

“To understand and preserve our natural resources and to promote opportunities for their appreciation and enjoyment.”

NRESC

Beaver Island's Natural Resources and Ecotourism Steering Committee
Beaver Island 49782

The NRESC consists of representatives from Peaine Township, St. James Township, both Townships' Planning Commissions, the Beaver Island Association, the Beaver Island Chamber of Commerce, the Beaver Island Community School, the Beaver Island Contractors and Realtors Group, the Beaver Island Wildlife Club, the Michigan Department of Natural Resources, the Peaine Township Trails Committee, the Little Traverse Bay Band of Odawa Indians, and other "at large" members approved by both Townships

October 18, 2012

PRESS RELEASE FROM BEAVER ISLAND NRESC: EXPLANATION OF THE NATURAL RESOURCES MANAGEMENT PLANNING PROCESS

This press release was unanimously adopted by the NRESC during its meeting on October 13, 2012.

What is the NRESC?

The Peaine and St. James Township Boards unanimously created the NRESC in September 2011—to “develop a balanced plan for promoting preservation and achieving sustainable economic growth and development for the Island.” The townships appointed NRESC members representing the Chamber of Commerce, Wildlife Club, real estate and construction businesses, Beaver Island Association, the school, both townships' planning commissions, and the Peaine Trails Committee, as well as at-large community members, the DNR, and the Little Traverse Odawa tribe—a balanced group of citizen-volunteers with different points of view, interests, and expertise.

At the same time, the township boards asked the new NRESC to develop for the boards' consideration a comprehensive management plan for the natural resources of the Beaver archipelago, with support from the DNR and MSU facilitators. The NRESC agreed and began a planning process that it decided would rely heavily on consultations with community members and other stakeholders.

What are the benefits of developing a Beaver Island natural resource management plan?

It goes without saying that most residents of and visitors care about the Beaver archipelago's unique natural beauty and varied marine and land environments. They recognize that these natural resources are a foundation of economic activity and community well-being—and they want them to stay as they are and/or be restored for years to come. It's also true that many different entities—the state of Michigan, the townships, thousands of individual property owners, local businesses, the school, Indian tribes, conservancy organizations, state universities, and the federal government—control the use of different parts of the Islands and that some volunteer organizations, such as the Wildlife Club and the Beaver Island Association, undertake many activities to enhance, restore, and protect the environment.

Given the importance of Beaver's natural resources, the fragmentation of control over them, and the many stakeholders with keen interest in them, developing a comprehensive natural resource management plan with Goals, measurable Objectives, and action Strategies should have the following benefits:

- 1. State land management.** Provide strong community input to the state DNR—owner of a third of Beaver Island, and all of High, Hog, Squaw, and Whiskey Islands—about the desired goals for its management of state lands.
- 2. Economic development.** Identify ways that all of the interested parties can work together to increase natural-resource based economic activity—home construction, recreation, and eco-tourism—and showcase the Island's assets to attract visitors, residents, and investment.
- 3. Invasive species.** Respond more effectively to current and future threats to the quality of natural resources, such as invasive species.



4. **Funding.** Increase the financial resources available for managing the natural resources by showcasing for governments at all levels and philanthropic organizations the uniqueness of the natural resources and the shared goals of the community and other stakeholders.
5. **Effective organizations.** Help government and nonprofit organizations prioritize and more effectively use their volunteers and funding to achieve results the community wants.
6. **A model for other communities.** Provide a model of community/DNR collaboration and planning that other communities can adopt, which would reflect well on Beaver Island.

Where is the NRES in the process of natural resource management planning?

During the spring and summer of 2012 the NRES conducted community forums and multiple focus groups that engaged about 150 year-round and summer residents and middle-and-high school students of the Island, as well as some off-Island stakeholders, to discuss their views about the Island's future and its natural resources.

Since then, NRES members have been developing a set of goals and objectives for a natural resource management plan that reflect the community's desire for a balanced plan to support economic development and preservation of natural beauty and the environment. The process is based on reaching consensus, meaning all of NRES's members must buy in to all aspects of the plan.

When the NRES members reach agreement on draft goals and objectives, they will seek extensive feedback from the community—and ideas about what actions could be taken to achieve the objectives and goals. Only after the feedback process will NRES members start to draft a full-scale plan to be presented to the community and the township boards for discussion and, perhaps, adoption. This will not happen until sometime in 2013, but it's not yet known precisely when.

(All NRES meetings are posted and open to the public. All NRES agendas, minutes, and other materials are posted at www.binresc.org.)

Signed by NRES Members

Sandra Birdsall (Peaine Township representative)
Bill Cashman (At large community)
Jim Gillingham (At large community)
Pam Grassmick (At large community)
Paul Johnson (Chamber of Commerce)
Archie Kiogima & Bill Parsons (Little Traverse Bay Odawa Tribe)
Linda McDonough (St. James Planning Commission)
Bill Markey (Peaine Planning Commission)
Dan Martell (Beaver Island Community School)
Brian Mastenbrook (DNR)
Peter Plastrik (St. James Township representative)
Jeff Powers (Wildlife Club)
Craig Schrottenboer (Beaver Island Association)
Doug Tilly (Peaine Trails Committee)
Ed Wojan (Realtors and Contractors group)