

LaNERR

Louisiana
National Estuary Research Reserve

Orientation to the Site Development Committee

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

30 September 2020

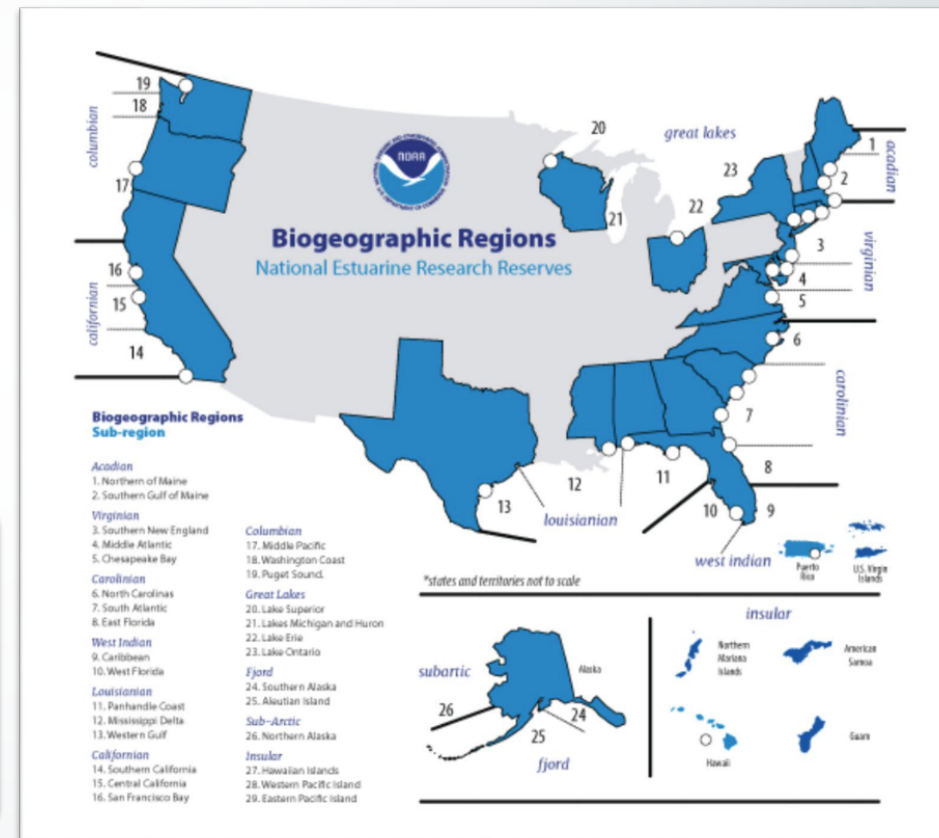




A Louisiana National Estuarine Research Reserve— Participating in a National Network to Tell our Story

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

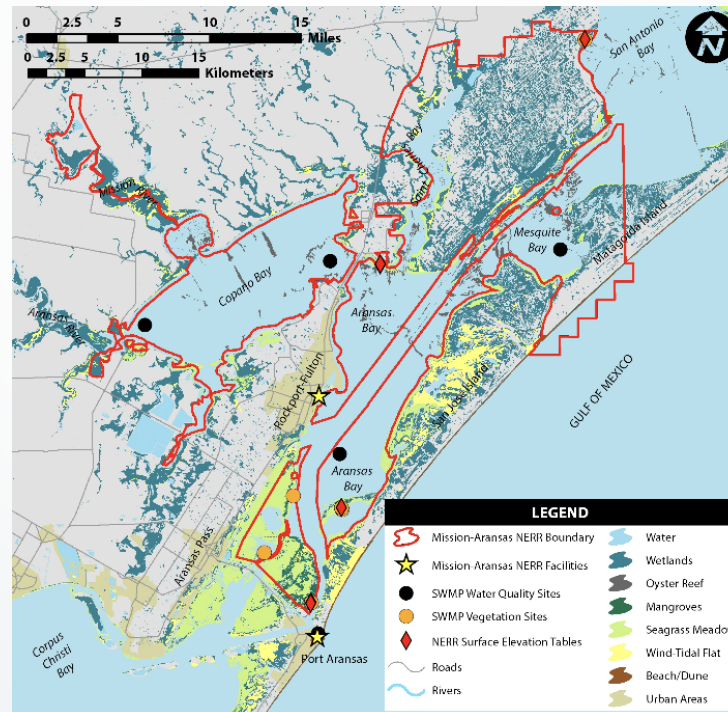
- Teachers
- Communities
- Students

Public lands connected by state waters

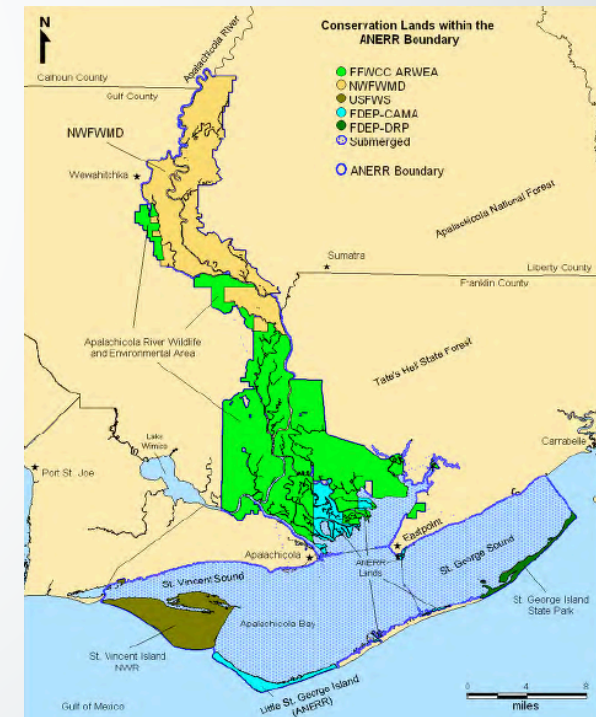
Weeks Bay NERR, AL



Mission-Aransas NERR, TX



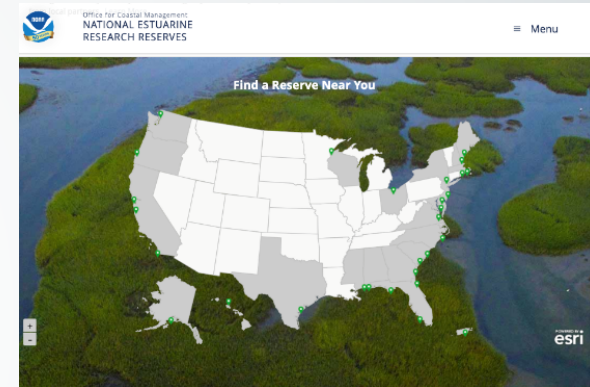
Apalachicola NERR, FL





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.
- Establishing a Louisiana National Estuarine Research Reserve (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**.





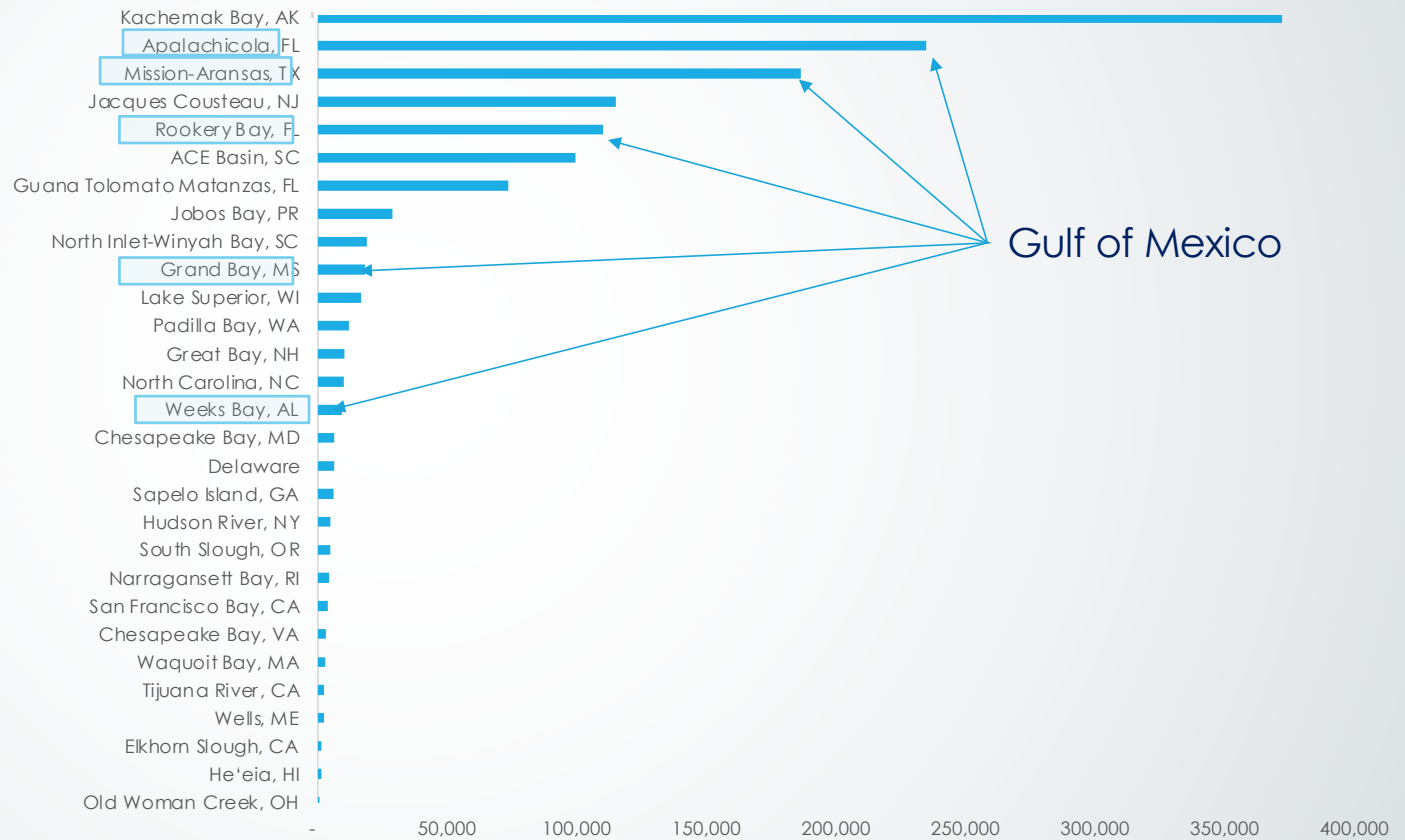
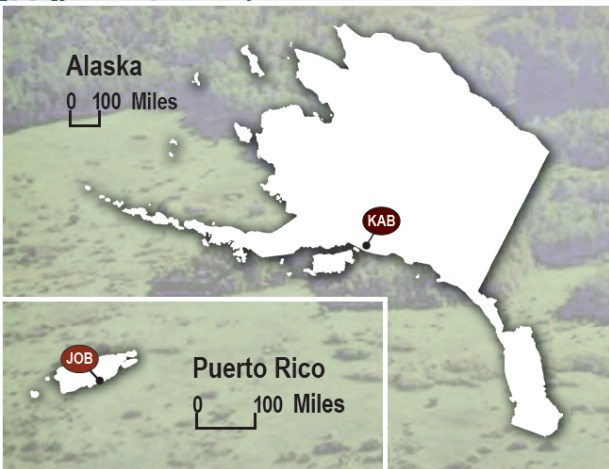
Benefits – Education & Research Facilities

- Interpretive center
- Nature trails
- Research field station
- Conference room
- Overnight accommodations
- Boats
- Public boat access
- Docking facilities
- Weather Station
- Public Access for research, education and stewardship





Reserve Size Varies





Common Questions (A)

- **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. Additionally, the LaNERR site could expand with municipal and non-profit property; and with donated or purchased land.
- **Will a new reserve involve NOAA taking land from the State?**
 - 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).
- **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.



Common Questions (B)

- **Does the designation of a reserve bring more rules and regulations?**
 - The designation of a LaNERR would not add any new regulations. NOAA will examine whether a proposed site is adequately managed for long-term research and education by existing state authorities. There are no federal regulations imposed as a result of reserve designation.
- **If the reserve site is designated, will there be restrictions to the existing cultural, recreational or commercial activities that occur in the area?**
 - No. Recreational and cultural, attributes of a LaNERR are important to designation. Designation of a LaNERR site does not preclude existing uses and does not result in the total preservation of the area.



Common Questions (C)

- **We already have a site in mind for our state. Is it necessary to go through the site selection process?**
 - Yes, the state is responsible for developing a site selection process that examines potential sites throughout the entire biogeographic subregion within the state and then narrows down the options to the best location.
- **How long does it take to designate a reserve?**
 - Most site designations have taken an average of 4-6 years.



NOAA's NERR Designation Process

Step 1- Letter of Interest

- **Governor John Bel Edwards sent letter of interest on July 23, 2019** to the Undersecretary of the NOAA who responded affirmatively in December that same year.
- **Governor Edwards identified Louisiana Sea Grant as the lead agency** in the designation process that, along with Governor's Office of Coastal Activities, would initiate a process to nominate a Louisiana NERR (LaNERR) to NOAA.

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

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



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

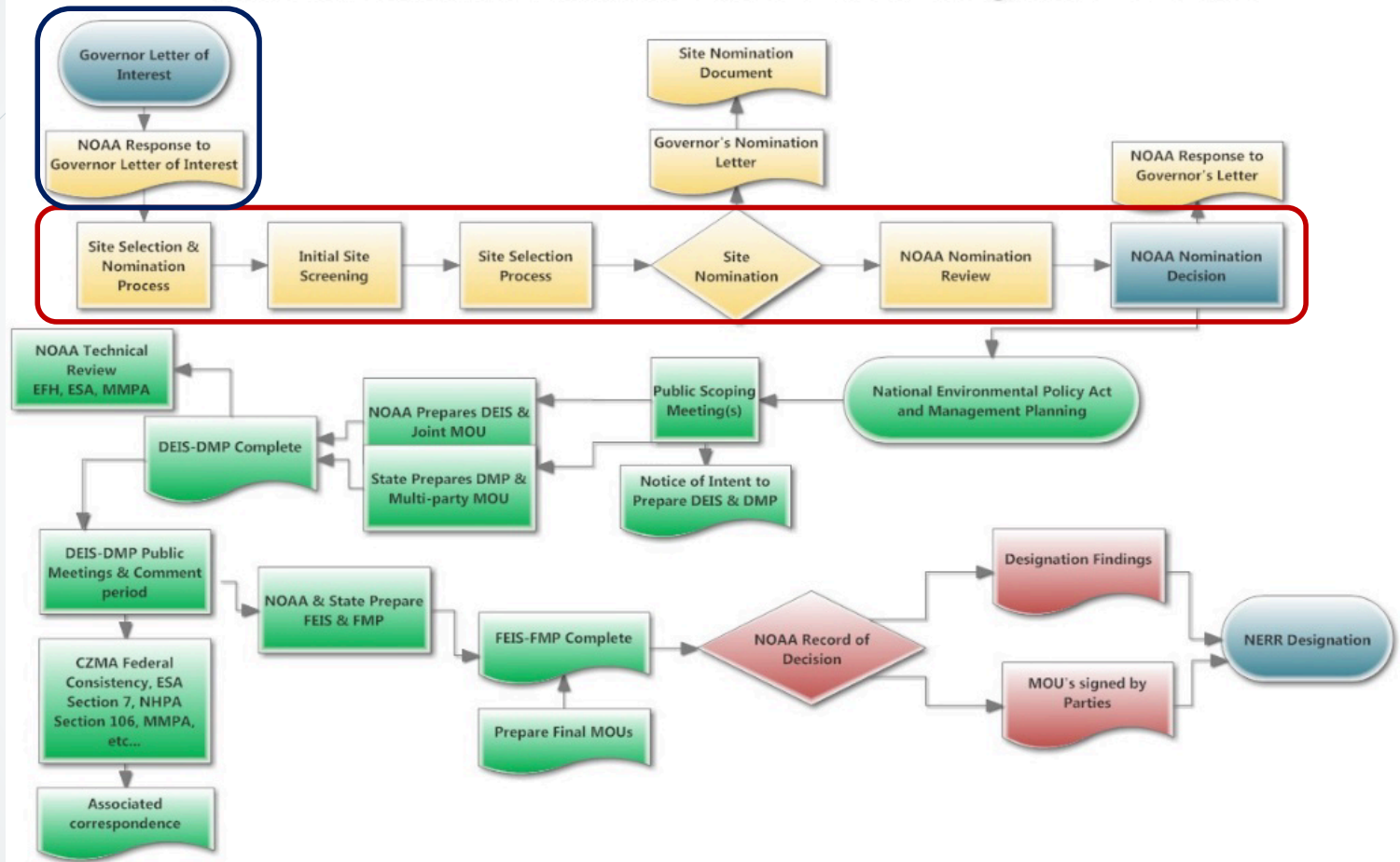
Step 4- Final Environmental Impact Statement and Final Management Plan

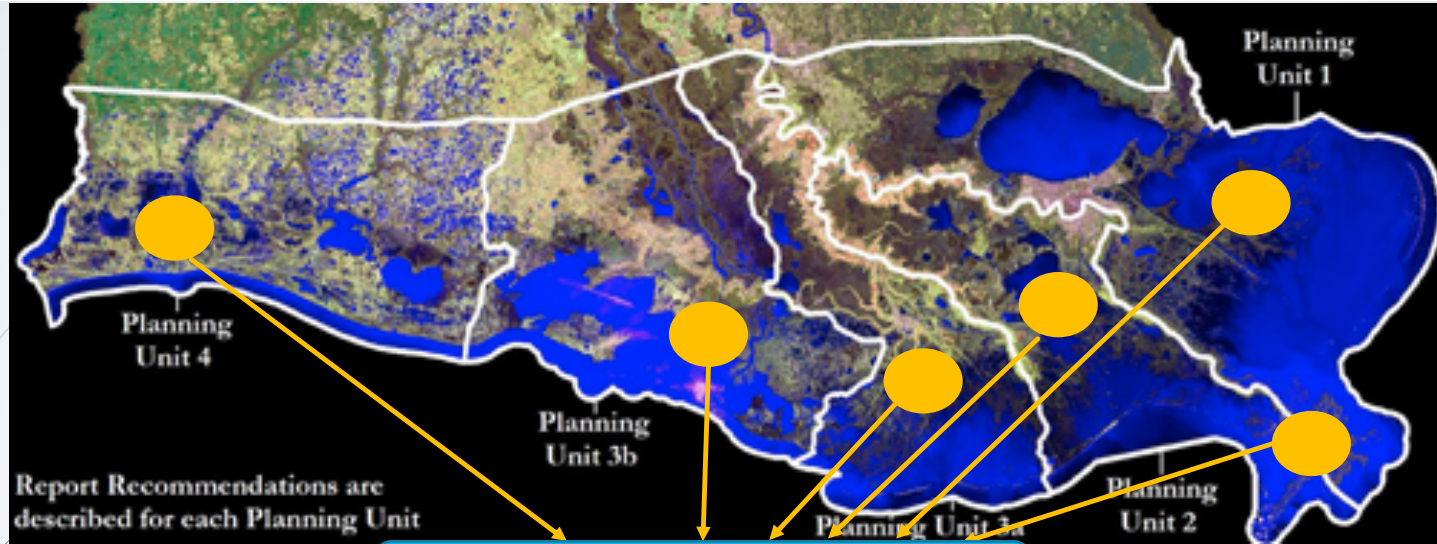
Step 5- Designation findings and certificate; Record of Decision

Step 6- Designation Ceremony

Pre-designation Process

National Estuarine Research Reserve Basic Designation Process





Zones
(Pre-screening)

Sites
(Development and Evaluation)

Single Site Nomination
(Selection)



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



LaNERR Site Selection and Nomination Teams

Site Designation Coordination 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

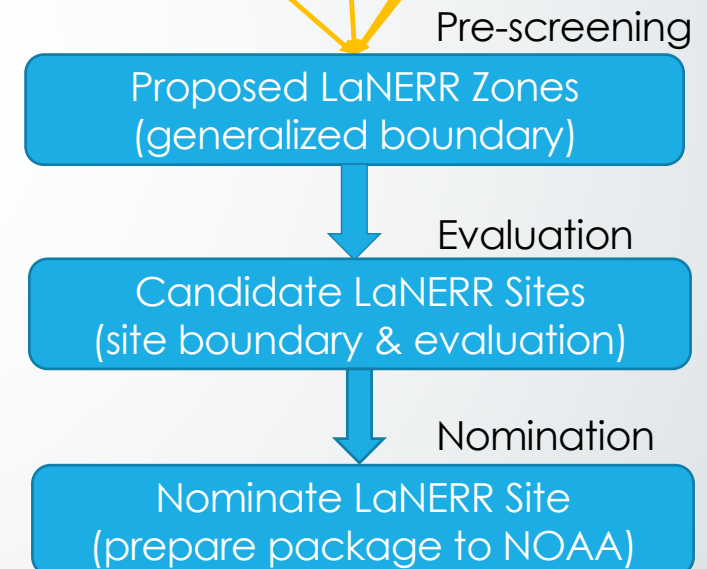
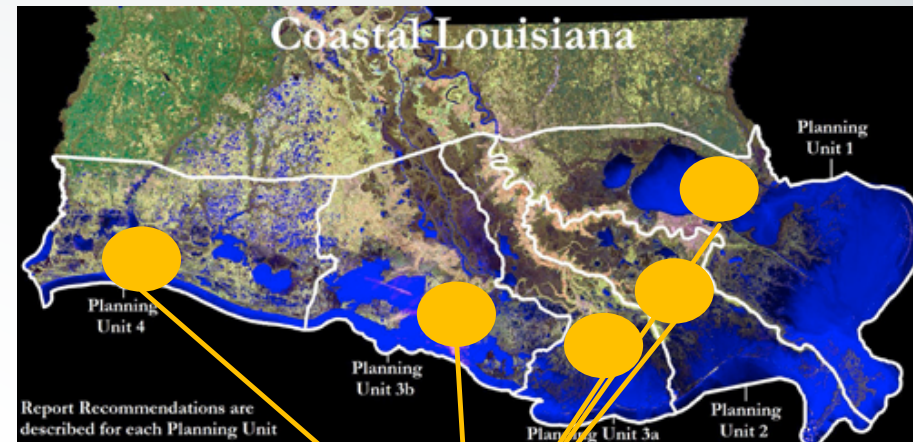
- Harry Vorhoff
 - Governor's office of Coastal Activities
- Russell Caffery
 - Governor's office of Coastal Activities
- Gregory Grandy
 - CPRA
- Bren Haase
 - CPRA
- Charles Reulet
 - DNR
- Keith Lovell
 - DNR
- Randy Myers
 - LDWF
- Cole Gararrett
 - LDWF
- Patrick Banks
 - LDWF
- Members met on August 13th 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





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.



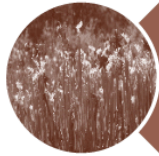


Timeline of Site Selection Process (Step 2)

2020					2021						
SEP	OCT	NOV	DEC	JAN	FEB	MAR	APR	MAY	JUN	JUL	AUG
Pre-screening of Coast: Identify Zones & Potential Sites		Roadshow: NERR Intro Public Review of Zones, Criteria, & Potential Sites		Collaborative Site Development: Evaluate & Prepare Candidate Site Proposals			Town Halls: Public Review of Candidate Site Proposals			Final Site Selection and Nomination	



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



I. Environmental Representativeness



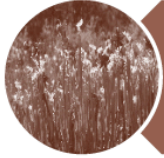
II. Value of the Site for Research, Monitoring, and Resource Protection



III. Suitability of the Site for Education and Interpretation



IV. Acquisition and Management Considerations



I. Environmental Representativeness

1. The candidate site is in the **Mississippi River Delta** that represents an active delta estuary.
 - Active Delta Estuary – Core and buffer areas that capture how fluvial processes and deltaic geomorphology are coupled to ecological features of an active delta estuary;
 - Ecological processes capture the unique life cycles of estuarine-dependent species based on exchange among riverine-bay-shelf habitats;
 - Vegetation types include the elevation and salinity gradients of deltaic wetlands from tidal freshwater to estuarine marshes and forested wetlands;
 - Delta ecosystems that are habitat to unique and endangered species;



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

2. 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.



III. Suitability of the Site for Education and Interpretation

3. 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, historical sites, etc., that provide education and interpretation value;
 - Are there schools and known educational and interpretive centers near the LaNERR zone;
4. The candidate site is accessible by normal modes of transportation.
 - What roads and boat launches provide access points to waterways of the LaNERR zone.



IV. Acquisition and Management Considerations

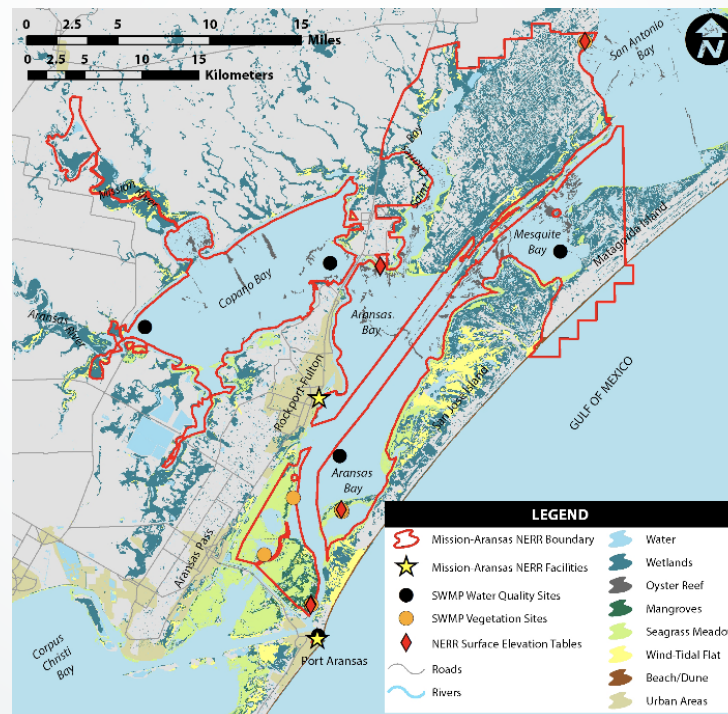
5. The generalized boundaries of the proposed LaNERR zone include sufficient land and water area to maintain the integrity of the active delta ecosystem.
6. The candidate site consists of publicly owned lands or demonstrates sufficient potential for land acquisition and adequate land-use control to meet Reserve System goals.
 - There are Wildlife Management Areas, State Parks, National Parks, conservation easements, etc. in the LaNERR zone.
7. The candidate site is suitable to address key local, state, and regional **coastal management issues**.

Public lands connected by state waters

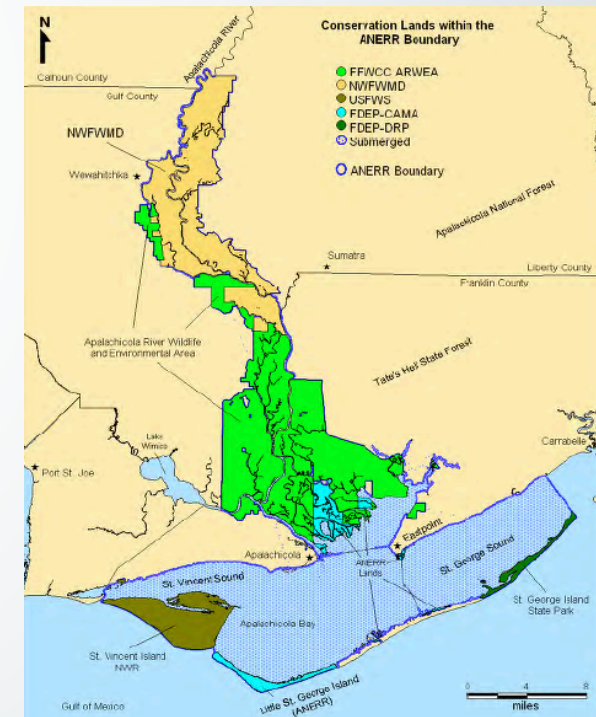
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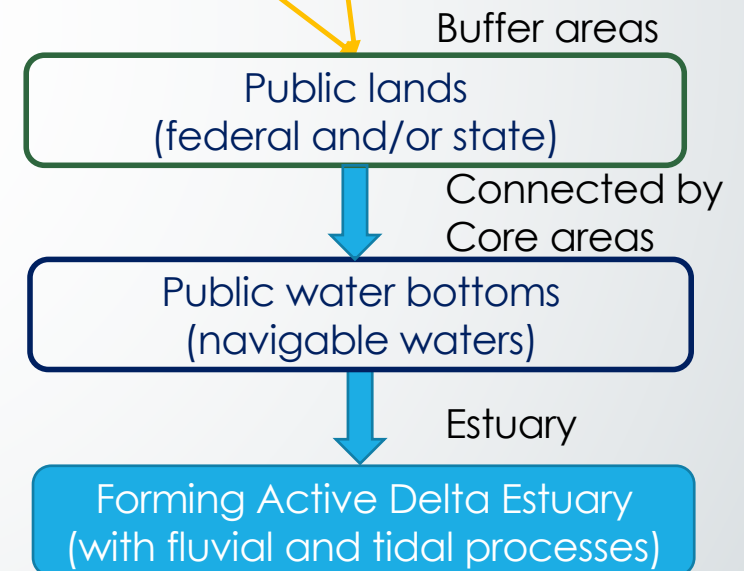
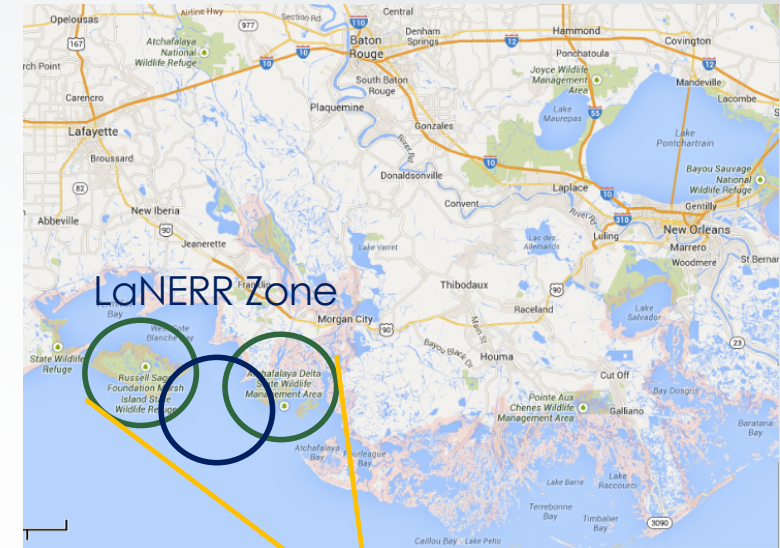
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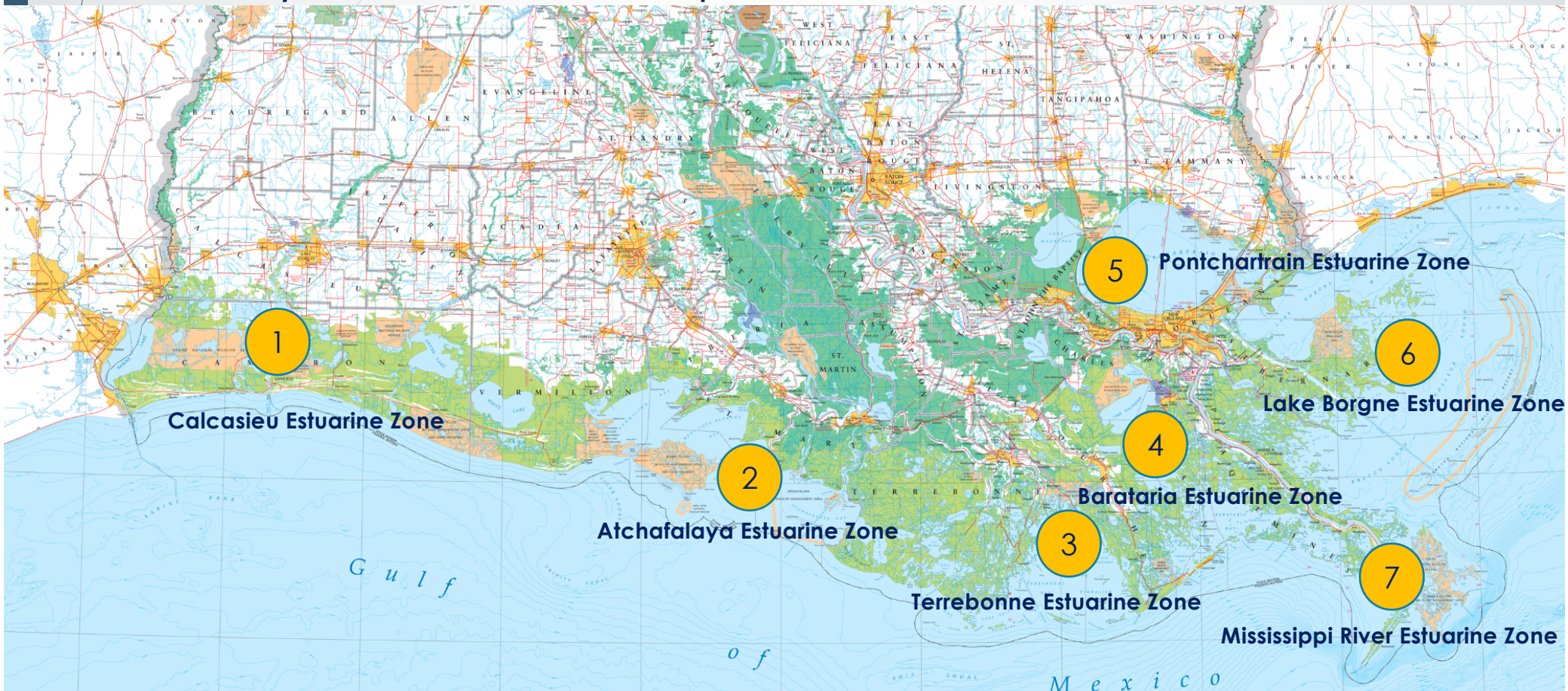
Establish LaNERR generalized zones (not site-specific boundaries):

In each of the coastal basins, look for a combination of federal and/or state lands ($\leq 50\%$ federal) composed of intertidal wetlands representing buffer areas connected by public water bottoms (navigable waters) that form estuary proper of the core areas that together form an active delta estuary with fluvial and tidal processes supporting delta ecosystem attributes.



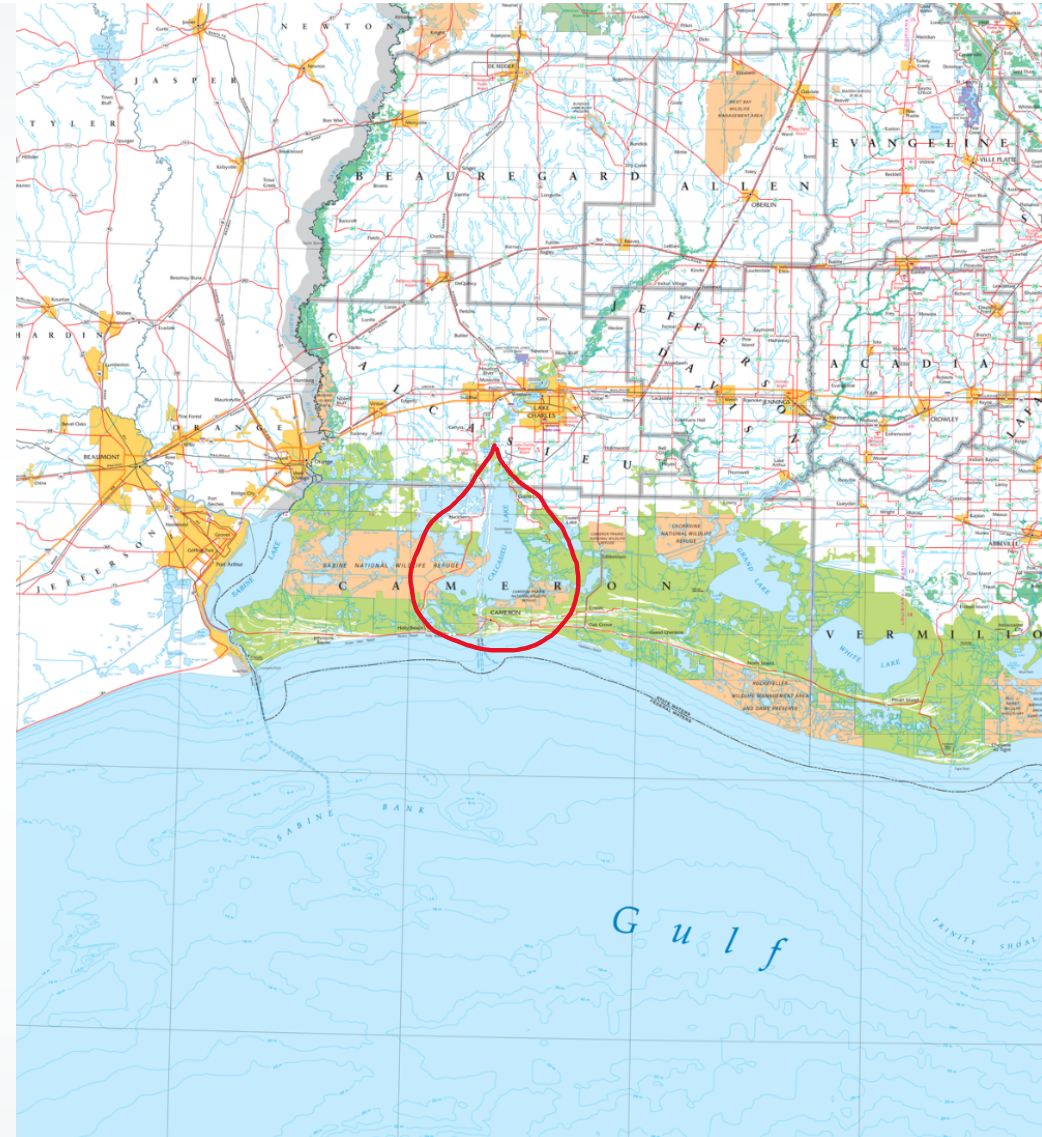


Seven proposed LaNERR zones for pre-screening by the Site Development Committee



1 Calcasieu Estuarine Zone

1. In each of the coastal basins, look for combination of public lands (federal and/or state) that represent intertidal wetlands representing buffer areas
2. Connected by public water bottoms (navigable waters) that form estuary proper of the core areas
3. That together form an active delta estuary with fluvial and tidal processes supporting delta ecosystem attributes.

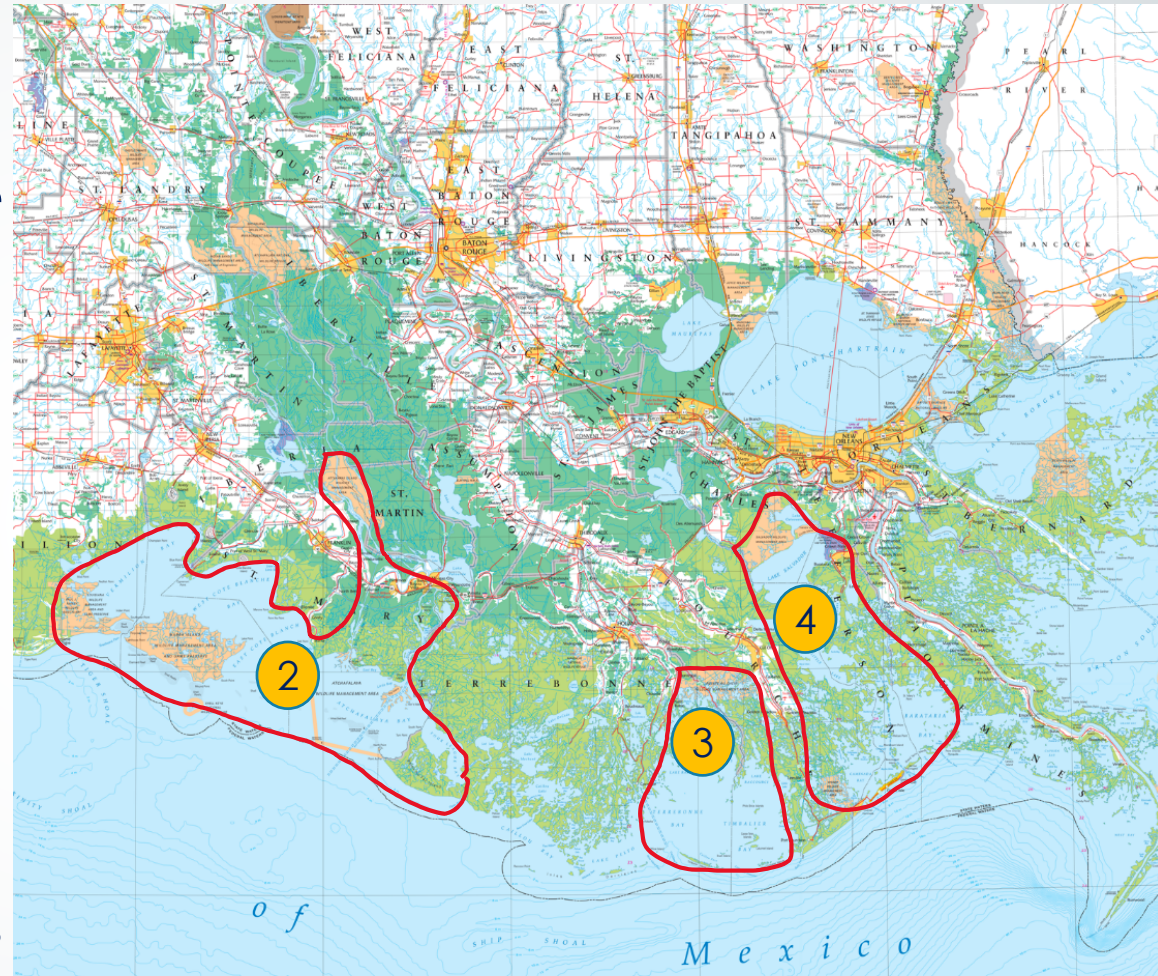


2 Atchafalaya Estuarine Zone

3 Terrebonne Estuarine Zone

4 Barataria Estuarine Zone

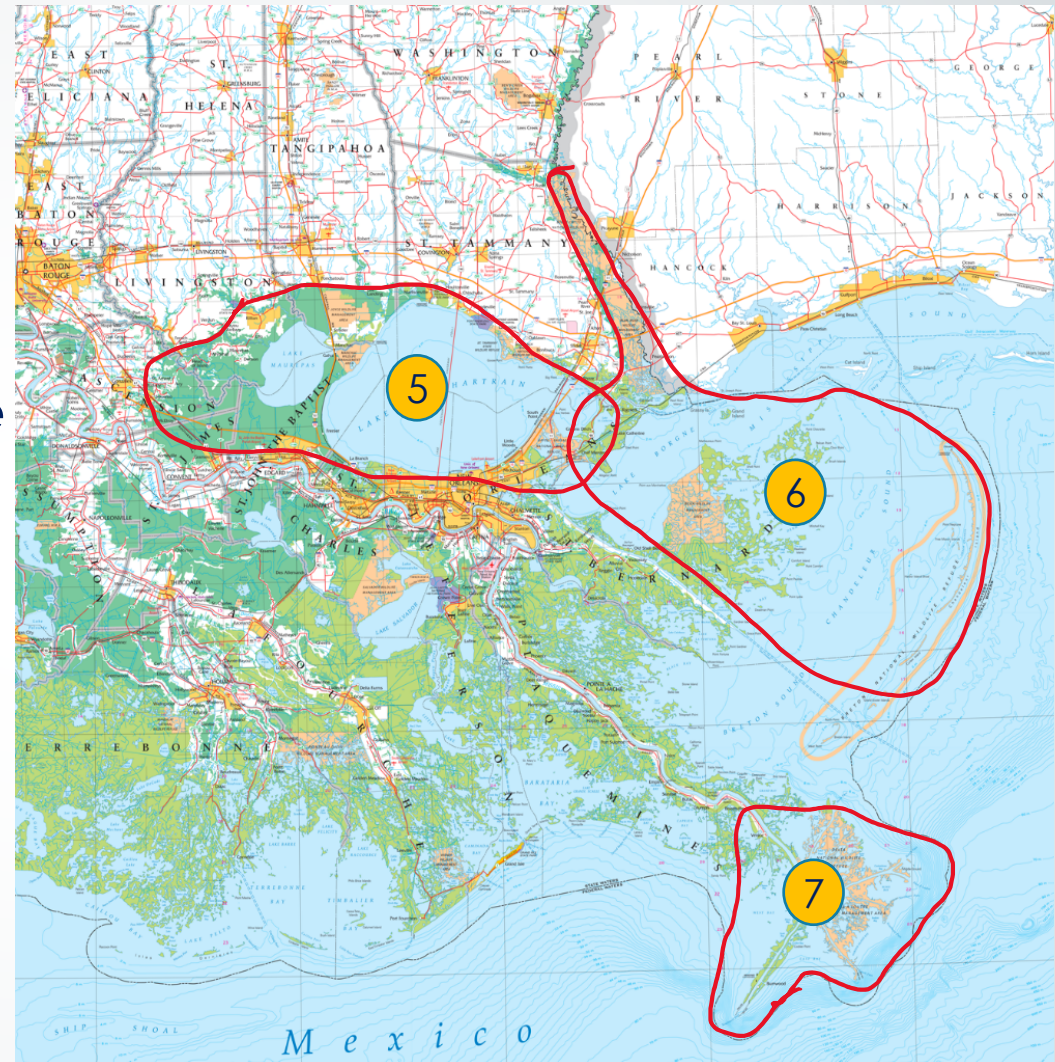
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3. That together form an active delta estuary with fluvial and tidal processes supporting delta ecosystem attributes.





- 5 **Pontchartrain Estuarine Zone**
- 6 **Lake Borgne Estuarine Zone**
- 7 **Mississippi River Estuarine Zone**

1. In each of the coastal basins, look for combination of public lands (federal and/or state) that represent intertidal wetlands representing buffer areas
2. Connected by public water bottoms (navigable waters) that form estuary proper of the core areas
3. That together form an active delta estuary with fluvial and tidal processes supporting delta ecosystem attributes.





NOAA Criteria

NAME OF PROPOSED LaNERR ZONE (1-7) Prescreening Criteria:

Highly
Recom
-mend

Recom
-mend

Do not
Recom
-mend

I. Environmental
Representativeness

1. The candidate site is representative of an active delta estuary.

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

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

III. Suitability of the Site
for Education and
Interpretation

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

4. The candidate site is accessible by normal modes of transportation.

IV. Acquisition and
Management
Considerations

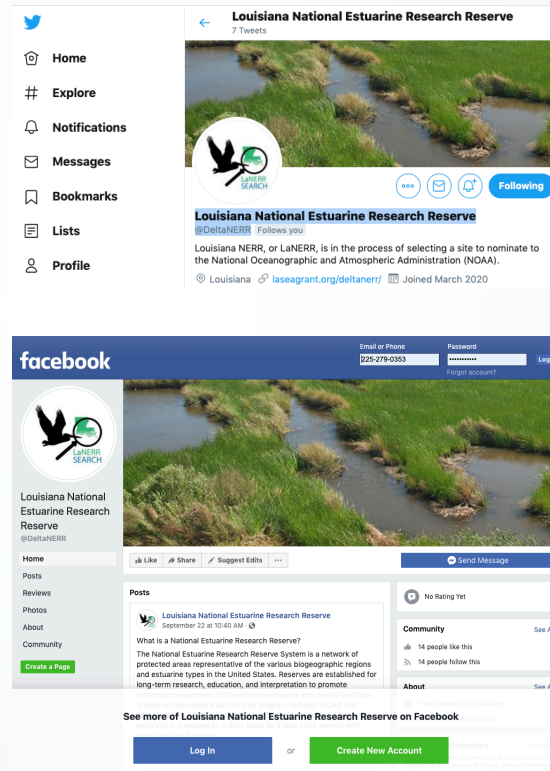
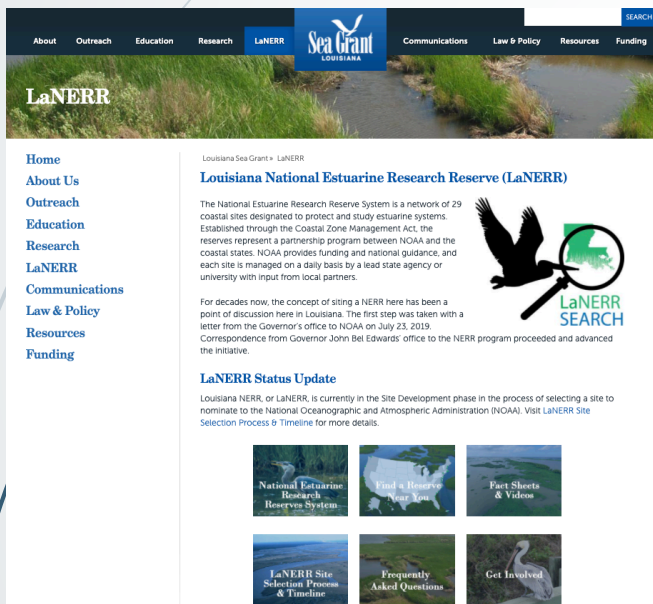
5. The generalized boundaries of the candidate site include sufficient land and water area to maintain the integrity of an active delta estuary.

6. The candidate site consists of publicly owned lands or demonstrates sufficient potential for land acquisition and adequate land-use control to meet Reserve System objectives.

7. The candidate site is suitable to address key local, state, and regional coastal management issues.



LaNERR Social Media



Contact

email
deltanerr@lsu.edu

- Social Media:

- <https://twitter.com/DeltaNERR>

- Website:

- <http://www.laseagrant.org/deltanerr/>

- Facebook

- <https://www.facebook.com/DeltaNERR/>

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National Estuary Research Reserve

Questions?

