

## Lake Superior National Estuarine Research Reserve

*The citizens of Northwest Wisconsin request:*

- **That the Legislature formally commit and allocate \$500,000 annually toward the Lake Superior National Estuarine Research Reserve and Wisconsin Freshwater Estuary Initiative.**

The Great Lakes are one of the world's most precious natural resources, and the State of Wisconsin has the privilege of being nestled between both Lake Superior and Lake Michigan. Our Great Lakes help define Wisconsin and represent vital natural and economic assets for the state.

Sustained research, education, and stewardship programs are important to the protection and restoration of these precious resources and the benefits they provide to Wisconsin's residents. Wisconsin's Freshwater Estuary Initiative is a statewide effort to increase awareness and promote stewardship of Wisconsin's Great Lakes freshwater estuaries and coastal areas. The initiative involves the University of Wisconsin-Extension, University of Wisconsin-Superior, City of Superior, Douglas County, Wisconsin Coastal Management Program, Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources, and a diverse network of partners. A key component of the initiative is the development of a Lake Superior National Estuarine Research Reserve.

In 2008, Governor Doyle nominated the St. Louis River Freshwater Estuary on Lake Superior as a National Estuarine Research Reserve (NERR). More than 70 dedicated individuals participated in the process that evaluated candidate NERR sites. There has been overwhelming local, state, and national support for a Lake Superior NERR. A Management Plan and Environmental Impact Statement for the NERR are being prepared and official designation of the Lake Superior NERR is anticipated to occur in the fall of 2010. The proposed lead institution for the NERR is the University of Wisconsin-Extension.

Funding for the Lake Superior NERR will provide opportunities for faculty, staff and student research at the University of Wisconsin-Superior and other UW institutions; expand outreach opportunities and resources to K-12 students and educators; address critical local needs related to coastal resources; and leverage additional research dollars to expand the important work of all partners in relation to coastal concerns. This funding will help to bring resources and national recognition to the Superior region with benefits extending to other Wisconsin coastal regions.

### **Going Forward:**

Once the Lake Superior NERR is designated, Wisconsin becomes eligible for approximately \$550,000 in annual Federal operations funding from the National Oceanic Atmospheric Administration (NOAA). A 30% state match, or approximately \$236,000, is required annually for the federal operations funds. Additional dollars for facilities construction and other NERR activities will become available to Wisconsin after designation.

To broaden the emphasis, we are requesting \$500,000 in annual State funding for the Wisconsin Freshwater Estuary Initiative. Approximately 50% will be used to match the NERR operations grant and enable the hiring of three NERR positions: the NERR Manager, NERR Research Coordinator, and NERR Education Coordinator. The other approximately 50% will be used to implement programming that:

- Extends the impacts of the Wisconsin NERR designation beyond the footprint of the NERR and provides benefits for a wide-range of Wisconsin's Lake Superior and Lake Michigan coastal communities.
- Addresses the local research, education, and management needs of Wisconsin's Lake Superior and Lake Michigan coastal communities.
- Leverages existing and attracts new funds for coastal research, education, and management.
- Strengthens existing partnerships with state and federal agencies, local and Tribal governments, organizations, universities and colleges.
- Coordinates and disseminates Great Lakes freshwater estuary and coastal research and education through an advisory council coordinated by the University of Wisconsin system.

Once established, the Lake Superior National Estuarine Research Reserve will become the 28th research reserve in the NERR System, and only the second Great Lakes reserve. This designation, coupled with the broader statewide Freshwater Estuary Initiative, will make the State of Wisconsin more competitive for additional funding opportunities that further enhance the state's leadership in Great Lakes research, education and outreach.

For Further Information Contact:

Tom Blewett, UW Cooperative Extension Interim State Program Director CNRED

Telephone: (608) 262-9310

Email: [thomas.blewett@ces.uwex.edu](mailto:thomas.blewett@ces.uwex.edu)

Faith Hensrud, University of Wisconsin-Superior Associate Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs and Outreach

Telephone: (715) 394-8455

Email: [fhensrud@uwsuper.edu](mailto:fhensrud@uwsuper.edu)