



For Immediate Release
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Impacted Communities Respond to Governor's Decision to Rescind Nomination of Wisconsin National Marine Sanctuary

Residents, educators, business leaders, tourism executives, environmental groups, and elected officials from the Cities of Port Washington, Sheboygan, Manitowoc, and Two Rivers have reacted with disbelief and disappointment to Governor Walker's action rescinding his 2014 nomination of the area of Lake Michigan off their communities to be American's newest National Marine Sanctuary.

The entire sanctuary designation process began with that nomination, which the Governor himself had submitted in November 2014 on behalf of the citizens of the State of Wisconsin. The nomination was officially selected by NOAA (National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration) to begin the Sanctuary Designation process and was perceived to be well on its way to Final Designation in late 2018 or early 2019. Once designated, the Wisconsin-Lake Michigan National Marine Sanctuary would become only the second Sanctuary in the Great Lakes and the 15th Sanctuary nationwide.

"The Governor's decision represents a missed opportunity for all of us," stated Kathy Tank, City of Port Washington Tourism Council Executive Director. "With roughly 33% of State visitor spending occurring each year along the I-43 corridor and our harbor communities preparing for tourism growth from the Designation of our Wisconsin Sanctuary, our business partners were very well-positioned to capture additional tourism dollars."

"Our communities have collaborated very effectively on our National Marine Sanctuary Nomination, and that includes proud institutions of maritime heritage learning like our Wisconsin Maritime Museum in Manitowoc and partner organizations in Sheboygan and Port Washington," said Rolf Johnson, CEO of the Wisconsin Maritime Museum. "Working together over the past several years, we've prepared and shared exciting, engaging new public exhibits that provide inspiring educational opportunities for future generations of scientists, researchers, engineers, explorers, and historians."

The regional nomination as submitted to NOAA detailed a proposed 875-square mile area National Marine Sanctuary, stretching from Port Washington to Two Rivers. It would contain 39 known shipwrecks, including the two oldest shipwrecks in Wisconsin and 15 intact shipwrecks (three with standing masts). Fifteen of the 39 shipwrecks are on the National Register of Historic Places. NOAA would assist with location, identification, and preservation of another 80 or so expected shipwrecks.

"We believe a Sanctuary Designation is truly fitting," stated Leslie Kohler, Chairwoman of the Board of Directors for the Sailing Education Association of Sheboygan (SEAS). "Our marine environment is enormously rich in historical, cultural, and archaeological treasures, and a National Marine Sanctuary will afford greater opportunity for discovery, protection, and preservation of those unique treasures."

"A National Marine Sanctuary in our Mid-Lake Region will be a economic bonus for our four communities and the region and will serve as a tremendous source of pride and celebration for our entire State of Wisconsin," said Chad Pelishek, City of Sheboygan Director of Planning & Development.

For more information, please visit the following website: www.sanctuaries.noaa.gov/wisconsin

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