

**Questions/Comments during CT NERR Site Selection Meeting
Tuesday, November 13, 2018**

- 1. How will you determine who is involved in developing the management plan?**
 - a. No firm decision on that process yet, but will likely be similar to how the Site Selection Team was formed. DEEP and the Steering Committee will first look to engage key partners within and outside the agency based on topical relevance/expertise and then augment with other interested parties.

- 2. Will you be able to receive partial funding and start up programs prior to designation or do you have to wait?**
 - a. NOAA provides grant funding (as available) to assist with steps relevant to designating a Reserve. However funding for operations and programs are not available until after a Reserve is officially designated.

- 3. There are oyster aquaculture grounds in the proposed boundary; you should be aware and take that into consideration.**
 - a. DEEP and the Steering Committee are aware of the oyster grounds and we will engage the fishing and aquaculture industries as the management plan is developed.

- 4. Can I get more detailed maps of the proposed area?**
 - a. Yes – if you send a request DEEP can provide more detailed maps.

- 5. Explain more about the difference between a core and buffer area.**
 - a. Core areas are primarily designed to encompass those areas of the Reserve that represent key habitats and ecologically significant areas that would be reflected in the research, monitoring, education and stewardship programs. Buffer areas are generally designed to help these areas ensure stability or provide pathways expand into if conditions change. Areas that denote facilities (in CT's case this would be UCONN Avery Point and Ct DEEP Marine headquarters) are defined by NOAA as being buffer areas.

- 6. In scoring sites, did you consider healthy watersheds and water quality? For example, the smaller watershed feeding into the CT River. Could you extend the proposed area upstream?**
 - a. Regarding boundaries: At present, we are not adjusting boundaries as part of the selection effort and nomination to NOAA. It is worth nothing that, if CT's nomination is approved, the next phases of developing the Environmental Impact Statement and creating the Management Plan could result in boundaries being shifted or adjusted.
 - b. Regarding watersheds: The detailed selection criteria did address issues of watersheds and water quality. We did not include a complete run-down of all the aspects of the selection criteria for this presentation. The nomination report, which contains links to the Selection Team materials, will be made available on the project website (www.ct.gov/DEEP/NERR) after it is submitted to NOAA

- 7. Concern about new regulations on aquaculture and commercial fishing industries. Please consider this. Felt there was inadequate notice of this meeting, so asked for another one.**
 - a. DEEP and the Steering Committee are aware of the aquaculture and fishing industries interests in the area, and we will engage with these groups as the

**Questions/Comments during CT NERR Site Selection Meeting
Tuesday, November 13, 2018**

management plan is developed. As covered in subsequent questions, the establishment of a Reserve does not bring with it any new regulations regarding uses.

- b. Per NOAA regulations, the meeting was posted in the Federal Register by NOAA on October 30, 2018 and notice was provided by CTDEEP to the Hartford Courant, the New London Day, and the Middletown Press on October 26, 2018. In addition, other announcements included:

- Invitations via email (sent three weeks prior with a reminder the preceding week) to:
 - over 200 individuals, organizations, and municipal officials whose roles or interests may overlap with the Reserve program;
 - Connecticut State legislators representing the NERR Project area towns; and
 - the Washington D.C. and Connecticut offices of U.S. Senators Richard Blumenthal and Chris Murphy and U.S. Representative Joe Courtney;
- Postings to electronic listservs:
 - CT Town Planners and Planning;
 - Long Island Sound Study Citizens Advisory Council;
 - Long Island Sound Study Scientific Advisory Committee;
- CTDEEP “Sound Outlook” newsletter email distribution list;
- Postings to social media platforms (CTDEEP Facebook and Twitter, Long Island Sound Study Facebook;)
- A formal CTDEEP press release on November 9, 2018;
- Mailings and phone calls by CTNERR partners from the Roger Tory Peterson Estuary Center and Connecticut Audubon Society in the Lower Connecticut River.

In light of the broad distribution of notices, there won't be another meeting as part of the nomination effort. However, there will be additional meetings planned to support the Environmental Impact Statement and Management Planning phases.

8. Project Oceanology is a fan of the NERRS, but a little worried about the NERRS education program's impact on them. When does CT DEEP/UCONN reach out to them to figure this out?

- a. This will be addressed generally within the management planning phase, and much more substantially after a Reserve is designated wherein an outreach “Needs Assessment” is done. Important to note that Reserves don't find much if any value in replicating or recreating efforts already in place. The focus is more on filling gaps and voids, and potentially strengthening or extending current efforts where practicable.

9. Another comment about reaching out to the fishing community.

- a. DEEP and the Steering Committee are aware of the fishing interests and we will engage the fishing community as the management plan is developed.

10. Will there be restrictions on dredging?

- a. There are no restrictions on dredging based simply on the presence of a NERR. For instance, a Reserve would not pose any additional regulatory burden to activities like fishing, shellfishing, or boating. As appropriate, individuals or

**Questions/Comments during CT NERR Site Selection Meeting
Tuesday, November 13, 2018**

businesses involved in these would continue to seek authorizations from the State and or municipalities and follow rules as currently established. There would be no need to get an additional “NERR Permit” to work or recreate within the waters or on the uplands of a Reserve. As a rule of thumb, any questions about specific activities tidal wetlands and in tidal, coastal or navigable waters and whether or not they require State approval should be directed to the Land and Water Resources Division of the Connecticut Department of Energy & Environmental Protection at 860-424-3034.

11. Will there be a physical location (center/building)?

- a. Both UCONN Avery Point and CTDEEP Marine Headquarters may be able to provide space that could support the administration and operations of a Reserve. The details of how these may play out will covered in subsequent phases. The Reserve system can sometimes assist with funding to help with capital expenses if budgets allow, although the sums are somewhat modest. At present there are no plans for any new buildings but we will look at this issue more closely as we develop the management plan.

12. Water quality is important, so need to bring in other parties, including those not living right on the water,

- a. Agreed, and it is these type of aspects that Reserves tend to excel at by reaching out to broad audiences and helping to deal with issues outside of their boundaries.

13. Doesn't seem like a lot of funding for the NERRS. Can it really do much?

- a. The reserve system uses its limited funds strategically and with partnerships in mind to reach intended audiences and make significant impact in the coastal management community. The education program's needs assessment and a facility and acquisition plan are examples example of how operations can be targeted to maximize returns on even a modest investment. Additionally, the reserve system can provide access to a nationwide network of programs, data, research, and best practices.

14. Are you working with the USFWS, especially on habitat and species issues?

- a. We did engage staff form the USFWS on the selection effort. At present, since there is not Reserve established yet, there is no coordination with any existing USFWS programs. We do however expect to continue to engage with USFWS going forward.

15. Supports the proposal, likes the hybrid approach.

16. How does designation affect nearby homeowners? CT should develop a fact sheet and get that widely distributed.

- a. Reserves operate within their own boundaries in terms of access and uses for programming and science. While it is hoped that neighbors and groups within the community can develop working partnerships with Reserves, there are no requirements to this effect. At a minimum the expectation is to at least maintain a respectful neighbor status where each goes about their business and doesn't bother the other. As this moves forward, we expect to have more opportunities to discuss and interact with communities on these points.

**Questions/Comments during CT NERR Site Selection Meeting
Tuesday, November 13, 2018**

- 17. Is it possible to modify the boundary, especially on the west side of the proposed site?**
- a. We are not modifying any of the current upland or offshore boundaries as part of the nomination effort. As noted earlier, it may be the case that the EIS and management planning processes may end up altering some of the current proposed boundaries as a result of the input and requirements for those work tasks.
- 18. The project is important. Can you use medical expertise to work on issues?**
- a. It is certainly possible.
- 19. Will there be more regulation on commercial shellfisheries?**
- a. No. A NERR does not add additional regulations. Reserves respect the existing regulatory structures for each state. In the case of Connecticut, existing entities such as CT DEEP, the Department of Agriculture/Bureau of Aquaculture, and local municipalities regulate shellfishing. These groups would continue to do so and would not be affected by a Reserve. Similarly, individuals or groups seeking to work within the industry would need to seek and receive the proper approvals as presently required, regardless of whether it is in a Reserve or not. Shellfisheries would NOT need to seek special permissions just to work within a Reserve.
- 20. Likes the NERRS; time for one in CT to facilitate research and education, and better public access. People shouldn't be concerned with overreach.**
- 21. A summary of what this person heard – no new regulations, the management plan will account for this.**
- 22. Audubon Connecticut - Comment in support of the proposal.**
- 23. The LIS Study could use sentinel sites, would like to see long-term monitoring, maybe the NERR can help with?**
- a. Yes – as part of the requirements for establishing a Reserve there must be on-site monitoring of several environmental parameters (water quality, meteorology) This is part of the SWMP – System Wide Monitoring Program – which has been collecting and providing data for several decades. The data is collected and made available, often in near real time. This type of effort would clearly support long-term monitoring in LIS. We would look strategically with partners at where to deploy monitoring equipment.
- 24. A NERR should help manage education programs smartly so facilities/sites are not overrun.**
- 25. Applaud efforts and the many partners engaged to get this effort going, a NERR will be an asset.**
- 26. Pls involve CT Audubon, lots of interest/opportunity at Roger Tory Peterson site in the Connecticut River.**