



GREAT LAKES  
ISLANDS ALLIANCE

# 2024 ANNUAL REPORT

[www.glialliance.org](http://www.glialliance.org)

THE GREAT LAKES ISLAND COMMUNITIES are places based on cycles and seasonality. Though each island, and each year, is a little different, there is some constancy and predictability. The late spring and early summer sees the “opening up” of the islands, marked by the return of summer residents, tourists and related activity. The early winter sees their departure, the eventual slowing or closing of ferries, and the winter residents finally having time to catch up on those small projects around the house.

With the notion of cycles in mind, GLIA will use the New Year to look back again and reflect on what we have achieved together. With the completion of 2024, GLIA now has six full years under its belt. We hope you join us in being proud of our growth and impact. The accomplishments listed below are the product of many people. Being part of GLIA means you have a connection to over 200 (and growing) islanders. That is powerful and a testament to what we can achieve together into the future.



2024 Great Lakes Island Summit attendees aboard the Isle Royale Queen III embarking on a tour of Les Cheneaux Islands. Photo by Peter Huston.

In September 2024, GLIA proudly hosted its fifth **Great Lakes Islands Summit** in the Les Cheneaux Islands. The Summit featured over a dozen panels and presentations covering a variety of topics, including emergency preparedness, fundraising, transportation, media engagement, youth involvement, and environmental protection. Participants had the unique opportunity to explore the stunning landscapes and historic structures of the Les Cheneaux Islands during a guided boat tour, narrated by representatives from the Les Cheneaux Islands Association. Attendees also heard from the Les Cheneaux Youth Advisory Committee, as well as from experts representing community foundations, Island newspapers, emergency response teams, local educators, administrators, and others.

**"Connection"** is a key term for GLIA and one that serves multiple purposes. As a non-partisan organization our mission is to connect Great Lakes islands to one another across political boundaries. Externally, we track and communicate with many other organizations and networks around the Great Lakes—and beyond—who align with our interests. There, our role is to educate and influence, often starting with the basic "Did you know? The Great Lakes has many island communities." Examples include the International Joint Commission, the Maine Islands Coalition, and Climate Strong Islands Network.



## 2024 GLIA UPDATES

April 2024 saw the arrival of **two new part-time staff**: Philip Rice as Communications Specialist, is tasked with marketing, web development, public relations, media, and internal communications; and Lisa Paul Sierk as Fundraising Specialist, oversees donor development, grants, sponsorships, and fundraising campaigns. Going into 2025, they join Matt Preisser, GLIA Coordinator (a part-time role contributed by the State of Michigan), as the three staff responsible for running the day-to-day activities of GLIA. Peter Huston finished his one-year role as Events Coordinator, following his earlier successful run as Project Manager (2021-2023). We thank the Mott Foundation for supporting the new staff positions!

GLIA continued to host its **monthly member meetings** via Zoom in 2024. In addition to covering network-wide business, these meetings are an opportunity for islanders to ask questions of one another and share updates from their communities, such as the development of a new island study or receipt of a new grant to undertake an important island project. These have provided inspiration and templates for other islands. Starting in January, GLIA extended its monthly meetings from 60 to 90 minutes and used the last half hour for deeper discussions about different topics, sometimes bringing in an expert speaker. These have proven to be valuable ways to hear progress being achieved in other island communities.

GLIA completed its first-ever **strategic plan** in August. The comprehensive plan outlines a focused approach to addressing the challenges and opportunities facing Great Lakes islands. The plan follows the GLIA charter's four primary areas of development: connection between island communities, information access, encouraging multi-island collaboration, and amplifying island voices.

At the close of 2024, Lee Ann Schaub replaced Ned Hancock, both from Madeline Island, Wisconsin, on the **Steering Committee**. Steve Wermuth replaced Patti Johnson, both from Kelleys Island, Ohio, as Alternates. Peter Huston from South Bass Island, Ohio filled an open Alternate spot, reprising the role he held several years ago. The SC plays an important role by guiding the overall direction and vision for GLIA. We thank Ned and Patti for their many years of volunteer service!





Attendees at the 2024 Great Lakes Islands Summit outside Clark Township Community Center. Photo Copyright © The Saint Ignace News.



GLIA members had the opportunity to tour the Great Lakes Boat Building School in Cedarville, MI, during the 2024 Islands Summit.



A highlight of the 2024 Islands Summit was a moving drum ceremony presented by the Sault Ste. Marie Tribe of Chippewa Indians at the historic Hessel School House, showcasing the rich cultural heritage of the region. Photo by Joe Shorthouse.

### 2024 Meeting Topics

- Fire preparedness and response
- Short-term rentals
- Island schools
- Volunteerism
- Islands sustainability
- History
- Arts
- Island charities
- Preserved/open spaces



### How do remote island communities handle the doldrums of a long winter?

In the Les Cheneaux Islands area of northern Lake Huron, they hold an annual event called Snowsfest. Running for 63 years, this one-of-a-kind festival includes fireworks, face painting, snowmobile rides, outhouse and cardboard sled races, and a pub crawl. A GLIA member from Amherst Island, Lake Ontario was so inspired by Snowsfest that he organized a winter festival for his island. The first-ever Amherst event, in February 2024, included multiple island organizations and included a pancake breakfast, car rally, crafts, games for kids and adults alike, panel discussion about island history, and, of course, a pub night. The festival was so well received that they plan to make it an annual affair. GLIA is proud to have played a small role in inspiring this major community event!

# THANK YOU TO OUR SUPPORTERS IN 2024

## SUMMIT SPONSORS

Bob and Alana Anderson  
Beaver Island Music Festival/Patrons of the  
Arts in Rural Communities  
Breezeswept Docks  
Charles Stewart Mott Foundation  
Clark Township  
Climate Strong Islands Network  
Hartleb Agency

Les Cheneaux islands Chamber of Commerce  
Richard Linn  
Mackinac Island Community Foundation  
Madeline Island Chamber of Commerce  
Lori Miller  
Ottawa County Improvement Corporation  
Resource Recycling Systems

## IN-KIND SUMMIT SUPPORT

Aldo Leopold Festival  
Ang-Gios Restaurant  
Cattails Cove  
Cedarville Hotel  
DeTour Area Schools  
Drummond Island Digest  
Drummond Island Tourism Association  
Focus on Funding  
Friends of the LC Area Trails  
GLIA Steering Committee  
Great Lakes Boat Building School  
Hessel School House-Avery Arts & Nature  
Learning Center  
The Island Institute  
The Islander Bar  
The Islands Wildlife Association

Les Cheneaux Community Foundation  
Les Cheneaux Community Library  
Les Cheneaux Community Schools  
Les Cheneaux Culinary School  
Les Cheneaux Distillers  
Les Cheneaux Islands Association  
Les Cheneaux Watershed Council  
Little Buoy Bakery & Café  
Mackinac Island Emergency Management Sault Ste.  
Marie Tribe of Chippewa Indians  
Snows Bar & Grill  
State of Michigan, Department of Environment,  
Great Lakes, and Energy  
The Stewardship Network  
St. Ignace News/Mackinac Town Crier  
Woods and Waters  
Youth Advisory Committee

## 2024 YEAR-END CAMPAIGN DONORS

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GREAT LAKES  
ISLANDS ALLIANCE



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](http://www.glialliance.org)

## 2024 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

## 2024 PARTNERS

### 2024 Steering Committee

**Renee Fultz** — South Bass Island  
**Michael Gora** — Middle Bass Island  
**Lee Ann Schaub\*\*** — Madeline Island  
**Ned Hancock\*** — Madeline Island  
**Joe Shorthouse** — Manitoulin Island  
**Angel Welke** — Beaver Island

### Alternates

**Bob Anderson** — Beaver Island  
**Laurie Cook** — Manitoulin Island  
**Peter Huston\*\*** — South Bass Island  
**Paul Juniper** — Amherst Island  
**Patti Johnson\*** — Kelleys Island  
**Steve Wermuth\*\*** — Kelleys Island



### Support Staff / Advisors / Partners

**Matt Preisser** — GLIA Coordinator, MI Dept. of Environment, Great Lakes, and Energy  
**Lisa Paul Sierk & Philip Rice** —GLIA Staff  
**Brenna Cohen & Kate Tagai** — Island Institute  
**Lisa Brush** — Fiscal Sponsor & Advisor, The Stewardship Network

\*Tenure ending in 2024  
\*\*Joining in 2024