

# LaNERR – Louisiana National Estuarine Research Reserve

Roadshow Presentation

*What is the National Estuarine Research Reserve  
(NERR) System and  
What are benefits of a NERR in Louisiana*

June 8, 2021





# A Louisiana National Estuarine Research Reserve— Participating in a National Network to Tell our Story

## National Estuarine Research Reserve System (NERRS)

network of protected areas representative of the various biogeographic regions and estuarine types in the United States.

Reserves are established as state-NOAA partnership for long-term research, education, and stewardship to promote informed management of the nation's estuaries and coastal habitats.





# Primary Goals of the Reserve System

1. Long-term protection to insure longitudinal research
2. Address significant coastal management issues through coordinated research
3. Enhance public awareness and understanding of estuaries
4. Partner with feds, state, public, and private entities on research
5. Conduct and coordinate system wide research



## STEWARDSHIP

- Mapping
- Restoration
- Land Acquisition



## RESEARCH

- Monitoring
- Collaboration
- Student Fellowships



## TRAINING

- Target Audiences
- Priority Issues



## EDUCATION

- Teachers
- Communities
- Students



## What are benefits of NERR System to Louisiana?

- The NERR System provides a national network to describe the unique attributes of a major delta ecosystem to the nation; and **promote our efforts at national level** to restore and protect this natural, economic, and cultural resource.
- A LaNERR will provide **federal support** for applied science, monitoring, education and outreach opportunities and resources to our coast.
- Facilities and site to enhanced education of ‘what is a delta estuary’ to K-12 and public builds support for our coastal programs from **recreation to restoration**.



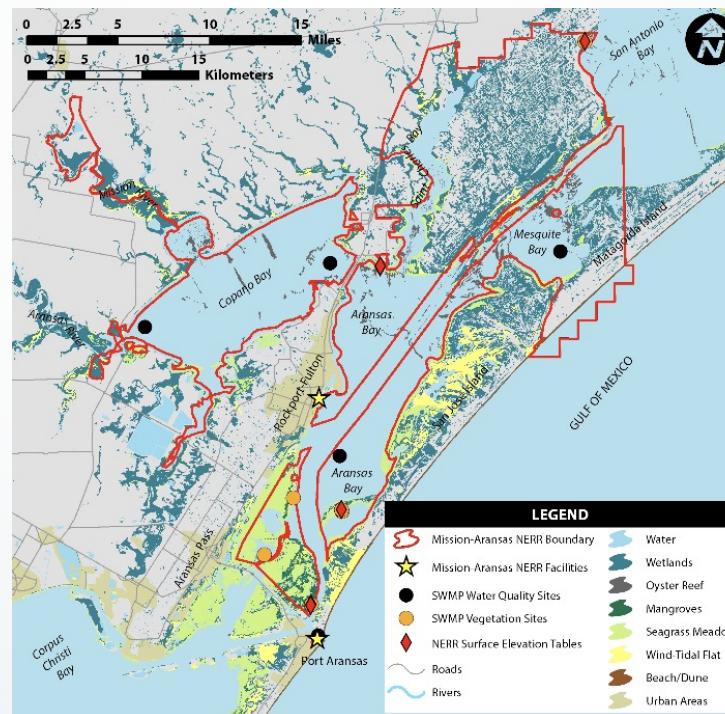


# Public lands connected by state waters

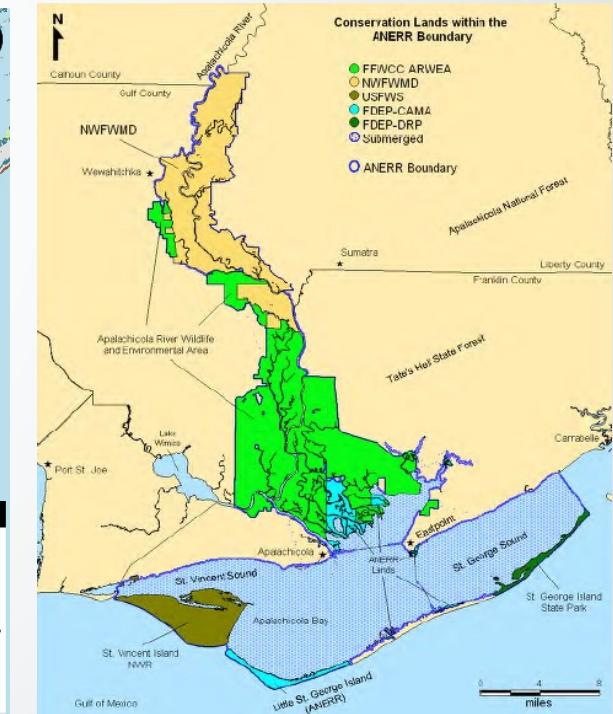
Weeks Bay NERR, AL



Mission-Aransas NERR, TX

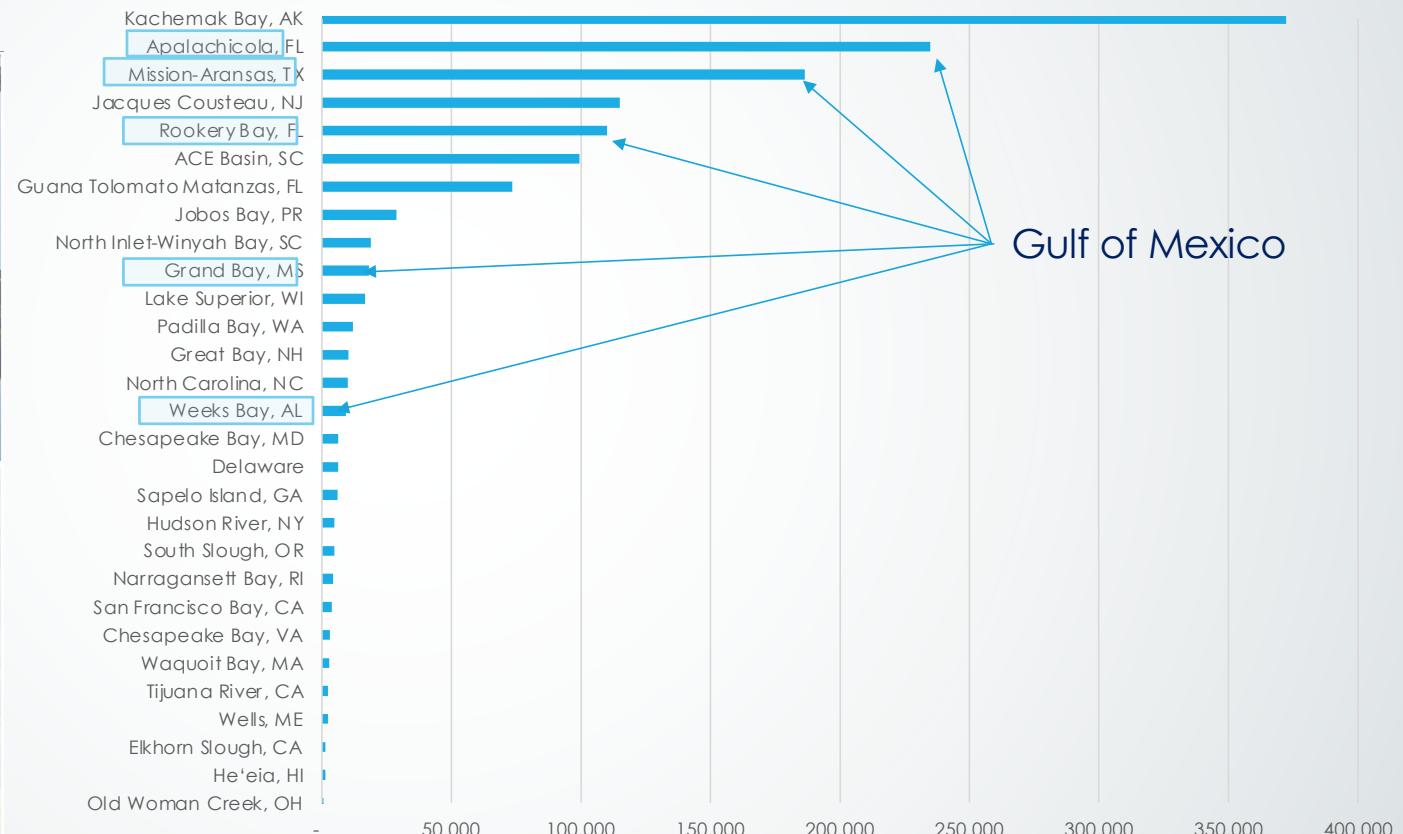
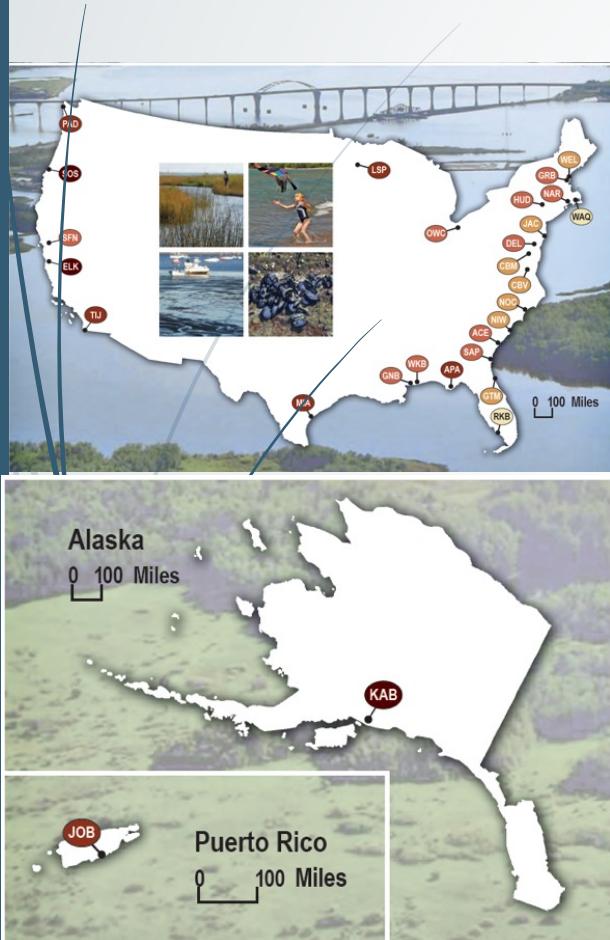


Apalachicola NERR, FL.





# Reserve Size Varies





## Common Questions

- **Will the state have to purchase land for a Louisiana reserve?**

No. Louisiana is considering sites from existing publicly owned lands and adjacent public trust waters. NOAA would not own or manage the land within a LaNERR. The LaNERR would be the property of Louisiana along with any other agreements with other public (federal refuge) or private lands (conservation easements).

- **Does the designation of a reserve bring more rules and regulations?**

The designation of a LaNERR would not add any new regulations. There are no federal regulations imposed as a result of reserve designation.

- **Will the federal government run the reserve?**

LaNERR would be a partnership between NOAA and Louisiana. The state is responsible for the day-to-day management of a reserve. NOAA administers the entire reserve system. NOAA responsibilities include establishing standards for designating and operating reserves that benefit the entire system.



## Step 1- Letter of Interest

## Step 2- Site Selection and Nomination (*Current Step*)

- **Site-Selection Process** must include: Site Selection Committee, site criteria that are applied to entire coastal zone, key stakeholder outreach and engagement, and at least one public meeting held jointly with NOAA
- **Governor Submits a Site Nomination Packet** including: Governor's nomination letter, description of the proposed site in relationship to each of the site selection criteria, an analysis of the proposed site based on the biogeographical scheme defined in regulations, a description of the site's major resources, location, proposed boundaries, and adjacent land uses, the public engagement process, and all other sites considered and why none of these were chosen.

## Step 3- Draft Environmental Impact Statement and Draft Management Plan

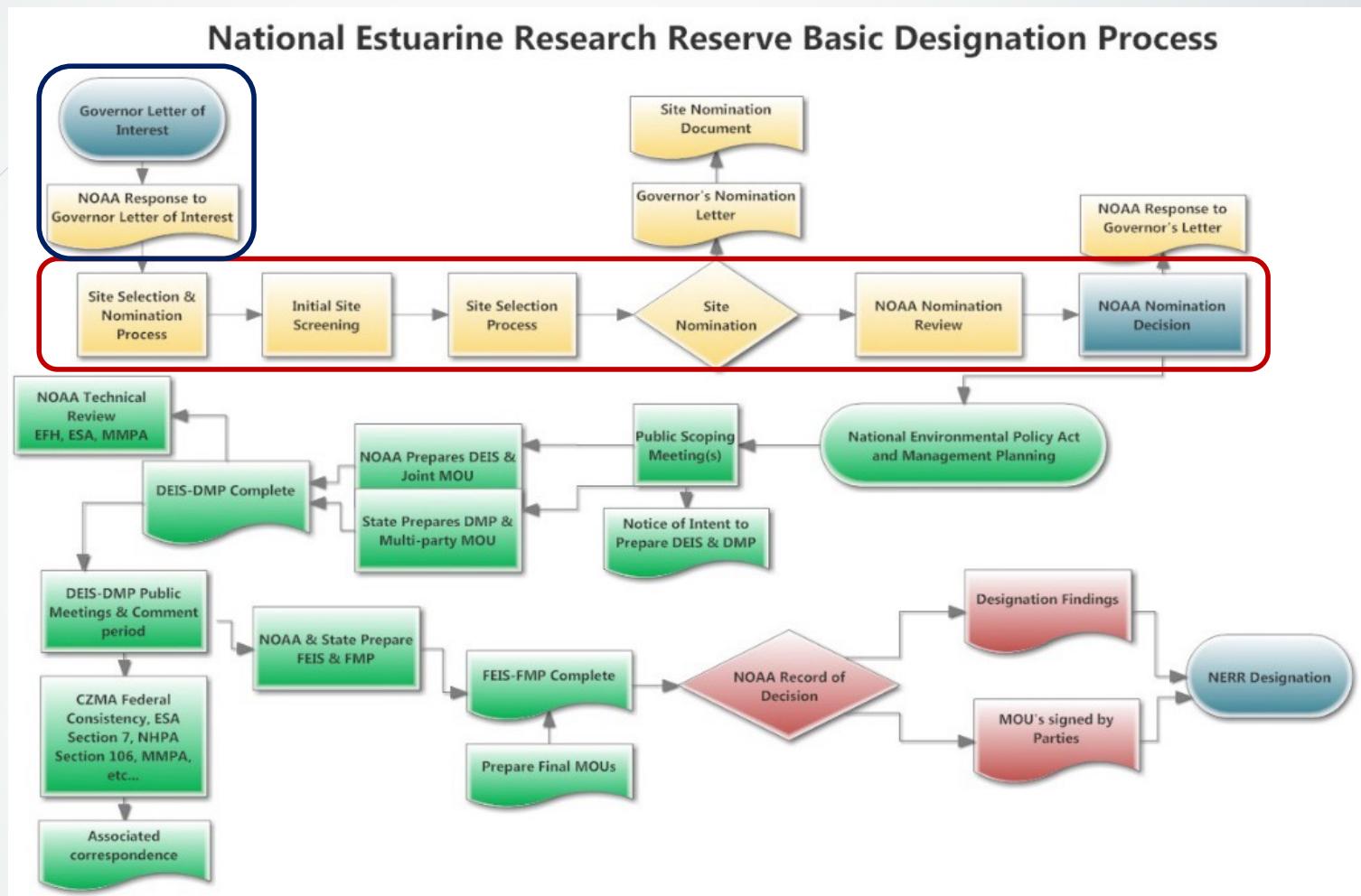
## Step 4- Final Environmental Impact Statement and Final Management Plan

## Step 5- Designation findings and certificate; Record of Decision

## Step 6- Designation Ceremony



## Pre-designation Process





# LaNERR Site Selection and Nomination Teams

## Designation Leadership Team

- Serves to provide leadership and oversight of the state designation. Its task is to manage the phases of the designation over time by coordinating the various committees, engaging the public, and by working closely with local NOAA Liaison to keep NOAA updated on progress

## Site Development Committee

- the technical team responsible for pre-screening the coastal zone to evaluate those areas clearly suitable to serve the function of a LaNERR. Its task is to submit 1-3 proposed sites to the Site Evaluation Committee for nomination of one final site to NOAA for site designation

## Site Evaluation Committee

- the executive level committee responsible for reviewing the final proposed sites for a LaNERR as recommended by the Site Development Committee. Its task is to select the final site to be recommended to the governor for nomination prior to being submitted to NOAA



The **Site Development Committee** is a technical team that will be responsible for pre-screening the coastal zone to evaluate those areas clearly suitable to serve the function of a LaNERR.

The Site Development Committee will submit 1-3 proposed sites to the Site Evaluation Committee for nomination of a LaNERR to NOAA for site designation.

**State Agencies:** CPRA; Archaeology; State Parks; La. Culture, Recreation and Tourism; Atchafalaya Basin Natural Heritage District; State Lands Office; LDAF; LDEQ; LDNR; LDOTD; LDWF; Louisiana Watershed Initiative

**Federal Agencies:** NOAA OCM - Gulf Coast Rep; USFWS; USGS; NWRC; NRCS; National Park Service; USACE; EPA

**NGOs:** The Nature Conservancy; Ducks Unlimited; The Conservation Fund; Land Trust for LA; LWF; Pontchartrain Conservancy; Restore or Retreat; The Water Institute of the Gulf; Mississippi River Delta Campaign – EDF; Audubon; CRCL; Trust for Public Land; BTNEP; Pointe au Chien Indian Tribe

**Universities:** LSU; LSU AgCenter; LUMCON; Nicholls State; McNeese; Southeastern La. University; Loyola University; University of Lafayette; Tulane; SUNO;



# LaNERR Executive Committee Members

- Harry Vorhoff
    - Governor's office of Coastal Activities
  - Russell Caffery
    - Governor's office of Coastal Activities
  - Gregory Grandy
    - CPRA
  - Bren Haase
    - CPRA
  - Members met on August 13<sup>th</sup> to receive an update on LaNERR Site Selection process
  - Executive Members felt the process depicted a fair and transparent way to select and nominate a site
  - Members will be updated as process evolves
- Charles Reulet
    - DNR
  - Keith Lovell
    - DNR
  - Randy Myers
    - LDWF
  - Cole Garrett
    - LDWF
  - Patrick Banks
    - LDWF





# Criteria from the NOAA guidelines to establish a LaNERR site in the Mississippi River Delta.

## National Estuarine Research Reserve Designation Guidance

Site Selection, Nomination, and Designation



February 1, 2020

Authored by NOAA



Stewardship Division  
Office for Coastal Management  
National Ocean Service  
National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration



### I. Environmental Representativeness



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



### III. Suitability of the Site for Education and Interpretation

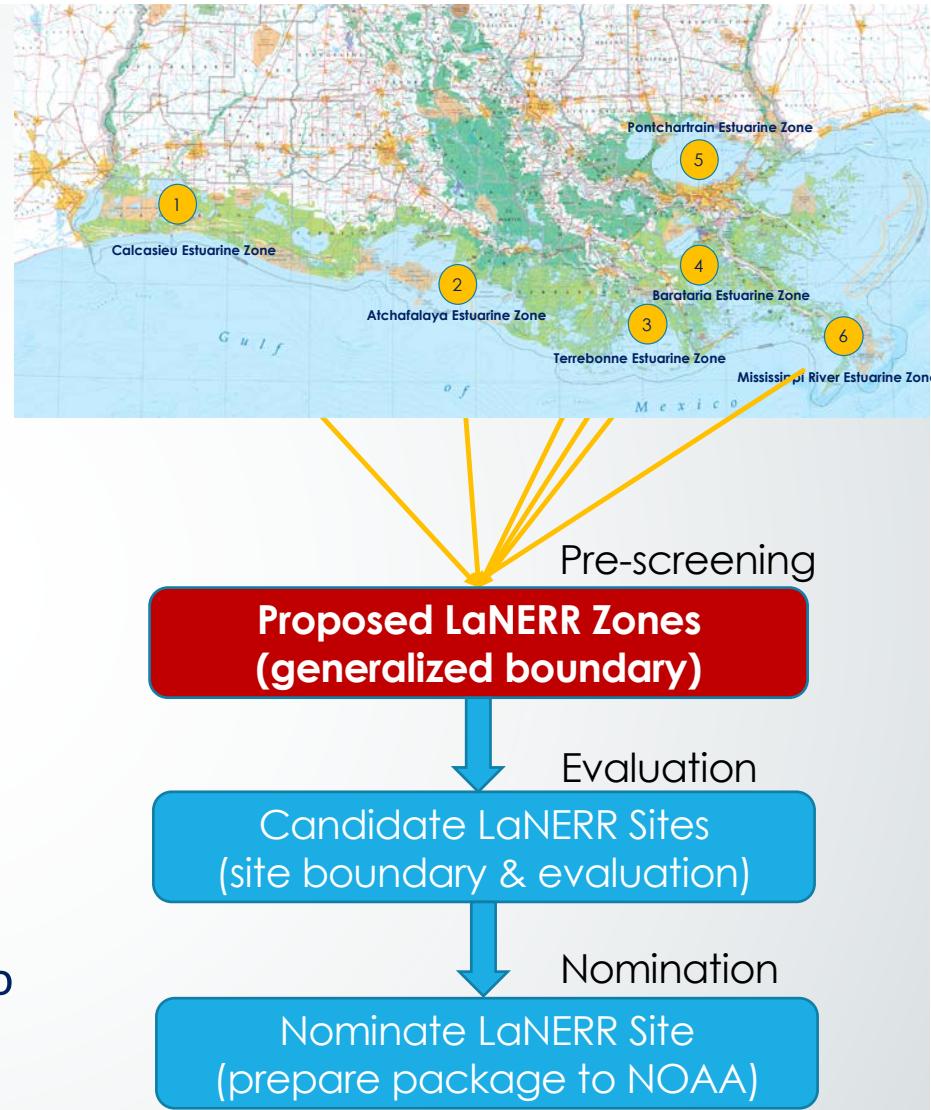


### IV. Acquisition and Management Considerations



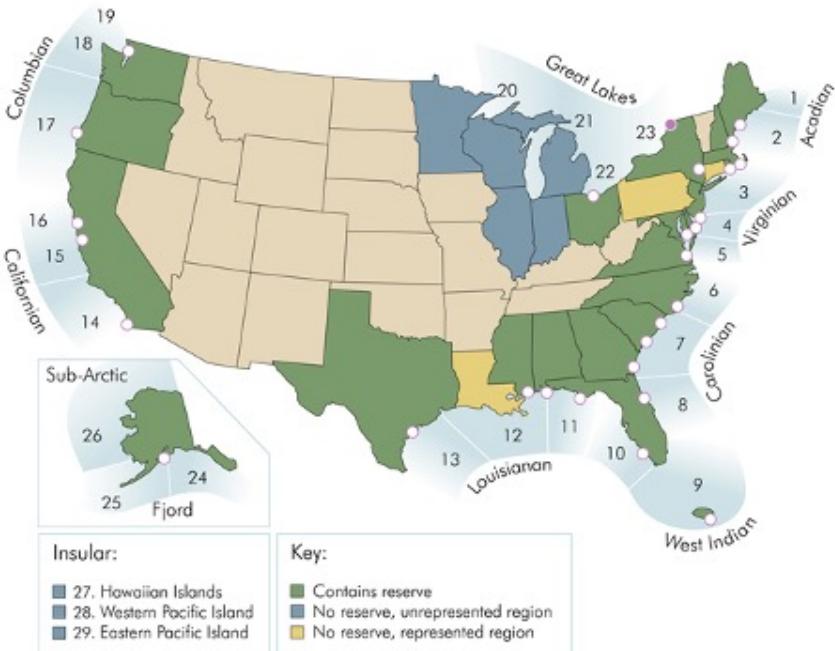
## How will Louisiana determine where to establish a LaNERR?

1. Develop pre-screening criteria that reflect LaNERR goals;
2. Establish generalized zones within which to identify candidate sites;
3. Use proposed zones to modify NOAA site criteria to help identify sites for consideration and final nomination;
4. Evaluate proposed LaNERR Zones to select candidate sites that define preferred goals;
5. Generate public support and partnerships for proposed final site to NOAA.



LaNERR  
SEARCH

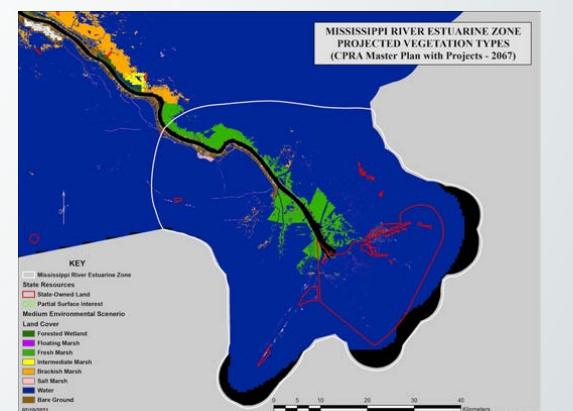
**Unique Environment**– Unique, as referred to in terms of NERR designation, refers to limited known occurrence of a habitat type, process, landscape feature, endangered or threatened species, etc. in the biogeographic region or sub-region.



**Core and buffer Areas** – NOAA regulations define key or “core” land and water areas which contain “ecological units of a natural estuarine system 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.”



**Integrity** – Ecosystem integrity is generally used to refer to the completeness, functionality, and health of an ecosystem. Declines in integrity reduce habitat quality for native biota, disrupt ecological processes and functions, and diminish ecosystem resilience and capacity to sustain species and many ecosystem services. Significant declines in ecosystem integrity could jeopardize the NERR system goal of long-term research.





This section of the presentation focuses on Criterion #1.

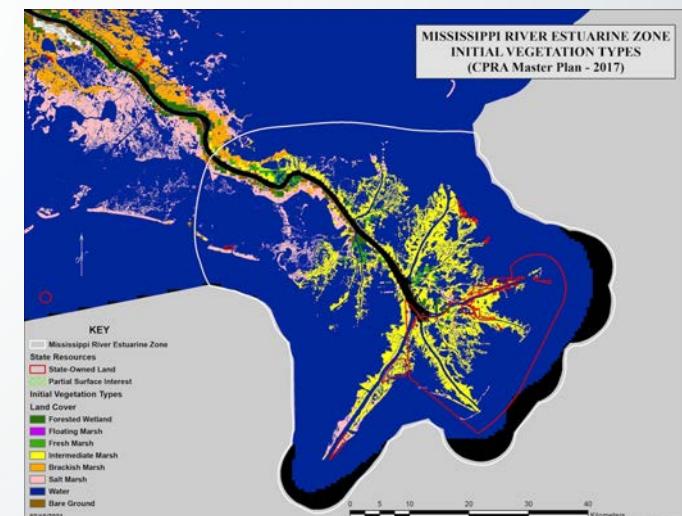
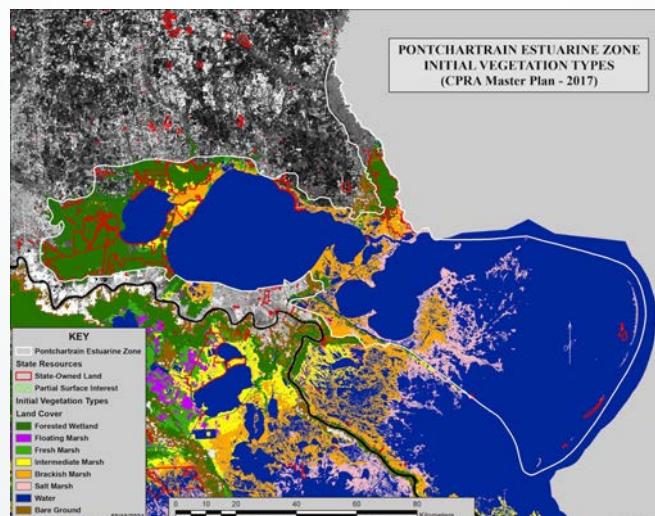
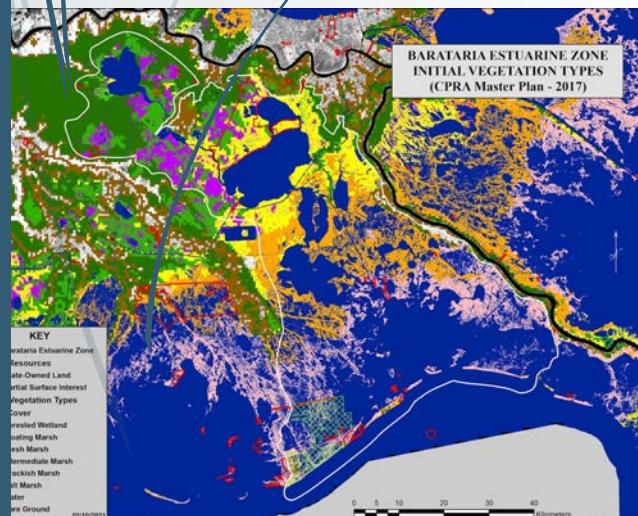
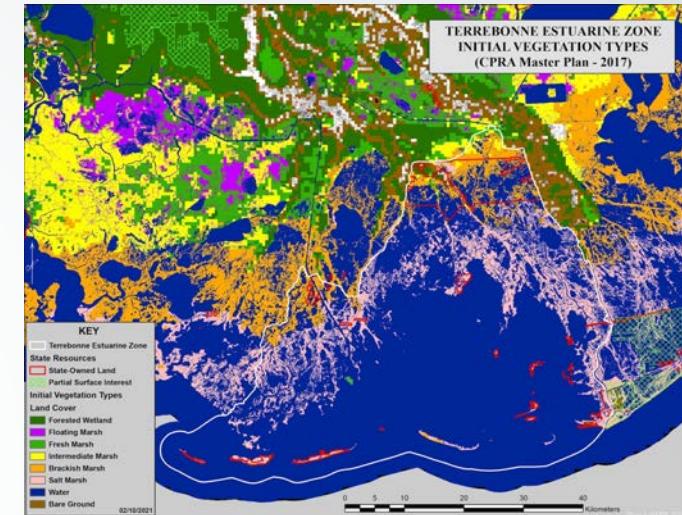
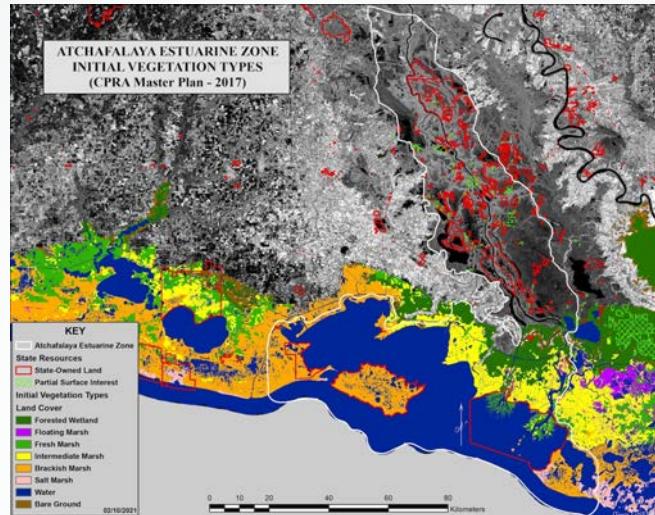
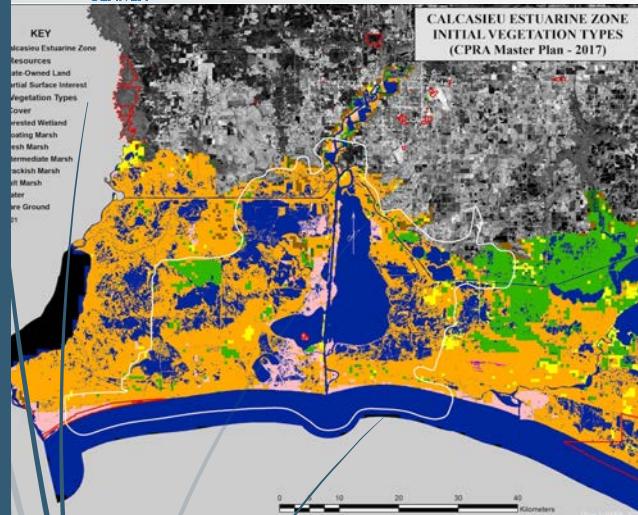
### Pre-Screening Criteria #1 Unique Coastal Setting

1. Are there potential core areas (state-owned lands and waters) in this Estuarine Zone that represent unique habitats, coastal processes and salinity gradients of a delta estuary in comparison to the other NERR sites in Louisianian Biogeographic Zone of NERR System (sections 11, 12, 13). Unique environmental representativeness is important to research and education mission of a NERR.

Description: Based on current distribution of habitat types used to define salinity zones in each Estuarine Zone maps using 2017 Coastal Master Plan. Habitat types are shown in outlined area of state-owned land in red.



These maps show the distribution of habitat types in each of the six Estuarine Zones. This information was used to develop recommendations for Criterion #1.





This section of the presentation focuses on Criterion #2.

### Pre-Screening Criteria #2 State-Owned Lands

2. Is there currently sufficient area of state-owned lands within this Estuarine Zone conducive to developing LaNERR Candidate Sites that meet National Estuarine Reserve System objectives?

Description: Majority of publicly-owned land used as core areas within a candidate site cannot be federal lands. Further, the state must demonstrate adequate management control for core areas to be designated as a NERR. NOAA requires that state lands be available in the initial designation of a NERR site since the agreement is a NOAA-state MOU.

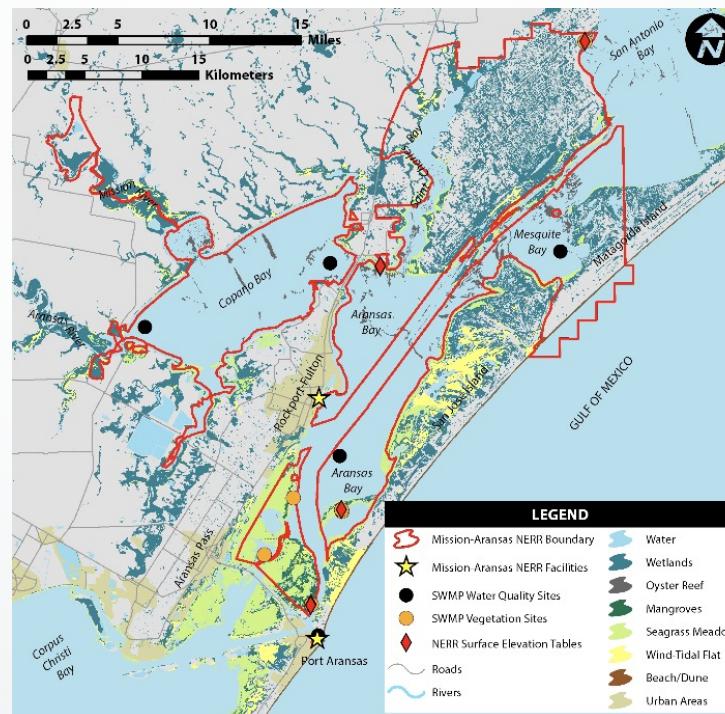


# Public lands connected by state waters

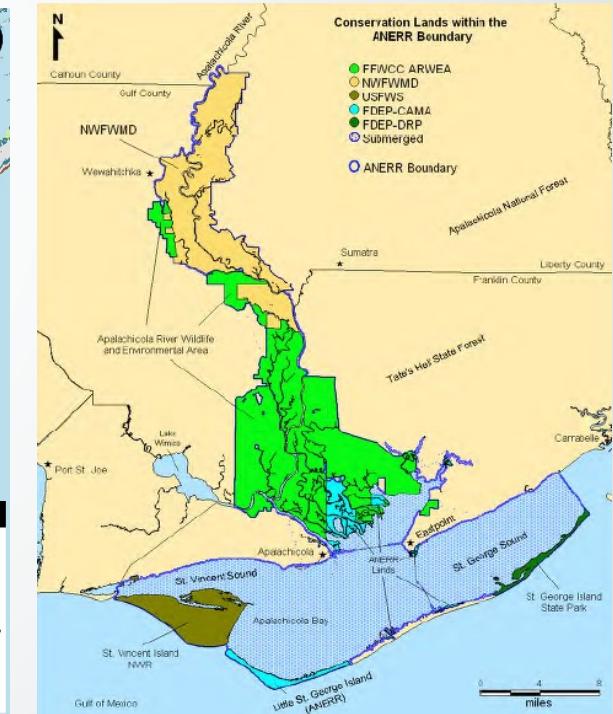
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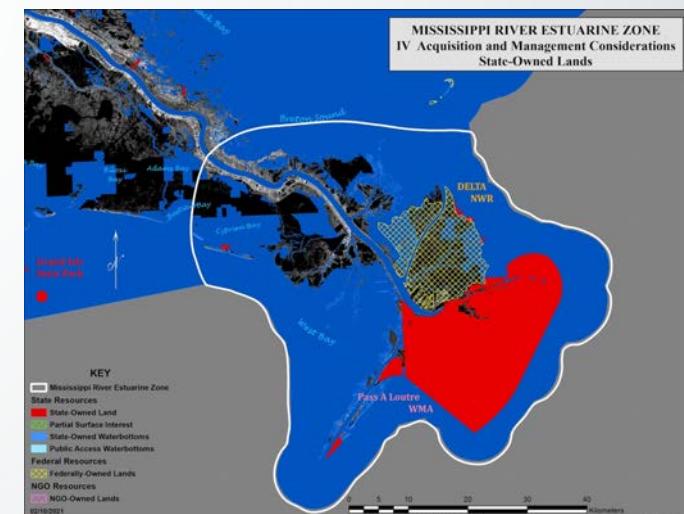
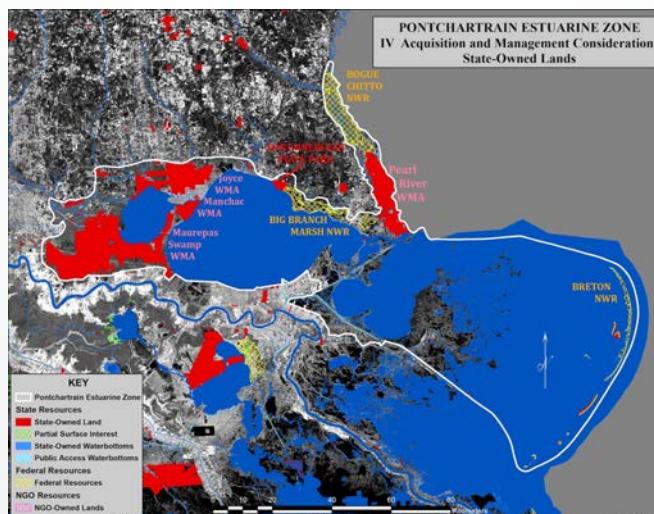
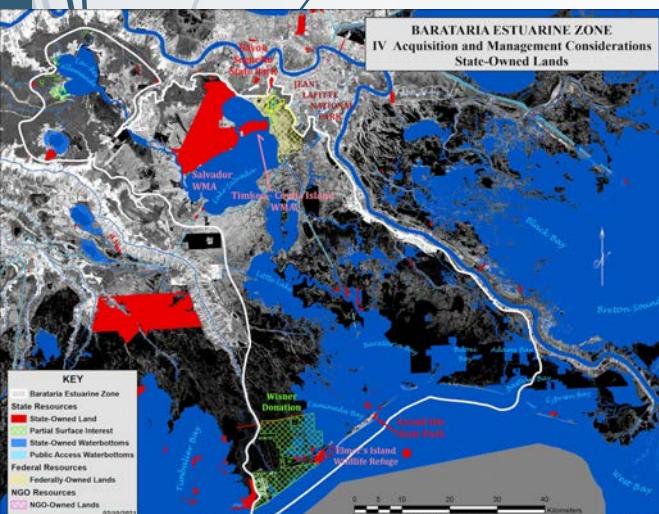
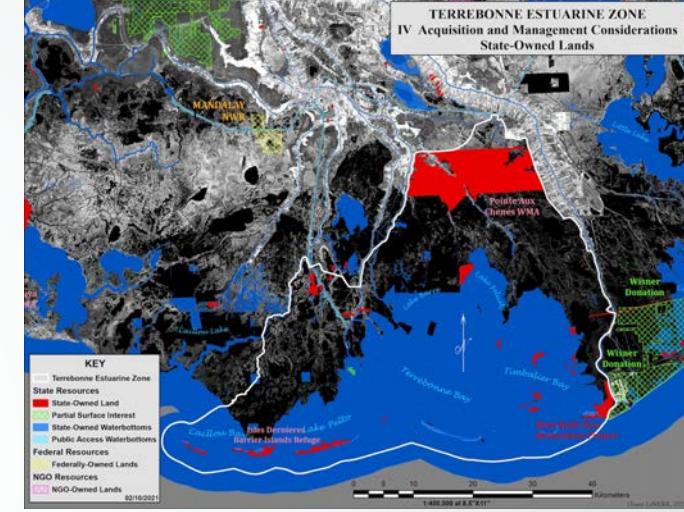
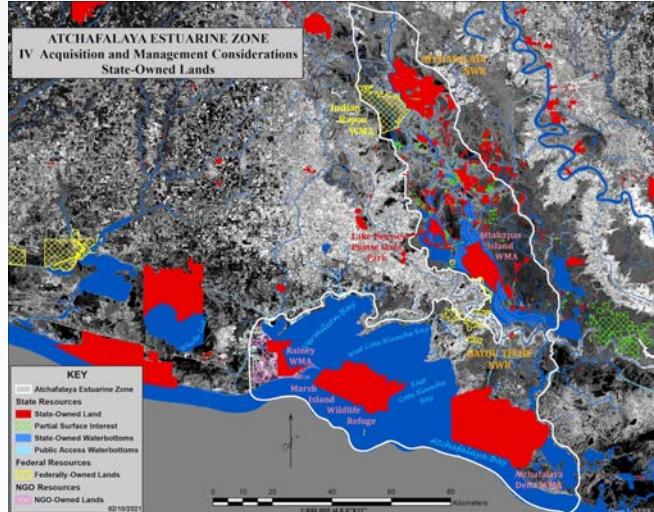


Apalachicola NERR, FL.





These maps show the distribution of state-owned lands (solid red) in each of the six Estuarine Zones. This information was used to develop recommendations for Criterion #2.





This section of the presentation focuses on Criterion #3.

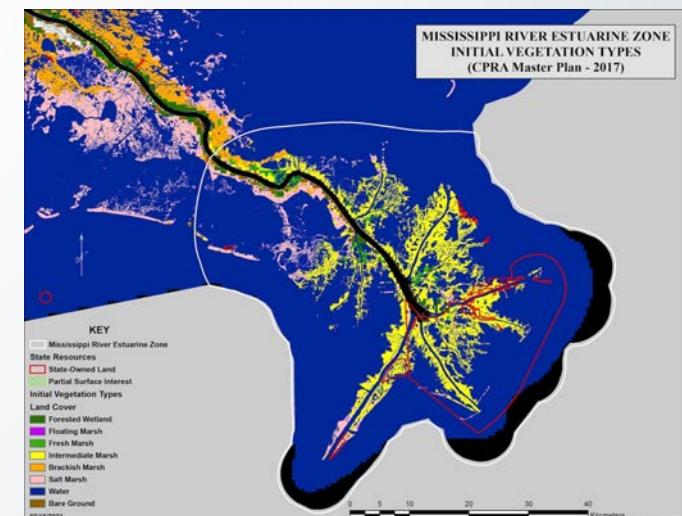
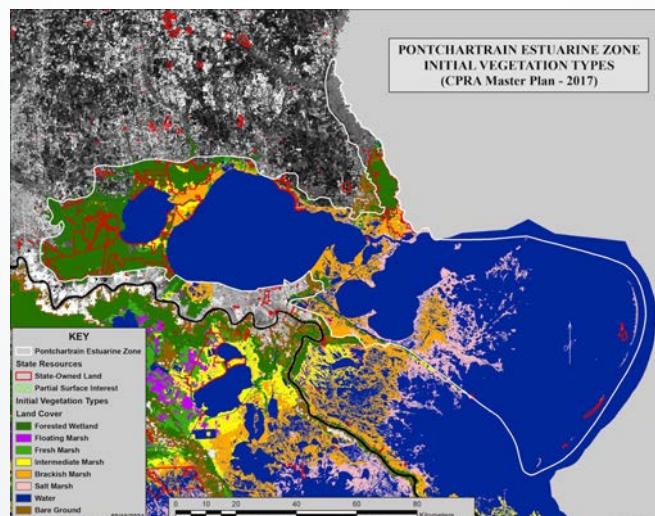
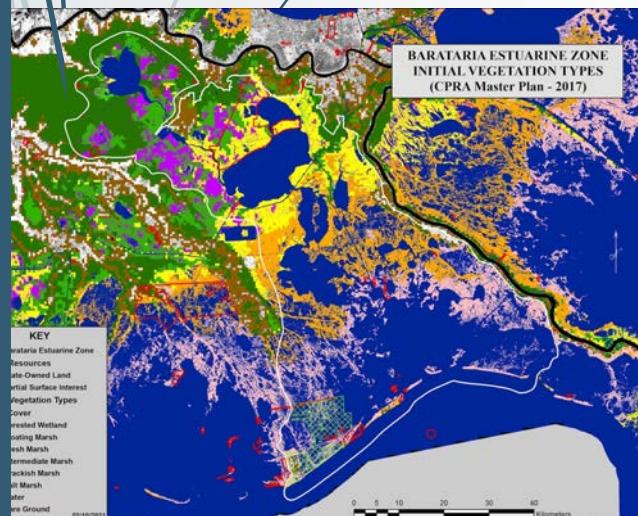
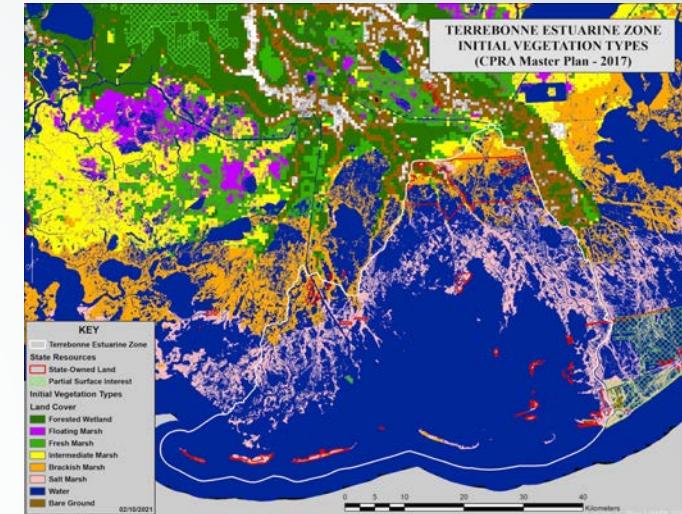
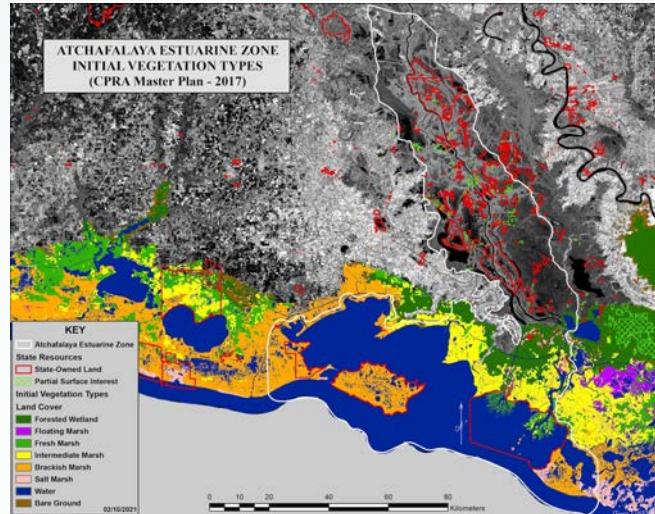
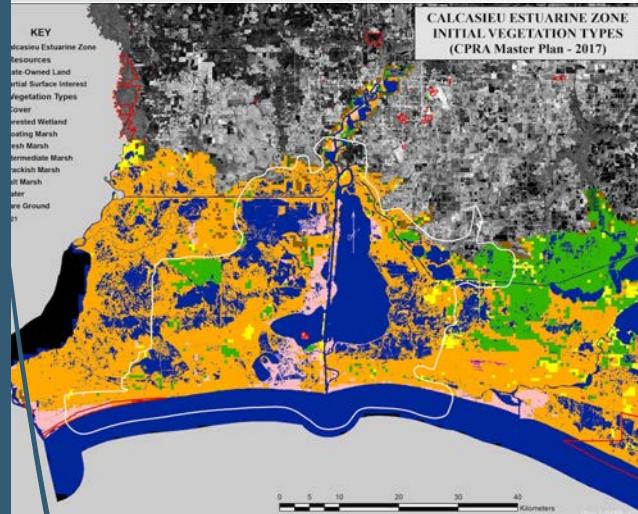
### Pre-Screening Criteria #3 Land Integrity

3. Is the integrity of the wetlands that may serve as potential core (state-owned land) and buffer areas that provide the unique features of the NERR (see criterion #1) maintained in perpetuity within this Estuarine Zone, which would allow for development of facilities and programs (research & education)?

Description: Land change was measured by comparing the 2017 Coastal Master Plan initial condition vegetation to the year 50 projected vegetation under the medium scenario with implementation of the plan. A reduction of 50% in wetland area from initial to projected was considered sufficient to question the integrity of a zone.



These maps show the distribution of habitat types in each of the six Estuarine Zones. This information was used to develop recommendations for Criterion #1.





This section of the presentation focuses on Criterion #4.

#### Pre-Screening Criteria #4 Change in Habitat Diversity

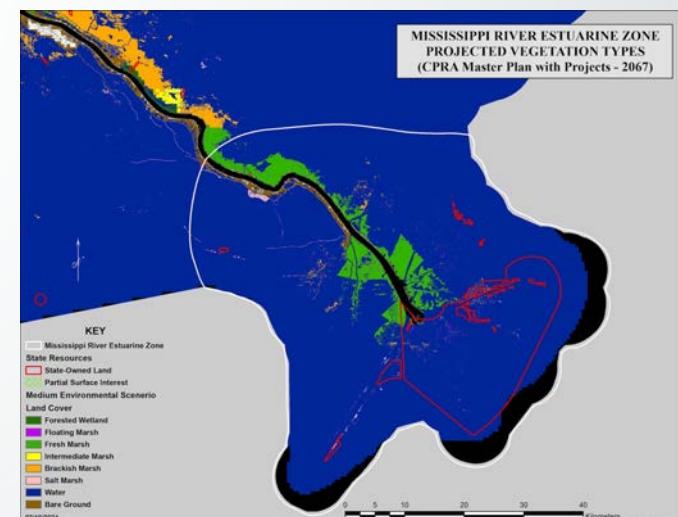
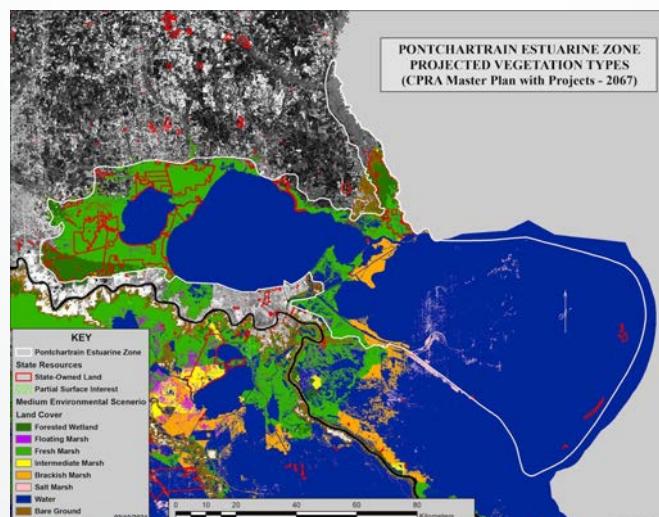
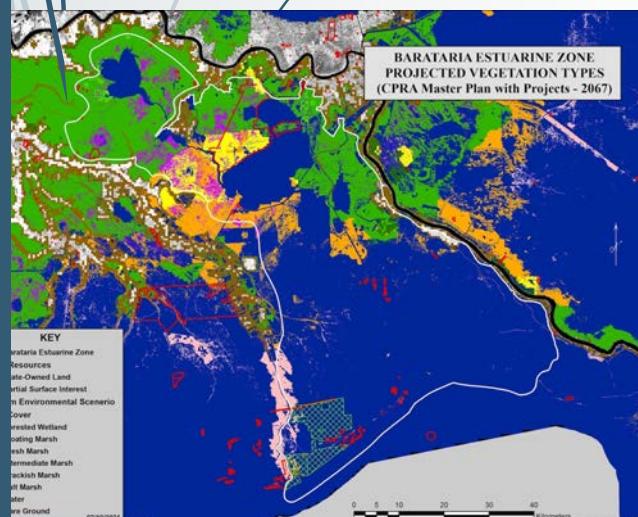
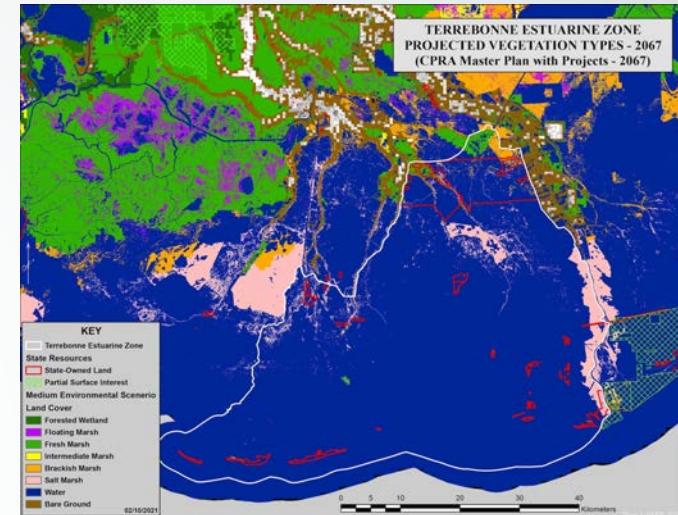
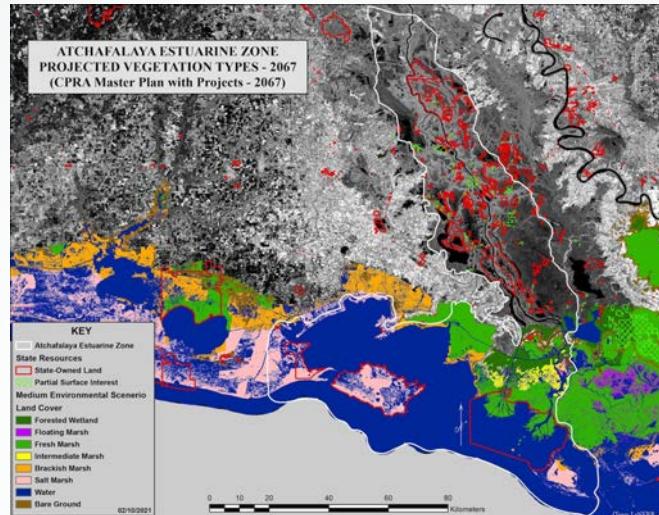
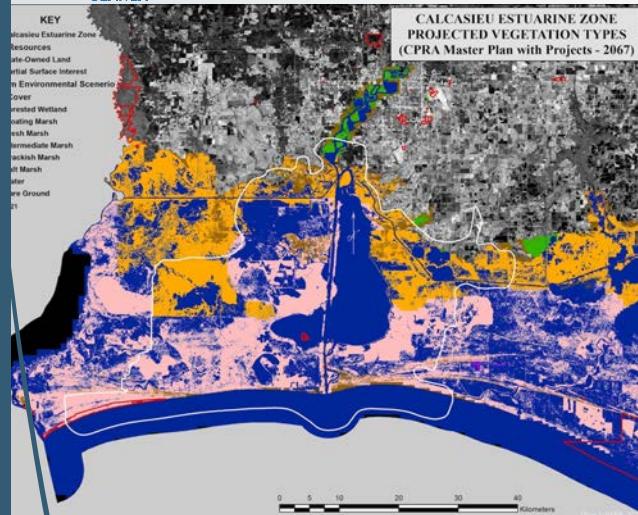
4. Do the wetlands that would serve as potential core (state-owned land) and buffer areas currently support a diversity of habitats along a salinity gradient representative of a delta estuary. Do these wetland areas maintain a diversity of habitats in perpetuity (maintain integrity) within this Estuarine Zone over the next 50 years?

Description: Changes that demonstrate Significant Habitat Diversity change represent conflict with foreseeable program development in research & education to meet the mission of a NERR. Change in habitat diversity was measured by comparing the 2017 Coastal Master Plan initial condition vegetation to the year 50 projected vegetation under the medium scenario with implementation of the plan. (see criteria to the right)

Insignificant change (fresh or saline habitat change <-25%);  
Moderate change (fresh or saline habitat change -25 to -65%);  
Significant change (fresh or saline habitat change > -65%).



These maps show the distribution of habitat types projected in 50 yrs in each of the six Estuarine Zones. This information was used to develop evaluations for Criteria #3 and #4.





# Three LaNERR Estuarine Zones for candidate site proposals.

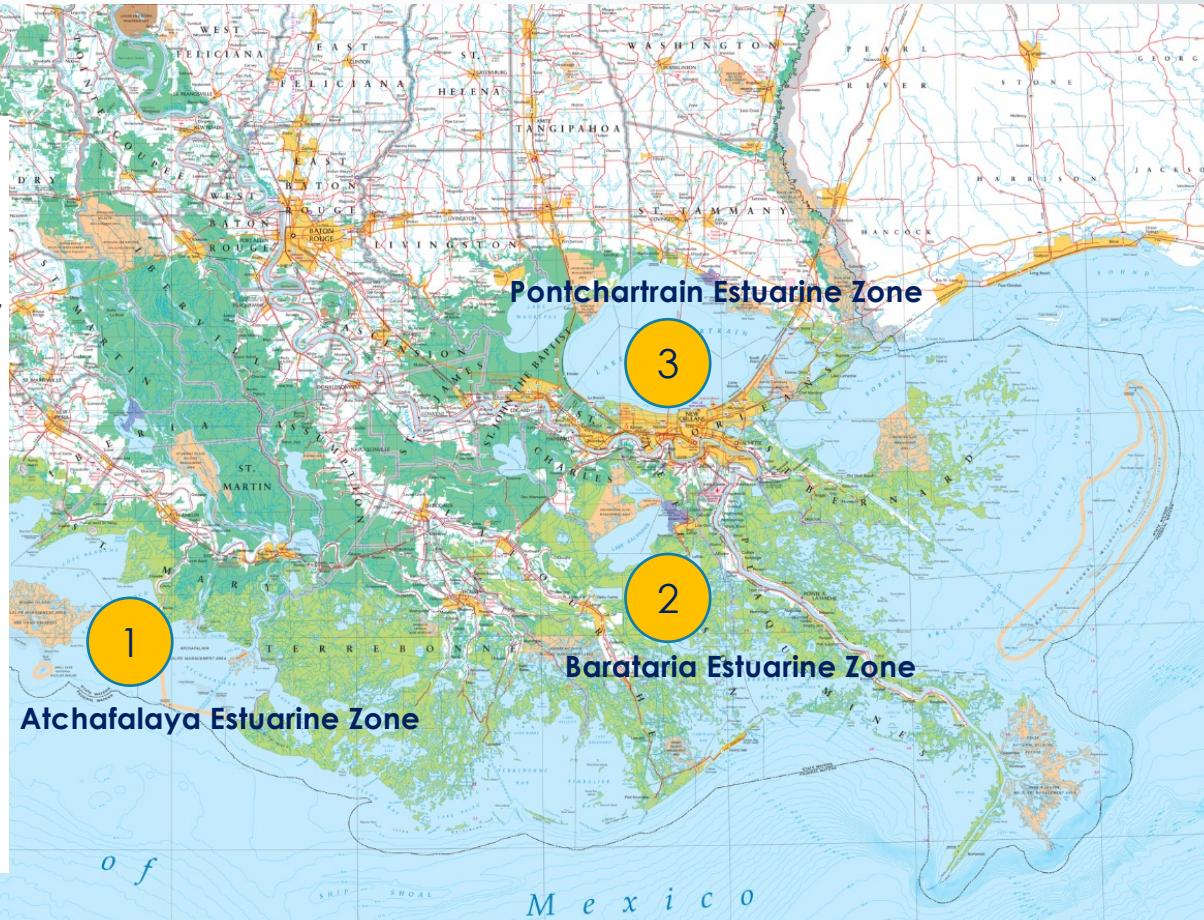


Results of Site Development Committee Preliminary Screening and Voting on Six Estuarine Zones

March 2021

Following the Site Development Committee Meeting #3 on February 25 and 26, 2021, a Qualtrics survey was provided to the SDC so members could vote on whether each Estuarine Zone should be considered further for the development of candidate NERR sites. A total of 53 votes were received, and a summary of the results is provided in the following table. Considering majority vote, the Atchafalaya, Barataria, and Pontchartrain Estuarine Zones will move forward for further consideration in developing candidate NERR sites for nomination to NOAA.

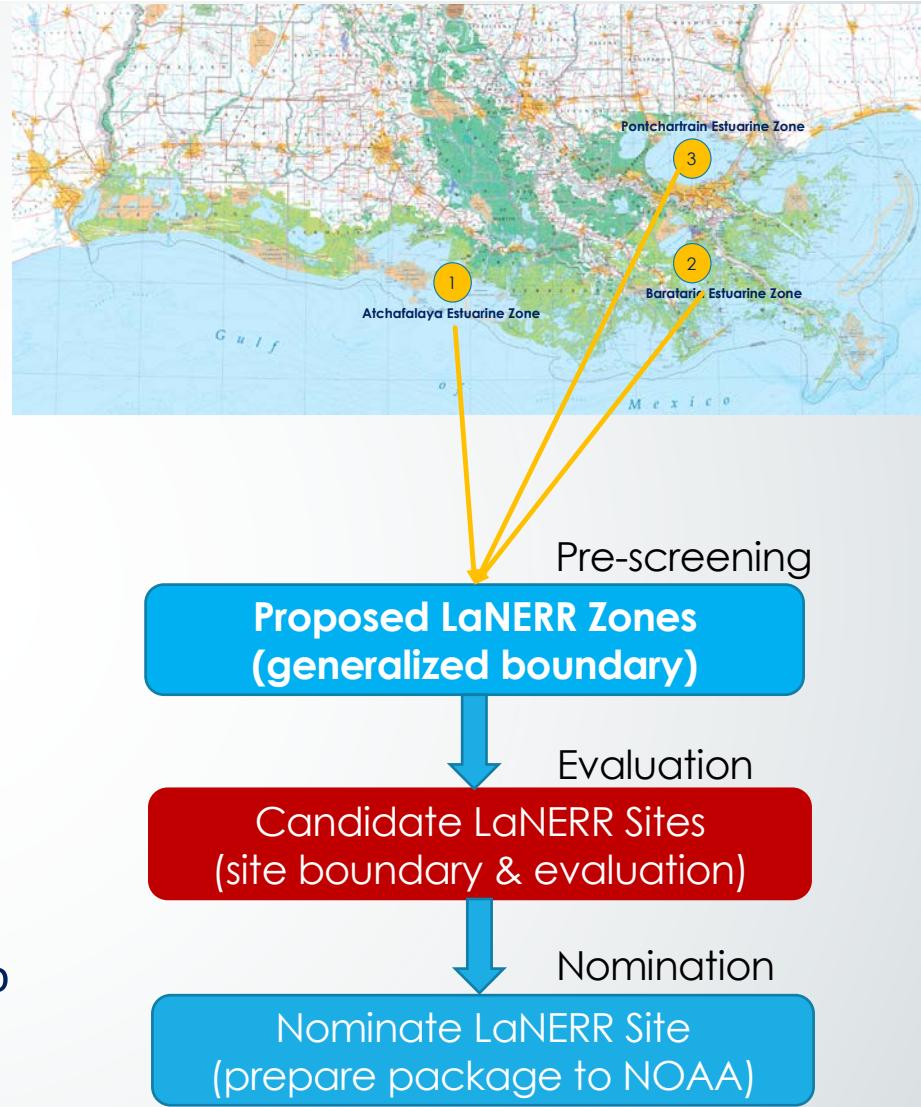
	Yes
Calcasieu Estuarine Zone	2%
Atchafalaya Estuarine Zone	96 %
Terrebonne Estuarine Zone	26 %
Barataria Estuarine Zone	70%
Mississippi River Estuarine Zone	26 %
Pontchartrain Estuarine Zone	83 %





## How will Louisiana determine where to establish a LaNERR?

1. Develop pre-screening criteria that reflect LaNERR goals;
2. Establish generalized zones within which to identify candidate sites;
3. Use proposed zones to modify NOAA site criteria to help identify sites for consideration and final nomination;
4. Evaluate proposed LaNERR Zones to select candidate sites that define preferred goals;
5. Generate public support and partnerships for proposed final site to NOAA.





#### IV. Acquisition and Management Considerations

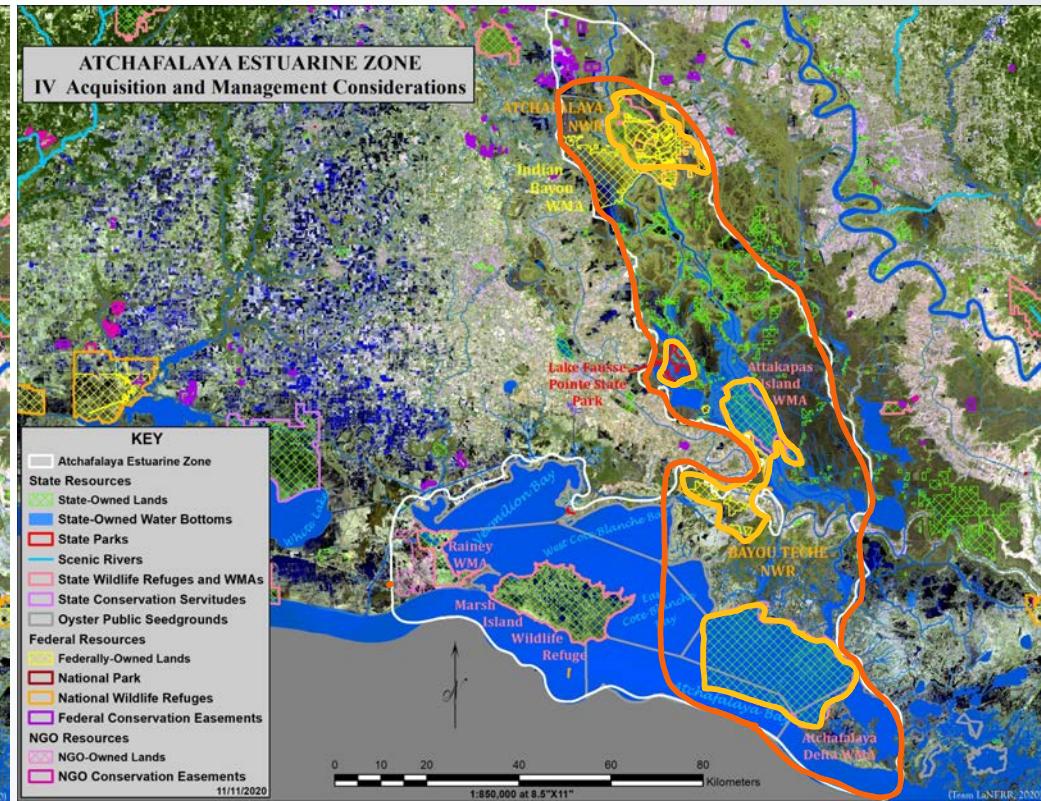
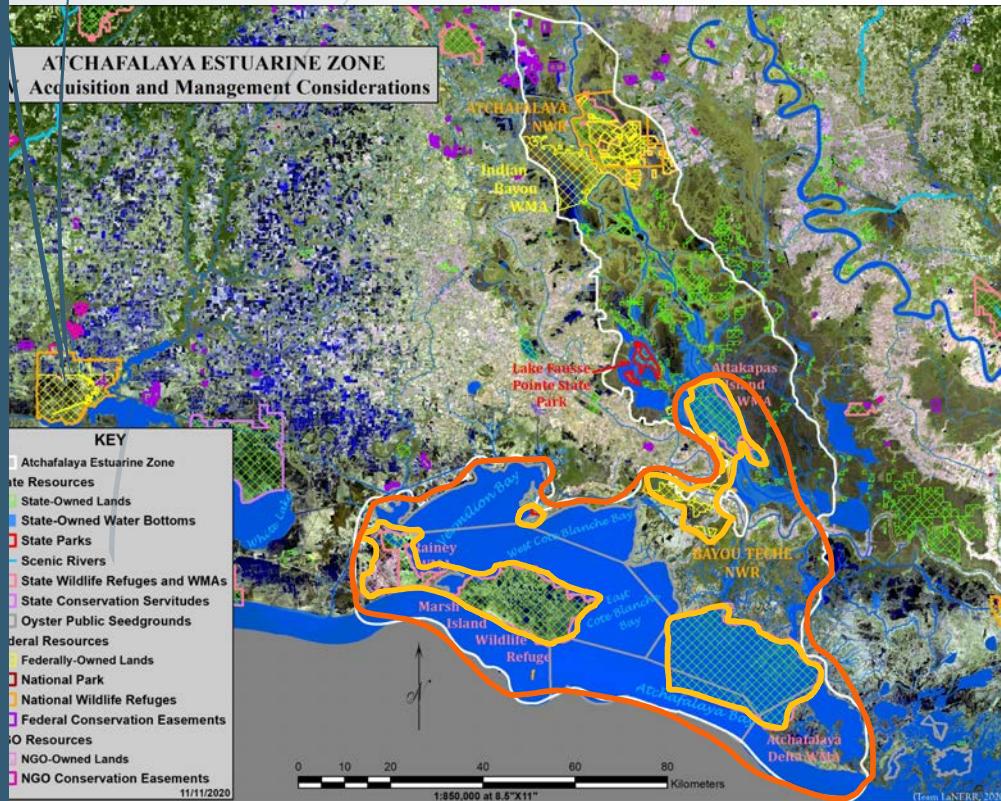
The generalized boundaries of the proposed LaNERR zone include **sufficient land and water area to maintain the integrity of the delta ecosystem.**

- The candidate site consists of publicly owned lands or demonstrates sufficient potential for land acquisition and adequate land-use control to meet Reserve System goals.
- There are Wildlife Management Areas, State Parks, National Parks, conservation easements, etc. in the LaNERR zone.
- The candidate site is suitable to address key **coastal management issues.**



#### IV. Acquisition and Management Considerations

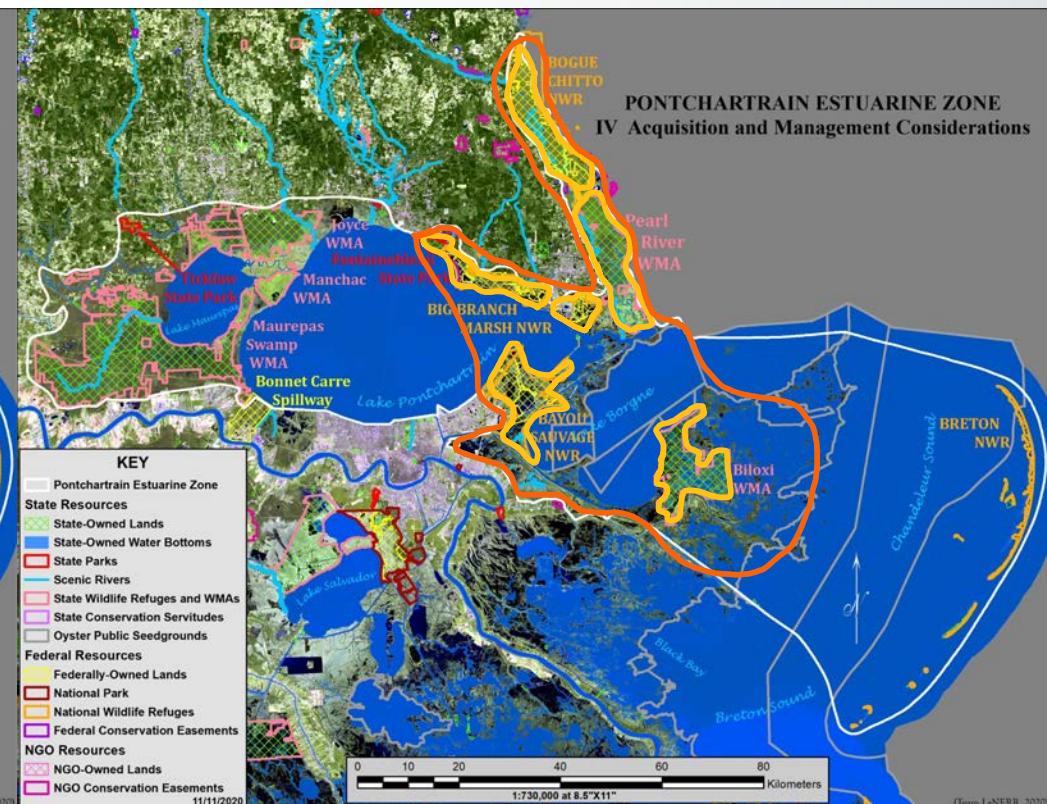
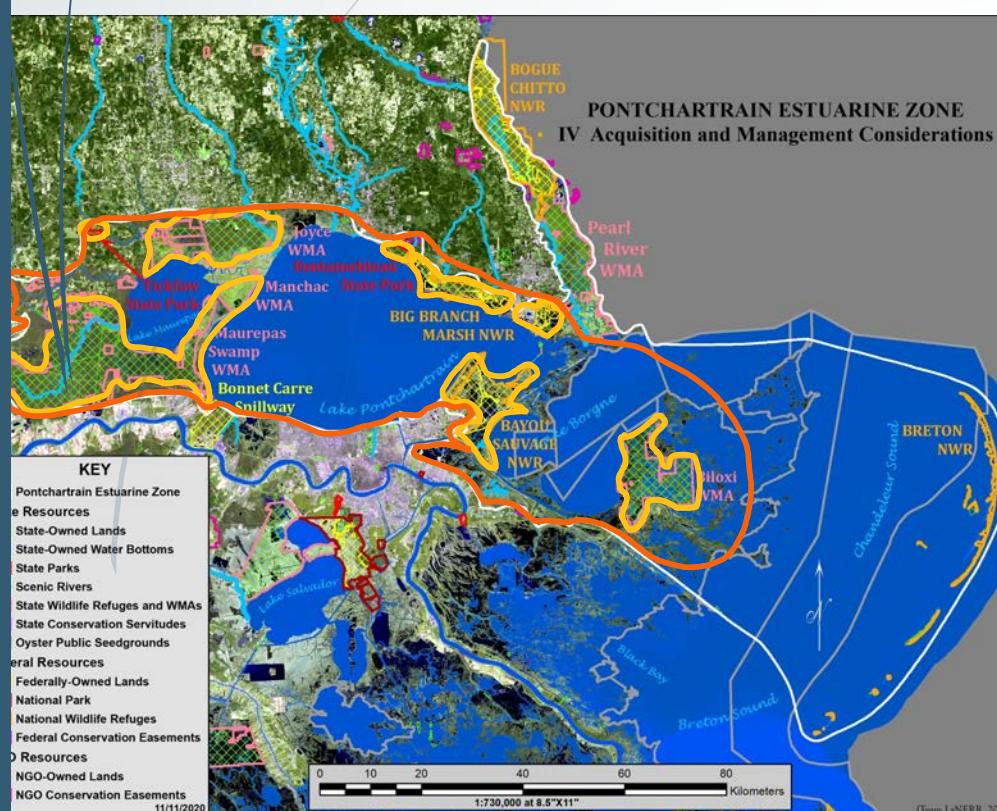
The process from generalized boundaries of **Estuarine Zones** to the more specific composites of **Candidate Sites** to the final core areas of a LaNERR **Nominated Site**.





#### IV. Acquisition and Management Considerations

The process from generalized boundaries of **Estuarine Zones** to the more specific composites of **Candidate Sites** to the final core areas of a LaNERR **Nominated Site**.





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

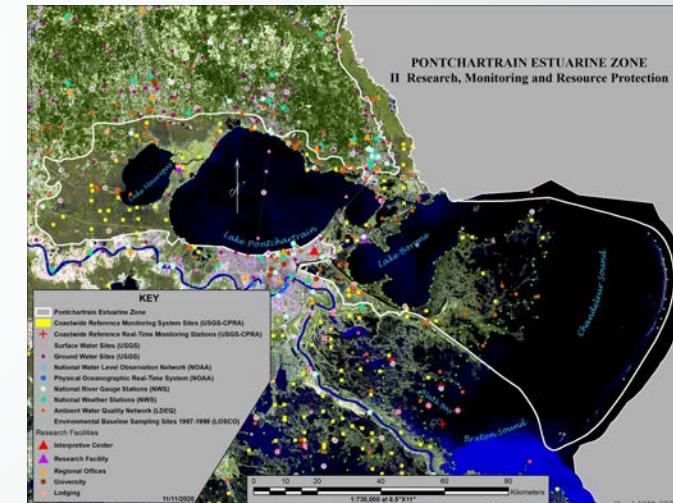
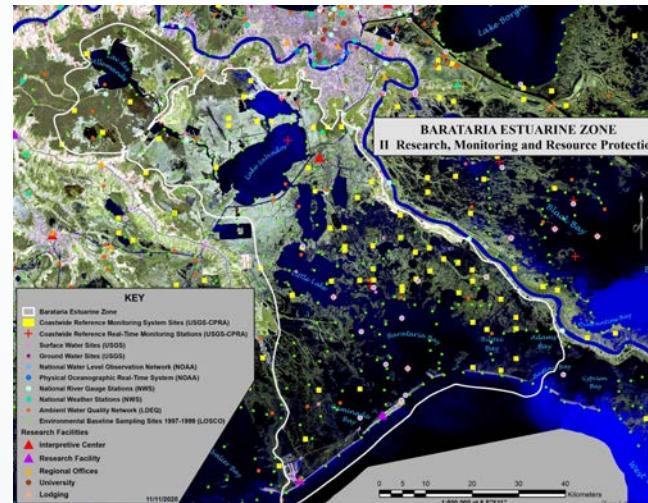
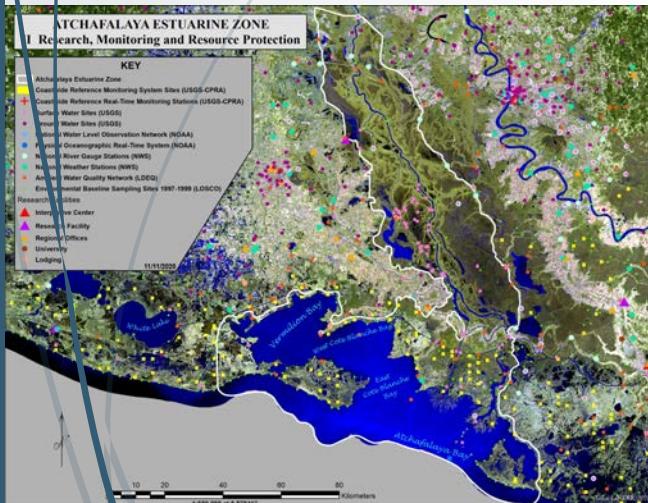
The candidate site is suitable for **research, monitoring, and resource protection** activities.

- The proposed zone has ecosystems suitable for monitoring processes of delta estuary; and has been site of long-term research efforts.
- There are research institutions and facilities in general area that can utilize the proposed site for research and monitoring programs;
- There is long-term sustainability and resilience to ecosystems in the proposed site; land use issues allow for resource protection.



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

### Distribution of monitoring stations (including coastwide reference monitoring stations – CRMS).





### III. Suitability of the Site for Education and Interpretation

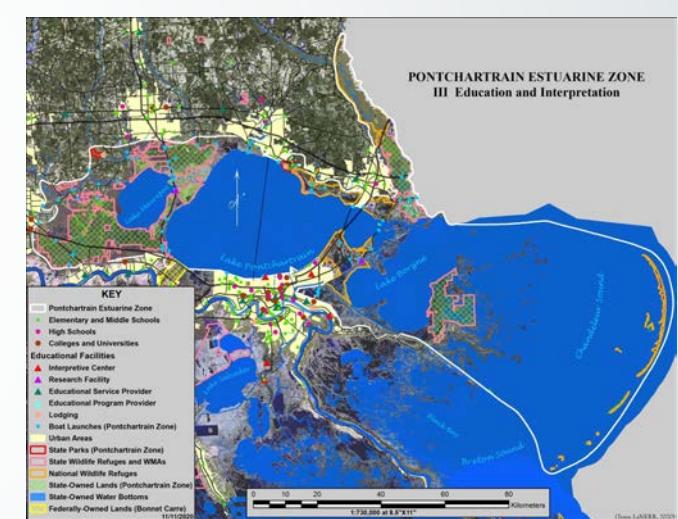
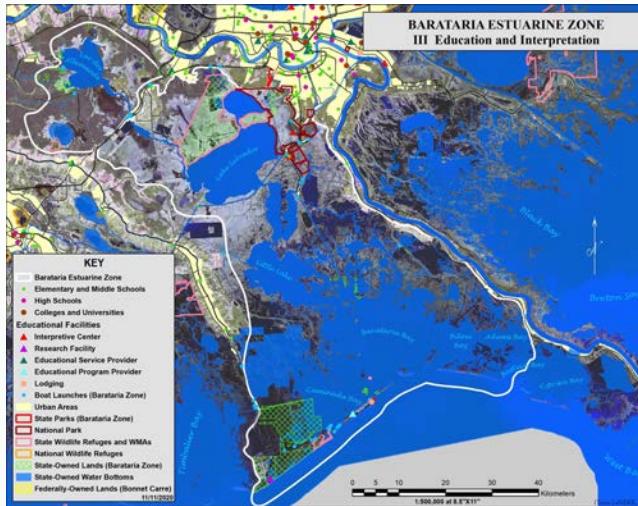
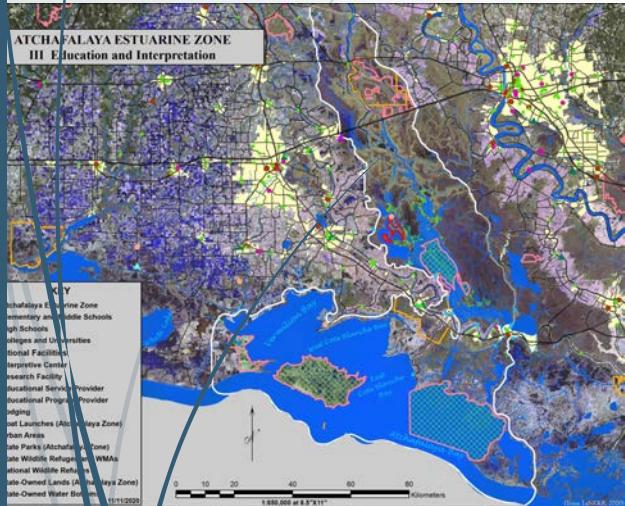
The candidate site is suitable for **education, training, and interpretation** activities.

- Does the LaNERR zone have significant features such as Scenic and Historic Rivers, Scenic Byways, Indian mounds, Archeological sites, etc., that provide education and interpretation value;
- Are there schools and known educational and interpretive centers near the LaNERR zone;
- Is the proposed site accessible by normal modes of transportation. What roads and boat launches provide access points to waterways of the LaNERR zone.



### III. Suitability of the Site for Education and Interpretation

Distribution of urban areas and schools along with access points in proximity of six Estuarine Zones.





# LaNERR Site Selection and Nomination Process: Public Participation and Transparency

## Site Development

- Propose LaNERR Zones
- Prescreen Zones to identify Sites
- Develop Candidate Sites
- Modify Site Criteria to NOAA

## Public Roadshow

- Outline Benefits of NERRS & LaNERR
- Overview of LaNERR Process to Stakeholders
- Receive feedback on Proposed LaNERR Zones

## Town Halls at Candidate Sites

- Presentation of Candidate Sites to local communities
- Public and stakeholder engagement
- Evaluate potential value of sites



# Site Development Committee Process.

Pre-screening  
of Estuarine  
Zones

Proposal Team Subcommittees form around each approved Estuarine Zone. Develop Candidate Sites.

Criteria Subcommittee develop criteria for site evaluation to screen candidate sites - NOAA Approval.

Screening Subcommittee evaluates Candidate Sites (phase I to II to final)

Select Final Site

Jan 2021

Feb 2021

Mar 2021

Apr 2021

May 2021

June 2021

Jul 2021

Aug 2021

Sep 2021

Oct 2021

1. Evaluate the six proposed generalized estuarine zones as qualifications for a LaNERR.
2. **Proposal Team Subcommittees** develop more specific Candidate Sites for consideration for a LaNERR. Phase I to Phase II to Final Phase development with evaluation by **Screening Subcommittee**
3. **Criteria Subcommittee** develops drafts of Modified Site Criteria for Site Selection.



# How do I stay engaged in the process?



**LaNERR**

About Outreach Education Research LaNERR Sea Grant LOUISIANA Communications Law & Policy Resources Funding

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Louisiana Sea Grant » LaNERR

### Louisiana National Estuarine Research Reserve (LaNERR)

The National Estuarine Research Reserve System is a network of 29 coastal sites designated to protect and study estuarine systems. Established through the Coastal Zone Management Act, the reserves represent a partnership program between NOAA and the coastal states. NOAA provides funding and national guidance, and each site is managed on a daily basis by a lead state agency or university with input from local partners.

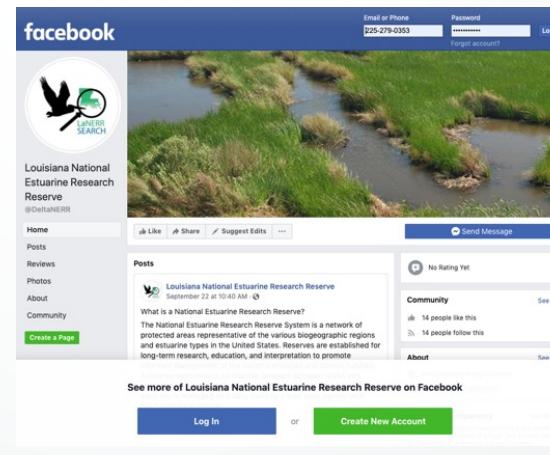
For decades now, the concept of siting a NERR here has been a point of discussion here in Louisiana. The first step was taken with a letter from the Governor's office to NOAA on July 23, 2019. Correspondence from Governor John Bel Edwards' office to the NERR program proceeded and advanced the initiative.

#### LaNERR Status Update

Louisiana NERR, or LaNERR, is currently in the Site Development phase in the process of selecting a site to nominate to the National Oceanographic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA). Visit [LaNERR Site Selection Process & Timeline](#) for more details.



National Estuarine Research Reserves System  
Find a Reserve Near You  
Fact Sheets & Videos  
LaNERR Site Selection Process & Timeline  
Frequently Asked Questions  
Get Involved



## Contact

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[deltanerr@lsu.edu](mailto:deltanerr@lsu.edu)

### Social Media:

- <https://twitter.com/DeltaNERR>
- <http://www.laseagrant.org/deltanerr/>
- [Facebook](https://www.facebook.com/DeltaNERR/)



# LaNERR Roadshow Presentation

## ([www.laseagrant.org](http://www.laseagrant.org))

### Search for Louisiana National Estuarine Research Reserve (LaNERR)

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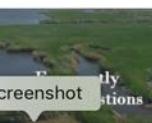
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Request a LaNERR  
Virtual Roadshow

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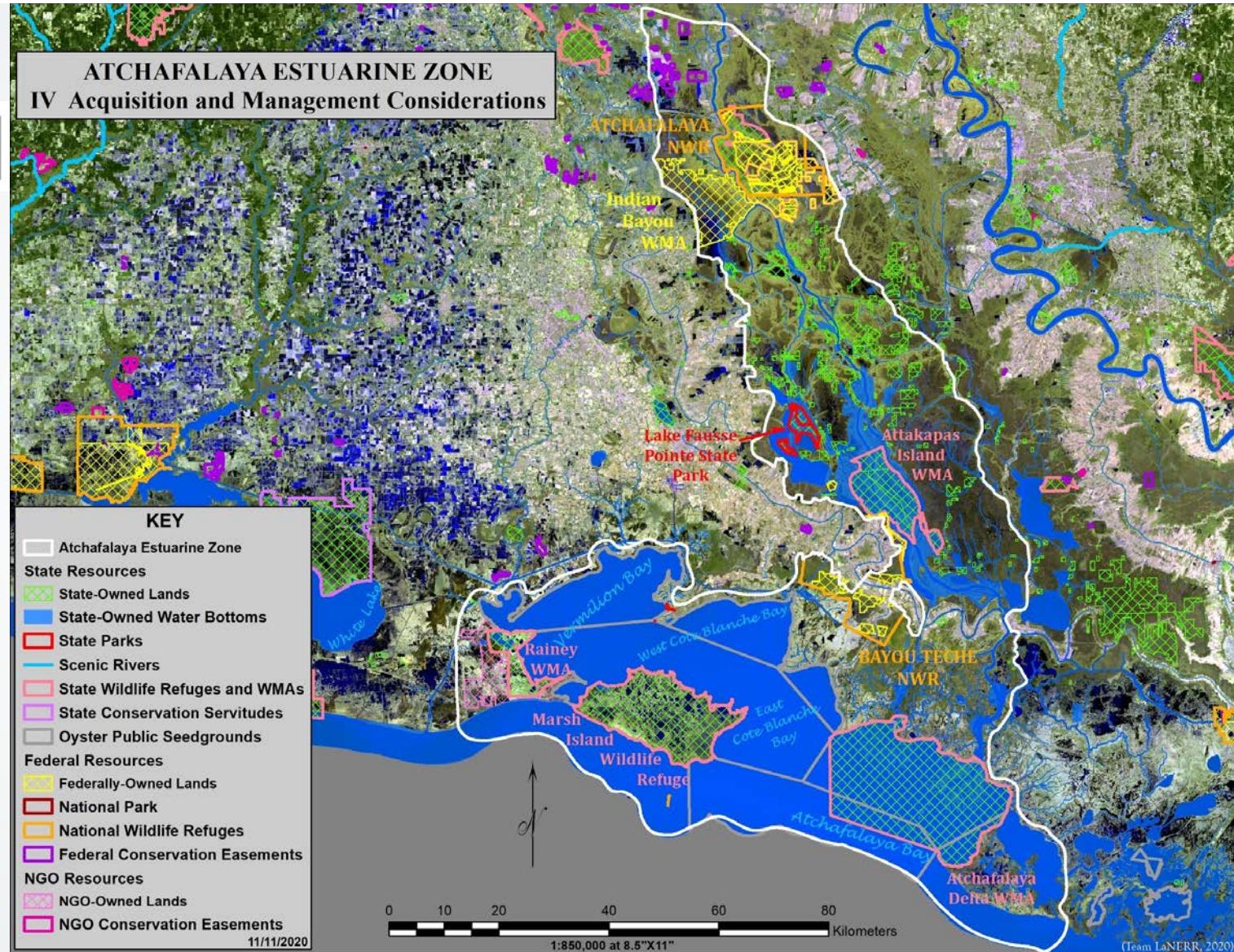
LaNERR

Louisiana  
National Estuary Research Reserve

Questions?



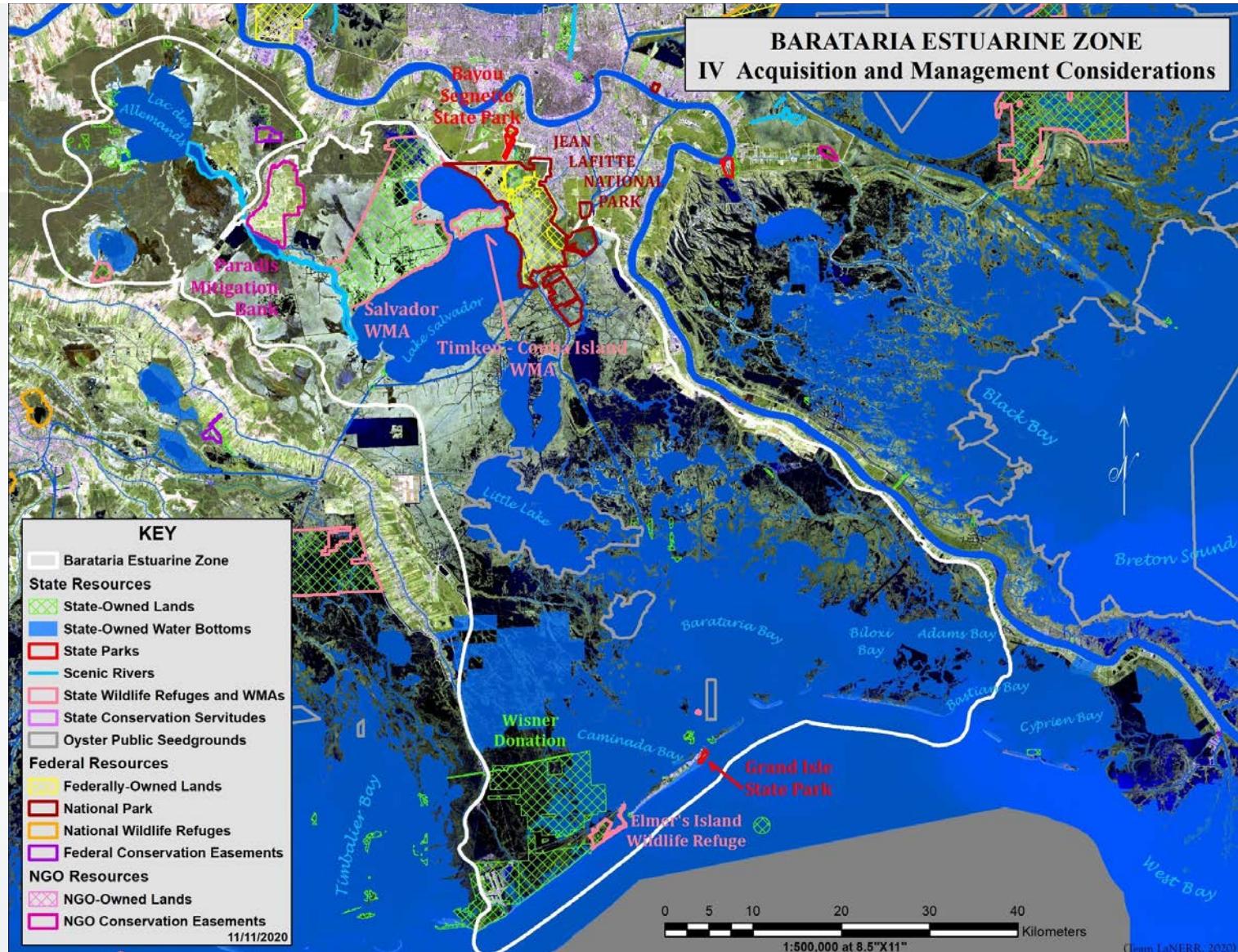
#### IV. Acquisition and Management Considerations



12/03/20

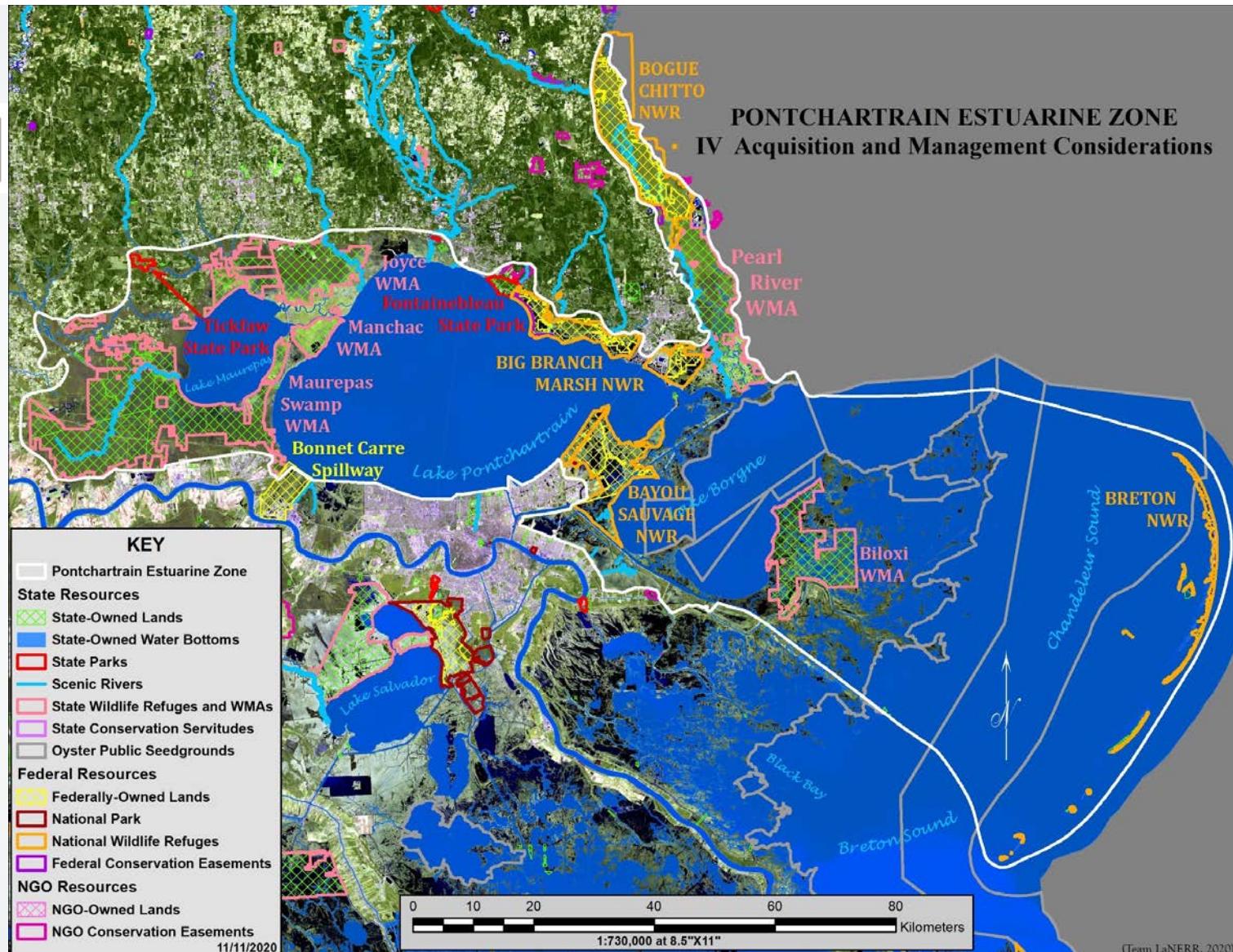


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