

Maine Island Coalition Meeting Minutes
10/16/20
Great Lakes Islands Alliance

Attendees:

MIC

Donna Wiegler, Co-Chair, Swan's Island
Roger Berle, Co-Chair, Cliff Island
Eva Murray, Matinicus
Kendra Chubbuck, Isle au Haut
Rachel Bishop, Frenchboro
Andy Dorr, Vinalhaven
Jim Buccheri, Monhegan

GLIA

Steering Committee

Bob Anderson, Beaver Island, MI
Kristy Beyer, Drummond Island, MI
Michael Gora, Middle Bass Island, OH
Jordan Killam, Kelleys Island, OH

General Membership

Ned Hancock, Madeline Island, WI
Will Craig, Washington Island, WI
Kevin Boyle, Beaver Island, MI
Kitty MacNamara, Beaver Island, MI
Pam Grassmick, Beaver Island, MI
Harold Stieber, Harsens Island, MI
Peter Huston, South Bass Island, OH
Dave DeLellis, Pelee Island, Ontario, CA
Joe Shorthouse, Manitoulin Island, Ontario, CA
Lisa Brohl, South Bass Island, OH
Angela Welke, Beaver Island, MI

Partner Organizations:

Pam Trinward, Office of Representative Chellie Pingree, ME
Meghan Grabill, Island Institute, ME
Andy Theriault, Island Institute, ME
Suzanne MacDonald, Island Institute, ME
Kate Tagai, Island Institute, ME
Matt Preisser, Michigan Department of Environment, Great Lakes, and Energy, MI
Lisa Brush, The Stewardship Network, MI

The History of the Maine Islands Coalition: <https://www.islandinstitute.org/maine-islands-coalition/>

Roger Berle:

- MIC formed in the early 2000's in response to a proposal surrounding Liquid Natural Gas which brought the island communities together in conversation.
- The conversation and policy focused work the communities engaged in was important and they decided to continue.

MIC Structure:

- A representative and an alternate from each of the 15 year-round islands plus guests attend each meeting.
- Meetings are held quarterly (except for in crisis response in 2020 when MIC met weekly from April-May and then bi-weekly through June-July and monthly through October.)
- The goal is to encourage idea sharing and communication between the islands and between island communities and service providers such as state and national legislators. The MIC is a structured network for idea sharing and problem solving.
- Each meeting is structured around a keynote topic with experts in the field, time for discussion, followed by time for each island to provide an update.

MIC topics over the years...

Property taxes
Land conservation
Economic development
Microloans
Insurance
Transportation (ferry and air service)
Sea level rise
Broadband
Leadership succession
Volunteering (recruiting and management)
Legislative relations
Wind power/ocean energy
Healthcare/eldercare
Affordable/workforce housing

Elderly aging in place
Substance abuse/opioids
Mental health
Emergency services
Public assistance
Tick-borne diseases
Lobstering – zones and licensing
Aquaculture
Groundfishing
Fuel shortages
Weatherization
Energy efficiency
Fire and Rescue – training
Schools - sustainability

Historical Societies and Museums
Population maintenance and rebuilding
Schools - sustainability
Historical Societies and Museums
Population maintenance and rebuilding
Solid Waste management and removal
Recycling
Junk cars
Stores
Post offices
Summer community interaction on year-round islands
Air BnB's



The History of the Great Lakes Islands Alliance: <https://glialliance.org/>

Matt Preisser and Bob Anderson

- GLIA formed in 2018 with the enactment of their charter: https://secureservercdn.net/198.71.233.138/7f4.61a.myftpupload.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/01/GLIA-Charter_Final.pdf
- In 2015 and 2016 Jon Allan and Matt Preisser organized a series of exchange trips and island based meetings between Great Lake Islanders and Maine Islanders and Island Institute staff to explore what a network could look like and how it could work in the Great Lakes Region.

GLIA Structure

- GLIA was formed to bring together island leaders, residents, and advocates from across the Great Lakes region in a network formed by islanders for islanders.
- GLIA has members from two countries: three states and one Canadian province in all five of the Great Lakes representing 15 year round island communities.
- GLIA is run by a Steering Committee of five members plus five alternates who meet monthly. The Steering Committee is supported in varying degrees by partner organizations, currently: The Stewardship Network, Michigan Department of Environment, Great Lakes, Northland College, and the Island Institute.
- The entire GLIA membership also participates on a monthly phone call to discuss GLIA business and provide island updates and emerging issues. Subcommittees are formed to tackle specific issues and/or opportunities.

As part of our introductions we asked for one interesting fact from each island:

Beaver Island, Michigan

- Was a kingdom in the 1860's
- Recently had a real estate listing in the Wall Street Journal.
- Has two townships- St. James Township which is the northern most part of Beaver island plus several smaller, nearby islands and Peaine Township.
- Has the only island based radio station in the Great Lakes.
- Has the 13th busiest airport in Michigan.

Madeline Island, Wisconsin

- Was settled by the French in 1693.
- Have all their street signs written in English and Ojibwe.

Matinicus Island, Maine

- Is the farthest island from the mainland in Maine that has a year-round community.

Washington Island, Wisconsin

- Is part of Door County
- Has more shipwrecks than any other part Lake Michigan

Swan's Island, Maine

- Is a dry island. There are no sales of alcohol, though residents can buy alcohol on the mainland and bring it back for personal consumption.

Harsens Island, Michigan

- Is a neighborhood community. The municipality for Harsens island is based on the mainland.

Middle Bass Island, Ohio

- In the 1880's the largest winery in the US; this year is the 350 year anniversary of the first appearance of Lake Erie islands on a map.

South Bass Island, Ohio

- The 1813 battle of Lake Erie, which ensured U.S. Control of the lake, happened at Put-in-Bay. South Bass was Oliver Perry's base of operations as he led the attack.
- There are over 30 different

Peleee Island, Ontario, CA

- The most southern inhabited land in Canada

Isle au Haut, Maine

- Has a freshwater pond on the island stocked with brook trout. The western shoreline of the lake is within the boundaries of Acadia National Park.

Cliff Island, Maine

- Is the farthest out neighborhood for the city of Portland. The center of the community is the school which currently has three students.

Kelleys Island, Ohio

- Is home to the world's largest humanly accessible example of glacial scoring.

Manitoulin Island, Ontario, CA

- Manitoulin is on the north shore of Lake Huron
- It is the largest freshwater island in the world and has 13,500 full time residents, a population that doubles in the summer.

Frenchboro, Maine

- Is made up of 12 islands. Of the 88 square miles of the township, only 5 miles is land.

Monhegan, Maine

- Has the tallest cliff's on the eastern seaboard.

Vinalhaven, Maine

- Granite from Vinalhaven was used to build the Washington Monument and federal office buildings in Washington, as well as the columns for the Cathedral of Saint John the Divine in New York City.

To facilitate the conversation, the group was broken into four breakout groups tasked with talking about how covid19 changed the summer, what benefits and challenges were present and how they are preparing to enter the fall and winter.

Breakout groups were given 20 minutes to talk before returning to the large group for debrief.

Overall Themes from small group discussions:

A perception that the islands were different than the rest of the country/mainland, that islands were naturally socially distanced and thus safer.

Islanders can isolate themselves from disease differently than from the mainland.

When restrictions opened up or eased, people came flooding in.

The real estate markets are hot. People who have no connection to the islands are buying houses and moving. There is concern this will create problems because buyers aren't fully aware of the services that are available (or not available) and aren't familiar with how to navigate logistics such as what to do with cars, when and how ferry schedules change seasonally, how to access medical services, etc.

Transportation to islands is challenging. The ferry/airplane are lifelines that are vulnerable in covid times. With decreased ridership because of restrictions and the need for distance, the ferry business model was challenged.

April-June was tough economically, but the bump in August- October is helping. The season is going later than normal.

Communities are starting to think about 2021, but there is a reluctance towards planning anything because so much was canceled this year and so much is still uncertain going into the winter.

There are social dynamics that go into all these considerations- needing the businesses open vs. needing them to shut down and how open is safe and appropriate?

As we continue to connect, what would you like to connect on?

From Bob Anderson, Beaver Island, MI

How to attract key service skill sets: automotive and marine repair, electrician, plumber, appliance repair, etc.

Kristy Beyer, Drummond Island, MI

What do you do about abandoned trailers and cabins on the island? Are there incentives for removal and cleanup? How are other islands dealing with this issue?

How do you manage local islanders negative view toward tourists "on their island"?

Matt Preisser, Lansing, MI

How do you predict the response from this new wave of real estate sales and the implications for housing and real estate and secondarily for schools, other services... a few years down the road?

How do we better build resilience – e.g. support island governments, businesses, non-profits, connect with diverse constituencies, improve internet presence/sales, diversify funding sources, etc.?

Kevin Boyle, Beaver Island, MI

Getting access to mainland government services has really become a bottleneck. Our SOS offices are still available only by appointment, and those don't always work. How do we advocate to our state government so that they set up systems that work for rural as well as urban communities?

Broadband was an issue before the pandemic and it is even more of one now.

Lisa Brohl, South Bass, OH

How do you balance the need to protect island residents from covid but still allow tourism?

It was hard working with government entities on grants/reports with everyone working remotely, how did others deal with this?

Dave DeLellis, Pelee Island, Ontario,

How do we build tourism in the shoulder season? What is the incentive for attracting tourists?

Does anyone have good plans for marketing ECO tourism?

Suzanne MacDonald, Rockland, ME

What are ways to measure the change we are seeing in front of us from a quantitative perspective - changes in real estate, population, school enrollment trends?

Donna Wiegle, Swan's Island, ME

How do we stabilize ferry rates? We can't just keep increasing transportation cost for islanders.

How do I help my community improve around all issues of leadership, not just board of selectmen, but fire chief, EMS crew chief, everyone in a leadership role? How to get them training to do a better job? Or find the right people for the job.

Peter Huston, South Bass, OH

We have learned lessons about golf cart rentals we can share.

I'd like to know how to manage police funding that covers the change between an influx of thousands in the summer and only 300 residents in the winter.

Resort and Gross Receipts Tax transparency with the county and state.

Jordan Killam, Kelleys Island, OH

Like Peter - tax transparency and also addressing aging population issues.

Andy Theriault, Rockland, ME

At the Institute, we're looking to learn about various ownership models for critical transport to islands (ferries and air service) as many of operators face the fallout from the pandemic and consider how to stay afloat moving forward

Angela Welke, Beaver Island, MI

How do you do effective planning: natural resource marketing, island strategic plan, 3-5 year marketing plan for the chamber of commerce?

Resources Shared:

Public Policy Network Health Facebook Group named PPN-Health - Michael Gora is an admin and recommends it for Covid-19 in depth information.

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/113452369205178/>

Beaver Island Webcam

Here's a link to the view from the webcam high atop the Beaver Island Community Center. It shows our ferry dock and natural harbor with Lake Michigan beyond:

<https://wvbi.biccenter.org/webcams>