

Divers, Preservationists, Lawmakers Mull Concepts Behind Great Lakes State Parks Proposal

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underwater features, including shipwrecks. Supporters of the bills see the chance to promote the Great Lakes and their shipwrecks to boost the economy and provide new and expanding opportunities for ecotourism and organizations like scuba divers, shipwreck historians, and preservationists.

Some divers and administrators in the Michigan Department of Natural Resources (DNR) believe

the state is in no financial shape to implement such a proposal. Since the new Great Lakes park would fall under the DNR, the agency is concerned an underfunded initiative could sap other programs. Divers are also concerned that a proposed \$15 voluntary pass to the Great Lakes State Park will eventually become mandatory for divers; a user fee, like trail permits for snowmobilers.

As proposed, the voluntary fee would fund a Great Lakes State

Park Preservation Fund to help manage the park and provide resources for organizations and programs focused on maritime history, underwater archaeology, and conservation. The fund would also be used to sink old ships for additional diving excursions, fund law enforcement and heritage education, provide money for tourism research and marketing.

Since the fee would be voluntary, the Senate Fiscal Agency has no idea how much it will contribute.

Undeterred, Mr. Vrana says the new park provides a ready-made theme for marketers to promote the Great Lakes as a tourist destination. I believe in the concept of state stewardship and I hope that the diving community will become a part of this."

Lynne Piippo, director of the St. Ignace Visitors Bureau, believes there are better avenues to take to accomplish these goals.

"The Great Lakes is a huge draw

for the state of Michigan," she said. "It is identifiable as to who we are. The method of making the Great Lakes a state park, however, is not something I would choose to put forward."

Initiatives like The Great Waters, a campaign by the Eastern Upper Peninsula Nature Tourism Alliance that promotes ecotours and nature trails, Mrs. Piippo said, is a better way to market the Great Lakes, since the program is already ongoing.

"We're already marketing ecotourism in a whole new way," she said. "We just need to be able to use (state tourism funding) to enhance the programs. I don't think the idea of making a Great Lakes State Park pass to soak people for money is the way to go."

Some state officials believe the idea of a bottomlands state park is a good one, but say Senator McManus' implementation needs to be thoroughly reviewed and revised.

"It's an interesting conceptual idea, however, it would be a large undertaking," said Ron Olson, chief of the DNR's Parks and Recreation Division. "It creates many issues for us. There is no money to effectively study or implement this concept at this time."

The DNR is the only state department that is almost entirely financed by user fees from campgrounds, marinas, and federal pass-through money, Mr. Olson said.

Only about nine percent of the DNR's \$280 million annual budget comes from the state's General Fund (tax dollars), which is down from about 23% just 10 years ago, creating a \$40 million shortfall in the budget.

To generate more revenue, the DNR increased camping fees this year at state campgrounds. Plans to increase fishing and hunting license fees are on the table.

"Even putting in staff time to study this stresses us" financially, he

said.

Like Mr. Olson, Larry Sanders, a Grand Haven recreational diver and president of the Straits of Mackinac Shipwreck Preserve, questions the state's financial commitment to such a program.

He points to the state's lack of involvement in placing buoys at shipwrecks in the Great Lakes as an example.

The local shipwreck preserve organization, said Mr. Sanders, voluntarily places seasonal buoys at each of the 15 dive sites in the Straits of Mackinac, which include shipwrecks and a rock maze. Members tie buoys to shipwrecks so other divers won't set buoys with grappling hooks, which can damage the wrecks.

"It would cost the state an estimated \$40,000 to install permanent, cement moorings that would not damage the shipwrecks," Mr.

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Great Lakes State Park Six Bill Package Summary

(Information provided by the office of
35th District Senator Michelle McManus)

Senate Bill 429 Sponsored by Senator Michelle McManus (R-Traverse City).

Creates the Great Lakes State Park and requires the Department of Natural Resources to manage those lands. It amends legislation in 1899 that gives the state control over the Great Lakes bottomlands.

Senate Bill 430 Sponsored by Senator Patty Birkholz (R-Saugatuck Township).

Creates the Great Lakes State Park Preservation Fund in the state treasury. The bill outlines the specific uses of the fund for the management of the Great Lakes State Park, administration, maritime history, underwater archaeology, park and recreation planning, enhancement of recreation opportunities, intentional sinking of vessels, tourism research and marketing, heritage education, and law enforcement.

Senate Bill 431 Sponsored by Senator Michael Prusi (D-Ishpeming).

Requires the DNR to create an annual Great Lakes State Park pass. It requires the DNR to design the pass and states that the pass can be sold only on a voluntary basis. A pass is not necessary to use the Great Lakes State Park. The proposed price of the pass is \$15, with funds collected from the sales of the pass to be forwarded to the Michigan Treasurer and credited to the Great Lakes State Park Preservation Fund.

House Bill 4638 Sponsored by Representative Steve Lindberg (D-Marquette Township).

Designates an advisory committee composed of the following:

- Two DNR representatives, one for park and recreation planning and one for law enforcement on Great Lakes surface waters and bottomlands.
- One representative from Travel Michigan for tourism, research, and marketing.
- One Department of Environmental Quality representative.
- One Department of History, Arts, and Libraries representative.
- Six individuals from the general public appointed by the governor.

House Bill 4639 Sponsored by Representative Daniel Acciavatti (R-Chesterfield Township).

Adds new functions for the committee established in House Bill 4638, such as establishing guidelines for the discovery of shipwrecks and making recommendations for use of funds from the Great Lakes State Park Preservations Fund.

House Bill 4640 Sponsored by Representative Joel Sheltroun (D-West Branch).

Places management responsibilities for the Great Lakes State Park with the DNR and the Natural Resources Commission. It will require them to manage the park to protect and preserve its natural resources and to enhance recreational opportunities within its boundaries, including, but not limited to, boating, fishing, swimming, and scuba diving.

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The quotation under the flag of *The St. Ignace News* on Page 1 is from the 10 triads written by Dr. Fred Newton Scott, creator and teacher of the first continuous course in journalism in the United States at the University of Michigan in 1890. The 10 triads are chiseled on the parapet of the Detroit News Building at 615 Lafayette Boulevard, Detroit. They were headed "Ideals of the Press" or "The Newspaper in a Free Society," and serve as a reminder of what a free press means to us.

14 Shipwrecks May Be Explored in the Straits of Mackinac

Fourteen shipwrecks in the Straits area are part of the Straits of Mackinac Shipwreck Preserve, spanning 148 square miles. The preserve also includes a rock maze, an unusual rock formation a few hundred yards east of Mackinac Island, which provides photography opportunities for divers.

The following is a list of shipwrecks in the Straits of Mackinac Shipwreck Preserve:

William H. Barnum

A 218-foot steamer that foundered during an early season storm in 1894. It was loaded with grain from Chicago. It lies in about 70 feet of water upright and intact between Mackinac City and Cheboygan.

Cayuga

The *Cayuga* sank in Sturgeon Bay in May 1895 and lies in an upright position. Some areas of the ship are broken up. There is also a salvage barge to the port side of the wreck, about 40 feet away. The wreck is in Lake Michigan, about 3.6 miles southwest of Grays Reef Light, past Waughoshance Point.

Cedarville

The Straits' most recent shipwreck is this 588-foot self-unloading freighter, which was built in 1927 and sank in May 1965, when it was struck by the Norwegian freighter *Topdalsfjord*. Ten of the 34 men on board were lost. The *Cedarville* was carrying a load of limestone bound for Gary, Indiana. It lies on its starboard side in 110 feet of water, although its hull is within 35 feet of the water's surface in Lake Huron, just beyond the Mackinac Bridge. The ship's superstructure and cabins lie almost upside down in 75 feet of water.

Eber Ward

The 213-foot steamer was cut by ice and sank in 140 feet of water in April 1909 west of the present-day location of the Mackinac Bridge, between the bridge and St. Helena Island. It is upright and intact. A sunken dump barge lies close by.

Fred McBrier

The 161-foot steamer had a wood hull and was built in Bay City

in 1881. In October 1890, the ship was struck by the steamer *Progress*, and quickly sank. There is still a lot of equipment on the wreck, but visibility is limited owing to surrounding silt, which can get kicked up easily. The wreck is in Lake Michigan about nine miles west of Old Mackinac Point Lighthouse in Mackinaw City.

Maitland

The 137-foot wooden bark boat was built in 1861. She collided with the schooners *Mears* and *Golden Harvest* in June 1871 and now lies upright and intact in 84 feet of water near Waughoshance Lighthouse.

Minneapolis

The *Minneapolis* is a 226-foot combination propeller and three-masted sailing ship that was cut by ice and now lies in 124 feet of water close to the Mackinaw City side in Lake Huron. She is upright, but broken.

Newell Eddy

The 242-foot schooner barge sank in 1893, three years after it was built. The wreck was found accidentally by students on a research vessel, testing side scan sonar technology. Her name is still visible across the top of the forward capstan. The ship lies upright in 165 feet of water.

Northwest

The 223-foot wood schooner was sunk by ice in April 1898 and now lies in 73 feet of water near the shoreline between Waughoshance Point and Mackinaw City. She is upright, but collapsed.

Sandusky

The oldest shipwreck known in the Straits of Mackinac, the *Sandusky* was built in 1848 in Sandusky, Ohio, and sank in a gale in September 1856. She is remarkably preserved and is one of the few wrecks in the Great Lakes that sports a figurehead. She is 110-feet with a square stern and two masts. The wreck lies in 79 feet of water west of the Mackinac Bridge, just north of Mackinaw City's McGulpin Point. She is upright and

intact.

Martin Stalker

Built in 1863, this wooden schooner was struck by a tow barge and sank in November 1886. She lies in 85 feet of water close to the Mackinac Bridge and the *Cedarville* wreck in Lake Huron. Her bow is intact, but the stern is broken.

St. Andrew

The 135-foot wooden schooner sank in June 1878 in 62 feet of water near Point au Sable near Cheboygan. Her bow is intact, but the stern is collapsed.

Uganda

The 291-foot wooden-hulled steamer was cut by ice during an early season trip to Buffalo, New York. The wreck lies in 210 feet of water four miles east of White Shoals light. The shallowest part of

Michigan Politics

By George Weeks



Budget Aside, There Is Progress in Lansing

Amid all of the headlines out of Lansing on the battle of the budget, there were two bits of good news last week about upgrading of state services for consumers:

- The Department of Community Health (DCH), long prodded by Attorney General Mike Cox, substantially expanded its Web site on prescription drug cost comparisons, giving consumers 118 brand names to evaluate lowest prices in their area by city or ZIP code.

In the first 24 hours of the expanded service, the site (www.michigandrugprices.com) was "overwhelmed" by 200,000 visits, according to DCH spokesman T.J. Bucholz. I called him Friday when my computer kept telling me the site was "too busy" to access.

In announcing his May price survey of 200 pharmacies in 10 communities on 11 commonly prescribed drugs that did not then appear on the DCH site, Cox said there were "staggering cost differences on identical prescription drugs."

His survey included 20 outlets in the Traverse City area and 20 in the Upper Peninsula, mostly in the Marquette area.

- Secretary of State Terri Lynn Land said this year she will upgrade eight existing branch offices, including the one in Escanaba by the end of the summer, to "PLUS" status. Among benefits: open until 7 p.m. on Wednesdays; a self-service station for license plate tab renewals; and specialized services such as instant titles and ability to buy a copy of your driving record on site, something some prospective employers require.

Term-limited Republican Land, a former county clerk, already has created 23 PLUS offices, including one in Marquette and one in Traverse City, as well as eight downstate metro SUPER!Centers that include Saturday hours.

"SUPER!" and other hype aside, Land, in her quiet and non-confrontational way, has done a

good job of targeting limited resources to regional services, while emphasizing technology and growth of online services, not only as a peddler of licenses for motorists and boaters but also as Michigan's chief elections officer.

Term-limited Republican Cox, a former Marine who, like Land, is a prospective gubernatorial candidate, is more confrontational by nature and the nature of his job. He has vastly expanded the protective scope of the office.

While praising the DCH site as a "positive step," Cox said it "falls short on a number of requirements" of proposed legislation he is pushing, and fails to "differentiate between generic and brand name drugs."

In announcing the expanded site, DCH Director Janet Olszewski said: "Since we first introduced our Web site last year, we have repeatedly said that as we work toward expanding our site, more prescription drugs would be added as information became available."

Tourism: Hype & Hit?

As a member of the House Tourism-Outdoor Recreation and Natural Resources Committee, Representative Howard Walker (R-Traverse City) hails aggressive efforts of the Granholm administration to promote tourism.

But he says it would be counterproductive folly if the Lansing talk of a 6% sales tax on "luxury and discretionary" items leads to hits on entertainment lures of the tourist industry.

Tourism, he says, is giving "a real positive impact" to the Michigan economy, but the more it is taxed, "you'll get less (economic impact) from what you're taxing."

The very nature of discretionary spending is that the consumer has discretion to spend those dollars elsewhere.

George Weeks retired last year after 22 years as political columnist for The Detroit News. His weekly Michigan Politics column is syndicated by Superior Features.