastal Shrublands and Cheniers **Group II- Intertidal areas** Coastal Forested Wetlands Coastal Floating Marshes Coastal Freshwater Marsh Coastal Intermediate Marsh Coastal Brackish Marsh Coastal Salt Marsh Coastal Mangroves Intertidal Beaches and Dunes Intertidal Mud and Sand Flats **Group III- Subtidal and Submerged Bottoms** Subtidal hard bottoms/reefs Subtidal soft bottoms Subtidal Plants (SAV)

	Subtidal Plants (SAV) (LA state water bottoms – no seagrasses) **There will also be emergent habitat in the basin through the implementation of the first large river sediment diversion – the Mid-Barataria Bay Sediment Diversion, which will introduce freshwater, sediment and nutrients into the basin creating a sub-delta that would be in the delta building phase of the delta cycle.**	
	The proposed Barataria Bay NERR contains upland, intertidal, and subtidal habitats. The aquatic portion of the basin is dominated by wetlands in the upper basin and open water in the lower basin adjacent to the Gulf of Mexico. Upland habitats would be the lowest percentage and include forested areas fringing the bottomland hardwoods in Jean Lafitte NP and dune and maritime forested areas on the barrier island. Intertidal or wetland areas include swamp, freshwater marsh, salt marsh/mangrove ecotone and comprise. Bottomland hardwood forest occurs on natural levee ridges at theBarataria Preserve. Approximate current extent of BLH (as upland as it gets in the Preserve is about 1500 acres (of 26,250 acres total area of the Preserve. State waters and subtidal habitats comprise the majority of the total area (1,240,288 of 1,502,043 sq. km) or 83%. Wetland area including freshwater swamp, freshwater marsh, floating marsh, intermediate marsh, brackish marsh, and salt marsh comprise the remaining 261, 755 sq. km or 17%.	1.2 Balanced ecosystem composition: A measure of the relative composition of ecosystem types within the boundaries of a site (buffer plus core areas). This criterion assumes that sites with a balanced proportion of ecosystem types are of higher relative "value" for protection and management. High, moderate, and low values are assigned to sites that contain variations in the proportions of all three ecosystem types. A value of zero is assigned to a site that is dominated by one ecosystem type or contains less than three ecosystem types. 3 Points. The site contains representative upland, intertidal, and subtidal habitats in relatively equal proportions (i.e. areal cover of any one ecosystem type not less than 25 percent of the total area). 2 Points. The site contains representative upland, intertidal, and subtidal habitats, with the areal cover of any one type not less than 10 percent of the total area. 1 Point. The site contains representative upland, intertidal, and subtidal habitats, with the areal cover of any one type less than 10 percent of the total area. 0 Points. The site contains representative upland, intertidal, and subtidal habitats, with the areal cover of two types being less than 10 percent of the total area *or* the site consists of habitats from only one or two of the three major ecosystem types.
	The proposed Barataria Bay NERR spans the estuarine salinity gradient from freshwater swamp to salt marsh/mangrove and barrier island habitats. **Within Groups I& II.** Of the vegetated habitats, 49% (128,428 sq. km) is intermediate marsh, 14% is freshwater marsh, 11% floating marsh,	1.3 Habitat composition and complexity: A measure of the diversity of habitat types present within the major ecosystem type found within the boundaries of the site. This criterion assumes that sites that have a high diversity of habitat types are of higher relative "value" for protection and management than those with a low diversity of habitat types. Major ecosystem type is defined

	11% freshwater forested wetland, 6% brackish marsh, 8% salt marsh and salt marsh/mangrove ecotone with smaller percentages of maritime forest and coastal dune habitats. **Within Group III.** Beds of *Ruppia maritima* occur in the estuary (Merino et al. 2009) though additional investigation is necessary to determine the extend of SAV within the boundaries of the proposed NERR. *Rangia cuneata* clam is 99.9% of the benthic biomass of Lake Salvador (Wong et al. 2010). Oyster beds occur in the lower Barataria Bay.	here as that type that comprises approximately 40 percent of the site. Use the habitat type designations listed above for "ecosystem composition." 3 Points. The site has a high diversity of habitat composition within its major ecosystem type, i.e., it contains three or more habitat types or subtypes within its major ecosystem type (e.g., site consists of a combination of swamps, coastal marshes, and reefs) or has a combination of multiple coastal marsh types (e.g., tidal freshwater, brackish, salt marsh zones including mangroves). 2 Points. The site has a moderate diversity of habitat composition within its major ecosystem type, i.e., it contains only two habitat types or subtypes within its major ecosystem type (e.g., consists of a combination of swamps and a single coastal marsh type). 1 Point. The site has a low diversity of habitat composition within its major ecosystem type, i.e., its major ecosystem type consists of a single habitat type (e.g., brackish marsh or tidal freshwater wetlands).
	The proposed Barataria NERR supports and serves and an important site for 6 of 6 faunal and floral components listed. The Barataria NERR is composed of a variety of important coastal flora and fauna. Important flora include swamp and marsh species such as *Taxodium distichum* (bald cypress), P*anicum hemitomon, Hydrocotyle sp., Eichornia crassipes, Pontederia cordata, Sagittaria lancifolia, Spartina patens, Vigna repens, Scirpus californicus, Echinochloa walteri, Sagittaria sp., Cladium jamaicense and Spartina patens, Scirpus olneyi, Scirpus robustus, Eleocharis parvula, and Spartina alterniflora, Juncus roemerianus, Batis maritima,* and the black mangrove*, Avicennia germinans.* The NERR also supports submerged aquatic vegetation such as *Valisineria.* Hunting and trapping is current practice within the Lake Salvador WMA with game species that include waterfowl, deer, rabbit, squirrel, rails, gallinules, and snipe. Furbearers include mink, nutria,	<u>1.4 Significant faunal and floral support:</u> A measure of the degree to which a site supports significant faunal or floral components. This criterion focuses on a site's contribution (i.e., function) toward supporting the activities (e.g., feeding, nesting) of the following suite of significant faunal or floral components. The list of components includes groups or organisms that are known to be dependent upon estuarine habitats for the entire or a crucial part of their life cycle. • Fish and Shellfish Spawning and Nursery Grounds (includes use by either freshwater, estuarine, or estuarine-dependent marine species) • Migratory Bird or Waterfowl Use • Bird Nesting or Roosting Area • Critical Mammal Habitat • Non-Game Animals (amphibians, reptiles, etc.)

	muskrat, raccoon, opossum, and otter. Fishing and boating is also popular. Freshwater fishing for bass, bream, crappie, catfish, drum, and garfish is excellent. Commercial fishing is prohibited. Birding and wildlife viewing is also excellent with the WMA providing excellent habitat for waterfowl, furbearers, and alligators, as well as nesting habitat for the previously endangered bald eagle. Fauna that are found within the boundary of the proposed NERR include the American alligator, wading birds, songbirds, woodpeckers, ducks, bottle nosed dolphin, nine-banded armadillos, swamp rabbits, cayote, bobcats, white-tailed deer, minks, river otter, bats, tree frogs, anoles, over 20 species of snakes, fin fish, blue crabs, gar fish, over 50 species of amphibians. *Endangered/Threatened Species*: West Indian Manatee, Red Knot, Piping Plover, Eastern black rail, Sturgeon, green sea turtle, hawksbill sea turtle, Kemp's Ridley sea turtle, Leatherback sea turtle, loggerhead sea turtle.	• State or federally Listed Species or of concern (animal or plant – including candidate species) • Other biodiversity support as representative of ecosystem services (such as invertebrates, reef environments...). 3 Points. The site supports or serves as an important site for a wide range of the faunal or floral components listed above (4 of 6) or is an extremely important site for any threatened or endangered species. 2 Points. The site supports or serves as an important site for a moderate range and diversity of the significant faunal or floral components listed above (3 of 6). 1 point. The site supports or serves as an important site for one or two of the significant faunal or floral components listed above. 0 point. The site does not support significant faunal or floral components.
	The proposed Barataria NERR has several geologic characteristics including distributaries ridges (natural levees), trangressive delta lobes (St. Bernard 2,800 – 1,000 ybp and Plaquemine delta lobe (750 – 300 ybp), deltaic features such as freshwater tidal lakes (Lake Salvador), bayous, crevasses and crevasse splays, ridge and swale topography, and extensive floating marshes (Jean Lafitte), barrier islands and headlands (Elmer's Island and Grand Isle State Park). The Barataria Basin is an irregularly shaped area bounded on each side by a distributary ridge formed by the present and a former channel of the Mississippi River. A chain of barrier islands separates the basin from the Gulf of Mexico. In the northern half of the basin, which is segregated by the Gulf Intracoastal Waterway (GIWW), several large lakes occupy the sump position approximately half-way between the ridges. The southern half of the basin consists of tidally influenced marshes connected to a large bay system behind the barrier islands. The basin contains 152,120 acres of swamp, 173,320 acres of fresh marsh, 59,490 acres of intermediate marsh, 102,720 acres of brackish marsh, and 133,600 acres of saline marsh. Thus, the Barataria Bay NERR contains natural levees, alluvial deposits, muddy marshes and	1.5 Geologic representativeness, diversity, and uniqueness of the site: A measure of the representativeness, diversity, and uniqueness of the geologic characteristics that define part or the whole of a candidate site. This criterion attempts to consider both the surface and subsurface geologic formations that may be representative or unique within a site, particularly as they affect or define associated biotic habitats. Included in these considerations are the ways that local geology affects surface hydrology, such as drainage and fluvial systems, and subsurface hydrology, such as shallow-water aquifers. Geologic and hydrologic maps should be used to evaluate this criterion. 3 Points. The site has numerous geologic characteristics, two or more unique geologic characteristics, and contains a high diversity of formation types or strata within its boundaries. 2 Points. The site has a moderate number of representative geologic characteristics and at least one unique geologic characteristic and contains a moderate diversity of formation types or strata within its boundaries.

	highly organic floating marshes (flotant), and sandy barrier islands. The natural levees of the modern and former Mississippi River are both along the main channel on the eastern side and along Bayou Lafouche to the west. Bayou Lafouche was the active channel of the Mississippi River 2,500 to 800 years before present. Grand Isle is the easternmost bastion of the Bayou Lafouche shoreline; a classic barrier island that separates the Gulf of Mexico form Caminada Bay and the larger Barataria Bay. Rapid subsidence and active faults are represented and contribute to wetland loss throughout coastal Louisiana. However, the proposed NERR boundary excludes areas south of active faults and where the buried Holocene Pleistocene surface exceeds 200 feet and where subsidence is most extreme. Thus, the geologic conditions are representative but only south of Buras, which was not in the Louisiana coastal plain. Subsurface Hydrology and Shallow Water Aquifers are complex in Barataria Basin because of paleochannels and other buried sand bodies associated with the Mississippi River (Kolker et al. 2013). These buried sand bodies allow freshwater to move underground from the Mississippi River into Barataria Basin when river stages are high. While such water would leave the river oxygen-rich, such water would probably be anoxic by the time it surfaced in the warmer estuarine waters. During calm winds, this could lead to stratification even in waters shallow enough to support oysters, which is on possible explanation for a massive oyster dieoff on the east side of Barataria Basin in January of 2021 that was noted in local news.	1 Point. The site has a moderate number of geologic characteristics, no unique geologic characteristics, or contains a moderate diversity of formation types or strata within its boundaries. 0 Points. The site has few or only one representative geologic characteristic, no unique geologic characteristics, or contains few or only one formation type or strata within its boundaries.
	Site encompasses **0 to 32 ppt salinity range** within its boundary. The Barataria Bay NERR includes a wide range of salinities from seawater concentrations in the Gulf of Mexico to freshwater in the northern part of the NERR. This middle estuary experiences large seasonal shifts in salinity with a freshening in the late winter/early spring and an increase in salinity in the late summer/early fall with a reduction in surface runoff and an increase in water levels of the Gulf of Mexico.	<u>1.6 Salinity gradient</u> A measure of the seasonal and spatial range of salinity over multiple years within a candidate site's boundaries. This criterion recognizes the effect of salinity on the biotic structure of estuarine habitats (including the plant communities and faunal components that inhabit them). It assumes that a site with a greater range of salinity will support a broader range of habitat types and organisms. 3 Points. The site encompasses > 10 parts per thousand (ppt) or greater <u>range</u> of salinity within its boundaries.

	The planned Mid-Barataria Bay Sediment Diversion will alter salinity dynamics in bay, providing an opportunity for study.	2 Points. The site encompasses a 5-10 ppt range of salinity within its boundaries. 1 Point. The site encompasses a 2-5 ppt range of salinity within its boundaries. 0 Points. The site encompasses < 2 ppt range of salinity within its boundaries.
	Human impacts in the basin include high rates of relative sea-level rise, loss of riverine input, and pervasive alteration of hydrology and nutrient enrichment. The hydrology of the basin has been altered with elimination of riverine surface input, clearing of natural levees and excavation of a dense network of drainage canals in agricultural fields, and extensive channelization of wetlands so that most upland runoff flows directly to open water bodies. The wet-dry season and tidal flooding of wetlands have been altered, especially with spoil banks created during channelization. Nutrient processing has changed with fertilizer application and nutrient runoff, especially nitrate, that is discharged directly to open water bodies. The role of wetlands in buffering nutrient concentrations and stoichiometry has been greatly reduced. Because of high nutrient input due to wetland bypassing, water bodies in the upper and mid basins receiving high nutrient inputs have become very productive, more heterotrophic due to high organic input from wetlands and uplands, and eutrophic to hyper-eutrophic. Water bodies with low agricultural input are less productive and slightly autotrophic, and more mesotrophic. Water quality in the upper basin is highly degraded while that in the lower basin is less so.	1.7 Degree developed and potential impacts to water quality: A measure of the degree to which the site (core and buffer) is developed and the relative impacts to surface waters from human activities upstream in its associated hydrologic basin (see reference map). This criterion assumes that human impacts to a site are directly proportional to the degree and type of development on site and upstream. Exceptions to this assumption may need to be considered where development at a site and its surrounding area have been subject to high levels of control. Density of development (e.g., no industrial activity or commercial development, few residences, minimal agricultural or silvicultural activity), water quality status within the site, or whether the land is in protected status are points of consideration for this criterion. 3 Points. The site is relatively undisturbed and the hydrologic basin contains low intensity development upstream (e.g., no industrial or commercial development, few residences, minimal agricultural or silvicultural activity) or the land is in protected status. 2 Points. The site is relatively undisturbed and the hydrologic basin contains moderate development upstream (e.g., relatively few residences, moderate agricultural or silvicultural activity, minimal commercial or industrial development). 1 Points. The site has been moderately disturbed and the hydrologic basins contains relatively intensive development (e.g., moderate density of residences, or the presence of industrial activity). 0 Points: The site has been extremely disturbed and the hydrologic basins contains very intensive development

		(e.g., high density residential, or commercial or industrial activity).
	FINAL Candidate Site Proposal Narrative **NAME OF SITE**	LaNERR Site Criteria
SCORE	**2.0 Research, Monitoring & Resource Protection**	
	The proposed Barataria NERR has: (1) a high diversity of ecosystem and habitat types from swamps and marshes to subtidal, to beaches and mangroves with the future emerging subdelta from the mid-Barataria river diversion; (2) a full salinity range (0 – 32 ppt); (3) has biotic communities and geologic features representative of a full salinity range and transgressive sequence of an interdistributary deltaic basin but including fortified barrier islands; (4) historic and archeological significance (Past cultures consumed and deposited the shells of primarily brackish water clam (Rangia cuneata) (National Park Service 2003). Historic = middens could be 6 m to 9 m (20 ft to 30 ft) high (no small feat at sea level) and cover more than 0.4 ha (1 ac). Most of the middens are now gone or greatly reduced in size, having been mined for shell material, which was used to make lime for mortar, or lost to dredging or erosion. Significant indigenous American archaeological sites (3,300-1,800 B.C.) along the Mississippi River distributaries and estuarine lake shores in the Barataria Basin, including sites in the Barataria Preserve along Bayou des Familles, Bayou Coquilles and Bayou Barataria, and on oak cheniers bordering Lake Salvador; these sites include shell middens, human remains and more Archeological sites on near distributary and natural levee ridges in the Barataria Preserve represent periods ranging from Canary Island (Isleno) population subsistence agriculture and homesteads (under Spanish colonial rule) to utilization by the iconic slave trading and "privateer" Lafitte brothers "band", to plantation agriculture (legacy sugar cane irrigation channels) to shell roads of various periods Barataria Preserve historic district (see National Register attachment) identifies value/importance. Barataria Preserve Cultural Landscape Report (NPS) is in development, anticipated 2022-23.	2.1 Value of site for research: A measure of the opportunities offered by characteristics of the site for research, such as a high diversity of ecosystem and habitat types, a balanced habitat composition, a wide salinity range (see criterion 1.7), biotic or geologic representativeness of the site, known historic uses or archaeological sites, and unique opportunities to conduct applied research regarding important local, state, and regional coastal management issues (including past and potential management activities). The assumption is that a site with representative, unique, and highly diverse characteristics will provide greater research, monitoring, and resource protection opportunities than one lacking these characteristics. Ratings generated for these factors under previous selection criteria can be used as a guide for rating this overall factor. 3 Points. The site has (1) a high diversity of ecosystem and habitat types, (2) moderate salinity range, (3) representative biotic and geologic sites or hydrologic characteristics, (4) state and federally listed species, (5) historic and archaeological significance, and (6) opportunities to address important habitat or resource management issues. 2 Points. The site has four or five of the six above. 1 Point. The site has two or three of the six above. 0 Points. The site has one or none of the six above.

	Kniffen (1936) mapped the location and described the pottery of Indian mounds and middens in Plaquemines and St. Bernard Parishes. He concluded that the shell mounds and middens were widely distributed but that the earthen mounds showed a marked linear and highly restricted distribution whereas. One of those lay within the Barataria on a line southward from Ponte a la Hache. Kniffen named a pottery complex the Bayou Cutler complex based on this distribution of earthen mounds. Little research has focused on previous and current Native Americans even though a Native America community persists near this part of Barataraia Basin near Grand Bayou (https://mississippiriverdelta.org/grand-bayou-village-needs-your-help/). Barataria Basin is one of the interdistributary sub-estuaries of the Mississippi deltaic plain. Habitats in the basin are diverse and range from hardwood forest, cypress tupelo swamp to marine marshes, beaches, and submerged habitats. The basin has a long history of research. Ecosystem studies began in the basin in 1960's with studies in the saline marshes and water bodies of the lower basin, which expanded to freshwater forested wetlands in the headwaters of the basin and fresh and brackish marshes in mid-Barataria Bay. As the focal area of the first large Mississippi River Sediment Diversion, the Mid-Barataria Bay Sediment Diversion, which will reconnect the River to adjacent marshes and bay, new and ongoing research on baseline data is being collected through Louisiana Center of Excellence Awards administered through The Water Institute of the Gulf and the Louisiana Coastal Protection and Restoration Authority. This research and monitoring initiative is designed to provide pre-diversion baseline data and post-diversion monitoring, assessment and adaptive management information. The new habitat created by the diversion will include emergent freshwater deltaic marsh, channels, and ridges and will provide a number of research opportunities for examining deltaic wetland and estuarine processes through river reconnection. Barataria – Terrebonne NEP- The Barataria-Terrebonne estuarine complex became a National Estuary in 1990. BTNEP was established in recognition of the national significance of this estuary system. BTNEP is a partnership of government, business, scientists, conservation organizations, agricultural interests, and individuals for	

	the *preservation*, *protection*, and *restoration* of the Barataria-Terrebonne National Estuary.	
	Ecosystem studies began in the basin in 1960's with studies in the saline marshes and water bodies of the lower basin, which expanded to freshwater forested wetlands in the headwaters of the basin and fresh and brackish marshes in mid-Barataria Bay. Examples of the history of study and publication are below: Adams, R.D., Barrett, B.B., Blackman, J.H., Gane, B.W., and McIntyre, W.G., 1976. Barataria Basin: Geologic processes and framework. Louisiana Coastal Resources Program, NOAA, LA SeaGrant Publication No LSU-T-76-008, 104 p. Conner, WH and J W Day. 1987. The Ecology of Barataria Basin, Louisiana: An Estuarine Profile. Biological Report 85(7.13) Fish and Wildlife Service, US Department of the Interior. Day, J.W. et al. 2021. A review of 50 years of study of hydrology, wetland dynamics, aquatic metabolism, water quality and trophic status, and nutrient biogeochemistry in the Barataria Basin, Mississippi Delta- system functioning, human impacts and restoration approaches. Water 13 (5), 642. Gosselink, J.G., 1984. The ecology of delta marshes of coastal Louisiana: a community profile. National Coastal Ecosystems Team, Division of Biological Services, Research Development, Fish and Wildlife Service, US Department of the Interior. Peyronnin, N.S., Caffey, R.H., Cowan, J.H., Justic, D., Kolker, A.S., Laska, S.B., McCorquodale, A., Melancon, E., Nyman, J.A., Twilley, R.R. and Visser, J.M., 2017. Optimizing sediment diversion operations: working group recommendations for integrating complex ecological and social landscape interactions. Water, 9(6), p.368. The long history of research in the bay and accumulation of environmental baseline data as well as the 50 Coastwide Reference Monitoring Stations (CRMS) located with the proposed NERR boundary provide ample reference data. Hydrology, salinity, vegetation, soil, elevation and accretion change data are collected over the long-term at each CRMS station.	2.2 Previous research and monitoring efforts: A measure of the degree to which the site (including the hydrologic basin) has been used for past research and monitoring, including considerations of the diversity of inquiry (fields of research), and the availability of data (the form and availability of documentation, e.g., peer-reviewed papers, grey literature, inventory reports). The assumption is that an area with previously established research and monitoring interest offers greater opportunity for future projects than an area that has not sparked such an interest in the past. 3 Points. The site has a long history of well-documented research and monitoring projects in a wide variety of topics. Data are readily available. 2 Points. The site has had major and well-documented research and monitoring efforts, generating data that are readily available. It has not had a long history of research and monitoring. 1 Point. The site has had only minor research and monitoring projects generating limited data (e.g., inventories) and/or these data may be difficult to obtain. 0 Points. The site has no known history of research and monitoring.

	As for NOAA, there has been a huge effort the last several years through NOAA's Gulf of Mexico Integrated Ecosystem Assessment (IEA) that has a focus on the Barataria Basin to inform management decisions regarding the planned Mid-Barataria Sediment Diversion (MBSD) at Myrtle Grove. The socio-economic working group on that project involved putting together a group of subject matter experts to provide input to a Bayesian Belief Network that was developed to complement the ecosystem services group. Through that effort, they developed a suite of biophysical, ecological, and human dimension indicators to exhibit the status and trends in Barataria Basin. They also solicited managers' feedback on the best format to present these indicators in the Barataria Basin Ecosystem Status Report. I can get you more information on that effort if helpful – aspects of it are still on-going. The NOAA IEA project is a collaborative effort with researchers, managers and local community members, a team of NOAA scientists are leading the use of the Integrated Ecosystem Assessment approach to balance the needs of nature and society through integrated science for current and future generations of the Gulf of Mexico. The Integrated Ecosystem Assessment (IEA) approach brings ecosystem science and management advice to natural resource managers to effectively carry out ecosystem-based management in the Gulf of Mexico. The goal of the Gulf of Mexico IEA is an ecosystem that is sustainable and capable of delivering societally desired levels of ecosystem services. Additionally, Louisiana Sea Grant has many sponsored research projects that focused on the Barataria Basin; in particular, research to better understand the ecosystem and fisheries impacts of planned freshwater diversions in the area for coastal restoration efforts (Mid-Barataria Sediment Diversion Project being the primary one), as well as water quality issues such as the impacts of the Davis Pond diversion on the Basin's water quality. For example, **Graduate Student Fellowship sponsored jointly with the NOAA Ocean Acidification Program**	

	Title: Impacts of Eutrophication Driven Acidification in Barataria Bay, LA - Implications for Oyster Health The proposed research will thus determine how eutrophication driven acidification can impact water quality and oyster health by testing the overarching hypothesis: - Seasonal eutrophication can significantly modulate the water pH and ΩAr conditions in Barataria Basin which can be amplified by increased river runoff and associated nutrients. **CSAP graduate student fellowship sponsored by CPRA and administered by LSG** **Title:** Determining Pre-project Wetland Soil and Estuarine Sediment Physical Properties and Phosphorus Cycling in the area of Influence of the Mid-Barataria Sediment Diversion **LSG sponsored undergraduate research project (UROP)** **Title:** Fate of Wetland Soil Carbon in Coastal Louisiana's Eroding Coastal Wetlands in Barataria Bay **CSAP graduate student fellowship sponsored by CPRA and administered by LSG** **Title:** Quantifying Erosional Process in Sediment Diversion Receiving Basins	
	A Barataria NERR has and will continue to be the focus of monitoring of a transgressional interdistributary estuarine system. The monitoring of pre- and post- a large river diversion is an added benefit of this site.	2.3 Suitability of site for environmental baseline monitoring: A measure of the suitability of the site as a reference area for assessing long-term natural resource trends or ecological characteristics, based on the degree to which the site has not been fragmented by land-use practices on or near the site. The assumption is that a site with contiguous habitats that provide landscape continuity (not interrupted by developed or disturbed lands & waters) will be a more valuable reference area to generate baseline monitoring information than a site that has been extensively altered. 3 Points. The site has outstanding areas to generate environmental baseline data to assess long- term resource trends or ecological characteristics for a wide range of needs.

		2 Points. The site has adequate areas to generate environmental baseline data to assess long- term resource trends or ecological characteristics for many needs. 1 Point. The site has marginal areas to generate environmental baseline data to assess long-term resource trends or ecological characteristics. 0 Points. The site has been so extensively altered by past activities that it is unsuitable for generating environmental baseline data.
	The following are coastal management issues pertinent to Barataria Bay: • Wetland loss and habitat change; • Wetland loss mitigation, restoration, and creation; • Dredging and spoil disposal; • Beneficial uses of dredged materials; • Shoreline erosion; • Commercial or recreational fisheries; • Waterfowl and other wildlife management; • Best management practices for habitat protection or management (e.g., wildlife management); • Best management practices to limit impacts from agricultural, silvicultural, or development activities; • Effects of pollutants on water quality and living resources (including oil spills, nutrients, harmful algal blooms, bacteria contamination, etc.) • Impacts of relative sea-level rise; • Prehistoric and early historic settlement and land use; • Hydrologic restoration; • Invasive species; The upper basin is dominated by bald cypress-water tupelo swamps and freshwater marshes with little loss of wetland area, although increased flooding may be affecting productivity and recruitment. The lower part of the basin has experienced wetland degradation and loss from natural delta abandonment, human caused reduction in riverine sediment loading and alteration of hydrology, oil and gas activity, sea-level rise and other directed human impacts. Several marsh creation	2.4. Ability to address key local, state, and regional coastal management issues: A measure of the degree to which the site is appropriate for investigating issues relevant to coastal management at the local, state, and regional levels. Solutions to these issues may require either the application of land management practices or habitat manipulations to perform meaningful research and assessment. As such, the site should offer both adequate control areas plus areas where demonstration projects and habitat manipulations (such as coastal restoration projects) can be accommodated to study many of the issues of concern. The assumption is that a site where diverse coastal management issues are evident and can be addressed will be of greater value from research and resource management standpoint than sites where these issues do not arise. The diversity and significance of coastal management issues should be identified for the hydrologic basin as it may influence core and buffer areas proposed. The following list are suggestions that may be included in the description of the sites ability to address key local, state, and regional coastal management issues. • Wetland loss and habitat change; • Wetland loss mitigation, restoration, and creation; • Dredging and spoil disposal; • Beneficial uses of dredged materials; • Shoreline erosion; • Commercial or recreational fisheries; • Waterfowl and other wildlife management;

	projects in the basin allow opportunities to assess wetland restoration and creation. Hydrologic restoration from the Davis Pond Diversion provides opportunities to assess this management technique. The Davis Pond diversion is the first substantial direct input of river water into the basin in over a century. The Davis Pond diversion is one of the first diversions in a program of planned introductions of river water from the Mississippi and Atchafalaya rivers to combat salinity intrusion and reverse land loss in the Mississippi Delta. There have been a series of studies on the impacts of the Davis Pond diversion on water quality and wetlands – cited in Day et al. 2021. Water quality in the basin depends on upland runoff, the degree of interaction with wetlands, biogeochemistry, and non-conservative uptake of nutrients – many studies have focused on these processes in Barataria Bay – reviewed in Day et al. 2021. As the focal area of the first large Mississippi River Sediment Diversion, the Mid-Barataria Bay Sediment Diversion, which will reconnect the River to adjacent marshes and bay, new and ongoing research on baseline data is being collected through Louisiana Center of Excellence Awards administered through The Water Institute of the Gulf and the Louisiana Coastal Protection and Restoration Authority. This research and monitoring initiative is designed to provide pre-diversion baseline data and post-diversion monitoring, assessment and adaptive management information. The new habitat created by the diversion will include emergent freshwater deltaic marsh, channels, and ridges and will provide a number of research opportunities for examining deltaic wetland and estuarine processes through river reconnection.	• Best management practices for habitat protection or management (e.g., wildlife management); • Best management practices to limit impacts from agricultural, silvicultural, or development activities; • Effects of pollutants on water quality and living resources (including oil spills, nutrients, harmful algal blooms, bacteria contamination, etc.) • Impacts of relative sea-level rise; • Prehistoric and early historic settlement and land use; • Unique connections in cultural and natural resources within the site (language, customs, land-use, etc.); • Fire management, invasive species; • Hydrologic restoration; 3 Points. The site is highly appropriate for investigating a diversity of coastal zone management issues. 2 Points. The site is appropriate for investigating coastal zone management issues. 1 Point. The site is minimally appropriate for investigating coastal zone management issues. 0 Points. The site is not appropriate for investigating coastal zone management issues.
	FINAL Candidate Site Proposal Narrative **NAME OF SITE**	LaNERR Site Criteria
Score	**3.0 Education and Interpretation**	
	There are a number of existing educational and outreach operations that would be in support of the LaNERR including Barataria-Terrebonne National Estuary Program (BTNEP), Jean Lafitte National Park, Jefferson Parish Louisiana Wetland Education Center (under development), and Ripple Effect New Orleans.	3.1 Diversity and quality of training education and interpretation of opportunities: A measure of the variety and quality of training, education, and interpretation opportunities (i.e., ecological, archaeological, cultural, historical, etc.) provided by the site (core and buffer areas) for the different target audiences. The

	The Barataria-Terrebonne NEP is a partnership of government, business, scientists, conservation organizations, and individuals for the preservation, protection, and restoration of the BTNEP in southeast Louisiana. BTNEP provides K-12 curriculum and activities for formal and informal educators aligned with the State of Louisiana Science Standard Lessons. The BTNEP hosts teacher workshops, and continuing education programs. A number of outreach and volunteer activities hosted by the BTNEP include Estuary Artworks, Paddle Bayou Lafourche, and Tribal Intergenerational Camp, and environmental clean-ups. Jean Lafitte NP hosts summer camps, citizens science projects, volunteer programs, and provides curriculum materials for educators in the New Orleans metropolitan area, and stakeholders within St Bernard, Jefferson, and Plaquemines Parishes. Ripple Effect in New Orleans is a nonprofit environmental education organization that fosters water literacy through professional training and standards-aligned curricula for teachers, with the intent to train educators to incorporate real-world, climate-related water issues into everyday science instruction.	assumption is that a candidate site with a diversity of such opportunities of high quality will be utilized to a greater extent than one with fewer opportunities. 3 Point. The site has numerous different training, education, and interpretation opportunities of high quality. 2 Points. The site has several significantly different educational opportunities of good quality. 1 Point. The site has few significant educational opportunities. 0 Points. The site has insignificant educational opportunities.
	Target audiences for a Barataria NERR include students and teachers from New Orleans, Lafitte, and nearby townships, visitors to Jean Lafitte NP, environmental groups, resource managers including federal (Jean Lafitte), state (Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries, Louisiana Coastal Protection and Restoration Authority, Grand Isle State Park, etc.), and residents who rely on resources for living such as fishermen. The sites are accessible within a single day trip from Baton Rouge, Hammond, and New Orleans and surrounding areas. **There are 125 K-12 schools within 150 miles of the site. There are 10 major universities within 150 miles in the greater New Orleans area not to mention the numerous universities that currently have active research in Barataria Bay (LSU, U of Louisiana Lafayette, etc.).**	3.2 Diversity and availability of target audiences: A measure of the diversity and availability of target audiences (e.g., user groups, resource managers, residents, environmental groups, decision makers, teachers and students, and the general public) which may routinely utilize the site (accessible during a single day trip) for training, education, and interpretation. The assumption is that a candidate site with a variety of available target audiences will be utilized to a greater extent than one with fewer target audiences. 3 Points. The site is suitable for a variety of target audiences that are readily available (accessible during a single day trip). 2 Points. The site is suitable for a moderate number of target audiences that are readily available (accessible during a single day trip).

		1 Point. The site is suitable for few target audiences that are available (accessible during a single day trip). 0 Points. The site is so remote or inaccessible that it is not suitable for any target audience.
	Facilities at Jean Lafitte NP + one unit of the US NPS Jean Lafitte National Historical Park and Preserve + 26,000 acres; designated as a Preserve (allows traditional hunting, fishing & gathering uses plus recreation), includes EPA-designated Clean Water Act 404c area (Bayou aux Carpes) + Visitor Center & interpretation/education (public education) office + approx 10 miles of boardwalk and surface trails w/parking areas & trailhead and on-trail interpretive signs + Environmental Education Center including screen-enclosed amphitheater, large classroom-meeting room with AV booth, small teaching lab for K-12, a few offices and commercial kitchen + park (federal) law enforcement office + park facilities maintenance office, equipment and workspace + park resource management office and workspace + boats: (canoes & kayaks, small to medium-size outboard motor boats & airboats + park vehicles limited to pickup trucks and cars **LUMCON** The DeFelice Marine Center is a modern, 75,000 square foot complex of research, instructional, housing, and support facilities completed in 1986. The Center includes 26,000 usable square feet of laboratory, classroom, office, and library space. Dormitory rooms and five apartments provide housing for up to 80 people. A cafeteria/general meeting room is situated in the center of the complex. Eight laboratories are equipped with running sea water. Six additional laboratories are reserved for dry applications and instrumentation. Laboratories are used for both research and education. Education areas include three classrooms and two teaching laboratories. In the fall of 2016, LUMCON completed renovations on a new 99-seat auditorium and flexuse space equipped with high-speed wireless, four large monitors, and both projection and audio systems. It can be configured in multiple arrangements for teaching and meetings. The	3.3 Availability of facilities: The degree to which the site (core and buffer areas) has existing facilities or potential sites for future facilities that can be used by staff, researchers, classes, and training groups (e.g., administrative building space, dormitories, labs, interpretive centers, trails and boardwalks, boat ramps, etc.). The assumption is that, due to limited reserve construction funds, a candidate site with existing facilities can meet the objectives of the Reserve System program sooner and more completely than a site without existing facilities. The availability of other sources of construction funds should be considered as part of this criterion. 3 Points. The site has established structures and facilities that can be used for reserve activities. 2 Points. The site has limited established structures or facilities that can be used for reserve activities. 1 Point. The site has excellent potential for the development of facilities for reserve activities. 0 Points. The site has limited established structures and limited potential for the development facilities for reserve activities.

	Marine Center includes nearly 50 indoor and outdoor mesocosms with running seawater that allow for a variety of scientific experiments and observations. LUMCON also has extensive machine and electronic shop capabilities and staff that are available to assist in designing and constructing any equipment needed in support of research projects. The variety, adaptability, and utility of the dormitory, educational, and research spaces at the DeFelice Marine Center are unique and allow LUMCON to serve the needs of the marine science community in a variety of ways. LUMCON operates and maintains a large fleet of research vessels and oceanographic equipment. **Louisiana Wetlands Education Center, Lafitte, LA** The Louisiana Wetland Education Center is a public services/education project located in the southern area of the Parish in the Town of Lafitte. The Louisiana Wetlands Education Center will be an educational asset serving students and families in the region, with programming for all ages, including a research outpost and meeting location for agencies and institutions. The Center will promote preservation, conservation, and adaptation related to wetland ecosystems, using its location in the Jean Lafitte area as an outdoor classroom. Future phases would include an expanded fishing village to teach visitors about coastal community traditions, a treetop ropes course, water taxis to Grand Isle, kayak and canoe rental, and overnight cabins. The Center is complementary to the existing Jean Lafitte Fisheries Market and adjacent to the Auditorium, Nature Trail, and Multi-Purpose Facility and Museum. $2M has been awarded through NRDA for recreation projects . Phase I creation of the Multipurpose Resource Facility is complete. LA SAFE has estimated their investment of up to $6.5M for the Wetland Center with the remainder of potential funding sources to be identified. **Jefferson Parish Ecotourism Ferry from Lafitte to Grand Isle, LA**As part of the Louisiana Wetlands Education Center, an ecotourism ferry connecting Lafitte to Grand Isle, Louisiana will allow visitors and students to learn about and appreciate the ecosystems of the Barataria Bay which range from emergent marsh and bays to coastal dunes.	

	Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries Grand Isle Fisheries Research Lab is located on the north shore of Grand Isle, Louisiana's only inhabited barrier island. This location provides the lab's dedicated staff the unique opportunity to conduct offshore sampling, tagging, and a number of other research projects. These projects are critical for gathering the data needed to effectively manage the diverse marine resources in Louisiana's waters and throughout the Gulf of Mexico. Staff also collaborate with other states, federal agencies, and some of the nation's top research institutions, educate the public about their research, and even assist in recovery efforts after natural and manmade disasters.	
	The upper part of the proposed Barataria NERR to Lafitte, LA is within 28 miles from New Orleans, LA, thus providing easy access on paved roads for K-12 schools, and other research and education institutions in and around New Orleans (Tulane, University of New Orleans, Loyola University, Xavier University of Louisiana). Louisiana State University in Baton Rouge is 108 miles (~2 hours) from Lafitte, LA and Southeastern University in Hammond is 87 miles from Lafitte, LA. Access to the southern part of the proposed Barataria NERR at Grand Isle, LA is also feasible for a day trip (108 miles from New Orleans and 158 miles from Baton Rouge, LA)	3.4 Proximity and accessibility of site to researchers, educators, and resource management decision makers: A measure of (1) the relative proximity of the site to urban centers, K-12 schools, research and education institutions, and resource management agencies that may routinely utilize the site and (2) the adequacy of the roads or points for boat access at the site. The underlying assumption is that the proximity and accessibility of the site will enhance its utilization for education, research, monitoring, and resource protection purposes. 3 Points. The site can be utilized by the above-listed entities during a single day trip. There are good roads or points for boat access at the site. 2 Points. The site is relatively isolated, and utilization would require an overnight stay from any of the above-listed entities, but accommodations are readily available. There are adequate roads or points for boat access at the site. 1 Point. The site is relatively isolated and reasonable accommodations for an overnight stay to utilize the site are limited. There are limited roads or points for boat access at the site. 0 Points. The site is extremely isolated and accommodations to utilize the site are not available. There are inadequate or no roads, or points for boat access at the site.

	There are a number of existing educational and outreach operations that would be in support of the LaNERR including NOAA's Gulf of Mexico B-WET program, LA Sea Grant, Barataria-Terrebonne National Estuary Program (BTNEP), Jean Lafitte National Park, Jefferson Parish Louisiana Wetland Education Center (under development), and Ripple Effect New Orleans. Since 2008, NOAA's Gulf of Mexico B-WET program has awarded a number of grants that partner with Louisiana Sea Grant to provide meaningful watershed educational experiences (MWEEs) to teachers and students in southeast LA and beyond. There is great potential for NOAA to continue to partner with LA Sea Grant to provide such rigorous environmental education in the Barataria Bay area and all Louisiana. BTNEP provides K-12 curriculum and activities for formal and informal educators aligned with the State of Louisiana Science Standard Lessons. The BTNEP hosts teacher workshops, and continuing education programs. A number of outreach and volunteer activities hosted by the BTNEP include Estuary Artworks, Paddle Bayou Lafourche, and Tribal Intergenerational Camp, and environmental clean-ups. Jean Lafitte NP hosts summer camps, citizens science projects, volunteer programs, and provides curriculum materials for educators in the New Orleans metropolitan area, and stakeholders within St Bernard, Jefferson, and Plaquemines Parishes. Ripple Effect in New Orleans is a nonprofit environmental education organization that fosters water literacy through professional training and standards-aligned curricula for teachers, with the intent to train educators to incorporate real-world, climate-related water issues into everyday science instruction. The Louisiana Wetland Education Center is a public services/education project located in the southern area of the Parish in the Town of Lafitte. The Louisiana Wetlands Education Center will be an educational asset serving students and families in the region,	<u>3.5 Value of site for environmental education and interpretation programs</u>: It is likely that sites with existing education programs have the necessary infrastructure in place to further expand their programs, thus it is valuable to rate sites based on the presence of these programs. However, in an area as large as the Louisiana Coastal Area, numerous excellent sites exist where virtually no education or interpretation programs have been developed. Thus, the potential for education and interpretation program development should be considered as well according to the diversity and quality of educational and interpretive program opportunities. Some suggestions to evaluate potential for education and interpretation program development include the following: • Number of educational institutions in the watershed of the proposed alternative; • Existing educational programs in the area that would likely take advantage of a NERR site; • Level of ability to access a proposed alternative by school groups; or • Existing facilities to host classroom education and training events. 3 Points. The site has a long history of education and interpretation, or the site offers excellent potential for future education and interpretation program development. 2 Points. The site has a good but short history of education and interpretation but is otherwise well suited or offers good potential for future education and interpretation program development. 1 Point. The site has had only a minor amount of education and interpretation being conducted, or the site offers fair potential for future education and interpretation program development. 0 Points. The site offers no significant potential for education and interpretation program development

	with programming for all ages, including a research outpost and meeting location for agencies and institutions. The Center will promote preservation, conservation, and adaptation related to wetland ecosystems, using its location in the Jean Lafitte area as an outdoor classroom. Future phases would include an expanded fishing village to teach visitors about coastal community traditions, a treetop ropes course, water taxis to Grand Isle, kayak and canoe rental, and overnight cabins. The Center is complementary to the existing Jean Lafitte Fisheries Market and adjacent to the Auditorium, Nature Trail, and Multi-Purpose Facility and Museum. $2M has been awarded through NRDA for recreation projects . Phase I creation of the Multipurpose Resource Facility is complete. LA SAFE has estimated their investment of up to $6.5M for the Wetland Center with the remainder of potential funding sources to be identified. The Center is complementary to the existing Jean Lafitte Fisheries Market and adjacent to the Auditorium, Nature Trail, and Multi-Purpose Facility and Museum. Other examples of ongoing education and outreach activites and groups: Wetshop is a teacher training , Common Ground Relief Wetland Youth Environmental Education and Outreach, Ground Work (workforce training), Jefferson Extension Office, Master Naturalist-NOLA, Audubon Nature Center, and Lafitte Barataria Museum and Wetland Trace. ***Jefferson Parish Ecotourism Ferry from Lafitte to Grand Isle, LA.*** As part of the Louisiana Wetlands Education Center, an ecotourism ferry connecting Lafitte to Grand Isle, Louisiana will allow visitors and students to learn about and appreciate the ecosystems of the Barataria Bay which range from emergent marsh and bays to coastal dunes.	
	FINAL Candidate Site Proposal Narrative **NAME OF SITE**	LaNERR Site Criteria
Score	**4.0 Acquisition and Management Consideration**	
	Over 95% of the proposed area is state owned (Lake Salvador Wildlife Management Area, Timken Wildlife Management Area, Grand Isle Fisheries Research Lab, Elmer's Island Wildlife Refuge, Grand Isle State	4.1 Publicly owned lands and feasibility of land acquisition: The degree of control on activities allowed on proposed land and waters of the candidate site (core and buffer areas) is regulated by

	Park) with the remaining federally owned (Jean Lafitte National Historic Park and Preserve) and a small percentage of protected private land (The Nature Conservancy). Additional opportunities exist for partnerships with landowners, created marshes, and sediment diversion outfall locations. Most of the emergent wetlands in the proposed area are privately owned but widespread monitoring and research occur nonetheless. Numerous landowners have granted long-term permits to allow CPRA or their contractors to regularly visit their property to collelct data at the extensive CRMS network. Furthermore, several large landowners routinely grant annual permits to estuarine researchers. Presumably, they would continue to do so on a case-by-case basis if approached by NERR researchers.	conditions of land ownership. Land ownership by state, federal government, or local governments, or environmental interest groups, and the degree to which owners have an interest in participating in a research reserve are important to realize the missions of a LaNERR. The assumption is that the degree of control needed to maintain the site to meet the missions of a NERR increases with publicly and privately owned land, along with the chances of purchasing additional areas, increase value of a NERR candidate site. In the combination of ownership described below, no more than 49% of the area within the boundary can be federal lands. 3 Points. A large percentage (more than 50 percent) of the site (core and buffer areas) is currently owned by the state, federal, or local governments, or environmental groups, representing significant opportunities for future land acquisition. 2 Points. State, federal, or local governments, or environmental groups own 25 to 50 percent of the site with the remainder in the hands of a few owners representing some degree of opportunities for future land acquisition. 1 Point. State, federal, or local governments or environmental groups own less than 25 percent of the site with the remainder in the hands of a few owners representing limited opportunities for future land acquisition. 0 Points. The site is owned by a large number of owners with little potential interest in supporting opportunities for future land acquisition.
	The proposed NERR is comprised of state lands and estuarine water and water bottoms, federal lands, and privately owned land. A large portion of state land and water bodies allow recreational fishing, hunting, and trapping. Oyster leasing on state (public) water bottoms is allowed in the lower bay. Federal land is protected from consumptive uses. Commercial fishing is allowed in state waters according to state regulations. Public wetlands are protected according to the jurisdiction.	4.2. Compatibility with existing management practices and consumptive and non-consumptive uses: A measure of the degree to which existing management practices (e.g., habitat manipulations, restoration projects, best management practices, wildlife management areas, leased bottoms, conservation easements, etc.) and historic and current consumptive and non-consumptive uses might conflict with planned and future management practices implemented under a research reserve program. The assumption is that sites with fewer conflicts are more likely to maintain both public support and the integrity of

	Public wetlands are regulated under the Clean Water Act, River and Harbor and Navigation Act, and the Louisiana Coastal Zone Act. Natural and prescribed fires have been common in emergent wetlands since before European settlement. Wetland restoration in the form of created wetlands, hydrologic restoration, terraces, shoreline protection, and vegetative plantings began in the mid-1900s, and became more common with public funding in the late 1900s. All of the above are compatible with operating a NERR. CPRA 2017. Louisiana's Comprehensive Master Plan for a Sustainable Coast. 2 June 2017.	the site (core and buffer areas). NOTE: This factor should be measured with focus on how present management practices for both land and water in core and buffer areas support both the mission of a NERR and reduce potential conflict with how the public expectations align with the expected usage of the candidate site to meet the mission of a research reserve site. It should be measured with a balance of how the site protects natural and cultural resources against reasonable access by the public to other areas of the site. 3 Points. Existing management practices and consumptive and non-consumptive uses of the site would not conflict with any foreseeable management policy of a research reserve 2 Points. Due to the presence of proportionately small areas of unique habitat and endangered species or threats to the integrity of ecosystem, there is the potential for limited restrictions on existing management practices or consumptive and non-consumptive uses of a site 1 Point. Due to the presence of areas of unique habitat and endangered species and threats to the integrity of the ecosystem, some restrictions on existing management practices or consumptive and non-consumptive uses of a site are likely 0 Points. Large areas of unique habitat and threats to the integrity of the ecosystem will require restrictions on existing management practices or consumptive and non-consumptive uses of a site.
	A large portion of the surrounding land is privately owned. Hundreds of thousands of these acres are as available to estuarine researchers as are emergent wetlands owned by the Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries. LDWF and numerous private landowners require permission and permits to conduct research on emergent wetlands that they own. Both types of landowners require researchers to submit descriptions of research activities, locations where research will be conducted, travel routes that will used, types of boats that will be used, and likely dates of data collection. Permits generally are granted, often with	<u>4.3 Compatibility with adjacent land use:</u> A measure of the potential conflicts between management practices on a candidate site (core and buffer areas) with land-use practices on adjacent lands to the site (core and buffer areas). It is also a measure of the adequacy of land-use regulations, plans, or other risk management controls (e.g. sufficient regulatory control in the event of an impact) to sustain the site's natural resources for long-term research, education, and resource protection. The assumption is that a candidate site with compatible land-use practices on adjacent lands is more likely to maintain the integrity of the reserve. NOTE: This issue should be evaluated

	restrictions on types of boats that can be used and dates when access is allowed, regardless of whether the landowner is private or public. For example, one ongoing study of secretive marsh birds in southeastern Louisiana has permission to conduct research on emergent wetlands owned by the following private companies (J.A. Nyman, personal communication; jnyman@lsu.edu). The Louisiana Land & Exploration Company, LLC 806 Bayou Black Drive, P.O. Box 7097 Houma, LA 70361. 636,000 acres (see https://www.conocophillips.com/spiritnow/story/a-legacy-of-conservation-and-collaboration/). Apache Louisiana Minerals LLC, Post Office Box 206, Houma, LA 70361. 270,000 acres (see https://apacorp.com/portfolio/united-states/) Rigolets Limited Partnership, By: TT&W, Inc. its General Partner, 1100 Poydras Street, Suite 3100, New Orleans, LA 70163. >20,000 acres south of Lafitte. Rocmill, Inc., R. King Milling, President, 909 Poydras St. Suite 2300, New Orleans, LA 70112 Madison Land Company, Inc., 3712 N. Hullen Street, Metarie, LA 70002 Harry Bourg Corporation, 7477 Grand Caillou Road, Dulac, Louisiana, 70353 Continental Land & Fur Co., Inc. 111 Veterans Memorial Glvd,Suite 500 Metarie, Louisiana 7005-30999 Privately owned land uses range from numerous small lots supporting houses that are isolated from the estuary by levees, to emergent wetlands whose ownership may be contested by several parties and used for recreation. The ownership of mineral rights and surface rights often were separated in the early 1900s which results in owners of some surface rights being affected by owners of mineral rights. Tens of thousands of acres of emergent wetlands in Jefferson and Plaquemines Parishes are claimed to be owned by the parishes and by private individuals. Similarly, ownership of some areas that currently are open water are claimed by the State of Louisiana and by private individuals and businesses that owned emergent wetlands that previously existed there. All areas of contested ownership were	relative to the potential for present or future conflicts with adjacent lands and the potential to designate buffer areas around a site. 3 Points. A large percentage of the land adjacent to the site is not currently used for activities that might impact the site (and therefore, may be obtainable as a buffer) or the land-use practices on adjacent lands would not have any negative impacts on a possible research reserve. 2 Points. A large to moderate percentage of the land adjacent to the site is not currently used for activities that might negatively impact the site, or the land-use practices on adjacent lands either could be negotiated or would have only minor impacts a possible research reserve. 1 Point. Some of the land adjacent to the site is currently used for activities that would have negative impacts on a possible research reserve and may not be negotiable. 0 Points. A large percentage of the land adjacent to the site is currently used for activities that would have negative impacts on a possible research reserve and would lead to conflicts.

	excluded from the maps indicating the maximum boundary of a NERR based in Barataria Basin and extending into estuarine areas affected by Mardi Gras pass.	
	The land ownership of the proposed Barataria NERR is majority state-owned (LDWF, LA State Parks, State Waters), with a much smaller percentage federal (National Park Service), and private (The Nature Conservancy). Most of the emergent wetlands in the proposed area are privately owned but widespread monitoring and research occur none-the-less. Numerous landowners have granted long-term permits to allow CPRA or their contractors to regularly visit their property to collect data at the extensive CRMS network. Furthermore, several large landowners routinely grant annual permits to estuarine researchers. Presumably, they would continue to do so on a case-by-case basis if approached by NERR researchers.	4.4 Land ownership A measure of the degree to which the property used to establish core and buffer areas of a candidate site is divided among landowners (e.g., divided into fewer parcels or owned by many agencies/individuals). The assumption is that a candidate site with fewer property owners will be easier to control types and levels of activities and offers opportunity for future acquisitions. 3 Points. The property is relatively undivided among agencies or individuals. 2 Points. The property is divided among few property owners. 1 Point. The property is divided among many property owners.
	The state and federal portions, which make up the majority of the proposed Barataria NERR have enforcement capabilities and established protection and management policies in place. US NPS federal law enforcement rangers (Jean Lafitte) provide visitor and resource protection at the Barataria Preserve; hunting and fishing permitted in designated areas of the Barataria Preserve with state permit, during state-designated seasons; hunting in some areas is allocated by lottery; recreational boating (human powered and motor craft) allowed in Barataria Preserve; commercial use permits enable 1-2 swamp tours to operate in the Preserve; US NPS must comply with all federal and state regulations guiding natural, cultural and historical resource impacts and protection; compliance experts on staff The State of Louisiana is responsible for protecting its management practices in state waters and on state water bottoms. Private landowners are responsible for protecting their management practices. Ownership is difficult to enforce for owners of small, scattered holding that depend only on income generated from surface rights such as recreational hunting and harvesting alligators and alligator eggs. Larger landowners can afford to patrol their lands and	4.5. Enforcement and protection of site area management practices: A measure of the degree to which land and water ownership has enforcement capabilities to protect and limit the types and levels of activities that are inconsistent with the management plans described in Site Criterion 4.2 above. This degree of control is based on size, geography, proximity to adjacent residential development and present management practices and controls. The assumption is that the integrity and security of a potential research reserve site can be better maintained with a higher level of enforcement and protection of core habitat areas to enforce management practices (such as a wildlife management area, or guidelines associated with private lands) that protects the consistency with how land and water will promote the mission of a NERR. 3 Points. Site areas are strongly protected and enforced to the degree necessary to meet management practices. 2 Points. Site areas are moderately protected and enforced to the degree necessary to meet management practices. 1 Point. Site areas are minimally protected and enforced to the degree necessary to meet management practices.

	call local law enforcement to charge trespassers with trespassing, vandalism, theft, etc. LDWF maintains its own enforcement officers who patrol LDWF property but who also enforce all state laws on public and private property.	0 Point. Site areas are not protected and enforced to the degree necessary to meet management practices.
	Land and water access is available throughout the proposed NERR via public roads and boat ramps. The site has 23 public boat ramps and 18 semi-private boast ramps. Public boat ramps access points: LaRousse boat launch in Kraemer. Clovelly Farms boat launch. Roadside launch on La Hwy 1 east of Port Fourchon Roadside launch on La Hwy 1 on both sides of road, east of Port Fourchon Roadside launch on La Hwy 1 End of Twin Bridge Rd, from Hwy. 90, under Bayou Des Allemands Bridge, Des Allemands Hwy.631 across from water valve, Des Allemands/Paradis End of Railroad Av. at Up the Bayou Rd. Des Allemands South of US 90 about 1/4 mi. west of Louisiana St., Paradis South of US 90 5mi. East of Boutte South of US 90 about 6mi east of Boutte Turn on Early St. in Paradis, north side of US 90 by 200 ft. Bayou Segnette State Park, entrance at Drake Av./ Westbank Xpwy. (bus. 90)-turn south at light. After hours entrance at Bayou Segnette floodwall next to Lapalco Bridge. Public Westbank Xpwy. (bus 90) at end of Louisiana St. on Mayronne Canal La 45 to park boundary, 1st turn to left as you travel south 0.7mi. From North boundary Glisson Launch, end of LA 45 LA 45 0.1mi south of park headquarters. Turn left about 0.3mi. 0.25mi from Bayou Barataria Bridge. On LA 301	4.6. Land and water access: A measure of the degree to which land and water access to the site support visitation and recreational value within guidelines of existing management plans. This degree of access is based on points of access (present and proposed), size, geography, proximity to adjacent residential development and present management practices and controls. 3 Points. The site has many existing and planned access points to support visitation and recreation that are very consistent with the management plans. 2 Points. The site has several existing and planned access points to support visitation and recreation that are very consistent with the management plans.. 1 Point. The site has few existing and planned access points to support visitation and recreation that are very consistent with the management plans. 0 Points. The site has no existing and planned access points to support visitation and recreation that are very consistent with the management plans.

	JOE'S LANDING, 1170 Anthony Ln., Barataria, Turn left (west) at Hwy 303 Bridge, approx. 1 mi. on bayou side, across from Rosethorn Park and Recreation Center, Lafitte Left on Hwy 303 at bridge, corner of Fleming Park and Texas St., Fleming Boat Launch, approx. 1/2 mi. past Fleming Curve, Lafitte To end of LA 45, turn left on Jean Lafitte Blvd., to end , turn left La 20 north to Vacherie, at intersection of La 643 end and Rue St. Martin on South side of street.	
	Although a high percentage of the land adjacent to the proposed boundary is privately owned, much of it is undeveloped (i.e., at least a moderate percentage (25 – 50%) of the land adjacent) marshland. The state water bottoms and emergent wetlands within the proposed area are too remote for significant acreages to be converted to urban or industrial uses. Likewise, the adjacent water bottoms and emergent wetlands are too remote for urban and industrial uses. Urban and industrial expansion is expected to proceed only in areas already protected by levees, except for tiny areas of an acre or less used to maintain/repair existing infrastructure outside the levee system.	4.7. Future urban and industrial development plans A measure of the potential level of future impacts of land development (urban and industry) in areas on or adjacent to a candidate site that would impact core and buffer areas. The assumption is that a candidate site with minimal to no development plans on-site and on adjacent lands to the candidate site is more likely to maintain the integrity of the reserve. NOTE: This issue involves the degree to which adjacent lands are currently being used or may be attainable as buffer areas for the research reserve. 3 Points.: A large percentage (more than 50 percent) of the land adjacent to the site is currently undeveloped or is not likely to be developed for urban and industrial usage (based on present urban and industrial activity). This large percentage of adjacent lands is very unlikely to be developed in the near future for urban and industrial development (e.g., consisting of marginally developable property, such as wetlands, which could be obtained as buffer). 2 Points. A moderate percentage (between 25 and 50 percent) of the land adjacent to the site is currently undeveloped (urban and industrial) or is not likely to be developed for urban or industrial usage (based on present or expected activity). The adjacent lands are unlikely to be developed in the near future for urban and industrial development (e.g., consisting of marginally developable property, such as wetlands, which could be obtained as buffer). 1 Point. A small to moderate percentage (10 to 25 percent) of the land adjacent to the site is currently undeveloped or

		is not likely to be developed for urban or industrial usage (based on present or expected activity). 0 Points. A large percentage (more than 50 percent) of the land adjacent to the site is developed (urban or industrial) and the area is likely to continue to be developed in the future.
	FINAL Candidate Site Proposal Narrative **NAME OF SITE**	LaNERR Site Criteria
	<u>5.0 Ability to conduct research on resilience and climate change impacts</u>	
	The proposed Barataria NERR and hydrologic basin where it is found provides unique and varied opportunities to conduct costal resilience research on natural, cultural and social systems. The proposed NERR and surrounding basin contain various land-use, and natural and cultural resources affected by some of the high rates of relative sea-level rise on the planet. Changes in hurricane frequency and magnitude are another climate change impact that affects the basin and natural, cultural, and social systems. The effects of SLR and storms have and will continue to be the focus of research in Barataria Basin. As a mitigation strategy, Barataria Basin is the focus of the first and largest wetland restoration project in the United States and globally with a focus on river delta restoration. The implementation of the Mid-Barataria Sediment Diversion will provide the opportunity to leverage existing baseline studies with other pre- and post- diversion research. Thus, allowing assessments of adaptation strategies for other river deltas undergoing sea-level rise as well as the effects of these strategies on cultural and social resources, and interactions.	<u>5.1 Coastal resilience research</u>: How suitable is the site (and hydrologic basin where it is found) to support research on coastal resilience including both natural, cultural, and social systems. This includes how climate change may amplify impacts of land-use change, increases in the vulnerability of the habitats of the site (and hydrologic basin) to relative sea level rise, and other climate change impacts. Research focuses include adaptations of natural, cultural, and social systems to climate change impacts, including restoration and protection projects. 3 Points. The site (and hydrologic basin) demonstrates high value in researching adaptation of natural, cultural, and social systems to climate change and relative sea level rise including research on adaptations that reduce vulnerability. 2 Points. The site (and hydrologic basin) demonstrates moderate value in researching adaptation of natural, cultural, and social systems to climate change and relative sea level rise including research on adaptations that reduce vulnerability. 1 Point. The site (and hydrologic basin) demonstrates low value in researching adaptation of natural, cultural, and social systems to climate change and relative sea level rise including research on adaptations that reduce vulnerability.

	Within the boundaries of the proposed Barataria NERR along a broad salinity gradient, there is space for shifts in habitats with sea-level rise and an increase in salinity in low salinity areas. Intermediate marshes may shift to brackish and saline. However, restoration strategies for the basin may freshen the bay, countering the salinity increases expected with sea-level rise. Outside of the boundaries of the proposed NERR, there are opportunities for additional property acquisition from private landowners. As a whole, Barataria Bay has 1,664 sq. km available for wetland migration and 38 sq. km with urban barriers to wetland migration (Borchert et al. 2018). Borchert, S., Osland, M.J., Enwright, N.M., Griffith, K.T. (2018) Coastal wetland adaptation to sea-level rise: quantifying potential for landward migration and coastal squeeze. Journal of Applied Ecology 55: 2876-2887.	5.2 This criterion focuses on the ability to accommodate shifts in habitat as sea level, inundation or other climate-change impacts occur. Is there sufficient ability of the system to accommodate these shifts within the site boundaries and/or is there an ability to expand the boundaries to allow for maintenance of an ecological unit. This includes consideration for additional property acquisition. 3 points. Reserve boundary allows for habitat migration and several areas adjacent to the boundary provide an option for expansion to accommodate habitat shifts and boundary expansion. 2 points. Reserve boundary allows for some habitat migration and some areas adjacent to the boundary provide an option for expansion to accommodate habitat shifts and boundary expansion. 1 point. Reserve boundary allows for little habitat migration and little to no areas adjacent to the boundary provides an option for expansion to accommodate habitat shifts and boundary expansion. 0 points. Reserve boundary does not allow for habitat migration and there are no areas adjacent to the boundary that provide an option for expansion to accommodate habitat shifts and boundary expansion.
	The State of Louisiana Coastal Protection and Restoration Authority's Flood Risk and Resilience Program implements non-structural flood mitigation. Through the 2017 Louisiana Coastal Master Plan, CPRA developed a risk reduction strategy that coordinates state resources and prioritizes areas of high risk, with parishes playing a lead role in implementing projects and selecting specific structures to be mitigated while prioritizing those that are low to moderate income. The program is intended to take advantage of nonstructural risk reduction project funding outside of federal grant programs in order to maximize flexibility and speed the implementation of projects that further comprehensive coastal risk reduction goals. The 2017 Coastal Master Plan recommends 32 nonstructural projects that include the mitigation	5.3 Infrastructure and Access: A changing climate is resulting in a variety of impacts that differ based on geography and conditions within geography. Reserves are designated to ensure a stable platform for research, address significant coastal management issues, enhance public awareness and understanding and promote use of the reserves consistent with the purposes outlined. Access to infrastructure that supports these purposes is key to achieving the mission of the reserve system. This criterion focuses on the expected vulnerability of existing facilities (including visitor centers, labs, storage facilities) proposed for use by the reserve to remain viable and accessible taking into account the most relevant climate change stressors

	of over 26,000 structures at a cost of $6 billion over the next 50 years. Several of those projects are located in Barataria Basin. A NERR HQ almost certainly would be constructed rather than occupy a pre-existing facility. As such, it would be raised, energy efficient, and storm resilient regardless of where in coastal Louisiana it was located.	in the locale. This accounts for adaptive strategies that are and/or may be in place to mitigate anticipated stressors. 3 points. Facility(ies) resilient and adaptable under high impact climate change scenarios given current understanding of vulnerability 2 points. Facilities resilient and adaptable under medium impact climate change stressor/threat scenarios 1 point. Facilities unlikely to be resilient and adaptable under medium/low impact climate change stressor/threat scenarios 0 points. Facilities vulnerable and not resilient under any climate change scenarios
	Road access to potential interpretative areas, headquarters, waterways, and boat launches is widely available throughout the proposed reserve. The state wildlife management areas, national park, and state park have existing boat launches, trails, and/or outdoor infrastructure for public use. These resources are maintained for resilience according to respective jurisdiction. Additionally, private boat access to the proposed reserves via marinas are also maintained.	5.4. Public Access Resilience: This criterion focuses on the ability to access the resources of the reserve. This includes access to water via docks and boat launches; access to interpretive and educational experiences via trails, pavilions, amphitheaters, as well as access to existing recreational and professional opportunities in the resource. 3 points. Public access infrastructure is resilient and adaptable under high impact climate change scenarios given current understanding of vulnerability 2 points. Public access infrastructure resilient and adaptable under medium impact climate change stressor/threat scenarios 1 point. Public access infrastructure unlikely to be resilient and adaptable under medium/low impact climate change stressor/threat scenarios 0 points. Public access infrastructure vulnerable and not resilient under any climate change scenarios
	FINAL Candidate Site Proposal Narrative **NAME OF SITE**	LaNERR Site Criteria
	6.0 LaNERR Partnerships:	Partnerships should be relevant and aid the program in achieving their goals, reaching target audiences, and developing and delivering key

		messages. They increase the resilience of the reserve and its ability to work with the local community to address climate change and impacts from other important stressors. Partnerships can increase the ability to address research needs and gaps, reach education and public engagement goals, and provide access to facilities and field opportunities. Institutional partnerships can also provide administrative services, support leveraging of resources, and reduce program costs. These organizations or third parties can also assist with fund-raising, grant development and management, and management of program income (ex. Friends Groups and NERRA). The strength of the reserve's partnerships and potential for partnerships will be evaluated based on the following:
	The Barataria Bay proposed NERR has a strong potential for strengthening and creating new partnerships. There are many ongoing partnerships among CPRA, NOAA, La Sea Grant, The Water Institute – RESTORE Center of Excellence, USGS, LSU, UL Lafayette, as well as participation of key individuals in National Marine Educators Association, Coastal and Estuarine Research Federation, Society of Wetland Scientists, other state professional organizations, research organizations, local or regional consortia. The importance of the Louisiana coast to society and natural resources of the state and country is evidenced by the number and breadth of coastal stakeholders. Regardless of the location of a NERR in Louisiana, there are many partnerships that will facilitate the goals of a Louisiana NERR. For example, non-profit and non-governmental organizations such as Coalition to Restore Coastal Louisiana, Healthy Gulf, and Sierra Club Delta Chapter will be important partners to a LA NERR. Louisiana Seagrant, academic and research institutions such as The Water Institute of the Gulf, Tulane University, Louisiana State University, Nicholls State University, University of New Orleans, Southeastern University, etc. will also be important partners. There is tremendous focus on Barataria Basin at the state level (CPRA) because of the planned implementation of the mid-Barataria Bay sediment diversions. Existing partnerships between CPRA and The Water Institute of the Gulf, at the federal level, the Department of	6.1 Potential to develop partnerships: This criterion focuses on the site's ability to create new partnerships and strengthen existing partnerships to achieve their goals, reach target audiences, develop and deliver key messages, and address relevant coastal management issues. This can be demonstrated by potential partner interest, geography, etc. with a focus on the outcomes of the partnership, not the number or name of organizations. This will be measured by the following metrics: • Existing MOUs or agreements explaining shared resources such as facilities and salaries • Memberships of key individuals to professional organizations such as National Marine Educators Association, Coastal and Estuarine Research Federation, Society of Wetland Scientists, other state professional organizations, research organizations, local or regional consortia, etc. • Recent history of key personnel participation in multi-institutional grants, publications, and projects • Letters from existing informal partners about past projects, their outcomes, and organizational structure • Letters from potential partners focusing on how the partner could complement or contribute to the reserve goals. This letter should include information such as

	Treasury work together through the Restore Act Center of Excellence to administer a competitive grants program and provide coordination and oversight to support research directly relevant to the implementation of Louisiana's Coastal Master Plan with many project focused on baseline and future conditions of Barataria Basin with the operation of the river sediment diversion. These existing partnerships among institutions and with researchers would continue to grow with and enhance a LA NERR in Barataria Bay. Another important partner to a LA NERR in Barataria Bay will be the Batararia – Terrebonne National Estuary Program (BTNEP), which is in itself a partnership of government, business, scientists, conservation organizations, agricultural interests, and individuals for the *preservation*, *protection*, and *restoration* of the Barataria-Terrebonne National Estuary. Thus a Barataria NERR would integrate these existing partnerships for supporting the mission of a NERR>. Key personnel at any LA NERR will have memberships with professional organizations such as Society of Wetland Scientist, Coastal and Estuarine Research Reserve that will also support outreach and engagement, although in absence of identifying key personnel at this stage, specifics memberships and participations are difficult.	historical context for partnership and their vision for contributing to the reserve mission. 3 Points. The site has strong potential to develop and strengthen new and existing partnerships of high quality evidenced by metrics stated above. 2 Points. The site has potential for new partnerships of good quality to develop. 1 Point. The site has potential for partnership development. 0 Points. The site has insignificant potential for partnerships.
	A LA NERR, including the proposed Barataria Bay NERR will partner with NOAA through many avenues including through the education, outreach and extension, and research through Louisiana Seagrant, Coastal Programs in collaboration with the Office of Coastal Management and the LA Department of Natural Resources. In general, there is a long and strong history of Sea Grant (and also NOAA) in this area. As for NOAA, there has been a huge effort the last several years called NOAA's Gulf of Mexico Integrated Ecosystem Assessment (IEA) that has a focus on the Barataria Basin to inform management decisions regarding the planned Mid-Barataria Sediment Diversion (MBSD) at Myrtle Grove. The socio-economic working group involved putting together a group of subject matter experts to provide input to a Bayesian Belief Network that was developed to complement	<u>6.2 Internal NOAA Partnerships</u>: This is a measure of the number and quality of partnerships with other NOAA entities that already exist within a program or that have the potential to develop based on common goals, geographic proximity, etc. The assumption is that a candidate site with a high diversity of existing partnerships and partnership potential will have opportunities to leverage support and create sustainable programs more so than one with fewer partnerships. Some examples include Sea Grant, Coastal Programs, Marine Sanctuaries, Weather Service, Climate Office and other line offices of NOAA. This will be measured by the following metrics: • Existing MOUs or agreements explaining shared resources such as facilities and salaries

	the ecosystem services group. Through that effort, they developed a suite of biophysical, ecological, and human dimension indicators to exhibit the status and trends in Barataria Basin. They also solicited managers' feedback on the best format to present these indicators in the Barataria Basin Ecosystem Status Report. The NOAA IEA project (see section above). In addition, NOAA provided a 2008-2013 Gulf of Mexico B-WET grant for $300,000 to LSU to solidify the Coastal Roots Program, a program that teaches students how to become environmental stewards of their natural resources by establishing native plant nurseries at their schools and subsequently planting them in a coastal habitat restoration project in south LA. Several of the schools who participated in the Coastal Roots program at this time were from the area surrounding Barataria Bay. NOAA provided a 2015-2019 Gulf B-WET grant for $50,000 to RENEW Schools (a charter school system in New Orleans) to provide watershed education to students and related teacher professional development. The PI of this award partnered with LA Sea Grant (Carol Franze) in southeastern LA. Carol visited students' classes to teach about urban pollution runoff, the effects this has on water quality in the Pontchartrain Basin, and the work that NOAA is engaged in to address this pressing issue. While not directly in the Barataria Bay area, the watershed concepts taught are applicable to all of southeast LA. Between 2015 and 2022, NOAA Gulf B-WET provided two awards to the Louisiana Environmental Education Commission to provide watershed education to students and related teacher professional development. The PI of these awards partnered with LA Sea Grant (Dianne Lindstedt) on lesson plan development, facilitation of professional development workshops, and facilitation of student field experiences. While not all directly in the Barataria Bay area, the watershed concepts taught are applicable to all of southeast LA. NOAA provided a 2022-2023 Gulf B-WET award for $100,000 to LSU/Sea Grantnin which K-12 educators work in the field alongside	• Recent history of key personnel participation in grants, publications, and projects with NOAA 3 Points. The site has a history of NOAA partnerships and there is strong potential to develop and strengthen new and existing ones of high quality evidenced by the metrics stated above. 2 Points. The site has several partnerships in place and there is potential for new partnerships of good quality to develop. 1 Point. The site has potential for partnership development. 0 Points. The site has insignificant potential for partnerships.

	university experts to collect scientific samples that are environmental indicators on climate, fisheries science and coastal geology. The field-based instruction takes place at multiple locations of cultural, ecological and economic importance across Louisiana's coastal zone.	
	A Barataria NERR has the potential for a high diversity of partnerships, of agencies and organizations which are vested in the basin but have yet to be formally partnered. Examples of these partnerships include the Louisiana Center of Excellence (CPRA, The Water Institute, US Department of Treasury). Please see relevant sections above. The BTNEP engages in coastal stewardship and community engagement through public-private partnerships such as the SMART Project- Saving Marsh and Ridges Together for ridge and marsh vegetation restoration projects. Barataria Basin was the focus area for the Sci-TEK project that was funded by CPRA (~$500,000) to develop a method for meaningful stakeholder engagement and inclusion of local & traditional ecological knowledge in the State-led coastal restoration decision-making process. Stakeholders involved in that project were in both Plaquemines and Jefferson Parishes. Since then, that work has evolved into several related efforts supported by Sea Grant, NOAA, the EPA, and others (in other locations). The Louisiana Universities Marine Consortium (LUMCON) would also be an important partner in a Barataria NERR. Universities include 10 in the greater New Orleans area, LSU, Southeastern, Nicholls State, and ULL would also be NERR partners, many of which have active research programs in Barataria Basin. Federal agencies such as US Army Corp of Engineers, EPA, NOAA, USGS, who also have research focus in Barataria will be important partners. The Town of Lafitte and The Nature Conservancy are other important partners. The potential for private partnerships is also high.	6.3 Diversity of Partnerships: This is a measure of the ability to reach diverse audiences through existing partnerships or potential partnerships based on common goals and geographic proximity. The assumption is that a candidate site with a high diversity of existing partnerships and partnership potential will have opportunities to leverage support and create sustainable programs more so than one with fewer partnerships. These partnerships should increase the candidate site's ability to address relevant coastal management issues, address research needs and gaps, and reach diverse audiences. These partner organizations should range in diversity such as federal agencies (ex. National Estuary Programs, National Wildlife Refuges, National Parks), state agencies and parks, local organizations (Marine Labs and Land Trusts), NGOs, and umbrella groups (national, regional or local). These partnerships should help bridge the gap between the NERRS and new audiences that the NERRS has not typically engaged (e.g., urban audiences) or that could help the NERRS become more effective at reaching intended audiences (e.g., national municipal association to facilitate reaching local officials). The focus of these partnerships should be the outcomes, not the number or name of organizations. This will be measured by the following metrics: • Existing MOUs or agreements explaining shared resources such as facilities and salaries • Recent history of key personnel participation in multi-institutional grants, publications, projects • Letters from existing informal partners about past projects, outcomes, and organizational structure • Letters from potential partners focusing on how the partner could complement or contribute to the reserve goals. This letter should include historical context and vision for partnership contributing to the reserve mission.

		3 Points. The site has many diverse partnerships and there is strong potential to develop and strengthen new and existing ones of high quality evidenced by metrics stated above. 2 Points. The site has several diverse partnerships in place and there is potential for new partnerships of good quality to develop. 1 Point. The site has potential for partnership development. 0 Points. The site has insignificant potential for partnerships.

Section III. Maps.

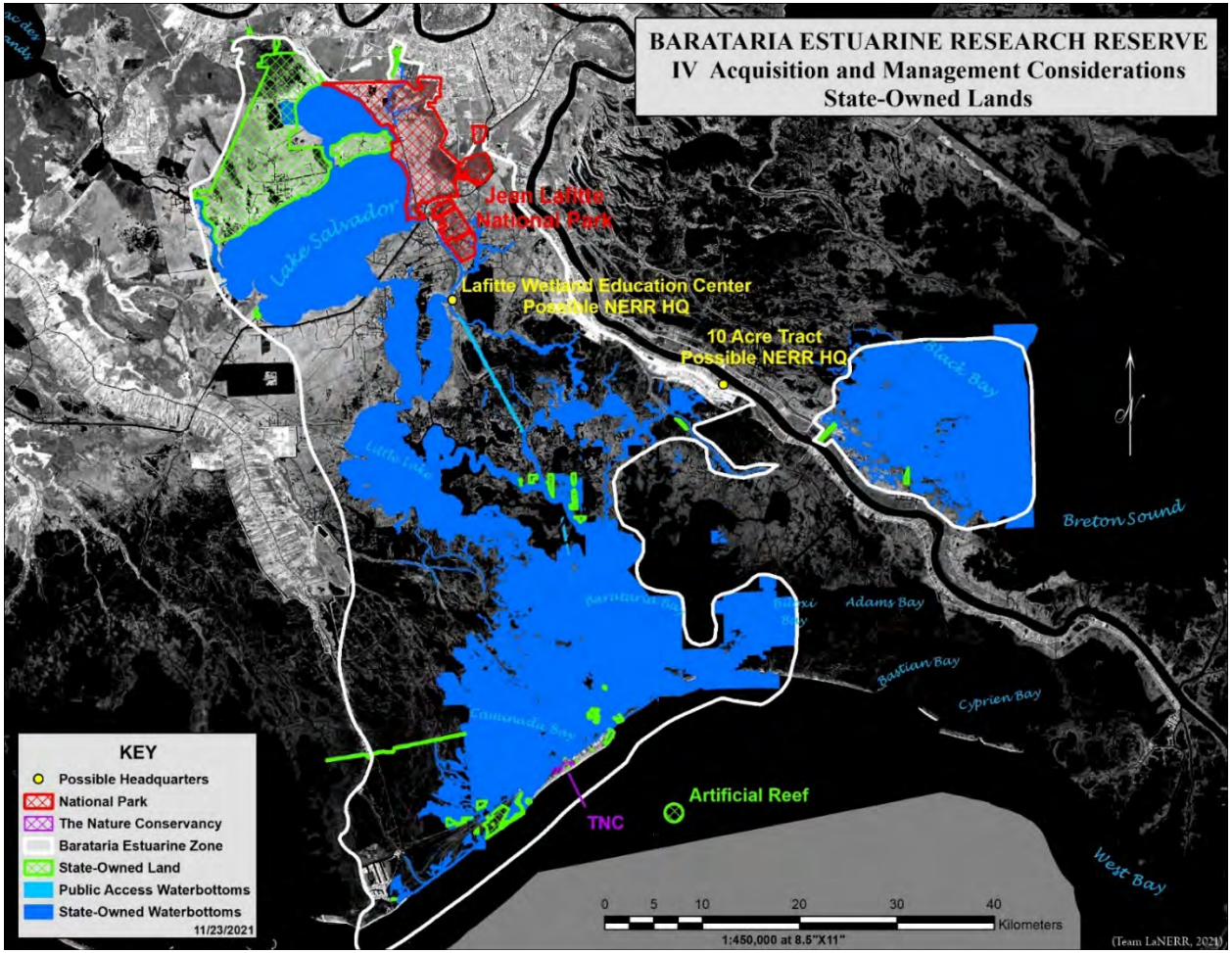

Figure 1. Proposed area of Barataria NERR. Most of the publicly owned lands and water bottoms that could be included in a Louisiana based NERR. A Louisiana-based NERR could encompass all or only parts of these lands and water bottoms. Some lands and water bottoms were excluded because of rapid wetland loss and contested ownership. The southern half of the water bottoms could be affected by the proposed Mid-Barataria Bay Divesion. The area east of the Mississippi River consists of public water bottoms leased for oyster production and near naturally formed Mardi Gras Pass.

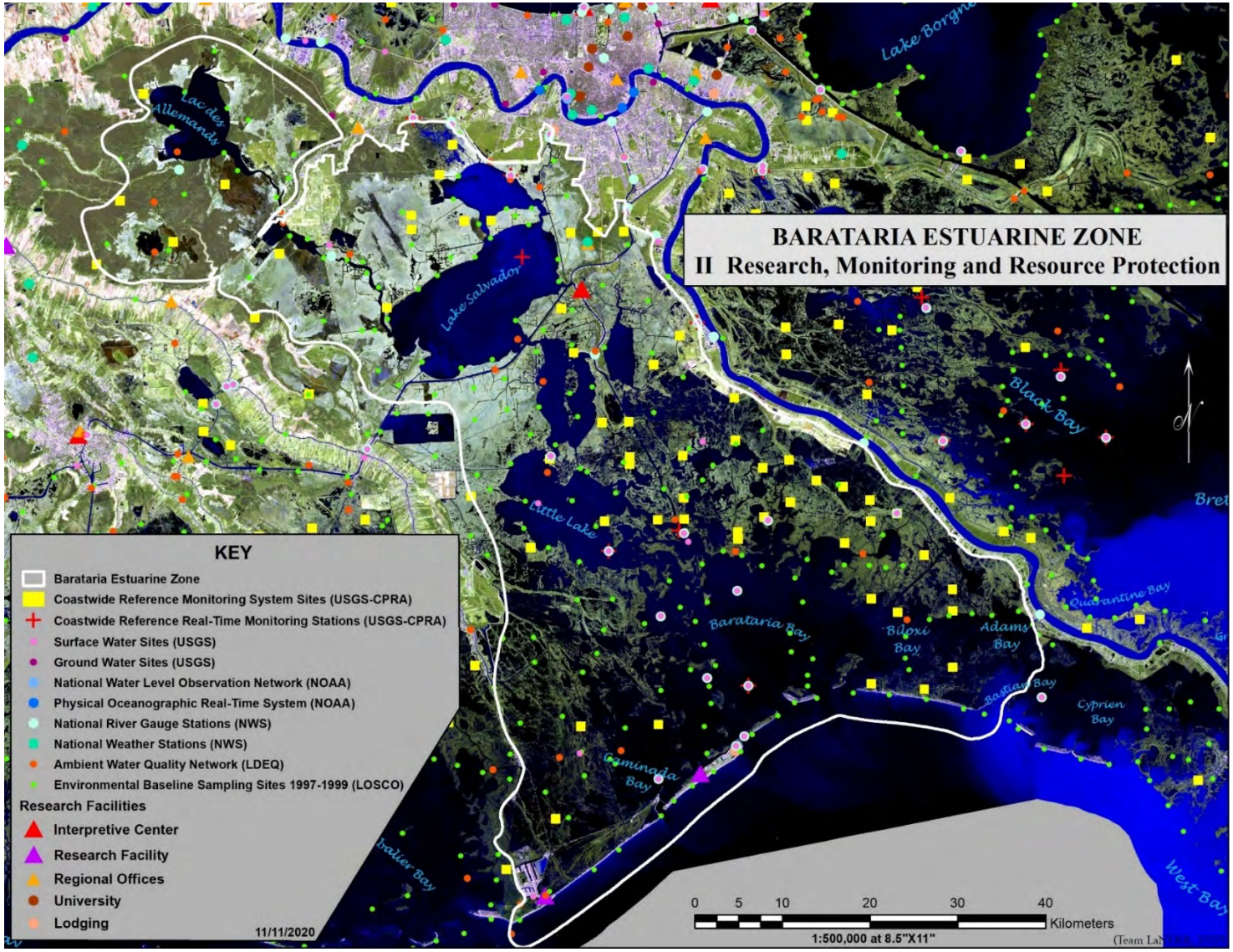

Figure 2. Locations where monitoring and/or research occur in southeastern Louisiana.

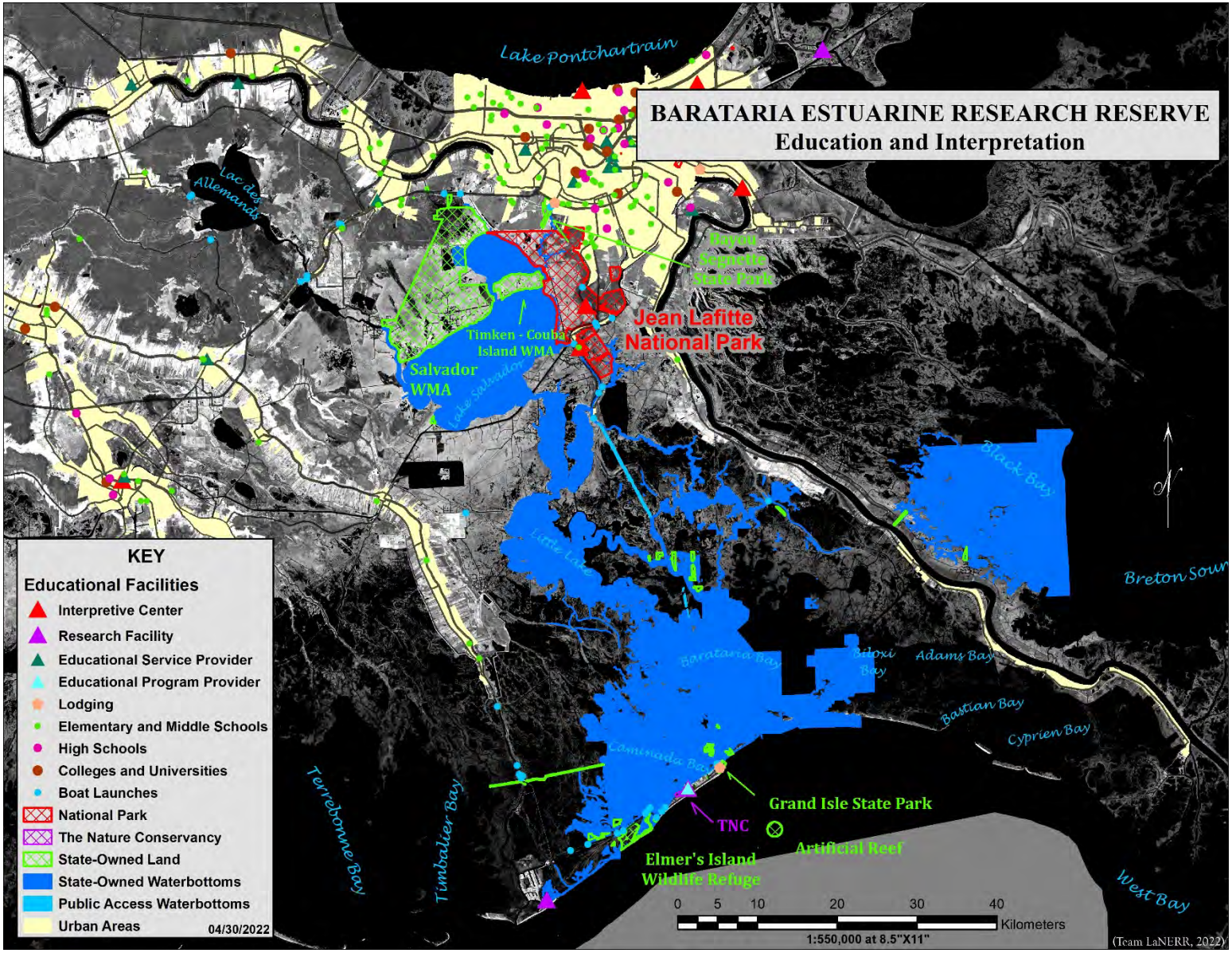

Figure 3. Proximity to existing education and interpretation centers.

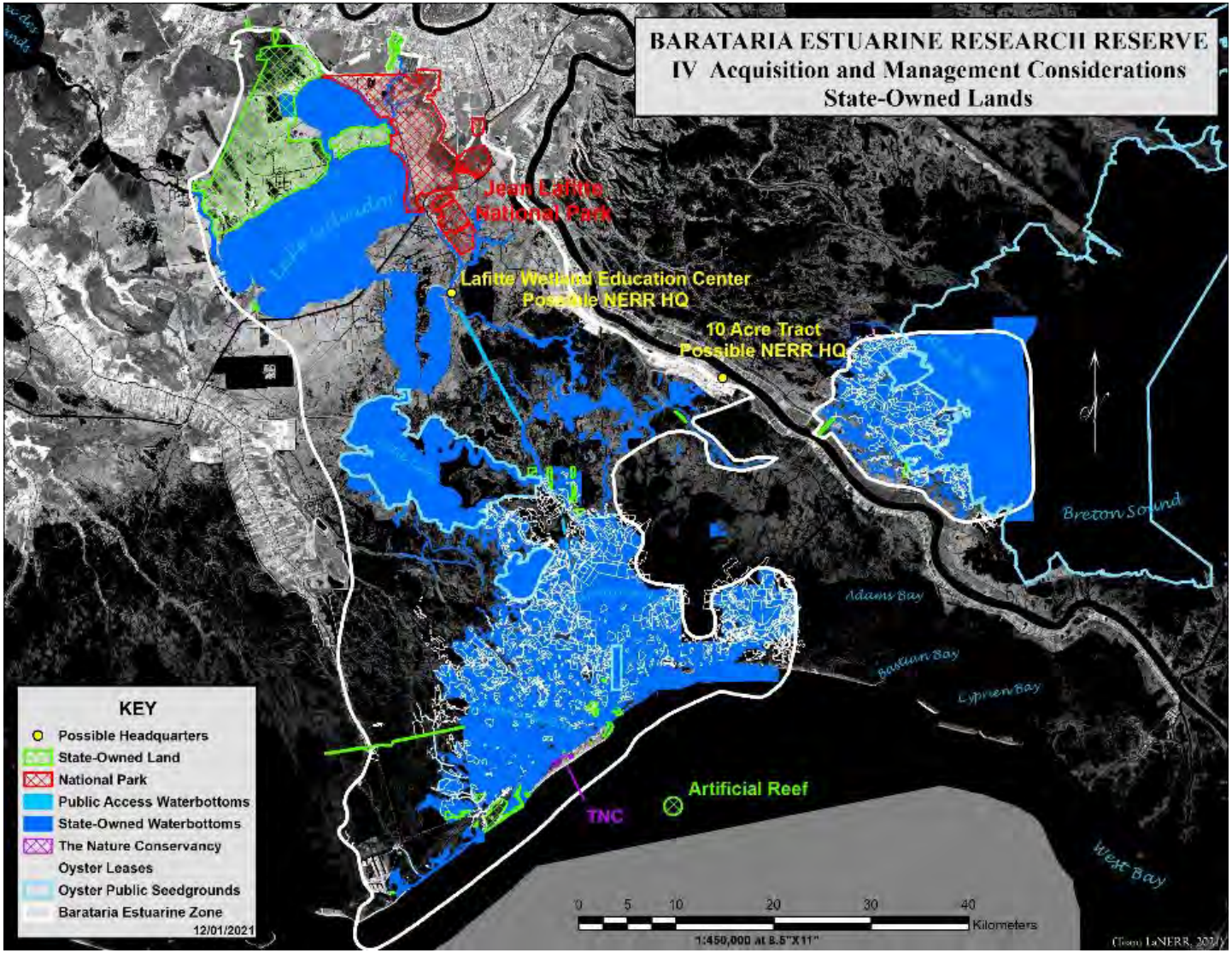

Figure 4. Proposed area of Barataria NERR showing public oyster seed grounds.

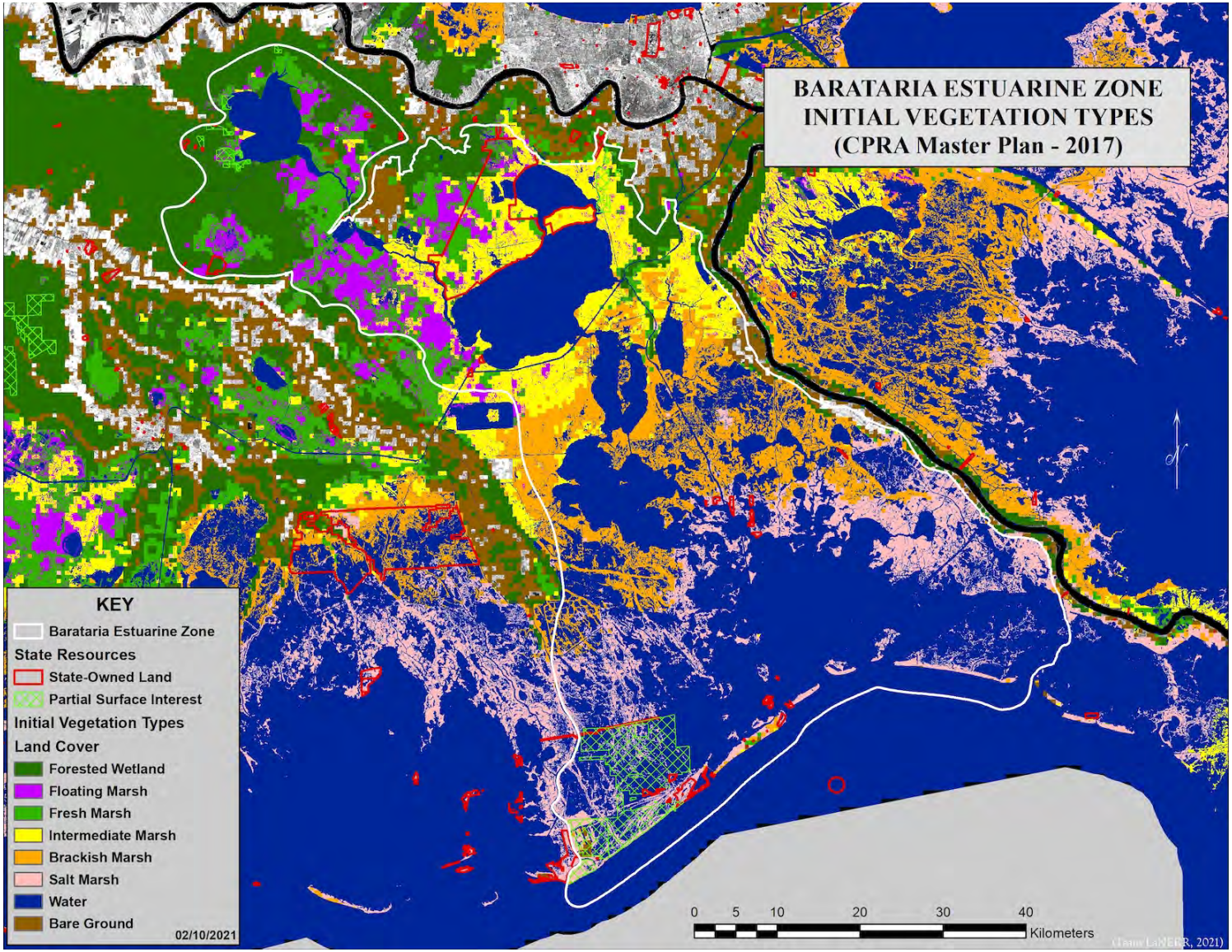

Figure 5. Emergent vegetative types in southeastern Louisiana.

Section IV. Public Support and Community Engagement

The Barataria Estuarine Zone Proposal Team hosted three Town Halls as part of the Louisiana National Estuarine Research Reserve (LaNERR). There were **21** virtual participants at the first Town Hall and **23** in-person participants (per the sign-in sheet). The second Town Hall had **47** virtual participants, and the third had **16** virtual participants. Participants included members from local parish, state and federal agencies; several non-governmental organizations, including economic development and technical training programs; academia; private sector; regional NERRs; business owners; and community members. Proposal team members, members of the Designation Leadership Team, and program management support staff also participated. Andy Nyman (Louisiana State University AgCenter), Julie Whitbeck (National Park Service - Jean Lafitte National Historical Park & Preserve, and Tracy Quirk (Louisiana State University) each presented at one Town Hall on behalf of their proposal team on the specifics of the proposed Barataria Estuarine Zone site.

Several participants asked about the **difference between a NERR and the Barataria Terrebonne National Estuary Program (BTNEP), potential overlaps with BTNEP, and potential overlaps with other entities focused on their own research efforts.** The team noted that NERRs and NEPs have differing missions. BTNEP is focused more on developing a large-scale management plan for both Barataria and Terrebonne basins, whereas a NERR is a site that has facilities and focuses more on 'place-based research' that can help accomplish the missions of an NEP. A NERR and a NEP can yield synergistic results by leveraging of resources, one regional example being in Port Aransas, TX. A NERR can help leverage other efforts to create new opportunities and vice versa; for example, NERRs can provide or enhance wetland access (boats, boat launches, etc.) for some groups that do not typically have access. A NERR also brings funding and new opportunities, such as the Margaret Davidson Graduate Fellowships that are granted for research to be done within a NERR, as well as programs that fund research across different NERRs. Last, NERRs are driven by local needs, so a NERR can help bridge gaps between existing entities and missions. Several in-person participants at the Town Hall in Lafitte spoke out with concerns about a NERR being located in their area. Concerns included whether **additional regulations** would be put in place and whether a NERR would **take ownership of existing commercial fishing areas** (land/water) that could hurt or potentially destroy local fishing communities and families that depend on the working coast. Members of the team responded that NERRs neither add additional regulations nor have the ability to take over land/water. It was also noted that the state-owned lands and waters being considered are owned by and are already regulated by the state. Concern was raised from multiple in-person fishing community members regarding existing Mississippi River diversions and whether a NERR being sited in the Barataria Estuarine Zone would **promote the construction of additional diversions, such as the Mid-Barataria Sediment Diversion**. Team member responded that siting a NERR has no effect on coastal restoration projects either being or not being constructed. NERR funding can enhance monitoring to better understand the system and how it may change. One in-person participant noted that there are no concerns about the research or monitoring aspects of a NERR.

Concern was raised that there is **not a representative of the local fishing community on the Executive Committee** (LaNERR site nominating committee). Additionally, **distrust was expressed because the Coastal Protection and Restoration Authority** is on that committee given their involvement with diversions and other coastal projects. Last, it was noted that the proposal team should ensure **other local fishing communities, such as local Asian fishing communities, are made aware of this effort**. Proposal team members assured participants that raised the previous concerns that Barataria is only one of three estuarine zones in consideration and that it is early enough in the process for one of the other two sites to be nominated instead. It was further noted that participants and local community have a voice in the siting of a NERR, because NERR site nomination and designation depends heavily on local support. Participants were asked to complete the questionnaire, submit emails or

letters, etc. to express their concerns, opposition to, or support for a NERR being located in Barataria. They were also provided contact information for team members, including those from NOAA to reach out to with additional questions, comments, or concerns.

While there was concern, among the fishing community about the regulatory nature of a NERR, many local citizens and stakeholder groups (e.g., LeBlanc and Schuster, Healthy Gulf, Sierra Club, Town of Lafitte) voiced their support for the establishment of a Barataria NERR to the proposal team.

LaNERR Leadership Team
Louisiana Sea Grant College Program
Louisiana State University
Baton Rouge, LA. 70803
Dear Leadership Team,

I'm writing in support of the nomination of BARATARIA BASIN as the site for the designation of a National Estuarine Research Reserve (NERR) by NOAA in coastal Louisiana. I have lived in the metropolitan New Orleans area all my life and have worked in lower Jefferson Parish for over a decade, concentrating in public relations for the towns of Jean Lafitte and Grand Isle.

I cannot think of a better place for the NERR than the BARATARIA BASIN. The BARATARIA BASIN is one of the most bio-diverse and productive estuaries in America. It has also been at the epicenter of coastal erosion over the last 100 years, seeing some of the most dramatic effects of land loss in the state and nation. Now it's undergoing a tremendous rebuilding effort that is outlined in the state's coastal master plan. The NERR could be there in the BARATARIA BASIN to help study and aid this process.

The NERR would also be a fantastic addition to facilities that are already here and under construction. The Barataria Preserve - Jean Lafitte National Historical Park literally surrounds the town of Jean Lafitte and the Louisiana Wetland Center is under construction and will be opening in the coming year. NERR would also be located just 35 miles north of the Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries Complex in Grand Isle and relatively close to three major Research Universities and only 30 minutes from downtown New Orleans, allowing researchers and the public close access to the facility.

This potential NERR site would no doubt play an important role in our community's rebirth following Hurricane Ida. Foremost, it would focus research in the BARATARIA BASIN that could help lead to ways to better protect our estuary and coastal communities. It would also mean more visitors to the Lafitte area and therefore more business for our local restaurants, shops, and stores.

Once the BARATARIA BASIN is approved by NOAA, I would be interested in working with NOAA and the lead state agency and management team in Louisiana to pursue other more formal support of BARATARIA BASIN as a NERR. I am very active in Jefferson Parish tourism and would be happy to help in any way possible.

I'm very supportive of the existing proposal to locate a NERR in BARATARIA BASIN. Please let me know if I can be of any assistance during the designation process.

Respectfully yours,

Paul Christiansen
LeBlanc and Schuster, Inc.
pchristiansen@leblanc-schuster.com

LaNERR Leadership Team
Louisiana Sea Grant College Program
Louisiana State University
Baton Rouge, LA. 70803

Dear Leadership Team,

This is a letter of support for the nomination of BARATARIA BASIN as the site for the designation of a National Estuarine Research Reserve (NERR) by NOAA in coastal Louisiana. The Jefferson Parish Department of Ecosystem and Coastal Management believes that the BARATARIA BASIN has the best environments, facilities, and access to support the missions of a NERR as defined by NOAA. Public lands and facilities in Jefferson Parish include: Grand Isle Fisheries Research Lab, Elmer's Island Wildlife Refuge, Grand Isle State Park, Bayou Segnette State Park, Jean Lafitte National Historic Park and Preserve (Barataria Preserve), the Jefferson Parish Louisiana Wetlands Education Center and the Wetland Harbor Activities Recreational Facility.

Our department would also like to highlight why this potential NERR site is so important to our community. Our complex ecosystem is disappearing and Jefferson Parish has been investing in strategic coastal restoration and projection projects. Other projects include boardwalks, boat launches, nature centers, and other coastal education centers. Recreational and educational features are important to the Parish in promoting the use of coastal resources and educating the public on the importance of coastal restoration. The presence of a NERR site would further enhance the public's ability to engage with their environment and disseminate valuable information.

In addition, once this BARATARIA BASIN is approved by NOAA as the site to initiate the designation process, our department would be interested in working with NOAA and the lead state agency and management team in Louisiana to pursue other more formal support of BARATARIA BASIN as a NERR. Our department operates a greenhouse facility to grow native wetland vegetation, has several vessels including a large vessel capable of transporting researchers and a significant amount of equipment. We operate a nationally recognized Christmas Tree Recycling project and are engaged with several organizations working to address wetland loss.

Our department is very supportive of the existing proposal to locate a NERR in BARATARIA BASIN. We would be interested in helping to serve as volunteers, advisory and friend organizations of support, and other possible opportunities that we would help define during the designation process.

Thank for considering our support as part of the proposal to nominate BARATARIA BASIN as a NERR in Louisiana.

Respectfully yours,

Jefferson Parish Deparment of Ecosysment and Coastal Management

Michelle Gonzales-Director
Jason Smith-Coastal Resources Manager
David Illgen-Coastal Resources Specialist

TOWN OF JEAN LAFITTE
OFFICE OF THE MAYOR

TIMOTHY P. KERNER, JR.
MAYOR

YVETTE CRAIN
TOWN CLERK

MARCELL RODRIGUEZ
CHIEF OF POLICE

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COUNCIL MEMBERS

SHIRLEY GUILLIE
MAYOR PROTEM

BARRY BARTHOLOMEW
CHRISTY CREPPEL
VERNA SMITH
CALVIN LEBEAU

April 25, 2022

LaNERR Leadership Team
Louisiana Sea Grant College Program
Louisiana State University
Baton Rouge, LA. 70803

Dear Leadership Team,

I'm writing in support of the nomination of the BARATARIA BASIN as the site for the designation of a National Estuarine Research Reserve (NERR) by NOAA in coastal Louisiana.

The Town of Jean Lafitte and BARATARIA BASIN is an ideal location for the NERR. While the town is strategically located in the heart of the BARATARIA BASIN, one of the world's most productive estuaries, it's also just 25 minutes from downtown New Orleans, making it easily accessible to researchers and visitors. We are also home to a thriving fishing and seafood industry that could greatly benefit from the NERR's research.

The Town of Jean Lafitte would also like to highlight why this potential NERR site is so important to our community. The Barataria Basin is home to the Jean Lafitte National Historic Park and Preserve, Wetland Trace Boardwalk, Lafitte's Barataria Museum, and the future Wetlands Education Center. We would welcome the addition of the NERR and everything it has to offer our area from stewardship, research, training, and education. The NERR facility would also add a welcomed boost to our local economy and help promote research and support of the Barataria Basin for years to come.

Once the BARATARIA BASIN is approved by NOAA as the site to initiate the designation process, I would be interested in working with NOAA and the lead state agency and management team in Louisiana to pursue a more formal support of BARATARIA BASIN as a NERR. I have already reached out to state officials, who join me in supporting the nomination of the BARATARIA BASIN as a NERR in Louisiana.

I would like to thank you for considering our support as part of the proposal to nominate BARATARIA BASIN as a NERR in Louisiana. I'm looking froward to working with you in the future.

Respectfully yours,

T. Kerner Jr.

Timothy P. Kerner, Jr.
Mayor

LOUISIANA HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

799 Jean Lafitte
Lafitte, LA 70067
Email: tkerner@legis.la.gov
Office: 504.689.7725
Fax: 504.689.7727

COMMITTEES:
Appropriations
Municipal, Parochial and Cultural Affairs
Natural Resources and Enviroment
Joint Legislative Committee on the Budget

TIMOTHY P. KERNER
State Representative ~ District 84

April 26, 2022

LaNERR Leadership Team
Louisiana Sea Grant College Program
Louisiana State University
Baton Rouge, LA. 70803

Dear Leadership Team,

Please accept this letter of support for the nomination of the BARATARIA BASIN as the site for the designation of a National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) National Estuarine Research Reserve (NERR) in coastal Louisiana.

I, along with many locals and the Jean Lafitte town government, strongly support the BARATARIA BASIN as the site for Louisiana's NERR. I truly believe this site would be a benefit to the state, region and town.

The BARATARIA BASIN has the best environment, facilities, and access to the basin to support the missions of a NERR as defined by NOAA. Jean Lafitte is proudly home to the Jean Lafitte National Historical Park and Barataria Preserve, Wetlands Trace Boardwalk, Lafitte's Barataria Museum anc the future Wetlands Education Center—all of which will work together with NERR's mission to protect and study America's estuarine systems.

The NERR program is very important to our community and will enrich and boost our understanding of the BARATARIA BASIN, as well as boosting our local economy that was hit hard by Hurricane Ida in August 2021.

If the BARATARIA BASIN is approved by NOAA as the site, as State Representative, I would be happy to work with NOAA and the lead state agency/management team as a partner or in an advisory role to help pursue other more formal support of the BARATARIA BASIN as a NERR.

Thank you for considering our support as part of the proposal to nominate the BARATARIA BASIN as a NERR in Louisiana. Please don't hesitate to reach out to me to discuss this matter in more detail.

Respectfully yours,

Timothy P. Kerner

Pontchartrain NERR

Phase III Proposal

BY

PONTCHARTRAIN TEAM

March 18, 2022

May 4, 2022

TO: LaNERR Executive Committee
Re: Cover Letter and Supplemental Information for LaNERR Site - Pontchartrain Proposal

Thank you for your collective and individual efforts in the important nomination process for the first NOAA-NERR in Louisiana. Although there are three well-qualified sites to serve as host of the LaNERR, we, the Pontchartrain Basin Leadership Team (PPLT) believe the Pontchartrain Basin (PB) and associated wetlands, with special consideration of the history of wide-ranging baseline ecological research activity and decades of environmental education focused on its overall ecology, is the perfect candidate for the NERR site. After reading the information in this letter, and the 42-page proposal itself, we hope you will agree! The purpose of this letter is two-fold for the Executive Committee: first is to highlight the case for the Pontchartrain Site, and second is to provide more supplemental information (and clarification) on some of the lower-scored subsections in our proposal.

The Case for the Pontchartrain Site

Throughout this process, it was apparent that the Pontchartrain Site has all of the necessary cornerstones in place for a successful NERR, with its primary attributes being the wide range of environmental resources within its boundaries, combined with easy access from multiple places within short distances of the biggest and most diverse population nexus in the state. Our proposed site is home to ~1.3 million residents (44% African American and Latinx/Hispanic) and directly accessible to the 16% of the population that live in poverty (including 24% of children under the age of 18). There are 17 universities and colleges within a one-hour drive, and 10 major research/education facilities within the site. In addition, there are also 18.5 million people that visit New Orleans each year that will have the opportunity to explore the proposed Pontchartrain NERR. The history and future capacity for environmental-based research, education, monitoring and stewardship activities of the natural resources of the Pontchartrain Site make it an outstanding choice for scientists, educators, local residents and tourists alike.

The scoring process managed by the Site Selection Committee (SSC), which focused on six primary criteria categories, validates these facts, and shows that our site is highly competitive with the other two sites in each category. Our rankings are as follows: (1) Environmental Representativeness (**ranked 2nd** in what was a virtual tie with the Atchafalaya team, 20.52% compared to their 20.59%); (2) Research/Monitoring/Stewardship (**ranked 2nd**, again in what was a close score of 11.63% for our site compared to 12.3% for the Atchafalaya team); Education and Training (**ranked 1st** at 16.22%-- significantly ahead of the second placed Barataria team with 13.9%); Land Acquisition/Management (**ranked 2nd**); Climate Change/Resiliency (**ranked 2nd**), and; Partnerships (**ranked 1st**). With the scoring this close, we hope the information provided in the remainder of this letter on our lowest scored subsections addresses any concerns the Executive Committee might have for nominating our site.

PPLT Response to Lowest Scored Sub-Sections

The PPLT reviewed the feedback from the SSC, and has provided responses below to all sections ranked by the committee with a score of 2.2 or less in the Phase 3 proposal submitted on March 25, 2022.

Section 1.7: Degree developed and potential impacts to water quality; Score = 1.6: While the south shore of Lake Pontchartrain is highly developed, it is not industrial development, but mostly residential neighborhoods with little or no direct connection to the aquatic habitat. In contrast, the north shore of Lakes' Pontchartrain and Maurepas represent some of the best oligohaline estuarine aquatic habitats in southeastern Louisiana, including extensive beds of SAV. Bonnet Carre Spillway openings and residential runoff are the biggest potential water quality issues in the Pontchartrain Basin, but are also monitored by a wide variety of programs including: USGS/USACE; Coastal Reference Monitoring System (CRMS) and the Pontchartrain Conservancy's (PC's) Water Quality Monitoring Program. Furthermore, all of these programs are expected to be primary components of the NERR's System Wide Monitoring Program Plan (SWMPP) for the Pontchartrain site, thereby addressing concerns about detectability of urban development impacts.

Section 2.3: Suitability of site for environmental baseline monitoring; Score = 2.07: There is a long history of water quality monitoring in the Pontchartrain Basin (PB) dating back to university research studies encompassing 70+ years, many of which were later consolidated under the CRMS program in 2003. The suite of ecological variables collected include vegetation species composition and percent cover; hourly water elevation/salinity/temp; surface elevation change and vertical accretion; soil properties; and land-water ratios. The PC Water Quality

Monitoring Program mentioned previously, has, since 2000, further supplemented those collections. These and other systems would ultimately comprise the System Wide Monitoring Program Plan (SWMPP) mandated for all NERR sites and would thereby be the basis for continued (on-going) and consolidated baseline information across the site that would include (and also expand) all previous historical baseline programs.

Section 4.3: Compatibility with adjacent land use; Score = 1.8: It was noted that the area around "subsection 2" of the proposed site could possibly be developed further, thereby impacting water quality. While there is always the concern of future development and weather threats, a NERR designation would promote more careful design of these factors (note there is low likelihood of any significant development in the other areas 1, 3, 4 & 5 due to the wetland environment and movement of population centers away from flood-prone areas). Many of the adjacent lands in the site are owned by entities with similar interests to the NERR (e.g., university foundations, land trusts, etc.) and much of the "development" that could occur may be for recreational use (i.e., camps) defined as low impact(s). Also, with a current moratorium on any new oil and gas drilling in Lake Pontchartrain itself, the region will face both development and abandonment pressures as people respond to the challenges of climate change and energy transition. Therefore, beyond regulatory considerations, development in the region will be increasingly shaped/constrained by the cost of capital and the availability of insurance. The NERR could provide valuable opportunities to better understand this evolving system and shape more suitable and resilient adaptation options.

Section 4.7: Future urban and industrial development plans; Score = 2.2: There is a possible impact to water quality around the PB's subsection 2; however, there is an extensive existing water quality monitoring infrastructure already in place and decades of lessons learned (described in previous sections above). Southeast Louisiana is not going to increase in human population or generate more industrial development over the next century, a trend that started with Hurricane Katrina in 2005 and has continued after each storm since. The NERR could provide important information and transitional opportunities for those communities. It is also noteworthy that our proposed site provides easy access to researchers/students from HBCUs (e.g., SU, SUNO, Dillard, Xavier) and non-R1 public institutions (e.g., UNO, Northshore Technical Community College, Nunez Community College).

Section 5.2: This criterion focuses on the ability to accommodate shifts in habitat as sea level, inundation or other climate-change impacts occur; Score = 2.0: There are no constructed levees around Lake Maurepas, the rivers that terminate into it, or the Pleistocene terraces on the North Shore. From a connectivity standpoint, the massive amount of combined water bodies that in total comprise our site provides connectivity for all water-related research, monitoring, education, stewardship and management activities. The proposed PB site is water dominated, and the sub-sites are connected via state water bottoms. Change will happen, our area can buffer those changes, and the PB site is not unique here as all proposed NERR sites are vulnerable.

Section 5.3: Infrastructure and Access; Score = 2.2: Any infrastructure that "suffered extensive impacts from recent hurricanes" was located outside of the Hurricane and Storm Damage Risk Reduction System (HSDRRS). Sometime in the next century, it is possible that the HSDRRS will be at the tip of a peninsula formed by the natural levees of the Mississippi River with non-estuarine marine habitat surrounding it on three sides. The proposed PB site would be present to track that change over time and generate data useful to other coastal communities around the world facing similar threats. As with all other facilities across the coast, our resources (those for education, research, etc.) will need to be continually enhanced to address SLR and increasing subsidence rates (i.e., required due to FEMA and private insurance regulations, market pressures, etc.), making the PB site an ideal area to monitor all of these issues.

Hopefully the above comments help supplement those areas of our proposal. Thank you again for your consideration of making the Pontchartrain Site the nominated site for our State's first NERR. We feel all of the information provided in our proposal, and supplemented/clarified in this letter, help showcase why our site would be the best choice. If you have any further questions for our PPLT, please do not hesitate to contact us.

Sincerely Pontchartrain Proposal Leadership Team

Mark S. Davis, Tulane University
Robert Moreau, Ph.D., Southeastern Louisiana University
David C. Podgorski, Ph.D., University of New Orleans
Robert A. Thomas, Ph.D., Loyola University
Kristi L. Trail, P.E., Pontchartrain Conservancy

Contents

DEAR MEMBERS OF THE LANERR DLT,

Enclosed is the Phase 3 Proposal from the Pontchartrain Proposal Leadership Team (PPLT). We believe the Pontchartrain Basin and associated wetlands, with special consideration of the history of wide-ranging base-line ecological research activity and decades of environmental education focused on its overall ecology, is the perfect candidate for the LaNERR site. The proposal discusses the many supportive factors that make this the ideal location, but very important is the availability of base-line ecological evaluation, the multitude of actual environmentally focused facilities, and the large, concentrated human population (about 1.2 million) that has long considered it to be the sacrosanct ecosystem in the region.

As we move to the next level of consideration, we have a wealth of activities and a host of colleagues to add to the justification. We know that of all the excellent proposed sites, and we love and respect them all, a Pontchartrain LaNERR will be easily – and daily – accessed by a multitude of citizens.

Mark S. Davis, J.D., MLT, Eugenie Schwartz Professor of River and Coastal Studies, Tulane University (and Director of Tulane's Institute on Water Resources Law and Policy, and Director of Tulane Center for Environmental Law)

Robert Moreau, Ph.D., Manager, Southeastern Louisiana University's Turtle Cove Environmental Research Station

David C. Podgorski, Ph.D., Assistant Professor, Pontchartrain Institute for Environmental Sciences and Department of Chemistry, University of New Orleans

Robert A. Thomas, Ph.D., Professor and Loyola Distinguished Scholar Chair in Environmental Communication, Director of Loyola's Center for Environmental Communication

Kristi L. Trail, P.E., Executive Director, Pontchartrain Conservancy

SECTION 1: Physical Description of the Site

The Pontchartrain Estuary LaNERR proposal site is a large, multi-component site stratified across the estuarine environmental gradient of the Pontchartrain Basin, from freshwater Maurepas Swamp in the northwest to the marine waters off the Chandeleur Islands to the southeast. The estuary is water-dominated and includes Lakes' Maurepas, Pontchartrain, Borgne, and Chandeleur Sound. Sub-areas are described below in more detail. State and federal landowners have been contacted about the LaNERR site selection process.

AREA #1: Maurepas and Manchac swamps surround Lake Maurepas, wetlands formed as the Mississippi River produced the St. Bernard Delta approximately 3,000 – 4,000 years ago. The majority land owner is the State of Louisiana. The extent of state-owned water bottoms to be included in each sub-area will be determined later, but are necessary for connectivity between sub-areas across the entire proposed site. I-10 traverses the southwestern edge of sub-area 1, and I-55 hugs the western edge of sub-area 1, making this area easily accessible to the public. Sub-area 1 consists of uplands (Alluvial Forested Wetlands), intertidal areas (Coastal Forested Wetlands, Coastal Freshwater and Intermediate Marshes), and subtidal and submerged bottoms (Subtidal Soft bottoms and SAV).

AREA #2: Big Branch NWR and Fontainebleau State Park are located on the northeastern edge of Lake Pontchartrain, and is bounded by Cane Bayou to the west, Lake Pontchartrain to the south, and Hwy 22 to the north, making sub-area 2 easily accessible to the public. The majority land owners are the federal government and the State of Louisiana. Sub-area 2 consists of uplands (Longleaf Pine Savanna and Maritime Forest), intertidal areas (Coastal Intermediate and Brackish Marshes), and subtidal and submerged bottoms (Subtidal Soft Bottoms and SAV), with a distinct line of demarcation where the marsh meets the Maritime Forest and Pine Savannah.

AREA #3: The Orleans Land Bridge is located between Lakes' Pontchartrain and Borgne, and contains Lake St. Catherine. The area is bounded by the Rigolets to the east, New Orleans East neighborhoods to the west, Lake Pontchartrain to the north and Lake Borgne to the south. Sub- area 3 is traversed by I-10 and Hwy 90, making it easily accessible to the public. The majority land owners are the federal government and State of Louisiana. The area provides storm surge protection for >1.5 million people, with habitats consisting of uplands (Maritime Forest), intertidal areas (Coastal Intermediate, Brackish and Saline Marshes), and subtidal/submerged bottoms (Subtidal Soft Bottoms/SAV).

AREA #4: The Pearl River floodplain is located just east of Slidell, LA and east of the Rigolets. The fresh waters that flow from the mouth of the Pearl are a critical feature that moderates salinity in Chandeleur Sound and Biloxi Marsh and impacts their productive oyster reefs. Sub-area 4 is traversed by I-10, Hwy 90 and Hwy 59 – making this area easily accessible to the public. The majority landowner is the State of Louisiana and consists of uplands (Alluvial Forested Wetlands, Bottomland Hardwood Forest), intertidal areas (Coastal Forested Wetlands, Coastal Freshwater, Intermediate, Brackish and Saline Marshes), and subtidal and submerged bottoms (Subtidal Soft Bottoms and SAV).

AREA #5: The Chandeleur Islands are located between Chandeleur Sound to the west and the Gulf of Mexico to the east and are barrier islands formed over 3,000 years ago as the rim of the St. Bernard Delta lobe of the Mississippi River. The Chandeleur Islands are only accessible by boat, but provide unparalleled habit found nowhere else in south Louisiana. The islands themselves are federally owned and the waters that surround them are state-owned. Additional state-owned water bottoms provide connectivity to the other sub-areas of the site. Sub-area 5 consists of intertidal areas (Coastal Saline Marshes, Coastal Mangroves, Intertidal Beaches and Dunes), and subtidal and submerged bottoms (Subtidal Soft Bottoms, Hard Bottoms, SAV), including the only location in Louisiana with true seagrasses.

SECTION 2: LaNERR Site Criteria Worksheet:

PONTCHARTRAIN SITE	LaNERR Site Criteria
1.0 ENVIRONMENTAL REPRESENTATIVENESS	
The Pontchartrain Estuary NERR proposal site is a multi-component site stratified across the estuarine environmental gradient, from freshwater Maurepas Swamp in the northwest to the marine waters off the Chandeleur Islands to the southeast. The estuary is water-dominated and includes Lakes' Maurepas, Pontchartrain, Borgne, and Chandeleur Sound. Sub-areas are described below in more detail: Area #1: Maurepas and Manchac swamps surround Lake Maurepas. The ecosystem composition consists of uplands (Alluvial Forested Wetlands), intertidal areas (Coastal Forested Wetlands, Coastal Freshwater and Intermediate Marshes), and subtidal and submerged bottoms (Subtidal Soft Bottoms and SAV). Area #2: Big Branch NWR and Fontainebleau State Park are located on the northeastern edge of Lake Pontchartrain. Ecosystem composition consists of uplands (Longleaf Pine Savanna and Maritime Forest), intertidal areas (Coastal Intermediate and Brackish Marshes), and subtidal and submerged bottoms (Subtidal Soft Bottoms and SAV).	1.1 Ecosystem composition: A measure of the diversity of ecosystem types present within the boundaries of the site. This criterion assumes that sites that have a high diversity of major ecosystem types are of higher relative "value" for protection and management than those with low ecosystem diversity (unless the ecosystem in consideration is rare or unique). 3 Points. The site has a high diversity of habitat composition within its major ecosystem type, i.e., it contains three or more habitat types or subtypes within its major ecosystem type (e.g., site consists of a combination of swamps, coastal marshes, and mud flats) or has a combination of multiple coastal marsh types (e.g., tidal freshwater, brackish, salt marsh zones). 2 Points. The site has a moderate diversity of habitat composition within its major ecosystem type, i.e., it contains only two habitat types or subtypes within its major ecosystem type (e.g., consists of a combination of forested wetlands and a single coastal marsh type). 1 Point. The site has a low diversity of habitat composition within its major ecosystem type, i.e., its major ecosystem type consists of a single habitat type (e.g., tidal freshwater marsh or brackish marsh, or forested wetland). These are the suggested Ecosystem Types to be used in the LaNERR evaluation: Group I- Uplands Alluvial Forested Wetlands Longleaf Pine Savannahs/Pine Flatwoods

Area #3: Pearl River WMA is located just east of Slidell, LA., between Lakes St. Catherine and Borgne. Ecosystem composition consists of uplands (Alluvial Forested Wetlands and Maritime Forest), intertidal areas (Fresh Marsh, Intermediate Marsh, Brackish Marsh, Saline Marsh) and subtidal and submerged bottoms (Subtidal Soft Bottoms and SAV). Area #4: Orleans Land Bridge is located between Lakes' Pontchartrain and Borgne, and contains Lake St. Catherine. Ecosystem composition consists of uplands (Maritime Forest), intertidal areas (Coastal Intermediate, Brackish and Saline Marshes), and subtidal and submerged bottoms (Subtidal Soft Bottoms and SAV). Area #5: Chandeleur Islands are located between Chandeleur Sound to the west and the Gulf of Mexico to the east. Ecosystem composition consists of intertidal areas (Coastal Saline Marshes, Coastal Mangroves, Intertidal Beaches and Dunes), and subtidal and submerged bottoms (Subtidal Soft Bottoms, Hard Bottoms and SAV), including the only location in Louisiana with true seagrasses.	Maritime Forest- Woodland Coastal Prairie/bogs Coastal Shrublands and Cheniers Group II- Intertidal areas Coastal Forested Wetlands Coastal Floating Marshes Coastal Freshwater Marsh Coastal Intermediate Marsh Coastal Brackish Marsh Coastal Salt Marsh Coastal Mangroves Intertidal Beaches and Dunes Intertidal Mud and Sand Flats Group III- Subtidal and Submerged Bottoms Subtidal hard bottoms/reefs Subtidal soft bottoms Subtidal Plants (SAV)
The Pontchartrain Estuary LaNERR proposed site exhibits a high degree of "balance" between ecosystem types. The proposed Pontchartrain LaNERR site is environmentally representative of deltaic south Louisiana and of the Pontchartrain estuary specifically – described in more detail below: The proposal site contains three Ecosystem Types (Uplands, Intertidal, Subtidal), with 3 – 9 subtypes within each Ecosystem Type. The exact proportion of each major Ecosystem Type is	1.2 Balanced ecosystem composition: A measure of the relative composition of ecosystem types within the boundaries of a site (buffer plus core areas). This criterion assumes that sites with a balanced proportion of ecosystem types are of higher relative "value" for protection and management. High, moderate, and low values are assigned to sites that contain variations in the proportions of all three ecosystem types. A value of zero is assigned to a site that is dominated by one ecosystem type or contains less than three ecosystem types.

difficult to predict as the exact boundaries of the site will not be defined until later in the selection process. However, we estimate that when the site's boundaries are finalized the ecological footprint of each Ecosystem Type across the site as a whole (across all 5 sub-areas) will be >25%. Each sub-area individually will NOT reflect this balance, as each sub-area reflects the ecological conditions of its' position along the environmental gradient of the Pontchartrain Basin.	3 Points. The site contains representative upland, intertidal, and subtidal habitats in relatively equal proportions (i.e. areal cover of any one ecosystem type not less than 25 percent of the total area). 2 Points. The site contains representative upland, intertidal, and subtidal habitats, with the areal cover of any one type not less than 10 percent of the total area. 1 Point. The site contains representative upland, intertidal, and subtidal habitats, with the areal cover of any one type less than 10 percent of the total area. 0 Points. The site contains representative upland, intertidal, and subtidal habitats, with the areal cover of two types being less than 10 percent of the total area *or* the site consists of habitats from only one or two of the three major ecosystem types.
Keeping in mind that final site boundaries will shift, at this time two of the three major Ecosystem Types (Uplands, Intertidal) are considered a Major Ecosystem Type (>40% extent) within the proposal site and across the sub-areas and consist of >3 habitat subtypes. The Upland Ecosystem Type consists of • Alluvial Forest • Longleaf Pine Savanna • Maritime Forest. The Intertidal Ecosystem Type consists of • Coastal Forested Wetlands • Coastal Floating • Fresh Marsh • Intermediate Marsh • Brackish Marsh • Saline Marsh • Coastal Mangroves • Intertidal Beaches and Dunes • Intertidal Mud and Sand Flats.	<u>1.3 Habitat composition and complexity:</u> A measure of the diversity of habitat types present within the major ecosystem type found within the boundaries of the site. This criterion assumes that sites that have a high diversity of habitat types are of higher relative "value" for protection and management than those with a low diversity of habitat types. Major ecosystem type is defined here as that type that comprises approximately 40 percent of the site. Use the habitat type designations listed above for "ecosystem composition." 3 Points. The site has a high diversity of habitat composition within its major ecosystem type, i.e., it contains three or more habitat types or subtypes within its major ecosystem type (e.g., site consists of a combination of swamps, coastal marshes, and reefs) or has a combination of multiple coastal marsh types (e.g., tidal freshwater, brackish, salt marsh zones including mangroves). 2 Points. The site has a moderate diversity of habitat composition within its major ecosystem type, i.e., it contains only two habitat types or subtypes within its major ecosystem type (e.g., consists of a combination of swamps and a single coastal marsh type). 1 Point. The site has a low diversity of habitat composition within its major ecosystem type, i.e., its major ecosystem type consists of a single habitat type (e.g., brackish marsh or tidal freshwater wetlands).

Even the non-major Ecosystem Type (Subtidal) contains three subtypes • Subtidal Hard Bottoms, • Soft Bottoms • SAV	
Floral habitat types include upland ecosystems of alluvial forest, longleaf pine savanna and maritime forest. The intertidal ecosystem habitat types include coastal forested wetlands, coastal floating, fresh, intermediate, brackish and saline marshes, coastal mangroves, intertidal beaches and dune flora and intertidal algal mud and sand flats. Subtidal habitat types include hard bottoms and soft bottoms that support submerged aquatic vegetation. In terms of fauna, the greater Pontchartrain Basin is essential both as migratory stopovers, overwintering locations, and as breeding sites for a wide diversity of birds. There has been a focus on breeding of wading and shore birds, in addition to charismatic migrants such as purple martins and prothonotary warblers. Other bird species include white ibis, Mississippi kite, tufted titmouse, northern parula, yellow-throated warblers and brown pelican. Non-game animals include West Indian manatees, Eastern spotted skunk, long tailed weasel, and habitats suitable for endangered species such as the bald eagle, brown pelican, reddish egret, paddlefish, Bachman's sparrow, red-cockaded woodpecker, pallid sturgeon, gopher tortoise, Alabama heel splitter, Louisiana quillwort, parrot pitcher plant, and ornate chorus frog. Habitat for aquatic fauna include spawning/nursery grounds for spotted seatrout, sand seatrout, Southern flounder, Atlantic croaker, spot, Gulf menhaden, striped mullet, white mullet, Gulf killifish, anchovies, blue crab,	1.4 Significant faunal and floral support: A measure of the degree to which a site supports significant faunal or floral components. This criterion focuses on a site's contribution (i.e., function) toward supporting the activities (e.g., feeding, nesting) of the following suite of significant faunal or floral components. The list of components includes groups or organisms that are known to be dependent upon estuarine habitats for the entire or a crucial part of their life cycle. • Fish and Shellfish Spawning and Nursery Grounds (includes use by either freshwater, estuarine, or estuarine-dependent marine species) • Migratory Bird or Waterfowl Use • Bird Nesting or Roosting Area • Critical Mammal Habitat • Non-Game Animals (amphibians, reptiles, etc.) • State or federally Listed Species or of concern (animal or plant – including candidate species) • Other biodiversity support as representative of ecosystem services (such as invertebrates, reef environments…). 3 Points. The site supports or serves as an important site for a wide range of the faunal or floral components listed above (4 of 6) or is an extremely important site for any threatened or endangered species. 2 Points. The site supports or serves as an important site for a moderate range and diversity of the significant faunal or floral components listed above (3 of 6). 1 point. The site supports or serves as an important site for one or two of the significant faunal or floral components listed above. 0 point. The site does not support significant faunal or floral components.

white shrimp, brown shrimp and lemon sharks. The Chandeleur Islands are home to the loggerhead, Kemp's ridley and the diamondback terrapin sea turtles.	
The Pontchartrain Basin represents a complete geological continuum from the Pleistocene to the present, which is unique to this estuary. The most geologically significant features include faults, surficial and buried barrier islands, and extensive fluvial deposits, which dominate the modern landscape. Upland portions of the proposal site contain diverse strata types, including clay, silt and sand deposits, which span a wide range of thicknesses and environments including fluvial, marsh and swamp. In addition, the thickness of the Holocene ranges from non-existent in the upland region to nearly 100 m. Marine portions are dominated by 1) shoreline processes (e.g., barrier island processes) and 2) riverine processes (e.g., the Mississippi River), which has generated several distinct hydrologic sub-basins. Also unique to this estuary, the proposal site spans the complete salinity gradient, ranging from fresh in the northwest estuary (~ 0.1 ppt) to the Gulf of Mexico (~25 ppt), and all salinity values in between depending on wind, storms, and tidal action.	1.5 Geologic representativeness, diversity, and uniqueness of the site: A measure of the representativeness, diversity, and uniqueness of the geologic characteristics that define part or the whole of a candidate site. This criterion attempts to consider both the surface and subsurface geologic formations that may be representative or unique within a site, particularly as they affect or define associated biotic habitats. Included in these considerations are the ways that local geology affects surface hydrology, such as drainage and fluvial systems, and subsurface hydrology, such as shallow-water aquifers. Geologic and hydrologic maps should be used to evaluate this criterion. 3 Points. The site has numerous geologic characteristics, two or more unique geologic characteristics, and contains a high diversity of formation types or strata within its boundaries. 2 Points. The site has a moderate number of representative geologic characteristics and at least one unique geologic characteristic and contains a moderate diversity of formation types or strata within its boundaries. 1 Point. The site has a moderate number of geologic characteristics, no unique geologic characteristics, or contains a moderate diversity of formation types or strata within its boundaries. 0 Points. The site has few or only one representative geologic characteristic, no unique geologic characteristics, or contains few or only one formation type or strata within its boundaries.
The proposed Pontchartrain Estuary NERR site is a multi-component site with surface water salinity ranging from 0 ppt to 32 ppt. Salinity ranges were determined from 2015 – 2021 for each sub area using the Louisiana Coastwide Reference Monitoring System (CRMS) and the Pontchartrain Conservancy's surface salinity monitoring.	1.6 Salinity gradient A measure of the seasonal and spatial range of salinity over multiple years within a candidate site's boundaries. This criterion recognizes the effect of salinity on the biotic structure of estuarine habitats (including the plant communities and faunal components that inhabit them). It assumes that a site with a greater range of salinity will support a broader range of habitat types and organisms. 3 Points. The site encompasses > 10 parts per thousand (ppt) or greater range of salinity within its boundaries.

Area #1: Maurepas and Manchac swamps surrounding Lake Maurepas. CRMS station 0030 located east of Lake Maurepas in the Manchac swamp reported a low salinity of 0.1 ppt and a high salinity of 2.6 ppt for a total range of 2.5 ppt. Area #2: Big Branch NWR and Fontainebleau State Park are located on the northeastern edge of Lake Pontchartrain. CRMS station 0006 located on the edge of Lake Pontchartrain in the Big Branch NWR reported a low salinity of 0.3 ppt and a high salinity of 13 ppt for a total range of 12.7 ppt. Area #3: Pearl River WMA is located just east of Slidell, LA., and northwest of Lake Borgne. CRMS station 4110-H01 located off of Salt Bayou in the Pearl River WMA reported a low salinity of 0.0 ppt and a high salinity of 10.3 ppt for a total range of 10.3 ppt Area #4: Orleans Land Bridge is located between Lakes' Pontchartrain and Borgne, and contains the Bayou Sauvage NWR. CRMS station 0002-H01 located off of Lake Pontchartrain in the Big Branch NWR reported a low salinity of 0.1 ppt and a high salinity of 10.2 ppt for a total range of 10.1 ppt. Area #5: The Chandeleur Islands are located between Chandeleur Sound to the west and the Gulf of Mexico to the east. Around the Chandeleur Islands the hydrocoast salinity surfaces reported a low salinity of 23 ppt and a high salinity of 32 ppt for a total range of 9 ppt.	2 Points. The site encompasses a 5-10 ppt range of salinity within its boundaries. 1 Point. The site encompasses a 2-5 ppt range of salinity within its boundaries. 0 Points. The site encompasses < 2 ppt range of salinity within its boundaries.
The proposed Pontchartrain Estuary NERR site is a multi-component site:	1.7 Degree developed and potential impacts to water quality: A measure of the degree to which the site (core and buffer) is developed and the relative impacts to surface waters from human activities upstream in its associated hydrologic basin (see reference map). This criterion assumes

Area #1: Maurepas and Manchac swamps surrounding Lake Maurepas are composed of 3 state-owned wildlife management areas (WMA) including the Maurepas Swamp WMA, Manchac WMA, and Joyce WMA. Very few structures are located within this sub area and are limited to fishing camps, environmental monitoring stations, and state-owned WMA buildings. A check-in/check-out process is required to access all three WMAs and is monitored by the state. No industrial or commercial development is located within this sub area. Area #2: Big Branch NWR and Fontainebleau State Park are located on the northeastern edge of Lake Pontchartrain and consist of both federal and state-owned properties. The only structures located within this sub area are the state buildings, cabins, and campsites associated with Fontainebleau State Park. No industrial or commercial development is located within this sub area. Area #3: Pearl River WMA is located just east of Slidell, LA., and northwest of Lake Borgne. It is composed of the state-owned Pearl River WMA. Very few structures are located within this sub area and are limited to fishing camps, environmental monitoring stations, and state-owned WMA buildings. A check-in/check-out process is required to access Pearl River WMA and is monitored by the state. No industrial or commercial development is located within this sub area. Area #4: Orleans Land Bridge is located between Lakes' Pontchartrain and Borgne, and contains the federally owned Bayou Sauvage NWR. Very few structures are located within	that human impacts to a site are directly proportional to the degree and type of development on site and upstream. Exceptions to this assumption may need to be considered where development at a site and its surrounding area have been subject to high levels of control. Density of development (e.g., no industrial activity or commercial development, few residences, minimal agricultural or silvicultural activity), water quality status within the site, or whether the land is in protected status are points of consideration for this criterion. 3 Points. The site is relatively undisturbed and the hydrologic basin contains low intensity development upstream (e.g., no industrial or commercial development, few residences, minimal agricultural or silvicultural activity) or the land is in protected status. 2 Points. The site is relatively undisturbed and the hydrologic basin contains moderate development upstream (e.g., relatively few residences, moderate agricultural or silvicultural activity, minimal commercial or industrial development). 1 Points. The site has been moderately disturbed and the hydrologic basins contains relatively intensive development (e.g., moderate density of residences, or the presence of industrial activity). 0 Points: The site has been extremely disturbed and the hydrologic basins contains very intensive development (e.g., high density residential, or commercial or industrial activity).

this sub area and are limited to environmental monitoring stations, boardwalks, and pavilions. Public access is restricted during certain times of the year. No industrial or commercial development is located within this sub area. Area #5: The Chandeleur Islands are located between Chandeleur Sound to the west and the Gulf of Mexico to the east. They are part of the federally owned Breton NWR and consist of multiple uninhabited barrier islands. There are no structures located directly on the islands themselves and public access is restricted to daytime only. No industrial or commercial development is located within this sub area.	

2.0 RESEARCH, MONITORING & RESOURCE PROTECTION -

The biotic communities and abiotic conditions of the proposed Pontchartrain site are intimately intertwined with one another resulting in a multitude of research opportunities across the site. First, the site possesses the classic habitat/abiotic gradient from marine, high-salinity, sand bottom habitats in the east to freshwater, mud-bottom sites in the west, with the mid-section of the study area being the most dynamic in terms of abiotic conditions and biotic communities. Overall, the site is abiotically dynamic and is strongly influenced by precipitation levels, tidal currents, extreme weather events, and periodic freshwater influx via the Bonnet Carre' Spillway. Both state and federally listed species occupy the proposed site including approximately 11 federally endangered/threatened species and more than 100 state imperiled species. There are more than 150 pre-1700 historic sites, as well as numerous historic	2.1 Value of site for research: A measure of the opportunities offered by characteristics of the site for research, such as a high diversity of ecosystem and habitat types, a balanced habitat composition, a wide salinity range (see criterion 1.7), biotic or geologic representativeness of the site, known historic uses or archaeological sites, and unique opportunities to conduct applied research regarding important local, state, and regional coastal management issues (including past and potential management activities). The assumption is that a site with representative, unique, and highly diverse characteristics will provide greater research, monitoring, and resource protection opportunities than one lacking these characteristics. Ratings generated for these factors under previous selection criteria can be used as a guide for rating this overall factor. 3 Points. The site has (1) a high diversity of ecosystem and habitat types, (2) moderate salinity range, (3) representative biotic and geologic sites or hydrologic characteristics, (4) state and federally listed species, (5) historic and archaeological significance, and (6) opportunities to address important habitat or resource management issues. 2 Points. The site has four or five of the six above. 1 Point. The site has two or three of the six above.

European colonization sites within the proposed Pontchartrain site. Finally, the site represents an ideal natural laboratory to study the impacts of a freshwater diversion on biotic communities as the Hope Canal, in the southwest region of the site is constructed. It will provide fresh water, nutrients, and sediments from the Mississippi River into the Maurepas swamp to revitalize an ecosystem that has been disconnected from the Mississippi River due to levee construction. Completion of this project offers the unique opportunity to study both the short-term and long-term ecological impacts of this diversion.	0 Points. The site has one or none of the six above.
The biota of the proposed Pontchartrain site has been surveyed and monitored since the late-1800s. Fishes have been most heavily studied with the most comprehensive surveys of the site and surrounding areas conducted using traditional sampling gear in 1954, 1978, 1987, 1996-1998, and 1998-2000 and, most recently in 2019, using environmental DNA surveys. Over the last 50 years, researchers obtained baseline data on changes in GNO alternate aquatic community states due to ENSO shifts, hurricanes, hypoxia from eutrophication, salinity stratification, and the construction and closure of navigation canals. Other vertebrate groups that have been surveyed include the lesser scaulp. Various surveys and studies of invertebrate biodiversity also were conducted over the same time-periods: • Rangia Clams • Hooked Mussels • Submerged Aquatic Vegetation • Blue Crab • Brown Shrimp	<u>2.2 Previous research and monitoring efforts:</u> A measure of the degree to which the site (including the hydrologic basin) has been used for past research and monitoring, including considerations of the diversity of inquiry (fields of research), and the availability of data (the form and availability of documentation, e.g., peer-reviewed papers, grey literature, inventory reports). The assumption is that an area with previously established research and monitoring interest offers greater opportunity for future projects than an area that has not sparked such an interest in the past. 3 Points. The site has a long history of well-documented research and monitoring projects in a wide variety of topics. Data are readily available. 2 Points. The site has had major and well-documented research and monitoring efforts, generating data that are readily available. It has not had a long history of research and monitoring. 1 Point. The site has had only minor research and monitoring projects generating limited data (e.g., inventories) and/or these data may be difficult to obtain. 0 Points. The site has no known history of research and monitoring.

The proposed Pontchartrain site has outstanding connected areas ranging from offshore seagrass beds to oligohaline salt marshes to freshwater cypress swamps. There are no artificial barriers within the site to prevent migrating aquatic organisms (e.g., blue crab, brown shrimp, red drum) from moving among these habitats to complete their life cycles. All of these habitats have been the subject of previous studies and surveys going back to the 1950s. This historical information can be used to generate environmental baseline data to accurately assess long-term resource trends and changes in ecological characteristics for a wide range of organisms, habitats, and needs.	2.3 Suitability of site for environmental baseline monitoring: A measure of the suitability of the site as a reference area for assessing long-term natural resource trends or ecological characteristics, based on the degree to which the site has not been fragmented by land-use practices on or near the site. The assumption is that a site with contiguous habitats that provide landscape continuity (not interrupted by developed or disturbed lands & waters) will be a more valuable reference area to generate baseline monitoring information than a site that has been extensively altered. 3 Points. The site has outstanding areas to generate environmental baseline data to assess long- term resource trends or ecological characteristics for a wide range of needs. 2 Points. The site has adequate areas to generate environmental baseline data to assess long- term resource trends or ecological characteristics for many needs. 1 Point. The site has marginal areas to generate environmental baseline data to assess long-term resource trends or ecological characteristics. 0 Points. The site has been so extensively altered by past activities that it is unsuitable for generating environmental baseline data.
It is axiomatic that the management of coastal resources should benefit from science and educational engagement. It is also axiomatic that science and educational programs should benefit and be informed by the programs, laws, and policies that shape and direct the management of coastal resources by governmental bodies. As obvious as those things are, they are easier said than done, a fact this proposed site addresses specifically. The size and nature of the proposed site offer remarkable opportunities for integrating academic research, public access and education and land and water management. This site features a full range of estuarine management issues including: ● Wetland loss and habitat change; ● Wetland loss mitigation, restoration, and creation; ● Dredging and spoil disposal;	2.4. Ability to address key local, state, and regional coastal management issues: A measure of the degree to which the site is appropriate for investigating issues relevant to coastal management at the local, state, and regional levels. Solutions to these issues may require either the application of land management practices or habitat manipulations to perform meaningful research and assessment. As such, the site should offer both adequate control areas plus areas where demonstration projects and habitat manipulations (such as coastal restoration projects) can be accommodated to study many of the issues of concern. The assumption is that a site where diverse coastal management issues are evident and can be addressed will be of greater value from research and resource management standpoint than sites where these issues do not arise. The diversity and significance of coastal management issues should be identified for the hydrologic basin as it may influence core and buffer areas proposed. The following list are suggestions that may be included in the description of the sites ability to address key local, state, and regional coastal management issues. ● Wetland loss and habitat change; ● Wetland loss mitigation, restoration, and creation;

• Beneficial uses of dredged materials; • Shoreline erosion; • Commercial or recreational fisheries; • Waterfowl and other wildlife management; • Best management practices for habitat protection or management (e.g., wildlife management); • Best management practices to limit impacts from agricultural, silvicultural, or development activities; • Effects of pollutants on water quality and living resources (including oil spills, nutrients, harmful algal blooms, bacteria contamination, etc.) • Impacts of relative sea-level rise; • Prehistoric and early historic settlement and land use; • Unique connections in cultural and natural resources within the site (language, customs, land-use, etc.); • Fire management, invasive species; • Hydrologic restoration; The site offers more than management issues, however, it also offers a rare if not unique suite of federal, state, local and private resource management programs to engage with including: • The federal Mississippi River and Tributaries Project (navigation and flood risk reduction) • The federal/state Coastal Wetlands Planning Protection and Restoration Act. Aside from the obvious planning and implementation aspects of this law, it places ecosystem conservation and enhancement on an equal footing with other Corps of Engineers program areas and creates the Corps to consult with EPA and the Fish and Wildlife Service to ensure consistency. • The Louisiana Coastal Protection and Restoration Authority • The federal/EPA Lake Pontchartrain Basin Restoration Program.	• Dredging and spoil disposal; • Beneficial uses of dredged materials; • Shoreline erosion; • Commercial or recreational fisheries; • Waterfowl and other wildlife management; • Best management practices for habitat protection or management (e.g., wildlife management); • Best management practices to limit impacts from agricultural, silvicultural, or development activities; • Effects of pollutants on water quality and living resources (including oil spills, nutrients, harmful algal blooms, bacteria contamination, etc.) • Impacts of relative sea-level rise; • Prehistoric and early historic settlement and land use; • Unique connections in cultural and natural resources within the site (language, customs, land-use, etc.); • Fire management, invasive species; • Hydrologic restoration; 3 Points. The site is highly appropriate for investigating a diversity of coastal zone management issues. 2 Points. The site is appropriate for investigating coastal zone management issues. 1 Point. The site is minimally appropriate for investigating coastal zone management issues. 0 Points. The site is not appropriate for investigating coastal zone management issues.

3.0 EDUCATION AND INTERPRETATION -

The proposed Pontchartrain NERR is a multisite reserve that will provide education outreach, research, training and stewardship opportunities in a wide variety of habitats. The facilities include: Turtle Cove Classroom on Galva Canal, Turtle Cove Environmental Research Station, Lake Pontchartrain Basin Maritime Museum, Shea Penland Coastal Education and Research Facility (CERF), New Canal Lighthouse Museum and Education Center, Tulane River and Coastal Center, Arlene Meraux River Observation Center, A Studio in the Woods, Port Manchac (proposed environmental and community enhancements there) and two sites within the National Wildlife Refuges Complex, including Big Branch Marsh and Bayou Sauvage, which is the second largest urban wildlife refuge in the country. There are also scenic rivers and state parks that serve to increase the range of educational experiences. Collectively, these sites provide a high diversity of habitats, including subtidal zones, barrier islands, salt, brackish and freshwater marshes, wetland forests, pine savannas and riverine environments in both rural and urban settings.

The proposed reserve also provides a wealth of archaeological, cultural and historical sites and experiences. There are over 150 pre-1700 historic sites and numerous historic European colonization sites including: Fort Pike on the Rigolets Pass, Fort MaCombe on Chef Menteur Pass, Fort St. John and many active archaeological excavations of Choctaw, Tchefuncte, Acolapissa, and Houma Native American tribe settlements. The Manchac (now in ruins), Madisonville, New

3.1 Diversity and quality of training education and interpretation of opportunities: A measure of the variety and quality of training, education, and interpretation opportunities (i.e., ecological, archaeological, cultural, historical, etc.) provided by the site (core and buffer areas) for the different target audiences. The assumption is that a candidate site with a diversity of such opportunities of high quality will be utilized to a greater extent than one with fewer opportunities.

3 Point. The site has numerous different training, education, and interpretation opportunities of high quality.
2 Points. The site has several significantly different educational opportunities of good quality.
1 Point. The site has few significant educational opportunities.
0 Points. The site has insignificant educational opportunities.

Canal and Tchefuncte Lighthouses are also examples of important historical sites, and those in need of preservation may benefit from a NERR designation. Interpretive centers at Fontainebleau, and Fairview-Riverside State Parks, as well as the New Canal Lighthouse Museum and Lake Pontchartrain Basin Maritime Museum offer public education and student field trip opportunities focused on natural, cultural and historical resources. The mission of the Maritime Museum is "bringing Louisiana's maritime history to life" and the New Canal Lighthouse Museum and Education Center offers a variety of community, student and teacher professional development outreach programs. It goes without saying, that New Orleans offers a plethora of educational opportunities at the countless museums and historic sites within the city. In summary, the proposed Pontchartrain NERR's ecologically diverse site provides excellent formal and informal educational opportunities to increase the knowledge and awareness of estuarine and coastal ecosystems, their cultural, historical and archaeological contexts, and the issues associated with their maintenance and protection.	
The previously listed educational outreach facilities and public access points in state parks, WMAs and National Wildlife Refuges within the defined zone are readily accessible and within close proximity to the ethnically, racially, socioeconomically and geographically diverse target audience in the region. The target audience includes approximately 300,000 K-12 public school students, 38,000 charter school students and over 195,000 college students and educators.	3.2 Diversity and availability of target audiences: A measure of the diversity and availability of target audiences (e.g., user groups, resource managers, residents, environmental groups, decision makers, teachers and students, and the general public) which may routinely utilize the site (accessible during a single day trip) for training, education, and interpretation. The assumption is that a candidate site with a variety of available target audiences will be utilized to a greater extent than one with fewer target audiences.

Additionally, environmental professionals and groups, the general public and community groups such as the Boy Scouts, Girl Scouts, Cub Scouts, Garden Clubs and Birding Groups, among others, are included in the target audience. Much of the proposed zone includes the Greater New Orleans Metro area. This area had a population of 1.27 million in 2020 and encompasses the parishes of Orleans, Plaquemines, St. Bernard, Jefferson, St. Charles, St. John the Baptist, St. James, and St Tammany. The most densely populated region of Louisiana, New Orleans, Metairie, and Kenner areas with a population of more than 1.2 million people, sits adjacent to Lake Pontchartrain and in close proximity to all parts of the proposed NERR site. This area is diverse in terms of ethnic and socio-economic demographics, with 34% of the three cities being black, and 58% white. New Orleans itself, being a destination city for tourists, significantly increases the opportunities for education and outreach beyond the residents of this area. Eco-tourism is a growing industry in New Orleans and the addition of a NERR would enrich the offerings available to visitors to learn about the natural history and resources of the area. The unique geography of most parishes within the zone puts the population centers close to the publicly owned lands that this NERR site encompasses.	3 Points. The site is suitable for a variety of target audiences that are readily available (accessible during a single day trip). 2 Points. The site is suitable for a moderate number of target audiences that are readily available (accessible during a single day trip). 1 Point. The site is suitable for few target audiences that are available (accessible during a single day trip). 0 Points. The site is so remote or inaccessible that it is not suitable for any target audience.
The existing research, training, education and recreational facilities within the proposed Pontchartrain NERR include: Turtle Cove Classroom on Galva Canal, Turtle Cove Environmental Research Station on Pass Manchac, Lake Pontchartrain Basin Maritime Museum, Shea Penland Coastal Education and Research Facility (CERF), New Canal Lighthouse	3.3 Availability of facilities: The degree to which the site (core and buffer areas) has existing facilities or potential sites for future facilities that can be used by staff, researchers, classes, and training groups (e.g., administrative building space, dormitories, labs, interpretive centers, trails and boardwalks, boat ramps, etc.). The assumption is that, due to limited reserve construction funds, a candidate site with existing facilities can meet the objectives of the Reserve System program sooner and more completely than a site without existing facilities. The availability of

Museum and Education Center, Tulane River and Coastal Center, Arlene Meraux River Observation Center, A Studio in the Woods, Port Manchac (a potential partner in this endeavor) and two sites within the National Wildlife Refuges Complex, including Big Branch Marsh and Bayou Sauvage, which is the second largest urban wildlife refuge in the country. There are also scenic rivers and state parks and over 60 public boat launches and marinas that provide easy access for research and recreational boat use throughout the proposed zone. Although many sites are currently focused on educational outreach, research integration, and stewardship, there is excellent potential for future expansion to better serve the public. An example for expansion of visitor education is the ecotourism company The Great Delta Tours, which specializes in bringing visitors to natural sites throughout the Pontchartrain Basin. The addition of a NERR in this region could greatly enhance the availability of resources to further all of these efforts through increased funding and staffing, expansion of existing programs, increased awareness throughout the region, and more intensified coordination among all venues.	other sources of construction funds should be considered as part of this criterion. 3 Points. The site has established structures and facilities that can be used for reserve activities. 2 Points. The site has limited established structures or facilities that can be used for reserve activities. 1 Point. The site has excellent potential for the development of facilities for reserve activities. 0 Points. The site has limited established structures and limited potential for the development facilities for reserve activities.
A major advantage of the proposed Pontchartrain NERR is the close proximity and accessibility of our many sites to researchers, educators, students, the general public and community groups. Our target audience will have access to the proposed reserve from major state and federal highways, including three interstates (I-10, I-12 and I-55), over 60 public boat launches and marinas and over 130 miles of car-free bike	<u>3.4 Proximity and accessibility of site to researchers, educators, and resource management decision makers:</u> A measure of (1) the relative proximity of the site to urban centers, K-12 schools, research and education institutions, and resource management agencies that may routinely utilize the site and (2) the adequacy of the roads or points for boat access at the site. The underlying assumption is that the proximity and accessibility of the site will enhance its utilization for education, research, monitoring, and resource protection purposes. 3 Points. The site can be utilized by the above-listed entities during a single day trip. There are good roads or points for boat access at the site.

lanes. In addition to the recreational trails and greenways that are currently under development, this reserve will include the only public beach in the Basin and several university research facilities, including Southeastern's Turtle Cove facilities, University of New Orleans's Coastal Education and Research Facility (CERF) and its lake front campus in New Orleans, as well as the New Canal Lighthouse, and Tulane's River and Coastal Center. More importantly, most of the facilities and destinations within the proposed reserve are ideally located for single-day educational field trips, where visitors can spend several hours exploring the environment and learn about the cultural and historical significance of the area, but return to school (or town) by the end of the day. This proximity of sites and destinations to transportation routes and population centers greatly increases the projected frequency of use by target audiences. Examples include: Turtle Cove Environmental Research Station: within an hour's drive of all sites within the greater New Orleans area, about 30 minutes from most Northshore population centers and less than 5 minutes from the I-55 Manchac exit. Lake Pontchartrain Basin Maritime Museum: centrally situated on the Northshore of Lake Pontchartrain and less than an hour from targeted audiences on the northshore of Lake Pontchartrain and an hour's drive from the southshore New Orleans population area; located less than 5 minutes from a state highway.	2 Points. The site is relatively isolated, and utilization would require an overnight stay from any of the above-listed entities, but accommodations are readily available. There are adequate roads or points for boat access at the site. 1 Point. The site is relatively isolated and reasonable accommodations for an overnight stay to utilize the site are limited. There are limited roads or points for boat access at the site. 0 Points. The site is extremely isolated and accommodations to utilize the site are not available. There are inadequate or no roads, or points for boat access at the site.

Shea Penland Coastal Education and Research Facility (CERF), New Canal Lighthouse Museum and Education Center and Tulane River and Coastal Center are located within the city of New Orleans and within minutes of a large portion of our target audience. Pontchartrain Conservancy's New Canal Lighthouse: EPA and USGS installed water sensors at a site near the New Canal Lighthouse on the south shore of Lake Pontchartrain in February 2021. The sensors record measurements of select water quality parameters every hour. The museum's outreach includes a "reactive sculpture" that visualizes the data in a creative, three-dimensional format. The 60+ public boat launches and marinas provide access for recreational boat use throughout the proposed zone. Longleaf pine savannas on the northshore are less than 20 minutes from state highways and provide excellent research and educational opportunities. Freshwater, intermediate, brackish and saline marshes are conveniently located within an hour's drive of most population centers and easily accessed by researchers.	
There are many existing education programs and related infrastructure within the proposed Pontchartrain NERR site. Higher Education Institutions and Research/Education/Outreach Centers: the proposed site is	3.5 Value of site for environmental education and interpretation programs: It is likely that sites with existing education programs have the necessary infrastructure in place to further expand their programs, thus it is valuable to rate sites based on the presence of these programs. However, in an area as large as the Louisiana Coastal Area, numerous

within a 1-hour drive of 17 universities and colleges in the 16-parish area (118,672 students); at least 10 major research and education enhancement facilities are located in the immediate Basin and a multitude of other state and municipal parks and educational programs exist within the proposed site boundaries. K-12 schools: There are 511 K-12 schools serving 289,494 students within the 16-parish area of the Pontchartrain Basin, not counting the Charter Schools. If the 38,372 students attending the 58 major charter schools in Orleans and Jefferson parish are added to this number, the area serves more than 327,866 students. Access to the resources of a NERR for this large population of pre-college students will enhance the development of environmental literacy of the state. This aspect of the education of our youth is essential as we move forward to address critical natural resource management challenges. It will also provide essential career-path opportunities for students who have an interest in natural ecosystem management, research, and education, and dove tails in well with the burgeoning STEM Coalitions across the region.	excellent sites exist where virtually no education or interpretation programs have been developed. Thus, the potential for education and interpretation program development should be considered as well according to the diversity and quality of educational and interpretive program opportunities. Some suggestions to evaluate potential for education and interpretation program development include the following: • Number of educational institutions in the watershed of the proposed alternative; • Existing educational programs in the area that would likely take advantage of a NERR site; • Level of ability to access a proposed alternative by school groups; or • Existing facilities to host classroom education and training events. 3 Points. The site has a long history of education and interpretation, or the site offers excellent potential for future education and interpretation program development. 2 Points. The site has a good but short history of education and interpretation but is otherwise well suited or offers good potential for future education and interpretation program development. 1 Point. The site has had only a minor amount of education and interpretation being conducted, or the site offers fair potential for future education and interpretation program development. 0 Points. The site offers no significant potential for education and interpretation program development

4.0 ACQUISITION AND MANAGEMENT CONSIDERATION -

The proposed Pontchartrain site consists of state and federal lands. State lands include four Wildlife Management Areas (WMAs): Joyce, Manchac, Maurepas and Pearl River WMAs, as well as Fontainebleau State Park, all of which total 207,453 acres. Federal lands include: Big Branch NWR; Bayou	4.1 Publicly owned lands and feasibility of land acquisition: The degree of control on activities allowed on proposed land and waters of the candidate site (core and buffer areas) is regulated by conditions of land ownership. Land ownership by state, federal government, or local governments, or environmental interest groups, and the degree to which owners have an interest in participating in a research reserve are

Sauvage NWR, and; Breton NWR, all of which total 52,360 acres. Therefore the site is well within the 49% maximum limit for federal lands–our proposed Pontchartrain site is at 25% federal lands when considering state and federal lands only, and much less when state water bottoms are included. State water bottoms in the estuary throughout the entire site provide a contiguous connection that spans the entire estuary from northwest to southeast and therefore enhance the actual footprint of the state and federal lands. Since the entire proposed site is owned by only two entities (state and federal), control over lands for the long-term is more readily assured as existing rules and regulations (i.e., by LDWF and/or USFWS) will dictate future use. There are, however, additional opportunities for land acquisitions adjacent to state and federal boundaries, including university foundation lands and quasi government/private commissions (*those are also noted further in Section 4.4 below*). The vast majority of the area within this proposed NERR site is public or subject to public use restrictions. The spectrum of "publicness" covers public ownership, control, and regulatory oversight in such a way that research, access, and development can be managed to support the aims of the NERR. Starting with the water, all of the estuarine bodies of water (e.g., Lakes Maurepas, Pontchartrain and Borgne) and their tributaries are public entities under Louisiana law. Similarly, all of the water bottoms of navigable waterways (determined by navigability in fact and/or the tidal overflow) are public entities that are generally inalienable. On navigable streams, public servitudes (state and federal) on	important to realize the missions of a LaNERR. The assumption is that the degree of control needed to maintain the site to meet the missions of a NERR increases with publicly and privately owned land, along with the chances of purchasing additional areas, increase value of a NERR candidate site. In the combination of ownership described below, no more than 49% of the area within the boundary can be federal lands. 3 Points. A large percentage (more than 50 percent) of the site (core and buffer areas) is currently owned by the state, federal, or local governments, or environmental groups, representing significant opportunities for future land acquisition. 2 Points. State, federal, or local governments, or environmental groups own 25 to 50 percent of the site with the remainder in the hands of a few owners representing some degree of opportunities for future land acquisition. 1 Point. State, federal, or local governments or environmental groups own less than 25 percent of the site with the remainder in the hands of a few owners representing limited opportunities for future land acquisition. 0 Points. The site is owned by a large number of owners with little potential interest in supporting opportunities for future land acquisition.

private lands provide a measure of protection against both inappropriate development and unfettered use by the general public. In addition to the waters and water bottoms that cover the full range of estuarine regime, there are significant associated wetlands ranging from swamps to saline marshes. Many of those areas are publicly owned (e.g., Big Branch National Wildlife Refuge, Fontainebleau State Park, Southeastern Louisiana University's Turtle Cove Research Station, and various state wildlife management areas, even if the fee remains private for mineral ownership reasons). When land acquisition has been prudent to increase land and resource conservation there has been a robust history of public/private cooperation. Charitable land trusts played significant roles in the acquisition of lands that went into the Big Branch and Bayou Sauvage National Wildlife Refuges. Today land trusts (e.g., The Nature Conservancy, The Conservation Fund, the Meraux Foundation, and the Land Trust for Louisiana) remain important players in the acquisition and stewardship of lands that will support the NERR.	
The lands, waters and water bottoms in this proposed NERR site support a wide variety of uses and users. These include recreational fishing and boating, commercial fishing, oil and gas development, energy transmission, flood control projects (notably the Bonnet Carre' floodway) and a host of coastal conservation and restoration projects. While potential conflict always exists, the trend in this basin is unquestionably toward improved environmental management. Historically divisive practices such as shell dredging and oil and gas development have largely been settled with those practices being curtailed	4.2. Compatibility with existing management practices and consumptive and non-consumptive uses: A measure of the degree to which existing management practices (e.g., habitat manipulations, restoration projects, best management practices, wildlife management areas, leased bottoms, conservation easements, etc.) and historic and current consumptive and non-consumptive uses might conflict with planned and future management practices implemented under a research reserve program. The assumption is that sites with fewer conflicts are more likely to maintain both public support and the integrity of the site (core and buffer areas). NOTE: This factor should be measured with focus on how present management practices for both land and water in core and buffer areas support both the mission of a NERR and reduce potential conflict with how the public expectations align with the expected usage of the candidate site to meet the mission of a research reserve site. It

or discontinued. There remain issues such as the impacts of upland development on estuarine habitat and water quality, the evolving impacts of climate change and rising seas but those are factors that actually weigh in favor of this basin being an appropriate place for estuarine research and public engagement. Aside from the substantial public land rights within the proposed NERR much of the private lands adjacent to the site are made up of wetlands that are subject to public interest regulation under laws such as the Clean Water Act, The Rivers and Harbors Act of 1899, and the Coastal Zone Management Act. *Also see section 4.1 above for more legal aspects of the lands in the proposed Pontchartrain site*.	should be measured with a balance of how the site protects natural and cultural resources against reasonable access by the public to other areas of the site. 3 Points. Existing management practices and consumptive and non-consumptive uses of the site would not conflict with any foreseeable management policy of a research reserve 2 Points. Due to the presence of proportionately small areas of unique habitat and endangered species or threats to the integrity of ecosystem, there is the potential for limited restrictions on existing management practices or consumptive and non-consumptive uses of a site 1 Point. Due to the presence of areas of unique habitat and endangered species and threats to the integrity of the ecosystem, some restrictions on existing management practices or consumptive and non-consumptive uses of a site are likely 0 Points. Large areas of unique habitat and threats to the integrity of the ecosystem will require restrictions on existing management practices or consumptive and non-consumptive uses of a site.
The lands adjacent to the estuary are almost entirely low-lying areas with limited development pressure. Development is almost exclusively confined to uplands and leveed areas. Historically the pursuit of oil, gas, sulfur, furs, and shells (for aggregate) posed significant challenges to the study and stewardship of the estuary. Similarly, poorly regulated waste and stormwater discharges once posed grave risks to the water and wildlife and fueled stakeholder conflicts. Improvements in regulatory oversight and infrastructure have reduced those conflicts significantly. To be sure, there are still compatibility issues from activities such as logging, drainage projects and the operation of flood control structures. Most of these are more chronic than potential and add at least as much to the research value of the site as they complicate it.	<u>4.3 Compatibility with adjacent land use:</u> A measure of the potential conflicts between management practices on a candidate site (core and buffer areas) with land-use practices on adjacent lands to the site (core and buffer areas). It is also a measure of the adequacy of land-use regulations, plans, or other risk management controls (e.g. sufficient regulatory control in the event of an impact) to sustain the site's natural resources for long-term research, education, and resource protection. The assumption is that a candidate site with compatible land-use practices on adjacent lands is more likely to maintain the integrity of the reserve. NOTE: This issue should be evaluated relative to the potential for present or future conflicts with adjacent lands and the potential to designate buffer areas around a site. 3 Points. A large percentage of the land adjacent to the site is not currently used for activities that might impact the site (and therefore, may be

	obtainable as a buffer) or the land-use practices on adjacent lands would not have any negative impacts on a possible research reserve. 2 Points. A large to moderate percentage of the land adjacent to the site is not currently used for activities that might negatively impact the site, or the land-use practices on adjacent lands either could be negotiated or would have only minor impacts a possible research reserve. 1 Point. Some of the land adjacent to the site is currently used for activities that would have negative impacts on a possible research reserve and may not be negotiable. 0 Points. A large percentage of the land adjacent to the site is currently used for activities that would have negative impacts on a possible research reserve and would lead to conflicts.
The proposed Pontchartrain site consists of only two major land owners, those being state and federal lands. State lands consist of four Wildlife Management Areas (WMAs) including Manchac, Maurepas, Joyce and Pearl River, as well as state parks. Federal lands include the National Wildlife Refuges of Big Branch, Bayou Sauvage and Breton. With only two major land owners, a NERR in the Pontchartrain Basin has the advantage of coordinated control from existing state and federal regulations without the problems associated with multiple private owners. Likewise, there are opportunities for other lands to be acquired or utilized as part of the NERR site from various owners adjacent to the primary state and federal areas, such as land from state university foundations or quasi-government/private commissions. In addition to the state and federal lands of the site, the great majority–if not all– of the water bottoms in the site are owned in trust by the state subject to a constitutional mandate to conserve and restore the health of those resources. Outside of the leveed and upland areas the bulk of the lands in the core and buffer areas are owned in large tracts by relatively few	4.4 Land ownership A measure of the degree to which the property used to establish core and buffer areas of a candidate site is divided among landowners (e.g., divided into fewer parcels or owned by many agencies/individuals). The assumption is that a candidate site with fewer property owners will be easier to control types and levels of activities and offers opportunity for future acquisitions. 3 Points. The property is relatively undivided among agencies or individuals. 2 Points. The property is divided among few property owners. 1 Point. The property is divided among many property owners.

persons. In many cases those lands have a long history of being managed conjunctively for private and public purposes. For example, public water bottoms can be leased for oyster farming or mineral development subject to statutory and contractual restrictions. On the other hand, private lands held for timber or mineral production are in many instances also included within one of the site's Wildlife Management Areas (Manchac, Maurepas, Joyce and Pearl River) or three National Wildlife Refuges (Big Branch, Bayou Sauvage and Breton).	
As noted above, the core area of this site is subject to multiple protective programs and enforcement schemes. These include the Rivers and Harbors Act of 1899, the Clean Water Act, the Coastal Zone Management Act, the Marine Mammal Protection Act, the Endangered Species Act, Louisiana's Scenic Streams Program, the National Environmental Policy Act and Louisiana's constitutional public trust doctrine. In addition to that protective legal architecture the site is the subject of four interlinked comprehensive, purpose driven stewardship programs that create a context for reconciling proposed actions and decisions. These programs are: a. The federal Mississippi River and Tributaries Project (navigation and flood risk reduction) b. The federal/state Coastal Wetlands Planning Protection and Restoration Act. Aside from the obvious planning and implementation aspects of this law, it places ecosystem conservation and enhancement on an equal footing with other Corps of Engineers program areas and ensures that the Corps consult with EPA and the Fish and Wildlife Service to ensure consistency.	4.5. Enforcement and protection of site area management practices: A measure of the degree to which land and water ownership has enforcement capabilities to protect and limit the types and levels of activities that are inconsistent with the management plans described in Site Criterion 4.2 above. This degree of control is based on size, geography, proximity to adjacent residential development and present management practices and controls. The assumption is that the integrity and security of a potential research reserve site can be better maintained with a higher level of enforcement and protection of core habitat areas to enforce management practices (such as a wildlife management area, or guidelines associated with private lands) that protects the consistency with how land and water will promote the mission of a NERR. 3 Points. Site areas are strongly protected and enforced to the degree necessary to meet management practices. 2 Points. Site areas are moderately protected and enforced to the degree necessary to meet management practices. 1 Point. Site areas are minimally protected and enforced to the degree necessary to meet management practices. 0 Point. Site areas are not protected and enforced to the degree necessary to meet management practices.

c. The Louisiana Coastal Protection and Restoration Authority d. The federal/EPA Lake Pontchartrain Basin Restoration Program.	
One of the biggest advantages of the proposed Pontchartrain site is its proximity to major population centers, and conversely, its many various locations for public access into the ecosystem. A diverse population of 2.1 million residents from across 16 boundary parishes have access to the estuary from major highways, including three interstates (I-10, I-12 and I-55). There are over 60 public boat launches and marinas that provide access for recreational boat use, as well as over 130 miles of car-free bike lanes and over 15 miles of protected urban bike lanes. In addition, there are other recreational trails and greenways under development in the area. A good example is the Manchac Greenway which will run from LaPlace to Ponchatoula. This greenway will include not only a striped bike lane, but also various stops (on land) throughout the route for bird watching, nature exploration, and general environmental education (i.e., in the form of physical nature signs as well as virtually via smart phone apps). The quality and variety of the site's access options are perhaps even more important. The site also includes the only public beach in the Basin (Fontainebleau State Park), as well a number of university research facilities (Southeastern's Turtle Cove facility, University of New Orleans's Coastal Education and Research Facility and its lakefront campus in New Orleans, Tulane's River and Coastal Center, etc.), and multiple boat and equipment rental facilities. In addition to these new facilities and collaborations are the subject of ongoing discussions and research proposals	4.6. Land and water access: A measure of the degree to which land and water access to the site support visitation and recreational value within guidelines of existing management plans. This degree of access is based on points of access (present and proposed), size, geography, proximity to adjacent residential development and present management practices and controls. 3 Points. The site has many existing and planned access points to support visitation and recreation that are very consistent with the management plans. 2 Points. The site has several existing and planned access points to support visitation and recreation that are very consistent with the management plans.. 1 Point. The site has few existing and planned access points to support visitation and recreation that are very consistent with the management plans. 0 Points. The site has no existing and planned access points to support visitation and recreation that are very consistent with the management plans.

(e.g., NSF's large and small research hubs under its Coasts and People Program). Another example of this is the recent development of Tulane University's Lower Coast Biological Field Station and its ongoing coordination with Southeastern Louisiana University, Dillard University, University of New Orleans, the National Park Service, the Coast Guard, the Audubon Zoo and Nature Center, and The Nature Conservancy. The potential for even greater access options in St. Bernard Parish (Hopedale, Violet Canal) are due to involvement of the Meraux Foundation.	
As noted above, development pressure in the proposed Pontchartrain NERR site is confined mostly to upland and leveed areas. The low lying un-leveed areas are increasingly made up of large tracts of undeveloped lands and lands under conservation ownership and/or management. Additionally, unlike many coastal areas, the population trends in this area are mostly flat so the "rush to the coast" that exists in many places is not happening here and given current trends it is highly likely that the cost of insurance and finances will make development even more unlikely—indeed, the trend will likely be toward less dense development and greater conservation land management. The greater challenge in this basin is not accommodating growth but retreat and coastal adaption, both of which are central aims of Louisiana's coastal protection and restoration program.	4.7. Future urban and industrial development plans A measure of the potential level of future impacts of land development (urban and industry) in areas on or adjacent to a candidate site that would impact core and buffer areas. The assumption is that a candidate site with minimal to no development plans on-site and on adjacent lands to the candidate site is more likely to maintain the integrity of the reserve. NOTE: This issue involves the degree to which adjacent lands are currently being used or may be attainable as buffer areas for the research reserve. 3 Points.: A large percentage (more than 50 percent) of the land adjacent to the site is currently undeveloped or is not likely to be developed for urban and industrial usage (based on present urban and industrial activity). This large percentage of adjacent lands is very unlikely to be developed in the near future for urban and industrial development (e.g., consisting of marginally developable property, such as wetlands, which could be obtained as buffer). 2 Points. A moderate percentage (between 25 and 50 percent) of the land adjacent to the site is currently undeveloped (urban and industrial) or is not likely to be developed for urban or industrial usage (based on present or expected activity). The adjacent lands are unlikely to be developed in the near future for urban and industrial development (e.g., consisting of marginally developable property, such as wetlands, which could be obtained as buffer).

	1 Point. A small to moderate percentage (10 to 25 percent) of the land adjacent to the site is currently undeveloped or is not likely to be developed for urban or industrial usage (based on present or expected activity). 0 Points. A large percentage (more than 50 percent) of the land adjacent to the site is developed (urban or industrial) and the area is likely to continue to be developed in the future.

5.0 ABILITY TO CONDUCT RESEARCH ON RESILIENCE AND CLIMATE CHANGE IMPACTS

The proposed Pontchartrain site ranks among the most vulnerable regions in the nation within the context of climate change, as manifested primarily by accelerating sea-level rise and increased tropical cyclone impacts. Recent studies have shown that subsidence rates in the neighborhood of one centimeter per year lead to some of the highest rates of relative sea-level rise in the world. While this, along with the associated coastal land loss, is widespread across coastal Louisiana, the proposed Pontchartrain site stands out in terms of its proximity to unique economic and cultural assets (notably the New Orleans metropolitan area) that are inextricably intertwined with this vulnerability. As such, this site possesses all the ingredients for world-class coastal resilience research that straddles all the relevant natural sciences along with the implications for rural and urban communities.	5.1 Coastal resilience research: How suitable is the site (and hydrologic basin where it is found) to support research on coastal resilience including both natural, cultural, and social systems. This includes how climate change may amplify impacts of land-use change, increases in the vulnerability of the habitats of the site (and hydrologic basin) to relative sea level rise, and other climate change impacts. Research focuses include adaptations of natural, cultural, and social systems to climate change impacts, including restoration and protection projects. 3 Points. The site (and hydrologic basin) demonstrates high value in researching adaptation of natural, cultural, and social systems to climate change and relative sea level rise including research on adaptations that reduce vulnerability. 2 Points. The site (and hydrologic basin) demonstrates moderate value in researching adaptation of natural, cultural, and social systems to climate change and relative sea level rise including research on adaptations that reduce vulnerability. 1 Point. The site (and hydrologic basin) demonstrates low value in researching adaptation of natural, cultural, and social systems to climate change and relative sea level rise including research on adaptations that reduce vulnerability.
The proposed Pontchartrain site includes the complete gradient from inland freshwater swamps to the full spectrum of marsh habitats in terms of salinity (fresh, intermediate, brackish,	5.2 This criterion focuses on the ability to accommodate shifts in habitat as sea level, inundation or other climate-change impacts occur. Is there sufficient ability of the system to accommodate these shifts within the site boundaries and/or is there an ability to expand the boundaries to

saline) going in a seaward direction, along with open water estuarine environments and the longest barrier island chain in Louisiana (Chandeleur Islands). The most inland portion consists of Pleistocene uplands that have the potential to accommodate landward migrating coastal ecosystems. As a result, the proposed Pontchartrain site offers excellent opportunities to study these landward shifts.	allow for maintenance of an ecological unit. This includes consideration for additional property acquisition. 3 points. Reserve boundary allows for habitat migration and several areas adjacent to the boundary provide an option for expansion to accommodate habitat shifts and boundary expansion. 2 points. Reserve boundary allows for some habitat migration and some areas adjacent to the boundary provide an option for expansion to accommodate habitat shifts and boundary expansion. 1 point. Reserve boundary allows for little habitat migration and little to no areas adjacent to the boundary provides an option for expansion to accommodate habitat shifts and boundary expansion. 0 points. Reserve boundary does not allow for habitat migration and there are no areas adjacent to the boundary that provide an option for expansion to accommodate habitat shifts and boundary expansion.
South Louisiana's coastal areas have the added components of subsidence and lack of accretion (due to levees and other flood control structures) of a mature delta environment. Major access highways in coastal Louisiana have purposely been built to be resilient in the face of subsidence, sea-level rise, and storm surge. The three primary interstates that cross the proposed Pontchartrain site are either elevated (I-10 and I-55) as they traverse swamp and marsh environments, or are built on the Pleistocene upland outside the flood zone (I-12). The site is within a 1-hour drive of: 17 universities and colleges in the 16-parish area (118,672 students); at least 10 major research and education enhancement facilities in the immediate Basin; and a multitude of other state and municipal parks and educational programs. A selection of 11 of the primary education, interpretive, and/or research centers was examined, including: Turtle Cove-Galva Canal Complex; Turtle Cove Environmental Research Station on Pass Manchac; Lake Pontchartrain Basin	5.3 Infrastructure and Access: A changing climate is resulting in a variety of impacts that differ based on geography and conditions within geography. Reserves are designated to ensure a stable platform for research, address significant coastal management issues, enhance public awareness and understanding and promote use of the reserves consistent with the purposes outlined. Access to infrastructure that supports these purposes is key to achieving the mission of the reserve system. This criterion focuses on the expected vulnerability of existing facilities (including visitor centers, labs, storage facilities) proposed for use by the reserve to remain viable and accessible taking into account the most relevant climate change stressors in the locale. This accounts for adaptive strategies that are and/or may be in place to mitigate anticipated stressors. 3 points. Facility(ies) resilient and adaptable under high impact climate change scenarios given current understanding of vulnerability 2 points. Facilities resilient and adaptable under medium impact climate change stressor/threat scenarios 1 point. Facilities unlikely to be resilient and adaptable under medium/low impact climate change stressor/threat scenarios 0 points. Facilities vulnerable and not resilient under any climate change scenarios

Maritime Museum; Big Branch Educational Complex; New Canal Lighthouse; Tulane River and Coastal Center; Shea Penland Coastal Education and Research Facility (CERF); A Studio in the Woods; Arlene Meraux River Observation Center; Fontainebleau State Park, and; City Park in New Orleans. All of these facilities and infrastructure have varying degrees of resiliency and adaptability to a changing climate including varying levels of raised elevation, adaptability for clean-up and repair after major storm events, mobile capability among programs, and capacity to adapt to long-term changes in climate (via enhancement of infrastructure).	
Easy and wide-spread access to the proposed Pontchartrain NERR by a large population of residents is one of the biggest advantages of this site. The major population centers of New Orleans, Baton Rouge, and the Northshore of Lake Pontchartrain provide a diverse population of approximately 2.1 million from across 16 boundary parishes. In addition, this population has access to the estuary and its resources from major highways (including the three interstates of I-10, I-12 and I-55), all of which are inherently built for resilience to climate change (i.e., those in the historical delta environments are elevated, such as the I-10 and I-55 corridors, etc.) via automobile. There are over 60 public boat launches and marinas for access for recreational boat use—these launches are of course built at sea level, but new marinas and facility structures must meet current FEMA codes. One of the largest growing economic sectors in our nation is that of eco-tourism, and in addition to boat use, bike travel is also on the rise. The proposed Pontchartrain site has over 130 miles of car-free bike	5.4. Public Access Resilience: This criterion focuses on the ability to access the resources of the reserve. This includes access to water via docks and boat launches; access to interpretive and educational experiences via trails, pavilions, amphitheaters, as well as access to existing recreational and professional opportunities in the resource. 3 points. Public access infrastructure is resilient and adaptable under high impact climate change scenarios given current understanding of vulnerability 2 points. Public access infrastructure resilient and adaptable under medium impact climate change stressor/threat scenarios 1 point. Public access infrastructure unlikely to be resilient and adaptable under medium/low impact climate change stressor/threat scenarios 0 points. Public access infrastructure vulnerable and not resilient under any climate change scenarios

lanes and over 15 miles of protected urban bike lanes---many of these are on elevated routes (such as the New Orleans bike path on the Mississippi River levee), or in recreational areas not harmed by periodic flooding. As mentioned in section 4.6 above, there are other recreational trails and greenways under development in the area, such as the Manchac Greenway which will run from LaPlace to Ponchatoula. This greenway will include striped bike lanes, nature trails for exploration, and rest stops that will showcase environmental education through both physical signage and virtual smartphone apps. Many recreational greenways are built in flood zones with the idea that they are inherently resilient to natural disasters.	
6.0 LANERR PARTNERSHIPS: *Partnerships should be relevant and aid the program in achieving their goals, reaching target audiences, and developing and delivering key messages. They increase the resilience of the reserve and its ability to work with the local community to address climate change and impacts from other important stressors. Partnerships can increase the ability to address research needs and gaps, reach education and public engagement goals, and provide access to facilities and field opportunities. Institutional partnerships can also provide administrative services, support leveraging of resources, and reduce program costs. These organizations or third parties can also assist with fund-raising, grant development and management, and management of program income (ex. Friends Groups and NERRA). The strength of the reserve's partnerships and potential for partnerships will be evaluated based on the following:*	
There is great potential in the proposed Pontchartrain site to develop new partnerships among institutions and entities, and to strengthen already existing ones. Some examples of the requested metrics include the following: MOU's or agreements explaining shared resources: -formal lease agreements between university research/education stations and state agencies (existing) as well as MOUs between quasi-private/government commissions (proposed). Such partnerships enhance the ability for collaborative efforts within the site to provide outcomes related to knowledge gained from research activities in the	6.1 Potential to develop partnerships: This criterion focuses on the site's ability to create new partnerships and strengthen existing partnerships to achieve their goals, reach target audiences, develop and deliver key messages, and address relevant coastal management issues. This can be demonstrated by potential partner interest, geography, etc. with a focus on the outcomes of the partnership, not the number or name of organizations. This will be measured by the following metrics: ● Existing MOUs or agreements explaining shared resources such as facilities and salaries ● Memberships of key individuals to professional organizations such as National Marine Educators Association, Coastal and Estuarine Research Federation, Society of Wetland Scientists, other state professional organizations, research organizations, local or regional consortia, etc. ● Recent history of key personnel participation in multi-institutional grants, publications, and projects

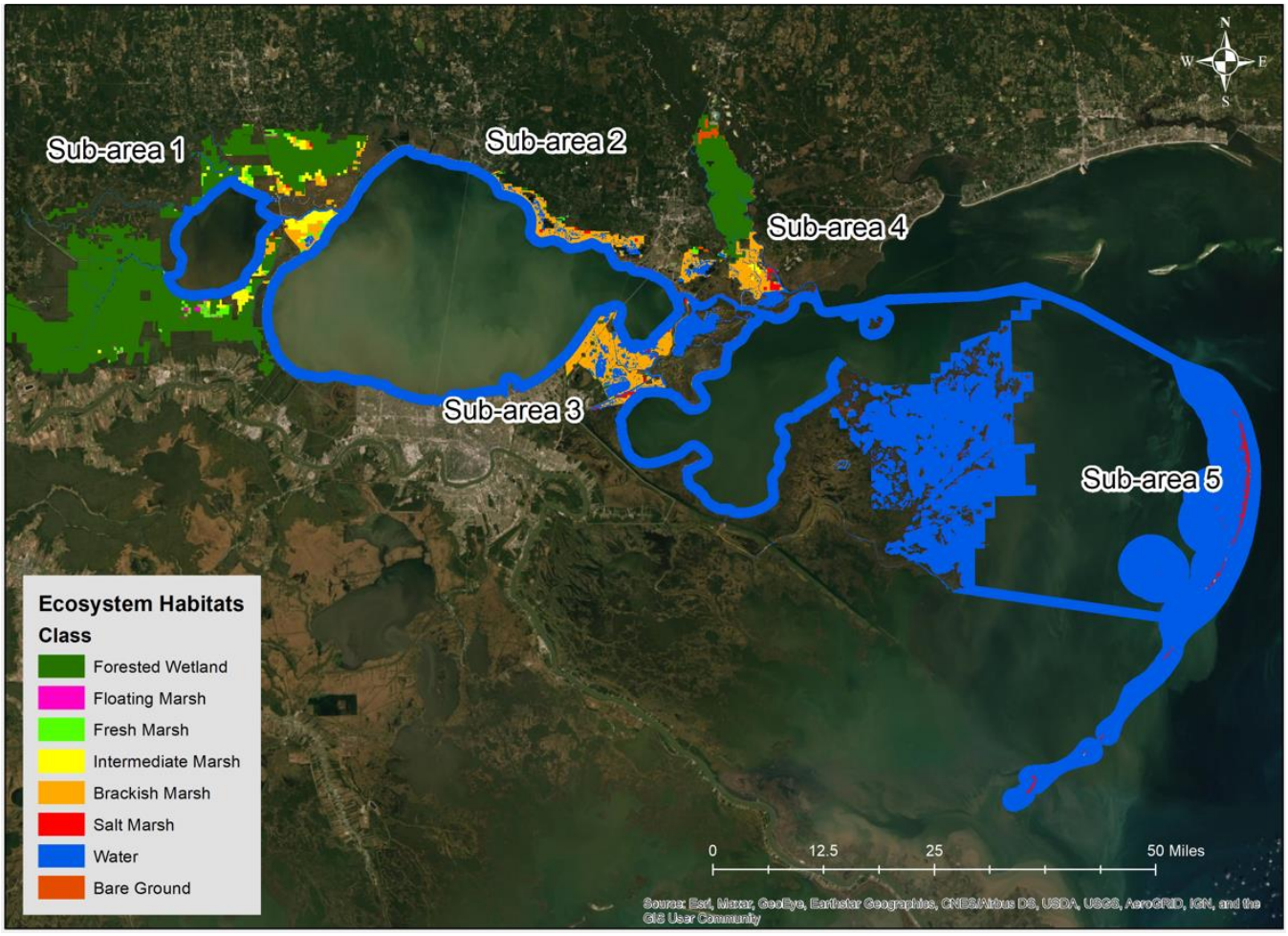
coastal environment for state agency planning to numbers of K-12 students who benefit from environmental education in a field trip format. Many researchers within the participating institutions of the Pontchartrain site are members of professional scientific organizations. In addition, field stations in the site are members of professional consortiums, such as the Organization of Biological Field Stations; Recent history of key personnel and institutions in multi-institutional grants and publications is discussed in more detail in Section 6.2 below. Letters of support from potential partners in the proposed Pontchartrain site are summarized in Section 4 of this proposal. In summary, a wide array of categories of such letters include those from public officials and municipalities, universities and university foundations, non-profit organizations, and others.	• Letters from existing informal partners about past projects, their outcomes, and organizational structure • Letters from potential partners focusing on how the partner could complement or contribute to the reserve goals. This letter should include information such as historical context for partnership and their vision for contributing to the reserve mission. 3 Points. The site has strong potential to develop and strengthen new and existing partnerships of high quality evidenced by metrics stated above. 2 Points. The site has potential for new partnerships of good quality to develop. 1 Point. The site has potential for partnership development. 0 Points. The site has insignificant potential for partnerships.
All of the key lead institutions for the Pontchartrain Proposal Leadership Team (PPLT) have quality partnerships with NOAA and other entities, and all have or have had key personnel and departments/institutes participate in coastal-related programs and NOAA-related grants. Space limitations in this proposal prevent the full documentation of all such information to be shown here, but some examples include: Southeastern Louisiana University- Department of Biological Sciences (Dr. Debbie Dardis) and Turtle Cove Environmental Research Station (Dr. Rob Moreau)- NOAA BWet Grants (current and previous), NOAA Gulf of Mexico Alliance "GOMA" grants (previous), and with SeaGrant	6.2 Internal NOAA Partnerships: This is a measure of the number and quality of partnerships with other NOAA entities that already exist within a program or that have the potential to develop based on common goals, geographic proximity, etc. The assumption is that a candidate site with a high diversity of existing partnerships and partnership potential will have opportunities to leverage support and create sustainable programs more so than one with fewer partnerships. Some examples include Sea Grant, Coastal Programs, Marine Sanctuaries, Weather Service, Climate Office and other line offices of NOAA. This will be measured by the following metrics: • Existing MOUs or agreements explaining shared resources such as facilities and salaries • Recent history of key personnel participation in grants, publications, and projects with NOAA

(current/previous, Drs. Hillmann, Shaffer and Piller). Multiple researchers from the Department have or have had grants under Southeastern's Institute for Biodiversity and Interdisciplinary Studies (IBIS) with NOAA programs such as the Lake Pontchartrain Restoration Act funding grants (previous) and EPA Lake Pontchartrain Basin Research Program (PRP) funding (previous) including Drs. Shaffer, Piller, Crother, Font, Valverde, Childers, Dardis, Bossart, Moreau and others. Southeastern and its Southeastern Foundation lands participate in the State's CoastWide Reference Monitoring System (CRMS) with the Foundation's East Jones Island property in the Manchac wetlands. Southeastern also has a formal 99-year lease with the Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries (LDWF) to manage and operate the Turtle Cove Environmental Research Station. University of New Orleans – Pontchartrain Institute for Environmental Sciences (PIES) is the research umbrella of UNO researchers and educators who have conducted work in the Pontchartrain under NOAA and affiliated other federal programs, and include: NOAA grants (past and/or present: Drs. O'Connell, Uzee-O'Connel, Turner, Cashner, and Reed), and also including D. Maygarden who is Manager of the Coastal Education and Research Facility and has had multiple NOAA-BWet and NOAA Gulf of Mexico Alliance "GOMA" grants and National Fish and Wildlife Foundation grants (current and previous). Multiple researchers from PIES have also participated in funding from SeaGrant and BOEM program grants (Drs. O'Connell and Uzee-O'Connell); EPA grant programs (Dr. O'Connell and Lorenz and Maygarden); NSF	3 Points. The site has a history of NOAA partnerships and there is strong potential to develop and strengthen new and existing ones of high quality evidenced by the metrics stated above. 2 Points. The site has several partnerships in place and there is potential for new partnerships of good quality to develop. 1 Point. The site has potential for partnership development. 0 Points. The site has insignificant potential for partnerships.

program grants (Drs. O'Connell, Uzee-O-Connell and Kulp, and D. Maygarden, among others) and; NASA (Drs. O'Connel, Lyncker-student-previous, among others). Tulane University – Multiple departments at Tulane have participated in NOAA and other federal grant programs relating to the study of the proposed Pontchartrain site. Some examples include Department of Earth and Environmental Sciences has received NOAA funding through Louisiana Sea Grant, (CSAP and the UROP programs) (Dr. Törnqvist); Department of River-Coastal Science and Engineering with funding from NOAA Restore (Dr. Meselhe), NOAA Center for Sponsored Coastal Ocean Research (Meselhe), NOAA Office of Water Prediction (Meselhe), and NOAA-Gulf Star-Gulf of Mexico Alliance (Meselhe). Pontchartrain Conservancy – Multiple departments at Pontchartrain Conservancy have participated in NOAA and other federal grant programs relating to the study of the proposed Pontchartrain site. Some examples include: marine debris removal, B-WET education programs & NOAA RESTORE planning grants.	
Entities associated within the proposed Pontchartrain site have a wide array of both existing partnerships as well as the potential to expand with new partnerships. University partnerships include those with field research and educational/interpretive research centers, several of which have MOUs and/or formal lease agreements with state agencies like the Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries. Formal MOUs also exist between	6.3 Diversity of Partnerships: This is a measure of the ability to reach diverse audiences through existing partnerships or potential partnerships based on common goals and geographic proximity. The assumption is that a candidate site with a high diversity of existing partnerships and partnership potential will have opportunities to leverage support and create sustainable programs more so than one with fewer partnerships. These partnerships should increase the candidate site's ability to address relevant coastal management issues, address research needs and gaps, and reach diverse audiences. These partner organizations should range in diversity such as federal agencies (ex. National Estuary Programs, National Wildlife Refuges, National Parks), state agencies and parks, local organizations (Marine Labs and Land Trusts), NGOs,

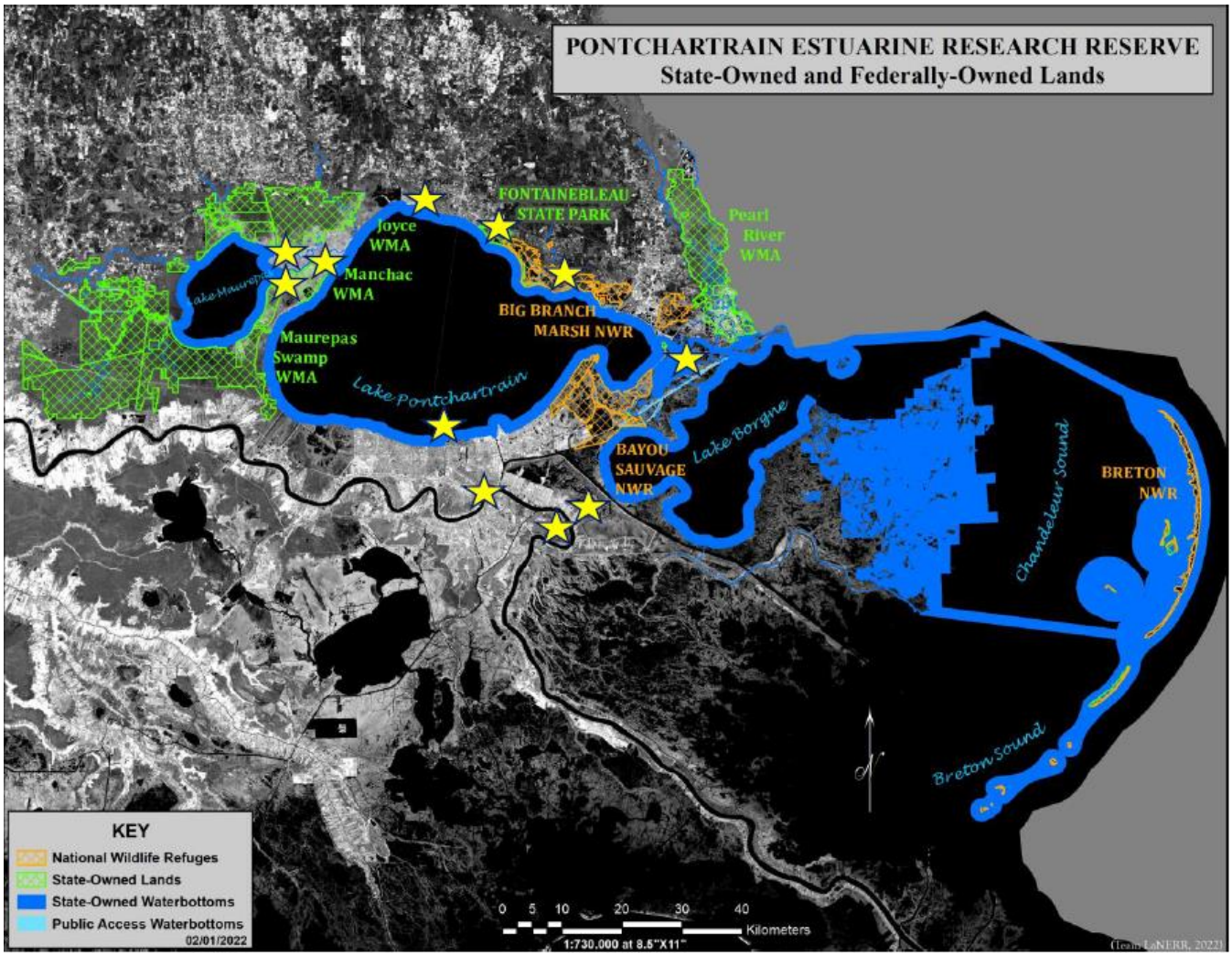
education/interpretive centers for collaborative work. And finally, all of these facilities have informal agreements to work with one another in collaborative endeavors that epitomize true partnerships. All of the key lead institutions for the Pontchartrain Proposal Leadership Team (PPLT) have, or have had key personnel participate in many partnerships throughout the proposed site.	and umbrella groups (national, regional or local). These partnerships should help bridge the gap between the NERRS and new audiences that the NERRS has not typically engaged (e.g., urban audiences) or that could help the NERRS become more effective at reaching intended audiences (e.g., national municipal association to facilitate reaching local officials). The focus of these partnerships should be the outcomes, not the number or name of organizations. This will be measured by the following metrics: ● Existing MOUs or agreements explaining shared resources such as facilities and salaries ● Recent history of key personnel participation in multi-institutional grants, publications, projects ● Letters from existing informal partners about past projects, outcomes, and organizational structure ● Letters from potential partners focusing on how the partner could complement or contribute to the reserve goals. This letter should include historical context and vision for partnership contributing to the reserve mission. 3 Points. The site has many diverse partnerships and there is strong potential to develop and strengthen new and existing ones of high quality evidenced by metrics stated above. 2 Points. The site has several diverse partnerships in place and there is potential for new partnerships of good quality to develop. 1 Point. The site has potential for partnership development. 0 Points. The site has insignificant potential for partnerships.

SECTION 3: Maps

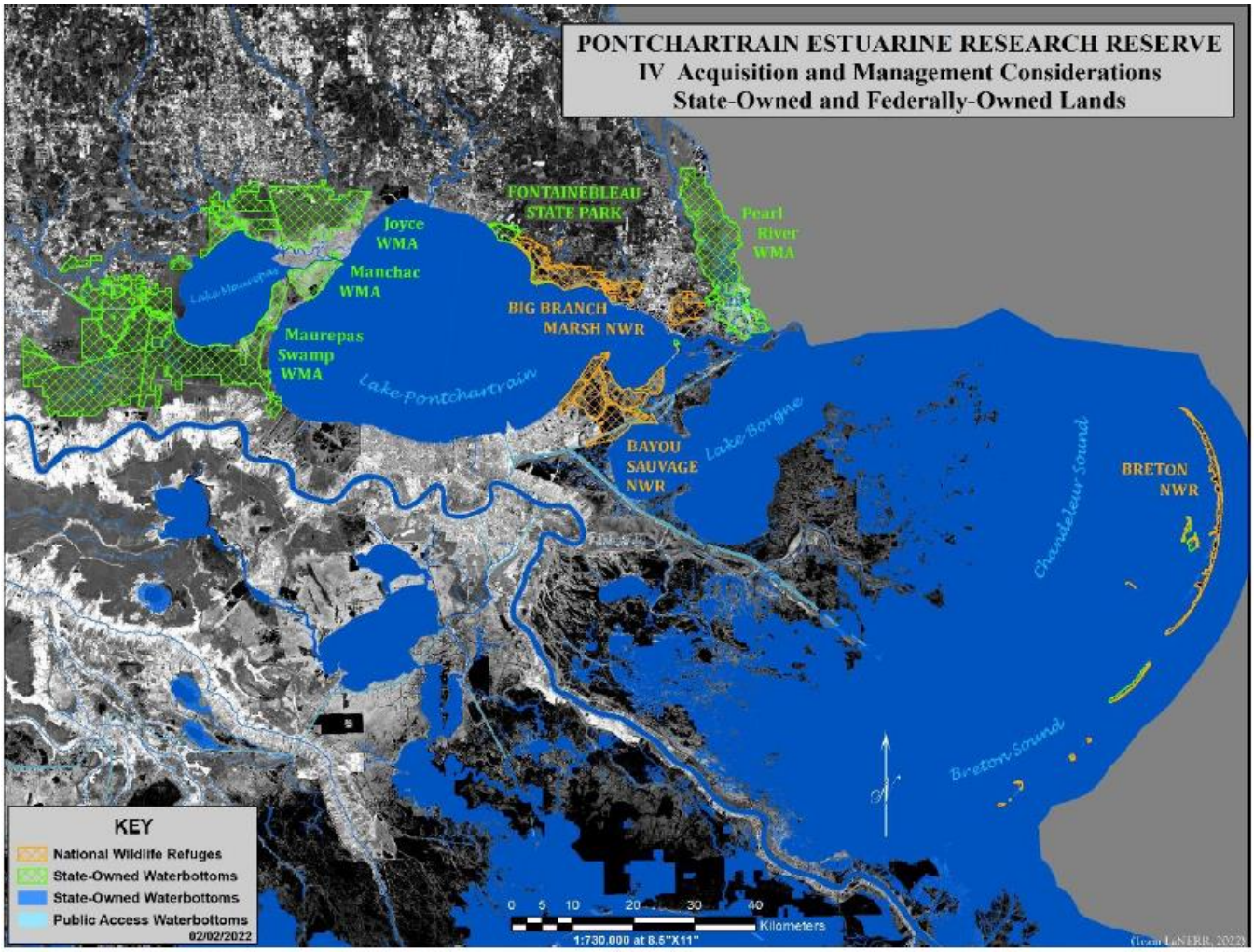


Map 1: Pontchartrain Estuarine Proposed Site – Vegetation Types

- *Initial Vegetation Types*
- *Forested*
- *Floating*
- *Fresh*
- *Intermediate*
- *Brackish*
- *Saline*
- *Bare ground*



Map 2: GIS Map of Monitoring/Research Stations AND Education/Interpretation Centers used in Pre-Screening Process for proposed Pontchartrain Estuarine Site



Map 3: Map of Acquisition and Management Considerations

LETTERS OF SUPPORT – updated April 30, 2022

Provided below is a summary of the Letters of Support received to date for the proposed Pontchartrain site, and categorized by: Academia; Public Officials/Entities; Business/Non-Profit/NGO; and Individuals. All letters are saved in the SharePoint site (see link below) in accordance with the previously submitted *Pontchartrain Team Meeting and Document Procedures*. This list is current as of April 30, 2022, however, additional letters received thereafter will continue to be added to the LaNERR-Pontchartrain SharePoint file site at:

https://lsumail2-my.sharepoint.com/:f:/g/personal/rtwilley_lsu_edu/Es0BlpmfxtVMsUpRUfKQYEIB7GFsQMEcvfiKMW5nr0GDhw?e=uiYLhV

Name	Title
(ACADEMIA)	
Rebecca Conwell	President and CEO, UNO Research and Technology Foundation
Dr. John Crain	President, Southeastern Louisiana University
Dr. Kimberly L. Foster & Dr. Keith Clay	Dean, School of Science and Engineering & Chair, Department of Ecology and Evolutionary Biology, respectively - Tulane University
Dr. Larry Hollier	Chancellor, LSU Health Sciences Center
Dr. Walter Kimbrough	President, Dillard University
Wendy Johns Lauderdale	Vice President, Advancement, Southeastern Louisiana University, and Executive Director, Southeastern Foundation
Dr. John Nicklow	President, UNO
Dr. John Sabo	Director, Tulane ByWater Institute
Tania Tetlow, J.D.	President, Loyola University New Orleans
Dr. Reynold Verret	President, Xavier University
(PUBLIC OFFICALS/ENTITIES)	
Daryl Ferrara	President, South Tangipahoa Parish Port Commission
Jaclyn Hotard	Parish President, St. John the Baptist
Guy McInnis	Parish President, St. Bernard
Senator Patrick McMath	State of Louisiana Senator, District 11
Robby Miller	Parish President, Tangipahoa
Northshore Legislative Delegation	Northshore Legislative Delegation (Hewitt, Frieman, McMath, Hollis, Mizell, Muscarello, Pope, Nelson, Bodi White, Owen, Carter, Wheat, DuBuisson, White, Wright)
Pete Panepinto	Mayor, City of Hammond
Karen Parsons	Principal Planner, New Orleans Regional Planning Commission

Name	Title
Mayra Pineda	President and CEO, Hispanic Chamber of Commerce of Louisiana
Jay Robichaux	Executive Director, River Parishes Tourist Commission
Jeffrey Roesel	Executive Director, New Orleans Regional Planning Commission
Senator Gary Smith	State of Louisiana Senator, District 19
St. John Parish Coastal Zone Authority	Motion of Support
St. John Parish Council	Resolution of Support
Representative Joseph Stagni	State of Louisiana Representative, District 92
Representative Mandie Landry	State of Louisiana Representative, District 91
Representative Matthew Willard	State of Louisiana Representative, District 97
Robert Zabbia	Mayor of Ponchatoula
(BUSINESS/NON-PROFIT/NGO)	
Shiva Adireddy Ph.D., MBA	Chief Executive Officer & Co-Founder , Avano
Larry Burch	President, Northlake Nature Center
Angela Ellender	Technical Director, Southwest Engineers
Rashida Ferdinand	E.D., Sankofa CDC
Greg "Za" Maurin	Chair, Friends of Manchac Greenway, Inc.
Blaise Pezold	Coastal Projects Manager, Arlene & Joseph Meraux Charitable Foundation
Pontchartrain Conservancy Board of Directors	Resolution (passed in 2021)
Sandy Rosenthal	Founder, Levees.org
Jeanne Stangle, MD	Board Member, Friends Of Camp Salmen Nature Park, Inc.
Kraig Stutes	Riverwood Waterways & Fisheries Committee (part of the Riverwood Improvement Association, Tchefuncte watershed)
(INDIVIDUALS)	
Philip Clinton	Resident, New Orleans
Tim Killeen	Retired LDWF, interested stakeholder
Susan Lang	Resident, New Orleans

SECTION 4 – LETTERS OF SUPPORT and COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT (SUMMARY OF TOWN HALL MEETINGS)

Provided below is a summary of the Letters of Support received to date for the proposed Pontchartrain site, and categorized by: Academia; Public Officials/Entities; Business/Non-Profit/NGO; and Individuals. All letters are saved in the SharePoint site (see link below) in accordance with the previously submitted *Pontchartrain Team Meeting and Document Procedures.* This list is current as of March 25, 2022, however, additional letters received thereafter will continue to be added to the LaNERR-Pontchartrain SharePoint file site at:

https://lsumail2-my.sharepoint.com/:f:/g/personal/rtwilley_lsu_edu/Es0BlpmfxtVMsUpRUfKQYEIB7GFsQMEcvfiKMW5nr0GDhw?e=uiYLhV

Name	Title
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Dr. Walter Kimbrough	President, Dillard University
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Dr. John Nicklow	President, UNO
Dr. John Sabo	Director, Tulane ByWater Institute
Tania Tetlow, J.D.	President, Loyola University New Orleans
Dr. Reynold Verret	President, Xavier University
(PUBLIC OFFICALS/ENTITIES)	
Daryl Ferrara	President, South Tangipahoa Parish Port Commission
Jaclyn Hotard	Parish President, St. John the Baptist
Guy McInnis	Parish President, St. Bernard
Senator Patrick McMath	State of Louisiana Senator, District 11

Name	Title
Robby Miller	Parish President, Tangipahoa
Northshore Legislative Delegation	Northshore Legislative Delegation (Hewitt, Frieman, McMath, Hollis, Mizell, Muscarello, Pope, Nelson, Bodi White, Owen, Carter, Wheat, DuBuisson, White, Wright)
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Karen Parsons	Principal Planner, New Orleans Regional Planning Commission
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Jeffrey Roesel	Executive Director, New Orleans Regional Planning Commission
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Larry Burch	President, Northlake Nature Center
Rashida Ferdinand	E.D., Sankofa CDC
Greg "Za" Maurin	Chair, Friends of Manchac Greenway, Inc.
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(INDIVIDUALS)	
Philip Clinton	Resident, New Orleans
Tim Killeen	Retired LDWF, interested stakeholder
Susan Lang	Resident, New Orleans

Summary of Community Engagement (Town Hall Meetings)

The LaNERR – Pontchartrain Site Team held three formally scheduled Town Hall Meetings in accordance with DLT guidelines, in a combination of formats that included HYBRID (in person attendance plus virtual zoom attendance) and VIRTUAL ONLY (i.e., only via zoom). Date, location and format of each meeting is outlined below along with documented attendance figures (per DLT figures and actual team observation during the meetings).

TOWN HALL MEETING #1: February 1, 2022, Southeastern Louisiana University (HYBRID)
- In Person Registered (via sign-in sheets): 28 (although we counted 45 in actual attendance)
- On-Line Registered: 68 (we noted 47 on zoom that evening and think some on-line registered folks actually attended in-person, thereby explaining some of the difference)
- Total Attendees: 96

TOWN HALL MEETING #2: February 3, 2022 (VIRTUAL ONLY)
- Total Attendees (online registration): 52

TOWN HALL MEETING #3: February 11, 2022, University of New Orleans (HYBRID)
- In Person Registered (via sign-in sheets, verified by actual attendance): 6
- On-Line Registered: 94
- Total Attendees: 100

GRAND TOTALS OF ALL 3 TOWN HALL MEETINGS:
- In Person Registered (via sign-in sheets): 34 (although we counted 51 in actual attendance)
- On-Line Registered: 214 (although we counted 193 in zoom)
- Grand Total of All Attendees (in-person and virtual): 244-248 total individuals

All three Town Hall meetings were positively received by those in attendance with no significant negative comments. Most comments involved questions and commentary on possible head quarter sites, additional lands that could be added in the future, impacts on eco-tourism (economics), existing facilities/access throughout the site (especially for K-12 and other community groups related to environmental education), and overall diversity of the site's ecosystem characteristics and human population characteristics (i.e., surrounding human population). A more detailed analysis of the meetings has been documented by the DLT. In summary, a NERR in our site appears to be well-received across the region based on the formal Town Hall meetings, and via communications our team members have had throughout our own stakeholder communities throughout this process.

APPENDIX A

Facilities, Infrastructure and Other Environmental Programs in the Region that may help to support the research, education, and training mission of the proposed Pontchartrain LaNERR.

PRIMARY FIELD STATIONS for Research, Education and Outreach Activities

1. Port Manchac (31450 Highway 51 South, Manchac, LA 70421, www.portmanchac.com). Port Manchac is an inter-modal state-facility on 140 acres at the head of North Pass. The facility contains barge docks, boat launches, and thousands of square feet of available space, and is one minute from the Manchac Exit on I-55 and interested in repurposing some assets for the NERR.

2. Turtle Cove Boatshed/Classroom/Parking Facility on Galva Canal (87 Alligator Lane, Akers/Manchac, LA 70421, www.southeastern.edu/turtlecove). The Galva Boatshed/Classroom is a Southeastern Louisiana University facility that serves as the meeting place/departure point for all users of the Turtle Cove Environmental Research Station. The facility is located on LDWF-Manchac WMA land one minute from the Manchac exit on I-55, and includes an LDWF boat launch, 20 vessels of all shapes and sizes, a classroom/conference/office space 20 ft above MSL with observation deck, bathroom, phone, electricity, water well and satellite internet service.

3. Turtle Cove Environmental Research Station (located on 10,000 acres of the Manchac WMA on Pass Manchac 5 miles east from the Galva Boatshed and 2 miles from Lake Pontchartrain: www.southeastern.edu/turtlecove). Turtle Cove ERS is a facility and program of Southeastern Louisiana University whose mission is to facilitate a better understanding of the coastal wetland environment through scholarly research, university education, public outreach and training workshops, and restoration activities. Facilities consist of a fully restored 3-story hunting lodge, overnight accommodations for 15, satellite internet service, half-mile long boardwalk with 50+ interpretive signs, 2,700 ft of bulkhead, various supplies/equipment for research and education activities, and a fleet of boats described in the Galva facility above. Pre-pandemic, Turtle Cove averaged 2,500 user days of activity annually.

4. Lake Pontchartrain Basin Maritime Museum (133 Mabel Dr., Madisonville, LA 70447, www.lpbmm.org). Located on the banks of the Tchefuncte River, the mission of the LPBMM is "bringing Louisiana's maritime history to life" through unique interpretive programs, exhibits and collections, publications, and special events. The museum attracts over 6,000 visitors annually. Facilities include 100 feet of frontage on the Tchefuncte River; 3,000 sq ft dock; 6,000 sq ft of meeting/event space, conference rooms; 12,000 sq ft of exhibit space; and 10,000 sq ft of wood working/boat building space and a research library.

5. Southeast Louisiana Refuges Complex – near Big Branch Marsh NWR (61389 Highway 434, Lacombe, LA 70445, https://www.fws.gov/refuge/Big_Branch_Marsh/). Big Branch Marsh NWR, established in 1994, encompasses 18,000 acres of habitat along Lake Pontchartrain, and includes habitats ranging from pine savanna flat-wood areas to forested wetlands to marsh environments. Big Branch accommodates over 125,000 visitors annually.

6. New Canal Lighthouse Museum and Education Center (8001 Lakeshore Drive, New Orleans, LA 70124, https://scienceforourcoast.org). Reconstructed in 2013 from the original 1890 structure, the New Canal Lighthouse is located on the South Shore of Lake Pontchartrain and is accessible from both I-10 and I-610. The site includes a NOAA Weather Tower, EPA Water Quality Monitoring station, Lakefront Learning Lab, green infrastructure demonstration gardens, and historical and environmental exhibits. The site averages 12,000 visitors/year, and includes full and part-time staff, restrooms, and is ADA accessible.

7. Tulane River and Coastal Center (1370 Port of New Orleans Pl, New Orleans, LA 70130, https://bywater.tulane.edu/). Tulane's ByWater Institute exemplifies Tulane's commitment to interdisciplinary studies of the river and coast. The River and Coastal Center is a key component of that work and is being developed in phases, with the first phase including new laboratory, educational, and conference facilities, along with staging areas for field operations.

8. Shea Penland Coastal Education and Research Facility ("CERF": 1815 Marques Rd., New Orleans, LA 70129, https://www.uno.edu/pontchartrain-institute/coastal-education-program). CERF is located on Chef Menteur Pass at the Highway 90 bridge. It is the science education field component of UNO's Pontchartrain Institute for Environmental Science. Infrastructure at CERF includes 4,000 square feet of space for use by researchers, educators, and students, including office, classroom, meeting, and kitchen spaces. Covered docks accommodate boat storage. UNO research vessels are kept on campus but docked at CERF as needed. Surrounding leased property is planted with native species and used in educational programing. Annual use of facilities has averaged approx.1,000 students per year for field workshops.

9. A Studio in the Woods (13401 Patterson Rd, New Orleans, LA 70131, http://www.astudiointhewoods.org/). A Studio in the Woods is a program of Tulane's ByWater Institute, and one of the leading artistic and academic residency programs in the Region. The mission of the Studio is to foster creative responses to the challenges of our time by providing retreat to artists, scholars, and the public in our protected forest on the Mississippi River.

10. Arlene Meraux River Observation Center ("AMROC," 5128 E. St. Bernard Hwy, Violet, LA, 70092, https://merauxfoundation.org/arlene-meraux-river-observation-center/). AMROC is a program of the Meraux Foundation, and consists of a four-story educational facility that features a classroom, community meeting spaces, and a fifth-floor observation deck overlooking the Mississippi River, as well as a state-of-the-art greenhouse dedicated to coastal restoration activities. The building will open next year, & AMROC marks the latest enhancement to the 130-acre Docville Farm that the Meraux Foundation dedicated to charity as a center for culture and learning. In recent non-pandemic years, the Foundation has had 7,000 visitors annually.

ADDITIONAL FACILITIES/PROGRAMS/LOCATIONS for Environmental Education and Outreach

(Orleans Parish)

Bucktown Harbor
City Park
Common Ground Relief
CSED Bayou Bienvenue Wetlands Platform
Bayou Sauvage NWR
(Lower 9)
Sankofa Wetland Park and Nature Trail (Lower 9)

(St. Bernard Parish)

40 Arpent Wetlands Observatory
River House at Crevasse 22Saint Bernard State Park

(St. Charles Parish)

Labranche Wetland Watchers Park and Program

(St. Tammany Parish)

Fontainebleu State Park
Northlake Nature Center

Louisiana National Estuarine Research Reserve (LaNERR)
Site Selection & Nomination Report

November 2022

APPENDIX 10:

Public Town Hall Meetings

Atchafalaya Town Halls (3)

Barataria Town Halls (3)

Pontchartrain Town Halls (3)

Introductory Materials

Advertisements

Meeting Materials

Meeting Participants

Public Comment / Questions / Answers

Town Hall Questionnaire Responses

LaNERR Public Town Hall Meetings Slated

(Louisiana National Estuarine Research Reserve)

The search for a **National Estuarine Research Reserve** in Louisiana wants to involve you!

The LaNERR Site Development Committee will host a series of town hall meetings to provide information on three possible sites: Atchafalaya Basin, Barataria Basin and Pontchartrain Basin. Three town hall meetings (virtual and hybrid) have been organized for each site. Webinar links below are specific to each town hall meeting. The public is encouraged to participate.

Virtual meetings are strictly online. Hybrid town hall meetings can be attended either in-person or online. Registration is required for online participation. To register, click the link of the meeting you want to attend.

The National Estuarine Research Reserve System is a network of estuarine areas representative of the various biogeographic regions in the United States. Reserves are established for long-term research, education, stewardship and interpretation to promote informed management of our nation's estuaries and coastal habitats. A reserve represents a partnership between the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) and coastal states. NOAA provides funding and national guidance, and each site is managed by a lead state agency with input from local partners.

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TOWN HALL SCHEDULE SUMMARY

(Registration will be required when you join the webinar link)

Atchafalaya Basin		
Date	**Time**	**Attendance Info**
Wednesday, February 2	12-2pm	Join this Webinar (virtual only)
Tuesday, February 8	6-8pm	Join this Webinar **OR** Join in-person at Morgan City Municipal Auditorium – 728 Myrtle St. in Morgan City
Thursday, February 10	6-8pm	Join this Webinar **OR** Join in-person at Sliman Theatre for the Performing Arts – 129 E. Main St. in New Iberia
Barataria Basin		
Date	**Time**	**Attendance Info**
Monday, February 7	6-8pm	Join this Webinar **OR** Join in-person at Lafitte Barataria Museum & Wetland Trace – 4917 City Park Drive in Lafitte
Wednesday, February 9	12-2pm	Join this Webinar (virtual only)
Wednesday, February 9	6-8pm	Join this Webinar (virtual only)
Pontchartrain Basin		
Date	**Time**	**Attendance Info**
Tuesday, February 1	6-8pm	Join this Webinar **OR** Join in-person at Southeastern Student Union Annex - Theater (2nd floor) in Hammond (parking at the corner of Ned McGehee Drive and North Oak Street)
Thursday, February 3	6-8pm	Join this Webinar **OR** Join in-person at SUNO Auditorium of the Arts, Humanities, Social Sciences (AHSS) – 6400 Press Drive in New Orleans
Friday, February 11	12-2pm	Join this Webinar (virtual only)

General Agenda for each Town Hall Meeting:

1. National Estuarine Research Reserve System – Kristin Ransom, NOAA
2. Introduction to LaNERR Process – Robert Twilley, Professor, LSU
3. Presentation by the specific LaNERR Alternative Site Team
4. Public Q&A; Also questionnaire for public to provide feedback
5. Adjourn

LaNERR
(Louisiana National Estuarine Research Reserve)

The search for a National Estuarine Research Reserve in Louisiana wants to involve you!

LaNERR SEARCH

The LaNERR Site Development Committee will host a series of Town Hall meetings to provide information on three possible sites: Atchafalaya Basin, Barataria Basin and Pontchartrain Basin. Three Town Hall meetings (virtual and hybrid) have been organized for each site. Webinar information can be found at *www.laseagrant.org/deltanerr*. The public is encouraged to participate.

Stewardship

Research

Education

Training

The National Estuarine Research Reserve System (NERR) is a network of estuarine areas representative of the various biogeographic regions in the United States. Reserves are established for long-term research, education, stewardship and interpretation to promote informed management of our nation's estuaries and coastal habitats. A reserve represents a partnership between the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) and coastal states. NOAA provides funding and national guidance, and each site is managed by a lead state agency with input from local partners.

NOAA's Designation Process

Step 1 – Letter of Interest

Governor John Bel Edwards sent a letter of interest on July 23, 2019, to the undersecretary of NOAA who responded affirmatively in December 2019. In said letter, Louisiana Sea Grant was identified as the lead agency in the designation process, along with the Governor's Office of Coastal Activities, and initiated the process to nominate a Louisiana NEER to NOAA.

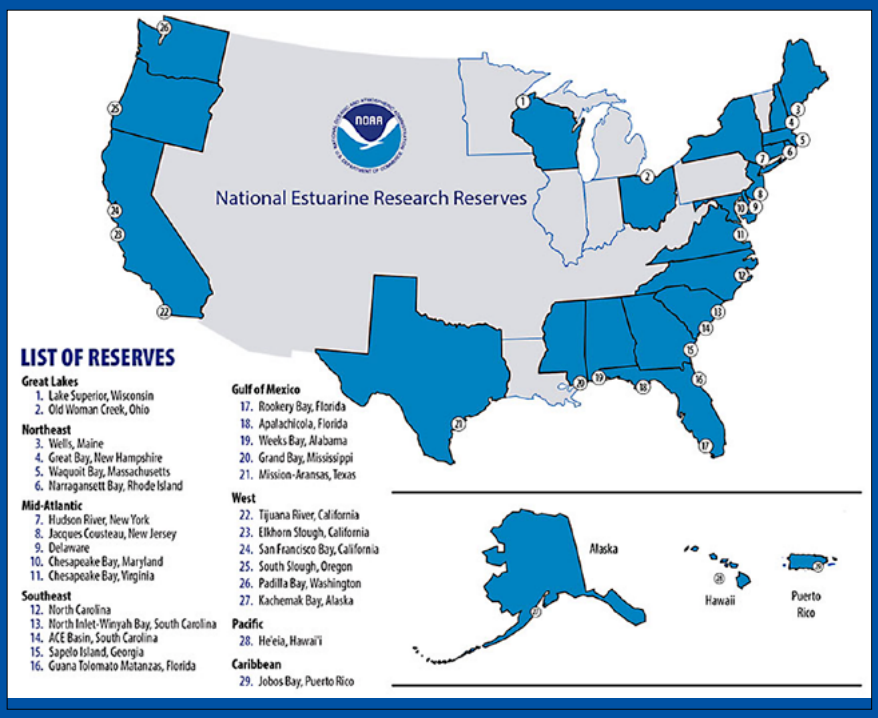
Step 2 – Site Selection and Nomination (Current Step)

Step 3 – Draft Environmental Impact Statement and Management Plan

Step 4 – Final Environmental Impact Statement and Management Plan

Step 5 – Designation Findings and Certificate; Record of Decision

Step 6 – Designation Ceremony

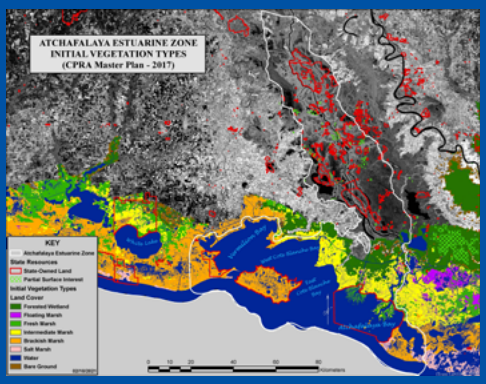


Why Should Louisiana have a NERR?

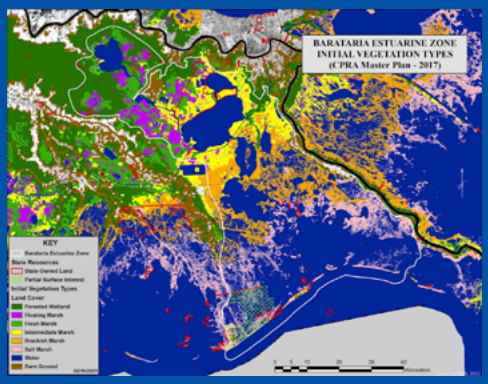
Louisiana is one of only two salt-water states in the nation without a designated Reserve. A Louisiana-based Reserve could complement and extend the scientific, educational and stewardship activities and needs of programs like the EPA National Estuary Program (Barataria National Estuary Program), the Louisiana Coastal Management Program, the Louisiana Sea Grant Program and various academic institutions through the addition of funding, resources and expertise. The health of the Mississippi River Delta ecosystem and its many services to Louisiana and the nation would benefit from establishing a NERR.

What Areas are Being Considered as a LaNERR Site?

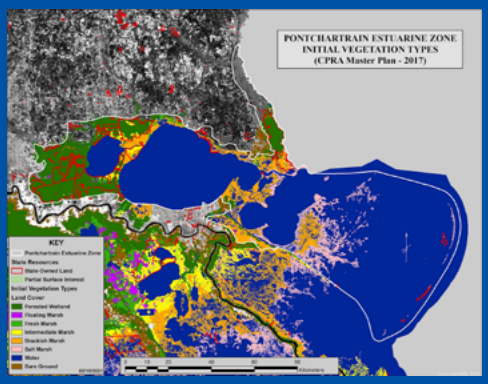
Three coastal basins are being considered for the location of a Reserve in coastal Louisiana. Each basin has habitats representative of a delta and contain resources to sustain programs in research, education and stewardship that are important to the mission of a NERR. Town Hall meetings have been organized (visit the LaNERR web site for details) to discuss preliminary plans for a Reserve at each of these proposed locations. One of these sites will be nominated based on criteria that have been approved by NOAA to meet the mission of a NERR (see LaNERR web site for criteria). We hope to have a nomination by June 2022 to complete Step #2 in the process (see above) and allow Louisiana to proceed with Steps 3 – 5 to designate a NERR along our coast.



Atchafalaya Basin



Barataria Basin



Pontchartrain Basin

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Sign up for our E-mail Listserve

https://lsu.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_42WBw0Qe2hP7Z6R

Designating a National Estuarine Research Reserve in Louisiana: Frequently Asked Questions

Site Selection Process: Definitions, Criteria, and Nomination Process

Q: What is a NERR?

A: The National Estuarine Research Reserve System is a network of 29 protected areas representative of the various biogeographic regions and estuarine types in the United States. Reserves are established for long-term research, education, training, and stewardship, and to promote informed management of the nation's estuaries and coastal habitats. A reserve represents a partnership between NOAA and coastal states. NOAA provides funding and national guidance, and each site is managed on a daily basis by a lead state agency with input from local partners. The reserve system covers 1.3 million acres and focus on four key sectors: Research, Education, Stewardship, and Training. (see https://coast.noaa.gov/nerrs/ and https://coast.noaa.gov/nerrs/about/ for more information)

- Stewardship: Each site undertakes the initiatives needed to keep the estuary healthy.
- Research: Reserve-based research and monitoring data are used to aid conservation and management efforts on local and national levels.
- Training: Local and state officials are better equipped to introduce local data into the decision-making process as a result of reserve training efforts.
- Education: Thousands of children and adults are served through hands-on laboratory and field-based experiences. School curriculums are provided online.

Q: What Is an Estuary?

A: Estuaries and their surrounding wetlands are bodies of water usually found where rivers meet the sea. Estuaries are home to unique plant and animal communities that have adapted to brackish water—a mixture of fresh water draining from the land and salty seawater. Learn More.

Q: What programs and benefits do research reserves offer?

A: Reserves apply science and education to improve the management of estuaries. Each reserve brings together local stakeholders, scientists, land management professionals, and educators to understand coastal management issues and generate local, integrated solutions. In addition to collecting and disseminating national and locally relevant data, reserves also provide the trainers and educators needed to bring the reserve-generated data and information to students, local citizens, and decision makers. Reserves further benefit their surrounding community by leveraging existing NOAA resources and bringing in federal funding that is only available to designated sites.

Q: Why should coastal Louisiana have a NERR?

A: The Mississippi River Delta and Chenier Plain represent the seventh largest river delta in the world and one of the most unique environmental, economic, and cultural landscapes in the United

States. This coastal region is also one of the most threatened natural resources in the world with historic wetland loss and flooding issues that challenge these economic and cultural assets of the region. Establishing a National Estuarine Research Reserve (NERR) will provide another tool in the toolbox to complement a concerted effort by the state of Louisiana to solve these challenges and build a more resilient delta landscape. A NERR in Louisiana (LaNERR) would be a place with research and education mission that would benefit students, the public and decision-makers with information on how a delta works – and what it takes to fix our present problems. The health of the Mississippi River delta ecosystem and the many human uses that depend on it would benefit from establishing a National Estuarine Research Reserve.

Q: Will the state have to purchase land for a Louisiana reserve?
A: No. Louisiana is considering sites from existing publicly owned lands and adjacent public trust waters. Additionally, the Louisiana NERR site could expand with municipal and non-profit property; and with donated or purchased land.

Q: Will a new reserve involve NOAA taking land from the State?
A: The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) does not own or manage the land within a reserve, nor does the designation of a reserve add new state or federal regulations. Memoranda of Agreement are used to articulate roles and responsibilities between relevant partners and landowners in the state, and NOAA.

Q: Will the federal government run the reserve?
A: The Louisiana NERR will be a partnership between NOAA and the state of Louisiana. The state is responsible for day-to-day management of a reserve. State responsibilities include land ownership and management; reserve staff members; program implementation; and 30% of funding for the reserve operations. NOAA administers the entire reserve system. NOAA responsibilities include establishing standards for designing and operating reserves; national policy and program guidance; technical assistance; program coordination; and 70% of funding reserve operations.

Q: Does the designation of a reserve bring more rules and regulations?
A: The designation of a Louisiana NERR will not add any new regulations to state-owned lands. NERR designation also does not impose regulations on privately-owned lands. NOAA will examine whether a proposed site is adequately managed for long-term research and education by existing state authorities. There are no federal regulations imposed as a result of reserve designation. Each reserve develops a management plan which takes into consideration the beneficial consumptive (resource harvesting such as fishing, shell fishing, etc.) and non-consumptive uses (recreational such as hiking, birdwatching, biking etc.) and the compatibility with adjacent land uses. These management plans use existing state laws and regulations on lands proposed for a LaNERR to be used to meet the NOAA criteria for a Reserve.

Q: Are there certain criteria that a site must meet to be eligible to be designated as a research reserve site?

A: Yes. Reserve sites are chosen to reflect regional variations and ecosystem types, termed "biogeographic regions," and unique estuarine habitat features within each biogeographic region. NOAA gives priority consideration to designation proposals that establish a reserve in a biogeographic region or sub-region that is not currently represented by the Reserve system or that incorporates unique habitat types that are not represented by the NERR System. NOAA will also evaluate the site based on whether it would be adequately managed for long-term research, education, and stewardship. Since Louisiana is in a biogeographic region that is represented in the Reserve system, this site should include unique habitat types that are not currently represented in the system.

Q: Is recreational hunting and fishing as well as commercial fishing allowed on NERR sites?
A: Designation of a reserve does **not** preclude existing uses and does **not** result in the total preservation of the area. Each reserve develops a management plan which takes into consideration the beneficial consumptive (resource harvesting such as fishing, shell fishing, etc.) and non-consumptive uses (recreational such as hiking, birdwatching, biking etc.) and the compatibility with adjacent land uses. NOAA relies on state regulatory mechanisms to manage those uses within the Reserve boundary.

Q: Will oil and gas exploration and drilling still be allowed?
A: The designation of a Reserve will not change any existing uses on that land/water. The site designation process is essential to identifying a proposed site where the goals of the NERR program (providing a stable environment for long-term research, education, and interpretation) do not conflict with existing uses at the site. NOAA relies on the state to identify a core area where existing uses would not have the potential to adversely impact the proposed site. NOAA relies on state regulatory mechanisms to determine how existing uses will be managed within the buffer areas of the Reserve. When considering new activities and uses proposed within the Reserve boundary (combined core and buffer), NOAA will continue to rely on state regulatory mechanisms to ensure that the siting of new activities will not adversely affect the Reserve site. When considering the uses present at a proposed NERR site, those activities should be considered in light of future impacts and how potential changes to the environment could impact the Reserve site once designated.

Ultimately, NOAA relies on state regulatory mechanisms for the management and siting of new and existing uses. However, NOAA does have to be consulted on the uses at a Reserve through the management planning process and relies on the Memorandum of Understanding/Memorandum of Agreement established between the state managing partner and NOAA at the time of site designation to guide the review of activities at a Reserve site.

Within the Reserve system there are examples of sites that have active oil and gas activities within the Reserve boundary. Mission-Aransas Reserve (located in the Coastal Bend of Texas) has current oil and gas production happening within the Reserve boundary, but this activity occurs within the buffer zone and not the core boundary. During the site designation process, the state mapped out the existing oil and gas activity in the area to determine where to place the core and

buffer boundaries to avoid oil and gas impacts within the core boundary of the Reserve. In other Reserves there is active oil and gas refining activity that occurs directly next to the boundary of the Reserve, and they are great partners for the reserve.

Q: How long does the designation process take?
A: The length of time it takes to designate a National Estuarine Research Reserve is not prescribed by NOAA, but rather depends on the time it takes for the state to accomplish the steps and tasks outlined in the regulations. The site selection and nomination process involve a number of steps and public engagement. Once a site is nominated the state and is approved by NOAA, the next steps involve preparation of an environmental impact statement and management plan for the site. Both of these steps require public engagement and input. It takes significant time to develop documentation, engage experts and the public, and execute the review and approval process. Robust stakeholder engagement, which is essential to ensure that the most appropriate site for all Louisiana stakeholders is designated, is imperative to a well-executed designation process.

Q: What funding from NOAA supports the Louisiana designation process?
A: A state is eligible for a total of $100,000 in federal funds for pre-designation activities, which include site selection, a limited basic characterization of the physical, chemical, and biological characteristics of the site, preparation of the required management plan, and providing data and information to NOAA for development of the draft and final Environmental Impact Statements. The Louisiana State University requested $48,000 in FY20 (70% federal and 30% state match requirement). The state may request up to $52,000 for the remainder of the designation process.

Q: If we have a potential reserve site in mind, is it necessary to use the formal selection process?
A: Yes. The state is responsible for developing a site selection process that examines potential sites and applies objective criteria to strategically identify and rank the most suitable locations for a NERR site. The site-selection process has been proven valuable in clarifying issues and priorities and in engaging interested and affected parties.

Q: What is the difference between the Pre-screening Criteria and the full NOAA criteria?
A: The purpose of the pre-screening criteria is to allow the Site Development Committee to narrow its focus to only those areas of the coast that meet the minimum requirements for a NERR. Site Development Committee members are asked to recognize that most sites could be good sites, but the criteria are meant to identify the best site for the stated goals of the NOAA program and the state's needs. Modification of the full criteria allow us to identify the optimal site for a NERR. The Site Development Committee has sent draft modifications of the full criteria to NOAA for review and approval. We hope to have those site criteria approved in time for Town Hall meetings of the three proposed sites for a Louisiana NERR.

Q: Are the criteria equally weighted?
A: The Pre-screening criteria are equally weighted however the final modified site criteria do not have to be. The draft site criteria for a LaNERR submitted by the Site Development Committee to

NOAA has equal weight to all criteria in six different categories (see http://www.laseagrant.org/deltanerr/updates/ for copy of the draft site criteria).

Q: What is the optimal size for a Louisiana NERR?

A: The smallest NERR in the system is in Ohio at a little less than 500 acres and the largest is in Alaska at more than 350,000 acres. The majority of NERRs are less than 50,000 acres. Three of the top five largest NERRs are in the Gulf states – two in Florida and one in Texas. Depending on how the site selection committee identifies a potential site, a Louisiana NERR site has the potential to be quite large. The site selection process will use factors such as the amount of state land immediately available, anticipated cost increases due to management of larger parcels, and others to develop the boundary of the potential NERR site. There is no optimal size for a Reserve site, rather the site's boundaries should be drawn in such a way as to allow for the long-term monitoring and research of a complete ecological unit of key estuarine habitats.

One important factor to note is that the Reserve boundary cannot be composed of more than 50% federal lands.

Q: Can Louisiana have more than one coastal basin included in a LaNERR site?

A: It is allowable for Louisiana to nominate a site with multiple components, and there are examples of sites in the Reserve system with multiple components. One consideration for a site with multiple components is that the funding available for that site stays the same, no matter how many components there are in the site. Multiple components necessarily increase the management needs for the Reserve, which can have a significant impact on the utility of the federal funding available. These considerations will be weighed against other factors during the site selection process.

Q: Can the managing entity be a consortium or a partnership of entities?

A: Once a site is designated, the state managing entity and the associated roles and responsibilities will be outlined in a Memorandum of Understanding and in the draft site management plan. There are several different examples of state managing entities, but the most common are either state agencies or state public universities. Ultimately, the state managing entity must identify and/or establish the mechanisms by which the state has control over the designated site and the management of that site for the life of the Reserve.

Q: What timeline should be used to evaluate the life of a NERR?

A: The goal of a NERR site is for longitudinal research. The oldest NERR site has been on the ground now since 1974, 46 years old already. NERR sites are focused on long-term research and monitoring, and sites are intended to exist indefinitely. This is why siting the NERR, developing public support, and establishing a managing entity is vital to its long-term success.

Q: How does the site selection process take into account the environmental changes happening along our coast and the efforts to address it through the Coastal Master Plan?

A: NOAA recognizes that many areas that could potentially be designated as a Reserve have undergone ecological change as a result of human activities, and such changes may have diminished the historical character of and integrity of a site. NERRS are located in dynamic zones, and the coasts are changing constantly. We recognize that as a conversation within the System and understand that new designations will have to consider these issues as the state moves through the designation process. NERRS regulations do permit the restoration of these areas to improve the representative character of and integrity of a Reserve, but these restoration activities *must* be carefully planned and approved by the state and NOAA through the Reserve management planning process. An activity that can be expected to have a significant adverse impact on the resources or habitats of a Reserve resulting in a change to the representative character and integrity of a Reserve is prohibited.

Manipulative activities taking place at a proposed site must meet the goals of the NERRS program, which are to provide long-term research, education, and interpretation. This includes providing a stable environment for research through the longer-term protection of NERR resources, as well as addressing coastal management issues identified as significant through coordinated research.

The site designation criteria used to identify a potential Reserve site will take these considerations into account, and it will be the role of the Site Development and Site Evaluation committees to weigh those criteria against the other non-restoration related criteria to determine the best potential site for Louisiana. The Coastal Master Plan will be an essential resource for the committees as they navigate these discussions, and the committee will be asked to consider landscape changes over the next 50 years, both with and without Coastal Master Plan projects.

It is also important to note that NOAA is involved in the site development process and regularly communicates with the team leading the site development process for Louisiana, and that any issues that arise for potential sites where Coastal Master Plan projects are planned will be discussed long before the site nomination package is finalized and submitted to NOAA for approval.

Q: Is it preferable to have a site that is closer to urban populations so that more people will use it?

A. This is a difficult question to answer definitively, as it is ultimately the outcome and decision of the site designation process managed by the state. NOAA has defined criteria that are required to be considered during the development and nomination of a potential Reserve site. Those criteria require the site development process to balance the benefits of a large nearby population that can access the Reserve site with the potential impacts that nearby development pressures can have on the long-term integrity of a Reserve site. This balancing act will be the responsibility of the Site Development and Site Evaluation committees, and NOAA relies on the expertise and knowledge of the state team and stakeholders to inform that decision. The site criterion uses one-day travel for education field trips as optimum location for schools and educational institutions to participate in a LaNERR.

Within the NERR system there are examples of both types of Reserves, each with its benefits and challenges. For example, the Tijuana River NERR in southern California is located close to the large population centers of San Diego, CA and Tijuana, Mexico. This site has robust public attendance at Reserve events and the ability to easily connect with other resources in the area. However, the Reserve has to focus significant resources on issues of water quality and urban runoff within the Reserve boundary that are direct impacts from the nearby population centers.

An opposite example is the Sapelo Island reserve site in Georgia. The habitats at this reserve site are relatively unimpacted and allow for research and stewardship without having to deal with concerns related to habitat degradation. However, it is located in a very remote location, requiring boat access to visit, which makes it difficult to host education and training events at the site. This results in staff having to travel outside of the Reserve boundary to engage with the communities in the surrounding area.

Q: Is something less than full ownership allowed?
A: Yes. There are examples throughout the NERR system of Reserves where the boundary includes lands dedicated through conservation easements and other agreements where the private property owner retains some rights to the property. Whatever the mechanism, it is required that the state managing partner has control over the use of the parcel that is to be included as part of the Reserve. The state managing partner is responsible for developing any conservation easements or other agreements that outline the management of the property and ensuring that those activities align with the goals of the Reserve, as well as receiving consent from NOAA that we approve the conservation easement or agreement as part of the management plan of the Reserve.

Q: If a private landowner wanted to participate in another federal easement program (for example, the Natural Resources Conservation Service Agricultural Reserve Program), could they also participate in a conservation easement and include that property in the Reserve boundary?
A: The answer to this question is dependent upon the specific programs involved, but essentially this is an existing land use question. If a landowner is participating in a conservation easement program, the state managing partner and NOAA would look at the uses included in the conservation easement and ensure that those uses are in line with the goals of the NERR program. Those existing uses would also be considered for any potential impacts that they may have on the integrity of the Reserve site before the agreement could be finalized and included in the Reserve boundary and management plan.

Q: Why is the Site Development Committee not considering donations of land from private interests at this time?
A. NOAA requires a minimum level of state control over the property to ensure long-term management as part of the NOAA-state partnership. Donations can take years and thus we cannot depend upon the precarious nature of land acquisition transactions to initiate a NERR site

in Louisiana. Donations will be considered later in the process as lagniappe. Additions to the reserve boundary can also be made once the reserve has been designated and as potential acquisition opportunities emerge. In fact, the availability of lands for future acquisition is a criterion in the site evaluation process.

Post Site Nomination Process

Q: If NOAA accepts the Louisiana nomination, when could a Reserve be designated?
A: Should NOAA accept the state's nomination, it would kick off the next step in the process , as required under NEPA, to consider the state's recommended site and other options as they develop a Draft Environmental Impact Statement; the state's development of a draft management plan for NOAA's review; and additional public meetings and opportunities for public comment. Once the drafts are open for public comment, NOAA and the state move to finalize these documents and develop a record of decision for approval of the designation. This could take 12 to 24 months.

Q: What happens if NOAA rejects the Louisiana site nomination?
A: If NOAA rejects the state's site nomination, the designation process would not advance to the next phase. NOAA would not proceed with the development of an EIS nor would it support the state's development of a draft management plan. NOAA could decide to revisit or reconsider the state's site nomination at any point in the future.

Q: If NOAA accepts Louisiana's site nomination, does this mean that NOAA has decided to designate a new reserve in Louisiana?
A: No. NOAA's decision to accept the state's site nomination and proceed to the next phase does not imply support for a new designation nor does it compel the agency to support a new reserve upon completion of the EIS and draft management plan.

Reserve Site Operation Post-Designation

Q: How much does each NERR site receive from the federal government annually, how much do we have to invest, where can that come from, and to what extent does NOAA dictate how that money has to be spent?
A: This answer differs depending on what the funding is being used for, and the amount of federal funding available each NERR within the System (depending upon the approved federal budget for the relevant fiscal year). Eligible managing state partners can apply for federal funding for the operation and management of the Reserve, as well as for acquisition of lands/waters and facilities construction. The portion of federal funding available to Reserve sites for operations are distributed in an equal share across all eligible sites.

Federal funds are available for the operation and management of the Reserve once it has been formally designated. Federal funds for the operation and management of a Reserve site may not exceed 70% of the total cost of operating and managing the Reserve for any one year. No more

than 10% of the total amount (state and federal shares) of each operation and management award may be used for construction-type activities.

Federal funds are also competitively available for facilities construction and for the acquisition of lands or waters, or interests therein, to be included in the boundary of an eligible Reserve site. Construction and acquisition funding is allocated through a competitive award process, and this fund changes annually based on federal budget appropriations and NERR System priorities. Federal funding for acquisition projects may not exceed an amount equal to 50 percent of the costs of the lands, waters, and interests therein or $5,000,000, whichever amount is less. For construction projects, federal funding may not exceed 70 percent of the total costs. Eligible construction and acquisition projects need to be outlined in the acquisition and construction section of Reserve site management plan.

The state share can be made up of a number of different sources. NOAA works with the state managing partner to identify the most appropriate sources of state match.

Q: If a private landowner wants to sell his property to the state as a part of the NERR program, what rights could he or she maintain?

A: If a private property owner sells their parcel to the state to be included in the Reserve boundary, they would retain whatever rights the public has to the land - no more, no less. If a private landowner enters into an agreement with the state to include their land in the NERR boundary as part of a conservation easement or some other agreement, the private landowner's rights would be outlined in that agreement, which will be included in the Reserve boundary with NOAA's consent.

Candidate Site Alternatives for Louisiana National Estuarine Research Reserve

The National Estuarine Research Reserve (NERR) System is a network of 29 coastal sites covering over 1.3 million acres of estuaries focused on promoting stewardship, research, training, and education. Established through the Coastal Zone Management Act, the reserves represent a partnership program between NOAA and the coastal states. Each site is managed on a daily basis by a lead state agency or university with input from local partners while NOAA provides funding and national guidance.

The concept of establishing a NERR has been discussed for decades here in Louisiana, one of the few coastal states without a NERR site. Louisiana Governor John Bel Edwards changed the nature of the conversation on July 23, 2019, when he sent a request for consideration to the Undersecretary of the NOAA who responded affirmatively in December that same year. In his letter to NOAA, Governor Edwards identified Louisiana Sea Grant as the lead agency in the designation process, that along with the Governor's Office of Coastal Activities, would initiate a process to nominate a Louisiana NERR (LaNERR) to NOAA.

Identifying alternative sites that would represent appropriate site criteria for a NOAA proposal is but one milestone in the 3-5 year designation process. This critical first step requires a collaborative process of identifying a site that meet the standards of NERR sites across the nation and represent a unique addition to the NERR System from the Mississippi River Delta. Public engagement is a critical part of this process, and we hope that you will participate in this survey to help provide feedback on what alternative site may be the most appropriate as our first NERR in Louisiana.

This survey will help you to participate in the evaluation of candidate site alternatives to establish a LaNERR. We are asking the public to discuss how best alternative sites meet the mission of a NERR. In rounds of Town Hall meetings, the public will share ideas about what is the mission of a NERR, how a NERR site in the Mississippi River Delta meets the national program needs, and what qualities of a site in Louisiana best fit the NOAA criteria. An information pamphlet on each of the candidate site alternatives provides an overview of LaNERR program as well as summaries of NOAA criteria.

By completing the questionnaire, you can register your opinions about candidate site alternatives for a LaNERR relative to NOAA criteria. You can also suggest ideas and recommendations for partnerships and support to individual LaNERR candidate sites.

We will use the responses to provide feedback to the respective Site Proposal Teams.

You can keep up with progress of the LaNERR initiative by following us on **laseagrant.org/deltanerr/**.

Thank you.

1. **What type of organization below BEST describes you?**
   (Please check only ONE.)

   - o State Agency/Government
   - o Federal Agency/Government
   - o Tribal Agency/Government
   - o County Agency/Government
   - o Local Agency/Government
   - o Regional Agency/Government
   - o Educator: K-12
   - o Educator: Higher Education
   - o Non-Profit Organization
   - o Privately employed
   - o Industry/Business
   - o Other (please describe)

2. **Would you be willing to provide the following information in the case we would like to follow up on your interest in supporting the LaNERR candidate site alternative?**

   Name:
   Email address:
   Other contact information:

3. **Have you visited the LaNERR web site at laseagrant.org/deltanerr/ to review the mission of the NERR system and examples of NERR sites.?**

   - o No
   - o Yes

4. **In which of the following areas do you live?**
   (Please check only ONE.)

   - Pontchartrain
   - Breton Sound
   - Mississippi Delta
   - Barataria
   - Terrebonne
   - Atchafalaya
   - Teche/Vermilion
   - Mermentau
   - Calcasieu/Sabine
   - Other: describe

5. **Which of the LaNERR candidate site alternatives are you considering in this survey?**
   (Please check only ONE.; To provide feedback on another candidate site, please take the survey again)

   - o Pontchartrain Basin
   - o Atchafalaya Basin
   - o Barataria Basin

6. **How likely would you consider the importance of a NERR in your community to ecotourism?**
   - o Very Likely
   - o Somewhat Likely
   - o Uncertain
   - o Somewhat Unlikely
   - o Very Unlikely

7. **Please indicate the extent to which you think the following missions of a proposed LaNERR are important to supporting Coastal Zone Management.**

	1 Very Important	2 Somewhat Important	3 Not Important	4 Not Sure
Research and Monitoring Mission	O	O	O	O
Education and Interpretative Center Mission	O	O	O	O
Coastal Zone Management Mission	O	O	O	O

8. **The following represent missions of a NERR site as outline in the presentation by NOAA and is part of the selection process of a NERR designation in Louisiana. How important is each to you?**

	1 Very Important	2 Somewhat Important	3 Uncertain	4 Unlikely Important	5 Not Important
Environmental Representativeness	O	O	O	O	O
Research and Monitoring	O	O	O	O	O
Education, Interpretation, and Culture	O	O	O	O	O
Coastal Zone Management Issues	O	O	O	O	O

9. **Please indicate which response below best describes your likelihood to participate in each mission of a NERR proposed in your region.**

	1 Very Likely	2 Somewhat Likely	3 Uncertain	4 Unlikely	5 Very Unlikely
Research and Monitoring Mission	O	O	O	O	O
Education and Interpretative Center Mission	O	O	O	O	O
Coastal Zone Management Mission	O	O	O	O	O

10. Please indicate which response below best describes your likelihood to participate in the missions of a NERR proposed in another region of Louisiana coastal zone.

	1 Very Likely	2 Somewhat Likely	3 Uncertain	4 Unlikely	5 Very Unlikely
Research and Monitoring Mission	O	O	O	O	O
Education and Interpretative Center Mission	O	O	O	O	O
Coastal Zone Management Mission	O	O	O	O	O

11. Please rate the benefits of having a research reserve located in your community.

	1 Very Beneficial	2 Somewhat Beneficial	3 Neutral	4 Somewhat Not Beneficial	5 Not Beneficial
Bringing new scientists and students from all over the U.S. to study at the site	O	O	O	O	O
Providing opportunity to apply for funds for facilities and land acquisition	O	O	O	O	O
Providing an opportunity to apply for operational funds that are currently restricted to Reserve System Sites	O	O	O	O	O
Additional opportunities to educate k-12 students about the estuary, science, and cultural knowledge	O	O	O	O	O
Improved science-based information becomes available to support local decision makers	O	O	O	O	O
Fostering collaborations and partnerships to solve local and regional problems	O	O	O	O	O

12. **Please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following statement. Are you concerned that the proposed NERR in your region would limit or restrict the opportunities to recreate or otherwise utilize the natural resources beyond the current management restrictions?**

	1 Strongly Disagree	2 Somewhat Disagree	3 Neutral or No Impact	4 Somewhat Agree	5 Strongly Agree
Recreational fishing and hunting	O	O	O	O	O
Commercial fishing	O	O	O	O	O
Boating or other aquatic activities	O	O	O	O	O
	O	O	O	O	O
Navigation	O	O	O	O	O
Oil and gas activities	O	O	O	O	O
Other: Please describe.	O	O	O	O	O

13. **Please indicate the extent to which you support or oppose the development of the NERR described in Question #5 in your community:**

- o Strongly Support
- o Somewhat Support
- o Neutral
- o Somewhat Oppose
- o Strongly Oppose

14. **What support and partnerships would you recommend that the LaNERR proposal team contact? Would you be willing to assist in making the contact?**

Contact:

Willing to Help?
- Yes
- No

15. **Are you interested in joining and participating on a 'friends of the NERR' support group that would serve to connect the development of a NERR to your community?**

- o Yes
- o No
- o Not Sure

16. **Please provide any additional comments you might have related to the search for a NERR site in coastal Louisiana.**

Atchafalaya

National Estuarine Research Reserve

About NERRS

The National Estuarine Research Reserve System (NERRS) represents a partnership between the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) and coastal states. Each site is managed by a lead state agency with input from local partners with funding and guidance from NOAA.

Reserves are established for long-term stewardship, research, education, and training.

This proposed Atchafalaya reserve would use current monitoring efforts and restoration activities to increase physical and biological monitoring in fresh, floating, brackish, and salt marshes.

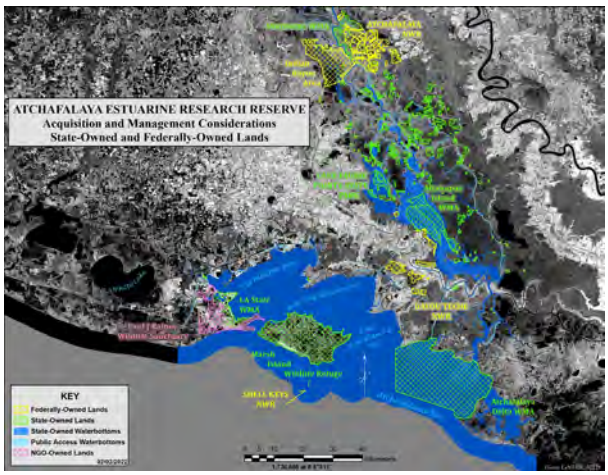
This proposed Atchafalaya reserve would provide vital research opportunities and access. It would be the only active delta estuarine system in the NERR network adding value to the significance of the research conducted at the site.

The Atchafalaya Basin is perfectly situated to offer a variety of opportunities for learning. Centrally located along the coast, it provides relatively short travel distances from major coastal zone cities and universities.

This region is an ideal place to discuss the interconnectedness of engineering, ecology, and its impacts on communities.

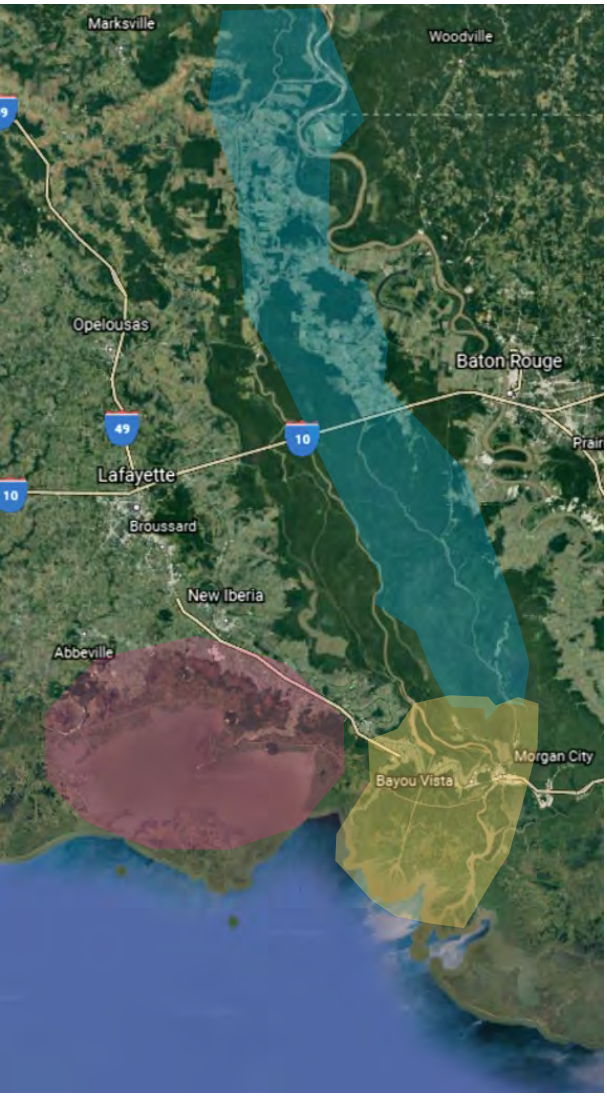
The Atchafalaya Basin has ecological and cultural significance for Louisiana and the nation.

The Atchafalaya and Wax Lake Deltas contain over 50,000 hectacres of the newest created land in North America. The Atchafalaya Basin is a small-scale version of Louisiana including nearly all of the habitats and ecosystems found in the state. It provides opportunities to study all the important ecological dynamics that drive change in Louisiana and can be used to better understand other major river deltas. The site offers access to flood plains of the upland river to the active river delta transitioning to brackish and saltmarsh systems as well as riverine, estuarine, and offshore habitats.



For more information on the LA NERR process: www.laseagrant.org/deltanerr

Flora and Fauna of the Atchafalaya Basin



Alluvial Floodplain Zone

- Upper: Bottomland hardwood forests
  - High sites with low flooding: American sweetgum, water oak, sugarberry
  - Low sites with high flooding: overcup oak, water hickory, green ash

- Lower: Cypress-Tupelo swamps
  - scrub-shrub community in some areas (water elm, swamp privet, buttonbush, scattered cypress)

River Delta and Fresh Marsh Zone

- Upstream tips of islands: Black willow with understory of elephant ear, rice cutgrass, climbing hempweed, etc.
- As elevation decreases, tidal fresh marsh vegetation dominates

Brackish and Salt Marsh Zone

- Moving away from river deltas, estuaries fringed with brackish and salt marshes and to a lesser extent black mangrove patches

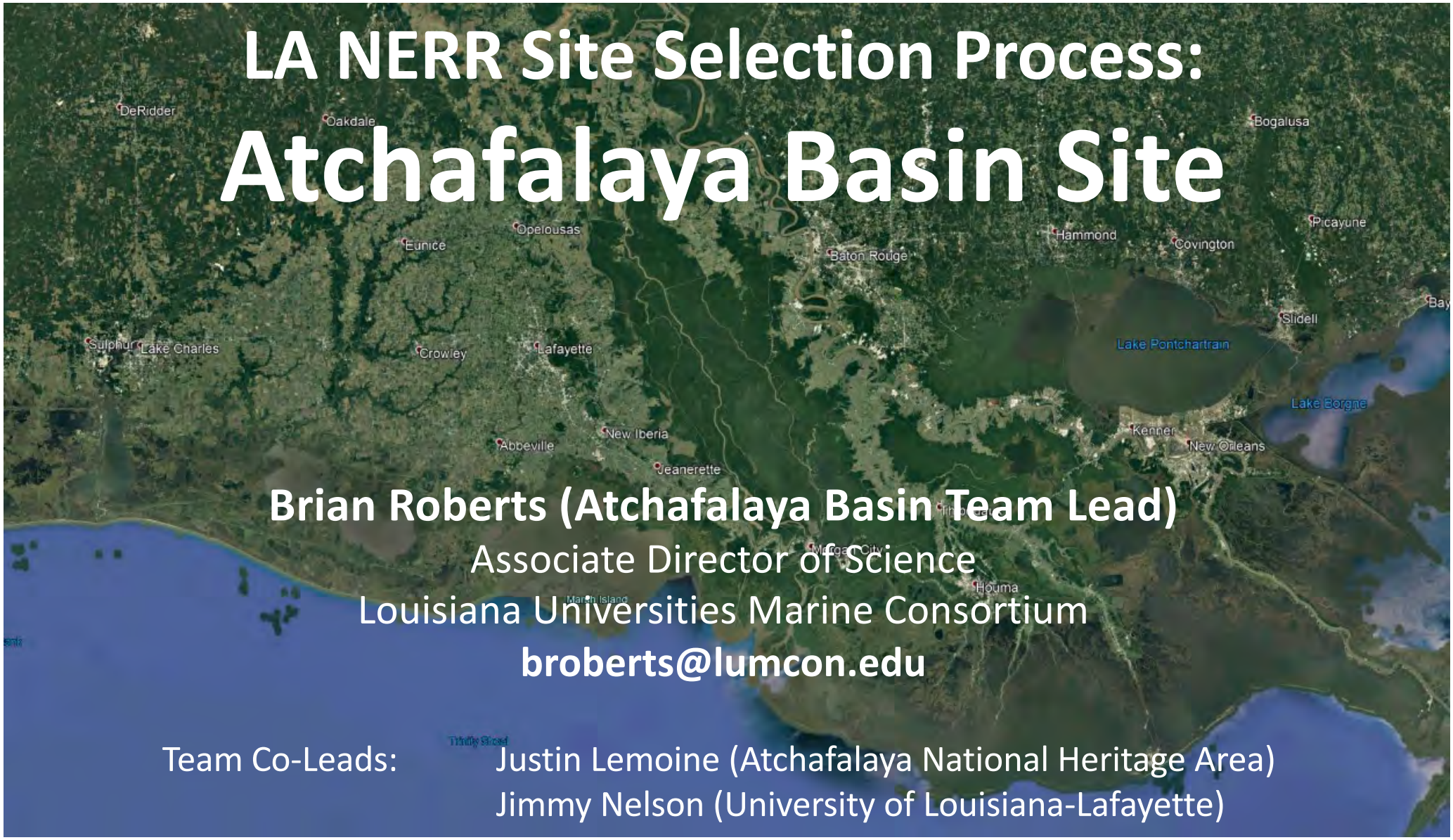
Important fauna of the Atchafalaya Basin

- Critical habitats for Louisiana black bear, neotropical migratory birds, American alligators, fish and invertebrates
- More than a dozen threatened or endangered species:
  - piping plover and other birds of concern, west Indian manatee, pallid sturgeon, and 5+ species of turtles

The proposed Atchafalaya NERR is supported by partnerships with the Atchafalaya National Heritage Area, Audubon Delta, The Nature Conservancy (TNC), Louisiana Sea Grant, Louisiana Universities Marine Consortium (LUMCON), University of Louisiana at Lafayette, Louisiana State University, Nicholls State University, United States Geological Survey, Barataria-Terrebonne National Estuary Program, Restore and Retreat, Inc., Boy Scouts of America, the Atchafalaya River Basin Restoration & Enhancement (ARBE) Task Force, Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries (LDWF), and municipalities within the basin.

LA NERR Site Selection Process:

Atchafalaya Basin Site



Brian Roberts (Atchafalaya Basin Team Lead)
Associate Director of Science
Louisiana Universities Marine Consortium
broberts@lumcon.edu

Team Co-Leads: Justin Lemoine (Atchafalaya National Heritage Area)
Jimmy Nelson (University of Louisiana-Lafayette)


DeRidder
Oakdale
Bogalusa
Opelousas
Eunice
Hammond
Covington
Picayune
Baton Rouge
Slidell
Sulphur
Lake Charles
Crowley
Lafayette
Lake Pontchartrain
Lake Borgne
New Iberia
Kenner
Abbeville
New Orleans
Jeanerette
Thibodaux
Morgan City
Houma
Marsh Island

Atchafalaya Basin NERR Candidate Site Proposal

Team Members:

Brian Roberts (Louisiana Universities Marine Consortium (LUMCON)), Team Lead
Justin Lemoine (Atchafalaya National Heritage Area), Team Co-Lead
Jimmy Nelson (University of Louisiana at Lafayette), Team Co-Lead

Joseph Baustian (The Nature Conservancy)
Craig Colten (Louisiana State University)
Murt Conover (LUMCON Education and Outreach)
Dani DiIullo (Louisiana Sea Grant Communications Coordinator)
Quenton Fontenot (Nicholls State University)
Brian Gautreau (LSU Ag Center Youth Wetlands and Outreach Program)
Erik Johnson (Audubon Louisiana)
Ken Krauss (Unites States Geological Survey)
Simone Maloz (Restore the Mississippi River Coalition)
Bryan Piazza (The Nature Conservancy)
Victoria Sagrera (Restore or Retreat, Inc)

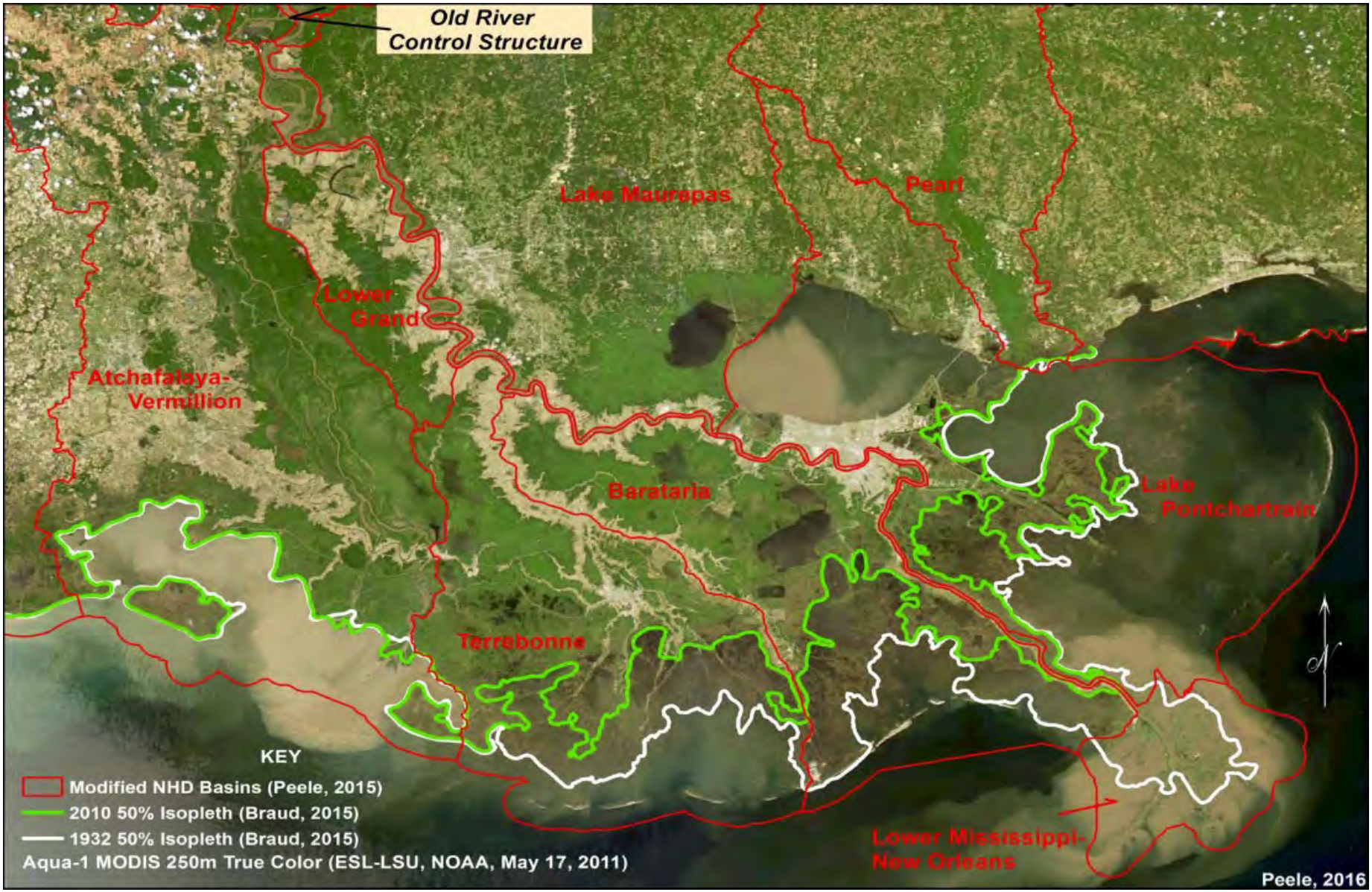
(1) **The site's contribution to the biogeographical and typological balance of the National Estuarine Research Reserve System.** ***NOAA will give priority consideration to proposals to establish Reserves in biogeographic regions or subregions or incorporating types that are not represented in the system***.

"Louisiana would like to nominate a site in the ***Delta biogeographic region*** *for inclusion in the NERRS"*
-Governor John Bel Edwards

How do we best design a Delta NERR site?

A Delta NERR should include:

- **River and its alluvial floodplain**
- **River Delta**
- **Estuarine ecosystem**


Old River
Control Structure
Lake Maurepas
Pearl
Lower
Grand
Atchafalaya-
Vermillion
Barataria
Lake
Pontchartrain
Terrebonne
Lower Mississippi-
New Orleans
KEY
Modified NHD Basins (Peele, 2015)
2010 50% Isopleth (Braud, 2015)
1932 50% Isopleth (Braud, 2015)
Aqua-1 MODIS 250m True Color (ESL-LSU, NOAA, May 17, 2011)
Peele, 2016

Atchafalaya Basin NERR Proposal Development Plan

Overall vision for and approach to the development of the Atchafalaya NERR:

Include all of the key habitats/ecosystems looked at in the NERR selection process with the idea being that the Atchafalaya basin provides a unique river delta NERR that encompasses ***all key relevant habitats*** *found in Louisiana.*

The Atchafalaya Basin is essentially a small-scale version of Louisiana representing all of the habitats found within the state and is a model for how the state and other deltaic systems are formed.

Zones of the Atchafalaya Basin

Alluvial Floodplain Zone

River Delta and Fresh Marsh Zone

Brackish and Salt Marsh Zone

Alluvial Floodplain Zone

- Upper: Bottomland hardwood forests
  - High sites with low flooding: American sweetgum, water oak, sugarberry
  - Low sites with high flooding: overcup oak, water hickory, green ash

- Lower: Cypress-Tupelo swamps
  - scrub-shrub community in some areas (water elm, swamp privet, buttonbush, scattered cypress)

River Delta and Fresh Marsh Zone

- Upstream tips of islands:
  - Black willow with understory of elephant ear, rice cutgrass, climbing hempweed, etc.

- As elevation decreases:
  - Tidal fresh marsh vegetation dominates

- Zone also contains:
  - Extensive SAV low intertidal & subtidal areas

Brackish and Salt Marsh Zone

- Moving away from river deltas:

- Estuaries are fringed with brackish and salt marshes

- and to a lesser extent black mangrove patches

Important fauna of ARB:

Critical habitas for Louisiana black bear, neotropical migratory birds, American alligators, and fish and inverts

Declared Critical Bird Habitat

More than a dozen threatened or endangered species including piping plover and other birds of concern, west Indian manatee, pallid sturgeon, and at least five species of sea turtles

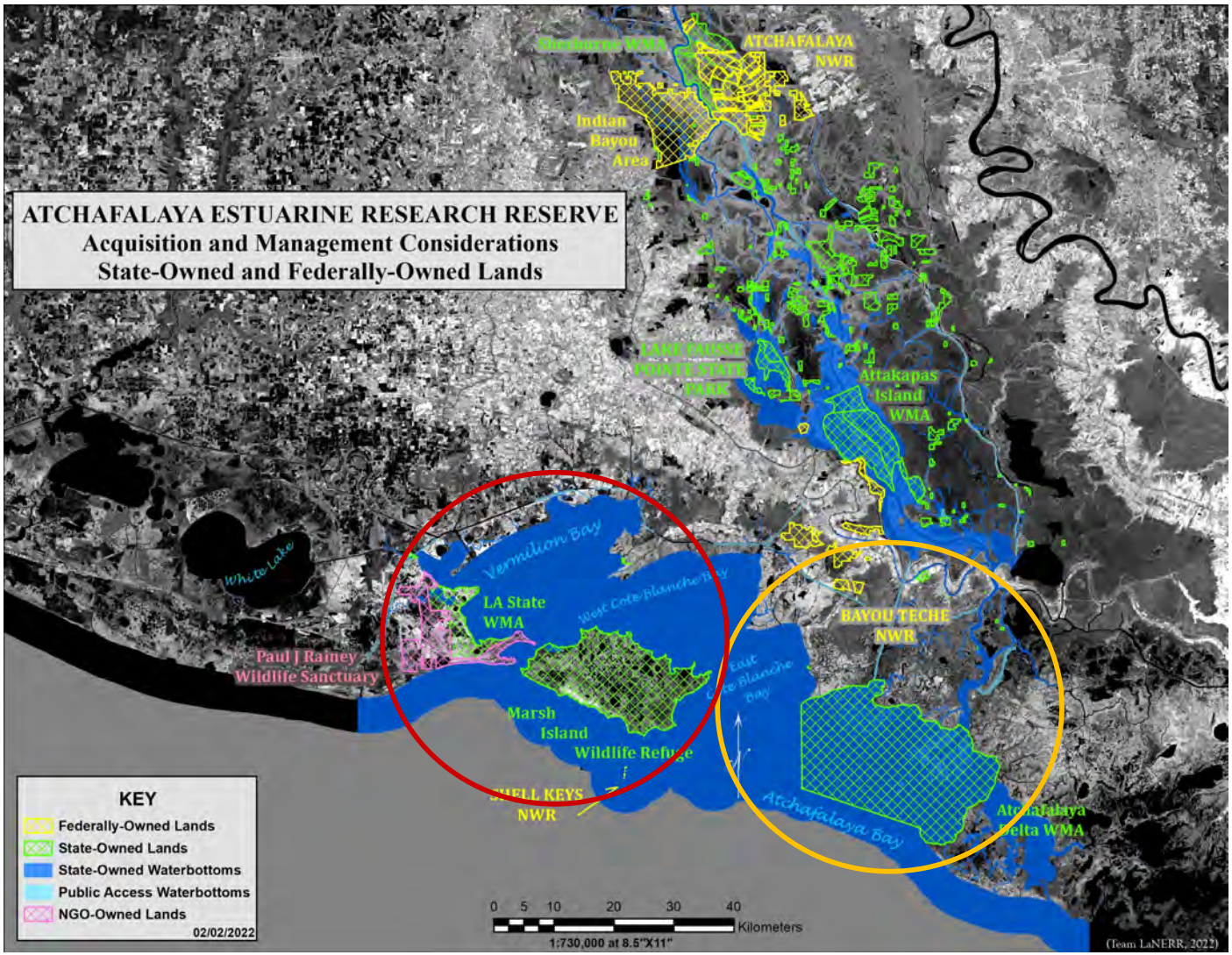
Proposed Atchafalaya NERR site would only require state lands

Alluvial Floodplain Zone

River Delta and Fresh Marsh Zone

Brackish and Salt Marsh Zone

Proposed Site also includes state estuarine/offshore water bottoms

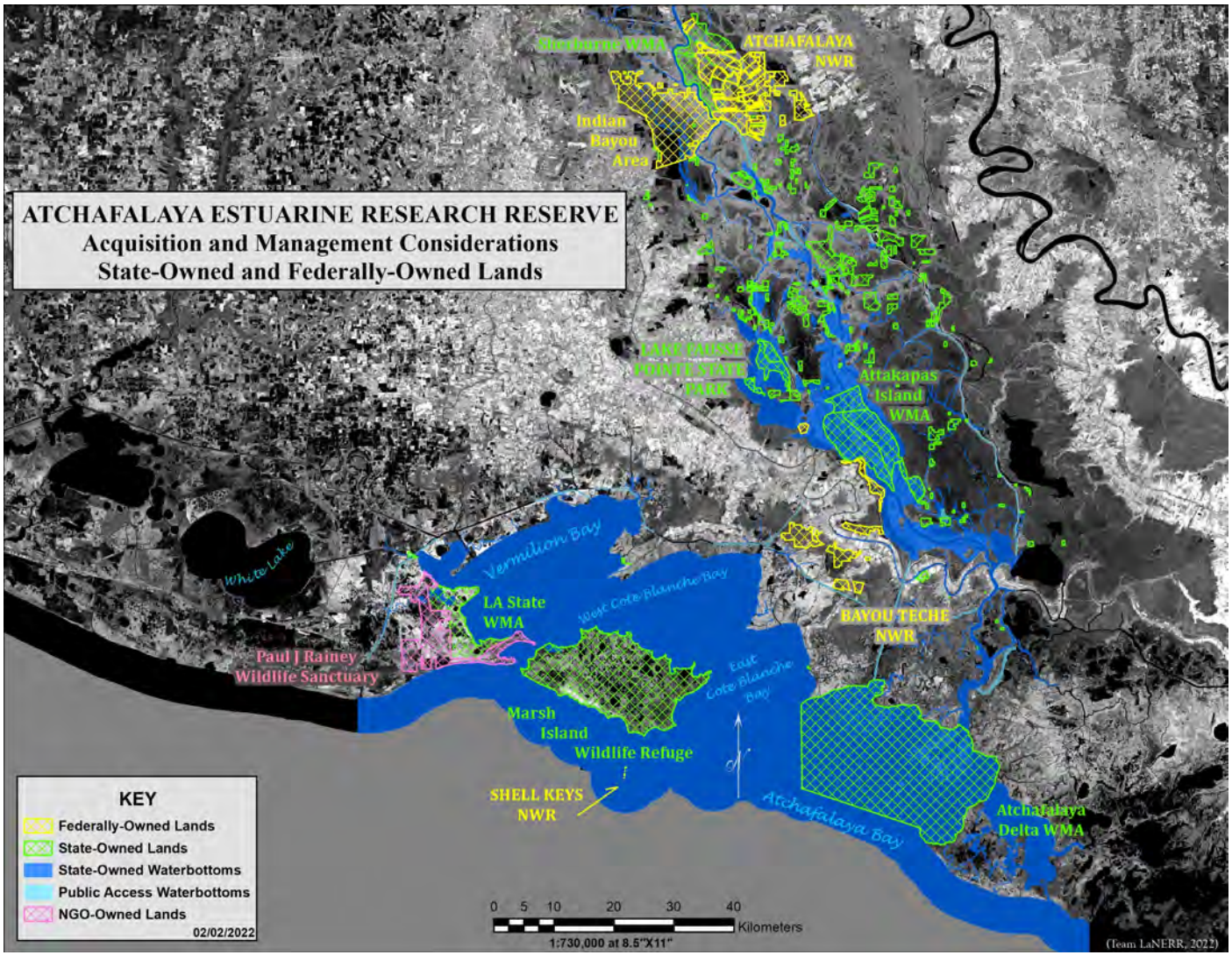


Long term goal: work with federal (e.g. NWRs), organizational (e.g. TNC, Audubon) and private land-owners to expand NERR

Proposed Atchafalaya NERR site would only require state lands

- Of the ~1.6 Million acres designated as the Atchafalaya Estuarine zone there are ~750,000 acres of state-owned lands and ~300,000 acres of state-owned water bodies. **Accounting for more than 65% of the total area**.

- > 10 state or federally designated wildlife areas



Reserves are established for long-term stewardship, research, education, and training.

Stewardship

This proposed Atchafalaya reserve would use current monitoring efforts and restoration activities to increase physical and biological monitoring in fresh, floating, brackish, and salt marshes.

Research

This proposed Atchafalaya reserve would provide vital research opportunities and access. It would be the only active delta estuarine system in the NERR network adding value to the significance of the research conducted at the site.

Education

The Atchafalaya Basin is perfectly situated to offer a variety of opportunities for learning. Centrally located along the coast, it provides relatively short travel distances from major coastal zone cities and universities.

Training

This region is an ideal place to discuss the interconnectedness of engineering, ecology, and its impacts on communities.

Partnerships

The proposed Atchafalaya NERR is supported by a growing number of partnerships

- Atchafalaya National Heritage Area
- Atchafalaya River Basin Restoration & Enhancement (ARBE) Task Force
- Louisiana Sea Grant
- Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries (LDWF)
- Audubon Delta
- The Nature Conservancy (TNC)
- Louisiana Universities Marine Consortium (LUMCON)
- University of Louisiana at Lafayette
- Louisiana State University
- Nicholls State University
- United States Geological Survey
- Barataria-Terrebonne National Estuary Program
- Restore and Retreat, Inc.
- Restore the Mississippi River Coalition
- Boy Scouts of America
- St. Mary Excel
- municipalities within the basin

How can you help and contribute to the LA NERR selection process?

Reach out to our Atchafalaya NERR proposal team (broberts@lumcon.edu)

VISIT US ONLINE:
www.laseagrant.org/deltanerr

Find us on
https://www.facebook.com/DeltaNERR/

Follow us on Twitter
https://twitter.com/deltanerr

Sign up for our E-mail Listserve
https://lsu.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_42WBw0Qe2hP7Z6R

Questions?

Q: What programs and benefits do research reserves offer?

A: Reserves apply science and education to improve the management of estuaries. Each reserve brings together local stakeholders, scientists, land management professionals, and educators to understand coastal management issues and generate local, integrated solutions. In addition to collecting and disseminating national and locally relevant data, reserves also provide the trainers and educators needed to bring the reserve-generated data and information to students, local citizens, and decision makers. Reserves further benefit their surrounding community by leveraging existing NOAA resources and bringing in federal funding that is only available to designated sites.

Q: Will the state have to purchase land for a Louisiana reserve?

A: No. Louisiana is considering sites from existing publicly owned lands and adjacent public trust waters. Additionally, the Louisiana NERR site could expand with municipal and non-profit property; and with donated or purchased land.

Questions?

Q: Will a new reserve involve NOAA taking land from the State?

A: The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) does not own or manage the land within a reserve, nor does the designation of a reserve add new state or federal regulations. Memoranda of Agreement are used to articulate roles and responsibilities between relevant partners and landowners in the state, and NOAA.

Q: Will the federal government run the reserve?

A: The Louisiana NERR will be a partnership between NOAA and the state of Louisiana. The state is responsible for day-to-day management of a reserve. State responsibilities include land ownership and management; reserve staff members; program implementation; and 30% of funding for the reserve operations. NOAA administers the entire reserve system. NOAA responsibilities include establishing standards for designing and operating reserves; national policy and program guidance; technical assistance; program coordination; and 70% of funding reserve operations.

Questions?

Q: Does the designation of a reserve bring more rules and regulations?

A: The designation of a Louisiana NERR will not add any new regulations to state-owned lands. NERR designation also does not impose regulations on privately-owned lands. NOAA will examine whether a proposed site is adequately managed for long-term research and education by existing state authorities. There are no federal regulations imposed as a result of reserve designation. Each reserve develops a management plan which takes into consideration the beneficial consumptive (resource harvesting such as fishing, shell fishing, etc.) and non-consumptive uses (recreational such as hiking, birdwatching, biking etc.) and the compatibility with adjacent land uses. These management plans use existing state laws and regulations on lands proposed for a LaNERR to be used to meet the NOAA criteria for a Reserve.

Questions?

Q: Is recreational hunting and fishing as well as commercial fishing allowed on NERR sites?

A: Designation of a reserve does **not** preclude existing uses and does **not** result in the total preservation of the area. Each reserve develops a management plan which takes into consideration the beneficial consumptive (resource harvesting such as fishing, shell fishing, etc.) and non-consumptive uses (recreational such as hiking, birdwatching, biking etc.) and the compatibility with adjacent land uses. NOAA relies on state regulatory mechanisms to manage those uses within the Reserve boundary.

Questions?

Q: Will oil and gas exploration and drilling still be allowed?

A: The designation of a Reserve will not change any existing uses on that land/water. The site designation process is essential to identifying a proposed site where the goals of the NERR program (providing a stable environment for long-term research, education, and interpretation) do not conflict with existing uses at the site. NOAA relies on the state to identify a core area where existing uses would not have the potential to adversely impact the proposed site. NOAA relies on state regulatory mechanisms to determine how existing uses will be managed within the buffer areas of the Reserve. When considering new activities and uses proposed within the Reserve boundary (combined core and buffer), NOAA will continue to rely on state regulatory mechanisms to ensure that the siting of new activities will not adversely affect the Reserve site. When considering the uses present at a proposed NERR site, those activities should be considered in light of future impacts and how potential changes to the environment could impact the Reserve site once designated.

Questions?

More FAQs and Responses can be found on the website in this document:

Designating a National Estuarine Research Reserve in Louisiana: Frequently Asked Questions

Site Selection Process: Definitions, Criteria, and Nomination Process

What questions do you have?

Summary of the LaNERR Town Halls for the Atchafalaya Estuarine Zone

February 2022

The Atchafalaya Estuarine Zone Proposal Team hosted three Town Halls as part of the Louisiana National Estuarine Research Reserve (LaNERR) Site Selection process.

- Wednesday, February 2 (12:00 – 2:00pm) Virtual Only
- Tuesday, February 8 (6:00 – 8:00pm) Virtual and In-Person at Morgan City Municipal Auditorium, 728 Myrtle St., Morgan City, LA
- Thursday, February 10 (6:00 – 8:00pm) Virtual and In-Person at Sliman Theatre for the Performing Arts, 129 E. Main St., New Iberia, LA

There were **92** virtual participants at the first Town Hall. The second Town Hall had **74** virtual participants and **135** in-person participants (per the sign-in sheet). The third Town Hall had **40** virtual participants and **8** in-person participants (per the sign-in sheet). Participants included local elected officials; city officials; members from local parish, state, and federal agencies; regional NERRs; non-governmental organizations, including economic development and technical training programs; academia; private sector; business owners; land owners; K-12 educators; local high school students; local media; and community members. Proposal team members, members of the Designation Leadership Team, and program management support staff also participated.

Each Town Hall began with a recorded presentation on the National Estuarine Research Reserve (NERR) System by Kristin Ransom of NOAA (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yhPBom-_6TE). This was followed by a recorded presentation on the Louisiana NERR (LaNERR) Process by Dr. Robert Twilley of Louisiana State University (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HtnY1AUHPrQ). Brian Roberts of LUMCON presented on behalf of the proposal team on the specifics of the proposed Atchafalaya Estuarine Zone site.

Links to the following documents were provided in the virtual Zoom chat, and print copies were available at the in-person meetings:

- Louisiana Sea Grant LaNERR website: https://www.laseagrant.org/deltanerr/
- LaNERR email: deltanerr@lsu.edu
- NERR/LaNERR factsheet: https://www.laseagrant.org/wp-content/uploads/LaNERR-Town-Hall-Intro.pdf
- NERR/LaNERR FAQs: https://www.laseagrant.org/wp-content/uploads/LaNERR-TownHall-FAQ.pdf
- Questionnaire: https://lsu.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_dmp13jzZEEJwQ3Y
- Atchafalaya NERR Town Hall presentation: https://www.laseagrant.org/wp-content/uploads/LaNERR-Atchafalaya-Town-Hall.pdf
- Atchafalaya NERR proposal factsheet: https://www.laseagrant.org/wp-content/uploads/LaNERR-Atchafalaya-Proposal-2pg.pdf

What follows is a topically organized summary of the public question and answer sessions from the three Atchafalaya Estuarine Zone Town Halls.

Multiple residents of the Morgan City area, St. Mary Parish, and surrounding areas **spoke in favor of having a NERR located in the Atchafalaya Estuarine Zone**, including the St. Mary Parish President, Mayor Pro Tempore of Berwick, LA, a Morgan City Councilman, a member of the St. Mary Parish Chamber of Commerce, members of local non-governmental organizations, including the Boy Scouts of America camp in Morgan City, K-12 educators, high school students, business owners, a land owner, and local community members. Reasons cited by participants for local interest in having a NERR located in the Atchafalaya Estuarine Zone included (but were not limited to): increased educational opportunities and access for K-12 students and others; increased tourism opportunities and potential economic benefits; ability to showcase the unique characteristics of an actively building river while also representing a range of habitats and natural resources including being the largest river swamp in the United States; enhanced connectivity to nation through the NERR network; enhanced ability to tell coastal Louisiana's cultural story of living with water on a national stage; additional opportunities for monitoring and research that can help provide insight for river sediment diversion projects; proximity to University of Louisiana at Lafayette, Louisiana State University, and Nicholls State University; potential attraction of scholars from a national and international stage; potential partnerships with existing groups such as the Atchafalaya Heritage Area, Boys Scouts of America, and the Cajun Coast Visitors & Convention Bureau.

Several participants asked **how local citizens, community groups, and businesses can get involved and show support for a NERR being located the Atchafalaya Estuarine Zone**. Members of the proposal team suggested submitting letters of support, because local support is an important component when NOAA decides whether to designate a particular site for a NERR; once a site is designated, there are numerous options for volunteering and getting involved. Several people noted that their letters of support have already been mailed to the Louisiana Governor's Office of Coastal Activities.

Participants asked about the **NERR site selection and designation process**, including whether the **management plan** would address issues in the Atchafalaya basin, such as sedimentation in waterways and other water quality concerns. A link to the NERR Designation Guidance book was provided (https://coast.noaa.gov/nerrs/about/designation-process.html), and team members explained the steps including where Louisiana is in the process. It was also noted that management plans do address the type of issues raised, but they focus the state's responsibilities over the next five years; basically, NERR management plans identify how issues are currently being managed. A link to existing management plans for other NERRs was provided (https://coast.noaa.gov/nerrs - click on a state to access their management plan). Last, team members noted that additional monitoring funded by a NERR may not resolve existing issues, but it can help bring new issues to light before it is too late to correct them.

Participants inquired about the **economic impacts** of having a NERR in the Atchafalaya Estuarine Zone, including whether local businesses (e.g., lumber yards, carpenters, electricians, etc.) would have an opportunity to bid on construction projects associated with NERR. Team members responded that the NERR facilities would be state facilities, so any contracting would be run through the state, although the point is well taken regarding consideration for local businesses. The team also noted that although it is hard to quantify exact economics, there are examples, such as the Mission-Aransas NERR in Texas (e.g., part of the NERR is on an active cattle ranch, which opened the opportunity to build bird blinds for birders; this has enhanced the number of visiting birders and thus benefited the local economy). An

article on the economic impact of several NERR sites, was provided (https://www.pewtrusts.org/en/research-and-analysis/articles/2021/06/11/national-estuary-system-helps-power-local-economies-study-finds).

There were questions regarding **how a NERR could benefit commercial fishermen,** ensure their way of life, and ensure the way they provide for their families is not disrupted. There was also a question about whether there has been **feedback from fishermen on the impacts of a NERR** over time. Team members noted that all land/water area in consideration is already state-owned and is already managed; therefore, a NERR would not add regulations or management but would utilize the management already in place. A NERR would add additional monitoring that could be beneficial to the fishing community, especially with local input from groups like the Atchafalaya River Basin Restoration & Enhancement Task Force. The team noted that there is a history of the fishing community and NERRs working together; there have been no major conflicts between commercial or recreational fishery groups and NERRs to date. An example of NERRs working with commercial and recreational fishers is in the Rookery Bay NERR in Florida where the groups worked together to identify juvenile habitats for important fisheries species so those areas could be monitored for water and habitat quality to help with fish recruitment. Another example is the Apalachicola Bay NERR in Florida where the NERR has been helpful to the fishing industry by way of additional monitoring that helps show changes in water quality.

Participants also had questions regarding how the **Atchafalaya Estuarine Zone compares to the other two zones being considered** in terms of habitats, wildlife, and amount of state-owned lands, as well as whether **sea level rise** and **road access** would be factored into making a decision between the three proposed sites. The team was also asked whether they thought it was possible to tell the story of **coastal Louisiana land loss** if the NERR is sited in the Atchafalaya area considering it has lower land loss rates compared to other areas. The proposal team responded in that they think the Atchafalaya Estuarine Zone is merited because it is the only proposed site that has a full suite of habitats from alluvial, to brackish/saline marsh, to cypress tupelo; they also noted that Atchafalaya is the only site with an actively growing river delta. Regarding site selection, the team noted that site selection criteria are set by NOAA for a NERR and are then customized for application to the state where the NERR is being considered. One criterion is related to access (e.g., can school kids visit the site in one day, are there opportunities for overnight stays, etc.?), with the understanding that some areas of a NERR may be more remote and only accessible by boat while other areas would be more readily accessible by road. Regarding sea level rise, compared to the rest of the NERR system, coastal Louisiana is experiencing drastic sea level rise, so any of the proposed sites in LA would experience effects of sea level rise; therefore, this will not likely be a deciding factor in site selection. Regarding telling the story of coastal Louisiana land loss, NERRS are built on partnerships, so unique questions and issues, even if they are in areas outside the original NERR boundary can be brought into consideration.

A question was asked to clarify the **spatial footprint of the proposed Atchafalaya NERR** as well as whether there are **other riverine floodplain sites in the NERR system.** The team noted that although other NERRs do have rivers and flood plains, none of them are of the spatial scale offered by Louisiana. It was also noted that the team has not yet selected specific areas for inclusion; the boundary of the proposed site is still in a draft phase.

Although **advertisement** for the LaNERR and the Atchafalaya Town Halls reached a wide audience in the St. Mary Parish area, it was noted that additional advertisement should be done further north in the Atchafalaya Basin.

Atchafalaya Town Hall #1

Wednesday, February 2 (12:00 – 2:00 pm)

Join this Webinar (virtual only)

Attendees

Proposal Team: Brian Roberts, LUMCON; Justin Lemoine, ANHA; James 'Jimmy' Nelson, ULL

Designation Leadership Team: Robert Twilley, LSU; Sandy Parfait, LSU; Kristin Ransom, NOAA; Julie Lively, LA Sea Grant; Not available: Jackson Martinez, GOCA

Royal Engineers & Consultants (LA Sea Grant Support): Alaina Grace, Mandy Green

Virtual attendees copied from Zoom Chat (affiliations noted if entered into the Zoom Chat):

- Amanda Voisin - Lafourche Parish Government
- Andy Nyman, LSU AgCenter
- Angelina Freeman, Louisiana Coastal Protection and Restoration Authority
- Avery Beck, Grand Bay NERR
- Brac Salyers, LA Dept of Wildlife & Fisheries, Inland Fisheries
- Brandon Ballengée, Atelier de la Nature & Tulane
- Brian Thorguson, Patterson State Bank, St. Mary Foundation
- Caitlin Turner, Department of Oceanography and Coastal Sciences, Louisiana State University
- Carol Lunn, University of New Orleans
- Catherine Holcomb St. Mary Excel
- Christine Henry
- Cindy Cutrera, Port of Morgan City
- Craig Colten LSU
- Dean Duplantis Hellenic LLC
- Denise Kinsey, LDWF Marine Fisheries
- Donna O'Kelley, community member
- Emily Maung-Douglass, Louisiana Sea Grant
- Greg Steyer, USGS
- Harvey Stern, Sierra Club
- Jennifer Cook, Louisiana Sea Grant
- Jenny Schexnayder, Nicholls State University
- Jim Pahl, CPRA
- Jimmy Broussard and David Naquin, St. Mary OHSEP
- Joselin Fernandez, Alberto Lasanta, Ian Oncale, Katherin Lopez - Seniors at Morgan City High School
- Kacie Wright, CWPPRA Outreach/USGS
- Kelly Boudreaux, St. Mary Excel & Business owner in Morgan City
- Kenny Ribbeck, LDWF Wildlife
- Kim Cressman, Grand Bay NERR in Mississippi. Hi neighbors!
- Kristi Butler LDWF Inland Fisheries
- Kristi Gay - MSU Coastal Conservation and Restoration

- Leslie Smith - Morgan City High School (English IV teacher)
- Maida Owens, LA Office of Cultural Development
- Margaret Theriot - St Mary Excel, business owner and parent
- Mary Jo Beadle St. Mary Excel Volunteer
- Melissa Daigle, Louisiana Sea Grant
- Mike Carloss, Ducks Unlimited
- Mitchell Hoffpauir, LDWF, Inland Fisherires
- Monica Mancuso, Retired Science Educator from St. Mary Parish, St. Mary Excel
- Niki Pace, Louisiana Sea Grant
- Paul Leberg, ULL
- R. Hampton Peele, Louisiana Geological Survey, LSU
- Ruby Maize-Excel
- Sara Krupa, LA DNR
- Scott Graham, Ducks Unlimited
- Scott Theriot local business owner
- Sharon McBreen, The Pew Charitable Trusts
- Skylar Liner, LSU/LUMCON
- Stephanie Archer, LUMCON
- Stephanie Plaisance, Caitlin Young, Abigail Davis, Allison Noble, LUMCON
- Stephen Swiber Diamond Services Corporation Morgan City
- Summer Langlois, CPRA
- Tasia Denapolis, Pontchartrain Conservancy
- Theryn Henkel - CPRA
- Todd Hubbell, CPRA
- Whitney Broussard, JESCO Environmental, Inc.
- Yvonne Allen USFWS

Atchafalaya Town Hall #1

Wednesday, February 2 (12:00 – 2:00 pm)

Join this Webinar (virtual only)

Each Town Hall began with a recorded presentation on the National Estuarine Research Reserve (NERR) System by Kristin Ransom of NOAA (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yhPBom-_6TE). This was followed by a recorded presentation on the Louisiana NERR (LaNERR) Process by Dr. Robert Twilley of Louisiana State University (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HtnY1AUHPrQ). Brian Roberts of LUMCON presented on behalf of the proposal team on the specifics of the proposed Atchafalaya Estuarine Zone site.

Links to the following documents were provided in the virtual Zoom chat, and print copies were available at the in-person meetings:

- Louisiana Sea Grant LaNERR website: https://www.laseagrant.org/deltanerr/
- LaNERR email: deltanerr@lsu.edu
- NERR/LaNERR factsheet: https://www.laseagrant.org/wp-content/uploads/LaNERR-Town-Hall-Intro.pdf
- NERR/LaNERR FAQs: https://www.laseagrant.org/wp-content/uploads/LaNERR-TownHall-FAQ.pdf
- Questionnaire: https://lsu.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_dmp13jzZEEJwQ3Y
- Atchafalaya NERR Town Hall presentation: https://www.laseagrant.org/wp-content/uploads/LaNERR-Atchafalaya-Town-Hall.pdf
- Atchafalaya NERR proposal factsheet: https://www.laseagrant.org/wp-content/uploads/LaNERR-Atchafalaya-Proposal-2pg.pdf

Public Questions and Comments

- We'd love to have more educational opportunities here for our students! Although we are surrounded by water, most of our students do not have access to the water - they don't have personal watercraft or live on the water.
- Today is World Wetlands Day. Can we hope the scheduling of today's Town Hall explain why the Atchafalaya Estuarine Zone is the best location for the LANERR. This is a symbolic endorsement for our zone being the best choice.
    - Answer - All three teams are doing their best to engage the public with the collective goal of getting a NERR established in LA, regardless of the location
    - Answer - The NERR Association (NERRA) is a national support for NERRS, and they often host special events on days like World Wetlands Day; once LA has a site, our NERR would have access to this group
    - Answer - NERRA is very active on social media and a great way to follow activities
- Is sea level rise a factor in site selection? Would it be good to select a site that would experience more flooding? Or would it better for the site to experience less?
    - Answer – Compared to the rest of the NERR system, LA is experiencing more drastic sea level rise, so any of the proposed sites in LA would experience effects of sea level rise.
- Dr Brian Roberts - can you post a link to your powerpoint
    - Answer – All slides will be posted on LA Sea Grant website

- Is road access important for the education function?
    - Answer – This is part of the evaluation of specific areas to include in the LaNERR; at this stage, the teams are not focused on facilities; boat launches, satellite facilities, etc. will all come into consideration, with the understanding that some areas of the LaNERR would be more remote and other areas would be more readily accessible; some areas may only be accessible by boat while others may be accessed by road.
- Are there other riverine floodplain sites in the NERR system?
    - Answer – other NERRs do have rivers and flood plains, but none of them are at the scale that we have in Louisiana; any of the three proposed sites would be a unique addition to the NERR system
- I can provide photos and links to drone footage of beneficial use of dredge material sites on the Atchafalaya River. Would that be helpful?
    - Answer – The more information proposal teams can gather, the better informed the teams will be, especially regarding all existing uses, as this can come into play when it is time to decide specific areas of land to include in the LaNERR
- When the Atchafalaya site is chosen, how can the locals get involved in continued support of the reserve itself?
    - Answer – That process starts now; proposal teams want to know what residents want to see in the LaNERR; this should be an ongoing dialog; interested land owners, business groups, individuals should get involved
    - Answer – Friends of the NERR groups have been highly supportive and helpful for other NERRS
    - Answer – Volunteer groups are also very important / helpful for NERRs; this is another way individuals or groups can get involved once a site is designated
    - Answer – Volunteering to assist with education opportunities is another way locals can get involved
- Can you clarify the spatial footprint of the proposed Atchafalaya NERR? You map suggested the basin and deltas, but also all of Vermilion Bay. So would the Teche-Vermilion watershed also be included?
    - Answer – At this point, the team has not selected specific areas for inclusion; at this time the team is only highlighting state / federal lands located within the overall estuarine zone; it should be noted that NERRs do not stay static over time; there is opportunity for NERRs to grow and add land over time
    - Answer – Teche-Vermillion inclusion is still open for discussion because of its uniqueness of being influenced by the Atchafalaya and also its own watershed stemming from the Lafayette area.
- I am excited about the K-12 educational opportunities that could take place within the largest wetland swamp in the U. S. Kristin, would the K-12 activities include K-12 boat excursions as many families lack personal watercraft excluding so many K-12 students to explore and learn in this natural outdoor classroom? Can you provide a couple of K-12 educational examples?
    - Answer – There is no limit to what can be done in terms of educational opportunities; the more partnerships and opportunities, the better!
    - Answer – Boat excursions are generally included (boat purchase and maintenance) used for educational opportunities to get kids out on the water
    - Answer – I am the Education Coordinator at the Grand Bay, NERR, MS (your neighbor one day!). One of my favorite things about the NERR Education system is that the sky is the limit! We are given the freedom to meet our community needs. We DO have an education vessel

that we take students out for programs. We also have a fleet of kayaks to take our older students out on the water. In Kristin's presentation, she mentioned our On the Road program where we bring our education programs into schools and then later bring the students out to the NERR for a field trip. We also do free, monthly community programs (which would be a whole other conversation ha)!
    - Answer – There is a benefit to coming into the NERR system later than many others; look to their lessons learned; although the sky is the limit, the budgets are not unlimited; we can look to other NERRs to see what worked / what didn't work
- How can the businesses in the area let you now they support the LANERR being located in our zone? What is the most convincing argument for the placement of the LANERR in this area?
    - Answer – We want to seek out private individuals and businesses; opportunities to include letters of support from community; non-committal at this point; reach out to Brian Roberts with letters of support; share the word about the search for a LaNERR with others to gather additional support
    - Answer – The most convincing argument is that Atchafalaya Basin is a mini-Louisiana with all habitats represented and it would fill a hole in the NERR system
- How would you be able to tell the story of LA land loss from and Atch Basin NERR given that areas of greatest loss are outside of the Atch Basin?
    - Answer – Good point, but land loss is still happening within the Atchafalaya Basin, especially within the estuarine bay area
    - Answer – NERRS are built on partnerships, so if there are specific questions or local issues, areas outside the original NERR boundary can be brought in
- Dr. Roberts, were you able to connect and receive the letters of support that were sent when hurricane Ida prevented postal service to you? Mr. Sutcliffe was receiving those during that time.
    - Answer – Yes, Charles Sutcliffe does have the letters; they will be provided to Brian for inclusion in their final proposal; final proposals will be due at the end of April, so all letters of support should be submitted before then. These are only letters of intent; they are not binding. Details would come later during MOUs
- Will the management plan address controversial issues in the Atchafalaya Basin such as sedimentation, management of water levels and water flow?
    - Answer – When the team goes through the EIS and the development of the Management Plan, all issues will have to be considered
    - Answer – Management Plans will address these issues, but they will be focused on what the state's responsibilities are over the next five years; basically, identify how the issues are currently being managed
    - Answer – This link will take you to the national NERRS site - click on any state that you'd like and it will take you to the page for that NERR site, where the management plan is linked. https://coast.noaa.gov/nerrs
- Isn't the Atchafalaya Delta's unique characteristic of being an actively building delta within the Mississippi system? Lots of Research and insight to be gained for sediment diversion projects in the delta and around the country.
    - Answer – Yes, this is a prograding delta; we have to maintain the navigation channel of the Atchafalaya River whereas this is not done in the Wax Lake Delta
- There will be two more in-person / hybrid Town Halls for the Atchafalaya region and Town Halls for the other two proposed locations; please spread the word about these so there can be as much community participation as possible
- Will hard copies of the survey be available next week?

    - Answer – Yes
- Can students complete the surveys?
    - Answer – Yes

Atchafalaya Town Hall #2

Tuesday, February 8 (6:00 – 8:00 pm)

Join this Webinar OR Join in-person at
Morgan City Municipal Auditorium – 728 Myrtle St. in Morgan City

Attendees

Proposal Team: Brian Roberts, LUMCON; James 'Jimmy' Nelson, ULL; Justin Lemoine, ANHA; Caroline Byrne, ANHA

Designation Leadership Team: Robert Twilley, LSU; Sandy Parfait, LSU; Kristin Ransom, NOAA; Maybe there in person (Julie Lively, LA Sea Grant; Jackson Martinez, GOCA)

Royal Engineers & Consultants (LA Sea Grant Support): Alaina Grace, Mandy Green, Kirk Rhinehart

General Participants: 74 (8 of whom are accounted for above) virtual participants; **135** in-person participants per the sign in sheets

Virtual participants (affiliations are noted if they were entered into Zoom Chat)

- Alana Aucoin
- Alice Pecoraro, St. Mary Excel
- Andrea Leonards
- Barry Dufrene
- Berwick High School
- Beth Bearb
- Bill Decker, Morgan City Review
- Brennan White, Berwick
- Brett White, Berwick, LA
- Brian Thorguson
- Carl Blum
- Carolina Bourque, LDWF
- Catherine Holcomb, St Mary Excel
- Charles Caillouet
- Charles Mayea
- Charlotte and Tommy Mahfouz
- Chase Cormier
- Christina Landry, Morgan City
- Christina Lange
- Christina Mancuso, Morgan City, LA
- Clarence Robinson
- Mike and Connie Francis, Berwick residents
- Damon Bergeron
- Darby Ratcliff, Berwick

- David Barousse
- David and Sadie Rankin, Morgan City, LA
- Dean A. Wilson, Atchafalaya Basinkeeper (enapay3@aol.com)
- Dean Duplantis Hellenic LLC
- Diane Lind
- Dru Hebert, Berwick and teacher at Central Catholic
- Dylan Vaughn
- Erik Lind
- Evan White, Berwick, LA
- Francis Chauvin
- Frank Jordan
- Grant White, Berwick High School
- Greig Chauvin
- Greg Linscombe
- Hannah Roy, City of Morgan City Grant Writer
- Henry LaGrange
- Jan LaRocca
- Jennifer Gerbasi, Terrebonne Parish Consolidated Government
- Jennifer Wise
- John Doucet, Nicholls State University
- Jun Xu, LSU
- Kimberly Vasquez, Berwick High School, Berwick
- Laura Meadows
- Leslie Kiyanfar
- Leslie Melancon
- Letty & Frederick Steckler, Patterson
- Lisa Parisola
- Lucien Cutrera, Baton Rouge
- Marcelle Hoskins
- Margaret Theriot, St. Mary Excel
- Marissa Brown
- Mark Shirley, LA Sea Grant Vermilion Parish
- Marty Floyd. La. Wildlife Federation
- Mary White, Berwick
- Michael Saunders
- Michelle Hoggatt
- Michelle Lewis
- Monica Fisher
- Monica Mancuso, St. Mary Excel
- Nancy Rabalais, Louisiana State Univ, Dept of Oceanography and Coastal Sciences
- Nick Loupe, Morgan City
- Paige Gisclair, Coastal Technical Assistance Center
- Rebecca and Dan Conrad, Morgan CIty

- Scott Theriot
- Stephanie Blanchard
- Stephanie Duhon
- Susan Giardina
- Thomas Mancuso, Morgan City
- Thy Bui
- Tim Matte, Morgan City
- Tommy Gegenheimer
- Victor Versaggi
- Wilma Subra

Please Print			Town Hall Meetings LaNERR SEARCH
Meeting Date: 2/8/22	Meeting Location: Morgan City		
Name	Organization/Company	EMAIL	TELEPHONE
Jimmie J Palmature		Palmature2001@gmail	985-312-7462
Donny Toups			985 255-1295
Tyler Besse	Tiger Ambassadors	tyler_besse96@student.stmarybks.net	9855193559
Justin Palmature		palmaturej@gmail.com	985-855-9628
John Burke	Capt. CAVIAR	JohnECAVIAR@AOL.COM	504 343 5232
LEE CONDOLLE	CITY OF PATTERSON (CITY COUNCIL)	LACONDOLLE@GMAIL.COM	985-714-3478
Duval ARTHUR	Town of Berwick	duval537@gmail.com	985-518-8882
Colleen ASKEW	Town of Berwick	Colleenaskew@yahoo.com	985-397-0793
Virgil Allen	Rig Museum	virgile rigmuseum.com	985-255-9642
Beth Chauvin	City of MC / Chamber	bethpaigedesigns@gmail.com	985-519-7932
Herman Martin	Retired Educator	hhar414@att.net	985-384-3095
Denise Bostic	Retired Educator	deniseambostic@yahoo	985-397-2782

Please Print			Town Hall Meetings
Meeting Date: 2/8/22	Meeting Location: Morgan City		
Name	Organization/Company	EMAIL	TELEPHONE
Rosalyn Conrad		theconrads@atvci.net	(985) 518-9316
Courtney Matherne		matherne13.cm@gmail.com	985-384-6447
Coral Marine	Joe & Gwen Cain	jcain@coralmarineservices.net	
Emily Loupe		e_czeck@yahoo.com	519-4452
Marcelle B. Hoskins	Marcelle B. Hoskins	Yvonne70380@yahoo	(985) 714-4858
Anthony Hoskins	Anthony Hoskins		
Karen Laughlin		klaughling@atvci.net	9855189461
Alison Wilson		aly_mitch@hotmail.com	985-518-3941
Vena, 'Bo' LaGrange	St. Mary Parish Govt.	blagrange@stmaryparish.gov	337-828-4100 x300
Stephen Snider	Diamond Services Corp	ssnider@tulane.edu	(985) 312-1002
Donald Turner	DONALD TURNER	DRT5040@yahoo	337-241-1100

Please Print			Town Hall Meetings LaNERR SEARCH
Meeting Date: 2/8/22	Meeting Location: Morgan City		
Name	Organization/Company	EMAIL	TELEPHONE
JEFFREY T MATHERNE	JTM COMPANIES	JMATHERNE@CLEANESTYARD.COM	985-384-6447
Heath Hoffpauir	heath@hankos.com	Hanko Boats	985-714-1706
Bonnie Duhon	w/St. Mary Council Dist 8	mduhawle@yahoo.com	985-397-3505
Edie Skiles	Resident - Berwick	ed5skiles1@gmail	985-518-7641
Brad Ratcliff	United Vision Log	BRAD.RATCLIFFE@UVLOGISTICS.CO	985 518 9308
Amanda Stephens	Morgan City		985-519-6406
Josh Alcina	Morgan City		985-518-2207
Dwayne Barbier	City of Morgan City	dw.barbier@cityofmc.com	985-380-4600
Lisa Durham		Ldurham17@gmail.com	9857143881
Dustin Breaux		DBR083@gmail.com	
Charlotte Wise	M.C.	wise5148@gmail.com	(985) 518-6473
Dr. C. Howard Wise	M.C.	" "	(985) 518-6472

Please Print			Town Hall Meetings 
Meeting Date: 2/8/22	Meeting Location: Morgan City		
Name	Organization/Company	EMAIL	TELEPHONE
AL ALBERT	Fisherman	mamagofast@Gmail.com	225-439-7568
GARY LAFLEUR	Nicholls Biology	gary.lafleur@nicholls.edu	985-414-0535
Donna O'Kelley	Morgan City Ass't	donnabrant2@hotmail.com	
Vere O'Kelley		Vere7777@gmail.com	442 5036
SHEILA HUE	SLCC-Young Memorial	sheila.hue@solacc.edu	380-2934
BART MANCUSO		BMANCUSO@ATVCI.NET	
Stephanie Lird	G & J	lird.stephanie@gmail.com	985-518-8790
Caroline Magee	Morgan City Supply	cmagee73@gmail.com	985-518-7945
BOBBY Rufree	F/BJ	BOBBY@YOURFARGO.com	985-312-1713
BRYCE MERRILL	MR. CHARLIE BIG	MERRILLDIVERMAN2@AOL.com	985-515-1000
Mary Tamporello		rella@atvci.net	985-518-5920
Ken Conrad	Johnny's Propeller	kconrad@johnnys-propeller.com	985-397-0748

Please Print			Town Hall Meetings
Meeting Date: 2/8/22	Meeting Location: Morgan City		
Name	Organization/Company	EMAIL	TELEPHONE
Margaret Theriot	St. Mary EXCEL	franchisefitness18@gmail.	985.714.4890
Monica Mancuso	"	monicamancuso12@gmail	985-518-2009
Mary & AJ Wanous		wanous@bellsouth.net	985-518-6492
Dani DiIullo	Louisiana Sea Grant	ddiiullo@lsu.edu	225.578.6442
Seth Blitch	The Nature Conservancy	sblitch@tnc.org	850.653.5757
Christina Williams	MCHS	christinaamira22@g..	985-518-3110
Ruby Maize	EXCEL	rubymaizeagmail	985-498-0420
Brant Dozier	MC Rentals	bdozier@teche.net	985-397-1524
Julie Lirette	Fishermen	julieg.r48@gmail.com	985-312-6338
Calvin Cognevich		cal.cogne@yahoo.com	985.385.2307
Don Hicks		road2vard@hotmail.com	985-498-0140
Cassie Adams	SLCC	Cassie.adams@slcc.edu	985 518-4494
Gwen Hidalgo	St. Mary Parish Council	ghidalgo@cox.net	985-518-8173

Please Print			Town Hall Meetings
Meeting Date: 2/8/22	Meeting Location: Morgan City		
Name	Organization/Company	EMAIL	TELEPHONE
Brian Eiserman Jr.	The Mkt	BrianEisermanJr@gmail.com	337-523-9689.
John Price		jdprice17@yahoo.com	985-518-9359
Lou Tamporello	City of Morgan City	rella@atvci.net	985-518-5576
Jennifer Dragna	Jennifer Dragna	jdragna@gmail.com	985-518-4696
[illegible]	City of M.C.	lieutenant9a@yahoo.com	985-519-4433
Leslie Smith	morgan city	lsmith@stmaryk12.net	(985) 791-7191
Lisa Guillory	Whitco	lisag@whitcosupply.com	985-518-0487
Mary Revels	MC	MARYRevels68@gmail.com	985-519-4676
EDITH HOVER	CITIZEN	edie@teche.net	985-384-4332
RYAN VACCARELLA	ConocoPhillips	ryan.p.vaccarella@cop.com	985-217-7594
C. FLOYD CLOUTIER	NA	CFCLOUT@GMAIL.COM	985.518-8845
Cindy Cutrera	Port of Morgan City	cindy@portofmc.com	985 384 0850
Tori Henry	" " "	tori@portofmc.com	" " "

Please Print			Town Hall Meetings
Meeting Date: 2/8/22	Meeting Location: Morgan City		
Name	Organization/Company	EMAIL	TELEPHONE
Tammie Moore	SLCC/St Mary School Board/Chamber	tammie.moore@solacc.edu	(337)578-7830
Charlotte Rateliff	St. Martin Parish Rep	cblratcliff@gmail	985-518-9308
Sidney Ray	CC's Coffee	hickey1210@bellsouth	985 397-3008
Scott Melancon	First National Bank	on file	9855184633
NEAL MAYON		nsmayon@gmail.com	—
GLEN HIDALGO	—	ghidalgo@cox.net	985-518-4757
Greg Green			985-397-2163
MARK DUHON	St Mary Parish Council/CDBG	mduhon1@yahoo.com	985.397.2520
Kermit Duck		kermitpduck@yahoo.com	985-519-1618
Deborah Price	The Frame Shop	deborah@frameshopinc.com	985-385-0730

Please Print			Town Hall Meetings
Meeting Date: 2/8/22	Meeting Location: Morgan City		
Name	Organization/Company	EMAIL	TELEPHONE
Catherine Holcomb	St. Mary Excel	catherinepholcomb@att.net	985-518-6698
Kelly Boudreaux	St. Mary Excel	kellylindboudreaux@gmail.com	9854481700
Woodrow Parker	Agua Safety First Community Program	AguaSafetyone@gmail.com	504.617.5881
Grace Eisenman	The Market	Southerng95@gmail	985-518-4603
Charlene McGimsey		dhanagriff@stmaryparishla.gov	985-518-7225
David Hanagriff	St. Mary Parish Pres	davidh@cox-internet.com	337-201-0402
Julie Lively	LA Sea Grant	julieann@lsu.edu	225-578-2433
Carrie Stansbury	Cajun Coast VCB	cstansbury@cajuncoast.com	985-380-8224
Tom Wheatley	The Pew Charitable Trusts	twheatley@pewtrusts.org	513-382-0113
Donovan Garcia	Friends of Bayou Teche Refuge	needtopaddle@yahoo.com	337-923-9718
Councilman Ron Bias	Dist. #3 M.C. La.	ron1009@bellsouth.net	985-518-9512
Laura Dozar	Citizen	bdozar@teche.net	985-518-7406
Judy Hidalgo	Citizen	judyh1@[illegible]	985-518-6167

Please Print			Town Hall Meetings
Meeting Date: 2/8/22	Meeting Location: Morgan City		
Name	Organization/Company	EMAIL	TELEPHONE
DEAN ADAMS	St MARY Council	adamsdean13@gmail.com	(985) 518-5227
Mark Stephens	City Council	@gmail.com morgancity0630	985 518 9306
PAT SY METZ		PSMETZ2@COX.NET	985-518-3409
Cyrus Provost	Retired	Prospect	985-384-2928
Thu Bui	LSU AgCenter / LA Sea Grant	tbui@agcenter.lsu.edu	337-251-6662
STEVE DOMANGUE	CITY COUNCIL	STEVED@CAMNATAS.COM	985-518-4814
Michelle Penning	Citizen	m_leleux@yahoo.com	985-312-9191
Barbara Leleux	Educator	bleleux@yahoo.com	985-712-2972
Eric Stone	Commercial fisherman	EricStone81@gmail.com	985-518-2551
Chris Chauvin	Commercial fisherman	Chauvinboy1996@gmail.com	985-992-6969
Serena Garrett	B&B food	sgarrett@bbgfood.com	985-518-3513
Michael Knoblach	Port of Morgan City	michaelkeportofmorgan	985-384-0850
Scott Green	Scott Green Properties	Scott@datsauce.com	985 714-2505

Please Print			Town Hall Meetings LaNERR SEARCH
Meeting Date: 2/8/22	Meeting Location: Morgan City		
Name	Organization/Company	EMAIL	TELEPHONE
Evan Boudreaux	St Mary Econ. Dev.	eboudreaux@stmaryparishla.gov	(985) 498-1627
DAN DUPLANTIS	Boy Scouts of America	dan@greenwoodmarine.com	985-518-7486
Beau Bourgeois	LSU AgCenter	Dbourgeois@agcenter.lsu.edu	(225) 614-5949
Tim Hymel	City of MC - council	hymelsemail@gmail.com	985-312 4698
Lettia Griffin	Angels Notary	griffinlettia@gmail.com	985 518-1946
Jerry Mayon	Con Fishing	jerry-mayon@yahoo.com	985-518-5305
Kristi Prejeant Rink	St Mary Parish Council	kprejeant@morganitysurgical.com	985-714-1330
Craig Rink		craig@centaurllc.com	504-270-7166
Tracey Scarbrough	EJ Fields Machine	trscarbrough@fieldsmachine.com	985-518-2380
Ludi Henry	Town of Berwick	ludhenry@gmail.com	985-518-0937
Christine Henry		ludhenry@gmail.com	985-518-0707
Mauel Garcia			(985) 519-1214
Sarah Herrera	Alto School of Dance	Sarah.Altoschoolofdance@gmail.com	985-255-6121

Atchafalaya Town Hall #2

Tuesday, February 8 (6:00 – 8:00 pm)

Join this Webinar OR Join in-person at
Morgan City Municipal Auditorium – 728 Myrtle St. in Morgan City

Each Town Hall began with a recorded presentation on the National Estuarine Research Reserve (NERR) System by Kristin Ransom of NOAA (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yhPBom-_6TE). This was followed by a recorded presentation on the Louisiana NERR (LaNERR) Process by Dr. Robert Twilley of Louisiana State University (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HtnY1AUHPrQ). Brian Roberts of LUMCON presented on behalf of the proposal team on the specifics of the proposed Atchafalaya Estuarine Zone site.

Links to the following documents were provided in the virtual Zoom chat, and print copies were available at the in-person meetings:

- Louisiana Sea Grant LaNERR website: https://www.laseagrant.org/deltanerr/
- LaNERR email: deltanerr@lsu.edu
- NERR/LaNERR factsheet: https://www.laseagrant.org/wp-content/uploads/LaNERR-Town-Hall-Intro.pdf
- NERR/LaNERR FAQs: https://www.laseagrant.org/wp-content/uploads/LaNERR-TownHall-FAQ.pdf
- Questionnaire: https://lsu.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_dmp13jzZEEJwQ3Y
- Atchafalaya NERR Town Hall presentation: https://www.laseagrant.org/wp-content/uploads/LaNERR-Atchafalaya-Town-Hall.pdf
- Atchafalaya NERR proposal factsheet: https://www.laseagrant.org/wp-content/uploads/LaNERR-Atchafalaya-Proposal-2pg.pdf

Public Questions and Comments

- St. Mary Parish President – This area is in the center of NSU, LSU, ULL, etc. It is a great place to have a NERR. St Mary Parish is critical and we want students to come here. We are right next to the Gulf. We are within minutes to get students out there. There is full support from St Mary Parish government; we are fishermen, shrimpers, oystermen, and we want the NERR here.
    - Audience applause
    - Answer – Public / local support is critical to selecting a location for a NERR; he urged audience members to complete the questionnaire and/or submit a letter of support
    - Answer – This stage is not about commitment, but more about whether there is local support for having a NERR in this area and why the community wants a NERR
    - Answer – St. Mary Parish not just M.C.
- How many people are in the Morgan City audience tonight?
    - Answer – About 130
- President of St. Mary Excel – According to scientists who have examined proposals, Atchafalaya was highest scoring zone. This zone is microcosm of LA. It represents all of habitats. Residents also represent a microcosm of Louisiana. Jumbo shrimp capital, families supported themselves from waterways; legacy oil and gas community serving the entire state; challenged by flooding including Hurricane Andrew, raised levees to protect against 100-year event; largest river swamp in US;

numerous proposals for projects in Morgan City/Atchafalaya; educational ferrys to get students into the basin and delta; trails to connect citizens to waterways; Atchafalaya Heritage Area; altogether, these would support a NERR in this area. We want to tell the story of the resilient Atchafalaya region.
    - Audience applause
- Executive Director at Cajun Coast Visitors & Convention Bureau – The coast is important to our identity; we are ecofriendly; we host the Eagle Expo; we go to high schools and homeschooled kids (1200 students/year); we think a NERR is very important to our mission; we are connected with the BTNEP, several others environmental groups; we have a welcome center on Hwy 90; we want the NERR to be located here; we have been great partners to many others, and we think we could be a great partner to a NERR
    - Audience applause
    - Answer – This proposal team will be presenting at the Eagle Expo - please spread the word to increase attendance
- Mayor pro-tem Berwick – We sent a letter of support to Gov Edwards; we learn from the coast; we are close to the coast; we have vital research opportunities and access; we are the only active delta in the entire NERR network; could use current monitoring activities in fresh, floating, brackish, and salt marsh; would attract scholars from a national and international stage; connectivity to nation; and a NERR would add money to our local economy; would enhance education opportunities for schools, and could shape decisions about where young locals decide where to live and learn in the future; officially support having a NERR in this area
    - Audience applause
- Increase quality of life, excited about economic increase, increase in visitors, new hands-on learning opportunities, program additions and course offerings, enhance SLCC biology degree, speaks to heart of culture and region, who would not want to enhance our opportunities to enhance research and access, we are centered here at the gateway to the gulf
    - Audience applause
- Morgan City(?) Councilman – We have everything to offer that you talked about in terms of meeting the mission of a NERR; we support the project; the mayor was unable to attend tonight, but he is on the same page
    - Audience applause
- There is cultural diversity in high schools; not much that links students together, except so many are born and raised here; there are cultural stories that they can tell themselves, others, and the nation; we are close to Nicholls State University; a lot of local students go there for financial reasons but they rarely think about marine biology; we have lots of boat docks, but most students do not have access to the natural resources unless their family provides it; a NERR can provide access to help them see these options; if these young kids have experience learning about the coast, they may choose to stay here and raise their families here; we need a NERR here.
- Even though she/her family have a camp, she would like to include education element in her children's lives; would like her kids to stay local
- Morgan City HS Senior read a letter of support that her class wrote to Governor JB Edwards
- There are lots of resources in the basin; in support of a NERR (member of St. Mary Parish Chamber of Commerce, business owner, and land owner)
- Swamp tour captain - uses Atchafalaya Basin as his office to educate people from all over the world; What is the economic impact of having a NERR here?
    - Answer – It's hard to quantify exact economics; direct (people coming to an area and staying there) and other indirect economic benefits

    - Answer – We have really great examples, e.g., Mission-Aransas NERR in TX; part of it is on an active cattle ranch; agreed to have the ranch as part of the NERR through the MOU; able to build bird blinds for birders; local economy gets more money from the birders visiting the ranch than from many other activities on that land
    - Answer – For those that are interested, here is an article on the economic impact of several NERR sites, one in the Gulf coast of Florida https://www.pewtrusts.org/en/research-and-analysis/articles/2021/06/11/national-estuary-system-helps-power-local-economies-study-finds
- What's the logistics of getting people to the bird blinds? There are few roads to get people to many places within the Atchafalaya Basin? Does a NERR come with brick and mortar (like boats, boat launches, roads, etc.)?
    - Answer – NERRS do come with facilities to enhance access
- People fly thousands of miles to visit the Atchafalaya; no other part of Louisiana has what the Atchafalaya Basin has in terms of natural resources
- How would the NERR benefit the commercial fisherman and ensure our way of life and the way we provide for our families?
    - Answer – Good question; there are a lot of ways a NERR can help; there is a monitoring program that is part of it, tied into a national monitoring system but customized locally, could be real time data that fishermen can use; the team is still trying to figure out how best to organize a NERR if it is in Atchafalaya
    - Answer – Quick answer is that everything a NERR does should be useful to you; everything a NERR does is with guidance from the local community to ensure what needs to be monitored actually gets monitored; need local input to customize this; not only what gets monitored but where the monitoring is
    - Answer – Another example of working with commercial and recreational fishers. We have worked directly with commercial fishers in the Rookery Bay NERR to identify juvenile habitats for important fisheries species so those areas where monitored for water and habitat quality to help fish recruit to the fishery
- Areas within the river would be ideal for the headquarters / facilities; people in this area have been associated with water for thousands of years; Morgan City is known for oil and gas, shrimping; a NERR would do nothing but help continue connecting people to the water
- Boy Scouts of America camp in Morgan City supports the effort
- Will local lumber yards, carpenters, electricians, etc. have an opportunity to bid on construction projects associated with NERR?
    - Answer – It will be a state facility, so contracting will be run through the state; point is well taken
- Shared story of friends from Maine who visited Morgan City and had many questions and were intrigued by the landscape; thinks this is a great area for a NERR because of the uniqueness of the landscape
- How could a NERR assist with water quality concerns?
    - Answer – It is difficult to correct water quality issues once they are very bad; can use NERR monitoring network to try and reverse issues as they arise; no direct funding to change water delivery; NERR funds are used to study/research; cooperation with other partners may be useful to raise issues to the proper entities that could address the issues
    - Answer – Even if a NERR itself cannot solve problems, the monitoring can help bring these issues to light

    - Answer – NERR monitoring can help understand how the system works and highlight issues before they become too bad to correct
    - Answer – State agencies and others can use the monitoring data from a NERR to analyze data and then help correct problems
- I am a life-long resident of Morgan City; we passionately want the NERR in Morgan City / St. Mary Parish
- What else do community/business owners need to do to show support for the NERR?
    - Answer – Letters of support, distribution of flyers, get the word out to others who are interested, send questions to deltanerr@lsu.edu or to Brian's email

Atchafalaya Town Hall #3

Thursday, February 10 (6:00 – 8:00 pm)

Join this Webinar OR Join in-person at
Sliman Theatre for the Performing Arts – 129 E. Main St. in New Iberia

Attendees

Proposal Team: Brian Roberts, LUMCON; Justin Lemoine, ANHA; Caroline Byrne, ANHA; Maybe in person (James 'Jimmy' Nelson, ULL)

Designation Leadership Team: Robert Twilley, LSU; Sandy Parfait, LSU; Kristin Ransom, NOAA; Julie Lively, LA Sea Grant; Maybe in person (Jackson Martinez, GOCA)

Royal Engineers & Consultants (LA Sea Grant Support): Alaina Grace, Mandy Green

General Participants: 40 virtual participants (9 accounted for above); **8** in-person participants per the sign in sheet

Virtual attendees (affiliations noted if they were entered into the Zoom Chat)

- Abigail Watson
- Andrew Whitehurst, Healthy Gulf, Water Program Dir.
- Anne Dugas
- Bart Mancuso, Morgan City
- Becky Allee
- Berwick High School
- Brett White, Berwick, LA
- Caitlin Young
- Catherine Holcomb, St. Mary Excel
- Christina Lange
- Christina Mancuso, Morgan City
- Cyrus Provost, Morgan City, LA
- David John
- Evan Boudreaux
- Evan White, Berwick
- Frances Chauvin
- Gina Sanford
- Grant White, Berwick High School
- Honora Buras
- Jennifer Cumbest
- Judith Weber
- Julie Whitbeck
- Laci Melancon, Coastal Technical Assistance Center

- Lou Tamporello
- Mark Shirley
- Mary White, Berwick
- Melissa Parsiola
- Micah Allen
- Mikah Ortiz, Berkwick High School
- ML Mancuso
- Monica Mancuso, St. Mary Excel
- Nancy Pendas
- Rebecca Triche, Louisiana Wildlife Federation
- Thu Bui
- Tommy Gegenheimer
- Wilma Subra
- Caller 1985****355
- Caller 1337****994

Please Print			Town Hall Meetings 
Meeting Date: 2/10/22	Meeting Location: New Iberia		
Name	Organization/Company	EMAIL	TELEPHONE
Herbert Leavitt		herbert.leavitt@louisiana.edu	617 455 2530

Please Print			Town Hall Meetings
Meeting Date: 2/10/22	Meeting Location: New Iberia		
Name	Organization/Company	EMAIL	TELEPHONE
[illegible]			345 4130
Everett Craddock			4
Paul Sylvester			
Justin Palmature		palmaturej@gmail.com	(985)855-9628
Jessica Palmature		jfisherpalmature@gmail.com	(985)232-1007
Jackson Martinez		Jackson.martinez@La.gov	832-797-2768
G.D Sagrera			337-364-8196

LaNERR SEARCH

Atchafalaya Town Hall #3

Thursday, February 10 (6:00 – 8:00 pm)

Join this Webinar OR Join in-person at
Sliman Theatre for the Performing Arts – 129 E. Main St. in New Iberia

Each Town Hall began with a recorded presentation on the National Estuarine Research Reserve (NERR) System by Kristin Ransom of NOAA (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yhPBom-_6TE). This was followed by a recorded presentation on the Louisiana NERR (LaNERR) Process by Dr. Robert Twilley of Louisiana State University (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HtnY1AUHPrQ). Brian Roberts of LUMCON presented on behalf of the proposal team on the specifics of the proposed Atchafalaya Estuarine Zone site.

Links to the following documents were provided in the virtual Zoom chat, and print copies were available at the in-person meetings:

- Louisiana Sea Grant LaNERR website: https://www.laseagrant.org/deltanerr/
- LaNERR email: deltanerr@lsu.edu
- NERR/LaNERR factsheet: https://www.laseagrant.org/wp-content/uploads/LaNERR-Town-Hall-Intro.pdf
- NERR/LaNERR FAQs: https://www.laseagrant.org/wp-content/uploads/LaNERR-TownHall-FAQ.pdf
- Questionnaire: https://lsu.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_dmp13jzZEEJwQ3Y
- Atchafalaya NERR Town Hall presentation: https://www.laseagrant.org/wp-content/uploads/LaNERR-Atchafalaya-Town-Hall.pdf
- Atchafalaya NERR proposal factsheet: https://www.laseagrant.org/wp-content/uploads/LaNERR-Atchafalaya-Proposal-2pg.pdf

Public Questions and Comments

- Is the NERR Designation Guidance book easy to find. It was depicted in one of the slides earlier.
    - Answer – Here is also a link to the NOAA site describing the process. https://coast.noaa.gov/nerrs/about/designation-process.html
- Advertisement for the NERR process should be done further up in the basin.
    - Answer – Appreciates this being brought up; it shows that additional advertisement needs to be done further north in the basin for future public meetings; anything the audience can do to help spread the word locally would be great
- How does the Atchafalaya basin compare to the other basins being considered in terms of habitats, wildlife, state lands?
    - Answer – No other basin has the full suite of habitats from alluvial to cypress tupelo, to delta and state lands along that full suite; growing land; brackish/saline marsh; LA black bear habitat is specific to the Atchafalaya Basin
    - Answer – There are criteria set by NOAA for a NERR, and these are customized for different areas of the country, including the criteria that will be applied here in Louisiana. One unique aspect of the Atchafalaya is that we are the only area in Louisiana with an actively growing delta

- How many people are in the room in New Iberia. This can just be typed in if you don't want to read the question.
    - Answer – Twelve(ish) - this shows we didn't do enough advertisement in this region, and we will work on this; if the audience can give advice on who else to reach out to in this region, the proposal team would appreciate it
- I think you just answered this question but Dr. Roberts, you've actually worked at other NERRs. Can you tell us, through your experience, why this Atchafalaya Zone stands out as the optimal geographic location out of all of the Delta biographic regions? What new scientific knowledge will we gain —that we can't get from any other location? I think Dr. Roberts is trying to answer the question, but I'm curious what his opinion based on having worked at other NERRS? * what is his opinion based on having worked at other NERRS? And Morgan City High School Students have already designed and are getting ready to print their t-shirts—Put the LANERR here! (In the Atchafalaya Zone).
    - Answer – Regarding working with different NERRs, you get the see the standardization of the monitoring across sites; there is nothing comparable to the MS Riv in any other NERR in the country; this is the largest river delta in the US; Atchafalaya is a smaller version of the MS River, and then we also have the Wax Lake Delta
- Inaudible question regarding the NERR process
    - Answer – Draft proposals will be submitted next month; feedback on proposals from Executive Committee; Executive Committee will make recommendation to Governor; Governor will send nomination request to NOAA
    - Answer – We need local support for a specific area to be selected and nominated; the community needs to want a NERR in their area for that area to get selected; there are three presentations per each of the three site proposal teams, and due to geographic extent of Atchafalaya Basin, the team has tried to spread out in-person Town Halls in Morgan City and New Iberia with a virtual-only option
- Inaudible question
    - Answer – Our state has a great monitoring network, but there are areas where commercial fisheries can benefit from additional monitoring; there are commercial fishery groups that are part of the Atchafalaya Task Force, so we are getting their input too
- Very informative presentation! It illustrates this team's preparation and partnership building. Thank you.
- In other states, has there been feedback from fishermen on impacts of NERR over time?
    - Answer – The fishing industry has been part of many NERRS and few to no issues that have occurred between the fishing industry and the NERR; Apalachicola Bay NERR has been a big help to the fishing industry by way of additional monitoring that helps show changes in water quality
    - Answer – NERRs are on the coast, which is also where commercial fishing occurs, so if there were major conflicts, they would be known. We don't hear about that, because NERRs don't impose new regulations beyond how the land/waters are already being managed
    - Answer – All state-owned land in LA are already managed by LDWF; a NERR would not add a layer of regulations / management, it would utilize the management already in place; a NERR would add additional monitoring that could be beneficial to all
- Do we have any how many Louisiana students that live within a 1 hour drive of the MS LANERR actually use the MS reserve? How Many Louisiana students use the MS reserve?
    - Answer – That is hard to quantify; Kristin Ransom has examples of usage of other NERRs; they do not capture what state someone has traveled from; what is in our presentation is an

estimate of the number of students within driving distance of the Atchafalaya Basin; next step is to figure out how to harness advertisement to enhance access and people visiting the NERR
    - Answer – Less than 5% of students visiting Grand Bay NERR are from LA (from 2019 to present)
- When you go up in the watershed, are we losing/gaining land?
    - Answer – Land is "moving" in the basin. Areas that appear to be land in maps may be water and vice versa. No/minimal net change in land/water in the upper parts of the floodplain; opening Morganza spillway has and can bring in a lot of water and sediment during high river flood years
- Issues with sedimentation in the channels (river) in the basin
    - Answer – This is not unique to Atchafalaya. In a lot of the coast, water levels are driven as much by wind as by tides.
- Excellent information - thank-you!

Locating a Louisiana National Estuarine Research Reserve: Barataria Basin

Andy Nyman
School of Renewable Natural Resources
LSU and the LSU AgCenter

jnyman@lsu.edu
For more information please go to www.laseagrant.org/deltanerr

7 February 2022

BARATARIA BASIN NERR TEAM

- Andy Nyman, LSU AgCenter and LSU
- Tracy Quirk, Louisiana State University
- Julie Whitbeck, National Park Service
- Albert “Rusty” Gaude, Louisiana Sea Grant, LSU AgCenter
- Quenton Fontentot, Nichols State University
- Simone Maloz, Nichols State University
- Carol Wilson, Louisiana State University
- Dominique Seibert, LSU AgCenter
- Donata Henry, Tulane University

What would a NERR in Louisiana do that is not already being done?

- Research and Monitoring: focus on a portion of the coast
- Education and Outreach: focus on a portion of the coast

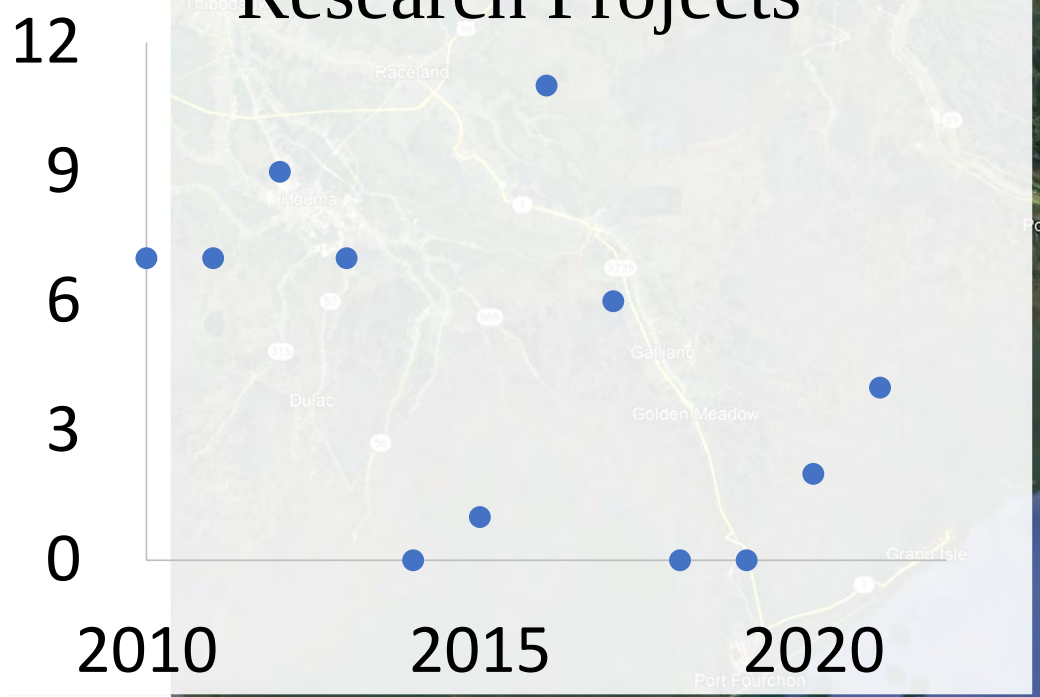
Applied research and monitoring within the reserve boundaries...

- The Science Collaborative is a competitive grant program for NOAA-funded research in the nationwide NEER system (average of $3 million/year).

Applied research within the reserve boundaries...

- The Science Collaborative is a competitive grant program for NOAA-funded research in the nationwide NEER system (average of $3 million/year).

Research Projects



Key Words

Fish	21
Marsh	16
Wetland	13
Oysters	12
Human	11
Crabs	1
Shrimp	1
Waterfowl	1
Birds	1

Balancing Freshwater Needs in Texas' Changing Climate

Project Type:
Collaborative Research

Focus Area(s):
Climate Change, Water Quality

Keyword(s):
freshwater, salinity, drought, crab

Reserve(s):
Mission Aransas, TX

Project Duration:
November 2011 to June 2015

Grant Amount:
$757,105.00

Project Leads:

- Ed Buskey, Mission-Aransas NERR, ed.buskey@utexas.edu
- Sally Morehead Palmer, Mission-Aransas NERR

Healthy estuaries are vital to the economy of the Texas central coast, supporting the region's multibillion-dollar fishing industry and growing tourist trade. Adequate supplies of freshwater are key to the productivity of these estuaries. However, as the regional population grew and the recent drought deepened, estuaries were receiving less freshwater.

In response to this challenge, the Mission-Aransas Reserve worked with a multidisciplinary team to develop science-based, stakeholder-informed recommendations to support freshwater inflows to maintain healthy estuaries in this region, while balancing other competing needs for freshwater.

Project Overview (PDF)

Project Products

Tools

- Blue Crab Simulation Model for Aransas and Copano

Multimedia

- Collaborative Approach to Research: Balancing

Evaluating Whether Oyster Aquaculture Can Help Restore Water Quality

Project Type:
Collaborative Research

Focus Area(s):
Ecosystem Service Valuation, Water Quality

Keyword(s):
oyster, aquaculture, nitrogen, nutrient pollution

Reserve(s):
Waquoit Bay, MA

Project Duration:
November 2017 to December 2020

Grant Amount:
$500,000.00

Project Leads:

- Daniel Rogers, Stonehill College, drogers2@stonehill.edu
- Tonna-Marie Surgeon-Rogers, Waquoit Bay NERR, tonna-marie.surgeon-rogers@state.ma.us
- Ginny Edgcomb, Woods Hole Oceanographic Institute

Project Record in National Catalog:
NOAA InPort Database

Project Website:
WBNERR Oyster Aquaculture

This project addressed a critical information gap identified by water quality managers and regulators, specifically: how much nitrogen is removed from coastal waters by common oyster aquaculture methods, and what culturing practices should be adopted to maximize benefits for water quality? To address this question, researchers worked closely with the Town of Falmouth to establish an experiment that mimicked commercial aquaculture practices and allowed for a robust comparison of nitrogen removal rates from three oyster growing systems. They found that all three oyster culturing methods stimulated natural microbial processes that remove nitrogen, which can measurably improve water quality. Project findings have been shared through innovative products to help new growers adopt best practices and allow towns and regulators to decide when shellfish aquaculture is a viable strategy for improving coastal water quality.

A Future for Oysters Along the Pacific

Project Type:
Collaborative Research

Focus Area(s):
Habitat Restoration

Keyword(s):
oyster, restoration, decision making

Reserve(s):
Elkhorn Slough, CA, San Francisco Bay, CA

Project Duration:
November 2011 to May 2015

Grant Amount:
$908,006.00

Project Leads:

- Matt Ferner, San Francisco Bay NERR, mferner@sfsu.edu
- Kerstin Wasson, Elkhorn Slough NERR, kerstin.wasson@gmail.com

Project Website:
San Francisco Bay Subtidal Habitat Goals Project

Oysters are the tiny superheroes of coastal environments. They enhance water quality, create habitat, and protect shorelines from storms and erosion. Along the Pacific Coast, native oysters are in decline, due in part to sedimentation, inadequate protection, and unsustainable harvests. Planning for a future that includes healthy native oyster populations depends on our ability to select sites for restoration that not only account for these challenges but also the impacts of a changing climate.

A team led by the Elkhorn Slough and San Francisco Bay Reserves helped to meet this need by developing science-based planning tools that decision-makers along the Pacific Coast can use to select local "sweet spots" for restoration in which oysters can thrive under current and future conditions.

Project Overview (PDF)

Project Products

Tools

- DIY Site Evaluation Tool for Olympia Oyster Restoration

Reports

- A Guide to Olympia Oyster Restoration and Conservation in Central California
- Kachemak Bay Research Reserve Oyster Population Resiliency: Situation Assessment Report
- A Guide to Olympia Oyster Restoration and Conservation

Understanding the Role Coastal Marshes Play in Protecting Communities from Storm Surge and Flooding

Project Type:
Collaborative Research

Focus Area(s):
Climate Change, Ecosystem Service Valuation

Keyword(s):
storm surge, flooding, resilience, wetland resilience, modeling

Reserve(s):
Hudson River, NY

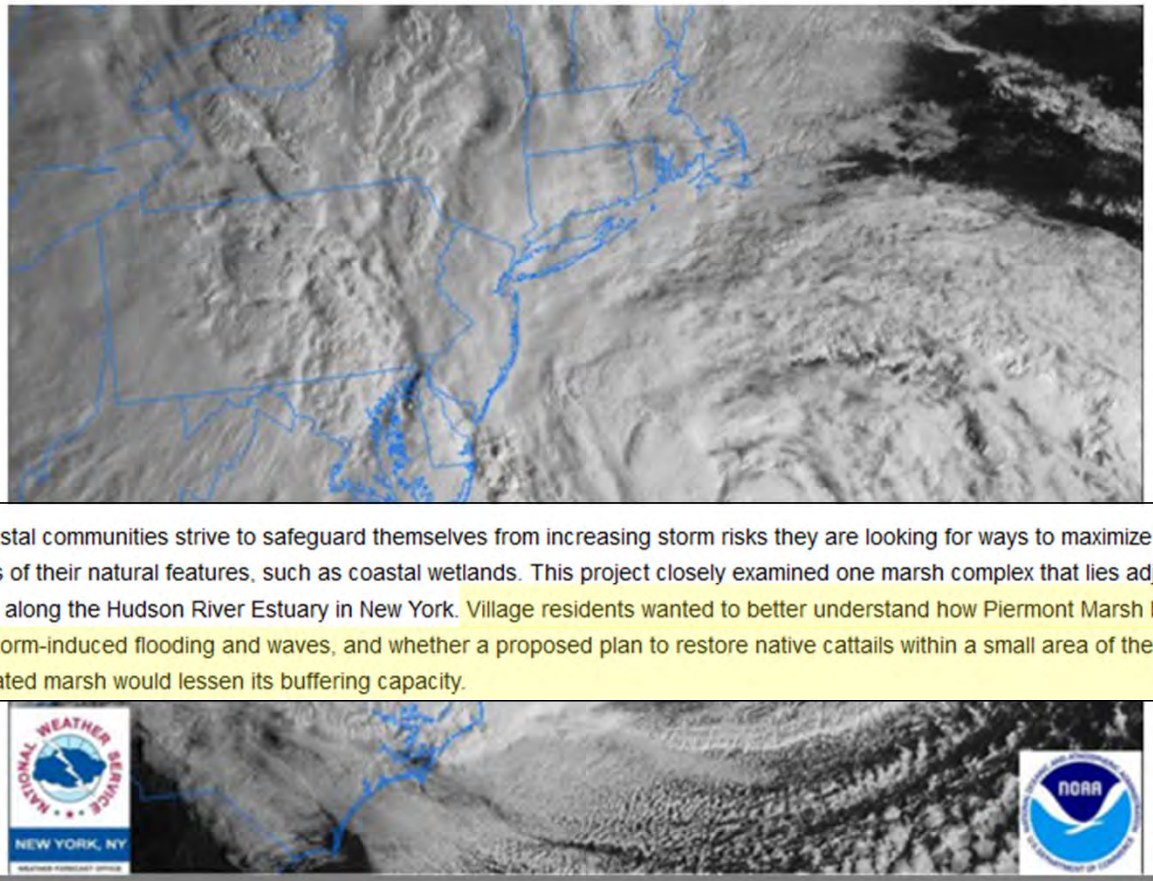
Project Duration:
November 2016 to September 2020

Grant Amount:
$677,307.00

Project Leads:
- Peter Sheng, University of Florida, pete@coastal.ufl.edu
- Sarah Fernald, Hudson River Reserve, sarah.fernald@dec.ny.gov

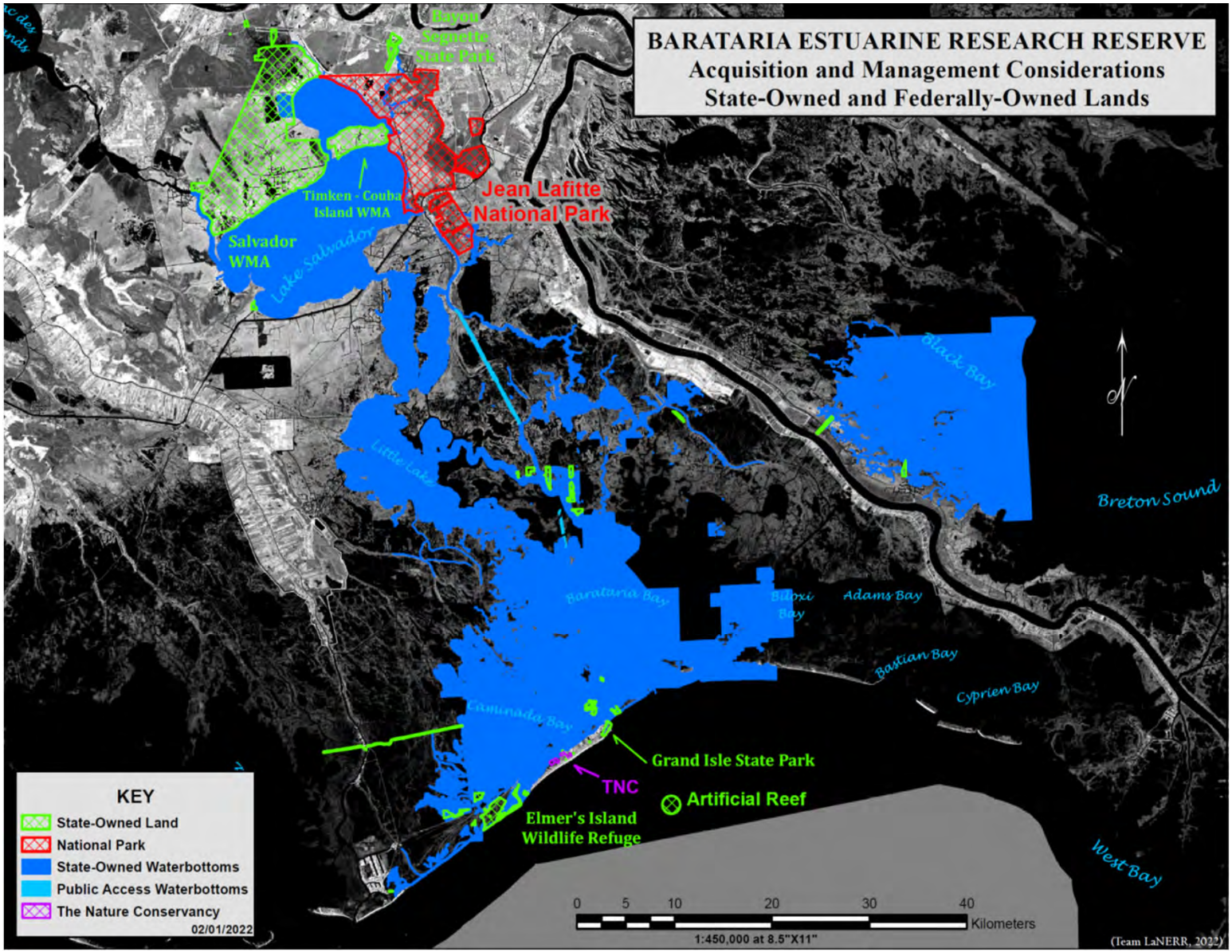
Project Record in National Catalog:
NOAA InPort Database

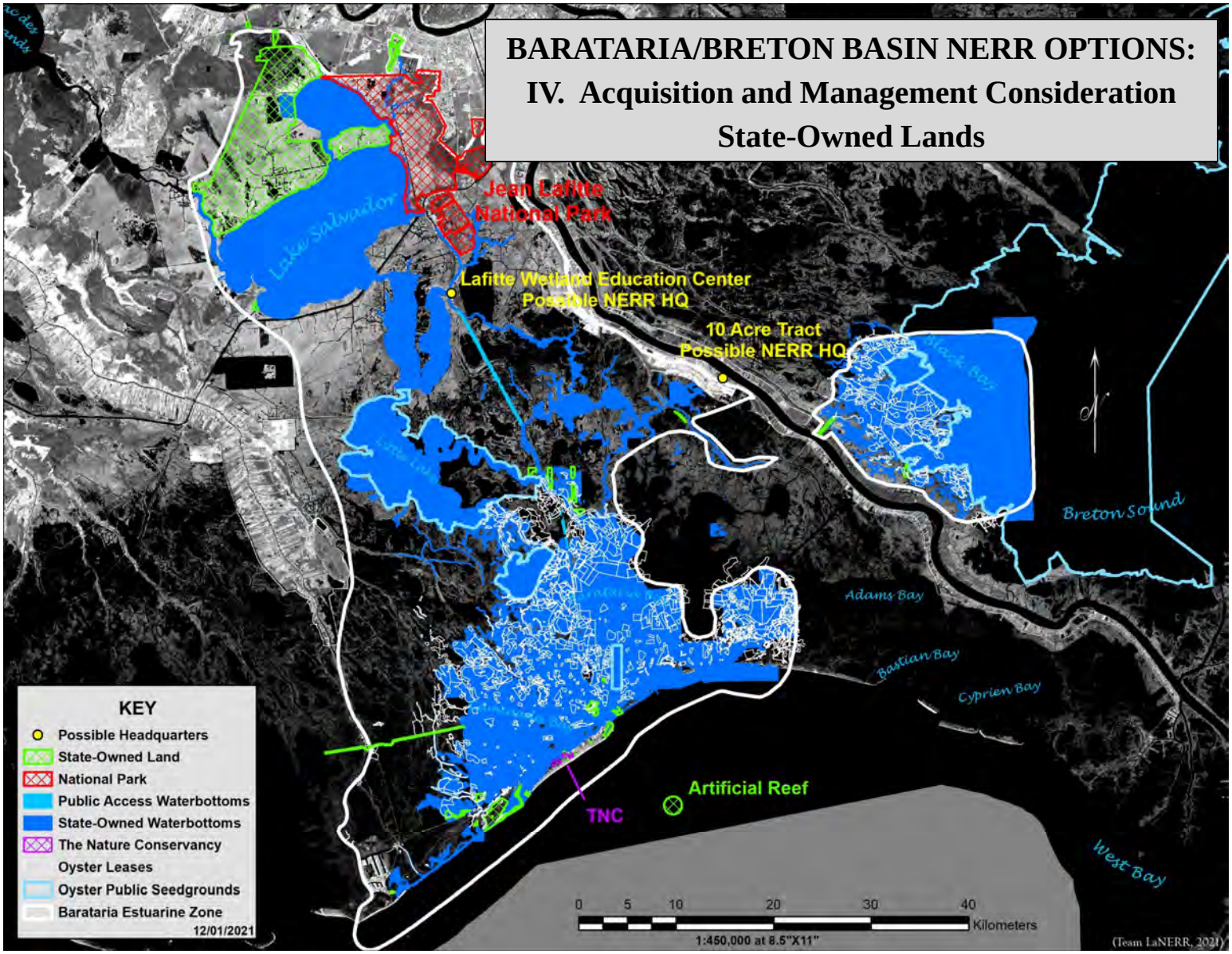
Project Website:
Piermont Marsh Storm Protection Study



As coastal communities strive to safeguard themselves from increasing storm risks they are looking for ways to maximize the protective powers of their natural features, such as coastal wetlands. This project closely examined one marsh complex that lies adjacent to Piermont Village along the Hudson River Estuary in New York. Village residents wanted to better understand how Piermont Marsh buffers their Village from storm-induced flooding and waves, and whether a proposed plan to restore native cattails within a small area of the phragmites-dominated marsh would lessen its buffering capacity.

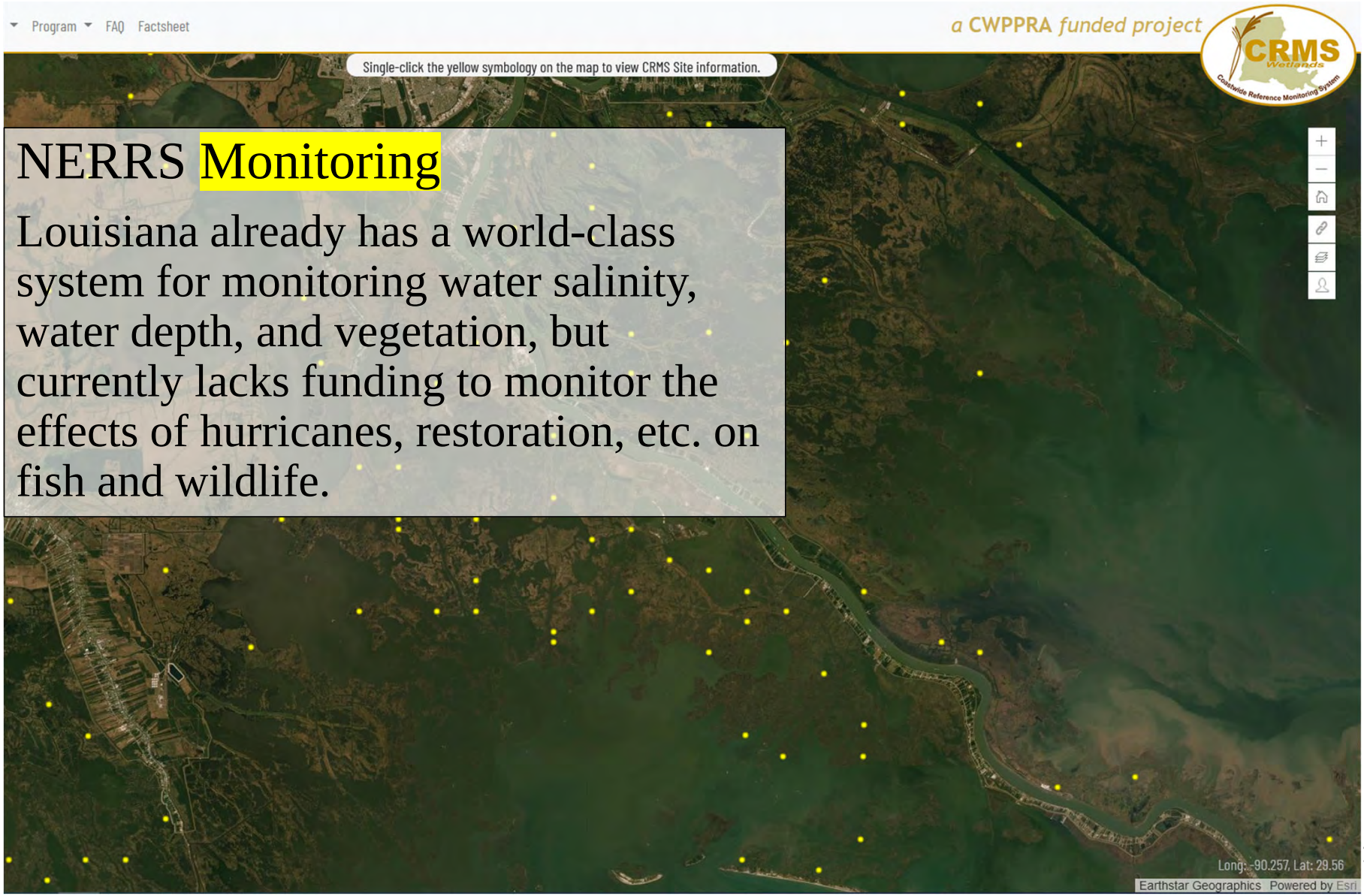
This project was shaped by experiences during Hurricane Sandy, an extremely destructive hurricane that made landfall in New Jersey in October 2012.


BARATARIA ESTUARINE RESEARCH RESERVE
Acquisition and Management Considerations
State-Owned and Federally-Owned Lands
Bayou Segnette State Park
Timken - Couba Island WMA
Jean Lafitte National Park
Salvador WMA
Lake Salvador
Little Lake
Barataria Bay
Black Bay
Breton Sound
Biloxi Bay
Adams Bay
Bastian Bay
Cyprien Bay
Caminada Bay
Grand Isle State Park
TNC
Artificial Reef
Elmer's Island Wildlife Refuge
West Bay
KEY
State-Owned Land
National Park
State-Owned Waterbottoms
Public Access Waterbottoms
The Nature Conservancy
02/01/2022
0 5 10 20 30 40
Kilometers
1:450,000 at 8.5"X11"
(Team LaNERR, 2022)


BARATARIA/BRETON BASIN NERR OPTIONS:
IV. Acquisition and Management Consideration
State-Owned Lands
Jean Lafitte National Park
Lake Salvador
Lafitte Wetland Education Center
Possible NERR HQ
10 Acre Tract
Possible NERR HQ
Breton Sound
Adams Bay
Bastian Bay
Cyprien Bay
West Bay
Artificial Reef
TNC
KEY
Possible Headquarters
State-Owned Land
National Park
Public Access Waterbottoms
State-Owned Waterbottoms
The Nature Conservancy
Oyster Leases
Oyster Public Seedgrounds
Barataria Estuarine Zone
12/01/2021
0 5 10 20 30 40
Kilometers
1:450,000 at 8.5"X11"
(Team LaNERR, 2021)

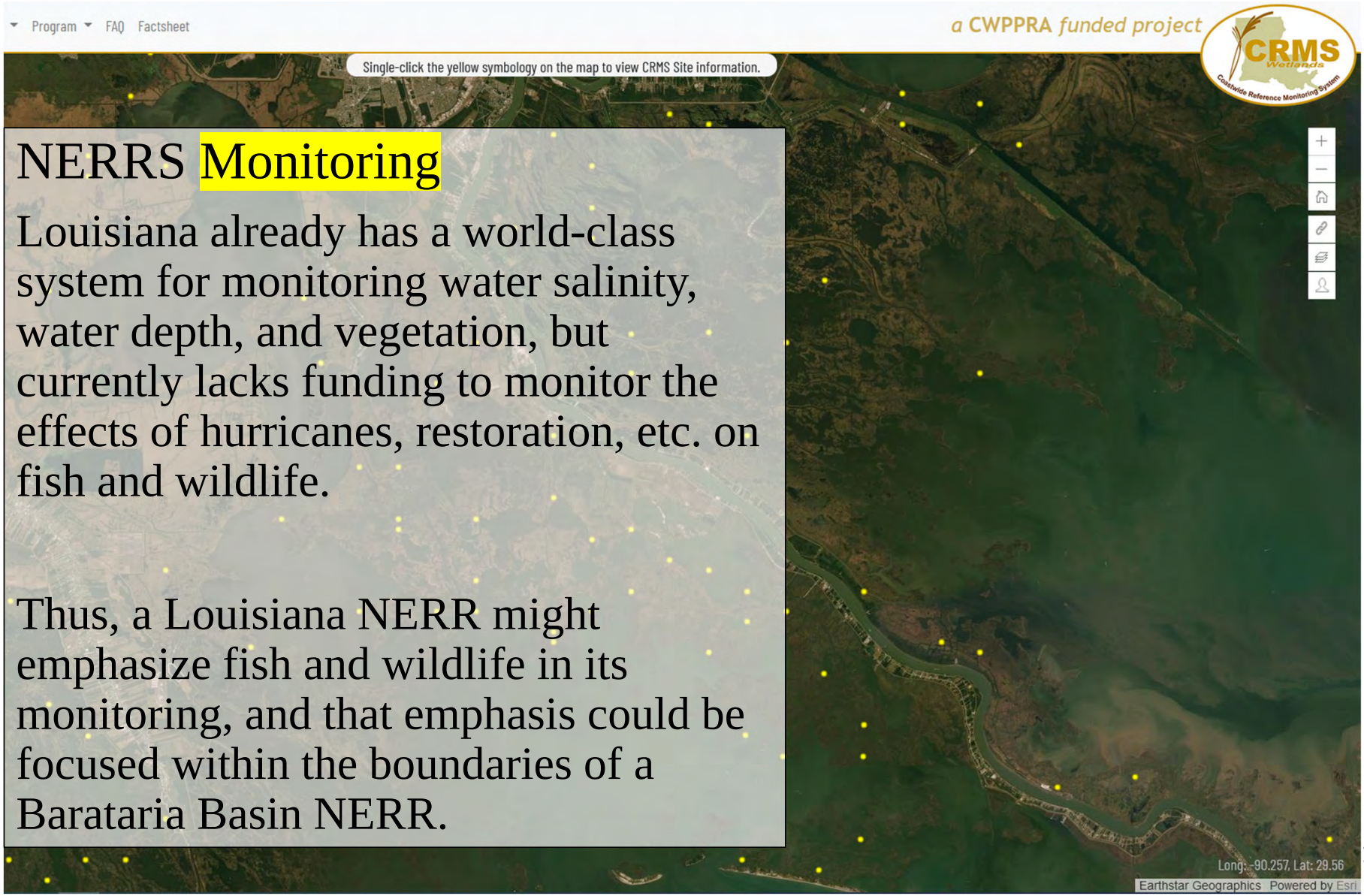
NERRS Monitoring

NOAA's National Estuarine Research Reserve System acknowledges the importance of long-term environmental monitoring programs and data dissemination through the support of the NERRS System-wide Monitoring Program (SWMP).



NERRS Monitoring

Louisiana already has a world-class system for monitoring water salinity, water depth, and vegetation, but currently lacks funding to monitor the effects of hurricanes, restoration, etc. on fish and wildlife.



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Thus, a Louisiana NERR might emphasize fish and wildlife in its monitoring, and that emphasis could be focused within the boundaries of a Barataria Basin NERR.

NERRS Monitoring

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Thus, a Louisiana NERR might emphasize fish and wildlife in its monitoring, and that emphasis could be focused within the boundaries of a Barataria Basin NERR.

https://www.nola.com/news/environment/article_776f2198-6012-11eb-8aca-83812682721d.html

Massive, unexplained bivalve die-off sends many Louisiana oystermen back to square one

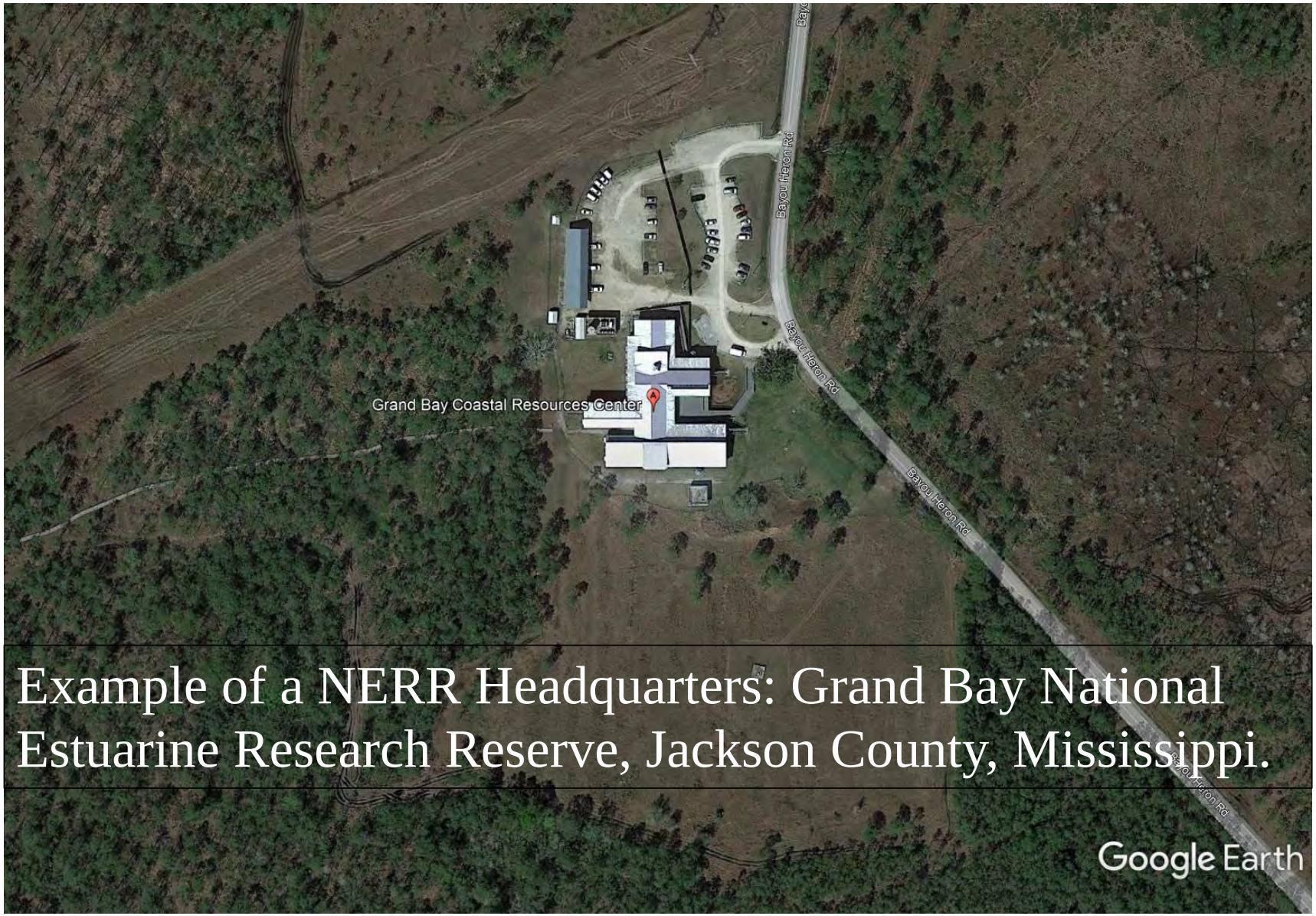
BY HALLE PARKER | STAFF WRITER
PUBLISHED JAN 31, 2021 AT 7:00 PM | UPDATED JAN 31, 2021 AT 8:54 PM

Longtime oysterman Mitch Jurisich scrapes oyster tongs along the water bottom to check the mortality rate of oysters on his lease aft thousands of sacks worth of oysters off of Plaquemines Parish's west bank. (Photo by Halle Parker, NOLA.com, The Times-Picayune |

HALLE PARKER

NERR Headquarters serve as community centers, promoting education that is locally relevant to coastal management.

Example of a NERR Headquarters: Grand Bay National Estuarine Research Reserve, Jackson County, Mississippi.



Example of a NERR Headquarters: Grand Bay National Estuarine Research Reserve, Jackson County, Mississippi.

Education offsite and at NERR Headquarters…

- K-12 Estuarine Education Program: Helps educators bring estuarine science into their classrooms through hands-on learning, experiments, fieldwork, and data explorations.
- Coastal Training Program: Training and technical assistance on relevant coastal management issues to local coastal decision-makers.
- Community Programs: Adult and family activities.

Ecotourism Potential of a NERR Headquarters

If 1% of tourists visiting New Orleans took a daytrip to a NERR, the NERR would have 197,500 visitors in addition to traditional visits.

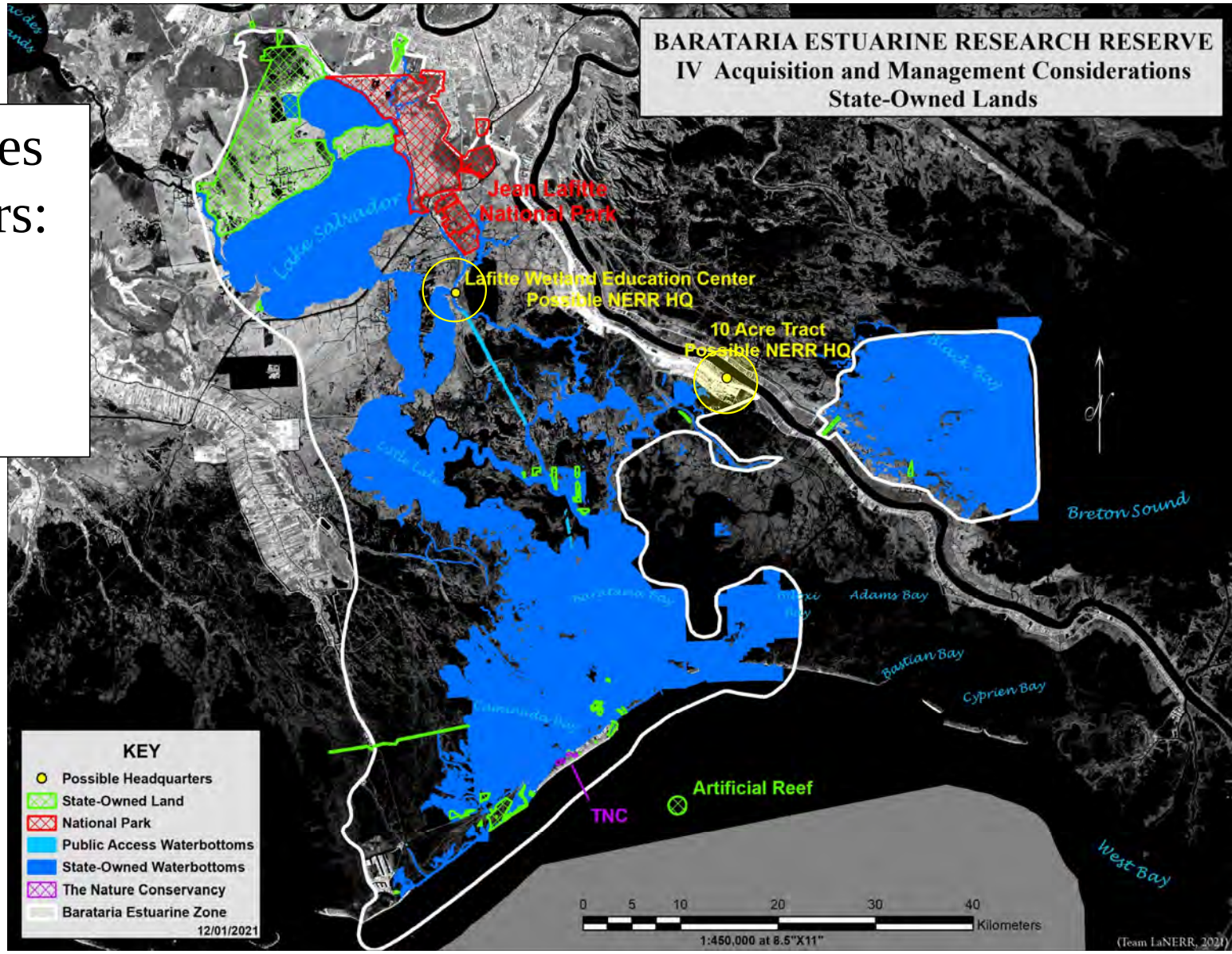
N.O. Tourism Spending Breaks Records in 2019

05/11/2020 by Rich Collins

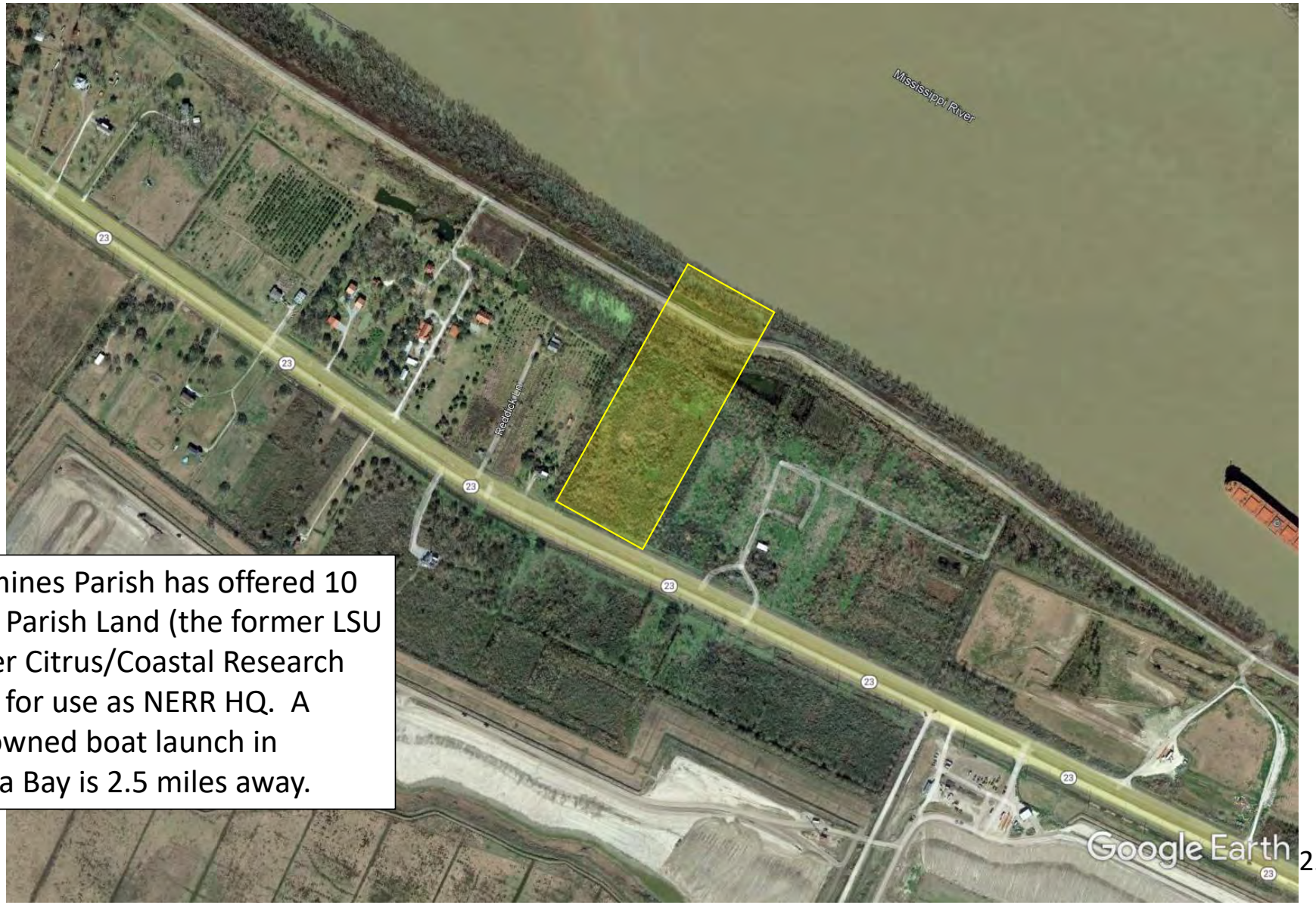
NEW ORLEANS – A new report from D.K. Shifflet & Associates says that, in 2019, New Orleans welcomed 19.75 million visitors, which is a 6.7 percent increase in visitors compared to the previous year. Visitors to New Orleans in 2019 spent $10.05 billion, a 10.3 percent increase over 2018.

Two potential sites for a Headquarters:

- Lafitte
- Plaquemines Parish



A NERR HQ could be located near Lafitte's Barataria Museum and Wetland Trace.



Plaquemines Parish has offered 10 acres of Parish Land (the former LSU AgCenter Citrus/Coastal Research Station) for use as NERR HQ. A parish-owned boat launch in Barataria Bay is 2.5 miles away.

Locating a Louisiana National Estuarine Research Reserve: Barataria Basin

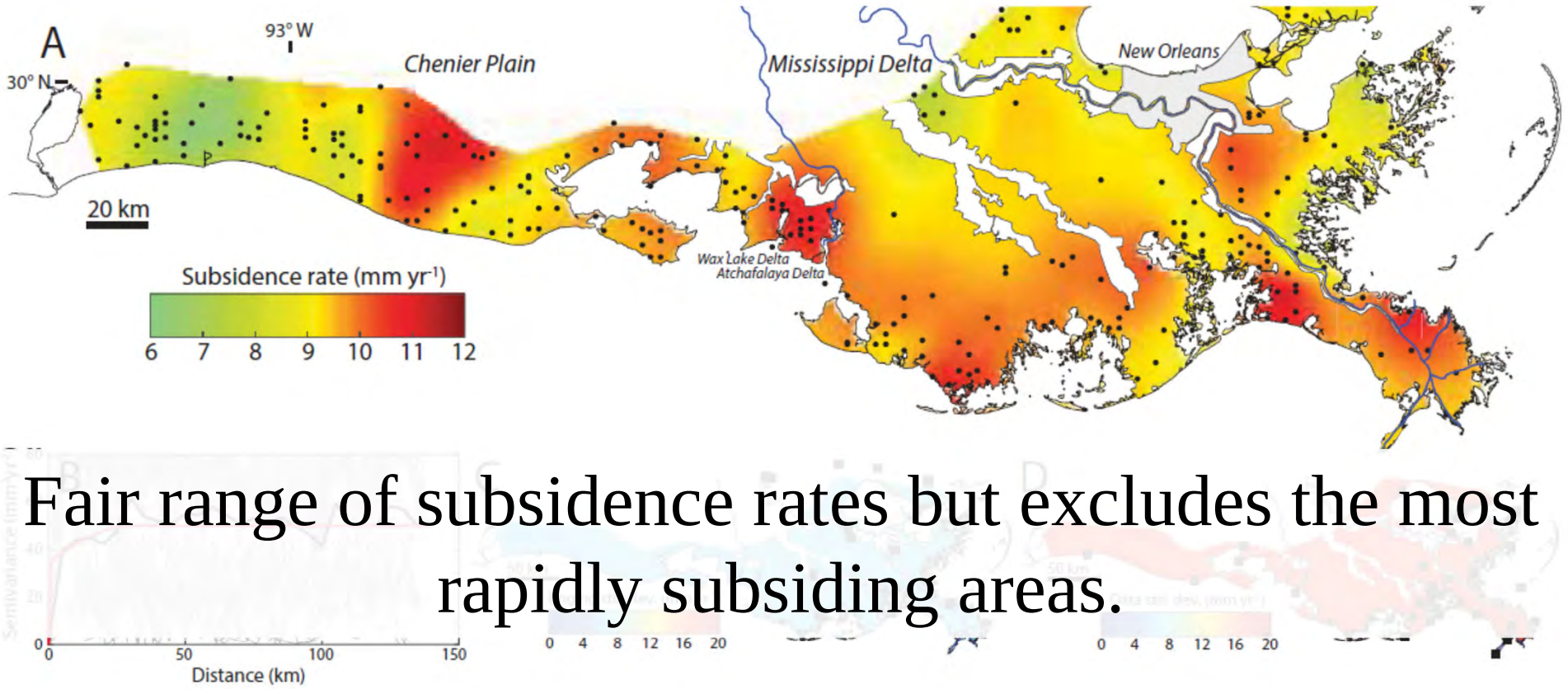
Andy Nyman
School of Renewable Natural Resources
LSU and the LSU AgCenter

jnyman@lsu.edu
For more information please go to www.laseagrant.org/deltanerr

7 February 2022

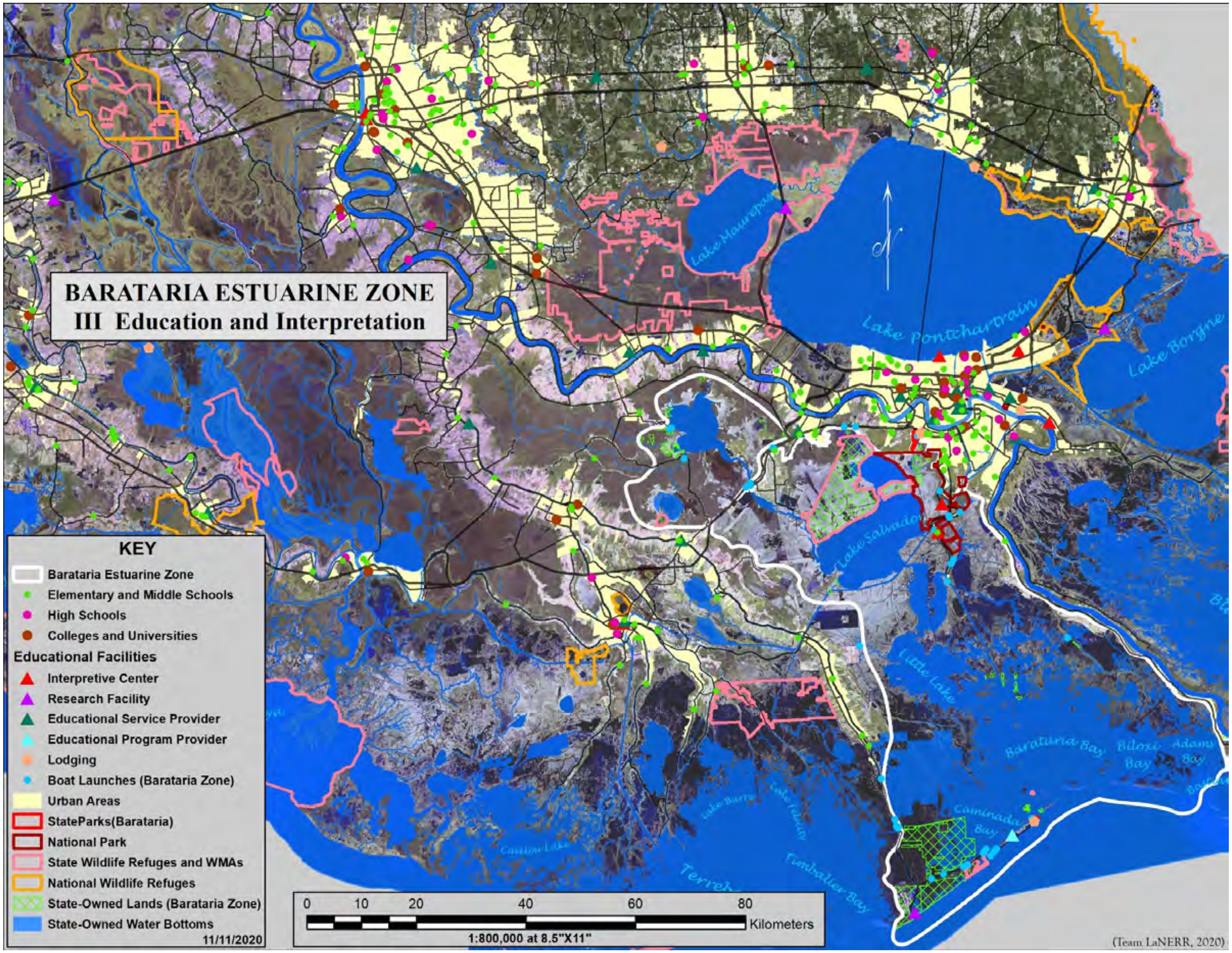
The 246,766 acre Apalachicola National Estuarine Research Reserve.

Figure 45. *Major oyster bars of the Apalachicola estuary (Livingston, 1983)*



Fair range of subsidence rates but excludes the most rapidly subsiding areas.

Figure 1. (A) Subsidence map for coastal Louisiana based on geostatistical interpolation (kriging) of 274 observations (black dots) of land-surface subsidence rates over the past 6–10 years. Areas in white and gray are agricultural and urban, respectively, and located outside of the wetlands. (B) Semivariogram of the data using 100 draws from different kriging options (gray), the data mean (black), and the kriging model (red). (C) Uncertainty (standard deviation) of the kriging estimate. Black squares show GPS stations. (D) Uncertainty (standard deviation) of the underlying data. Black squares show National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) tide gauges. Note that the subsidence map can easily be converted into a relative sea-level rise map by adding the climate-driven sea-level component.


BARATARIA ESTUARINE ZONE
III Education and Interpretation
KEY
Barataria Estuarine Zone
Elementary and Middle Schools
High Schools
Colleges and Universities
Educational Facilities
Interpretive Center
Research Facility
Educational Service Provider
Educational Program Provider
Lodging
Boat Launches (Barataria Zone)
Urban Areas
StateParks(Barataria)
National Park
State Wildlife Refuges and WMAs
National Wildlife Refuges
State-Owned Lands (Barataria Zone)
State-Owned Water Bottoms
11/11/2020
0 10 20 40 60 80
Kilometers
1:800,000 at 8.5"X11"
Lake Maurepas
Lake Pontchartrain
Lake Borgne
Lake Salvador
Little Lake
Barataria Bay
Biloxi Bay
Adams Bay
Caminada Bay
Timbalier Bay
(Team LaNERR, 2020)

Summary of the LaNERR Town Halls for the Barataria Estuarine Zone

February 2022

The Barataria Estuarine Zone Proposal Team hosted three Town Halls as part of the Louisiana National Estuarine Research Reserve (LaNERR) Site Selection process.

- Monday, February 7 (6:00 – 8:00pm) Virtual and In-Person at Lafitte Barataria Museum & Wetland Trace, 4917 City Park Drive, Lafitte, LA
- Wednesday, February 9 (12:00 – 2:00pm) Virtual Only
- Wednesday, February 9 (6:00 – 8:00pm) Virtual Only

There were **21** virtual participants at the first Town Hall and **23** in-person participants (per the sign-in sheet). The second Town Hall had **47** virtual participants, and the third had **16** virtual participants. Participants included members from local parish, state and federal agencies; several non-governmental organizations, including economic development and technical training programs; academia; private sector; regional NERRs; business owners; and community members. Proposal team members, members of the Designation Leadership Team, and program management support staff also participated.

Each Town Hall began with a recorded presentation on the National Estuarine Research Reserve (NERR) System by Kristin Ransom of NOAA (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yhPBom-_6TE). This was followed by a recorded presentation on the Louisiana NERR (LaNERR) Process by Dr. Robert Twilley of Louisiana State University (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HtnY1AUHPrQ). Andy Nyman (Louisiana State University AgCenter), Julie Whitbeck (National Park Service - Jean Lafitte National Historical Park & Preserve, and Tracy Quirk (Louisiana State University) each presented at one Town Hall on behalf of their proposal team on the specifics of the proposed Barataria Estuarine Zone site.

Links to the following documents were provided in the virtual Zoom chat, and print copies were available at the in-person meeting:

- Louisiana Sea Grant LaNERR website: https://www.laseagrant.org/deltanerr/
- LaNERR email: deltanerr@lsu.edu
- NERR/LaNERR factsheet: https://www.laseagrant.org/wp-content/uploads/LaNERR-Town-Hall-Intro.pdf
- NERR/LaNERR FAQs: https://www.laseagrant.org/wp-content/uploads/LaNERR-TownHall-FAQ.pdf
- Questionnaire: https://lsu.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_dmp13jzZEEJwQ3Y
- Barataria NERR Town Hall presentation: https://www.laseagrant.org/wp-content/uploads/LaNERR-Barataria-Town-Hall.pdf

What follows is a topically organized summary of the public question and answer sessions from the three Barataria Estuarine Zone Town Halls.

Several participants asked about the **difference between a NERR and the Barataria Terrebonne National Estuary Program (BTNEP), potential overlaps with BTNEP, and potential overlaps with other entities focused on their own research efforts.** The team noted that NERRs and NEPs have differing missions. BTNEP is focused more on developing a large-scale management plan for both Barataria and Terrebonne basins, whereas a NERR is a site that has facilities and focuses more on 'place-based-research' that can help accomplish the missions of an NEP. A NERR and a NEP can yield synergistic results by leveraging of resources, one regional example being in Port Aransas, TX. A NERR can help leverage other efforts to create new opportunities and vice versa; for example, NERRs can provide or enhance wetland access (boats, boat launches, etc.) for some groups that do not typically have access. A NERR also brings funding and new opportunities, such as the Margaret Davidson Graduate Fellowships that are granted for research to be done within a NERR, as well as programs that fund research across different NERRs. Last, NERRs are driven by local needs, so a NERR can help bridge gaps between existing entities and missions.

Several in-person participants at the Town Hall in Lafitte spoke out with concerns about a NERR being located in their area. Concerns included whether **additional regulations** would be put in place and whether a NERR would **take ownership of existing commercial fishing areas** (land/water) that could hurt or potentially destroy local fishing communities and families that depend on the working coast. Members of the team responded that NERRs neither add additional regulations nor have the ability to take over land/water. It was also noted that the state-owned lands and waters being considered are owned by and are already regulated by the state.

Concern was raised from multiple in-person fishing community members regarding existing Mississippi River diversions and whether a NERR being sited in the Barataria Estuarine Zone would **promote the construction of additional diversions, such as the Mid-Barataria Sediment Diversion**. Team members responded that siting a NERR has no effect on coastal restoration projects either being or not being constructed. NERR funding can enhance monitoring to better understand the system and how it may change. One in-person participant noted that there are no concerns about the research or monitoring aspects of a NERR.

Concern was raised that there is **not a representative of the local fishing community on the Executive Committee** (LaNERR site nominating committee). Additionally, **distrust was expressed because the Coastal Protection and Restoration Authority** is on that committee given their involvement with diversions and other coastal projects. Last, it was noted that the proposal team should ensure **other local fishing communities, such as local Asian fishing communities, are made aware of this effort**.

Proposal team members assured participants that raised the previous concerns that Barataria is only one of three estuarine zones in consideration and that it is early enough in the process for one of the other two sites to be nominated instead. It was further noted that participants and local community have a voice in the siting of a NERR, because NERR site nomination and designation depends heavily on local support. Participants were asked to complete the questionnaire, submit emails or letters, etc. to express their concerns, opposition to, or support for a NERR being located in Barataria. They were also provided contact information for team members, including those from NOAA to reach out to with additional questions, comments, or concerns.

Additional questions were raised regarding **management of the NERR**, whether **more than one site can be nominated**, and location of a **NERR headquarters**. Team members provided the following responses. A NERR has to be managed by a state agency or a university. Although there are no cost estimates yet for managing any of the three proposed sites, the amount of funding per site is limited; therefore, it can be difficult to manage either a very large NERR or more than one site in a single state (North Carolina NERR was used as an example). Last, team members noted that the NERR headquarters does not have to be in a city per say, but it does have to be near the actual NERR area (i.e., it cannot be in a different estuarine zone).

Participants asked whether **professional/technical trainings** would be offered and who they would target, whether funds would be provided for **tourism infrastructure**, and whether NERRs **enhance conservation efforts such as removal of marine debris**. Team members noted that although the Louisiana process has not yet gotten to the stage of answering these in detail, they would all be addressed in the development of the management plan once a site is nominated. In terms of professional training, one example from a regional NERR was that training was offered to coastal land owners regarding blue carbon and carbon sequestration; it was also noted that training programs are based on an assessment of local needs and are revised every 5 years. Last, it was noted that other NERRs do conduct marine debris removal; there is a NOAA marine debris program, so a NERR can help open avenues to other resources that could help locally.

Last, a participant asked what **key advantages the team sees for Barataria** versus the other two proposed sites. Team members noted the more compact spatial scale and accessibility to cities and roads compared to the other sites, while also having the same diversity. Jean Lafitte National Park is excited about the potential for a partnership with NOAA / NERR; the national park is a protected area in the upper part of the basin, which can be viewed as an added point of stability for a NERR in the Barataria Estuarine Zone.

Barataria Town Hall #1

Monday, February 7 (6-8pm)

Join this Webinar **OR** Join in-person at

Lafitte Barataria Museum & Wetland Trace – 4917 City Park Drive in Lafitte

Attendees

Proposal Team: Andy Nyman, LSU; Tracy Quirk, LSU

Designation Leadership Team: Robert Twilley, LSU; Sandy Parfait, LSU; Kristin Ransom, NOAA; Julie Lively, LA Sea Grant; Jackson Martinez, GOCA

Royal Engineers & Consultants (LA Sea Grant Support): Alaina Grace, Mandy Green, Kirk Rhinehart

General Participants: 21 virtual participants (8 accounted for above); **23** in-person participants per the sign in sheet

Virtual participants (affiliations are noted if they were entered into the Zoom Chat)

- Angela Underwood, Weeks Bay NERR
- Alex McClellan, LSU
- Becky Allee, NOAA
- Billy Guste
- Earl Melancon, LA Sea Grant
- Gary Vitrano, LDWF
- Laci Melancon, Coastal Technical Assistance Center
- Marcus Perez
- Mark Shirley, LSU AgCenter
- Martin Floyd, LDWF; Floyd ECOnsultants, LLC
- Matthew Duplessis
- Michelle Gonzales, Director of Ecosystem and Coastal Management Director of Ecosystem and Coastal Management, Jefferson Parish
- Rebecca Triche, Executive Director of Louisiana Wildlife Federation
- Robert Moreau, SELU
- Roy Kron, LA Sea Grant

Please Print			Town Hall Meetings
Meeting Date: Feb. 7	Meeting Location: Lafitte		
Name	Organization/Company	EMAIL	TELEPHONE
Kristi Trail	PC	kristi@scienceforourcoast.org	504-836-2215
Tracy Kuhns	GoFish Coalition	tracy.gofishcoalition@gmail.com	504-269-7162
Dylan Fazende	fisherman	dylafazende@yahoo.com	504-388-0031
			[redacted]
Holden Fabre	Fisherman		504-655-1834
Rocky DiTchaRo	DiTchaRo SEAFood	DiTchaRodominick@GMAIL.com	504-812-4913
Michael Helmers Jr	Fisherman	bayouboy4970@aol.com	504-810-7179
Michael Helmers Sr	Fisherman		504-416-1011
Yvette Crain	Town of Jean Lafitte	YCrain@townofjeanlafitte.com	504 228-3347
Shae Crain		shaecrain@gmail.com	

Please Print			Town Hall Meetings LaNERR SEARCH
Meeting Date:	Meeting Location:		
Name	Organization/Company	EMAIL	TELEPHONE
Linda Fazende	Fisherman	anglbabe1768@aol.com	504-289-3277
Jeff Fazende	fisherman	--	--
Gregory Haydel	Fisherman	sheenagreg@cox.net	
Kenneth Perrin	Fisherman		
Michael Roth	GOFISH	rkfisheries@cox.net	504 289-6256
Ted Adams	Fisherman		504 439-2021
TROY ZAN	Fisherman	p.zan@cox.net	504 715-8310
Jason Smith	Jefferson Parish	jsmith@jeffparish.net	504 731 4025
Ian Terrio	Fisherman		
Tom Wheatley	The Pew Charitable Trusts	twheatley@pewtrusts.org	813-982-0113
Raleigh Hoke	Healthy Gulf	Raleigh@healthygulf.org	573 795 1916
[illegible]	Fisherman		
[illegible]	Fisherman		[illegible]

Please Print			Town Hall Meetings
Meeting Date:	Meeting Location:		
Name	Organization/Company	EMAIL	TELEPHONE
Paul Christiansen	LeBlanc and Schuster	pchristiansen@leblanc-schuster.com	504 810. 1275
Seth Blitch	The Nature Conservancy	sblitch@tnc.org	850.653.5757
Kelly Doyle	Resident Fish Person	k.doyle22@yahoo	504 570 7756
Earl Higgins	Sierra Club		

LaNERR SEARCH

Barataria Town Hall #1

Monday, February 7 (6-8pm)

Join this Webinar **OR** Join in-person at

Lafitte Barataria Museum & Wetland Trace – 4917 City Park Drive in Lafitte

Each Town Hall began with a recorded presentation on the National Estuarine Research Reserve (NERR) System by Kristin Ransom of NOAA (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yhPBom-_6TE). This was followed by a recorded presentation on the Louisiana NERR (LaNERR) Process by Dr. Robert Twilley of Louisiana State University (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HtnY1AUHPrQ). Andy Nyman (Louisiana State University AgCenter) presented on behalf of their proposal team on the specifics of the proposed Barataria Estuarine Zone site.

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Public Questions and Comments

- Can more than one site in Louisiana be nominated?
    - Answer - The amount of funding per site is limited and hard to run more than one site. That is why we are focused on one of three sites. North Carolina tried to run three sites with one NERR grant and it has been challenging.
- What's the difference between the NERR and BTNEP? Looks like another layer of bureaucracy. Families depend on these estuaries and we fear that a NERR in Barataria could run fishing families out of business.
    - Answer - The NERR would serve in a similar capacity as BTNEP; there are enough problems in coastal LA that there is sufficient space for multiple efforts working together against the same problems.
    - Answer - NERRs do not add new regulations, but there is no guarantee that the groups already regulating areas for consideration would not change their existing regulations, but that would be out of the NERR control.
    - Answer - The NERR would bring another pool of money for research (e.g., to study effects of diversions). A NERR can't make or stop a diversion from being constructed.
- Concern raised from multiple fishing community members regarding the diversions and whether a NERR would promote the construction of diversions

    - Answer - A NERR has no effect on restoration projects that would or would not be constructed
    - Answer - A NERR can provide funds to help better understand the system (e.g., why there was such a large oyster die off last year); currently sea grasses and other things are not being monitored, but a NERR can help fund monitoring. A NERR can also enhance access to these sites for school age children and others; it could even bring in tourism, which could bring more money into the coastal communities.
- Another comment regarding concern from the fishing industry and not seeing value in providing opportunities for community to access the coast
- Comment regarding distrust for state agencies and not being in favor of a NERR
    - Answer - The state already owns and manages the land and water being considered. Any regulations already in place will remain in place. A NERR will not change anything.
- Against this
- Have been trying to get monitoring at other locations in the water column for a while
- We don't have an issue with the research aspect of a NERR but we want to protect traditional fishing and working waterfront
- There is value in the process and having a voice to help guide how this is done, but often we feel that input from the fishermen means nothing
- Commercial fishermen need more representation for decision making
- Who will manage the NERR?
    - Answer - It can only be a state agency or university (or partnership)
- Is there a way to leave comments?
    - Answer - There are print copies of the questionnaire, an online version, LaNERR email address for people to express support and concerns; all input is welcomed
    - Answer - Will email all information to anyone that leaves their email address on the sign in sheet
    - Answer - Please everyone feel free to reach out to me via email if you have any questions about the NERR system at large kristin.ransom@noaa.gov
- Would a headquarters be in Barataria if the site is located in one of the other basins?
    - Answer - No - the headquarters would be in the area selected for the NERR
- We are concerned that additional regulations will be put in place
    - Answer - NERRs do not add any additional regulations; these are state owned lands and waters that are already regulated; those same regulations would stay in place
- Comment regarding freshwater input from Davis Pond and the diversion. Not in favor of CPRA or a NERR.
- The Asian fishing community should also be made aware of the NERR process so they aren't left out; same with the people in the Belle Chasse area
    - Answer – Future public meetings can be hosted in those areas too

Barataria Town Hall #2

Wednesday, February 9 (12:00 – 2:00 pm)

Join this Webinar (virtual only)

Attendees

Proposal Team: Andy Nyman, LSU; Tracy Quirk, LSU; Julie Whitbeck, NPS Jean Lafitte National Historical Park & Preserve

Designation Leadership Team: Robert Twilley, LSU; Sandy Parfait, LSU; Kristin Ransom, NOAA; Julie Lively, LA Sea Grant; not available (Jackson Martinez, GOCA)

Royal Engineers & Consultants (LA Sea Grant Support): Alaina Grace, Mandy Green

General Participants: 47 (9 accounted for above) virtual participants

Virtual participants (affiliations are noted if they were entered into the Zoom Chat)

- Amanda Phillips
- Angelina Freeman, CPRA
- Avery Beck – Grand Bay NERR
- C Britt
- Caitlin Wessel
- Carol Wilson
- Cheston Hill
- David Illgen, Jefferson Parish Ecosystem and Coastal Management
- Erin Rooney, HDR
- Honora Buras, retired CPRA
- Isaac Mudge
- James Nelson
- Jennifer Cook, Louisiana Sea Grant
- Jennifer Cumbest
- Jenny Schexnayder
- Jim Pahl
- Joseph Coco
- Lauren Leonpacher
- Lou Tamporello
- Kim Cressman, Grand Bay NERR
- Mark Hogan
- Mark Tobler
- Melissa Daigle, Louisiana Sea Grant
- Michael Saunders
- Michelle Felterman
- Mike Carloss, Ducks Unlimited

- Mike Schulze
- Monica Santos
- Nancy Rabalais - Louisiana State University, Dept of Oceanography and Coastal Sciences
- Paul Leberg
- Sara Krupa
- Sharon McBreen
- Stacy Ortego
- Stephanie Archer, LUMCON
- Tasia Denapolis – Pontchartrain Conservancy
- Terri Von Hoven
- Thomas Rowley
- Todd Hubbell
- William Hano

Barataria Town Hall #2

Wednesday, February 9 (12:00 – 2:00 pm)

Join this Webinar (virtual only)

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- NERR/LaNERR FAQs: https://www.laseagrant.org/wp-content/uploads/LaNERR-TownHall-FAQ.pdf
- Questionnaire: https://lsu.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_dmp13jzZEEJwQ3Y
- Barataria NERR Town Hall presentation: https://www.laseagrant.org/wp-content/uploads/LaNERR-Barataria-Town-Hall.pdf)

Public Questions and Comments

- Is the NERR Headquarters located in a city?
    - Answer – It does not have to be in a "city" per se; it can be in a more coastal location, which can help provide more access to the estuary; however, one option under consideration is Lafitte, so it can be in a city, town, or rural location
- I see lots of collaborative efforts among all the agencies and the NERR. However, are there already too many overlapping entities with their own research programs and seeking outside programs?
    - Answer – Several people have asked this before; we are a coastal engaged state already; we see a NERR as a way to leverage those other efforts to create new opportunities; for example, some groups (park service) doesn't have a program to enhance access for the public (boats, boat launches, etc.); interaction across existing groups and a NERR can enhance opportunities
    - Answer – NERRs also bring funding; Margaret Davidson scholarships are granted for work to be done within NERRS; there are also programs that fund research across different NERRs
    - Answer – Reserves are driven by local needs, so a NERR can help bridge any existing gaps
- Did you consider potential overlap with the Barataria-Terrebonne National Estuary Program?
    - Answer – Yes, BTNEP is an EPA program, so it's a different national agency and supports limited research; its mission is different than that of a NERR. We see it as leveraging of resources rather than an overlap of research

    - Answer – A good model is Sea Grant – coordinated efforts to make sure no topical areas fall through the cracks while also not interfering with one another; there would be coordination to coordinate different efforts
- How does proposed day-to-day management cost of the NERR compare for the Barataria-based sites vs. the Pontchartrain or Atchafalaya sites?
    - Answer – Right now, there are no cost estimates for any of the three proposed sites; there is a total amount of money provided by NOAA, which is divided equally across all NERRS. Regardless of the size of a NERR, all NERRS get the same amount of money.
- What would be some professional/technical trainings offered and who would they target?
    - Answer – Our team has not yet drilled down to that level; we welcome public input for ideas and suggestions; anticipate that the location of the NERR would likely dictate the type of trainings that can be offered.
    - Answer – Helped host workshop while at Sea Gran and other coastal NERRs for carbon sequestration to train land owners about blue carbon and carbon sequestration
    - Answer – For the coastal training program, all programming is based on a needs assessment (revised every 5 years) of what the local needs for training are.
- Does the NERR federal grant include any kind of tourism infrastructure or is the hope that will build up as programs expand?
    - Answer – Part of this depends on the management plan that is proposed to NOAA (tourism is not an a priori focus, but education is); however, if tourism is seen as a critical need, it could be worked into part of the management plan or facilities (e.g. facilities to enhance / emphasize ecotourism)
- How would a NERR enhance conservation efforts such as removal of marine debris - if at all
    - Answer – A NERR could be a place for people could gather, NOAA funds could be directed to this; could be coordinated with other groups/efforts and volunteers
    - Answer – NERRs do a lot of marine debris work; there is a NOAA marine debris program, so a NERR can help open avenues to other resources that could help locally.
- What key advantages do you see for Barataria vs the other sites?
    - Answer – The spatial extent of all basins for consideration are substantial, but the Barataria basin possesses all the same diversity in a somewhat smaller geographical extent; it is also very accessible to cities, roads, etc. The national park in the Lafitte area is very excited about the potential for a partnership with NOAA / NERR; the national park is a protected area in the upper part of the basin, so we know that area will not change; it can be looked at as an added stability for a NERR in Barataria

Barataria Town Hall #3

Wednesday, February 9 (6:00 – 8:00 pm)

Join this Webinar (virtual only)

Attendees

Proposal Team: Andy Nyman, LSU; Tracy Quirk, LSU

Designation Leadership Team: Robert Twilley, LSU; Sandy Parfait, LSU; Kristin Ransom, NOAA; Julie Lively, LA Sea Grant; Not available (Jackson Martinez, GOCA)

Royal Engineers & Consultants (LA Sea Grant Support): Alaina Grace, Mandy Green

General Participants: 16 (8 accounted for above) virtual participants

Virtual participants (affiliations are noted if they were entered into the Zoom Chat)

- Carissa Thiel, Nicholls State University
- Catherine Holcomb, St. Mary Excel
- Everett Craddock
- Hampton Peele, Louisiana Geological Survey, LSU
- Laci Melancon, Coastal Technical Assistance Center
- Louis Tamporello
- Sharon McBreen
- Caller 1504xxxx620

Barataria Town Hall #3

Wednesday, February 9 (6:00 – 8:00 pm)

Join this Webinar (virtual only)

Each Town Hall began with a recorded presentation on the National Estuarine Research Reserve (NERR) System by Kristin Ransom of NOAA (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yhPBom-_6TE). This was followed by a recorded presentation on the Louisiana NERR (LaNERR) Process by Dr. Robert Twilley of Louisiana State University (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HtnY1AUHPrQ). Tracy Quirk (Louisiana State University) presented on behalf of their proposal team on the specifics of the proposed Barataria Estuarine Zone site.

Links to the following documents were provided in the virtual Zoom chat, and print copies were available at the in-person meeting:

- Louisiana Sea Grant LaNERR website: https://www.laseagrant.org/deltanerr/
- LaNERR email: deltanerr@lsu.edu
- NERR/LaNERR factsheet: https://www.laseagrant.org/wp-content/uploads/LaNERR-Town-Hall-Intro.pdf
- NERR/LaNERR FAQs: https://www.laseagrant.org/wp-content/uploads/LaNERR-TownHall-FAQ.pdf
- Questionnaire: https://lsu.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_dmp13jzZEEJwQ3Y
- Barataria NERR Town Hall presentation: https://www.laseagrant.org/wp-content/uploads/LaNERR-Barataria-Town-Hall.pdf

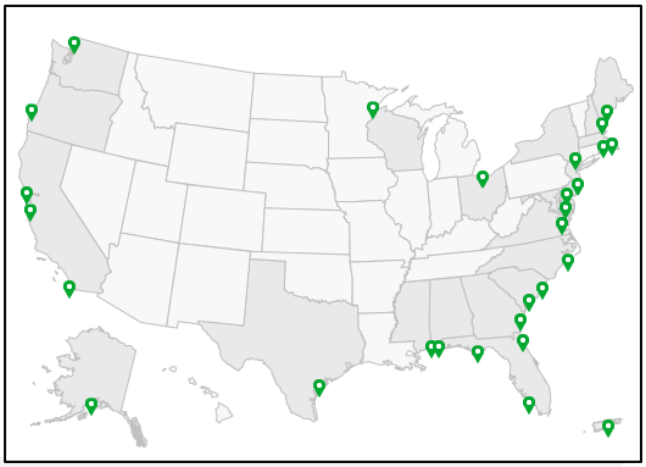
Public Questions and Comments

- Hi! I'm from St. Mary Parish. Nice presentation!
- I'm unable to unmute but was curious if the presentations for other sites will be available? Also second the (question regarding potential overlap with) BTNEP question from John
    - Answer – BTNEP is focused more on developing a large scale management plan for both Barataria and Terrebonne basins; a NERR is focused on place-based research
    - Answer – My current opinion is that a NERR and an NEP would yield synergistic results rather than competitive results.
    - Answer – Gave a talk to the BTNEP management council and received the same question. This is a site, a place, and facilities that can help accomplish those missions.
    - Answer – Other partnerships between NERRs and NEPs yield very synergistic results. In Port Aransas, missions of NERR and NEP are similar; have worked to develop a joint acquisition program; share water quality monitoring data; reserve is on advisory council and vice versa.
- Just listening in for all public feedback on all of the LaNERR meetings. Great presentation!

Proposed LaNERR: Pontchartrain Basin

National Estuarine Research Reserve System

This network of 30 sites protects and conserves more than 1.3 million acres of coastal and estuarine habitat and is managed by a partnership between NOAA and coastal states. NOAA provides federal funding and oversight, while state agencies or universities implement day-to-day operations for each reserve. Reserve staff work with local communities to address challenges related to natural resource management such as nonpoint source pollution, habitat restoration, invasive species, and more.



Reserve System Snapshot

~1.3+ million acres of public land and waters

4.5K miles of waterfront and diverse habitat

280 monitoring stations

3,000+ educators and **81,000+** K–12 students receive outdoor STEM education

36,000+ volunteers support reserves

Value of Establishing a Louisiana Reserve

Louisiana is the only coastal salt-water state in the nation without a designated Reserve (and Michigan is the only other coastal freshwater state without a freshwater Reserve). A Louisiana-based Reserve could complement and extend the scientific, educational and stewardship activities and needs of programs like the EPA National Estuary Program (Barataria National Estuary Program), the Louisiana Coastal Management Program, the Louisiana Sea Grant Program and various academic institutions through the addition of funding, resources and expertise. The health of the Mississippi River Delta ecosystem and its many services to Louisiana and the nation would benefit from establishing a NERR.

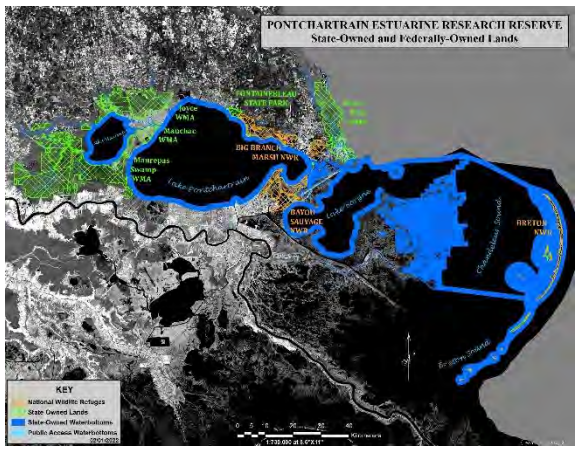
Programs and Potential Focus Areas

Each reserve administers four core programs using similar protocols to ensure they are locally relevant and nationally significant. These programs are tailored to address local issues and priorities important to Louisiana. Illustrative details are provided below.

Research | **Stewardship** | **Training** | **Education**

Overview of LaNERR – Proposed Pontchartrain Estuary Site
Louisiana's NERR - Pontchartrain Site, ranges from the upper northwestern corner of the Basin surrounding Lake Maurepas to the southeastern boundary of the Chandeleur Islands. The proposed site consists of a wide array of habitats that include: bottom-land hardwood forest; pine savannah; forested wetland; fresh-to-saline attached marsh; floating marsh; submerged-aquatic vegetation; to barrier islands. Salinity ranges from fresh to marine.

Proposed Lands, Water and Monitoring
State Wildlife Management Area and park lands (207,453 acres); Federal National Wildlife Refuge lands (52,360 acres); and a connecting boundary of state-owned water bottoms (acreage TBD) are included in the proposed NERR. Other lands could be added in the future. Many are already part of Louisiana's Coast-Wide Reference Monitoring System (CRMS).



Human Inhabitants and Access
A diverse population of 2.1 million residents across 16 boundary parishes that have access to the estuary from: major highways (including 3 interstates); 60+ boat launches and marinas; 130+ miles of car-free bike lanes and 15+ miles of protected urban bike lanes; and other developing recreational greenways.

Higher Education Institutions and Research/Education/Outreach Centers
The site is within a 1-hour drive of 17 universities and colleges in the 16-parish area (118,672 students); at least 10 major research and education enhancement facilities in the immediate Basin; and a multitude of other state and municipal parks and educational programs.

Other Interesting Facts of the Pontchartrain Site
Fisheries-over 100 species; *Wetland Plants*-over 100 species; *Mammals*-approx. 40 species
Migratory Birds – over 270 species move through the Basin every year
Reptiles and Amphibians – approx. 120 species
All Plants and Animals (incl. invertebrates): rare to endangered-690 species; Invasive-60 species
# of Permitted State WMA Hunting/Fishing Users (yr 2021): 24,246
#K-12 Schools (16 parish area, not including Charter Schools): 511 schools//289,494 students

Support for the Proposed Louisiana Reserve

The designation process for the Louisiana NERR is being led at the state level by Louisiana Sea Grant and a team of professionals from the state and federal levels. For more information on this designation process please visit: www.laseagrant.org/deltanerr. Stay connected at:

Like us on Facebook @DeltaNERR

Follow us on Twitter @DeltaNERR

Sign up for our E-mail Listserv

Louisiana National Estuarine Research Reserve (LaNERR) Site Designation Process

PONTCHARTRAIN LaNERR PROPOSED SITE

Hosted on February 1, 2022 by:
Southeastern Louisiana University
Student Union Annex – Theater
500 Western Ave. Hammond LA 70402

National Estuarine Research Reserve System

Agenda

1. Welcoming Remarks - Robert Moreau, Manager of Southeastern's Turtle Cove Environmental Research Station

2. What is a National Estuarine Research Reserve System (video #1) – Kristin Ransom, Regional Coastal Management Specialist, NOAA Office for Coastal Management

3. Introduction to LaNERR Process (video #2) – Robert Twilley, Professor, LSU, and Lead for LaNERR Designation Leadership Team (DLT)

4. Presentation by the Pontchartrain Proposal Leadership Team - Kristi Trail (Lead), Executive Director, Pontchartrain Conservancy

5. Public Q&A; Also Questionnaire for public to provide feedback

6. Adjourn

LaNERR SEARCH

National Estuarine Research Reserve System

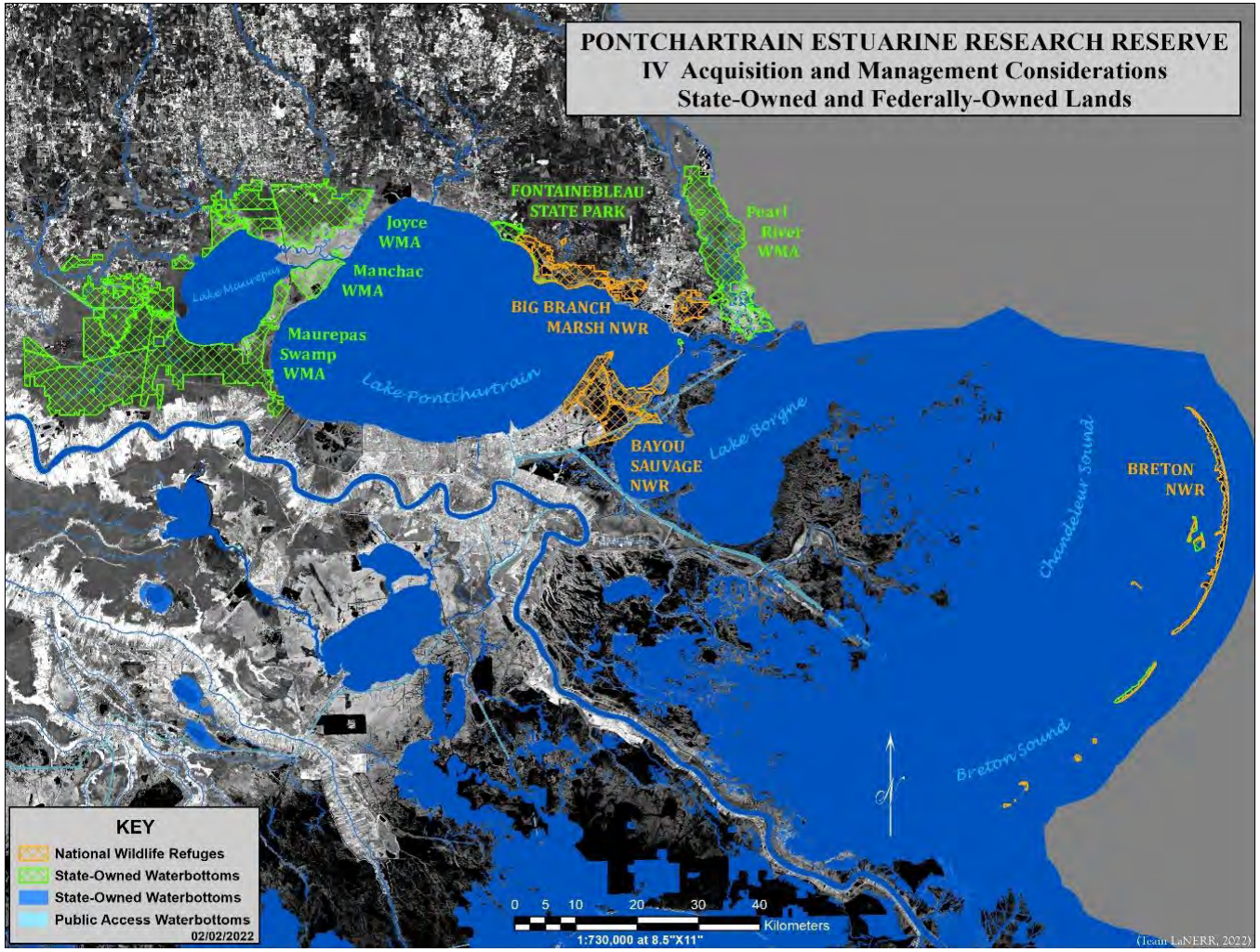
PONTCHARTRAIN BASIN

Boundary overview map :

-Pontchartrain basin *(red)*

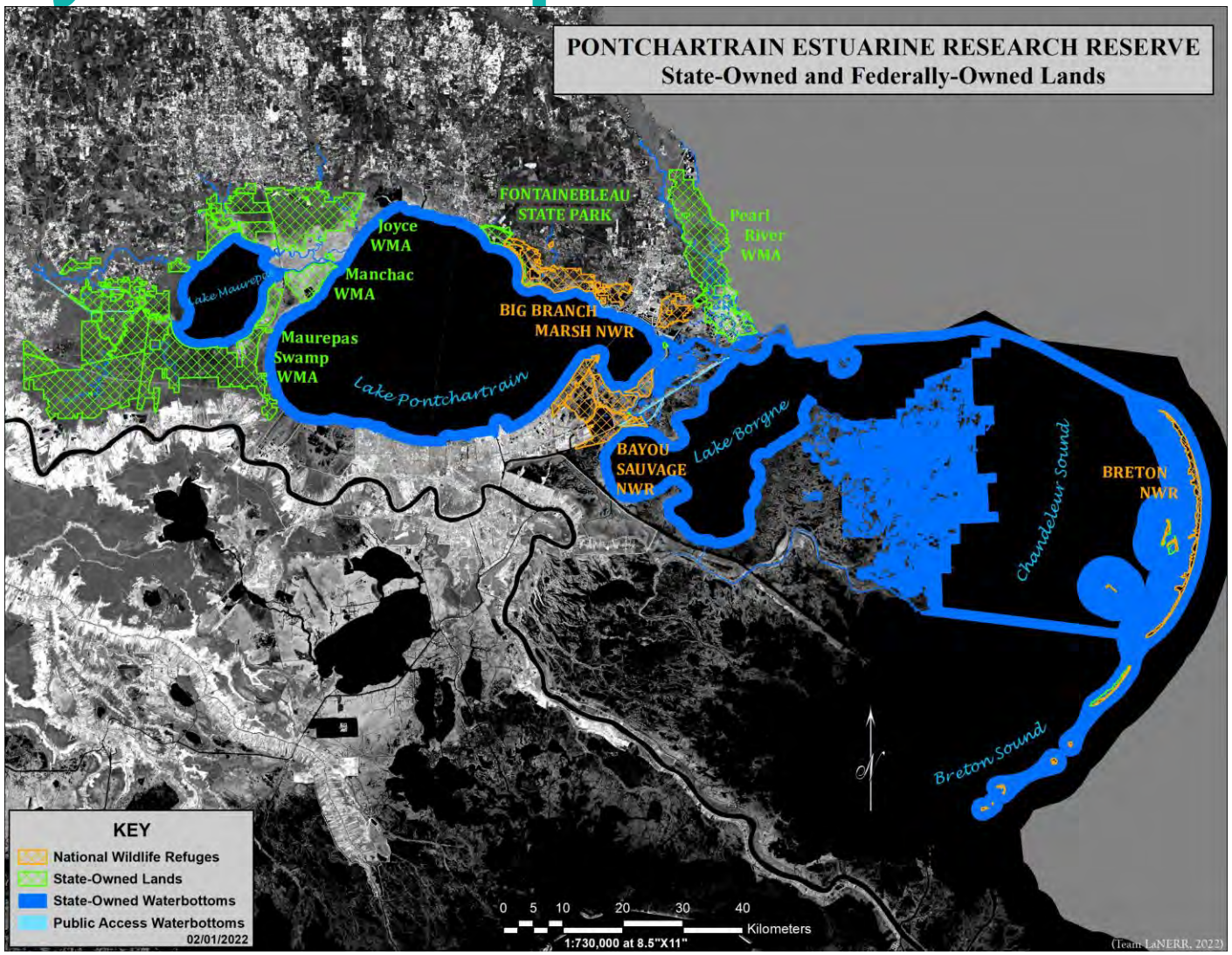
-Estuary *(black and white)*

PONTCHARTRAIN LaNERR OUTER BOUNDARY STATE WATER BOTTOMS of PROPOSED SITE



- State (green) and Federal (orange) lands are easy to identify for the proposed site
- State-Owned Water Bottoms (blue) will likely be trimmed in final proposal.

PONTCHARTRAIN LaNERR PROPOSED SITE: Physical Description

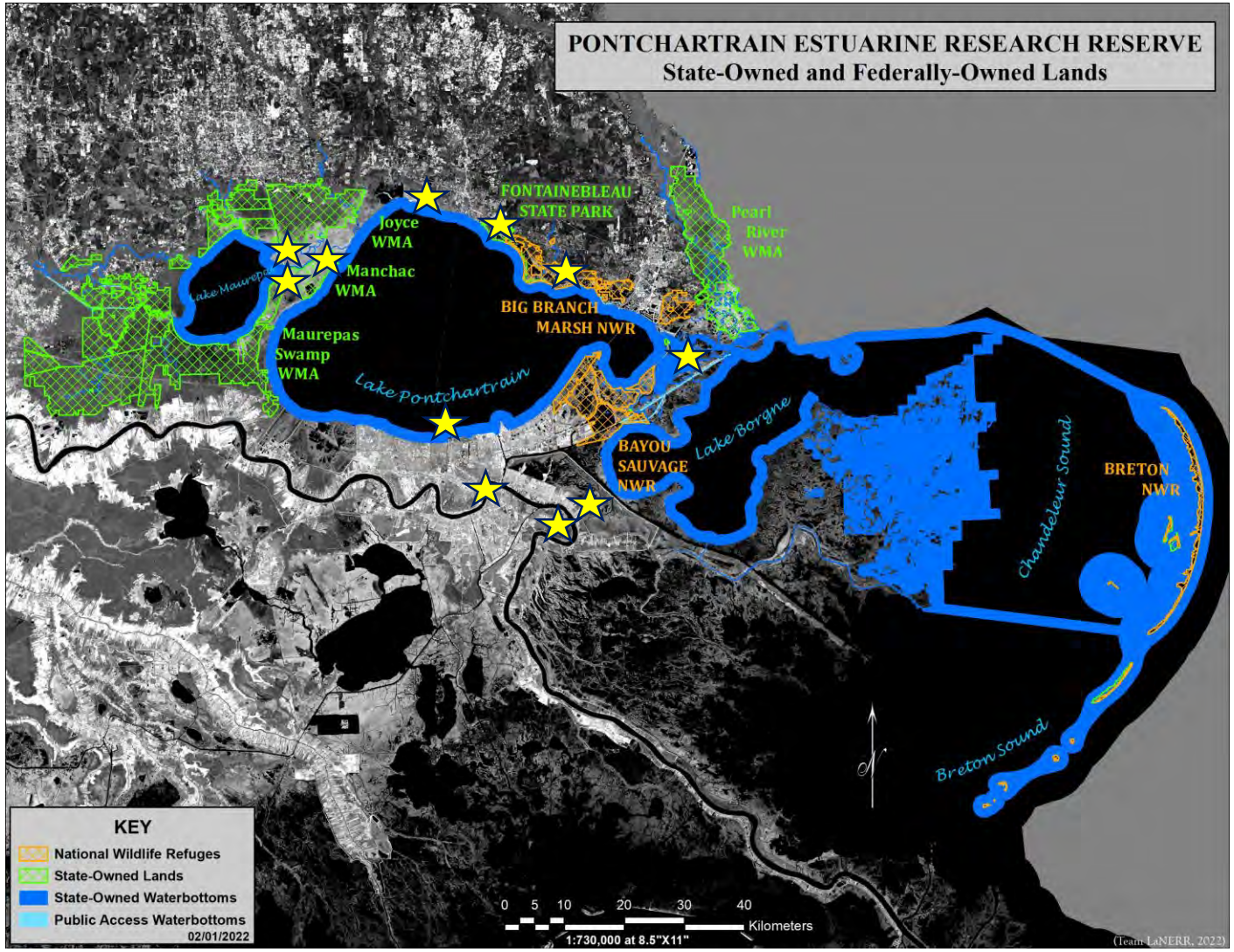


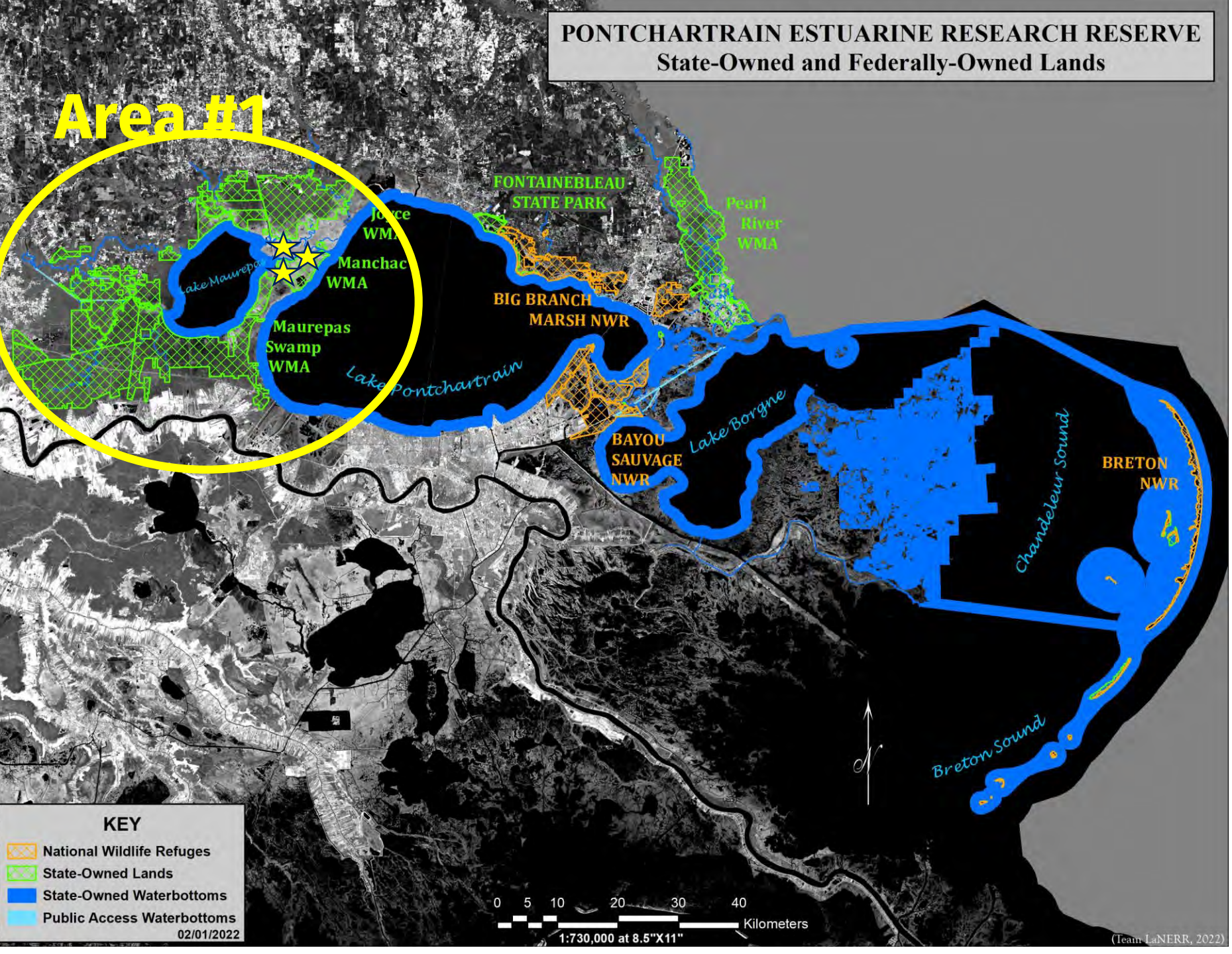
- Multi-component site stratified across the estuarine gradient, from freshwater Maurepas Swamp (northwest) to the marine waters off the Chandeleur Islands (southeast).
- The estuary is water-dominated - includes Lakes' Maurepas, Pontchartrain, Borgne, and Chandeleur Sound.

PONTCHARTRAIN LaNERR PROPOSED SITE- Preliminary Map

The Pontchartrain Basin, with its history of ecological research activity and environmental education, is the perfect candidate for the LaNERR site.

An important asset are the many environmental/research focused facilities (☆) and the large, concentrated human population (about 1.2 million metro-area; about 2.1 million in 16-parish boundary area).





Pontchartrain LaNERR Proposed Site

Area #1

PONTCHARTRAIN LaNERR PROPOSED SITE

AREA #1: Maurepas and Manchac Swamps surround Lake Maurepas. Habitat consist of Uplands (Alluvial Forested Wetlands), Intertidal Areas (Coastal Forested Wetlands, Coastal Freshwater and Intermediate Marshes), and Subtidal and Submerged Bottoms (subtidal soft bottoms and SAV).



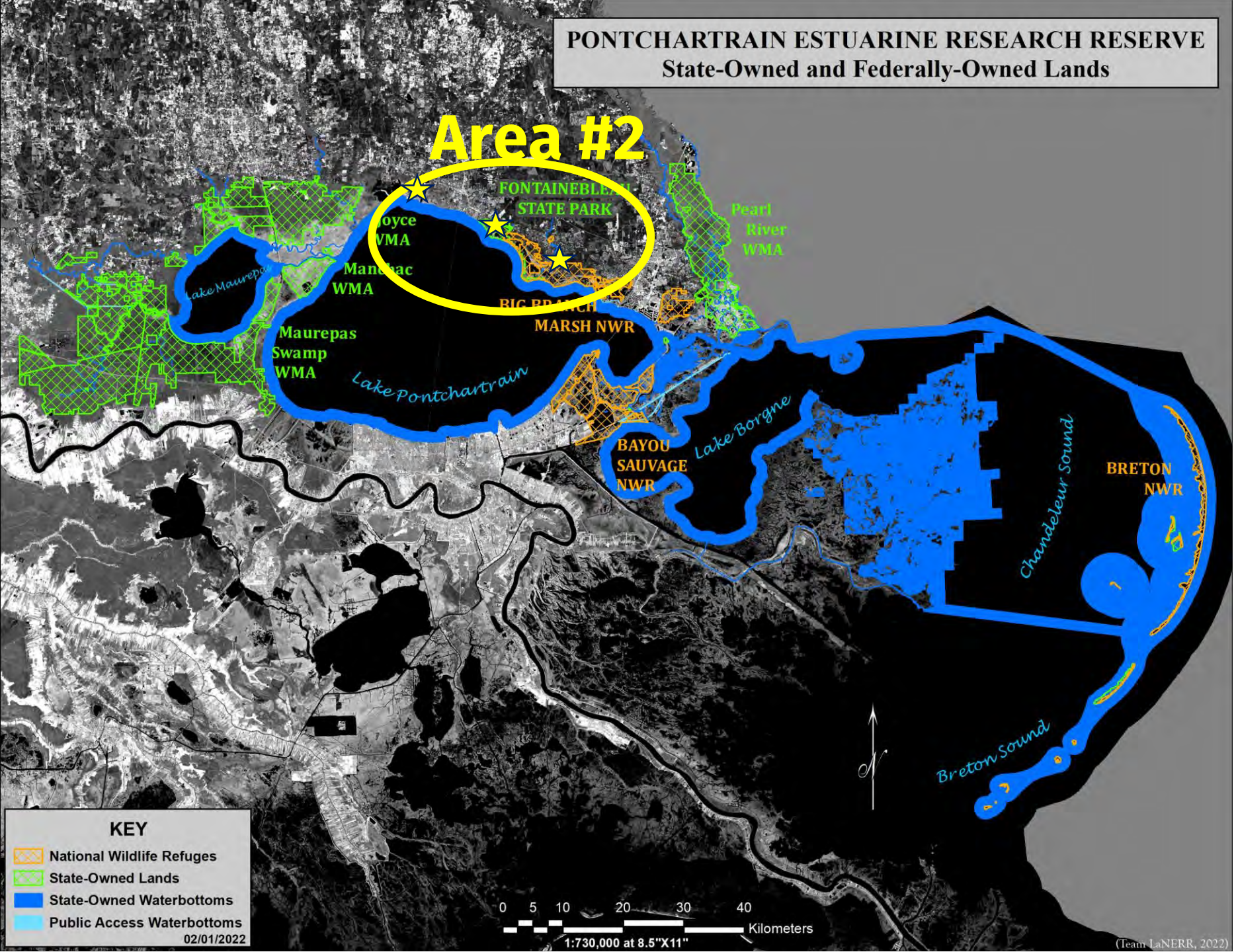






Pontchartrain LaNERR Proposed Site

Area #2



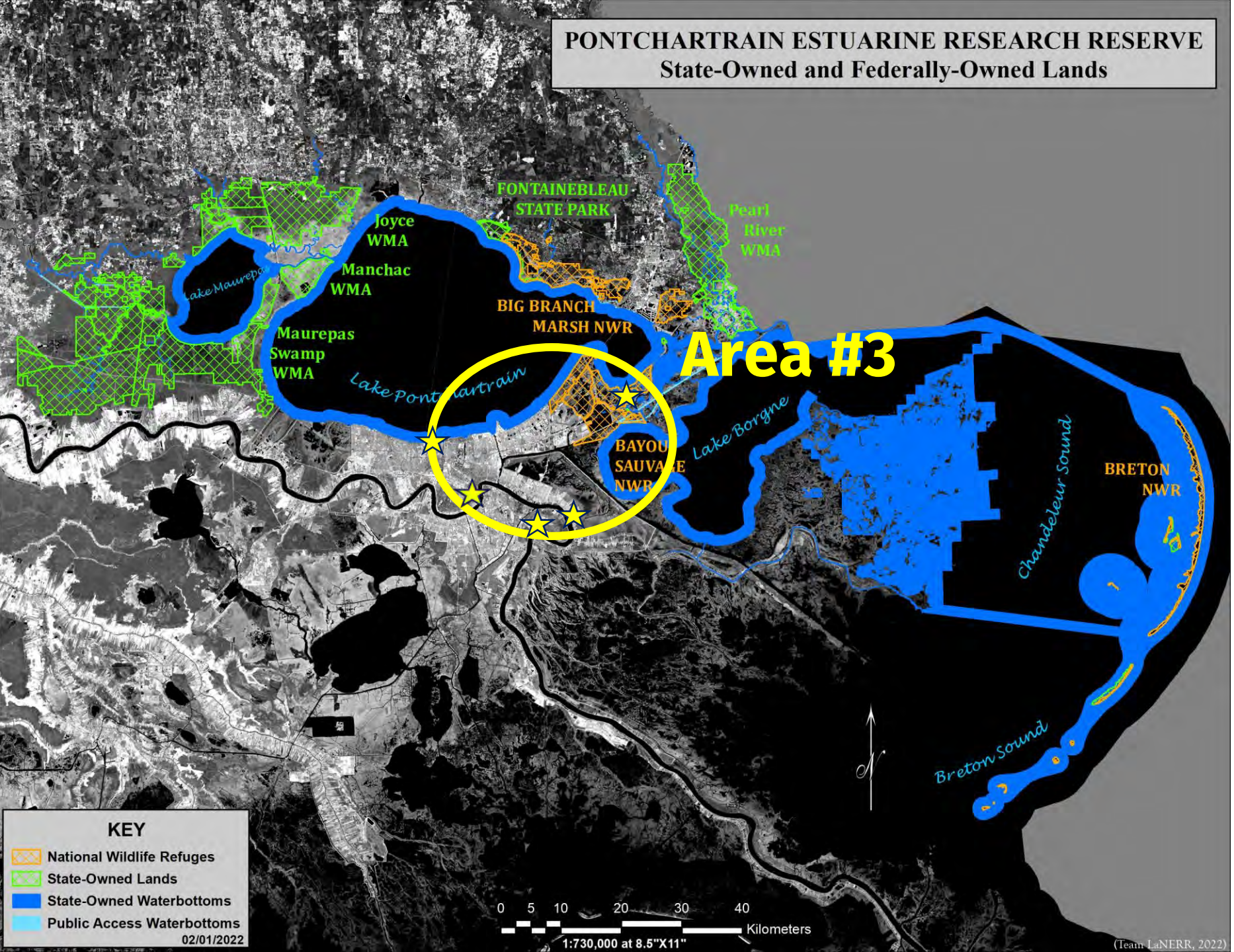
PONTCHARTRAIN LaNERR PROPOSED SITE

AREA #2: Big Branch NWR/Fontainebleau State Park is located on the northeastern edge of Lake Pontchartrain. The majority of Habitat is federally owned, and consists of Uplands (Longleaf Pine Savanna and Maritime Forest), Intertidal Areas (Coastal Intermediate and Brackish Marshes), and Subtidal and Submerged Bottoms (subtidal soft bottoms and SAV).









Pontchartrain LaNERR Proposed Site

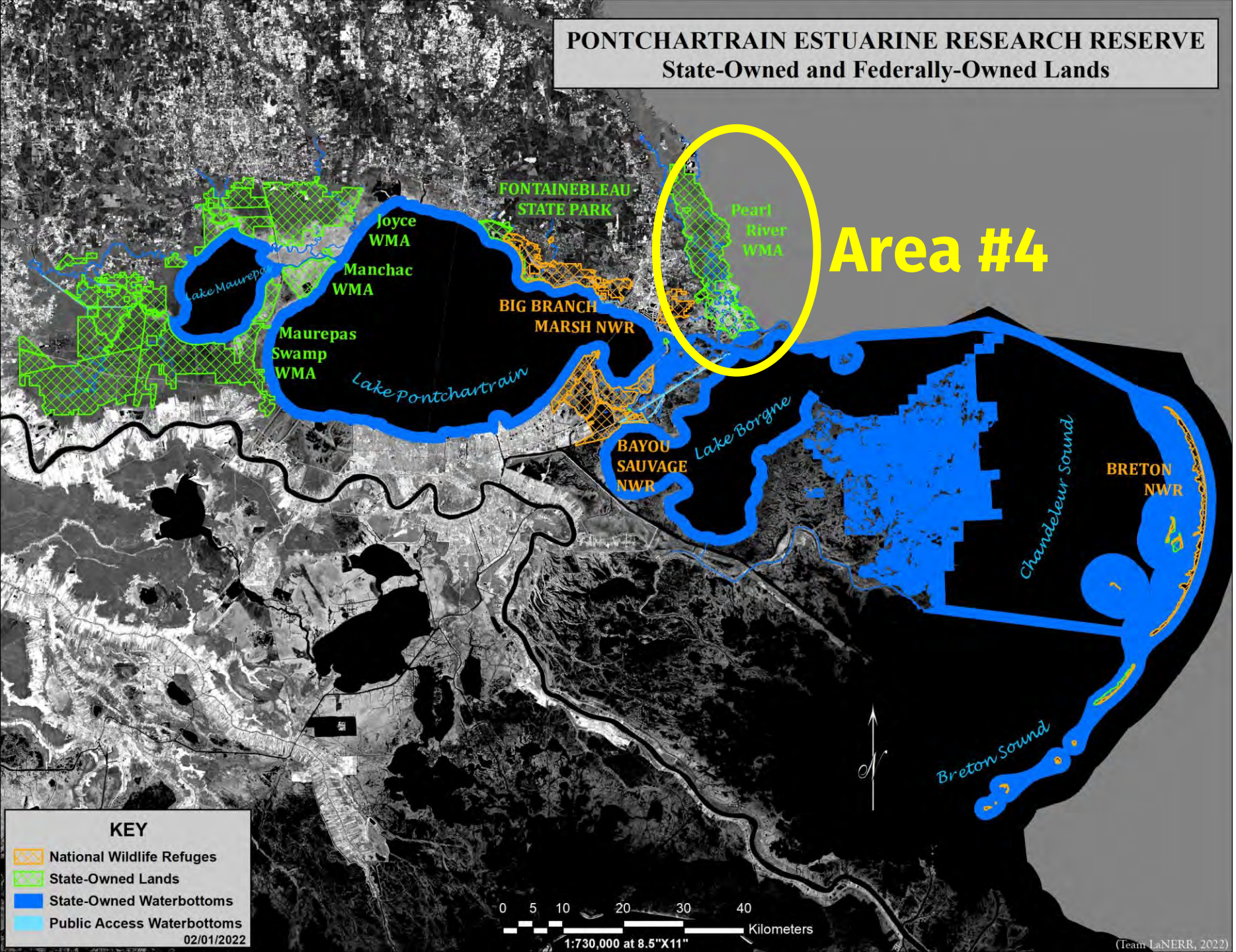
Area #3

PONTCHARTRAIN LaNERR PROPOSED SITE

AREA #3: Orleans Land Bridge is located between Lakes' Pontchartrain and Borne, and contains Lake St. Catherine. Habitat consists of Uplands (Maritime Forest), Intertidal Areas (Coastal Intermediate, Brackish and Saline Marshes), and Subtidal and Submerged Bottoms (subtidal soft bottoms, and SAV).

Pontchartrain LaNERR Proposed Site

Area #4:

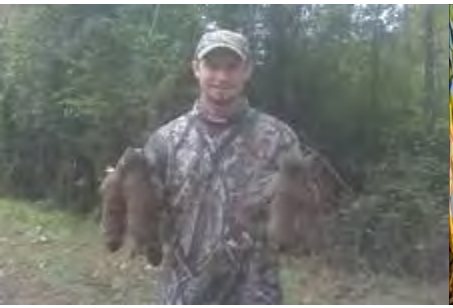


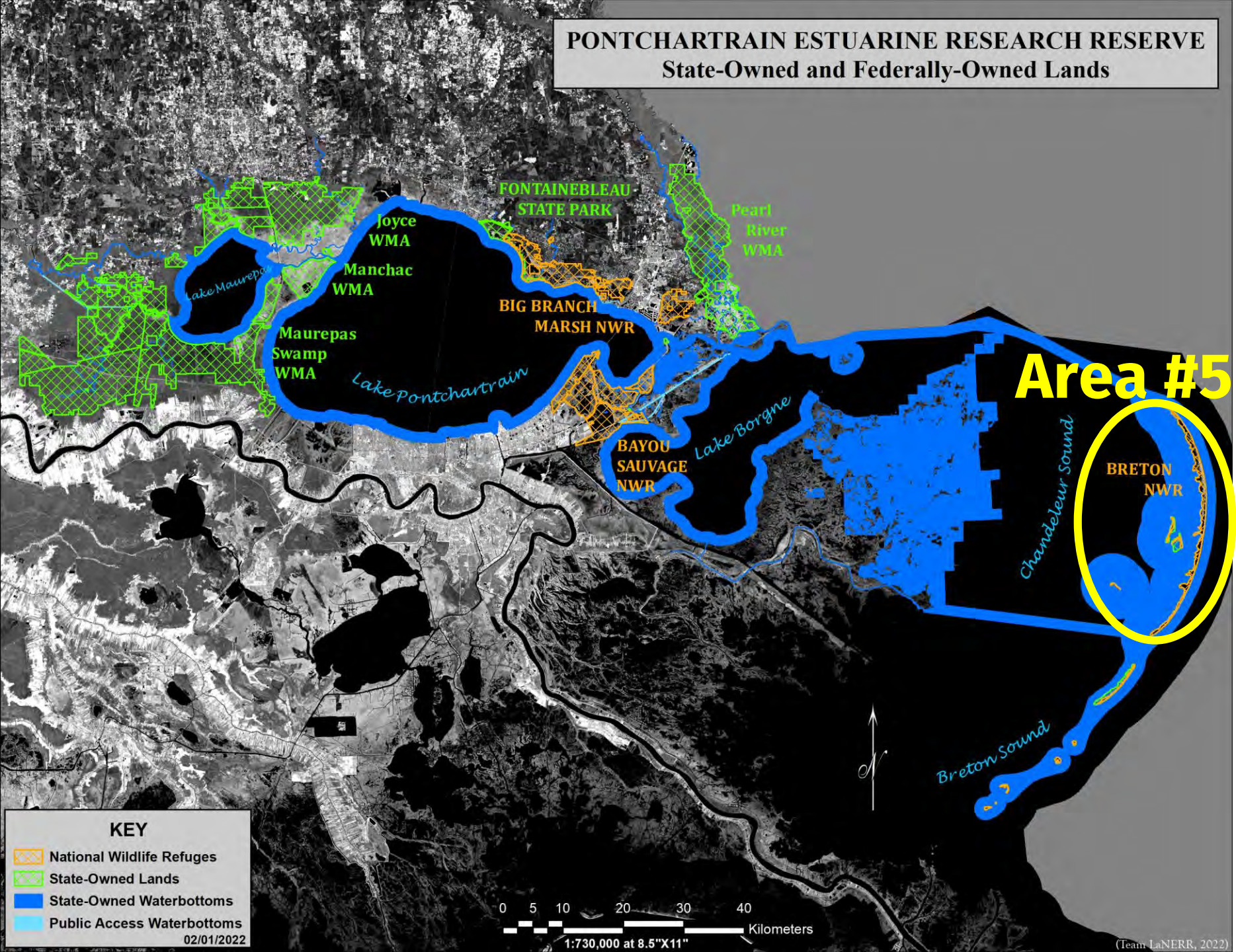
PONTCHARTRAIN LaNERR PROPOSED SITE

AREA #4: Pearl River WMA is located 6 miles east of the town of Slidell and contains hardwood forest (45%), cypress-tupelo swamp (35%) and intermediate marsh (20%). Activities include hunting , trapping, camping, fishing, boating, hiking, photography and birding.







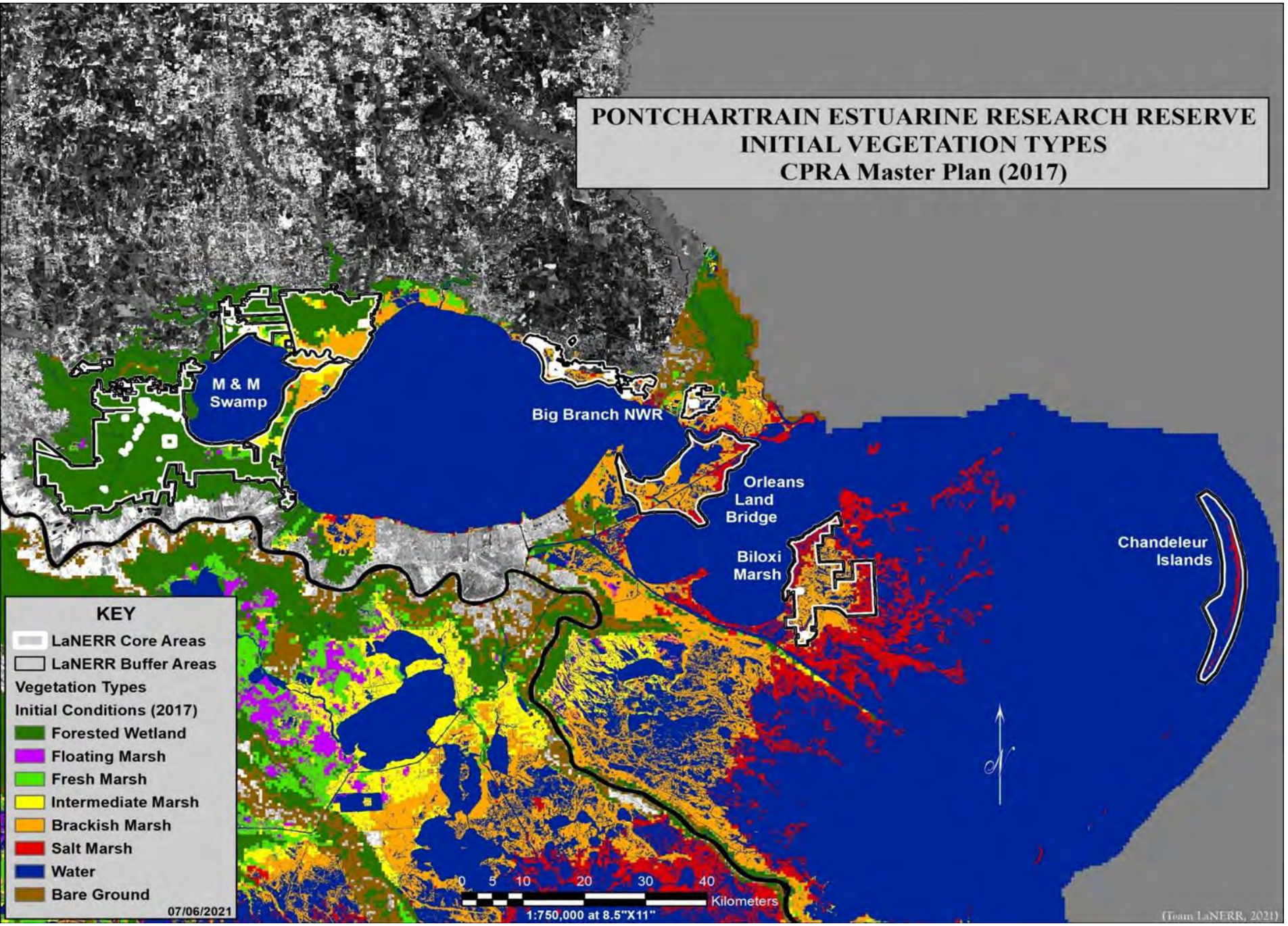
Pontchartrain LaNERR Proposed Site

Area #5

PONTCHARTRAIN LaNERR PROPOSED SITE

AREA #5: Chandeleur Islands are located between Chandeleur Sound to the west and the Gulf of Mexico to the east. Habitat consist of Intertidal Areas (Coastal Saline Marshes, Coastal Mangroves, Intertidal Beaches and Dunes), and Subtidal and Submerged Bottoms (subtidal soft bottoms, hard bottoms, SAV), including the only location in Louisiana with true seagrasses.

Pontchartrain LaNERR Proposed Site



Initial Vegetation Types

- Forested
- Floating
- Fresh
- Intermediate
- Brackish
- Saline
- Bare ground

PONTCHARTRAIN LaNERR PROPOSED SITE

A few interesting facts about our site (also see 2-Page Fact Sheet Provided):

Size of Proposed Site

State lands: 207,453 acres
Federal lands: 52,360 acres
State-Owned Water Bottoms: TBD

Human Inhabitants and Access

# of Residents in 16-parish Boundary: 2.1 mill
# of Car-Free Bike Lanes: 130+ (plus additional 15+ of urban bike-assisted lanes)
Many developing green ways

PONTCHARTRAIN LaNERR PROPOSED SITE

Interesting facts (cont):

Higher Education Institutions and Research/Education/Outreach Centers

1-hour drive of 17 universities and/or colleges//118,672 students

9 major research/education enhancement centers plus a multitude of parks and other environmental program areas

Fun Facts

Fisheries-over 100 species; Wetland Plants-over 100 species; Mammals-approx. 40 species

Migratory Birds – over 270 species move through the Basin every year

Reptiles and Amphibians – approx. 120 species

All Plants and Animals (incl. invertebrates): rare to endangered-690 species; Invasive-60 species

# of Permitted State WMA Hunting/Fishing Users (yr 2021): 24,246

#K-12 Schools (16 parish area, not including Charter Schools): 511 schools//289,494 students

BROAD RANGE OF SUPPORT FROM ACROSS THE ESTUARY!!!

PONTCHARTRAIN LaNERR PROPOSED SITE

What does a potential NERR in the Pontchartrain Basin mean for our communities?

Stewardship

Education and Training

Research and Monitoring

Eco-Tourism

Thank you

LaNERR SEARCH

Questions

Summary of the LaNERR Town Halls for the Pontchartrain Estuarine Zone

February 2022

The Pontchartrain Estuarine Zone Proposal Team hosted three Town Halls as part of the Louisiana National Estuarine Research Reserve (LaNERR) Site Selection process.

- Tuesday, February (6:00 – 8:00pm) Virtual and In-Person at Southeastern University, Student Union Annex – Theater, Hammond, LA
- Thursday, February 3 (6:00 – 8:00pm) Virtual Only
- Friday, February 11 (12:00 – 2:00pm) Virtual and In-Person at Geoghegan Grand Ballroom, University of New Orleans Homer Hitt Alumni and Visitors Center, New Orleans, LA

There were **47** virtual participants at the first Town Hall and **28** in-person participants (per the sign-in sheet). The second Town Hall had **37** virtual participants. The third Town Hall had **63** virtual participants and **6** in-person participants (per the sign-in sheet). Participants included members from parish, state, and federal agencies; regional NERRs; non-governmental organizations, including community groups, economic development and technical training programs; academia; private sector; land owners; and community members. Proposal team members, members of the Designation Leadership Team, and program management support staff also participated.

Each Town Hall began with a recorded presentation on the National Estuarine Research Reserve (NERR) System by Kristin Ransom of NOAA (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yhPBom-_6TE). This was followed by a recorded presentation on the Louisiana NERR (LaNERR) Process by Dr. Robert Twilley of Louisiana State University (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HtnY1AUHPrQ). Kristi Trail of the Pontchartrain Conservancy presented on behalf of the proposal team on the specifics of the proposed Pontchartrain Estuarine Zone site.

Links to the following documents were provided in the virtual Zoom chat, and print copies were available at the in-person meetings:

- Louisiana Sea Grant LaNERR website: https://www.laseagrant.org/deltanerr/
- LaNERR email: deltanerr@lsu.edu
- NERR/LaNERR factsheet: https://www.laseagrant.org/wp-content/uploads/LaNERR-Town-Hall-Intro.pdf
- NERR/LaNERR FAQs: https://www.laseagrant.org/wp-content/uploads/LaNERR-TownHall-FAQ.pdf
- Questionnaire: https://lsu.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_dmp13jzZEEJwQ3Y
- Pontchartrain NERR Town Hall presentation: https://www.laseagrant.org/wp-content/uploads/LaNERR-Pontchartrain-Town-Hall.pdf
- Pontchartrain NERR proposal factsheet: https://www.laseagrant.org/wp-content/uploads/LaNERR-Pontchartrain-Proposal-2pg.pdf

What follows is a topically organized summary of the public question and answer sessions from the three Pontchartrain Estuarine Zone Town Halls.

Several participants **spoke in support of having a NERR located in the Pontchartrain Estuarine Zone**, including members of parish agencies, foundations, academia, private sector, and the community. Reasons cited for wanting a NERR in this area included (but were not limited to): the asset that a NERR could be in conjunction with the existing coastal restoration efforts; access to large numbers of K-12 students given the proximity to large population centers; enhanced opportunities for monitoring and research on both the north and south shores of Lake Pontchartrain; and proximity to a number of scenic rivers and Bayou Sauvage, which is the largest 'urban' national wildlife refuge in the country. Several participants inquired as to where **letters of support** should be sent and **how the business community can support the process**. Contact information was provided for submitting letters of support, and participants were asked to complete the questionnaire as another way to show their support or to voice any concerns, and to continue spreading the word to others. Proposal team members noted the importance of local community support for NOAA to designate a NERR. Once a site is designated, there are many ways community members and businesses can get involved, including joining a NERR Friends Group. Last, it was noted that the Pontchartrain team already has a Friends of Pontchartrain LaNERR page on Facebook (https://www.facebook.com/groups/157994849641231).

Questions were asked about the maps that were shown, the **boundary** and **spatial scale** of the proposed site, including **why certain land areas were or were not included** for consideration, as well as **potential overlap with the NERR site being proposed in the Barataria Estuarine Zone**. Team members noted that only state-owned lands are included in the initial draft and that there may be overlap between proposed sites at this early phase. One participant noted the **unique habitat that the Chandeleur Islands could contribute to a NERR but questioned accessibility** for K-12 students and other citizens as well as whether the Pontchartrain team should **consider a more compact spatial boundary** at this stage. Team members responded that the proposed boundary is draft, and they are currently brainstorming potential areas for inclusion. Once one of the three estuarine zones is nominated, then consideration will be given to available funding and other factors when determining the actual size of the NERR. Team members also noted that the Chandeleur Islands have been included because of their unique habitat and research opportunities, recognizing that they would not likely be readily accessible to the public.

Questions were also raised about how a NERR in this area would handle **urban pressures** on both the north and south shores of Lake Pontchartrain, how the **Hurricane and Storm Damage Risk Reduction System (HSDRRS)** and other water management features would align with a NERR, where the **headquarters** would be located, and whether all research and outreach facilities must be in the Pontchartrain Basin. First, the proposal team noted that they see the location as an advantage. For example, Bayou Sauvage is one of the largest urban National Wildlife Refuges in the United States, and there are many points of access from various areas. The unique water management systems, including HSDRRS, and multiple lines of defense techniques (incorporating swamps, landbridges, and levees to protect major metro areas and industry) could be valuable teaching tools to show how this part of the state lives with and deals with water. This could also be included in STEM lessons / programs. It was noted that the location of a headquarters typically depends on the lead state agency, but once a NERR is established, it can compete for funds to build additional facilities. Existing research and outreach facilities can be utilized as long as all parties are in agreement.

Questions were asked about the **NERR site nomination and designation process** including **who nominates a site**, whether the number of **tourists** visiting the New Orleans area could have an impact on site selection, **how long** the process takes for a NERR to become 'functional,' and whether limited **funding** could slow the process. Proposal team members noted that the LaNERR Executive Committee

(Governor's Office of Coastal Activity, Coastal Protection and Restoration Authority, LA Dept. of Wildlife and Fisheries, and LA Dept. of Natural Resources) will decide which zone to nominate to the Governor. Once the Governor nominates a site to NOAA, the EIS and management plan process begins and takes approximately 1.5 - 2 years. NOAA NERRs do not have a specific selection criterion related to tourism, but almost all NERRs have an eco-tourism component. In terms of funding limitations, both the state lead and NOAA OCM will work hand in hand. NOAA is aware that this NERR is in progress and plans to work closely with the lead state agency; however, if there are funding issues on the state side, the process could be delayed.

Several participants asked questions about specific land area considerations and **whether funding is allocated for land acquisition**. The team noted that funds are allocated, usually annually, through a competitive application process, for construction and land acquisition. Other participants asked whether **private lands with conservation easements** were eligible for inclusion in a NERR and whether **private land owners could give land** to a NERR. The team responded that an MOU can be established between land owners and the managing entity as long as the purpose and use of land in the conservation easement contributes to the mission of the reserve, and that through MOUs private land can be donated to a NERR. The Mission-Aransas NERR in Texas has a large cattle ranch that is included in the boundary through conservation easements. The Weeks Bay NERR in Alabama started with a small designated area that was mostly state lands/water. Once the NERR was established, they worked with private land owners to expand the NERR. Since we are in the site nomination process, there is value in having interested land owners submit short letters stating interest; letters of intent are not binding. Once a site is nominated, the designation phase would begin, and an MOU would work out the details.

There were questions about educational opportunities and engagement of and access for disadvantaged communities. Specifically, whether **educational opportunities are open to community organizations or whether they are exclusively for K-12**? Team members noted that educational/outreach opportunities are available for anyone that is interested, not just K-12. Community groups, college classes, teacher workshops, other general groups, etc.; considering the number of educational facilities already in the Pontchartrain Basin, the addition of a NERR can be a great asset. NERRs are open for everyone interested, and many NERRs have a friends group, which is a great way for individuals or community groups to get involved. A participant asked **what role community organizations, especially those in disadvantaged communities, would have in the LaNEER**, and how the team plans to **proactively engage neighborhood groups that are already involved in coastal restoration and resilience** (e.g., Lower 9th Ward Center for Sustainable Engagement and Development, Sankofa [Lower 9th], groups involved in neighborhood water management projects, the New Orleans East Vietnamese Community Veggie Coop, Ms. Noreen Jacobs' organization [https://volunteer.handsonneworleans.org/agency/detail/?agency_id=83229], etc.); additionally, it was stated that local community groups in disadvantaged communities should be actively engaged now versus having their engagement be an afterthought. The team noted that one aspect of a NERR is to figure out challenges and limitations to enhance access for all; everything is driven by community and local needs. The LaNERR process has gone through the technical aspects needed to narrow it down to three candidate estuarine zones; once a site is nominated, NOAA has public engagement requirements to ensure all groups that could be impacted by a NERR are engaged in the process; this would be conducted during the EIS and management plan phase. Other NERRs have proven that community engagement, passion, and support can be the deciding factor for site selection and nomination.

Pontchartrain Town Hall #1

Tuesday, February 1 (6-8pm)

Join this Webinar **OR** Join in-person at Southeastern Student Union Annex – Theater (2nd floor) in Hammond (parking at the corner of Ned McGehee Drive and North Oak Street)

Attendees

Proposal Team: Kristi Trail, PC; Eva Hillmann, PC; Robert Moreau, SELU; Mark Davis, Tulane; Robert Thomas, Loyola; Maybe in person - David Podgorski, UNO

Designation Leadership Team: Robert Twilley, LSU; Sandy Parfait, LSU; Kristin Ransom, NOAA; Maybe in person - Julie Lively, LA Sea Grant; Jackson Martinez, GOCA

Royal Engineers & Consultants (LA Sea Grant Support): Alaina Grace, Mandy Green

General Participants: 47 virtual participants; **28** in-person participants per the sign in sheet

Virtual attendees copied from Zoom Chat (affiliations noted if entered into the Zoom Chat)

- Angela Underwood, Weeks Bay NERR
- Avery Beck : Avery Beck, Grand Bay NERR
- Bailey Wingett, Southeastern
- Caitlin Turner, Department of Oceanography and Coastal Sciences, Louisiana State University
- Catherine Holcomb, St. Mary Excel
- Chris Murray, Southeastern
- Christina Barrilleaux, Southeastern Louisiana University
- Christinia Lindsly, Southeastern Louisiana University
- Courtney St. John, Southeastern
- Daniel Bollich, Delta Land Services.
- Darby ODonnell, SELU
- Illya Tietzel, SUNO
- Jamie Bass, SELU
- Jeanne Brooks
- Jolie Hidalgo, Southeastern
- Maddie Oliveri, Southeastern Louisiana University
- Marty Floyd representing La. Wildlife Federation
- Michaelyn Broussard, Southeastern
- Paul Forbes
- Penny Shockett, SELU
- Rick Johnson, Entergy - Sustainability & Environmental Policy
- Tara Lambeth, St. John Parish

SLU

Please Print			Town Hall Meetings
February 1, 2022	SLU-Student Union Theater	6:00-8:00pm	
Name	**Organization/Company**	**EMAIL**	**TELEPHONE**
Shelby Powell	Vertebrate Museum	shelby.powell@selu.edu	985-400-8267
Kim Coates	Tangipahoa Parish	district10@tangipahoa.org	985-969-6268
Cliff Fontenot	SLU Biology	cfontenot@selu.edu	985-351-4816
Emma Guillot	SELU	emma.guillot@selu.edu	985-201-5957
JOHN POTEET	LAFCAA	john@lafcaa.com	985-215-2695
al Dranguet	SLU	Ldranguet@gmail.com	985-320-7265
Tom Meehan	LPBAM	TMEEHAN@EASTMAN.com	423-440-9680
John Lopez	Delta Science	lopezdeltascience@gmail.com	504 421-7348

SLU

Please Print			Town Hall Meetings
February 1, 2022	SLU-Student Union Theater	6:00-8:00pm	
Name	Organization/Company	EMAIL	TELEPHONE
Nick Stevens	Wetland Resources	Nicholas.stevens@selu.edu	985-778-7063
Brian Crother	Southeastern	bcrother@selu.edu	
LIZ MARCHIO	Southeastern	elizabeth.marchio@selu.edu	504-215-0258
Florence Wen	Southeastern	florence.wen@selu.edu	

SLU

Please Print			Town Hall Meetings
February 1, 2022	SLU-Student Union Theater	6:00-8:00pm	
Name	Organization/Company	EMAIL	TELEPHONE
Ariel Ebanks	Southeastern	ariel.ebanks@selu.edu	985-710-4259
Eryn Percle	Southeastern	eryn.percle@selu.edu	504 875 0814
Oliver Lyustina	SLU	oliver.lyustina@selu.edu	(305) 934-3481
Pat Dufresne	Port Manchac	portmanchac@i-55.com	(985) 386-5309

LaNERR SEARCH

SLU

Please Print			Town Hall Meetings
February 1, 2022	SLU-Student Union Theater	6:00-8:00pm	
Name	**Organization/Company**	**EMAIL**	**TELEPHONE**
Madison Hohensee	Invertebrate Museum	Madison Hohensee	225-933-3423
Tim Killeen	Killeen.tim@gmail.com	retired resources manager	(504) 427-4277
Eva Hillmann	SELU/PC	eva.hillmann@selu.edu	(985) 634-4245
Deborah Dardis	SELU	ddardis@selu.edu	985-974-4678
Kyle Piller	SELU	Kyle.piller@selu.edu	985-549-2191
Frank Neelis	Manchac Greenway	[illegible]	[illegible]
Ben Taylor	Manchac Greenway	maurepas@charter.net	985 974 1810
Haylie Orr	Vertebrate Museum	haylie.Orr@selu.edu	504-913-5143
MARY WHITE	Biology/SLU	mwhite@selu.edu	985 320-9497
CACEY KENNEDY	SELU	CACEY.KENNEDY@SELU.EDU	
Tylon Kennedy	SELU	tylon.kennedy@selu.edu	
Kylee Langevin	SELU	Kylee.Langevin@selu.edu	985-503-3025

Pontchartrain Town Hall #1

Tuesday, February 1 (6-8pm)

Join this Webinar **OR** Join in-person at Southeastern Student Union Annex – Theater (2nd floor) in Hammond (parking at the corner of Ned McGehee Drive and North Oak Street)

Each Town Hall began with a recorded presentation on the National Estuarine Research Reserve (NERR) System by Kristin Ransom of NOAA (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yhPBom-_6TE). This was followed by a recorded presentation on the Louisiana NERR (LaNERR) Process by Dr. Robert Twilley of Louisiana State University (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HtnY1AUHPrQ). Kristi Trail of the Pontchartrain Conservancy presented on behalf of the proposal team on the specifics of the proposed Pontchartrain Estuarine Zone site.

Links to the following documents were provided in the virtual Zoom chat, and print copies were available at the in-person meetings:

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- LaNERR email: deltanerr@lsu.edu
- NERR/LaNERR factsheet: https://www.laseagrant.org/wp-content/uploads/LaNERR-Town-Hall-Intro.pdf
- NERR/LaNERR FAQs: https://www.laseagrant.org/wp-content/uploads/LaNERR-TownHall-FAQ.pdf
- Questionnaire: https://lsu.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_dmp13jzZEEJwQ3Y
- Pontchartrain NERR Town Hall presentation: https://www.laseagrant.org/wp-content/uploads/LaNERR-Pontchartrain-Town-Hall.pdf
- Pontchartrain NERR proposal factsheet: https://www.laseagrant.org/wp-content/uploads/LaNERR-Pontchartrain-Proposal-2pg.pdf

Public Questions and Comments

- Will you be sharing the notes from the meeting?
  - Answer – All Town Hall materials will be uploaded to the LaNERR website
- Retired wildlife manager – suggest adding the number of scenic rivers in the area and noting that Bayou Sauvage is the only 'urban' NWR in the country; excited to see this process moving forward
- Do all research / outreach facilities have to be in the Pontchartrain basin?
  - Answer – The process of designing facilities is part of the final proposal to NOAA; right now teams should keep options open and brainstorm potential options; there is a restricted budget, so options should be strategic (i.e., what is the best added value with regard to facilities already in existence?)
- Are private lands with conservation easements eligible to be included into the program?
  - Answer - depending on how the MOU is worded, yes absolutely. Mission-Aransas NERR in Port Aransas, TX has a large cattle ranch that is included in the boundary through conservation easement.

    - Answer – Weeks Bay started with a designated area that was mostly state lands/water. Once the NERR was established, they worked with private land owners to expand the NERR.
- Happy to know the land areas in consideration can be modified through this process and land areas are not set in stone yet
- For people with private lands who have more than 20 acres would they be considered to have the chance to give there land to part of the LaNERR for the eco tourism aspect of it?
    - Answer – An MOU can be established between land owners and the managing entity as long as the purpose and use of land in the conservation easement contributes to the mission of the reserve
    - Answer – Since we are in the site nomination process, there is value of interested land owners to submit a short letter stating interest; letters of intent are not binding; once a site is nominated, the designation phase would begin, and an MOU would work out the details
- What can the business community do to support the process? How to look at the sustainability of this area of the state?
    - Answer – A start would be to complete the survey/questionnaire and spread the word about upcoming Town Halls to gather additional support; get others to complete the survey and consider submitting a letter of support; letters can be from individuals or from groups
    - Answer – Local support can be critical for final site nomination and eventual designation; suggest people look at the economic document on the LaNERR website for examples of how NERRs are beneficial to local communities
    - Answer – Most NERRs have a friend's group – they provide volunteer services, can raise funds, tend to be very versatile, and are very helpful to their local NERR; consider business group participation in a friends group
- After the site is designation, how long would it take for site to be operational?
    - Answer – It depends, in part on the amount of resources that can be devoted to drafting the management plan and EIS; usually approximately 2 years; there are options to expedite the process (e.g., CT NERR) if there are substantial resources that can be devoted to it
    - Answer – The next step is for one of the three sites to be nominated to Gov JB Edwards. His office will then nominate a site to NOAA; if NOAA approves, that is when the management plan and EIS phase begin; upon completion of that, a site can be designated
- Are there any specific plans or projects that the LaNERR wants to get started if everything works out and the nomination gets voted in?
    - Answer – The team has not yet gotten that far down the road; at this time, they are still trying to get the Pontchartrain site nominated
- Where should letters of support be sent?
    - Answer – Kristi Trail - Kristi@scienceforourcoast.org
- If the basin is selected, are there funds usually allocated for the acquisition of lands?
    - Answer – There are funds allocated, usually every year, for construction and acquisition. They are allocated through a competitive application process. If you look at the copy of my slides, on the one covering funding, acquisition is the PAC funding.

Pontchartrain Town Hall #2

Thursday, February 3 (6:00 – 8:00 pm)

Join this Webinar (virtual only)

Attendees

Proposal Team: Kristi Trail, PC; Eva Hillmann, PC; Robert Moreau, SELU; Mark Davis, Tulane Robert Thomas, Loyola; David Podgorski, UNO

Designation Leadership Team: Robert Twilley, LSU; Sandy Parfait, LSU; Kristin Ransom, NOAA; Not available: Julie Lively, LA Sea Grant; Jackson Martinez, GOCA

Royal Engineers & Consultants (LA Sea Grant Support): Alaina Grace, Mandy Green

General Participants: 37 virtual participants

Virtual attendees copied from Zoom Chat (affiliations noted if entered into the Zoom Chat)

- Alex McClellan, LSU
- Andrew Whitehurst
- Dr. Angela M Chalk, Executive Director, Healthy Community Services, New Orleans, LA
- Barbara Johnson, The Great Delta Tours
- Bill Haines Meraux Foundation
- Blaise Pezold, Moreaux Foundation
- Chris Barnett, Pontchartrain Conservancy
- Chris Haines Meraux Foundation board member
- Dinah Maygarden, UNO Pontchartrain Institute for Env Sci
- Frank Jordan, Loyola University New Orleans
- Gary Vitrano, Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries
- Grant McCall
- Honora Buras, self, Ascension resident, retired CPRA Planning and Research Division
- Illya Tietzel, Southern University at New Orleans
- John Lane, St. Bernard Parish Government, Coastal Director
- Mark Schexnayder; Batture LLC, Society for Louisiana Iris, Mark Davis Fan Club, President
- Mostafa Elaasar
- Philip Livaudais
- Seth Blitch, The Nature Conservancy
- Tara Lambeth, Coastal and Water Management Division Lead, St. John the Baptist Parish

Pontchartrain Town Hall #2

Thursday, February 3 (6:00 – 8:00 pm)

Join this Webinar (virtual only)

Each Town Hall began with a recorded presentation on the National Estuarine Research Reserve (NERR) System by Kristin Ransom of NOAA (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yhPBom-_6TE). This was followed by a recorded presentation on the Louisiana NERR (LaNERR) Process by Dr. Robert Twilley of Louisiana State University (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HtnY1AUHPrQ). Kristi Trail of the Pontchartrain Conservancy presented on behalf of the proposal team on the specifics of the proposed Pontchartrain Estuarine Zone site.

Links to the following documents were provided in the virtual Zoom chat, and print copies were available at the in-person meetings:

- Louisiana Sea Grant LaNERR website: https://www.laseagrant.org/deltanerr/
- LaNERR email: deltanerr@lsu.edu
- NERR/LaNERR factsheet: https://www.laseagrant.org/wp-content/uploads/LaNERR-Town-Hall-Intro.pdf
- NERR/LaNERR FAQs: https://www.laseagrant.org/wp-content/uploads/LaNERR-TownHall-FAQ.pdf
- Questionnaire: https://lsu.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_dmp13jzZEEJwQ3Y
- Pontchartrain NERR Town Hall presentation: https://www.laseagrant.org/wp-content/uploads/LaNERR-Pontchartrain-Town-Hall.pdf
- Pontchartrain NERR proposal factsheet: https://www.laseagrant.org/wp-content/uploads/LaNERR-Pontchartrain-Proposal-2pg.pdf

Public Questions and Comments

- I hope we can get the Nerr for the Pontchartrain basin! This would be such an asset with our Coastal Restoration efforts!!
- In my opinion, Pontchartrain would make access to more K12 students accessible.
- The Pontchartrain Basin is the perfect location for a NERR!
- Biloxi Wildlife Management Area is missing from the map
    - Answer – Technically Biloxi WMA is leased from private land owners. I think that's why it was left off.
    - Answer – That's correct....but those private lands can be included later if we are chosen.
    - Answer – Good catch. That is because we decided to focus primarily on state owned and federally owned lands (and state owned water bottoms) only at this stage for the Town Hall meetings. Biloxi Marsh not owned by the state (just managed by). We will be considering/communicating with other possible lands as we get to Phase III of the proposal.
- UNO Coastal Education and Research Facility is also on New Orleans East Land Bridge
    - Answer – Correct and one of those 10 stars noted that (Kristi maybe just didn't mention). But UNO-CERF is definitely one of the key research/education/outreach centers in the Pontchartrain with a long history of work in our region.
- What role would the HSDRRS play in the Pontchartrain Basin for the NERR?

    - Answer – It and other such features can be part of the outreach and education component; the way coastal LA copes and builds is unique, especially considering the amount of adaptation that is ongoing; green infrastructure, etc. HSDRRS can be a learning / teaching tool to help people understand these types of features.
- We tried to get a comprehensive teaching lesson on protection systems, lines of defense; coastal LA is ideal place to learn about this; include in STEM programs; teaching on the combined protection and restoration system
- Pontchartrain Basin represents a great example of the value of multiple lines of defense that incorporate swamps, landbridges and levees to protect major metro areas and industry.
- Are educational opportunities open to community organizations or are the ed opportunities exclusively for K-12?
    - Answer – Educational/outreach opportunities are available to a wide range of participants, not just K-12. Community groups, college classes, teacher workshops, other general groups, etc.
    - Answer – Considering the number of educational facilities already in the Pontchartrain Basin, the addition of a NERR can be a great asset.
- What role does community organizations have in the LaNEER? [in light of underrepresented communities]
    - Answer – One aspect of NERRs is to figure out challenges and limitations to enhance access for all; everything is driven by community and local needs
    - Answer – It is open for everyone interested; NOAA says “from K – grey" - many NERRs have a friends group, which is a great way for individuals or community groups to get involved; these sites are for everyone
- We have a friends of Pontchartrain LaNERR on Facebook. Please join! https://www.facebook.com/groups/157994849641231
- The millions of tourists that come through our region is another fantastic opportunity. Does this fit into the NERR grading?
    - Answer – This seems important in terms of the number of people and access; value to get both locals and tourists out to a site
    - Answer – NOAA NERRs do not have a specific criterion related to tourism, but almost all NERRs have an eco tourism component – so it is for everyone; the criterion is about ‘access’
- What is your thinking about how you proactively engage neighborhood groups who are involved in coastal restoration and resilience (i.e Lower 9th Ward Center for Sustainable Engagement and Development, Sankofa (Lower 9th); Water Management Projects in neighborhoods, New Orleans East Vietnamese Community Veggie Coop
- There are lots of local community groups in disadvantaged communities that should be actively engaged now vs having their engagement be an afterthought
    - Answer – We have gone through the technical aspect to narrow it down to three estuarine zones and now the public engagement begins; local communities or individuals can submit brief letters of support; once a site is nominated, there will be tremendous public engagement during the EIS and management plan phases to nail down the details of the site. Other NERRs have proven that community engagement / passion / support can be the deciding factor of selecting and nominating a site.
    - Answer – There are terms of public engagement from the NOAA side to engage all groups that could be impacted by a NERR; this would be conducted during the EIS and Management Plan phase

- Ms. Noreen Jacobs has a community organization. Her website is https://volunteer.handsonneworleans.org/agency/detail/?agency_id=83229. Her older email address is nwjacobs40@gmail.com. An alternative email is hopecommunityrc@gmail.com
- In Mississippi, Grand Bay NERR is staffed by Miss Dept of Marine Resources. When will Louisiana need to make the decision about who provides staff for this new state facility. Does that matter at this point?
    - Answer – All NERRs are different; we are in the process of deciding on the general location of a site, and we hope to have a site nominated by June 2022; in that nomination package, the lead state agency should be identified, although there can be modifications during the EIS and Management Plan phase

Pontchartrain Town Hall #3

Friday, February 11 (12:00 – 2:00 pm)

Join this Webinar OR Join in-person at the Geoghegan Grand Ballroom located at UNO's Homer Hitt Alumni and Visitors Center in New Orleans

Attendees

Proposal Team: David Podgorski, UNO; Kristi Trail, PC; Eva Hillmann, PC; Robert Moreau, SELU; Maybe in person (Robert Thomas, Loyola; Mark Davis, Tulane)

Designation Leadership Team: Robert Twilley, LSU; Sandy Parfait, LSU; Kristin Ransom, NOAA; Julie Lively, LA Sea Grant; Maybe in person (Jackson Martinez, GOCA)

Royal Engineers & Consultants (LA Sea Grant Support): Alaina Grace, Mandy Green

General Participants: 63 virtual participants; **6** in-person participants per the sign in sheet

Virtual participants listed below (affiliations are noted if they were entered into the Zoom Chat)

- Barbara Hargove
- Becky Allee
- Bradley Breland
- Brady Skaggs, Pontchartrain Conservancy
- Bridget Faust-Accola, NOAA Office of Coastal Management
- C Britt
- Caitlin Wessel
- Carol Lunn
- Carolyn Monteith
- Catherine Holcomb
- Charles Crabtree
- Cheston Hill
- Chris Barnett
- Cynthia Duet
- Deborah Dardis
- Deja Hebert
- DeWitt Braud, LSU
- Dov Block, St. John the Baptist Parish
- Erin Rooney, HDR
- Erin Vidrine, CPRA
- Frank Neelis
- Gregory Grandy, CPRA
- Ivy Mathieu, St. John Parish Coastal Advisory Committee
- James MacPherson, Lake Pontchartrain Basin Maritime Museum

- Jennifer Cook, LA Sea Grant
- Jennifer Cumbest
- Jenny Schexnayder
- Jeremy Rodriguez
- Jonathan Winslow
- Joseph Coco
- Kacie Wright, USGS/CWPPRA
- Laci Melancon
- Lena Byers
- Dr. Liz Marchio, Southeastern Louisiana University
- Louis Tamporello, Morgan City Council
- Martin Floyd
- Martin Landrieu
- Matthew Duplessis
- Maxwell Harsha, UNO
- Melissa Daigle, LA Sea Grant
- Mike Carloss, Ducks Unlimited
- Monica Mancuso
- Nancy Rabalais, LSU
- Noreen Jacobs
- Paige Gisclair
- Patricia Meadowcroft
- Patricia Zebrick
- Philip Clinton
- Phoebe Zito
- R. Hampton Peele, Louisiana Geological Survey, LSU
- Rebecca Triche, Louisiana Wildlife Federation
- Ridgely Myers
- Robert Hastings
- Robert Edwards
- Sharon Edwards
- Summer Langlois, CPRA
- Tara Lambeth, St. John the Baptist Parish
- Tasia Denapolis, Pontchartrain Conservancy
- Terri Von Hoven
- Tim McLean
- William Guste
- Caller 1228****701

UNO

Please Print			Town Hall Meetings
February [redacted] 2022	SLU-Student Union Theater	6:00-8:00pm	
Name	**Organization/Company**	**EMAIL**	**TELEPHONE**
Olga Tietzel	SUNO	itietzel@suno.edu	504-286-5111
Tim Killeen		Killeen.timp@gmail.com	504 427-4277
Raleigh Hoke	Healthy Gulf	Raleigh@healthygulf.org	573 705 1916
MARTIN O'CONNELL	UNO/PIES	moconnel@uno.edu	504-280-4032
Kirsty Rees	UNO	krees@uno.edu	504-280-6743
Dinah Maygarden	UNO/PIES	dmaygard@uno.edu	504 866-1693

Pontchartrain Town Hall #3

Friday, February 11 (12:00 – 2:00 pm)

Join this Webinar OR Join in-person at the Geoghegan Grand Ballroom located at UNO's Homer Hitt Alumni and Visitors Center in New Orleans

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- Pontchartrain NERR proposal factsheet: https://www.laseagrant.org/wp-content/uploads/LaNERR-Pontchartrain-Proposal-2pg.pdf

Public Questions and Comments

- I thought I saw overlap with Barataria Basin in Breton Sound. Comment?
    - Answer – Correct; all three proposal teams are in communication, and both Barataria and Pontchartrain teams have some areas that overlap; Pontchartrain boundary would stay north of the MRGO; Barataria would be south of the MRGO
- The Chandeleurs are a wonderful habitat, but how accessible would it be to the general and local urban citizens?
    - Answer – The team has no intention to build access point for mass transit to Chandeleur Island; this location would be more for research; the public access would be for a more central location
    - Answer – Expect to have a multitude of accessible locations throughout the Pontchartrain Zone for NERR related activities
- The specific habitats are incredible and unique. How will these attributes combine with urban pressures, both north shore and south shore?
    - Answer – This is to the team's advantage; Bayou Sauvage is one of the largest urban refuges in the US; lots of access from various areas; also unique water management

system and multiple lines of defense; could be valuable teaching tool to show how this part of the state lives with and deals with water

- Would it be better for Pontchartrain to focus more narrowly now than later?
    - Answer – Good question; the teams are at the point of trying to figure this out now
    - Answer – We have a wealth of resources. Coastal landscape offers a lot of opportunities. NERRs range in size from 500 – 365K acres. There is no size determination. State has to decide what they think is best and meets the NERR mission. Strategy given to teams was to brainstorm locations. Criteria are mostly at basin level and unrelated to NERR size. Following nomination, will have to consider available funding and other factors when determining size.
    - Answer – Looking for a site with unique habitat. Boundary should then include unique habitat plus a buffer around that habitat to preserve it. There are opportunities to change the size of the NERR and areas that are included throughout the process
    - Answer – What limits NERR size is available funding. Have been questioned about whether there is an opportunity to combine sites from the three zones into one NERR. For now, they will remain separate.
- Can you be clearer on geographic boundary and whether there will be one central physical location?
    - Answer – This has not yet been decided. Most NERRs have one physical center but others have more than one
    - Answer – Location of headquarters depends on lead state agency and the location of where the staff of that state lead already work; once a NERR is established, can compete for funds to build additional facilities
    - Answer – Sequence of process / decisions – right now the teams are focused on the attributes of each site to meet NERR mission; once a site is nominated, then that group will drill down to where the headquarters would be and determine what parcels of land/water would be included. The maps are draft right now; they show all the state owned land/water - not the land/water that will be included; these decisions come after a site is selected/nominated
- Affords opportunity for monitoring and research on north and south shores of Lake Pontchartrain
    - Answer – Agrees; having a lot of monitoring is a good thing; a NERR would allow us to share data with data from other NERRs
- What's next? Who gets to decide among the three zones?
    - Answer – Executive Committee will nominate one site to the Governor
    - Answer – Once the state provides nomination to NOAA, NOAA has to review and approve, and then EIS and management plan process begins and takes 1.5-2 years
    - Answer – There were early meetings with the Governor's Cabinet to decide which agencies would be on Executive Committee (GOCA, CPRA, LDWF, LDNR). Executive Committee will make the decision on which zone will be nominated to the Governor
- Once the Governor submits a site, would funding or lack of funding slow the final 18-24 month process
    - Answer – The short answer is, it depends. Both the state lead and NOAA OCM will work hand in hand. NOAA OCM knows this is coming and has dedicated staff resources to move the designation forward. If there are funding issues at the state side, it could delay things.

Recorded Date	What type of organization below BEST describes you? (Please check only ONE.)	Have you visited the LaNERR web site at laseagrant.org/deltanerr/ to review the mission of the NERR system and examples of NERR sites?	In which of the following areas do you live? (Please check only ONE.) - Selected Choice	Which of the LaNERR candidate site alternatives are you considering in this survey? (Please check only ONE; To provide feedback on another candidate site, please take the survey again)	How likely would you consider the importance of a NERR in your community to ecotourism?	Please indicate the extent to which you think the following missions of a proposed LaNERR are important to supporting Coastal Zone Management. - Research and Monitoring Mission	Please indicate the extent to which you think the following missions of a proposed LaNERR are important to supporting Coastal Zone Management. - Education and Interpretative Center Mission	Please indicate the extent to which you think the following missions of a proposed LaNERR are important to supporting Coastal Zone Management Mission	The following represent missions of a NERR site as outline in the presentation by NOAA and is part of the selection process of a NERR designation in Louisiana. How important is each to you? - Environmental Representativeness	The following represent missions of a NERR site as outline in the presentation by NOAA and is part of the selection process of a NERR designation in Louisiana. How important is each to you? - Research and Monitoring	The following represent missions of a NERR site as outline in the presentation by NOAA and is part of the selection process of a NERR designation in Louisiana. How important is each to you? - Education, Interpretation, and Culture	The following represent missions of a NERR site as outline in the presentation by NOAA and is part of the selection process of a NERR designation in Louisiana. How important is each to you? - Coastal Zone Management Issues	Please indicate which response below best describes your likelihood to participate in each mission of a NERR proposed in your region. - Research and Monitoring Mission	Please indicate which response below best describes your likelihood to participate in each mission of a NERR proposed in your region. - Education and Interpretative Center Mission	Please indicate which response below best describes your likelihood to participate in each mission of a NERR proposed in your region. - Coastal Zone Management Mission
2/8/2022 19:20	Non-Profit Organization	Yes	Other: Rapides Parish		Somewhat likely	Very Important	Very Important	Very Important	Very Important	Very Important	Very Important	Very Important	Somewhat Likely	Somewhat Likely	Somewhat Likely
2/2/2022 7:29	Other (please describe)	Yes	Atchafalaya	Atchafalaya Basin	Very likely	Very Important	Very Important	Very Important	Very Important	Somewhat Important	Very Important	Very Important	Somewhat Likely	Very Likely	Somewhat Likely
2/2/2022 12:49	Federal Agency/Government	Yes	Other: Describe	Atchafalaya Basin	Uncertain	Very Important	Very Important	Very Important	Very Important	Very Important	Very Important	Very Important	Very Likely	Very Likely	Very Likely
2/2/2022 12:50	Privately employed	No	Atchafalaya	Atchafalaya Basin	Very likely	Very Important	Very Important	Very Important	Very Important	Very Important	Very Important	Very Important	Uncertain	Very Likely	Uncertain
2/2/2022 12:51	County Agency/Government	Yes	Atchafalaya	Atchafalaya Basin	Very likely	Very Important	Very Important	Somewhat Important	Somewhat Important	Somewhat Important	Very Important	Somewhat Important	Somewhat Likely	Very Likely	Very Likely
2/2/2022 13:43	State Agency/Government	Yes	Pontchartrain	Atchafalaya Basin	Somewhat likely	Very Important	Very Important	Very Important	Somewhat Important	Very Important	Somewhat Important	Very Important	Somewhat Likely	Very Likely	Somewhat Likely
2/2/2022 13:45	County Agency/Government	No	Atchafalaya	Atchafalaya Basin	Very likely	Very Important	Very Important	Very Important	Very Important	Very Important	Very Important	Very Important	Very Likely	Very Likely	Very Likely
2/2/2022 13:45	Other (please describe)	Yes	Atchafalaya	Atchafalaya Basin	Very likely	Very Important	Very Important	Very Important	Very Important	Very Important	Very Important	Very Important	Somewhat Likely	Very Likely	Somewhat Likely
2/2/2022 13:47	State Agency/Government	Yes	Atchafalaya	Atchafalaya Basin	Very likely	Very Important	Very Important	Very Important	Very Important	Very Important	Very Important	Very Important	Very Likely	Very Likely	Very Likely
2/2/2022 13:52	Non-Profit Organization	Yes	Atchafalaya	Atchafalaya Basin	Very unlikely	Very Important	Very Important	Very Important	Somewhat Important	Very Important	Very Important	Somewhat Important	Very Likely	Very Likely	Somewhat Likely
2/2/2022 13:54	Non-Profit Organization	Yes	Atchafalaya	Atchafalaya Basin	Very likely	Very Important	Very Important	Very Important	Very Important	Very Important	Very Important	Very Important	Somewhat Likely	Very Likely	Somewhat Likely
2/2/2022 14:16	Industry/Business	Yes	Teche/Vermilion	Atchafalaya Basin	Very likely	Very Important	Very Important	Somewhat Important	Somewhat Important	Very Important	Very Important	Very Important	Very Likely	Very Likely	Very Likely

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2/2/2022 17:20	State Agency/Government	Yes	Teche/Vermilion	Atchafalaya Basin	Very likely	Very Important	Very Important	Very Important	Very Important	Very Important	Very Important	Very Important	Very Likely	Somewhat Likely	Somewhat Likely
2/3/2022 8:10	Other (please describe)	Yes	Atchafalaya	Atchafalaya Basin	Very likely	Very Important	Very Important	Very Important	Very Important	Very Important	Very Important	Very Important	Uncertain	Very Likely	Somewhat Likely
2/6/2022 17:24	Industry/Business	Yes	Atchafalaya	Atchafalaya Basin	Very likely	Very Important	Very Important	Very Important	Very Important	Very Important	Very Important	Very Important		Very Likely	
2/8/2022 19:20	Privately employed	No	Other: Atchafalaya born and bred. Live in BR now.	Atchafalaya Basin	Very likely	Very Important	Very Important	Very Important	Very Important	Very Important	Very Important	Very Important	Very Likely	Very Likely	Very Likely
2/8/2022 19:21	Educator: K-12	Yes	Atchafalaya	Atchafalaya Basin	Very likely	Very Important	Very Important	Very Important	Very Important	Very Important	Very Important	Very Important	Very Likely	Very Likely	Very Likely
2/8/2022 19:39	Privately employed	Yes	Teche/Vermilion	Atchafalaya Basin	Very likely	Very Important	Very Important	Very Important	Very Important	Very Important	Very Important	Very Important	Uncertain	Very Likely	Uncertain
2/8/2022 20:11	Other (please describe)	Yes	Atchafalaya	Atchafalaya Basin	Very likely	Very Important	Very Important	Very Important	Very Important	Very Important	Very Important	Very Important	Very Likely	Very Likely	
2/8/2022 20:15	Non-Profit Organization	No	Atchafalaya	Atchafalaya Basin	Very likely	Very Important	Very Important	Very Important	Very Important	Very Important	Somewhat Important	Very Important	Very Likely	Uncertain	Somewhat Likely
2/9/2022 15:46	Educator: Higher Education	Yes	Atchafalaya	Atchafalaya Basin	Very likely	Very Important	Very Important	Very Important	Very Important	Very Important	Very Important	Very Important	Very Likely	Very Likely	Somewhat Likely
2/10/2022 19:43	Non-Profit Organization	Yes	Other: Jackson MS	Atchafalaya Basin	Somewhat likely	Very Important	Very Important	Somewhat Important	Very Important	Very Important	Very Important	Somewhat Important	Somewhat Likely	Somewhat Likely	Uncertain
2/10/2022 19:53	Other (please describe)	No	Teche/Vermilion	Atchafalaya Basin	Very likely	Very Important	Very Important	Very Important	Very Important	Very Important	Very Important	Very Important	Unlikely	Very Likely	Uncertain
2/10/2022 20:02	Educator: K-12	Yes	Teche/Vermilion	Atchafalaya Basin	Very likely	Somewhat Important	Very Important	Somewhat Important	Somewhat Important	Somewhat Important	Very Important	Somewhat Important	Very Likely	Very Likely	Very Likely
3/9/2022 11:03	Non-Profit Organization	Yes	Teche/Vermilion	Atchafalaya Basin	Very likely	Very Important	Very Important	Very Important	Very Important	Somewhat Important	Very Important	Very Important	Uncertain	Very Likely	Uncertain
3/9/2022 11:06	Educator: Higher Education	No	Atchafalaya	Atchafalaya Basin	Somewhat likely	Somewhat Important	Somewhat Important	Somewhat Important	Uncertain	Somewhat Important	Somewhat Important	Somewhat Important	Somewhat Likely	Somewhat Likely	Somewhat Likely

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3/24/2022 13:38	Other (please describe)	No	Atchafalaya	Atchafalaya Basin	Very likely	Very Important	Very Important	Very Important	Very Important	Somewhat Important	Very Important	Very Important	Uncertain	Uncertain	Uncertain
3/24/2022 13:42	Non-Profit Organization	No	Atchafalaya	Atchafalaya Basin	Very likely	Very Important	Very Important	Very Important	Very Important	Very Important	Very Important	Very Important	Somewhat Likely	Somewhat Likely	Somewhat Likely
3/24/2022 13:44	Local Agency/Government	No	Atchafalaya	Atchafalaya Basin	Very likely	Very Important	Very Important	Very Important	Very Important	Very Important	Very Important	Very Important	Very Likely	Very Likely	Very Likely
3/24/2022 13:47	Other (please describe)	No	Atchafalaya	Atchafalaya Basin	Very likely	Very Important	Very Important	Very Important	Very Important	Very Important	Very Important	Very Important	Uncertain	Uncertain	Uncertain
3/24/2022 13:50	Privately employed	Yes	Atchafalaya	Atchafalaya Basin	Very likely	Very Important	Very Important	Very Important	Very Important	Very Important	Very Important	Very Important	Very Likely	Very Likely	Very Likely
3/24/2022 13:54	Educator: K-12	Yes	Atchafalaya	Atchafalaya Basin	Very likely	Very Important	Very Important	Very Important	Very Important	Very Important	Very Important	Very Important	Very Likely	Very Likely	Very Likely
3/24/2022 13:56	Privately employed	Yes	Atchafalaya	Atchafalaya Basin	Very likely	Very Important	Very Important	Very Important	Very Important	Very Important	Very Important	Very Important	Very Likely	Very Likely	Very Likely
3/24/2022 13:58	Educator: K-12	No	Atchafalaya	Atchafalaya Basin	Very likely	Very Important	Very Important	Very Important	Very Important	Very Important	Very Important	Very Important	Very Likely	Very Likely	Very Likely
3/24/2022 14:03	Local Agency/Government	Yes	Atchafalaya	Atchafalaya Basin	Very likely	Very Important	Very Important	Very Important	Very Important	Very Important	Very Important	Very Important	Very Likely	Very Likely	Very Likely
3/24/2022 14:09	County Agency/Government	Yes	Atchafalaya	Atchafalaya Basin	Very likely	Very Important	Very Important	Very Important	Very Important	Very Important	Very Important	Very Important	Very Likely	Very Likely	Very Likely
3/24/2022 14:11	Industry/Business	No	Atchafalaya	Atchafalaya Basin	Very likely	Very Important	Very Important	Very Important	Very Important	Very Important	Very Important	Very Important	Somewhat Likely	Very Likely	Somewhat Likely
3/24/2022 14:13	Educator: K-12	No	Atchafalaya	Atchafalaya Basin	Very likely	Very Important	Very Important	Very Important	Very Important	Very Important	Very Important	Very Important	Uncertain	Very Likely	Uncertain
3/24/2022 14:15	Industry/Business		Atchafalaya	Atchafalaya Basin	Very likely	Very Important	Very Important	Very Important	Very Important	Very Important	Somewhat Important	Very Important	Uncertain	Uncertain	Uncertain
3/24/2022 14:17	County Agency/Government	Yes	Atchafalaya	Atchafalaya Basin	Very likely	Very Important	Very Important	Very Important	Very Important	Very Important	Very Important	Very Important	Very Likely	Very Likely	Very Likely
3/24/2022 14:19	Industry/Business	Yes	Atchafalaya	Atchafalaya Basin	Very likely	Very Important	Very Important	Very Important	Very Important	Very Important	Very Important	Very Important	Somewhat Likely	Somewhat Likely	Somewhat Likely
3/24/2022 14:21	State Agency/Government	No	Atchafalaya	Atchafalaya Basin	Very likely	Very Important	Very Important	Very Important	Very Important	Very Important	Very Important	Very Important	Very Likely	Very Likely	Very Likely

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3/24/2022 14:25	Local Agency/Government	No	Atchafalaya	Atchafalaya Basin	Somewhat likely	Very Important	Very Important	Somewhat Important	Very Important	Very Important	Somewhat Important	Somewhat Important			
3/24/2022 14:27	Local Agency/Government	No	Atchafalaya	Atchafalaya Basin	Very likely	Very Important	Very Important	Very Important	Very Important	Very Important	Very Important	Very Important	Very Likely	Very Likely	Very Likely
3/24/2022 14:30	Other (please describe)	No	Atchafalaya	Atchafalaya Basin	Very likely	Very Important	Very Important	Very Important	Very Important	Very Important	Very Important	Very Important	Very Likely	Very Likely	Very Likely
3/24/2022 14:33	Other (please describe)	No	Atchafalaya	Atchafalaya Basin	Very likely	Very Important	Very Important	Very Important	Very Important	Very Important	Very Important	Very Important	Very Likely	Very Likely	Very Likely
3/24/2022 14:35	Privately employed	Yes	Atchafalaya	Atchafalaya Basin	Very likely	Very Important	Very Important	Very Important	Very Important	Very Important	Very Important	Very Important	Very Likely	Very Likely	Very Likely
3/24/2022 14:37	Privately employed	Yes	Atchafalaya	Atchafalaya Basin	Very likely	Very Important	Very Important	Very Important	Very Important	Very Important	Very Important	Very Important	Uncertain	Very Likely	Uncertain
3/24/2022 14:39	Privately employed	No	Atchafalaya	Atchafalaya Basin	Very likely	Very Important	Very Important	Very Important	Very Important	Very Important	Very Important	Very Important	Very Likely	Very Likely	Very Likely
2/8/2022 14:14			Barataria	Barataria Basin	Very likely	Very Important	Very Important	Very Important	Very Important	Very Important	Very Important	Very Important		Very Likely	Very Likely
2/8/2022 19:48	Educator: Higher Education	Yes	Other: Lafourche	Barataria Basin	Very likely	Very Important	Very Important	Somewhat Important	Somewhat Important	Very Important	Very Important	Somewhat Important	Somewhat Likely	Very Likely	Very Likely
2/9/2022 12:14	Non-Profit Organization	Yes	Pontchartrain	Barataria Basin	Very likely	Very Important	Very Important	Very Important	Very Important	Very Important	Very Important	Very Important	Very Likely	Somewhat Likely	Somewhat Likely
2/9/2022 13:13	County Agency/Government	Yes	Barataria	Barataria Basin	Very likely	Very Important	Very Important	Very Important	Very Important	Very Important	Very Important	Very Important	Very Likely	Very Likely	Very Likely
2/9/2022 13:18	State Agency/Government	No		Barataria Basin	Very unlikely	Not Important	Somewhat Important	Not Important	Unlikely Important	Somewhat Important	Somewhat Important	Unlikely Important	Unlikely	Unlikely	Unlikely
2/9/2022 13:22	Educator: Higher Education	Yes	Other: Baton Rouge	Barataria Basin	Very likely	Very Important	Very Important	Very Important	Very Important	Very Important	Very Important	Very Important	Very Likely	Somewhat Likely	Somewhat Likely

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2/9/2022 13:37	Non-Profit Organization	Yes	Pontchartrain	Barataria Basin	Very likely	Somewhat Important	Very Important	Very Important	Very Important	Somewhat Important	Very Important	Very Important	Somewhat Likely	Somewhat Likely	Somewhat Likely
2/9/2022 19:20	Other (please describe)	Yes	Pontchartrain	Barataria Basin	Somewhat likely	Very Important	Very Important	Somewhat Important	Very Important	Very Important	Very Important	Somewhat Important	Very Likely	Very Likely	Very Likely
2/1/2022 18:32	Industry/Business	No	Pontchartrain	Pontchartrain Basin	Uncertain	Very Important	Somewhat Important	Somewhat Important	Somewhat Important	Very Important	Very Important	Somewhat Important	Somewhat Likely	Somewhat Likely	Somewhat Likely
2/1/2022 18:35	Educator: Higher Education	Yes	Pontchartrain	Pontchartrain Basin	Very likely	Very Important	Very Important	Somewhat Important	Very Important	Very Important	Very Important	Somewhat Important	Somewhat Likely	Very Likely	Uncertain
2/1/2022 18:57	Other (please describe)	Yes	Pontchartrain	Pontchartrain Basin	Very likely	Very Important	Very Important	Very Important	Very Important	Very Important	Very Important	Very Important	Very Likely	Very Likely	Very Likely
2/1/2022 18:57	County Agency/Government	Yes	Pontchartrain	Pontchartrain Basin	Very likely	Very Important	Very Important	Very Important	Very Important	Very Important	Very Important	Very Important	Very Likely	Very Likely	Very Likely
2/1/2022 19:10	Educator: Higher Education	No	Pontchartrain	Pontchartrain Basin	Very likely	Very Important	Very Important	Very Important	Very Important	Very Important	Very Important	Very Important	Very Likely	Very Likely	Very Likely
2/1/2022 19:11	Non-Profit Organization	No	Other: Rapides but extensive coastal work thru CWPPRA, etc	Pontchartrain Basin	Very likely	Very Important	Very Important	Very Important	Very Important	Very Important	Very Important	Very Important	Somewhat Likely	Somewhat Likely	Very Likely
2/1/2022 19:33	Educator: Higher Education	No	Pontchartrain	Pontchartrain Basin	Very likely	Very Important	Very Important	Very Important	Very Important	Very Important	Very Important	Very Important	Somewhat Likely	Somewhat Likely	Unlikely
2/2/2022 12:55	Educator: Higher Education	Yes	Pontchartrain	Pontchartrain Basin	Very likely	Very Important	Very Important	Very Important	Very Important	Very Important	Somewhat Important	Very Important	Very Likely	Very Likely	Somewhat Likely
2/3/2022 18:40	Non-Profit Organization	No	Pontchartrain	Pontchartrain Basin	Very likely	Very Important	Very Important	Very Important	Very Important	Very Important	Very Important	Very Important	Somewhat Likely	Very Likely	Very Likely
2/3/2022 18:44	County Agency/Government	Yes	Pontchartrain	Pontchartrain Basin	Very likely	Very Important	Very Important	Very Important	Very Important	Very Important	Very Important	Very Important	Very Likely	Very Likely	Very Likely

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2/3/2022 19:18	Non-Profit Organization	Yes	Pontchartrain	Pontchartrain Basin	Very likely	Very Important	Very Important	Very Important	Very Important	Very Important	Very Important	Very Important	Very Likely	Very Likely	Very Likely
2/3/2022 19:19	Non-Profit Organization	Yes	Pontchartrain	Pontchartrain Basin	Very likely	Very Important	Very Important	Very Important	Very Important	Very Important	Very Important	Very Important		Very Likely	Very Likely
2/3/2022 19:21	Educator: K-12	Yes	Pontchartrain	Pontchartrain Basin	Very likely	Very Important	Somewhat Important	Very Important	Somewhat Important	Very Important	Very Important	Somewhat Important	Somewhat Likely	Very Likely	Unlikely
2/3/2022 20:23	Other (please describe)	Yes	Pontchartrain	Pontchartrain Basin	Uncertain	Very Important	Very Important	Very Important	Very Important	Very Important	Very Important	Very Important	Very Likely	Somewhat Likely	Somewhat Likely
2/3/2022 21:36	Non-Profit Organization	Yes	Pontchartrain	Pontchartrain Basin	Somewhat likely	Very Important	Somewhat Important	Very Important	Somewhat Important	Very Important	Very Important	Very Important	Somewhat Likely	Somewhat Likely	Somewhat Likely
2/11/2022 12:58	Non-Profit Organization	Yes	Pontchartrain	Pontchartrain Basin	Very likely	Very Important	Very Important	Very Important	Very Important	Very Important	Very Important	Very Important	Very Likely	Very Likely	Very Likely
2/11/2022 12:59	Non-Profit Organization	Yes	Pontchartrain	Pontchartrain Basin	Very likely	Very Important	Very Important	Very Important	Very Important	Very Important	Very Important	Very Important	Very Likely	Very Likely	Somewhat Likely
2/11/2022 13:22	Local Agency/Government	Yes	Pontchartrain	Pontchartrain Basin	Very likely	Very Important	Very Important	Very Important	Very Important	Very Important	Very Important	Very Important	Uncertain	Very Likely	Somewhat Likely
2/11/2022 13:45	Other (please describe)	Yes	Pontchartrain	Pontchartrain Basin	Very likely	Very Important	Very Important	Very Important	Somewhat Important	Very Important	Very Important	Very Important	Uncertain	Somewhat Likely	Uncertain
2/11/2022 22:25	Non-Profit Organization	Yes	Pontchartrain	Pontchartrain Basin	Very likely	Somewhat Important	Very Important	Very Important	Very Important	Uncertain	Very Important	Somewhat Important	Somewhat Likely	Somewhat Likely	Very Likely

Recorded Date	What type of organization below BEST describes you? (Please check only ONE.)	Please indicate which response below best describes your likelihood to participate in the missions of a NERR proposed in another region of Louisiana coastal zone. - Research and Monitoring Mission	Please indicate which response below best describes your likelihood to participate in the missions of a NERR proposed in another region of Louisiana coastal zone. - Education and Interpretative Center Mission	Please indicate which response below best describes your likelihood to participate in the missions of a NERR proposed in another region of Louisiana coastal zone. - Coastal Zone Management Mission	Please rate the benefits of having a research reserve located in your community. - Bringing new scientists and students from all over the U.S. to study at the site	Please rate the benefits of having a research reserve located in your community. - Providing opportunity to apply for funds for facilities and land acquisition	Please rate the benefits of having a research reserve located in your community. - Providing an opportunity to apply for operational funds that are currently restricted to Reserve System Sites	Please rate the benefits of having a research reserve located in your community. - Additional opportunities to educate k-12 students about the estuary, science, and cultural knowledge	Please rate the benefits of having a research reserve located in your community. - Improved science-based information becomes available to support local decision makers	Please rate the benefits of having a research reserve located in your community. - Fostering collaborations and partnerships to solve local and regional problems	Please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following statement. Are you concerned that the proposed NERR in your region would limit or restrict the opportunities to recreate or otherwise utilize the natural resources beyond the current management restrictions? - Recreational fishing and hunting	Please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following statement. Are you concerned that the proposed NERR in your region would limit or restrict the opportunities to recreate or otherwise utilize the natural resources beyond the current management restrictions? - Commercial fishing	Please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following statement. Are you concerned that the proposed NERR in your region would limit or restrict the opportunities to recreate or otherwise utilize the natural resources beyond the current management restrictions? - Boating or other aquatic activities	Please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following statement. Are you concerned that the proposed NERR in your region would limit or restrict the opportunities to recreate or otherwise utilize the natural resources beyond the current management restrictions? - Navigation
2/8/2022 19:20	Non-Profit Organization	Somewhat Likely	Somewhat Likely	Somewhat Likely	Very Beneficial	Very Beneficial	Very Beneficial	Very Beneficial	Very Beneficial	Very Beneficial	Strongly Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Strongly Disagree
2/2/2022 7:29	Other (please describe)	Unlikely	Unlikely	Uncertain	Very Beneficial	Very Beneficial	Very Beneficial	Very Beneficial	Very Beneficial	Very Beneficial	Somewhat disagree	Somewhat disagree	Somewhat disagree	Somewhat disagree
2/2/2022 12:49	Federal Agency/Government	Very Likely	Very Likely	Very Likely	Very Beneficial	Very Beneficial	Very Beneficial	Very Beneficial	Very Beneficial	Very Beneficial	Somewhat agree	Somewhat agree	Somewhat agree	Somewhat agree
2/2/2022 12:50	Privately employed	Very Unlikely	Uncertain	Very Unlikely	Very Beneficial	Very Beneficial	Very Beneficial	Very Beneficial	Very Beneficial	Very Beneficial	Neither agree nor disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Strongly Disagree	Strongly Disagree
2/2/2022 12:51	County Agency/Government	Unlikely	Uncertain	Uncertain	Very Beneficial	Very Beneficial	Very Beneficial	Very Beneficial	Very Beneficial	Very Beneficial	Strongly Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Strongly Disagree
2/2/2022 13:43	State Agency/Government	Somewhat Likely	Very Likely	Somewhat Likely	Somewhat Beneficial	Very Beneficial	Somewhat Beneficial	Very Beneficial	Very Beneficial	Very Beneficial	Neither agree nor disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Neither agree nor disagree
2/2/2022 13:45	County Agency/Government	Very Likely	Very Likely	Very Likely	Very Beneficial	Very Beneficial	Very Beneficial	Very Beneficial	Very Beneficial	Very Beneficial	Neither agree nor disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Neither agree nor disagree
2/2/2022 13:45	Other (please describe)	Very Unlikely	Very Unlikely	Very Unlikely	Very Beneficial	Very Beneficial	Very Beneficial	Very Beneficial	Very Beneficial	Very Beneficial	Strongly Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Strongly Disagree
2/2/2022 13:47	State Agency/Government	Unlikely	Unlikely	Unlikely	Very Beneficial	Very Beneficial	Very Beneficial	Very Beneficial	Very Beneficial	Very Beneficial	Strongly Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Strongly Disagree
2/2/2022 13:52	Non-Profit Organization	Uncertain	Uncertain	Uncertain	Very Beneficial	Somewhat Beneficial	Somewhat Beneficial	Very Beneficial	Very Beneficial	Very Beneficial	Strongly Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Strongly Disagree
2/2/2022 13:54	Non-Profit Organization		Somewhat Likely		Very Beneficial	Very Beneficial	Very Beneficial	Very Beneficial	Very Beneficial	Very Beneficial	Strongly Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Strongly Disagree
2/2/2022 14:16	Industry/Business	Somewhat Likely	Somewhat Likely	Somewhat Likely	Very Beneficial	Neutral	Neutral	Somewhat Beneficial	Somewhat Beneficial	Very Beneficial	Strongly Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Strongly Disagree

Recorded Date	What type of organization below BEST describes you? (Please check only ONE.)	Please indicate which response below best describes your likelihood to participate in the missions of a NERR proposed in another region of Louisiana coastal zone. - Research and Monitoring Mission	Please indicate which response below best describes your likelihood to participate in the missions of a NERR proposed in another region of Louisiana coastal zone. - Education and Interpretative Center Mission	Please indicate which response below best describes your likelihood to participate in the missions of a NERR proposed in another region of Louisiana coastal zone. - Coastal Zone Management Mission	Please rate the benefits of having a research reserve located in your community. - Bringing new scientists and students from all over the U.S. to study at the site	Please rate the benefits of having a research reserve located in your community. - Providing opportunity to apply for funds for facilities and land acquisition	Please rate the benefits of having a research reserve located in your community. - Providing an opportunity to apply for operational funds that are currently restricted to Reserve System Sites	Please rate the benefits of having a research reserve located in your community. - Additional opportunities to educate k-12 students about the estuary, science, and cultural knowledge	Please rate the benefits of having a research reserve located in your community. - Improved science-based information becomes available to support local decision makers	Please rate the benefits of having a research reserve located in your community. - Fostering collaborations and partnerships to solve local and regional problems	Please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following statement. Are you concerned that the proposed NERR in your region would limit or restrict the opportunities to recreate or otherwise utilize the natural resources beyond the current management restrictions? - Recreational fishing and hunting	Please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following statement. Are you concerned that the proposed NERR in your region would limit or restrict the opportunities to recreate or otherwise utilize the natural resources beyond the current management restrictions? - Commercial fishing	Please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following statement. Are you concerned that the proposed NERR in your region would limit or restrict the opportunities to recreate or otherwise utilize the natural resources beyond the current management restrictions? - Boating or other aquatic activities	Please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following statement. Are you concerned that the proposed NERR in your region would limit or restrict the opportunities to recreate or otherwise utilize the natural resources beyond the current management restrictions? - Navigation
2/2/2022 17:20	State Agency/Government	Unlikely	Unlikely	Unlikely	Very Beneficial	Very Beneficial	Very Beneficial	Very Beneficial	Very Beneficial	Very Beneficial	Strongly Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Strongly Disagree
2/3/2022 8:10	Other (please describe)	Unlikely	Unlikely	Unlikely	Very Beneficial	Very Beneficial	Very Beneficial	Very Beneficial	Very Beneficial	Very Beneficial	Strongly Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Strongly Disagree
2/6/2022 17:24	Industry/Business	Unlikely	Unlikely	Unlikely	Very Beneficial	Very Beneficial	Very Beneficial	Very Beneficial	Very Beneficial	Very Beneficial	Strongly Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Strongly Disagree
2/8/2022 19:20	Privately employed	Uncertain	Uncertain	Uncertain	Very Beneficial	Neutral	Neutral	Very Beneficial	Very Beneficial	Very Beneficial	Strongly Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Strongly Disagree
2/8/2022 19:21	Educator: K-12	Uncertain	Unlikely	Uncertain	Very Beneficial	Very Beneficial	Somewhat Beneficial	Very Beneficial	Somewhat Beneficial	Very Beneficial	Somewhat disagree	Somewhat disagree	Somewhat disagree	Somewhat disagree
2/8/2022 19:39	Privately employed	Uncertain	Uncertain	Uncertain	Very Beneficial	Very Beneficial	Very Beneficial	Very Beneficial	Very Beneficial	Very Beneficial	Neither agree nor disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Neither agree nor disagree
2/8/2022 20:11	Other (please describe)	Uncertain	Uncertain	Uncertain	Very Beneficial	Very Beneficial	Very Beneficial	Very Beneficial	Very Beneficial	Very Beneficial	Strongly Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Strongly Disagree
2/8/2022 20:15	Non-Profit Organization	Very Likely	Uncertain	Uncertain	Very Beneficial	Very Beneficial	Very Beneficial	Somewhat Beneficial	Very Beneficial	Very Beneficial	Strongly Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Neither agree nor disagree
2/9/2022 15:46	Educator: Higher Education	Somewhat Likely	Very Likely	Somewhat Likely	Very Beneficial	Very Beneficial	Very Beneficial	Very Beneficial	Very Beneficial	Very Beneficial	Somewhat agree	Somewhat agree	Somewhat agree	Somewhat agree
2/10/2022 19:43	Non-Profit Organization	Somewhat Likely	Somewhat Likely	Somewhat Likely	Very Beneficial	Very Beneficial	Very Beneficial	Very Beneficial	Very Beneficial	Very Beneficial	Strongly Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Strongly Disagree
2/10/2022 19:53	Other (please describe)	Very Unlikely	Very Unlikely	Very Unlikely	Very Beneficial	Very Beneficial	Very Beneficial	Very Beneficial	Very Beneficial	Very Beneficial	Strongly agree	Strongly agree	Strongly agree	Strongly agree
2/10/2022 20:02	Educator: K-12	Very Unlikely	Very Unlikely	Very Unlikely	Somewhat Beneficial	Very Beneficial	Very Beneficial	Very Beneficial	Somewhat Beneficial	Somewhat Beneficial	Somewhat disagree	Somewhat disagree	Somewhat disagree	Somewhat disagree
3/9/2022 11:03	Non-Profit Organization	Very Unlikely	Very Unlikely	Very Unlikely	Somewhat Beneficial	Very Beneficial	Very Beneficial	Very Beneficial	Very Beneficial	Very Beneficial	Strongly Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Strongly Disagree
3/9/2022 11:06	Educator: Higher Education	Somewhat Likely	Somewhat Likely	Somewhat Likely	Somewhat Beneficial	Somewhat Beneficial	Somewhat Beneficial	Somewhat Beneficial	Somewhat Beneficial	Somewhat Beneficial	Somewhat agree	Somewhat agree	Somewhat agree	Somewhat agree

Recorded Date	What type of organization below BEST describes you? (Please check only ONE.)	Please indicate which response below best describes your likelihood to participate in the missions of a NERR proposed in another region of Louisiana coastal zone. - Research and Monitoring Mission	Please indicate which response below best describes your likelihood to participate in the missions of a NERR proposed in another region of Louisiana coastal zone. - Education and Interpretative Center Mission	Please indicate which response below best describes your likelihood to participate in the missions of a NERR proposed in another region of Louisiana coastal zone. - Coastal Zone Management Mission	Please rate the benefits of having a research reserve located in your community. - Bringing new scientists and students from all over the U.S. to study at the site	Please rate the benefits of having a research reserve located in your community. - Providing opportunity to apply for funds for facilities and land acquisition	Please rate the benefits of having a research reserve located in your community. - Providing an opportunity to apply for operational funds that are currently restricted to Reserve System Sites	Please rate the benefits of having a research reserve located in your community. - Additional opportunities to educate k-12 students about the estuary, science, and cultural knowledge	Please rate the benefits of having a research reserve located in your community. - Improved science-based information becomes available to support local decision makers	Please rate the benefits of having a research reserve located in your community. - Fostering collaborations and partnerships to solve local and regional problems	Please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following statement. Are you concerned that the proposed NERR in your region would limit or restrict the opportunities to recreate or otherwise utilize the natural resources beyond the current management restrictions? - Recreational fishing and hunting	Please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following statement. Are you concerned that the proposed NERR in your region would limit or restrict the opportunities to recreate or otherwise utilize the natural resources beyond the current management restrictions? - Commercial fishing	Please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following statement. Are you concerned that the proposed NERR in your region would limit or restrict the opportunities to recreate or otherwise utilize the natural resources beyond the current management restrictions? - Boating or other aquatic activities	Please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following statement. Are you concerned that the proposed NERR in your region would limit or restrict the opportunities to recreate or otherwise utilize the natural resources beyond the current management restrictions? - Navigation
3/24/2022 13:38	Other (please describe)	Unlikely	Unlikely	Unlikely	Neutral	Neutral	Neutral	Neutral	Neutral	Neutral	Neither agree nor disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Neither agree nor disagree
3/24/2022 13:42	Non-Profit Organization	Uncertain	Uncertain	Uncertain	Very Beneficial	Very Beneficial	Very Beneficial	Very Beneficial	Very Beneficial	Very Beneficial	Neither agree nor disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Neither agree nor disagree
3/24/2022 13:44	Local Agency/Government	Very Likely	Very Likely	Very Likely	Very Beneficial	Very Beneficial	Very Beneficial	Very Beneficial	Very Beneficial	Very Beneficial	Strongly agree	Strongly agree	Strongly agree	Strongly agree
3/24/2022 13:47	Other (please describe)	Unlikely	Unlikely	Unlikely	Very Beneficial	Very Beneficial	Somewhat Beneficial	Very Beneficial	Somewhat Beneficial	Somewhat Beneficial	Strongly Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Strongly Disagree
3/24/2022 13:50	Privately employed	Very Likely	Very Likely	Very Likely	Very Beneficial	Very Beneficial	Very Beneficial	Very Beneficial	Very Beneficial	Very Beneficial	Strongly agree	Strongly agree	Strongly agree	Strongly agree
3/24/2022 13:54	Educator: K-12	Uncertain	Very Likely	Uncertain	Very Beneficial	Very Beneficial	Very Beneficial	Very Beneficial	Very Beneficial	Very Beneficial	Strongly Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Strongly Disagree
3/24/2022 13:56	Privately employed	Very Likely	Very Likely	Very Likely	Very Beneficial	Very Beneficial	Very Beneficial	Very Beneficial	Very Beneficial	Very Beneficial	Strongly Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Strongly Disagree
3/24/2022 13:58	Educator: K-12	Very Unlikely	Very Unlikely	Very Unlikely	Very Beneficial	Very Beneficial	Very Beneficial	Very Beneficial	Very Beneficial	Very Beneficial	Strongly Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Strongly Disagree
3/24/2022 14:03	Local Agency/Government	Very Unlikely	Very Unlikely	Very Unlikely	Very Beneficial	Very Beneficial	Very Beneficial	Very Beneficial	Very Beneficial	Very Beneficial	Neither agree nor disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Neither agree nor disagree
3/24/2022 14:09	County Agency/Government	Unlikely	Somewhat Likely	Unlikely	Very Beneficial	Very Beneficial	Very Beneficial	Very Beneficial	Very Beneficial	Very Beneficial	Strongly Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Strongly Disagree
3/24/2022 14:11	Industry/Business	Somewhat Likely	Very Likely	Somewhat Likely	Very Beneficial	Somewhat Beneficial	Somewhat Beneficial	Very Beneficial	Very Beneficial	Very Beneficial	Strongly Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Strongly Disagree
3/24/2022 14:13	Educator: K-12	Uncertain	Very Likely	Uncertain	Very Beneficial	Very Beneficial	Very Beneficial	Very Beneficial	Very Beneficial	Very Beneficial	Strongly Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Strongly Disagree
3/24/2022 14:15	Industry/Business	Unlikely	Unlikely	Unlikely	Very Beneficial	Very Beneficial	Very Beneficial	Very Beneficial	Very Beneficial	Very Beneficial	Strongly Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree
3/24/2022 14:17	County Agency/Government	Very Likely	Very Likely	Very Likely	Very Beneficial	Somewhat Beneficial	Very Beneficial	Very Beneficial	Very Beneficial	Very Beneficial	Somewhat agree	Somewhat agree	Somewhat agree	Somewhat agree
3/24/2022 14:19	Industry/Business	Very Unlikely	Very Unlikely	Very Unlikely	Very Beneficial	Very Beneficial	Very Beneficial	Very Beneficial	Very Beneficial	Very Beneficial	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat agree	Somewhat agree	Somewhat agree
3/24/2022 14:21	State Agency/Government	Very Likely	Very Likely	Very Likely	Very Beneficial	Very Beneficial	Very Beneficial	Very Beneficial	Very Beneficial	Very Beneficial	Strongly agree	Strongly agree	Strongly agree	Strongly agree

Recorded Date	What type of organization below BEST describes you? (Please check only ONE.)	Please indicate which response below best describes your likelihood to participate in the missions of a NERR proposed in another region of Louisiana coastal zone. - Research and Monitoring Mission	Please indicate which response below best describes your likelihood to participate in the missions of a NERR proposed in another region of Louisiana coastal zone. - Education and Interpretative Center Mission	Please indicate which response below best describes your likelihood to participate in the missions of a NERR proposed in another region of Louisiana coastal zone. - Coastal Zone Management Mission	Please rate the benefits of having a research reserve located in your community. - Bringing new scientists and students from all over the U.S. to study at the site	Please rate the benefits of having a research reserve located in your community. - Providing opportunity to apply for funds for facilities and land acquisition	Please rate the benefits of having a research reserve located in your community. - Providing an opportunity to apply for operational funds that are currently restricted to Reserve System Sites	Please rate the benefits of having a research reserve located in your community. - Additional opportunities to educate k-12 students about the estuary, science, and cultural knowledge	Please rate the benefits of having a research reserve located in your community. - Improved science-based information becomes available to support local decision makers	Please rate the benefits of having a research reserve located in your community. - Fostering collaborations and partnerships to solve local and regional problems	Please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following statement. Are you concerned that the proposed NERR in your region would limit or restrict the opportunities to recreate or otherwise utilize the natural resources beyond the current management restrictions? - Recreational fishing and hunting	Please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following statement. Are you concerned that the proposed NERR in your region would limit or restrict the opportunities to recreate or otherwise utilize the natural resources beyond the current management restrictions? - Commercial fishing	Please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following statement. Are you concerned that the proposed NERR in your region would limit or restrict the opportunities to recreate or otherwise utilize the natural resources beyond the current management restrictions? - Boating or other aquatic activities	Please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following statement. Are you concerned that the proposed NERR in your region would limit or restrict the opportunities to recreate or otherwise utilize the natural resources beyond the current management restrictions? - Navigation
3/24/2022 14:25	Local Agency/Government	Very Likely	Somewhat Likely	Somewhat Likely	Very Beneficial	Very Beneficial	Very Beneficial	Somewhat Beneficial	Somewhat Beneficial	Very Beneficial	Strongly agree	Strongly agree	Strongly agree	Strongly agree
3/24/2022 14:27	Local Agency/Government	Very Likely	Very Likely	Very Likely	Very Beneficial	Very Beneficial	Very Beneficial	Very Beneficial	Very Beneficial	Very Beneficial	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Neither agree nor disagree
3/24/2022 14:30	Other (please describe)	Uncertain	Uncertain	Uncertain	Very Beneficial	Very Beneficial	Very Beneficial	Very Beneficial	Very Beneficial	Very Beneficial	Neither agree nor disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Neither agree nor disagree
3/24/2022 14:33	Other (please describe)	Very Likely	Very Likely	Very Likely	Very Beneficial	Very Beneficial	Very Beneficial	Very Beneficial	Very Beneficial	Very Beneficial	Strongly Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Strongly Disagree
3/24/2022 14:35	Privately employed	Unlikely	Uncertain	Unlikely	Very Beneficial	Very Beneficial	Very Beneficial	Very Beneficial	Very Beneficial	Very Beneficial	Neither agree nor disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Neither agree nor disagree
3/24/2022 14:37	Privately employed	Very Unlikely	Very Unlikely	Very Unlikely	Very Beneficial	Very Beneficial	Very Beneficial	Very Beneficial	Very Beneficial	Very Beneficial	Strongly Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Strongly Disagree
3/24/2022 14:39	Privately employed	Very Likely	Very Likely	Very Likely	Very Beneficial	Very Beneficial	Very Beneficial	Very Beneficial	Somewhat Beneficial	Neutral	Somewhat agree	Somewhat agree	Somewhat agree	Somewhat agree
2/8/2022 14:14		Very Unlikely	Very Unlikely	Very Unlikely	Very Beneficial	Somewhat Beneficial	Very Beneficial	Very Beneficial	Very Beneficial	Very Beneficial	Strongly agree	Strongly agree	Strongly agree	Strongly agree
2/8/2022 19:48	Educator: Higher Education	Uncertain	Uncertain	Uncertain	Very Beneficial	Very Beneficial	Very Beneficial	Very Beneficial	Very Beneficial	Very Beneficial	Strongly Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Strongly Disagree
2/9/2022 12:14	Non-Profit Organization	Very Likely	Somewhat Likely	Somewhat Likely	Very Beneficial	Very Beneficial	Very Beneficial	Very Beneficial	Very Beneficial	Very Beneficial	Strongly Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Strongly Disagree
2/9/2022 13:13	County Agency/Government	Very Likely	Very Likely	Very Likely	Very Beneficial	Very Beneficial	Very Beneficial	Very Beneficial	Very Beneficial	Very Beneficial	Strongly Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Strongly Disagree
2/9/2022 13:18	State Agency/Government	Very Unlikely	Very Unlikely	Very Unlikely	Neutral	Somewhat Beneficial	Neutral	Very Beneficial	Neutral	Neutral	Strongly Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Strongly Disagree
2/9/2022 13:22	Educator: Higher Education	Very Likely	Somewhat Likely	Somewhat Likely	Neutral	Somewhat Beneficial	Somewhat Beneficial	Very Beneficial	Very Beneficial	Somewhat Beneficial	Neither agree nor disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Neither agree nor disagree

Recorded Date	What type of organization below BEST describes you? (Please check only ONE.)	Please indicate which response below best describes your likelihood to participate in the missions of a NERR proposed in another region of Louisiana coastal zone. - Research and Monitoring Mission	Please indicate which response below best describes your likelihood to participate in the missions of a NERR proposed in another region of Louisiana coastal zone. - Education and Interpretative Center Mission	Please indicate which response below best describes your likelihood to participate in the missions of a NERR proposed in another region of Louisiana coastal zone. - Coastal Zone Management Mission	Please rate the benefits of having a research reserve located in your community. - Bringing new scientists and students from all over the U.S. to study at the site	Please rate the benefits of having a research reserve located in your community. - Providing opportunity to apply for funds for facilities and land acquisition	Please rate the benefits of having a research reserve located in your community. - Providing an opportunity to apply for operational funds that are currently restricted to Reserve System Sites	Please rate the benefits of having a research reserve located in your community. - Additional opportunities to educate k-12 students about the estuary, science, and cultural knowledge	Please rate the benefits of having a research reserve located in your community. - Improved science-based information becomes available to support local decision makers	Please rate the benefits of having a research reserve located in your community. - Fostering collaborations and partnerships to solve local and regional problems	Please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following statement. Are you concerned that the proposed NERR in your region would limit or restrict the opportunities to recreate or otherwise utilize the natural resources beyond the current management restrictions? - Recreational fishing and hunting	Please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following statement. Are you concerned that the proposed NERR in your region would limit or restrict the opportunities to recreate or otherwise utilize the natural resources beyond the current management restrictions? - Commercial fishing	Please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following statement. Are you concerned that the proposed NERR in your region would limit or restrict the opportunities to recreate or otherwise utilize the natural resources beyond the current management restrictions? - Boating or other aquatic activities	Please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following statement. Are you concerned that the proposed NERR in your region would limit or restrict the opportunities to recreate or otherwise utilize the natural resources beyond the current management restrictions? - Navigation
2/9/2022 13:37	Non-Profit Organization	Somewhat Likely	Somewhat Likely	Uncertain	Very Beneficial	Very Beneficial	Neutral	Very Beneficial	Neutral	Very Beneficial	Somewhat agree	Somewhat disagree	Strongly Disagree	Strongly Disagree
2/9/2022 19:20	Other (please describe)	Somewhat Likely	Very Likely	Somewhat Likely	Neutral	Somewhat Beneficial	Somewhat Beneficial	Very Beneficial	Very Beneficial	Very Beneficial	Somewhat disagree	Somewhat disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neither agree nor disagree
2/1/2022 18:32	Industry/Business	Uncertain	Uncertain	Uncertain	Very Beneficial	Very Beneficial	Very Beneficial	Very Beneficial	Very Beneficial	Very Beneficial	Strongly Disagree	Somewhat disagree	Strongly Disagree	Strongly Disagree
2/1/2022 18:35	Educator: Higher Education	Somewhat Likely	Very Likely	Unlikely	Very Beneficial	Very Beneficial	Very Beneficial	Very Beneficial	Very Beneficial	Very Beneficial	Strongly Disagree	Somewhat disagree	Somewhat disagree	Strongly Disagree
2/1/2022 18:57	Other (please describe)	Very Likely	Very Likely	Very Likely	Very Beneficial	Very Beneficial	Very Beneficial	Very Beneficial	Very Beneficial	Very Beneficial	Strongly agree	Somewhat agree	Strongly agree	Somewhat agree
2/1/2022 18:57	County Agency/Government	Uncertain	Uncertain	Uncertain	Very Beneficial	Very Beneficial	Very Beneficial	Very Beneficial	Very Beneficial	Very Beneficial	Strongly Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Strongly Disagree
2/1/2022 19:10	Educator: Higher Education	Very Likely	Very Likely	Very Likely	Very Beneficial	Very Beneficial	Very Beneficial	Very Beneficial	Very Beneficial	Very Beneficial	Neither agree nor disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat disagree	Somewhat disagree
2/1/2022 19:11	Non-Profit Organization	Somewhat Likely	Somewhat Likely	Very Likely	Very Beneficial	Very Beneficial	Very Beneficial	Very Beneficial	Very Beneficial	Very Beneficial	Strongly Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Strongly Disagree
2/1/2022 19:33	Educator: Higher Education	Unlikely	Unlikely	Unlikely	Very Beneficial	Very Beneficial	Very Beneficial	Very Beneficial	Very Beneficial	Very Beneficial	Strongly Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Strongly Disagree
2/2/2022 12:55	Educator: Higher Education	Very Unlikely	Very Unlikely	Very Unlikely	Very Beneficial	Very Beneficial	Very Beneficial	Very Beneficial	Very Beneficial	Very Beneficial	Somewhat disagree	Somewhat disagree	Strongly Disagree	Strongly Disagree
2/3/2022 18:40	Non-Profit Organization	Somewhat Likely	Somewhat Likely	Somewhat Likely	Very Beneficial	Very Beneficial	Very Beneficial	Very Beneficial	Very Beneficial	Very Beneficial	Somewhat disagree	Somewhat disagree	Somewhat disagree	Somewhat disagree
2/3/2022 18:44	County Agency/Government	Uncertain	Uncertain	Uncertain	Very Beneficial	Very Beneficial	Very Beneficial	Very Beneficial	Very Beneficial	Very Beneficial	Strongly Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Strongly Disagree

Recorded Date	What type of organization below BEST describes you? (Please check only ONE.)	Please indicate which response below best describes your likelihood to participate in the missions of a NERR proposed in another region of Louisiana coastal zone. - Research and Monitoring Mission	Please indicate which response below best describes your likelihood to participate in the missions of a NERR proposed in another region of Louisiana coastal zone. - Education and Interpretative Center Mission	Please indicate which response below best describes your likelihood to participate in the missions of a NERR proposed in another region of Louisiana coastal zone. - Coastal Zone Management Mission	Please rate the benefits of having a research reserve located in your community. - Bringing new scientists and students from all over the U.S. to study at the site	Please rate the benefits of having a research reserve located in your community. - Providing opportunity to apply for funds for facilities and land acquisition	Please rate the benefits of having a research reserve located in your community. - Providing an opportunity to apply for operational funds that are currently restricted to Reserve System Sites	Please rate the benefits of having a research reserve located in your community. - Additional opportunities to educate k-12 students about the estuary, science, and cultural knowledge	Please rate the benefits of having a research reserve located in your community. - Improved science-based information becomes available to support local decision makers	Please rate the benefits of having a research reserve located in your community. - Fostering collaborations and partnerships to solve local and regional problems	Please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following statement. Are you concerned that the proposed NERR in your region would limit or restrict the opportunities to recreate or otherwise utilize the natural resources beyond the current management restrictions? - Recreational fishing and hunting	Please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following statement. Are you concerned that the proposed NERR in your region would limit or restrict the opportunities to recreate or otherwise utilize the natural resources beyond the current management restrictions? - Commercial fishing	Please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following statement. Are you concerned that the proposed NERR in your region would limit or restrict the opportunities to recreate or otherwise utilize the natural resources beyond the current management restrictions? - Boating or other aquatic activities	Please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following statement. Are you concerned that the proposed NERR in your region would limit or restrict the opportunities to recreate or otherwise utilize the natural resources beyond the current management restrictions? - Navigation
2/3/2022 19:18	Non-Profit Organization	Somewhat Likely	Somewhat Likely	Unlikely	Very Beneficial	Very Beneficial	Neutral	Very Beneficial	Very Beneficial	Very Beneficial	Strongly Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Strongly Disagree
2/3/2022 19:19	Non-Profit Organization	Unlikely	Unlikely	Unlikely	Very Beneficial	Very Beneficial	Very Beneficial	Very Beneficial	Very Beneficial	Very Beneficial	Strongly Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Strongly Disagree
2/3/2022 19:21	Educator: K-12	Uncertain	Very Likely	Unlikely	Very Beneficial	Very Beneficial	Somewhat Beneficial	Very Beneficial	Very Beneficial	Very Beneficial	Somewhat disagree	Somewhat disagree	Strongly Disagree	Strongly Disagree
2/3/2022 20:23	Other (please describe)	Very Likely	Somewhat Likely	Somewhat Likely	Very Beneficial	Very Beneficial	Very Beneficial	Very Beneficial	Very Beneficial	Somewhat Beneficial	Neither agree nor disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat agree	Neither agree nor disagree
2/3/2022 21:36	Non-Profit Organization	Uncertain	Uncertain	Uncertain	Very Beneficial	Very Beneficial	Very Beneficial	Very Beneficial	Very Beneficial	Very Beneficial	Strongly Disagree	Somewhat disagree	Strongly Disagree	Strongly Disagree
2/11/2022 12:58	Non-Profit Organization	Uncertain	Uncertain	Uncertain	Very Beneficial	Very Beneficial	Somewhat Beneficial	Somewhat Beneficial	Somewhat Beneficial	Very Beneficial	Strongly Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Strongly Disagree
2/11/2022 12:59	Non-Profit Organization	Unlikely	Unlikely	Unlikely	Very Beneficial	Very Beneficial	Very Beneficial	Very Beneficial	Very Beneficial	Very Beneficial	Strongly Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Strongly Disagree
2/11/2022 13:22	Local Agency/Government	Uncertain	Uncertain	Uncertain	Somewhat Beneficial	Very Beneficial	Very Beneficial	Very Beneficial	Very Beneficial	Very Beneficial	Strongly Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Strongly Disagree
2/11/2022 13:45	Other (please describe)	Unlikely	Uncertain	Unlikely	Somewhat Beneficial	Somewhat Beneficial	Somewhat Beneficial	Very Beneficial	Very Beneficial	Very Beneficial	Somewhat disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Strongly Disagree	Strongly Disagree
2/11/2022 22:25	Non-Profit Organization	Uncertain	Uncertain	Uncertain	Very Beneficial	Somewhat Beneficial	Neutral	Very Beneficial	Neutral	Very Beneficial	Somewhat disagree	Strongly Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Strongly Disagree

Recorded Date	What type of organization below BEST describes you? (Please check only ONE.)	Please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following statement. Are you concerned that the proposed NERR in your region would limit or restrict the opportunities to recreate or otherwise utilize the natural resources beyond the current management restrictions? - Oil and gas activities	Please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following statement. Are you concerned that the proposed NERR in your region would limit or restrict the opportunities to recreate or otherwise utilize the natural resources beyond the current management restrictions? - Other: Please describe.	Please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following statement. Are you concerned that the proposed NERR in your region would limit or restrict the opportunities to recreate or otherwise utilize the natural resources beyond the current management restrictions? - Other: Please describe. - Text	Please indicate the extent to which you support or oppose the development of the NERR described in Question #5 in your community:	What support and partnerships would you recommend that the LaNERR proposal team contact?	Would you be willing to assist in making the contact?	Are you interested in joining and participating on a 'friends of the NERR' support group that would serve to connect the development of a NERR to your community?	Please provide any additional comments you might have related to the search for a NERR site in coastal Louisiana.
2/8/2022 19:20	Non-Profit Organization	Strongly Disagree			Strongly Support			Yes	
2/2/2022 7:29	Other (please describe)	Somewhat disagree			Strongly Support	St Mary Excel	Yes	Not Sure	
2/2/2022 12:49	Federal Agency/Government	Somewhat agree			Strongly Support		No	Yes	
2/2/2022 12:50	Privately employed	Neither agree nor disagree			Strongly Support			Yes	
2/2/2022 12:51	County Agency/Government	Strongly Disagree			Strongly Support	na	No	Not Sure	
2/2/2022 13:43	State Agency/Government	Neither agree nor disagree			Neutral			Yes	
2/2/2022 13:45	County Agency/Government	Neither agree nor disagree			Strongly Support	PORT OF MORGAN CITY	No	Not Sure	
2/2/2022 13:45	Other (please describe)	Strongly Disagree			Strongly Support			Yes	
2/2/2022 13:47	State Agency/Government	Strongly Disagree			Strongly Support			Not Sure	
2/2/2022 13:52	Non-Profit Organization	Strongly Disagree			Strongly Support	St. Mary EXCEL	Yes	Yes	It's our turn. Let us be the host to the world for what Louisiana has to offer! We have it all :)
2/2/2022 13:54	Non-Profit Organization	Strongly Disagree			Strongly Support	City of Morgan City, Hellenic Land,Inc, Scott Green/DAT Sauce, South LA Community College, Nicholls State University, University of Louisiana at Lafayette, Louisiana State University, Southern University, ByWater Institute, The Water Institute of the Gulf	Yes	Yes	The largest wetland swamp in the U.S. merits designation as a NERR. The accretion forming river delta protects the NERR investment and the Atchafalaya geologic features are lagniappe.
2/2/2022 14:16	Industry/Business	Somewhat disagree			Strongly Support	Teche-Vermilion Freshwater District	Yes	Yes	The choice is clear. The Atchafalaya Delta is active, stable, and will not be impacted by major diversion or large-scale restoration efforts on the books for the other two candidates. The Atchafalaya is the twin river to the Mississippi and a perfect proxy for outreach and research in a delta system.

Recorded Date	What type of organization below BEST describes you? (Please check only ONE.)	Please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following statement. Are you concerned that the proposed NERR in your region would limit or restrict the opportunities to recreate or otherwise utilize the natural resources beyond the current management restrictions? - Oil and gas activities	Please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following statement. Are you concerned that the proposed NERR in your region would limit or restrict the opportunities to recreate or otherwise utilize the natural resources beyond the current management restrictions? - Other: Please describe.	Please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following statement. Are you concerned that the proposed NERR in your region would limit or restrict the opportunities to recreate or otherwise utilize the natural resources beyond the current management restrictions? - Other: Please describe. - Text	Please indicate the extent to which you support or oppose the development of the NERR described in Question #5 in your community:	What support and partnerships would you recommend that the LaNERR proposal team contact?	Would you be willing to assist in making the contact?	Are you interested in joining and participating on a 'friends of the NERR' support group that would serve to connect the development of a NERR to your community?	Please provide any additional comments you might have related to the search for a NERR site in coastal Louisiana.
2/2/2022 17:20	State Agency/Government	Strongly Disagree			Strongly Support			Yes	
2/3/2022 8:10	Other (please describe)	Strongly Disagree			Strongly Support	St. Mary Excel	Yes	Yes	I am in St. Mary Excel- but I am also a lifetime area in the region and retired public school educator. We can help in the mission and want to see the LANERR here.
2/6/2022 17:24	Industry/Business	Strongly Disagree			Strongly Support			Yes	The Atchfalaya Zone is ready for the NERR in our area. This is a huge opportunity to our area.
2/8/2022 19:20	Privately employed	Strongly Disagree			Strongly Support	Local, parish, and regional governmental entities & St. Mary Excel	Yes	Yes	Thanks for the opportunity to participate in the process.
2/8/2022 19:21	Educator: K-12	Strongly Disagree			Strongly Support	public	No	Yes	
2/8/2022 19:39	Privately employed	Neither agree nor disagree			Strongly Support			Yes	
2/8/2022 20:11	Other (please describe)	Strongly Disagree			Strongly Support			Not Sure	
2/8/2022 20:15	Non-Profit Organization	Neither agree nor disagree		Concern research may be misused to keep filling the Basin with sand and silt	Strongly Support	Atchafalaya Basinkeeper. LCPA-West	Yes	Yes	The Atchafalaya Basin protects millions of people from flooding. I see already groups funded by special interest groups that wants the Basin filled engaged on this selection process and that is a concern for me.
2/9/2022 15:46	Educator: Higher Education	Somewhat agree			Strongly Support	SLCC	Yes	Yes	WE WANT THE NEER HERE..ATCHAFALYA
2/10/2022 19:43	Non-Profit Organization	Strongly Disagree			Strongly Support	Statewide Science Teachers Assoc., Community Colleges	No	Yes	
2/10/2022 19:53	Other (please describe)	Strongly agree			Strongly Support			Yes	
2/10/2022 20:02	Educator: K-12	Somewhat disagree			Strongly Support	Parish government, parish schools	Yes	Not Sure	
3/9/2022 11:03	Non-Profit Organization				Strongly Support			Yes	I work for the International Crane foundation and do outreach work focused on LA's whooping cranes. I think the Atchafalaya NERR would be an ideal partner for our crane outreach in addition to the outreach we do across South LA to TX.
3/9/2022 11:06	Educator: Higher Education	Somewhat agree	Somewhat agree		Somewhat Support			Yes	

Recorded Date	What type of organization below BEST describes you? (Please check only ONE.)	Please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following statement. Are you concerned that the proposed NERR in your region would limit or restrict the opportunities to recreate or otherwise utilize the natural resources beyond the current management restrictions? - Oil and gas activities	Please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following statement. Are you concerned that the proposed NERR in your region would limit or restrict the opportunities to recreate or otherwise utilize the natural resources beyond the current management restrictions? - Other: Please describe.	Please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following statement. Are you concerned that the proposed NERR in your region would limit or restrict the opportunities to recreate or otherwise utilize the natural resources beyond the current management restrictions? - Other: Please describe. - Text	Please indicate the extent to which you support or oppose the development of the NERR described in Question #5 in your community:	What support and partnerships would you recommend that the LaNERR proposal team contact?	Would you be willing to assist in making the contact?	Are you interested in joining and participating on a 'friends of the NERR' support group that would serve to connect the development of a NERR to your community?	Please provide any additional comments you might have related to the search for a NERR site in coastal Louisiana.
3/24/2022 13:38	Other (please describe)	Neither agree nor disagree	Neither agree nor disagree		Neutral		No	Not Sure	
3/24/2022 13:42	Non-Profit Organization	Somewhat agree			Strongly Support	Local Businesses	Yes	Yes	
3/24/2022 13:44	Local Agency/Government	Strongly agree			Strongly Support			Yes	
3/24/2022 13:47	Other (please describe)	Strongly Disagree			Strongly Support			Yes	
3/24/2022 13:50	Privately employed	Strongly agree			Neutral			Yes	
3/24/2022 13:54	Educator: K-12	Strongly Disagree	Strongly Disagree		Strongly Support	St Mary Parish Superintendent	Yes	Yes	We need a NERR here. Education, opportunity, stewardship, green living, tourism, and economy. All of it
3/24/2022 13:56	Privately employed	Neither agree nor disagree			Strongly Support			Yes	
3/24/2022 13:58	Educator: K-12	Neither agree nor disagree			Strongly Support			Not Sure	
3/24/2022 14:03	Local Agency/Government	Neither agree nor disagree	Neither agree nor disagree		Strongly Support			Yes	
3/24/2022 14:09	County Agency/Government	Strongly Disagree			Strongly Support	St. Mary Parish Council	Yes	Yes	
3/24/2022 14:11	Industry/Business	Strongly Disagree			Strongly Support			Yes	
3/24/2022 14:13	Educator: K-12	Strongly Disagree	Strongly Disagree		Strongly Support			Yes	
3/24/2022 14:15	Industry/Business	Neither agree nor disagree			Strongly Support			Not Sure	
3/24/2022 14:17	County Agency/Government	Somewhat agree			Strongly Support			Yes	
3/24/2022 14:19	Industry/Business	Somewhat agree			Strongly Support			Not Sure	
3/24/2022 14:21	State Agency/Government	Strongly agree					No	Yes	We need this in St. Mary Parish

Recorded Date	What type of organization below BEST describes you? (Please check only ONE.)	Please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following statement. Are you concerned that the proposed NERR in your region would limit or restrict the opportunities to recreate or otherwise utilize the natural resources beyond the current management restrictions? - Oil and gas activities	Please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following statement. Are you concerned that the proposed NERR in your region would limit or restrict the opportunities to recreate or otherwise utilize the natural resources beyond the current management restrictions? - Other: Please describe.	Please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following statement. Are you concerned that the proposed NERR in your region would limit or restrict the opportunities to recreate or otherwise utilize the natural resources beyond the current management restrictions? - Other: Please describe. - Text	Please indicate the extent to which you support or oppose the development of the NERR described in Question #5 in your community:	What support and partnerships would you recommend that the LaNERR proposal team contact?	Would you be willing to assist in making the contact?	Are you interested in joining and participating on a 'friends of the NERR' support group that would serve to connect the development of a NERR to your community?	Please provide any additional comments you might have related to the search for a NERR site in coastal Louisiana.
3/24/2022 14:25	Local Agency/Government	Neither agree nor disagree			Strongly Support	100 Black Men of St. Mary Parish	Yes	Yes	
3/24/2022 14:27	Local Agency/Government	Somewhat disagree			Strongly Support		No	Yes	
3/24/2022 14:30	Other (please describe)	Neither agree nor disagree			Strongly Support			Yes	
3/24/2022 14:33	Other (please describe)	Neither agree nor disagree	Neither agree nor disagree		Strongly Support		Yes	Yes	Educate the under privladged to know and grow
3/24/2022 14:35	Privately employed	Somewhat agree			Strongly Support			Not Sure	
3/24/2022 14:37	Privately employed	Strongly Disagree			Strongly Support			Not Sure	I think the Atchafalaya site meets all of the needs of the NERR. We would be excited to have a NERR right here in our backyard. The educational opportunities available would help locals learn about the delta as well as beng a great eco-tourism boost.
3/24/2022 14:39	Privately employed	Somewhat agree			Strongly Support		No	No	
2/8/2022 14:14		Strongly agree			Strongly Support			Yes	
2/8/2022 19:48	Educator: Higher Education	Strongly Disagree			Strongly Support			Yes	
2/9/2022 12:14	Non-Profit Organization	Strongly Disagree		While it is great to explain what won't be limited by the designation, considering that a NERR is a "protected" area it might be useful to explain how it is protected or what from.	Strongly Support				
2/9/2022 13:13	County Agency/Government	Strongly Disagree			Strongly Support		Yes	Yes	
2/9/2022 13:18	State Agency/Government	Strongly Disagree			Somewhat Oppose		No	No	
2/9/2022 13:22	Educator: Higher Education	Neither agree nor disagree			Strongly Support				

Recorded Date	What type of organization below BEST describes you? (Please check only ONE.)	Please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following statement. Are you concerned that the proposed NERR in your region would limit or restrict the opportunities to recreate or otherwise utilize the natural resources beyond the current management restrictions? - Oil and gas activities	Please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following statement. Are you concerned that the proposed NERR in your region would limit or restrict the opportunities to recreate or otherwise utilize the natural resources beyond the current management restrictions? - Other: Please describe.	Please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following statement. Are you concerned that the proposed NERR in your region would limit or restrict the opportunities to recreate or otherwise utilize the natural resources beyond the current management restrictions? - Other: Please describe. - Text	Please indicate the extent to which you support or oppose the development of the NERR described in Question #5 in your community:	What support and partnerships would you recommend that the LaNERR proposal team contact?	Would you be willing to assist in making the contact?	Are you interested in joining and participating on a 'friends of the NERR' support group that would serve to connect the development of a NERR to your community?	Please provide any additional comments you might have related to the search for a NERR site in coastal Louisiana.
2/9/2022 13:37	Non-Profit Organization	Strongly Disagree	Strongly Disagree	I'm sorry to bastardize this field, but I wasn't positive what this question meant. I believe a NERR would have affects on these things, but I don't have much concerns about those effects, because I assume they would be best for the long term. I disagreed with most, because I have little concern about the effects.	Strongly Support	I honestly think it might be helpful to have fisherman involved.	No	Yes	
2/9/2022 19:20	Other (please describe)	Somewhat disagree			Strongly Support	Bayou Culture Collaborative	Yes	Yes	
2/1/2022 18:32	Industry/Business	Neither agree nor disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	NA	Somewhat Support	NA	No	Not Sure	
2/1/2022 18:35	Educator: Higher Education	Strongly Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Film industry	Strongly Support	HBCUs & libraries, community organizations	Yes	Yes	Inclusion of African American communities
2/1/2022 18:57	Other (please describe)	Strongly agree	Strongly agree		Strongly Support			Yes	
2/1/2022 18:57	County Agency/Government	Strongly Disagree			Strongly Support	Friends of the Manchac Greenway	Yes	Yes	
2/1/2022 19:10	Educator: Higher Education				Strongly Support		Yes	Yes	
2/1/2022 19:11	Non-Profit Organization	Strongly Disagree			Strongly Support		Yes	Yes	
2/1/2022 19:33	Educator: Higher Education	Strongly Disagree			Strongly Support			Not Sure	
2/2/2022 12:55	Educator: Higher Education	Neither agree nor disagree				local universities and colleges	Yes	Not Sure	Thank you for making this possible.
2/3/2022 18:40	Non-Profit Organization	Somewhat disagree			Strongly Support	Community Based Organizations that provided community education programming	Yes	Yes	
2/3/2022 18:44	County Agency/Government	Strongly Disagree			Strongly Support			Yes	St. John Parish provided a letter of support but please let us know if we can do anything else to help!

Recorded Date	What type of organization below BEST describes you? (Please check only ONE.)	Please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following statement. Are you concerned that the proposed NERR in your region would limit or restrict the opportunities to recreate or otherwise utilize the natural resources beyond the current management restrictions? - Oil and gas activities	Please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following statement. Are you concerned that the proposed NERR in your region would limit or restrict the opportunities to recreate or otherwise utilize the natural resources beyond the current management restrictions? - Other: Please describe.	Please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following statement. Are you concerned that the proposed NERR in your region would limit or restrict the opportunities to recreate or otherwise utilize the natural resources beyond the current management restrictions? - Other: Please describe. - Text	Please indicate the extent to which you support or oppose the development of the NERR described in Question #5 in your community:	What support and partnerships would you recommend that the LaNERR proposal team contact?	Would you be willing to assist in making the contact?	Are you interested in joining and participating on a 'friends of the NERR' support group that would serve to connect the development of a NERR to your community?	Please provide any additional comments you might have related to the search for a NERR site in coastal Louisiana.
2/3/2022 19:18	Non-Profit Organization	Strongly Disagree			Strongly Support	The Meraux foundation	Yes	Yes	I manage the Friends of Pontchartrain La. Nerr group on Facebook and am on the Coastal zone board for St. Bernard.
2/3/2022 19:19	Non-Profit Organization	Neither agree nor disagree						Yes	
2/3/2022 19:21	Educator: K-12	Neither agree nor disagree			Strongly Support			Yes	I support the argument that the Pontchartrain site strongly meets the criteria for community engagement on all levels and provides excellent access to estuarine sites and examples for demonstrating the critical importance of the estuary to human quality of life.
2/3/2022 20:23	Other (please describe)	Strongly agree			Strongly Support		Yes	Not Sure	
2/3/2022 21:36	Non-Profit Organization	Somewhat disagree			Strongly Support	La. Science Teacher Professional Association	No	Yes	A NERR site in the Pontchartrain Basin would be of service to a larger base of students than a NERR in either the ATCH or BARATARIA Basins. Access and partnerships should be strong points for a NERR in this Basin.
2/11/2022 12:58	Non-Profit Organization	Strongly agree			Strongly Support		Yes	Yes	
2/11/2022 12:59	Non-Profit Organization	Neither agree nor disagree			Strongly Support		Yes	Yes	Strongly support selection of the Pontchartrain Basin
2/11/2022 13:22	Local Agency/Government	Neither agree nor disagree			Strongly Support			Yes	I believe the Pontchartrain Basin presents an excellent opportunity for the creation of a NERR site and will look forward to updates in the future.
2/11/2022 13:45	Other (please describe)	Neither agree nor disagree			Strongly Support	Native American Tribes; Representatives of Fishing and Hunting Clubs (like Ducks Unlimited etc); or any group with extensive experience working within the basin areas.	Yes	Yes	Please edit answer given at beginning regarding who I work with:: Other = I worked as a geologist with DOI agency MMS/BOEM for 30 years mapping GOM geology of oil and gas fields; now retired. I would advise that in correspondence with NOAA, emphasize how local universities have numerous experts in deltiac processes. These local experts could serve in building visuals to use at educational exhibits etc. Also, I would be interested in volunteering for the educational outreach aspects of the NERR. Thank you.
2/11/2022 22:25	Non-Profit Organization	Strongly Disagree			Strongly Support		No	Yes	

Louisiana National Estuarine Research Reserve (LaNERR)
Site Selection & Nomination Report

November 2022

APPENDIX 11:

Detailed Site Screening and Scoring Outcomes

Evaluation Process Basic Info: LANERR PROCESS

The site selection process was organized around evaluations of the 6 criteria groups by teams made up of members of the Site Selection Team
Criteria:
Group 1: Environmental Representativeness:
Group 2: Research/Monitoring/Stewardship:
Group3: Education and Training:
Group 4: Acquisition/Management:
Group 5: Resiliency:
Group 6: Partnerships

Each team was provided data sets from Designation Leadership Team and set of standard basin maps of state and federal lands, vegetation types, education facilities, and monitoring stations relevant to the criteria. These data and information gathered by the respective teams, along with a series of Town Hall meetings with public, were applied to describe how each site addressed each of the LaNERR criteria to formulate a final proposal.

During the evaluation phase, a Screening Subcommittee of the Site Development Committee, was formed to score each of the thee proposals against the LaNERR Site Criteria. The Screening Subcommittee was charied by Seth Blitch of TNC and included sixteen other members. One member of the subcommittee had to resign due to illness associated with Covid. There was a meeting of the Screening Subcommittee to review the LaNERR Site Criteria and answer any questions associated with the evaluation process. Following that meeting the subcommittee had about two weeks to complete the evaluation process. Each member completed an evaluation by providing scores using Qualtrics for each criterion for each site. The final scores were collected by LaNERR Designation Leadership Team and formulated this report for the Site Development Commitee and LaNERR Executive Committee.

Scoring Analysis Process:
Each respondent's final scoring sheets using Qualtrics, which assigned a reviewer number in the order received (Rev1, Rev2, etc.), along with comments were loaded into this workbook. This document contains all initial scores by each subcommittee member (again anonymous using the Qualtrics process) align with comments. There were 15 evaluations submitteed.

The results from each reviewer were collected and used to generate an average score by criteria. The average score for each criterion was summed within each of the six categories that the criterion was associated to generate a summed score for each site by one of six categories (see categories above). The average score was also summed for all criteria to generate a total score and converted to a percentage based on 90 points representing the total possible score. The total score and percentage are used to rank the three proposals.

The "Results Overview" contains observations based on a review of the final results.

The "Final Results" contains the scoring results in several tabular and graphic formats, with brief written synopsis.

Each SITE has a summary sheet (Atchafalaya, Barataria, Pontchartrain) containing the criteria list, each reviewers scores, and summary info including the average score and variance.

Screening Subcommittee comments are then provided for each CRITERION.

Results Overview:

ATCHAFALAYA: 87.24%
BARATARIA: 77.71%
PONTCHARTRAIN: 86.46%

Criteria Group 1: Environmental Representativeness:

Overall, the scores for this section (looking at the average of the average scores across all reviewers for each criteria) were:

ATCHAFALAYA: 20.59%
BARATARIA: 18.52%
PONTCHARTRAIN: 20.52%

Criteria Group 2: Research/Monitoring/Stewardship:
Overall, the scores for this section (looking at the average of the average scores across all reviewers for each criteria) were:

ATCHAFALAYA: 12.30%
BARATARIA: 11.56%
PONTCHARTRAIN: 11.63%

Criteria Group3: Education and Training:
Overall, the scores for this section (looking at the average of the average scores across all reviewers for each criteria) were:

ATCHAFALAYA: 12.59%
BARATARIA: 13.97%
PONTCHARTRAIN: 16.22%

Criteria Group 4: Acquisition/Management:
Overall, the scores for this section (looking at the average of the average scores across all reviewers for each criteria) were:

ATCHAFALAYA: 21.17%
BARATARIA: 16.30%
PONTCHARTRAIN: 18.67%

Criteria Group 5: Resiliency:
Overall, the scores for this section (looking at the average of the average scores across all reviewers for each criteria) were:

ATCHAFALAYA: 11.70%
BARATARIA: 9.41%
PONTCHARTRAIN: 10.44%

Criteria Group 6: Partnerships
Overall, the scores for this section (looking at the average of the average scores across all reviewers for each criteria) were:

ATCHAFALAYA: 8.89%
BARATARIA: 7.96%
PONTCHARTRAIN: 8.98%

Final Overall Scoring Values

	Atchafalaya	Barataria	Pontchartrain
Total Points	78.52	69.94	77.82
Site Score	87.24%	77.71%	86.47%

Summary

The tables and charts provide a breakdown of how the scoring contributed to the overall site scores, as well as how sites compared when looking at criteria groups.

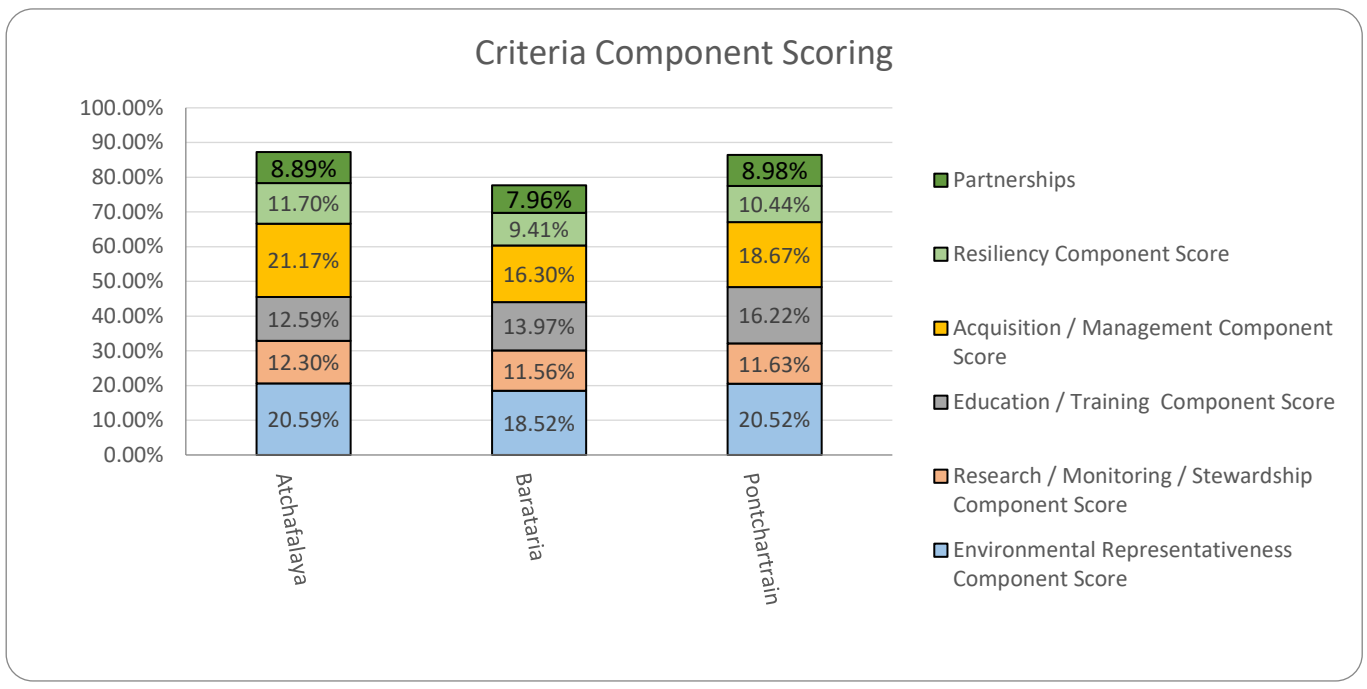
There were 90 possible points in the LaNERR criteria and Atchafalaya Basin received 87.24% compared to 86.47% for Pontchartrain and 77.71% for Barataria Basin.

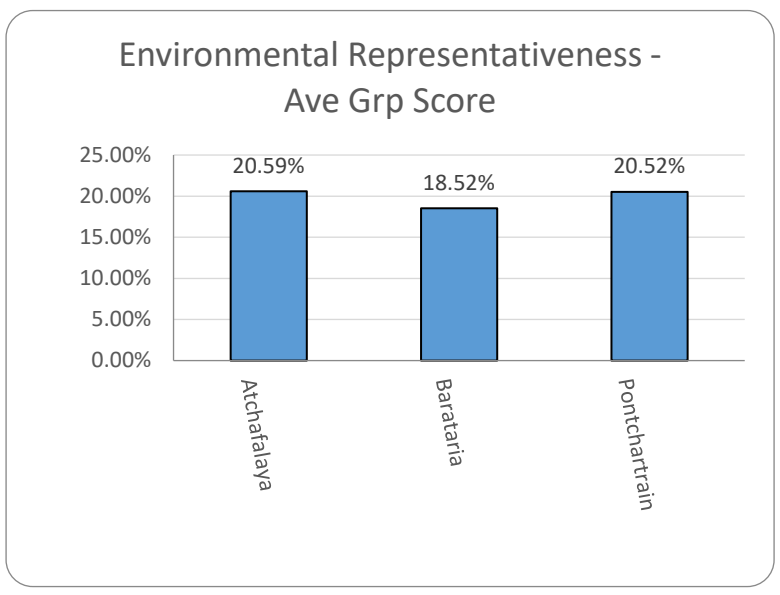
When considering the imapct of selection criteria (using both the average scores and percentages of total), the Atchafalaya and Pontchartrain sites scored high across the six topical areas of the LaNERR criteria. Atchafalaya scored higher in Environmental Representativeness, Research/Monitoring/Stewardship, Acqusition/Management, and Resiliency. Pontchartrain Basin scored higher in Education/Training and Partnerships. Barataria did not have highest score in any of the six topical areas. The scores between Atcharafalaya and Pontchartrain were particularly close in Environmental Representativeness and Partnerships.

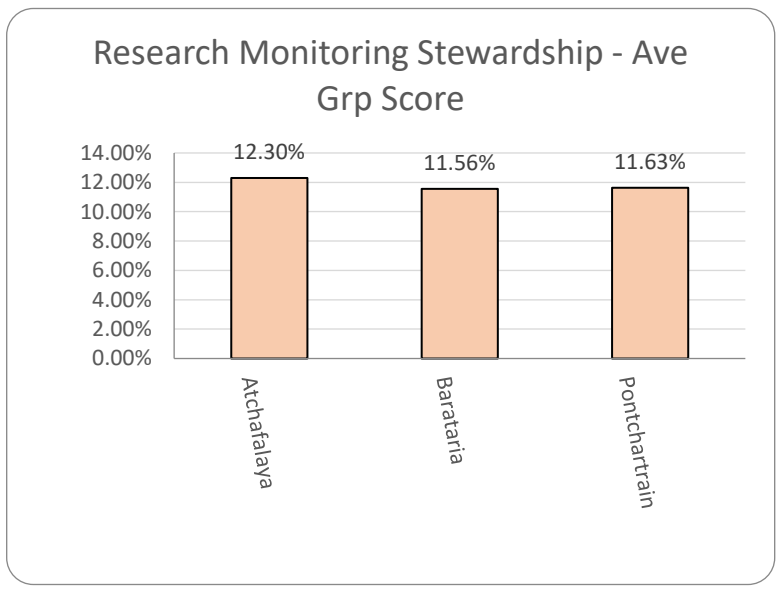
Atchafalaya and Pontchartrain Basins scored first or second in all six of the topical areas and Barataria was second in only one category (Education/Training) of the 6 groups. Atchafalaya ranked first in 4 of the 6 categories, second and third in one each. Pontchartrain ranked first in two categories and second in four other categories.

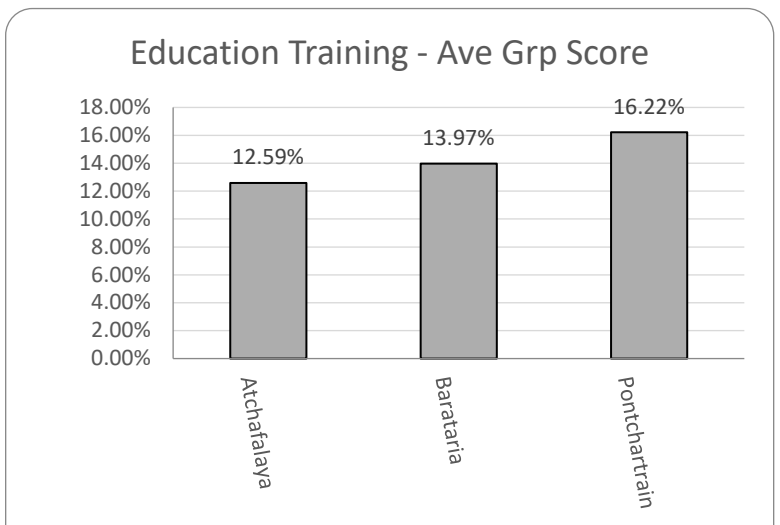
Component Scoring: Contribution of each Criteria Group to the Overall Score

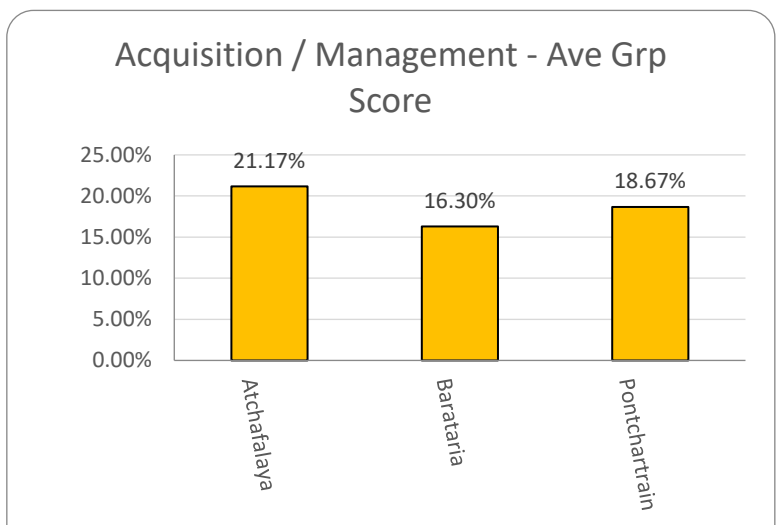
Estuarine Zone	Environmental Representativeness Component Score	Research / Monitoring / Stewardship Component Score	Education / Training Component Score	Acquisition / Management Component Score	Resiliency Component Score	Partnerships	Overall Score
Atchafalaya	20.59%	12.30%	12.59%	21.17%	11.70%	8.89%	87.24%
Barataria	18.52%	11.56%	13.97%	16.30%	9.41%	7.96%	77.71%
Pontchartrain	20.52%	11.63%	16.22%	18.67%	10.44%	8.98%	86.47%

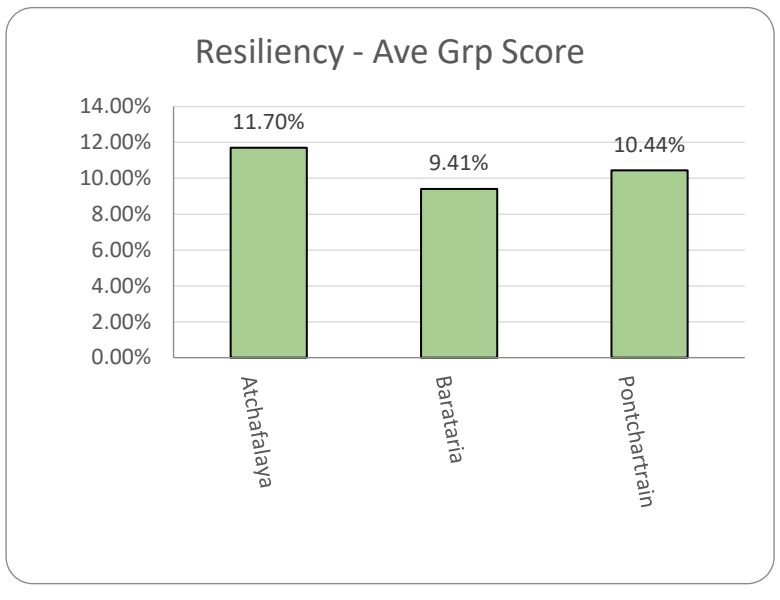


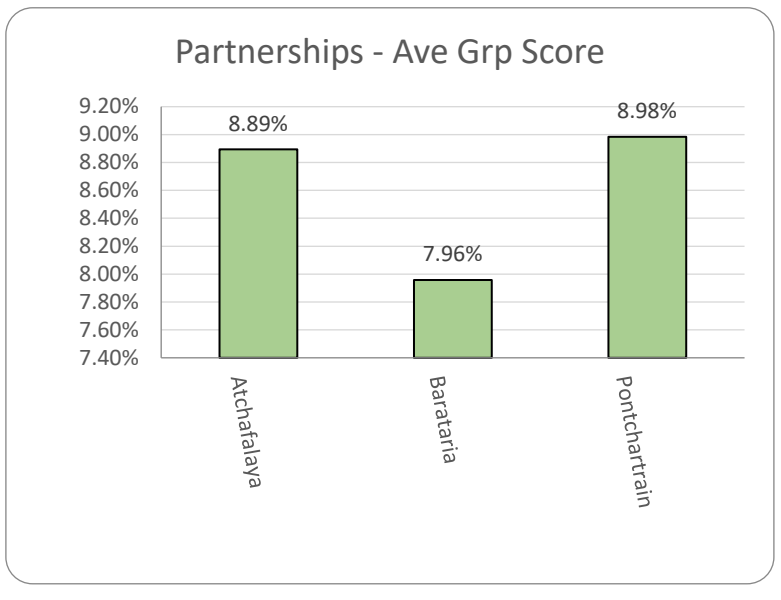






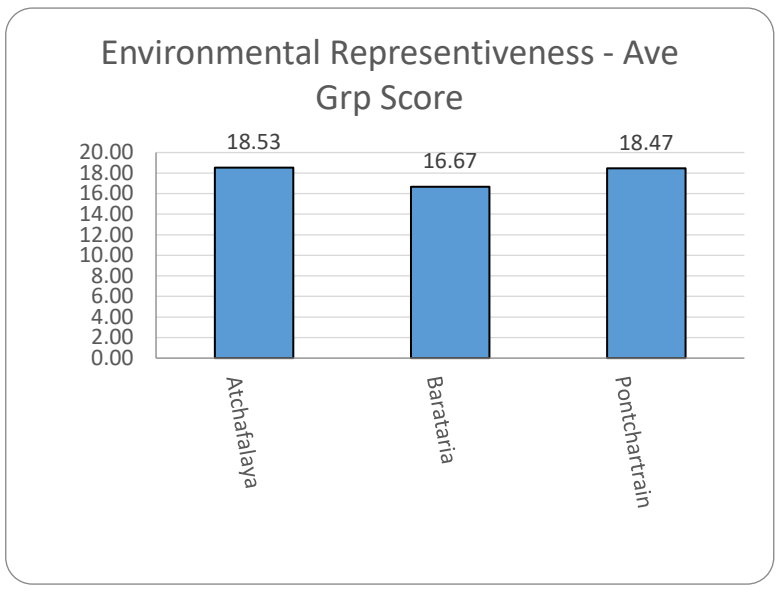


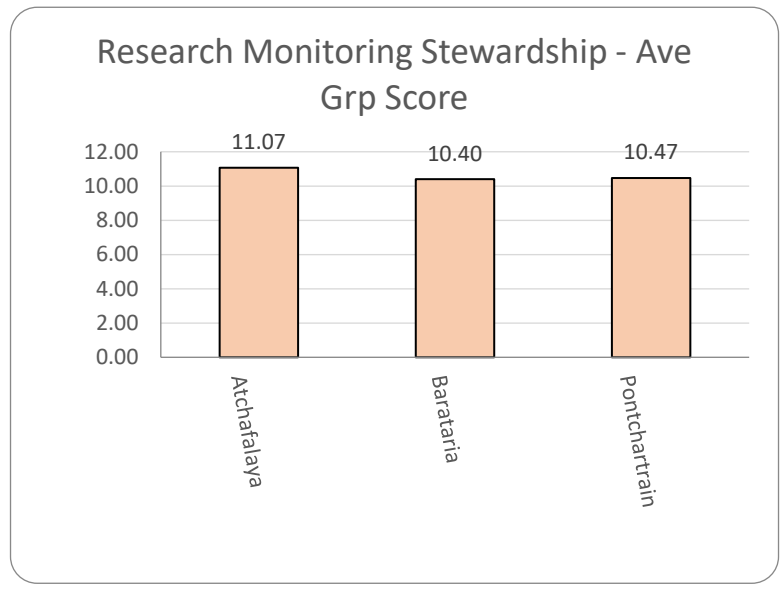


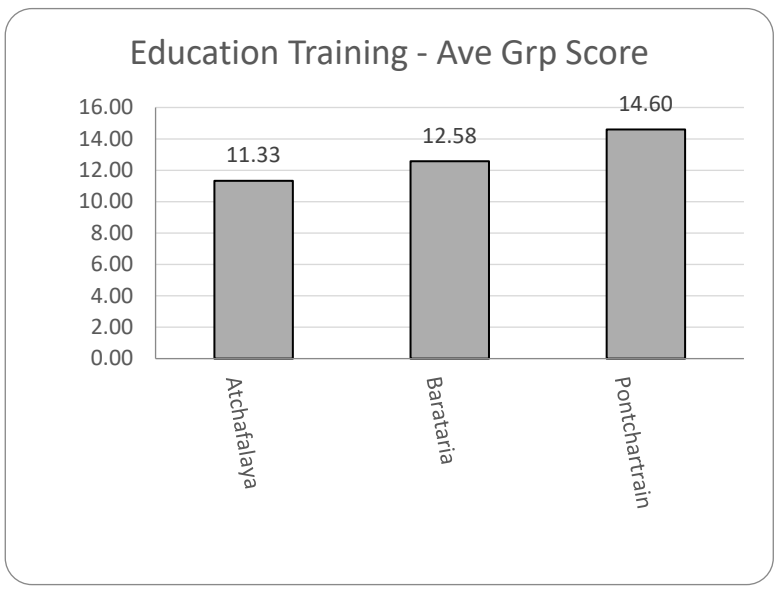


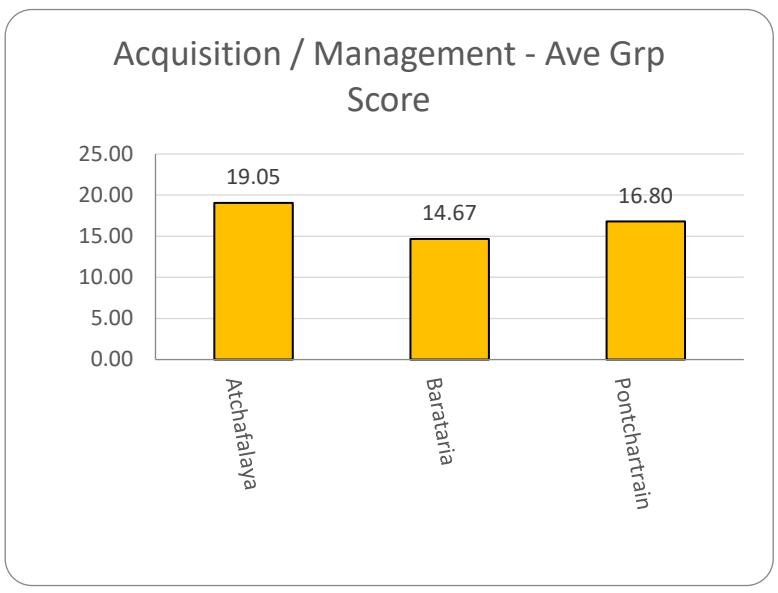
Average Scoring of Criteria Groups

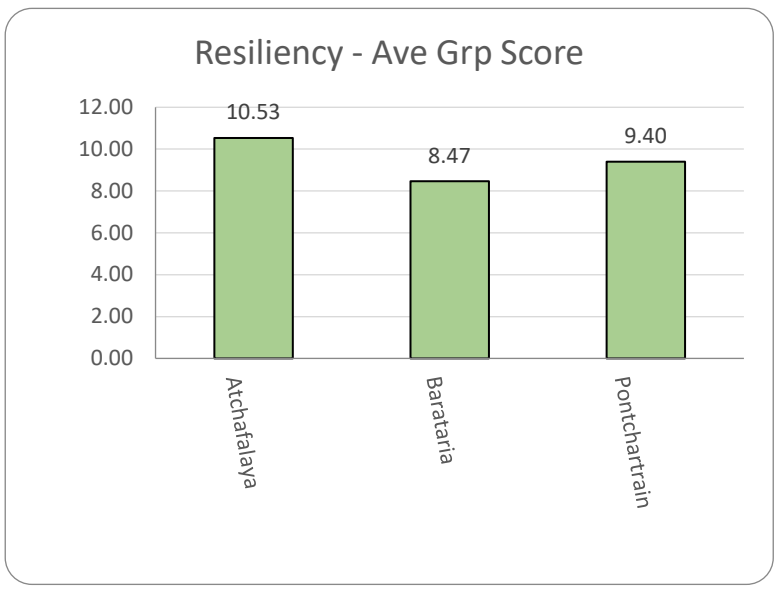
Estuarine Zone	Environmental Representativeness Ave Group Score	Research / Monitoring / Stewardship Ave Group Score	Education / Training Ave group Score	Acquisition / Management Ave Group Score	Resiliency Ave Group Score	Partnerships	Overall Score
Atchafalaya	18.53	11.07	11.33	19.05	10.53	8.00	78.52
Barataria	16.67	10.40	12.58	14.67	8.47	7.16	69.94
Pontchartrain	18.47	10.47	14.60	16.80	9.40	8.09	77.82

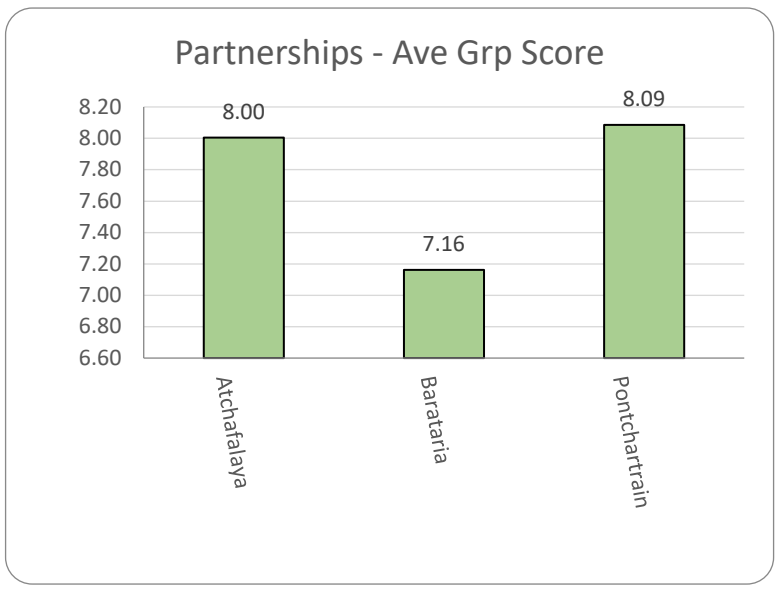












Average Rank Scoring of Criteria Groups

Estuarine Zone	Environmental Representativeness Ave Group Score Rank	Research / Monitoring / Stewardship Ave Group Score Rank	Education / Training Ave group Score Rank	Acquisition / Management Ave Group Score Rank	Resiliency Ave Group Score Rank	Partnerships
Atchafalaya	1	1	3	1	1	2
Barataria	3	3	2	3	3	3
Pontchartrain	2	2	1	2	2	1

Atchafalaya Estuarine Zone Scores

Section	Criteria	Max Score	Min Score	R1	R2	R3	R4	R5	R6	R7	R8	R9	R10	R11	R12	R13	R14	R15	*Criteria Ave Score*	*Variance*	*Section Average*	*Section Raw Score*	*Section % Score*
1	Environmental Representativeness & Characterisitics																						
1.1	Ecosystem Composition	**3**	1	1	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	1	3	3	3	3	3	3	*2.73*	*0.46*			
1.2	Balanced Ecosystem Composition	**3**	0	1	3	3	2	3	3	3	3	1	2	3	3	2	3	2	*2.47*	*0.52*			
1.3	Habitat Composition / Complexity	**3**	1	1	3	3	2	3	3	3	3	2	3	3	3	3	3	1	*2.60*	*0.51*			
1.4	Significant faunal and floral support	**3**	0	2	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	2	3	3	3	3	3	*2.87*	*0.12*	2.65	18.53	20.6%
1.5	Geologic representativeness, diversity, and uniqueness of the site	**3**	0	3	2	3	1	3	3	3	3	2	3	3	3	3	3	3	*2.73*	*0.33*			
1.6	Salinity Gradient	**3**	0	2	2	2	2	3	3	3	3	2	3	3	3	3	3	2	*2.60*	*0.24*			
1.7	Degree developed and potential impacts to water quality	**3**	0	2	3	3	2	3	2	3	3	2	3	3	3	2	3	1	*2.53*	*0.38*			
2	Value for Research Monitoring & Stewardship																						
2.1	Valueof the site for research	**3**	0	3	2	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	*2.93*	*0.06*			
2.2	Previous research and monitoring efforts	**3**	0	3	2	3	1	3	2	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	*2.73*	*0.33*			
2.3	Suitability of the Site for environmental baseline monitoring	**3**	0	3	3	3	2	3	2	3	3	2	3	3	3	3	3	3	*2.80*	*0.16*	2.77	11.07	12.3%
2.4	Ability to address key local, state, and regional coastal management issues	**3**	0	2	2	3	1	3	3	3	3	2	3	3	3	2	3	3	*2.60*	*0.37*			
3	Value for Training, Education, and Interpretation																						
3.1	Diversity and quality of training, education, and interpretation opportunities	**3**	0	1	2	3	2	2	2	3	3	2	3	2	3	2	3	1	*2.27*	*0.46*			
3.2	Diversity and availability of target audiences	**3**	0	2	3	3	1	3	2	3	3	2	3	2	3	3	2	1	*2.40*	*0.51*			
3.3	Availability of facilities	**3**	0	1	2	3	1	2	1	3	2	2	3		2	2	3	0	*1.93*	*0.78*	2.27	11.33	12.6%
3.4	Proximity and accessibility of site to researchers, educators, and resource management	**3**	0	2	3	2	1	3	3	3	3	2	3	2	3	3	2	1	*2.40*	*0.51*			
3.5	Value of the site for environmental education and interpretation programs	**3**	0	2	3	2	2	3	2	3	3	3	3	1	3	2	2	1	*2.33*	*0.49*			
4	Acquisition & Management																						
4.1	Publically owned lands and feasibility of land acquisition	**3**	0	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	2	3	3	3	3	3	2	*2.87*	*0.12*			
4.2	Compatibility with Existing Management Practices and Consumtive / Non-consumptive Uses	**3**	0	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	2	3	3	3	3	3	2	*2.87*	*0.12*			
4.3	Compatibility with adjacent land use	**3**	0	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	2	3	2	3	2	3	1	*2.67*	*0.36*	2.72	19.05	21.2%
4.4	Land ownership	**3**	1	3	3	2	2	3	3	3	2	3	3	3	3	2	3	1	*2.60*	*0.37*			
4.5	Enforcement and protection of site area management practices	**3**	0	3	3	2	2	3	3	3	3	2	2	3	3	3	3	2	*2.67*	*0.22*			
4.6	Land and water access	**3**	0	2	2	3	2	3	3	3	3	2	3	2	3	3	3	2	*2.60*	*0.24*			
4.7	Future urban and industrial development plans	**3**	0	3	2	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3		3	3	3	1	*2.79*	*0.31*			
5	Research on Resilience and Climate Change Impacts																						
5.1	Coastal resilience research	**3**	1	3	3	3	2	3	3	3	3	2	3	3	3	2	3	3	*2.80*	*0.16*			
5.2	Focus on the abilit to accommodate shifts in habitat as sea level, inundation or other climate change impacts occur	**3**	0	3	1	3	3	3	3	3	3	2	3	3	3	3	3	2	*2.73*	*0.33*	2.63	10.53	11.7%
5.3	Infrastructure and access	**3**	0	3	2	3	2	3	3	3	3	3	2	3	3	2	3	1	*2.60*	*0.37*			
5.4	Public Access Resilience	**3**	0	1	2	3	2	3	3	3	3	3	2	2	3	3	3	0	*2.40*	*0.77*			
6	LaNERR Partnerships																						
6.1	Potential to develop partnerships	**3**	0	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	2	*2.93*	*0.06*			
6.2	Internal NOAA Partnerships	**3**	0	3	3	2	1	3	2	3	3	3	2	2	3	2	2		*2.43*	*0.39*	2.67	8.00	8.9%
6.3	Diversity of Partnerships	**3**	0	3	2	3	2	3	2	2	3	3	3	3	3	3	2		*2.64*	*0.23*			
	Totals:	**90**																	**78.52**				
	Site Score:																		***87.24%***			***78.52***	***66.65%***

Barataria Estuarine Zone Scores

Section	Criteria	Max Score	Min Score	R1	R2	R3	R4	R5	R6	R7	R8	R9	R10	R11	R12	R13	R14	R15	*Criteria Ave Score*	*Variance*	*Section Average*	*Section Raw Score*	*Section % Score*
1	Environmental Representativeness & Characterisitics																						
1.1	Ecosystem Composition	**3**	1	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	2	3	3	3	2	2	*2.80*	*0.16*			
1.2	Balanced Ecosystem Composition	**3**	0	3	3	3	2	2	2	2	2		2	1	3	2	1	1	*2.07*	*0.49*			
1.3	Habitat Composition / Complexity	**3**	1	3	3	3	2	2	3	3	3	3	1	3	3	3	1	3	*2.60*	*0.51*			
1.4	Significant faunal and floral support	**3**	0	3	3	2	2	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	*2.87*	*0.12*	2.38	16.67	18.5%
1.5	Geologic representativeness, diversity, and uniqueness of the site	**3**	0	2	2	2	1	3	2	2	3	2	2	2	3	3	3	2	*2.27*	*0.33*			
1.6	Salinity Gradient	**3**	0	2	0	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	2	*2.67*	*0.62*			
1.7	Degree developed and potential impacts to water quality	**3**	0	2	2	1	0	1	2	2	1	3	1	1	1	2	2	0	*1.40*	*0.64*			
2	Value for Research Monitoring & Stewardship																						
2.1	Valueof the site for research	**3**	0	3	2	2	2	3	3	2	3	3	2	3	3	3	2	3	*2.60*	*0.24*			
2.2	Previous research and monitoring efforts	**3**	0	3	1	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	2	2	3	3	3	3	*2.73*	*0.33*			
2.3	Suitability of the Site for environmental baseline monitoring	**3**	0	1	2	2	2	3	3	3	2	3	2	2	1	3	3	2	*2.27*	*0.46*	2.60	10.40	11.6%
2.4	Ability to address key local, state, and regional coastal management issues	**3**	0	3	2	3	3	2	3	3	2	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	*2.80*	*0.16*			
3	Value for Training, Education, and Interpretation																						
3.1	Diversity and quality of training, education, and interpretation opportunities	**3**	0	3	2	3	2	2	2	3	3	2	2	2	3	2	3	2	*2.40*	*0.24*			
3.2	Diversity and availability of target audiences	**3**	0	2	3	3	3	2	3	3	2		3	3	3	3	2	2	*2.64*	*0.23*			
3.3	Availability of facilities	**3**	0	2	2	2	3	2	3	3	3	2	3	2	3	2	3	2	*2.47*	*0.25*	2.52	12.58	14.0%
3.4	Proximity and accessibility of site to researchers, educators, and resource management	**3**	0	2	3	2	2	2	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	2	1	*2.53*	*0.38*			
3.5	Value of the site for environmental education and interpretation programs	**3**	0	2	3	3	2	3	3	3	3	3	3	2	3	2	2	1	*2.53*	*0.38*			
4	Acquisition & Management																						
4.1	Publically owned lands and feasibility of land acquisition	**3**	0	1	3	1	1	3	2	3	3	1	3	2	1	3	3	1	*2.07*	*0.86*			
4.2	Compatibility with Existing Management Practices and Consumtive / Non-consumptive Uses	**3**	0	1	3	1	3	3	2	3	2	3	3	2	3	3	3	2	*2.47*	*0.52*			
4.3	Compatibility with adjacent land use	**3**	0	2	1	1	1	1	2	2	1	3	2	1	3	1	1	1	*1.53*	*0.52*	2.10	14.67	16.3%
4.4	Land ownership	**3**	1	1	1	1	1	2	1	1	1	3	2	2	2	2	2	1	*1.53*	*0.38*			
4.5	Enforcement and protection of site area management practices	**3**	0	2	2	2	2	3	2	2	2	2	2	1	3	3	3	1	*2.13*	*0.38*			
4.6	Land and water access	**3**	0	3	3	2	3	2	2	2	3	2	3	2	3	3	2	2	*2.47*	*0.25*			
4.7	Future urban and industrial development plans	**3**	0	2	2	2	2	3	3	3	2	3	3	2	3	3	3	1	*2.47*	*0.38*			
5	Research on Resilience and Climate Change Impacts																						
5.1	Coastal resilience research	**3**	1	3	1	3	2	2	2	3	3	3	3	3	2	3	3	3	*2.60*	*0.37*			
5.2	Focus on the abilit to accommodate shifts in habitat as sea level, inundation or other climate change impacts occur	**3**	0	3	2	2	2	3	2	3	1	3	2	1	1	2	3	2	*2.13*	*0.52*	2.12	8.47	9.4%
5.3	Infrastructure and access	**3**	0	2	0	1	2	1	3	2	2	3	2	2	1	2	1	2	*1.73*	*0.60*			
5.4	Public Access Resilience	**3**	0	3	2	1	2	2	2	2	2	3	2	2	1	3	2	1	*2.00*	*0.40*			
6	LaNERR Partnerships																						
6.1	Potential to develop partnerships	**3**	0	3	3	2	3	3	3	3	3	3	2	2	3	2	3	3	*2.73*	*0.20*			
6.2	Internal NOAA Partnerships	**3**	0	3	1	3	2	2	2	1	3	3	1	2	3	2	1		*2.07*	*0.64*	2.39	7.16	8.0%
6.3	Diversity of Partnerships	**3**	0	3	1	3	3	2	2	2	3	3	1	3	3	2	2		*2.36*	*0.52*			
	Totals:	**90**																	**69.94**				
	Site Score:																		***77.71%***			***69.94***	***59.19%***

Pontchartrain Estuarine Zone Scores

Section	Criteria	Max Score	Min Score	R1	R2	R3	R4	R5	R6	R7	R8	R9	R10	R11	R12	R13	R14	R15	*Criteria Ave Score*	*Variance*	*Section Average*	*Section Raw Score*	*Section % Score*
1	Environmental Representativeness & Characterisitics																						
1.1	Ecosystem Composition	**3**	1	3	3	3	2	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	*2.93*	*0.06*			
1.2	Balanced Ecosystem Composition	**3**	0	3	2	3	2	3	3	3	3	3	2	3	2	3	3	3	*2.73*	*0.20*			
1.3	Habitat Composition / Complexity	**3**	1	3	2	3	2	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	2	3	3	3	*2.80*	*0.16*			
1.4	Significant faunal and floral support	**3**	0	2	3	3	2	3	3	3	3	3	2	3	3	3	3	3	*2.80*	*0.16*	2.64	18.47	20.5%
1.5	Geologic representativeness, diversity, and uniqueness of the site	**3**	0	3	2	3	2	3	2	3	3	3	3	2	1	3	3	3	*2.60*	*0.37*			
1.6	Salinity Gradient	**3**	0	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	*3.00*	*0.00*			
1.7	Degree developed and potential impacts to water quality	**3**	0	2	1	2	1	2	2	1	1	2	2	0	2	3	3	0	*1.60*	*0.77*			
2	Value for Research Monitoring & Stewardship																						
2.1	Valueof the site for research	**3**	0	3	2	3	2	3	3	3	3	3	3	2	3	3	3	3	*2.80*	*0.16*			
2.2	Previous research and monitoring efforts	**3**	0	3	2	3	3	3	3	2	3	3	3	3	3	3	2	3	*2.80*	*0.16*			
2.3	Suitability of the Site for environmental baseline monitoring	**3**	0	2	1	2	3	3	2	2	2	2	2	1	1	3	3	2	*2.07*	*0.46*	2.62	10.47	11.6%
2.4	Ability to address key local, state, and regional coastal management issues	**3**	0	3	2	3	3	3	3	3	2	3	3	2	3	3	3	3	*2.80*	*0.16*			
3	Value for Training, Education, and Interpretation																						
3.1	Diversity and quality of training, education, and interpretation opportunities	**3**	0	3	3	3	2	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	*2.93*	*0.06*			
3.2	Diversity and availability of target audiences	**3**	0	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	2	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	*2.93*	*0.06*			
3.3	Availability of facilities	**3**	0	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	*3.00*	*0.00*	2.92	14.60	16.2%
3.4	Proximity and accessibility of site to researchers, educators, and resource management	**3**	0	3	2	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	*2.93*	*0.06*			
3.5	Value of the site for environmental education and interpretation programs	**3**	0	3	2	2	2	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	*2.80*	*0.16*			
4	Acquisition & Management																						
4.1	Publically owned lands and feasibility of land acquisition	**3**	0	3	3	2	1	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	2	3	*2.73*	*0.33*			
4.2	Compatibility with Existing Management Practices and Consumtive / Non-consumptive Uses	**3**	0	2	1	2	2	3	3	2	2	2	3	3	3	2	3	3	*2.40*	*0.37*			
4.3	Compatibility with adjacent land use	**3**	0	2	2	2	1	2	2	2	1	2	2	1	3	3	2	0	*1.80*	*0.56*	2.40	16.80	18.7%
4.4	Land ownership	**3**	1	2	2	3	1	3	3	2	2	3	3	3	3	2	3	2	*2.47*	*0.38*			
4.5	Enforcement and protection of site area management practices	**3**	0	2	1	2	2	3	3	2	2	2	2	2	3	3	3	3	*2.33*	*0.36*			
4.6	Land and water access	**3**	0	3	2	3	2	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	*2.87*	*0.12*			
4.7	Future urban and industrial development plans	**3**	0	2	1	3	1	3	3	2	2	2	3	2	3	3	3	0	*2.20*	*0.83*			
5	Research on Resilience and Climate Change Impacts																						
5.1	Coastal resilience research	**3**	1	3	2	3	3	3	3	2	3	2	3	3	3	3	3	3	*2.80*	*0.16*			
5.2	Focus on the abilit to accommodate shifts in habitat as sea level, inundation or other climate change impacts occur	**3**	0	3	1	2	1	3	2	2	1	3	1	1	2	3	2	3	*2.00*	*0.67*	2.35	9.40	10.4%
5.3	Infrastructure and access	**3**	0	2	1	3	2	2	2	3	2	3	2	1	2	3	2	3	*2.20*	*0.43*			
5.4	Public Access Resilience	**3**	0	3	2	3	2	3	2	3	2	3	2	1	2	3	2	3	*2.40*	*0.37*			
6	LaNERR Partnerships																						
6.1	Potential to develop partnerships	**3**	0	3	2	3	3	3	2	3	3	3	3	2	3	3	3	3	*2.80*	*0.16*			
6.2	Internal NOAA Partnerships	**3**	0	3	2	3	2	3	2	2	3	3	3	2	3	2	3		*2.57*	*0.24*	2.70	8.09	9.0%
6.3	Diversity of Partnerships	**3**	0	3	2	3	3	3	2	2	3	3	2	3	3	3	3		*2.71*	*0.20*			
	Totals:	**90**																	**77.82**				
	Site Score:																		***86.47%***			***77.82***	***86.47%***

	Atchafalaya	Barataria	Pontchartrain
1.1 Ecosystem composition: SCORE	**2.73**	**2.80**	**2.93**
1.1 Ecosystem composition: A measure of the diversity of ecosystem types present within the boundaries of the site. This criterion assumes that sites that have a high diversity of major ecosystem types are of higher relative “value” for protection and management than those with low ecosystem diversity (unless the ecosystem in consideration is rare or unique). 3 Points. The site has a high diversity of habitat composition within its major ecosystem type, i.e., it contains three or more habitat types or subtypes within its major ecosystem type (e.g., site consists of a combination of swamps, coastal marshes, and mud flats) or has a combination of multiple coastal marsh types (e.g., tidal freshwater, brackish, salt marsh zones). 2 Points. The site has a moderate diversity of habitat composition within its major ecosystem type, i.e., it contains only two habitat types or subtypes within its major ecosystem type (e.g., consists of a combination of forested wetlands and a single coastal marsh type). 1 Point. The site has a low diversity of habitat composition within its major ecosystem type, i.e., its major ecosystem type consists of a single habitat type (e.g., tidal freshwater marsh or brackish marsh, or forested wetland). These are the suggested Ecosystem Types to be used in the LaNERR evaluation: Group I- Uplands Alluvial Forested Wetlands Longleaf Pine Savannahs/Pine Flatwoods Maritime Forest- Woodland Coastal Prairie/bogs Coastal Shrublands and Cheniers Group II- Intertidal areas Coastal Forested Wetlands Coastal Floating Marshes Coastal Freshwater Marsh Coastal Intermediate Marsh Coastal Brackish Marsh Coastal Salt Marsh Coastal Mangroves Intertidal Beaches and Dunes Intertidal Mud and Sand Flats Group III- Subtidal and Submerged Bottoms Subtidal hard bottoms/reefs Subtidal soft bottoms Subtidal Plants (SAV)	This area contains virtually all suggested ecosystem types and includes an area of active delta building. In terms of active deltaic ecosystem components, Atch Basin is the only real example among proposed sites Proposed area includes multiple habitat groups and many sub-types from the intertidal group. Also the only proposed site with an actively growing delta. Clear contains examples of all three major ecosystem types, although I would not agree that it represents all LA habitat types. Given the "protection and management" objective outlined in the assumption, the diversity of habitats in this site are somewhat overshadowed by federal restrictions. Much of the site is regulated under congressional desigation as the Atchafalaya Basin Floodway system. Management of the floodplain as a floodway and navigation corridor results in highly altered hydrology and habitat types that may be considered less "valued for protection and management" simply because alternatives for protection and management of specific habitat types or geophysical and hydrologic functions are limited by federal mandates to maintain navigation and flood control capacity. The regulated region where conservation options are limited is dominated by coastal forrested wetlands and alluvial forested wetlands. More opportunity exists in the area of delta formation which consists of various marsh types and soft bottom substrates. I will sum up a few overall comments here. There were typos, title area variations such as ARD, Atch. Basin, Atch. NERR, etc. There were comments I made in the draft proposal that were not addressed. Hopefully the team has time to discuss before a final version is submitted. Also, re. ecosystem types there is no mention of BUDMAT such as on Atch. Delta WMA and other areas w/in this proposed NERR which was also mentioned in original comments I made to draft. High diversity, from bottomland hard wood forests to the north to coastal marshes to the south. All 3 groups are provided. This NERR has more than the minimum required for 3 points. Although all 3 sites meet the highest criteria, the AT has unique characteristics (as an active delta) that the other sites and no other NERR currently has. For that reason, I would rank AT highest in this criteria. more than 3 habitat types are represented. The proposed area is lacking in some of the Group 1, Group 2 and Group 3 habitats. A majority of the area is freshwater wetland and riverine swamp. Some limited salt marsh but no upper end salinity habitat.	high habitat diversity and balance, although this is not an active deltaic system and so active deltaic settings are not really represented There is the potential for a wide variety of habitats to represented in this basin. The area has a good diversity of habitats, but it is a bit difficult to determine much about uplands from the narrative are is primarily focuses on intertidal areas. The site is limited in Group I habitats, but has a great continuum os habitat types from Gorups II and III. Overall comments on Barataria proposal is that comments were addressed in previous draft. It was well written w/ a few minor typos like John Lafitte used several times instead of Jean and a few others which I hope can be addressed via team call/mtg. Could also use page numbers like other two proposals. This is for Barataria Basin. High diversity all 3 sites meet the highest criteria Multiple (more than 3) types of coastal marsh and uplands. Barataria Basin (BB) is a very diverse system with most of the habitats outlined in the 3 groups with exception of the higher elevation habitats and on lower end, true seagrasses.	Highly representative of Louisiana ecosystems ranging from freshwater swamp to barrier islands This proposed site has a wide diversity of habitats and does include at least one habitat in each main group. It dominant habitat type of intertidal and it has at least 5 subgroup habitats. Clearly there is strong representation of multiple ecosystem types within the proposed boundary This site has the most diverse composition of ecosystems of any of the sites. It has a multiple habitats from each of the groups with redundancy. I thought the Ponchartrain proposal was the best written and best format of all 3 proposals, with no typos or other issues. About Pontchartrain. High Diversity. site meets the highest criteria all three groups are well represented with multiple examples of habitat. The Pontchartrian Basin (PT) is very strong in this category because of the diversity of habitat that fits the range of all three Ecosystem Types. The main difference from other sites is that it contains the upper range of habitat with Pine Forest all the way through to true seagrasses on the Chandeleur Islands.

	Atchafalaya	Barataria	Pontchartrain
1.2 Balanced ecosystem composition: SCORE	**2.47**	**2.07**	**2.93**
1.2 Balanced ecosystem composition: A measure of the relative composition of ecosystem types within the boundaries of a site (buffer plus core areas). This criterion assumes that sites with a balanced proportion of ecosystem types are of higher relative “value” for protection and management. High, moderate, and low values are assigned to sites that contain variations in the proportions of all three ecosystem types. A value of zero is assigned to a site that is dominated by one ecosystem type or contains less than three ecosystem types. 3 Points. The site contains representative upland, intertidal, and subtidal habitats in relatively equal proportions (i.e. areal cover of any one ecosystem type not less than 25 percent of the total area). 2 Points. The site contains representative upland, intertidal, and subtidal habitats, with the areal cover of any one type not less than 10 percent of the total area. 1 Point. The site contains representative upland, intertidal, and subtidal habitats, with the areal cover of any one type less than 10 percent of the total area. 0 Points. The site contains representative upland, intertidal, and subtidal habitats, with the areal cover of two types being less than 10 percent of the total area or the site consists of habitats from only one or two of the three major ecosystem types.	This NERR site contains number of significant upland, intertidal, and subtidal habitats, and multiple sub-habitat types All the areas being proposed are on state-owned lands making it easy to select sites that represent a balanced ecosystem composition. I agree with the brief description that representative habitats can occur in equal proportions, but there are no acreage estimates or any other details that bear that out. This site scores lower than it may have if the ecosystem components were more representative by type. In my opinion, the highly regulated nature of the Atchafalaya River Floodway and artificially restricted floodplain makes most of the area identified as the Estuarine Zone less representative of what is more typically characterized as an estuary. The tidal influence is dwarfed by the artificial hydrology of the leveed floodplain, and it seems more one-directional in important aspects of estuary function like energy transfer and biological connectivity. Entire area could be divided by the 3 groups, so 33% of each. As compared to the other sites, AT has the largest intact tracts of state-owned lands represented not only in all ecosystem types, but across the salinity and elevation gradient within ecosystem types purports to contain equal parts of the three main representative habitats. Most of the habitat is riverine swamp with a much smaller portion grading into coastal freshwater and intermediate marsh. The lower end has some brackish and saltmarsh but a relatively small percentage.	State waters and subtidal habitats comprise 83% of the total area with the remaining 17% comprised of marsh. While upland and maritime forests are mentioned, I assume the area is too small to note. high habitat diversity and balance, although this is not an active deltaic system and so active deltaic settings are not really represented It's a little unclear from the proposal. Likely yes, it would be possible to capture equal proportions, but would require more complex private land-owner agreements compared to other sites. It appears that both uplands and subtidal habitats would be less than 10% each of the overall ecosystem composition. The Barataria site has a full complement of habitats but is a little heavier in Group II and III habitats. Any one type not less than 10% There is an imbalance in current ecosystem composition (dominated by subtidal) and the small tracks of state-owned lands may impact the ability to maintain a balanced ecosystem composition as affected by SLR, land loss and future river diversions. Contains marshland, uplands, and intertidal areas. Range of ecosystem types is broad, ranging from bottomland hardwood forest and swamps to saltmarsh. The only thing lacking is true seagrasses.	Contains more than 25% of each ecosystem type with a good diversity of sub-habitats There is an abundance of state and federal land in this basin which make having a balance proportion of different ecosystem types achievable. It would have been useful to use GIS to break out the 3 coarse ecosystem types across the estimated whole of the potential boundary. It appears from section 1.3 that only Uplands and Intertidal are >40%, meaning Subtidal is <20%, or under the 25% threshold. The Pontchartrain site has a full compliment of habitats from all three ecosystems groups Entire area will be > 25%; they authors did the math and that was helpful Meets the highest criteria for three ecosystem types, but state lands are heavily weighted in the upper, freshwater reached of the site. meets the criteria of 25% or more Probably the most well-balanced because of the fairly consistent salinity gradient from the upper basin to the lower basin. The system has the full range of salinity for fresh through to 35 ppt seawater ecosystems.

	Atchafalaya	Barataria	Pontchartrain
1.3 Habitat composition and complexity: SCORE	**2.60**	**2.60**	**2.80**
1.3 Habitat composition and complexity: A measure of the diversity of habitat types present within the major ecosystem type found within the boundaries of the site. This criterion assumes that sites that have a high diversity of habitat types are of higher relative “value” for protection and management than those with a low diversity of habitat types. Major ecosystem type is defined here as that type that comprises approximately 40 percent of the site. Use the habitat type designations listed above for “ecosystem composition.” 3 Points. The site has a high diversity of habitat composition within its major ecosystem type, i.e., it contains three or more habitat types or subtypes within its major ecosystem type (e.g., site consists of a combination of swamps, coastal marshes, and reefs) or has a combination of multiple coastal marsh types (e.g., tidal freshwater, brackish, salt marsh zones including mangroves). 2 Points. The site has a moderate diversity of habitat composition within its major ecosystem type, i.e., it contains only two habitat types or subtypes within its major ecosystem type (e.g., consists of a combination of swamps and a single coastal marsh type). 1 Point. The site has a low diversity of habitat composition within its major ecosystem type, i.e., its major ecosystem type consists of a single habitat type (e.g., brackish marsh or tidal freshwater wetlands).	The diversity of habitat types is a strength of this site with nearly all sub-habitat types represented Site represents both upland and intertidal groups. Intertidal is the main group and there at least 5 subgroups under intertidal represented in the basin. The site has diversity of habitats within the portion of the site that is the building delta south of the ICWW. However, given the criteria that diversity is important as an index of "value for protection and management", the score is reduced in my opinion due to federal limitations on manipulating or preserving features of the floodway within upper portion of the site that is the Atchafalaya Basin Floodway. Again, need to address BUDMAT habitat w/in area. This was done in Ponchartrain proposal. High diversity of habitats. All three groups are listed. Suggest that GIS is used to calculate 40% of site. From description, it appears that all 3 ecosystem types meet the 40% criteria and 3 or more habitat types contains multiple habitat types within each of the major tiers of the ecosystem. A majority of the habitat is riverine swamp and lacks many of the diverse habitats indicated in the 3 groups.	In addition to the breakdown of marsh types, I would suggest breaking out the composition of "Group III - subtidal and submerged bottoms" as this makes up 83% of the area. high habitat diversity and balance, although this is not an active deltaic system and so active deltaic settings are not really represented This site could have all three major groups. The dominant group would be intertidal, and this site could have all six subtypes. As I read it, there is good diversity in intertidal habitats, and little to none in upland and subtidal habitats. The site has a natural gradient of freshwater swamps and uplands, to transitional habitats like intermediate and brackish marsh and bayous, to coastal salt marshes and barrier islands at the gulf. It is the most openly connected site with minimal restriction in functional connectivity and natural transition between the progression of different habitats in my opinion. High diversity of habitats Suggest that GIS is used to calculate 40% of site. Compared to the other two sites, BA has fewer habitat types and subtypes and appears upland and intertidal may not meet the 40% criteria (proposal needs to better define) Marsh types are varied, brackish, freshwater, floating, salt marsh, salt marsh/mangrove. Broadly diverse habitats throughout.	Very well documented ecosystem types and sub-types covering all major categories Site has at least 5 intertidal habitat subgroups. high diversity of habitats Suggest that GIS is used to calculate 40% of site. From description, it appears that all 3 ecosystem types meet the 3 or more habitat types but only two ecosystem types meet 40% criteria all major areas contain at least three habitat types The PT has a very high diversity of habitat ranging from pine forest grading to cypress swamp, fresh to saline marsh and finally to seagrass communities.

	Atchafalaya	Barataria	Pontchartrain
1.4 Significant faunal and floral support: SCORE	**2.87**	**2.87**	**2.80**
1.4 Significant faunal and floral support: A measure of the degree to which a site supports significant faunal or floral components. This criterion focuses on a site's contribution (i.e., function) toward supporting the activities (e.g., feeding, nesting) of the following suite of significant faunal or floral components. The list of components includes groups or organisms that are known to be dependent upon estuarine habitats for the entire or a crucial part of their life cycle. Fish and Shellfish Spawning and Nursery Grounds (includes use by either freshwater, estuarine, or estuarine-dependent marine species) Migratory Bird or Waterfowl Use Bird Nesting or Roosting Area Critical Mammal Habitat Non-Game Animals (amphibians, reptiles, etc.) State or federally Listed Species or of concern (animal or plant – including candidate species) Other biodiversity support as representative of ecosystem services (such as invertebrates, reef environments...). 3 Points. The site supports or serves as an important site for a wide range of the faunal or floral components listed above (4 of 6) or is an extremely important site for any threatened or endangered species. 2 Points. The site supports or serves as an important site for a moderate range and diversity of the significant faunal or floral components listed above (3 of 6). 1 point. The site supports or serves as an important site for one or two of the significant faunal or floral components listed above. 0 point. The site does not support significant faunal or floral components.	The diversity of ecosystem types and sub-types supports each of the faunal and floral communities listed Very clearly has rich floral and faunal assemblies/components. Good job addressing the bulleted examples in the guidance. Authors suggest that in summary, this site would cover all components of the list that was provided. The Atchafalaya Basin NERR has at least 6 significant floral and faunal components. All sites support important floral and faunal components and meet the highest site criteria. Discriminating scores is a judgement of what an individual values. numerous bid species but not as many mammal species. habitats of concern are provided by flora species not a lot of info. The basin does support a very large diversity of flora and fauna but does lack some of those supported by more saline environments.	The subtidal and marsh land in this proposed NERR site support a wide range of fish, birds, reptiles, and mammals, including a large number of RTE species Seems to cover 5 of the six areas (although not specifically called out by the categories in the guidance). 7 bullets are listed but it says 6 so it was difficult to match the criteria to the paragraph. All sites support important floral and faunal components and meet the highest site criteria. Discriminating scores is a judgement of what an individual values. Full range of flora, fauna and endangered species provided in this basin. The diversity of habitat also translates into diverse flora and fauna.	Each of the major ecosystem types included in this area supports a wide range of flora and fauna, which is well documented in the description I believe the site supports a wide range of flora and fauna. But the narrative does not make the case very clearly. What about overwintering ducks? Which species are listed (there are a number of plant species for instance)? It was difficult to match the criteria to the paragraph. Using the components listed as headers and then putting the criteria underneath would be helpful. All sites support imporatnt floral and faunal components and meet the highest site criteria. Discriminating scores is a judgement of what an individual values. very diverse listing of species present. There is significant flora and fauna but the sites but the various ecosystems are somewhat fragmented and not a contiguous as the other basins. This would make the basin less conducive to corridor-movement of various land animals.

	Atchafalaya	Barataria	Pontchartrain
1.5 Geologic representativeness, diversity, and uniqueness of the site: SCORE	**2.73**	**2.27**	**2.60**
1.5 Geologic representativeness, diversity, and uniqueness of the site: A measure of the representativeness, diversity, and uniqueness of the geologic characteristics that define part or the whole of a candidate site. This criterion attempts to consider both the surface and subsurface geologic formations that may be representative or unique within a site, particularly as they affect or define associated biotic habitats. Included in these considerations are the ways that local geology affects surface hydrology, such as drainage and fluvial systems, and subsurface hydrology, such as shallow-water aquifers. Geologic and hydrologic maps should be used to evaluate this criterion. 3 Points. The site has numerous geologic characteristics, two or more unique geologic characteristics, and contains a high diversity of formation types or strata within its boundaries. 2 Points. The site has a moderate number of representative geologic characteristics and at least one unique geologic characteristic and contains a moderate diversity of formation types or strata within its boundaries. 1 Point. The site has a moderate number of geologic characteristics, no unique geologic characteristics, or contains a moderate diversity of formation types or strata within its boundaries. 0 Points. The site has few or only one representative geologic characteristic, no unique geologic characteristics, or contains few or only one formation type or strata within its boundaries.	This area experiences rapid sedimentation, which is unique among coastal Louisiana sites. It also contains an actively forming delta If the goal is to establish a NERR that captures the dynamics of an active delta, as the Governor has requested, this is the only example among the three nominated sites. This site has representative geology for the region and is the sole location of an actively growing delta. Very good description of the geologic attributes and uniqueness. Having the only actively building delta system in the state is a huge plus for a NERR. Numerous geologic formations with areas supporting biotic habitats The Atchafalaya NERR has an actively growing delta and one of the largest contiguous swamp forests in the United States Although all 3 sites meet the highest criteria, the AT has unique characteristics (as an active delta) that the other sites and no other NERR currently has. For that reason, and the extensive geochronology of this site that affords some unique research opportunities, I would rank AT slightly higher in this criterion. Would also like to see the proposal justify with additional information on subsurface hydrology and/or shallow water aquifers. The AT Basin is unique in that a represents the largest riverine swamp in the country and is characterized uniquely by the active delta development.	This site contains a number of geological features, including alluvial deposits, natural levees, ridges, and barrier islands. The portions of this site that relate to deltas are not actively forming and have been dormant and impacted by humans for a long time. This site would contain all the representative geologies for region, except an active delta. Site has decent geologic diversity, but maybe one that qualifies as unique. Fig. 5 and 6 are cited but I could not find them. The criteria and list of info does not match well and its difficult to evaluate. Meets the highest criteria; however, would like to see the proposal justify with additional information on subsurface hydrology and/or shallow water aquifers. Diverse representation and a unique feature are presented. Although very diverse and unique, the system is part of a river delta system that has been manipulated over decades to where the riverine influence is greatly diminished. As a consequence, the BB is suffering massive losses. But there are some small diversions in place and larger ones planned.	The geological formations and processes in this area cover a full range, as this area covers upland, riverine, shoreline, and barrier islands landscapes. The active parts of the coastal ecosystem are not especially unique among coastal habitats on the Gulf Coast This site has a lot of the representative geologic characteristics of the region but does lack a unique feature when compared to other potential sites. Numerous geologic formations from shoreline processes, riverine processes, and several hydrologic sub-basins. Meets the highest criteria; however, would like to see the proposal justify with additional information on subsurface hydrology and/or shallow water aquifers. more than two geological features. the diverse nature of the geology is apparent. As with habitat diversity, the PT basin is also geologically diverse and contains unique characteristics. The north shore of lake Pontchartrain is unique in Louisiana as well as the Chandeleur Islands. The formation of these geologic features are broad-ranging including riverine processes as well as more terrestrial-driven processes.

	Atchafalaya	Barataria	Pontchartrain
Criteria 1.6 Salinity gradient: SCORE	**2.60**	**2.67**	**3.00**
1.6 Salinity gradient A measure of the seasonal and spatial range of salinity over multiple years within a candidate site's boundaries. This criterion recognizes the effect of salinity on the biotic structure of estuarine habitats (including the plant communities and faunal components that inhabit them). It assumes that a site with a greater range of salinity will support a broader range of habitat types and organisms. 3 Points. The site encompasses > 10 parts per thousand (ppt) or greater range of salinity within its boundaries. 2 Points. The site encompasses a 5-10 ppt range of salinity within its boundaries. 1 Point. The site encompasses a 2-5 ppt range of salinity within its boundaries. 0 Points. The site encompasses < 2 ppt range of salinity within its boundaries	Salinity levels vary across the site, which contains fresh rivers and brackish and salt marshes. Salinity range in the proposed area is from fresh, riverine habitat to salt marshes. Good explanation of the broad and dynamic range of salinities along the river-bay-Gulf continuum. This site is dominated by freshwater habitats. However, there is a lateral salinity gradient to the east and west within the site that encompasses a broad range of plant and faunal communities that include saltwater and brackish water assemblages. Ranges from fresh 0 ppt to salinity > 20 ppt. The authors provided a range and cited the reference of various studies, which were helpful. Although this NERR is river dominated it is largely fresh, but along the Gulf of Mexico and on Marsh Island the salinity exceeds 15 ppt. Meets the highest criteria marked lower to account for the overall freshness of the system numbers provided indicate small differential in salinity rates. The AT Basin does have a muted salinity gradient on the southern end but rarely has seawater conditions that would define the full salinity gradient.	This site contains a full salinity gradient from freshwater in the north the seawater in the south Ranges from fresh 0 ppt to salinity > 20 ppt. It would have been great for the proposal to state these salinities to make it easy to review. Meets the highest criteria ppt not provided. The BB has a full range of salinities although varies from year to year depending primarily on rainfall.	Covers a full salinity gradient, which is expected given that it contains everything from swamp and riverine areas to barrier islands A full range of salinities from 0 to 32 ppt is captured in this basin. Taken as a whole, the 5 sites encompass a very broad salinity range and are heavily influence by the Mississippi River and its hydrologic management. The site has a full compliment of fresh to saline environments. The salinity complex is contiuous and extends from fully riverine to barrier islands. ranges from fresh 0 ppt to salinity > 20 ppt. The authors provided a range and cites the reference of CRMS sites, which was very helpful. Meets the highest criteria and proposal also demonstrated that state lands within site also meet salinity gradient criteria, so would rank slightly higher 0-32 range The PT basin has a very broad range of salinity (0-32ppt) and associated habitats.

	Atchafalaya	Barataria	Pontchartrain
Criteria 1.7 Degree developed and potential impacts to water quality: SCORE	**2.53**	**1.40**	**1.60**
1.7 Degree developed and potential impacts to water quality: A measure of the degree to which the site (core and buffer) is developed and the relative impacts to surface waters from human activities upstream in its associated hydrologic basin (see reference map). This criterion assumes that human impacts to a site are directly proportional to the degree and type of development on site and upstream. Exceptions to this assumption may need to be considered where development at a site and its surrounding area have been subject to high levels of control. Density of development (e.g., no industrial activity or commercial development, few residences, minimal agricultural or silvicultural activity), water quality status within the site, or whether the land is in protected status are points of consideration for this criterion. 3 Points. The site is relatively undisturbed and the hydrologic basin contains low intensity development upstream (e.g., no industrial or commercial development, few residences, minimal agricultural or silvicultural activity) or the land is in protected status. 2 Points. The site is relatively undisturbed and the hydrologic basin contains moderate development upstream (e.g., relatively few residences, moderate agricultural or silvicultural activity, minimal commercial or industrial development). 1 Points. The site has been moderately disturbed and the hydrologic basins contains relatively intensive development (e.g., moderate density of residences, or the presence of industrial activity). 0 Points: The site has been extremely disturbed and the hydrologic basins contains very intensive development (e.g., high density residential, or commercial or industrial activity).	This area is relatively undisturbed with the only industrial development taking place in Morgan City, at the southern edge of the area. With the amount of state-owned land and water in the area, development is unlikely to take place in the future Compared to other sites that have been proposed, this hydrologic basins around this site are not heavily developed. Agreed on very low development or potential for it. Like nearly all freshwater systems in LA this one is hydrologically altered and managed, but in my estimation, it has the least chance at negative, anthropogenically mediated water quality impacts of the three sites in question. With the upper area being a floodplain swamp, the authors suggest that the area could improve water quality. This NERR is not "pristine" but has relatively low development in the local watershed. It is however affected by high nutrient inputs from the Mississippi River watershed. The core and buffer are undeveloped. Having an undeveloped buffer and very limited development in extended hydrologic basin is a huge plus. due to the large amount of hydromodification affecting the area very low development. The AT Basin does receive water derived from 2/3 of the country's runoff through the MSR. It is therefore exposed to numerous sources of runoff but the assimilation and processing capability of the basin more than makes up for this.	Agricultural development and fertilizer application has resulted in high nutrient inputs in in this basin Salinity gradients and hydrology in the basin are deeply altered and not representative of a natural system. This site has been disturbed by levees along the river and for hurricane protection. There is also fairly intense develop along the north portion of the basin. Based on the very honest description of the issues of hydrologic disturbance and water quality degradation. Well done, even it if doesn't help the scoring. As the researchers mentioned, the water quality of the northern area has degraded water quality from agricultural runoff. More saline areas have higher water quality. Adjacency of urban development in the upper site and historic impacts from oil and gas (canals, subsurface withdraws) have greatly impacted hydrology and water quality. moderate agricultural use and impacts, in addition to disturbances for development. There is a fair amount of development in and around the basin. Although not in the traditional sense, there is a lot of fishing communities that line the basin and within the basin, there is significant and oil and gas development and infrastructure.	Though proximate to the New Orleans metro area, the individual components of this area contain state and federal wildlife areas and unpopulated swamp and barrier islands with limited development This basin is the location of a lot of intense development to the south and increasing dense development to the north, and a lot of industry lies within the hydrologic basin. The five sites are lightly developed, but in LA hydrologic modifications of nearly all basins, especially the Mississippi, have a profound influence on the character of the coast. Evidenced by the state's current effort to install diversions in the Mississippi River levees to reconnect severed water and sediment supply. No water quality information was provided about the areas. Area #1 can have water quality issues, as well as Area #2, especially when the Bonne Carre spillway opens. Pontchartrain Conservancy has a water quality program and they could have described the results of this. LA DEQ and CPRA's SWAMP have also been monitoring this area. Although the sites themselves are relatively undisturbed by human impacts, the adjacent uplands are moderately disturbed. Which is not mentioned in the proposal. Although, the selected areas have low intensity development, human activities upstream of sites are impactful to the site. The adjacency of development and associated non-point source water quality impacts exist. moderate development upstream from some of the areas within. The specific sites identified for the basin are not developed but there is a lot of development around the PT basin. This could potentially have some indirect impact but not likely to change the land-use. Primarily, there could be episodes of where water quality issues could be a factor, particularly along the north and south shores of Lake Pontchartrain and periodic openings of the Bonnet Carre Spillway.

	Atchafalaya	Barataria	Pontchartrain
Criteria 2.1 Value of site for research: SCORE	**2.93**	**2.60**	**2.80**
2.1 Value of site for research: A measure of the opportunities offered by characteristics of the site for research, such as a high diversity of ecosystem and habitat types, a balanced habitat composition, a wide salinity range (see criterion 1.7), biotic or geologic representativeness of the site, known historic uses or archaeological sites, and unique opportunities to conduct applied research regarding important local, state, and regional coastal management issues (including past and potential management activities). The assumption is that a site with representative, unique, and highly diverse characteristics will provide greater research, monitoring, and resource protection opportunities than one lacking these characteristics. Ratings generated for these factors under previous selection criteria can be used as a guide for rating this overall factor. 3 Points. The site has (1) a high diversity of ecosystem and habitat types, (2) moderate salinity range, (3) representative biotic and geologic sites or hydrologic characteristics, (4) state and federally listed species, (5) historic and archaeological significance, and (6) opportunities to address important habitat or resource management issues. 2 Points. The site has four or five of the six above. 1 Point. The site has two or three of the six above. 0 Points. The site has one or none of the six above	This area meets all six criteria for research. It would be the only active river delta estuarine system in the NERR network and is one of the few areas in the state that is actively building land. It is also historically and culturally important. As noted above, this is the ONLY system that has a natural active delta and associated depositional environments Site has at least 5 of the values and has the highest value of the proposed sites based on this metric. Good response to the 6 criteria. The site easily meets them. Opportunities for continuing existing research and beginning new, applied lines of inquiry in the Basin are great and line up heavily with the mission of a NERR. This area is important historical site where Native Americans, enslaved populations, early European settlers have used this area. Meets the highest criteria; research on an active delta could provide critical understanding (nationally and internationally) to inform how to reconnect riverine systems to their floodplains and optimize river reintroduction to deteriorating deltas Great research opportunities Although the basin lacks salinity gradient compared to the other areas, the uniqueness of the system offers unlimited research opportunity to study a very natural deltaic system.	Under these criteria, this site is somewhat limited given the large area that is subtidal. I would suggest noting, if applicable, any historical/archaeological significance A fine site for coastal and estuarine research, but not deltaic research. The coastal/estuarine aspects of this site are not especially unique for the Gulf Coast. This basin is subject to some of the most intense restoration efforts in the state, including ridge restoration, marsh creation, barrier island restoration, and does have a sediment diversion that is being planned. The Barataria basin has archeological and historically significant sites, but the proposal fails to address them. Researchers mention the extensive scientific research going on and funded by various agencies including LA-COE, CPRA, NOAA RESTORE, LA TIG, etc. Meets the highest criteria; opportunity to evaluate the effects of restoration efforts on the landscape 4 items are present. The BB has supported an enormous wealth or marine and estuarine research in the past.	This location has very high research value, both physical and social/cultural. The presence of the Bonnet Carre and Hope Canal development each have tremendous research potential. Where this site falls short compared to other nominee sites is that it lacks a planned sediment diversion within its boundaries or an active delta. There's a lot of valuable research that could be conducted here centered around management issues and there is a freshwater diversion into the Maurepas Swamp that is planned, but it lacks the type of large-scale project that is at the center of Louisiana's restoration efforts. Definitely contains all 6 criteria. Some of the information here would have benefitted previous sections. hits all 6 This site has all 6. Meets the highest criteria; opportunity to evaluate the effects of restoration efforts on the landscape Meets the highest criteria; opportunity to evaluate the effects of restoration efforts on the landscape diverse and contains a large number of protected species. Site has high diversity of habitat and fisheries and wildlife. Only area of state with palid sturgeon. Also has manatee.

	Atchafalaya	Barataria	Pontchartrain
Criteria 2.2 Previous research and monitoring efforts: SCORE	**2.73**	**2.73**	**2.80**
2.2 Previous research and monitoring efforts: A measure of the degree to which the site (including the hydrologic basin) has been used for past research and monitoring, including considerations of the diversity of inquiry (fields of research), and the availability of data (the form and availability of documentation, e.g., peer-reviewed papers, grey literature, inventory reports). The assumption is that an area with previously established research and monitoring interest offers greater opportunity for future projects than an area that has not sparked such an interest in the past. 3 Points. The site has a long history of well-documented research and monitoring projects in a wide variety of topics. Data are readily available. 2 Points. The site has had major and well-documented research and monitoring efforts, generating data that are readily available. It has not had a long history of research and monitoring. 1 Point. The site has had only minor research and monitoring projects generating limited data (e.g., inventories) and/or these data may be difficult to obtain. 0 Points. The site has no known history of research and monitoring	This area has been very widely studied and contains a wide range of ongoing state and federal monitoring efforts. All sites proposed have been hubs for research and monitoring efforts. This basin has attracted a lot of interest from a mix of academic (LSU, Tulane, ULL), federal (NASA, USGS, USACE), and NGOs (NAS, TNC). Narrative makes a very strong case for historic monitoring and research and provides excellent recent examples too. This site has a long history of well-documented research. As well offers great opportunity for future research, monitoring, and modeling. For example, future Coastal Master Plan modeling efforts (> 2023) might be able to use the research and monitoring from this area to improve predictive modeling. This site does not have the research depth and monitoring history found in some other areas of the Louisiana coast. Meets the highest criteria; of the 3 sites, provided the most compelling evidence of robust and diverse monitoring and research investments good bit of research though would not characterize it as having a long history of research. The level of research is vast both on the upper end and lower end. Much of this research has contributed to what we know about riverine swamp systems as well as estuarine research.	This site has a documented record of ecosystem research and studies dating back to the 1960s There has been a lot of research in the basin, but maybe not as intense as other basins until more recently. Intense data collection in this region followed the Deepwater Horizon Oil Spill. I believe this should be a 3 for this area, but there is not enough in the narrative to be sure. Availability of data via CRMS, BTNEP, etc. The CRMS program and SWAMP monitoring programs will also be helpful in the future. Meets the highest criteria description of research does not include info on availability of data and is not very diverse. Supported much research in the past.	This area has been extremely well studied for decades (and longer). Most of this research, however, was focused on fishes. If non-fisheries research has occurred, I suggest this be listed to show research "on a variety of topics" Due to its close proximity to a major population center and long history of settlement, there is a long history of data collection and monitoring efforts in the basin with readily available data. Well documented research and monitoring. Not sure if this data “are readily available” likely still in old reports, spreadsheets, etc. There is a wealth of monitoring data on the Maurepass swamp and >20 Coastwide Reference Monitoring stations throughout the Pontchartrain Basin that are not mentioned in the proposal Meets the highest criteria; suggest the proposal includes examples of publications and monitoring maps as evidence to meeting criteria data and historical research goes back to the 1950's As with other sites, the PT basin has had a strong legacy of research.

	Atchafalaya	Barataria	Pontchartrain
Criteria 2.3 Suitability of site for environmental baseline monitoring: SCORE	**2.80**	**2.27**	**2.07**
2.3 Suitability of site for environmental baseline monitoring: A measure of the suitability of the site as a reference area for assessing long-term natural resource trends or ecological characteristics, based on the degree to which the site has not been fragmented by land-use practices on or near the site. The assumption is that a site with contiguous habitats that provide landscape continuity (not interrupted by developed or disturbed lands & waters) will be a more valuable reference area to generate baseline monitoring information than a site that has been extensively altered. 3 Points. The site has outstanding areas to generate environmental baseline data to assess long- term resource trends or ecological characteristics for a wide range of needs. 2 Points. The site has adequate areas to generate environmental baseline data to assess long- term resource trends or ecological characteristics for many needs. 1 Point. The site has marginal areas to generate environmental baseline data to assess long-term resource trends or ecological characteristics. 0 Points. The site has been so extensively altered by past activities that it is unsuitable for generating environmental baseline data.	A large number of state and federal agencies have physical and biological monitoring sites throughout the basin Compared to the other two sites, the AB is by far the least impacted by human activities in my opinion. This is the least disturbed of all the proposed sites and would be good for baseline data. The site, while dynamic, affords an unusual level of coastal stability in LA that makes for excellent baseline monitoring opportunities. Given the assumption outlined in 2.3, the site does not provide an area that is contiguous and not interrupted by developed or disturbed lands and waters. The upper portion of the site has been highly altered and continues to be manipulated from flood control and navigation. Site with more contiguous habitat features along a more traditional salinity gradient may provide better baseline monitoring information. Authors mention CRMS, LA DEQ, USGS, EPA, NOAA, etc. This monitoring will be valuable baseline to support future monitoring and research. This is one of the areas along the Louisiana coast that actually may survive the impacts of apparent sea-level rise due to its large freshwater and sediment input. As such research and monitoring in this area can inform management actions for other sites. All 3 sites are data rich, but most point to CRMS sites established in 2006. Would be interested in knowing how many multi-decadal records exist for abiotic and biotic parameters, what status and trend assessments have been conducted in past, and ability to establish a baseline for reference. Based on the least amount of development in AT, and fewer interacting causal mechanisms affecting change, AT might be more suitable for environmental baseline monitoring. The AT system is very strong in this area because of the vast system that is largely uninhabitable and unlikely to ever experience any significant development. It is somewhat manipulated through the Corps flood control operations but the system response is largely natural and untouched.	With over 50 CRMS stations, this location has a large number of existing sites for baseline monitoring. If applicable, I would suggest listing any other monitoring that occurs in the site, such as NOAA or NWS stations. given the extent and depth of human alteration in this system, I have a hard time imagining what present-day "baseline reference" would mean. This is a heavily modified area with levees and development. However, there is baseline information that could be collected pre-restoration and pre-further climate change impacts. Because of continuing high loss of coastal wetlands, significant alteration of the hydrology of the Mississippi, massive loss of native oyster reefs it is hard to make a case for more than adequate baseline data opportunity. It is a great place to study change in the face of on-going alterations. Probably the least disturbed of the three sites in terms of continuity and the most adequate for generating baseline monitoring and information. Agree that CRMS and SWAMP program (that includes LDEQ AWQ and LDWF FIMP) will be useful in this Basin. All 3 sites are data rich, but most point to CRMS sites established in 2006. Would be interested in knowing how many multi-decadal records exist for abiotic and biotic parameters, what status and trend assessments have been conducted in past, and ability to establish a baseline for reference. area is not completely contiguous. This is always a challenge in coastal Louisiana because there is a lot of public and non-public use of the area. But what is most challenging is the current degrading landscape and the ever presence of the treat of devastating hurricanes. For example, Hurricane IDA destroyed numerous monitoring sites and destroyed nearly 100K acres of marsh.	This area covers a range of ecosystems and has no artificial barriers (i.e. high connectivity). Given the multi-component aspect of this NERR, I suggest clarifying the degree of connectivity between components Much of this system has been altered by humans in some form, so it is hard to assess what "baseline" would mean. While this habitat has been extensively modified and impacted by development and river management, there is still baseline information that can be gleaned from specific habitats within the basin and their response to sea level rise. Because of continuing high loss of coastal wetlands, significant alteration of the hydrology of the Mississippi, massive loss of native oyster reefs it is hard to make a case for more than adequate baseline data opportunity. It is a great place to study change in the face of on-going alterations. The Pontchartrain site is moderately altered and has some development that makes is less than desirable for generating baseline monitoring and information. More details about monitoring were needed. Did not mention the ongoing monitoring, such as CRMS, SWAMP (that includes LDEQ AWQ and LDWF FIMP), LA DEQ, USGS, EPA, etc. Some of the monitoring is mentioned elsewhere (3.4) but it would be great to get a summary here. All 3 sites are data rich, but most point to CRMS sites established in 2006. Would be interested in knowing how many multi-decadal records exist for abiotic and biotic parameters, what status and trend assessments have been conducted in past, and ability to establish a baseline for reference. the overall area could be considered fragmented The PT Basin already has much baseline monitoring from federal resources as well and state and local organizations. The Pontchartrain Conservancy is very active in monitoring locally. The only issue is the vulnerability of the site to disastrous hurricane events.

	Atchafalaya	Barataria	Pontchartrain
Criteria 2.4: Ability to address key local, state, and regional coastal management issues: SCORE	**2.60**	**2.80**	**2.80**
2.4. Ability to address key local, state, and regional coastal management issues: A measure of the degree to which the site is appropriate for investigating issues relevant to coastal management at the local, state, and regional levels. Solutions to these issues may require either the application of land management practices or habitat manipulations to perform meaningful research and assessment. As such, the site should offer both adequate control areas plus areas where demonstration projects and habitat manipulations (such as coastal restoration projects) can be accommodated to study many of the issues of concern. The assumption is that a site where diverse coastal management issues are evident and can be addressed will be of greater value from research and resource management standpoint than sites where these issues do not arise. The diversity and significance of coastal management issues should be identified for the hydrologic basin as it may influence core and buffer areas proposed. The following list are suggestions that may be included in the description of the sites ability to address key local, state, and regional coastal management issues. Wetland loss and habitat change; Wetland loss mitigation, restoration, and creation; Dredging and spoil disposal; Beneficial uses of dredged materials; Shoreline erosion; Commercial or recreational fisheries; Waterfowl and other wildlife management; Best management practices for habitat protection or management (e.g., wildlife management); Best management practices to limit impacts from agricultural, silvicultural, or development activities; Effects of pollutants on water quality and living resources (including oil spills, nutrients, harmful algal blooms, bacteria contamination, etc.) Impacts of relative sea-level rise; Prehistoric and early historic settlement and land use; Unique connections in cultural and natural resources within the site (language, customs, land-use, etc.); Fire management, invasive species; Hydrologic restoration; 3 Points. The site is highly appropriate for investigating a diversity of coastal zone management issues. 2 Points. The site is appropriate for investigating coastal zone management issues. 1 Point. The site is minimally appropriate for investigating coastal zone management issues. 0 Points. The site is not appropriate for investigating coastal zone management issues	The area is largely intact and can provide a wide range of social and ecological co-benefits including hurricane protection and wildlife and fisheries habitat. It is also home to a number of RTE species. There is a lot of interest in this site around understanding the land-building process and timelines for river deltas and using that information to apply to large-scale restoration efforts throughout the state. A very good job of detailing how there are important and linked coastal management issues that can be easily addressed at this site. Again, very responsive to the examples offered in the guidance. Much of the Atchafalaya site is so strongly tied to national level influence because of the direct connectivity to the large Mississippi River watershed that it is not likely a good site for addressing local or state coastal management issues. As per the guidance that solutions to site related issues could potentially be addressed by management practices or habitat manipulation within the site, my opinion is that much of this site provides limited opportunity to evaluate response coastal management practices that would be applicable beyond the site due to the overwhelming influence of upstream drivers. Those processes and physical resources are unique to the Atchafalaya Basin. There are critical management issues (hydrological restoration, water quality and living resources and the authors did a great job of listing them. They mention that this area is the largest stand of coastal cypress forest left in the nation. Organizations are already working with the Governor's office via the Atchafalaya River Basin Restoration & Enhancement (ARBRE) Task Force. Thus, this coordination can help support a future NERR site here. Other management issues this area can help support include: coastal restoration by being an important reference to the proposed Sediment Diversions in the Coastal Master Plan. Meets full list of key local, State, and regional coastal management issues listed. a number of issues are detailed in the proposal, but some areas are missing. Such as, water quality, historic settlement, and cultural/natural resources. The basin experiences the least amount of loss and therefore restoration efforts, but it does nevertheless offer opportunities to provide many opportunities for coastal management. It just may be less that other sites, which is a good thing.	This area is a key location to study the impacts of the large-scale Mississippi River diversions. It also contains several marsh creation projects and the Davis Pond diversion, making this an important site in relation to coastal protection and restoration issues. Additionally, the impact of agricultural runoff is another key coastal management issue that can be addressed by this site This is an area where a lot of restoration has already taken place or is planned. More resources devoted here could better inform future management actions and oil spill recovery. even though the narrative does not draw very much from the examples in the guidance, I think based on all the ramifications of the diversions alone this area presents many opportunities to address coastal resource management issues. there are critical management issues (wetland loss, water quality and living resources (including oil spills, nutrients, harmful algal blooms,) in the Basin that the NERR could help address Although the site may be highly appropriate for investigating coastal management issues; concern that the interacting effects of numerous and large-scale restoration efforts along with the natural variability and complexity of the BA basin might make it more difficult to discern best management practices for individual issues until decades of additional monitoring post MBSD is conducted. site has a number of coastal zone management aspects in its favor but does not include a wide variety. The BB is the has numerous coastal restoration projects planned and constructed and plenty of management of the resources actively taking place. Future plans for a large-scale river diversion will be the focus of a wealth of research and management in the future.	This area is extremely well situated to provide data and research opportunities on a wide range of management issues, which are well documented in the proposal The Pontch Basin has many positive attributes for being selected as a NERR, but if the goal is to identify an active deltaic system, this is not one. There are quite a few key management issues that could be investigated in this basin, including marsh creation, barrier island restoration, SAV bed restoration beds, oil spill recovery, and freshwater diversion impacts. However, there is not a sediment diversion planned for this basin which is a key management issue in the state, nor is there an active delta that can be studied. Absolutely on all coastal management issues, the area is a cauldron of issues and opportunity to study them. There are critical management issues (wetland loss, water quality and living resources (including oil spills, nutrients, harmful algal blooms,) and the authors did a great job of listing them Meets full list of key local, state and regional coastal management issues listed. site is highly appropriate for investigation of a variety of strategies The site presents the full range of opportunities to address coastal management issues. In addition to coastal restoration, which is prevalent throughout the state, there is also unique opportunities such as seagrass ecosystem research.

	Atchafalaya	Barataria	Pontchartrain
Criteria 3.1 Diversity and quality of training education and interpretation of opportunities: SCORE	**2.27**	**2.40**	**2.93**
3.1 Diversity and quality of training education and interpretation of opportunities: A measure of the variety and quality of training, education, and interpretation opportunities (i.e., ecological, archaeological, cultural, historical, etc.) provided by the site (core and buffer areas) for the different target audiences. The assumption is that a candidate site with a diversity of such opportunities of high quality will be utilized to a greater extent than one with fewer opportunities. 3 Point. The site has numerous different training, education, and interpretation opportunities of high quality. 2 Points. The site has several significantly different educational opportunities of good quality. 1 Point. The site has few significant educational opportunities. 0 Points. The site has insignificant educational opportunities.	In addition to the area's ecological value, the area also has historical and cultural value The site has some developed facilities and many opportunities. It is not very difficult to access, but access takes a bit of planning. Also, it is more centrally located than the other two sites. There are significant education opportunities, but has fewer when compared to the other sites. Great examples of the array of education opportunities available and nice linkage natural and cultural heritage. This area has high cultural and historical significance and many opportunities of high quality. Although the Atchafalaya NERR has excellent opportunities for education, there are problems of easy access to the site that are not addressed here. This site has numerous ecological and cultural training, education, and interpretation opportunities, but has fewer archeological and historical opportunities. marked lower due to accessibility A number of educational opportunities are present. The AT basin is very large and much of it is remote. I think it may be a little challenging to access for many, such as school age kids and general public. But in some limited area, it may be set up to have some accessibility. The main thing that to access much of the basin could be difficult. Of the three sites, the AT Basin is least accessible by much of the population.	BTNEP and the Jean Lafitte NP present educational opportunities for residents of "down the bayou" communities as well as those in the New Orleans metro area. There are a few sites for education and interpretation in the basin and one is/will be constructed using oil spill funds. Not sure how diverse the target audiences may be This site has numerous ecological and cultural training, education and interpretation opportunities, but has fewer archeological and historical opportunities. several relatively varied training/educational aspects to the site. The BB certainly offers numerous opportunities because of its proximity to numerous communities and its overall popularity with local recreational and commercial fishing communities. There are several locations that provide educational and interpretive services.	This proposed NERR location can project an extremely diverse number of educational opportunities on a diverse range of habitats and ecosystems as well as social/cultural landscapes. These opportunities can be supported by state, federal, NGO, and academic facilities in the area 3 - Located near a population center in the state, there are already a lot different education and training opportunities for much of this basin. There are clear a wide array of existing opportunites for education, outreach, and training that a NERR could leverage. List various educational opportunities from Turtle Cover Classroom to the New Canal Lighthouse Museum and Education Center. City of New Orleans can also provide various opportunities. The challenge will be coordinating and communicating the high quality interpretation opportunities so that users do not get lost or confused about what is available and what is of high quality The diversity of ecological, archeological, cultural and historical sites, experiences and training exceeds the other two sites numerous high quality educational opportunities presented The PT Basin provides numerous opportunities for education and training by virtue of being near a large metropolitan area and all the amenities that go along with large population centers. There are numerous facilities in and around the basin that can be utilized or adapted for utilization by the NERR.

	Atchafalaya	Barataria	Pontchartrain
Criteria 3.2 Diversity and availability of target audiences: SCORE	**2.40**	**2.64**	**2.93**
3.2 Diversity and availability of target audiences: A measure of the diversity and availability of target audiences (e.g., user groups, resource managers, residents, environmental groups, decision makers, teachers and students, and the general public) which may routinely utilize the site (accessible during a single day trip) for training, education, and interpretation. The assumption is that a candidate site with a variety of available target audiences will be utilized to a greater extent than one with fewer target audiences. 3 Points. The site is suitable for a variety of target audiences that are readily available (accessible during a single day trip). 2 Points. The site is suitable for a moderate number of target audiences that are readily available (accessible during a single day trip). 1 Point. The site is suitable for few target audiences that are available (accessible during a single day trip). 0 Points. The site is so remote or inaccessible that it is not suitable for any target audience.	While the area is central to many communities, it is still a distance away from many population centers, which could potentially limit the number and diversity of visitors This site is more remote than the others. It is still accessible within a day (driving time + boat time) for Lafayette, Baton Rouge, and New Orleans area. Yes, accessible to variety of target audiences. The target audience includes 860 schools with > 456,000 students located within 75 miles of the Atchafalaya Basin. Lafayette and Baton Rouge is less than 75 miles from any point in the proposed NERR. Although the site is relatively close to major population centers, most of the sites are only accessible by boat. Site suitable for variety of audiences during a single day trip accessibility of the delta and areas within the leveed area Large diverse audiences within driving distance. Accessibility will be limited for all user groups. Excellent for serious researchers and managers but to lesser extent for those seeking educational services.	There is a large population center near the basin and the site would be accessible within a day trip. The Barataria site is in close proximity to the New Orleans urban center and could draw on the numerous environmental and education opportunities there. It would also leverage federal funds devoted to environmental education and outreach in underprivileged communities like New Orleans. Although not as likely to connect to as many such programs as the Pontchartrain site, it is still likely to draw substantial interest and connect with many facilities and intuitions with sufficient capacity to take advantage of environmental education opportunities of the NERR. Accessible to variety of target audiences The state lands located south of Lafitte would be a bit more difficult to get to for a day trip by target audiences in New Orleans and Baton Rouge (over 2 hours) good proximity Although there is some capability, there will need to be some improvements to allow full access for some because many locations are somewhat remote from major metropolitan areas of the I10 corridor.	The proximity to the New Orleans metro area represents a tremendous opportunity to expand the target audience for this proposed NERR, which would contain the second largest urban NWR in the country. This site is the most accessible to a large diverse population, including researchers, schools, general population. There are areas that can be reached by boat, but also quite a few areas that are accessible by road. The site is bounded by large urban areas on the north shore of Lake Poncthcartrain and on the south by New Orleans. Both urban centers offer many diverse environmental interpretation programs and connect to far more potential patrons than any of the other sites. State and Federal outreach and education funds target urban areas like these. That trend is set to increase in the future with new federal funding strongly tied to environmental education and urban outreach, particularly in underprivileged communities like New Orleans. USFWS National Wildlife Refuges have recently expanded east of the City in the heart of the proposed NERR site with the nation's largest urban refuge and the Secretary of the Interior is set to address local communities in late April in a commitment to increase such programs. yes, accessible to variety of target audiences. The target audience includes approximately 300,000 K-12 public school students, 38,000 charter school students and over 195,000 college students and educators. Most easily assessible by the largest variety of target audiences other than sub area 5 which is suitable for only a few target audiences very diverse audiences Being near New Orleans allows for a broad and numerous target audience and the accessibility to facilities throughout allows for broad and diverse audience access.

	Atchafalaya	Barataria	Pontchartrain
Criteria 3.3 Availability of facilities: SCORE	**1.93**	**2.47**	**3.00**
3.3 Availability of facilities: The degree to which the site (core and buffer areas) has existing facilities or potential sites for future facilities that can be used by staff, researchers, classes, and training groups (e.g., administrative building space, dormitories, labs, interpretive centers, trails and boardwalks, boat ramps, etc.). The assumption is that, due to limited reserve construction funds, a candidate site with existing facilities can meet the objectives of the Reserve System program sooner and more completely than a site without existing facilities. The availability of other sources of construction funds should be considered as part of this criterion. 3 Points. The site has established structures and facilities that can be used for reserve activities. 2 Points. The site has limited established structures or facilities that can be used for reserve activities. 1 Point. The site has excellent potential for the development of facilities for reserve activities. 0 Points. The site has limited established structures and limited potential for the development facilities for reserve activities	Existing facilities in Morgan City, the Atchafalaya Heritage Area Welcome Center, and TNC's Atchafalaya Conservation Center provide locations for researchers to access different locations within the area While admittedly there is a remoteness to much of this site, it would not be alone in NERR sites that are somewhat remote. There could be more infrastructure for sure but given the support and existing infrastructure that could temporarily house a program, I believe the site has enough established sites and commitment that it qualifies for a 3. Has established structures and facilities. Planned facilities in Morgan City, Henderson, Bayou Sorrel, and a number of other sites spaced throughout the area could potentially leverage the NERR designation This site currently has limited established structures/facilities but has excellent future potential based on planned facilities and leveraged investments by partners. adequate existing structures. This is the challenge for the AT Basin site due to the nature of the remote access to much of the area. The existing facilities are somewhat limited.	Two primary areas are focused on here...Lafitte and Grand Isle. I would suggest possibly adding facilities at Jean Lafitte NP to this list, if appropriate. If this site will have access to any facilities in Terrebonne/Lafourche, I would suggest adding those in order to show a wider geographical spread of facilities There are a few established facilities in the basin, but fewer compared to other basins. Not really an abundance of available facilities mentioned, but those that are all have strong potential to support the efforts and aims of a NERR's education programs. Has established structures and facilities This site currently has limited established structures/facilities but has excellent future potential especially if ferry connecting Lafitte to Grand Isle is established. established facilities are present. There are some good facilities available including LUMCON and Jean Lafitte and LDWF on Grand Isle. Likely will need some improvements to serve the purpose for a NERR.	The number and diversity of facilities that can be used for programming is a tremendous strength of this proposed area. There are a number of existing facilities that could be used for reserve activities. However, it should be noted several of them were damaged in recent hurricanes and may need extensive repairs. has established structures and facilities This site has the greatest amount of existing facilities and best ability to leverage limited reserve construction funds. many available sites. also opportunity for expansion of existing sites. The PT Basin has an advantage because of the number of existing facilities available. By being so closely located to a large population center, there are naturally a lot of available facilities to coordinate with the NERR.

	Atchafalaya	Barataria	Pontchartrain
Criteria 3.4 Proximity and accessibility of site to researchers, educators, and resource management decision makers: SCORE	**2.40**	**2.53**	**2.93**
3.4 Proximity and accessibility of site to researchers, educators, and resource management decision makers: A measure of (1) the relative proximity of the site to urban centers, K-12 schools, research and education institutions, and resource management agencies that may routinely utilize the site and (2) the adequacy of the roads or points for boat access at the site. The underlying assumption is that the proximity and accessibility of the site will enhance its utilization for education, research, monitoring, and resource protection purposes. 3 Points. The site can be utilized by the above-listed entities during a single day trip. There are good roads or points for boat access at the site. 2 Points. The site is relatively isolated, and utilization would require an overnight stay from any of the above-listed entities, but accommodations are readily available. There are adequate roads or points for boat access at the site. 1 Point. The site is relatively isolated and reasonable accommodations for an overnight stay to utilize the site are limited. There are limited roads or points for boat access at the site. 0 Points. The site is extremely isolated and accommodations to utilize the site are not available. There are inadequate or no roads, or points for boat access at the site.	The site is not immediately proximate to any colleges or universities, but it's location is central to many (ULL, LSU, Nicholls, McNeese, etc.) The site is more accessible than many recognize. I have led many day trips from Baton Rouge, including some with two groups, one for morning and one for afternoon to accommodate limited space on boats that were available. It's more remote compared to the other sites and much of the proposed areas would require boat access. However, it is still within a daytrip distance from the largest population centers in the state. A strong case is made that the site is accessible to many educators and other stakeholders is the space of a day. While accessible, the site has limited access compared to other sites and would prove a burden for many typical k-12 students for a day trip. The Atchafalaya site is the least populous of the sites and has only one urban center in Lafayette, with a growing area to the south in Morgan City. Day trips can be used. In total there are ~150 boat launches within the basin including several on state and/or public lands throughout the proposed NERR. Some of the largest state universities are in Baton Rouge and Lafayette (75 miles away), thus allows researchers to easily access the NERR. Large diversity of schools and educators will be proximal to site with many points of access. within distance for day travel and many access points to area, including water. The AT Basin is strong for research and resource management because they have capability to access these types of areas but the educators will be more limited both in accessibility and proximity.	The upper part of this proposed site is proximate and accessible to a number of researchers in the New Orleans area. The southern part is further afield, however. It seems like Nicholls and LUMCON should be listed here, especially as researchers here are most proximate to the southern part of the site. Day trips can be used Would have liked to see proposal better describe points of road or boat access to site and sub areas and number of K-12 schools who might access site. relatively accessible by major institutions and roadways are present. For researchers, not a major issue but for the general public and educators it is a little more of a challenge due relatively remote locations.	The proximity of this area to the New Orleans metro area provides tremendous research and training opportunities for a number of universities, including HCBUs, as well as community/technical colleges This site is the most accessible of the three proposed sites. There are numerous boat and road access points to the various areas. This is one of the advantages of this site is the accessibility to many of the locations in the five sub-areas. This site is far closer to many urban centers than any of the other sites. It has proximity to schools and other educational institutions that can provide true 'day trips' with minimal travel to a large portion of the site. day trips can be used. The target audience will have access to the proposed reserve from major state and federal highways, including three interstates (I-10, I-12 and I-55), over 60 public boat launches and marinas and over 130 miles of car-free bike Large diversity of schools and educators will be proximal to site with many points of access. sites are accessible and diverse This is probably the criteria that PT Basin has most advantage over the other sites. Proximity to numerous locations throughout the basin allows relatively easy accessibility for a very large population of educators and students. This is important for K-12 educators. College and professional researchers can access any location, but school-aged children will need much more simple accessibility and proximity to utilize the NERR.

	Atchafalaya	Barataria	Pontchartrain
Criteria 3.5 Value of site for environmental education and interpretation programs: SCORE	**2.33**	**2.53**	**2.80**
3.5 Value of site for environmental education and interpretation programs: It is likely that sites with existing education programs have the necessary infrastructure in place to further expand their programs, thus it is valuable to rate sites based on the presence of these programs. However, in an area as large as the Louisiana Coastal Area, numerous excellent sites exist where virtually no education or interpretation programs have been developed. Thus, the potential for education and interpretation program development should be considered as well according to the diversity and quality of educational and interpretive program opportunities. Some suggestions to evaluate potential for education and interpretation program development include the following: Number of educational institutions in the watershed of the proposed alternative; Existing educational programs in the area that would likely take advantage of a NERR site; Level of ability to access a proposed alternative by school groups; or Existing facilities to host classroom education and training events. 3 Points. The site has a long history of education and interpretation, or the site offers excellent potential for future education and interpretation program development. 2 Points. The site has a good but short history of education and interpretation but is otherwise well suited or offers good potential for future education and interpretation program development. 1 Point. The site has had only a minor amount of education and interpretation being conducted, or the site offers fair potential for future education and interpretation program development. 0 Points. The site offers no significant potential for education and interpretation program development	This site is well suited for the development of robust educational program development with state, federal, and NGO facilities present throughout the basin From the proposal it wasn't clear that there were that many existing education and interpretation opportunities at present. The site has a good history of outreach and public engagement, so there is opportunity to improve Long history of education. NERR partner LUMCON serves as both the state's marine science lab and as host to the consortium of all of the public and private universities and colleges including community and technical colleges) in Louisiana with interests in coastal and marine science research and education and has a long track record of funded projects that focus on broader impact activities. All sites have a long history of education and interpretation and significant future potential. numerous educational and interpretation programming. The sites can offer unlimited educational opportunity but realistically will be difficult to access by educators along with masses of students. Accessibility and proximity is going to be a challenge without significant infrastructure improvements.	This site possesses a lot of educational value potential, but the locations for these are limited to Lafitte and Grand Isle. The Wetland Education Center will be a tremendous asset very valuable except for the lack of active deltaic processes. Not unique. There is educational opportunity and interpretation in the basin but seems to be mostly limited to the Jean Lafitte Preserve. The Barataria site is in close proximity to the New Orleans urban center and could draw on the numerous environmental and education opportunities there. I suspect that it is not as likely to connect to as many such programs as the Pontchartrain site, but it is still close enough to the major urban centers that it will likely draw substantial interest and connect with many facilities and intuitions with sufficient capacity to take advantage of environmental education opportunities of the NERR. Long history of education All sites have a long history of education and interpretation and significant future potential. a number of educational aspects to the site. Again, the challenge is the distance to travel to get to existing facilities.	As documented earlier in the proposal, this side has a full range of ecosystems and social/cultural/historical landscapes as well as numerous facilities that can be used for education and interpretation. The area is also accessible to teachers and students, making this site of very high educational value. There are a variety of education and interpretation programs in this basin associated with academic institutions, National Wildlife Refuges, and NGOs. Given the proximity to a major US city (New Orleans) with a litany of environmental education opportunities that are listed. The Pontchartrain site is connected to the largest concentration of existing environmental education infrastructure of any of the sites. long history of education All sites have a long history of education and interpretation and significant future potential. numerous programs are present, and expansion is anticipated though a long history is not specified Again, this site presents numerous opportunities for education and interpretation mainly due to the proximity to so many people.

	Atchafalaya	Barataria	Pontchartrain
Criteria 4.1 Publicly owned lands and feasibility of land acquisition: SCORE	**2.87**	**2.07**	**2.73**
4.1 Publicly owned lands and feasibility of land acquisition: The degree of control on activities allowed on proposed land and waters of the candidate site (core and buffer areas) is regulated by conditions of land ownership. Land ownership by state, federal government, or local governments, or environmental interest groups, and the degree to which owners have an interest in participating in a research reserve are important to realize the missions of a LaNERR. The assumption is that the degree of control needed to maintain the site to meet the missions of a NERR increases with publicly and privately owned land, along with the chances of purchasing additional areas, increase value of a NERR candidate site. In the combination of ownership described below, no more than 49% of the area within the boundary can be federal lands. 3 Points. A large percentage (more than 50 percent) of the site (core and buffer areas) is currently owned by the state, federal, or local governments, or environmental groups, representing significant opportunities for future land acquisition. 2 Points. State, federal, or local governments, or environmental groups own 25 to 50 percent of the site with the remainder in the hands of a few owners representing some degree of opportunities for future land acquisition. 1 Point. State, federal, or local governments or environmental groups own less than 25 percent of the site with the remainder in the hands of a few owners representing limited opportunities for future land acquisition. 0 Points. The site is owned by a large number of owners with little potential interest in supporting opportunities for future land acquisition.	With more than 10 state or federally designated wildlife areas throughout the basin, this site is almost entirely publicly owned Site would only require state lands. Would have been nice to parse out ownership of the other 35% of the area in this section that is not state lands. The site has the largest percentage of publicly owned lands of any of the proposed sites. It also has a large percentage of land that could potentially be acquired in the upper portion of the Atchafalaya Basin. However, land ownership does not necessarily confer control to meet the mission of the NERR as per the assumption The floodway designation of the upper portion of this site requires that any manipulation of the site be consistent with the USACE's mandate to maintain flood control capacity and a navigation corridor. those mandates are less compatible with protection and restoration objectives than other publicly owned lands like Wildlife Management areas, National Wildlife Refuges, or State Parks. Having been associated with many failed efforts to improve habitats in the Atchafalaya Basin Floodway, I can attest to the difficulty in designing and implementing meaningful conservation due to those mandates and the USACE management of the floodway. Conversely, ownership in the lower portion of the site provides very good opportunity to control the site in the interest of the mission of the NERR. Of the ~1.6 million acres designated as the Atchafalaya Estuarine Zone by the LaNERR selection process, there are ~750,000 acres of state-owned lands and ~300,000 acres of state-owned water bodies. Thus, ~65% is estimated to be state-owned land. The authors suggest state ownership of potential lands makes the development of a NERR very straightforward. Although all 3 sites meet the highest criteria, the AT site requires only state lands and state water bottoms. With over a million acres of state-owned lands and water bottoms, funds would not be needed for future land acquisitions. For that reason, I would rank AT highest in this criterion. note that clear land ownership is an issue in the basin 65% The AT Basin has a lot of state and federally owned lands throughout. This could be a very important advantage.	Over 95% of the proposed area is state owned (WMAs and state parks). Presumably, most of the subtidal land and submerged bottoms are also state owned. The extent of private/corporate ownership gives me pause, even if there is a history of cooperation. It's a little hard to tell from the proposal. Large parts are state and federally owned lands, but most of the emergent marshlands are privately owned. This site has limited public ownership. Opportunity to grow ownership significantly in the near future may also be limited or difficult due to large percentage of open water in this site where ownership is contested. Having once been coastal wetlands, many private land owners still hold claim to areas that could be considered state owned water bottoms. Most of the emergent wetlands is privately owned. The reason 95% of the area is state owned probably is because the state owns water bottoms. Meets the highest criteria for more than 50% currently state owned, however many of the parcels are small and not a lot of opportunities for future land acquisition. Additionally, most of the wetlands within proposed area are privately owned and could impact ability to access lands for research and monitoring. 95% state owned. the remainder is accessible. State lands are a little sparse and much of the basin is privately owned. However, there are some good public facilities available but somewhat remote and limited by location.	The majority of the area of this proposed NERR site is public or subject to public use restrictions. Other areas include lands owned by university foundations, private commissions, and land trusts. The proposed site is entirely state and federally-owned lands. This site has a plent of state and federal lands owned in the interest of conservation and other public use trusts. Options for additional land may be limited. The authors claim that the site is 25% federal lands when considering state and federal lands only Meets the highest criteria and benefits from all lands owned by federal and state entities. The site has numerous state and federal owned land throughout and there where the main activities are targeted there also exists pretty nice existing facilities and infrastructure. Just as the other sites, there is a lot of remote locations targeted for the NERR but there seems to be good established facilities available such as Fontainebleau State Park and Big Branch Marsh NWR.

	Atchafalaya	Barataria	Pontchartrain
Criteria 4.2. Compatibility with existing management practices and consumptive and non-consumptive uses: SCORE	**2.87**	**2.47**	**2.40**
4.2. Compatibility with existing management practices and consumptive and non-consumptive uses: A measure of the degree to which existing management practices (e.g., habitat manipulations, restoration projects, best management practices, wildlife management areas, leased bottoms, conservation easements, etc.) and historic and current consumptive and non-consumptive uses might conflict with planned and future management practices implemented under a research reserve program. The assumption is that sites with fewer conflicts are more likely to maintain both public support and the integrity of the site (core and buffer areas). NOTE: This factor should be measured with focus on how present management practices for both land and water in core and buffer areas support both the mission of a NERR and reduce potential conflict with how the public expectations align with the expected usage of the candidate site to meet the mission of a research reserve site. It should be measured with a balance of how the site protects natural and cultural resources against reasonable access by the public to other areas of the site. 3 Points. Existing management practices and consumptive and non-consumptive uses of the site would not conflict with any foreseeable management policy of a research reserve 2 Points. Due to the presence of proportionately small areas of unique habitat and endangered species or threats to the integrity of ecosystem, there is the potential for limited restrictions on existing management practices or consumptive and non-consumptive uses of a site 1 Point. Due to the presence of areas of unique habitat and endangered species and threats to the integrity of the ecosystem, some restrictions on existing management practices or consumptive and non-consumptive uses of a site are likely 0 Points. Large areas of unique habitat and threats to the integrity of the ecosystem will require restrictions on existing management practices or consumptive and non-consumptive uses of a site.	The majority of the area is state land, including LDWF Wildlife Management Areas. These areas support a wide range of consumptive and non-consumptive uses that are consistent with the goals of the NERR Since the entire site would be located on state lands, managed by LDWF, future management and use conflicts are less likely. This is a awkward section to evaluate. Since the existing policies on public land would continue to be the policies in force then there should be no conflicts. But that also depends on who the state managing partner ultimately is and how successive administrations and legislative sessions interpret the use and value of public and sovereign submerged lands. I see no conflict with consumptive or non-consumptive use of the site. However, it is once again difficult to rank this site high when there is no assurance that USACE management of the upper portion of the Atchafalaya Basin will not conflict with NERR mission objectives. Some research objectives could mesh seamlessly with basin management, while others could be in stark contrast to the flood control mandate. Navigation maintenance will also potentially conflict with management as the USACE continually manipulates the river inside the floodway and within the new delta area. No existing management practices or consumptive uses will conflict. No foreseeable conflicts conflicts do not appear to exist. The AT Basin is one of the great wild lands of North America. Other than the flood management practices, the basin is mainly left to natural processes. The basin also has commercial and recreational fishing and hunting but these practices do not pose any incompatibilities.	With the vast majority of the land area owned and/or managed by the state, existing management practices would be compatible with those of the NERR This site may have complications with the planned diversions shifting some of the consumptive uses. This is a awkward section to evaluate. Since the existing policies on public land would continue to be the policies in force then there should be no conflicts. But that also depends on who the state managing partner ultimately is and how successive administrations and legislative sessions interpret the use and value of public and sovereign submerged lands. Not much obvious user conflicts other than some potential overlap with oyster leases There could be some perceived conflict of habitat manipulations with the Mid-Barataria Sediment Diversions. No foreseeable conflicts compatible with NERR use. Because the basin lacks public access this could be a problem. However, this could be overcome by cooperative agreements with large landowners who have been cooperative in the past.	Much of this area is managed by LDWF or USFWS with other areas subject to public interest regulations. The management practices of the NERR would be compatible with existing practices Since the proposed site is all state and federal lands, compatibility with existing management practices is likely to not have conflict. This is a awkward section to evaluate. Since the existing policies on public land would continue to be the policies in force then there should be no conflicts. But that also depends on who the state managing partner ultimately is and how successive administrations and legislative sessions interpret the use and value of public and sovereign submerged lands. The Bonnet Carre Spillway is managing Mississippi River floodwaters and diverts excess water into the Pontchartrain Basin as a directed flood prevention measure. Although infrequent, it could potentially interfere with NERR mission objectives. No user conflicts other than oyster leases. There could be some perceived conflict of habitat manipulations with the Bonne Carre Spillway being opened and the planned Maurepas diversions No foreseeable conflicts Just as with all locations in Louisiana, the compatibility use can be an issue primarily due to the large percent of privately owned lands and the industrial use of natural resources. In compatibilities can be avoided but may limit some activities.

	Atchafalaya	Barataria	Pontchartrain
Criteria 4.3 Compatibility with adjacent land use: SCORE	**2.67**	**1.53**	**1.80**
4.3 Compatibility with adjacent land use: A measure of the potential conflicts between management practices on a candidate site (core and buffer areas) with land-use practices on adjacent lands to the site (core and buffer areas). It is also a measure of the adequacy of land-use regulations, plans, or other risk management controls (e.g. sufficient regulatory control in the event of an impact) to sustain the site's natural resources for long-term research, education, and resource protection. The assumption is that a candidate site with compatible land-use practices on adjacent lands is more likely to maintain the integrity of the reserve. NOTE: This issue should be evaluated relative to the potential for present or future conflicts with adjacent lands and the potential to designate buffer areas around a site. 3 Points. A large percentage of the land adjacent to the site is not currently used for activities that might impact the site (and therefore, may be obtainable as a buffer) or the land-use practices on adjacent lands would not have any negative impacts on a possible research reserve. 2 Points. A large to moderate percentage of the land adjacent to the site is not currently used for activities that might negatively impact the site, or the land-use practices on adjacent lands either could be negotiated or would have only minor impacts a possible research reserve. 1 Point. Some of the land adjacent to the site is currently used for activities that would have negative impacts on a possible research reserve and may not be negotiable. 0 Points. A large percentage of the land adjacent to the site is currently used for activities that would have negative impacts on a possible research reserve and would lead to conflicts.	Due to the area being part of a floodway in the coastal zone, adjacent lands are managed in ways consistent with the NERR site Development around the basin is limited when compared to other sites, but runoff from surrounding agricultural lands may impact the basin. It should be noted that the Basin is a patchwork of public and private land, and while mainly public lands are tapped for the NERR they would often be adjacent to private lands. Most private lands are used for hunting and fishing, and not development and very little mineral extraction. That seems unlikely to change, but in should be acknowledged. Most of the area surrounding are public lands. In the buffer area, there are some private lands and Atchafalaya NERR team intends to continue to build relationships with private landowners (many of whom have already expressed interest in working with the NERR—see attached letters) to maintain quality and quantity of programming on the initial NERR site. Adjacent land use practices would not have any impact on core or buffer areas Because of the vastness of the basin and lack of development, there should be very little, if any, incompatibilities with adjacent land use.	There is not enough information provided on how the privately-owned, surrounding land is utilized to effectively rate this There's agriculture and development in the surrounding lands that could negatively impact the basin, as well as planned levees. There is also extensive industry development along the basin that could have impacts. This is a awkward section to evaluate. Since the existing policies on public land would continue to be the policies in force then there should be no conflicts. But that also depends on who the state managing partner ultimately is and how successive administrations and legislative sessions interpret the use and value of public and sovereign submerged lands. The proposal does not provide any useful information. So, evaluation is based on my own understanding. A large portion of the surrounding land is privately owned and thus it might negatively impact the site Some lands adjacent to site is used for stormwater discharge and drainage projects and also a lot of water control structures on private lands that could have negative impacts and would need agreements with landowners. surrounding land is indicated to be privately held. there is limited information as to the impacts of that privately held property. Because of the low impact of NERR activities, compatibility may be limited provided the proper permissions are granted.	Adjacent landowners include university foundations, private commissions, and land trusts, which are potentially compatible with the NERR. However, other adjacent land areas and uses include logging, drainage projects, and the operation of flood control structures There is likely a lot of future development that could occur in the basin and there are continued hurricane and river management actions that could impact the basin that could not be worked around. Not because the proposal narrative is weak (it is quite good), but LA is a state that strongly identifies with private land use rights and holds out the possibility of future energy extraction based on the development of new technology. The watershed north of Lake Pontchartrain could be more developed or with agricultural use influence the water quality of the rivers and the Lake in Sub-areas 1, 2, and 3. There are localized minor impacts from adjacent land use practices including logging, drainage, and flood control structures but a moderate amount of land adjacent to site would not have anticipated impacts. Just as stated above, this can be an issue in Louisiana but mostly avoidable.

	Atchafalaya	Barataria	Pontchartrain
Criteria 4.4 Land ownership: SCORE	**2.60**	**1.53**	**2.47**
4.4 Land ownership A measure of the degree to which the property used to establish core and buffer areas of a candidate site is divided among landowners (e.g., divided into fewer parcels or owned by many agencies/individuals). The assumption is that a candidate site with fewer property owners will be easier to control types and levels of activities and offers opportunity for future acquisitions. 3 Points. The property is relatively undivided among agencies or individuals. 2 Points. The property is divided among few property owners. 1 Point. The property is divided among many property owners.	Core and buffer areas would be almost completely within state lands and/or waters reducing the risk of land rights issues Entire site would be on state-owned lands. Although seems like the term "state lands" might mean "public lands". Either way, it appears all lands would be among two agencies at most. The property is relatively undivided with > 65% of the total area being state-owned lands or water bodies. This site would only require state lands but if other lands included, they are large intact parcels undivided by landowners. dual claimed landownership is a historical issue predominantly state ownership. Plenty of publicly owned lands to suite purpose.	It is stated that most of the emergent wetlands are privately owned. More details on this would be helpful to effectively rate this category. Specifically, are most of these privately owned locations owned by large landowners (as opposed to several small, individual landowners). In the upper and lower basin lands are state and federally-owned, but much of the mid-basin is privately owned and may offer complications. Divided among multiple landowners. That said, based on the narrative and personal knowledge, most public and private sites manage in ways consistent with NERR principles. The proposal does provide a poor job of which areas would be included in the core area of the NERR. By selecting the whole lower basin, the score is dropped. The property is divided by many property owners. Hard to determine from information provided how many landowners would be included in buffer areas that might have influence on types and levels of activities conducted on reserve. there are a number of different owners, including different agencies, involved. Divided interest is always a challenge in coastal Louisiana and there are plenty of divided interest in the BB. But there are a lot of cooperative private landowners.	

	Atchafalaya	Barataria	Pontchartrain
Criteria 4.5. Enforcement and protection of site area management practices: SCORE	**2.67**	**2.13**	**2.33**
4.5. Enforcement and protection of site area management practices: A measure of the degree to which land and water ownership has enforcement capabilities to protect and limit the types and levels of activities that are inconsistent with the management plans described in Site Criterion 4.2 above. This degree of control is based on size, geography, proximity to adjacent residential development and present management practices and controls. The assumption is that the integrity and security of a potential research reserve site can be better maintained with a higher level of enforcement and protection of core habitat areas to enforce management practices (such as a wildlife management area, or guidelines associated with private lands) that protects the consistency with how land and water will promote the mission of a NERR. 3 Points. Site areas are strongly protected and enforced to the degree necessary to meet management practices. 2 Points. Site areas are moderately protected and enforced to the degree necessary to meet management practices. 1 Point. Site areas are minimally protected and enforced to the degree necessary to meet management practices. 0 Point. Site areas are not protected and enforced to the degree necessary to meet management practices.	Given the large amount of public land, especially LDWF land, much of the area would be patrolled by state Wildlife Enforcement Agents Entire site would be on lands managed and enforced by LDWF. Good that the enforcement side of the equations is mentioned but should be more on specific statutes and rules that protect the lands and waters. Seems the Atchafalaya response is interpreted different than the other 2 proposals. This did not change my score however. Wildlife Enforcement Agents routinely patrol public lands and waters and Wildlife Management Areas to enforce proper uses and ensure public safety. In addition, local fisherman and hunters as well as other natural resource users are actively engaged with enforcement in this area. All 3 sites have focused their core areas on state and federal lands that have strong protections. If AT selects 100% state land as buffer area also, it will have the strongest protections of the 3 sites. due to its remote location, difficult to enforce established enforcement. Should not be a problem other than individual tampering. The basin is vast and mostly wild.	With the majority of the area of this proposed NERR state or federally owned, enforcement and protection would be subject to existing state policies The upper and lower basins which are state and federal lands are enforced and protected, but the mid-basin may be much less so. A bit light on explanation. Does address that public and private lands have mechanisms for protection, but not the degree to which enforcement occurs. Area can be moderately protected Strongly protected and enforced enforcement potential is indicated but not demonstrated in the proposal. State laws prohibit certain activities, but private landownership may present challenges to some activities.	This area is subject to a number of protective programs as noted in the proposal. It might be worth noting here that (in a more on-the-ground sense) that the area is also subject to regular patrols of wildlife enforcement agents given that is comprised largely of wildlife management areas. This land of this site is already managed by state and federal entities which offer enforcement and protection of the site. Narrative does a good job noting the degree to which there are codifies protections of these lands and waters, but does not address the enforcement side, which while it may be good, is not able to be determined by what is written. Area can be moderately protected. The authors list the policy/acts but not really how well the property is protected or enforced. Strongly protected and enforced enforcement is not detailed though legal protections are set out in the proposal. Most targeted area can be enforced but because of the size of the NERR locations and huge expanse of the entire NERR makes it somewhat difficult to protect every aspect.

	Atchafalaya	Barataria	Pontchartrain
Criteria 4.6. Land and water access: SCORE	**2.60**	**2.47**	**2.87**
4.6. Land and water access: A measure of the degree to which land and water access to the site support visitation and recreational value within guidelines of existing management plans. This degree of access is based on points of access (present and proposed), size, geography, proximity to adjacent residential development and present management practices and controls. 3 Points. The site has many existing and planned access points to support visitation and recreation that are very consistent with the management plans. 2 Points. The site has several existing and planned access points to support visitation and recreation that are very consistent with the management plans.. 1 Point. The site has few existing and planned access points to support visitation and recreation that are very consistent with the management plans. 0 Points. The site has no existing and planned access points to support visitation and recreation that are very consistent with the management plans.	Land and water access points are located across the area, allowing access to each of the different ecological zones. There are a lot of water access sites in the proposed area, but very few that are easily accessible by car only. In most cases, boat access is within a few miles of municipalities. Water access points are readily accessible and well-signed from roads and major highways. Many points of access but northern state lands are more remote and would need to enhance visitation opportunities. access points, particularly by water, are present and consistent with management plan. Access will always be somewhat of a problem in terms of numbers of access points and proximity but from the access points available there is pretty much free access and movement throughout.	I would suggest listing out some of the specific access points for the site. The focus on Plaquemines and the diversion area takes away from other locations within the overall NERR site. Site has several existing and planned access points Would have liked to see proposal better describe points of road or boat access to site and sub areas. different access by land and water are provided. There are plenty of public access points.	This site is highly accessible at locations throughout the site This basin has a lot of different water and road access points. However, the Chandeleur Islands part of the proposed NERR are very remote with only boat access. Site has many existing and planned access points, including 3 interstates, 60+ boat launches, Manchac Greenway, etc. Many points of access throughout site and many more existing trails, greenways, launches that are in closer proximity to residents would rank this site slightly higher. many and diverse access points are present. There are plenty of locations for access throughout.

	Atchafalaya	Barataria	Pontchartrain
Criteria 4.7. Future urban and industrial development plans: SCORE	**2.79**	**2.47**	**2.20**
4.7. Future urban and industrial development plans A measure of the potential level of future impacts of land development (urban and industry) in areas on or adjacent to a candidate site that would impact core and buffer areas. The assumption is that a candidate site with minimal to no development plans on-site and on adjacent lands to the candidate site is more likely to maintain the integrity of the reserve. NOTE: This issue involves the degree to which adjacent lands are currently being used or may be attainable as buffer areas for the research reserve. 3 Points.: A large percentage (more than 50 percent) of the land adjacent to the site is currently undeveloped or is not likely to be developed for urban and industrial usage (based on present urban and industrial activity). This large percentage of adjacent lands is very unlikely to be developed in the near future for urban and industrial development (e.g., consisting of marginally developable property, such as wetlands, which could be obtained as buffer). 2 Points. A moderate percentage (between 25 and 50 percent) of the land adjacent to the site is currently undeveloped (urban and industrial) or is not likely to be developed for urban or industrial usage (based on present or expected activity). The adjacent lands are unlikely to be developed in the near future for urban and industrial development (e.g., consisting of marginally developable property, such as wetlands, which could be obtained as buffer). 1 Point. A small to moderate percentage (10 to 25 percent) of the land adjacent to the site is currently undeveloped or is not likely to be developed for urban or industrial usage (based on present or expected activity). 0 Points. A large percentage (more than 50 percent) of the land adjacent to the site is developed (urban or industrial) and the area is likely to continue to be developed in the future.	Given the amount of state and federal land and wildlife areas as well as it's floodway status, this area is highly unlikely to experience urban or industrial development. The Atchafalaya NEER has lands proposed for possible inclusion in the Atchafalaya NERR exist within the floodway and coastal zone that sees tremendous temporal and spatial variation in water levels. The annual flood pulse limits development within the region to areas outside of the flood zone and levees. The core and buffer are undeveloped state lands that don't anticipate seeing impacts from additional land development both inside and outside floodway The basin will likely remain undeveloped in perpetuity.	Most of this site is subtidal and emergent wetlands and not expected to experience the impacts of urban and industrial development. There is development adjacent to the basin, but unlikely to be intense expansion in the future. There is a lot of industry that surrounds the basin, and have been some attempts to increase industry, but the future of that is uncertain. It will likely stay undeveloped Although adjacency of urban development in the upper site, undeveloped lands are not likely to be developed for urban and industrial usage. percentage of undeveloped area is not presented. There could be some issues with dealing with oil and gas development and private landownership.	While proximate to some of the most densely populated areas of the state, the lands that make up this NERR consist of state and federal wildlife areas. Much of the adjacent land low is in un-leveed areas consisting of large tracts of undeveloped lands and lands under conservation ownership and/or management, limited the potential for future urban and industrial growth. While the state and federal government own a lot of the land around the basin, there is development happening that will likely continue adjacent to this area. It will likely stay undeveloped but with major urban areas on the south shore of Lake P and expansion in the north shore, the land use (from agricultural to developed or forest to developed) in the watersheds could change and influence the areas. The authors mention the trend will likely be toward less dense development and greater conservation land management The selected areas have low intensity development, but most undeveloped lands are under conservation and management, and are not likely to be developed for urban and industrial usage. Due to close proximity to New Orleans, the site has potential for future development but not likely directly in the target locations. Nevertheless, there may be some influence and impact from future activities.

	Atchafalaya	Barataria	Pontchartrain
Criteria 5.1 Coastal resilience research: SCORE	**2.80**	**2.60**	**2.80**
5.1 Coastal resilience research: How suitable is the site (and hydrologic basin where it is found) to support research on coastal resilience including both natural, cultural, and social systems. This includes how climate change may amplify impacts of land-use change, increases in the vulnerability of the habitats of the site (and hydrologic basin) to relative sea level rise, and other climate change impacts. Research focuses include adaptations of natural, cultural, and social systems to climate change impacts, including restoration and protection projects. 3 Points. The site (and hydrologic basin) demonstrates high value in researching adaptation of natural, cultural, and social systems to climate change and relative sea level rise including research on adaptations that reduce vulnerability. 2 Points. The site (and hydrologic basin) demonstrates moderate value in researching adaptation of natural, cultural, and social systems to climate change and relative sea level rise including research on adaptations that reduce vulnerability. 1 Point. The site (and hydrologic basin) demonstrates low value in researching adaptation of natural, cultural, and social systems to climate change and relative sea level rise including research on adaptations that reduce vulnerability	As a location with tremendous sediment input and active delta building, this area is an important location to examine how restored land responds to storm hazards There is likely little threat for large increases in urban and industrial development around the basin. Most the land is state owned and is not have river, train, and highway access that other sites in the state do. By virtue of being in LA almost any site demonstrates high value for studying coastal resilience. This site makes strong points on why it qualifies as one of those locations - especially with an actively building delta, daily manipulation of water and sediment in the system, and the mentioned, planned projects by CPRA. I ranked this site lower because the overpowering influence of the Atchafalaya River on the immediate coastal area within the NERR makes research related to climate challenging. Although the upstream changes in hydrology are ultimately a function of climate to some degree, I suspect that adaptations in this basin are more related to land-use practices over a third of the country and less related to the changing climate With natural systems. More information could be provided about the cultural and social systems. I agree with the team that Atchafalaya NERR offers an incredible opportunity to support these massive restoration efforts by providing the archetype for a future with action. In addition, this area needs to be protected as many other coastal habitats will likely drown with future sea level rise. Thus, investing now in this area is wise for the State of LA. The site demonstrates high value for conducting research on adaptations to climate change and adaptations that reduce vulnerability. It is unique as the only active land building delta, in that if facilitates understanding of natural land building processes and ability to adapt to changing climate and can directly inform billions in restoration planning. large number of coastal projects in this area already. Excellent opportunity to study and area that spans 100 miles inland with numerous diverse habitat that can be impacted over time.	Barataria Basin is surrounded locations with various land uses and natural and cultural resources that have been directly affected by climate change, making this a key location to study social and ecological resilience. Fur, the site is home to the Mid-Barataria Sediment Diversion which will have direct impacts on community resilience. highly threatened by sea level change, good place to study this but not resilient per se. This area is on the forefront of climate and would be a great location for coastal resilience research. Most of SE LA is high vulnerability - high risk, so the opportunity to studying nature-based solutions to reduce risk and increase resilience is high at this site. 2 pts with natural systems. But not sure on the cultural and social systems. Tribal communities and the local fisherman are important systems that need to be researched. Although the site may be highly appropriate for conducting research on adaptations that reduce vulnerability, have concern that the interacting effects of numerous and large-scale restoration efforts along with the natural variability and complexity of the BA basin might make it more difficult to discern effects of restoration actions until decades of additional monitoring post MBSD is conducted. opportunities for cultural and social resilience research are not provided. The BB provides excellent opportunity to study coastal resiliency on the backdrop of a highly vulnerable system. If the future planned diversion is put in place, the area will be great opportunity to study the effects of one of the largest restoration efforts ever undertaken.	This area is highly vulnerable, both physically and socially, to coastal hazards and climate change. A number of adaptation measures (in both urban and coastal environments) have been planned or constructed, presenting tremendous opportunity for resilience research. This is an area that is vulnerable to climate change and where a lot of efforts to restore the coast are happening. It is an area rich for research on coastal resilience. Most of SE LA is high vulnerability - high risk, so the opportunity to studying nature-based solutions to reduce risk and increase resilience is high at this site. But not sure on the social systems. Tribal communities and the local fisherman are important systems that need to be researched. The site demonstrates high value for conducting research on adaptations to climate change and adaptations that reduce vulnerability. The PT Basin presents excellent opportunity for coastal resilience research. The close proximity to a city as unique as New Orleans that is built upon a riverine delta that is constantly threatened by tropical storms and sea level rise make coastal resiliency paramount.

	Atchafalaya	Barataria	Pontchartrain
Criteria 5.2 This criterion focuses on the ability to accommodate shifts in habitat as sea level, inundation or other climate-change impacts occur: SCORE	**2.73**	**2.13**	**2.00**
5.2 This criterion focuses on the ability to accommodate shifts in habitat as sea level, inundation or other climate-change impacts occur. Is there sufficient ability of the system to accommodate these shifts within the site boundaries and/or is there an ability to expand the boundaries to allow for maintenance of an ecological unit. This includes consideration for additional property acquisition. 3 points. Reserve boundary allows for habitat migration and several areas adjacent to the boundary provide an option for expansion to accommodate habitat shifts and boundary expansion. 2 points. Reserve boundary allows for some habitat migration and some areas adjacent to the boundary provide an option for expansion to accommodate habitat shifts and boundary expansion. 1 point. Reserve boundary allows for little habitat migration and little to no areas adjacent to the boundary provides an option for expansion to accommodate habitat shifts and boundary expansion. 0 points. Reserve boundary does not allow for habitat migration and there are no areas adjacent to the boundary that provide an option for expansion to accommodate habitat shifts and boundary expansion	This location is fairly self-contained and fringed primarily by agricultural land. It is also one of the few areas of the state not experiencing land and habitat loss as a result of SLR and climate change impacts, reducing the risk of habitat shifting. This site has high ability to accommodate habitat shifts, and buffer those shifts. Since this area is less densely populated and the upper basin is less confined by levees compared to the other sites, there a lot more room for habitat shift and migration. This is the most resilient coastal area in the state to climate change. There is nowhere unimpacted by in along Louisiana's coast, but for all its management and manipulation, the Atchafalaya is set up well to allow for habitat migration. And that is described very well in the narrative. The fragmented nature of the site provides less resiliency to accommodate changes in habitat. Transitional habitats capable of functionally accommodating climate-related habitat change only exist in the lower portion of the estuary portion of the site below the ICWW. This NERR area is the perfect place to study and allow accommodations in habitat shifts from sea level rise. I agree with the team, that Atchafalaya is an ideal location for a NERR focused on studying climate change impacts as its boundaries allow for habitat migration and shifts within the reserve. All sites provide opportunities for habitat migration, with the greatest amount of wetland acreage available in the AT. All sites can accommodate habitat shifts. This site has the least land change and habitat shifts which may make it easier to discern climate specific changes within system. Again, should offer excellent, untouched habitat to assess for changes over decades of sea level and other coastal impacts.	This location is primarily subtidal and can accommodate shifts in habitat from climate change. This are will also potentially need to accommodate shifts in habitat resulting from the operation of the diversion. There is some room for habitat migration, but it is limited by river and hurricane protection levees. There is also a plan for a levee in the upper basin that would limit migration room even further. There's not funding for full project implementation for this project at this time, but there is a Chief's Report. Many intertidal areas are converting open water, but diversions may alter this trend. There appears, from the maps, a decent chance that some habitat migration can occur. Can allow for habitat migrations from SLR or major restoration as the proposal states but by year 2050 a lot of the wetlands might turn into open water. All sites provide opportunities for habitat migration and all sites can accommodate habitat shifts. some area available to accommodate shift. The system is ever changing both from climate change impacts and storm impacts.	This area covers the full range of ecosystems that can allow for habitat migration. Details on the connectivity between individual site components/locations that make up the NERR would be useful when considering the NERR as a whole low elevations and low sediment supply both make much of this system less resilient to habitat change and relatec climatic impacts. There is some room for habitat migration, but it is limited by the presence of river and hurricane protection levees. Much of the coastal marshes in this area are, and will likely continue to convert to open water. Numerous levees in the area may arrest the migration of habitat as well. Because there is a high degree of vulnerability here habitats are more likely to be lost than migrate. This section should have been addressed more thoroughly. Can allow for some habitat migrations from SLR or major restoration as the proposal states. Not sure about if this area could consider additional property acquisition to accommodate shifts in habitats from climate change. All sites provide opportunities for habitat migration and all sites can accommodate habitat shifts. Plenty of opportunity to accommodate shifts due to a variety of potential impacts including storms, sea level rise, seasonal variations, and river diversions and change in hydrology.

	Atchafalaya	Barataria	Pontchartrain
Criteria 5.3 Infrastructure and Access: SCORE	**2.60**	**1.73**	**2.20**
5.3 Infrastructure and Access: A changing climate is resulting in a variety of impacts that differ based on geography and conditions within geography. Reserves are designated to ensure a stable platform for research, address significant coastal management issues, enhance public awareness and understanding and promote use of the reserves consistent with the purposes outlined. Access to infrastructure that supports these purposes is key to achieving the mission of the reserve system. This criterion focuses on the expected vulnerability of existing facilities (including visitor centers, labs, storage facilities) proposed for use by the reserve to remain viable and accessible taking into account the most relevant climate change stressors in the locale. This accounts for adaptive strategies that are and/or may be in place to mitigate anticipated stressors. 3 points. Facility(ies) resilient and adaptable under high impact climate change scenarios given current understanding of vulnerability 2 points. Facilities resilient and adaptable under medium impact climate change stressor/threat scenarios 1 point. Facilities unlikely to be resilient and adaptable under medium/low impact climate change stressor/threat scenarios 0 points. Facilities vulnerable and not resilient under any climate change scenarios	This location is not experiencing a high degree of clime-induced land and habitat loss. Infrastructure would not be vulnerable, even under high climate change scenarios This basin will likely be less impacted than other basins. Existing facilities are also limited at present which would allow for the location of future facilities to be more strategic. Given that currently and future facilities will somewhat inland in an area of the coastal zone that is fairly stable, it confers a good level of resilience. The most existential threat to resilience in this area is winds from hurricanes which have been frequent, strong and destructive in the past decade. Facilities are planned to be resilient and adaptable, those that include the elevated interstates. In addition, there is high degree of habitat stability. Site is not currently experiencing as much climate change induced habitat and land loss as the other sites and may be most resilient/adaptable under high impact scenarios; however, exposure and vulnerability to infrastructure will be dependent upon where facilities and locations are chosen. Gulf adjacent sub areas may have higher threat and less adaptable under medium impact scenarios. The AT Basin is very strong in this category because it is least vulnerable to the long-term effects of climate change and hurricane impacts.	Existing infrastructure can be considered highly vulnerable to tropical events and other impacts of climate change. As noted in the proposal, new facilities will need to be elevated and flood proofed, and existing facilities will also require similar nonstructural protection In SE LA, because of the high degree of vulnerability to SLR and storms, facilities can be resilient to only moderate change. Even if the facilities themselves are adaptable, access and durability of the lands upon which they sit is challenged. Facilities are planned to be resilient and adaptable Significant resources would need to be spent to ensure that NERR HQ and existing state lands would remain viable and accessible under medium/low climate change stressors (SLR and storminess). Land change scenarios suggest that many of the state lands that have high exposures would be lost in the future. info provided is not an existing condition but planned future mitigation strategies that may or may not be implemented. Storms frequently cause great problems for the area but there are a lot of efforts to maintain infrastructure and a commitment to recover. There is always the threat, and it seems to be ever increasing.	Given the location and physical vulnerability of this site to hurricanes and other storm events, infrastructure would likely be at risk under high impact climate scenarios There are a number of facilities in this basin that are very vulnerable to climate change and suffered extensive impacts from recent hurricanes. In SE LA, because of the high degree of vulnerability to SLR and storms, facilities can be resilient to only moderate change. Even if the facilities themselves are adaptable, access and durability of the lands upon which they sit is challenged. Facilities are planned to be resilient and adaptable, those that include the elevated interstates Enhancements to infrastructure would need to be spent to ensure that they remain viable and accessible under medium climate change stressors (SLR and storminess). Land change scenarios suggest that significant buffering capacity of existing marshes in the basin may be lost in the future leading to higher exposures and vulnerability. There is always the possibility of hurricane impacts and any location in Louisiana is vulnerable. But this location has some resilience to overcome storm and sea level rise impacts.

	Atchafalaya	Barataria	Pontchartrain
Criteria 5.4. Public Access Resilience: SCORE	**2.40**	**2.00**	**2.40**
5.4. Public Access Resilience: This criterion focuses on the ability to access the resources of the reserve. This includes access to water via docks and boat launches; access to interpretive and educational experiences via trails, pavilions, amphitheaters, as well as access to existing recreational and professional opportunities in the resource. 3 points. Public access infrastructure is resilient and adaptable under high impact climate change scenarios given current understanding of vulnerability 2 points. Public access infrastructure resilient and adaptable under medium impact climate change stressor/threat scenarios 1 point. Public access infrastructure unlikely to be resilient and adaptable under medium/low impact climate change stressor/threat scenarios 0 points. Public access infrastructure vulnerable and not resilient under any climate change scenarios	This location is not experiencing a high degree of clime-induced land and habitat loss. As with infrastructure, public access points would not be vulnerable, even under high climate change scenarios Climate change will likely impact some access points, even under moderate scenarios, but many will likely be resilient. I believe resources are often accessible in this area. But when spring floods hit many points of access, particularly launches, are submerged or the current is too strong to launch. Not a detraction, just a statement of the condition of the site. This area has gained land and so it is probably the most resilient place on LA coast. Unfortunately, there is insufficient information to access public access resilience. Many existing roads leading to docks, boat launches, facilities in Louisiana and in the sites are of low elevation and not well maintained and experience flooding and erosion. Access within this site may have reduced vulnerability due to flood protection levees in the basin. Convenient access will be a challenge but one that can be overcome with significant investment in facilities.	Existing boat launches, trails, and/or outdoor infrastructure for public use are all "maintained for resilience." I would suggest adding a brief description or examples of what this means. Same rationale as in previous section. Under medium impact. May streets become flooded with storms. Unfortunately, there is insufficient information to access public access resilience. Many existing roads leading to docks, boat launches, facilities in Louisiana and in the sites are of low elevation and not well maintained and experience flooding and erosion. Proposal did not describe points of road or boat access to site and sub areas. Access appears to have the greatest exposure and vulnerability at this site. access and activities are provided for. Should be a commitment to maintaining sufficient access.	As with 5.3, given the location and physical vulnerability of this site to hurricanes and other storm events, public access points would likely be at risk under high impact climate scenarios Some of the public access with likely be impacted or even lost due to climate change. Same rationale as in previous section. under medium impact. May streets become flooded with storms. Unfortunately, there is insufficient information to access public access resilience. Many existing roads leading to docks, boat launches, facilities in Louisiana and in the sites are of low elevation and not well maintained and experience flooding and erosion. Appears to have many higher elevation road systems that can provide access to facilities. The PT Basin has sufficient access for just about any activity.

	Atchafalaya	Barataria	Pontchartrain
6.1 Potential to develop partnerships: SCORE	**2.93**	**2.73**	**2.80**
6.1 Potential to develop partnerships: This criterion focuses on the site's ability to create new partnerships and strengthen existing partnerships to achieve their goals, reach target audiences, develop and deliver key messages, and address relevant coastal management issues. This can be demonstrated by potential partner interest, geography, etc. with a focus on the outcomes of the partnership, not the number or name of organizations. This will be measured by the following metrics: Existing MOUs or agreements explaining shared resources such as facilities and salaries Memberships of key individuals to professional organizations such as National Marine Educators Association, Coastal and Estuarine Research Federation, Society of Wetland Scientists, other state professional organizations, research organizations, local or regional consortia, etc. Recent history of key personnel participation in multi-institutional grants, publications, and projects Letters from existing informal partners about past projects, their outcomes, and organizational structure Letters from potential partners focusing on how the partner could complement or contribute to the reserve goals. This letter should include information such as historical context for partnership and their vision for contributing to the reserve mission. 3 Points. The site has strong potential to develop and strengthen new and existing partnerships of high quality evidenced by metrics stated above. 2 Points. The site has potential for new partnerships of good quality to develop. 1 Point. The site has potential for partnership development. 0 Points. The site has insignificant potential for partnerships.	This NERR has developed a large number of partners who support teh development of this NERR, including the Atchafalaya River Basin Restoration & Enhancement Task Force which consists of a large number of federal, state, and industry representatives. There appears to be a large number of potential partners interested in this basin, including academic institutions, federal agencies, and NGOs. This proposal team has a very keen sense of the partnerships needed to make a NERR work locally and as part of the System. strong potential This site has strong support as identified through formal partners in developing the NERR, commitments established under the ARBE Task Force and the numerous letters of support. This site proposal did not mention existing MOUs nor provide history of key personnel in grants, publications and projects that should be added to demonstrate that the site meets the metrics. strong partnerships are in place. Partnerships already largely exist for activities in the basin. There are unlimited opportunities in the future.	The proposal lists a number of strong partnerships. With respect to BTNEP, it might be worth noting the member of the BTNEP management conference, if appropriate There are some existing partnerships working/with interests in this basin, and site here could expand those partnerships. very good job on listing potential partners and affiliations, but not much in the way of addressing existing grants, MOU's, or letters of support. Strong potential This site would rely heavily on existing partnerships established under the BTNEP and I would have liked to see in proposal how the site would strengthen new and existing partnerships other than restoration partners. Public meetings did raise some distrust of CPRA, a significant partner, over diversions and no local fishing community represented. This site proposal did not mention existing MOUs nor provide history of key personnel in grants, publications and projects that should be added to demonstrate that the site meets the metrics. numerous partnerships present and future. There are plenty of partnerships in place due to the public and private awareness of coastal restoration efforts to maintain diverse use of the coastal wetlands. I can only see this continuing to expand with a NERR.	The letters of support presented cover a range of stakeholders including public officials, universities, NGOs and non-profits. A lot of partnerships currently exist in this area and could be strengthened and grown. Because of the diversity of stakeholders, interests, and organizations in the vicinity of this site the potential here is high. strong potential This site has strong support as identified through partners in developing the NERR, lease agreements and MOUs, history of key personnel and letters of support. many existing partners and potential for additional. The PT Basin, as with other basins being considered, has very well-established partnerships.

	Atchafalaya	Barataria	Pontchartrain
Criteria 6.2 Internal NOAA Partnerships: SCORE	**2.43**	**2.07**	**2.57**
6.2 Internal NOAA Partnerships: This is a measure of the number and quality of partnerships with other NOAA entities that already exist within a program or that have the potential to develop based on common goals, geographic proximity, etc. The assumption is that a candidate site with a high diversity of existing partnerships and partnership potential will have opportunities to leverage support and create sustainable programs more so than one with fewer partnerships. Some examples include Sea Grant, Coastal Programs, Marine Sanctuaries, Weather Service, Climate Office and other line offices of NOAA. This will be measured by the following metrics: Existing MOUs or agreements explaining shared resources such as facilities and salaries Recent history of key personnel participation in grants, publications, and projects with NOAA 3 Points. The site has a history of NOAA partnerships and there is strong potential to develop and strengthen new and existing ones of high quality evidenced by the metrics stated above. 2 Points. The site has several partnerships in place and there is potential for new partnerships of good quality to develop. 1 Point. The site has potential for partnership development. 0 Points. The site has insignificant potential for partnerships.	The site team has worked closely with Louisiana Sea Grant and Sea Grant extension. There is also an opportunity to expand existing relationships with NOAA RESTORE and GCOOS. Louisiana Seagrant has been involved and interested in the basin for a long time, but there doesn't seem to be strong, historical partnerships with NOAA outside of that. Good history and potential it seems, but would have like to see a bit more around resource sharing and have a few more details on existing relationships. The team listed NOAA RESTORE, NOAA Weather Service and Climate Office, LA Sea Grant that is funded by NOAA. Strong history of NOAA partnerships but would like to see more details or examples of recent history of grants, publications an projects. history of working with NOAA. Most if not all agencies already are NOAA partners and should be easily established if needed.	It would be helpful to list any existing or past NOAA partnerships with any of the NERR-affiliated programs or entities. NOAA has been extensively involved in this basin due to restoration efforts (via CWPPRA) and as a result of the Deepwater Horizon Oil Spill. Not sure how involved NOAA folks have been. Louisiana Sea Grant College Program is sponsored by NOAA and will be a great partner and natural fit. The LA TIG (Trustee Implementation Group) would also be a good avenue to work with NOAA and other federal agencies. The site has several partnerships in place but did not provide details to discern the level of potential to develop new and strengthen existing partnerships (should be added to proposal). potential for partnership. NOAA is very active in the area and with the BTNEP in place, participation is strong. Coastal restoration efforts will reinforce these partnerships.	This proposed NERR site has a very strong history of partnerships with NOAA which is all very well documented in the proposal Okay, but have grants with NOAA entities is, to me, not quite the same as having partnerships with the agency. Would have like to hear more about the relationship side of things. Not sure how involved NOAA folks have been. Many PIs in the area received grants from NOAA were listed but it doesn't mean they had high quality partnerships. Also, other funding agencies were listed, which was distracting. Strong history of NOAA partnerships Seem to be well established.

	Atchafalaya	Barataria	Pontchartrain
Criteria 6.3 Diversity of Partnerships: SCORE	**2.64**	**2.36**	**2.71**
6.3 Diversity of Partnerships: This is a measure of the ability to reach diverse audiences through existing partnerships or potential partnerships based on common goals and geographic proximity. The assumption is that a candidate site with a high diversity of existing partnerships and partnership potential will have opportunities to leverage support and create sustainable programs more so than one with fewer partnerships. These partnerships should increase the candidate site's ability to address relevant coastal management issues, address research needs and gaps, and reach diverse audiences. These partner organizations should range in diversity such as federal agencies (ex. National Estuary Programs, National Wildlife Refuges, National Parks), state agencies and parks, local organizations (Marine Labs and Land Trusts), NGOs, and umbrella groups (national, regional or local). These partnerships should help bridge the gap between the NERRS and new audiences that the NERRS has not typically engaged (e.g., urban audiences) or that could help the NERRS become more effective at reaching intended audiences (e.g., national municipal association to facilitate reaching local officials). The focus of these partnerships should be the outcomes, not the number or name of organizations. This will be measured by the following metrics: Existing MOUs or agreements explaining shared resources such as facilities and salaries Recent history of key personnel participation in multi-institutional grants, publications, projects Letters from existing informal partners about past projects, outcomes, and organizational structure Letters from potential partners focusing on how the partner could complement or contribute to the reserve goals. This letter should include historical context and vision for partnership contributing to the reserve mission. 3 Points. The site has many diverse partnerships and there is strong potential to develop and strengthen new and existing ones of high quality evidenced by metrics stated above. 2 Points. The site has several diverse partnerships in place and there is potential for new partnerships of good quality to develop. 1 Point. The site has potential for partnership development. 0 Points. The site has insignificant potential for partnerships.	A large and diverse group of partners has coalesced around this location, although it is not clear that any MOUs are currently in place. Federal refuges and parks would need to be key partners although they have not been engaged to this point. A lot of different groups seem to be interested in working within this basin. The huge number of letters of support from potential partners (yes, many were from students, and the speaks to the education outreach potential at the site), and existing relationship already described the current and potential partnership environment is strong. Atchafalaya overall: Informative proposal and provided relevant information that made it easy to review. The fact that this stie could be the only active delta estuarine system in the NERR network is very exciting. The team put together an impressive packet with over 400 pages, with many letters and coloring sheets from local schools. I enjoyed seeing the "All I want for Christmas is for the Atchafalaya Zone to be named the LA National Estuarine Research reserve". I agree with the team that Atchafalaya is an ideal location for a NERR because it can allow for studying and educational opportunities to assess climate change impacts as its boundaries allow for habitat migration and shifts within the reserve. All 3 sites have many diverse partnerships, but this site has a strong potential to develop new and strengthen existing partnerships. partnerships with state agencies are in place. potential for federal partnerships. Should currently exist or easily set up.	The role the BTNEP (and members of their management conference) can play here is very important. That being said, this section should be expanded out considerably, including LDWF, USFWS, and the NPS at the governmental level. Ripple Effect and the operators of the Wetland Education Center could also be mentioned here, as well as university partners. This basin is an area of a lot of interest with future restoration plans and has spurred collaboration between diverse groups, including academic institutions, state and federal agencies, and NGOs. The narrative itself says there exist strong potential for partnerships and does not mention existing relationships. Overall: well written and informative. Provided great examples of research that is ongoing. All 3 sites have many diverse partnerships, but evidence provided suggest this site has the least diversity potential for partnerships is indicated. The existing partnerships include industrial, commercial, and recreational users throughout the basin.	Partners in this proposed NERR sites have existing MOUs for collaborative educational work. I would suggest expanding this section and specifically listing partnerships, as was done in the discussion of NOAA partnerships (Criteria 6.2) to highlight the diversity of partners. Due to the location and history of this area, partnership diversity is strong, with academic, federal, state, and NGOs present in the basin. It is clear from the letters of support and previous sections there exists a high level of partnerships. But the narrative in this section itself does very little to highlight those relationships. This really should be graded a 3, and more description/detail in this section would have helped that. Overall Pontchartrain: well written and organized, provided relevant information that made it easy to review. All 3 sites have many diverse partnerships, but this site has a strong potential to develop new and strengthen existing partnerships. Seem to have highly diverse partnerships including public and private.

Louisiana National Estuarine Research Reserve (LaNERR)
Site Selection & Nomination Report

November 2022

APPENDIX 12:

Site Nomination Public Meetings

Federal Register and Local Newspaper Notices

Other Advertisements

Meeting Materials

Meeting Attendees and Public Comments / Q&A

Written Comments and Letters Received

DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

Public Meetings for Recommending a National Estuarine Research Reserve Site[s] in the Atchafalaya River Area of Louisiana

AGENCY: Office for Coastal Management, National Ocean Service, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), U.S. Department of Commerce

ACTION: Public meeting notice.

SUMMARY: Notice is hereby given that two public meetings will be held for the purpose of providing information and receiving comments on the preliminary recommendation by the State of Louisiana that portions of the Atchafalaya River area be proposed to NOAA for designation as a National Estuarine Research Reserve.

DATES: The in-person public meeting will be held at 5 p.m. Central Time on November 2, 2022, in the Morgan City Auditorium (728 Myrtle Street, Morgan City, Louisiana 70380). The virtual public meeting will be held at 5 p.m. Central Time on November 3, 2022, at the following link: *meet.google.com/gya-dsaj-eob.* Participants may also join the meeting by phone by using this toll-free number +1 470 485 8283, and meeting ID 749 865 797#.

ADDRESSES: Both public meetings will present the same information.

The State agency holding the meetings is the Louisiana Coastal Protection and Restoration Authority. NOAA's Office for Coastal Management will assist with the meetings.

This meeting will present the State's proposed nomination. Detailed information on the proposed site can be found on the following website: *https://www.laseagrant.org/deltanerr/.*

A presentation about the proposal and the National Estuarine Research Reserve System will be provided at both meetings. The views of interested persons and organizations regarding the proposed nomination are solicited. This information may be expressed verbally and in written statements. Written comments may also be sent to: Louisiana Coastal Protection and Restoration Authority, at *coastal@la.gov.* All written comments must be received no later than seven days following the public meetings [November 10, 2022]. All comments received will be considered by the state when formally nominating a site or sites to NOAA.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Ms. Erica Seiden, Office for Coastal Management, National Ocean Service, NOAA, 1305 East West Highway, N/OCM, Silver Spring, MD 20910 or Email: *erica.seiden@noaa.gov.*

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: The research reserve system is a Federal and State partnership program administered by the Federal government, specifically NOAA. The research reserve system currently has 30 sites and protects more than 1.3 million acres of estuarine and Great Lakes habitat for long-term research, monitoring, education, and stewardship. Established by the Coastal Zone Management Act of 1972, each reserve is managed by a lead State agency or university, with input from local partners. NOAA provides partial funding and national programmatic guidance.

This particular site selection effort is a culmination of several years of local, grassroots-support for a research reserve in Louisiana. The proposed site[s] presented at this meeting follow a comprehensive evaluation process that sought the views of the public, affected landowners, and other interested parties. State and local agency representatives, Tribal nations, as well as estuarine experts, served as committee members and evaluated site proposals.

Keelin S. Kuipers,

Deputy Director, Office for Coastal Management, National Ocean Service, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration.

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BILLING CODE 3510–JE–P

BUREAU OF CONSUMER FINANCIAL PROTECTION

Credit Union Advisory Council Meeting

AGENCY: Bureau of Consumer Financial Protection.

ACTION: Notice of public meeting.

SUMMARY: Under the Federal Advisory Committee Act (FACA), this notice sets forth the announcement of a public meeting of the Credit Union Advisory Council (CUAC or Council) of the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau (Bureau). The notice also describes the functions of the Council.

DATES: The meeting date is Thursday, November 3, 2022, from approximately 1:00 p.m. to 5:00 p.m. eastern daylight time. This meeting will be held virtually and is open to the general public. Members of the public will receive the agenda and dial-in information when they RSVP.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Kim George, Outreach and Engagement Associate, Section for Advisory Board and Councils, Office of Stakeholder Management, at 202–450–8617, or email: *CFPB_CABandCouncilsEvents@cfpb.gov.* If you require this document in an alternative electronic format, please contact *CFPB_Accessibility@cfpb.gov.*

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

I. Background

Section 2 of the CUAC Charter provides that pursuant to the executive and administrative powers conferred on the Bureau by section 1012 of the Dodd-Frank Wall Street Reform and Consumer Protection Act (Dodd-Frank Act), the Director established the Credit Union Advisory Council under agency authority.

Section 3 of the CUAC Charter states: ''The purpose of the CUAC is to advise the Bureau in the exercise of its functions under the Federal consumer financial laws as they pertain to credit unions with total assets of $10 billion or less.''

II. Agenda

The CUAC will discuss broad policy matters related to the Bureau's Unified Regulatory Agenda and general scope of authority.

Persons who need a reasonable accommodation to participate should contact *CFPB_504Request@cfpb.gov,* 202–435–9EEO, 1–855–233–0362, or 202–435–9742 (TTY) at least ten (10) business days prior to the meeting or event to request assistance. The request must identify the date, time, location, and title of the meeting or event, the nature of the assistance requested, and contact information for the requester. The Bureau will strive to provide but cannot guarantee that accommodation will be provided for late requests.

Written comments will be accepted from interested members of the public and should be sent to *CFPB_CABandCouncilsEvents@cfpb.gov,* a minimum of seven (7) days in advance of the meeting. The comments will be provided to the CUAC members for consideration. Individuals who wish to join this meeting must RSVP via this link *https://surveys.consumerfinance.gov/jfe/form/SV_5cquaM1xPpg9pFc,* by noon, November 2, 2022. Members of the public must RSVP by the due date.

III. Availability

The Council's agenda will be made available to the public on Wednesday, November 2, 2022, via *consumerfinance.gov.* Individuals

STATE OF LOUISISANA
PARISH OF ST. MARY

BEFORE ME, the undersigned Notary Public, duly commissioned in and for the Parish and State aforesaid; personally came and appeared, **Judith Touchet** who after being duly sworn, depose and said;

That she is **Bookkeeper** for the Daily Review a daily newspaper published at Morgan City, Louisiana, and having general circulation in the Parish of St. Mary.

That the attached is a true and correct copy of a legal advertisement, which appeared in the **October 14 & 19, 2022** issue of The Daily Review.

Judith Touchet

Sworn to and subscribed before me this 11/3/22

JAB

JOSEPH A. TABB - BAR ROLL 31983
NOTARY PUBLIC
STATE OF LOUISIANA

PUBLIC NOTICE

As mandated by the by-laws of the Louisiana Shrimp and Petroleum Festival and Fair Association, a general membership meeting has been scheduled for Monday, October 17, 2022 at 5:00pm in the Festival Office, located at 715 Second St, Morgan City, Louisiana. This will be a joint Membership and Board Meeting. This meeting has the purpose of accepting nominations and elections of members to the Festival Board of Directors. This is an annual meeting.
Adv. Sept. 28, Oct. 12 and 14, 2022

PUBLIC NOTICE

PUBLIC MEETING NOTICE:
AGENCIES: National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) and the Louisiana Coastal Protection and Restoration Authority (CPRA)
PUBLIC MEETINGS FOR RECOMMENDING A NATIONAL ESTUARINE RESEARCH RESERVE SITE[s] IN THE ATCHAFALAYA RIVER DELTA AREA OF LOUISIANA

The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) and the Louisiana Coastal Protection and Restoration Authority (CPRA) will hold the following public meetings to receive public comments on Recommending a National Estuarine Research Reserve Site[s] in the Atchafalaya River Delta Area of Louisiana.

Two meetings will be held, (one in-person, one virtual). Details are as follows:
Wednesday, Nov. 2
5:00 PM
Location:
Morgan City Auditorium
(728 Myrtle Street, Morgan City, Louisiana 70380)
Thursday, Nov. 3
12:00 PM
Virtual Hearing Link:
meet.google.com/gya-dsaj-eob
Join by phone:
+1 470 485 8283
Meeting ID:
749 865 797#

The CPRA will receive email and/or written comments and recommendations no later than seven days following the public meetings (November 10, 2022). Emailed comments can be sent to coastal@la.gov. Written comments should be mailed (to arrive no later than November 10, 2022) to the following address:
Coastal Protection & Restoration Authority
Public Comments –NERR
150 Terrace Avenue
Baton Rouge, LA 70802

Detailed information on the proposed site[s] can be found on the following website: https://www.laseagrant.org/deltanerr/

For questions regarding the hearings, please contact Kristin Ransom, NOAA Office for Coastal Management, 1021 Balch Blvd. Suite 1003, Stennis Space Center, MS 39529 or Email: kristin.ransom@noaa.gov.
Adv. Oct. 14 & 19, 2022

PUBLIC NOTICE

PUBLIC NOTICE

NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN that the St. Mary Parish Board of Adjustments will hold a **PUBLIC HEARING** on **MONDAY, November 7, 2022 AT 5:45 P.M.** in the Parish Council Meeting Room, Fifth Floor Courthouse, Franklin, Louisiana, for the following purposes:

Jerry Trosclair for a Variance to deviate from Div.1.6 Agricultural and Residential Standards; Sec 1.6.2 Residential Accessory Uses, Building, and Structures; Table 1.6.2. Detached Accessory Building Standards-Setbacks-Front, Generally- behind the principle building located in an Existing Neighborhood (EN2) Zoned District located at 920 Chitimacha Trail, Baldwin, LA-Sec. 22/21 T14S R9E;

Parcel Id #2144901095.00-Lot por BD Baldwin - Teche - L Wright - Road situated in Sec. 22 T14S R9E Acq. 186 303991,

Parcel Id #2144901004.00-Lot por BD Baldwin - Teche - L Wright - Road situated in Sec. 22 T14S R9E Acq. 186 303991,

Parcel Id #2144901005.00-Lot por BD Baldwin - Teche - L Wright - Road situated in Sec. 21 T14S R9E Acq. 186 303991 &

Parcel Id #2144901096.00-Lot por BD Baldwin - Teche - L Wright - Road situated in Sec. 21 T14S R9E Acq. 186 303991.

All persons are invited to this meeting to submit their approval or objections to the above VARIANCE REQUEST.
St. Mary Parish
Board of Adjustments
John P. Davis,
Chairman
Adv. Oct. 14, 21 and 28, 2022

PUBLIC NOTICE

NOTICE TO CONTRACTORS
2022 Street Improvements - Rebid

Sealed proposals for the asphalt concrete and aggregate overlay of streets will be received by the City of Patterson until 10:00 a.m., local time on Tuesday, November 1, 2022, at the City of Patterson, City Hall Complex, 1314 Main Street, Patterson, Louisiana, 70392, at which time and place said proposals will be publicly opened and read aloud. Any proposal received after the announced closing time will be returned unopened.

Electronic Access/Bids: The City of Patterson has opted to allow all contractors the opportunity to receive bid information, and to bid, electronically. Electronic bid submission and/or access to bid information/documentation is through LaMATS e-Auction Services, https://lamats.eauctionservices.com. Electronic bid submissions will be submitted prior to the bidding deadline and will be secured until bid opening. There is no charge to register, to access the electronic bid requirements or to submit electronic bids and documentation. Contractors who register to access bid documents electronically will receive electronic notification of any changes or addendums to the solicitation. Questions related to electronic bidding or accessing information/documents electronically should be directed to Paul Holmes, paul@lamats.net, (225) 678-6107.

An electronic access/processing fee of $800 will be paid by the awarded contractor only, whether having submitted its bid by mail, courier, or electronically and must be payable/forwarded to LaMATS e-Auction Services after the awarded contractor is chosen, by mailing to 700 North Tenth Street, Baton Rouge, Louisiana, 70802, Attention: **LaMATS e-Auction Services**, within five (5) business days of contract award. Failure to forward payment promptly may result in withholding of funds by the City.

Bids received prior to the time of the scheduled bid opening will be securely kept unopened. No bid received after the scheduled time for opening will be considered. Failure of the U.S. Mail or of any express carrier or delivery service to deliver the bids timely shall not be considered due cause for the scheduled time of the bid opening to be extended.

All proposals must be submitted in a sealed envelope bearing the Bidder's name, address and State Contractor's license number and must be addressed as follows:

PROPOSAL:
2022 Street Improvements - Rebid
City of Patterson
P.O. Box 367
Patterson, Louisiana 70392

LICENSE NO.

_____

Failure to have the license number on the envelope will be cause for not opening the proposal.

Base Bid: Work on which Base Bid proposals are invited consists of the asphalt concrete overlay of two (2) streets. One (1) street will include a leveling course along with the asphalt concrete overlay, and other items of work in connection therewith. The other street will include cold planing and patching along with the asphalt concrete overlay, and other items of work in connection therewith. The total length of streets is approximately 3,572 linear feet.

Alternate No. 1 Bid: Alternate No. 1 consists of the reconstruction of one (1) street by the asphalt concrete overlay of 325 linear feet together with leveling course, asphalt patching, and other items of work in connection therewith and scarification and overlay of 1,087 linear feet. with aggregate and other items of work in connection therewith. The total length of the street in Alternate No. 1 is approximately 1,412 linear feet.

Proposals must be submitted on the Louisiana Uniform Public Work Bid Form furnished with the contract documents. Proposal sheets will be issued only to contractors and/or subcontractors licensed in accordance with the provisions of R.S. 37:2150 through 2173 of the Louisiana Legislature. Contractors desiring to bid shall submit to the Engineer evidence that they hold license for **HIGHWAY, STREET AND BRIDGE CONSTRUCTION** that is in full force and effect.

Every bid submitted shall be accompanied by a proposal guaranty in the form of a certified check, cashier's check or bid bond in an amount of not less than five percent (5%) of the total amount bid and shall be made payable to City of Patterson. All bid bonds shall be accompanied by a duly authorized power of attorney and shall be guaranteed by a surety or insurance company currently on the U. S. Department of Treasury Financial Management Service list of approved bonding companies or by a Louisiana domiciled insurance company with at least an A- rating in the latest printing of the A. M. Best's Key Rating Guide or by an insurance company in good standing licensed to write bid bonds which is either domiciled in Louisiana or owned by Louisiana residents. If bidding electronically, a clear copy of the original bid security must be included with your electronic bid. If an electronic bidder is the apparent low bidder, then the bidder will be required to deliver the original bid security to the City of Patterson within 48 hours of the opening of bids.

A Prebid Conference at which the scope of the project, subsurface investigation data (if applicable), contract time, minority business enterprise requirements (if applicable), and other requirements of the bidding and contract documents may be discussed, or any other special requirements for the project which may be discussed with prospective bidders, will be held at the office of City of Patterson, City Hall Complex, 1314 Main Street, Patterson, Louisiana, 70392, on Thursday, October 20, 2022, at 10:00 a.m., local time. A tour of the project site will be conducted following the Prebid Conference. All bidders are encouraged to attend the Prebid Conference and if requested, the project tour.

If you have any questions regarding this project, please send them to MelanieCaillouet@ProvidenceEng.com. All questions should be sent by 5:00 p.m., Tuesday, October 25, 2022, and will be answered by addendum.

Written evidence of the authority of the person signing the bid for public works shall be submitted at the time of bidding. The authority of the signature of the person submitting the bid shall be deemed sufficient and acceptable if any of the conditions in LA R.S. 38:2212(B)(5) are met.

A Bid will be considered responsive if it conforms in all respects with the conditions and requirements of the Bidding Documents. In order to be considered responsive, the Louisiana Uniform Public Works Bid Form must; (a) be fully completed, signed and be responsive in all respects to the Bidding Documents; (b) be made on the Bid Forms provided and submitted intact.

The plans, specifications, and proposal forms may be obtained from Providence Engineering and Environmental Group LLC, 1297 St. Charles Street, Suite H, Houma, Louisiana, 70360. In accordance with Louisiana Public Bid Law, prime bidders shall be charged a deposit of $80.00 and, upon return of the plans and specifications in good condition within ten (10) days from the bid date, shall be refunded the full deposit. All other persons requesting plans and specifications shall pay a deposit of $80.00 and shall be refunded the remainder from the cost of reproduction ($40.00) upon return of the plans and specifications in good condition within ten (10) days from the bid date. The cost of mailing, if required, shall be billed separately for an additional non-refundable $15.00 charge.

To the extent permitted by applicable state and federal laws and regulations, the OWNER reserves the right to reject any and/or all proposals for just cause.
(S) Rodney Grogan
Rodney Grogan,
Mayor
Adv. Oct. 7, 14 and 19, 2022

PUBLIC NOTICE

LEGAL NOTICE
Sixteenth Judicial District Court
PARISH OF ST. MARY
STATE OF LOUISIANA
Reverse Mortgage Funding LLC
Vs. No. 136931
Div "E"
Earline T Grizzaffi

TAKE NOTICE, that by virtue of Order of Seizure and Sale issued out of the Honorable 16th Judicial District Court, in and for the Parish of St. Mary, and to me directed, in the above numbered and entitled suit, I have seized the following mentioned and described property, to wit:

THE EAST FIFTY (50 FEET) FEET OF THAT CERTAIN LOT OF GROUND, LYING AND BEING SITUATED IN MORGAN CITY, PARISH OF ST. MARY, STATE OF LOUISIANA, KNOWN, DESIGNATED AND DESCRIBED AS LOT SEVEN (7) IN SQUARE THIRTY-ONE (31) IN MORGAN CITY, LOUISIANA, AS PER MAP AND PLAN OF BARNES, RECORDED IN THE RECORDERS OFFICE; SAID PART OF LOT HEREIN HAVING FIFTY (50 FEET) FEET FRONT ON NORTH SIDE OF FRERET STREET, FIFTY (50 FEET) FEET FRONT ON WEST SIDE OF ALLEY RUNNING NORTH AND SOUTH THROUGH SAID SQUARE THIRTY-ONE (31 FEET); TOGETHER WITH ALL BUILDINGS AND IMPROVEMENTS THEREON SITUATED AND APPERTAINING, (COB 4-H) FOLIO 537, ENTRY NO. 51,567 ON JANUARY 25, 1926).
AND
THE REAR FIFTY (50 FEET) FEET OF LOT SIX (6) IN SQUARE THIRTY-ONE (31) IN THE CORPORATE LIMITS OF MORGAN CITY, PARISH OF ST. MARY, STATE OF LOUISIANA, TOGETHER WITH ALL BUILDINGS AND IMPROVEMENTS AND ALL RIGHTS OF WAYS, PRIVILEGES AND SERVITUDES THEREUNTO BELONGING OR ANYWISE APPERTAINING. THE HEREIN LOT SOLD HAVING A WIDTH OF FIFTY (50 FEET) FEET ON THE WEST SIDE OF ALLEY RUNNING NORTH AND SOUTH THROUGH SAID SQUARE; BY A DEPTH BETWEEN PARALLEL LINES OF FIFTY (50 FEET) FEET, WESTERLY WITH EQUAL DISTANCES APART (COB 4-K, FOLIO 306, ENTRY NO. 51,849 ON MARCH 23, 1926).

to satisfy the sum of ONE HUNDRED THIRTY THOUSAND EIGHT HUNDRED EIGHTY SEVEN AND 36/100 ($130,887.36) DOLLARS, principal advances made, together with accumulated interest to August 17, 2022, and all other allowable charges, plus interest thereon at the rate of 5.060 percent per annum thereon from August 18, 2022 until paid and reasonable attorneys= fees, all costs and expense in enforcing the Note and Mortgage, and all advances for, taxes, insurance premiums, and all other charges and expenses permitted by the Note or Mortgage including pre-payment penalty, if any, and late charges and all costs of this proceedings as well as all sheriff's costs and commission

All successful bidders must have cash, cashier's check or a verifiable letter of credit in favor of said bidder from a solvent bank, savings and loan association or other such financial institution authorized to do business in the state of Louisiana and full payment must be made on the date of sale. Letter must state that money is available on the date of sale.

I shall expose the same at public sale, for Cash, according to law WITHOUT appraisement to the last and highest bidder, at the principal front door of the Court House in the Parish of St. Mary, Town of Franklin, Louisiana, on Wednesday, the 16th day of November A.D., 2022, between the legal hours commencing at 10 O'Clock A.M.
Sheriff's Office
Parish of St. Mary, La.
Monday, the 12th day of September A.D., 2022
BLAISE W. SMITH,
SHERIFF
By: Catheryn Washington
Deputy Sheriff
Adv. Oct. 14 and Nov. 9, 2022

PUBLIC NOTICE

NOTICE OF PUBLIC HEARING

A series of Public Hearings will be held in accordance with LA R.S. 48:231 and conducted by the Joint Transportation, Highways and Public Works Committee. Below is a list of the times and places where the hearings will be held. The purpose of the hearings is to review highway construction priorities for the fiscal year 2023-2024. A copy of the Preliminary Program for Fiscal Year 2023-2024 will be available for review on October 1, 2022, by interested persons at the LADOTD Headquarters Building, 1201 Capitol Access Road, Room 200U, Baton Rouge, LA 70802 or online at
http://www.dotd.la.gov/Inside_LaDOTD/Divisions/Multimodal/Transportation_Planning/Highway_Priority/Pages/default.aspx

All interested persons are invited for the purpose of becoming fully acquainted with the proposed program and will be afforded an opportunity to express their views in person. Oral testimony may be supplemented by presenting important facts and documentation in writing. All interested parties will be able to listen to the meeting by ZOOM. The ZOOM information will be posted at the link above. Written statements and comments should be handed to the committee conducting the Hearing or mailed to the following address postmarked within 45 calendar days following the Hearing:

JOINT TRANSPORTATION, HIGHWAYS & PUBLIC WORKS COMMITTEE
C/O LA DOTD (SECTION 85)
P.O. BOX 94245
BATON ROUGE, LA 70804-9245

Should anyone requiring special assistance due to a disability wish to participate in this public hearing, please contact LADOTD (Attn: Ms. Mary Elliott) by mail at the address above or by telephone at (225) 379-1218 at least five days prior to the date of the public hearing.

LEGISLATIVE PUBLIC HEARINGS
FOR THE HIGHWAY PRIORITY CONSTRUCTION PROGRAM (2023-2024)

Date & Time	DOTD District	Parishes	Location
November 2, 2022 9:00 am	07	Allen, Beauregard, Calcasieu, Cameron, Jeff Davis	**SEED Center** 4310 Ryan Street, Lake Charles
November 2, 2022 1:30 pm	03	Acadia, Evangeline, Iberia, Lafayette, St. Landry, St. Martin, St. Mary, Vermilion	**Lafayette Parish Sheriff's Office Public Safety Complex** 1825 W. Willow Street, Scott
November 9, 2022 9:30 am	02	Jefferson, Lafourche, Orleans, Plaquemines, St. Bernard, St. Charles, Terrebonne	**Yenni Building East Bank Council Chambers** 1221 Elmwood Park Blvd, Suite 100, Jefferson
November 9, 2022 2:30 pm	62	Livingston, St. Helena, St. John the Baptist, St. Tammany, Tangipahoa, Washington	**Tangipahoa Council Office Chambers** 206 East Mulberry Street, Amite
November 10, 2022 9:00 am	61	Ascension, Assumption, E. Baton Rouge, E. Feliciana, Iberville, Pointe Coupee, St. James, W. Baton Rouge, W. Feliciana	**State Capitol Basement, House Committee Room 1,** Baton Rouge

Adv. Oct. 7 & 14, 2022

PUBLIC NOTICE

PUBLIC MEETING NOTICE:

AGENCIES: National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) and the Louisiana Coastal Protection and Restoration Authority (CPRA)

PUBLIC MEETINGS FOR RECOMMENDING A NATIONAL ESTUARINE RESEARCH RESERVE SITE[s] IN THE ATCHAFALAYA RIVER DELTA AREA OF LOUISIANA

The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) and the Louisiana Coastal Protection and Restoration Authority (CPRA) will hold the following public meetings to receive public comments on Recommending a National Estuarine Research Reserve Site[s] in the Atchafalaya River Delta Area of Louisiana.

Two meetings will be held, (one in-person, one virtual). Details are as follows:

Wednesday, Nov. 2
5:00 PM
Location:
Morgan City Auditorium (728 Myrtle Street, Morgan City, Louisiana 70380)

Thursday, Nov. 3
12:00 PM
Virtual Hearing Link:
meet.google.com/gya-dsaj-eob Join by phone: +1 470 485 8283
Meeting ID: 749 865 797#

The CPRA will receive email and/or written comments and recommendations no later than seven days following the public meetings (November 10, 2022). Emailed comments can be sent to coastal@la.gov. Written comments should be mailed (to arrive no later than November 10, 2022) to the following address:

Coastal Protection & Restoration Authority
Public Comments –NERR
150 Terrace Avenue
Baton Rouge, LA 70802

Detailed information on the proposed site[s] can be found on the following website: https://www.laseagrant.org/deltanerr/

For questions regarding the hearings, please contact Kristin Ransom, NOAA Office for Coastal Management, 1021 Balch Blvd. Suite 1003, Stennis Space Center, Stennis, MS 39529 or Email: kristin.ransom@noaa.gov.
Adv. Oct. 14 and 19, 2022

PUBLIC NOTICE

NOTICE

Notice is hereby given that the following proposed ordinance has been submitted at a regular meeting of the City Council of the City of Patterson, Louisiana on the 4th day of October, 2022, to-wit:

* * * * * * * * * * *

INTRODUCTION OF ORDINANCE NO. 2022-10A
AN ORDINANCE ADOPTING INCREASE OF SALARY OF CHIEF OF POLICE

BE IT ORDAINED by the Mayor and Council of the City of Patterson, Louisiana in session assembled, that the salary of the Chief of Police be set as follows:

(A) The compensation of the Chief of Police for the City of Patterson, Louisiana shall include:

1) a base salary of $59,000.00 per year, payable monthly;

2) state supplemental pay;

3) any vehicle and telephone allowance that the City Council approves;

4) all other employee benefits of any nature and kind approved by the City Council.

(B) The compensation of the Chief of Police provided in this ordinance shall be effective commencing on the 1st day of December, 2022. All prior adopted ordinances, and provisions therein, contrary to this ordinance are revoked and deemed null and void as of the effective date of this ordinance.

The foregoing was introduced by Councilmember Lee Condolle and seconded by Councilmember Ray Dewey, at the regular monthly meeting of the Patterson City Council on the 4th day of October, 2022.

The foregoing was offered for adoption by Councilman ————, who moved its adoption, seconded by Councilman ————, and being read and considered section by section, the Ordinance was submitted to vote with the results:

YEAS: ————

NAYS: ————

ABSENT: ————

WHEREUPON, the Ordinance was declared adopted on this ——— day of ————, 2022.

RODNEY GROGAN, MAYOR
ATTEST:

DAMITA D. YOUNG,
CITY CLERK
* * * * * * * * * * *

Notice is further given that a public hearing on the aforesaid proposed ordinance is set for 6:00 p.m. on the 1st day of November, 2022, during the regular meeting of the Patterson City Council to be held at the City Hall in Patterson, 1314 Main Street, Patterson, Louisiana, on that date and at that time, and final action on said proposed ordinance shall be taken at said meeting.
(S) Damita D. Young
City Clerk
Patterson, Louisiana
Adv. Oct. 12, 19 and 26, 2022

PUBLIC NOTICE

NOTICE

Notice is hereby given that the following proposed ordinance has been submitted at a regular meeting of the City Council of the City of Patterson, Louisiana on the 4th day of October, 2022, to-wit:

* * * * * * * * * * *

INTRODUCTION OF ORDINANCE NO. 2022-10B
AN ORDINANCE TO SUPPLEMENT SECTION 6-18 OF THE CODE OF ORDINANCES SO AS TO ADD SUBSECTION 6-18(b)(3) TO REQUIRE PLANNING COMMISSION RECOMMENDATION AND COUNCIL APPROVAL REGARDING LIVESTOCK

BE IT ORDAINED by the Mayor and Council of the City of Patterson, Louisiana in session assembled, that Section 6-18 of the Code of Ordinances be supplemented and reenaction so as to add Subsection 6-18(b)(3) to read as follows:

(3)It shall be unlawful for any person within the city to keep, possess or maintain any livestock animal on any parcel of land unless and until such person is granted permission to do so by the Mayor and City Council after receiving recommendations regarding same from the Planning Commission.

All other provisions contained in Section 6-18 of the Code of Ordinances shall remain in full force and effect.

The foregoing was introduced by Councilmember Dawn Rentrop and seconded by Councilmember Ray Dewey, at the regular monthly meeting of the Patterson City Council on the 4th day of October, 2022.

The foregoing was offered for adoption by Councilmember ————, who moved its adoption, seconded by Councilmember ————, and being read and considered section by section, the Ordinance was submitted to vote with the results:

YEAS: ————

NAYS: ————

ABSENT: ————

WHEREUPON, the Ordinance was declared adopted on this ——— day of ————, 2022.

RODNEY GROGAN, MAYOR
ATTEST:

DAMITA D. YOUNG,
CITY CLERK
* * * * * * * * * * *

Notice is further given that a public hearing on the aforesaid proposed ordinance is set for 6:00 p.m. on the 1st day of November, 2022, during the regular meeting of the Patterson City Council to be held at the City Hall in Patterson, 1314 Main Street, Patterson, Louisiana, on that date and at that time, and final action on said proposed ordinance shall be taken at said meeting.
(S) Damita D. Young
City Clerk
Patterson, Louisiana
Adv. Oct. 12, 19 and 26, 2022

PUBLIC NOTICE

NOTICE TO CONTRACTORS
2022 Street Improvements - Rebid

Sealed proposals for the asphalt concrete and aggregate overlay of streets will be received by the City of Patterson until 10:00 a.m., local time on Tuesday, November 1, 2022, at the City of Patterson, City Hall Complex, 1314 Main Street, Patterson, Louisiana, 70392, at which time and place said proposals will be publicly opened and read aloud. Any proposal received after the announced closing time will be returned unopened.

Electronic Access/Bids: The City of Patterson has opted to allow all contractors the opportunity to receive bid information, and to bid, electronically. Electronic bid submission and/or access to bid information/documentation is through LaMATS e-Auction Services, https://lamats.eauctionservices.com. Electronic bid submissions will be submitted prior to the bidding deadline and will be secured until bid opening. There is no charge to register, to access the electronic bid requirements or to submit electronic bids and documentation. Contractors who register to access bid documents electronically will receive electronic notification of any changes or addendums to the solicitation. Questions related to electronic bidding or accessing information/documents electronically should be directed to Paul Holmes, paul@lamats.net, (225) 678-6107.

An electronic access/processing fee of $800 will be paid by the awarded contractor only, whether having submitted its bid by mail, courier, or electronically and must be payable/forwarded to LaMATS e-Auction Services after the awarded contractor is chosen, by mailing to 700 North Tenth Street, Baton Rouge, Louisiana, 70802, Attention: **LaMATS e-Auction Services**, within five (5) business days of contract award. Failure to forward payment promptly may result in withholding of funds by the City.

Bids received prior to the time of the scheduled bid opening will be securely kept unopened. No bid received after the scheduled time for opening will be considered. Failure of the U.S. Mail or of any express carrier or delivery service to deliver the bids timely shall not be considered due cause for the scheduled time of the bid opening to be extended.

All proposals must be submitted in a sealed envelope bearing the Bidder's name, address and State Contractor's license number and must be addressed as follows:

PROPOSAL:
2022 Street Improvements - Rebid

City of Patterson
P.O. Box 367
Patterson, Louisiana 70392

LICENSE NO.

Failure to have the license number on the envelope will be cause for not opening the proposal.

Base Bid: Work on which Base Bid proposals are invited consists of the asphalt concrete overlay of two (2) streets. One (1) street will include a leveling course along with the asphalt concrete overlay, and other items of work in connection therewith. The other street will include cold planing and patching along with the asphalt concrete overlay, and other items of work in connection therewith. The total length of streets is approximately 3,572 linear feet.

Alternate No. 1 Bid: Alternate No. 1 consists of the reconstruction of one (1) street by the asphalt concrete overlay of 325 linear feet together with leveling course, asphalt patching, and other items of work in connection therewith and scarification and overlay of 1,087 linear feet. with aggregate and other items of work in connection therewith. The total length of the street in Alternate No. 1 is approximately 1,412 linear feet.

Proposals must be submitted on the Louisiana Uniform Public Work Bid Form furnished with the contract documents. Proposal sheets will be issued only to contractors and/or subcontractors licensed in accordance with the provisions of R.S. 37:2150 through 2173 of the Louisiana Legislature. Contractors desiring to bid shall submit to the Engineer evidence that they hold license for **HIGHWAY, STREET AND BRIDGE CONSTRUCTION** that is in full force and effect.

Every bid submitted shall be accompanied by a proposal guaranty in the form of a certified check, cashier's check or bid bond in an amount of not less than five percent (5%) of the total amount bid and shall be made payable to City of Patterson. All bid bonds shall be accompanied by a duly authorized power of attorney and shall be guaranteed by a surety or insurance company currently on the U. S. Department of Treasury Financial Management Service list of approved bonding companies or by a Louisiana domiciled insurance company with at least an A- rating in the latest printing of the A. M. Best's Key Rating Guide or by an insurance company in good standing licensed to write bid bonds which is either domiciled in Louisiana or owned by Louisiana residents. If bidding electronically, a clear copy of the original bid security must be included with your electronic bid. If an electronic bidder is the apparent low bidder, then the bidder will be required to deliver the original bid security to the City of Patterson within 48 hours of the opening of bids.

A Prebid Conference at which the scope of the project, subsurface investigation data (if applicable), contract time, minority business enterprise requirements (if applicable), and other requirements of the bidding and contract documents may be discussed, or any other special requirements for the project which may be discussed with prospective bidders, will be held at the office of City of Patterson, City Hall Complex, 1314 Main Street, Patterson, Louisiana, 70392, on Thursday, October 20, 2022, at 10:00 a.m., local time. A tour of the project site will be conducted following the Prebid Conference. All bidders are encouraged to attend the Prebid Conference and if requested, the project tour.

If you have any questions regarding this project, please send them to MelanieCaillouet@ProvidenceEng.com. All questions should be sent by 5:00 p.m., Tuesday, October 25, 2022, and will be answered by addendum.

Written evidence of the authority of the person signing the bid for public works shall be submitted at the time of bidding. The authority of the signature of the person submitting the bid shall be deemed sufficient and acceptable if any of the conditions in LA R.S. 38:2212(B)(5) are met.

A Bid will be considered responsive if it conforms in all respects with the conditions and requirements of the Bidding Documents. In order to be considered responsive, the Louisiana Uniform Public Works Bid Form must; (a) be fully completed, signed and be responsive in all respects to the Bidding Documents; (b) be made on the Bid Forms provided and submitted intact.

The plans, specifications, and proposal forms may be obtained from Providence Engineering and Environmental Group LLC, 1297 St. Charles Street, Suite H, Houma, Louisiana, 70360. In accordance with Louisiana Public Bid Law, prime bidders shall be charged a deposit of $80.00 and, upon return of the plans and specifications in good condition within ten (10) days from the bid date, shall be refunded the full deposit. All other persons requesting plans and specifications shall pay a deposit of $80.00 and shall be refunded the remainder from the cost of reproduction ($40.00) upon return of the plans and specifications in good condition within ten (10) days from the bid date. The cost of mailing, if required, shall be billed separately for an additional non-refundable $15.00 charge.

To the extent permitted by applicable state and federal laws and regulations, the OWNER reserves the right to reject any and/or all proposals for just cause.
(S) Rodney Grogan
Rodney Grogan, Mayor
Adv. Oct. 7, 14 and 19, 2022

PUBLIC NOTICE

LEGAL NOTICE
Sixteenth Judicial District Court

PARISH OF ST. MARY

STATE OF LOUISIANA
Planet Home Lending LLC
Vs. No. 136063
Div "G"
Ryan E Theriot and Christina M Theriot AKA Christina Anne Monceaux Theriot

TAKE NOTICE, that by virtue of Order of Seizure and Sale issued out of the Honorable 16th Judicial District Court, in and for the Parish of St. Mary, and to me directed, in the above numbered and entitled suit, I have seized the following mentioned and described property, to wit:

THAT CERTAIN TRACT OR PARCEL OF LAND TOGETHER WITH ALL BUILDINGS AND IMPROVEMENTS THEREON SITUATED AND ALL RIGHTS, WAYS, PRIVILEGES, SERVITUDES AND APPURTENANCES THEREON BELONGING OR IN ANYWISE APPERTAINING, LYING AND BEING SITUATED IN BERWICK, ST. MARY PARISH, LOUISIANA, AND BEING MORE PARTICULARLY KNOWN, DESIGNATED AND DESCRIBED AS LOT 21 OF BLOCK "C" OF COUNTRY CLUB ESTATES UNIT NO. 1, AS PER MAP OF SAID SUBDIVISION MADE BY J.C. THOMAS, JR., SURVEYOR, OF DATE MARCH 22, 1967, LAST REVISED JANUARY 22, 1968, WHICH MAP IS ATTACHED TO AN ACT OF SALE RECORDED IN ST. MARY PARISH COB 15-G, ENTRY NO. 136536; subject to restrictions, servitudes, rights-of-way and outstanding mineral rights of record affecting the property.

to satisfy the sum of ONE HUNDRED TWENTY EIGHT THOUSAND FOUR HUNDRED FORTY THREE AND 28/100 ($128,443.28) DOLLARS, with interest thereon at 5.500% per annum from September 01, 2019, until paid; all expenses incurred in enforcing the note and mortgage including reasonable attorney's fees; if/as applicable, such other or additional amounts incurred or advanced for taxes, insurance premiums, special assessments, repairs to and/or maintenance of the property, for the protection, preservation, repair and recovery of the property, for the protection and preservation of the lien of the mortgage, for the protection and preservation of the mortgagee's interest thereunder, and other amounts provided by the mortgage and applicable law, such as late charges, escrow advances for the payment of taxes and insurance, corporate advances, property appraisals, inspection fees, prior attorney fees and expenses, abstract and title charges, NSF charges, attorney fees and expenses, and other charges which plaintiff is permitted to prove by verified petition, verified supplemental petition, or affidavit filed or submitted before distribution by the sheriff of the proceeds of the judicial sale herein; and all law charges, fees and expenses incurred in connection or relating to this proceeding including without limitation sheriff's commission, sheriff's costs, court costs all as permitted by the note or mortgage being enforced by this proceeding and all costs of this proceedings, as well as all sheriff's costs and commission

All successful bidders must have cash, cashier's check or a verifiable letter of credit in favor of said bidder from a solvent bank, savings and loan association or other such financial institution authorized to do business in the state of Louisiana and full payment must be made on the date of sale. Letter must state that money is available on the date of sale.

I shall expose the same at public sale, for Cash, according to law WITHOUT appraisement to the last and highest bidder, at the principal front door of the Court House in the Parish of St. Mary, Town of Franklin, Louisiana, on Wednesday, the 26th day of October A.D., 2022, between the legal hours commencing at 10 O'Clock A.M.
Sheriff's Office
Parish of St. Mary, La.
Wednesday, the 7th day of September A.D., 2022
BLAISE W. SMITH,
SHERIFF
By: Catheryn Washington
Deputy Sheriff
Adv. Sept. 23 and Oct. 19, 2022

PUBLIC NOTICE

PUBLIC NOTICE

NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN that the St. Mary Parish Board of Adjustments will hold a **PUBLIC HEARING** on **MONDAY, November 7, 2022 AT 5:45 P.M.** in the Parish Council Meeting Room, Fifth Floor Courthouse, Franklin, Louisiana, for the following purposes:

Jackie Marcotte for a Front Yard Setback Variance to deviate from the required 50 ft. to 45 ft., a Rear Yard Setback Variance to deviate from the required 40 ft. to five (5) ft. and a Side Yard Setback Variance to deviate from the required Ten (10) ft. to Five (5) ft. in an Agricultural (AG) Zoned District located at 1124 A Victoria Riverside Rd., Patterson, LA; Sec. 20 T15S R12E; Parcel #Id 2954364091.00-Lot Tract 1 per Plat 431 339770 being Por Lot 3 per Plat 371 246738 the Resub of Lots 10-A 10-B 10-C Riverside Est per Plat 30Q 220249 ACQ 402 335217.

All persons are invited to this meeting to submit their approval or objections to the above VARIANCE REQUEST.
St. Mary Parish Board of Adjustments
John "Booker" Davis,
Chairman
Adv. Oct. 19, 26 and Nov. 2, 2022

CAPITAL CITY PRESS

Publisher of
THE ADVOCATE

PROOF OF PUBLICATION

The hereto attached notice was published in THE ADVOCATE, a daily newspaper of general circulation published in Baton Rouge, Louisiana, and the Official Journal of the State of Louisiana, City of Baton Rouge, and Parish of East Baton Rouge or published daily in THE TIMES-PICAYUNE/THE NEW ORLEANS ADVOCATE, in New Orleans Louisiana or published daily in THE ACADIANA ADVOCATE in the following issues:

10/17/2022, 10/18/2022, 10/19/2022

Joy Newman, Public Notices Representative

Sworn and subscribed before me, by the person whose signature appears above

19 Oct 2022

M. Monic McChristian,

Notary Public ID#88293

State of Louisiana

My Commission Expires: Indefinite

Ad No: 8807

COASTAL PROTECTION REST AUTH
COASTAL PROTECTION REST AUTH
PO Box 44027
Baton Rouge, LA 70804-4027

PUBLIC MEETING NOTICE:

AGENCIES: National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) and the Louisiana Coastal Protection and Restoration Authority (CPRA).

PUBLIC MEETINGS FOR RECOMMENDING A NATIONAL ESTUARINE RESEARCH RESERVE SITE[s] IN THE ATCHAFALAYA RIVER DELTA AREA OF LOUISIANA

The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) and the Louisiana Coastal Protection and Restoration Authority (CPRA) will hold the following public meetings to receive public comments on Recommending a National Estuarine Research Reserve Site[s] in the Atchafalaya River Delta Area of Louisiana.

Two meetings will be held, (one in-person, one virtual). Details are as follows:

Wednesday, Nov. 2	5:00 PM	Location: Morgan City Auditorium (728 Myrtle Street, Morgan City, Louisiana 70380)
Thursday, Nov. 3	12:00 PM Virtual Hearing	Link: meet.google.com/gya-dasj-eob Join by phone: +1 470 485 8283 Meeting ID: 749 865 797#

The CPRA will receive email and/or written comments and recommendations no later than seven days following the public meetings (November 10, 2022). Emailed comments can be sent to coastal@la.gov. Written comments should be mailed (to arrive no later than November 10, 2022) to the following address:

Coastal Protection & Restoration Authority
Public Comments –NERR
150 Terrace Avenue
Baton Rouge, LA 70S

Detailed information on the proposed site[s] can be found on the following website: https://www.laseagrant.org/deltanerr/

For questions regarding the hearings, please contact Kristin Ransom, NOAA Office for Coastal Management, 1021 Balch Blvd, Suite 1003, Stennis Space Center, Stennis, MS 39529 or Email: kristin.ransom@noaa.gov.

8807-23024 Oct. 17, 18, 19 3t

https://bra.navigahub.com/ew/bra/localstorage/ad/materials/23024/23024.jpg

PUBLIC MEETING NOTICE:

AGENCIES: National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) and the Louisiana Coastal Protection and Restoration Authority (CPRA)

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8807-23024 Oct. 17, 18, 19 3t

From: Michelle Felterman
To:
Subject: FW: LA NERR
Date: Wednesday, October 19, 2022 10:08:04 AM
Attachments: image002.png
NERR Nomination Public Meetings.pdf

From: Brian Lezina <Brian.Lezina@la.gov>
Sent: Wednesday, October 19, 2022 9:56 AM
To: Bren Haase <Bren.Haase@LA.GOV>; Gregory Grandy <Gregory.Grandy@la.gov>; Harry Vorhoff <Harry.Vorhoff@la.gov>; Russell Caffery <Russell.Caffery@la.gov>; Charles Sutcliffe <Charles.Sutcliffe@LA.GOV>; Keith Lovell <Keith.Lovell@LA.GOV>; Charles Reulet <Charles.Reulet@LA.GOV>; Patrick Banks <pbanks@wlf.la.gov>; Randy Myers <rmyers@wlf.la.gov>; Cole Garrett <cgarrett@wlf.la.gov>
Cc: Robert R Twilley <rtwilley@lsu.edu>; Michelle Felterman <Michelle.Felterman@LA.GOV>; Joseph "Wes" Leblanc <Joseph.Leblanc@LA.GOV>
Subject: LA NERR

LA NERR Search Executive Committee,

For your awareness.

As you all know the Governor has submitted the Atchafalaya area as the official nomination for the LA NERR to NOAA. In order to finalize the nomination process, and officially move to the designation process, public meetings concerning the nomination need to be held. To that end
CPRA will host two public meetings – the first will be in-person at the Morgan City Auditorium on November 2, 2022; and a second will be virtual on November 3, 2022. Details for each are attached. Presentations will be made by both CPRA and NOAA.

If you have any questions or would like more information, please contact Michelle Felterman (michelle.felterman@la.gov; 225-342-4629).

Thank you all,

Brian

Brian Lezina
Coastal Protection and Restoration Authority
Division Chief | Planning and Research
The Water Campus | 150 Terrace Avenue | Baton Rouge, LA 70802
o: 225.342.1475

PUBLIC MEETINGS FOR RECOMMENDING A NATIONAL ESTUARINE RESEARCH RESERVE SITE[s] IN THE ATCHAFALAYA RIVER DELTA AREA OF LOUISIANA

PUBLIC MEETING INFORMATION

Two meetings will be held (one in-person, one virtual).

Wednesday November 2, 2022 @ 5:00 PM
Morgan City Auditorium
728 Myrtle Street, Morgan City, LA 70380

Thursday November 3, 2022 @ 12:00 PM
Virtual via Google Meet link or by phone
meet.google.com/gya-dsaj-eob
Phone: +1 470 485 8283
meeting ID: 749 865 797#

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
November 1, 2022
Contact: coastal@la.gov

Upcoming public meetings for Atchafalaya National Estuarine Research Reserve Site Nomination

BATON ROUGE, LA – The Louisiana Coastal Protection and Restoration Authority (CPRA) is hosting two public meetings to provide information and receive comments on the preliminary recommendation by the State of Louisiana that portions of the Atchafalaya River Delta area be proposed to the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) for designation as a National Estuarine Research Reserve.

The National Estuarine Research Reserve System (NERRS), created by the Coastal Zone Management Act, is a network of 30 coastal areas designated to protect and study estuarine systems. Collectively, these 30 National Estuarine Research Reserves contain 1.3 million acres of estuary. Each reserve is managed by a lead state agency or university, who integrates input from local partners, for which NOAA provides funding, guidance, and technical assistance.

Designation by the NERRS requires the candidate is “a representative estuarine ecosystem suitable for long-term research, which may include all of the key land and water portions of an estuary, and adjacent transitional areas and uplands constituting to the extent feasible a natural unit, and which is set aside as a natural field laboratory to provide long-term opportunities for research, education, and interpretation.”

The upcoming public meetings listed below will present the state's proposed nomination. NOAA’s Office for Coastal Management will assist with the meetings. Detailed information on the proposed site[s] can be found here.

November 2, 2022 @ 5:30 PM
Morgan City Auditorium
728 Myrtle Street, Morgan City, LA 70380

November 3, 2022 @ 12:00 PM and 5:00 PM
Virtual Hearing
Link: meet.google.com/gya-dsaj-eob

The views of interested persons and organizations regarding the proposed nomination are solicited. This information may be expressed verbally and in written statements. Written comments may also be sent by email to coastal@la.gov or by mail to the following address:

Coastal Protection and Restoration Authority
Public Comments – NERR
150 Terrace Avenue
Baton Rouge, LA 70802

All written comments must be received no later than seven days following the public meetings (November 10, 2022). All comments received will be considered by the state when formally nominating a site or sites to NOAA.

For questions regarding the hearings, please contact Ms. Kristin Ransom, NOAA Office for Coastal Management, National Ocean Service, NOAA, 1021 Balch Blvd. Suite 1003, Stennis Space Center, Stennis, MS 39529; Phone: 601-568-1091 or Email: kristin.ransom@noaa.gov

###

Atchafalaya NERR Nomination

Public Meetings

NOVEMBER 2

5:00 PM

Morgan City Auditorium
728 Myrtle Street
Morgan City, LA 70380

NOVEMBER 3

12:00 PM & 5:00 PM

Virtual
Check caption for details!

Photo Courtesy of NASA

CPRA

NOAA

LinkedIn

Coastal Protection and Restoration Authority of Louisiana
6,289 followers
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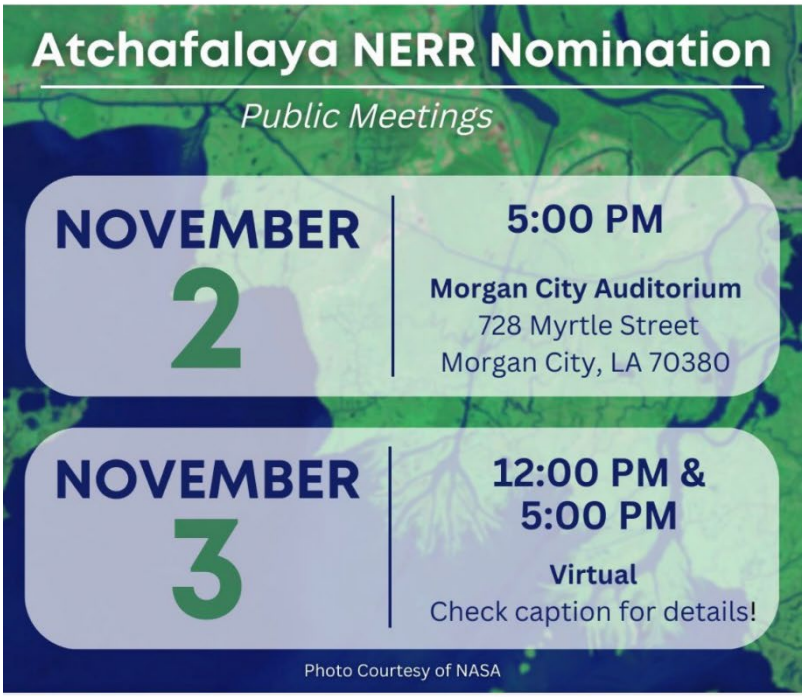
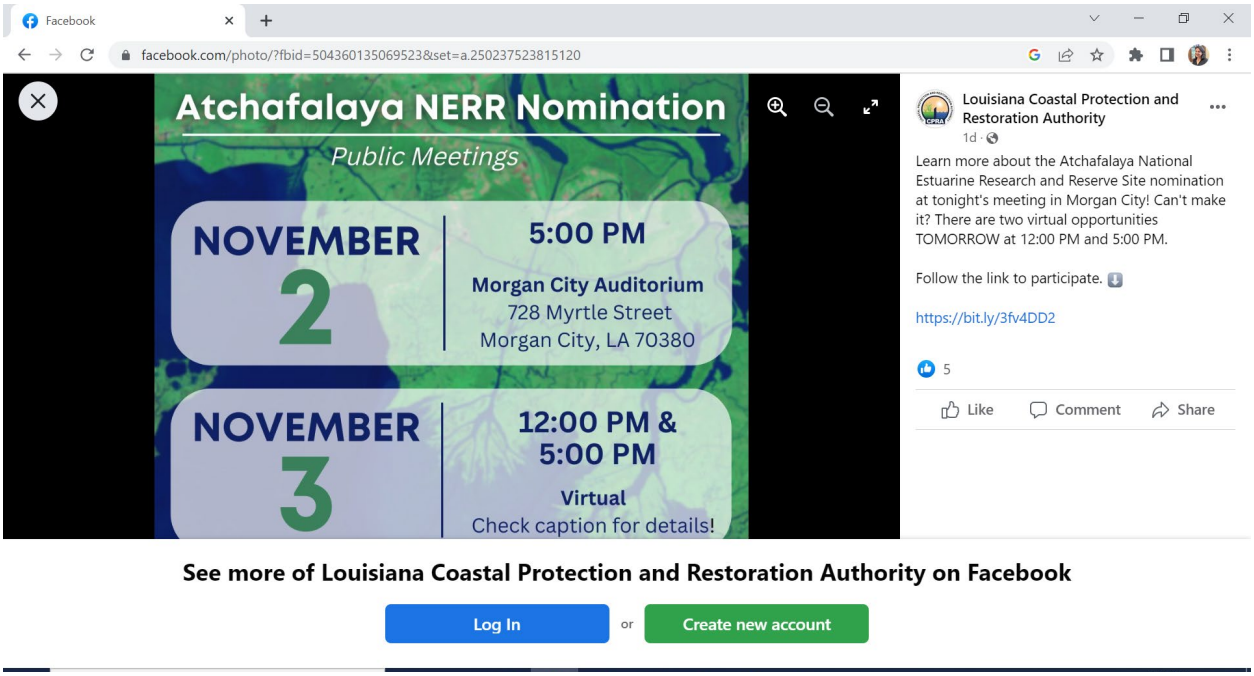
Learn more about the Atchafalaya National Estuarine Research and Reserve Site nomination at tonight's meeting in Morgan City! Can't make it? There are two virtual opportunities TOMORROW at 12:00 PM and 5:00 PM.

Follow the link to participate. ⬇️

https://bit.ly/3fv4DD2



Facebook


Facebook
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Atchafalaya NERR Nomination
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NOVEMBER 2
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Louisiana Coastal Protection and Restoration Authority
1d ·
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Follow the link to participate.
https://bit.ly/3fv4DD2
5
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Designating a National Estuarine Research Reserve (NERR) in Louisiana: Frequently Asked Questions

Site Selection and Nomination Process: Definitions, Criteria, and Nomination Process

Q: What is a National Estuarine Research Reserve (NERR)?

The NERR System is a network of 30 protected areas representative of the various biogeographic regions and estuarine types in the United States. NERRs are established for long-term research, education, training, and stewardship, and to promote informed management of the nation's estuaries and coastal habitats. A NERR represents a partnership between the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) and coastal states. NOAA provides funding and national guidance, and each site is managed on a daily basis by a lead state agency with input from local partners. The NERR System covers 1.3 million acres and focuses on four key sectors: Research, Education, Stewardship, and Training. Refer to this website for additional information https://coast.noaa.gov/nerrs/.

- Research: NERR-based research and monitoring data are used to aid conservation and management efforts on local and national levels.
- Education: Thousands of children and adults are served through hands-on laboratory and field-based experiences. School curriculums are provided online.
- Stewardship: Each site undertakes the initiatives needed to keep the estuary healthy.
- Training: Local and state officials are better equipped to introduce local data into the decision-making process as a result of NERR training efforts.

Q: What is an estuary / estuarine?

Estuaries and their surrounding wetlands are usually found where rivers meet the sea. Estuaries are home to unique plant and animal communities that have adapted to estuarine water—a mixture of fresh water draining from the land and salty seawater.

Q: What programs and benefits does a NERR offer?

NERRs apply science and education to improve the management of estuaries. Each NERR brings together local stakeholders, scientists, land management professionals, and educators to understand coastal management issues and generate local, integrated solutions. In addition to collecting and disseminating national and locally relevant data, NERRs also provide the trainers and educators needed to bring the NERR-generated data and information to students, citizens, and decision makers. NERRs further benefit local communities by leveraging existing NOAA resources and funding that is only available to NERRs.

Q: Why should coastal Louisiana have a NERR?

The Mississippi River Delta and Chenier Plain represent the seventh largest river delta in the world and one of the most unique environmental, economic, and cultural landscapes in the United States. This coastal region is also one of the most threatened natural resources in the world with historic wetland loss and flooding issues that challenge these economic and cultural assets of the region. Establishing a NERR will provide another tool in the toolbox to complement a concerted effort by the state of Louisiana to solve these challenges and build a more resilient delta landscape. A NERR in Louisiana would be a place with research and education missions aimed to benefit students, the public, and decision-makers with information on how a river delta works, the challenges our coast is facing, and what it takes to address these challenges. The health of the Mississippi River delta ecosystem and the many human uses that depend on it would benefit from establishing a NERR.

Q: Will the state have to purchase land for a Louisiana NERR?

No. Louisiana is considering sites from existing publicly owned lands and adjacent public trust waters. Additionally, the Louisiana NERR could expand with municipal and non-profit property, and with donated or purchased land.

Q: Will a new NERR involve NOAA taking land from the state?

No. NOAA does not own or manage the land within a NERR, nor does the designation of a NERR add new state or federal regulations. Memoranda of Agreement are used to articulate roles and responsibilities between relevant partners and landowners in the state and NOAA.

Q: Will the federal government run the NERR?

A NERR in Louisiana would be a partnership between NOAA and the state of Louisiana. The state is responsible for day-to-day management of a NERR. The state is responsible for land ownership and management; NERR staff; program implementation; and 30% of funding for the NERR operations. NOAA administers the entire NERR System. NOAA is responsible for establishing standards for designing and operating NERRs; national policy and program guidance; technical assistance; program coordination; and 70% of funding for operations.

Q: Does the designation of a NERR bring more rules and regulations?

No. The designation of a NERR in Louisiana will not add any new regulations to state-owned lands. Also, a NERR designation does not impose regulations on privately-owned lands. NOAA will examine whether a proposed site is adequately managed for long-term research and education by existing state authorities. There are no federal regulations imposed as a result of NERR designation. Each NERR develops a management plan which takes into consideration the beneficial consumptive (resource harvesting such as fishing, shell fishing, etc.) and non-consumptive uses (recreation such as hiking, birdwatching, boating, etc.) and the compatibility with adjacent land uses. Management plans use the existing state laws and regulations already in place on lands proposed for a NERR.

Q: Is recreational hunting and fishing as well as commercial fishing allowed in NERRs?

Designation of a NERR does **not** preclude existing uses and does **not** result in the total preservation of the area. Each NERR develops a management plan which takes into consideration the beneficial consumptive (resource harvesting such as fishing, shell fishing, etc.) and non-consumptive uses (recreation such as hiking, birdwatching, biking etc.) and the compatibility with adjacent land uses. NOAA relies on state regulatory mechanisms to manage those uses within the NERR boundary.

Q: Will oil and gas exploration and drilling still be allowed?

The designation of a NERR will not change any existing uses on the land/water within the NERR boundary. The NERR designation process is essential to identifying a proposed site where the goals of the NERR Program (providing a stable environment for long-term research, education, stewardship, and training) do not conflict with existing uses at the site. NOAA relies on the state to identify a core area where existing uses would not have the potential to adversely impact the proposed site. NOAA relies on state regulatory mechanisms to determine how existing uses will be managed within the buffer areas of the NERR. When considering new activities and uses proposed within the NERR boundary (combined core and buffer), NOAA will continue to rely on state regulatory mechanisms to ensure that the siting of new activities will not adversely affect areas within the NERR. When considering the existing uses in a proposed NERR boundary, those activities should be considered in light of future impacts and how potential changes to the environment could impact the NERR site once it is designated.

Ultimately, NOAA relies on state regulatory mechanisms for the management and siting of new and existing uses. However, NOAA does have to be consulted on the uses at a NERR through the management planning process and relies on the Memorandum of Understanding / Memorandum of Agreement established between the state managing partner and NOAA at the time of NERR designation to guide the review of activities in a NERR boundary.

Within the NERR System there are examples of sites that have active oil and gas activities within the NERR boundary. The Mission-Aransas NERR in Texas has active oil and gas production occurring within the NERR boundary, but this activity occurs within the buffer and not within the core. During their designation process, the state mapped out the existing oil and gas activity in the area to determine where to place the core and buffer boundaries to avoid oil and gas impacts within the core boundary of the NERR. In other NERRs, there is active oil and gas refining activity that occurs directly next to the boundary of the NERR, and they are great partners for the NERR.

Q: What is the optimal size for a Louisiana NERR?

The smallest NERR in the system is in Ohio at a little less than 500 acres and the largest is in Alaska at more than 350,000 acres. The majority of NERRs are less than 50,000 acres. Three of the top five largest NERRs are in the Gulf states – two in Florida and one in Texas. Depending on how a potential site is selected for a NERR in Louisiana, it has the potential to be quite large. The site selection process will use factors such as the amount of state land immediately available, anticipated cost increases due to management of larger parcels, and other considerations to develop the boundary of the proposed NERR. There is no optimal size for a NERR, rather the NERR boundaries should be drawn in such a way as to allow for the long-term monitoring and research of a complete ecological unit of unique estuarine habitats.

Q: Can Louisiana have more than one coastal basin included in a NERR?

It is allowable for Louisiana to nominate a site with multiple components, and there are examples of sites in the NERR System with multiple components. One consideration for a site with multiple components is that the funding available for that site stays the same, no matter how many components the site includes. Multiple components increase the management needs for the NERR, which can have a significant impact on the utility of the federal funding available. These considerations will be weighed against other factors during site selection.

Q: Are there certain criteria that a site must meet to be eligible to be designated as a NERR?

Yes. NERR sites are chosen to reflect regional variations and ecosystem types, termed "biogeographic regions," and unique estuarine habitat features within each biogeographic region. NOAA gives priority consideration to establishing new NERRs in a biogeographic region or sub-region that is not yet represented by the NERR System or that incorporates unique habitat types that are not represented by the NERR System. NOAA will also evaluate the site based on whether it would be adequately managed for long-term research, education, and stewardship. Since Louisiana is in a biogeographic region already represented in the NERR System, the nominated site should include unique habitat that is not yet represented.

Q: Is it preferable to have a site that is closer to urban populations so that more people will use it?

This is a difficult question to answer definitively, as it is ultimately the outcome and decision of the NERR designation process managed by the state. NOAA has defined criteria that are required to be considered during the selection and nomination of a potential NERR site. Those criteria require the site selection process to balance the benefits of a large nearby population that can access the NERR with the potential impacts that nearby development pressures can have on the long-term integrity of a NERR. NOAA relies on the expertise and knowledge of the state team and stakeholders to inform that decision. Within the NERR System, there are examples of both types of NERRs, each with its benefits and challenges.

For example, the Tijuana River NERR in southern California is located close to the large population centers of San Diego, CA and Tijuana, Mexico. This site has robust public attendance at NERR events and the ability to easily connect with other resources in the area. However, the NERR has to focus significant resources on issues of water quality and urban runoff within the NERR boundary that are direct impacts from the nearby population centers.

An opposite example is the Sapelo Island NERR in Georgia. The habitats in this NERR are relatively unimpacted and allow for research and stewardship without having to deal with concerns related to habitat degradation. However, it is located in a very remote location, requiring boat access to visit, which makes it difficult to host education and training events at the site.

This results in staff having to travel outside of the NERR boundary to engage with the communities in the surrounding area.

Q: If we have a potential NERR site in mind, is it necessary to use the formal selection process?

Yes. The state is responsible for developing a site selection process that examines potential sites and applies objective criteria to strategically identify and rank the most suitable locations for a NERR site. The site-selection process has proven valuable in clarifying issues and priorities and in engaging interested and affected parties. For more information on the site selection process used in Louisiana, visit this website: https://www.laseagrant.org/deltanerr/

Q: What timeline should be used to evaluate the life of a NERR?

The oldest NERR was designated in 1974 (48 years ago). NERRs are focused on long-term research and monitoring, and sites are intended to exist in perpetuity. This is why carefully siting the NERR the Louisiana is vital to its long-term success.

Q: How does the site selection process take into account the environmental changes happening along our coast and the efforts to address it through the Coastal Master Plan?

NOAA recognizes that many areas that could potentially be designated as a NERR have undergone ecological change as a result of human activities, and such changes may have diminished the historical character of and integrity of a site. NERRs are located in dynamic zones, and the coasts are changing constantly. We recognize that as a conversation within the System and understand that new designations will have to consider these issues as the state moves through the designation process. NERRS regulations do permit the restoration of these areas to improve the representative character of and integrity of a NERR, but these restoration activities *must* be carefully planned and approved by the state and NOAA through the NERR management planning process. An activity that can be expected to have a significant adverse impact on the resources or habitats of a NERR resulting in a change to the representative character and integrity of a NERR is prohibited.

Manipulative activities taking place at a proposed NERR must meet the goals of the NERR Program, which are to provide long-term research, education, stewardship, and training. This includes providing a stable environment for research through the longer-term protection of NERR resources, as well as addressing coastal management issues identified as significant through coordinated research.

It is also important to note that NOAA is involved in the site selection and nomination process and regularly communicates with the team leading this effort in Louisiana. Any issues that arise for potential sites where Coastal Master Plan projects are planned will be discussed before a site is nominated to NOAA for approval.

Q: Can the managing entity be a consortium or a partnership of entities?

Once a site is designated, the state managing entity and the associated roles and responsibilities will be outlined in a Memorandum of Understanding and in the draft management plan. There are several different examples of state managing entities, but the most common are either state agencies or state public universities. Ultimately, the state managing entity must identify and/or establish the mechanisms by which the state has control over the designated site and the management of that site for the life of the NERR.

Q: Is something less than full ownership allowed?

Yes. There are examples throughout the NERR System where the boundary includes lands dedicated through conservation easements and other agreements where the private property owner retains some rights to the property. Whatever the mechanism, it is required that the state managing partner has control over the use of the parcel that is to be included as part of the NERR. The state managing partner is responsible for developing any conservation easements or other agreements that outline the management of the property and ensuring that those activities align with the goals of the NERR, as well as receiving approval from NOAA of the conservation easement or agreement as part of the NERR management plan.

Q: If a private landowner wanted to participate in another federal easement program (for example, the Natural Resources Conservation Service Agricultural Reserve Program), could they also participate in a conservation easement and include that property in the NERR boundary?

This is dependent upon the specific programs involved, but essentially this is an existing land use question. If a landowner is participating in a conservation easement program, the state managing partner and NOAA would look at the uses included in the conservation easement and ensure that those uses are in line with the goals of the NERR Program. Those existing uses would also be considered for any potential impacts that they may have on the integrity of the NERR site before the agreement could be finalized and included in the NERR boundary and management plan.

Q: Why is the Louisiana NERR site selection and nomination process not considering donations of land from private interests at this time?

NOAA requires a minimum level of state control over the property to ensure long-term management as part of the NOAA-state partnership. Donations can take years and thus we cannot depend upon the precarious nature of land acquisition transactions to initiate a NERR site in Louisiana. Donations will be considered later in the process as lagniappe. Additions to the NERR boundary can be made once the NERR has been designated and as potential acquisition opportunities emerge. In fact, the availability of lands for future acquisition is a criterion in the site evaluation process.

After a Site is Nominated to NOAA

Q: If NOAA accepts Louisiana's NERR nomination, when could a NERR be designated?

Should NOAA accept the state's nomination, it would kick off the next step in the process, as required under NEPA, to consider the state's recommended site and other options as they develop a draft environmental impact statement (EIS); the state's development of a draft management plan for NOAA's review; and additional public meetings and opportunities for public comment. Once the drafts are available for public comment, NOAA and the state work to finalize these documents and develop a record of decision for designation approval. This can take 12 to 24 months.

Q: What happens if NOAA rejects Louisiana's NERR nomination?

If NOAA rejects the state's NERR nomination, the designation process would not advance to the next phase. NOAA would not proceed with the development of an EIS nor would it support the state's development of a draft management plan. NOAA could decide to revisit or reconsider the state's site nomination at any point in the future.

Q: If NOAA accepts Louisiana's NERR nomination, does this mean that NOAA has decided to designate a new NERR in Louisiana?

No. NOAA's decision to accept the state's site nomination and proceed to the next phase does not imply support for a new designation nor does it compel the agency to support a new NERR upon completion of the EIS and draft management plan.

Q: How long does the NERR designation process take?

The length of time it takes to designate a NERR is not prescribed by NOAA, but rather depends on the time it takes for the state to accomplish the steps and tasks outlined in the regulations. The site selection and nomination process involve a number of steps and public engagement. Once a site is nominated by the state and is approved by NOAA, the next steps involve preparation of an EIS and management plan for the site. Both of these steps require public engagement and input. It takes significant time to develop documentation, engage experts and the public, and execute the review and approval process. Robust stakeholder engagement, which is essential to ensure that the most appropriate site for all Louisiana stakeholders is designated, is imperative to a well-executed process.

Q: What funding from NOAA supports the Louisiana NERR designation process?

A state is eligible for a total of $100,000 in federal funds for pre-designation activities, which include site selection, a limited basic characterization of the physical, chemical, and biological characteristics of the site, preparation of the required management plan, and providing data and information to NOAA for development of the draft and final EIS.

NERR Site Operation after Designation

Q: How much does each NERR receive from the federal government annually, how much does the state have to invest, where does the money come from, and to what extent does NOAA dictate how that money has to be spent?

This answer differs depending on what the funding is being used for and the amount of federal funding available for each NERR within the System (depending upon the approved federal budget for the relevant fiscal year). Eligible managing state partners can apply for federal funding for the operation and management of the NERR, for acquisition of lands/waters, and for facilities construction. The federal funding available to NERRs for operations are distributed in an equal share across all eligible sites.

Federal funds are available for the operation and management of the NERR once it has been formally designated. Federal funds for the operation and management of a NERR site may not exceed 70% of the total cost of operating and managing the NERR for any one year. No more than 10% of the total amount (state and federal shares) of each operation and management award may be used for construction-type activities.

Federal funds are also competitively available for facilities construction and for the acquisition of lands or waters, or interests therein, to be included in the boundary of an eligible NERR site. Construction and acquisition funding is allocated through a competitive award process, and this fund changes annually based on federal budget appropriations and NERR System priorities. Federal funding for acquisition projects may not exceed an amount equal to 50 percent of the costs of the lands, waters, and interests therein or $5,000,000, whichever amount is less. For construction projects, federal funding may not exceed 70 percent of the total costs. Eligible construction and acquisition projects need to be outlined in the acquisition and construction section of the NERR management plan.

The state share can be made up of a number of different sources. NOAA works with the state managing partner to identify the most appropriate sources of state match.

Q: If a private landowner wants to sell their property to the state as a part of the NERR Program, what rights could they maintain?

If a private property owner sells their parcel to the state to be included in the NERR boundary, they would retain whatever rights the public has to the land - no more, no less. If a private landowner enters into an agreement with the state to include their land in the NERR boundary as part of a conservation easement or some other agreement, the private landowner's rights would be outlined in that agreement, and the land will be included in the NERR boundary with NOAA's consent.

Louisiana National Estuarine Research Reserve (NERR)

Site Nomination Public Meetings

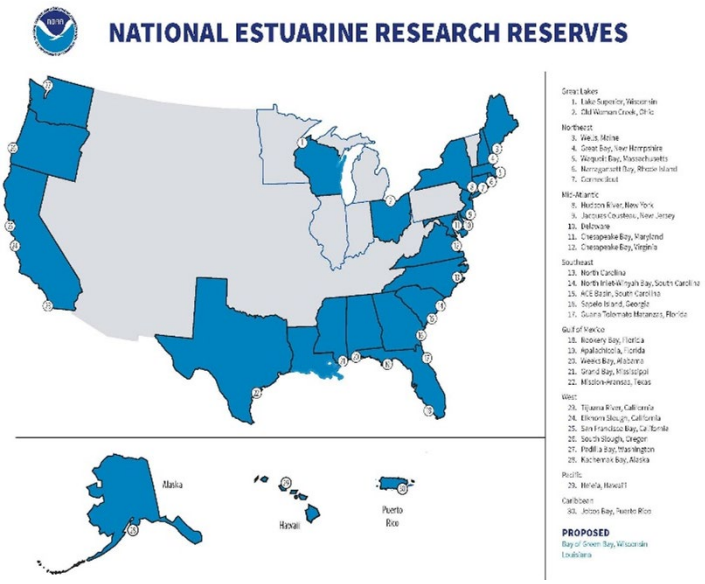
November 2 and 3, 2022

About NERRS

The National Estuarine Research Reserve (NERR) System is a network of 30 estuarine areas representative of the various biogeographic regions in the United States. NERRs are established for long-term research, education, stewardship, and training to promote informed management of our nation's estuaries and coastal habitats. A NERR represents a partnership between the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) and coastal states. NOAA provides funding and national guidance, and each site is managed by a lead state agency with input from local partners. For more information, visit the following website: https://coast.noaa.gov/nerrs/.

Why Should Louisiana Have a NERR?

Louisiana is the only coastal, marine state in the nation without a NERR. A Louisiana-based NERR could complement and extend the scientific, educational, and stewardship activities and needs of programs like the EPA's Barataria-Terrebonne National Estuary Program, the Louisiana Coastal Management Program, the Louisiana Sea Grant, and various academic institutions through the addition of funding, resources, and expertise. The health of the coast and its many services to Louisiana and the nation would benefit from establishing a NERR.



Louisiana National Estuarine Research Reserve (NERR)

About the Proposed Louisiana NERR

The Atchafalaya Basin is:

- *geographically situated to offer a variety of opportunities for learning. Centrally located along the coast, it provides relatively short travel distances from major coastal cities.*
- *an ideal place to discuss the interconnectedness of engineering, ecology, and its impacts on communities.*
- *ecologically and culturally significant for Louisiana and the nation.*

This proposed Atchafalaya NERR would:

- *leverage existing monitoring efforts to increase physical and biological monitoring.*
- *provide vital research opportunities and access.*
- *be the only active river delta in the NERR network, adding value to the significance of the research conducted at the site.*

Louisiana National Estuarine Research Reserve (NERR)

NOAA's Designation Process

Step 1 – Letter of Interest (Complete): Governor John Bel Edwards sent a letter of interest to NOAA in July 2019; NOAA responded affirmatively in December 2019.
Step 2 – Site Selection and Nomination (Current Step): Information on this process can be found on the following website: https://www.laseagrant.org/deltanerr/
Step 3 – Draft Environmental Impact Statement and Management Plan
Step 4 – Final Environmental Impact Statement and Management Plan
Step 5 – Designation Findings and Certificate; Record of Decision
Step 6 – Designation Ceremony

About the Public Meetings

NOAA and the Louisiana Coastal Protection and Restoration Authority (CPRA) will hold the following public meetings to receive public comments on "Recommending a NERR in the Atchafalaya River Delta Area of Louisiana."

Three meetings will be held, one in-person and two virtual. Details are as follows:

Wednesday, November 2	5:00 PM	Location: Morgan City Auditorium, 728 Myrtle Street, Morgan City, Louisiana 70380
Thursday, November 3	12:00 PM & 5:00 PM	Virtual Meeting: Link: meet.google.com/gya-dsajeob or Join by phone: +1 470 485 8283 Meeting ID: 749 865 797#

General Agenda for each Public Meeting:

- Setting the Stage
- NERR System 101
- Overview of the Site Selection and Nomination Process
- Next Steps in the Designation Process
- Public Question and Answer / Comment

CPRA will receive email and/or written comments and recommendations for seven days following the public meetings (no later than November 10, 2022). Emailed comments can be sent to coastal@la.gov. Written comments should be mailed (to arrive no later than November 10, 2022) to the following address:

Coastal Protection and Restoration Authority
Public Comments – NERR
150 Terrace Avenue
Baton Rouge, LA 70802

For questions regarding the hearings, please contact Kristin Ransom, NOAA Office for Coastal Management, 1021 Balch Blvd. Suite 1003, Stennis Space Center, Stennis, MS 39529, or email: kristin.ransom@noaa.gov.

ATCHAFALAYA NATIONAL ESTUARINE RESEARCH RESERVE (NERR) PUBLIC MEETING

November 2 & 3, 2022

WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS

PRESENTERS	AFFILIATION
Brian Lezina	CPRA
Kristin Ransom	NOAA

OBJECTIVES

- Provide an overview of the process used to select a NERR site for nomination to NOAA
- Receive public feedback on the proposed NERR site

AGENDA

Setting the Stage
Reserve System 101
Overview of the Site Selection and Nomination Process
Next Steps in the Designation Process
Questions and Answers

SETTING THE STAGE

- Interest in establishing a Louisiana NERR has been ongoing for decades
- Louisiana is the only marine coastal state without a NERR
- State initiated request to begin NERR site selection process in July 2019
- NOAA responded affirmatively in November 2019
- NERR site selection and nomination process began in 2020
- Meeting today is to get public feedback on the proposed site being nominated to NOAA

NERR Overview

NATIONAL ESTUARINE RESEARCH RESERVE SYSTEM

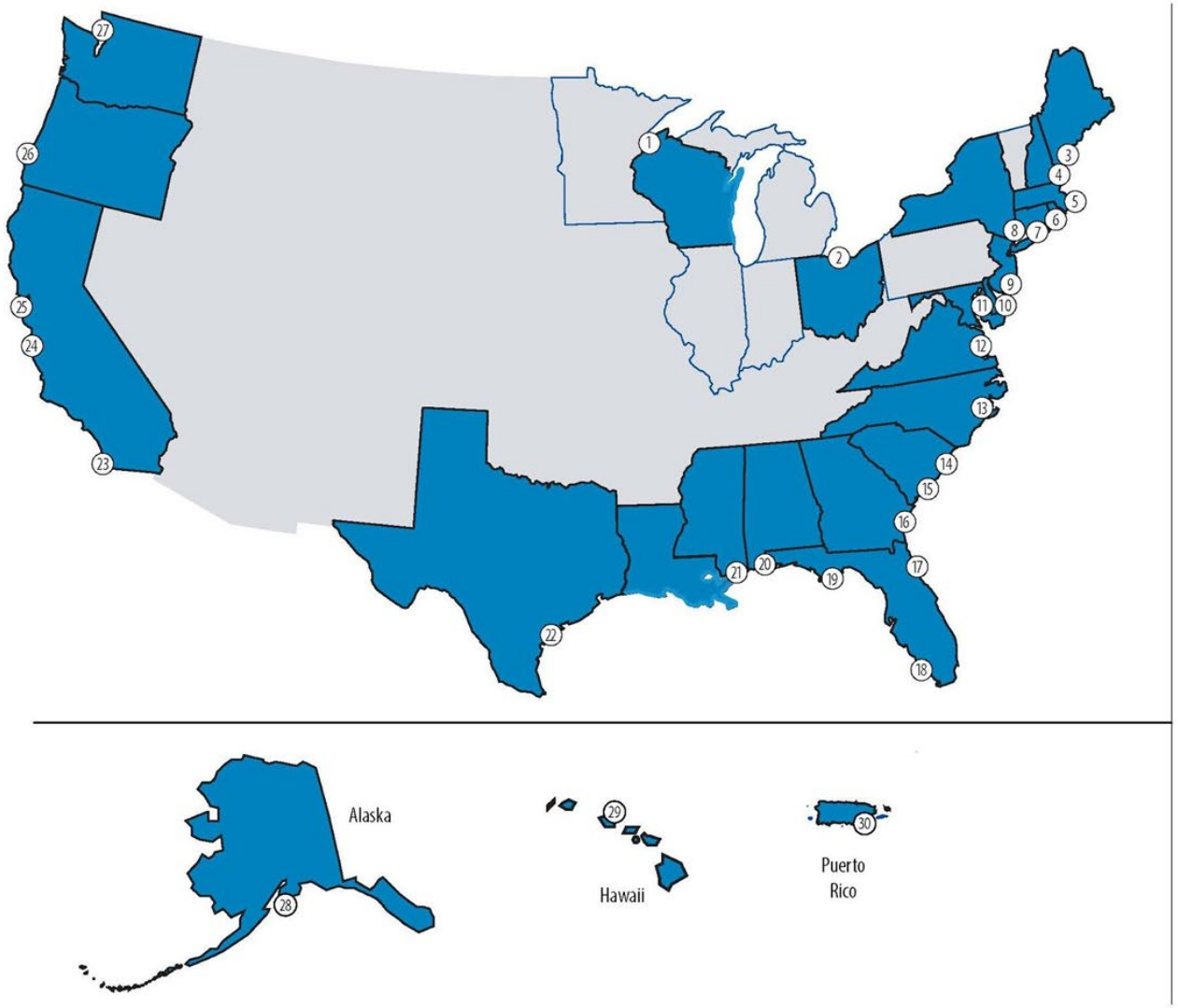
Applying Science and Education to Improve the Management of Estuaries

Kristin Ransom

November 2022

A Network of 30 Protected Places

NATIONAL ESTUARINE RESEARCH RESERVES



Great Lakes
1. Lake Superior, Wisconsin
2. Old Woman Creek, Ohio

Northeast
3. Wells, Maine
4. Great Bay, New Hampshire
5. Waquoit Bay, Massachusetts
6. Narragansett Bay, Rhode Island
7. Connecticut

Mid-Atlantic
8. Hudson River, New York
9. Jacques Cousteau, New Jersey
10. Delaware
11. Chesapeake Bay, Maryland
12. Chesapeake Bay, Virginia

Southeast
13. North Carolina
14. North Inlet-Winyah Bay, South Carolina
15. ACE Basin, South Carolina
16. Sapelo Island, Georgia
17. Guana Tolomato Matanzas, Florida

Gulf of Mexico
18. Rookery Bay, Florida
19. Apalachicola, Florida
20. Weeks Bay, Alabama
21. Grand Bay, Mississippi
22. Mission-Aransas, Texas

West
23. Tijuana River, California
24. Elkhorn Slough, California
25. San Francisco Bay, California
26. South Slough, Oregon
27. Padilla Bay, Washington
28. Kachemak Bay, Alaska

Pacific
29. He'eia, Hawai'i

Caribbean
30. Jobos Bay, Puerto Rico

PROPOSED
Bay of Green Bay, Wisconsin
Louisiana

Over 1.4 Million Acres Protected

Vision: Resilient estuaries and coastal watersheds where human and natural communities thrive.

Mission: To practice and promote stewardship of coasts and estuaries through innovative research, education, and training using a place-based system of protected areas.

Locally Relevant, Nationally Significant

People

Science

Protected Places

System-Wide and National Programs

Research

- System-Wide Monitoring Program
- National Estuarine Research Reserve Science Collaborative
- Margaret A. Davidson Fellowship

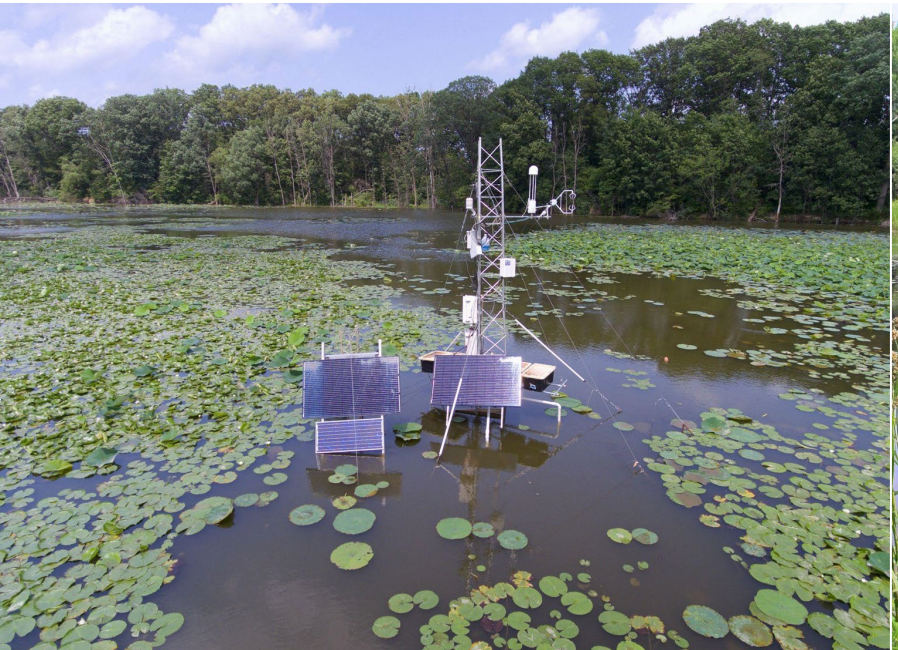
Training

- Coastal Training Program

Education

- Teachers on the Estuary
- K through 12 Estuarine Education

Stewardship



A Partnership Program

State role

- Land ownership and management
- Reserve staff members
- Program implementation
- Funding (30 percent match)

Federal role

- National policy and program guidance
- Technical assistance
- Program coordination
- Funding (70 percent)

Frequently Asked Questions

1. After designation, who owns and manages the reserve?
2. Does the designation of a reserve result in new federal regulations?
3. Does the designation of a reserve affect existing uses?

Thank you!

Kristin Ransom
Kristin.ransom@noaa.gov

OVERVIEW OF SITE SELECTION AND NOMINATION PROCESS

SITE EVALUATION COMMITTEES

Designation Leadership Team

Provided leadership and oversight of the state nomination process. Its task was to manage the phases of the nomination process over time by coordinating the various committees, engaging the public, and by working closely with local NOAA Liaison to keep NOAA updated on progress

Site Development Committee

The technical team responsible for pre-screening the candidate sites to identify those sites clearly suitable to serve the function of a NERR. Tasked with submitting 1-3 candidate sites to the Executive Committee for nomination of one site to NOAA for site designation

Site Criteria Subcommittee

The subcommittee that developed site selection criteria specific for coastal Louisiana based on NOAA guidelines

Site Screening Subcommittee

The subcommittee (along with other representative groups) responsible for reviewing and scoring candidate sites using site selection criteria approved by NOAA

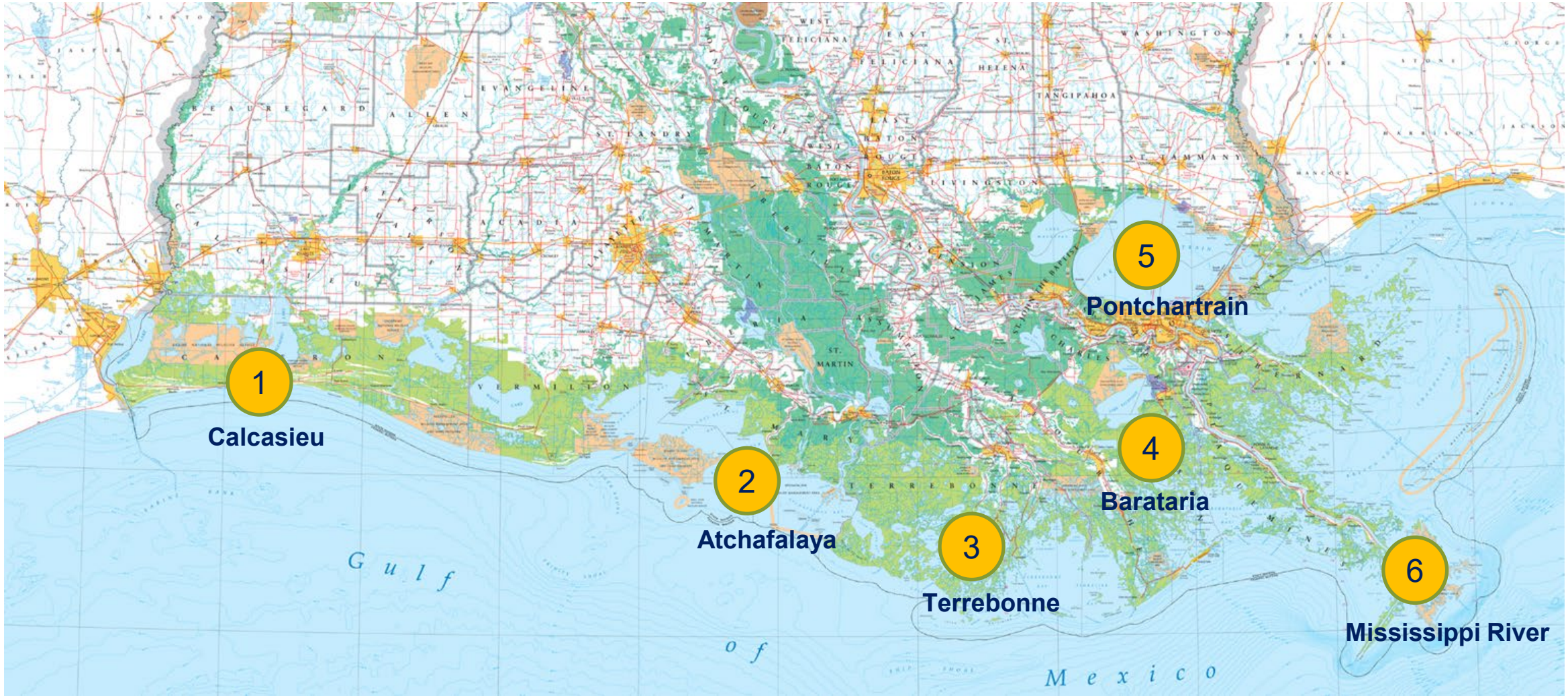
EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

- **Review the process used to evaluate candidate sites**
- **Review the outcomes of site evaluation**
- **Select and nominate one site to the Governor**
- **Members included:**
  - Governor's Office of Coastal Activities
  - Coastal Protection and Restoration Authority
  - Louisiana Department of Natural Resources
  - Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries

PROCESS USED FOR SITE SELECTION

- Establish six broad sites across the coast within which a NERR could be established
- Develop preliminary screening criteria
- Apply preliminary screening criteria to evaluate and reduce number of candidate sites (from six to three sites)
- Modify NOAA site selection criteria to focus on coastal Louisiana
- Host Town Hall meetings to gather public feedback on the three remaining candidate sites
- Evaluate and score remaining sites using NOAA site selection criteria to select one site for nomination

INITIAL CANDIDATE SITES CONSIDERED

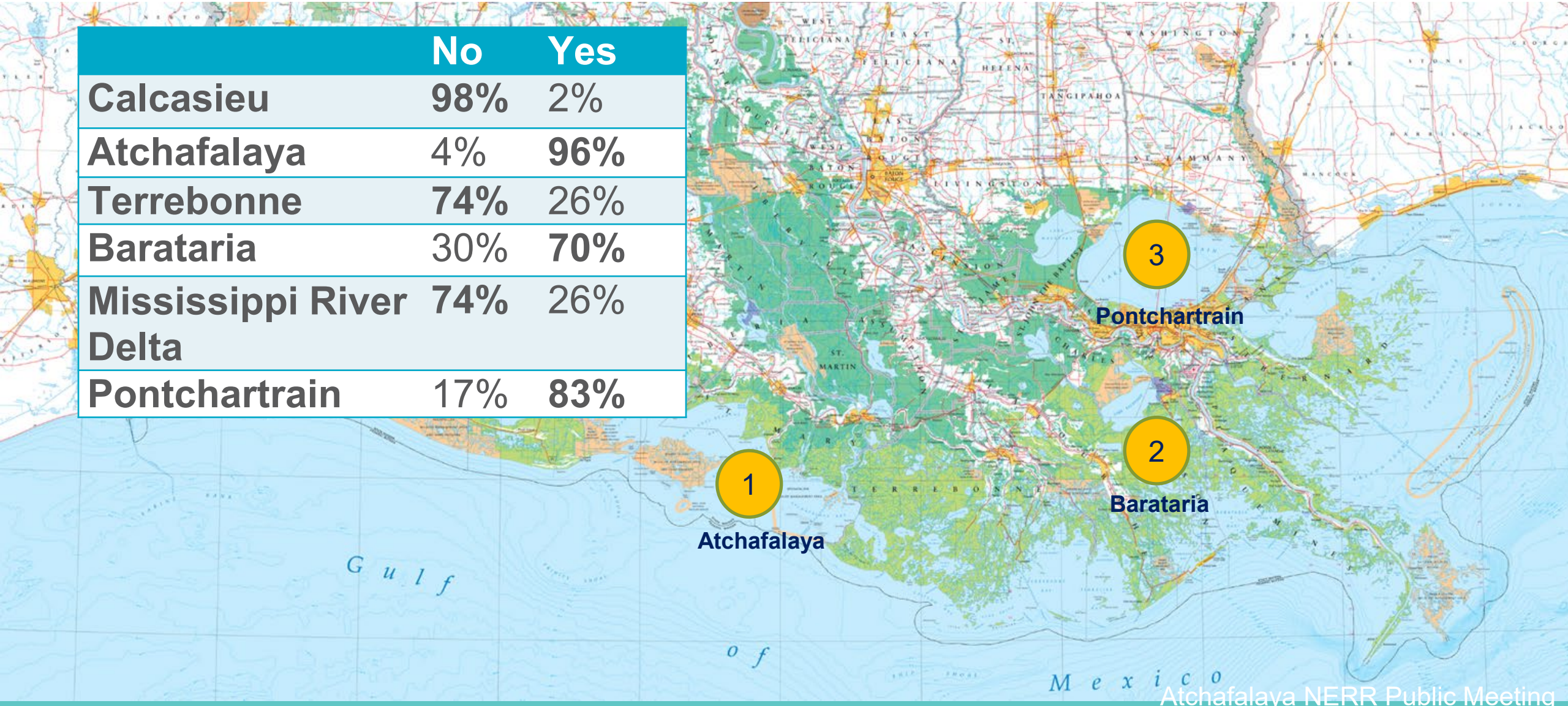


PRELIMINARY SCREENING CRITERIA

- Unique Coastal Setting
- State-Owned Lands
- Land Integrity
- Change in Habitat Diversity
- Hydrologic Manipulations

RESULTS OF PRELIMINARY SCREENING

	No	Yes
Calcasieu	**98%**	2%
Atchafalaya	4%	**96%**
Terrebonne	**74%**	26%
Barataria	30%	**70%**
Mississippi River Delta	**74%**	26%
Pontchartrain	17%	**83%**



SITE SELECTION CRITERIA

1. Environmental Representativeness
2. Research, Monitoring and Resource Protection
3. Education and Interpretation
4. Acquisition and Management Consideration
5. Ability to Conduct Research on Resilience and Climate Change Impacts
6. Partnerships

PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT

- Nine Town Hall Meetings were held in February 2022 to gather public feedback on each of the three candidate sites
- Reached over 600 people; ~350 in Atchafalaya

Candidate Sites	In Person	Virtual	Total
Atchafalaya	143	206	349
Barataria	23	84	107
Pontchartrain	34	147	181
Total	200	437	637

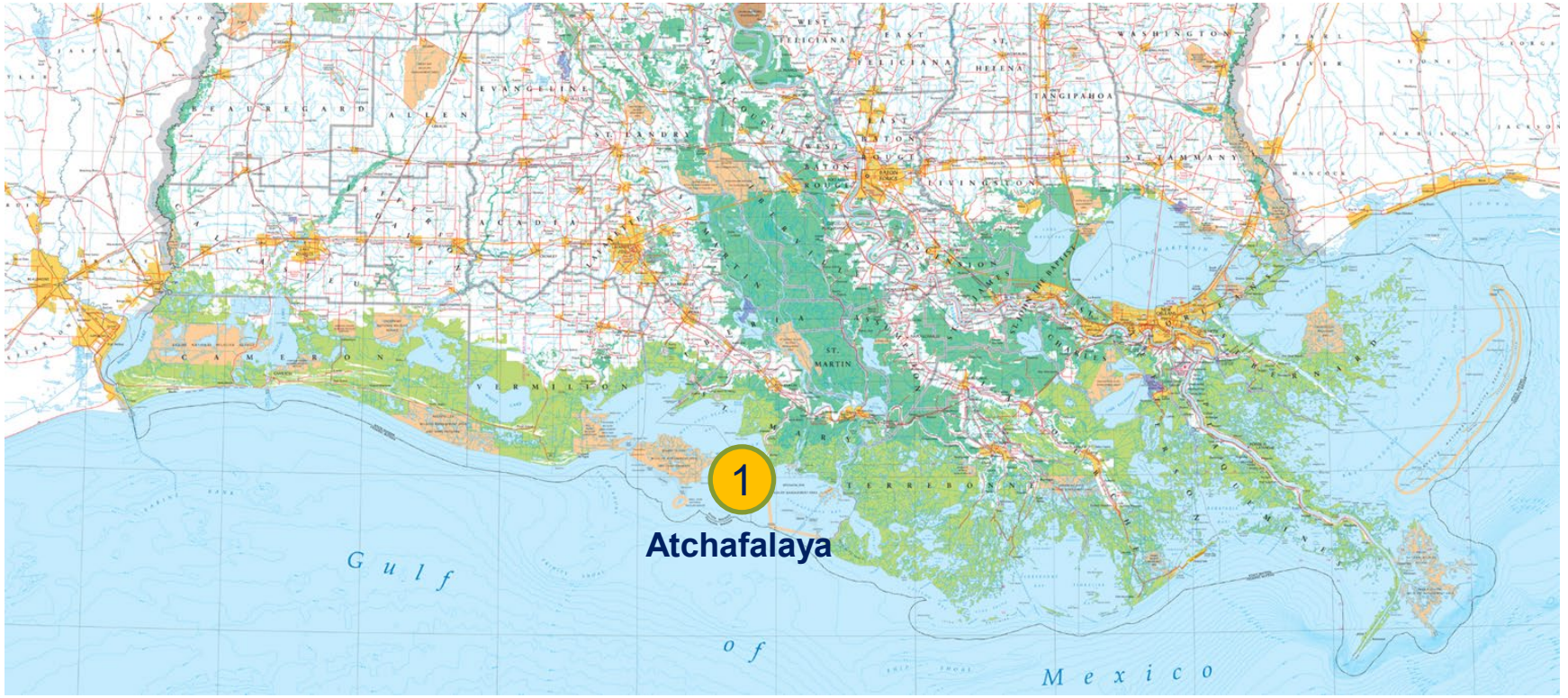
APPLYING SITE SELECTION CRITERIA

Screening subcommittee evaluated and scored each candidate site based on final site selection criteria (Atchafalaya scored the highest)

Site Selection Criteria	Atchafalaya	Barataria	Pontchartrain
Environmental Representativeness	1	3	2
Research / Monitoring / Stewardship	1	3	2
Education / Training	3	2	1
Acquisition / Management	1	3	2
Resiliency	1	3	2
Partnerships	2	3	1

NOMINATING ATCHAFALAYA SITE TO NOAA

- By majority vote, Executive Committee nominated Atchafalaya to the Governor
- Governor John Bel Edwards nominated the Atchafalaya site to NOAA



NEXT STEPS IN THE DESIGNATION PROCESS

NATIONAL ESTUARINE RESEARCH RESERVE SYSTEM

The Designation Process
Next Steps and Roles

Kristin Ransom

November 2022

Site Nomination Document Review Process

Key considerations:

- Addresses minimum requirements in designation guidance
- Consistent with reserve system regulations
- Process met procedural requirements
- Public comments documented, considered

Designation Process and Milestones

Thank you!

Kristin.Ransom@noaa.gov

DESIGNATION TIMELINE

<table>
<tr><th>2022</th><th colspan="2">2023</th><th>2024</th></tr>
<tr><td rowspan="3">State Nominates Atchafalaya Site to NOAA</td><td colspan="2">Prepare Management Plan</td><td rowspan="3">Designation</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="2">Prepare Environmental Impact Statement</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="2">Develop NOAA-State MOUs</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="3">Finding and Record of Decision</td></tr>
</table>

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

CONTRIBUTING FEEDBACK

- **Written comments should be submitted to:**
  - Email: coastal@la.gov
  - Mail:

    Coastal Protection & Restoration Authority

    Public Comments – NERR

    150 Terrace Avenue

    Baton Rouge, LA 70802
- **All written comments must be received no later than November 10, 2022**

CONNECT WITH US!

@LouisianaCPRA

Louisiana National Estuarine Research Reserve (NERR)

Site Nomination Public Meeting #1

Wednesday, November 2, 2022

5:00 PM CT

Morgan City Auditorium, 728 Myrtle Street, Morgan City, Louisiana 70380

Attendees

Leadership Team: Kristin Ransom, NOAA; Brian Lezina, CPRA; Michelle Felterman, CPRA, Alicia Mcalhaney, CPRA, Joseph 'Wes' Leblanc, CPRA

Royal Engineers & Consultants (CPRA Program Management Support): Alaina Grace, Mandy Green

General Participants: 30 in-person participants per the sign in sheets (sign-in sheets are inserted after this file)

Hand outs

- NERR/LaNERR factsheet and public meeting agenda
- NERR/LaNERR FAQs

Public Meeting #1

- Presentation by Brian Lezina (CPRA) and Kristin Ransom (NOAA) on the specifics of the LaNERR Site Selection and Nomination Process.
- **Public Comment / Q&A**
    - Are there training programs for seniors?
        - Yes, the reserve will provide education and training opportunities for the whole community (i.e., "NERRs serve all ages - from K to Gray").
    - Is the NERR going to be in the boundary of St. Mary Parish?
        - The exact boundary will be determined during the designation process, but it will likely include the Atchafalaya and Wax Lake deltas because the active deltas represent the unique habitat required for designation.
    - Will the reserve study the lands and swamps that are behind levees? There are a lot of flood control levees in the area.
        - The state will have to determine this when we determine niche and research that we want to conduct. It could be helpful to include leveed and unleveed areas for comparisons. We can tie the new NERR monitoring stations into the existing LA monitoring stations.
    - Commended the state and the governor for nominating Atchafalaya; this nomination in conjunction with Coastal Center at Nicholls State University will be a huge asset.
    - How long until we see benefit (jobs, research, education)?
        - This will depend on the timing of designation; we hoping to complete the designation process in early 2024.
    - What else is required for the NERR (e.g., boat launches, facilities, etc.)?

        - There is no rule on this; existing access points and facilities will be identified in the management plan. The management plan will also lay out the plan for expansion of these components in the first five years of NERR operations.
    - Brett Allain has legislative support for 30% match for operations and construction funding for facilities. What other investments will be required?
        - $750K annually from NOAA for operations after the reserve is designated (state match of 30% required)
        - First step is to hire core staff. For the first few years post-designation, these staff generally work from the offices of the state agency/university they are employed by. Reserve headquarters and visitor centers are usually built with funds from competitive NOAA grant. The NOAA grant funding for construction also requires match.
    - Have heard from other NERRs that a NERR in St. Mary Parish could bring approximately $1 million / year to the local economy. With researchers coming in/out, enhanced tourism, etc. this can be a huge economic impact of $50-$100 million / year. Very excited about having the NERR here because of the opportunities it can bring.
    - Comment about an oyster program where oysters were moved to New York; although not edible, they were used for water quality improvements. Will oyster production/propagation be included in the plan?
        - The state has an oyster strategic plan; active delta areas are generally too fresh for oysters.
        - Looking forward to having designation.
    - Student at Morgan City high school commented that he is taking an environmental science class. He expressed that the reserve will provide opportunities to improve the curriculum right here in the back yard.
        - That is exactly what these reserve systems intend to do.
    - Have you dealt with landowners?
        - To start, the designation would only be on state lands and waterbottoms.
        - What about putting the headquarters on private land to make access easier?
            - The state has thought about this and will get public feedback during EIS and management plan development process.
            - Understand it is challenging to get access for everyone to some of these areas.
    - Expressed thanks for the work that has been done and for attention that has been brought to the Atchafalaya delta.
    - School board offered unanimous support for the NERR in St. Mary Parish in January 2021 and continues to offer full and unwavering support. The reserve will protect plants and animals. Thanked everyone moving the reserve forward. Students, teachers, and community will benefit from the reserve, and it will reinforce advancement of St. Mary Parish.

Louisiana National Estuarine Research Reserve (NERR)

    - Catherine Holcomb expressed support for the reserve on behalf of St. Mary Excel and others. Full comments are provided below.
    - All comment cards received are provided below.

- Adjourn

Sign up to get emails on important events involving the Atchafalaya NERR!

Date: 11/02/2022

Atchafalaya NERR Nomination Meeting @ Morgan City, LA

NAME	EMAIL	EMAIL UPDATES? (YES/NO)	PARISH OF RESIDENCE	CITY OF RESIDENCE
Alaina Grace	agrace@roydengineering.net	Yes	Lafourche	Thibodaux
Caroline Byrne	cbyrne@crtila.gov	Yes	EBR	Baton Rouge
Monica Mancuso	monicamancuso12@gmail.com	yes	St. Mary	Morgan City
Cindy Cutrera	cindy@portofmc.com	yes	St Mary	Morgan City
Lee Hebert	ohhebert1952@gmail.com	no	St mary	M.C.
KENNY ALFRED	KENNYHALFRED2020@GMAIL.COM	NO	ST. MARY	BAYOU VISTA
ANDREW MANCUSO	andrew.mancuso@newindustries.com	NO	St. MARY	Morgan City
Thomas Mancuso			St. mary	Morgan City
Bill Decker	bdecker@dailyreview.com	Yes	Lafayette	Lafayette
LAURA Meaders	Allainb@legis.la.gov	Y	St mary	MC
Leslie L. Smith	lsmith@stmaryk12.net	yes	St Mary	Morgan City
Tyler Mundy	amason4729@gmail.com	yes	St mary	Morgan City

Sign up to get emails on important events involving the Atchafalaya NERR!

Date: 11/02/2022

Atchafalaya NERR Nomination Meeting @ Morgan City, LA

NAME	EMAIL	EMAIL UPDATES? (YES/NO)	PARISH OF RESIDENCE	CITY OF RESIDENCE
Dan Kroes	dkroes@usgs.gov	Y	EBR	Baton Rouge
Justin Lemoine	jlemoine@crtlagov	Y	EBR	Baton Rouge
Steve Domangue	Steved@Cannatas.com	Y	St Mary	Morgan City
Catherine Holcomb	catherinepholcomb@att.net	y	St. Mary	Morgan City
Cyrus Provost		y	St. Mary	Morgan City
Virgil Allen	virgil@rigmuseum.com	Y	St. Mary	Morgan City
Micah Allen	rigmuseum@rigmuseum.com		St. Mary	Morgan City
BRYCE MERRILL	MERRILLOILFIELD2@AOL.COM	y	"	"
JAM JONES	mossfield@yahoo.com	y	St. Mary	FRANKLIN
Deborah Price	deborah@frameshopinc.com	Y	St. Mary	Morgan City
Bret Allain	bretallain@cox.net	y	St Mary	Franklin
Robert Trilley				

Sign up to get emails on important events involving the Atchafalaya NERR!

Date: 11/02/2022

Atchafalaya NERR Nomination Meeting @ Morgan City, LA

NAME	EMAIL	EMAIL UPDATES? (YES/NO)	PARISH OF RESIDENCE	CITY OF RESIDENCE
Scott Green	Scott@datsaucela.com	yes	St. Martin/St. Mary	Morgan City
Collin Lindrew	clindrew@crt.la.gov	No	EBR	Baton Rouge
Don HAYDEL	DON.HAYDEL@LA.GOV	YES	ASCENSION	PRAIRIEVILLE
Herman Hartman				
Ruby Maize	rubymaize0gmail.com	Yes	St. Mary	M. C.
Bryant Dominque			Calcasieu	Lake Charles
Seth Blitch				

Good evening. I'm Catherine Holcomb, a lifelong resident of Morgan City and President of St. Mary Excel. Thank you for hosting this public hearing. We are so excited that a panel of experts- using a scientific rubric – has recommended the Atchafalaya Zone as the future site of the Louisiana National Estuarine Research Reserve.

The United States has a National Estuarine Research Reserve in every coastal state except LA. The bar is set high—ours will be the last and we want it to be the best.
Now it is time to continue **using the science and best practices** to ensure the Atchafalaya Zone becomes an outstanding NERR site.

We offer St. Mary Excel's contribution to what we recognize as needed:

St. Mary Excel sees the mission of the Atchafalaya Reserve to be **THE COASTAL RESOURCE** showcasing the possibilities inherent in delta formation for a restored Louisiana coast!

To be successful in meeting its mission, several factors must be in place.

money
30 state
70

First we address the administration needs.

1. Administration must meet the high quality standards set out in other NERRs across the nation. On a slow day, the Atchafalaya River drains 30% of the Mississippi River- which drains 41 percent of the 48 contiguous states of the entire country. It is NOT a NERR unless Resources are HERE.
2. It should be located in Morgan City, LA for optimum effective and efficient NERR implementation. Some NERRs split the locale, but the Atchafalaya River Delta Estuary Reserve would benefit from the best practice of **<u>on-site administration.</u>**

   As such, the state agency, the university, or consortium of universities, must have:
   - adequate coastal knowledgeable staff,
   - extensive coastal studies experience,
   - history of coastal commitment, and
   - unparalleled eagerness for on-site administration of Atchafalaya delta conservation and stewardship.

The administration for the NERR is responsible for providing strategic and targeted system-wide programs focused on research and monitoring, education, training, and stewardship. The management team that is hired for this initiative **must** have offices in Morgan City, LA.

*HERE IS A DOCUMENT WITH THE QUALIFICATIONS OF THE ARANSAS PASS ADMINISTRATIVE STAFF. **

St. Mary Excel also recognizes that we have many existing public lands and, in some cases, private lands that will facilitate meeting the Atchafalaya NERR mission.

- the **Atchafalaya Wildlife Refuge.** In addition to open water habitats, the refuge includes many features of an active deltaic system. We ask the committee to consider the Atchafalaya Wildlife Refuge.

- the **Atchafalaya River Delta Interpretive Center**.

  NERRS have interpretive centers-- and for the last 30 years our area has had a concept map of an Interpretive Center on the vacant private property out on Fig St. St. Mary Excel recommends the 30-year-old identified site of 115 acres of habitat in a protected 100-year flood event levee system located across the street from a parkway, Lake End Parkway.

  The center would be easily accessible to students and visitors. The Center would house engaging and interactive displays utilizing --where appropriate --virtual reality and digital displays to educate visitors on facets of the area within the coastal climate that includes heat, humidity, rainstorms, and at times outside of the leveed system, riverine flooding. The facets of the center include:

  - Deltaic formation, levee construction, sedimentation, beneficial use, etc.,
  - History of the area,
  - Folklore,
  - Culture,
  - People (Indigenous and Immigrant),
  - Wildlife and habitat,

- Economy of the locale,
- Environmental protection and justice, and
- Coastal challenges.

At this location at the center, levee floodgates allow access to the river system outside of the levee system. A boat dock adjacent to the floodgates would be needed. The dock would allow convenient visitor access for boarding floating classrooms for immersion into basin and delta education.

When floodgates are closed due to high water conditions, the Berwick, Lake End Park, and other boat launches can be used to provide visitor waterway access. These additional sites are not as convenient as the Interpretive Center docking area.

This center is connected to the Bike Morgan City trail on Fig Street allowing multimodal access to the center from throughout the Morgan City and Berwick area.

Other available existing public and private facilities that can be incorporated into the NERR mission include:

- the **Berwick Lighthouse Park**. The park currently houses the Southwest Reef Lighthouse. The Ship Shoal Lighthouse is soon to be added to the park. The addition of an observation deck should be considered for the Ship Shoal Lighthouse allowing visitors ~~to take a birds-eye view south toward the Atchafalaya~~ delta and north towards the basin. an added attra

- the **International Petroleum Museum and Exposition,** "The Mr. Charlie Oil Rig Museum." The museum is an authentic working rig with living and working quarters. The museum would serve an interpretive purpose in the Louisiana reserve through rig-boarding for tours and education, contributing insights into oil and gas historical impacts within the conservation area.

- the **Cajun Coast Visitors and Convention Bureau**, "The Welcome Center." The center is located at the north side of the Highway 90 exit at Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Boulevard in Morgan City, LA. The center

is located on the Bike Morgan City trail and has administrative office space for the reserve. The center has been identified for a boardwalk experience which would allow an excursion into a coastal habitat especially fitting for the very young, physically feeble, and those with limited time to explore the reserve expanse.

- the **Green Community Foundation Nature and Cultural Trail Project**. The project will facilitate recreational, therapeutic, and educational opportunities. The project will also include wetland preservation and wildlife management through stewardship.

- **Atchafalaya Deltaic Research at Wax Lake Floating Classroom**. Over thirty years of research will be highlighted and enhanced through use of a planned floating classroom. Researchers currently using the sight should assist in classroom design and reserve activities for this part of the reserve.

This is how St. Mary Excel **meeting with local stakeholders** has envisioned the Atchafalaya Zone as a LANERR.

We would ask that this outline of a NERR be given high priority with marketing and outreach to other areas that may benefit from the NERR connection.

St. Mary Excel is submitting into the record documentation of:

- Local officials being alerted to our NERR designation and the process
- Our quarterly local interest group meeting powerpoint, our agenda, our sign-in sheet and our YOUTUBE recording of our meeting on Sept. 16, 2022 for sharing on-going planning and hearing feedback from stakeholders.
- St. Mary Excel's Quarter 3 2022 Report to stakeholders which has been emailed to stakeholders, our membership list and published in the local newspaper
- Points of Contact-local governmental and agency contacts
- Subject matter experts--education and coastal training sections
- Potential NERR Facilities/owners/ and their points of contact

- St. Mary Excel's Contribution to the Atchafalaya River Delta Estuary Reserve Management Plan (a rudimentary draft of the management plan)-
- We also supplied the following to the CPRA team members that we met with yesterday:

    - Our Briefing Book for the Urban Land Institute Panel Readiness – (History)
      And the final Urban Land Institute study of our area
    - Bike Morgan City Plan
    - BP Proposal for a Resilience Lab
    - Berwick Down By The Riverside document
    - Morgan City Historic District Application
    - Morgan City Gateway Initiative Documents
    - Cajun Coast Paddling Trails
    - History of Morgan City – book by the Morgan City Historical Society
    - Fun Things to Do in Morgan City / Berwick / Patterson

- Bios of People that Operate the Aransas Pass Estuary in Texas

And finally, documentation of our meeting yesterday with CPRA staff

participation Brian showed the a slide earlier highlighting our 130 local citizens attended the NERR town hall here in this room, and 285 attended the virtual meeting to support the Atchafalaya Zone nomination. Many more sent letters to the governor –we are excited and want to help further the process to make our LANERR the best in the country

RESOURCES ARE NEEDED HERE FOR IT TO BE A DELTA NERR—not in Baton Rouge, not in New Orleans, but right here where the river is--

We have been dealing with our resource—the Atchafalaya River right over that seawall for years! Now, St. Mary Excel needs the management writing team to know that the resources –administration, facilities, education, training and more--all need to be where the river is! THE DELTA IS HERE, RESOURCES MUST ALSO BE HERE. Thank you…

Thank you

COMMENT CARD – NERR NOMINATION MEETING 11/02/2022

Name: Leslie Smith **Affiliation:** Teacher, Resident

Please provide your comments below. Public comments will be received after the presentations.

I have lived here for 41 years. I have worked in our tourism industry at Cajun Coast Visitors + convention bureau, and for the last 16 years, I have been a teacher at MCHS. With all of my experience, I can confidently say that we need a NERR here – ~~Both~~ to support tourism and to educate our children (and even adults) on the uniqueness + beauty that the Atchafalaya Basin offers. My students, especially, have limited access to water + the basin even though we are surrounded by it. →

COMMENT CARD – NERR NOMINATION MEETING 11/02/2022

Name: Catherine Holcomb **Affiliation:** St. Mary Excel

Please provide your comments below. Public comments will be received after the presentations.

COMMENT CARD – NERR NOMINATION MEETING 11/02/2022

Name: KENNY ALFRED **Affiliation:** ST. MARY PARISH SCHOOL BOARD

Please provide your comments below. Public comments will be received after the presentations.

COMMENT CARD – NERR NOMINATION MEETING 11/02/2022

Name: TERRY GUARISCO **Affiliation:** _____

Please provide your comments below. Public comments will be received after the presentations.

LAND OWNER

Louisiana National Estuarine Research Reserve (NERR)

Site Nomination Public Meeting #2

Thursday, November 3, 2022

12:00 PM CT

Virtual Meeting

Link: meet.google.com/gya-dsajeob

or Join by phone: +1 470 485 8283 Meeting ID: 749 865 797#

Attendees

Leadership Team: Kristin Ransom, NOAA; Brian Lezina, CPRA; Michelle Felterman, CPRA, Alicia Mcalhaney, CPRA, Joseph 'Wes' Leblanc, CPRA

Royal Engineers & Consultants (CPRA Program Management Support): Alaina Grace, Mandy Green

NOAA: Brian Bloodworth, Michael Griffin, Kenneth Rainer, Patmarie Nedelka, Bridget Faust, Matt Chasse, Mel Landry, Polina Dineva

CPRA: Erin Vidrine, James Pahl

General Participants: 24 virtual participants (in addition to those listed above)

- Bill Haines (@.org)
- Carrie Stansbury and Rotary
- Cheston Hill, Office of State Lands
- Chris Haines (@.org)
- Colin Anderson (@.com)
- J. Jackson
- Janine Barr (@.com)
- Jenny Schexnayder (@.edu)
- Karen Wicker (@.com)
- Kristi Trail, Pontchartrain Conservancy (@.org)
- Kyle
- Mark
- Patty Taylor
- Rebecca Triche (@.org)
- St. Mary Excel
- Sara Krupa (@.com)
- Stacy Ortego (@.org)
- Tony Guarisco (@.com)
- Yvonne Allen, USFWS (@.gov)
- Five unidentified callers (202-***-**59, 225-***-**49, 504-***-**94, 573-***-**16, 985-***-**09)

Public Meeting #2

- Presentation by Brian Lezina (CPRA) and Kristin Ransom (NOAA) on the specifics of the LaNERR Site Selection and Nomination Process
- **Public Comment / Q&A**

- As for the state's 30% match, is that money designated and protected via a state agency's budget line item or a line item in the states overall budget?
  - The state's match is not currently designated in a state agency's budget line. CPRA is looking to set up partnerships with the state agency that will manage the reserve. There is interest from the state and the legislature in the reserve designation.
- Is the Wax Lake Outlet being considered as a site?
  - Yes, the reserve will include the active deltas to showcase what the area has to offer in Louisiana and in the reserve system.
- This has a been a well-done, informative presentation! Y'all did good!
- Thank you for the update...exciting project for Louisiana.
- Nice job, thank-you!

- Adjourn

Louisiana National Estuarine Research Reserve (NERR)

Site Nomination Public Meeting #3

Thursday, November 3, 2022

5:00 PM CT

Virtual Meeting

Link: meet.google.com/gya-dsajeob

or Join by phone: +1 470 485 8283 Meeting ID: 749 865 797#

Attendees

Leadership Team: Kristin Ransom, NOAA, Joseph 'Wes' Leblanc, CPRA

Royal Engineers & Consultants (CPRA Program Management Support): Alaina Grace, Mandy Green

General Participants: 5 virtual participants (in addition to those listed above)

- John Kleinschmidt (@.com)
- Kelli Cunningham (@.com)
- Raleigh Hoke (@.org)
- Two unidentified callers: (225-xxx-xx27, 573-xxx-xx16)

Public Meeting #3

- Recorded presentation by Brian Lezina (CPRA) and Kristin Ransom (NOAA) on the specifics of the LaNERR Site Selection and Nomination Process
- **Public Comment / Q&A**
    - When do things get hyper specific in terms of site, facilities, access, etc.?
        - These things will be identified during the early EIS and Management Plan development. This is when alternatives will be defined, boundaries will be identified, and when NERR needs / plans for the first five years will be identified.
- Adjourn

From: Michelle Felterman
To: marymwhite107@gmail.com
Cc: Alicia Mcalhaney
Subject: RE: Atchafalaya recommendation for Louisiana's NERR

Ms. White,

Thank you for your comment and support of the Atchafalaya NERR.

v/r,

Michelle

Michelle Felterman | Coastal Protection and Restoration Authority
Coastal Resource Scientist Supervisor | Planning and Research Division
The Water Campus | 150 Terrace Avenue | Baton Rouge, LA 70802
o: 225.342.4629

-----Original Message-----
From: Mary White <marymwhite107@gmail.com>
Sent: Monday, October 24, 2022 9:00 PM
To: GOV Coastal <coastal@LA.GOV>
Subject: Atchafalaya recommendation for Louisiana's NERR

I support the Atchafalaya recommendation for Louisiana's NERR.

Mary White

From: Michelle Felterman
To: bdozar@teche.net
Cc: Alicia Mcalhaney
Subject: RE: In support

Mr. and Ms. Dozar,

Thank you for your comment and support of the Atchafalaya NERR.

v/r,

Michelle

Michelle Felterman | Coastal Protection and Restoration Authority
Coastal Resource Scientist Supervisor | Planning and Research Division
The Water Campus | 150 Terrace Avenue | Baton Rouge, LA 70802
o: 225.342.4629

-----Original Message-----
From: bdozar@teche.net <bdozar@teche.net>
Sent: Monday, October 24, 2022 7:13 PM
To: GOV Coastal <coastal@LA.GOV>
Subject: In support

To Whom it May Concern,

We are so excited to support the Atchafalaya recommendation for Louisiana's NERR in the Atchafalaya River Delta region. This recommendation can conserve and protect the Atchafalaya and add to our area's economic diversification. Such a win-win for us all!

Thank you!

Laura and Briant Dozar
Berwick, LA 70342

From: Michelle Felterman
To: cpbaia50@gmail.com
Subject: NOAA and CPRA Comments on Recent Atchafalaya NERR Recommendation

---

Mr. Blum,

Thank you for your comment and support of the Atchafalaya NERR.

v/r,

Michelle

Michelle Felterman | **Coastal Protection and Restoration Authority**
Coastal Resource Scientist Supervisor | Planning and Research Division
The Water Campus | 150 Terrace Avenue | Baton Rouge, LA 70802
o: 225.342.4629
www.coastal.la.gov

From: Carl Blum
Sent: Tuesday, October 25, 2022 9:07:17 AM (UTC-06:00) Central Time (US & Canada)
To: GOV Coastal
Cc: St. Mary Excel Community
Subject: NOAA and CPRA Comments on Recent Atchafalaya NERR Recommendation

NOAA and CPRA,

I support the Atchafalaya recommendation for Louisiana's NERR. This recommendation can conserve and protect the Atchafalaya and add to economic diversification for East St. Mary Parish.

No other area in our state or region better represents the unique geography and cultural diversity that St. Mary Parish possesses. Our area will be able to inform visitors from our state and nation of that environment and support research into our local micro-climate and it's far reaching effects on our changing coastal area.

My 38 year old Morgan City based architectural firm voices our total support for this unique opportunity and thanks all those who are making this possible.

Carl P. Blum AIA
Architect
P. O. Box 2386
900 David Drive
Morgan City, Louisiana 70381
Office: 985-385-3296

From: Michelle Felterman
To: cindy@portofmc.com
Cc: Alicia Mcalhaney
Subject: RE: Public Comment - LA NERR
Attachments: image001.png

Ms. Cutrera,

Thank you for your comment and support of the Atchafalaya NERR.

v/r,

Michelle

Michelle Felterman | **Coastal Protection and Restoration Authority**
Coastal Resource Scientist Supervisor | Planning and Research Division
The Water Campus | 150 Terrace Avenue | Baton Rouge, LA 70802
o: 225.342.4629
www.coastal.la.gov

From: Cindy Cutrera. Port of Morgan City <cindy@portofmc.com>
Sent: Wednesday, November 9, 2022 8:40 AM
To: GOV Coastal <coastal@LA.GOV>
Subject: Public Comment - LA NERR

Please find attached my personal comment on the proposed Atchafalaya NERR.

Thank you for the opportunity.

Cindy Cutrera, IMPE, CLED
Economic Development Manager
Port of Morgan City
7327 Highway 182 - Office
800 Youngs Road - Port Terminal
P. O. Box 1460, Morgan City, LA 70381
Office 985-384-0850, Ext. 114 . Fax 985-385-1931
Cell 985-312-2596 . cindy@portofmc.com

www.portofmc.com

November 9, 2022

Coastal Protection and Restoration Authority
Public Comment – NERR
Via coastal@la.gov

As a resident of Morgan City, LA, my family and I are pleased to have the Atchafalaya Coastal Basin officially selected by Governor John Bel Edwards as the preferred site in Louisiana to be added to the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's (NOAA) National Estuarine Research Reserve (NERR) system.

In addition to the educational and economic benefits, we believe there are many reasons that Morgan City, LA should be the home site for the Atchafalaya Coastal Basin NERR:

- Much information already available through the Coastwide Reference Monitoring System (CRMS) sites and stations
- An abundance of LDWF Public Lands
- 4 NOAA PORTS stations from Berwick, LA to the Atchafalaya River Bar Channel (PORTS® is a decision support tool that improves the safety and efficiency of maritime commerce and coastal resource management through the integration of real-time environmental observations, forecasts and other geospatial information. PORTS® measures and disseminates observations and predictions of water levels, currents, salinity, and meteorological parameters (e.g., winds, atmospheric pressure, air and water temperatures) that mariners need to navigate safely. https://tidesandcurrents.noaa.gov/ports.html
- Ability for our area to partner with South Louisiana Community College – Young Memorial Campus who has provided the region with a highly-skilled workforce as industry has diversified their activities
- Availability of a regional partnership with Nicholls Coastal Center whose vision is a living, working, and resilient coast
- Numerous beneficial use of dredge material sites on the Atchafalaya River including Horseshoe Bend Island, recognized for environmental benefits created
- The last inhabited location before the river meets the sea

Morgan City is home to the LA Shrimp and Petroleum Festival which is a celebration of community where two seemingly different industries, shrimp and petroleum, worked together to provide a flourishing economy dependent upon our waterways. Just as the balance of shrimp and petroleum industries supported our local economy, Morgan City is poised to support a national estuarine research reserve where others can learn about and enjoy a balanced living, working and resilient coast.

Sincerely,

Cindy Cutrera
825 Hickory Street
Morgan City, LA 70380

From: Michelle Felterman
To: veradjudycki@gmail.com
Cc: Alicia Mcalhaney
Subject: NERR

Ms. Judycki,

Thank you for your comment and support of the Atchafalaya NERR.

v/r,

Michelle

-----Original Message-----
From: Vera Judycki <veradjudycki@gmail.com>
Sent: Friday, October 28, 2022 4:54 PM
To: GOV Coastal <coastal@LA.GOV>
Subject: NERR

EXTERNAL EMAIL: Please do not click on links or attachments unless you know the content is safe.

I support the atchafalaya site.

Sent from my iPad

From: Michelle Felterman
To: Monica Mancuso
Cc: Alicia Mcalhaney
Subject: RE: LANERR Comments

Monica,

Thank you for your comment. If the Atchafalaya NERR is accepted by NOAA for nomination we will take your comments into consideration during development of the Draft Management Plan and Draft Environmental Impact Statement.

v/r,

Michelle

Michelle Felterman | **Coastal Protection and Restoration Authority**
Coastal Resource Scientist Supervisor | Planning and Research Division
The Water Campus | 150 Terrace Avenue | Baton Rouge, LA 70802
o: 225.342.4629
www.coastal.la.gov

Subject: FW: LANERR Comments
Date: Thursday, November 10, 2022 1:08:19 PM

From: Monica Mancuso <monicamancuso12@gmail.com>
Sent: Thursday, November 10, 2022 11:55 AM
To: cpra@la.gov; Brian Lezina <Brian.Lezina@la.gov>
Subject: Re: LANERR Comments

In essence for ease of understanding, you could take the parish line down to the Gulf of Mexico.

> On Nov 10, 2022, at 10:11 AM, Monica Mancuso <monicamancuso12@gmail.com> wrote:
>
> **Here is the website showing "current" Atchafalaya National Estuary Research Reserve status.**
> https://coastal.la.gov/our-work/key-initiatives/atchafalaya-national-estuarine-research-reserve/
>
> **From the Q & A Section of the website,**
> **What lands will be included in the NERR?**
> At this time, Louisiana is considering sites from existing publicly owned lands and adjacent public trust waters. In the future, the NERR site could expand with municipal and non-profit property; and with donated or purchased land from willing landowners.
>
> ST. MARY EXCEL COMMENTS:
>
> - Comment 1: Include Lake Palourde, the Bayou Boeuf area, the City of Morgan City, and down Bayou Shaffer as these sites are not currently within the Zone Map reserve boundary on the above website.
> - Comment 2: Land owners (some who are in a municipality) have been waiting 30 years for engagement in conservation in the area. Reach out to the persons who have indicated stewardship inclinations for possible

donations and/or conservation easements, and/or reasonable purchase. Reach out to the Cajun Coast Visitors and Convention Bureau, located within a municipality, for administration office location. [These initial inclusion decisions will aid in providing estuary engagement for education, research, training, and stewardship.]

- Comment 3: The municipalities of Morgan City and Berwick are critical in PK-12 access to the estuary. The municipalities provide infrastructure services for safe and enjoyable engagement for “K to gray.”

"It is not an Atchafalaya Delta NERR unless resources are **HERE.**"

St. Mary Excel
506 1st St.
Morgan City, LA 70380