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National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration
NATIONAL OCEAN SERVICE
OFFICE OF OCEAN AND COASTAL RESOURCE MANAGEMENT
Silver Spring, Maryland 20910

APR 6 2009

Ms. Diana Joyner
Chair, Wells Reserve Management Authority
342 Laudholm Farm Road
Wells, Maine 04090

Dear Ms. Joyner:

Enclosed are the final evaluation findings for the Wells National Estuarine Research Reserve (NERR) for the period from June 2004 through April 2008. The fundamental conclusion of this evaluation is that Maine, through the Reserve Management Authority (RMA), is adhering to the programmatic requirements of the NERR system in its operation of the approved Wells NERR.

This document contains four recommendations, none of which is mandatory. In response to the RMA's comments on the draft findings, we have made factual corrections; made some revisions to the discussion and findings related to the Trust and the RMA; and slightly revised the Program Suggestions dealing with research and with the Laudholm Trust/RMA relationship.

We appreciate your cooperation and assistance and that of the Reserve staff during the accomplishment of this evaluation.

Sincerely,

David M. Kennedy
Director

Enclosure

cc: Paul Dest, Manager, Wells National Estuarine Research Reserve
Michael Migliori, Estuarine Reserves Division, OCRM, NOAA
Phil Maier, Manager, ACE Basin National Estuarine Research Reserve

FINAL Evaluation Findings

Wells National Estuarine Research Reserve

June 2004 through April 2008



Office of Ocean and Coastal Resource Management
National Ocean Service
National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration
U.S. Department of Commerce

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I. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Coastal Zone Management Act (CZMA) of 1972, as amended, established the National Estuarine Research Reserve System (NERRS). Sections 312 and 315 of the CZMA require the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) to conduct periodic performance reviews or evaluations of all federally approved National Estuarine Research Reserves (NERRs). The review described in this document examined the operation and management of the Wells National Estuarine Research Reserve (the NERR or the Reserve) during the period from June 2004 through April 2008. The Reserve is administered by the Reserve Management Authority (RMA), an instrument of the State of Maine.

This document describes the evaluation findings of the Director of NOAA's Office of Ocean and Coastal Resource Management (OCRM) with respect to the Wells NERR during the review period. This evaluation includes discussions of major accomplishments as well as recommendations for program improvement. The fundamental conclusion of the findings is that the State of Maine, through the RMA, is successfully implementing its federally approved NERR.

The evaluation team documented a number of Wells Reserve accomplishments during this review period. The staff of the Reserve are highly respected and admired, and they exercise leadership roles at the local, regional and national levels. The facilities at the Reserve have been significantly enhanced and improved for staff, visitors, and visiting researchers. Both the Reserve's Management Plan and Site Profile have been completed. The volunteer program is an important and indispensable aspect of the Reserve's success in accomplishing its many programs and projects. Another aspect of the Reserve's successful programs is the wide-ranging and numerous collaborative partnerships that are vital to the accomplishment of so many projects. The Reserve is at the forefront of salt marsh habitat research and restoration activities statewide and regionally. The salt marsh habitat theme is also carried throughout its monitoring, education, and stewardship activities, thus exemplifying the integrated nature of all of the Reserve's programs and activities. The Coastal Training Program has initiated a new program entitled Protecting Our Children's Water, which is seen as a model for multidisciplinary research. It implements the theory, principles, and practices of community-based ecosystem management based upon social science research.

The evaluation team also identified areas where the Reserve and its programming could be strengthened. The Reserve has never received funding from the State of Maine Legislature's General Fund for Reserve operations. The Laudholm Trust has provided non-federal match dollars for the Reserve's cooperative agreement awards from NOAA. Although the economic climate may not support such a request now, the Reserve and its partners should continue efforts to make state legislators and others aware of the importance and need for dedicated state funding. The Reserve's 'facilities-rich' situation presents a need to develop strategies to provide non-federal maintenance and renovation funds. The Laudholm Trust, the RMA, and the Reserve should strive for ongoing and transparent communication and close collaboration and coordination on the development of strategic planning documents and on other important

initiatives. Finally, the Reserve and the RMA should engage in discussions about the constraints and opportunities to support research and monitoring activities, including, but not limited to, academic institution affiliation, boundary expansion, memoranda of understanding, special use permits, and land acquisition exclusive of Refuge property.

II. PROGRAM REVIEW PROCEDURES

A. OVERVIEW

The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) began its review of the Wells Reserve in February 2008. The §312 evaluation process involves four distinct components:

- Initial document review and identification of specific issues of particular concern;
- A site visit to Maine, including interviews and public meetings;
- Development of draft evaluation findings; and
- Preparation of the final evaluation findings, partly based on comments from the state regarding the content and timetables of recommendations specified in the draft document.

The recommendations made by this evaluation appear in boxes and bold type and follow the findings section where facts relevant to the recommendation are discussed. The recommendations may be of two types:

Necessary Actions address programmatic requirements of the CZMA's implementing regulations and of the Wells Reserve approved by NOAA. These must be carried out by the date(s) specified;

Program Suggestions denote actions that NOAA's Office of Ocean and Coastal Resource Management (OCRM) believes would improve the program, but which are not mandatory at this time. If no dates are indicated, the state is expected to have considered these Program Suggestions by the time of the next CZMA §312 evaluations.

A complete summary of accomplishments and recommendations is outlined in Appendix A.

Failure to address Necessary Actions may result in a future finding of non-adherence and the invoking of interim sanctions, as specified in CZMA §312(c). Program Suggestions that are reiterated in consecutive evaluations to address continuing problems may be elevated to Necessary Actions. The findings in this evaluation document will be considered by NOAA in making future financial award decisions relative to the Wells Reserve.

B. DOCUMENT REVIEW AND ISSUES DEVELOPMENT

The evaluation team reviewed a wide variety of documents prior to the site visit, including: (1) Wells Reserve §312 evaluation findings dated 2005; (2) federally approved Environmental Impact Statement and program documents; (3) financial assistance awards and work products; (4) semi-annual performance reports; (5) official correspondence; and (6) relevant publications on natural resource management issues in Maine.

Based on this review and on discussions with OCRM, the evaluation team identified the following priority issues:

- major accomplishments during the review period;
- status of Reserve staffing and needs;
- any facilities development and maintenance needs and/or land acquisition efforts;
- status of general administration of the Reserve and management plan revisions;
- status of implementation of the Reserve's research, monitoring, and education programs;
- the manner in which the Reserve coordinates with other governmental and non-governmental organizations and programs in the state and region; and
- the Reserve's progress in addressing the recommendations contained in the most recent Section 312 evaluation findings dated December 2005.

C. SITE VISIT TO WELLS NATIONAL ESTUARINE RESEARCH RESERVE

Notification of the scheduled evaluation was sent to the Reserve Management Authority, members of Maine's congressional delegation, and regional newspapers. In addition, a notice of NOAA's "Intent to Evaluate" was published in the Federal Register on April 1, 2008.

The site visit to the Wells Reserve was conducted from May 13 - 15, 2008. The evaluation team consisted of Ms. Chris McCay, Evaluation Team Leader, National Policy and Evaluation Division, OCRM; Mr. Steve Tucker, Program Analyst, National Policy and Evaluation Division, OCRM; Ms. Amy Waggener, Program Specialist, Estuarine Reserves Division, OCRM; and Mr. Phil Maier, Manager, ACE Basin (South Carolina) National Estuarine Research Reserve. Mr. Peter Wellenberger, Manager, Great Bay (New Hampshire) National Estuarine Research Reserve, joined the evaluation team for one day.

During the site visit, the evaluation team met with the Reserve director and staff; members of the RMA; the president, chair, and several other officers and trustees of the Laudholm Trust; federal and state agency representatives; numerous non-profit and local government partners; and academic partners. Appendix C lists people and institutions contacted during this review.

As required by the CZMA, OCRM held an advertised public meeting on Wednesday, May 14, 2008, at 5:00 p.m. at the Mather Auditorium, Wells National Estuarine Research Reserve at Laudholm Farm, 342 Laudholm Farm Road, Wells, Maine. The public meeting gave members of the general public the opportunity to express their opinions about the overall operation and management of the Wells Reserve. Appendix D lists individuals who registered at the meeting. NOAA's responses to written comments submitted during this evaluation are summarized in Appendix E.

The Wells Reserve director and staff members were crucial in setting up meetings and arranging logistics for the evaluation site visit. Their support is most gratefully acknowledged.

III. RESERVE PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

NOAA's Office of Ocean and Coastal Resource Management designated the Wells National Estuarine Research Reserve (NERR or the Reserve) in 1984. The lead state agency is the Reserve Management Agency (RMA), an independent state agency created by the Maine Legislature specifically to support and promote the interests of the Reserve. The RMA employs the Reserve staff and is able to acquire land or hold conservation easements for resource protection. It also serves as the policy-making board for the Reserve. The RMA meets quarterly; its membership is comprised of representatives with a property, management, or financial interest in the Reserve. This includes a representative from the Maine Department of Conservation, the Town of Wells, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the Laudholm Trust, the Maine State Planning Office (ex officio non-voting), and NOAA (ex officio non-voting). A governor-appointed scientist with an established reputation in the field of marine or estuarine research also serves on the RMA.

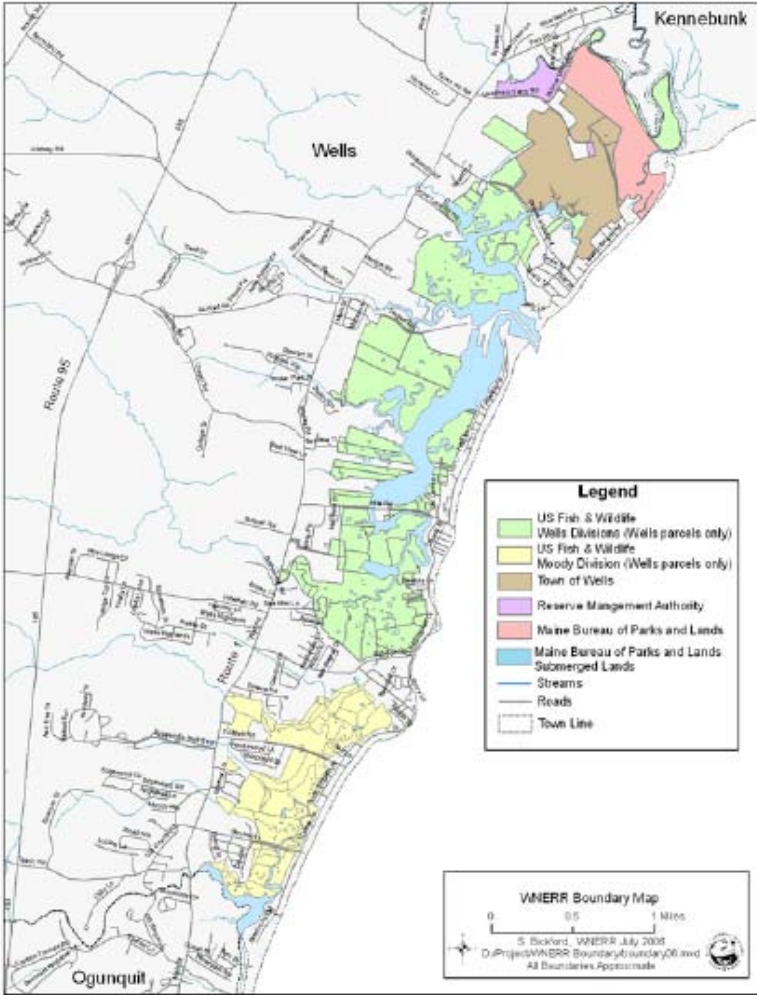
The Reserve comprises 2,250 acres of salt marshes, beaches, dunes, upland fields and forests, riparian areas, and submerged lands within the watersheds of the Little, Webhannet, and Ogunquit Rivers. Parcels of conserved land owned by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Town of Wells, the Maine Department of Conservation, and the Wells Reserve Management Authority make up the Reserve. In addition to the conservation land, the Wells Reserve includes two building campuses: 1) Laudholm Farm, a cluster of buildings on the National Register of Historic Places, that serves as the center for visitors and for the research, education, and stewardship programs; and 2) the Alheim Commons, a property that includes two facilities that house visiting scientists, educators, and resource managers.

The Little and Webhannet Rivers empty into Wells Bay, a sandy basin that stretches approximately 10 miles. Double spit barrier beaches attached to the mainland border each river's inlet. The Little River system is largely undeveloped; however, the mouth of the Webhannet River is surrounded by development that includes Wells Harbor. Due to a relatively low freshwater flow, the estuarine system is dominated by semi-diurnal tides having a range of 8.5 to 9.8 feet.

The site's diverse natural features form an ecosystem that is unique for its location and supports a broad variety of plants and animals. The Reserve is an integral part of the Atlantic Coast bird migration corridor, and more than 200 species of birds depend on the Reserve during the course of a year. The Webhannet and Little River estuaries are important breeding grounds for soft shell clams and other invertebrates. The estuaries also provide excellent habitat for finfish. The Reserve also contains three locations designated by the state and listed on Maine's Register of Critical Areas: Wells Piping Plover Nesting Area, Wells Slender Blue Flag Area, and Laudholm Beach.



Wells National Estuarine Research Reserve



IV. REVIEW FINDINGS, ACCOMPLISHMENTS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

A. OPERATIONS AND MANAGEMENT

1. Administration and Staffing

Within the National Estuarine Research Reserve System, the Wells Reserve has a unique operations and management structure that is discussed at greater length in the following section. Such a structure provides both singular opportunities and challenges for the administration of the Reserve.

The staff members are the heart of the Reserve's success in research, education, stewardship, outreach, building partnerships, and coordination. They exercise leadership roles locally, regionally, and systemwide and are well respected for their dedication, professional expertise, and enthusiasm. During this evaluation period, for example, the Stewardship Coordinator has served on the Oversight Committee of the Mt. Agamenticus to the Sea Coalition; the Reserve Director served as president of the National Estuarine Research Reserve Association; the CTP Coordinator participated in the NERRS CTP Performance Measures and External Review Committees and Climate Change Workgroup; and the Research Director has participated in the Regional Association for Research in the Gulf of Maine, Gulf of Maine Council on the Marine Environment Working Groups on Habitat and Monitoring, and the NERRS Strategic Planning Committee. The Reserve began through local involvement and effort, and the Reserve staff members in turn are committed to serve the local communities, resources, and citizens.

ACCOMPLISHMENT: The Wells Reserve staff members exercise active leadership roles at local, regional, and national levels while remaining committed to serving the communities in which the Reserve is located.

Because no traditional state agency or state university serves as the lead agency for the Reserve, the Reserve Management Authority (RMA) was created by the Maine Legislature to serve as the policy-making and governing authority for the Wells Reserve. No state funds are or have ever been appropriated for the RMA. The Laudholm Trust provides the majority of non-federal matching funds for the NOAA cooperative agreements through its membership base and by applying for foundation grants. The Reserve also seeks and obtains a significant number of grants, but this is a heavy workload issue. A dedicated state funding source for Reserve operations would provide a greater degree of stability and enable staff to extend the reach of research, education, and stewardship programs. The last several evaluation findings have urged the RMA and Trust to pursue dedicated state funds, and they have done so but have not been successful. The Reserve and Trust have continued educational efforts with legislators, the Governor, and others to keep the issue at the forefront, but RMA and Trust members indicated during the site visit that the political and budget climates in Maine have not changed and

dedicated state funding will remain out of reach. Nevertheless, an ongoing effort to continually educate legislators, the Governor, and other supporters about the need for state funding should remain a key focus of the RMA, the Laudholm Trust, and the Reserve.

PROGRAM SUGGESTION: OCRM urges the Reserve and its partners to continue efforts to make state legislators and others aware of the importance of and need for dedicated state funding for Reserve operations.

2. Laudholm Trust and Reserve Management Authority

The Laudholm Trust was originally formed in 1982 as a grassroots effort to protect the historic Laudholm Farm in Wells from development. Shortly after it was formed, the Trust teamed with the Maine Coastal Program to expand the mission and create a National Estuarine Research Reserve. The group was able to raise enough money, which -- in combination with NOAA and State of Maine funding -- allowed the purchase of the 240-acre Laudholm Farm. The Town of Wells (one of the partners in the establishment of the Reserve) was given title to this property, and in combination with conservation land owned by the State of Maine and Rachel Carson National Wildlife Refuge, the Wells National Estuarine Research Reserve was designated in 1984. Because only a governmental entity can be designated as the managing partner for a reserve within the NERR system, the Maine Legislature created the Wells Reserve Management Authority (RMA).

The RMA serves as the policy-making and governing authority for the Reserve. The Trust has a representative on the RMA. The Laudholm Trust Board traditionally designates its Trust President as its representative; that person traditionally serves as the chair of the RMA. (After the site visit and subsequent to the evaluation period addressed by these findings, the RMA by-laws were updated to state that the Trust President will serve as the RMA Chair.) Members of the Laudholm Trust Board also serve on the Reserve's many advisory committees.

The Wells Reserve does not receive support from the State of Maine Legislature's General Fund. The Reserve is eligible for, and does receive, competitive State funds for programs and capital costs. The Laudholm Trust has provided the majority of non-federal matching funds for the Reserve's cooperative agreement awards from NOAA. It has also provided significant financial support for the construction of new facilities, acquisition of conservation lands within the Reserve's boundaries, and improvements to the Reserve's historic buildings. During this review period the Trust provided the annual non-federal matching funds and more than \$600,000 in capital project funding.

In meetings during the site visit and follow-up phone calls the evaluation team had with the Laudholm Trust president, Trust Board chairman, and other members of the Trust Board, almost all acknowledged that the Laudholm Trust is at a developmental and operational crossroads. The demographics of the membership are changing. The original members of the Trust are aging; some have left the Trust because its original intent -- to protect the Laudholm Farm from development -- has been met. Membership recruitment as well as fundraising is focusing on new people and different organizations.

The Trust is dedicated to supporting the Reserve and its programs. However, the evaluation team understood that some Trust Board members wanted the Laudholm Trust to assume an increased administrative and management role in Reserve governance beyond that which the Trust has as a member of the RMA. At the time of the site visit, the Trust's strategic planning effort was under way. The Reserve, through the RMA, has a strategic plan as well as a recently revised management plan, both of which guide the Reserve and all its programs and facilities. Because a continued close collaboration between the Laudholm Trust and the Reserve is vital, the Trust's strategic plan and the Reserve's strategic and management plans must be complementary. However, it appeared to the evaluation team that there was insufficient involvement by the RMA or Reserve director in the Trust's strategic planning work. During the evaluation review period, there have been times of conflict between the Trust and the Reserve leadership, which has led to mistrust and has impeded transparency and inclusion in organizational planning and decision-making.

As already noted, the RMA is statutorily delegated the authority for administration and management of Wells Reserve, and the Laudholm Trust is one of the members of the RMA. The Trust is a vital partner for the Reserve because of its significant financial support; the other representatives on the RMA from organizations that provide professional expertise in areas such as resource management, research, and education and whose lands provide the places for the Reserve's programs are equally vital to the Reserve. Issues with regard to the Reserve should be raised to and resolved by the RMA.

It is important for communication to be ongoing and transparent. It is essential that the Laudholm Trust Board, President, the RMA and Wells Reserve Director collaborate in developing strategic direction and goals to ensure transparency and future organizational success. This has not consistently occurred in the past and is essential to building trusting relationships and complementary strategies. The Trust not only attends RMA meetings but chairs them. Information from and decisions made at RMA meetings should be shared with the Trust Board by its President; conversely, information about decisions by the Trust Board that affect the Reserve should be shared with the RMA. Perhaps having a rotating second Trust member attend RMA meetings in a learning/listening capacity (not as a voting member) would be useful in reporting back to the full Trust Board. In turn, an RMA member (not the Trust representative) or Reserve Director should attend Trust Board meetings and other key decision-making committees. Trust Board member involvement in the Reserve's program advisory committees is also important.

Since the site visit, Laudholm Trust and the Laudholm Trust Board experienced changes in membership and leadership. There is a committed effort to build and maintain effective relationships between the Reserve and Laudholm Trust leaders and their respective Boards. The Laudholm Trust President and Wells Reserve Director are implementing shared strategic goals and have taken clear and visible actions to build an effective, vital partnership based on transparency and inclusiveness. Laudholm Trust Executive Officers are now joining the quarterly RMA meetings to keep each other better informed and to strengthen the relationships between the boards.

PROGRAM SUGGESTION: The Laudholm Trust and the RMA should work on ways to inform, engage, collaborate, and coordinate in strategic management planning, ongoing advisory committees, and on other important initiatives. Communication should be ongoing and transparent, and partner attendance at Trust Board and RMA meetings should be inclusive and encouraged.

3. Grants Management

One of the unique aspects resulting from the Wells Reserve's management structure is that there are no supporting administrative functions like that normally provided by a state department or university serving as a Reserve lead agency (e.g., personnel and fiscal activities). Therefore, the Reserve staff members are responsible for all grants management activities, including the preparation of financial reports. This is a significant workload, because the Reserve applies for and receives awards from a number of governmental institutions, in addition to the NOAA CZMA funding.

4. Management Plan

In response to a program suggestion in the last evaluation findings, the Reserve completed a final draft of its third management plan since designation. The Reserve management plan was accepted and approved by NOAA in September 2007.

ACCOMPLISHMENT: The Wells Reserve completed its 2007-2012 management plan, which was approved in September 2007.

5. Strategic Planning

In tandem with the development of its revised management plan for 2007-2012, the Reserve also developed and completed a new strategic plan for 2007-2012. Key components of the strategic plan are incorporated throughout the management plan. As discussed in the section above entitled "Laudholm Trust and Reserve Management Authority," the Trust was engaged in a strategic planning effort at the time of the site visit. A recommendation to address collaboration and coordination of these efforts and documents is included in the "Laudholm Trust and Reserve Management Authority" section.

6. Facilities and Infrastructure

The Reserve is anchored by the historic buildings of the Laudholm Farm (the Reserve's main campus), which include a fully restored 19th-century farmhouse that houses an exhibit area, offices, and gift shop; a circa-1900 barn housing a library, auditorium, maintenance shop; other smaller outbuildings; and nine buildings that are part of a life estate. Significant repairs and renovations were made to the barn in 2007. The Maine Coastal Ecology Center (MCEC), built

in 2001, provides offices, research and teaching labs, a GIS center, and exhibits. Just prior to the evaluation site visit, a walk-in environmental research chamber was installed in the MCEC to provide for interaction between visitors and researchers. In 2006 the Reserve built, furnished, and equipped a 20-bed dormitory called the Alheim Commons, which provides housing for Reserve partners and researchers, educators, and resource managers. Also during this evaluation review period, an historic outbuilding – formerly a garden shed – was renovated, fully furnished, and heated for use as a meeting and office space. The Forest Learning Shelter was constructed in 2006 along a trail for educational use by the Reserve, schools, and community groups.

The Reserve also has a system of walking trails. Four full-color interpretive signs were installed in 2006 to inform visitors about forest ecology as they walked along portions of trails comprising the Forest Learning Trail. New boardwalks were also constructed during this evaluation period to provide access to forested areas of the Reserve. In 2008 eight full-color interpretive signs were located along the Salt Marsh Loop Trail to inform visitors about salt-marsh ecology, wetlands, watersheds, and invasive plant species.

The Reserve was able to acquire a 2.5-acre parcel of open space (Lord Property-Phase 1) adjoining the Reserve’s main campus in 2005. This parcel has been the Reserve’s top acquisition priority since 1984. The Reserve then signed a purchase and sale agreement for the remaining 2.5 acres of the Lord Property (phase 2), which contains a farmhouse and attached barn and one outbuilding. Since the site visit the acquisition project has been completed.

ACCOMPLISHMENT: The Reserve has significantly improved its facilities during this evaluation period, providing new housing for visiting researchers at the Alheim Commons and enhancing experiences for visitors with the Forest Learning Shelter, the walk-in environmental research chamber, boardwalks, and interpretive signage along trails.

The Reserve’s facilities-rich situation is not without concern. All facilities require maintenance, and historic structures sometimes require unique and expensive maintenance techniques. In 2007 the nine buildings that are part of a life estate were all re-roofed, clapboards and other deteriorated components of the exterior were either repaired or replaced, and all were painted. Repairs and improvements were made to the barn complex, and other historic building (visitor center, ice house, water tower) were painted.

The Laudholm Trust has been successful at fund-raising to acquire structures, and the Reserve has also received NOAA federal funds for construction. However, it is difficult for the Reserve to obtain funding for ongoing maintenance and operational costs associated with its numerous buildings, particularly without state funding. The Laudholm Trust indicated that it is easier to solicit and obtain donations for specific parcels of land or historic buildings than to convince potential donors of the importance of funding for maintenance and upkeep. With the completion of the Lord Property acquisition, there are now additional structures to be maintained. The Reserve and its partners should conduct some long-term planning for maintenance needs and options for funds to be available for the maintenance of the Reserve’s numerous structures and buildings. For example, this could include a continued effort to obtain state funding, as noted in “Administration and Staffing” above, or the establishment of an endowment for each acquisition.

PROGRAM SUGGESTION: The Reserve and its partners should develop long-term strategies for providing maintenance and repair/renovation funds for the many structures for which the Reserve is responsible and take steps to include maintenance funding requirements as part of future acquisitions.

7. Coordination and Partnerships

To the evaluation team, one of the most impressive strengths of the Reserve is the staff's ongoing commitment to collaborative efforts. This appears to be born not out of necessity, although that surely may be a factor, but rather occurs almost as an involuntary function of the Reserve's staff "culture." Everyone with whom the team met offered multiple examples of partnerships in which they and Wells staff were involved. Many of these specific projects and programs are discussed in greater detail elsewhere in this document. The following list is representative of the partnership projects and programs in which the Reserve has participated during this evaluation period:

Maine Sea Grant College Program

The Reserve renewed a Memorandum of Understanding with the Maine Sea Grant College Program to provide office space for a Sea Grant employee at Wells Reserve and to foster collaboration on research, education, and stewardship projects between the two organizations. The Sea Grant marine extension associate indicated that being located at the Reserve was a good model for other Reserves. With a Sea Grant extension focus on ecosystem health and sustainable community development, such proximity prevents redundancies in the two organizations' efforts and allows for collaborative activities provided in slightly different ways. The Reserve and Sea Grant have work on the Coastal Training Program's "Protecting Our Children's Water" project, on the monitoring of salt marsh habitat restoration, and on developing information for distribution at the Reserve Visitor Center. As part of the NOAA/EPA Coastal Community Development Partnership, the Reserve and Sea Grant partnered with the Maine Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife and Trout Unlimited to provide community technical assistance in the Town of Wells. The partnership worked on the "Depot Brook Smart Development Project" to implement a community-supported initiative to protect the current ecological integrity of a local trout stream, Depot Brook, while allowing for growth and development within a proposed gateway area of Wells.

AmeriCorps

Wells Reserve established a partnership with AmeriCorps and had 28 individuals from throughout the nation stationed at the Reserve in the spring and fall of 2006 and the fall of 2007 working on stewardship projects for the Reserve and for conservation organizations in coastal York County. In collaboration with the Rachel Carson National Wildlife Refuge, the AmeriCorps volunteers performed an intensive assessment of human impacts on salt marshes and tidal restrictions from South Berwick to Cape Elizabeth, which will be used to identify potential restoration projects and as a baseline for marsh status.

Mount Agamenticus to the Sea Conservation Initiative

The MtA2C Initiative aims to protect large unfragmented forests, rare natural communities, drinking water sources for nine communities, and a great diversity of threatened and endangered species to create a green corridor from the mountains to the sea within a 48,000-acre focus area in southernmost Maine. A stewardship endowment has been established to care for lands protected by the MtA2C. The Reserve and nine other conservation organizations completed Phase 1 (2002-2006) of MtA2C, protecting 1,515 acres in 29 projects. The Reserve also applied for and received a Coastal and Estuarine Land Conservation Program grant on behalf of the Initiative, thus protecting three high priority projects within the focus area. In 2007 and 2008 the Reserve entered into an agreement with The Nature Conservancy to increase the pace of land conservation in the Tatic Hills region of the MtA2C focus area. This resulted in the conservation of three separate priority parcels of land within the first six months of the agreement.

Maine Coastal Program

The Maine Coastal Program was involved in the designation of the Reserve and serves on the Reserve Management Authority as an ex officio member. A representative from the Coastal Program serves on the Coastal Training Program Advisory Committee and on the Stewardship Advisory Committee. The Coastal Program has been able to provide some targeted funding to the Reserve and currently provides support for the K-12 educational programming.

<p>ACCOMPLISHMENT: Wells Reserve continues to actively engage in numerous collaborative partnerships addressing a wide range of issues that are of importance to local, regional, and state interests.</p>

8. Volunteer Program

The Reserve is well served by a large and active group of volunteers, who are essential to the programs and operations at the Reserve and have been since the founding of the Wells Reserve. The Reserve benefits from between 15,000 and 19,000 hours of volunteer time annually, which are provided by a core group of more than 450 people, supplemented by other individuals who volunteer less regularly or for one-time events. The Reserve has an active volunteer training program and a Volunteer and Visitor Center Coordinator position to manage the program. Individuals interested in serving as volunteer naturalists and docents for particular programs receive 20-24 hours of training in those areas from reserve staff and guest speakers. Volunteers (including a retired professionally-trained school librarian) and donors were responsible for developing a coastal resources library, which participates in the Maine interlibrary loan and on-line research system. The library has a T-1 internet connection and video conferencing system (TV monitors, camera, and supporting equipment) that is currently under-utilized. The system does have the potential to increase the audience of CTP classes, allow two separate classes to sit in on each other's programs, and be a tool for greater outreach and education.

Volunteers lead school programs and guided walks, assist with research monitoring and stewardship activities, greet visitors, help with grounds and building maintenance, and assist with administrative tasks. Several annual events, such as Earth Day, the Laudholm Nature Crafts Festival, Punkinfiddle: A National Estuaries Day Celebration, and Winter Family Fun Day

depend upon volunteer leadership and staffing.

The Reserve provides volunteer opportunities for people with developmental challenges as part of their community inclusion programs, for students to fulfill community service requirements as part of their academic programs, and for a group of incoming University of New England students as a way to introduce a volunteer component to their freshman orientation.

ACCOMPLISHMENT: The Reserve continues to invest in a large and knowledgeable volunteer community by providing volunteer training and opportunities in all aspects of the Reserve's programs and management that benefit both the Reserve and the local community.

B. RESEARCH AND MONITORING

1. Research Activities

The Reserve studies and monitors change in Gulf of Maine estuaries, coastal habitats, and adjacent coastal watersheds, and produces science-based information needed to protect, sustain, or restore them. Research themes focus on estuarine water quality, habitat value for fish, shellfish and birds, salt marsh habitats and communities, and salt marsh degradation and restoration. The work of the Reserve's researchers is well integrated into the projects and efforts of the education, stewardship, and Coastal Training Program components.

During this evaluation period, research conducted at the Reserve included, but was not limited to:

- Conducted hydrologic and modeling studies of tidally restricted marshes at various Maine sites in support of salt marsh restoration planning. Project sites include Drakes Island Marsh (Wells), Spruce Creek Marsh (Kittery), Wheeler Marsh (York), Ocean Park Marsh (Old Orchard Beach) and Pemaquid Marsh (Bristol).
- Developed software-modeling application to help restoration managers assess marsh habitat response to potential restoration scenarios at degraded salt marsh sites. The software, named Marsh MD (Marsh Model Designer), was based on ecological experimentation and validation activities performed at the Wells Reserve Drakes Island site. In conjunction with the Wells Coastal Training Program, the Reserve developed a user version of the model along with a training tutorial, and distributed them to more than 60 restoration professionals in the U.S.
- Developed an enhanced version of the Marsh MD model to take advantage of new technologies for measuring elevation and vegetation from remote-sensing sources. Named SMART (Salt Marsh Assessment and Restoration Tool), the software used data from aerial flights over the Drakes Island marsh site at the Wells Reserve to develop baseline elevation and plant community maps.
- Compiled saltmarsh monitoring datasets from 36 complete or imminent restoration projects in

the Gulf of Maine to assess regional monitoring and restoration practices. Results showed that pre-restoration sites had lower tidal heights, reduced salinity levels, and plant communities with greater cover of brackish species and lower cover of halophytes than reference areas. Results were presented at a regional monitoring workshop at the Wells Reserve and published.

- Partnered with Maine Audubon in dragonfly and vernal pool studies in the wetlands and uplands of the Reserve, and with Maine Inland Fisheries and Wildlife on butterfly survey.
- Partnered with York County Chapter of Maine Audubon in ongoing bird studies, including banding and surveying of song birds and saw whet owls.
- Partnered with Maine Sea Grant in a beach-profiling project, examining changes in shape and structure of beaches over time.

ACCOMPLISHMENT: Research at Wells Reserve has established the Reserve in the forefront of salt marsh habitat investigation, degradation, and restoration at the state and regional level.

The research program mentors and trains five to 10 undergraduate and graduate students each year; during this evaluation period, the Reserve hosted four Graduate Research Fellows. The Reserve provides scientific, staff, and facilities support for approximately 30 studies annually. According to research staff, on average, 93 faculty, students, and technicians from 20 academic institutions, as well as Wells Reserve staff, participate in these studies each year.

However, staff noted that a lack of overall funding for research, and state funding in particular, is a concern. Staff members are concerned about inadequate capacity to pursue the full suite of studies and projects they would like to undertake. A state funded researcher on staff could not only bring in needed salary (which would also provide non-federal match dollars) but also could provide increased credibility in grant competitions and strengthen existing or create new partnerships. The staff is interested in pursuing an academic institution affiliation of some type as one way to achieve some of those benefits, and OCRM believes that this is worthwhile to pursue.

Because most of the Reserve's coastal salt marsh and estuarine resources are within the boundaries of the Rachel Carson National Wildlife Refuge lands, that is where much of the Reserve-oriented research is conducted. Researchers are required to obtain a special use permit from the Refuge for virtually all research activities. The Refuge and the Reserve do not have completely identical missions, and there have been instances where there was some confusion about whether a permit was required or why a permit was not issued. The Reserve recognizes that the Refuge must follow its rules and regulations and may not in some cases issue a permit for research. In turn, the Refuge staff has indicated it will attempt to make the permit process more transparent to help avoid ambiguity and confusion in the future.

The growth of the Reserve's programs, particularly its research program, is placing greater pressure on the Refuge lands within the Reserve boundaries. The Reserve's management plan

specifically recognizes the capacity limits of Refuge property to accommodate researchers. The management plan's Boundary and Acquisition Plan section discusses the need for additional acquisition of property not only to meet objectives for protecting resources and broadening the Reserve's ecological diversity, but to ensure a stable environment for research and education.

PROGRAM SUGGESTION: The Reserve and the RMA should engage in discussions about the constraints and opportunities to support research and monitoring activities, including, but not limited to, academic institution affiliation, boundary expansion, memoranda of understanding, special use permits, and land acquisition exclusive of Refuge property.

2. Monitoring

The Reserve's System-wide Monitoring Program (SWMP) is fully implemented and functional with four dataloggers. Additional estuarine water quality stations are monitored bimonthly by the Reserve's volunteer Watershed Evaluation Team (WET). The WET program is managed by the Reserve's education staff, involves middle and high school students and community volunteers, and pre-dates the SWMP. These volunteers also monitor phytoplankton productivity (an indicator of estuarine health) and fecal coliform bacterial contamination (an indicator of human health risk).

In 2005 the Reserve created a baseline vegetation map of the Webhannet River and Little River estuaries to track large-scale changes in native marsh plant zonation and spatial coverage of invasive plant species. The Reserve established 40 permanent vegetation plots paired with groundwater wells in an array designed to detect the influence of upland development on salt marsh sustainability. In 2008, these plots began to be used as reference sites against which to compare the performance of a number of local salt marsh restoration projects. They will also be used over the long term to monitor the response of the Webhannet marsh to sea level change, the latter measured jointly by SWMP dataloggers and NOAA's National Water Level Observing Network installation at Wells Harbor at the inlet of the Webhannet River.

At a national level, the ability to fully evaluate the success of salt marsh restoration efforts is hindered by the lack of reference sites. Beginning in 2008, the National Estuarine Research Reserve System is establishing restoration reference sites in salt marshes at five reserves. Wells Reserve will serve as one of the five NERR sites with funding from the National Marine Fisheries Service Office of Habitat Conservation for this monitoring effort.

3. Site Profile

The previous evaluation findings dated December 2005 included a Necessary Action requiring the completion of the Wells NERR Site Profile. The Site Profile has been completed.

ACCOMPLISHMENT: The Wells Reserve Site Profile has been completed and published.

C. EDUCATION AND OUTREACH

1. Education and Outreach Programs

Wells Reserve has interpretive education and outreach programs that are extensive and wide-ranging. The Reserve accommodates approximately 40,000 visitors per year with on-site self-guided interpretive trails and staff- and volunteer-led programs and events. The staff also develops and offers guided group programs for local communities and creates substantial custom programming to meet the needs of individual groups.

School Programs

Guided programs for school students include an expanded *Microscopic Drifters* and *Water Quality Monitoring Field Studies* for middle and high school students and teachers. An annual average of 1,170 elementary school students and teachers participated in the *Exploring Estuaries* field trip. The Reserve has now aligned all its guided school programs with the “Maine Learning Results” and identified which Results were met through the program and teacher’s guide. (According to the Maine Department of Education website, the “Learning Results” express what students should know and be able to do at various checkpoints during their education and identify the knowledge and skills essential to prepare Maine students for work, for higher education, for citizenship, and for personal fulfillment.) The Reserve has also designed quantifiable evaluations for the guided school group programs.

Reserve staff created a classroom kit called “Safari in a Box” for use off-site by teachers and community groups, and its use has tripled in this evaluation period. The kit provides pelts, repli-tracks, repli-scat, videos, books, and curriculum to teach about Maine wildlife and adaptations. As mentioned in the “Monitoring” section above, the education staff also maintains WET (Watershed Evaluation Team) for year-round water quality monitoring using school students and volunteers.

On-site Events, Trails, and Exhibits

The Reserve hosts guided walks, monthly lectures and special programs on seasonal topics. There are several annual major events hosted at the Reserve, such as Winter Family Fun Day in February, Earth Day in April, and Punkinfiddle: A National Estuaries Day Celebration in September. The Maine Coastal Ecology Center holds exhibits interpreting salt marsh and coastal watershed research, and the Visitor Center houses natural and cultural history exhibits. There are also seven miles of trails throughout diverse habitats on the Reserve, with interpretive signs at key points. As noted in the “Facilities and Infrastructure” section, the Forest Learning Shelter was constructed in 2006 for educational use by the Reserve, schools, and community groups, and interpretive signs were added along the Forest Learning and Salt Marsh Loop trails.

Children’s Camp Programs

Throughout the summer and during winter and spring breaks, the Reserve offers half-day exploration sessions for six- to nine-year-old children called *Just for Kids*, to introduce them to science and nature. A week-long *Junior Researchers Day Camp* provides children ages 9 to 12 the opportunity to assist scientists with ongoing research and to learn about the varied natural communities of the Reserve.

Other Outreach Techniques

The Reserve has published several books and materials that provide information about the Reserve and the Natural and historical resources of the area. These include:

- ◆ *Incorporating Small Streams & Brooks into Developing Landscapes*. The book is an aid to the citizen planner, suggesting how streams and brooks can be naturally functioning and aesthetic components of urban design. It is a product of the Depot Brook Project discussed under the “Coordination and Partnerships” section.
- ◆ *Laudholm, The History of a Celebrated Maine Saltwater Farm*.
- ◆ *Coastal Fish of Southern Maine and New Hampshire*. The book introduces all fish species, well known or unfamiliar, that regularly occur in estuaries of the region.
- ◆ Quarterly newsletters mailed to supporters of the Laudholm Trust and Wells Reserve.
- ◆ Calendars of programs and events.

At the time of the evaluation site visit, the Reserve and Laudholm Trust had started a ‘branding campaign’ to improve public understanding of the relationship between the Reserve and the Trust. This includes a redesigned suite of print publications, a refined signage template, and website redesign.

ACCOMPLISHMENT: The Reserve’s education and outreach programs are wide-ranging and extensive, reaching a range of ages through numerous programs. The Reserve is the recent beneficiary through the Laudholm Trust of a financial gift from a local donor earmarked for new and enhanced educational programming.

2. Coastal Training Program (CTP)

During this review period the Reserve submitted an updated CTP Strategy Document for 2007-2011 in 2007. The Reserve received review comments in early 2008, and at the time of the site visit, revisions to the strategy document based upon those comments were being made.

Almost 3,330 people participated in 70 programs offered by CTP during this evaluation period. These participants are involved in community-based protection, stewardship, and conservation of the ecological life support systems of the Gulf of Maine region. Workshops have addressed water pollution, salt marsh restoration, stormwater management, invasive species, vernal pool conservation, GIS and GPS skills, and open space planning.

The Reserve has begun a new initiative called *Protecting Our Children’s Water*. This project is a model of the approach and philosophy of the CTP. It was developed to implement the theory, principles and practices of community-based ecosystem management and is based upon six years of social science research. The needs, values and structure of the complex system of practitioners working to protect water in southern Maine are incorporated into the design, implementation and evaluation of the project. Through support and facilitation of two regional watershed councils, the *Protecting Our Children’s Water* project strives to build collaboration across municipal boundaries in order to facilitate the implementation of watershed management plan, conservation plan, and comprehensive plan goals for clean water and reduction of nonpoint source pollution. This project brings municipal staff and board members, state and federal water

managers, scientists and nongovernmental organizations into regular contact to share knowledge and develop action strategies. Formal and informal training, collaborative meetings, and field sessions contribute to the partnerships that have developed among eight municipalities, three municipal water districts, and several state agencies and nonprofit groups. Regular meetings to track progress and set goals are components of the project.

Protecting Our Children's Water has received national attention and is proving to be a model for multidisciplinary research that facilitates the translation of science and the bridging of the science-to-management divide. The CTP Coordinator has presented findings about the program at over 20 individual conferences and meetings from 2004 through 2007.

ACCOMPLISHMENT: The CTP initiative entitled *Protecting Our Children's Water* strives to build collaboration across municipal boundaries in order to facilitate the implementation of watershed management plan, conservation plan, and comprehensive plan goals for clean water and reduction of nonpoint source pollution. It is being seen as a model for multidisciplinary research that facilitates the translation of science and the bridging of the science-to-management divide.

D. STEWARDSHIP AND RESOURCE MANAGEMENT

As may be evident from reading the previous sections of this document, many of the Reserve's stewardship and resource management activities are intrinsically bound to or can be defined as education, research, monitoring, or partnership activities. The Reserve's stewardship activities are focused in at least four major areas:

Stewardship of Reserve Lands

The Reserve and the Rachel Carson National Wildlife Refuge developed and are implementing a plan to improve habitat for the New England cottontail rabbit (State of Maine endangered species and a candidate for federal listing under the Endangered Species Act) and other early successional wildlife species. With the Maine Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife and the Maine Bowhunters Association, the Reserve continues to implement a deer reduction program to get the deer population under control and in better balance with the upland ecosystem. The Reserve, the Refuge, Maine Audubon, and the Maine Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife are protecting and monitoring endangered least terns and piping plovers on Laudholm Beach. The Reserve also maintains open fields for grassland nesting birds through annual prescribed burning and mowing.

Environmental Monitoring

The Reserve is involved in several projects to monitor the health of plants, animals, and habitats. Together with the Town of Wells, the Rachel Carson National Wildlife Refuge, and NOAA, the Reserve monitored the restoration of the 77-acre Drakes Island Marsh, where a new, wider culvert and Maine's first self-regulating tide-gate were installed to improve tidal flow into the marsh. In 2007 the Reserve completed a 10-year monitoring effort to monitor marine debris on Laudholm Beach as part of a national effort in partnership with the Ocean Conservancy. As that effort ended, another began: Reserve staff members helped to establish and implement the Maine Healthy Beaches Program -- a coastwide water quality monitoring effort for water

temperature, salinity, tidal stage, weather, and observations of beach usage in the summer months.

GIS Support to Conservation Organizations and Municipalities

The Reserve recognizes that many local municipalities and land trusts lack the capacity for GIS technology and analysis and the useful products that can come out of such technology. That lack of capacity can hinder the pace of conservation and land planning. The Reserve continues to assist 22 towns in southern Maine through the Reserve's GIS Center, which supports land trusts, watershed coalitions, and municipalities by providing mapping services; technical assistance with GIS/GPS; digital georeferenced data including conservation lands, tax parcel maps, remote sensed images and USGS topographic maps; training opportunities for GIS and GPS use; and software support for several programs.

During this evaluation period the Reserve developed the SWIM (Seacoast Watershed Information Manager) program. This is an on-line resource created to help residents and communities in southern Maine and adjacent New Hampshire make well-informed decisions about water resources. The site allows anyone to explore interactive maps, search the water resources library, share ideas in a discussion forum, view an events calendar, access decision support tools, and stay current on water issues.

The Reserve also completed the first comprehensive digitization of regional conserved lands in the state. By working with the Nature Conservancy and the Maine Coast Heritage Trust, this data was attached to the state's conserved lands GIS layer.

Conservation Planning and Community Outreach

The Reserve staff has been active in the development of conservation plans both regionally (the Mount Agamenticus to the Sea Conservation Initiative discussed in an earlier section of this document) and statewide (Maine's Coastal and Estuarine Land Conservation Program Plan and the Maine Coast Protection Initiative Conservation Framework). Locally, during this evaluation period the Reserve worked with the York Conservation Commission to restore Wheeler Marsh through the repair of a damaged culvert and the improvement of tidal flow to the marsh; completed a nonpoint source pollution survey for Spruce Creek Watershed and followed up with outreach to communities and conservation groups; and completed nonpoint source pollution surveys and management plans for the York River and the Ogunquit River watersheds and followed with outreach to communities and conservation groups.

ACCOMPLISHMENT: The Reserve's stewardship activities and projects are seamlessly integrated with its research, education, and partnership activities and programs. The stewardship focus addresses local needs and priorities at the action and implementation stage. As one participant in the evaluation noted, Reserve stewardship is action oriented, without years spent 'conceptualizing.'

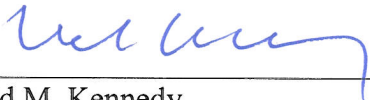
V. CONCLUSION

For the reasons stated herein, I find that the State of Maine is adhering to the programmatic requirements of the Coastal Zone Management Act and the regulations of the National Estuarine Research Reserve System in the operation of its approved Wells National Estuarine Research Reserve.

The Wells Reserve has made notable progress in: Administration and Staffing, Management Plan, Facilities and Infrastructure, Coordination and Partnerships, Volunteer Program, Research Activities, Site Profile, Education and Outreach, Coastal Training Program, and Stewardship and Resource Management.

These evaluation findings also contain four (4) recommendations. All of the recommendations are in the form of Program Suggestions. There are no Necessary Actions. The Program Suggestions should be addressed before the next regularly-scheduled program evaluation, but they are not mandatory at this time. Program Suggestions that must be repeated in subsequent evaluations may be elevated to Necessary Actions. Summary tables of program accomplishments and recommendations are provided in Section VI.

This is a programmatic evaluation of the Wells National Estuarine Research Reserve that may have implications regarding the state's financial assistance awards. However, it does not make any judgment about or replace any financial audits.



David M. Kennedy
Director, Office of Ocean and Coastal
Resource Management



Date

VI. APPENDICES

Appendix A. Summary of Accomplishments and Recommendations

The evaluation team documented a number of the Reserve Management Authority's and the Reserve's accomplishments during the review period. These include:

Issue Area	Accomplishment
Administration and Staffing	The Wells Reserve staff members exercise active leadership roles at local, regional, and national levels while remaining committed to serving the communities in which the Reserve is located.
Management Plan	The Wells Reserve completed its 2007-2012 management plan, which was approved in September 2007.
Facilities and Infrastructure	The Reserve has significantly improved its facilities during this evaluation period, providing new housing for visiting researchers at the Alheim Commons and enhancing experiences for visitors with the Forest Learning Shelter, the walk-in environmental research chamber, boardwalks, and interpretive signage along trails.
Coordination and Partnerships	Wells Reserve continues to actively engage in numerous collaborative partnerships addressing a wide range of issues that are of importance to local, regional, and state interests.
Volunteer Program	The Reserve continues to invest in a large and knowledgeable volunteer community by providing volunteer training and opportunities in all aspects of the Reserve's programs and management that benefit both the Reserve and the local community.
Research Activities	Research at Wells Reserve has established the Reserve in the forefront of salt marsh habitat investigation, degradation, and restoration at the state and regional level.
Site Profile	The Wells Reserve Site Profile has been completed and published.
Education and Outreach	The Reserve's education and outreach programs are wide-ranging and extensive, reaching a range of ages through numerous programs. The Reserve is the recent beneficiary through the Laudholm Trust of a financial gift from a local donor earmarked for new and enhanced educational programming.

Coastal Training Program (CTP)	The CTP initiative entitled <i>Protecting Our Children's Water</i> strives to build collaboration across municipal boundaries in order to facilitate the implementation of watershed management plan, conservation plan, and comprehensive plan goals for clean water and reduction of nonpoint source pollution. It is being seen as a model for multidisciplinary research that facilitates the translation of science and the bridging of the science-to-management divide.
Stewardship and Resource Management	The Reserve's stewardship activities and projects are seamlessly integrated with its research, education, and partnership activities and programs. The stewardship focus addresses local needs and priorities at the action and implementation stage. As one participant in the evaluation noted, Reserve stewardship is action oriented, without years spent 'conceptualizing.'

In addition to the accomplishments listed above, the evaluation team identified several areas where the program could be strengthened. Recommendations are in the forms of Program Suggestions and Necessary Actions, although there are no Necessary Actions from this evaluation. Areas for improvement include:

Issue Area	Recommendation
Administration and Staffing	PROGRAM SUGGESTION: OCRM urges the Reserve and its partners to continue efforts to make state legislators and others aware of the importance of and need for dedicated state funding for Reserve operations.
Laudholm Trust and Reserve Management Authority	PROGRAM SUGGESTION: The Laudholm Trust and the RMA should work on ways to inform, engage, collaborate, and coordinate in strategic management planning, ongoing advisory committees, and on other important initiatives. Communication should be ongoing and transparent, and partner attendance at Trust Board and RMA meetings should be inclusive and encouraged.
Facilities and Infrastructure	PROGRAM SUGGESTION: The Reserve and its partners should develop long-term strategies for providing maintenance and repair/renovation funds for the many structures for which the Reserve is responsible and take steps to include maintenance funding requirements as part of future acquisitions.
Research Activities	PROGRAM SUGGESTION: The Reserve and the RMA should engage in discussions about the constraints and opportunities to support research and monitoring activities, including, but not limited to, academic institution affiliation, boundary expansion, memoranda of understanding, special use permits, and land acquisition exclusive of Refuge property.

Appendix B. Response to Previous (2005) Evaluation Findings

Program Suggestion: WNERR should finalize its revised management plan within six months following the receipt of the final evaluation findings.

Response: WNERR completed a final draft of its Management Plan (2007-2012) at the end of 2006. In tandem with the development of the final draft of the plan, WNERR developed and completed a new Strategic Plan in December 2006. The two plans complement one another, with key components of the strategic plan incorporated throughout the Management Plan. Both the Strategic Plan and Management Plan are for the period 2007 through 2012. The Management Plan was accepted and approved by NOAA/OCRM in September 2007.

Program Suggestion: NOAA strongly encourages WNERR, RMA, and Laudholm Trust to continue their efforts to secure dedicated state funding for reserve operations.

Response: The WNERR Manager, the Laudholm Trust President and the RMA explored the feasibility of seeking state funds. Meetings were held with State Legislators, such as a breakfast the Trust and WNERR hosted for legislators to familiarize them with the Reserve and its programs, and a couple of one-on-one meetings. In the end, due to on-going State budget problems (shortfalls in revenue, resulting in cut-backs in State services), the RMA believed that the fiscal climate was not right at this time to seek State funds.

Necessary Action: The Research and Monitoring Program must complete the site profile by December 31, 2006.

Response: The Research Program completed the final draft of the Site Profile of the WNERR in the fall of 2006, which was submitted to the Research Coordinator at NOAA/ERD and to primary authors for their review. The comments were incorporated and the final draft was completed by the end of the year. The final document was submitted to NOAA in January 2007. Copies of the Site Profile were made available by CD and on the web via FTP site. Bound, color copies of the document were printed in 2007 for distribution to authors and to individuals with a significant interest in the Research Program at the WNERR.

Appendix C. Persons and Institutions Contacted

Wells National Estuarine Research Reserve

Paul Dest, Director
Michele Dionne, Research Director
Sarah Jolly, Education Director
Christine Feurt, CTP Coordinator
Tin Smith, Stewardship Coordinator
Nancy Viehmann, Volunteer and Visitor Center Coordinator
Jeremy Miller, Research Associate
Jim Dochtermann, Research Associate
Hannah Wilhelm, Research Assistant
Ellen McCann, Education Associate
Zack Steele, CTP Associate
Sue Bickford, GIS/Natural Resource Specialist
Jake Aman, AmeriCorps Environmental Educator

Laudholm Trust Staff, Board Officers, and Board Trustees

Susan Rouillard, President (at the time of the site visit)
Diana Joyner, Recording Secretary (President at the time of the issuance of the findings)
Bruce Read, Chairman (at the time of the site visit)
Tim Dietz, Vice Chair (Chairman at the time of the issuance of the findings)
Don Somers, Immediate Past Chair
Scott Richardson, Communications Director
Walt Leffler, Building Advisory Committee
Cynthia Daley, Building Advisory Committee

Reserve Management Authority

Susan Rouillard, Laudholm Trust
Kathleen Leyden, Maine Coastal Program
Richard Clark, Town of Wells
Ward Feurt, Rachel Carson National Wildlife Refuge

State Agency and Local Government Representatives

Kate O'Brien, Rachel Carson National Wildlife Refuge
Scott Lindsay, Maine Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife
Sgt. Tim Spahr, Maine Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife
Don Kale, Maine Department of Environmental Protection
Jane Duncan, Town of Wells Town Manager
Richard Clark, Town of Wells, Selectman

Other Organizations and Representatives

Carol Donnelly, York Rivers Association
Doreen MacGillis, York Land Trust
Keith Fletcher, The Nature Conservancy
Rob Nichols, Kittery Land Trust

Phyllis Ford, Spruce Creek Association
June Ficker, York County Audubon Society
Bridget Coullon, York County Audubon Society
Diana Joyner, University of Maine Cooperative Extension
Frank Wertheim, University of Maine Cooperative Extension
Owen Grumbling, University of New England
Kristen Whiting Grant, Maine Sea Grant College Program
Paul Anderson, Maine Sea Grant College Program
Don Somers, Wells NERR Volunteer
Jean Somers, Wells NERR Volunteer
Bob Kuech, Wells NERR Volunteer, Education Advisory Committee
Jeanne Meggison, Wells NERR Volunteer, Education Advisory Committee

Appendix D. Persons Attending the Public Meeting

The public meeting was held on Wednesday, May 14, 2007, at 5:00 p.m. at the Mather Auditorium, Wells National Estuarine Research Reserve at Laudholm Farm, 342 Laudholm Farm Road, Wells, Maine. No members of the public attended the meeting.

Appendix E. NOAA's Response to Written Comments

NOAA received one written comment regarding the Wells National Estuarine Research Reserve. The letter is part of the official record of the evaluation and is briefly summarized below, followed by NOAA's response.

Ward Feurt, Refuge Manager Rachel Carson National Wildlife Refuge

Comment: Mr. Feurt notes that the ties between the Reserve and the Refuge are extensive and that the two organizations are often cited as examples of successful interagency partnerships. With mission similarity, the Reserve and the Refuge have developed close working relationships and are represented on each other's management structure committees.

NOAA's Response: The evaluation team thanks Mr. Feurt for his comments. Although Mr. Feurt was not able to meet with the evaluation team during the site visit, a later meeting was scheduled and held.