

CT NERR Kick-off Meeting Notes: Questions and Answers

CT DEEP – Gina McCarthy Auditorium

79 Elm St, Hartford CT 06106

4/12/2016, 5:30 – 7:00 PM

Q: Are we considering or emphasizing certain areas of Connecticut like the Connecticut River area to locate a NERR?

A: No, we are not directly targeting any one area or areas other than the overall project area (Coastal communities and Connecticut river towns to the Middletown/Glastonbury line.) The initial screening may result in possibilities that are concentrated in a specific geography, but any such result would be driven by the site selection team's application of the screening criteria, and not a prior decision to focus anywhere in particular.

Q: Are there different criteria or approaches to address the land and water component of a site? Is there any requirement (e.g., size) for these?

A: The criteria, as whole, don't differentiate between land and water composition of a possible site, although by their nature some are more geared to one or the other (e.g., land cover types and salinity ranges.) There are no requirements that a site meets certain percentages or minimum/maximum areas of land or water. More information on the composition of a site can be found in the NERR regulations and the Connecticut Site Selection Process document but in summary, any site boundary should encompass adequate portions of the key land and water areas of the natural system to approximate an ecological unit and to ensure effective conservation. The boundary size will vary greatly depending on the nature of the ecosystem and encompass two areas: key land and water areas (or 'core area') and a buffer zone designed to protect the unit.

Q: Within the existing NERR system, has there been any consideration to splitting functions (education/training or science/research) or staff that work on each function between different site locations?

A: While there is nothing to prevent this, typically, all reserve staff are co-located together in one location. There is greater value to having all staff and each component function of the reserve more or less in one place to help foster collaboration and operational efficiencies. However, for reserves that are made up of more than one site location, there are some cases where one particular location may have a greater education focus while another location has a greater research focus.

Q: Have you considered any of the existing LISS Stewardship site locations as potential NERR sites?

A: Yes, the initial inventory of potential candidates the site selection team will screen does include LISS Stewardship sites. Additionally, recent efforts to develop a database of the ecological characteristics of these and other sites in CT will figure prominently in the screening. One consideration to note, however, is that some Stewardship sites are federally owned so we need to be careful on how these are considered since any proposed NERR site cannot consist of more than 50% federal lands.

Q: Will we be considering some or all of the submerged lands of Long Island Sound as part of the site selection?

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A: In general yes, the CT waters of Long Island Sound could constitute some of a NERR. However, in addition to the environmental based criteria that would apply here we will also need to give careful consideration to any management issues and potential use conflicts that are associated with the waters of Long Island Sound that may not be compatible with research reserve programs.

Q: Will the UCONN-Avery Point campus be part of a NERR site?

A: It is certainly a possibility, as many of the facilities and capabilities there provide linkages to NERR programs and goals. However, it is not a forgone conclusion that this will be the case. Rather, the site selection process will provide some directions as to whether this may be the best approach or not. Within the criteria are elements where the existence and accessibility of facilities can be evaluated.

Q: Would Connecticut's location in a more urbanized estuary constitute enough of a distinction from neighboring Reserves to warrant inclusion?

A: Not solely. There are other Reserves in the system that are influenced by degrees of urbanization. However, coupling the LIS urbanized environment along with the necessary differential of a unique estuarine typology from the other Southern New England reserves, and other attributes could be an acceptable way to characterize the potential CT site. One of the selection criteria does look at how developed a site and its surrounding watershed is and the impacts polluted runoff from these development activities may have on reserve waters. More pristine sites will receive a higher point value than extremely disturbed sites.

Q: CT is integrated within the US EPA National Estuary Program (NEP) through the Long Island Sound Study which has been involved in many of the topics and efforts that a NERR would also support and carry out. Do other Reserves within the system work with NEPs?

A: Yes, NERRs and NEPs do collaborate and they are important partners given their similar missions. The extent and nature of collaboration is often dependent on proximity and jurisdiction, but it is clearly encouraged.

Q: Can other people from outside UCONN Marine Sciences or DEEP be involved? Where can I go to find out more information?

A: Absolutely. We would encourage anyone with an interest to become involved. The project web site www.ct.gov/deep/nerr has links to contact us, or you can call or e-mail Kevin O'Brien (860-424-3432 or kevin.obrien@ct.gov) for more information. Additionally, the project web site has a host of material, including the Site Selection Process Document, which can provide additional details to many of the questions noted above.