



Great Lakes Islands Alliance
Conference Call Meeting Minutes
April 1, 2020

Attendance

Island Communities

- Beaver (MI) – Bob, Kitty, Kevin, Pam
- Bois Blanc (MI) - Suzette
- Drummond (MI)
- Harsens (MI) - Harold
- Kelleys (OH) – Jordan, Jackie
- Les Cheneaux (MI) - Mark
- Mackinac (MI) – Dennis, Christine, Rick
- Madeline (WI) – Michael, Elizabeth, Glenn, Jim, Joe, Jim
- Manitoulin (ON) – Barbara, Laurie, Joe, Jim
- Middle Bass (OH) - Mike
- Neebish (MI) – Lori, Phyllis
- Pelee (ON)
- South Bass (OH) – Peter, Lisa
- Sugar (MI) - Frank
- Washington (WI) – Jeff, Will
- Other

Partner Organizations

- Island Institute - Kate
- MI Dept of Environment, Great Lakes, and Energy - Matt
- Northland College – Haley
- The Stewardship Network - Lisa
- Other guests: Jon Allan, Roger Berle

Welcome/Roll call

Island Updates – this month’s GLIA call was dedicated to sharing coronavirus information (status, good ideas, specific challenges) from each island. GLIA members from each community were asked to provide an informal, 5-10 min update. Note: with a few exceptions, the summaries below are not a verbatim, nor are they intended to represent a full or formal or fully vetted record from each island community. Please contact GLIA leads from each island for clarifications.

- Beaver Island: No known COVID-19 positives on the island. Beaver is fortunate from the resources we have. We have a list (document) of essential services available (attached). It is an extension of the winter season, but with more isolation. Everything is shut down, the school is doing e-learning, meetings are being held sporadically and live streamed for observation. Services (e.g., EMS) still in place. Health Center has 2 full time nurse practitioners and 24/7 ALS level paramedic support and air ambulance support. Health center is identifying retired health care workers in the event that extra help is needed. Good intra-island communication including WVBI (island radio station) and News on the Net and internet public forum. Transportation on and off is just with the air service, crews have been isolated from each other and taking other safety protocols. Ferry is currently closed and evaluating procedures. For our ferry, it is not “drive on, drive off yourself” – ferry employees have to load the vehicles themselves, so concern about staff being exposed to so many people. The boat may run for freight. Fuel (gasoline) on the island is call/pay ahead. Commission on aging office at the county is available by apt. Food pantry is still operating. Emergency plumber or electrical are still available. Live streaming and recording church services and other meetings so people can tune in or watch from home. Island leadership (townships, boards, others) is

convening regularly (with teleconferencing for community participation) and issued a statement asking summer residents to not return and if they do, abide by a self-quarantine.

- Bois Blanc: no report (assume participant had to leave call)
- Harsens: No known COVID-19 positives on the island. Churches are closed, small island market is open, but everyone has to go off island to primary grocery store, doctor and bank. Additionally, two of our restaurants, although closed, are providing carry-out dinners during limited hours throughout the week. We also have a crew of volunteers sewing facemasks and distributing them at no charge to whoever would like one. Also have many cases of volunteers doing the shopping for those (seniors and immune compromised) individuals hesitant to leave their homes. The good in people really comes out in times of crisis. Ferry is still partially disabled as it ran into the mainland ramp in December and that has been fixed to be functional and is in the process of being fully repaired. With the partially disabled ferry, no large construction equipment can travel to the island preventing large deliveries of materials used for mitigating the anticipated high water this spring and summer. Small trailers of sand, dirt and rock are permitted. It just takes a lot longer and is more costly because of the increased number of trips involved. As a result, the long dormant Harsens Island Transportation Authority (HITA) has been resurrected and is in discussion with the Detroit International Bridge Company (think Ambassador Bridge) to potentially put a fire under those folks to get going on their plans to build a bridge to the island. The meetings however have now been hampered by the "Stay at home" directive put forth by Governor Whitmer. Much more pro-bridge sentiment among the natives than in the past few years. Everyone is hunkering down unless they have to access critical services. We have more communication with the mainland than normal because everything is over there. When people travel, they sanitize everything.
- Kelleys: In early March, some islanders, especially those who had been isolated all winter, did not immediately grasp the threat of a potential outbreak on Kelleys. Ferry service resumed on Sunday, March 15 with no restrictions or guidelines, which has since changed. No statements were made by the Village officials or the Kelleys Island Ferry Boat Line concerning a response to the virus until Thursday, March 19. The Chamber of Commerce has been instrumental in relaying messages from both entities since. The Mayor and the Chamber Director now work closely to address new guidelines set forth by the Governor of Ohio, get them in writing, and release them on social media. Most restaurants, save for a few offering takeout or delivery, are closed. The school, playgrounds, and the State Park campground are also closed. Our grocery store, The Island Market, remains open. The Chamber and its members began to cancel events in April and early May. After reading the meeting notes from the Island Institute's meeting with the Maine islands, Kelleys Island's Mayor decided to follow Swan's Island's example and institute a rule that those returning to the island must quarantine themselves for 14 days and practice social distancing guidelines if they need to go to town. We're grateful that we have Governor Mike DeWine's proactive mandates on our side as we navigate this crisis. The plan is to rally support from our mainland fans and encourage them to monetarily support businesses and organizations until it's safe to return.
- Les Cheneaux: see attached summary
- Mackinac: following state and national guidelines. Working on three different fronts:
 1. City of Mackinac Island: city has curtailed all unnecessary government meetings and staff working from home. Council meetings are held using Zoom.
 2. Services: No cars on the island so the horses are out working. The garbage, food and freight is still being moved with horse and wagon. The grocery store is open but is only allowing six people in at a time and you are required to put on gloves. They also offer deliveries. The bank is open but the door is locked so only one or two people are in at one time. The Post Office has never in our history delivered mail but upon request from residents will drop mail at homes on Wednesdays. The boat

- line has cut off the Saturday trip and not transport any tourists, only workers. The summer workers in route are being staged on the mainland in St. Ignace and Mackinac city. The tourism bureau is helping with communications and working with local businesses. Put together a task force that meets with city and medical providers and others. As of now, still planning the summer business season though getting pushed back to end May. Will reassess based on status and state recommendations.
3. Medical: Center is open and is in communication with the hospital on the mainland. Doing pre-screenings before people are allowed in the building and bringing over a trailer to be an isolation unit in case there is a positive case. Screening includes cleaning hands, taking temperature, and asking a set of screening questions about exposure, cough, etc. Anyone at risk or not feeling well asked to go to the mainland ASAP. Fire, police, EMS are meeting tomorrow to change SOP's. They are fitted with N95's and are pretty good on PPE equipment.
- Madeline: Ferry line is running reduced services with no service on Sundays. Ferry ran year-round this year (unusual – lack of ice). One restaurant is open for carry out services. There is no home delivery of mail, but people have started to go to Post Office twice a week rather than every day to space it out. Town meetings have started to be done by tele-conference. Public comment can be made by drop box outside the office or email. The town office and buildings (eg library) are closed. Island put out a notice to seasonals to consider not coming to the island, but those that do are asked to self-quarantine for 14 days. There has been a few confirmed cases in Ashland County and Bayfield County over on the mainland. No one knows what the dimensions of the summer season looks like and there is a lot of uncertainty. Safety is the overall concern. Red Cliff health clinic (on nearby mainland) is offering drive-up services and asking people to check in on others. Trying to spread the message of call first to share symptoms with doctor so they can triage care rather than call 911 or go to the health center which could be quickly overwhelmed.. Health providers in active communications with chambers, Travel Wisconsin, businesses, etc. on closures. The Fire Dept has put protocols in place to restrict burning permits. Law enforcement is working as usual. Social media use has exponentially increased. There are lots of notifications going up on Madeline Island Facebook page as well as conference calling and Zoom meetings. Local church is holding Facebook Live services. Spring Elections are an issue, we don't want restricted movement to inhibit people from voting, so they are getting the word out about using absentee ballots. The state park is open with free entry. Alcohol Anonymous and AI-Alon meetings are going on-line. Please check in with these and other sensitive populations such as elderly.
 - Manitoulin: On Sunday March 29 we heard about our first cases of COVID 19. Two individuals in their 50s who had travelled to Australia. Thus will certainly not be the only cases. There has been a huge number of snowbirds returning to Manitoulin and reports that some (hopefully very few) are not self-isolating. There has been fund raising efforts to purchase respirators / ventilators. I believe that in normal situation individuals requiring ventilators are sent to Sudbury, about 110 miles away from island. For groceries we call in our order to store give credit card number and groceries are placed out on deck for you to pick up. Ward's will call when order is ready. Have everything potting soil to get seeds going, rubber boots. If they don't have it you don't need it. Bigger stores in Mindemoya, Little Current etc are open for seniors and high-risk individuals for first hour in morning. Usually from eight to nine. We have all essential services daily mail delivery, fuel, garbage. Grocery stores and pharmacies have delivery to seniors, at risk individuals or people who have returned to island and are under quarantine. The fire department has volunteered to do the deliveries. A big concern on Manitoulin is people leaving their permanent residences off island and moving to Manitoulin to quarantine for summer. We have basic health services for residents but not enough to cope with summer visitors. The ferry was to start its spring schedule on May 1 but it has been postponed indefinitely. Provincial and local parks on Manitoulin have been closed down to encourage social distancing. "Destination Manitoulin," our local tourist information centre, is not promoting tourism. Museums will not be opening and other non-essential businesses. Restaurants are take-out only and some are definitely suffering the effects of COVID 19. There is loads of charitable work continuing in the

communities. Dropping off casseroles, food, baking and even toilet paper and hand sanitizer at peoples door. We are all looking out for elderly and calling our neighbours to check on them. There are two hospitals on the island, one has been designated as a Covid19 hospital and the other is used for other medical needs. One of the towns held their first zoom meeting, which allowed people from the public to watch so they are actually reaching a larger population than normal. People (especially elderly) are putting flags out in front of their houses if they need something – different colors mean different things, e.g., “need food.” Some chatter of shutting down the bridge to the mainland.

- Middle Bass: Middle Bass Island is more or less a residential suburb of South Bass Island/Put-in-Bay from the perspective of restrictions, subject to the same rules as our bigger neighbor to the south. The ferry is running just Monday, Tuesday and Friday to the mainland. Two of the three island restaurants are open on a very limited schedule for take-out, and one of them is offering pizza delivery by private boat to South Bass Island. The General Store is also open with limited hours.
- Neebish: no stores, clinics, EMTs on the island. Government and most services are on the mainland. Island facebook page is popular and important for info sharing. People are calling those that live alone and the elderly to check in. People being very helpful to their neighbors. Those going off-island are picking up things for other islanders. State Parks are still open. Mainland vs. island tensions are rising. Returning snowbirds are self-quarantining on their own. Not really an island for tourists.
- South Bass: My wife Amy and I (Peter) are self-quarantined and we ask all returning residents to follow those guidelines. COVID is in our county and the community of Port Clinton where the ferries dock. Numbers are still on the rise in our state. We are watching the stories about North Haven Island Maine, Northern Michigan, The Hamptons, and the Keys for insights on messaging. Miller Ferry (Millerferry.com) is running a reduced schedule Monday through Friday, currently no weekend trips. They are the island gatekeeper and have issues strong caution for non-essential travel. Fisherman from Minnesota, Wisconsin and the Dakotas are still coming to fish, they are not being invited to come to the island. Lodging and rental companies are asking people to reschedule till later in the year. Internet is so much better now than ever, facilitation of ZOOM and facebook is a loose network. We use Constant Contact for our external communications to members and the great public. Economy is on hold. A meeting was held in mid march to discuss and the business community wants to wait and see. Next meeting is 4/14 and perhaps we will make some forecasts. The Post office and the Police Department are working together to provide mail and package delivery to seniors and those in high risk categories. The Post Office is coordinating sign up. School building, library and Senior center closed. School is being done virtually at home. Local church is streaming Sunday services. We are emphasizing the SBA (Small Business Association) and Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act opportunities to our business community. EMS has a call ahead policy before coming to your house or going to their office. Big Week of Birding May 5-12 held on the mainland at Magee Marsh (A state park) was cancelled and while that does not directly affect us, several birding related Road Scholar (formerly elder hostel) programs that came to the island in May were canceled and the state parks affected were closed to the public out of concern that people were not following social distancing. Island promotion: according to the Ohio Travel Association this is a good time to share your brand. Messaging should be positive, but say "Stay at home and be safe, we will still be here when its safe to return". Something like this, which I made on my laptop from footage we had done. <https://vimeo.com/402289329/a2ca1c3445> Though state park on island is closed, Put-in-Bay Township Park District's preserves are still open. We have no water, shelters, bathrooms or other facilities. Trails are open as long as social distance is maintained and no gathering in the parking areas at this time. We have low visitation this time of year and little opportunity for personal contact with others there now. As a matter of fact, we just closed on the Coopers Woods Preserve- the closing was able to move forward. Local non-profits are concerned about survival. As a non-profit our Lake Erie Islands Nature and Wildlife Center does need to look for other sources of funding but is seeing a

surge in online attention. We hope to capitalize on that for fundraising and are excited about sharing resources with other islands for this.

- Sugar: ours is a “commuter island.” Reduced ferry schedule but still manageable. One restaurant but most islanders get supplies from Sault St. Marie (mainland). We are asking returning snowbirds to self-quarantine and bring their own supplies. Communications occurring through social media and the town’s website. Town meeting held using Zoom.
- Washington: No known positive cases on the island. They estimate 6-8 returning snowbirds daily; for these people they recommend self-quarantining. Most facilities are closed. School and church and others starting to utilize virtual technologies such as Zoom. Ferry has reduced schedule. Some have wondered whether the ferry should screen passengers, but the company argues that it doesn't have the authority to do so -- or the desire. Basic medical services by appointment only. Looking to offer special services to shut-ins. “Destination Door County” (regional marketing campaign) has reduced/changed its marketing, though remains optimistic – they believe that once this is all over, people will be more willing to drive than fly, which suits the seasonal island clientele.

Other Discussion

- GLIA Website: discussion about how to utilize the new site, www.glialliance.org, for coronavirus-related materials. We can post documents or links however there are different announcements/directives from each country, state/province, city/township/village, Dept. of Health, federal/state/county/local parks, businesses, non-governmental organizations, etc. – literally dozens if not hundreds of entities across the 15 GLIA islands. Also the situation is very fluid (sometimes changing daily) and materials can get out-of-date almost as fast as we can post them. Our webmaster, Mike Gora, is a volunteer. Decision to offer each island space for 1-3 links or documents per island, ideally aggregated sites/lists that are being updated by others. Add disclaimer statement that GLIA is not responsible for the content of any documents or links.
 - ACTION ITEM: Islands can send their links to Mike Gora at michaelg@glialliance.org
- U.S. Census: today is Census day, please remember to do this so your community gets appropriate credit and federal dollars. It can be done entirely online.
- Individual islands vs. GLIA roles (continuing coronavirus):
 - A member asked if there could be some common language used by each of the islands, e.g., messaging to visitors. Possibly, depends on specific topic and audience. However should respect autonomy of each member island government and its constituencies. Also remember GLIA members are volunteers, not formally appointed by local governments (a few are informally).
 - Discussion around short-term (most of today’s talk) vs. longer-term thinking. What happens this summer when cottagers and tourists come back? Is there a way to support them and our island businesses and services?
 - ACTION ITEM: Assigned to GLIA Steering Committee for discussion on its next call, April 15.
- 2020 Great Lakes Islands Summit: there is great uncertainty around how long travel restrictions and group events prohibitions will last. Many events occurring this summer are being cancelled, postponed, or going virtual. The next Summit is not until October so a decision is not necessary for the time being. The local host team and GLIA Steering Committee continues to develop the event logistics, budget, and agenda with the assumption that a face-to-face event is still going to happen. A virtual event may be possible but less desirable than visiting island communities and meeting in person.

Next GLIA call: Wed, May 6 at 10am eastern.

Respectfully submitted,
Matt Preisser, GLIA Coordinator
April 3, 2020