



July 26, 2021

Mayor David J. Ward
City of Sturgeon Bay
421 Michigan Street
Sturgeon Bay, WI 54235

Dear Mayor Ward,

It is my pleasure to write a letter of support for Sturgeon Bay's bid for designation as a National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) National Estuarine Research Reserve (NERR). Shedd Aquarium has been conducting migratory fish research in three states (Illinois, Wisconsin, Michigan) since 2017, and chose Door County as a focus area for expanded research due to the richness in tributaries, volume of migratory fishes, and an enthusiastic community of support for the studies.

Sturgeon Bay is well situated for a NOAA NERR research facility because it straddles Lake Michigan's main basin, Green Bay, and has numerous creeks and wetlands. The geography provides a diversity of habitats to investigate the interconnected relationships of wildlife and the environment. Aside from the access to aquatic resources, the physical location of Sturgeon Bay as a main epicenter for tourist travel to the rest of Door County is an asset for connecting Great Lakes residents and non-residents to freshwater conservation issues. Indeed, public engagement has been considered one of the biggest challenges for reducing freshwater biodiversity loss, not just in the Great Lakes, but globally. The opportunities to connect diverse audiences to various aquatic habitats is unique within the Great Lakes region and is relevant to NOAA'S efforts to Conserve and Restore America the Beautiful.

As the lead for Shedd Aquarium's migratory fishes research program, I see immense value in being able to connect with NOAA NERR staff, should Sturgeon Bay be selected as a site. One of NOAA NERR's guiding principles for both system and individual reserves is to "engage and inform local citizens, teachers, students, and communities in science-based stewardship." This principle meshes well with Shedd's long-term citizen science sucker migration phenology program that has six long-term monitoring sites in Door County. Opportunities to link animal migrations through various habitats that all require stewardship would be a valuable collaboration.

There are many other opportunities for synergies based on shared goals of healthy aquatic ecosystems and facilitating the best available science to make informed management decisions, along with communicating findings to the public. Shedd



Aquarium engages our 2 million on-site visitors and over 1 million followers/subscribers across our social and email channels by sparking compassion, curiosity, and conservation for the aquatic animal world. By connecting healthy environments, such as estuaries, to healthy aquatic and human communities, we can achieve a world thriving with aquatic life sustained by people who love, understand, and protect it.

It is very exciting that NOAA is going to embark on the designation of a third NERR in the Great Lakes region. The addition of a new estuarine system to the current network of 29 coastal sites will advance NOAA'S commitment to conserving and restoring aquatic habitat. I wish you the best in the bid process.

Sincerely,

Karen Murchie, Ph.D.

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