

2023

ANNUAL REPORT



GREAT LAKES
ISLANDS ALLIANCE

www.glialliance.org

In calendar year 2023, island communities around the Great Lakes faced a barrage of challenges, both old and new, which impacted their social fabric, their local economies, and the natural environments on which they depend and are defined. Fortunately, islands are serving as living laboratories where unique solutions are being created and tested. The Great Lakes Islands Alliance (GLIA) has long recognized the value of information sharing and continues to support the simple need for connection between islands. Somewhat ironically, although not apologetically, we are bridging islanders.

Now completing its sixth year, GLIA remains the only organization in the Great Lakes region dedicated solely to the unique needs of island communities in both the United States and Canada. We focus on developing and sustaining peer-to-peer learning and relationships, as well as raising awareness among non-islanders. Below are examples of our progress in 2023 to meet each of our four overarching goals.

Goal 1: Connect Distant Communities

- GLIA hosted 12 member meetings (one each month) via Zoom in 2023. These meetings form the backbone of our activities by offering space for islanders to share news and ask questions of one another. We also use this time to provide updates on GLIA-wide progress.
- In October 2023, the GLIA Steering Committee, staff and advisory partners convened for a four-day, intensive strategic planning retreat near the Les Cheneaux Islands in northern Lake Huron. Facilitated by staff from the Island Institute, the meeting allowed us to: reflect on our individual and group leadership competencies; acknowledge the myriad of complex issues facing our islands; develop a shared vision for GLIA; and identify the key steps necessary to reach that future state. Outcomes of the retreat are being used to draft GLIA’s first-ever strategic plan.



Work session at the 2023 strategic planning retreat.

Goal 2: Facilitate information access and sharing, particularly through tools that offer best practices and solutions to island challenges.

- GLIA continued our Expert Webinar Series in 2023. Through these webinars we seek to highlight island innovators or attempt to view more general societal issues through an island lens. In February, a speaker from Amherst Island, Ontario, discussed the methodology and results from a recent island-wide opinion survey. This webinar helped inspire new community-wide surveys on several islands and influenced others that were underway. In April, we hosted a science communications expert from Beaver Island, Michigan to talk about changing attitudes and experiences related to the natural world.



- While focusing on the Great Lakes region, GLIA is quick to learn from global events. The unprecedented springtime forest fires in western Canada led to smoke plumes that blanketed our islands through the summer. In August, the island of Maui suffered its own catastrophic wildfire with significant loss of life and property. Great Lakes islanders, whose home communities are generally forested and reliant on help from the mainland, paused to consider their own risk from fires or other climate catastrophes. Through GLIA, members discussed fire preparedness planning (prevention and response) and learned about a simulated mass evacuation exercise held on Mackinac Island.
- Borrowing from the Beaver Island playbook, the Lake Erie Islands Conservancy tried a novel approach to limit the impacts of Emerald Ash Borer (EAB), an invasive insect that can decimate ash trees. Working with the federal government, the Conservancy introduced small, non-stinging wasps (natural predators of EAB) that did not yet exist on the islands. This is seen as a more environmentally-friendly way to combat the destructive insect pest.

Goal 3: Advance opportunities for multi-island collaboration, where appropriate.

- GLIA was excited to receive another multi-year grant from the Charles Stewart Mott Foundation in 2023. This “capacity grant” helps pay for our staff that perform GLIA’s backbone functions. We remain greatly appreciative of our major funder.
- The Stewardship Network, a non-profit organization which serves as GLIA’s fiscal sponsor and valued advisor, continued their annual “Spring Challenge,” an event that encourages individuals and organizations to perform on the ground stewardship in their communities. In 2023, GLIA was proud to win TSN’s “Teacher Cup” award, signifying the most cumulative hours by educators.



Goal 4: Amplify island voices to mainland audiences.

- GLIA meets quarterly with the Climate Strong Islands Network (CSIN), a policy-oriented network based in Washington, D.C. In 2023, we provided input into CSIN’s national policy framework to ensure that it is relevant to both ocean and freshwater (Great Lakes) islands.
- GLIA’s Facebook page and discussion group continue to share postings of interest from individual islands.
- Two new videos were added to GLIA’s YouTube channel. These are short visual peeks at Amherst Island, Ontario and Les Cheneaux Islands, Michigan. Cumulatively, GLIA’s series of 13 videos have reached nearly 5,000 viewers.
- GLIA helped support Lake Erie Awareness Day, a collaboration between federal, state, and local agencies and organizations to recognize the environmental programs benefiting this important lake. GLIA will look to partner with others in the future on similar marketing and awareness programs.



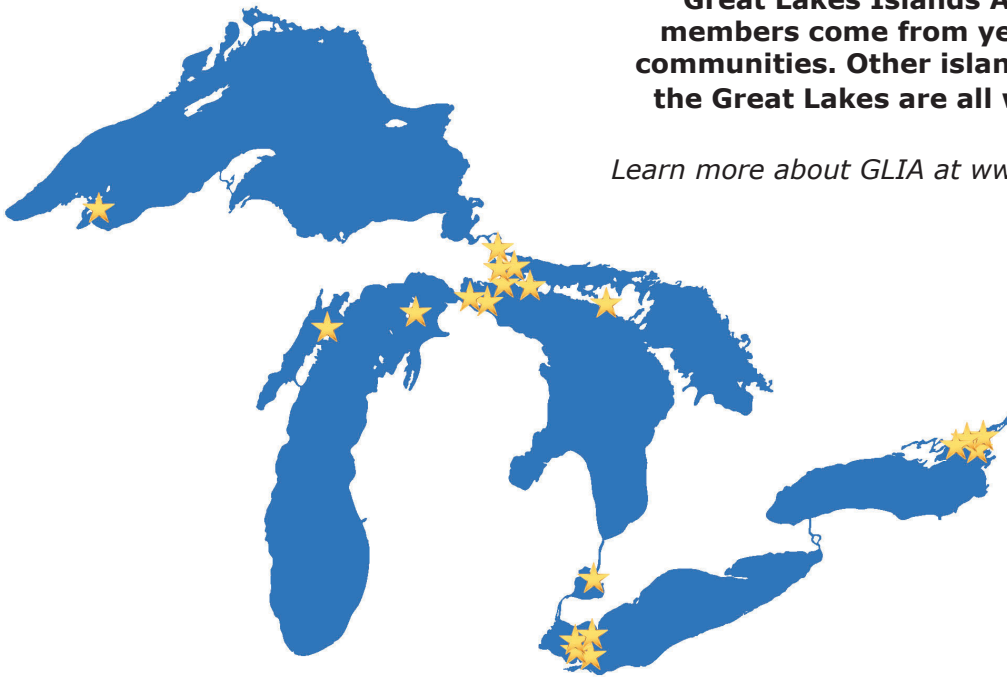
Mark Clymer, right, a GLIA member from Cedarville, MI, getting his 1930 Dodge Watercar ready to give tours of the Les Cheneaux Islands.

Comments after the 2023 Strategic Planning Retreat

Just a quick note to thank GLIA. Having attended the strategic planning retreat I found myself back on Amherst Island talking about Les Cheneaux and their Winter Carnival. Before i knew it I was organizing a one day winter Festival for Amherst Island, our first ever. None of this would have happened without GLIA . thank you. Paul Juniper

Great Lakes Islands Alliance (GLIA) members come from year-round island communities. Other island communities in the Great Lakes are all welcome to join.

Learn more about GLIA at www.glialliance.org



2023 GLIA MEMBER ISLANDS

Lake Erie

Kelleys Island, *Ohio, USA*
Middle Bass Island, *Ohio, USA*
Pelee Island, *Ontario, Canada*
South Bass Island (Put-in-Bay), *Ohio, USA*

Lake Michigan

Beaver Island, *Michigan, USA*
Washington Island, *Wisconsin, USA*

Lake Ontario

Amherst Island, *Ontario, Canada*
Howe Island, *Ontario, Canada*
Simcoe Island, *Ontario, Canada*
Wolfe Island, *Ontario, Canada*

Lake Huron

Bois Blanc Island, *Michigan, USA*
Drummond Island, *Michigan, USA*
Les Cheneaux Islands, *Michigan, USA*
Mackinac Island, *Michigan, USA*
Manitoulin Island, *Ontario, Canada*
Neebish Island, *Michigan, USA*
St. Joseph Island, *Ontario, Canada*
Sugar Island, *Michigan, USA*

Lake Superior

Madeline Island, *Wisconsin, USA*

Lake St. Clair

Harsens Island, *Michigan, USA*

2023 Partner Organizations



2023 Steering Committee

Renee Fultz – South Bass Island
Michael Gora – Middle Bass Island
Ned Hancock – Madeline Island
Joe Shorthouse – Manitoulin Island
Angel Welke – Beaver Island

Backup

Bob Anderson – Beaver Island
Laurie Cook – Manitoulin Island
Patty Johnson – Kelleys Island
Paul Juniper – Amherst Island

Support Staff/Advisors/Partners

Peter Huston – GLIA Project Manager
Matt Preisser – GLIA Coordinator,
MI Dept. of Environment, Great Lakes, and Energy
Brenna Cohen & Kate Tagai – Island Institute
Lisa Brush – Fiscal Sponsor & Advisor, The Stewardship Network