

Northern Lake Michigan Islands Collaborative Meeting
Peaine Township Hall, Beaver Island
October 14-15, 2021

Meeting Notes

Present: D. Tritsch, C. Wilton, A. LaFreniere, A. Fleming, B. Anderson, K. Zick, W. Markey, B. Girdler, E. Leuck, D. Tilly, K. Lyle, D. Case, C. Johnson, J. Flanagan, S. Harris, B. Welke, C. Pryor, M. Finn, L. Boisvert, J. Moore, B. Mastenbrook, J. Kleitch, M. Preisser.

Phone*: M. Wiatrolik, C. Baldwin, G. Kinser, M. Cowall, H. Seyfarth

* Due to technical difficulties, the conference line was not functional for much of the meeting. Our apologies for those who planned to participate via phone.

Thursday, October 14

Welcome, Introductions, Agenda Review

Preisser opened the meeting by welcoming everyone and expressing thanks to Peaine Township for hosting. Kleitch provided some ground rules for the meeting (e.g., every voice is important, be respectful, etc.). Introductions around the room and on the phone. Great turnout for the meeting (~22 in the room and several on the phone).

Moore was manning the video camera for live streaming and reported another 27 unique IP addresses watching live. To view the Thursday recording, visit:

<https://beaverislandnews.com/2021%20October%2014%20NLMIC%20Day%20One.html>

Invasive Species Updates (Shelby Harris)

Shelby Harris discussed the Terrestrial Invasive Species (TIS) program and efforts in 2021. There were many collaborators and fund sources to combat invasive species on the islands. The U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service's Great Lakes Coastal Program provides a grant to St. James Township to fund Shelby's position (which covers the entire island, both townships). The following were highlighted:

- Charlevoix, Antrim, Kalkaska, Emmet Cooperative Invasive Species Management Area (CAKE CISMA) had two island interns this year and provided multiple resources for surveys
- Little Traverse Bay Bands of Odawa Indians provided logistical support and GIS mapping expertise
- Beaver Island Association provided equipment and materials
- Little Traverse Conservancy provided transportation in the form of a van
- Many others!

2021 Accomplishments

- Garlic mustard, spotted knapweed, hounds tongue, European swamp thistle, autumn olive, Japanese knotweed, wild parsnip, and bull thistle were all targeted on the islands. Highlights included work on private lands and shorelines, multiple management techniques (hand pulling, herbicide, use of equipment to remove woody species, foliar spraying, etc.). Shoreline surveys included 44 miles of shoreline surveyed, and outer islands surveys.

- A contract with Wildlife and Wetlands Solutions to do treatment was also implemented for phragmites, narrow-leaf cattail, and glossy buckthorn.
- Emerald Ash Borer (EAB) biological control monitoring indicates that there has been successful reproduction of parasitoids that target EAB on Beaver Island. This indicates that controls may be working. This is a major success story and has drawn interest from the state and elsewhere.
- Invasive species education efforts being developed include brochures, information cards, a landowner's guide, and kiosk information.

The efforts have truly been a collaboration between many partners and would not have been possible without those relationships!

2022 Priorities

- Trails (including state land trails), roadsides, and private property will be prioritized for surveys and treatments in the coming year. Several past studies to draw from in terms of identifying priorities.
- We need to continue to educate hikers as a unique audience. Boot scrapers, additional brochures and signs at trails are desired.
- Hire/oversee several more island interns for the summer
- Develop a plan to maintain island invasive species capacity (staffing) over the long run (extending beyond this grant)

Landscape Level Planning & Implementation (Jennifer Kleitch)

Jennifer Kleitch discussed the history of the Landscape Level Planning Map and zones as well as the development and status of the implementation planning effort. The intent of the conversation was to finalize the DRAFT Implementation Plan for Management of State-Owned Lands on Beaver Island. This document was shared via email prior to the meeting. She reviewed the history of the Landscape Level Planning Subcommittee (LLPS), development of the zones Map, how the implementation planning effort was initiated, history of previous drafts and reviews, and what is desired from the conversation today. She also did an overview of the key parts of the plan, which include the zone definitions, alternative approaches to implementation (DNR preferred the second alternative), and the objectives, outcomes, and actions section of the draft plan. This Implementation Plan (including the zones map) will become an addendum to the broader management plan finalized several years ago.

Discussion/Question and Answer period

Comments and questions were taken by the NLMIC membership present.

- Cultural Resources – in that section, the wording says “cultural sites will be *considered*” (emphasis added). This is too loose. DNR concurred and will tighten it up. These sites must be evaluated, it's not an option. Additional discussion of cultural resources. Stacy T, formerly with Michigan History Center, has moved over the DNR Forest Resources Division.
- Question about the letter sent to the DNR Director by several island organizations asking for resources for the island and progress on these plans. Mastenbrook replied that he was asked to help put together some points for a response. He sent comments in late August and hasn't heard anything since.
- Add page numbers so it's easier to follow and cite.
- Alternatives: the preferred alternative should be titled “DNR and NLMIC/LLPS preferred,” not just “DNR preferred,” to reflect the effort and direction requested by the LLPS.

- Other commenters said it was a nice document and appreciated DNR's efforts to date.

A "will live with" decision was posed to the NLMIC membership. Preisser noted several changes were proposed (above) that haven't been fully fixed yet and floated to the NLMIC; he also recognized that several people had planned to participate in today's discussion but were excluded due to the unexpected issues with the conference line. Given this, he recommended DNR address the above suggestions and we email out the final document one more time, requesting a "will live with" statement from NLMIC members within X days (TBD, anywhere from 7-30 days) (ultimately, doc was sent on 10/20 with deadline of 10/29). This means you/your organization find the document largely acceptable and workable, if not 100% exactly matching to your needs and desires. "Will live with" is the preferred decision-making style when the leader (this case DNR) agrees to share the decision-making power and group collaboration/commitment is valued. Should "will live with" not be achieved, or anything substantially new come up, the fallback process will be to have the DNR make the final decision itself, using all the input received to date.

Little Traverse Conservancy (LTC) Update (Anne Fleming)

Anne Fleming showed an island-wide map of LTC properties and provide several updates. Roughly ~40 acres being added to the Conn's Cove Preserve. Fundraising for the adjacent parcel. Stanhope Preserve represents a really important area along Gull Harbor. There are sculptures on some of the preserves that add an element of interest.

Deer Camera Study (Clay Wilton)

Clay Wilton (Michigan Natural Features Inventory) presented on a camera trap study that was undertaken through funding and support of the Little Traverse Bay Bands of Odawa Indians on Beaver and Garden Islands. The goals of the project were to estimate deer density and habitat use on the islands. Camera traps were run July 13-October 8 for a total of 88 days. There were 60 cameras on Beaver Island and 11 on Garden Island. A total of over 227,000 images were recorded and analyzed. Results were that there were an estimated 32 deer/square mile on Beaver Island and 5 deer/square mile on Garden Island. Other data were presented relative to buck:doe ratios. Question was asked if these ratios were "good." Clay noted it was hard to explain quickly but thought the numbers were "moderate" (does maybe a little high). Heat maps of deer density by habitat type were also developed. For next steps, he hopes to work with DNR, tribe, wildlife club, and others to dig into the numbers and determine what they may mean for the island forest/other habitats and user groups.

There is a technical report available on the Michigan Natural Features Inventory website:

<https://mnfi.anr.msu.edu/reports/MNFI-Report-2021-05.pdf>

Beaver Island Historical Society Update (Bobbi Welke)

Staff from US Fish & Wildlife Service (regional office in Wisconsin) conducted an inventory of road culvert and water crossings, and the hope is to continue survey in 2022. These get put into regional databases and can be used by governments, road commissions, others. Print Shop rehab this winter. Some water damage at the Marine Museum. St. James Twp is interested in putting a floating dock near the museum (floating, rather than fixed, may better accommodate fluctuating water levels). MDARD grant – the Chamber of Commerce and Historical Society have a grant to set up historical signs (22) around the island which will be up by next season. They also purchased signs to mark the Blue and

Buffalo Camp trails. They still need to get the signs installed. Beaver Island Historical Society App is live and is being improved as well. It is downloadable now for use. App was also part of MDARD grant.

Field Trip (Seven Bridges Trail)

Ken Zick, Dick Mulvihill, Shelby Harris and others guided an excursion down a popular trail. Discussed signage at trailhead, parking, condition of bridges and direction markers, out-and-back nature of trail, natural habitats & threat from invasive species, and more.

Evening Excursion

On the evening of Thurs Oct 14, NLMIC members were invited to a special Dark Sky presentation at Whiskey Point Brewing Company and viewing at the Harbor Lighthouse. Dark Sky Advocates (Cynthia Johnson, Bill Markey, and others) discussed the on-going designation process, demonstrated the tools used to measure darkness, and identified stars and constellations across the current night sky. Advancing the Dark Sky initiative remains a priority for many on the island and is consistent with several goals of the Management Plan for State-owned Lands on Northern Lake Michigan Islands, particularly Goal 5, Other Natural Resources-Based Activities (“identify other new potential economic opportunities that may be viable and compatible with the enhancement and maintenance of the integrity of ecological and cultural resources”).

Friday, October 15

Welcome, Introductions, Agenda Review

Preisser welcomed everyone to day 2. Roughly the same turnout (in room and phone). Moore reported 21 unique IP addresses watching live. To view the Friday recording, visit: <https://beaverislandnews.com/2021%20October%2015%20NLMIC%20Day%202.html>

Beaver Island Archipelago Trails Association (BIATA): Development of Trails Master Plan (multiple speakers)

Ken Zick started this portion of the meeting with background on BIATA. It was formed in 2016 and a vision statement was developed in 2017 which encapsulates many recreationists, stakeholders, and public values. For several years, there has been interest in developing an island-wide master plan for trails. Today’s session is to discuss development of a work plan to guide this planning effort and garner support to begin it - not approval of an actual trails master plan, but rather the process to create one including hiring a contractor, public involvement, and feedback loops. A draft of the work plan was circulated to NLMIC members prior to the meeting for their review.

Doug Tilly discussed the history of trails on the island and issues that are occurring, including stolen signs and damage by ATVs. Currently all trails are technically considered multi-use however some are through sensitive areas vulnerable to bikes, ATVs, etc.. There are no trails marked for ORVs or snowmobiles. The BIATA has about 35 members with around a dozen that are most active. The idea of developing a plan for the trails started with a meeting with BIATA and DNR a few years ago. The BIATA is focused on Beaver Island trails at this time, not trails on the outer islands.

Bill Markey explained that the long term goal is to have linked and looped trails with connectors. The planning effort is designed to be an iterative process with feedback loops.

A discussion ensued regarding the trails on Garden Island and concerns related to a map and signs pointing to the cemetery. The signs and map were developed without landowner knowledge or approval and there is concern that additional attention will result in damage or theft at the cemetery in particular. This led to a discussion later about what do we want the outer islands to “be”? (See Outer Islands notes below). BIATA does cover the entire Archipelago (per its mission statement), however this specific discussion about a trails plan only pertains to Beaver Island.

There was additional discussion about whether maps could indicate which trails are hiking (non-motorized) only. Color coding was suggested for that purpose. The NLMIC could also discuss closing trails that are currently open to motorized vehicles (ORVs) under PA 288. This would be a good topic for future discussions. It was also mentioned that there are now two businesses that rent ORVs on the island and there is a lot of misinformation about where it is legal to ride. Outreach is needed to businesses, boat company, materials at trail heads.

A trails master plan would be intended as multi-use. Since it’s island-wide, would need to consider both public and private property. Nothing would be forced on private property owners but would seek willing landowners to partner. The document should be connected to the larger Beaver Island Master Plan (see http://www.resilientmichigan.org/beaverisle_plan.asp), developed with significant public input in 2017, and both township recreation plans. A plan designer would be hired to run this process and develop the document.

Jim Flanagan talked about trails maps that have been developed. One is an overview map and others are zoomed in for use on the individual trails. There is also a trail brochure being developed and the Historical Society App is up and running. Contacts for the app are Lori Taylor-Blitz (Historical Society) and Paul Cole (Chamber). Lots of collaborations. Some discussion about cell coverage and use of apps in dead zones.

Matt Cowall and Heather Seyfarth were up next. Matt and Heather are with the Land Information Access Association (LIAA), a nonprofit community service and planning organization headquartered in Traverse City. They were hired to draft the proposed work plan. They reiterated that this is essentially a “plan to make a plan.” Some discussion about nomenclature and maybe “master plan” isn’t the best choice of words – potential confusion with the broader document.

Heather asked some questions of the group to gather input and discussion followed related to the questions below.

Q: What do you want to make sure the project team considers during the planning process?

A: Cultural resources must be considered; protect access across Kuebler Trail (easements); basic recreation and safety are important but we also want to encourage environmental appreciation; accessibility; somehow consider Dark Skies; locally-maintained trails; state designations; include “non-traditional” trails such as the water trail, birding trail, early learning trail – they are complementary and symbiotic; find some places for ORVs & be inclusive of all users; user safety; enforcement.

Q: Additional ideas about how we should engage with the community/stakeholders?

A: on-line forum, Facebook, township & organization websites, Northern Islander, survey on ferry & airlines (captive audience – gauge their expectations and understanding)

Q: What/who are informational resources that we should make sure we don’t miss?

A: Beaver Island Master Plan, township rec plans, convene focus groups, NLMIC Management Plan (including Implementation Plan and zones map), Historical Society app, state and tribal historic preservation offices (follow-up question about whether a map exists showing cultural resources on the island – no, this doesn't exist, these are sensitive and many are found on private property)

Q: How do you imagine your jurisdiction/entity using the trail plan that is developed?

A: hope the townships would adopt the plan (not much discussion - by this question we were almost out of time)

Zick concluded the discussion with a request from the members present to support moving forward with the planning effort. Tritsch made a motion to accept, Leuck seconded. There was one “nay” - concern about trails on Garden Island but it was reiterated that this motion was solely about the project for Beaver Island. The motion passed.

Any additional questions – contact Heather (seyfarth@liaa.org), Matt C (mcowall@liaa.org) or Ken (zickk@wfu.edu).

Impacts of increased recreation and visitors (Grassmick)

Pam Grassmick stated that “The Island has been found” and this is evidenced by 6,000 extra visitors on the ferry and >50 rental vehicles in the month of July alone. She gave a presentation titled “Sustaining the Archipelago’s culture and natural resources during intense use”. Within the presentation she outlined past planning efforts, recreational trends, current issues, challenges, opportunities, examples of destination strategies, and discussed what success could look like. Highlights included needs to increase education on natural resources (ferry passengers again viewed as a target audience; also rental agencies/owners) and related laws. Unique opportunities include the Dark Sky effort, water trail, south end lighthouse, and pending changes to the University of Michigan UNESCO biosphere (possible future presentation). Challenges outlined included the need for increased law enforcement in addition to other issues related to inappropriate activities on the islands. Pam shared example pledges from other islands where visitors were asked to honor the land.

North and South Fox Islands – Forest inventory and natural community surveys by Michigan Natural Features Inventory (Wilton)

Wilton presented a slideshow highlighting the results of field work undertaken by MNFI in summer 2021, funded by the DNR and facilitated by Little Traverse Bay Bands of Odawa Indians. This project is the direct result of discussions several years ago at a NLMIC meeting. Clay gave an overview for both North and South Fox Islands including methods and results of the surveys in addition to many fascinating photos. He reports that they found many exemplary plant specimens (among the best in the state and region), including old growth trees, and are recording several new Element Occurrence (official records of rare/unique species or plant communities) in their database. A report outlining the surveys and findings is being developed by Josh Cohen of MNFI and will be shared with the NLMIC once it is available.

Outer Islands – what other needs exist on the other islands?

Brian Mastenbrook began a discussion of the outer islands - we focus most of our time on Beaver but NLMIC also includes Garden, North & South Fox, High, Hog, and Whiskey. Today we heard a little about the first three; we rarely discuss the latter three in much detail. Brian asked the group whether it is time to develop a vision, guidelines, sideboards, and goals for the outer islands. These islands are not exempt from increasing activity (including recreation) or threats (invasive species) and we risk losing the unique

cultural and ecological resources that are present. With a changing climate, what will the future hold for these places? Do we remain largely reactionary? Discussion: boaters seem to be using the outer islands more for camping and beach fires. Education of allowable activities is a significant need, as is law enforcement for those acting outside of those bounds. Archaeological sites are in need of survey as removal of artifacts is an issue. A survey to document the current status of cultural and natural resources was suggested by some. The room agreed that additional discussion is warranted. At a next meeting we would like to have greater focus on the outer islands and discuss how to best approach the needs there.

Other member updates/general comments

- Port of St. James – added 2 new trails
- There was mention of a tame deer on Beaver Island and concern over increasing aggressive behavior.
- Let's revisit the NLMIC project matrix. This list of project concepts was brainstormed at the NLMIC meeting in Feb 2019. Consider making an agenda topic/exercise for next meeting.
- Can these NLMIC meetings be public meetings? NLMIC is open to anyone and the meetings are not intended to be private. Suggestion to hold a future meeting in the evening, more explicitly open it up to the island community, spend 2 hours explaining "what we've been doing."
- NLMIC membership – need to seek more younger folks. They are the future leaders. Need to better advertise and hold in the evening (see above). Inclusion of some hunting and fishing topics may attract more younger people.
- What happened to the state-wide land plan? There was a DNR speaker at an earlier NLMIC meeting. Suggestion for future agendas - revisit old agendas/notes and bring back speakers to close the loop.

Review action items, minutes, ponder next meeting, adjourn

Attendees were asked about meeting logistics:

- 1 long day vs. 2 split days – most favored 2 split days
- field trip – well received, helped break up the meeting and get moving around. Let's do this again. See earlier comment about doing a field trip around cultural resources.

Next meeting would be late winter/early spring. Likely back on the mainland or maybe virtual, depending on conditions at that time. Preisser, Kleitch and others will start to plan in early 2022 and send save-the-date when ready.

Meeting adjourns.