

**25<sup>th</sup>**  
*Anniversary*

# Superior Days 2010

## Legislative Issues Packet

- Recognition of 25 Years of Partnership
- Lake Superior National Estuarine Research Reserve
- Research Facility at the U.S. Geological Survey Vessel Dock Site in Ashland
- Superior Research Institute
- Wisconsin/Minnesota Tax Reciprocity
- Maintenance of Recreational Trails for Non-Motorized Use

## Recognition of 25 Years of Partnership

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In recognition of 25 years of partnership between the Northern Wisconsin communities and the state government, we are sincerely grateful for our past successful efforts. This event which began in 1986 in an attempt to establish communication linkage between Northwest Wisconsin and state government has evolved into a major annual event and has been thriving in focusing attention on the economic needs and opportunities for our area communities. Previous Superior Days have resulted in many significant project accomplishments. Another key benefit is the enhanced local and state cooperation in solving community issues.

Therefore, the Superior Days delegation expresses their gratitude to the Wisconsin State Legislature for their instrumental role in the success of this grass root citizen lobbying effort and looks forward to a continued collaboration to help find solutions to important issues impacting Northern Wisconsin communities.

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# Lake Superior National Estuarine Research Reserve

*The citizens of Northwest Wisconsin request:*

- **That the Legislature formally commit and allocate \$500,000 annually toward the Lake Superior National Estuarine Research Reserve and Wisconsin Freshwater Estuary Initiative.**

The Great Lakes are one of the world's most precious natural resources, and the State of Wisconsin has the privilege of being nestled between both Lake Superior and Lake Michigan. Our Great Lakes help define Wisconsin and represent vital natural and economic assets for the state.

Sustained research, education, and stewardship programs are important to the protection and restoration of these precious resources and the benefits they provide to Wisconsin's residents. Wisconsin's Freshwater Estuary Initiative is a statewide effort to increase awareness and promote stewardship of Wisconsin's Great Lakes freshwater estuaries and coastal areas. The initiative involves the University of Wisconsin-Extension, University of Wisconsin-Superior, City of Superior, Douglas County, Wisconsin Coastal Management Program, Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources, and a diverse network of partners. A key component of the initiative is the development of a Lake Superior National Estuarine Research Reserve.

In 2008, Governor Doyle nominated the St. Louis River Freshwater Estuary on Lake Superior as a National Estuarine Research Reserve (NERR). More than 70 dedicated individuals participated in the process that evaluated candidate NERR sites. There has been overwhelming local, state, and national support for a Lake Superior NERR. A Management Plan and Environmental Impact Statement for the NERR are being prepared and official designation of the Lake Superior NERR is anticipated to occur in the fall of 2010. The proposed lead institution for the NERR is the University of Wisconsin-Extension.

Funding for the Lake Superior NERR will provide opportunities for faculty, staff and student research at the University of Wisconsin-Superior and other UW institutions; expand outreach opportunities and resources to K-12 students and educators; address critical local needs related to coastal resources; and leverage additional research dollars to expand the important work of all partners in relation to coastal concerns. This funding will help to bring resources and national recognition to the Superior region with benefits extending to other Wisconsin coastal regions.



## **Going Forward:**

Once the Lake Superior NERR is designated, Wisconsin becomes eligible for approximately \$550,000 in annual Federal operations funding from the National Oceanic Atmospheric Administration (NOAA). A 30% state match, or approximately \$236,000, is required annually for the federal operations funds. Additional dollars for facilities construction and other NERR activities will become available to Wisconsin after designation.

To broaden the emphasis, we are requesting \$500,000 in annual State funding for the Wisconsin Freshwater Estuary Initiative. Approximately 50% will be used to match the NERR operations grant and enable the hiring of three NERR positions: the NERR Manager, NERR Research Coordinator, and NERR Education Coordinator. The other approximately 50% will be used to implement programming that:

- Extends the impacts of the Wisconsin NERR designation beyond the footprint of the NERR and provides benefits for a wide-range of Wisconsin's Lake Superior and Lake Michigan coastal communities.
- Addresses the local research, education, and management needs of Wisconsin's Lake Superior and Lake Michigan coastal communities.
- Leverages existing and attracts new funds for coastal research, education, and management.
- Strengthens existing partnerships with state and federal agencies, local and Tribal governments, organizations, universities and colleges.
- Coordinates and disseminates Great Lakes freshwater estuary and coastal research and education through an advisory council coordinated by the University of Wisconsin system.

Once established, the Lake Superior National Estuarine Research Reserve will become the 28th research reserve in the NERR System, and only the second Great Lakes reserve. This designation, coupled with the broader statewide Freshwater Estuary Initiative, will make the State of Wisconsin more competitive for additional funding opportunities that further enhance the state's leadership in Great Lakes research, education and outreach.

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## Research Facility at the U.S. Geological Survey Vessel Dock Site in Ashland

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*The citizens of Northwest Wisconsin request:*

- **That the Legislature assist in securing sufficient funding to complete a Research Facility at the U.S. Geological Survey Vessel Dock Site in Ashland and to support the educational and research programs that arise from it.**

A Congressionally-funded dock facility for the U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) research vessel Kiyi was constructed in Ashland, Wisconsin in 2008-2009. This facility is a joint venture between the City of Ashland, Ashland County, Ashland Area Development Corporation and the USGS, which has operated out of Ashland since 1957 and has a federal mandate to study the fish populations of Lake Superior.

The USGS dock facility is available for use by other federal, Canadian, state, tribal, and local governmental agencies and enhances the Lake Superior and other Bi-national Great Lakes fisheries and environmental research and monitoring programs. The USGS dock facility complements Ashland's Waterfront Development Plan and benefits the region and its economy by ensuring a continued presence of the USGS program in Ashland and increasing the use of Ashland as a port for the Great Lakes research vessels.

Future plans for the dock facility include construction of a research facility for the USGS program to be co-located in Ashland. Currently, the USGS science and support facility is located more than a mile away from the dock facility and does not provide adequate office, meeting, and laboratory space to effectively support the USGS Lake Superior research program. The cost of the proposed research facility is estimated to be \$6 million. The City proposes to donate an adjoining parcel of land to the dock facility that will accommodate the proposed research facility. Co-location of the vessel dock, warehouse, laboratories, offices and meeting rooms into one facility is a common feature of many well-known maritime research centers (e.g., Woods Hole Institute, Harbor Branch Oceanographic Institute). It will enhance the quality of the USGS research program, the integration of the USGSD vessel and research facilities, and educational and research capabilities for schools, colleges, and universities. Particularly, the research facility will be beneficial to educational and research programs at Northland College, Sigurd Olson Environmental Institute, and the University of Wisconsin institutions at Superior, Stevens Point and Madison.

The combined facility will be operated jointly by USGS, City of Ashland, and Northland College and will be a public outreach program that seeks to increase public awareness of Lake Superior and its fish and aquatic resources. The combined USGS research and dock facility will benefit the regional economy by serving as a regional, national, and international center for research and education focused on Lake Superior and will annually attract many scientists, students and visitors.

The City of Ashland intends to seek Congressional funding to construct this research facility and also seeks partners in the State of Wisconsin to join with them in securing sufficient funding to complete the facility and to support the educational and research programs that arise from it.



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## Superior Research Institute

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*The citizens of Northwest Wisconsin request:*

- **Support funding to create a state of the art maritime research and outreach facility on Montreal Pier to support agencies that engage in Great Lakes maritime research and education.**

For over 116 years the University of Wisconsin-Superior has been an integral part of this community and the University is a strong supporter of partnerships with the City of Superior. One of the many examples of the City and University partnership is the Great Ships Initiative, a research program of the Northeast Midwest Institute that conducts some of their research on the city owned Montreal Pier.

UW-Superior has taken a leadership role in research and education focused on the Great Lakes. The University has expanded its commitment to research and education by supporting the Lake Superior Research Institute, Great Lakes Maritime Research Institute, the Great Ships Initiative and the St. Louis River National Estuarine Reserve Site and hosting an office of Wisconsin-Sea Grant. These important and growing research and education initiatives are presently challenged by a lack of suitable facilities and the need for additional space will only grow in the future.

The University and the City feel that there is unique and timely opportunity to create a state of the art maritime research and outreach facility on Montreal Pier. The facility could not only house UW-Superior research and education programs but has the potential to support a variety of city, regional, state and federal agencies and non-governmental agencies that engage in Great Lakes maritime research and education. This exceptional facility would bring outside researchers, conferences, recognition and revenue to our university and showcase our community. The consolidation of organizations and their personnel in a world class facility on a unique location would create a vital synergy and dynamism.

This goal is best reached through a joint effort that will include additional partners and our outreach has indicated that the following additional groups may be potential partners:

- Wisconsin Sea Grant
- Wisconsin Coastal Zone Management
- Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources
- US Army Corps of Engineers
- US Coast Guard
- US Geological Survey

These parties are active in maritime research and education and could benefit from being affiliated with the use of a modern education and research facility with dock space that is located on the largest port of the Great Lakes. We also believe that there are other parties who may be interested in the potential that this facility has and we will seek out the support of all relevant groups as we move forward in the process.

The City and University have jointly developed conceptual drawings, engineering analysis, budget estimates and have discussed permitting with the appropriate agencies. The partnership is now starting the process of obtaining funding for an appropriate sized research facility.

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## Wisconsin ~ Minnesota Tax Reciprocity

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*The citizens of Northwest Wisconsin request:*

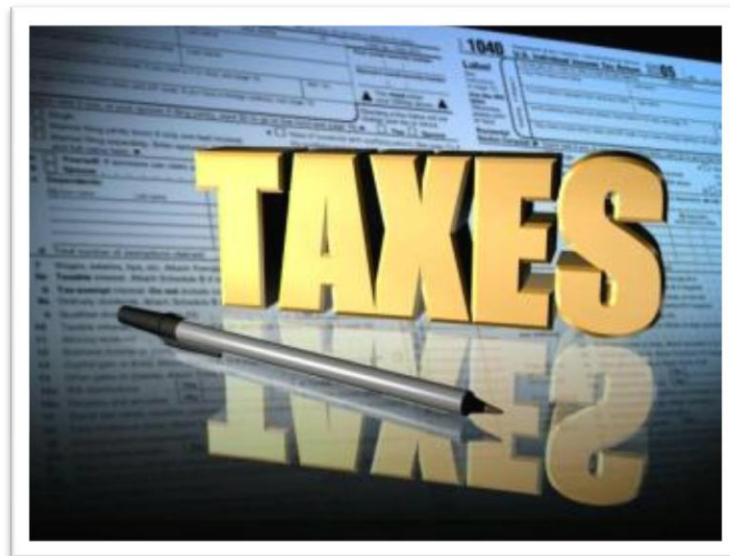
- **That the Legislature enter into a new Wisconsin – Minnesota Income Tax Reciprocity Agreement.**

“On September 18, 2009, the income tax reciprocity agreement between Minnesota and Wisconsin was terminated by Minnesota, effective for taxable years beginning after December 31, 2009,” according to the Wisconsin Department of Revenue.

The result of the termination of this agreement will affect 80,000 Wisconsin taxpayers, most who reside in Northwest Wisconsin. This will require our residents to file two state tax returns in 2011 for the 2010 tax year, rather than filing only a single Wisconsin income tax return as in the past.

Not renewing this agreement will result in more complexity in completing income tax return forms and higher costs for preparation of these income tax forms.

We appreciate the work of the Wisconsin Department of Revenue and the Legislature thus far and encourage both Governors to negotiate in good faith a new Wisconsin – Minnesota Income Tax Reciprocity Agreement when practical and feasible.



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## Maintenance of Recreational Trails for Non-Motorized Use

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*The citizens of Northwest Wisconsin request:*

- **That the State of Wisconsin establish a fund for development and maintenance of non-motorized recreation trails.**

Development and maintenance of trails for hiking, skiing, snowshoeing, and other non-motorized recreation is important to tourism and recreation in Northwest Wisconsin. In 2008, a special legislative study committee found a lack of consistent funding and maintenance for non-motorized trails, with many trails poorly maintained. The committee's report to the Legislature recommended creation of a non-motorized trail funding program in the DNR and a non-motorized recreation and transportation trails council.

Development of this program is important to the future of the many recreation trails in the northern region of the state. In addition to providing consistent maintenance for trails in state parks and forests, the program could provide funding for the North Country National Scenic Trail and Ice Age National Scenic Trails in our region. Many planned miles of these unique trails have not been developed due to lack of resources. Their completion in Wisconsin depends on future funding such as that proposed in the study report.

Careful planning in the current state budget environment can prepare for good investment when additional resources become available.

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