

Proposed Wisconsin–Lake Michigan National Marine Sanctuary

PUBLICATION



**JANUARY 9,
2017**

NOAA published a Draft Environmental Impact Statement, Draft Management Plan, and proposed rule for the proposed Wisconsin–Lake Michigan National Marine Sanctuary.

PUBLIC COMMENT AND MEETINGS



NOAA's public comment period was open from January 9 to March 31, 2017. During this time period, NOAA received 566 written comments. NOAA also held public meetings in four coastal communities, with about 400 attendees and 75 verbal comments submitted.

NEXT STEPS



In cooperation with the state of Wisconsin, NOAA is considering the comments it received on the sanctuary proposal as it drafts a final proposal for publication. Before the designation becomes effective, Congress and Governor Scott Walker will have an opportunity to review the proposal.

Background

In October 2015, NOAA announced its intent to designate a new national marine sanctuary to help conserve nationally-significant shipwrecks and related maritime heritage resources in Wisconsin. Following a public comment period in 2016, NOAA developed a detailed analysis and management plan for a proposed national marine sanctuary in the waters of Lake Michigan adjacent to Manitowoc, Sheboygan, and Ozaukee counties.

The proposed 1,075-square-mile Wisconsin–Lake Michigan National Marine Sanctuary would protect 37 shipwrecks and related underwater cultural resources that possess exceptional historic, archaeological, and recreational value. The sanctuary would also enhance heritage tourism within the many coastal communities that have embraced their centuries-long maritime relationship with Lake Michigan, the Great Lakes region, and the nation.

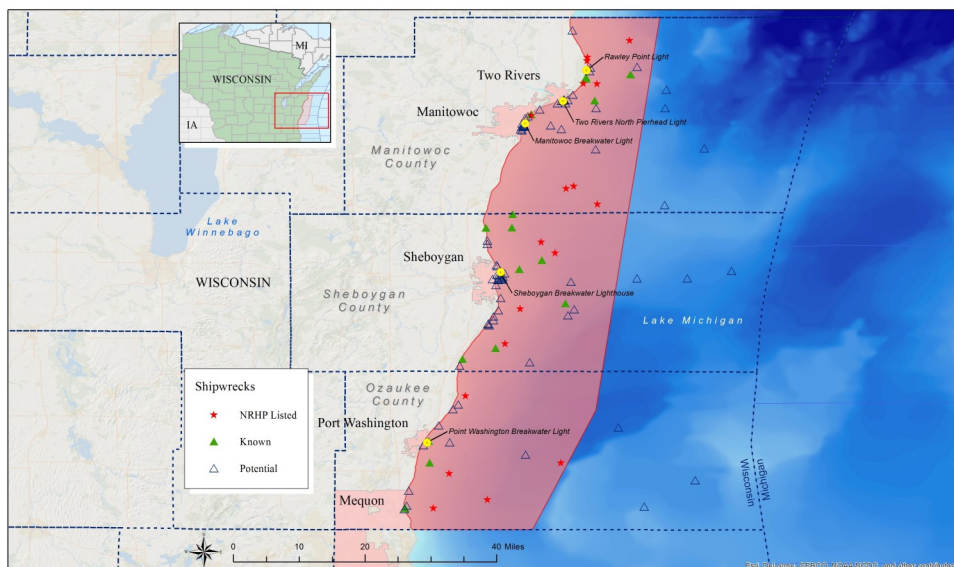
About the Nomination

Wisconsin–Lake Michigan was nominated as a national marine sanctuary through NOAA's Sanctuary Nomination Process with broad community and bipartisan support.

In December 2014 the state of Wisconsin officially submitted the nomination, citing the need to protect, conserve, and enhance public access to this nationally-significant collection of shipwrecks. The nomination also notes opportunities to foster education and research partnerships, increase tourism, and enhance economic development.

The nomination is endorsed by a diverse coalition of organizations and individuals at local, state, regional, and national levels. This includes elected officials, businesses, museums, and environmental, recreational, conservation, tourism, and educational groups.

Principal cities involved in supporting the sanctuary nomination include Port Washington, Sheboygan, Manitowoc, Two Rivers, and Mequon.



Map: NOAA

This map shows NOAA's preferred boundary alternative, covering a 1,075-square-mile area in Lake Michigan that would protect 37 known and 80 potential shipwrecks.

Proposed Sanctuary Alternatives	Boundary	Known Shipwrecks	Potential Shipwrecks
No Action			
Boundary A (NOAA's preferred alternative)	1,075 square miles	37	80
Boundary B	1,260 square miles	38	95

Proposed Regulatory Alternatives	Prohibitions
Regulatory Alternative A	Damaging shipwrecks and grappling into and anchoring on shipwreck sites with a mooring buoy.
Regulatory Alternative B (NOAA's preferred alternative)	Damaging shipwrecks and grappling into and anchoring on all shipwreck sites.

The Proposal

NOAA is proposing to designate Wisconsin-Lake Michigan National Marine Sanctuary and has developed alternatives for the designation that include a no-action alternative, two boundary alternatives, and two regulatory alternatives (see tables above). NOAA's preferred boundary alternative would designate a 1,075-square-mile sanctuary in Lake Michigan that would protect 37 known historic shipwrecks and about 80 potential shipwrecks and other historic maritime-related features. Fifteen of the known historic shipwrecks are preserved virtually intact, possessing extraordinary historical, archaeological, and recreational significance. The area also includes Wisconsin's two oldest known shipwrecks dating to the 1830s.

Spanning the 1800s through the early 20th century, shipwrecks in the proposed sanctuary represent diverse vessel types that played critical roles in evolving the Great Lakes from a maritime frontier into the nation's busiest waterway. During this period workaday wooden schooners and innovative steel steamships moved raw materials, agricultural products, and passengers in larger quantities than ever before. Well-preserved by Lake Michigan's cold, fresh water, the historic shipwrecks in the proposed sanctuary represent the tenacity and entrepreneurial spirit of generations of Americans. Eighteen of the 37 shipwrecks are listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

NOAA's preferred regulatory approach would adopt regulations similar to those used in

other sanctuaries to protect underwater cultural resources, with an additional regulation that prohibits grappling and anchoring on shipwreck sites. Authorities related to natural resources and their management remain with the state of Wisconsin. The proposed sanctuary would be co-managed by NOAA and the state of Wisconsin.

For more information

Web: <http://sanctuaries.noaa.gov/wisconsin/>

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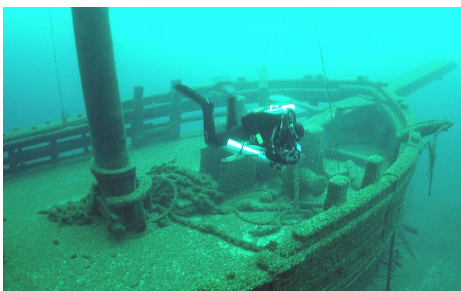


Photo: Tamara Thomsen, Wisconsin Historical Society

A diver swims over the schooner *Walter B. Allen*, sunk in 1880.



Photo: Milwaukee Public Library

The steamer *Vernon* sunk during a storm in 1887 with the loss of 48 lives.

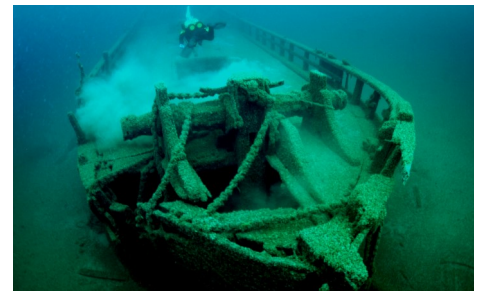


Photo: Tamara Thomsen, Wisconsin Historical Society

Built in 1843, the schooner *Home* is one of the oldest shipwrecks discovered in Wisconsin.