

ST. JAMES TOWNSHIP PARKS AND RECREATION PLAN — HARBOR PLAN ADDENDUM



THE HARBOR

Paradise Bay, sometimes known as Beaver Harbor, St. James Harbor or simply “The Harbor,” is a remarkable example of a natural, sheltered harbor. It is extremely popular with boaters, as is evidenced by the many public and private docks that dot its shores, as well as the many boats that pepper its waters throughout the summer months. The harbor is a cornerstone of the island’s economy, as the transportation of freight and passengers both depend on its shelter. The town of St. James and the majority of the island’s retail and commercial businesses are all located on its shores.

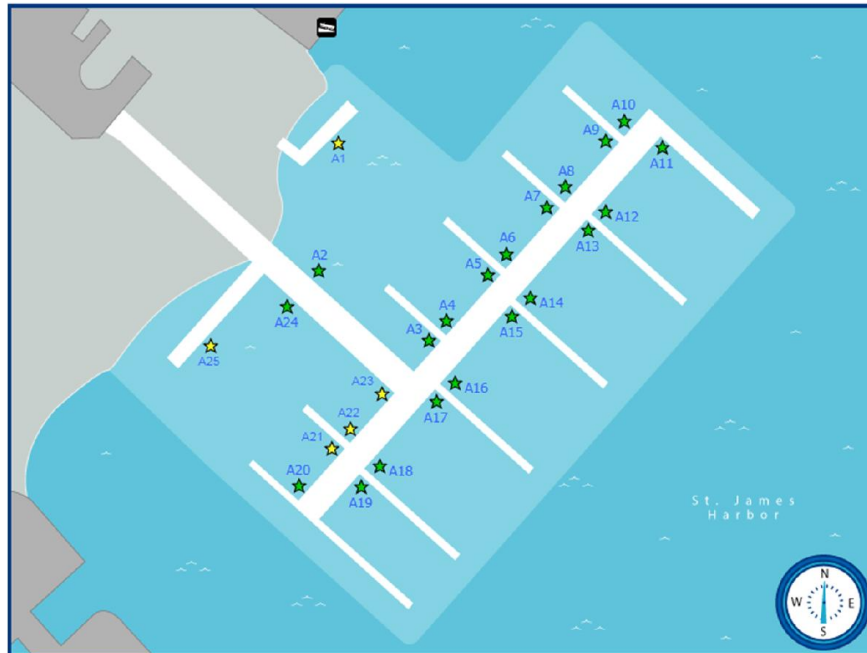
Beaver Island’s economy depends on recreational tourism. From its forests and inland lakes to its beaches, the island is a wonderful vacation spot for those who wish to spend time outdoors. But the island’s recreation, too, is largely centered on the harbor. Paradise Bay is undeniably the hub of recreational boating on the island. It is one of the only places to launch a boat. It is the destination of anyone boating to the island on private vessels. It is the staging point to get to anywhere else around the island, and to the outer islands—such as Garden Island or High Island. The harbor is also an extremely important point of refuge for boaters—both recreational and commercial—during poor weather.

Boaters in the harbor are served by only one privately owned and one publicly owned marina. Both of these institutions need to be upgraded to meet growing demand. With a renewed focus on tourism island-wide, it is in the utmost interest of both St. James Township and the island at large to capitalize on the harbor’s natural beauty and shelter by making sure that its supporting facilities are the best that the island can offer, and on par with the expectations of modern boaters.

THE BEAVER ISLAND MUNICIPAL DOCK

Size of Facility

- The size of the facility and whether or not it is “right sizing”
 - o The Beaver Island Municipal Dock has twenty-five slips—twenty-three are transient slips and two are seasonal slips. As the dock is run under the DNR’s reservation system, transient boaters are not typically turned away at any point in the season. There are, however, times during the peak of the Island’s summer season—July and August—where there are no transient slips available. The Municipal Dock additionally holds a waiting list for its two seasonal slips.
- Amount of slips/what type
 - o The Municipal Dock has twenty-five slips, of which twenty-three are for transient boaters and two are seasonal slips. Sixteen of these slips have no minimum length for boats: five of these have a maximum length of 25’, two have a maximum of 30’, and nine have a maximum length of 35’. The remaining nine slips have a minimum length of 35’ and a maximum of 60’. All of the slips have water and power.
- Demand for seasonal slips
 - o The Municipal Dock Seasonal Slip Allocation Policy, passed by the township board on December 12, 2017, indicates that the existing seasonal slip-holder has the right of refusal for their slip during the following year. In February, the existing holder is contacted. If they wish to continue to rent their seasonal slip, they may do so. If they do not wish to retain their slip, the township publicizes the opening and interested boaters may register their interest in the slip. The harbormaster also maintains a list of boaters interested in renting a seasonal slip. In March, the seasonal slip(s) that are open are filled from the pool of interested boaters via a lottery drawing. The existence of a wait list indicates a lack of seasonal slips at the BIMD, something that needs to be addressed in the future.



Infrastructure

- Annual Maintenance Schedule
 - o The harbormaster building and docks are closed down each fall, and re-opened every spring. A bubbler system is in place throughout the winter months. Although much of the maintenance and upkeep of the BIMD is performed on an as-needed basis, a thorough inspection of the docks, property, and building are performed each spring, and any major repairs (winter damage, etc.) are carried out at that time. Lawn and landscaping maintenance, as well as tightening or any other maintenance of the dock boards, are all performed as needed throughout the spring and summer. Licensed plumbers and electricians perform any needed maintenance or repairs of those systems as needed. Various items, such as the loaner bicycles, washers/dryers, and handheld marine radios are replaced infrequently, but as needed.
- Minor Infrastructure Repairs/Additions

<u>Project</u>	<u>Year</u>	<u>Projected Cost</u>
Spare Electric Pedestal	2019	\$1000
Lighting Upgrades	2019	\$1250
New Sidewalk	2020	TBD

 - o A spare electric pedestal will be kept on hand in case of failure.
 - o A few short lengths of sidewalks may be added, to the side door of the building, and connecting the shore-dock to the main walkway.
- Replacement/rehabilitation schedule of large investments
 - o Overall, the docks and harbormaster building are all in good shape, and the township does not foresee needing to conduct any large repairs or replacements within the next several years. Upgrades to the bubbler and pump-out systems are possible, but not planned at this time.

ADA

- Is it ADA accessible, what are its deficiencies
 - o The BIMD docks are barrier-free and handicap accessible. No wheelchair lifts are available for loading/unloading from boats to the dock at this time. The harbormaster building, including the restrooms, showers, laundry, and lounge are all barrier-free and ADA compliant.

Dredging

- History
 - o In 2013, St. James Township was approved for \$1 million for dredging under the Michigan State Waterways Commission's emergency dredging plan. Due to the subsequent rise in lake levels, however, no actual dredging took place.
- Future Dredging
 - o St. James Township does not anticipate the need to dredge the area near the BIMD in the next five years.

Marketing/Events

- How is it marketed
 - o The Beaver Island Municipal Dock maintains a Facebook Page and is featured with its own section on the Beaver Island Chamber of Commerce website. As a participant of the Department of Natural Resources Reservation System, the BIMD is also easily found on the DNR website, where transient slip reservations can be made. The BIMD is also present on the Pure Michigan website, as well as several private marina-database websites.
- What events does it have
 - o The BIMD has been host to many events throughout its history. The yearly Chicago Yacht Club Race to Mackinac, is a busy time for the dock. Although it is not a stop on the race, the route passes very near to Beaver Island, and therefore many boats make a stop at the BIMD. In the past, the Boyne Thunder Poker Run, based out of Lake Charlevoix, has had the Municipal Dock as one of its stops. Although the Poker Run's route did not include Beaver Island in 2018, a return to the island in future years is a likely possibility. In more recent times, the schooner *Madeline*, a two-masted fifty-six foot replica of an 1840s commercial vessel, has docked at the BIMD for tours. The *Madeline* is run by the Maritime Heritage Alliance, and was brought to the island by the collaborative effort of the Beaver Island Municipal Dock and the Beaver Island Historical Society. The BIMD has also hosted Boy Scout troops from around the state of Michigan.

Partnerships

- With whom does the dock partner/for what
 - o The BIMD has a longstanding partnership with the Beaver Island Chamber of Commerce. The Chamber building immediately neighbors the harbormaster building, and the two share a parking lot. The Chamber features the BIMD heavily in its website, which is often a first stop for people interested in visiting the island. As mentioned above, the BIMD and the Michigan DNR are also integral partners, as the dock is both part of the DNR Reservation System, and determines its transient slip rates based on DNR recommendations. The dock also has partnered with the Beaver Island Historical Societies to host events and parties. Local businesses, such as the Circle M Restaurant, the Beaver Island Lodge, and McDonough's Market also regularly pick up customers from the dock who wish to patronize their businesses.

ANDERSON’S MARINA

The Beaver Island Marina, also known variously as Beaver Island Marine Inc., and Anderson’s Marina, is a large, privately owned marina on the harbor. It has approximately 40 slips, a boat launch ramp, gasoline and diesel fuel sales, a bath house, and a small shop. The multi-faceted business covers six lots on the northern side of the harbor. In addition to the marina, there is a car rental service, a full service auto and marine mechanic’s shop, boat and vehicle storage, and a small rental apartment building. The businesses (all under the name of Beaver Island Marine Inc.), and all six lots have been for sale as a package deal for a number of years.

In February of 2018, a charitable foundation presented St James Township with a Beaver Island Marina Purchase Proposal Draft Concept; the proposal was shared with the island community at an open meeting at St James Township Hall. In very general terms, the proposal suggested that the foundation buy the marina (and adjacent property) and gift it to the township for use as either a profitable marina or a waterfront park. Subsequently, the township board appointed two of its members to pursue discussion with the foundation, and, in June, authorized the Public Works Committee and an advisor to continue to work on the project.

There followed several months of research, contact with the charitable foundation, committee and board discussions. St James Township recognizes the inherent value of ownership of the proposed property to help fulfil its adopted goal: IMPROVE AND PROMOTE ACCESS TO RECREATIONAL SITES FOR RESIDENTS AND VISITORS. The Township has identified the following items as priorities for potential use of the property were it to come into Township ownership.

TOWNSHIP WOULD OPERATE IF ACQUISITION ACCOMPLISHED:	
Boat Launch	Essential to maintain on harbor. Determine needed repair/replacement costs. The boat launch ramp is in need of repair. Although the actual ramp itself is in serviceable condition, the concrete wall along the east side is crumbling and needs to be repaired, as it is not currently safe for the public to stand on.
Fuel Dock	Essential to maintain on harbor. Determine needed repair/replacement costs.
Sales Office	Office to be maintained, but maybe not as extensive as existing.
Boater Showers & Lounge	Essential for visitors. Perhaps have public access restrooms for non-boaters.
Docks	Determine ‘right size’ of dock slips; assess condition of docks; determine needed repair/replacement costs; meet ‘clean marina’ standards. Consider replacing some or all with floating docks. Would use DNR reservation system in conjunction with the BIMD.
County Road Commission Land	Property likely used as designated parking for boat launch, this is essential, as outlined in the current St. James Township 5-Year Recreation Plan.

TOWNSHIP WOULD NOT OPERATE:	
Car Rental, Car Repair, Large Boat Storage, Boat Repair	Not to be provided by township, but essential that this be available on Island.
Apartment Building	This is affordable housing for island community—try to make sure number of housing units don't disappear, possibly moved to new location.

As pictured below, the potential asset includes six lots—three waterfront lots and three directly across Main Street, as they appear under current ownership.



If this transaction continues and the township does eventually gain ownership of the marina, public input and the will of the residents of St. James Township and of Beaver Island will play a key role. The township will conduct public input meetings and visioning events in order to plan and execute the running of the marina. What is certain is that the township would strive to run the marina using clean marina standards and best practices. What is also clear is that the township will need funding assistance in order to conduct the necessary repairs to make Anderson's Marina a safe and profitable venture. The township would seek funding from sources such as the DNR's Waterways Program Grants, the Natural Resources Trust Fund, and others to help with renovations and repairs.

OTHER TOWNSHIP-OWNED ASSETS ON THE HARBOR

Jewell Gillespie Park

- Jewell Gillespie Park is a public beach and playground on the harbor. Two of the four lots that make up the park are co-owned by Peaine Township. The park is a fairly small, sandy beach with a variety of playground equipment located in downtown St. James. Jewell Gillespie Park is an extremely popular swimming beach during the summer months, especially during the peak of the island's tourist season in

July and August. The park contains a sandy beach, with playground equipment, as well as a small grassy area with picnic tables and a family-style outhouse. Additional beach area and a paved parking lot were all added to the park in 2001, but the beach and the adjacent road remain very crowded during peak season. Due to its popularity, the township needs to upgrade to a restroom/changing room with running water, tied into the municipal sewer. Drinking fountains, or some other means for beachgoers to fill water bottles, are also needed. The township would also be interested in increasing the size of the park, if the adjacent properties were to become available.

Former DNR Property

- The Former DNR Property, which includes a boat launch area and a submerged dock, is an integral piece of the future for the harbor. The property is approximately three acres, along the west side of the harbor. Across the road from the waterfront is a house, utilized by the summer deputy, with a large backyard and over an acre that is currently wooded. Within the past ten years, plans were drawn to install a boat launch, fishing pier, and a small park at this property, but these plans never came to fruition. While something of this nature remains a possibility, the township may wish to pursue other projects at this site. One such idea is a small park with a kayak/small craft launch site. Another is the possibility of installing a fishing pier or small boardwalk at this site. The yard behind the house is fairly flat, and could be a good place for a parking lot. The wooded area behind the house's backyard could stay wooded and serve a small park, or cleared to increase parking or open space. The largest problem associated with the lakefront of this lot is the relatively industrial nature of the adjacent properties, many of which are used by fuel barges, fishing boats, and other commercial maritime activities.

Harbor Light Park

- Harbor Light Park is located at Whiskey Point, on the mouth of the harbor. By far its most notable feature is the Beaver Island Harbor Lighthouse, the current iteration of which was built in 1870 and is still active. The park also contains a small monument to Beaver Islanders who have been lost at sea, and a few park benches. The St. James Township Hall is located near the property, as well as the Central Michigan University Biological Station's boathouse—a former United States Coast Guard Lifesaving Station—from which Great Lakes research is conducted. The hall, itself a former Coast Guard building, also has on display the fourth-order Fresnel lens that was once installed in the lighthouse. The lens is viewable from the outside of the building, via an access ramp. Most of the property of the park is an open, grassy field. Although there is lake frontage, there is no development for any marine activity, and the beach is not particularly sandy or welcoming for bathers. It is, however a stop on the Beaver Island Water Trail. In the future, it is possible that the township may wish to increase the beach or maritime recreation capacities of the park. There is also need for a public restroom at this property, as there are no such facilities on this part of the harbor, despite being a popular destination for tourists.

Paradise Bay Park

- Paradise Bay Park is a very small park located in the heart of downtown St. James, directly adjacent to the Beaver Island Boat Company dock. The park has a paved walkway and patio area, with benches, all surrounded by flower gardens, bushes, and a few small trees. The park does include some sandy lake frontage. Due to its small size and proximity to commercial properties on either side, the park is not advertised as a beach, and use of the park is mostly limited to the garden area. Although its size may preclude it from becoming a public beach, it is possible that the property could be a launching site for paddlers of kayaks, paddleboards, and other portable boats.

Boat Launches

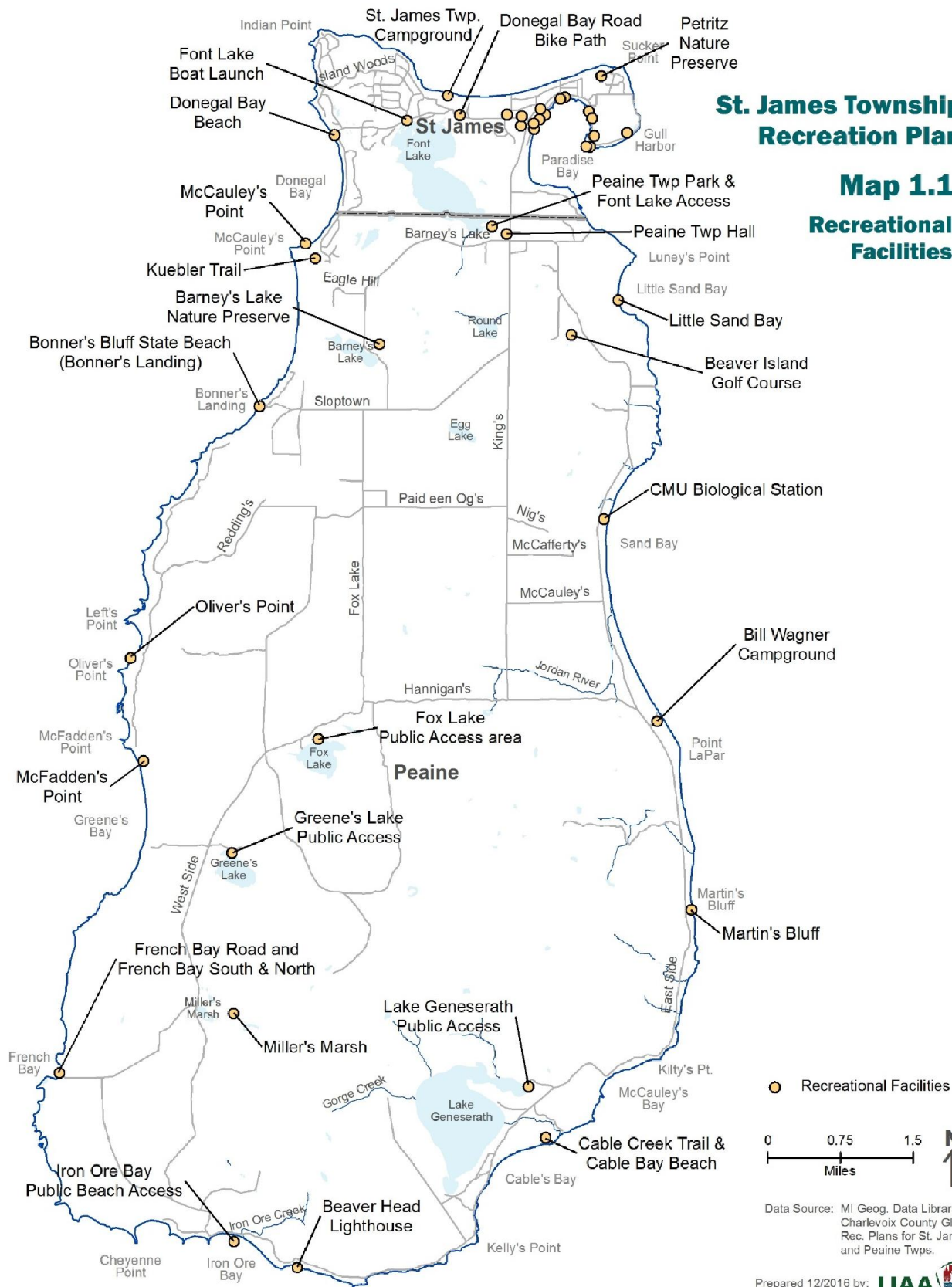
- St. James Township does have arrangements for public boat launching at two separate locations in the harbor. One of these is at the aforementioned Anderson's Marina. Currently the township pays the owners for the right for the public to use their ramp. Although this arrangement does not cost the township a great deal of money, the situation is not ideal. The area is extremely crowded, largely due to the rental vehicles and vehicles to be repaired at the mechanic's shop. As of now there is no convenient place for a vehicle and trailer to park near this launch.
- The township also maintains an easement on another boat launch, located at the end of Gallagher Street, just to the west of Anderson's Marina. Although this area is usually somewhat less crowded, there are still limiting factors to its usefulness as a public boat launch. As with Anderson's, there are no existing parking facilities, forcing vehicles and trailers to park along Gallagher Street. Not only does this cause the road to be narrower, but it also blocks the line of sight of pedestrian and vehicular traffic. On particularly busy days, it also can lead to the blocking of private driveways, as well as of the nearby St. James' Episcopal Church. In addition to the parking problems, the adjacent property is a tug and barge shipping business. This could cause safety concerns for both the shipping crew as well as the public.

Fishing Pier

- As of 2018, the harbor is noticeably lacking any publicly accessible fishing pier. As noted in the 2018-2023 St. James Township 5-Year Recreation Plan, the construction of a fishing pier on the harbor is an official township objective, and an attractive project that would increase accessibility to the harbor for those without a boat. As of this writing, the township does not have any concrete plans for this project, but the construction of such a pier is certainly a major goal moving forward. One possibility among many would be to build a pier at the former DNR building site, although more research would have to be done on the logistics and suitability of the site for a public pier. Once a location is decided upon, the Great Lakes Fisheries Trust's Fisheries Access Grant program, which specifically exists to increase access to shore-based fishing on the Great Lakes, is an excellent candidate to help fund this project.

St. James Township Recreation Plan

Map 1.1 Recreational Facilities



St. James Township Recreation Plan

Map 1.2 Recreational Facilities (Detail)

