

DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE**National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration****Announcement of Delaware National Estuarine Research Reserve Revised Management Plan Including a Boundary Expansion**

AGENCY: Estuarine Reserves Division, Office of Ocean and Coastal Resource Management, National Ocean Service, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, U.S. Department of Commerce.

ACTION: Notice of approval and availability of the final revised management plan for the Delaware National Estuarine Research Reserve.

SUMMARY: Notice is hereby given that the Estuarine Reserves Division, Office of Ocean and Coastal Resource Management, National Ocean Service, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), U.S. Department of Commerce has approved the revised management plan, which includes an expansion of the boundary of the reserve, for the Delaware National Estuarine Research Reserve.

The Delaware Reserve was designated in 1993, pursuant to Section 315 of the Coastal Zone Management Act of 1972, as amended, 16 U.S.C. 1461. The reserve has been operating under a management plan approved in 1993. Pursuant to 15 CFR 921.33(c), a state must revise their management plan every five years. The submission of this plan fulfills this requirement and sets a course for successful implementation of the goals and objectives of the reserve.

The Delaware National Estuarine Research Reserve is administered in partnership with the Delaware Department of Natural Resources and Environmental Control. The reserve consists of two component sites that are located thirty miles apart. These components include both brackish and freshwater estuaries and represent the diverse estuarine ecosystems found throughout the Mid-Atlantic region. The Upper Blackbird Creek site in New Castle County is a low salinity brackish or freshwater system that is located in a rural area. The Lower St. Jones River site in Kent County is located just south of the state capital and represents a more saline estuary that has experienced greater impacts from the surrounding development. These diverse settings provide an ideal opportunity to study anthropogenic impacts to natural estuarine and coastal systems and to convey information about the importance of estuarine

habitats and functions to the citizens of Delaware.

The mission of the reserve is to preserve and manage the natural resources within the two reserve components for research, to provide education and outreach programs that promote better understanding of Delaware's estuarine and coastal areas, and to promote informed coastal decisionmaking. Goals and objectives to advance this mission are identified within the management plan for administration; facilities and construction; public access; education, interpretation and outreach; environmental research and monitoring; and stewardship.

Administrative goals for the Delaware Reserve include increasing volunteer activities; coordinating with partners to promote science based management; and ensuring that education, research, monitoring, and land management efforts are supported with staff, facilities and operational necessities. Facilities that were constructed over the past three years at the St. Jones component site will be maintained for reserve and for community and partner use.

Education, interpretation and outreach efforts will focus on enhancing public understanding of the function of estuaries and promoting the wise use of estuarine resources to encourage an environmental ethic. Programs for the public, for students, teachers, and coastal decisionmakers will be offered and exhibits at the visitor center will be maintained and updated as needed. The reserve education program will continue to improve the use of Web based tools and public events to promote increased estuarine awareness among target audiences and the general public.

The Delaware reserve's research and monitoring program will focus on anthropogenic impacts that contribute to habitat degradation or loss. The reserve research and monitoring goals are to identify the various types, quality, and quantity of habitats available in the estuary to facilitate proper management and protection; and to identify, monitor, and limit the anthropogenic impacts to the estuarine system. Specifically, the reserve will develop an on site library of reference materials and data; collect baseline data and build a database for use in long term studies; promote the use of the reserve within the research community in the study of anthropogenic changes; disseminate important research and monitoring results about Delaware estuaries to key decisionmakers and the scientific community; and increase monitoring.

Habitat protection and restoration efforts over the next five years will

address controlling invasive species, developing best management practices for agricultural lands surrounding the reserve, monitoring land use decisions within the reserve watershed, and developing conservation plans for all reserve owned property.

One hundred and forty seven privately held acres adjacent to the Upper Blackbird Creek component were acquired by the reserve in 2004. Obtaining land adjacent to the Blackbird Creek will ensure that researchers have adequate access to the natural resources of the reserve and will add woodland, marsh and open field upland habitats to this component site. The management plan incorporates the land into the reserve boundary and outlines a plan to phase in public access, education programming, and restoration activities on the new property.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Cory Riley at (301) 563-7222 or Laurie McGilvray at (301) 563-1158 of NOAA's National Ocean Service, Estuarine Reserves Division, 1305 East-West Highway, N/ORM5, 10th floor, Silver Spring, MD 20910.

Dated: May 27, 2005.

Mitchell Luxenberg,

Acting Director, Management and Budget, National Ocean Service, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration.

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DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE**National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration****Office of Oceanic and Atmospheric Research; NOAA Ocean Exploration Advisory Working Group**

AGENCY: Office of Oceanic and Atmospheric Research (OAR), National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), Department of Commerce (DOC).

ACTION: Notice of solicitation for members of the NOAA Ocean Exploration Advisory Working Group.

SUMMARY: The Under Secretary of Commerce for Oceans and Atmosphere has requested the NOAA Science Advisory Board to provide it with timely and expert advice and oversight of the Ocean Exploration Program. The SAB is chartered under the Federal Advisory Committee Act and is the only Federal Advisory Committee with the responsibility to advise the Under Secretary on long- and short-range strategies for research, education, and application of science to resource

management and environmental assessment and prediction. The SAB is forming an external panel to provide general priorities for ocean exploration, including geographic areas of interest as well as subject matter topics; advice concerning emerging ocean exploration-relevant technologies; and to conduct periodic reviews of the program for the purpose of assessing program accomplishments and providing guidance and perspective for the program's future. Nominations to the panel are being solicited. The intent is to select from the nominees; however, the SAB retains the prerogative to name people to the working group that were not nominated if it deems it is necessary to achieve the desired balance. Once selected, the SAB will post the review panel members' names at <http://www.sab.noaa.gov>.

DATES: Nominations must be received by June 23, 2005.

ADDRESSES: Nominations should be submitted electronically to noaa.sab.exploration@noaa.gov.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Dr. Michael Uhart: 301-713-9121, ext. 159.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: The Ocean Exploration Advisory Working Group will consist of approximately nine individuals from academia, government, industry, and other ocean-related institutions. This group will provide its findings and results to the Science Advisory Board, which will deliberate on the input before forwarding it to NOAA. NOAA is seeking individuals that have national and international reputations; and degrees, or professional qualifications, in: Physical, chemical, or biological oceanography, social sciences, or ocean engineering, technology, and/or operations. They should be familiar with NOAA's organization and Strategic Plan and have scientific credentials and/or relevant experience that will enable them to provide expert advice concerning the Ocean Exploration Program's roles within the context of NOAA's ocean missions and policies. They should be familiar with the organization and management of complex, interdisciplinary science programs. Members will be appointed for three-year terms, renewable once, and serve at the discretion of the Secretary. Initial appointments will include one-third each four- and five-year terms. Vacancy appointments shall be for the remainder of the unexpired term of the vacancy, and shall be renewable twice if the unexpired term is less than one year.

The Terms of Reference for the review is posted at: <http://www.sab.noaa.gov/>

Working%20Groups/Working%20Groups.htm.

Nominations:

Anyone is eligible to nominate and self-nominations will be accepted. Nominations should provide: (1) The nominee's full name, title, institutional affiliation, and contact information; (2) the nominee's area(s) of expertise; and (3) a short description of their qualifications relative to the kinds of advice being solicited. Inclusion of a resume is desirable.

Dated: May 26, 2005.

Louisa Koch,

Deputy Assistant Administrator, Office of Oceanic and Atmospheric Research, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, Atmospheric Administration.

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DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

I.D. 033105B

Endangered and Threatened Wildlife; Recovery Plans for Listed Marine Mammals

AGENCY: National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS), National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), Commerce.

ACTION: Notice of availability.

SUMMARY: NMFS announces the availability of the final revision of the recovery plan for the western North Atlantic right whale, *Eubalaena glacialis*, as required by the Endangered Species Act of 1973 (ESA).

ADDRESSES: The final plan is provided on NMFS' Protected Resources internet website at www.nmfs.noaa.gov/pr/PR3/recovery.html. Also, requests for a copy of the recovery plan may be submitted to Chief, Marine Mammal Division, Office of Protected Resources, NMFS, 1315 East-West Highway, Silver Spring, MD 20910.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Gregory Silber, Ph.D., Office of Protected Resources, NMFS, 1315 East-West Highway, Silver Spring, MD 20910, Phone: 301-713-2322; Fax: 301-427-2522.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

Background

Congress passed the ESA (16 U.S.C. 1531 *et seq.*) to protect species of plants and animals in danger of extinction. NMFS and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) share responsibility for

the administration of the ESA. NMFS is responsible for most endangered and threatened marine mammal species, including the Northern right whale (*Eubalaena glacialis*). Listed endangered and threatened species under NMFS jurisdiction are identified in 50 CFR 222.23(a) and 50 CFR 227.4, respectively. The List of Endangered and Threatened Wildlife, which contains species under the jurisdiction of both agencies, is provided in 50 CFR 17.11(h). The North Atlantic right whale (originally the Northern right whale) is listed as endangered.

Section 4(f)(1) of the ESA requires that recovery plans be developed and implemented for the conservation and survival of endangered and threatened species, unless such plans would not promote the conservation of the species. A plan was prepared at the request of the Assistant Administrator for Fisheries to promote the recovery of North Atlantic right whales.

Comments and Responses

NMFS published a notice of availability of, and request for comments on, the draft revised recovery plan for the North Atlantic right whale in the **Federal Register** on August 31, 2004 (69 FR 53040). We received comments from eight individuals and organizations, and approximately 5500 form letters during the 60-day comment period.

NMFS received a number of suggestions regarding editorial and formatting changes. Generally, the suggestions regarding editorial and formatting changes were accepted and the plan has been modified accordingly. NMFS also received approximately 5500 form letters via e-mail encouraging the implementation of a strengthened recovery plan. The agency appreciates these comments and is moving as swiftly as possible to implement this plan.

Most of the other comments requested an update of, or modification to, the introductory sections of the plan on North Atlantic right whale distribution and abundance, and human impacts. Commenters also provided comments on the reclassification criteria, listing/recovery factors and the implementation schedule, and the recovery narrative. These comments are addressed in the following sections of this notice of availability.

Comments on the Reclassification Criteria

Several comments were received on the reclassification criteria. The text on the reclassification criteria from the 2004 draft recovery plan follows: