

# Gov. Evers: Announces NOAA designation for National Marine Sanctuary off coast of Lake Michigan advances

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MADISON — Gov. Tony Evers today announced the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's (NOAA) Office of National Marine Sanctuaries will publish a final rule for the designation of the Wisconsin Shipwreck Coast National Marine Sanctuary. The sanctuary designation will take effect following a review by the governor and Congress over a 45-day period of continuous session of Congress.

"This National Marine Sanctuary would be only the second of its kind in the country and will build upon Wisconsin's legacy of maritime trade and navigation, highlight Wisconsin's unique and vibrant coastal communities, as well as protect, conserve, and enhance public access to a significant number of historic shipwrecks in Lake Michigan for generations to come," said Gov. Evers. "These shipwrecks tell the story of our state and this designation will allow us to further explore and learn from our history, enhance local tourism, and provide educational opportunities for Wisconsinites and visitors alike. We appreciate all the work over the years of NOAA, Senator Tammy Baldwin, our agencies, all the local leaders and local groups for their efforts to get us here."

In 2017, NOAA published draft designation documents for the Wisconsin Shipwreck Coast National Marine Sanctuary and held a public comment period. Based on an analysis of public comments and dialogue with the state of Wisconsin, the sanctuary proposal extends from part of Kewaunee County, to Manitowoc, Sheboygan, and Ozaukee counties. The Wisconsin Shipwreck Coast National Marine Sanctuary spans 962 square miles and will protect 36 historically significant shipwrecks and related

maritime heritage resources. Many of the shipwrecks are largely intact, being well-preserved by Lake Michigan's cold fresh water. Of the 36 wrecks, 21 of them are on the National Register of Historic Places and the area also includes Wisconsin's two oldest known shipwrecks. Archival research suggests there may be 60 additional undiscovered shipwrecks.

"The city of Manitowoc has worked toward this day for 12 years along with many wonderful partners at NOAA, the Marine Sanctuary Foundation, the state of Wisconsin, and our municipal partners. We are excited that the Wisconsin Shipwreck Coast NMS will finally be a reality," said city of Manitowoc Mayor Justin Nickels. "The protection of this body of water and the shipwrecks with this designation, which lie forever at rest along our coast, will memorialize the rich history of our community and the men and women who built our city for generations before us."

The area was nominated for National Marine Sanctuary consideration by a diverse coalition of organizations and individuals at local, state, regional, and national levels. This included elected officials, historical societies, businesses, museums, and environmental, recreational, conservation, fishing, tourism and educational groups, including dedicated work on behalf of the project from NOAA, Senator Tammy Baldwin, and the National Marine Sanctuary Foundation, as well as the Wisconsin Departments of Administration and Natural Resources and the Wisconsin State Historical Society. Principal cities involved in the nomination include Port Washington, Sheboygan, Manitowoc, and Two Rivers. The sanctuary will be co-managed by the state of Wisconsin.