



Dear Connecticut NERR Partner:

We are pleased to announce an information meeting on Tuesday May 16th 2017 from 6:00 pm to 8:00 pm in the second floor Auditorium of the Academic Building at the University of Connecticut's Avery Point Campus in Groton CT. This will provide an update on Connecticut's effort to identify and nominate a National Estuarine Research Reserve (NERR) for Connecticut.

The NERR system is a federal/state partnership that establishes a location dedicated to estuarine research, monitoring, education, and stewardship. A Connecticut-based NERR would complement and extend many existing scientific and environmental management and education activities through the addition of funding, resources, and expertise; additionally, it would help identify and enable new directions and initiatives by leveraging national programs.

Since the Spring of 2016, members of a multi-disciplinary team have worked to identify, evaluate, and recommend a location for NERR in Connecticut. This meeting will provide a forum to share the results of their preliminary recommendations, and to provide an overview of what the next stages of the process will entail. This will also be an opportunity to find out more about what establishing a NERR means and to ask questions.

An agenda and informational material is enclosed with this invitation, and the project website www.ct.gov/deep/NERR contains additional information as well.

We have endeavored to target relevant individuals and groups that are aligned geographically or topically with a potential Connecticut Reserve, but please feel free to forward to other interested parties as needed.

To facilitate a broad audience as conveniently as possible, the meeting will also be accessible remotely via webinar and call-in. Details on remote access will be posted on the project website in advance of the meeting date.

Please RSVP by emailing kevin.obrien@ct.gov or calling 860-424-3432 and indicate if you will be joining us in person or remotely. A response by Thursday, May 11 2017 is appreciated.

We hope that you are able to participate and look forward to seeing you on May 16th.

Sincerely,

Brian Thompson, Director, Connecticut Department of Energy and Environmental Protection, Land and Water Resources Division

James Edson, PhD., Department Chair, University of Connecticut Department of Marine Sciences

Sylvain De Guise, PhD., Director, Connecticut Sea Grant College Program



CT National Estuarine Research Reserve Project: Preliminary Results Meeting Agenda

Where:

Second floor Auditorium of the Academic Building, University of Connecticut Avery Point Campus, 1080 Shennecossett Rd., Groton, CT 06340.

When:

Tuesday, May 16th from 6:00 pm to 8:00 pm

Schedule:

Welcome/Housekeeping	6:00 – 6:05
Meeting Goals	6:05 – 6:15
NERR System Overview	6:15 – 6:25
CT Selection Process <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Big Picture (Teams/Members, Major steps, timeline)• Preliminary Selection Process and Results• Next Steps – Detailed Screening• Nomination & Subsequent Planning Effort	6:25 – 7:25
Q&A / Comments / Discussion	7:25 – 7:55
Wrap-up	7:55 – 8:00

Additional Information:

Remote Attendance:

- For those unable to join us at Avery Point, a webinar/teleconference will be provided. Please check the project website www.ct.gov/deep/NERR for access information, which will be posted in advance of the meeting.

Directions and Parking:

- For driving directions and parking information please visit: <http://marinesciences.uconn.edu/wp-content/uploads/sites/459/2015/11/Avery-Point-map.pdf>

Questions?

- Please contact Kevin O'Brien (kevin.obrien@ct.gov, 860-424-3432)



KEY MESSAGE POINTS FOR THE CONNECTICUT NERR EFFORT:

Rationale/Need:

- **Connecticut's coast and LIS are important** as they provide valuable natural resource and economic benefits, improve water quality, and provide our communities a sense of place.
- **A NERR is being considered in Connecticut because:**
 - The Connecticut coast has areas deserving the benefits (i.e., education, training, research and stewardship) a NERR affords, while at the same time bringing our State's unique contributions to the national NERR system.
 - CT environmental agency leaders, local colleges and universities, outdoor education programs, and various environmental organizations support the potential for a NERR designation.
 - The NERR program leadership is interested in and supportive of extending the system to include unrepresented areas such as Connecticut – an interest that has existed since the early days of the Reserve system, nearly 30 years ago.
- The national system of 29 reserves **provides many important benefits¹:**
 - **Reserves protect more than 1.3 million acres** of coastal and estuarine lands that **provide flood protection, keep water clean, sustain and create jobs, support fish and wildlife, and offer outdoor recreation.**
 - Every year, **programs offered at reserves attract more than a half a million visitors, and educate approximately 85,000 students and 3,200 teachers.**
 - **Decision makers from more than 2,500 cities and towns and 570 businesses benefit by reserve-based science and technical expertise** nationwide each year.
 - The reserve system maintains **more than 110 water quality stations and 30 weather stations.** Every 15 minutes, **they collect data used to help manage hazardous spills, shellfish industry operations, and emergency response to storms and flooding.**
 - **Reserves leverage additional funding for their surrounding communities.** In some states, this can be as much as \$1.5 million.
 - **Reserve protection and management of estuaries keeps commercial and recreational fishermen successful.** The national system contributes billions of dollars to the shellfish and seafood industry in states with a reserve, and tens of billions of dollars in ocean-dependent industries along our coasts.
- A CT NERR **can provide opportunities, capacity, and funds to support research, training, stewardship, and education** that conserve and enhance LIS and Connecticut's coastal environments.

Process to establish:

- Although focused on similar geographic areas, **the process to establish a NERR in Connecticut and Connecticut's Legislatively mandated "Blue Plan" process are distinct and separate efforts**, each with their own unique requirements and needs.
- **Establishing a NERR is a multi-step process that typically spans several years.** The first step (site selection) is to evaluate and select an area consistent with NERR system requirements. Subsequent steps involve developing a management plan and an Environmental Impact Statement.

¹ National Estuarine Research Reserve Association (www.nerra.org), 2017.



- **CTDEEP is leading the site selection with the support of a management team from the UCONN Marine Science Department and CT Sea Grant, as well as volunteers from several environmental and academic groups.**
- **Public involvement in the CT NERR process is required** and a site will only be designated where there is support.
- **Once a site has been recommended by CT *and* accepted by NOAA, the management planning process will begin** to establish the framework for operational control.
- Leadership of the management planning process, and the eventual responsibility for operating the NERR **will be addressed *after* the site selection.**
- **It should not be assumed that the groups involved with selection will be responsible for control of a CT NERR** simply because they led or participated in the process.
- The NERR Program **has the flexibility of endorsing a variety of partnership agreement models** to create a best-fit management practice for each Reserve **as the location, land ownership, and interest/capacity of a variety of parties are contributing factors to successfully running a Reserve.**

Location/Setting:

- **Only areas already under public ownership or control will be considered as the foundation for the CT NERR site.** However, additional lands under private ownership can be included under mutual interest and agreement.
- A variety of publically owned properties across the coast of Connecticut, including major river basins and in Long Island Sound will be evaluated. **These will use the state developed/federally approved NERR selection process, with stakeholder involvement, to determine the best option for CT to fit within the national NERR System.**
- **Establishing a NERR does not require acquisition of private land and does not affect any private property rights of any property owner.**
- Existing tribal treaty rights and management agreements **remain unchanged by a NERR designation.**

Access and Uses:

- **The establishment of a NERR does not bring any additional Federal regulations.**
- A key component of a NERR site **is providing the public a perpetual place to learn, use, and enjoy.**
- Recreational and commercial activities including - but not limited to - hunting, fishing, boating, etc., are allowed in a NERR in manners consistent with existing state or federal regulations – **a NERR manages its land, access, uses, and activities under existing rules and frameworks, not by introducing new ones.**
- The operational guidelines of the NERR **will be codified in a plan - created with public involvement - that detail how activities, uses, and resources will managed in a balanced approach.**

Other:

- **No increase in local public taxes is required for a CT NERR site.**
- **Interested parties can become involved** with the NERR through a variety of volunteer opportunities or as part of advisory groups.