

# Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20510

March 6, 2019

The Honorable Rear Admiral Timothy Gallaudet, Ph. D., USN Ret.  
Acting Under Secretary of Commerce for Oceans and Atmosphere  
National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration  
1401 Constitution Avenue, Northwest, Room 5128  
Washington, D.C. 20230

Dear Acting Under Secretary Gallaudet:

We write in support of former Connecticut Governor Dannel Malloy's nomination of a Connecticut National Estuarine Research Reserve (Reserve or NERR). Connecticut is one of only two marine coastal states without a Reserve, although the state's economy is reliant on the myriad ecosystem services provided by our estuaries. The proposed site is the culmination of decades of work and has been meticulously vetted by community residents, state governing agencies, private organizations, scientists, and universities. We urge the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) to move quickly to finalize and approve the proposed Connecticut Reserve.

A NERR designation would bring welcomed research, security, and educational opportunities to the site and surrounding communities. Connecticut is reliant on its estuaries for food, recreation, community resilience, pollution management, coastal buffering, jobs, transportation, and education, but could benefit from greater coordination between managing bodies and larger public outreach. The state contains tens of thousands of acres of estuarine habitat threatened by climate change, pollution, and development. However, the proposed Connecticut NERR is unique in several ways: it includes both urban and rural estuaries, drains into Long Island Sound, and shows potential for resilience against climate-related changes.

Additionally, the Connecticut NERR will truly be a living laboratory. The proposed site has particularly enormous potential for education, public outreach, and stewardship due to its environmental heterogeneity and network of existing infrastructure:

- Habitat types (not exhaustive): Cliffs and bluffs, coastal grassland, developed areas, glacial bedrock, intertidal flats, maritime forests, marshes, sandy bottoms, seagrass beds, various salinities and depths, two major rivers, and dozens of tributaries.
- Biodiversity (not exhaustive): Migratory marine mammals, dozens of amphibian, bird, invertebrate, plant, reptile, and terrestrial mammal species listed as endangered, threatened, or of concern by the state; in addition, 52 species of marine fauna depend exclusively on the offshore waters within the Reserve.

- Research and educational opportunities (not exhaustive): Biodiversity, climatology, economics, hydrology, national security, and recreation.
- Existing education and outreach: 1 aquarium, 2 museums, 2 education centers, several land trusts and watershed organizations; in addition, the NERR sits within the educational reach of around 12,500 K-12 students and thousands of undergraduate and graduate students.

The proposed Connecticut NERR has myriad benefits and few drawbacks. Connecticut is overdue for a Reserve, and the site nominated by former Governor Malloy is the best our state contains. It will make a useful addition to the existing statewide network of environmental management programs and national network of NERRs. As such, we respectfully request that you finalize and approve this nomination without delay.

Sincerely,



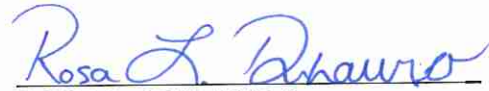
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