

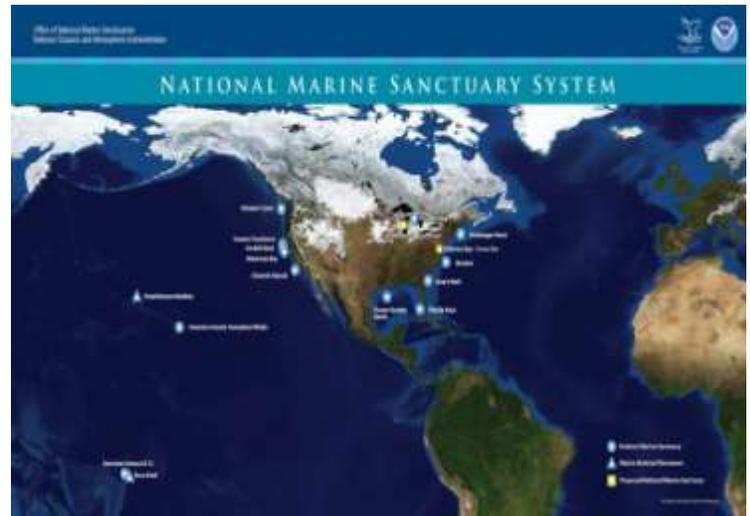
LAKE SUPERIOR NATIONAL MARINE SANCTUARY (NMS) INITIATIVE

Supporting Lake Superior Marine Research, Education, and Protection

QUESTION & ANSWER FACT SHEET

What is a National Marine Sanctuary (NMS)?

National Marine Sanctuaries or “NMS” areas are designated by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) for research, education, and protection within the ocean or Great Lakes waters. These are areas of the marine environment with special conservation, recreational, ecological, historical, cultural, archaeological, or esthetic qualities of national significance. Examples of such resources include historic shipwrecks, critical underwater habitats for fish, or maritime sites of cultural importance. Of the 14 designated areas within the NMS system, 13 are located in ocean areas. Only one site is designated on the Great Lakes. That is the Thunder Bay NMS on Lake Huron near Alpena, MI.



What are marine resources and why must they be protected?

The term “marine resources” broadly includes the natural and cultural resources within the oceans and Great Lakes. Marine resources can include natural resources like water, fish and other aquatic species. It also includes historic and cultural resources, like shipwrecks, archaeological sites, and marine resources of cultural significance to Native Americans.

Why is a Wisconsin Lake Superior NMS being considered at this time?

For the first time, the process for adding new Sanctuaries is open for nominations from the public, state and federal agencies, and tribes <http://www.nominate.noaa.gov/>. Lake Superior waters in the area around Chequamegon Bay and the Apostle Islands contain significant natural and cultural marine resources. The area contains a particularly diverse fish community and is an important spawning and feeding area. The only self-sustaining population of lake sturgeon in Lake Superior spawns in the Bad River system. The area is also rich in archaeological resources like shipwrecks and Native American cultural resources. A NMS would provide new opportunities for research, education, and conservation to protect these resources while providing additional economic opportunities. In 2015, the State of Wisconsin successfully nominated a Lake Michigan site. NOAA recently started the designation process for this site. To date, a NMS nomination for Lake Superior has not occurred.

Who is interested in pursuing a Wisconsin Lake Superior NMS?

A local group of citizens has come together to investigate the opportunity for a Lake Superior NMS nomination. They are working with state and federal agencies, tribes, and the public to explore whether there is interest and opportunity for submitting a nomination. This is a local community-based process. Input from a wide range of interests is being sought as part of the nomination process.

How is a site added to the national NMS system?

Designation of a NMS is a 2-step process. Nominating a site is the first step. Public involvement from a wide variety of interests is essential to a successful nomination. The nomination must meet federally required criteria <http://www.nominate.noaa.gov/guide.html> and have broad public support. A successful nomination means that a Wisconsin Lake Superior NMS would be added to the list of areas that NOAA can consider for designation. A possible second step is for NOAA to begin the Sanctuary designation process. This involves developing an environmental impact statement (EIS) and management plan for the site. Public involvement and hearings are key in all parts of the designation process. It is important to note that the nomination and designation processes are separate.

What are the benefits of a Lake Superior NMS?

Sanctuaries provide benefits by supporting resource protection, education, research and monitoring, community engagement for conservation, and economic development. If designated, a NMS would bring financial and technical resources from NOAA benefiting Lake Superior and local communities. For example, Sanctuaries promote public education through community-based programs. Sanctuaries are living laboratories and hands-on classrooms for research and education. As nationally designated sites, they become attractions for visitors. Thunder Bay NMS has become a tourist destination that attracts almost 100,000 visitors who spend more than \$110 million annually in the three counties adjacent to the sanctuary. Seventy percent of businesses in Alpena, MI cited the very positive impact of the Thunder Bay NMS on their business. At least three businesses have started directly because of the Thunder Bay NMS and two new hotels are being built. NMS sites may include development of a new visitor center and research facility or could foster partnerships to use and support existing facilities within a community. The Northern Great Lakes Visitor Center and Northland College Center for Freshwater Innovation have been discussed as potential partners.

How does a NMS protect marine resources?

Designated Sanctuaries use a variety of tools to protect natural and cultural resources. These include regulations to protect significant marine resources, along with education and research as conservation and protection tools. The National Marine Sanctuaries Act, along with already existing federal, state, and local legislation and regulations, provide the legal framework outlining the activities that are allowed or prohibited. Disturbance or alteration of the lakebed in important habitat and disturbance of underwater cultural resources are some general NMS prohibitions. Unlike the oceans, NOAA does not have a fisheries management role in the Great Lakes. The Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (WDNR) regulates recreational fishing and in collaboration with the Red Cliff and Bad River tribes, commercial fishing, in Lake Superior. There are no changes in the way fishing is regulated being proposed in the Lake Superior NMS nomination.

Aren't other state, federal, local, and tribal agencies already doing this?

Other state, federal, or tribal agencies may have some overlapping regulations or management authorities aimed at protecting specific marine resources. However, NOAA's Office of National Marine Sanctuaries is directly mandated to comprehensively conserve (look at the big picture) and manage special areas of the marine environment. Coordination and cooperation among NOAA, tribal, and government agencies is key to successful Sanctuary management. NOAA also establishes advisory councils composed of federal, state, local, and tribal representatives as well as individuals representing stakeholder groups. <http://sanctuaries.noaa.gov/management/ac/welcome.html>

Where would a Lake Superior NMS be located?

A NMS designation only applies to submerged (underwater) areas and resources. Adjacent land areas are not included. The area around the Apostle Islands and Chequamegon Bay comprises the core area being considered. However, possible boundaries for a Lake Superior NMS will depend on which areas meet the Sanctuary nomination criteria and also have broad public support.

Are local or state funds or taxes required to support a NMS?

NO. Once designated, the costs for operating a NMS are paid by NOAA. NMS staff are NOAA employees and contractors, living locally, and paid via federal sources. Thunder Bay NMS supports 13 full time positions. NOAA would also look for partnership opportunities for the resource protection, education, and research programs. There are no user fees associated with a NMS.

Will a NMS designation affect treaty rights?

NO. Treaty rights are not affected. Tribes engage in consultation and coordination with NOAA through a government to government relationship.

Where Can I Find Out More Information?

Website for the local initiative: <http://www.lakesuperiorsanctuary.org>

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/LakeSuperiorNationalMarineSanctuaryInitiative>

For more information about the National Marine Sanctuary System, or designated Sanctuaries within the system, please see: <http://sanctuaries.noaa.gov/about/welcome.html>