2025 Great Lakes Islands Summit
September 21-24, 2025
Beaver Island, Michigan

Summary Report

The 6th Conference of the Great Lakes Islands Alliance

GLIA GREAT LAKES ISLANDS ALLIANCE

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Front photo credit: Great Lakes Islands Alliance

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- The local planning team from Beaver Island who started planning this event way back in late 2024 – not long after arriving home from the previous Summit. They served as the "boots on the ground" and were absolutely critical to run such a logistically complicated meeting!

- The GLIA Steering Committee, Staff, and Partners who helped review the agenda, arrange vendor contracts, set up registration, coordinate GLIA's fundraising and communications needs, facilitate the meeting and even game-day troubleshoot!
    - Steering Committee: Bob Anderson, Laurie Cook, Renee Fultz, Mike Gora, Peter Huston, Paul Juniper, Lee Ann Schaub, Joe Shorthouse, Angel Welke, and Steve Wermuth
    - Staff: Matt Preisser (GLIA Coordinator) and Philip Rice (GLIA Communications Specialist)
    - Partners: Our friends at The Stewardship Network, including Lisa Brush (CEO and founder), Lizzy Courtois (Operations Manager), Erin Claflin (Finance Manager), and Rob Luzynski (Community Coordinator and our forms guru)

- Our many Sponsors who provided direct financial support. See Appendix A for list of sponsors.

- Finally, we are grateful for the members of GLIA. Before each Summit, we say with hope, "if we build it, they will come." And you do! We are thankful that you continue to believe in GLIA's vision and take time away from your busy professional schedules and personal lives to participate in our activities. You are why GLIA exists.

ABOUT THE GREAT LAKES ISLANDS ALLIANCE

The Great Lakes Islands Alliance (GLIA) is a voluntary, collaborative, multi-national network that brings together island community leaders, residents, and advocates from across the Great Lakes and beyond. Its mission is to "encourage relationship building, foster information exchange, and leverage resources to address shared challenges and embrace opportunities to benefit islands."

At present, the membership of GLIA is composed of approximately 250 islanders from 20 different island communities in both the United States and Canada. Membership is open to any islander, both year-round and seasonal. GLIA's membership includes a wide diversity of backgrounds and perspectives, including elected officials, members of island boards and committees, Chambers of Commerce, visitors bureaus, non-profit organizations, educators and school administrators, EMS/fire/police organizations, property owner associations, island businesses, museums, libraries, historical societies, and property owners. Additionally, there are another 50 individuals from mainland entities (generally governments, universities, non-profits, and islanders outside of the Great Lakes) who believe in the mission of GLIA and track our activities as GLIA Observers.

GLIA achieves its objectives through multiple means, primarily through connection. Our core function is to connect islanders to one another and to facilitate the sharing of information: island-derived solutions, case studies, reports, contacts, grant opportunities, and other experiences. Secondarily, we seek to improve understanding and appreciation of islands by governments and other decision-makers and thought leaders on the mainland.

GLIA holds zoom meetings monthly throughout the year, supplemented by additional communications through email, webinars, and use of traditional and social media. GLIA meets in person once per year at our annual conference, the Great Lakes Islands Summit (Summit), the focus of this report.

Discussion topics are diverse and wide-ranging but always follow the contemporary interests and needs of the member islands. Sometimes these are unique to islands (e.g., ferry systems); some are also relevant to mainland communities (e.g., schools or environmental protection) however through GLIA the topic is viewed through an island lens.

GLIA organizes its efforts into two separate, but not mutually exclusive, focus areas. First, *Environmental Stewardship* seeks to "protect and conserve the natural environment on islands." Island communities are defined by the Great Lakes and care about water quality and quantity, biodiversity conservation, pollution prevention, waste management, recycling, and climate adaptation and resiliency. Second, *Socio-Economic Wellbeing* seeks to "foster a robust quality of life for year-round islanders, seasonal residents, and visitors alike." GLIA explores topics as diverse as tourism, blue economy (water-based) opportunities, health and safety, education, housing, infrastructure, cultural/historic heritage, and local governance and capacity.

For additional information on GLIA, including our Charter, Strategic Plan, Annual Reports, map of participating islands, and more, please visit our website: https://glialliance.org

SUMMIT BACKGROUND AND LOGISTICS

The Summit serves as the annual member meeting of GLIA. It is a forum for members to meet and interact with each other, learn from experts on topics of interest to islands, and provide input into network-wide business. The event rotates to a different island each year with a team from the local island community serving as host. In this role they work with GLIA staff to help identify and secure meeting facilities, draft the agenda, and liaise with local island leaders and organizations, including interfacing with potential speakers and sponsors. The GLIA Steering Committee, Staff and Partners provide oversight and support. The Summit always includes some general GLIA business but otherwise reflects the focal points and character of the host community and joint interests of visiting islanders.

The first five Summits were held as follows: Beaver Island, Michigan (Lake Michigan) in 2017; Madeline Island, Wisconsin (Lake Superior) in 2018; Mackinac Island, Michigan (Lake Huron) in 2019; a proximate cluster of four Lake Erie Islands (Kelleys, Middle Bass, Pelee, and South Bass Islands) in 2022; and the Les Cheneaux Islands area in Michigan waters of northern Lake Huron in 2024.

The 2025 Summit, GLIA's sixth overall, returned to Beaver Island, the site where it all began. Spanning September 21-24, 2025, the event brought together approximately 75 attendees including islanders from 11 different island communities from the states of Michigan, Ohio, Wisconsin and the Province of Ontario, plus additional islanders from outside the region and several invited guests from the mainland. See Appendix B for the final attendance list with contact information.

The 2025 Summit was headquartered at the Beaver Island Community Center, close to the ferry dock and many of the island hotels, for the entire event except for Tuesday which was at the Central Michigan University (CMU) Biological Station. Lodging, meals and transportation were provided by CMU and multiple other island vendors.

In addition to providing the local community the unique opportunity of showcasing their island to visiting counterparts, each Summit directly contributes to the local economy and extends the fall shoulder season. The 2025 Summit provided approximately $20,000 in additional revenue to the local economy of Beaver Island.

MEETING CONTENT

The full agenda for the conference can be found in Appendix C. Below are brief narrative descriptions for each portion of the agenda.

Sunday, September 21, 2025

Most of the visiting attendees arrived on Beaver Island over the weekend via ferry or plane. Printed materials (full agenda, name tag, and additional information about GLIA and Beaver Island) were available for pickup at the Beaver Island Community Center. There was also an on-site sale of remaining GLIA sweatshirts. A “soft start” for the Summit began at 5pm, when Angel Welke and Bob Anderson, members of both the local Summit planning team and the GLIA Steering Committee, provided the Summit welcome and overview. Dozens of individuals and organizations were recognized that had contributed to the event, everything from volunteers who helped arrange the logistics to the many financial sponsors. To conclude the evening, a group dinner was provided, complete with background serenade by the island radio station, WVBI, the “Voice of Beaver Island.”

Monday, September 22, 2025

Opening Remarks

The formal agenda began at 8:15am on Monday. Angel Welke provided opening remarks, centered on the events theme of “Collaboration.” After noting how individuals and groups within small island communities must collaborate for successful outcomes, she drew a parallel observation of how islands are collaborating with other islands via GLIA and this Summit.

Networking Session

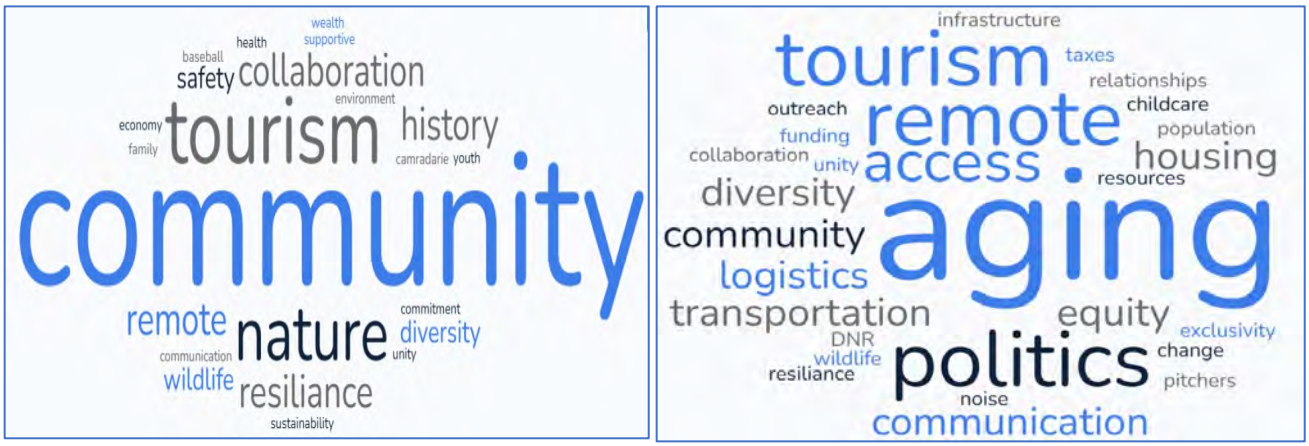
After the welcome, the group immediately dove into a unique collaboration exercise that sought to spur networking between individuals. Matt Preisser, GLIA Coordinator, noted that it is human nature to sit with people you are familiar with (spouse, friends, colleagues from your island that you traveled with). Given that a major object of the Summit was to facilitate relationships, GLIA wanted to make sure similar people (professions, roles, interests, etc.) from different islands met each other. Prior to the Summit, organizers split attendees into cohorts of 6-8 people based on self-reported information from registration – for example, there were small groups of environmentalists, educators, people involved in health and safety, communications/media, businesspeople, and more. For the networking exercise, attendees were asked to go to their assigned table, meet the other individuals, and figure out what their commonality was. They had 45 minutes of unstructured time to talk. For some people (the introverts), this forced them far out of their comfort zones. The various table discussions were lively and interesting. At the end, Matt called everyone together and asked each table to guess what they had in common. Some tables were correct, others were not – but all seemed to appreciate the exercise. By doing this first, attendees were matched with some kindred spirits for the rest of the three-day event.

GLIA 101: Islands Round-Robin, State of the Network, and Discussion

The next portion of the plenary (full group) agenda was the traditional GLIA 101 presentation by the GLIA Coordinator. At each Summit, there are attendees that are new to GLIA. Matt wanted to center everyone around the brief history of GLIA (why and how it was created), its current structure and operations, and what it seeks to achieve.

Matt first recognized the major sponsors of the 2025 Summit; the local planning team; and GLIA's institutional partners. A tremendous amount of time went into planning the event and GLIA is appreciative of the wide-ranging support.

Next was a virtual walk-through of the GLIA islands. Against a Power Point backdrop for each island (showing a map, year-round population and distance to the mainland), Matt identified each community and asked those islanders to stand, briefly introduce themselves and provide two things for their island – one positive word that describes their community (often what the island is good at or known for) and one lingering challenge. Individuals from the same island often had very different takes on their community. After every person was introduced, word clouds were displayed showing the variety of descriptive words. (In Word Clouds, the text size of each word corresponds to the number of times it is identified).



Responses for one positive word (left) and one lingering challenge (rights).

The presentation then segued into "What is GLIA?"

- *Origins of GLIA.* Matt discussed how GLIA started to come together one decade ago, relaying the story of the initial meeting on Beaver Island – to ask this community if they saw benefit in working with other islands – and then a series of islander exchanges (visits) with Maine islands via the Island Institute. The Institute and the Maine Islands Coalition (a network of island leaders from 15 Maine islands, facilitated by the Institute) served as the original inspiration for GLIA.

- *Why GLIA?* Below are several of the reasons why a network of Great Lakes islands has been formed.

- Island communities are unique. All islands have things in common, no matter their location or size or character.
- Islands have limited capacity (staff, expertise, time, money).
- Seasonality affects everything.
- The mainland doesn't understand you.
- The mainland doesn't appreciate you.
- Collective voice / power in numbers.

- *What does GLIA do?* Matt discussed the various activities GLIA undertakes throughout the year under the themes of connecting, convening, elevating and supporting. We share information across a wide variety of topics via focused discussions in monthly zoom meetings and at the in-person Islands Summits (shown below) plus additional communications.

Monthly Zoom Meetings
Academia on islands
Affordable housing
Econ. dev. (CVBs, Chambers, DDAs, etc.)
Forest management
Island charities
Land preservation
Policing
Population measurement & fluctuation
Summer festivals/events
Trails
Visitor etiquette

2024 & 2025 Summits
Arts & culture
Econ Dev
Education
Emergency services
Environment
Health care
Housing
Island media
Natural/Cultural Resources
Philanthropy
Planning & preparedness
Youth engagement

- *Who is GLIA?* Matt provided an outline of the membership of GLIA. The heart of GLIA is the islanders themselves, currently 250 people from 20 Great Lakes island communities. Membership in GLIA remains free and open to anyone living on an island, either year-round or seasonally. There are an additional 50 individuals who are not Great Lakes islanders but are welcomed into GLIA as Partners, Observers, and Other Interested Parties. This group includes government agencies, non-profit organizations, philanthropic groups, and islanders from outside the Great Lakes. New members in either category can join by completing a form on our website or by contacting Matt.

  GLIA's leadership team is the ten-member Steering Committee. They volunteer additional time each month to oversee GLIA's trajectory and ensure our activities stay true to our mission, budget, and strategic plan.

  Next, Matt introduced the concept of the GLIA staff, currently filled by two part-time, paid positions: the GLIA Coordinator (Matt), roughly one-third time at the State of Michigan, Department of Environment, Great Lakes, and Energy (EGLE), Michigan's environmental agency, and the GLIA Communications Specialist (Philip Rice), a one-quarter time position employed by the Stewardship Network (TSN). He discussed these unique arrangements and how their various roles and responsibilities come together to support GLIA for twelve months.

Finally, Matt recognized GLIA's core institutional partners: the Charles Stewart Mott Foundation, EGLE, and TSN. These entities have been providing the financial and related structural support for the two positions. Though GLIA espouses the value of volunteers, it recognizes this model ultimately has limitations (time, expertise) and thus the staff positions have been critical to perform the necessary backbone operations. They also serve as objective parties not beholden to any one island or issue. GLIA would not exist without the on-going support of these three partners.

- *How are we doing?* The final portion of this segment covered the State of the GLIA Network. This was an outline of our major accomplishments, including the continued strong participation in the monthly zoom meetings and Island Summits, implementation of our Strategic Plan, several new communications tools, and recent GLIA open houses on Kelleys and Mackinac Islands. Matt noted that connection is an art, and it can be difficult to measure relationships and information exchange.

  He ended with his key next steps, coming into this Summit (recognizing that this event may cause some shifts):
  - Build depth – both on islands and with partners. There are still many people on islands who have not yet heard of GLIA. We must reach more elected officials and other island decision-makers to both expand our reach and improve the benefit to islands. He cited the need to get more Canadian members and how member roles must continually be shared, understood and reinforced for GLIA to reach its potential. Matt discussed the value of engaging with additional institutional partners on the mainland (recognizing that we do not want GLIA to become dominated by mainland organizations). These are organizations with similar missions or interests that have expertise, programs and funding already in place. GLIA will continue to seek out these entities and find ways to align with them and inform them about Great Lakes islands, rather than trying to recreate the wheel ourselves.
  - Communications – we must continue to churn out new editorial content about islands and their needs. In particular, the *Island Insights* newsletter (initiated this past year) and GLIA's Expert Webinar Series have both gotten good reviews. We must keep these tools interesting and timely and relevant.
  - Island Summit – this event continues to be GLIA's largest activity of the year. It takes a tremendous amount of time, energy and money to have a Summit. After each Summit, we put out a survey and use the results to inform the next event. In particular, each year three key decision points arise: the timing (fall or spring), frequency (every year or every other year), and location (which island or could the event be on the mainland). GLIA needs to remain flexible. We would love to have every single island host a Summit at some point, but the reality is that it may not be practical for most.
  - New projects – in a shameless teaser for tomorrow, Matt hinted that GLIA will be rolling out at least two new, long-awaited projects in 2026.

To close out this agenda item, Matt opened it up for questions and group discussion. Some key points that came out:

- Q: The Island Institute was important to GLIA's creation story. Do we still work with them? A: like any organization, their mission, leadership, and activities change over time. Recently, our observation is that they have shifted to be more focused internally on Maine (consistent with their core mission) rather than networks outside Maine. GLIA members still see the Institute as an important organizational model and programmatic partner and suggested we find ways to keep the relationship going.
- Q: Can GLIA run smaller, more targeted gatherings for specific topics, ideally in-person? The Summits are wonderful but often feel like 'drinking water through a fire hose.' A: yes this is possible, we would just need to consider resource requirements and impact on our other activities. We would likely need an islander or two to step up to lead.
- Q: Fundraising needs to be a collective effort, with islanders needing to do more as the true spokespeople for GLIA. Island nonprofits understand the difficulty and time-consuming nature of chasing money every year just to keep the lights on. GLIA needs to be creative and tap into new supporters. A: agreed.
- Q: How do we get the younger generation involved in GLIA? Maybe there could be internships or an all-island group along the lines of the youth advisory committees (YACs) that some individual islands have. "Bring a younger person with you to GLIA meetings." A: agreed, good ideas.
- Q: What about lobbying? Isn't that an important activity to enact change? A: Islanders and island communities are allowed to lobby their elected officials, to the extent allowed by their laws. For GLIA, we are not a legal, stand-alone organization. Our fiscal sponsor (TSN) is a registered non-profit (termed a 501c3 here in the United States) and thus cannot lobby. Further, the primary grants that support our staff have strict limits on lobbying. As GLIA continues to evolve, it may someday choose to become a legal entity (as noted in our Strategic Plan). At that point, this lobbying function would be considered and would inform how that decision plays out.

Day 1 Breakout Sessions & Full Group Recap

Participants were offered the choice of attending one of three breakout sessions: (1) education; (2) housing; and (3) arts/culture. Each breakout lasted two hours and was repeated after lunch, so each person was able to participate in two breakouts. For a summary of each breakout, written by session chairs, see Appendix D.

As the final agenda item of the day, everyone reconvened to hear recaps from session chairs and discuss if/how the Beaver Island solutions may be transferrable to other islands.

Tuesday, September 23, 2025

GLIA Business

For the business portion of the meeting, Philip Rice, GLIA Communications Specialist, shared information on GLIA's two major upcoming projects. The purpose of this session was to

discuss the impetus behind the two efforts; walk through draft prototypes of each; and hear islander feedback on the draft objective, content, process and ultimately the merits of each project.

Great Lakes Islands Community Resource Directory – GLIA has a islands-wide community directory (island contacts across various organizations and sectors) as a document on its website, but it is static and outdated. There has been interest in updating and modernizing the directory. Philip shared details on developing a more nimble online tool, outlining how it will gather essential information to help residents and non-residents navigate transportation, housing, services, and infrastructure across island communities. Emphasis was placed on the fact that GLIA will not be trying to replace or compete with any existing island websites because the directory will link directly to local island sites and amplify and consolidate information the communities are already providing. A question came up about how private sector listings would be handled. We explained that the directory will focus on linking to each island's chamber or equivalent organization which already maintains business member information rather than attempting to list individual businesses ourselves.

Great Lakes Islands Passport – Philip introduced the concept of the Island Passport, an idea originally proposed during the first Summit in 2017 as a way to encourage visitation. We currently see this idea as having a different objective and format. In Philip's prototype, it would be a print piece designed to complement the online resource directory by offering a clear snapshot of island life for non-residents - transportation options, essential services like schools and libraries, and more. He emphasized that the Passport would go far beyond a typical tourist brochure. It highlights community life, seasonal rhythms, and the realities of four season living, making it an outreach tool for those who may be considering island life more seriously.

Discussion

- Overall, the audience was excited by the prospects of the two projects. Consensus was that they would each help the island communities, in inter-related but different ways, and would be worthwhile projects for GLIA to focus on through 2026.
- How will collection and vetting of information from each island take place? Philip would do the bulk of the work, using internet and contacts from each community. Its fair to have a primary point of contact but be careful to rely on only one person. He could make a list of questions or survey to help standardize.
- Who would need to approve? Does this need to happen locally? TBD, may be island by island. GLIA would not be inventing anything new but it is still extremely important to ensure local awareness and buy-in. We anticipate that not all islands may want to participate, at least initially, which is fine.
- The term "passport" may not be the best term – it signals entry and limitation or exclusion. What about "passkey" or "ticket" or "Great Lakes islands trail"? Need to think about this. We are no longer focusing on tourists.
- Electronic vs physical format – how would these be produced? The Directory would be on-line only while the passport could be both electronic and physical. A physical item would cost money to produce and ship to up to 20 islands. If physical, could it fit in a wallet? Maybe a rack card? These could be print-on-demand (islands could order their own copies). Electronic format is simpler but digital access has user limitations (certain parts of islands do not have cell).

- Stamps – if the passport had a physical marker of some kind, could you get a local business to sponsor it? Do we have to do stamps?
- Liked the idea of a scavenger hunt-type activity on the passport.
- Look at existing passport models – there is one for breweries.
- Can the Directory include a way for islanders to communicate to one another, meaning an on-line tool? Possibly. Consider lessons learned from GLIA's earlier experimentation with Slack, the cloud-based messaging and collaboration platform.
- Future enhancements – there are ways each product could be expanded or improved down the road.

Keynote Address

GLIA welcomed Jennifer Valiulis, Territorial Chief of Wildlife of the U.S. Virgin Islands Division of Fish and Wildlife, as its 2025 keynote. Jennifer led off with a description of her island, St. Croix, which is one of the U.S. Virgin Islands (along with St. Thomas, St. John and many smaller islands and cays). As a U.S. territory, they have a non-voting member in Congress and don't contribute to the electoral college voting for President. St. Croix has two main towns and abundant natural and cultural resources. It is heavily influenced by a history of colonialism and deforestation for sugar cane. The island is not all tropical paradise. There is a long contentious debate about an oil refinery.

Among the contemporary challenges on St. Croix is fostering an appreciation of the environment (by both residents and visitors) and losing youth to other places. Extremely similar to Great Lakes islands! Some notable successes include air quality monitoring (training community members to use units on home rooftops) and water quality monitoring (students are paired with university researchers).

Jennifer then described the Climate Strong Islands Network (CSIN), a network of U.S. islands focused on advocacy and education to promote just policies that support island communities (https://www.climatestrongislands.org). Jennifer serves as the CSIN co-chair. CSIN is proud to have recently started to include freshwater islands (GLIA has started to participate). There are many similarities between islands, big and small, saltwater and freshwater. One big initiative of CSIN is its National Islands Policy Framework which was first issued several years ago but recently updated (more below during discussion).

One very important actor on St. Croix is the St. Croix Foundation for Community Development (https://www.stxfoundation.org). There are 300 nonprofits on the island and most have only 1 or 2 staff. Donor fatigue is high and they must compete for scarce dollars and time. The Foundation brings all the organizations together for collaboration and coordination. It describes itself as having "found a distinctive sweet spot as a hybrid operating foundation that serves as both a grantmaker and direct service provider for the People of the U.S. Virgin Islands." Among those service roles, it is the fiscal sponsor for many of the small nonprofits that cannot do this themselves.

In her experience, Jennifer shared a list of traits that are crucial for successful collaboration:
- Shared goals and vision
- Respect and trust
- Good communications

- Multi-disciplinary
- Embraces differences
- Requires effort

To wrap the keynote, there was time for questions and discussion.

- The CSIN National Islands Policy Framework drew lots of interest. The Framework has seven key issue areas: (1) reliable, affordable, and clean energy; (2) watershed management and coastal resilience; (3) food and water security; (4) disaster preparedness and response; (5) sustainable marine economy; (6) waste and recycling management; and (7) transportation. The Great Lakes islands see themselves in most of these focus areas.
- Advocacy vs. lobbying vs. education. Whatever you call it, ultimately the objective is to get islanders in front of politicians and other decision-makers.
- More discussion on the use of relatively cheap, portable air quality monitoring devices that can be purchased and used by citizens and non-profits.
- Community forest project on St. Croix where everyone plants a tree. Trees are very tangible successes and help build long-term connections to place.
- Environmental monitoring is important! Sea turtle example.
- Allow people to use their gifts (experiences, passion, money, etc.).
- Island-mainland dynamics is an ongoing concern to seemingly every island, no matter where it is.
- Benefits and curses of highly seasonal populations (year-round vs. seasonal residents).
- Zoom and other virtual tools should not replace face-to-face interactions, but can be important ways to engage more people.
- Examples of how to get youth involved in island life.

Day 2 Breakout Sessions & Full Group Recap

Participants were offered the choice of attending one of two breakout sessions: (1) environment & natural/cultural resources; and (2) island economies, health care and emergency services. Each breakout lasted two hours and was repeated after lunch, so each person was able to participate in both breakouts. For a summary of each breakout, written by session chairs, see Appendix D.

Similar to Monday, the final session had the full group reconvening together to discuss what they'd heard and ask additional questions.

Evening Entertainment

That evening showcased the diverse musical traditions of Beaver Island. Open to the broader community, GLIA brought in the talented performers Cindy Gillespie-Cushman (vocals, traditional Irish bodhrán drum), Ruby John (fiddle), Hilary Palmer (vocals), and Rita Palmer (guitar). Through music, they not only entertained the guests, they helped foster a sense of comradery and friendship among the visiting islanders.

Wednesday, September 24, 2025

The final Summit morning consisted of a final wrap-up, including group reflection and next steps. The Beaver Island host team discussed how exciting it is to witness so many different islands arriving at a "shared understanding." They reflected back on the Summit theme, "Collaboration," and again thanked everyone that had a hand in creating and attending this event.

Attendees were asked to pause for a minute and think of one word that summarizes their current feeling after the four-day event.

The GLIA Coordinator shared a slide showing his "GLIA Big Ideas" in order from easiest to most difficult. These have been collected over the past decade. His objective was to encourage attendees to "think big" and consider what GLIA could achieve in 5, 10, 20 or 50 years.

- Create new cross-island committees/teams – for example all the island mayors/supervisors/ councillors, chambers, museums, educators, media, others
- Celebrate islands! E.g., "Great Lakes Islands Week"
- Long-term arrangement with a university
- Form nonprofit organization w/ full-time staff
- Develop a long-term "Young Island Leaders" Program – training, mentoring
- "Loan" GLIA staff to individual islands for specific tasks
- Small grants program that would be open only to island nonprofits
- "Promise" Initiative for island graduates (modeled after Kalamazoo Promise)

We then opened the floor for general discussion.

- Participants provided examples of "what am I taking back to my island?"
- Thinking back to the early Summits, GLIA is shifting from identifying problems to sharing solutions, which is great.
- Islands experience many of the same problems, though the solutions may be different.
- There were 16 first-time Summit attendees and many said the event far exceeded expectations.
- Having a single island-wide organization that touches on many topics and is integral to island functioning (Beaver Island Association) is a great idea.
- Some islands would benefit from a common community calendar.
- GLIA should do more to engage with academia, such as the Institute of Island Studies.
- Touring the island school was a game-changer and those discussions were eye-opening; schools deserve some special attention from GLIA.
- "Sense of community" is extremely important – both within islands and between islands (thanks GLIA!). GLIA has become its own community.
- Feeling of inspiration – we've seen how much more can be achieved if we put our minds and hearts to it.
- Pointing to weaknesses is not a bad thing.
- It's important to be comfortable being uncomfortable.
- Feeling of validation – "I'm not the only one" and "these things can be fixed."
- Islanders love where we're from.
- Don't wait for someone else to do it.
- It doesn't stop here.

Below are some key takeaways and next steps which will be brought to the Steering Committee and membership for further development in the coming year.

1. Every challenge has a solution, nothing is impossible. Leadership is important – need passion and persistence. Continue to foster leaders for GLIA and within the island communities.
2. GLIA continues to become an increasingly important participant in island life. It should continue to support key island institutions, particularly non-profits and schools.
3. More In-Person Gatherings - keep the zooms and Islands Summit as core activities, but find ways to support additional meetings. Consider topic-specific meetings, for example meetings dedicated to housing or education. Hold more open houses on individual islands to get more people aware and interested in GLIA.
4. Island Planning & Governance – not as exciting as on-the-ground projects but extremely important and undervalued and islands would benefit from more focus and sharing. In particular, GLIA should encourage more strategic planning and help islands share their experiences.
5. Youth – we need more young people at the GLIA events. Pursue a GLIA young persons committee or future island leaders group?
6. Policy & Advocacy – GLIA will continue to explore how it may support education of mainland decision-makers, within its existing limits (i.e., we cannot lobby). Islanders are able to do many of these things and should be the first-line spokespeople for your communities. Are there other ways GLIA may support you?

Appendix A: 2025 Summit sponsors

Institutional Partners

CHARLES STEWART MOTT FOUNDATION

EGLE
MICHIGAN DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENT, GREAT LAKES, AND ENERGY

The Stewardship Network
Member Communities

Summit Sponsors

BOB & ALANA ANDERSON

ANONYMOUS

BEAVER ISLAND HISTORICAL SOCIETY
Keeping Island History Alive

BEAVER ISLAND MUSIC FESTIVAL 2025

Chadams GLASS

CHARLEVOIX COUNTY COMMUNITY FOUNDATION

80 YEARS MCDILLIDS FLYING SERVICE
ISLAND AIRWAYS
BEAVER ISLAND
50 YEARS WELKE AVIATION

ISLAND PROPERTY SERVICES

MADELINE ISLAND CHAMBER
come over
WWW.MADELINEISLAND.COM

Mackinac Island community foundation

Miller Ferries
Passenger & Vehicle Service to Put-in-Bay & Middle Bass Island, Ohio

Ottawa County Improvement Corporation

Appendix B: final attendance list

Island Name	Last	First	Email	Organization (if applicable)	Tell us about yourself
Beaver Island	Anderson	Alana	aaanders49@gmail.com		Forest View Senior Housing Board member; enjoy pickleball, arts & crafts, gardening, community volunteer
Beaver Island	Anderson	Bob	reanders49@gmail.com		GLIA Steering Committee alternate, Beaver Island Community Center Board, Summit planning Committee; enjoy pickleball, woodcarving, community volunteer
Beaver Island	Boyle	Kevin	kevin@boyle.bz	WVBI, Northern Initiatives	Retired Partner, Latham & Watkins; Volunteer Manager at WVBI-FM (island radio station); Volunteer Robotics Teacher & FIRST FRC Coach; Board member of Northern Initiatives
Beaver Island	Burton	Carol	carolburtonbimf@gmail.com	Patrons of the Arts	Owner; St James Boat Shop, Burton Car & Vacation Rentals, Island Homes; Charlevoix County Community Foundation, President Chamber of Commerce, Chair Board of Review
Beaver Island	Burton	Elsie	editor@beaverislandhistory.org	Beaver Island Historical Society of MI	Editor of the Northern Islander
Beaver Island	Case	Dave	davecase80@gmail.com		Founder of DJ Case & Associates...a conservation communications firm based in northern Indiana. Beaver Island resident since 2020.
Beaver Island	Cwikiel	Wilfred	wilc@beaverisland.k12.mi.us	Beaver Island Community School	Superintendent-Principal of Beaver Island Community School
Beaver Island	Delamater	Mary	lefevream@hotmail.com	Island Airways	Island Airways General Manager
Beaver Island	Ebersoldt	Vincent	vebersoldt@eplusa-arch.com	Beaver Island Workforce Housing, LLC	Architect and developer of workforce housing on beaver island
Beaver Island	Fingeroot	Vicky	vickyfingeroot@yahoo.com		Harbor Master and Chamber of Commerce
Beaver Island	Grassmick	Pamela	pgrassmick@gmail.com		On local and county planning commissions, board member of the Charlevoix County Community Foundation, projects: birding, water trail, invasive species control, dark sky designation, and land protection.
Beaver Island	Harris	Shelby	shelbyharris123@gmail.com		Board Member of Beaver Island Association, Board Member of Beaver Island Wildlife Club, Secretary of Beaver Island Archipelago Trails Association, President of Amik Circle Society, Member of the CAKE CISMA Steering Committee, Member of the Northern Lake Michigan Island Alicance and Cultural Resources Committee, GLIA member, Member of the Beaver Island Dark Sky Committee, Docent at the Beaver Island Historical Society, business owner on Beaver Island, island descendent, tribal member of the Grand Traverse Band of Ottawa and Chippewa Indians
Beaver Island	LeFevre-Welke	Angel	lefevream@hotmail.com	Island Airways	Owner/president of Island Airways; BI school board; BI historical society; BI Chamber of Commerce; Irish Heritage Group

Island Name	Last	First	Email	Organization (if applicable)	Tell us about yourself
Beaver Island	Mangra	Gina	trails@biata.org	Beaver Island Archipelago Trail Association	I'm am the President of the BIATA. I'm the Loon Ranger for Lake Geneserath. I teach Mycology on Beaver Island with presentations and foraging tours. I'm an avid gardener and I love to fish. I'm almost a full time resident of Beaver Island.
Beaver Island	Mulvihill	Dick	dick.mulvihill@gmail.com	Beaver Island Association	Beaver Island Association
Beaver Island	Pangle	Kevin	pangl1k@cmich.edu	CMUBS	Director
Beaver Island	Partridge	Ann	ann@biruralhealth.org	Beaver Island Rural Health Center	Beaver Island Rural Health Center, BI Food Pantry, BI Elks #2886
Beaver Island	Risinger	Amy	jbrfinlaw@aol.com		Part-Year Resident on Beaver Island
Beaver Island	Risinger	Jeff	jbrfinlaw@aol.com		Part-Year Resident on Beaver Island
Beaver Island	Rittof	Britt	editorassistant@beaverislandhistory.org	Beaver Island Historical Society of MI	Northern Islander Newspaper
Beaver Island	Taylor-Blitz	Lori	director@beaverislandhistory.org	Beaver Island Historical Society of MI	Beaver Island Historical Society Executive Director, Beaver Island Rural Health Center Vice President, St. James Township Deputy Supervisor, Beaver Island Elks 2886 Exalted Ruler
Beaver Island	Welke	Bobbi	supervisor.stjamestwp.bi@gmail.com	St James Township	St James Township Supervisor. BI Transportation Authority. BI Association Housing Taskforce. BI Association Broadband Team. Emergency Services Authority. Waste Management Committee.
Beaver Island	Welke	Paul	lefevream@hotmail.com	Owner / Director of Operations Island Airways	Pilot / mechanic; former township trustee
Drummond Island	Asztalos	Ashley	Events@visitdrummondisland.com	Drummond island Tourism Association	tourism office and server
Drummond Island	Asztalos	Nicholas	Hayesashley230@gmail.com		fire department, work construction,
Drummond Island	Kolo	Christina	Operations@visitdrummondisland.com	Drummond island Tourism Association	tourism office
Harsens Island	Stieber	Denise	grace731max@gmail.com	Harsens Island Lioness Lions, Harsens Island Garden Club	Master Gardener
Harsens Island	Stieber	Harold	stiebha@gmail.com	Harsens Island St Clair Flats Association (HISCFA)	Former HISCFA Treasurer
Kelleys Island	Kennedy	Bobbie-Jo	kijeep@yahoo.com		I am a volunteer for the Kelleys island Historical Association and a member of the island's Audubon club. I am interested in preserving island history and architecture as well as saving wild spaces.
Kelleys Island	Kilen	Kit	kitk573@gmail.com	OSU Retiree. Former Stone Lab office staff.	Year round resident. Restaurant food prep. Active in Island church community, arts community, Island Singers. Interest in health, well being of aging Island population, Winter activities, education.
Kelleys Island	Kipfer	Chris	cfkipfer@yahoo.com		KI Landowners Assn board member and Village Council candidate. Interested in sustainable housing solutions, maintaining infrastructure and protecting the lake health
Kelleys Island	Wermuth	Janet	janetwermuth@live.com		Co-Owner/Operator, Crooked Tree Vineyard; President, Kelleys Island School Board; Hiking/walking trails
Kelleys Island	Wermuth	Steve	swermuth1@gmail.com		Co-owner/operator Crooked Tree Vineyard; Kelleys Island BZA member; volunteer fire/EMT

Island Name	Last	First	Email	Organization (if applicable)	Tell us about yourself
Les Cheneaux	Adams	Elliot	elliota88@gmail.com	LCYC/Chadams Glass	Les Cheneaux Yacht Club Manager/Caretaker + Sailing Director, Chadams Glass owner, sailing, nature, wildlife, cycling, and juggling
Les Cheneaux	Clymer	Mark	supervisor@clarktwpmi.gov	Clark Township	Clark Township Supervisor; Board Member: LC Comunity Library, LC Watershed; Interests: boating, sailing, hiking, research
Les Cheneaux (Coryell Island)	Wolters	Lynn	lwolters016@gmail.com	Les Cheneaux Watershed Council	Lakeside Islanders Social Club Board Member / Les Cheneaux Maritime Museum/ Les Cheneaux Watershed Council Member
Les Cheneaux (Coryell Island)	Wolters	Valerie	vwemail22@gmail.com	Les Cheneaux Watershed Council/ Lakeside Islanders Social Club/	Island Directory Organizer/ Island History Interviewer and coordinator for Historical Event/ Coordinator: Frog Fest day of Science for the EUP/ Youth Judge Volunteer at Hessel Antique Wooden Boat Show/ Retired 1st Grade Teacher
Mackinac Island	Cavazos	Kyrsten	cavazoskyrsten@gmail.com	Mackinac Island Community Theatre & Straits Pride	Inn on Mackinac - General Manager, Mackinac Island Community Theatre - Director, Straits Pride: LGBTQ+ Advocacy Nonprofit - Founder/Vice President/Social Engagement & Outreach Committee Head
Mackinac Island	Eiseler	Laura	archrock222@gmail.com	GLIA	Retired schoolteacher
Mackinac Island	Hancock	Sara	shancock@micf.org	Mackinac Island Community Foundation	Administrative Assistant at MICF, School board member, working mom with 4 kids in school, running, theater
Mackinac Island	Linn	Rick	rhlinn@yahoo.com		EMS/Medical Center, Fire Dept, Community Foundation, Historic District Committee
Mackinac Island	McGreevy	Stephanie	smcgreevy@micf.org	Mackinac Island Community Foundation	Executive Director of CF, board member of Mackinac Marine Rescue, Boating, hiking, cycling
Mackinac Island	Rice	Philip	price@stewardshipnetwork.org	GLIA	GLIA Communications Specialist, Mackinac Island Community Theatre, Straits Pride, Upper Peninsula Arts & Culture Alliance
Mackinac Island	Rollins	Christine	carollins@comcast.net		Works for Mackinac Island Fire Dept., Deputy City Clerk, Deputy City Treasurer, Cemetary Board
Mackinac Island	St Onge	Anne	imatmipl@yahoo.com		City Librarian, personal interests are Art, Gardening, Theatre
Mackinac Island	Ware	Liz	lware@missionpoint.com	City of Mackinac Island	I work for our family's resort, Mission Point Resort as the VP of Sales and Marketing. I serve on several boards including the Treasurer for the Michigan Restaurant & Lodging Association, Mackinac Island Tourism Bureau, Michigan Hospitality and Tourism Alliance, and was appointed by the Governor to the Michigan Travel Commission.
Madeline Island	Schaub	Lee Ann	leeann@madferry.com	Madeline Island Ferry Line	Year-round Island resident, employed by Madeline Island Ferry Line, President of Madeline Island Chamber of Commerce

Island Name	Last	First	Email	Organization (if applicable)	Tell us about yourself
Madeline Island	Schaub	Rob	robertcschaubiii@gmail.com		Year-round Island resident, retired EMT, full-time substitute teacher, manager at Motion To Go, board member of the Madeline Island Historical Preservation Association
Manitoulin Island	Cook	Laurie	hlaurie.cook@yandex.com	Glia	Manitoulin Nature Club speakers committee, Friends of Manitoulin Turtles member, Municipal Councillor Ward 1 (the islands) NEMI
Manitoulin Island	Shorthouse	Joe	jmwildroses@gmail.com		Retired university professor
Manitoulin Island	Shorthouse	Marilyn	jmwildroses@gmail.com		Wife of Steering Committee Member Joe Shorthouse. Interested in all aspects of island life. Summer resident, along with Joe, on Manitoulin Island.
n/a	Brush	Lisa	lbrush@stewardshipnetwork.org	The Stewardship Network	GLIA Mainland Partner
n/a	McWhirter	Sheri	smcwhirter@mlive.com	MLive Media Group	Environment reporter for MLive/Grand Rapids Press
n/a	Preisser	Matt	preisserm@michigan.gov	Michigan Department of Environment, Great Lakes, and Energy	GLIA Coordinator
n/a	Shiels	Derek	derek@landtrust.org	Little Traverse Conservancy	Director of Land Stewardship
n/a	Wright	Mae	mwright@ltbbodawa-nsn.gov	Little Traverse Bay Bands of Odawa Indians	Tribal Historic Preservation Officier/NAGPRA Representative
Neebish Island	Jones	Pamela	pamelajones0418@gmail.com	Neebish Island Improvement Association	I'm the VP of the Neebish Island Improvement Association. I'm in charge of social activities for the island, tech support, and anything else anyone doesn't want to do :)
Neebish Island	Miller	Lori	millerlori8@gmail.com		Volunteer; NI Historical Society, Neebish Island Leaflet FB
Neebish Island	Reed	Phylis	phylisreed@gmail.com	GLIA. Neebish Island Improvement Association	President, NIIA
Pelee Island	DeLellis	Dave	dave@delsol.ca	Township of Pelee Island	3rd term councillor on Pelee Island, farmer and concrete provider on island, many committees of council of years. revitalizing Pelee
Prince Edward Island	Ryan	Helena	hmryan@upei.ca	University of Prince Edward Island	University of Prince Edward Island
South Bass Island (Put-in-Bay)	Brohl	Russell	russellbrohl758@gmail.com		Retired great lakes master. Formally onthe Middle Bass School Board, Pit in bay township Zoning Board, put in bay Port authority and the Perry group
South Bass Island (Put-in-Bay)	Fultz	Renee	fultz.renee@gmail.com	LEI Nature & Wildlife Center	I am the director of the Nature & Wildlife Center, on the board of the Put-in-Bay Chamber of Commerce, and a GLIA steering committee member. I am a full time resident of Put-in-Bay and have a year and a half old daughter I am excited to be raising on the island.
South Bass Island (Put-in-Bay)	Huston	Amy	lakeerieoriginals@gmail.com	Painter Sarah Cochran	artist, small business owner, history
South Bass Island (Put-in-Bay)	HUSTON	PETER	filmaffects@gmail.com	GLIA SC Alt.	Lake Erie Foundation, Friends of Perry's Victory (National Park Service), Shores and Islands Ohio (CVB) Board Member

Island Name	Last	First	Email	Organization (if applicable)	Tell us about yourself
South Bass Island (Put-in-Bay)	Jenkins	Jordan	jordan@putinbaydaily.com	Put-in-Bay Daily / Park Hotel / Put-in-Bay Chamber of Commerce	I currently serve as General Manager of the historic Park Hotel and Bay Club Cottages on Put-in-Bay, as well as Marketing Coordinator for the Put-in-Bay Chamber of Commerce. In addition, I am the Owner & Publisher of Put-in-Bay Daily, an online news and events platform. Through these roles, I oversee hospitality operations, manage marketing campaigns, coordinate community events, and lead digital media initiatives that promote tourism and support local businesses. My work has been recognized with multiple statewide tourism marketing awards. I also remain active in community service and regional collaboration, with growing involvement in county-level tourism development. On a personal level, I enjoy music (as a drummer), local history, sports, and spending time with my family on the island.
South Bass Island (Put-in-Bay)	Kutschbach Brohl	Lisa	lakbrohl@gmail.com	Lake Erie Islands Conservancy	Put-in-Bay Township Park District commissioner Lake Erie Islands Nature and Wildlife board Center
South Bass Island (Put-in-Bay)	Sulesky	Bill	sulesky@live.com	Village of Put-in-Bay	Councilman for Village of Put-in-Bay and Member of Put-in-Bay Planning Commission; Fleet Manager for Island Transportation Corp; Board Member of The Perry Group; Put-in-Bay Yacht Club Food and Beverage Committee Member; owner and property manager of Baywatch Investments, LLC; avid outdoorsman
South Bass Island (Put-in-Bay)	Sulesky	Patty	events@visitputinbay.com	Put-in-Bay Chamber of Commerce and Tourism Bureau	Put-in-Bay Chamber of Commerce Membership and Events Coordinator; enjoy boating and traveling.
St. Croix (U.S. Virgin Islands)	Valiulis	Jennifer	jvaliulis@stxenvironmental.org	Climate Strong Islands Network and St. Croix Environmental Association	I am a co-chair of the Climate Strong Islands Network (CSIN) and the Executive Director of the St. Croix Environmental Association
Washington Island	Heal	Jeffrey	Offagain@earthlink.net		Farm Museum Director, Lions Club, Sportsman's Club
Washington Island	Heal	Tiana 'Ti'	Offagain@earthlink.net		Community Van coordinator, Aquasize Instructor, Farm Museum

Appendix C: final agenda

2025 Great Lakes Islands Summit
Beaver Island, Michigan
September 21-24, 2025

Sunday, September 21

Time	Session	Location
Afternoon	Arrivals & Hotel Check-in (confirm check-in time with your lodging)	Your hotel (variable)
4:00 – 5:00 pm	Participant sign-in and packet pickup	Beaver Island Community Center (BIC Center) - lobby
5:00 – 5:30 pm	Beaver Island Welcome & Event Overview • Angel Welke & Bob Anderson, GLIA Steering Committee and 2025 Beaver Island Summit Host Team • *Invited:* Reflections by Host Team from 2017 Islands Summit • Breakout session sign-up	BIC Center – auditorium
5:30 – 8:00 pm	Group Dinner • Catering by TBD • Entertainment by WVBI (“The Voice of Beaver Island”)	BIC Center – auditorium

Monday, September 22

Time	Session		Location
7:30 – 8:15 am	Rolling Breakfast • Catering by Central Michigan University • Breakout session sign-up (con't)		Beaver Island Community Center (BIC Center) – auditorium
8:15 – 8:30 am	Opening Remarks - Summit Theme, "Collaboration" • Angel Welke, GLIA Steering Committee Chair		BIC Center – auditorium
8:30 – 9:00 am	Kickoff Networking Session		BIC Center – auditorium
9:00 – 9:45 am	GLIA 101: Islands Round-Robin, State of the Network, and Discussion • Matt Preisser, GLIA Coordinator		BIC Center – auditorium
9:45 – 10:00 am	*Break and Walk to Breakouts*		
10:00 – 12:00 pm	Concurrent Breakout Sessions (pick one, repeat in afternoon)		
	1. Education • Lead: Wil Cwikiel, Superintendent/Principal, Beaver Island Community School • Topics: k-12 school, Central Michigan University, library • Location: Beaver Island Community School/Beaver Island District Library	2. Housing • Leads: Bobbi Welke, St. James Township Supervisor, and Vincent Ebersoldt, Developer • Topics: community housing (workforce, senior, etc.) • Location: BIC Center Auditorium plus tour of new housing units	3. Arts/Culture • Leads: Lori Taylor-Blitz, Executive Director, Beaver Island Historical Society, and Carol Burton, Executive Director, Patrons of the Arts in Rural Communities • Topics: museums, festivals, events • Location: Print Shop Museum plus field trip
12:00 – 12:15 pm	*Break/Walk back to Community Center for Lunch*		
12:15 – 1:15 pm	Group Lunch • Catering by Central Michigan University		BIC Center – auditorium

1:15 – 1:30 pm	*Walk to Breakouts*		
1:30 – 3:30 pm	Concurrent Breakout Sessions (repeated)		
	4. Education • Lead: Wil Cwikiel, Superintendent/Principal, Beaver Island Community School • Topics: k-12 school, Central Michigan University, library • Location: Beaver Island Community School/Beaver Island District Library	5. Housing • Leads: Bobbi Welke, St. James Township Supervisor, and Vincent Ebersoldt, Developer • Topics: community housing (workforce, senior, etc.) • Location: BIC Center Auditorium plus tour of new housing units	6. Arts/Culture • Leads: Lori Taylor-Blitz, Executive Director, Beaver Island Historical Society, and Carol Burton, Executive Director, Patrons of the Arts in Rural Communities • Topics: museums, festivals, events • Location: Print Shop Museum plus field trip
3:30 – 3:45 pm	*Break/Walk back to Community Center for Group Recap/Discussion*		
3:45 – 4:30 pm	Reconvene for Full Group Discussion • What did you learn? • What solutions or ideas can you provide from your island? • What could GLIA do to support islands in this space?		BIC Center – auditorium
4:30 – 5:30 pm	Networking/free time		
5:30– 7:00 pm	Group Dinner • Catering by Beaver Island Elks		Beaver Island Christian Church, Gregg Fellowship Center
7:00 – ??	Optional evening gathering		TBD

Tuesday, September 23

Time	Session	Location
6:45 – 7:30 am	*Shuttles from town to Central Michigan University-Biological Station*	*Various downtown pickup spots*
7:00 – 8:00 am	Rolling Breakfast	Central Michigan University-Biological Station (CMUBS) – Dining Room
8:00 – 8:45 am	GLIA Business • Matt Preisser, GLIA Coordinator • Philip Rice, GLIA Communications Specialist	CMUBS – Lecture Hall
8:45 – 9:45 am	Keynote Address • Jennifer Valiulis, Territorial Chief of Wildlife of the U.S. Virgin Islands Division of Fish and Wildlife	CMUBS – Lecture Hall
9:45 – 10:00 am	*Break*	
10:00 – 12:00 pm	Concurrent Breakout Sessions (pick one, repeat in afternoon)	
	7. Environment & Natural/Cultural Resources • Lead: Pam Grassmick, Beaver Island Association • Panelists: Mae Wright, Tribal Historic Preservation Officer, Little Traverse Bay Bands of Odawa Indians; and Derek Shiels, Director of Land Stewardship, Little Traverse Conservancy • Topics: environmental quality, land protection, management by Tribal Nations, citizen involvement, more • Location: CMUBS – Lecture Hall	8. Island Economies, Health Care, Emergency Services • Leads: Angel Welke, Island Airways/Air Ambulance and Secretary, Beaver Island Chamber of Commerce, and Ann Partridge, Managing Director at BI Rural Health Center • Topics: tourism, health clinic, resale shop, Emergency Services Authority, preparedness, storm recovery • Location: CMUBS – classroom
12:00 – 1:00 pm	Group Lunch	CMUBS – Dining Room

1:00 – 3:00 pm	Concurrent Breakout Sessions (repeated)	
	9. Environment & Natural/Cultural Resources • Lead: Pam Grassmick, Beaver Island Association • Panelists: Mae Wright, Tribal Historic Preservation Officer, Little Traverse Bay Bands of Odawa Indians; and Derek Shiels, Director of Land Stewardship, Little Traverse Conservancy • Topics: environmental quality, land protection, management by Tribal Nations, citizen involvement, more • Location: CMUBS – Lecture Hall	10. Island Economies, Health Care, Emergency Services • Leads: Angel Welke, Island Airways/Air Ambulance and Secretary, Beaver Island Chamber of Commerce, and Ann Partridge, Managing Director at BI Rural Health Center • Topics: tourism, health clinic, resale shop, Emergency Services Authority, preparedness, storm recovery • Location: CMUBS – classroom
3:00 – 3:15 pm	*Break*	
3:15 – 4:00 pm	Reconvene for Group Discussion • What did you learn? • What solutions or ideas can you provide from your island? • What could GLIA do to support islands in this space?	CMUBS – Lecture Hall
4:00 – 6:00 pm	Networking/free time. Optional tour of CMU Bio station. Shuttles back/forth CMU to town – optional stops at nature preserve, transfer station, medical center.	
6:00 – 7:30 pm	Group Dinner	CMUBS – Dining Room
7:30 pm -	Evening gathering (open to the broader community) • Live musical entertainment: Cindy Gillespie-Cushman (vocals, traditional Irish bodhrán drum), Ruby John (fiddle), Hilary Palmer (vocals), Rita Palmer (guitar)	CMUBS – deck and beach (weather dependent)

Wednesday, September 24

Time	Session	Location
8:00 – 9:00 am	Rolling Breakfast • Catering by Central Michigan University	Beaver Island Community Center (BIC Center) – auditorium
9:00 – 11:00 am	Summit Wrap Up (Matt, Angel, Philip, others) • Group reflections, questions, discussion • GLIA Looking Forward • Participant survey • Next steps • Group photo	BIC Center – auditorium
11:00 am	Summit Adjourns	
	Check-out hotels Explore on your own! Ferry departure 1:20pm (planes variable)	

Thank you for joining us! Safe travels home!

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https://GLIAlliance.org

Appendix D: Breakout Session Summaries

2025 Great Lakes Islands Summit
Environment and Natural Resources Breakout Session

Tuesday, September 23, 2025

10:00 a.m.-Noon and repeated 1:00-3:00 p.m.

Pam Grassmick, Lead, Beaver Island Association pgrassmick@gmail.com
Dave Case, Facilitator, Beaver Island dave@djcase.com

- ***Research on Great Lakes Islands***. Kevin Pangle, Central Michigan University Biological Station pangl1k@cmich.edu

  Dr. Kevin Pangle is a professor in the Department of Biology at Central Michigan University and the director of the CMU Biological Station. Dr. Pangle's research focuses on Great Lakes food webs with a particular focus on fisheries. He will present ongoing research and outreach at the station and its connection to the Beaver Island community.

- ***Collaborating on Cultural Resources and Natural Resources***. Mae Wright, Little Traverse Bay Band of Odawa mwright@ltbbodawa-nsn.gov

  Mae Wright is the Tribal Historic Preservation Officer (THPO) for the Little Traverse Bay Band of Odawa Indians, a role where she oversees the tribe's efforts to protect and manage its cultural and historic resources. As the THPO, Wright's responsibilities include managing programs related to historic preservation, with an official designation approved by the National Park Service. Also, as the THPO, she is responsible for the administration of any or all of the functions of a State Historic Preservation Officer (SHPO) with respect to Tribal land.

- ***Tools and Strategies for Land Conservation***. Derek Shields, Little Traverse Conservancy derek@landtrust.org

Derek Shiels is the Director of Land Stewardship at Little Traverse Conservancy, where he leads a team of 10 and many more volunteers to care for over 26,000 acres spread across five northern Michigan counties and at least 12 different islands in the Great Lakes. Derek has biology degrees, fundraising and leadership certificates, and has been active in his community serving as a city councilmember for the past five years. Derek will talk about the role a local land conservancy plays in Great Lakes islands conservation. He will highlight some of the Conservancy's past experiences with land protection and stewardship.

- ***Natural Resources as Economic Drivers on Great Lakes Islands***. Greg Larson, Beaver Island Association greglarsonarchitect@gmail.com

  Greg is President of the Beaver Island Association (BIA). Greg's presentation will focus on the direct link the BIA sees between natural resources and the economic vitality of the island. He will review some of the successful initiatives and provide recommendations for other islands.

- ***Invasive Species Threats to Island Ecosystems***. Cheryl Kern, Invasive Species Administrator, Peaine Township, Beaver Island cherylkernbi@gmail.com

  Cherly is the Invasive Species Administrator for Peaine Township here on Beaver Island. Cheryl will talk about experiences on Beaver Island managing invasive species and dealing with the potential threats to ecosystems. She will identify challenges and make recommendations for other Great Lakes island communities dealing with invasive species.

Great Lakes Islands Alliance-2025 Summit on Beaver Island, Michigan

Summary of Breakout Panel Discussion:

Topic: Environment and Natural Resources-Collaboration

SUB-TOPICS: Island preservation of cultural and natural resources, Great Lakes fisheries, Island Bio-stations, tools and strategies for conservation, economic drivers, threats to island ecosystems from invasive species.

Handouts: Bios of speakers with contact information and Greg Larsen's Beaver Island Association summary of Mission Statement and brief history of projects.

Panel members were asked to:

Think about the important work that you do that may be transferrable to the larger audience.
Why is your work on islands important?
How is your island work different from everywhere else you work?
Examples of successes
Notable challenges or pitfalls and how to avoid them…recommendations for other islanders.

Two-two hour sessions were well attended and facilitated by Dave Case. Dave began with a brief background of his work in 1980 for the National Park Service on North Manitou Island studying the deer population. He went on to explain his work with the USFWS and *The Nature of Americans* which studied the importance of nature on health and emotional well-being. He explained that the effect of islands on people is like “being exposed to nature on steroids’.

Kevin Pangle, Director of Central Michigan University's Bio-station (CMUBS) began with an overview of Beaver Island's facility which covers 500 acres and three properties. Between May and September of 2025, they hosted 871 guests from 84 different groups with a peak day of 96 guests. The cafeteria was identified as a challenge to accommodate the food needs of so many guests. He commented on how the island made a wonderful laboratory and the synergy of science with the arts proved to be particularly fruitful for students and faculty. He described CMU's efforts with the bi-national Great Lakes Acoustical Telemetry Observation Center. GLATOS helps to improve the understanding of fish migration and naturally functioning systems. He identified successes as: using student research to address community issues through internships in invasive species or studying water quality in the harbor, micro plastics impacts in waterways, and island’s trail use by wildlife and humans. He felt that the bio station was a good return on investment as it is used for joint research by Eastern Michigan University, Northern Michigan University, Grand Valley, and Kalamazoo College. Challenges included remoteness and higher costs of travel and expenses. Lack of reliable high speed internet also complicated research and class activity. Kevin offered an example of hosting a group of nuclear physicists from around the world and the challenges of logistics coming to Beaver Island. He explained his work with the Little Traverse Band of Odawas biologists in understanding the inversion of the aquatic food web in Lake Michigan. He went on to state that Lake herring or Cisco was non-existent a few years ago and it is now making a comeback while whitefish remain down. Kevin expressed an interest in collaborating with other field stations such as Stone Lab in Lake Erie.

Mae Wright, Tribal Historic Preservation Officer (THPO) for the Little Traverse Bay Bands of Odawas formally introduced herself in Anishinaabemowin and as a woman from the Bear Clan. Mae explained the various treaties and that the present THPO position was established in 2016 by the National Park Service. She represents one of the twelve federally recognized tribal nations in Michigan. Mae described her various functions as the Tribal Historic Preservation Officer and how as a one person office she often collaborates to reclaim art work and artifacts from museums or repatriate elders with the tribe. She gave examples of support systems to help in her work. One such organization was the National Association of Tribal Historic Preservation Officers which is a non-profit and they consult on various projects. She also regularly interacts

with the Enviromental Protection Agency on issues important the LTBB such as Line 5. Mae explained the importance of story telling along with language revitalization and preservation through on-line classes, labelling household items, or providing coloring books. She stressed the importance of relationships between the elders teachings in giving context to their tribal history along with a better understanding of natural and cultural resources. She gave an example of the importance to the tribe of sturgeon in an 1845 document. She felt her communities challenges mirrored that of islands such as expense of transportation, lack of affordable housing, and health care.

Derek Shield is the Director of Land Stewardship at the Little Traverse Conservancy (LTC). They work in five counties in Michigan on eighteen different islands. LTC has a staff of twenty two. Derek commented that protecting land can be for various reasons and focus on local matters including water quality, trails, forest management, hunting, views, farming, and general recreation. LTC currently manages 26,000 acres and 120 miles of trails. He explained how nature was good for local economies and went on to explain LTC's work with the Aldo Leopold Festival in Hessel/Les Cheneaux Islands. The organization is funded primarily though private donations. Easements are the largest tool and they have a qualitative and trend score when prioritizing which land to protect. LTC has recently completed a universally accessible trail on Lake Michigan which will increase the capacity for those with mobility issues. He spoke of collaboration with the Land Trust Alliance and how local master plans and planning surveys assist with prioritizing local land acquisitions. He explained a program called ECAR which stand for Ecological Conditions and Response Program which is applied to 27,000 acres. He presented an example on one of Beaver Island's nature preserves. Their staff identifies, records, and develops a plan for the unique and special natural features found on a preserve or easement and also identifies threats such as invasive species. Derek discussed the beneficial impact of open spaces on tourism, especially during covid, and during the recovery from the 2025 ice storm. He felt the use and enjoyment of these open spaces far exceeded the impact to the tax roll.

Greg Larson began the session with how the Beaver Island Association (BIA) has focused on the economic and ecological vitality of the community since 1986. What began as a organization to give voice to non-voting property owners has morphed into a group of year round and seasonal residents collaborating with various governmental agencies, tribal entities, and funding sources to preserve and promote Beaver Island. It has a 501 (c) 3 status. He showcased several successful initiatives such as the birding, waterways trail, International Dark Sky Sanctuary, and early efforts in invasive species control. He spoke of other programs that included workforce housing, championing Advanced Life Support and air ambulance services, and high speed internet. Refer to handout. He shared challenges related to maintaining programs long term and funding capacity of a small island. The strength of the organization lies in tapping knowledgeable passionate residents. Kitty McNamara during the reconvening for group discussion commented on the importance of having an organization such as the BIA in an island community to compliment and assist townships and other organizations.

Cheryl Kern is the Peaine Township Invasive Species Coordinator. She gave a brief overview of the importance for prevention and early detection of invasive species along with a rapid response plan for islands. According to the USFWS islands account for 80% of documented species loss. Invasive species include non-native plants, animals, insects, and disease. The impacts extend to agriculture, local communities, public health, and cultural heritage and often are introduced by human activity. The economic impact to small island communities could be devastating related to interior lakes fisheries, timber, or property values. She described the island's wood ordinance to prevent forest pests along with the invasive species intern program between Central Michigan University and the townships. Cheryl identified challenges such as weather, adequate funding, small work pool, working in isolated areas, and coordinating with mainland groups. She also spoke of successful efforts which included community education and engaged property owners. The need to strengthen partnerships with other islands to address mutual needs was a recommendation from Cheryl.

Dave Case closed the panel discussion with a reflection on community and agency "sparks" which relates to improving the understanding of who gets involved and why some projects are more successful than others. Keys to successful projects are identifying those "sparks" in your island community.

Beaver Island Association

BIA Mission Statement

The mission of this organization shall be to:

- Represent the combined interests of our membership on issues of mutual concern that may the fundamental character of Beaver Island
- Support the preservation of the natural resources and beauty of Beaver Island and appropriate environmental conservation policies and/or methods.
- Work with local governmental units in support of property owners' shared perspectives, concerns and investments.
- Foster and support economic growth that consistent with the preservation of the natural of Beaver Island and the quality of life, which is the reason for our original and continuing attraction to Beaver Island.

BIA Brief History

Our island's many boards and committees have been saturated through the years with BIA board members who care deeply about sustaining the islands' economy and natural resources. Board members participate with the development of Beaver Island's first and continued Master Plans, Recreational Plans, Recommendations for Beaver Islands Natural Resources, Northern Lake Michigan Islands Collaborative, and numerous other NGO, tribal, township, county, state and federal planning meetings.

- Worked to establish state funding for a waste recycling transfer station on Beaver Island following the closure of the dump site.
- Ensured proper land use planning with the removal of a proposed Lake Geneserath site condo
- Championed the establishment of the EMS and air-ambulance service.
- 2007: Began the invasive species program with state, federal, and tribal partners, changing state policies to allow for shoreline treatment of phragmites.
- Great Lakes Islands Alliance existence was facilitated by BIA with the first meeting held in 2017 with 16 year-round Great Lakes Islands participating producing the Great Lakes Unbridged Island Communities Project.
- Participated in Michigan Public Service Commission's Lansing discussions to eliminate electric fee charges associated with the building of the island's power plant.
- Worked with numerous non-profits and governmental agencies to secure funding for scientific studies, protection of threatened and endangered species, and ensure appropriate local and state planning and policies.
- Established and continuing to lead the high speed internet initiative.
- Established and continues to lead a Workforce Housing Initiative.
- Engaged the USDA with EAB monitoring, resulting in parasitoid releases since 2018 on Beaver and Garden Islands to ensure forest health. Currently one of three sites in the state of Michigan.
- Established the Beaver Island Birding Trail & Water trail
- Lead establishment of Beaver Island as an International Dark Sky Sanctuary.
- Initiated Taskforce to address island blight

Please don’t hesitate to reach out to any BIA Board Member participating in GLIA 2025 for more information on any of our past and/or present initiatives

Great Lakes Islands Alliance – 2025 Summit on Beaver Island, Michigan

Summary of Panel Discussion:

TOPIC: Island Economies, Health Care, Emergency Services - Cooperation

SUB-TOPICS: Tourism, Health clinic, Resale shop, Emergency Services Authority (BIESA), Preparedness, Storm recovery

Sessions opened with a brief introduction of what was to be covered, introduction of Beaver Islanders in the room and their role(s) on the Island, introduction of moderator, and explanation that a formal presentation was not prepared but the entire time would be Q&A. Questions about issues on other islands and hopefully answers with some guidance to solutions or additional information on the topic.

Both sessions started with a discussion of what cooperation looked like on Beaver Island. The idea of the "Discover Beaver Island" group of committed Islanders who met to tackle lagging economy, add robust events, extend shoulder seasons, and more. From Discover Beaver Island, the Beaver Island Irish Heritage Group (BIIHG) was formed and now hosts the Emerald Island Irish Feile in September. This accomplished multiple goals of extending the summer season, adding cultural exposure of the Irish connection on Beaver Island, and providing an economic boost to the Island economy.

This introduction started the conversation in both sessions. The following topics were discussed:

- Calendar meetings – Islanders meeting all winter to establish an island wide calendar of EVERY event to reduce "over booking" events.
- Discover Beaver Island – discussed the strength of rebranding. Another example from Jen in St. Croix "Reimagine St. Croix"
- COVID travel issues were discussed. BI campaign "We Will Leave the Lighthouse on For You." This phrase is still used during the winter season when summer residents miss the Island or in the spring to encourage visitors. The lighthouse is on for you.
- Collaboration among islands. Examples given were me visiting Mackinac Island to give a GLIA introduction at a library house party. Philip is attending a conference at the Great Lakes maritime museum. GLIA and CSIN worked together on virtual hill visits where island issues were discussed at length with legislators.
- How to deal with "bad" (rule breaking) visitors: The BI good visitor guide was discussed at length.
- Other Discover Beaver Island efforts: birding trail, dark sky designation, water trail

- How to encourage economic growth while maintaining pristine natural resources. Education, good visitor guide.
- The importance of strategic planning was brought up in both sessions. GLIA is developing a webinar and / or planning session on this for attendees.
- Youth – both sessions included lively discussions of the need for youth involvement in island happenings, education, organizations like GLIA. GLIA is looking at several ways to tackle this need – education, webinars, cooperative events like the GLIA basketball tournament are a great first step.
- Youth Advisory Committee – extensive discussion of the possibility of this on all or some islands.
- Education was one of the most important topics discussed. There are several members of the education community working on updates, programs, and additional information on this urgent topic.
- Ideas shared:
    - Wil "Be the dripping faucet" to keep focus on issues and get funding.
    - Janet – strategic planning is the key to taking organizations to the next level
    - Janet – history kiosk at the school
    - Washington Island – "Vision 2040" to plan for what is to come on the island.
    - Create a vision
    - GLIA house parties – a way to encourage more participation on each island. Let by a member of the Steering Committee or by active GLIA members on each island
    - The Island Pledge – written by Beaver Island school kids about the importance of stewardship of Beaver Island
    - The good visitors guide – Beaver Island Chamber of Commerce education program for visitors
    - Dental program in schools – Beaver Island, Mackinac Island, Elks funding
    - E-bike issues including fire fighting issues

Conclusion:

The theme of collaboration was put in action during these two sessions. Every attendee participated either by asking questions or offering solutions. It was seeing the GLIA Mission in action. *GLIA Mission: to encourage relationship building, foster information exchange, and leverage resources to address shared challenges and embrace opportunities to benefit islands.* These sessions were just the beginning of many discussions, information exchanges, and cooperation to come in the future.

Beaver Island Arts and Culture Breakout Summary · Monday, September 22

A field trip group explored how arts and culture are preserved, interpreted, and shared on Beaver Island through three distinctive museum experiences, each offering a different lens on island identity, creativity, and community memory.

Stop 1: Beaver Island Historical Society Headquarters, Print Shop Museum

The tour began at the Beaver Island Historical Society's main headquarters, the Print Shop Museum, where the group was welcomed by Lori Taylor Blitz, Executive Director of the Beaver Island Historical Society, and Carol Burton, Executive Director of Patrons of the Arts in Rural Communities. Together, they framed the visit around a core idea: arts and culture are not add-ons to island life, they are essential tools for storytelling, education, and belonging and are integral to life on Beaver Island.

As the Historical Society's primary museum site, the Print Shop Museum serves as a broad interpretive hub for Beaver Island history, with exhibits that span the island's Indigenous presence, the King Strang era, early Irish life and heritage, and other rotating themes that reflect community stories and change over time. A highlight for arts and culture audiences is the prominent display of Zoltan Sepeshy's WPA era mural *Hauling in the Net*, a New Deal public art commission created in 1940. The mural connects Beaver Island to a wider American legacy of federally supported public art, while also resonating locally through its maritime themes and the Great Lakes cultural landscape.

The museum also emphasizes community engagement through rotating exhibits, educational programming, and access to historical collections. A new exhibit on display, "Gutsy Women of Beaver Island" highlighted historic female leadership that shaped island history over the years. To close the visit, participants received a keepsake tote bag with museum souvenirs and brochures etc.

Stop 2: Beaver Island Marine Museum

The group then visited the Beaver Island Marine Museum, housed in a historic net shed built in 1906 on St. James Harbor. This museum focuses on the island's maritime heritage, particularly commercial fishing, shipbuilding, shipping, and diving traditions that shaped Beaver Island's economy and daily life.

Exhibits interpret the working waterfront through fishing equipment, vessel histories, shipwreck artifacts, and stories of the people whose livelihoods depended on Lake Michigan. The Marine Museum's purpose is to preserve and interpret the island's deep relationship with the water and to highlight how maritime labor and ingenuity helped form Beaver Island's cultural identity. Staff was available on site to answer questions about exhibits, which featured historical artifacts, information about shipwrecks and other historic events, and several vessels currently undergoing restoration that visitors could explore inside.

Stop 3: Toy Museum

The final stop was the Toy Museum, a compact but memorable cultural space and storefront known for its dense and playful displays of historic toys. Visitors encounter collections of vintage toys, including toy trucks suspended overhead and other nostalgic objects that capture everyday childhood experiences from past generations.

Although informal in nature, the Toy Museum contributes meaningfully to the island's cultural landscape by preserving material culture that reflects daily life, personal collecting, and shared memories. The museum owner, local artist Mary Scholl, was on site to greet visitors and answer questions. She also welcomed the group to a second building on the property where her extensive collection of original fine art was on display and for sale.

Overall Takeaway

Together, the three museum visits offered a layered view of arts and culture on Beaver Island. From federally supported public art and formal historical interpretation, to maritime heritage and grassroots collections that celebrate nostalgia and play, the field trip highlighted how island communities preserve identity through objects, stories, and shared spaces.

Great Lakes Islands Alliance—2025 Summit on Beaver Island, Michigan

Island Education—Opportunities, Challenges, and Solutions
Breakout Session Summary

Considering the topic of education broadly, this breakout session specifically involved two elements of Island education:1) libraries that serve as opportunities for all Island residents to access information, 2) public schools that serve to meet the educational needs of Island students and their families. The breakout session involved a visit to (and a presentation by the staff of) the Beaver Island District Library and a tour of the Beaver Island Community School (BICS). After the BICS tour, session attendees engaged in a robust discussion about the strengths, opportunities, challenges facing Island schools, and then shared solutions based on their experiences with Island education across the entire Great Lakes basin.

The Beaver Island District Library (BIDL) has been serving the residents and visitors of Beaver Island for over thirty years. The BIDL is funded through a combination of property taxes, private contributions, foundation and government grants, and sales of used books. Located a short walk (75 paces) from the Beaver Island Community School, the BIDL serves as the BICS school library with students utilizing the BIDL's resources throughout the school day. From the larger community education perspective, the BIDL provides a sponsors a variety of activities and services including access to a nation-wide interlibrary loan system, free internet access, family literacy activities, author visits, summer programs, and a community meeting space.

The BICS tour included learning about the academic programs and extra-curricular activities that serve the 57 PK-12th grade students that attend Beaver Island Community School. After the tour, BICS Superintendent-Principal Wilfred Cwikiel facilitated a "brainstorming/focus group" discussion that explored a series of questions about Island education. The questions as well as a summary of the participants' responses are provided below.

What role to Islands school play in their communities?
Island schools serve as the community's heart: educating and preparing young people, supporting families, sustaining year-round island life, and offering childcare and resources. They are central gathering places for cultural events, sports, meals, and friendship. They build identity, reduce isolation, foster pride, and connect generations while helping students succeed locally or beyond.

How are Island schools viewed by their community members?
Islanders are proud of their schools, viewing them as vital centers of learning and community. They offer safety, close relationships, and strong academics, yet face limited resources and opportunities. Communities value them as economic drivers, gathering hubs, and pathways to futures, while still wanting greater access, programming, guidance, and equity for all residents.

What are the strengths of Island schools?
Great Lakes Island schools offer strong community connection, dedicated staff, small class sizes, and personalized learning. They provide AP and online dual enrollment options, robust arts, athletics, trades, preschool, and field-based programs. Strong parent involvement, intergenerational engagement, cultural inclusion, and community partnerships create a supportive

and safe environment. Sound facilities, quality teachers, and conscientious leadership reinforce student opportunities, pride, and a shared sense of belonging.

What are the specific challenges that Island schools face across the Great Lakes?
Like mainland schools, schools that serve students living on Great Lakes Islands face many challenges. Island schools face declining enrollment, housing shortages for staff and families, and limited childcare. Funding constraints affect services, advanced courses, arts, and extracurriculars. Isolation reduces social diversity and networking. Weather disrupts schedules, and staffing, guidance, and mental health needs strain resources. Bullying, phones, substance use, and limited career pathways challenge student well-being, retention, and community sustainability.

What are the current solutions that Island schools have used to address these challenges, and do these point to future opportunities offered by Island schools?
Great Lakes Island schools are uniquely situated to expand place-based learning through internships with local businesses, nature centers, and university field station programs. They can strengthen mentorship networks, foster Island-Island teacher exchanges, and create adult education offerings. Arts, cultural history, and CTE/work-based learning programs enrich student experiences, while remote location offers unique real-world, community-connected learning rooted in the Island's environment and history.

In what ways can GLIA help to address thorny challenges, meet unmet needs, or expand upon successful solutions?
The goal for this session was for participants to walk away with a greater understanding of Island education and possible ways for Great Lakes Islanders to collaborate to ensure that Island students and their families have access to an education that is rigorous, equitable, engaging, supportive, and impactful. As the unifying convenor and collective voice of the Great Lakes Islands, GLIA is well situated help address challenges and amplify solutions. Ideas for GLIA leadership to consider include facilitating teacher exchanges between Island schools, developing a mentorship program to help retain Island teachers, planning and hosting a Great Lakes Island Teachers Summer Academy, preparing a "white paper" that captures the state of Great Lakes Island Education in the U.S. and Canada, establishing a GLIA Youth Advisory Council (YAC) that would provide guidance to GLIA on the needs of youth, and creating a repository for information sharing about internships, work-based learning, and adult learning opportunities.

Great Lakes Islands Alliance – 2025 Summit on Beaver Island, Michigan
Summary of Panel Discussion and Tour: Community Housing Collaboration

Panel Discussion: Two one-hour panel sessions were held, hosted by Bobbi Welke, St. James Township Supervisor/Beaver Island Association (BIA) Housing Taskforce member, and Vince Ebersoldt, Architect and Housing Developer. Community housing initiatives were discussed included:

- Forest View, an existing senior housing community (rental units; 2 two-bedrooms and 4 one-bedroom units),
- The Juniper, a nearly completed, Michigan State Housing Development Authority (MSHDA) 'MI Neighborhoods' Grant supported workforce housing community (rental units, 12 one-bedroom units at 560 sft),
- A developing project on 15 available acres,
- Beaver Island Association's Housing Taskforce, and
- Beaver Island Land Use and Sustainable Housing

Given the uniqueness of The Juniper project, most of the conversation was about this development. The panelists shared the project details with a focus on the cost control importance of utilizing customized prefabricated modular units plus covered project challenges, solutions, and lessons learned. Remote island housing development is indeed challenging and funding is even more challenging.

The second phase of The Juniper project will likely include two-bedroom customized prefabricated modular units, but project commencement is contingent upon the success of the first phase and adequate funding availability.

The key lesson learned was the need for financial support to make a new project sustainable. There is an opportunity for Michigan Islands to discuss changes in grant funding from the Michigan State Housing Development Authority (MSHDA). These changes would support Island housing needs and costs as they consider their October 2026 grant cycle. There was some discussion about a GLIA-wide housing conference.

Housing Field Trip: Two 40-minute tours were held. Three vans were used to transport participants from the BIC Center to tour The Juniper and then travel by Forest View. The Juniper tour was interesting with participants visiting one of the 12 units. The modular plan and construction details were shared.

Collaboration in Action: The BIA Housing Taskforce will be developing a BI Housing Plan, which will be shared with interested island officials. The Juniper housing plans were shared with those having this interest.

The panelists shared that we would like to work with MSHDA to see if the proposed Michigan Island/MSHDA session could be come a Great Lake Island Housing Conference so we can learn about best practices from all the states and provinces that GLIA represents. On 10/16/25, MSHDA officials offered to participate in such a conference knowing that housing officials from the other states/provinces would need to be involved.

Appendix E: Survey Results

GREAT LAKES ISLANDS ALLIANCE

Great Lakes Islands Summit 2025 – Survey Summary

Overall Participation

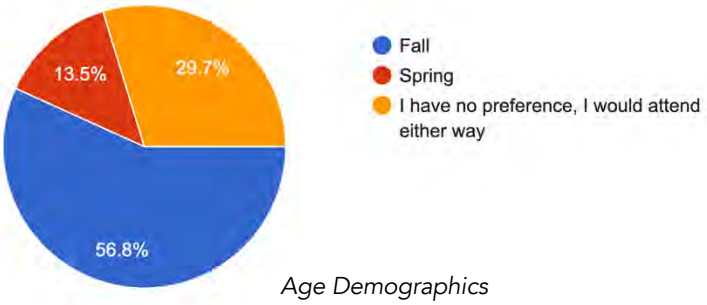
- 92% plan to attend again in the future.
- 97% learned something new they'll apply in their community.

Perceived Value

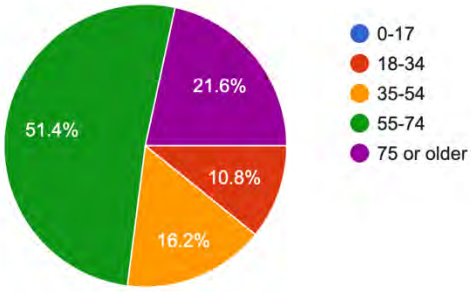
- 100% of participants indicated they found it valuable or extremely valuable.
- Sessions were described as highly valuable both personally and professionally.
- Top benefits: collaboration, networking, shared learning.
- Breakout sessions & networking opportunities were mentioned most frequently.
- Attendees strongly prefer interactive and small-group learning formats.

Timing & Format Preferences

- Preferred format: In-person (23), Unsure (11), Virtual (2).
- Summit is strongly valued as an **in-person fall** event.
- A majority of attendees cited quality and **value of the content** as the most important deciding factor, not location or convenience.



Age Demographics



Attendee Profile

- 75% have attended a Summit before.
- 78% are full-time island residents.
- 73% have lived on their island 10+ years.

Comments & Feedback Themes

- Desire for more unstructured time and exploration.
- Requests for broader breakout diversity (youth, environment, economy).
- Strong appreciation for host island and local programs.

Takeaways / Recommendations

- Maintain and expand breakout sessions.
- Preserve in-person fall schedule.
- Potentially include more free time for local experiences.

View all results and comments here
https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLScMBXAxS_rxI0BSWMKiXyw0XYU3ftUAJ_AFirzj8BBv4ccN3A/viewanalytics