

Hawaii National Estuarine Research Reserve

Site Selection Fact Sheet

MARCH 2013

What is an Estuary?

Estuaries are coastal areas where salt water from the sea mixes with fresh water from rivers and streams. They are among the most productive ecosystems on Earth. Whether they're called a bay, harbor, inlet, or lagoon, estuaries are the transition area between the inland waters and the sea. Some familiar examples of estuary ecosystems include Kaneohe Bay, Oahu; Kealia Ponds, Maui; Waipio Bay, Hawaii and Wainiha Bay, Kauai.

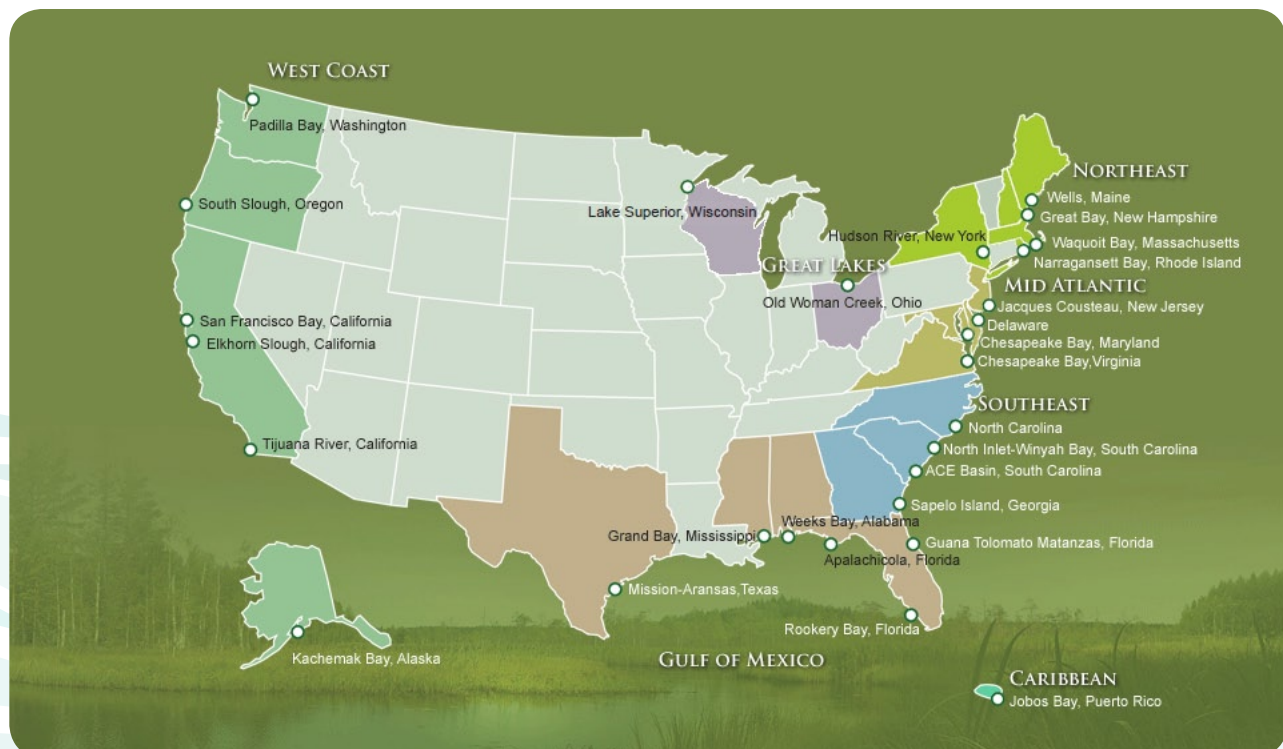
Why are Estuaries so Important?

- Estuaries are essential habitat for wildlife.
- Two-thirds of the fish and shellfish caught in the U.S. depend on estuaries for their survival.
- Estuarine wetlands protect human communities from flooding.
- Estuaries provide important recreational opportunities, such as swimming, boating, birding and hiking.

Estuaries are easily altered and degraded by human activities. Pollution, sedimentation, and other threats can damage the habitat that so many wildlife populations depend on for survival, including those native plants and animals important for cultural gathering and recreational fishing.

What is a National Estuarine Research Reserve (NERR)?

The National Estuarine Research Reserve (NERR) System is a network of 28 areas representing different biogeographic regions of the United States that are protected for long-term research, water-quality monitoring, education and coastal stewardship. Established by the Coastal Zone Management Act (CZMA) of 1972, as amended, the NERR System is a partnership between the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) and the coastal states. NOAA provides funding, national guidance and technical assistance to support research. Each NERR is managed on a daily basis by a lead state agency or university, with input from local partners.



Guidelines for Establishing Proposed Boundaries for NERRs

Boundaries for NERRs 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.” NERRs must be discrete enough to be effectively managed, but large enough to include a natural area that will facilitate long-term research and monitoring projects. To help focus management efforts, site component boundaries encompass two zones: key land and water in “core areas,” and “buffer zones” which surround the core area.

NERR Activities

Research conducted at NERRs is intended to support local knowledge and management decisions pertaining to the coastal resources of that biogeographical region. Core areas are most typically intact ecosystems where low-impact research can be conducted. Activities in the buffer zone are typically more diverse and may include previously established land uses, educational facilities and traditional or cultural practices.

NERR Designation Process

The designation of a NERR involves several steps including:



The State Office of Planning Coastal Zone Management Program is in the beginning of the process, “Site Selection and Nomination”.

The site selection process will include:

- Development of the Hawaii NERR site selection criteria;
- Public Outreach and a public solicitation of proposals for potential NERR sites;
- Review of the proposed sites against the selection criteria by an established Site Evaluation Committee;
- Development of a “short list” of potential NERR sites that meet the selection criteria; and
- Development of a recommended nomination site for the Governor’s review and nomination to NOAA.

The Governor will then submit to the NOAA Administrator a site selection document and a nomination letter identifying the proposed site by December 31, 2013. NOAA will review the site selection document and send a letter to the Governor accepting or rejecting the nomination.

Contacts and More Information:

PBR HAWAII & Associates, Inc.
Catie Cullison
ccullison@pbrhawaii.com
(808) 521-5631

Hawaii CZM Program
Rebecka Arbin
Rebecka.J.Arbin@dbedt.hawaii.gov
(808) 587-2831

National Estuarine Research Reserve System Website:
<http://www.nerrs.noaa.gov/>

Hawai’i Coastal Zone Management Program:
<http://planning.hawaii.gov/czm/>

