



Joel Gunnlaugsson <chairman@washingtonisland-wi.gov>

Grand Traverse Islands National Lakeshore Proposal

3 messages

John Bacon <jbacon2822@gmail.com>
To: chairman@washingtonisland-wi.gov

Thu, Jan 2, 2014 at 11:09 AM

Dear Town of Washington Island,

I've been a sea kayak guide for the past three years, and for the past three years I have wondered why the Grand Traverse Islands from the tip of Door County up to the Garden Peninsula never became a National Lakeshore like Sleeping Bear Dunes, Pictured Rocks, and the Apostle Islands. I have wondered if the push for the creation of such a park could ever succeed. And I'd like to find out.

For reasons I elaborate on in my attached proposal, I think it would be a great thing for Door and Delta Counties, for Wisconsin, for Michigan, and for the nation itself. If you have the time and are willing to review my proposal, I would greatly appreciate any support, feedback, and guidance you could give me. What can I do to make Grand Traverse Islands National Lakeshore a reality? If you think it is a worthy goal, can you help? If you disagree with the idea, can you tell me why – so that I understand your position on the matter?

Thank you for your time!

Sincerely,

John Bacon

John Bacon

8135 White Cliff Rd.

Egg Harbor, WI 54209

E-mail: jbacon2822@gmail.com

Cell: (920) 421-2822

 **Grand Traverse Islands National Lakeshore Proposal.pdf**
1994K

John Bacon <jbacon2822@gmail.com>
To: chairman@washingtonisland-wi.gov

Sun, Jan 12, 2014 at 2:31 PM

Hello,

I sent you a proposal for the Grand Traverse Islands National Lakeshore a couple weeks of ago. I'm still hoping to hear back from you regarding what you think of the idea and if you would support it or not. However, I would like to amend what I sent you.

Based on the important services provided by the USFWS in monitoring and managing nesting sites in the Grand Traverse Islands, I would like to remove Spider, Gravel, and Hog from the proposed lakeshore boundaries and keep them in the hands of the USFWS. If possible, I would like to add as an additional request of my proposal that Fish, Gull, Little Gull, and Gravelly islands be purchased from private hands and given to the USFWS's care. My proposal would also support the transfer of Rocky Island to the USFWS, as the Nature Conservancy has expressed interest in doing. As others who have responded to my proposal have pointed out to me, these are all islands that provide critical habitat for sea birds and are not likely to serve any major historical or recreational purpose.

I have attached a revised version of my drafted proposal that reflects these changes.

As I have said, I would really love to hear your thoughts on the matter so that I may take them into consideration before contacting others. Thanks!

Sincerely,

John Bacon

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 **Revised Draft of Grand Traverse Islands National Lakeshore Proposal.pdf**
2127K

Joel Gunnlaugsson <chairman@washingtonisland-wi.gov>
Draft To: John Bacon <jbacon2822@gmail.com>

Thu, Jan 16, 2014 at 10:41 AM

Good day,

Sorry for the delay on a response, but time is never in my favor.

After reading through everything, I personally think there is much merit to your intent and efforts on this issue, but I guess I'm more confused on what exactly your desiring the Town of Washington to do if my board feels so inclined.

Are you simply looking for support with a letter from the Town stating such ?

Please let me know,

Cheers,
Joel Gunnlaugsson

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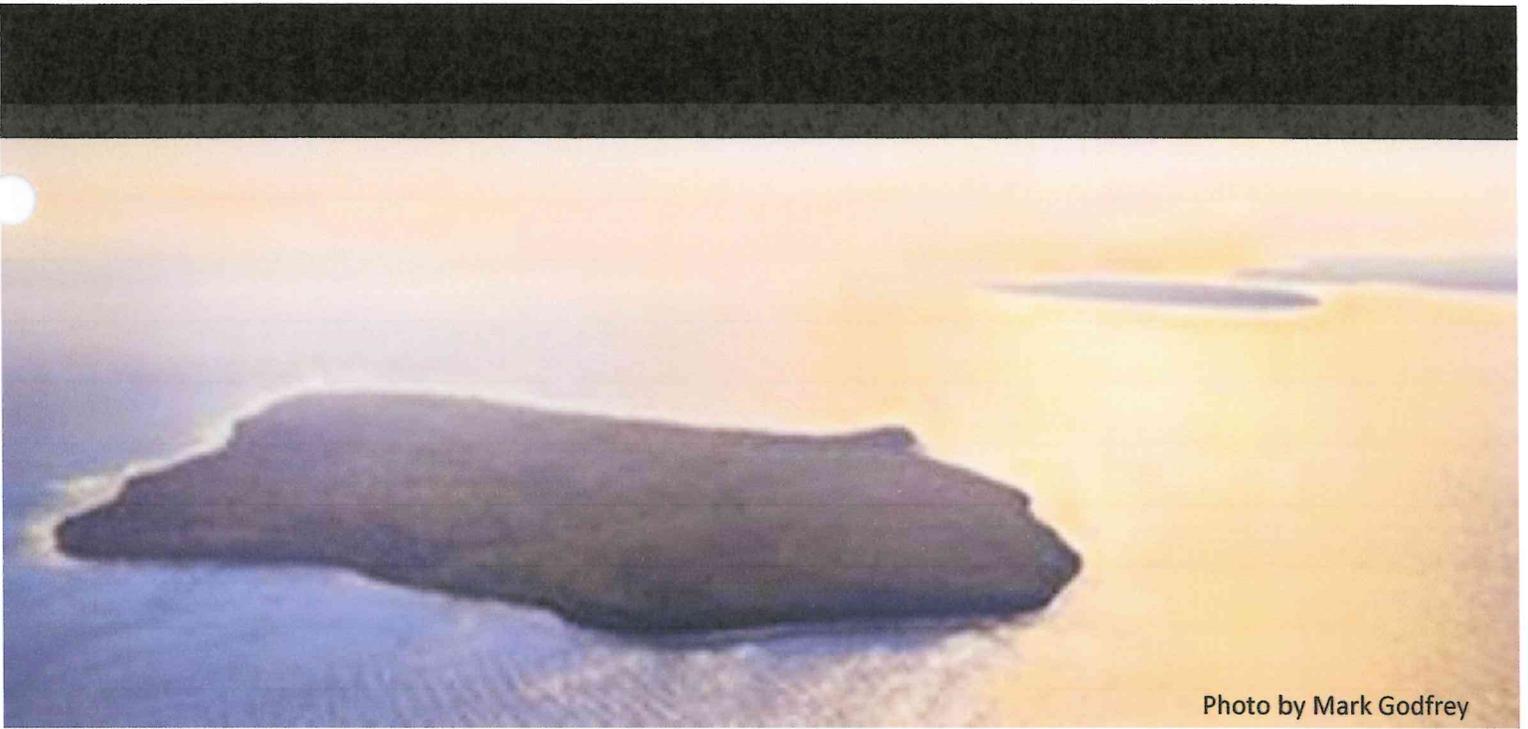


Photo by Mark Godfrey

Grand Traverse Islands National Lakeshore

What It Would Look Like and Why It Should Be Created

January 10, 2014

DRAFT

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Part One:

Proposal for a New National Lakeshore





Proposal for a New National Lakeshore

Located in the northern reaches of the Great Lakes, and marking the dangerous maritime divide between the warmer, shallower waters of Green Bay and the colder, deeper waters of Lake Michigan – one of the largest lakes in the world – lie the Grand Traverse Islands, a richly biodiverse, historically significant, and relatively still undeveloped wilderness archipelago connecting the Door Peninsula in northeast Wisconsin to the Garden Peninsula in Upper Michigan. Unfortunately, these beautiful islands are largely inaccessible to the public; their ecological management is fragmented across county, state, federal, and organizational lines; the historically valuable buildings and lighthouses located there lie abandoned and are falling into grave disrepair; and portions of the island chain that lie in private hands are inherently threatened by future development. The creation of a new National Lakeshore encompassing the islands, as well as portions of both peninsulas, would not only resolve these issues, but create great economic benefits for our counties, states, and perhaps even the nation itself.

The Grand Traverse Islands are highly deserving of National Lakeshore status. Part of the vast Niagara Escarpment, stretching all the way to Niagara Falls, these islands consist of dolomitic limestone rock formed over 425 million years ago from compressed coral reefs along the shores of a warm, shallow sea. Today, they are the summer home of migrating bats, birds, and butterflies, as well as an important spawning ground for lake fish and ecologically significant habitat for threatened wildflowers and orchids. Given their name by early French Voyageurs paddling from one peninsula to the other as they traveled to and from Mackinac Island, and encompassing five nineteenth-century lighthouses and a former US Life Saving Service station, numerous shipwrecks, Native American archeological sites, and the Great Estate of Chester Thordarson – the inventor of the first million-volt transformer – they also represent an important piece of our collective maritime and cultural heritage.

A great deal of the island chain (and portions of the two peninsulas) is already owned and managed by county, state, and federal agencies or local and national organizations, which means very little land would need to be purchased from private owners to make the Grand Traverse Islands National Lakeshore a reality. Sadly, very little of this naturally and historic-

Grand Traverse Islands National Lakeshore

Photo by Mark Godfrey



-ally important wilderness is open to the public. Plum and Pilot Islands, which are managed by the US Fish and Wildlife Service, and Poverty Island, which appears to be overseen by the Coast Guard, are by nature inaccessible. Although the Nature Conservancy is in the process of purchasing St. Martin Island from the Luber family, it appears that the Nature Conservancy's long-term plan is to transfer control of the island over to the US Fish and Wildlife Service, which would preclude public access to this island as well.

The fact that public ownership of the Grand Traverse Islands is so fragmented means that ecological management of the islands is fragmented as well. The Wisconsin DNR, Michigan DNR, Door County Parks Department, Door County Land Trust, US Fish and Wildlife Service, and The Nature Conservancy all work very hard and do incredible things to protect the area's fragile and threatened biological communities. Each complements the other, but it remains true that these agencies and organizations have somewhat different goals and priorities, and that the Grand Traverse Islands would be most effectively managed and overseen by a single agency. Since the Grand Traverse Islands bridge the states of Wisconsin and Michigan, it follows that any single overseeing agency would have to be federal.*

The National Park Service is a perfect candidate. Although the US Fish and Wildlife Service does a fantastic job of managing the lands it oversees, its mission severely restricts public access. Furthermore, the goals of the US Fish and Wildlife Service do not include historic preservation and interpretation, which is greatly needed throughout the Grand Traverse Islands. Many of the most significant historical structures in the region are threatened by disrepair and collapse – including the Range Lights, Lightkeeper's House, and US Life Saving Station on Plum Island, the Lighthouse on Pilot Island, and the Lighthouse and Lightkeeper's House on Poverty Island. The National Park Service would have a much greater stake in preserving these important places due to its interpretive mission.

Furthermore, the creation of a new National Lakeshore would allow for public purchase and permanent protection of lands currently in private hands throughout the Grand Traverse Islands. This would include nearly the whole of Detroit Island, as well as parts of St. Martin

Grand Traverse Islands National Lakeshore

Photo by Mark Godfrey



Island, Summer Island, and Little Summer Island, as well as small areas on both of the peninsulas. Washington Island and the tribally managed land on St. Martin Island would be left alone, though it would be nice to include the lighthouse on St. Martin.

If these reasons were not enough, the local, regional, and perhaps even national economic benefits of a new National Lakeshore would be enormous. Tens of thousands of people travel to the Apostle Islands each year simply because it's a National Lakeshore (especially sailors and sea kayakers, who tend to be wealthy, with plenty of discretionary income). Moreover, those visitors aren't just from the Midwest: they're from all over the country - and the world. Door County is only 4 hours away from Chicago and 5 hours away from Minneapolis-St. Paul. Tourism in Door County has skyrocketed over the last thirty years, and the Grand Traverse Islands National Lakeshore would be a very popular destination. Local accommodations, restaurants, charter boats, outfitters, gas stations, grocery stores, and other businesses would see a huge increase in sales. New businesses would likely be created. All this means more jobs, lower unemployment, and greater economic growth at a time when our counties, states, and country are seeking these outcomes.

I understand that this idea is not without controversy for the land owners and the currently-managed public places it would affect. However, the creation of a new National Lakeshore is the right path forward. The Grand Traverse Islands deserve it. It would be a great thing for our counties, for our states, for our nation, and for the environment. It would preserve, protect, and provide public access to one of the most beautiful places in the world - the Grand Traverse Islands - for us, for nature, and for all time.

John Hartley Bacon
January 10, 2014

**Based on the important services currently provided by the USFWS in monitoring and managing sea bird nesting sites in the Grand Traverse Islands, their small size and their lack of historical or recreational significance, Spider, Gravel, Fish, Gull, Little Gull, Gravelly, and Rocky Islands are not included in this proposal. However, the purchase of these islands not already in public hands is included, so that they may be transferred to the USFWS's care.*



Part Two:

**What the National Lakeshore
Would Look Like**

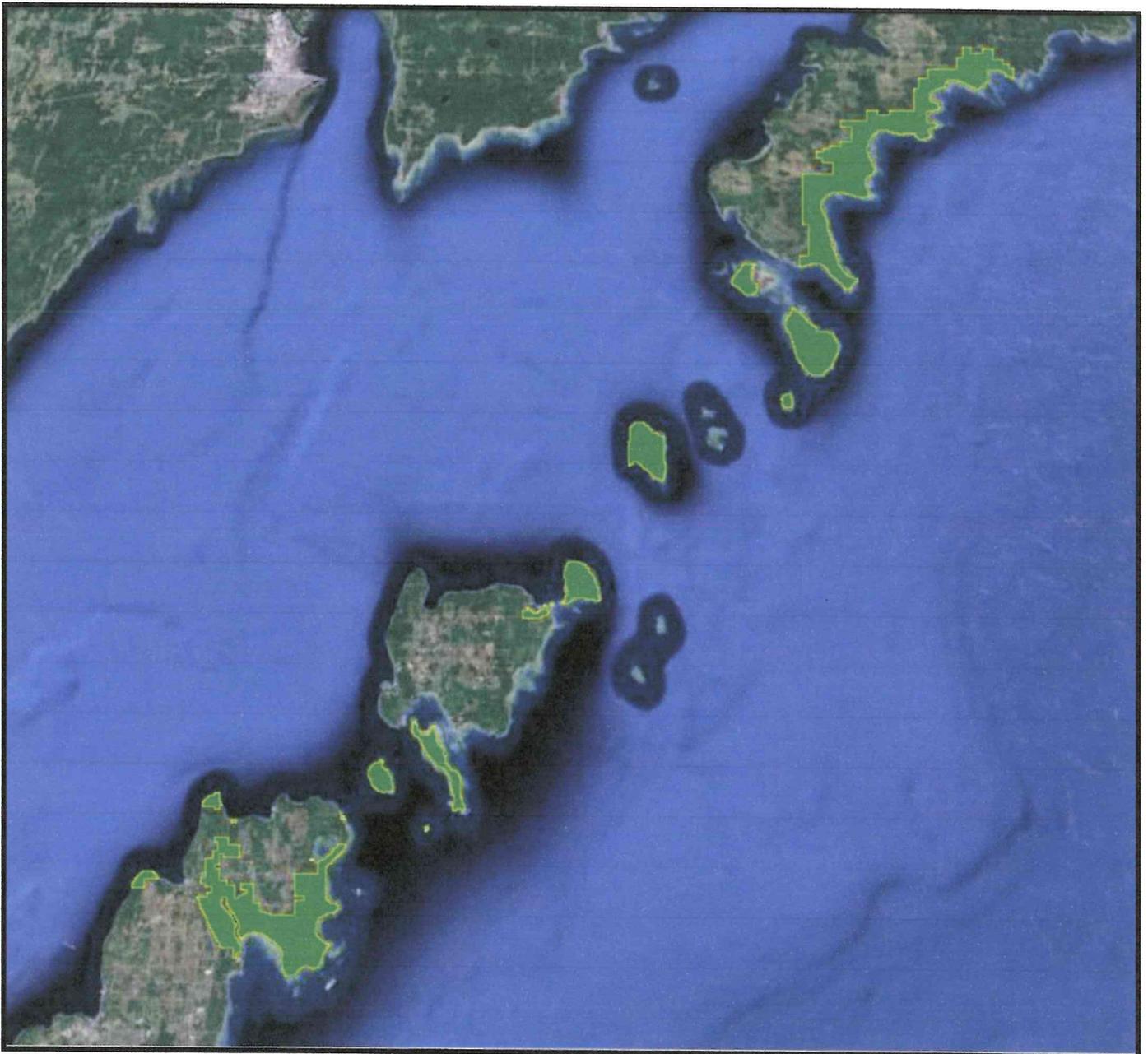


Grand Traverse Islands National Lakeshore

Photo by Mark Godfrey



Proposed Lakeshore:



The Landscape:

Great Lakes Archipelago:

The National Lakeshore would encompass 8 islands: Pilot, Plum, Detroit, Rock, St. Martin, Poverty, Summer, and Little Summer. 7 smaller nearby islands (Spider, Gravel, Hog, Fish, Gull, Little Gull, Gravelly, and Rocky) would ideally be managed by the USFWS.



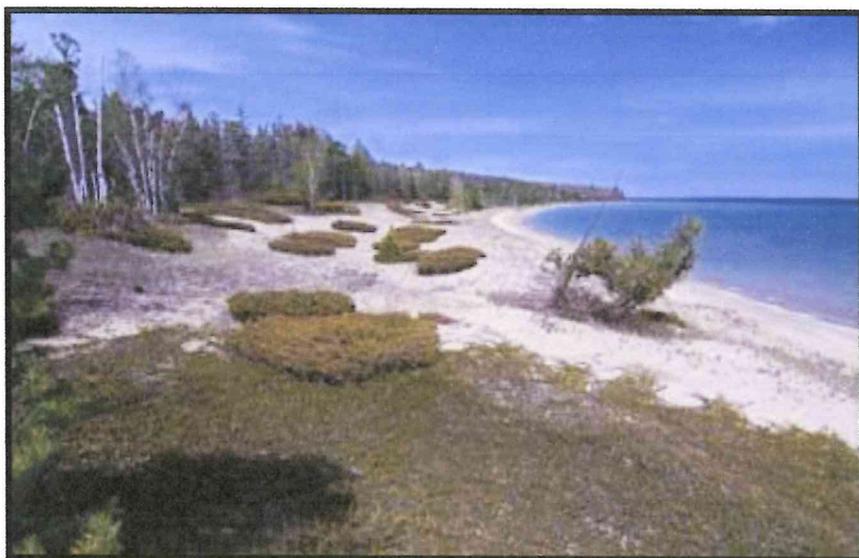
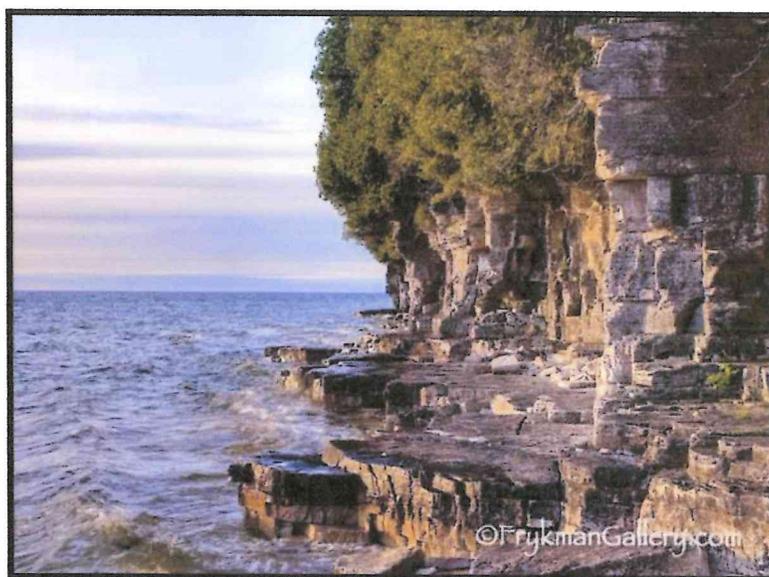
Wetland Ecosystems:

It would include spectacularly bio-diverse wetland ecosystems such as the Mink River Estuary – one of the most pristine freshwater estuaries in the nation!

The Landscape:

Dramatic Cliffs:

The Niagara Escarpment travels the length of the island chain from the Door Peninsula to the Garden Peninsula, characterized by impressive dolostone cliffs and rocky shelves. Small caves, arches, and stacks can be seen.



Sand Dunes & Beaches:

Some notable ridge and swale environments can be found in the area too, as well as several well-known swimming beaches at Newport State Park and on Rock Island.



The Landscape:

Inland Lakes:

The National Lakeshore could include a number of inland lakes, such as Charboneau Lake, Bog Lake, and Fishery Lake. Europe Lake would be the largest of all.



Diverse Forests:

Lands composing the National Lakeshore would feature many different forest communities, both boreal, deciduous, and mixed. Hemlock, Beech, Basswood, Maple, Birch, Oak, Ash, Sumac, Cedar, Pine, Spruce, and Fir are all present, as are others.

Historical Places:

Fleetwing Shipwreck:

The Fleetwing was a 230-ton three-masted schooner that ran aground in a gale in Garrett Bay on October 26, 1888. It sits 5 to 25ft deep and is easily accessible.



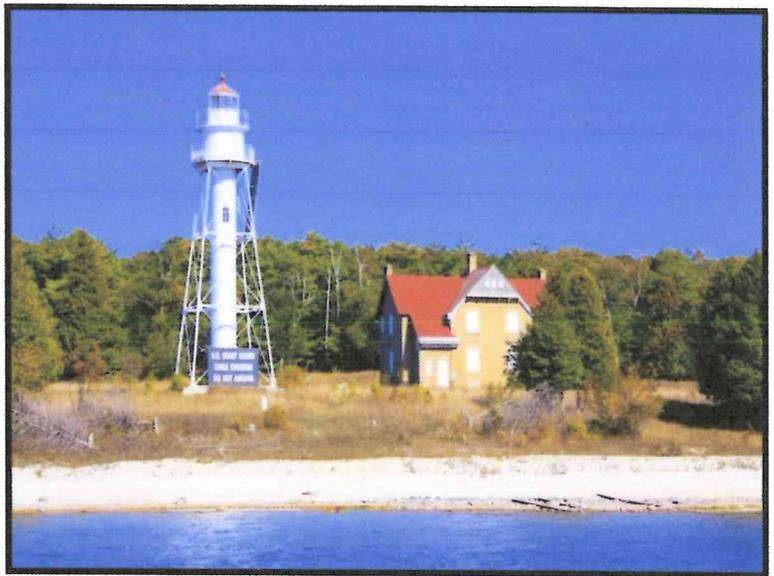
Native American Pictographs:

Located along the shoreline in Door Bluff Headlands County Park, these pictographs are believed to depict the "Death's Door Legend."

Historical Places:

Plum Island Range Lights:

Built in 1985, the Plum Island Range Lights helped the Pilot Island Lighthouse guide ships through infamous Death's Door. In 2000, the Wisconsin Trust for Historic Preservation placed the Plum Island Light Station on its list of the State's Ten Most Endangered Historic Properties. It remains endangered.



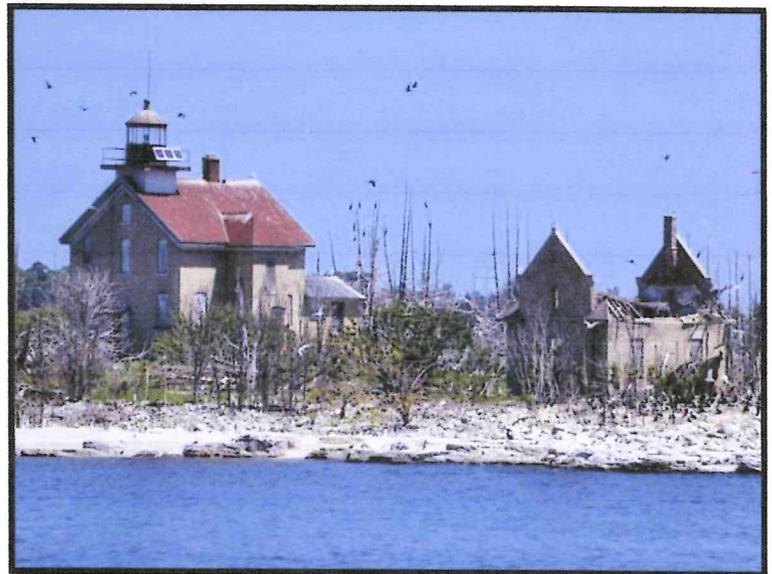
Plum Island US Life Saving Station:

Built in the late 1800s, the Plum Island US Life Saving Station worked to save ships that ran aground or wrecked on the islands and shoals of Northern Door County. The USLSS Heritage Association lists the station as endangered.

Historical Places:

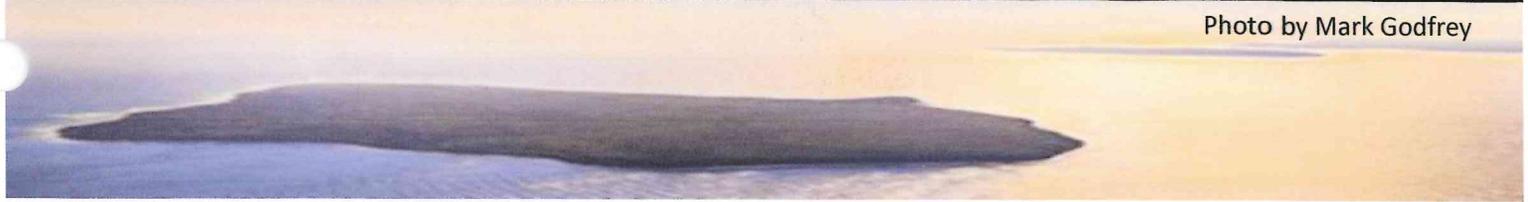
Pilot Island Lighthouse:

Built in 1958, the Pilot Island Lighthouse helped guide ships through the Death's Door Passage. Cormorants and other sea birds have taken over the island and the structure is falling into disrepair.



Pilot Island Shipwrecks:

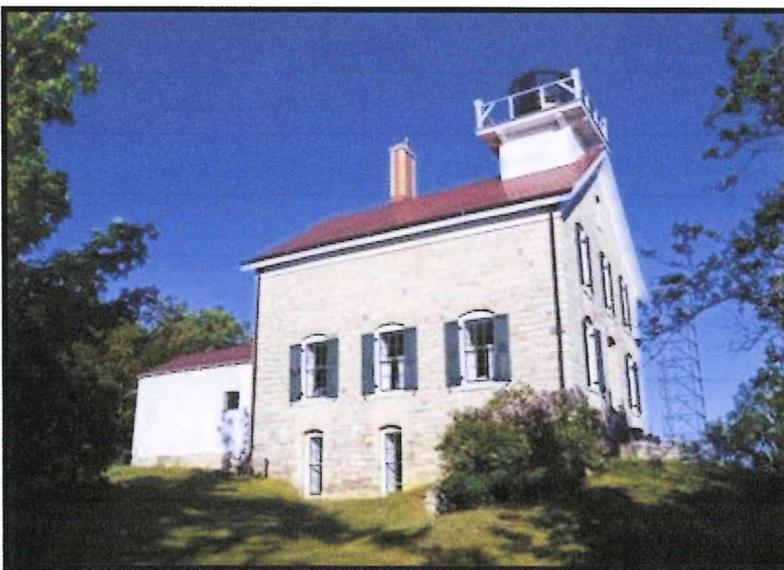
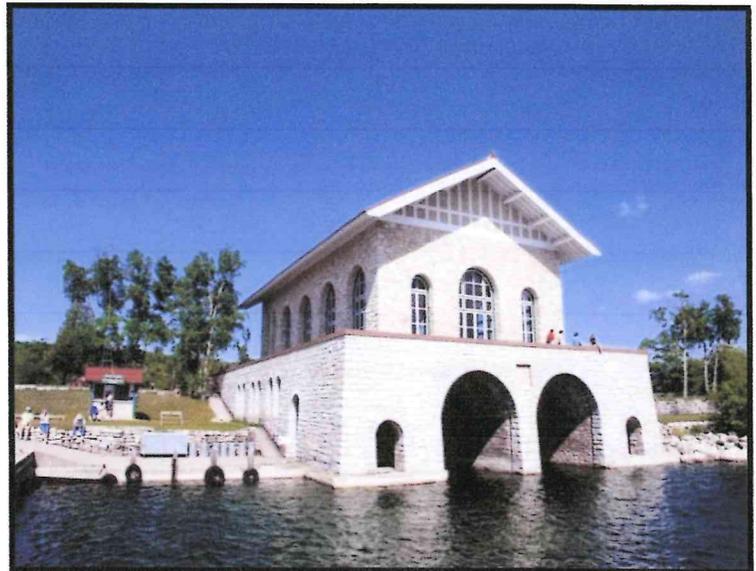
Among a number of Pilot Island wrecks, the A.P. Nichols, Forest, and J.E. Gilmore stand out. Within the span of two years, these three ships wrecked on the same spot, and their wrecks overlap each other, sitting at a depth of 15 to 40ft.



Historical Places:

Thordarson Estate:

The Icelandic-American inventor of the first million-volt transformer, Chester Thordarson, built a large estate on Rock Island, including a Great Hall and Boathouse, built entirely from locally quarried rock. Part of Rock Island State Park, it remains in good condition.



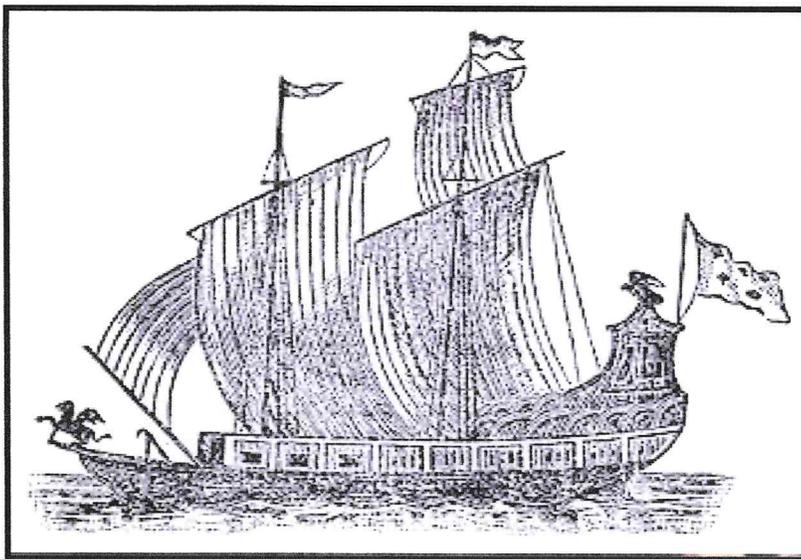
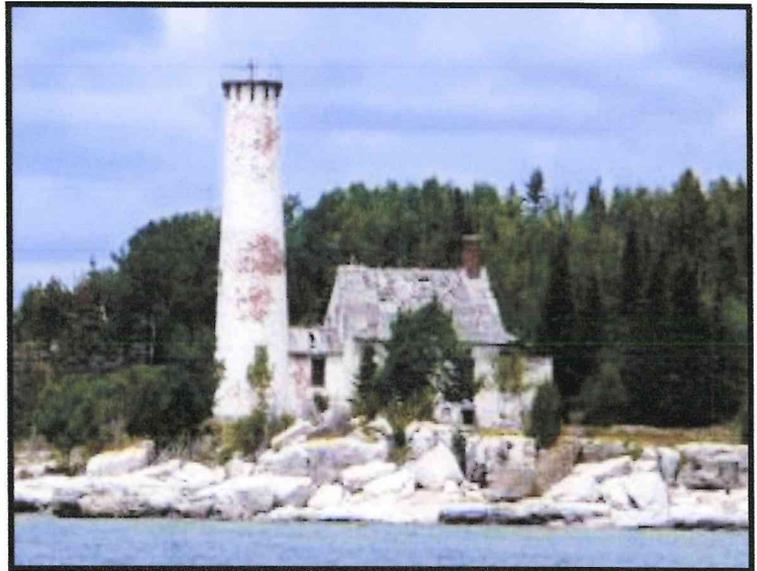
Pottawatomie Lighthouse:

The oldest lighthouse in Door County and the Grand Traverse Islands, it was originally constructed in 1836 to protect the Rock Island Passage. It was razed and rebuilt in 1858 for structural reasons. Due to the efforts of the Friends of Rock Island, it is now in good condition.

Historical Places:

Poverty Island Lighthouse:

Built in 1874, the Poverty Island Lighthouse guarded the Poverty Island Passage. The lighthouse is now abandoned and in 2011 was declared "America's Most Endangered Lighthouse" by Lighthouse Digest.



Le Griffon:

It is highly likely and widely believed that the first sailing ship built on the Great Lakes, Le Griffon, wrecked in the Grand Traverse Islands on return from its maiden voyage. Le Griffon was built and sailed by French Explorer Robert La Salle.



Notable Plants and Animals:

| | |
|--------------------------|---------------------------|
| Bald Eagle | Western Fox Snake |
| Monarch Butterfly | Turkey |
| Whitefish | Dune Grass |
| Canada Yew | Wood Lily |
| Mink | Merlin |
| Dwarf Lake Iris | Perch |
| Antlion | Ruby-throated Hummingbird |
| Bats | Pileated Woodpecker |
| White-tailed Deer | Wolf Spider |
| White Pelican | Owls |
| Trout | Raccoon |
| Osprey | Luna Moth |
| Lady Slippers | Caspian Tern |
| Hine's Emerald Dragonfly | Dune Goldenrod |
| Porcupine | Black-crowned Night Heron |
| Northern Water Snake | Black Bear |
| Jack-in-the-Pulpit | Cormorants |
| Painted Turtle | Salmon |
| Snapping Turtle | Coyote |
| Land Snails | Thimbleberry |
| Northern Pike | Egret |
| Sandhill Crane | Wood Nymph |
| Grey Fox | Possum |
| Red Fox | Gulls |
| Skunk | Bass |
| Swans | Dune Thistle |