

**NATIONAL ESTUARINE RESEARCH RESERVE
DESIGNATION, SITE SELECTION AND NOMINATION**



**N A T I O N A L
E S T U A R I N E
R E S E A R C H
R E S E R V E
S Y S T E M**

May 2006

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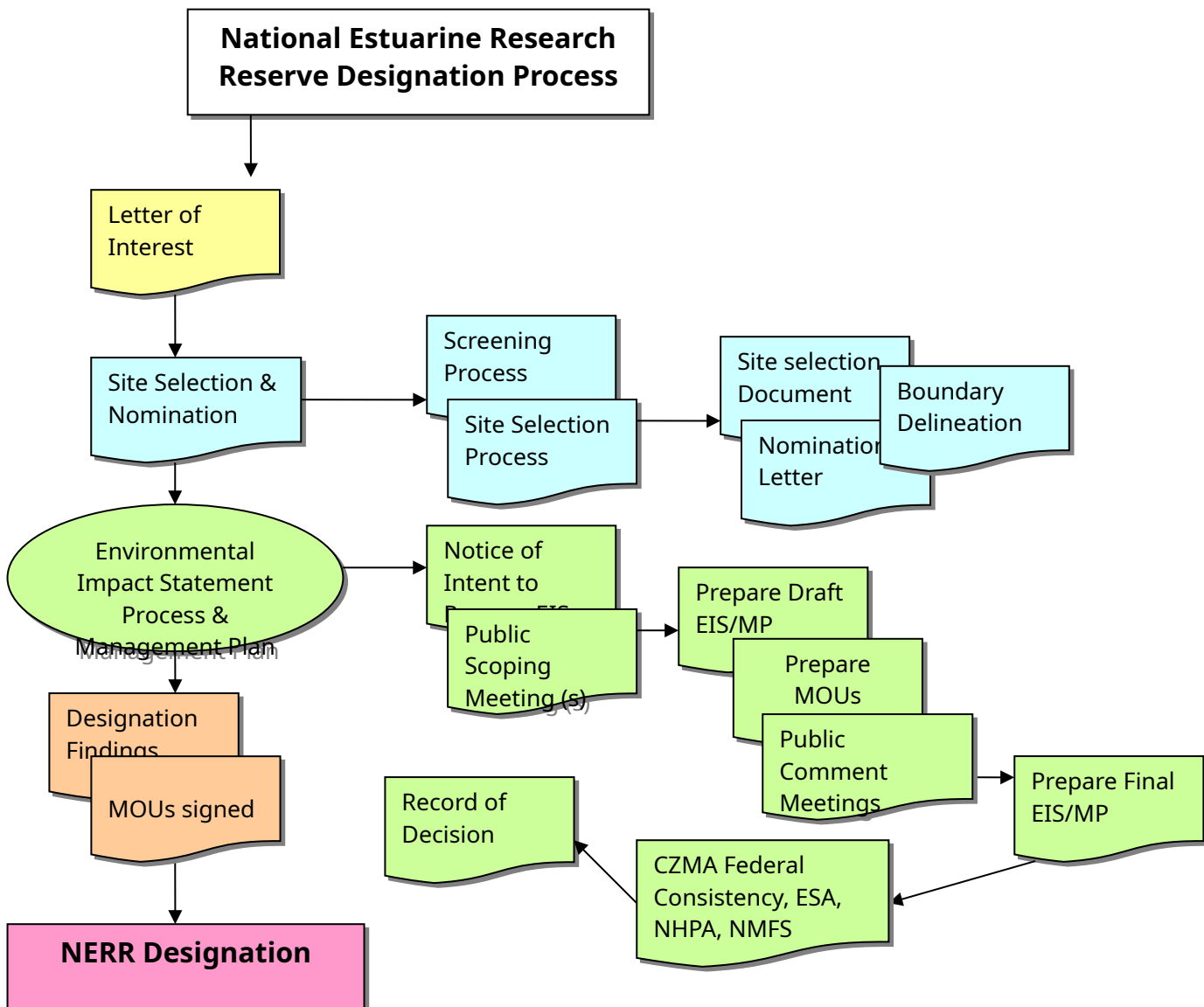
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I. Designation Process Overview

A. Key State Documents

- Letter expressing interest in nominating a National Estuarine Research Reserve (reserve)
- Site selection document and official nomination letter
- Draft Environmental Impact Statement/Draft Management Plan (DEIS/DMP)
- Final Environmental Impact Statement/Final Management Plan (FEIS/FMP)
- MOU between state partners (if applicable)
- Applications for financial assistance

B. Designation Process



Funding:

A state is eligible for a total of \$100,000 in federal funds for pre-designation activities. Activities appropriate for these funds are developing site selection, developing and applying a site selection process, preparation of the DEIS/DMP and FEIS/FMP, and limited basic characterization studies of the physical, chemical and biological attributes of the site.

Step 1. Letter of Interest

The Governor sends a letter to the NOAA Administrator identifying:

- interest in developing a reserve program and nominating a site (do not indicate a specific site)
- need for funds for site selection (if applicable)
- lead agency or agencies for contact

NOAA will respond to the state with a determination of whether it can consider a nomination and provide funds.

Step 2. Site Selection and Nomination

Once NOAA determines that it can accept a new nomination, the lead state agency may submit an application to NOAA for pre-designation assistance (70/30 match requirement). It is recommended that the preliminary application for the site selection phase request \$25-40K, to leave sufficient funds for subsequent steps.

While a reserve designation usually requires many partners, the lead state agency should be determined as early in the process as possible. While not imperative that the lead state agency manage pre-designation funds, it is encouraged that the lead state agency be prepared to accept and manage funds once the designation occurs. Any applications for pre-designation funds must identify who will be conducting the work and supplying match for the award.

The site selection process should be collaborative and involve a diverse array of stakeholders. In past designations, the lead state agency has sought various experts and the public to inform the process including tribes, industry, public officials, farmers, ranchers, community organizations and issue groups, among others. Efforts to identify and involve stakeholders early in the process will contribute to a successful reserve designation.

The site selection process should start by covering the entire biogeographic sub-region within the state. Options for sites can then be narrowed. A site must contribute to the biogeographic and typological balance of the Reserve System, and be adequately protected for long-term research, education, and stewardship.

Key elements of site selection:

- Development of a process for selecting a site, including development of site selection

criteria. It is recommended that the state establish a site selection committee comprised of key individuals with relevant expertise (e.g. scientists, educators, resource managers). Identification of significant cultural and historic areas when developing site selection criteria is important.

- Identification of potential sites that are representative of the biogeography, suitable for long-term research and education, compatible with existing uses, and contain key land and waters to approximate an ecological unit.
- Involve and seek the views of affected landowners, resource users, local governments, state and federal agencies, as well as others interested in the process.
- Development of a strategy for incorporating public participation into the process. The state, in conjunction with NOAA, holds a public meeting in the vicinity of the site or sites being considered to discuss the criteria and application of those criteria. Notice should be made in the local newspaper and Federal Register at least 15 days prior to the meeting.
- Development of a site nomination which includes a description and analysis of sites considered, why a site was not preferred, and rationale for the site selected. The Governor formally submits the site nomination to the NOAA Administrator for approval. NOAA may request additional information or suggest changes to the nomination.

Step 3. Draft Environmental Impact Statement/Draft Management Plan

After NOAA approves the site nomination, the lead agency may submit an application to NOAA, limited to the unallocated portion of the \$100,000, for development of the Draft Environmental Impact Statement/Draft Management Plan (DEIS/DMP), Final Environmental Impact Statement/Final Management Plan (FEIS/FMP), and basic characterization studies. The state application for post site selection funding must include:

- A draft management plan outline, including milestones and timeline
- An outline of a draft memorandum of understanding (MOU) between the lead state agency and NOAA detailing the federal and state roles in reserve management (as well as additional MOU's with land owning/leasing or managing partners, if applicable)

Prior to preparation of the DEIS/DMP, NOAA publishes an intent to prepare an EIS in the Federal Register. The state, with assistance by NOAA, holds a scoping meeting(s) to solicit the views of the public regarding the proposed project before the DEIS/DMP is prepared. The meeting must be publicized at least 15 days prior to being held in both the Federal Register and local media. Comments are accepted and addressed in the DEIS.

The state, with assistance by NOAA, prepares a preliminary and final DEIS/DMP, including a MOU identifying the state and NOAA roles in managing the reserve. The state submits the

preliminary and final documents to NOAA for review.

After NOAA approval, NOAA, or in some cases the state partner, prints the document and distributes it to interested parties including federal, state, and local agencies.

NOAA, through the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, announces the availability of the DEIS/DMP in the Federal Register. The date of publication begins the 45-day comment period on the DEIS/DMP. The state and NOAA hold a public hearing(s) 30-45 days after the announcement. NOAA also publishes a notice of the public hearing(s) in the Federal Register 15 days prior to the hearing. Concurrently, the state publishes a notice of the public hearing (s) in the local media.

If, during the comment period, NOAA determines that critical information was omitted in the DEIS that would have a bearing on the decision, a supplement to the DEIS may need to be published to incorporate this new information.

Step 4. Final Environmental Impact Statement/Final Management Plan

The state, with assistance by NOAA, prepares the FEIS/FMP as follows:

- NOAA works with the state to respond to comments on the DEIS/DMP.
- The state makes necessary changes to the DEIS/DMP and submits preliminary and final documents to NOAA for review. The FEIS/FMP includes:
 - Proposed MOU between NOAA and the state (not signed)
 - Draft or final MOU(s) among reserve partners establishing roles and responsibilities (these must be finalized prior to designation but should not be signed in the FEIS/FMP)
- Upon approval, NOAA, or in some cases the state partner, prints the FEIS/FMP and distributes it to those who provided comments, to other interested parties, and to the NEPA distribution list posted on the Council on Environmental Quality web site and available from the NOAA Office of Public and Constituent Affairs.
- NOAA, through the U.S. EPA, publishes a Federal Register notice announcing the availability of the FEIS/FMP. The date of publication begins the 30-day “cooling-off” period. During this time, NOAA may receive comments but is not obligated to respond to them. This is essentially a time to address any minor issues or major litigious issues.

Step 5. Final requirements, Designation Findings and Certificate; Record of Decision, Signing of the MOU

- After the 30-day cooling-off period is completed and all issues have been addressed, the following steps need to be finalized:
 - NOAA and the state sign the MOU. If revisions to the MOU have been made to address site-specific issues, NOAA will clear the MOU through the Department of Commerce (DOC). After DOC has approved the MOU, five original copies will be signed by the Director of the Office of Ocean and Coastal Resource Management (OCRM), and sent to the appropriate official in the state for signature. Three original copies should be returned to OCRM.
 - MOU(s) among reserve partners establishing roles and responsibilities are signed.
 - NOAA will make a CZMA federal consistency determination for the designation of a reserve in a state with a federally approved coastal management program.
 - Endangered Species Act Section 7 consultations with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the National Marine Fisheries Service should be completed.
 - National Historic Preservation Act Section 106 consultations with the State Historic Preservation Officer should be completed.
- NOAA prepares designation findings for signature by the NOAA Administrator. Once the designation findings are signed, the designation is official.
- NOAA prepares a certificate of designation for signature by state and NOAA Administrators.
- NOAA prepares a record of decision for signature by the NOAA or NOS Administrator.
- NOAA publishes a Federal Register notice announcing the reserve designation, the consistency determination, and the NEPA record of decision. An announcement of designation should also be published in the local media.

Step 6. Designation Ceremony

- The state normally organizes a designation ceremony with Congressional and state participation.
- NOAA can provide an invitation list of NOAA personnel, arrange for speakers from NOAA, and assist with publicity.
- NOAA presents the certificate of designation to state officials and Congressional representatives.

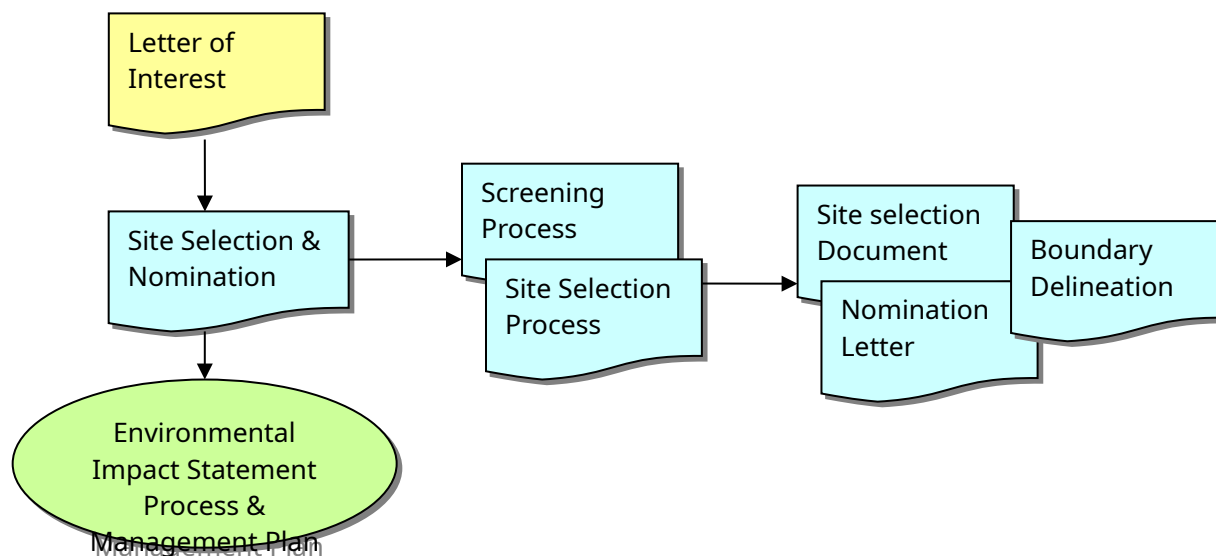
C. Reserve Funding and Implementation

Upon publication of the FEIS/FMP, the reserve is eligible for implementation funding as follows:

Type	Match Requirements	
	Federal Share	State Share
NERR Operations Funds	70%	30%
Construction Awards	70%	30%
Land Acquisition Awards	50%	50%
Graduate Research Fellowships	70%	30%
Other NOAA funds	Variable	Variable

NOTE: This is an overview of the designation process. Situations may vary within a state or NOAA, resulting in slight modifications to some of the designation steps. More detailed information on the designation process is available from ERD. Prior to undertaking any step, please contact ERD staff to discuss logistics and timelines.

II. Site Selection Criteria and Process



A. Introduction

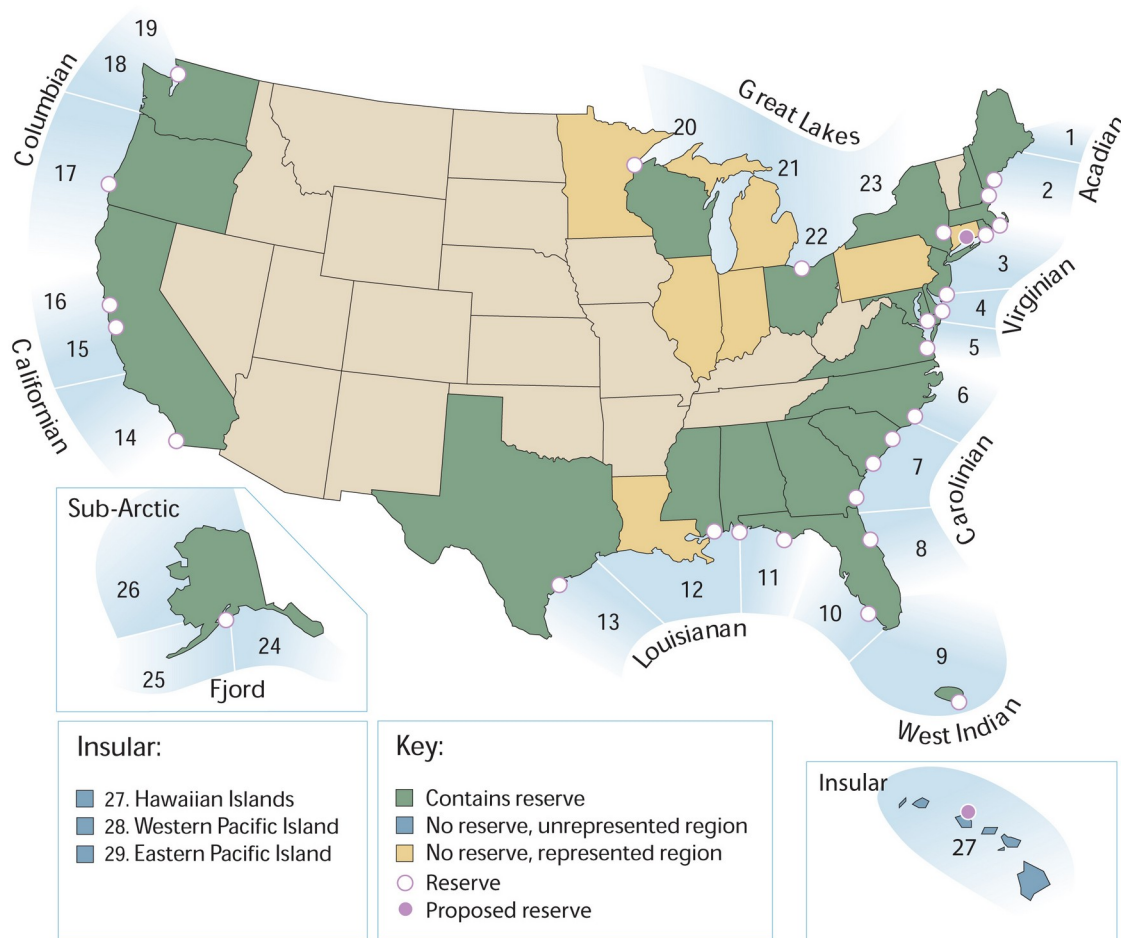
The following set of site selection criteria are designed as a model for states that plan to propose new sites for the National Estuarine Research Reserve System (NERRS) and based on site selection and feasibility guidance provided in 15 CFR 921.11. It can be modified in consultation with ERD to reflect regional differences in the ecological characteristics of the habitats to be considered. The relative "values" placed upon the criteria can also be modified as appropriate.

The criteria fall into the four major categories:

- I. Environmental Representativeness
- II. Value of the Site for Research, Monitoring, and Resource Protection
- III. Suitability of the Site for Education and Interpretation
- IV. Acquisition and Management Considerations.

These categories reflect the major considerations associated with addressing the goals of the NERRS program. The format used in presenting each selection criterion includes a (1) brief description and/or definition of the criterion with underlying assumptions about its use and (2) scoring levels.

An extremely important site selection criterion, at the very outset of the site selection and site nomination process, is whether there is an existing site located in the particular biogeographic subregion and typologic classification scheme under consideration (15 CFR 921.3). A site proposal for a biogeographic region that is not represented is automatically of high value to the NERRS Program. The map of existing and proposed sites and the biogeographic regions indicates which regions and subregions still require site representation.



B. Preliminary Site Screening Process

Prior to the application of the full suite of site selection criteria detailed above, it may be appropriate for the state, in consultation with ERD, to utilize a simplified procedure to screen the proposed sites to eliminate those areas that are clearly not suitable candidates. A preliminary screening should reduce the amount of time and effort that is required to apply the full suite of criteria to all sites. A candidate site which does not appear to meet each of the following criteria should be eliminated from the site selection process.

- The candidate site is a representative estuary in the biogeographic region or subregion.
- The proposed boundaries of the candidate site include sufficient land and water area to maintain the integrity of the ecosystem.
- The candidate site consists of publicly owned lands and/or demonstrates sufficient potential for land acquisition and adequate land use control to meet NERRS objectives.
- The candidate site is accessible by normal modes of transportation.

- The candidate site is suitable for research, monitoring, and resource protection activities.
- The candidate site is suitable for education, training, and interpretation activities.
- The candidate site is suitable to address key local, state, and regional coastal management issues.

C. Site Selection Criteria and Process for their application to screened sites

There are a variety of ways that the application of the full set of site selection criteria to the screened sites can be undertaken. An initial step is to identify who will be responsible for this phase of the site selection process. Normally, these individuals become members of a site selection committee. Once the site selection committee has been identified, it is recommended that each member preliminarily assess and score each of the candidate sites individually. If necessary, the scoring within each criterion may be crafted to help better evaluate the proposed sites.

Field visits to each site will allow the committee members an opportunity to gain first hand knowledge of the characteristics of each site. They should also give everyone a better understanding of the factors to be considered under each selection criterion and how these factors should be taken into account. Field trips may be appropriate before scoring the sites. However, the committee members should be familiar with the site selection criteria prior to visiting the candidate sites.

After site selection committee members have assessed the candidate sites individually, the site selection committee should convene to assess the sites collectively and determine one site for nomination to the Governor. Several options exist for this collective decision making. Three options are described below:

Option 1. Strict Averaging of the Individual Scores

All committee member scores for each criterion would be averaged, then totaled and weighted to arrive at one site to recommend to the Governor for nomination.

Option 2. Working Group Discussions

The site selection committee would be divided into two to three small working groups to assess all of the candidate sites, taking their individual assessments and scores into account. Each working group would then reach consensus as a group on an appropriate score for each criterion.

Thereafter, the working groups would reconvene in full committee and compare their collective decision making with the goal of overall consensus on the scoring for each candidate site. One site would be recommended to the Governor for nomination.

Option 3. Committee Discussion

The committee as a whole would assess each site, taking individual assessments and scores into account. Members would reach consensus as a group on each criterion and ultimately select the site to be recommended to the Governor for nomination.

Site Selection Criteria

1. Environmental Representativeness: Ecosystem/Ecological Characteristics

In order to determine the representativeness of a candidate site relative to ecosystem type (as defined in Appendix 2 of NERRS Program Regulations (15 CFR Part 921)), the site will be evaluated using the following suite of ecological, biological, physical, and chemical characteristics that fall under the general category of "Ecosystem/Ecological Characteristics." The first five criteria for ecological and biological characteristics focus primarily on factors concerning a site's diversity and balance in regard to the types of ecosystems and habitats present, as well as any significant and/or unique biotic trait. The remaining criteria for physical/chemical characteristics focus on a site's position within the watershed to which it belongs, geological and salinity characteristics, water quality, and the degree to which it is developed.

A. Ecosystem Composition. This is a measure of the diversity of ecosystem types present within the boundaries of the site. This criterion is based on the assumption that sites that have a high diversity of major ecosystem types are of higher relative "value" for protection and management than those with low ecosystem diversity (unless the ecosystem in consideration is rare or unique: see "Biotic Uniqueness of the Site"). Use the following ecosystem type designations (Appendix 2 of NERRS Program Regulations (15 CFR Part 921)). Modify as appropriate.

Group I - Shorelands

- A. Maritime Forest-Woodland
- B. Coastal Shrublands
- C. Coastal Grasslands
- D. Coastal Tundra
- E. Coastal Cliffs

Group II - Transition Areas

- A. Coastal Marshes
- B. Coastal Swamps
- C. Coastal Mangroves
- D. Intertidal Beaches
- E. Intertidal Mud and Sand Flats
- F. Intertidal Algal Beds

Group III - Submerged Bottoms

A. Subtidal Hard Bottoms

B. Subtidal Soft Bottoms

C. Subtidal Plants

- 3 Points The site has a high diversity of ecosystem composition, i.e., it contains at least one representative habitat from each of the three main ecosystem groups listed above (e.g., maritime forest, coastal marsh, and oyster reef).
- 2 Points The site has a moderate diversity of ecosystem composition, i.e., it contains at least one representative habitat from two of the three main ecosystem groups listed above (e.g., maritime forest and coastal marsh).
- 1 Point The site has a low diversity of ecosystem composition, i.e., it contains at least two representative habitats from only one of the three main ecosystem groups listed above (e.g., coastal marsh and mud flat).
- 0 Points The site has a very low diversity of ecosystem composition, i.e., it contains only a single habitat type within any one of the three main ecosystem groups listed above (e.g., maritime forest).

B. Balanced Ecosystem Composition. This is a measure of the relative composition of ecosystem types within the boundaries of a site. This criterion is based on the assumption that sites with a balanced proportion of ecosystem types are of higher relative "value" for protection and management. High, moderate, and low values are assigned to sites that contain variations in the proportions of all three ecosystem types. A value of zero is assigned to a site that is dominated by one ecosystem type or contains less than three ecosystem types.

- 3 Points The site contains representative upland, intertidal, and subtidal habitats in relatively equal proportions (i.e., areal cover of any one ecosystem type not less than 25% of the total area).
- 2 Points The site contains representative upland, intertidal, and subtidal habitats, with the areal cover of any one type not less than 10% of the total area.
- 1 Point The site contains representative upland, intertidal, and subtidal habitats, with the areal cover of any one type less than 10% of the total area.
- 0 Points The site contains representative upland, intertidal, and subtidal habitats, with the areal cover of two types being less than 10% of the total area or the site consists of habitats from only one or two of the three major ecosystem types.

C. Habitat Composition/Complexity. This is a measure of the diversity of habitat types present within the major ecosystem type found within the boundaries of the site. This criterion is based on the assumption that sites that have a high diversity of habitat types are of higher relative "value" for protection and management than those with a low diversity of habitat types. Major

ecosystem type is defined here as that type that comprises approximately 40% of the site. Use the habitat type designations listed above for "ecosystem composition."

- 3 Points The candidate site has a high diversity of habitat composition within its major ecosystem type, i.e., it contains three or more habitat types or subtypes within its major ecosystem type (e.g., site consists of a combination of swamps, coastal marshes, and mud flats) or has a combination of multiple coastal marsh types (e.g., high, mid, and low marsh zones).
- 2 Points The site has a moderate diversity of habitat composition within its major ecosystem type, i.e., it contains only two habitat types or subtypes within its major ecosystem type (e.g., consists of a combination of swamps and a single coastal marsh type).
- 1 Point The site has a low diversity of habitat composition within its major ecosystem type, i.e., its major ecosystem type consist of a single habitat type (e.g., maritime forest or *Juncus* marsh).

D. Habitat Uniqueness of the Site. This criterion is a measure of the presence of rare or unique habitat types within a candidate site. This criterion recognizes the importance of emphasizing unique areas in the selection process, in addition to the representativeness of the candidate site in terms of ecosystem and habitat diversity. Unique habitat is defined here as a habitat type of "limited" known occurrence within the biogeographic region/subregion. This criterion can be a simple "yes/no" question.

3 Points The site contains one or more "unique" habitat types within its boundaries.

0 Points The site contains no "unique" habitat types within its boundaries.

E. Significant Faunal and Floral Support. This is a measure of the degree to which a site supports significant faunal and/or floral components. This criterion focuses on a site's contribution (i.e., function) toward supporting the activities (e.g., feeding, nesting) of the following suite of significant faunal and/or floral components. The list of components includes groups or organisms that are known to be dependent upon estuarine habitats for the entire or a crucial part of their life cycle.

- Fish and Shellfish Spawning and Nursery Grounds (includes use by either freshwater, estuarine, or estuarine-dependent marine species)
- Migratory Bird and/or Waterfowl Use
- Bird Nesting and/or Roosting Area
- Critical Mammal Habitat
- Non-Game Animals (amphibians, reptiles, etc.)
- State or Federally Listed Species (animal or plant - including candidate species)

- 3 Points The candidate site supports or serves as an important site for a wide range of the faunal and floral components listed above (4 of 6) and/or is an extremely important site for any threatened or endangered species.
- 2 Points The site supports or serves as an important site for a moderate range and diversity of the significant faunal and floral components listed above (3 of 6).
- 1 Point The site supports or serves as an important site for one or two of the significant faunal and floral components listed above.
- 0 Points The site does not support significant faunal and floral components.

F. Site's Relationship to Its Tidally Influenced Drainage Basin. This is a measure of relative proportion and/or juxtaposition of a site relative to the greater tidally-influenced drainage basin to which it belongs. This factor assumes that, except for the deltaic portions of major river systems, most coastal drainage basins are relatively small, tidally-influenced, coastal plain drainages, and that a site's "value" increases as a function of how much of the overall drainage basin is encompassed within its boundaries. Aerial photos and detailed topographic maps should be used for judging this criterion.

- 3 Points The site encompasses a relatively large percentage (> 75%) of the tidally influenced portion of the drainage basin to which it belongs.
- 2 Points The site is not large relative to the overall drainage basin (<75 but >25%), but is situated either near the mouth or headwaters of the drainage basin.
- 1 Point The site is small relative to the overall drainage basin (<25%), but is situated either near the mouth or headwaters of the drainage basin.
- 0 Points The site is small relative to the overall drainage basin (<25%) and does not encompass either the mouth or headwaters of the drainage basin.

G. Geologic Representativeness/Diversity/Uniqueness of the Site. This is a measure of the representativeness/diversity/uniqueness of the geologic characteristics that define part or the whole of a candidate site. This criterion attempts to consider both the surface and subsurface geologic formations that may be representative or unique within a site, particularly as they affect and/or define associated biotic habitats. Included in these considerations are the ways that local geology affects surface hydrology, such as drainage systems, and subsurface hydrology, such as shallow-water aquifers. Geologic and hydrologic maps should be used to evaluate this criterion.

- 3 Points The site has numerous representative geologic characteristics, two or more unique geologic characteristics and contains a high diversity of formation types or strata within its boundaries.
- 2 Points The site has a moderate number of representative geologic characteristics and at least one unique geologic characteristic, and contains a moderate diversity of

formation types or strata within its boundaries.

- 1 Point The site has a moderate number of geologic characteristics, no unique geologic characteristics, or contains a moderate diversity of formation types or strata within its boundaries.
- 0 Points The site has few or only one representative geologic characteristics, no unique geologic characteristics, or contains few or only one formation type or strata within its boundaries.

H. Salinity Gradient. This is a measure of the range of salinity within a candidate site's boundaries. This criterion recognizes the effect of salinity on the biotic structure of estuarine habitats (including the plants communities and faunal components that inhabit them). It makes the assumption that a site with a greater range of salinity will support a broader range of habitat types and organisms.

- 3 Points The site encompasses a 25 ppt or greater range of salinity within its boundaries (e.g., 0-25 ppt, 5-30 ppt).
- 2 Points The site encompasses a 15-24 ppt range of salinity within its boundaries (e.g., 0-15 ppt, 5-25 ppt, 10-30 ppt).
- 1 Point The site encompasses a 6-14 ppt range of salinity within its boundaries (e.g., 0-8 ppt, 10-22 ppt, 25-32 ppt).
- 0 Points The site encompasses a 5 ppt or less range of salinity within its boundaries (e.g., 0-5 ppt, 8-10 ppt, 20-25 ppt).

I. Degree Developed and Potential Impacts to Water Quality. This is a measure of the degree to which the site and its surrounding area are developed and the relative impacts to surface waters from human activities. This criterion is based on the assumption that human impacts to a site are directly proportional to the degree of development. Exceptions to this assumption may need to be considered where development at a site and its surrounding area have been subject to high levels of control. Data on land use and water quality measurements from local, county, and state government agencies should be used to judge this criterion.

- 3 Points The site is relatively undisturbed and the watershed contains low intensity development (e.g., few residences, minimal agricultural or silvicultural activity) and/or the land is in protected status.
- 2 Points The site is relatively undisturbed and the watershed contains moderate development (e.g., relatively few residences, moderate agricultural or silvicultural activity, minimal commercial development).
- 1 Point The site has been moderately disturbed and the watershed contains relatively intensive development (e.g., moderate density of residences, and/or the presence of industrial activity).

0 Points The site has been extremely disturbed and the watershed contains very intensive development (e.g., high density residential, and/or commercial or industrial activity).

2. Value of the Site for Research, Monitoring, and Resource Protection

A. Value of Site for Research: This is a measure of the opportunities offered by characteristics of the site for research, such as a high diversity of ecosystems/habitat types, a balanced habitat composition, a wide salinity range, biotic or geologic representativeness of the site, known historic uses or archaeological sites, and unique opportunities to conduct applied research regarding important local, state, and regional coastal management issues (including past and potential management activities). The assumption is that a site with representative, unique, and highly diverse characteristics will provide greater research, monitoring, and resource protection opportunities than one lacking these characteristics. Ratings generated for these factors under previous selection criteria can be used as a guide for rating this overall factor.

3 Points The site has (1) a high diversity of ecosystem/habitat types, (2) moderate salinity range, (3) representative biotic and geologic sites or characteristics, (4) state and federally listed species, (5) historic and archaeological significance, and (6) opportunities to address important habitat or resource management issues.

2 Points The site has four or five of the six above.

1 Point The site has two or three of the six above.

0 Points The site has one or none of the six above.

B. Previous Research and Monitoring Efforts: This is a measure of the degree to which the site has been used for past research and monitoring, including considerations of the diversity of inquiry (fields of research), and the availability of data (the form and availability of documentation, e.g., peer reviewed papers, grey literature, inventory reports). The assumption is that an area with previously established research and monitoring interest offers greater opportunity for future projects than an area that has not sparked such an interest in the past.

3 Points The site has a long history of well documented research and monitoring projects in a wide variety of topics. Data is readily available.

2 Points The site has had major and well documented research and monitoring efforts, generating data that is readily available. It has not had a long history of research and monitoring.

1 Point The site has had only minor research and monitoring projects generating limited data (e.g., inventories) that may be difficult to obtain.

0 Points The site has no known history of research and monitoring.

C. Suitability of Site for Environmental Baseline Monitoring: This is a measure of the suitability of the site as a reference area for assessing long-term resource trends and/or ecological characteristics, based on the degree to which the site has been altered by land use practices on or near the site. The assumption is that a site that has relatively pristine land areas and waters will be a more valuable reference area to generate baseline monitoring information than a site that has been extensively altered.

- | | |
|----------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 3 Points | The site has outstanding areas to generate environmental baseline data to assess long-term resource trends or ecological characteristics for a wide range of needs. |
| 2 Points | The site has adequate areas to generate environmental baseline data to assess long-term resource trends or ecological characteristics for many needs. |
| 1 Point | The site has marginal areas to generate environmental baseline data to assess long-term resource trends or ecological characteristics. |
| 0 Points | The site has been so extensively altered by past activities that it is unsuitable for generating environmental baseline data. |

D. Ability to Address Key Local, State, and Regional Coastal Management Issues: This is a measure of the degree to which the site is appropriate for investigating issues relevant to coastal management at the local, state, and regional levels. Solutions to these issues may require either the application of land management practices or habitat manipulations in order to perform meaningful research and assessment. As such, the site should offer both adequate control areas plus areas where demonstration projects and habitat manipulations can be accommodated in order to study many of the issues of concern. The assumption is that a site where coastal management issues arise and can be addressed will be of greater value from a resource protection standpoint than sites where these issues do not arise. The significant issues should be identified for each region and may include:

- wetlands development
- wetlands mitigation/restoration/creation
- dredging and spoil disposal
- beneficial uses of dredged materials
- shoreline erosion
- commercial and/or recreational fisheries
- waterfowl and other wildlife management
- best management practices for habitat protection and/or management (e.g., fire management)
- best management practices to limit impacts from agricultural, silvicultural, or development activities
- best methods to control pestiferous insects or undesirable vegetation
- effects of pollutants on water quality and living resources

- impacts of sea-level rise
- prehistoric and early historic settlement and land use

3 Points The site is highly appropriate for investigating coastal zone management issues.

2 Points The site is appropriate for investigating coastal zone management issues.

1 Point The site is minimally appropriate for investigating coastal zone management issues.

0 Points The site is not appropriate for investigating coastal zone management issues.

3. Suitability of the Site for Training, Education, and Interpretation

A. Diversity and Quality of Training, Education, and Interpretation Opportunities: This is a measure of the variety and quality of training, education, and interpretation opportunities (i.e., ecological, archeological, cultural, historical, etc.) provided by the site for the different target audiences. The assumption is that a candidate site with a diversity of such opportunities of high quality will be utilized to a greater extent than one with fewer opportunities.

3 Points The site has numerous different training, education, and interpretation opportunities of high quality.

2 Points The site has several significantly different educational opportunities of good quality.

1 Point The site has few significant educational opportunities.

0 Points The site has insignificant educational opportunities.

B. Diversity and Availability of Target Audiences: This is a measure of the diversity and availability of target audiences (e.g., user groups, resource managers, residents, environmental groups, decision makers, teachers and students, the general public) which may routinely utilize the site for training, education, and interpretation. The assumption is that a candidate site with a variety of available target audiences will be utilized to a greater extent than one with fewer target audiences.

3 Points The site is suitable for a variety of target audiences that are readily available.

2 Points The site is suitable for a moderate number of target audiences that are readily available.

1 Point The site is suitable for few target audiences that are available.

0 Points The site is so remote or inaccessible that it is not suitable for any target audience.

4. Acquisition and Management Considerations

Acquisition, Facilities, and Proximity

A. Land Ownership: This is a measure of the degree to which the property is divided (e.g., divided into only a few parcels or owned by many individuals). The assumption is that a candidate site with fewer property owners will be easier to acquire or control.

3 Points The property is relatively undivided.

2 Points The property is divided with few property owners.

1 Point The property is divided with many property owners.

B. Publicly Owned Lands and Feasibility of Land Acquisition: This is a measure of the degree to which the land within the site is currently owned by the state, federal government or local governments and/or environmental interest groups, and the degree to which there is interest in donating or selling property by its owners. The assumption is that the degree of control needed to maintain the site in relatively pristine conditions increases with publicly owned land and lands controlled by environmental groups, and that the chances of purchasing additional areas increase with private property owners who are willing to sell.

3 Points A large percentage (more than 50%) of the candidate site is currently owned by the state, federal, or local governments and/or environmental groups, and these entities have an interest in participating in a NERR.

2 Points State, federal, or local governments and/or environmental groups own 25-50% of the candidate site with the remainder in the hands of a few owners who have an interest in participating in a NERR.

1 Point State, federal, or local governments and/or environmental groups own less than 25% of the site with the remainder in the hands of a few owners who have an interest in participating in a NERR.

0 Points The site is owned by a large number of owners with little potential interest in sale or donation.

C. Availability of Facilities: The degree to which there are existing facilities or potential sites for future facilities that can be used by staff, researchers, classes and training groups (e.g., administrative building space, dormitories, labs, interpretive centers, trails and boardwalks, boat ramps, etc.). The assumption is that, due to limited NERR construction funds, a candidate site with existing facilities can meet the objectives of the NERRS Program sooner and more completely than a site without existing facilities. The availability of other sources of construction funds should be considered as part of this criterion.

3 Points The site has established structures and facilities that can be used for reserve activities.

- 2 Points The site has limited established structures and/or facilities that can be used for reserve activities.
- 1 Point The site has excellent potential for the development of facilities for reserve activities.
- 0 Points The site has limited potential for the development facilities for reserve activities.

D. Proximity and Accessibility of Site to Researchers, Educators, and Resource Management Decision Makers: This is a measure of (1) the relative proximity of the site to urban centers, K-12 schools, research and education institutions, and resource management agencies which may routinely utilize the site and (2) the adequacy of the roads and/or points for boat access at the site. The underlying assumption is that the proximity and accessibility of the site will enhance its utilization for education, research, monitoring, and resource protection purposes.

- 3 Points The candidate site can be utilized by the above listed entities during a single day trip. There are good roads and/or points for boat access at the site.
- 2 Points The candidate site is relatively isolated and utilization would require an overnight stay from any of the above listed entities, but accommodations are readily available. There are adequate roads and/or points for boat access at the site.
- 1 Point The candidate site is relatively isolated and reasonable accommodations for an overnight stay to utilize the site are limited. There are limited roads and/or points for boat access at the site.
- 0 Points The candidate site is extremely isolated and accommodations to utilize the site are not available. There are inadequate or no roads and/or points for boat access at the site.

Management Considerations

E. Controlled Land and Water Access: This is a measure of the degree to which land and water access to the candidate site can be controlled and limited. It is based on size, geography, proximity to adjacent development, and historical controls. The assumption is that the integrity and security of a potential NERR site can be better maintained with a higher level of controlled land and water access.

- 3 Points The candidate site is relatively isolated and of a size that can be controlled. Historically, access has been controlled, and can easily be controlled in the future due to the presence of limited access points by boat or vehicle.
- 2 Points The candidate site is not very isolated, but has a limited number of access points. Historically, site access has not been controlled, but the site is of a size that it can be controlled in the future.

- 1 Point Site access will be difficult to control due to the large number of access points and/or the size of the area. Historically, site access has not been controlled and it is unclear whether it can be controlled in the future.
- 0 Points Site access cannot be controlled due to the large number of access points, lack of historical controls, the size of the area, and/or dense adjacent development.

F. Compatibility with Existing Management Practices and Consumptive and Non-Consumptive Uses: This is a measure of the degree to which existing management practices (e.g., habitat manipulations, best management practices) and historic and current consumptive and non-consumptive uses might be in conflict with foreseeable management practices implemented under a NERR Program. The assumption is that sites with fewer conflicts are more likely to maintain both public support and the integrity of the site.

NOTE: This factor should be measured in light of special circumstances (such as the presence of unique habitats or of listed species) that might cause the state to limit what is now unlimited use or practices by groups or individuals and, in the process, cause some conflict in regard to designation of a NERR site. It should be measured with an eye toward balancing protection of critical sites or resources against reasonable access to other parts of the site.

- 3 Points Existing management practices and consumptive and non-consumptive uses would not be in conflict with any foreseeable management policy of a NERR.
- 2 Points Due to the presence of proportionately small areas of unique habitat/endangered species or threats to the integrity of the ecosystem, there is the potential for limited restrictions on existing management practices and/or consumptive and non-consumptive uses of a site.
- 1 Point Due to the presence of areas of unique habitat/endangered species and threats to the integrity of the ecosystem, some restrictions on existing management practices and/or consumptive and non-consumptive uses of a site are likely.
- 0 Points Large areas of unique habitat and threats to the integrity of the ecosystem will require restrictions on existing management practices and/or consumptive and non-consumptive uses of a site.

G. Compatibility With Adjacent Land Use: This is a measure of the potential conflicts between management practices on a NERR site with land use practices on adjacent lands. It is also a measure of the adequacy of land use regulations, plans, or other controls to sustain the site's resources for long-term research, education, and resource protection. The assumption is that a candidate site with compatible land use practices on adjacent lands is more likely to maintain the integrity of the reserve.

NOTE: As with the previous factor, this issue should be evaluated with an eye toward the potential for present and/or future conflicts with adjacent lands and the potential to designate buffer zones around a site.

- 3 Points A large percentage of the land adjacent to the site is not currently used for activities that might impact the site (and therefore, may be obtainable as a buffer) and/or the land use practices on adjacent lands would not have any negative impacts on a possible NERR.
- 2 Points A large to moderate percentage of the land adjacent to the site is not currently used for activities that might negatively impact the site, and/or the land-use practices on adjacent lands either could be negotiated or would have only minor impacts a possible NERR.
- 1 Point Some of the land adjacent to the site is currently used for activities that would have negative impacts on a possible NERR and may not be negotiable.
- 0 Points A large percentage of the land adjacent to the site is currently used for activities that would have negative impacts on a possible NERR and would lead to conflicts.

H. Future Development Plans: This is a measure of the potential level of future development in areas on or adjacent to a candidate site which would impact the site. The assumption is that a candidate site with minimal to no development plans on-site and on adjacent lands is more likely to maintain the integrity of the reserve.

NOTE: Even more so than the previous factor, this issue involves the degree to which adjacent lands are currently being used and/or may be attainable as buffer areas for the NERR.

- 3 Points A large percentage (more than 50%) of the land adjacent to the site is currently undeveloped and/or is, for whatever reason, very unlikely to be developed in the near future (e.g., consisting of marginally developable property, such as wetlands, which could be obtained as buffer).
- 2 Points A moderate percentage (between 25-50%) of the land adjacent to the site is currently undeveloped and/or is not likely to be developed in the near future.
- 1 Point A small to moderate percentage (10-25%) of the land adjacent to the site is currently undeveloped and/or is not likely to be developed in the near future, with limited levels of development on other lands.
- 0 Points A large percentage (more than 50%) of the land adjacent to the site is developed and the area is likely to continue to be developed in the future.

III. Site Nomination Review Checklist

Fulfillment of National Estuarine Research Reserve System Program Regulations 15CFR 921.11

The following is a checklist that will be used by ERD to ensure that a site nomination package fulfills the reserve system program regulation requirements.

Contents of the Site Nomination Package in Fulfillment of 15 CFR 921.11 (b) & (d)

- _____ Nomination of the proposed site by the Governor
- _____ Description of the site selection process
- _____ Identification of the site selection agency and potential management agency
- _____ List of all sites considered
- _____ Brief statement of the reasons why a site was not preferred
- _____ Description of the proposed site in relationship to each of the guiding principles (15 CFR 921.11 (c))
- _____ Analysis of the proposed site based on the biogeographic scheme/typology
- _____ Description of the proposed site and its major resources.
 - _____ location
 - _____ proposed boundaries
 - _____ adjacent land uses
 - _____ maps
- _____ Description of the public participation process
- _____ Summary of public comments
- _____ Documentation that Governor(s) of other affected states has been contacted if interstate issues are involved
- _____ Copies of all correspondence, including contact letters to affected landowners

Fulfillment of Procedural Requirements in 15 CFR 921.11 (b) and (d)

- _____ The state sought the views of:

- _____ affected landowners
- _____ local governments
- _____ other state agencies
- _____ federal agencies
- _____ other parties interested in the area

_____ The state held at least one public meeting in the vicinity of the proposed site.

_____ Fifteen days prior to the meeting, notice of the meeting was placed:

- _____ in the area's principle newspaper
- _____ by NOAA in the Federal Register

Conformity of the Proposed Site with Guiding Principles in 15 CFR 921.11(c)

_____ The site contributes to the biogeographic and typological balance of the NERRS.

_____ The site is located in a biogeographic region and subregion not represented in the system.

_____ The site is a representative estuarine ecosystem.

_____ The site's ecological characteristics will attract a broad range of research interests.

_____ The site is suitable for long-term estuarine research based on ecological factors and proximity to research facilities and educational institutions.

_____ The site's ecological characteristics will attract a broad range of educational interests.

_____ The site is important to education and interpretive efforts.

_____ The site is, to the maximum extent possible, minimally affected by human activity or influence.

_____ The site is compatible with existing and potential land and water uses in contiguous areas.

_____ The site is compatible with approved coastal and estuarine management plans.

- _____ The site boundaries encompass an adequate portion of key land and water areas to approximate an ecological unit.
- _____ The site boundaries encompass an adequate portion of key land and water areas to ensure effective conservation.
- _____ Less than 50% of the proposed reserve is currently federally protected.
- _____ The managing entity has or will establish adequate control over human activities occurring within the area.

Conformity of State's Request for Funds for EIS and Management Plan with 15 CFR 12

- _____ Request for funds for EIS and Management Plan
(Amount: \$_____)
- _____ Request for funds for limited site characterization
(Amount: \$_____)
- _____ Draft management plan outline
- _____ Outline of draft MOU between state and NOAA

IV. Boundary Delineation

A. Introduction

Criteria for setting boundaries are contained in NERRS regulations (Title 15 of the Code of Federal Regulations Part 921, Section 921.11). The main factor in delineating reserve boundaries is a determination that the site's boundaries encompass an adequate portion of the key land and water areas of the natural system to approximate an ecological unit and to assure effective conservation. Boundary size will vary greatly depending on the size of the ecosystem. Reserves may include existing Federal or state lands already in a protected status where mutual benefit can be enhanced. Limits do apply, however, to the extent of Federal lands that can be included in a Reserve. NOAA will not approve a site that is dependent primarily upon the inclusion of Federal lands.

Once a site is selected by a state, the delineation of proposed boundaries is the next important step prior to approval of the site by NOAA. The establishment of final boundaries is a difficult process that requires consideration of many factors, environmental and administrative. The regulations intend that environmental and scientific factors be given primary consideration in the initial delineation of proposed boundaries.

A balance must be sought in determining the overall size of a reserve between encompassing enough area to include an ecosystem large enough to make long-term estuarine research viable yet having a discrete contiguous area that can be effectively managed. The reserve boundary must provide protection for the ecosystem but may not be arbitrary (i.e., based on the availability of property nearby which may be available for purchase). This guidance document is, in part, an effort to ensure that property interests purchased in an effort to establish adequate state control of a reserve are actually required for the integrity of the reserve.

B. Basic Scientific Principles in Establishing Reserve Boundaries

1. Reserve boundaries are proposed by coastal states and approved by NOAA. It is preferable that boundaries include contiguous land and water areas which are essential to the reserve, i.e., to establish a natural field laboratory capable of supporting NERRS long-term research and educational objectives.
2. Boundaries should encompass an entire ecological unit (habitats and communities), including adjacent terrestrial areas, especially watersheds and drainage areas. However, to protect a whole watershed will, in most cases, be extraordinarily difficult and prohibitive in cost. The solution is to establish and protect a core area which incorporates the critical portions of the estuarine ecosystem.
3. Key land and water areas comprise a core area which preserves for research purposes a full range of significant physical, chemical and biological factors contributing to the diversity of fauna, flora, and natural processes occurring within the estuary.
4. The determination of which water and land areas are "key" to a particular reserve must be

made based upon specific scientific knowledge of the area. A basic principle to follow when deciding upon key land and water areas is that they should encompass resources that are representative of the total ecosystem and which if compromised could endanger the research objectives of the reserve.

5. An area adjacent to or surrounding the core and on which the integrity of the core area depends is the buffer zone. Buffer zones protect the core and provide additional protection for estuarine-dependent species. The buffer zone may also include an area best-suited for facilities required for research and interpretation. Additionally, buffers must encompass an area sufficient to accommodate the shift of the core in case of biological, ecological, or geomorphologic change.
6. Buffers are usually of the same biome as the core and may accommodate NOAA-approved manipulative research which should not be carried out in the core. They may encompass wetlands not in the core area, ecotones, and upstream effects where practical, as well as shoreland and contiguous ocean or bay water.
7. Determination of the landward boundary of a reserve is difficult because of transitional zones, the slope of the upland, the size of the estuary and other factors. At a minimum, the landward boundary should encompass wetlands that contribute to estuarine processes. Wetlands may be defined in terms of vegetation, and the upland limit of wetlands can be defined accordingly. There is generally a transitional zone (ecotone) in which vegetative types from two or more ecological groups mix together. Ecotones combine the characteristics of the communities they join and often have an unusually high abundance and diversity of life and serve a unique function to the ecosystem. The emergence of upland vegetation will indicate in general terms where the landward boundary of a reserve should be drawn. However, how much, if any, of the uplands are included in the proposed boundary must be determined on the basis of scientific judgment and not property lines or the availability of land for acquisition.
8. Estuarine resources do not necessarily end at the shoreline, but may include adjacent open water areas.

C. General Principles

Boundaries of reserves connote some degree of control by the managing entity over human activities and the natural resources occurring within the reserve. Generally, reserve boundaries will include two areas: key land and water areas, or a "core" area, and a buffer zone. Control on the landward side may involve direct ownership or jurisdiction of the agency which manages the core area; it may also mean control exercised by administrative action, easements, or by other means. Federal and state lands contiguous with the reserve maybe included within the boundaries only after formal agreements approved by NOAA have been established through proper administrative or legal measures.

D. Recommended General Procedure for Proposed Boundary Delineation

I. Conduct a scientific survey of the proposed site(s)

A. Identify proposed boundary on the landward side

- vegetation types
- landform/physical (natural or man-made)
- land use
- estuarine dependent physical processes, biological components, (flora/fauna) or combination.

B. Identify proposed boundary on the water side

- natural delineation between discrete or separable landforms
- natural delineation between discrete or separable water bodies or portions of the same water body.

II. Identify key land and water areas (Core Area)

A. Within the boundary established on the basis of the scientific survey

(see I. above), identify, and rank in order of their importance, the most important ecological units of the proposed area, i.e., those units most important to the integrity of the area and its resources. (See Nos. 3 and 4 of the Basic Scientific Principles listed in these guidelines.)

- Why are these units important?
- What is the minimum land and water area needed to protect these highest priority ecological units?

III. Identify buffer area

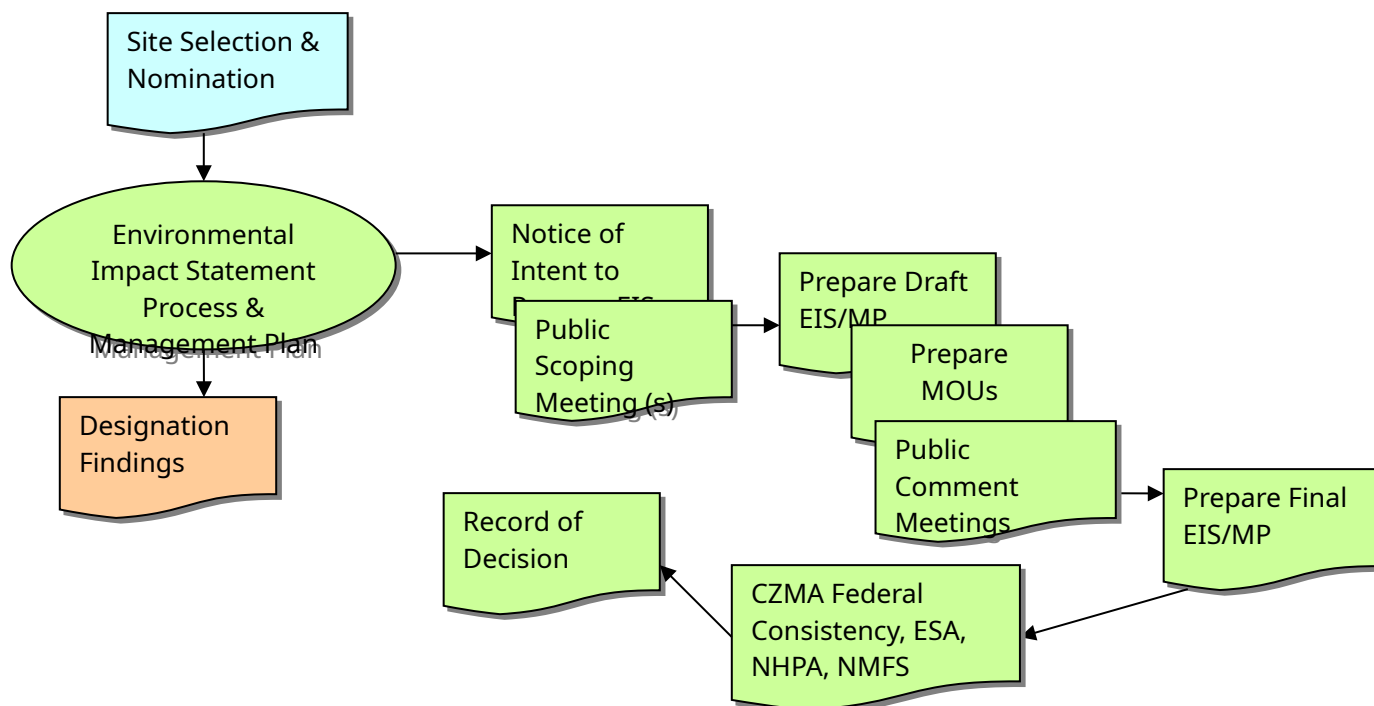
A. Within the boundary established on the basis of the scientific survey (see I. above) and in consideration of the core area identified in II.A., identify the minimum buffer area required to ensure the long-term viability of the core area for research purposes and to provide for required research or interpretive support facilities. (See Nos. 5 and 6 of the Basic Scientific Principles listed in these guidelines.)

V. Multi-Component Reserves

A multi-component reserve has two or more noncontiguous protected areas, or components, that are under the managerial jurisdiction of the reserve. Multiple components are appropriate when a state has a complex coast that makes it impossible for a single component to represent the habitat diversity in a biogeographic region. They should not be considered solely as a means for increasing protected land within a State.

A multi-component reserve is “treated as one reserve in terms of financial assistance and development of an overall management framework and plan” (NERRS regulations, §921.10b). It is subject to the same funding limits as single-component reserves, and it must function as one unit and not as individual "mini" reserves. ERD will look for strong administrative, education, research and monitoring plans that preserve an identity for the reserve and the national system. A state may choose to develop a multi-component reserve at any time during designation or operation of the reserve. The number of components is not limited, but the benefit of additional components must be balanced against increased management responsibility and program dilution. ERD and the state will determine the feasibility of planned components with each reserve on a case-by-case basis.

VI. Developing an Environmental Impact Statement and Reserve Management Plan



A. Introduction

The National Environmental Policy Act of 1969, as amended, requires that Federal agencies consider the environmental impacts of major Federal actions. The designation of a reserve is considered a major Federal action and requires a NEPA review before NOAA can officially designate a reserve. As determined by National Estuarine Research Reserve System regulations (§ 921.13), an environmental impact statement (EIS) and management plan must be developed to assess the possible environmental impacts of the proposed designation and to identify future management strategies if the proposed reserve is designated.

B. Milestones in Environmental Impact Statement and Management Plan Preparation

The process details the steps that NOAA and the state follow in order to prepare an environmental impact statement and a reserve management plan. This process should begin immediately following the approval of the Notice of Intent (NOI) to prepare a draft EIS/MP (DEIS). The process can last from 1-2 years and includes several important milestones:

NOAA Milestones

1. Prepare a NOI to assemble a DEIS/MP, with a minimum public comment period of 30 days before the release of the DEIS, to be published in the *Federal Register*.
2. File a completed DEIS/DMP with the U.S. EPA and prepare a notice of availability (NOA) for public comment to be published in the *Federal Register*. The NOA is published no less than 30 days prior to a public meeting(s) on the DEIS/DMP.

3. Prepare a notice announcing a public meeting(s) on the DEIS/DMP to be published in the *Federal Register*.
4. Address all comments received on the DEIS/DMP and file a completed Final Environmental Impact Statement/Final Management Plan (FEIS/FMP) with the U.S. EPA. The NOA for the FEIS/FMP is published in the *Federal Register* no less than 30 days before issuing a Record of Decision.
5. Prepare a notice announcing the designation of the new reserve and the availability of the NEPA Record of Decision to be published in the *Federal Register*. This notice must also contain the federal consistency determination from the state.

State Milestones

1. Conduct a scoping meeting(s) to solicit public comment on the proposed reserve prior to preparing the DEIS/DMP. The state must advertise the meeting(s) in local media at least 15 prior to the meeting(s) being held.
2. Prepare, with assistance from NOAA, a preliminary and final DEIS/DMP to NOAA. The DMP must contain a draft MOA(s) between the State and NOAA (see Appendix A).
3. Publish a notice in local media of the public hearings to review the DEIS/DMP. The hearings should be held 30-45 days after NOAA announces the availability of the DEIS/DMP in the *Federal Register*.
4. Prepare, with assistance from NOAA, a preliminary and a FEIS/FMP and submit to NOAA. The FEIS/FMP must respond to all comments received on the DEIS/DMP, as well as a final MOA between the State and NOAA and any other MOAs developed with local partners (see Appendix A).
5. Submit to NOAA all relevant MOAs signed by the State and all applicable partners. NOAA must receive copies of the signed MOAs prior to the NOAA Administrator signing the designation findings and certificate that officially designate the reserve.
6. Publish a notice in local media announcing the official designation of the new reserve.

C. Draft EIS Process for Reserve Designation

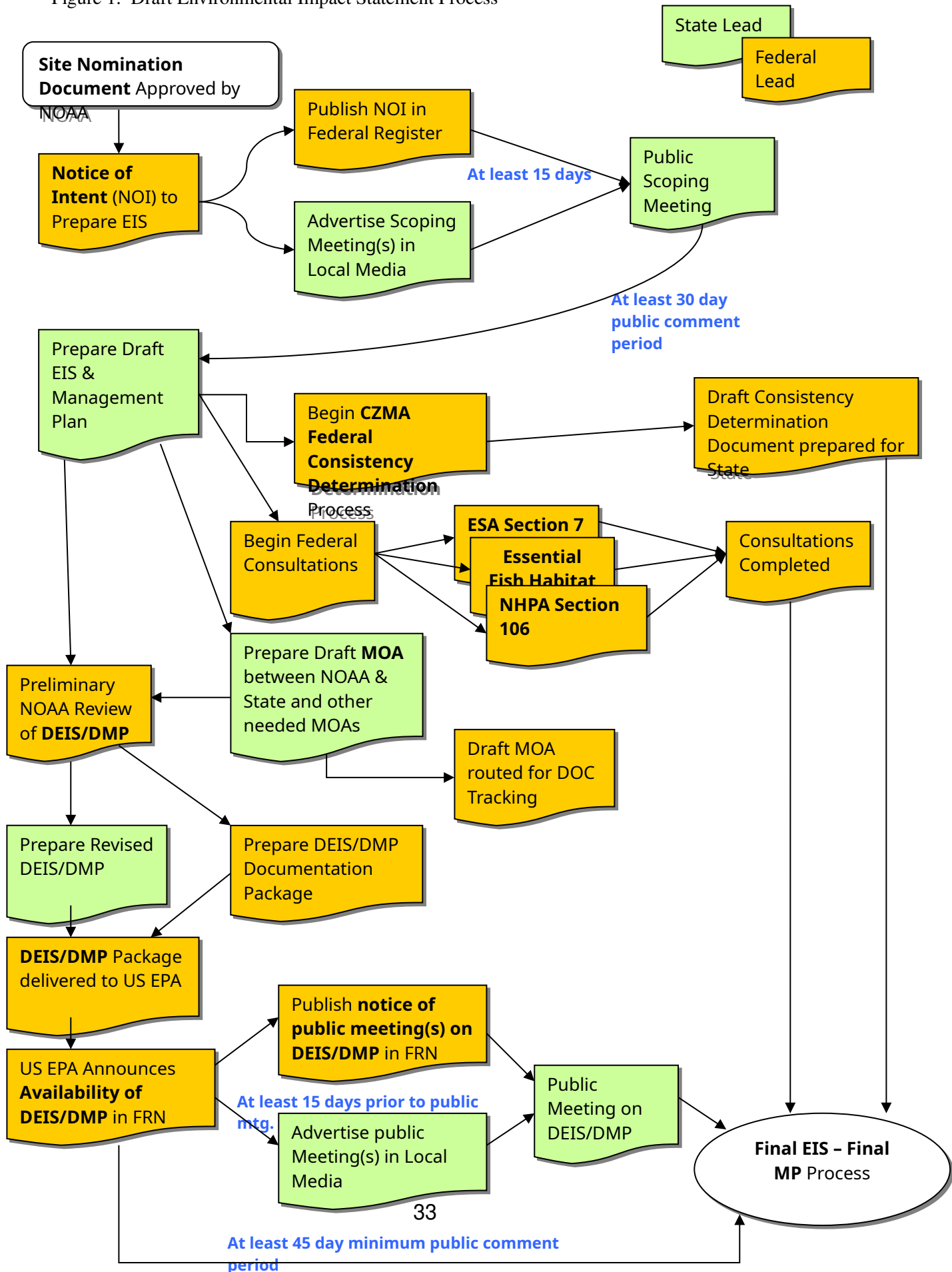
The Draft EIS process for the designation of National Estuarine Research Reserve is based on the requirements of NEPA and NOAA's Administrative Order 216-6. Each step in this process must be completed and in many cases sequentially. The overall process is shown in Figure 1. Each segment of the process denotes the recommended lead, State or NOAA.

1. Notice of Intent

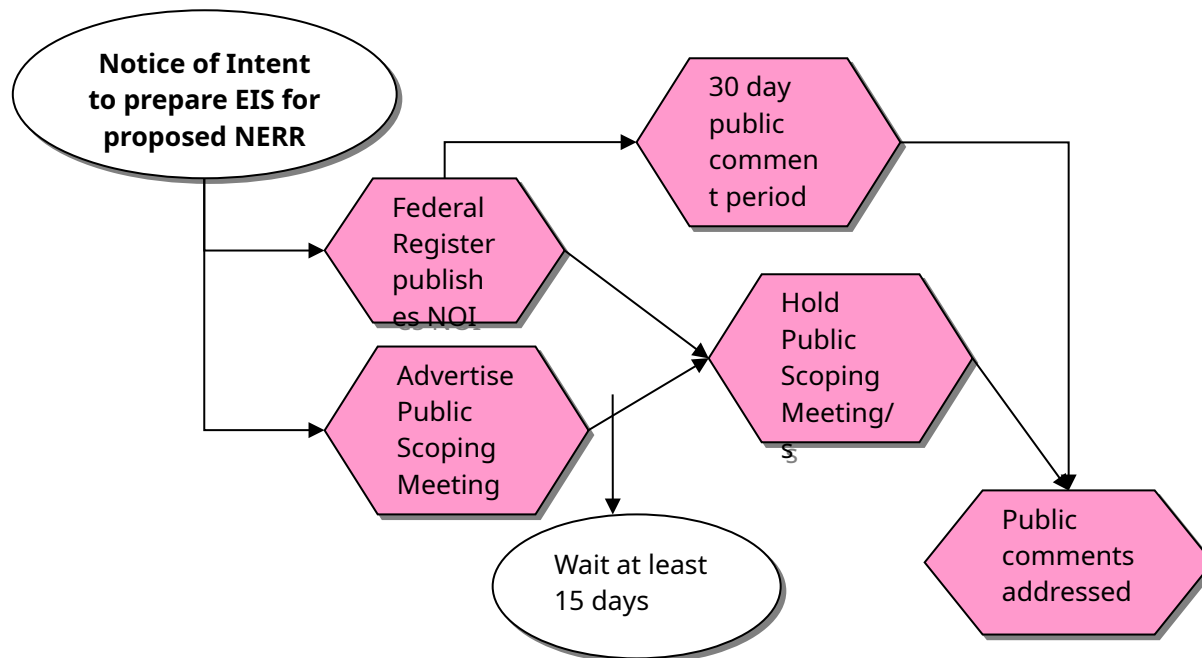
After the site nomination document is approved by NOAA, a Notice of Intent (NOI) to prepare a Draft EIS and Management Plan is created by NOAA with the assistance of the State. The NOI is a concise announcement of NOAA's plan to prepare a DEIS that must:

- describe the proposed action and possible alternatives.
- describe the proposed scoping process and provide information on any planned scoping meetings and/or hearings.
- identify the responsible federal program official to whom questions should be addressed regarding the federal action or the DEIS.

Figure 1. Draft Environmental Impact Statement Process



The NOI must be delivered to the *Federal Register* on Fridays for publication the following Friday. In addition, the NOI must be published in the *Federal Register* at least 15 days prior to any planned scoping meetings or hearings. This allows for sufficient advance public notice of the action. NOAA must consider all public comments during a comment period of at least 30 days after publication of the NOI. Concurrently with the federal action, the state partner will advertise any scoping meetings or hearings in local media outlets. This ensures adequate local public notice of these meetings.



2. Public Scoping Meetings

The formal scoping process begins after the NOI is published in the *Federal Register*, but can in practice begin prior to that notice being published. The purpose of a scoping process is to help the state partner and NOAA determine the range of issues associated with the designation of a National Estuarine Research Reserve.

The scoping process may be conducted in several formats including:

- Internal meetings between NOAA and state level stakeholders
- Formal public hearings where the public provides testimonial that is recorded into the official record
- Informal public meetings with at large or invited individuals to discuss the proposed designation
- Solicitation of public comment through various media (mass mailings, newspapers, internet, phone conversations)

Although a public meeting is not a requirement, NERRS regulations Sec. 921.11 (c) requires NOAA to hold a public scoping meeting with the state partner in the area or areas most affected by the proposed Reserve designation. This meeting must be held no earlier than 15 days after the NOI is published.

The goal of a public scoping meeting is to determine the range of issues regarding the proposed

designation by engaging a broad group of interested private and public parties. The process helps NOAA and the state partner to be responsive to information and concerns that may arise. The process will help determine the relevant stakeholders, identify significant environmental issues, strengthen stakeholder support for NERR designation, and identify information gaps or other actions that may affect designation.

3. Prepare Draft Environmental Impact Statement

Following the 30-day public comment period, the next step in the designation process is to prepare a Draft EIS and Management Plan as per NERRS regulations Sec. 921.12. NERRS regulations clearly define the roles of NOAA and the state partner in this process. NOAA is the primary lead in developing the draft EIS to meet its NEPA obligations. The state partner supports NOAA's preparation of the draft EIS by collecting information relevant to the EIS and providing it to NOAA. Additionally, the state partner is the primary lead for developing a draft management plan, including a NOAA-State MOU and additional MOUs between state partners. NOAA provides guidance to assist in the development of the management plan and MOU(s).

A more detailed description of the requirements for EISs can be found in NOAA's administrative order 216-6 (insert web link).

a. Environmental Impact Statement Components

The NEPA regulations (40 CFR 1502.10) require all EIS documents to contain the following contents.

Required EIS Contents	
Cover Sheet	Executive Summary
Table of Contents	Purpose & Need
Description of Proposed Action	Alternatives to Proposed Action
Affected Environment	Environmental Consequences
Mitigation Methods	List of Preparers
Distribution List	Index & Appendices

b. Cover Sheet

Every EIS must have a one-page cover sheet that includes the following information:

- A list of the responsible agencies including the lead agency and any cooperating agencies. In the case of reserve designation, *U.S. Department of Commerce; National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration; National Ocean Service; Office of Ocean and Coastal Resource Management; Estuarine Reserves Division; and address*
- The title of the proposed action that is the subject of the statement, together with the state and county(ies) (or other jurisdiction if applicable) where the action is located. Recent examples include:

*Final Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement
Federal Approval of the Texas National Estuarine Research Reserve
and Management Plan: The Mission-Aransas Estuary*

*Final Environmental Impact Statement and Final Management Plan
to establish the San Francisco Bay National Estuarine Research Reserve*

- The name, address, and telephone number of the person at the NOAA who can supply further information.
- A designation of the statement as a draft, final, or draft or final supplement.
- A one paragraph abstract of the statement.

c. Summary

The summary must accurately summarize the substantive parts of the EIS. It may also be called the executive summary and should be no more than a few pages in length. The summary shall include:

- A brief summary of the major conclusions.
- A description of any areas of controversy (including issues raised by agencies and the public).
- The major issues (including the choice among alternatives) that will be discussed in the EIS.

d. Table of Contents

The table of contents provides organization to the EIS and should include a list of tables, figures, and acronyms in addition to the major sections, described below, of the document. Other recommended components referenced in the table of contents include a list of preparers or acknowledgements, list of persons or organizations receiving the document, references, and a list of attachments and appendices.

i. Purpose and Need

An EIS must contain a purpose and need statement. CEQ regulations 40 CFR 1502.13 state, “*The statement shall briefly specify the underlying purpose and need to which the agency is responding in proposing the alternatives including the proposed action.*” This section presents a brief statement explaining why the action (i.e., reserve designation) is being considered. The purpose and need specifies the underlying purpose and need to which NOAA is responding and sets the overall direction of the environmental analysis process. The purpose and need section should answer the question, “Why is NOAA proposing to approve the reserve designation?” An example is that the reserve is “representative of an estuarine ecosystem suitable for long-term research and education”. A proposed reserve should be in a biogeographic region that is currently unrepresented in the national system and/or have a unique ecosystem type(s) or physical characteristics described in Appendix 2 of the Sec. 921, or are from a state currently not represented in the NERRS.

The purpose and need serves as an important screening criterion for determining which alternatives to designation of the proposed reserve are reasonable. All reasonable alternatives examined in detail must meet the defined purpose and need.

The purpose and need statement must:

- Be broadly to address the number of alternatives to be considered.
- Describe the goal or end result of the action not the manner in which to accomplish the end result.
- Be short and concise manner that describes the driving force behind NOAA's desire to designate the proposed reserve.

ii. Description of Proposed Action and Alternatives

As required by Section 102 (2) (E) of NEPA, every EIS must contain a detailed description of the proposed action and alternatives. Considered the heart of the EIS, this section describes the proposed action and each alternative that will accomplish the purpose and need for reserve designation. Identifying the proposed action will inform reviewers of the reserve designation being considered. The proposed action is also call the preferred alternative of all the alternatives NOAA has identified for the EIS. NOAA selects a preferred alternative based on environmental, economic, technical, and other considerations.

In addition to the proposed action, this section should provide objective descriptions of all reasonable alternatives under consideration by NOAA. It is recommended that NOAA and the state partner include short, concise summaries of the impacts of each alternative, provided in comparative form. Previous reserve designation EIS documents have used a tabular format to depict each alternative and their impacts as shown in Figure 2. A more detailed analysis of the impacts of each alternative should be discussed in the "Environmental Consequences" section of the EIS.

Figure 2. Example tabular format of Alternatives and their Impacts

Table 4. Summary of alternatives. Abbreviations in the table: GIWW=Gulf Intracoastal Water Way, MHT=Mean High Tide, MP=Management Plan.

Alternatives	Action	Alternative Size	Social Impacts	Environmental Impacts	Research, Education
Preferred Alternative	Approve nominated site and implementation of management plan	185,708 acres ¹	Minor impacts to communities and uses adjacent to Reserve	Minor impacts related to sampling studies, construction of associated facilities	Positive new opportunities for conducting research
Boundary Alternative A	Include the GIWW and all transportation corridors	236,641 acres	Additional permit burden for future dredging operations ³	Minor impacts related to sampling studies, construction of associated facilities	Positive new opportunities for conducting research related to dredging activities or best use sites
Boundary Alternative B	Extend the Reserve boundary an additional 1,000 feet to MHT Line	207,043 acres	Additional permit burden for applicants for new piers and docks ³	Minor impacts related to sampling studies, construction of associated facilities	Additional opportunities for research along shorelines, i.e., seagrass habitats

The alternatives identified in this section are those that may be feasibly carried out based on technical, economic, environmental and other factors, and meets the purpose and need for the proposed action. A no-action alternative must be included as one of the alternatives described in this section.

According to CEQ regulations 40 CFR 1502.14 the Proposed Action and Alternatives section should:

- Rigorously explore and objectively evaluate all reasonable alternatives, and for alternatives which were eliminated from detailed study, briefly discuss the reasons for their having been eliminated.
- Devote substantial treatment to each alternative considered in detail including the proposed action so that reviewers may evaluate their comparative merits.
- Include reasonable alternatives such as alternative boundaries, sites, multiple sites or others.
- Include the No Action Alternative. The No Action Alternative is the most likely future that could be expected to occur in the absence of the project.
- Identify NOAA's preferred alternative or alternatives, if one or more exists.
- Include appropriate mitigation measures not already included in the proposed action or alternatives.

Refer to the NOAA, December 16, 2002, [Memorandum for Legal Guidance on Determining Related Actions and Developing Reasonable Alternatives for Inclusion in a Single EIS](http://www.nepa.noaa.gov/reasonable_alts.pdf) at http://www.nepa.noaa.gov/reasonable_alts.pdf for more information on development of alternatives.

Determining the Number of Alternatives to Include

The number of alternatives considered reasonable will vary depending on the nature of the purpose and need for the action. The alternatives described in this section should be representative of all of those possible actions that can be reasonably expected to satisfy the purpose and need.

At a minimum, NOAA must include a description of two alternatives: the proposed action or preferred alternative and the no action alternative. However, in the case of NERR designation, NOAA and the state partner should look at several alternatives including:

- Alternative reserve boundaries
- Alternative reserve sites
- Alternative management options

In many instances there are potentially a very large number of possible alternatives. NOAA should only analyze and compare a reasonable range of alternatives in the EIS to meet the purpose and need for designating a new reserve.

What is the No Action Alternative?

NOAA must include a no action alternative as part of the EIS for reserve designation. The no action alternative is simply the continuation of the status quo and the proposed National Estuarine Research Reserve is not designated. In this alternative, NOAA will not meet the stated purpose and need of the action. The alternative should accurately describe what would happen if the reserve designation did not take place without being overly speculative. Additionally, this alternative provides a baseline comparison with the proposed action and any alternatives.

Alternatives Considered but Not Analyzed

During the initial stages of the designation process, NOAA and the state partner may consider a number of alternatives that could be considered reasonable but are unlikely to accomplish the goal of designating a new reserve. For example, during the site selection process an alternative site was looked at but was not considered reasonable because the site lacked adequate state control and was dropped from consideration.

Any alternatives considered but rejected for further analysis should be briefly discussed in a subsection of the EIS (i.e., “Alternatives Considered, but not Further Analyzed”). This allows NOAA to identify these alternatives and to explain why they were not reasonable for achieving the purpose and need of designating a proposed reserve.

Summarizing the Environmental Consequences

Within this section, NOAA and the state partner should briefly describe the anticipated environmental consequences of reserve designation and alternatives on the affected environment. A detailed analysis of these environmental consequences will be found in the Environmental Consequences section of the EIS.

Designation of a NERR is typically an administrative function and the environmental consequences are positive as designation brings the development of research, education, and stewardship programs; economic benefits to local communities; and the potential for strengthened environmental protections implemented by the state. Some explanation of the environmental consequences of future reserve infrastructure should be described, if applicable.

iii. The Affected Environment

This section is a description of the environment in which the proposed action and alternatives are considered. Current conditions of the proposed reserve and its vicinity are described in detail and serve as a baseline for comparison of each alternative and their associated impacts.

Federal regulations 40 CFR 1502.15 describe this requirement as follows:

*The environmental impact statement shall **succinctly** describe the environment of the area(s) to be affected or created by the alternatives under consideration. The descriptions shall be no longer than is necessary to understand the effects of the alternatives. Data and analyses in a statement shall be commensurate with the importance of the impact, with less important material summarized, consolidated, or simply referenced. Agencies shall avoid useless bulk in statements and shall concentrate effort and attention on important issues. Verbose descriptions of the affected environment are themselves no measure of the adequacy of an environmental impact statement.*

This section is typically divided into subsections that address major categories of resources affected by the NERR designation. For example, previous NERR designation EIS's have used subsections describing biological resources (including endangered and threatened species),

socioeconomic resources, habitat, cultural resources, and historical resources. Other ideas for subsections include the following as well as other areas of interest specific to the proposed reserve:

<i>Hydrology</i>	<i>Geology</i>
<i>Zoning</i>	<i>Pollution Sources</i>
<i>Existing Infrastructure</i>	<i>Climate</i>

Each resource described in the Affected Environment Chapter must also receive a parallel discussion in the Environmental Consequences Chapter. Additionally, incorporating by reference other EISs and EAs may be used to add information about the affected environment without adding length to the document. This is especially useful if existing infrastructure or land acquisition projects are ongoing during the designation process.

iv. Environmental Consequences

An EIS must have a detailed description of the anticipated environmental consequences of the NERR designation and alternatives (including the No-Action Alternative) on the resources described in the Affected Environment section. In this section, NOAA and the state partner describe the scientific and analytic basis for the comparison of the proposed NERR designation and alternatives. The section must provide a detailed analysis and description of any general or specific environmental impacts or effects resulting from NERR designation or the reasonable alternatives.

Effects can include ecological (such as the effects on natural resources and on the components, structures, and functioning of affected ecosystems), aesthetic, historic, cultural, economic, social, or health, whether direct, indirect, or cumulative. Effects may also include those resulting from actions which may have both beneficial and detrimental effects, even if on balance the agency believes that the effect will be beneficial.

The section should be organized to show the following:

- The overall or general impacts of NERR designation and the significance of these impacts.
- Specific impacts or effects of NERR designation and their significance as related to the sections described in the Affected Environment section.
- Possible conflicts between the NERR designation and applicable federal, regional, state, and local plans, programs, or controls for the proposed reserve site. This includes but is not limited to the:
 - Endangered Species Act
 - Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation & Management Act
 - National Historic Preservation Act
 - Coastal Zone Management Act
- Unavoidable adverse environmental or socioeconomic impacts that may result from NERR designation.
- The cumulative impacts of NERR designation and alternatives on activities occurring in the area/environment affected by the action. Cumulative impacts can result from individually minor but collectively significant actions taking place over a period of time.

v. Mitigation Measures

In some examples, alternatives, including the preferred alternative, reference measures that avoid, reduce or minimize the effects of designating a NERR. If identified, these mitigation measures should be included in the analysis of each alternative in the Environmental Consequences section. A table can be used to show mitigation measures as related to each alternative identified in the EIS.

Mitigation measures may include the following actions:

- Avoidance of impacts associated with the preferred action or its alternatives
- Minimizing the degree or magnitude of the NERR designation and its implementation
- Compensating for the impact of NERR designation
- Restoring affected environments or habitats. The resource manipulation/ restoration part of the management plan may address mitigation in detail.

vi. List of Preparers

The EIS must include a list of persons involved or consulted in the preparation of the document. This section should include any person that was primarily responsible for preparing the document, background papers, or provided substantial information. This includes NOAA staff and state partner staff.

vii. Distribution List

The EIS must include a distribution list that includes other agencies, organizations, and individuals who have requested the document. An asterisk or some kind of notation should be included for those organizations or individuals who commented on the draft document.

viii. Index and Appendices

The EIS must contain an index. The index should include an alphabetical list of key words and their associated page numbers that will allow the reader to find information easily within the EIS. The index should focus on subject matter not a simple repeat of the table of contents. Any appendices to support the EIS should also be included. One mandatory appendix or attachment is the Reserve Management Plan. Other materials that are best consolidated into the appendix are:

- Lengthy technical discussions, baseline studies, etc...
- Materials likely to be understood by technically trained individuals
- Comments to the EIS and responses to those comments
- Concurrence letters as per other legal requirements
- Reserve – NOAA Memorandum of Understanding
- Reserve – Local partner Memorandum of Understanding

4. Prepare Reserve Management Plan

Sec. 912.13 (a) of NERRS regulations identifies the various components of the draft

management plan. These generally include:

- Reserve goals and objectives
- An administrative plan
- A research plan that includes a monitoring design
- An education and outreach plan
- A public access plan
- An acquisition plan
- A construction plan for future reserve facilities
- A resource protection plan
- Applicable MOU(s)
- And if applicable; a restoration plan and/or a resource manipulation plan

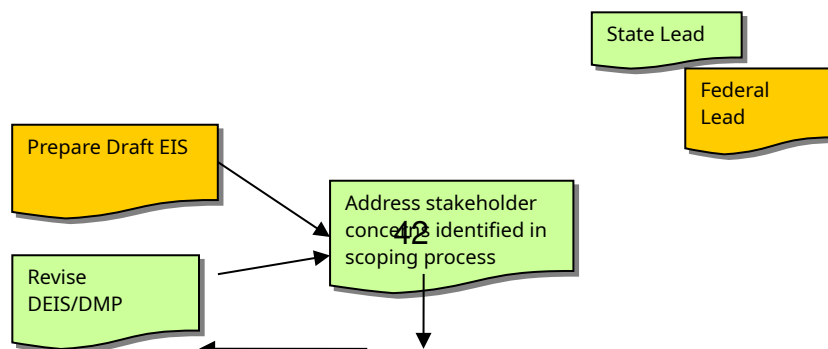
The management plan is part of the draft EIS and is also a stand alone document upon designation of the reserve. Within the EIS, the management plan is incorporated as an attachment or an appendix. Detailed guidance on each of the components of a NERR management plan can be found in “Guidelines for Management Plan Revisions – National Estuarine Research Reserve System” obtained from NOAA’s Estuarine Reserves Division.

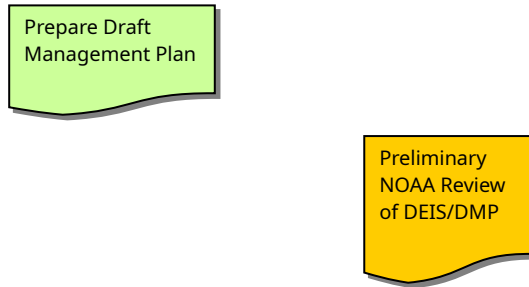
5. Environmental Impact Statement Development and Review Process

The development of a draft EIS can typically be a 4-6 month project. The official preparation of the draft document begins immediately after the NOI is published in the *Federal Register*. In reality, the state partner can begin collecting information for the EIS prior to the NOI. However, the preparers must remember to address stakeholder concerns or comments identified during the scoping meetings when developing the draft EIS. Figure 3 describes the initial process NOAA and the State partner follow for preparing a Draft EIS and Management Plan for designating a new NERR.

NOAA and the state partner should be working together throughout this process with NOAA taking the lead in developing the draft EIS and the state partner taking the lead in developing the draft management plan. Each party has important contributions to both documents being developed.

Figure 3. Process for preparing a preliminary Draft EIS and Management Plan





Additionally, the internal NOAA review and clearance process for EISs is incorporated into this review process. The NOAA clearance process for approving a draft EIS for the designation of a Reserve includes both a preliminary review and formal clearance.

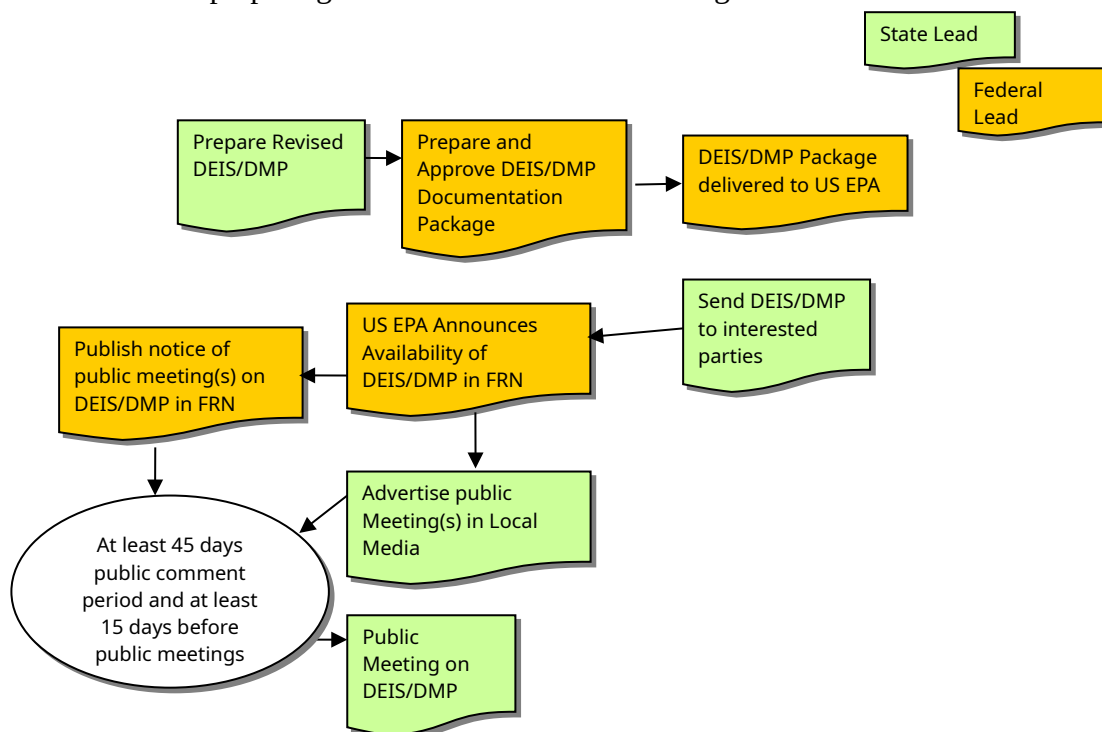
In the preliminary review process, the draft EIS/Management Plan must be reviewed sequentially by:

- ERD responsible program specialist and EIS development team members who are leading the development of the draft EIS/Management Plan
- ERD Research Coordinator
- ERD Education Coordinator
- ERD Chief
- NOS General Counsel
- And finally, NOAA's NEPA Coordinator or designate

Concurrently, NOAA should begin to prepare consultation letters regarding compliance with the Endangered Species Act, the National Historic Preservation Act, and the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act to appropriate federal and state contacts.

Upon receipt of comments obtained during the preliminary review process, NOAA and the state partner will revise the draft EIS/MP in preparation for the formal document review process. The formal review process requires by NOAA, as shown in Figure 4, prepares the document for publishing in the Federal Register and comment by the public.

Figure 4. Process for preparing a formal Draft EIS and Management Plan



In the formal review process, the draft EIS/Management Plan must be reviewed sequentially and tracked by the:

- ERD Chief
- NOS General Counsel
- OCRM Director
- NOS Assistant Administrator
- And finally, NOAA's NEPA Coordinator or designee

Several letters and memos are prepared for the controlled correspondence informing each party in the signature chain about the purpose of the action to designate a new National Estuarine Research Reserve.

In preparation for approval of the draft EIS, NOAA must provide the state partner with:

- The point of contact for receiving public comments. Typically, this contact is the Chief of the Estuarine Reserves Division.
- A list of organizations, agencies, and individuals who will receive the document. This list will include all the appropriate state and federal stakeholders in the designation process and other who during the scoping process or other contacts have expressed an interest in reviewing the document.
- Appropriate federal elected officials from the:
 - Senate Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation
 - Senate Ocean and Fisheries Subcommittee
 - House of Representatives Resource Committee
 - House of Representatives Subcommittee on Fisheries and Conservation, Wildlife & Oceans

- o House of Representatives Science Committee
- o Senate and House members directly affected by NERR designation.

The document is printed by NOAA but in most cases the state partner prints it using non-federal funds or pre-designation assistance funds from NOAA. Due to the large size of a combined a draft EIS/MP, whoever prints the document has the option to create CDs to reduce printing costs. State partners are encouraged to make a pdf version of the draft EIS/MP available to the public through their website. A number of hard copies will still be required for certain individuals or agencies receiving the document for review. NOAA will require a total of 8 hard copies of the document. Of those, 5 are transmitted to U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) for review.

Upon approval of the draft EIS/MP by NOAA's NEPA Coordinator, NOAA must file the draft EIS with the EPA as per 40 CFR 1506.9. Five copies of the draft EIS/MP, a "Dear Reviewer" letter signed by the NEPA coordinator, and a NEPA compliance memo to EPA are required parts of the package filed with EPA. EISs may be mailed or delivered in-person to EPA at the following addresses:

Deliveries by the US Postal Service	Deliveries in-person or by commercial mail services (Federal Express, UPS, etc...)
US Environmental Protection Agency Office of Federal Activities EIS Filing Section Ariel Rios Building (South Oval Lobby) Mail Code 2252-A 1200 Pennsylvania Ave., NW Washington, DC 20004	US Environmental Protection Agency Office of Federal Activities EIS Filing Section Ariel Rios Building (South Oval Lobby) Rm. 7220 1200 Pennsylvania Ave., NW Washington, DC 20004

Note: The draft EIS/MP must not be made available to the public until a Notice of Availability is published by EPA in the Federal Register.

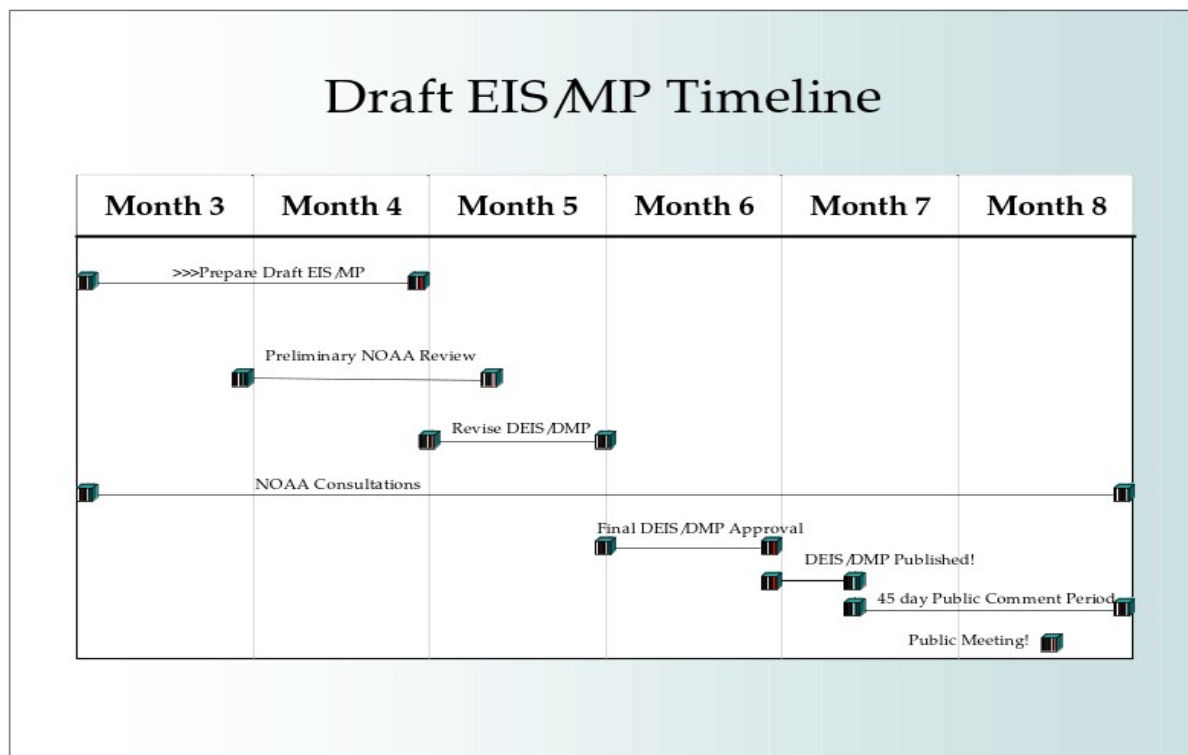
EPA publishes the draft EIS/MP in the *Federal Register* beginning a 45 day public comment period. Comments mailed to the NOAA point of contact must be considered in developing the Final EIS/MP. Before the Notice of Availability is scheduled to be published in the Federal Register, NOAA and the State partner will mail the document to applicable parties identified on the Distribution List.

NOAA and the state partner must prepare for at least one public meeting about the Draft EIS/MP for designation of a NERR. NOAA must advertise at least one public meeting about the Draft EIS/MP in the *Federal Register* at least 15 days prior to the date of the meeting(s). Concurrently, the state partner must advertise the public meeting(s) in local media outlets. In many cases two meetings are required. One meeting may take place in the state capitol and the other is often located in close proximity to the proposed reserve. These meetings provide opportunity for a broad spectrum of the public to learn about and comment on the proposed reserve designation. Figure 5 shows an estimated timeline for the Draft EIS/MP process.

6. Public Meetings:

NOAA and state partner representatives provide public presentations on and receive formal and informal public comments about the proposed NERR. Formal comments are submitted into the record and require NOAA response in the Final EIS/MP.

Figure 5. Draft EIS/MP Process Timeline



7. Other NOAA Draft EIS/MP Actions

During the development of the preliminary Draft EIS/MP, NOAA begins several actions required as part of the NEPA process. These actions include the:

- CZMA Federal Consistency Determination Process
- Federal Consultations pertaining to applicable Federal Laws
- Memorandum of Understanding Review and Tracking

Each action takes place concurrently with the development of both the Draft and the Final EIS/MP.

CZMA Federal Consistency Determination Process

Federal Consultations (ESA, NHPA, etc..)

NOAA must consult with various federal and state agencies

Memorandum of Understanding Review and Tracking Process



United States Department of the Interior

FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE
Ecological Services
c/o TAMU-CC, Campus Box 338
6300 Ocean Drive
Corpus Christi, Texas 78412
February 13, 2006

Laurie McGilvray
Chief
Estuarine Reserves Division
National Ocean Service, NOAA
Office of Ocean and Coastal resource Management
Silver Spring, MD 20910

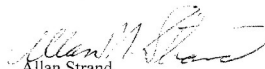
Consultation Number 2-11-06-I-0003

Dear Ms. McGilvray:

We have reviewed your request for concurrence on your determination of effects on endangered and threatened species and their habitats for the designation of the Mission-Aransas Estuarine Research Reserve (NERR) within Nueces, Aransas, San Patricio, Refugio and Calhoun Counties, Texas, as described in your January 4, 2006 letter and subsequent email dated February 10, 2006. Your determination of effects of the proposed designation of the NERR to Federally-listed species and additional information you have provided are to be included in the Final Environmental Impact Statement and Management Plan for this project. The purpose of the proposed NERR is to protect representative natural habitats through joint Federal-State partnerships and utilize the management plan to increase awareness and stewardship of the resources while assuring benefits that can be enjoyed by the public. Based on the project description, purpose, location, and management goals, the Service concurs with your determination that the project may affect, but will not likely adversely affect, Federally-listed species as a result of the proposed action. Should project plans change, or if additional information on the distribution of listed or proposed species becomes available, this determination can be reconsidered.

If you have any further questions please contact Dr. Larisa Ford at (361) 994-9005 or by email at Larisa_Ford@fws.gov.

Sincerely


Allan Strand
Field Supervisor

Section VII describes in detail the review and tracking process for NERR MOUs.

30-day public comment period, the next step in the designation process is to begin to prepare a Draft EIS and Management Plan as per NERRS regulations Sec. 921.12. NERRS regulations clearly define the roles of NOAA and the state partner in this process. NOAA is the primary lead in developing the draft EIS to meet its NEPA obligations. The state partner supports NOAA's preparation of the draft EIS by collecting information relevant to the EIS and providing it to NOAA.

Additionally, the State partner is the primary lead for

developing a proposed reserve's draft management plan, including a NOAA-State MOU and a State Partner MOU. NOAA provides guidance to assist in the development of the management plan.

VII. Guidelines for Memorandums of Agreement

A. Introduction

Memorandums of Agreement (MOA) are made to form partnerships and work with other federal agencies, universities, state, local and international governments, tribes, private institutions and other organizations. The process of initiating, extending and/or modifying these agreements involves clearance of the official MOA and required supporting documentation which can often be time consuming. Approval and clearance signatures are obtained during a controlled routing of the MOA package through the program office, NOS senior management, NOAA General Counsel, and if required the Office of the Executive Secretary, and Department of Commerce (DoC) General Counsel. As a general rule, if you are trying to establish a relationship with any party outside of NOAA, and it involves the use of money, property and/or employee time, you should contact the DoC General Law Division (202-482-5391) as early as possible to get some guidance. Information on agreements is also available online at www.ogc.doc.gov/ogc/admin/general.html.

Several steps need to be taken in order to process agreements including:

- advanced planning
- choosing the right type of agreement
- drafting the terms and conditions
- reviewing and clearing the agreement
- executing the agreement
- administering the agreement

B. Choosing the Correct Authority and Type of Agreement

The name Memorandum of Agreement or MOA carries no legal authority, but is simply a way to refer to an agreement with another organization. However, it is important to choose the correct authority and type of agreement for the relationship you are about to establish. Agreements between NOAA and other agencies are important for several management and legal reasons. You may want to keep track of funds, justify program activities, or ensure that a job gets done. There are also legal reasons such as 31 U.S.C. §1301 “only for purpose of appropriation,” 31 U.S.C. § 1501 “obligation only when in writing,” and 31 U.S.C. §1532 “no transfer without authority.” If you feel that drafting an agreement with another agency is needed, you must first determine what type of agreement is necessary.

There are essentially five types of agreements:

- 1) Contracts
- 2) Economy Act Agreements (31 U.S.C. § 1535)
- 3) Joint Projects (15 U.S.C. § 1525)
- 4) Grants and Cooperative Agreements
- 5) Other Types of MOAs and Agreements**

Other types of MOAs and Agreements

Some relationships are formed because of unique statutory authority or they do not involve expenditure of funds or property. The Office of General Counsel is available to help draft these types of agreements and can offer advice on traps for the unwary.

A template for the afore mentioned agreements can be viewed on the DoC Office of General Counsel Web site at <http://www.ogc.doc.gov/ogc/admin/general.html>. Please consult this Web site before you draft a document. Additionally, the director of this office, Brian DiGiacomo, has a link on this page to his email.

C. MOA Clearance Process (For ERD Use)

You will save time if your agreement is well drafted and contains all necessary supporting documentation. Once you have drafted a document with legal consultation it is ready for review and clearance. **NOTE:** This process takes approximately two months, so please allow enough time for clearance, especially if a timely financial transfer is involved. NOS has created an electronic MOA Tracking System which serves as a database for MOA documents and their status. The NOS MOA point of contact is Martin Freeman. Martin can be reached at (301)713-3070 or at martin.freeman@noaa.gov. His office is located on the 13th floor. Martin ensures that all information has been entered into the tracking system correctly and moves MOAs through the clearance process. Below are the eight steps required to process an original MOA and an amendment or annex to an MOA. **NOTE:** You will want to start with at least three copies of your original document for signature since a signed original copy should reside with Veronica, you and the other party. You may want more copies if there are several partners.

1) A new record must be created in the MOA Tracking System by the program officer

To access this system, you must have Filemaker Pro on your desktop. The file is located on P:\Estuarine Reserves Division\MOA\FMP client. If you do not have Filemaker Pro, please see Erica Seiden for assistance in entering your data into the system. Each division has an MOA specialist. Currently, Debra Persons is serving that role for CPD and Erica Seiden for ERD.

2) The MOA package must be routed through OCRM

After the data is input into the database, the program officer prints a tracking control sheet from the MOA tracking system and attaches this to the folder containing the MOA paperwork and supporting documentation. Within OCRM, MOAs must be routed through ERD Chief, OCRM Director and OCRM Financial Officers if transfer of funds is involved. Once you have sign off dates from these individuals, that data must be entered into the MOA tracking system. Additionally, at this time you must complete the checklist of requirements on the tracking system and forward the electronic record and any other electronic supporting files to the NOS MOA official.

3) A hard copy of the MOA must be submitted to the NOS MOA official -Veronica Harvey

Once all required information and office level signatures are obtained, the package should be delivered to Veronica. Additionally, make sure that you have sent the tracking system record and any electronic copies of supporting documentation to Veronica for review.

4) NOS MOA official accepts or rejects the record

Veronica will review the database record and any supporting material. She will either forward it on for NOS clearance or she will reject the record and ask you for specific items to ensure a complete package. Once you have revised or obtained additional information to complete the package, you will resubmit the record via the tracking system and supply hard copies to Veronica if necessary. A copy of the MOA package should be filed in a central place within ERD.

5) The approved record is transferred to the NOS MOA master system

Veronica will approve the database record and make it a permanent part of the system. It is at this point that it will be assigned an official MOA tracking code.

6) The MOA package is routed through the NOS chain of clearance

When official signatures are obtained, an approval memo is signed and the MOA package is returned to you for signatures from the outside parties involved in the agreement.

7) The final signed and fully executed agreement document is filed with the NOS MOA official and the database record is closed

You should submit a complete copy to Veronica. She will mark the record as “closed”, but remains active during the period of performance. An agreement must be in existence, completed and approved with all necessary signatures before work or transfer of funds can occur. Please keep this in mind if funds will need to be transferred within a specific time frame as the clearance process takes approximately 2 months.

8) Amendments can be added to the system

If you should want to amend an MOA and the official MOA was not logged into the tracking system, you must recreate a record. Once a record is created, the amendment can be forwarded to Veronica to be incorporate into the master system.

Agreements involving no funds

Description	Approval level	Signature authority
-------------	----------------	---------------------

general agreements not affecting delegation of Under Secretary's authority, positions, and operations with other NOAA line offices and other agencies	program/staff office director	program/staff office director
general agreements affecting delegation of Under Secretary's authority, positions, and operations with other NOAA line offices and other agencies	Under Secretary for Oceans and Atmosphere	Under Secretary for Oceans and Atmosphere

Appendices

Appendix A: Examples of MOAs

The 2 MOA examples included in this section are:

1. Generic MOA template
2. MOA between NOAA and San Francisco State University.
3. MOA BETWEEN SAN FRANCISCO STATE UNIVERSITY, East Bay Regional Park District, Solano Land Trust, California Department of Parks and Recreation, The Bay Conservation and Development Commission and the California State Lands Commission.

1. *Generic MOA Template*

Memorandum of Agreement
Between the
National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration
And the
(state agency)
Detailing the state-federal roles in the
Management of the (name of reserve)

This Memorandum of Agreement states the provisions for the cooperative management of (name of reserve) in the state of (said state), between (state partner agency) and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's Office of Ocean and Coastal Resource Management.

WHEREAS, the state of (said state) has determined that the waters and related coastal habitats of (state reserve areas) provide unique opportunities for study of natural and human processes occurring within the estuarine ecosystems of the state to contribute to the science of estuarine ecosystem processes, enhance environmental education opportunities, and provide scientific information for effective coastal zone management in state of (said state); and

WHEREAS, the state of (said state) has determined that the resources of the (name of reserve) and the values they represent to the citizens of (said state) and the United States will benefit from the management of these resources as part of the National Estuarine Research Reserve System; and

WHEREAS, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration has concurred with that finding and pursuant to its authority under section 315 of the Coastal Zone Management Act of

1972, as amended (CZMA, 16 U.S.C. 1461) and in accordance with implementing regulations at 15 CFR 921.30 has designated the (name of reserve); and

WHEREAS, the (state agency), as the agency designated by the Governor of (said state) is responsible for managing the (name of reserve) and acknowledges the value of state-federal cooperation for the long-term management of the reserve in a manner consistent with the purpose of their designation; and

WHEREAS, the management plan describes the goals, objectives, strategies/actions, administrative structure, and institutional arrangements for the reserve, including this MOA and others;

NOW THEREFORE, in consideration of the mutual agreements herein, NOAA and (state agency) agree to the following:

ARTICLE I: STATE-FEDERAL ROLES IN RESERVE MANAGEMENT

A. (state agency) Role in Reserve Management

The (state agency) shall:

1. be responsible for compliance with all federal laws and regulations, and ensure that the (name of reserve) management plan is consistent with the provisions of the CZMA and implementing regulations;
2. ensure protection of the natural and cultural resources of the reserve, and ensure enforcement of the provisions of state law, including rules and regulations of the (state coastal management program if applicable);
3. ensure adequate, long-term protection and management of lands included within the reserve boundary;
4. annually apply for, budget, and allocate funds received for reserve operations, research and monitoring, education and stewardship; and as necessary, land acquisition and reserve facility construction;
5. conduct and coordinate research and monitoring programs that encourage scientists from a variety of institutions to work together to understand the ecology of the reserve ecosystem to improve coastal management;
6. conduct and maintain programs that disseminate research results via materials, activities, workshops, and conferences to resource users, state and local agencies, school systems, general public, and other interested parties;

7. provide staff, and endeavor to secure state funding for the manager, education coordinator and research coordinator;
8. secure facilities and equipment required to implement the provisions within the reserve management plan;
9. ensure adequate funding for facilities operation and maintenance;
10. maintain effective liaison with local, regional, state, and federal policy makers, regulators and the general public;
11. serve as principal contact for issues involving proposed boundary changes and/or amendments to the reserve management plan;
12. respond to NOAA's requests for information, particularly cooperative agreement and grant progress reports and evaluation findings, including necessary actions and recommendations, made pursuant to Section 312 of the CZMA; and
13. expend funds in accordance with federal and state laws, the reserve management plan, and annual funding guidance from NOAA.

B. Federal Role in Reserve Management

NOAA's Office of Ocean and Coastal Resource Management shall:

1. administer the provisions of the Sections 315 and 312 of the CZMA to ensure that the reserve operates in accordance with goals of the reserve system and the (name of reserve) reserve management plan;
2. review and process applications for financial assistance from the (state agency), consistent with 15 CFR 921, for management and operation, and as appropriate, land acquisition and facility construction;
3. advise (state agency) of existing and emerging national and regional issues that have bearing on the reserve and reserve system;
4. maintain an information exchange network among reserves, including available research and monitoring data and educational materials developed within the reserve system;
5. to the extent possible, facilitate NOAA resources and capabilities in support of reserve goals and programs.

C. General Provisions

1. Nothing in this agreement or subsequent financial assistance awards shall obligate

either party in the expenditure of funds, or for future payments of money, in excess of appropriations authorized by law.

2. Upon termination of this agreement or any subsequent financial assistance awards to (state agency), any equipment purchased for studies to further this agreement will be disposed of in accordance with 15 CFR 24.32.
3. A free exchange of research and assessment data between the parties is encouraged and is necessary to ensure success of cooperative studies.

D. Other Provisions

1. Nothing in this agreement diminishes the independent authority or coordination responsibility of either party in administering its respective statutory obligations. Nothing in this agreement is intended to conflict with current written directives or policies of either party. If the terms of this agreement are inconsistent with existing written directives or policies of either party entering this agreement, then those portions of the agreement which are determined to be inconsistent with such written directives and policies shall be invalid; but the remaining terms not affected by the inconsistency shall remain in full force and effect. At the first opportunity for revision of this agreement, all necessary changes shall be made by either an amendment to this agreement or by entering in a new superseding agreement, which ever is deemed expedient to the interested parties. Should disagreement arise on the interpretation of the provisions and/or amendments of this agreement that cannot be resolved by negotiations at the operating level of each party, the area(s) of disagreement shall be stated in writing by each party and promptly presented to a mutually approved mediator for non-binding mediation. If the parties cannot agree on the choice of a mediator or if the mediation does not resolve the dispute to the mutual approval of the parties, the parties are free to pursue any other legal remedies that are available.

ARTICLE II: REAL PROPERTY ACQUIRED FOR PURPOSE OF THE RESERVE

As well as acknowledging the rest of the requirements set forth at 15 CFR 921, (state agency) specifically acknowledges and will fully comply with conditions set forth at 15 CFR 921.21 (e), which specify the legal documentation requirements concerning the use and disposition of real property acquired for reserve purposes with federal funds under Section 315 of the CZMA.

ARTICLE III: PROGRAM EVALUATION

The Office of Ocean and Coastal Resource Management Division of NOAA will schedule periodic evaluations of (state agency) performance in meeting the terms of this agreement, financial assistance awards, and the reserve management plan. Where findings of deficiency occur, NOAA may initiate action in accordance with the designation withdrawal or interim sanctions procedures established by the CZMA and applicable regulations at 15 CFR 921.40-41.

ARTICLE IV: EFFECTIVE DATE, REVIEW, AMENDMENT AND TERMINATION

- A. This agreement is effective on the date of the last signature on this agreement and shall be in effect until terminated by either party.
- B. This agreement will be reviewed periodically by both parties and may only be amended by the mutual written consent of both parties.
- C. This agreement may be terminated by mutual consent of both parties, or by NOAA if NOAA withdraws designation of the reserve within the reserve system, pursuant to applicable provisions of the CZMA and its implementing regulations as described under 15 CFR 923 Subpart L, or if NOAA finds that (state agency) fails to comply with this MOA. The agreement may be terminated by (state agency) with or without cause. Should this agreement be terminated, reimbursement of unexpended funds from financial assistance awards shall be determined on a pro rata basis according to the amount of work done by the parties at the time of termination. Additionally, reimbursement for land purchased and facilities constructed with NOAA funds shall be consistent with terms and special award conditions of financial assistance awards.
- D. If any clause, sentence or other portion of this MOA shall become illegal, null or void for any reason, the remaining portions of this MOA shall remain in full force and effect.
- E. No waiver of right by either party of any provision of this MOA shall be binding unless expressly confirmed in writing by the party giving the waiver.

IN WITNESS THEREOF, the parties have caused this agreement to be executed.

Name

Name

Director
Office of Ocean and Coastal
Resource Management
National Ocean Service
National Oceanic and
Atmospheric Administration
U.S. Department of Commerce

Director
State Agency Department

Date

Date

2. NOAA and San Francisco State University:

Memorandum of Agreement
Between the
National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration
and the
San Francisco State University
Detailing the State-Federal Roles in the
San Francisco Bay National Estuarine Research Reserve

This Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) serves to establish the framework for coordination, cooperation and communication regarding the San Francisco Bay National Estuarine Research Reserve (SFBNERR). This agreement concerns the Office of Ocean and Coastal Resource Management (OCRM), National Ocean Service, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), whose address is 1305 East-West Highway N/ORM, Silver Spring, Maryland, 20910, and the San Francisco State University (SFSU), whose address is 1600 Holloway Avenue, San Francisco, CA 94132.

WHEREAS, the State of California has determined that certain waters and coastal habitats of the San Francisco Bay system provide representative opportunities to study natural estuarine and human processes occurring within an estuarine ecosystem; and

WHEREAS, the State of California finds that the resources of San Francisco Bay and its value to the citizens of California and the United States will benefit from the management of this site as part of the National Estuarine Research Reserve System; and

WHEREAS, NOAA has concurred with that finding, and may designate certain areas of San Francisco Bay as a National Estuarine Research Reserve pursuant to its authority under Section 315 of the Coastal Zone Management Act of 1972, as amended, (CZMA, P.L. 92-583, 16 U.S.C. 1461) and in accordance with implementing regulations at 15 CFR 921.30; and

WHEREAS, SFSU is designated by the State of California and in the San Francisco Bay National Estuarine Research Reserve Management Plan (“Plan”) as the agency responsible for managing the reserve, as defined in the Plan; and

WHEREAS, the Plan describes the goals, objectives, plans, administrative structure, and institutional arrangements for the reserve, including this MOU and others; and

WHEREAS, SFSU acknowledges the need and requirement for continuing State-Federal cooperation in the long term management of the reserve in a manner consistent with the purposes sought through its designation.

NOW THEREFORE, in consideration of the mutual agreements contained herein it is agreed by and between SFSU and NOAA as follows:

ARTICLE 1: STATE-FEDERAL ROLES IN RESERVE MANAGEMENT

The following section describes the roles and responsibilities of the reserve partners. The obligations described for each reserve partner are subject to available funding.

A. State Role in Reserve Management

San Francisco State University, as the principal contact for the State of California in all matters concerning the reserve, will be responsible for ensuring that the reserve complies with management objectives of the Plan, the California Coastal Management Program, other applicable provisions of California law, Section 315 of the Federal Coastal Zone Management Act (CZMA), and the federal regulations of the National Estuarine Research Reserve System (NERRS). San Francisco State University will be the grant receiving office for the SFBNERR under Section 315 of the CZMA. Subject to available and authorized appropriations, SFSU’s responsibilities for plan implementation include the following:

1. Annually apply for, budget, and allocate funds received for SFBNERR operations, (e.g., education, research and monitoring programs), as well as for acquisition and facilities;
1. Conduct active research and monitoring programs that draw scientists from various institutions to work together on understanding coastal issues;
2. Conduct and maintain programs that provide materials, activities, workshops, and conferences that translate the research results to the resource users, regulators, and the public;

3. Provide a full-time, state-funded Reserve Manager, and endeavor to secure state-funding for Research and Education Coordinator positions to coordinate research, monitoring, education and translation of research results;
4. Secure facilities that will, among other things, include research laboratory, classroom, library, office, meeting, field equipment storage and interpretive display space;
5. Secure equipment to facilitate research and outreach activities that, among other things, will include boats, laboratory and field equipment, audiovisual, curriculum, reference materials and databases;
6. Maintain effective liaison with local, regional and state policy makers, regulators and the general public;
7. Serve as principal negotiator on issues involving proposed boundary changes and/or amendments to the Plan;
8. Respond to NOAA's requests for information and respond to evaluation findings made pursuant to Section 312 of the CZMA;
9. Expend funds in accordance with federal and state laws, the SFBNERR management plan, and annual appropriations; and
10. Ensure enforcement of the applicable provisions of California law, including the rules and regulations of the California Coastal Management Program, to protect the research reserve.
11. Coordinate and support research, monitoring, education, and management activities with staff at China Camp State Park, Rush Ranch, and Browns Island Regional Shoreline.

B. Federal Role in Reserve Operation

The Office of Ocean and Coastal Resource Management will serve to administer the provisions of Section 315 of the CZMA to ensure that the reserve operates in accordance with the goals of the NERRS and the Plan. These responsibilities are subject to the availability of appropriated funds. In carrying out its responsibilities, OCRM will:

1. Review and process applications for financial assistance to SFSU, consistent with 15 CFR Part 921 for acquisition, development, operations, education, research, and monitoring activities associated with the reserve;
1. This agreement does not create any obligation on the part of OCRM to award financial assistance.
2. Make periodic evaluations in accordance with Section 312 of the CZMA to measure SFSU's performance in Plan implementation;

3. Advise SFSU of existing and emerging national and regional issues; and
4. Establish an information exchange network cataloging all available research data and educational material developed on each reserve included within the reserve system.

C. General Provisions

1. Nothing in this agreement or subsequent financial assistance awards shall obligate any party in the expenditure of funds, or for future payments of money, in excess of appropriations authorized by law.
2. Both parties agree to comply with all applicable federal or State laws regulating ethical conduct of public officers and employees.
3. Each party will comply with all applicable laws, regulations, and executive orders relative to Equal Employment Opportunity.
4. Upon termination of this agreement or any subsequent financial assistance awards, any equipment purchased for studies initiated in furtherance of this agreement will be returned to the agency of initial purchase.
5. A free exchange of research and assessment data among agencies is encouraged and is necessary to insure the success of these cooperative studies.

D. Other Provisions

Nothing in this MOA diminishes the independent authority or coordination responsibility of each agency in administering its statutory obligations. Nothing herein is intended to conflict with current agency directives. If the terms of this MOA are inconsistent with existing directives of any agency entering into this agreement, then those portions which are determined to be inconsistent shall be invalid; but the remaining terms not affected by the inconsistency shall remain in full force and effect. At the first opportunity for review of this agreement, all necessary changes will be made by either an amendment to this MOA or by entering into a new MOA, which ever is deemed expedient to the interest of all Parties. Should disagreement arise on the interpretation of the provisions of this MOA, or amendments and/or revisions thereto, that cannot be resolved at the operating level, the area(s) of disagreement shall be stated in writing by each party and presented to the other parties for consideration.

ARTICLE II: REAL PROPERTY ACQUIRED FOR THE PURPOSE OF THE RESERVE

As well as agreeing to adhere to the rest of the provisions set forth at 15 CFR Part 921, SFSU agrees to the conditions set forth at 15 CFR 921.21(e), which specify the legal documentation requirements concerning the use and disposition of real property acquired for reserve purposes with Federal funds under Section 315 of the CZMA.

ARTICLE III. PROGRAM EVALUATION

OCRM will schedule periodic evaluations of the SFSU’s performance in meeting the terms of financial assistance awards, in implementing the Management Plan and in meeting the provisions of this MOA. Where findings of deficiency occur, NOAA may initiate action in accordance with the designation withdrawal procedures established by the CZMA and applicable regulations.

ARTICLE IV. EFFECTIVE DATE, REVIEW, AMENDMENT AND TERMINATION

This MOA is effective on the date of designation of the reserve. The MOA will be reviewed periodically. This MOA may be amended by the mutual consent of the parties. This MOA may be terminated by mutual consent of the Parties, or by NOAA if it withdraws designation of the areas as a National Estuarine Research Reserve, pursuant to applicable provisions of the CZMA and its implementing regulations as described under 15 CFR Part 923 Subpart L. Should this MOAU be terminated, reimbursement of unexpended funds shall be determined on a pro rata basis according to the amount of work done by the Parties at the time of termination. This MOA is subject to the availability of appropriated funds.

IN WITNESS THEREOF, the Parties hereto have caused this MOA to be executed.

Charles Ehler
Acting Director
Office of Ocean and Coastal
Resource Management
National Ocean Service
National Oceanic and
Atmospheric Administration
U.S. Department of Commerce

Robert A. Corrigan
President
San Francisco State University

Date

Date

3: MOA BETWEEN SAN FRANCISCO STATE UNIVERSITY, East Bay Regional Park District, Solano Land Trust, California Department of Parks and Recreation, The Bay Conservation and Development Commission and the California State Lands Commission.

MEMORANDUM OF AGREEMENT

This Memorandum serves as an expression of intent among six parties-in-interest, to wit: San Francisco State University, the state lead agency; East Bay Regional Parks District; Solano Land Trust; California Department of Parks and Recreation; The Bay Conservation and Development Commission; and the California State Lands Commission.

Witnesseth:

WHEREAS, the State of California has received a grant from the United States Secretary of Commerce for the development and operation of certain portions of the San Francisco Bay Estuary (see Appended List) as the San Francisco Bay National Estuarine Research Reserve (the Reserve), and

WHEREAS, the purpose of this grant is to create new opportunities for coordinated San Francisco Bay estuarine resource management, research, monitoring, stewardship, and public education (the Program), and

WHEREAS, such Program has wide public support, as evidenced by the implementation of the Comprehensive Conservation and Management Plan for the San Francisco Bay Estuary, and the Baylands Ecosystem Habitat Goals Project and

WHEREAS, the parties-in-interest have evidenced support for such a Program through their approval of the 1992 Site Nomination Proposal for the San Francisco Bay National Estuarine Research Reserve,

NOW THEREFORE, in consideration of the mutual benefits to be derived from implementing this Program, the parties-in-interest agree to the following:

1. The lands described in the Appended List are hereby designated as sites belonging to the San Francisco Bay National Estuarine Research Reserve.
2. There shall be a program management plan for the reserve that provides a framework for conducting a specified Program on Reserve sites. Revisions of the program management plan shall be developed by the reserve staff and shall be subject to approval by a management advisory board composed of the parties-in-interest. The program management plan shall be reviewed periodically and revised as specified by NOAA and the management advisory board.

3. A primary purpose of the Program is to provide funding, staff, and other resources and guidance that will assist reserve land managing partners to develop site-specific activities that are consistent with the reserve management plan. This program will focus on identifying and conserving sensitive ecological resources, promoting on-site research and long term monitoring, engaging local communities in stewardship activities that support the conservation of sensitive reserve resources, and acting as a regional educational resource that serves the public of the San Francisco Bay and Delta region.

4. Reserve parties-in-interest agree to support the implementation of the reserve management plan. Issues that arise that may be contrary to the terms or intent of the management plan will be brought to the management advisory board for discussion and resolution by a consensus of its members. Irresolvable disputes will be mediated by State and Federal representatives approved by the management advisory board.

5. Multiple uses of reserve lands are encouraged to the extent that such uses are compatible with the program and its purpose as expressed in the management plan. Uses, and/or levels of use, which are not compatible with the goals of the reserve management plan shall be restricted by the agency having jurisdiction over the reserve site (or sites) in question.

6. Management Structure

a. There shall be a management advisory board, comprised of one member from each of the parties-in-interest, that shall review the recommendations of reserve staff and shall act on behalf of the agencies having jurisdiction over sites comprising the Reserve. The advisory board will be a non-voting advisory body and will be supported by reserve staff. The management advisory board shall review the management plan periodically and shall advise SFSU regarding the adequacy of staff implementation of the management plan. A representative of NOAA shall serve as an ex-officio representative on the management advisory board.

b. SFSU shall implement the program by hiring and directing reserve staff, supervising and coordinating implementation of the provisions of the management plan, and by receiving and acting upon the recommendations of the management advisory board and participating site managers. The reserve staff will be directly responsible for program coordination with agency representatives having jurisdiction over reserve sites.

c. The Bay Conservation and Development Commission will assist in developing an advisory structure that provides the management advisory board with an appropriate linkage to the broader community so that its direction of the reserve reflects the concerns and ideas of this regional constituency.

8. No projects shall be carried out on reserve lands without the approval of the agency having jurisdiction over such lands. Such agency shall maintain all facilities built on its

lands in furtherance of a project, and shall cooperate with reserve staff in carrying out the approved program.

9. The reserve staff, management advisory board and appropriate advisory participants shall confer regularly to ensure coordination between the reserve program and the broader goals and mandates of regional coastal management programs that affect the San Francisco Bay Estuary.

10. This Memorandum shall not be construed to preclude additional transfers of property among the Signatories, nor to preclude additions of appropriate lands to reserve sites.

11. This Memorandum shall continue in perpetuity so long as the reserve program is funded and viable; additional participants may join by unanimous approval of the parties-in-interest, and this Memorandum may be amended or terminated by majority vote of the parties-in-interest at any time. Nothing in this Memorandum shall preclude the unilateral withdrawal of any of the parties-in-interest. In such an eventuality, it is understood that the lands of the withdrawing party would be de-designated from the reserve, and it is further understood that the federal Office of Management and Budget will take appropriate action with respect to repayment of grant funds as may be indicated by its regulations.

12. All Signatories agree that they will cooperate with the reserve program so that it can achieve its mission to serve as a regionally-scaled scientific and educational resource to help promote and recover the ecological health of the San Francisco Estuary and to create a more sustainable regional environment for future generations.

Signed,

San Francisco State University

By: _____

Date: _____

Title: _____

San Francisco State University

By: _____

Date: _____

Title: _____

California Department of Parks and Recreation

By: _____ Date: _____

Title: _____

East Bay Regional Parks District

By: _____ Date: _____

Title: _____

Solano Land Trust

By: _____ Date: _____

Title: _____

San Francisco Bay Conservation and Development Commission

By: _____ Date: _____

Title: _____

California State Lands Commission

By: _____ Date: _____

Title: _____

Properties included in the San Francisco Bay National Estuarine Research Reserve

China Camp State Park – CA Department of Parks & Recreation.

Browns Island Regional Shoreline – CA State Lands Commission (owner) and East Bay Regional Parks District (lessee).

Rush Ranch Open Space Preserve – Solano Land Trust.

Appendix B - NOAA FEIS/FMP Action Checklist

To Do

- Consultation with USF&WS regarding ESA Sec. 7
 - Letter to responsible USF&WS Official
 - Concurrence letter from responsible USF&WS Official
- Consultation with NMFS regarding Essential Fish Habitat
 - Letter to responsible NMFS Official
 - Concurrence letter from responsible USF&WS Official
- Consultation with State Historical Preservation Officer regarding NHPA Sec. 106
 - Letter to responsible State Historical Preservation Officer
 - Concurrence letter from responsible USF&WS Official
- Approval of CZMA Federal Consistency Determination by NOAA & State Coastal Program
 - Draft Consistency Determination
 - Consistency Determination approved by NOAA Consistency Official
 - Concurrence letter from State Coastal Program
- Submit MOU to NOAA MOU tracking database
- Respond to public comments on Draft EIS
- Respond to public comments on Draft MP
- NOAA review of FEIS/FMP
- Prepare Designation Findings Document & Certificate of Designation
- Prepare Record of Decision (ROD)
- Prepare FEIS/FMP Package
 - Incorporate DEIS/DMP comments
 - MOU between NOAA and State Partner (unsigned)
 - MOU(s) between State Partner and other reserve partners (unsigned)
 - Concurrence letters
 - List of persons receiving the FEIS/FMP
 - Point Paper (OCRM)
 - Memo to NEPA Compliance Official (NOS)
 - NEPA Compliance memo to EPA (NEPA Official)