

ISLAND CURRENTS

Beaver Island Association

Spring & Summer 2010

Supporting Environmental
and Economic Sustainability

Mission Statement

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

Sustainability . . . Of What, And How?

Beaver Island Association members who live on the Island year-round, as well as those who follow BI happenings in the monthly papers and BI web-postings, know that the last several months have been anything but quiet on the governmental, environmental and economic fronts.

There has been disquiet within and between the two Township Boards on issues related to the municipal airport and the management and financing of the Townships' other joint ventures. Most recent reports suggest that the back-and-forthing on those issues has calmed down a bit since the first joint meeting of the two Boards last November, which as Ron Wojan commented in its closing moments was both a troubling and inspiring example of participatory democracy. But fundamental questions still need to be answered. In this observer's view, the most important of them—putting aside the merits of any of the specific topics being debated—is this: Since it is obvious that almost every big thing that affects (or is affected by) the governance of Beaver Island requires collaboration and coop-

eration between the two Townships, how sustainable is our bifurcated form of government, and isn't it time to consolidate the two Townships into one?

More on that later, but for now, let's concentrate on another question about the future of Beaver Island that is attracting lots of attention. In its narrowest form, as advocated by a new affinity group organization called the Beaver Island Conservation Club, the question is whether or not the Island should adopt a program called QDM, which stands for Quality Deer Management. At the risk of over-simplification, this is a program of primary concern to hunters, aimed at improving the quality (in terms of numbers and gender, age and antler-size distribution) of the deer herd in order to make the BI deer hunting scene as robust as it can be. But the kind of "management" it would entail extends well beyond decisions about how many deer of which gender and age should be "harvested" in any given season to fundamental choices about the care, preservation and management of the totality of the Island's natural resources, especially its forests. *continued on page 2.*

In This Issue and online at www.BeaverIslandAssociation.org



Clear Cutting &
Forest Management



Understanding & Managing
Beaver Island Ecosystems



2010
Phragmites Program



Natural Resources &
Eco-Tourism Commission



Beaver Island Association Supports
Forest Fire Prevention

Beaver Island Association

Sustainability, continued from the cover

At the heart of the debate regarding forest management is the issue of clear-cutting, which to some degree apparently is one of the habitat aspects of QDM. On the negative side of that debate, at least with respect to the beech-maple portions of Beaver Island forests, is forester Eric Myers, whose views on the subject appear in this issue of *Currents*. A middle view expressed by Eric Ellis, biologist and manager of Conservation Resource Alliance's Wild Link Program, with concurrence from CMU Bio-Station Director Don Uzarski, is that carefully planned and properly performed rotational clear-cuts of a variety of species, possibly including some hardwood stands, can be an effective way to "maintain early

successional habitat" that will support diverse and healthy wildlife.

The Beaver Island Association has taken no formal position on QDM specifically or forestry management practices generally. But in early March we urged the Peaine Township Board to analyze these issues "through a perspective much broader than deer herd management" and to "wait for and carefully consider" recommendations from the Natural Resources and Eco-Tourism Commission "before adopting any specific forest management strategy as official Township policy."

We are heartened that the Peaine Trustees chose such a course, and the Association will provide financial support for a day-long NRETC Symposium on "Managing our Forest and

Wildlife for Sustainability" to be held at the BI Community Center on June 28. Eric Myers is an NRETC member and will be the keynote speaker and facilitator for this Symposium, which is to be the first in a planned series devoted to "understanding and managing Beaver Island's ecosystems for sustainability and economic growth." We encourage all BIA members who will be on the Island that day to attend, both to learn more about these important issues and to express your views.

Two members of that Commission (established by the Townships last year) also are members of the BIA Board of Directors: Jim Jones (as our official representative) and Jacque LaFreniere. Former BIA Board member and President Pam Grassmick

Clear-Cutting and Forest Management

As property owners and visitors to Beaver Island we are all responsible for the management of the natural resources on our property and the public land on Beaver Island. I personally feel it is important to manage natural resources. Indeed, there is evidence that human societies have manipulated this very Beaver Island ecosystem for many centuries to improve their lives. The important thing about natural resource management is that you must work in harmony with nature, nurture the entire ecosystem and the cycles within it that have evolved over millennia. Throughout history, societies that have not followed this practice have failed, every time.

Clear-cutting a beech-maple forest is not working with nature. Clear-cutting is only necessary as a tree removal strategy to allow trees that have minimal shade tolerance to regenerate,

like aspen and birch. Historically, Michigan had a small amount of aspen forests but today it is a more dominant forest type due to clear-cutting. Historically, Beaver Island was dominated in the interior by a beech-maple forest. It is important to know what was here before today because then we know what type of biological community can sustainably exist here.

A beech-maple forest is a complex community that is the habitat for many of the food webs that sustain the natural systems over all Beaver Island. Clear-cutting (when foresters completely remove the entire tree community) destroys this valuable biological community. In a mature beech-maple forest you find logs and snags (standing dead trees) which may seem useless but in fact are of the utmost importance. Logs and snags are the base of many food chains. This means all the

critters that live in and under them are food for other things which in turn are eaten by additional things, etc. If you get rid of the logs and snags in the forest with clear-cutting there is nothing to feed the food chains on the Island.

An important and often overlooked benefit in a mature beech-maple forest is the water reservoir that logs and snags provide. Turn over most logs in a beech-maple forest on Beaver Island and you will find red-backed salamanders and countless other animals but you will also see white growing roots from neighboring trees. These flipped over logs which can have 50% water content or more provide a stable source of water to the trees. (Be sure to flip them back over after you observe this little niche of nature.) Do you remember the drought a few years ago when the trees started losing their green leaves in the summer? A mature

Supporting Environmental and Economic Sustainability

spearheaded formation of the Commission (and another devoted to social services) and also is a member. We are grateful for and proud of their participation. In keeping with our commitment to supporting both environmental and economic sustainability, Jim has suggested that analysis of and decisions about wildlife and forest management should be integrated in a comprehensive view of Beaver Island as a sociological eco-system, including the effects of all varieties of human presence and activity on the Island, not just deer-hunting.

He also suggests that Beaver Island is a near-perfect environment for scientific study of Complex Adaptive Sociological Ecosystem dynamics—because of its diverse plant popula-

tions, pristine forest areas, limited predator-prey relationships, deforestation by humans and beavers, small but intrusive human community and activities (including not only logging but building construction, hunting, fishing, limited farming and tourism), topographical variety (including wetlands, forests, beaches and inland lakes), and isolation in the middle of an inland sea—and proposes that the CMU Biological Station would be an ideal place for a laboratory and related course work for such studies. As a disturbing reflection of the increasing urgency of these issues, a recently completed comprehensive study ranks Beaver Island as the tenth most threatened Great Lakes island in terms of biodiversity and conservation.

We look forward to seeing as many of you as possible and discussing these and other important matters at the Association's Annual Membership Meeting this summer. Please mark your calendars now for Monday, July 12 at 7 p.m. at Peaine Township Hall. Plans also are in the works for a BIA-sponsored presentation on Green Building Practices and LEED Certification later in the summer; we'll announce details on that as soon as they're available. Until then, enjoy what's left of Spring wherever you may be and feel free to share your thoughts and concerns with any of us on the BIA Board (by e-mail, letter or phone) until we meet again on our beloved Beaver Island.

Paul Glendon, President
Beaver Island Association

forest that has lots of logs and snags would be less susceptible to drought and be able to support animals through these hard times. Moreover, those soggy logs and snags and the cool shade mean that a beech-maple forest is one of the most fire resistant communities in Michigan.

For Beaver Island residents, it is important to understand why the practice of clear-cutting beech-maple forests on public or private land is not a benefit. Some people think that the only way to get young growing plants is to clear-cut a forest. Why do people want young growing plants, you ask? So that animals, especially game animals like deer and turkey and ruffed grouse can use this part of the ecosystem. The problem with clear-cutting is there can be consequences that could degrade or even destroy the natural beauty on Beaver Island. Clear-cut ar-

reas have increased soil erosion, lowering the productivity of future forests. Most soils on Beaver Island are not the best to begin with and clear-cutting will make them worse. Besides degrading the soil, clear-cuts are disturbed areas which invasive species tend to thrive in. Moreover, beech-maple forests that have been clear-cut were healthy communities which have evolved over centuries to be more resistant to insects and disease. Clear-cutting is like amputating a healthy limb.

Every time you clear-cut you have more soil erosion, and I think everyone agrees aesthetic views are compromised by clear-cutting. This means clear-cutting is not good for the tourist industry, because who wants to take a vacation to look at it? Like it or not, tourism is an important part of the economy of Beaver Island that supports many services we all can rely on. Fur-

thermore, it has been shown that logging wastes left behind after clear-cutting increase fire, insect and disease problems. Sunshine in the open area (clear-cut) dries out the wood making it easier to ignite/burn. No one will benefit from a forest fire on Beaver Island and clear-cut areas increase fire risk, whereas an intact beech-maple forest has a very low fire risk.

Regardless, I am sure someone will say there is plenty of beech-maple on the Island; we can remove some percentage of beech-maple. Something similar was said about passenger pigeons before they went extinct. Besides, beech are already suffering, most likely from beech bark disease which is a fungal disease transmitted by a scale insect. The last thing we need is to indiscriminately remove healthy disease resistant beech trees from the Island.

continued on page 4.

Beaver Island Association

Membership Application

☐ New Member ☐ Renewal ☐ Update Address

* 2010 Dues: \$20.00 *

Your Name: _____

Island Address: _____

(Address Line 2): _____

City: _____

State: _____ Zip: _____

Telephone: () _____ Fax: () _____

Mailing Address (if different than above)

Your Name: _____

Address: _____

(Address Line 2): _____

City: _____

State: _____ Zip: _____

Telephone: () _____ Fax: () _____

E-mail Address: _____

☐ Send Beaver Island Association
News Updates via this email address

☐ Send Beaver Island Association
News via postal mail

☐ I would be interested in serving on a committee.

☐ I would like to help with the annual meeting.

☐ I would like to help with special projects:

Please Mail with your Membership Dues of \$20.00 to:

Beaver Island Association

Box 390

Beaver Island, MI 49782

Forest Management, continued from page 3.

To recap: clear-cutting goes against the natural system that exists on the island, causes soil erosion, is ugly to look at, removes healthy disease resistant trees, provides a place for exotic plants to grow, increases fire risk, and with snow even fails to feed deer in winter when food is most needed. Clear-cutting a beech-maple forest does not seem like a wise use of our resource. I hope no one on the Island would condone clear-cutting as any advantages are far outweighed by the many disadvantages. Of course clear-cut logging is easy to do and the most efficient way to convert trees to CASH, but in a beech-maple forest it puts the desires of current users ahead of the needs of future users. People who want to help Beaver Island in the short and long term need to protect remaining beech-maple forests. If everyone takes a scientific look and sees the Island not as a fragmented patchwork of natural and economic resources but as a whole ecosystem, we should all end up happy.

This does not mean clear-cutting is always bad. Clear-cutting may be used on private or state land that is aspen dominated. According to the DNRE there are around 1000 acres of aspen on Beaver Island, and in my view these are the ONLY areas where clear-cutting should even be considered.

I think a big reason clear-cutting is so prevalent is that its real advantage is that anyone can do it without any forestry training. The problem with this is that a great many environmental problems result from attempts to oversimplify nature's complexities. I hope no one would say, "We thought about doing things right but it seemed hard so we did what was easy." We are talking about our forests, AND our children's

forest and their children's...

Using forest harvesting methods other than clear-cutting does take a bit more time and knowledge, but provides ample habitat for game and non-game wildlife and opens up so many new possibilities. For example, it can be written in a management plan to leave some healthy straight trees (with their 'good genes') in some areas as a seed source, or leave some snags for housing animals, or removing diseased trees to cut down on the spread of the disease. These types of tactics would increase the forests' value to wildlife and humans monetarily.

Good forest management in a beech-maple forest is more about what is left behind than what is taken out. The benefit of this is that large healthy trees and snags (biological legacies) can be left in the forest. This means we will be improving the habitat for all creatures over time. This should be the goal of Island management to use AND improve all our resources.

Respectfully,

Eric R. Myers, Ph.D. Forestry

The Loons Return

The Loons have returned to most of the inland lakes. The lakes opened almost a month earlier this year than usual but the loons waited until their usual time to return. Mute Swans are again nesting at Barney's Lake but on a new site that isn't competition for the Loons.

Jacque LaFreniere

The BIA Annual Meeting

Mark your calendar: Monday, July 12th at 7 p.m. at Peaine Township Hall.

Beaver Island Natural Resources/ Eco-Tourism Commission Part I of a Series of Symposiums on Understanding and Managing Beaver Island's Ecosystems For Sustainability and Economic Growth

Symposium Number I

Managing our Forest and Wildlife for Sustainability June 28, 2010, Beaver Island Community Center

8:15- 8:45a.m. Registration, coffee and snack

8:50 am. Welcome, Keynote Address -- Eric R. Myers

Each speaker will address the most important issue(s) concerning their topic.

9:00 -- Our Beaver Island Forests Today

- A look at our existing forests (types of forests, soil types, tree species, habitat provided/GIS data)
- Regulations and Management Practices as they occur today (Private land, state land, DNR compartments for logging, state land management)

9:45 -- Our Forest of the Future / Effects of Land Management Decisions on Our Forests

- Forest Succession and Sustainability -- Eric R. Myers
- Managing Threats: Differences between types of logging and their effect, Poor practices for sustainability, Invasive Species (garlic mustard and emerald ash borer) and disease (Beech Bark Disease)
- Private Land Management (Decisions to Log, Contracts, Conservation Easements)

Short Break

11:00 -- Effects of Land Management Decisions on Wildlife Species/ Habitats of:

- Deer, turkey, ruffed grouse, woodcock, wood duck, beaver (45 min)
- Song birds and Ecotourism

12:10 -- Questions for Morning Session Speakers

12:30 -- Break for Lunch: On your own.

1:45 -- Roundtable Discussions: 1) Rank the most important forestry, wildlife, and ecotourism issues discussed in the morning. 2) List economic factors to be taken into consideration. 3) Recommend future management ideas including proven ways of monitoring resources. 4) Miscellaneous.

2:45 -- Roundtable Presentations- conclusions and questions from each table

3:15 - 4:00 -- Panel Discussion by experts on issues raised --questions from roundtable and wrap up—where do we go from here?



Beaver Island Association

Introducing The **Human Services Commission**

You saw a posting on the Beaver Island Forum about a Health Fair in September sponsored by the Human Services Commission, and you might have asked yourself: “The Human Services Commission—What is it? Who is it? What is it doing?” Good questions!! Let's try to answer them.

In the fall of 2009, both townships passed a resolution that established a commission to (in part) “identify and prioritize the island’s human needs, identify sources for providing those, advocate for the Island with off-Island agencies to work toward providing for the needs of Islanders.” And so, the Human Services Commission was born.

The mission statement of the HSC states: “The Human Services Commission is a collaboration of organizations that advocates for the emotional and physical needs of Island residents and visitors of all ages.” The Commission membership is from across the Island and identifies with the diverse needs of the Island. Current members include: Pam Grassmick, Peaine Township representative and HSC chairperson; Donna Kubic, BI Rural Health Center and HSC secretary; Alice Belfy, BI Community School; Steve Finch, BI Lighthouse School; Judi Meister, Food

Pantry; Kathy Tidmore, St. James Township representative; Nancy Tritsch, Council on Aging; Bob Tidmore, Amvets; Lois Williams, Hospice and Helping Hands. Joan Vyse, as St. James representative, regrettably was unable to complete her tenure.

The Commission has set three major goals:

- Build collaborative partnerships to foster physical, social, emotional, or spiritual well-being of residents and visitors
- Implement structure to coordinate information re: access to services for community use
- Support the economic vitality of our community by ensuring that services are available and accessible

Putting it simply: We are hoping that as a group of people representing many different service organizations, we will have more credibility and “clout” than any of the organizations might have operating individually. We want to ensure that Beaver Island receives its fair share of tax-supported services, and we want information about those services to be available in user-friendly form.

In January, four members of the Commission traveled to Charlevoix to

meet with Shirley Roloff, Charlevoix County Commissioner representing Beaver Island, and 15 members from various county agencies to discuss improving communication regarding services available to all Charlevoix County residents, however removed from the mainland, the efficient delivery of those services, and developing a gap analysis of services.

The Commission continues to work toward ensuring that living on Beaver Island remains a viable option for low income, elderly, visitors, and all those in-between. In September 2010, the Commission will offer a Human Services Fair for the Island community with participating agencies of Emmet and Charlevoix counties.

The HSC holds monthly meetings the third Tuesday of each month at 2:00 at BI Community School. The HSC also meets monthly (by teleconference) with the Coordinating Body of Emmet and Charlevoix Human Services for the purpose of obtaining relevant information in a timely manner. There is much we hope to accomplish as the HSC connects with mainland resource services to work toward providing for the needs of Islanders.

Judi Meister

Phragmites program for Beaver Island 2010

This year’s plan for Phragmites monitoring and treatment will be drastically different from past years. A Phragmites administrator will be hired by the townships this spring. He/she will set up a system of beach volunteers—sort of an Adopt a Beach program—under a plan developed by the Natural Resources and Ecotourism

Commission (of Beaver Island). These volunteers will check their beaches for the presence of Phragmites and later be trained by the DNRE to treat it. This will save substantial funds. We have so little of it currently on our beaches that it really doesn't justify the cost of hiring a company to come here and treat it as in the past. Also, the DNRE will secure

the necessary permits and provide the treatment chemical.

The DNRE will treat phragmites on High Island and will hire professionals to treat Hog Island.

Anyone wishing to know more, or to “adopt their beach” please call Jacque LaFreniere (231-448-2220) or email her at jacquel@tds.net

Natural Resources/Eco-tourism Commission

Announces Forest Management Symposium & Reports On Other Work

An important public symposium “Managing our Forests and Wildlife for Sustainability” will be held on the Island on June 28 from 8:15 a.m. to 4 p.m. at the Beaver Island Community Center. The symposium is sponsored by the Natural Resources / Eco-Tourism Commission (NRETC) and is part I of a series of symposiums on understanding and managing Beaver Island’s ecosystems.

The Commission’s goal is to develop an island-wide consensus on a management plan for the island’s resources. This first seminar will include the following topics:

- Information on the forests of the Island and regulation and management practices as they are today, including the schedule of state land for logging
- Forests of the future, managing threats including Beech Bark Disease, the newest threat to our forest land
- Private Land Management – Logging Contracts and Conservation easements
- Wildlife Management – deer, grouse, woodcock, wood duck, turkey and beaver
- Song Birds and Ecotourism
- Roundtable Discussions for island input into resource management issues

The increase in logging activity on the Island and the current discussions about managing deer on the Island make the symposium a timely event. It is designed not only to inform about Island issues but also to give an opportunity for participants to express their thoughts.

Other on-going projects of the

NRETC include cleaning up garbage dumps on Garden Island, preparing an Island map of nature trails with guides to birds, animals, plants and trees, preparing a self-guided driving tour of the Island’s resources, assisting the Phragmites coordinator, Jacque LaFreniere, with this year’s phragmites treatment. The commission is also participating with off-island environmental groups in several grant requests.

Beaver Island’s Natural Resources/Eco-Tourism Commission is a joint commission of the two townships established to promote understanding and preservation of our natural resources and opportunities for their appreciation and enjoyment. The Beaver Island Association is represented on the commission by Jim Jones.

The Commission is comprised of a 17 member board representing the Island’s government, plan commissions, trails committee, BI Community School, wildlife club, historical society, DNR, Little Traverse Conservancy, the Tribes, and several businesses focusing on tourism: Beaver Island Eco-Tours, Beaver Island Music Festival, Paradise Dive Shop and Island Seas School of Kayaking. The individual members representing those organizations include scientists (biologists, zoologist, foresters, park managers), environmentalists, planners, hunters and consultants.

The commission’s officers are Sandy Birdsall, chair; Jacque LaFreniere, vice-chair, and Pam Grassmick, Secretary.

Sandy Birdsall
NRETC Chair

Beaver Island Association Board of Directors

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DID YOU KNOW - If you have a medical emergency and call 911 there is up to a 30 second delay. DO NOT HANG UP

Beaver Island Association Supports Forest Fire Prevention

As part of an ongoing effort to support the Beaver Island Fire Department in its wild fire prevention efforts, the Beaver Island Association and a group of individual donors have provided the financial support required to raise the level of island fire risk awareness.

New signs depicting the fire risk level on the island have been purchased and installed by the Beaver Island Fire Department. There are two types of signs. On the Island large, post mounted signs have been placed

at both campgrounds, the municipal airport, and the municipal marina. A smaller, counter top sign has been placed at Welke Airport. On the mainland, counter top signs are in place at the Beaver Island Boat Company, the Charlevoix Airport and the Fresh Air Aviation terminal.

The signs will be updated as risk level changes. Jacque LaFreniere has volunteered her time, and has been trained by the State of Michigan Department of Natural Resources

(DNR) to make the assessment. The risk assessment is derived from a formula which considers a number of factors including temperature, humidity and wind velocity. Previously the Beaver Island Fire Department stated fire risk levels based upon DNR calculations which were made using mainland, and not Island-specific data.

The BIA continues to work with the Beaver Island Fire Department in support of other efforts including an emergency notification system.

Nature News: an interesting winter weather pattern

In the winter of 2008-2009 we reached our record snowfall of 138" over the course of the winter. This past

winter (2009-2010) we probably were one of the lowest with barely 32". We had little to no precipitation from the

middle of January on. That includes both rain and snow. As a result, we reached High Fire dangers earlier.

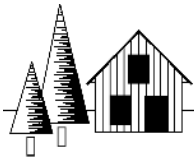
We want to hear from you

The goal of the *Island Currents* newsletter and our website www.beaverislandassociation.org is to promote greater communication.

Opinions, stories, informative articles or any issues you feel are of interest are welcome.

The next deadline for submission

is October 15, 2010. All articles should be submitted to Sue Avery at cabinbythelake1@gmail.com



Beaver Island Association

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Box 390

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