

ISLAND CURRENTS

Beaver Island Association Newsletter - Winter 2011
Supporting Environmental & Economic Sustainability

PERMACULTURE ON BEAVER ISLAND: Building Community Independence in Changing Times

No one likes hearing this, but it's time to have an adult conversation. Beaver Island will face some never-before-seen challenges in years to come. They revolve around oil: specifically, the phenomenon known as "peak oil," which refers to the point at which global production of oil will not meet worldwide demand. Many experts suggest we already have passed the peak of conventional oil production, which is why energy companies are shifting to other means of energy production such as tar sand extraction, mountain top removal and natural gas "fracking."

So why does this matter to independent minded, nature praising Island homeowners? It matters because fossil fuels touch every aspect of our lives. Energy, food, travel, communication and finance are all dependent on massive amounts of cheap fossil fuels, primarily petroleum. Many astute consumers have already realized that when the cost of oil goes up, the cost of living on earth goes up. Add last year's Gulf of Mexico oil spill and Michigan's own pipeline spill near Kalamazoo, and we have more than enough reasons to get off fossil fuels.

The exact nature and timeline of peak oil are debated extensively throughout industry and academia, and I encourage you to do your own research on the topic. However, when the United States, German, and English militaries all produce independent reports on the distinct possibility of worldwide oil shortages in the next several years (as they did last summer), it's time to pay attention. (See <http://cleantechnica.com>.)

The good news in this scenario is that peak oil has been on the radar of one group of problem solvers for years. Collectives from all over the world have begun designing and implementing solutions to our dependence on fossil fuels, and their important work is yielding noteworthy results. Much of this new work is being done in sustainable agriculture, renewable energy, alternative fuels, and believe it or not, community building. This emerging field is known as *Permaculture*, and it's spreading across the world.

That's because Permaculture (short for Permanent-Culture) is becoming the definitive design methodology in the transition to a sustainable planet. Now I realize "sustainable" is a loaded word these days, and has been overused often. But I believe it is still a good descriptor as long as we agree on a common meaning. The definition I propose is this: In order for any system to be truly sustainable, it must *produce* more than it *consumes*. It's that simple.

Permaculturists design systems that produce more than they consume, to create human settlements that are self-sufficient and regenerative. Another key to Permaculture design is emphasis on small scale, intensive systems. An individual home is a great place to start, but ideally we would design solutions for a community of homes based on their common needs. Permaculture systems take into account and integrate energy and food production, water use, building materials, transportation fuels and waste disposal. Imagine all of your basic needs being produced and provided for locally, without the use of

fossil fuels. These projects also invigorate local economies and create new jobs. Perhaps best of all, Permaculture design not only works to maintain healthy ecosystems, it actually restores damaged environments back to natural balance.

It didn't take long for me to realize that Beaver Island is an ideal place for Permaculture, so I brought some of my staff and students to the Island this past summer. We began installing a perennial food forest, earth oven, and timber processing station on our South End property. We took preliminary data and began designing a hybrid wind and solar system to provide for our home's energy, heat and hot water needs. We began looking at the beach algae accumulation we've been having as a potential source of Ethanol, a fuel that could replace the petroleum we use in our car. This is all well and good, but alone it's not enough, which is why we started talking with our neighbors.

We agreed that it is time to turn this adult conversation into a community dialogue. It's time to come together and start taking responsibility for our collective island needs, rather than continue helpless dependence on foreign, petroleum-based sources of energy and food. There is still much discussion, listening, and learning to be done. Hopefully, we can begin a sincere dialogue on community based energy systems, and what they might look like in practice, and I encourage you to support and join this emerging dialogue with your ideas, thoughts, and goals.

Here's a short list of steps Island homeowners can take to begin implementing Permaculture:

Permaculture on BI, continued:

Reevaluate your relationship with energy. Have a home energy audit and become familiar with your home heating, cooling, hot water and cooking systems.

Start planting fruit and nut trees around your property. Permaculture systems are based on perennial food production. The idea is to mimic a natural forest system, which can be left alone for long periods and still produce large quantities of edibles and other useful resources.

Begin investigating which types of renewable energy systems will work for you, and keep an open mind. Wind, solar, biomass and perhaps most important, efficiency and conservation, all can play big roles in Beaver Island's future. In Permaculture, we build systems that are resilient, meaning we have back-ups. The more ways you have to heat and cook, the better you'll sleep at night.

Always look for opportunities to collaborate with other Islanders. Get together and buy solar panels at group-reduced bulk cost. Start a community, school or church garden. Begin an inventory of community resources and a neighborhood tool sharing group. Put up inexpensive hoop houses in open space and grow food all year long (even on BI!). Start a Permaculture book club. Buy food from Island growers and gather folks together for a locally grown meal every so often. In years to come, we may find that *community* is our most important renewable resource.

-Nathan Ayers

[Nathan is founder/head designer of Chiwara Permaculture Design in Ann Arbor. He has come to his family's South End cottage for 25+ years and hopes to retire there when that time comes. Reach him at nate@chiwarapermaculture.com]

BIA 2011 ANNUAL MEETING

Please mark your calendars for Monday, July 11, 2011, for this summer's BIA Annual Meeting.

WILDLIFE REPORT

PHRAGMITES UPDATE: This past summer we asked for volunteer phragmites beach monitors. We had 46 people volunteer their time to survey the beaches for phragmites and then to treat it. On Aug. 25, the DNRE arrived with chemicals and equipment and met with the volunteers to teach them the proper methods for treating. The method involved spraying the chemical onto a cotton glove worn over rubber gloves. Then the swiping method, from bottom to top of the plant, was employed. For most, the beaches had a few sprigs here and there and that method worked well. For some, however, there were larger stands of phragmites where volunteers spent many hours hand swiping (Cable's Bay for instance), or the length of the beach to cover involved significant time. Did I mention we had basically a one day treatment window? That meant we had to cover all the beaches in one day (and a little bit of the following morning). This was not known prior to the arrival of the DNRE, so some worked very long hours attempting to complete their "assigned" beach. The DNRE took care of the state land and Little Traverse Conservancy property at Little Sand Bay and the outer islands including High and Garden. The state also hired a chemical company to treat Hog Island which really needed it! Next spring and summer will tell whether this method worked well enough to continue it or if we need to devise another.

LOON REPORT: It was a bad year for the Common Loon on Beaver Island. We had several nesting pairs and some tried twice, but there were no successful chicks this year. Most disappeared within the first couple of weeks, if the eggs hatched at all. Eagles were the most likely culprit; one observer watched in dismay as an eagle destroyed the nest and eggs at Barney's Lake while the loons watched nearby. Loons re-nested on Font Lake after the loss of eggs in the first

nest, but later abandoned the egg. Fox Lake had a nest, but about the time they should hatch, the eggs disappeared and no chicks were seen.

DEAD BIRDS: A lot of dead birds washed up on the beaches again last summer and fall. Is it Avian Botulism? We don't know. Some loons, freshly dead, were sent to the state toxicology lab. The first report was not avian botulism, but rather selenium poisoning. We haven't heard about the others yet. What are being found on the beaches are Common Loons, White Winged Scoters, Oldsquaws, mergansers and Red Necked Grebes. A few other odds and ends have shown up as well: a goose, gulls, cormorants and other various ducks. People are asked to report them to Jacque LaFreniere and collect fresh (no smell) birds for necropsy. Others can be buried or bagged up and taken to the transfer station.

DEER MANAGEMENT: Peaine and St. James Townships have agreed to support Quality Deer Management on Beaver Island. Both the Beaver Island Wildlife Club and the Beaver Island Conservation Club agree to the basic tenets of the plan, which must be approved by the DNRE. It would include limits of one antlered deer per hunter maximum per year, 3 point minimum on one side (6 point rule), but youth hunting free of these restrictions. The plan will be in effect 2011 through 2015 and will be reviewed at the end of that period.

-Jacque LaFreniere

BEAVER ISLAND PROPERTY TAXES: POINTS TO PONDER

In July 2010 the BIA Board of Directors of the Beaver Island Association reviewed extensive island tax data. The table on the next page summarizes state, county and school district property taxes based on official records from tax year 2009. Township tax levies are tabulated and discussed separately on the page following the first table.

Analysis of 2009 Beaver Island Property Taxes

	<u>Mill Rates</u>	<u>St. James Taxable Value (\$thousands)</u>	<u>Peaine Taxable Value (\$thousands)</u>	<u>Total Taxes Assessed (both townships)</u>
<u>Charlevoix County</u>				
Voted-Separate Millage Limitation	4.7000	47,376	71,613	\$559,250
Voted-Transit	0.2500	47,376	71,613	\$29,747
Voted-Grandview	0.7464	47,376	71,613	\$88,814
Voted-Grandview				
Bond	0.5400	47,376	71,613	\$64,254
Voted-Senior Citizens	0.4000	47,376	71,613	\$47,596
Voted-Recycling	0.1500	47,376	71,613	\$17,848
Voted-Roads	<u>1.0000</u>	47,376	71,613	<u>\$118,989</u>
Sub-total	<u>7.7864</u>	47,376	71,613	<u>\$926,499</u>
<u>School District</u>				
- State Education Tax	6.0000	47,376	71,613	\$713,937
- Debt Retirement	2.0000	47,376	71,613	\$237,979
- Local-non primary residence	15.7908	36,290	57,970	\$1,488,431
- MBT Commercial Residential Property	<u>3.7908</u>	434	234	<u>\$2,535</u>
- sub-total	<u>27.5816</u>			<u>\$2,442,881</u>
<u>Charlevoix-Emmet Intermediate School District</u>				
- Voted-Separate Millage Limitation	0.2000	47,376	71,613	\$23,798
- Voted-Special Education	0.6713	47,376	71,613	\$79,878
- Voted-Special Education	1.1600	47,376	71,613	\$138,028
- Voted-Vocational Education	<u>0.7468</u>	47,376	71,613	<u>\$88,861</u>
- Sub-total	<u>2.7781</u>			<u>\$330,565</u>
<i>Sub-total Schools</i>				<u>\$2,773,446</u>
<u>BI District Library</u>	0.9000	47,376	71,613	\$107,090
<u>Total Taxes Levied 2009</u>	<u>39.0461</u>			<u>\$3,807,036</u>

As these numbers show, Charlevoix County and the state of Michigan together levied property taxes on Beaver Islanders totaling \$3.807 million. One obvious question raised by this data is whether Beaver Islanders receive fair value for the taxes we pay to the County. For example, we paid \$119 thousand to Charlevoix County in 2009 for roads, far more than was spent on BI roads, along with \$153 thousand for the Grandview Nursing Home in East Jordan and \$48 thousand for the county-wide Senior Citizens fund.

A larger issue is education funding, particularly the amount spent on the BI Community School relative to number of students. Total BI school taxes are about \$2.443 million, which is almost \$35,000 per student for an enrollment of 70 children in the Beaver Island Community School, with

slightly over 60% coming from taxes on non-primary residential property.

Owners of many if not most of those properties cannot vote on Beaver Island. This logically can be called “taxation without representation” – not a great situation, as our country’s founders recognized. Shouldn’t all taxpayers be eligible to vote in local school funding elections? This is a question for the State Legislature, of course; but still one worth asking.

Another issue is that capping of taxable values beginning around 1990 has had the result that new construction properties (or any property whose legal ownership changes) are more heavily taxed than older properties of similar assessed value.

It seems likely these tax issues, in conjunction with the poor state of the Michigan economy, have significantly curtailed new investment in BI property and negatively affected property

values and island service businesses, including real estate and construction organizations, many of which have closed or left Beaver Island in the last several years. The Beaver Island Association would like to hear ideas from members and other interested citizens for dealing with this situation.

In addition to state and county taxes, there are interesting issues related to township taxes. The taxes levied by Peaine and St. James Townships (not the state or county) represent only about 20% of total Beaver Island property taxes. It is interesting to look at the differences between St. James and Peaine Township millage rates and tax amounts (note these refer only to the local taxes levied by the two townships for Beaver Island operations, not Charlevoix County or the state of Michigan), as shown in the table below.

TOWNSHIP PROPERTY VALUES, MILLAGE & TAX REVENUES			
	<u>St. James TWP</u>	<u>Peaine Twp.</u>	<u>Total</u>
Taxable Value	\$47,376,283	\$71,613,160	\$118,989,443
Township Millage	<u>St. James TWP</u>	<u>Peaine TWP</u>	<u>Weighted Average (39.8%/60.2%)</u>
- Voted-Separate Mileage Limitation	0.9502	0.8100	0.8658
- Voted-Operational**	2.8500	1.5000	2.0375
- Voted Fire Protection	0.9713	0.6426	0.7735
- Voted-Transfer Station	1.5345	1.0152	1.2220
- Voted-Medical Center	1.9426	1.8420	1.8821
- Voted-Roads	1.8458	0.8797	1.2644
- Voted-EMS**	1.0000	0.6615	0.7963
- Voted-Historical Society**	0.2363	0.1563	0.1882
- Voted-Airport	<u>0.9227</u>	<u>0.6104</u>	<u>0.7347</u>
- sub-total	<u>12.2534</u>	<u>8.1178</u>	<u>9.7644</u>
Tax From Current Millage	\$ 580,521	\$ 581,341	\$ 1,161,862

****adjusted: Peaine does not have a separate mileage for EMS or the Historical Society but matches St. James dollars from its Operational millage.**

Tax Issues to Ponder, continued:

In summary, the Taxable Value of property in Peaine (\$71.6 million) is 51% higher than St. James (\$47.4 million). In order to raise the same revenue, St. James levies a millage 51% higher than Peaine. As a result, both townships raise approximately \$581 thousand to support local operations. Both townships levy approximately the same millage to support the Rural Health Center, but they contribute

equal *dollar* amounts to support the Transfer Station, Airport, EMS, Fire Protection and the Historical Society. The result is that property owners with properties of equal taxable value pay more for such services in St. James than Peaine. Also St. James, with more paved roads, spends more on road maintenance and town operations than does Peaine. While the percentage difference is large (51%), total dollars involved are less so. If millage rates were equalized in

the townships by weighted average property owners in Peaine would see an annual increase of \$169 for each \$100,000 of taxable value (\$200,000 assessed value) and St. James property owners would see a \$249 annual decrease. Since the services provided are the same, doesn't a single island-wide millage rate for township services and operations support make sense?

-Peter Igoe

ROADS REPAVING AND MAINTENANCE INITIATIVE

Virtually all island residents, full-time or seasonal, and vacation visitors have opinions on the condition of our roads. The Board of Directors of the Beaver Island Association is pursuing an advocacy role on behalf of our membership to support improving the condition of the roads we all rely on for transportation.

The road subject could encompass both paving and maintenance. The issue of paving versus gravel road surfaces has strong opinions on both sides, but is beyond the scope of the Association initiative. The cost of any additional road paving upgrades is substantial, and would require financing support that would likely need a bond issue at the township level, with local taxes to pay off the debt. Repaving and maintenance of our existing roads, however, is an area where individual citizens and organizations can exert influence.

First, the subject of re-paving, specifically repaving of King's Highway: this falls under the authority of the Charlevoix County Road Commission. The Road Commission is overseen by a manager and a three member Board that determines the allocation of county paving funds. Any asphalt paving on Beaver Island is a

major undertaking because of the logistics and cost of materials, mixing and application equipment, and work crew, so scheduling more work to be done along with the highway project lowers the unit cost for all involved.

The next repaving of King's Highway is planned to be done in conjunction with paving projects at the public airport, but the timing is uncertain because of the dispute over the value of the property acquired on the west side of the airport. Depending on the settlement of this issue, funding may get used that was intended for the paving projects. Hopefully this will be resolved in a manner that will allow the paving to proceed as early as 2012 or 2013. One way we can help this along is by identifying other private paving projects that could be done at the same time. If any BIA members have been thinking about a paving project (driveway, parking area, tennis court), contact one of the Board members and we will make sure it is included in the list compiled by the townships.

The second area our Association can influence is maintenance of our existing roads. Much dialogue has occurred on the subject of grading and dust control (see the Spring 2010

Road Commission Newsletter, at: <http://www.charlevoixcounty.org>).

Weather is a major factor, but it is expected that changes to increase clay content in the road gravel mix coupled with application of calcium chloride brine solution should improve dust conditions this year.

An area where our local road crew is limited is grading equipment. In the spring the County sends a road grader to the island to do the initial grading after mud season. The remainder of the summer and fall the only equipment available are truck-mounted grading blades. While the truck blade is effective on many roads (whether a function of gravel mix, traffic and speed levels, road design, shade levels, rain, etc.), it clearly struggles with other roads that at times literally challenged the limits of a vehicle's suspension. Having a road grader available on a more frequent or even full-time basis would provide the equipment to tackle the heavy wash-board conditions. We intend to add the voice of our Association to dialogue with the Road Commission to assure current equipment allocation and future capital forecasts fairly include the needs of Beaver Island roads.

-Bob Anderson

Economic Growth & the Environment: Challenges & Opportunities

Beaver Island's limited economy affords meager year-round work opportunities, so its economic recovery and future growth depend less on summer tourism than on increasing the number of non-summer tourists and permanent Island residents not dependent on the Island for their livelihoods.

More people want to "get back to nature," and Beaver Island could be an ideal place for year-round ecotourism. The serenity of the Island's natural areas and its timeless small-community social structure have attracted retirees looking for hospitable places to spend their "golden years," and continuation of that trend can and should be encouraged. Another potential source of year-round residential growth is younger people (hopefully with children to more fully populate our new school) who still work but may prefer "virtual employment" *at home* in an environment less hectic, friendlier, safer and more pristine than most urban areas. This would let us tap into a trend in which many companies use virtual employment to cut costs and boost productivity and employee satisfaction in occupations such as sales, consulting, technical service, programming and website development (details at www.2work-at-home.com/telecommute.shtml).

Until recently, lack of rapid Internet service on Beaver Island made most such employment here difficult if not impossible. With DSL now available on most of the Island, that problem largely has been solved. However, most jobs require the employee to report to a non-virtual office every so often and others require travel to client sites, and the Island's lack of regular, affordable transportation to anywhere but Charlevoix is another impediment that still exists.

Attracting any significant number of new permanent residents to Beaver Island as a virtual workplace therefore will require development of improved transportation options. Ideally, the Island would have regular flight service to a major airline hub, most like-

ly the Chicago/Milwaukee area. With over ten million residents, it could be a good source for virtual employees (and families) to relocate to Beaver Island. Great Lakes Air already flies to Manistee and Ironwood from Milwaukee. To improve economic development, we believe that establishing such service at least weekly between Beaver Island and Chicago and/or Milwaukee with either or both of our existing air services or another carrier should be a priority for Island leadership.

For retirees, the biggest reservation about permanent residence on Beaver Island may be limited access to a full range of health care. Blessed as we are with the services and care-givers of the BI Rural Health Center, it is a fact of life that advancing age brings more need for emergency and/or specialty services of a major hospital, and getting to one of those quickly from Beaver Island can be difficult or impossible depending on weather and other uncontrollable factors. Thus it seems another point of emphasis for Island leadership should be to develop a system for faster, more reliable flights to off-island emergency medical services and more comprehensive on-island capacity to attend to persons pending such transport.

Island Airways is working toward being designated as an air ambulance service, which requires extensive development of pilot training and airport operation manuals and demonstrated proficiency for pilots and ambulance service personnel. Paul Welke reports that the manuals are written and await FAA approval and he is coordinating this process with Beaver Island EMS and expects Island Airways to be certified as an air ambulance service in six to twelve months. This will be an important development, as will the Health Center's pending affiliation with Northern Michigan Hospital. But even when Island Airways is air ambulance certified, Welke notes, it will not be able to guarantee year-round 24/7 medical transport availa-

bility given weather, crew and equipment limitations, so additional work needs to be done on this.

Potential permanent BI residents are likely to experience the Island first as visitors/tourists. They may be avid hunters, fishers, boaters, hikers, campers, birders, marathoners, golfers, or sunrise/sunset watchers. But those who seriously would consider *moving here* would be attracted by what they perceive as a safe, friendly, welcoming small-community social environment and serene, pristine and diverse natural environment. Internet advertising may be the most effective way to promote the attractions of Beaver Island to such people, emphasizing both the Island's natural environment and infrastructure. But to be effective the message must include improvements discussed above and capture and promote the full range of BI's natural wonders, which in turn means Island leadership needs to do everything possible to preserve, protect and promote the rich biodiversity of Beaver Island's forests, bogs, lakes, shoreline and wildlife.

Improving deer hunting is an important part of this, and local wildlife/hunting groups and the township boards have made significant strides in this regard with the Quality Deer Management (QDM) plan. But the deer herd is only one of the Island's natural wonders, and it is unlikely many people would move to Beaver Island just to hunt deer, no matter how magnificent the antlers, so this should be just one part of a whole-system approach to the Island's natural environment.

With this in mind, the BIA recommended that the Michigan DNRE grant Biodiversity Stewardship Area (BSA) status to the whole island *and* establish a Wildlife Certification program to collaborate with township government, civic groups and private property owners to responsibly manage and protect all aspects of our uniquely diverse natural environment. BSA designation is to represent com-

mitment to conserving the state's biological heritage, focusing on maintenance and restoration of ecosystems within such areas. As such, it seems appropriate for Beaver Island, which is recognized as having some of the best examples of natural communities in the state and being one of the ten most threatened Great Lakes islands in terms of biodiversity.

Beaver Island's shoreline *and* interior initially were nominated for BSA designation, but the DNRE later indicated the interior could not be so designated because most of those state lands are dedicated for "game management research." Talks with DNRE officials last summer suggested a Wildlife Certification program unique to Beaver Island could accommodate *both* improved game management and research (*a la* QDM) and ecosystems

protection and research (*a la* BSA); thus our advocacy for that approach.

It now appears BSA status won't happen, because DNRE Wildlife Division Chief Russ Mason recently stated it "cannot be applied to Wildlife Division lands because of their official designation as 'state experimental game areas' [which] requires that management treatment of these lands focuses on the promotion of game species and fur-bearers, although these treatments would be calibrated to benefit as many other species as practical." But he also reiterated the hope that the DNRE could collaborate with the two townships and local groups in a plan for "coordinated wildlife management across ownerships (public and private)" that "would allow islanders more opportunity and special privileges to achieve

desired wildlife population characteristics" and be "something absolutely unique . . . to promote tourism."

We also support development of a comprehensive *local* plan for conservation, ecotourism and economic development that incorporates these principles and concerns. The Natural Resources and Ecotourism Commission established by the township boards has made progress on this, but much remains to be done and we will stay involved in those efforts. We ask hear BIA members' views on these topics, particularly as to proper balance between hunting and broader environmental interests, and we encourage you to make those views known to township trustees and other Island leaders.

-Jim Jones & Paul Glendon

Invasive Species on Beaver Island: Vigilance Still Needed

According to the Center for Invasive Species and Ecosystem Health, an invasive is "any species, including seeds, spores, or other biological material capable of propagating that species . . . not native to that ecosystem, whose introduction does or is likely to cause economic or environmental harm or harm to human health."

Beaver Island has some of the highest quality natural areas in the State of Michigan and is ranked as one of the most biologically diverse islands in the Great Lakes, but invasive species if not controlled can change the natural diversity of our islands – and our economy. To attract visitors and new residents, we need to display our natural resources in their best invasive-free environment.

Right now there are less than a dozen invasive species on the Island, some a bigger problem than others. One of the worst, Phragmites, has been controlled by early identification and rapid response with support of the Michigan DNRE, townships, and private property owners, coordinated by

the townships' Phragmites Administrator, Jacque LaFreniere. But we can't stop with Phragmites. New to the Island are European Swamp Thistle and Japanese Knotweed. In the next 20 years, Beech Bark Disease in our forests is predicted to kill 80% of our Beech trees. Thankfully, the Emerald Ash Borer has not been introduced to Beaver Island, and isolation from the mainland may make our Ash trees a future visitor attraction, since elsewhere in the Midwest they may be seen only in text books. Kevin McDonough's Ash tree stump at the boat dock with a notice to *not transport firewood to Beaver Island* is an example of effective individual attempts to protect our Island's forests.

We need to be vigilant to prevent or eliminate species that could forever alter Island ecosystems, including inland lakes, because once invasive species are entrenched it is sometimes impossible to restore habitat. The community must work together to keep Beaver Island as we know it. Here are some things you can do per-

sonally to protect your property and Island ecosystems:

Continue to read local publications and visit BIA's website to learn about invasive species on the Island, and spread the word if you find one.

Plant only native species; be sure plants you bring to the island aren't invasives; if transferring plants, remove most of the soil from the roots.

Identify and control strange plants on your property that spread from original boundaries; web-search *invasive species*; visit www.invasive.org, or www.invasivespeciesinfo.gov. Use our access to Michigan Natural Features Inventory staff and other botanists to assist in plant identification.

Clean boat or leave out of water four days before taking it to another body of water and don't release fish, plants, live bait or other exotics into the wild.

For more information or questions, please feel free to call me or e-mail mcgrass@ameritech.net.

-Pam Grassmick

BIA MEMBERS SPEAK: SURVEY RESULTS

Last autumn we sent out a survey to all BIA members for views on a number of topics. Response was reasonably good. We heard from just under half of our 100+ members. Generally what the responders said was: keep up the good work and stay focused on environmental issues.

Ninety percent said BIA should engage in public advocacy on issues affecting life on Beaver Island. Among topics listed for such advocacy, those most favored were environment/ecology and recreation, followed by road maintenance/improvement and township taxes and governance. A strong majority also favor more Association advocacy for concerns of nonresident property owners.

A similarly strong majority favored Association involvement in Island projects not only in an advocacy role but as organizer or participant. Among choices for such involvement, highest response was for collecting/removing junk vehicles, followed closely by sustainable energy and extending the Donegal Bay bike path.

The predominant sentiment was that the Association should be nonpolitical, but one-third of those responding to this question believed we should get involved in township consolidation. We were encouraged that 80% indicated they would participate

in future BIA-sponsored invasive species projects, and by near-unanimous willingness to pay higher dues (\$30 to \$50/year) to seed BIA projects.

Almost 90% of responders think BIA should present summer educational programs; suggested topics include the environment, ecology, energy conservation, logging, trails, economic development and taxes. There also was sentiment for including such programs in the BIA Annual Meeting, but fewer than half said that would make them more likely to attend.

Annual meeting attendance has declined over the past few years, and there were numerous comments about inability to attend due to time constraints and competing interests in the summer. With this in mind we asked if members' interests would be satisfied by an open summer *Board* meeting instead of an annual membership meeting; two-thirds of responders said yes, so we probably will propose a bylaw amendment to that effect at this summer's Annual Meeting.

Consistent with these survey results, articles in this issue of *Island Currents* address several areas of interest: planning for environmental protection and economic growth, BI taxes, invasive species and wildlife, sustainable energy. Exactly what to *do* in these areas will be a matter of continuing Board discussion and planning, for which we welcome all members' input.

-Paul Glendon

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"A HOME ON THE SHORE"

Copies of this BIA-sponsored video are available for \$5; order by e-mail from Beth Leuck (address above).

PLEASE PAY YOUR DUES!!!!

If there is a red-stamp message next to your name and address below, you owe \$20 (\$40 if unpaid since 2009). Please send a check at your earliest convenience to:

Beaver Island Association

P. O. Box 390

Beaver Island, MI 49782

www.beaverislandassociation.org