

# A Report to the Joint Standing Committee on Inland Fisheries & Wildlife

L.D. 398 -- Resolve, To Develop a Management Plan for the Nonwildlife  
Components of Swan Island and Little Swan Island in Perkins Township,  
Sagadahoc County

The stakeholders group findings and recommendations

Submitted by:  
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## Table of Contents

I. INTRODUCTION.....	3
II. STAKEHOLDER GROUP RECOMMENDATIONS.....	4
III. SUMMARY OF STAKEHOLDER GROUP MEETINGS.....	8
IV. HISTORY; PRE-STATE OWNERSHIP.....	8
V. HISTORY; STATE OWNERSHIP.....	9
VI. WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT.....	10
VII. PUBLIC USE FACILITIES.....	11
VIII. HISTORICAL FEATURES.....	13
IX. COOPERATIVE ARRANGEMENTS.....	14
X. REGULATORY CONSIDERATIONS.....	15
XI. NON-REGULAROTRY CONSIDERATIONS.....	16
XII. APPENDICIES.....	
A. LD 398.....	18
B. Memorandum of Agreement.....	19
C. Swan Island timeline.....	21
D. Minutes for the first meeting on September.....	22
E. Minutes for the second meeting.....	27
F. Minutes for the third meeting.....	28
G. Visitor use trends .....	30
H. Revenue trends.....	31



## **Introduction**

The Steve Powell Wildlife Management Area, owned and managed by the Maine Department of Inland Fisheries & Wildlife (MDIFW), is located in the Kennebec River between the towns of Richmond and Dresden. It includes Swan Island, Little Swan Island, and several hundred acres of tidal flats totaling about 1,755 acres. Swan Island is approximately 4 miles long and varies between ½ and ¾ mile wide. Little Swan Island is nestled on the east side of Swan Island, directly across from the campground, and is separated from the larger island by Little River.

Swan Island, known for its abundant and often quite visible wildlife (especially nesting bald eagles, white-tailed deer and wild turkey), is actually an abandoned 18th and 19th century town called Perkins Township, and has long been recognized for its varied and interesting history. It was used by Native American tribes, early explorers, and settlers, and was reportedly visited by American historical figures such as Aaron Burr and Benedict Arnold on their 1775 expedition to Quebec City. In 1995 the National Park Service recognized Swan Island's historic importance in the areas of agriculture, architecture, industry, historic archaeology and community development, and placed the entire island in the National Register of Historic Places as the statewide level of significance as a historic district.

Each year, more than 4000 people visit Swan Island. The Island's public visitation season runs from May 1st through Labor Day (with limited access through the fall). Interpretive tours and environmental programs are offered to schoolchildren and the public by MDIFW employees.

The history of Swan Island and surrounding communities are deeply intertwined creating a deep sense of appreciation by area residents and visitors. Offering a unique combination of wildlife management, public recreational use, and historical significance, Swan Island enjoys broad support from a variety of interests.

Many have been concerned with how budget cuts may impact or have already impacted Swan Island's operations, and feel the Island has more to offer the public. Hearing these concerns, LD 398, 'Resolve, to Develop a Management Plan for the Nonwildlife Components of Swan Island and Little Swan Island in Perkins Township, Sagadahoc County' (Appendix A). This resolve directed MDIFW and the Department of Conservation (DOC) to establish and convene a stakeholder group to evaluate options available to manage the nonwildlife components for Swan Island and Little Swan Island in Perkins Township, Sagadahoc County. The stakeholder group shall consider and, when possible, build upon the 1999 master plan for Swan Island in conducting its work pursuant to this section. The departments shall develop and enter into a memorandum of agreement for the management of the nonwildlife components of the islands based on the recommendations and findings of the stakeholder group. Based on these recommendations, the two Departments are to then enter a memorandum of agreement for management of nonwildlife components on the two islands.

## **Stakeholder Group Recommendations**

The diversity of knowledge each member of the stakeholder group offered allowed for in-depth discussions and insight into the opportunities for Swan Island. There was general agreement

among the stakeholder group that public use should focus on environmental and cultural education of the Island resources. In general, it was the consensus of the Swan Island Stakeholder Group to make the following five primary recommendations.

- 1. MDIFW shall continue to manage the nonwildlife components of Swan Island and Little Swan Island.** The stakeholder group recognized several factors leading to this recommendation. In recent years Swan Island has experienced service reductions and threatened with additional curtailments during state budget cuts. To minimize the risk of Swan Island experiencing further curtailments the legislature, through the budgeting process, directed Swan Island to become self-funding. The 2009 operating season was the first under this directive and MDIFW managed Island resources to effectively have revenue match operating expenses without further reducing services.

Utilizing DOC to manage the public use components would not buffer the Island from future budget cuts. Revenue generated at State Parks goes into the state's general fund each year and the State Parks & Historical Site system relies on the Legislature to then appropriate dollars necessary to operate state parks back to DOC. Currently, State Park funding needs exceed available funds. Additionally, BP&L manages over \$100 million in infrastructure and has an estimated backlog of \$40 million of repair and upgrade expenses.

Currently, MDIFW staff assigned to Swan Island manages the public use components and elements of the wildlife management activities on the Island. When considering a potential role for DOC to manage these public use components and that USFWS would require MDIFW to maintain oversight on these activities it became apparent this arrangement would not be an efficient use of State resources.

- 2. MDIFW shall work with area stakeholders to create an Advisory Committee to Swan Island.** The stakeholder group recognizes that much can be gained from the expertise of the participants beyond the specific objectives of LD 398. To facilitate ongoing discussions and continued input from stakeholders, an Advisory Committee shall be created to offer guidance and support to MDIFW staff for improving the educational opportunities, condition of historic features and overall user experience within the framework of IFW's Steve Powell Wildlife Management Area management plan.

The Advisory Committee should include representatives from MDIFW, DOC, Maine Land Use Regulation Committee, the Maine Historic Preservation Commission, and one or more individuals with links to local civic, commercial, conservation or educational entities. The Advisory Committee should also endeavor to include a professional planner, historic architect, landscape historian and grant writer.

Within the Advisory Committee would be two subcommittees; Educational and Historical. The Educational Subcommittee would be charged with analyzing user statistics, educational programming, and promotional efforts; identifying opportunities for improvements; coordinating efforts with potential partners; and assisting with the implementation of improved educational programming.

The Historical Subcommittee would be charged with analyzing which buildings and landscapes should be preserved, restored, or rehabilitated; identifying future uses of the buildings as allowed under the scope of the USFWS program; coordinating fundraising efforts; and establishing mechanisms for undertaking both capital improvements and ongoing maintenance of the buildings and landscapes. Plans and work shall be performed in accordance with Federal Aid to Wildlife Restoration funding, Maine Historic Preservation Commission, *the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties* and the Steve Powell Wildlife Management Area management plan.

3. **The Department of Conservation and Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife shall enter into a memorandum of agreement.** The stakeholder group recognizes that DOC staff has an extensive cache of experience and knowledge that could benefit user experience on Swan Island and the memorandum of agreement should facilitate a free exchange of information and guidance. The two departments will work cooperatively to co-promote Swan Island's recreational and educational opportunities. This may include, but not be limited to, advertising opportunities on Department websites and materials, sharing of resources such as the First Time Campers program, and the free exchange of staff knowledge and experience, specifically the Historic Site Specialist and Parks Regional staff.
4. **Expand visitor use.** The group recognized that Swan Island is a great resource offering unique opportunities to visitors for two reasons; 1] Offers an experience similar to the remotest regions of Maine but easily accessible in southern Maine, and 2] The Island is rich with natural and cultural resources providing extensive opportunities for education about Maine's natural heritage, the area's history, and for demonstrating the interrelationship of nature and human development.

The group also recognized that, broadly, two groups of users exist; 1] day and overnight visitors primarily during the summer, and 2] educational groups during the spring and fall while school is in session.

The stakeholder group acknowledged that visitors are attracted by the remoteness and undeveloped character of the Island and that dramatically altering features of the Island or increasing the visitor use beyond a certain level could detract from the visitor experience. With this in mind the stakeholder group felt that it was first most important to maintain the highest quality experience for visitors.

To successfully expand visitor use, provide a high quality experience, and operate within funding/operational constraints, the stakeholder group recommends that MDIFW improve services and promotion to incrementally increase visitor use over time. Increases in visitor use will be evaluated by MDIFW and the Advisory Committee annually to ensure it remains consistent with the Steve Powell Wildlife Management Area management plan as approved by USFWS.

Given recent budget cuts and the poor economy, Swan Island may be better served by implementing low cost ideas that will better promote use to better position the Island when the economy turns around. Recognizing a restroom facility and drinking water supply sized for an overnight capacity of 60 visitors, the goal would be to balance day use with overnight use and see more consistent levels of use through the operating season.

While having events on the Island from time to time would be appropriate the stakeholder group recommends that large events not be a focus or encouraged. Small, scheduled events to attract first time visitors would be appropriate if they also expose visitors to the resources and opportunities on the Island.

#### **5. No new legislation is needed at this time.**

To help accomplish these recommendations the stakeholder group has provided MDIFW with additional recommendations for consideration. From these discussions the following recommendations were considered feasible for the short-term. The remaining, long-term recommendations will be evaluated jointly by MDIFW and the Advisory Committee on an ongoing basis.

1. Create a season pass for day use that would allow users providing their own means of access to the island to participate in the non-consumptive uses of the Island. Season pass benefits may include winter access for snowshoeing and cross-country skiing, and day use access without reservations. This would also provide a mechanism for citizens to support the Island;
2. Offer a teachers workshop during the spring of 2010 to introduce teachers to the educational opportunities on the Island;
3. Put Biddeford School's material on-line as a resource for others in power point format;
4. Create a block of day use passes for businesses to purchase and distribute to customers;
5. Build on BP&L's First Time Campers program by offering Swan Island as a site one or two weekends each year;
6. BP&L and MDIFW should use cross promotion of Department programs by advertising the camping opportunity on each Department website;
7. Work toward creating a dock at the camping area for day use access by paddlers/boaters utilizing Iron Rangers (stationary, steel boxes) to collect fees;
8. Grow visitor use over time and allow for a business to then provide bike/canoe/kayak rentals from the mainland at an appropriate time. This was attempted by local guide Robin Thayer for 3 consecutive summers; she was unable to make a go of it;
9. Improve demonstration/education opportunities about habitat management techniques. Add signage where habitat management occurs near the road or trails and offer workshops;
10. Evaluate logistics and potential to provide firewood on site through an outside vendor at a charge to campers;
11. Area towns need to improve co-promotion of resources and opportunities to also attract visitors and create awareness of complementing opportunities. It was also suggested that

Merrymeeting Bay Business Association develop a "Publication of Interests" to complement the desire to attract more visitors to area businesses;

12. Increase environmental education opportunities about the Merrymeeting Bay area;
13. When building restoration work allows, consider how the buildings can be utilized to complement the educational programming such as a History Center;
14. MDIFW should review logistics of current transportation system to determine if other access points or equipment may better serve staff and visitors while being more economical;
15. Establish communication with Rails to Trails/Kennebec River Initiative programs and coordinate or help facilitate potential opportunities; and
16. When revenue allows, staff Island appropriately such that a set ferry schedule can be in place to discontinue reservations for day use.



## **Summary of Swan Island Stakeholder Group Meetings**

The first meeting was held September 3, 2009 at the MDIFW Augusta headquarters opening with a presentation on the background of LD 398 and responsibilities for the stakeholder group. Presentations were also made by MDIFW and DOC on Department operations related to public use facilities, history of Swan Island and potential limiting factors or constraints for providing public use.

Each participant was given an opportunity to express what Swan Island could offer surrounding communities and visitors. Many comments pivoted around harnessing the totality of opportunity on the Island to attract more visitors. Discussion included how the historical features could be used to complement other activities along with improving accessibility for users. However, the stakeholder group recognized that realizing the value of Swan Island will require partnerships and effort from area businesses, communities and other organizations to identify funding and volunteer opportunities.

One topic that generated discussion at each meeting was the 3 day curriculum that Biddeford Middle School utilizes and it's potential to be a model for others. Discussion concluded that to expand curriculum use to other schools, the Biddeford teachers would need help promoting their work online and at workshops, helping locate other schools and teachers who might be interested.

The second meeting on October 6, 2009 occurred on Swan Island to observe transportation logistics, wildlife viewing opportunities, wildlife management, condition of buildings and other features of the island while allowing time to discuss compatible uses. This meeting was in the field with very engaging discussions.

Tammy Lavigne and Douglas Bertrand from the Biddeford Middle School shared the program they have developed for 7<sup>th</sup> graders which has become part of their curriculum. This program includes a three day, two night stay on the island with 100 students following a structured program. This topic generated good discussion around environmental education opportunities, what has been done on the island and potential partners.

The third and final meeting October 16, 2009 occurred at the MDIFW Augusta headquarters. Discussions focused on 1] potential limitations for visitor use, 2] visitor expectations, 3] expectations for town participation, 4] improving self service options for day use 5] additional educational opportunities 6] creating an Advisory Committee, and 7] reviewing recommendations.

### **Island History; Pre-State Ownership**

Exactly how Swan Island received its name is debatable. Even the earliest records reference it by this name. Native Americans called the island "Swango" (Island of Eagles). Some say the name was simply shortened to Swan. Another legend contends that the bay was once the stopping place of many swans and that this is the origin of the Island's name. The real story is probably lost forever in the memories of those early explorers who first reached the island.



The first recorded European explorer to Swan Island was Samuel de Champlain in 1605. Raleigh Gilbert of the Popham Colony was next in 1607. A third visit occurred in 1614 when Captain John Smith visited the Native Americans on the Island.

The next record of European –American settlers in connection with Swan Island occurred in 1667 when Christopher Lawson bought the island from the Indian Chief Abagadassat. Lawson built a house and lived on Swan Island. In 1668, Lawson used Swan Island as collateral for a loan from wealthy Boston merchant Humphry Davy. Four years later, in 1672, Lawson defaulted on the loan and transferred title of Swan Island to Davy. King Philip's War came to the area in 1676 and drove all white settlers away. After the conclusion of Queen Anne's War, settlers returned to Merrymeeting Bay and Swan Island where a palisaded garrison house was erected in 1719. Twenty soldiers were stationed here in July of 1720 due to increasing tensions with the local Native American population. The next year these soldiers were transferred to the newly built Fort Richmond located just above the head of Swan Island. After Dummer's War (1722-1724), a Thomas Percy took up residence on Swan Island. Others soon followed. In the fall of 1750 Captain Whidden's family, located on the southeastern portion of the Island, was attacked by Native Americans. Thirteen family members were taken captive. Within a few years Fort Frankfort/Shirley, Fort Western and Fort Halifax were built further up the Kennebec effectively pushing the frontier northward. Finally, in 1760, the last of the French and Indian Wars concluded. Peace came to Swan Island.

The island was most prosperous during the 1800s with a peak population of 95 residents who looked to farming, fishing, lumbering, shipbuilding, and ice cutting to provide a livelihood. However, by the early 1900s, a definite change had occurred. Modern refrigeration rapidly brought an end to the ice cutting. At about the same time, iron ships became popular, and the Island lost its shipbuilding business. Pollution, dams and overfishing in the Kennebec had resulted in a loss of fishing income. Much of the island had been converted to field, or so heavily cut that lumbering dwindled as a source of income; and many Island residents were forced to leave in search of other jobs. By July 1, 1918, the Island population had decreased to the point where insufficient numbers of men were available to fill the town offices, and the Town of Perkins became Perkins Township.

Termination of Swan Island as an active community came in 1936 when the Richmond-Swan Island-Dresden ferry service closed down. People began leaving the island rapidly after this occurrence.

### **Island History; State Ownership**

The Maine Department of Inland Fisheries & Wildlife had long been interested in purchasing land in the Merrymeeting Bay area because of its waterfowl management potential. As more and more of its residents left, Swan Island became a potential site for such an acquisition. The Department of Inland Fisheries & Wildlife, through the use of Federal Aid to Wildlife Restoration funding, began buying the farms on the Island in the early 1940s; and by the early 1950s the only remaining piece of private land was the cemetery, which was subsequently willed to the Department in 1988.

Swan Island soon became Swan Island Game Management Area. One of the early biologists working and living there was Stephen E. Powell. When Powell left the Island, he became responsible for all the Wildlife Management Areas in the state. At this time, he donated a strip of land in the Kennebec River adjacent to Swan Island and extending south from Green Point. This area known as the “Middle Ground” is a very valuable feeding area for migrating ducks and geese. After Steve Powell’s death in 1971, the name of the area was changed, in his memory, to Steve Powell Wildlife Management Area.

With 5 to 7 foot freshwater tides, nesting bald eagles, numerous white-tailed deer, wild turkeys, and 3,000 to 4,000 visitors each year, Swan Island is truly unique. Steve Powell Wildlife Management Area provides a sanctuary for migrating waterfowl, turkeys, and the resident white-tailed deer. It is also one of only two WMAs in the state where camping is allowed and information and education programs are provided for visitors. The value of the historical sites here further enhances the uniqueness of this area.

## **Wildlife Management**

When Swan Island first became a Wildlife Management Area, there were initial plans to use it primarily as an experimental site for various wildlife management activities. In the 1950s and 1960s a resident biologist, game warden and laborer were assigned here, and various big game research and management activities were conducted including; big game studies, development of waterfowl trapping techniques, waterfowl banding, and extensive agricultural plantings of wildlife foods. Early development projects undertaken during this period include; the general maintenance of facilities, construction of big game enclosures, construction of eight small upland marshes, and the planting and maintenance of 100 acres of cropland oats and winter rye for use by migrant Canada geese.

Initial deer management and research efforts included animal repellent studies (the Goodrich Chemical Corporation used the facilities to develop a commercially sold deer repellent called “Goodrite Zip”), limited forest cuttings, and trapping and transplanting surplus deer in an effort to control damage to crops primarily planted for goose management. Deer are not confined to the Island. The mainland is reached by an easy swim across or walk during the winter. With no special state management in recent years, regulation of the population is by natural means. Periodic overpopulation of deer provides more visibility to the public but also impacts the forest regeneration and in turn limits habitat diversity and cover types for other species such as ruffed grouse, and snowshoe hare. While this provides educational opportunities to demonstrate some consequences of an unregulated deer herd it also detracts from species diversity and some habitat management abilities.

In 1952, game research was relocated to facilities at the University of Maine, Orono and research programs at Swan Island were phased out. Waterfowl banding programs were continued, and the cropland was maintained in oats and winter rye. Twenty-one nesting boxes have been installed and maintained and 201 Canada geese, primarily young goslings, were released during the summers of 1965 through 1970. These introductions were aimed at establishing a breeding population within the Bay area.

During the spring, several thousand geese may be in the Merrymeeting Bay area at any one time. Approximately 230 acres of fields are maintained by rotational mowing, and 160 acres of these were once treated on a five-year rotation with a winter rye-clover-grass seed mixture, fertilizer and lime. However, rising costs in recent years have been prohibitive, and maintenance of the improved fields has been limited to the mowing. In 1984 a hay contract was initiated with a local farmer who harvested over 9,000 bales of hay. However, this also became impractical as a means of maintaining the fields. Today the primary objective for the historic agricultural fields is to maintain them for grassland nesting birds and to provide habitat diversity for the island as a whole. Recently volunteers have been instrumental in helping keep up to date on the mowing rotation.

Another focus of wildlife management on the island is to maintain small wetlands for waterfowl and wading bird feeding, resting, and nesting. Several small wetlands on the island and the peripheral tidal flats provide habitat for the life cycles of many wetland associated avian species.

Historically Swan Island was one of the last nesting territories for bald eagles in Maine. A successful egg transplant program was carried out on the island at the onset of Maine's bald eagle recovery plan. Merrymeeting Bay now abounds with nesting territories. Cooperation with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and University of Maine Eagle Project has resulted in eleven eaglets being banded here since 1979. Currently there are three nesting pairs that occupy territories within Steve Powell WMA. Conservation ownership of bald eagle nesting territories was a key component of the management plan that resulted in the delisting of the bald eagle. Continued management of the island will include restricting activities in the area of the nests that could negatively impact nesting success.

### **Public Use Facility**

A campground was established with the assistance of a \$25,000 legislative grant during the mid-1960s. Primary objectives are to provide non-consumptive use opportunity to include day use visitation, picnicking, and camping. Guided, interpretive tours conducted by Department personnel and developed nature trails provide additional natural resource and history appreciation, and provide an integral portion of the Department's conservation education efforts.

Initially the campground facilities consisted of 10 Adirondack type shelters and support facilities providing limited over night camping and daily tours on a seasonal basis for the visiting public. In 2001 a drilled well was installed, providing drinking water and to service the restroom facility completed in 2006. The well is considered a public water supply and is managed by MDIFW to meet Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) regulations. The Swan Island restroom facility is a six-room wooden framed structure, which includes three restrooms, one storage room, one washroom and one systems room. An outbuilding called the "boathouse" serves as a classroom for MDIFW school programs.

Today, school wildlife and conservation programs developed and presented by MDIFW Information and Education (I&E) staff consist of a variety of general wildlife and environmental topics and represent an ongoing effort to integrate Department resources to provide quality educational experiences to visitors.

A nature trail system has been established with the assistance of the Maine Conservation Corps, and is an important asset to the Conservation Education Program associated with the Island. In the summer of 2005, a 'Watchable Wildlife' tower was erected at the old home site of Cyrus and Rachel Wade. This is a restored 1931 vintage fire tower that once stood on the Frye Mountain Wildlife Management Area in Montville. Relocation of the fire tower was a collaborative effort between Maine Department of Conservation, Maine Forest Service and MDIFW, with funding for restoration provided by the State Wildlife Grant Program, with match and in-kind services provided by MDIFW. The tower was dedicated to photographer Bill Silliker in a ceremony attended by family, friends, members of the legislature and the Governor Baldacci.

Annually, season day use visitors have ranged from approximately 1,000 to almost 3,000 and overnight use from 500 to almost 1,300. Annual revenue from public use fees has ranged from a low of about \$5,000 to a high of \$18,000. Reductions in use can be attributed to previous state shutdown days reducing visitor days and spikes in visitation resulting from featured articles in widely distributed magazines.

In 1999 the operating cost was approximately \$75,000, with approximately \$13,000 received in visitor fees. Since this time the Department has been challenged with several budget cuts and has reduced Island staffing and associated costs. The budgeted operating cost for 2010 is \$14,950 (does not include salary wages for permanent MDIFW staff) with a revenue projection of \$19,000.

Whether the operational budget is \$75,000 or \$15,000, MDIFW staff are responsible for the following tasks while on the Island:

- Providing boat transportation to and from the Island;
- Coordinating Island reservations;
- Providing vehicular transportation for visitors throughout the Island;
- Providing interpretive guided tours to visitors, usually a narrated truck ride;
- Providing guided tours and wildlife education programming for larger school groups;
- Providing support for overnight campers, which requires overnight staff and assistance with transportation and supplies;
- Maintaining and managing the cultural resources;
- Maintaining and managing the natural resources; and
- Maintaining the Island's infrastructure.

Despite major cuts in staffing and funding, MDIFW so far has been able to maintain the current level of service provided and has implemented changes to encourage easier access to the island for those who do not require transportation. This has become increasingly difficult as staffing now consists of one regional biologist whose primary seasonal duties are to manage and operate the island, one seasonal island assistant, and volunteer help coordinated by MDIFW. Currently a dedicated account exists for visitor fees and donation to be used for operating the island. Additionally, improvements to infrastructure related to public use needs to be paid for out of this account. Current revenues barely cover the cost of operation and consequently much of the

island infrastructure is not improving. Despite this, much has been accomplished in recent years in terms of stabilization, and facility and infrastructure upkeep.

## **Historical Features**

The Maine Historic Preservation Commission, with cooperation from the Maine Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife, successfully had Swan Island listed in the National Register of Historic Places. The process, which began in 1994 with initial site visits by state archaeologists, culminated in 1995 with submission of formal nomination papers complete with supporting historical documentation and evidence. The registration of the Swan Island Historic District in the National Register in December of 1995 had, at last, bestowed on the island the cultural recognition it so richly deserves.

This broad designation covers not only the cultural features on the island but the natural features as well. MDIFW's Steve Powell Wildlife Management Area Plan considers this designation when evaluating and implementing wildlife management activities. Camping facilities and historic preservation are not approved expenditures for USFWS Federal Aid dollars, so these costs must be funded with general fund dollars and/or through visitor fees.

Since being obtained by the State, the township of Perkins has remained relatively unaltered. Some of the buildings remain, and many of the agricultural fields have been maintained for wildlife and habitat diversity. The physical changes since the 1940s have been slow and gradual, with a steady deterioration of the cultural resources.

There are 34 contributing resources in the Historic District, including 8 buildings, 20 house sites, 1 landscape and 5 stone walls. There are 20 identified historic archaeological sites, including those associated with the ice industry. Finally, there are several prehistoric archaeological sites which are not included in the present Registration due to a lack of significance.

Two of the buildings in the historic district of historical importance that were "restored" with the use of State Park & Recreation Commission or Bureau of Parks & Recreation funds in the mid 1960s: the c. 1800 Federal style Tubbs-Reed and Gardiner-Dumaresq Houses). Professional architectural surveys Condition assessments were generated for these two buildings in 1995, providing baseline information and estimated costs for stabilizing these structures within an appropriate "time" period. The limited repairs undertaken by BGS since 1999 have been based on these conditions assessments.

Since 1999 all efforts to stabilize, rehabilitate, or preserve the buildings and structures on the island have been funded by or through outside entities, including the Maine Historic Preservation Commission, The National Trust, Friends of Swan Island and student groups. Other historic buildings and associated outbuildings are located in the Historic District. The c. 1930 Priest-Blen house is used as an office space and living quarters for island staff. Minimal upkeep and modernization has been undertaken over the years. The c. 1860 Lily-Wade House was adopted under an agreement with the Swan Island Project and as a result received some restoration or preservation attention in the late 1990s and early 2000's. The c. 1885 Robinson-Powell house was once used as the primary residence for the first island manager and subsequently for summer staff living quarters. The Friends of Swan Island have undertaken several maintenance projects

on this building but major structural issues remain unaddressed. The c. 1850 Greek Revival style Maxwell-Tarr House was formerly the residence of the game warden originally assigned to the island. Despite emergency grant funds from the National Trust for Historic Preservation in 2002 to stabilize the west half of the roof, it has received no additional attention since that time and it has suffered significant deterioration and is no longer safe to enter. It is unlikely to continue standing in the near future. Other extant buildings on the island include several garages and barns, a boat house, and two former shops associated with the Robinson House: the extent to which maintenance has been undertaken on these structures is unclear.

If corrective efforts do not continue, more of these historic buildings will be lost. Visitation and educational opportunities will increase as buildings are further restored.

### **Cooperative Arrangements**

Outside groups have taken an interest in Swan Island and have organized to provide a service or use the island. Below is a timeline of these partnerships and the enrichment they provided to the island:

- In 1990, an earlier legislative funding cut threatening the existing public use component of Swan Island stimulated the resurgence of Friends of Merrymeeting Bay (FOMB), founded in 1975. FOMB developed a Swan Island Committee whose purpose was to pursue alternative funding and provide support. This group was especially active in the early 1990s but continued until 2005 maintaining a discrete Swan Island savings account to accept donations made by Island visitors. MDIFW did not have a mechanism to accept such donations to be used for Island projects. Currently, FOMB conducts yearly outings on the Island and provides MDIFW with volunteers for various work activities.
- In 1995 the Maine Historic Preservation Commission formally nominated Swan Island as a Historic district, which was then formally adopted in 1996 by the U.S. Department of Interior.
- In 1997 the Gray-Swan Wildlife Foundation, a nonprofit (501C-3) organization, was created as a fundraising organization to benefit both Swan Island and the Maine Wildlife Park. The organization was governed by a board of directors comprised of both private citizens and appropriate MDIFW staff.
- In 1998 the Richmond School Department (RSD) began a partnership with MDIFW to develop a K-12 environmental education program for their students. Working under a Memorandum of Understanding, RSD adopted the Lilly-Wade house and began fund raising and stabilization/restoration efforts in exchange for educational access to Swan Island for their students. Lilly-Wade house stabilization/restoration work was expected to be coordinated with Maine Historic Preservation Commission, Bureau of General Services and MDIFW and comply with accepted historic restoration standards. This effort is no longer active, possibly due to competing school demands and/or staffing changes.

- In 2001 the Gray-Swan Wildlife Foundation legally dissolved.
- In 2002 Friends of Swan Island, Inc. (FOSI) a 501C-3 corporation was created and existing assets of the Gray-Swan Wildlife Foundation were legally transferred to FOSI. The mission of the FOSI is:

“To stabilize, restore and maintain the six historic homestead houses on Swan Island, and to insure their future maintenance, use and function as integral parts of Swan Island. In addition, this corporation shall encourage programs of education and historic research concerning Swan Island under the aegis and regulations of the Maine Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife, and shall not act in conflict with the policies and legislative mandates of the Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife.”

FOSI operated under an agreement between the Corporation and the Commissioner of MDIFW to be renewed on an annual basis by mutual consent.

- FOSI MOA was not renewed in 2009 although interest was still indicated for future participation.
- Bath Iron Works (BIW) has partnered with MDIFW as part of the Department’s ‘Adopt a Facility Program’. BIW has provided annual winter storage and some maintenance of the ferry (barge) used for transportation to the Island.

## **Regulatory Considerations**

- MDIFW is authorized in statute to acquire land for the management of wildlife as follows:

### **§10052. Bureau of Administrative Services**

**5. Land acquisition.** The acquisition and development of land for the protection, preservation and enhancement of inland fisheries and wildlife resources.

### **§10053. Bureau of Resource Management**

**4. Habitat Management.** The management of habitat for the protection, preservation, enhancement and use of inland fisheries and wildlife resources

**5. Wildlife sanctuaries; wildlife management areas.** The management of wildlife sanctuaries and wildlife management areas for the State as designated in chapter 925;

### **§10106. Fish and wildlife Restoration**

**2. Commissioner’s authority.** The State assents to the Federal Aid in Wildlife Restoration Act, Public Law, September 2, 1937, chapter 899, as amended, and the Federal Aid in Fish Restoration Act, Public Law, August 9, 1950, chapter 658, as amended. The commissioner is authorized, empowered and directed to perform such acts as may be necessary to the conduct and establishment of cooperative wildlife and fish restoration projects, as defined in those Acts of Congress, in compliance with those Acts and with rules and regulations promulgated by the United States Secretaries of Agriculture and Interior under those Acts.

- US Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) provided money to MDIFW via Wildlife and Sport Fish Restoration funding for the acquisition of Swan Island. Upon using these funds certain conditions are placed on the use and management of that property including the following (50 CFR § 80.1 – 25);
  - a. MDIFW required by USFWS as the State Fish & Wildlife Agency to maintain control and management of the land;
  - b. MDIFW required to manage the land for the purposes for which it was acquired and as directed by periodic updates reviewed by USFWS in the WMA management plan;
  - c. Should State of Maine violate either of these requirements it must regain control, reestablish appropriate management or pay back the USFWS for the land in kind or at current value or acquisition value whichever is higher;
  - d. All expenditures of USFWS grant monies must be for approved purposes and projects. Camping facilities and historic preservation are not approved expenditures; and
  - e. Use of the land must be for USFWS approved purposes.
  
- In addition, because the Island is in the National Register any federally funded, permitted or licensed activity (including Federal funding or oversight by USFWS) must be reviewed for effects under Section 106 of the Federal Historic Preservation Act. While National Register listing is a great recognition, it also means that in some situations the entire Island, including structures, roads, stonewalls, the mix of fields/forest and others have certain restrictions and conditions with their use and/or alteration. It also means that the properties qualify to apply for State or Federal Historic Preservation grant funds, when such funds are available.
  
- As an unorganized town, the Island is within LURC jurisdiction and is designated as an Unusual Area Protection Subdistrict (P-UA). The purpose for the P-UA subdistrict is to protect areas of significant natural, recreational, historic, scenic, scientific or aesthetic value which are susceptible to significant degradation by man’s activities, and for which protection cannot adequately be accomplished by inclusion in any of the other sub districts.
  
- There are multiple nesting sites for numerous pairs of bald eagles on the island. Activities to minimized disturbance to the nest sites need to comply with the Bald and Golden Eagle Protection Act. They will also be managed to a higher degree of protection to be in line with Federal Aid regulations and MDIFW’s bald eagle management plan.

### **Non-Regulatory Considerations**

- There are also a few logistical limitations with public use on Swan Island. The current parking area services visitors for the island, includes a boat launch accessing the Kennebec River, and provides access to a private residence. The total of these accommodations allows enough parking for 12 to 15 cars. The ferry, known as the Swanee, accommodates about 15 passengers depending on camping gear and other supplies. Visitors, if they so choose, are then transported to the camping site with a tour truck that accommodates about 20 visitors depending on the amount of gear.



- The camp site has 10 Adirondack shelters that will accommodate 60 users. These overnight users are serviced with a drinking water supply and bathroom facility. The septic is designed for 550 gallons per day, which in terms of allowable use (DHHS regulations) is enough for the ten campsites with occupancy of 6 people per site and minimal additional day use. It is allowable to infrequently, temporarily exceed that. In addition it is not wise to push the envelope on the capacity since it could lead to issues and failure of the system. The well has a capacity of 2 gallons per minute with an estimated reserve of 470 gallons in the casing. We do not know what the recharge rate would be at a given time but it seems likely that the actual capacity for the well, with average annual precipitation/water tables and median use, would be on par with the septic systems' capacity (although not much more). It should also be noted that since regulations dictate that facilities need be within 500 feet of campsites we would be in violation if we had "primitive sites" at a further distance to the bathroom facilities. Expansion of the campground is limited by the supporting infrastructure as well as the need to minimize impacts to the wildlife management of the island.
- Current operating revenue for the public use component of Swan Island is derived from visitor fees. Limited revenues allow for limited staffing on the island. The current level of staffing is operating as efficiently as possible however this means that the ferry only operates at scheduled times when prior reservations are made.

## Appendix A

### **Resolve, To Develop a Management Plan for the Nonwildlife Components of Swan Island and Little Swan Island in Perkins Township, Sagadahoc County**

#### **Sec. 1 Creation of a stakeholder group; membership and memorandum of agreement.**

**Resolved:** That the Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife and the Department of Conservation, referred to in this resolve as "the departments," shall establish and convene a stakeholder group to evaluate the options available to manage the nonwildlife components of Swan Island and Little Swan Island in Perkins Township, Sagadahoc County. The stakeholder group shall consider and, when possible, build upon the 1999 master plan for Swan Island in conducting its work pursuant to this section. The departments shall develop and enter into a memorandum of agreement for the management of the nonwildlife components of the islands based on the recommendations and findings of the stakeholder group. The stakeholder group consists of:

1. The Commissioner of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife or the commissioner's designee;
2. The Commissioner of Conservation or the commissioner's designee;
3. A person representing the Town of Richmond;
4. A person or persons representing an adjacent municipality that expresses an interest in participating in the stakeholder group;
5. A person representing a nonprofit organization with the mission of preserving and protecting the ecosystem of Merrymeeting Bay;
6. A person representing a nonprofit organization that works to improve and promote Swan Island;
7. A person representing a business from the local community near Swan Island;
8. A person representing an historic preservation organization involved with or having a current interest in Swan Island;
9. A person from a state agency with a current interest in the management of Swan Island; and
10. A person not from a state agency with a current interest in the management of Swan Island.

The departments shall ensure that a balance of interests is present on the stakeholder group; and be it further

**Sec. 2 Report. Resolved:** That no later than February 1, 2010 the departments shall report the findings and recommendations of the stakeholder group established in this resolve and the memorandum of agreement developed between the departments as a result of the stakeholder group's findings and recommendations to the Joint Standing Committee on Inland Fisheries and Wildlife. The report must include any draft legislation needed to carry out the recommendations contained in the report. The Joint Standing Committee on Inland Fisheries and Wildlife may submit legislation to the Second Regular Session of the 124th Legislature regarding the report.

## Appendix B

Memorandum of Agreement  
Between  
Maine Department of Conservation  
And the  
Maine Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife  
In Relation To  
Swan Island, Perkins Township

WHEREAS, It is resolved by the Maine State Legislature in LD 398, Appendix A, Sec. 1, that:  
“The departments shall develop and enter into a memorandum of agreement for the management of the non-wildlife components of the islands based on the recommendations and findings of the stakeholder group.”

WHEREAS, the Maine Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife, acquired Swan Island with funding from the United States Fish and Wildlife Service with the use of Federal Aid In Wildlife Restoration and therefore has management authority and responsibility for Swan Island as a Wildlife Management Area; and

WHEREAS, Swan Island also known as the Steve Powell Wildlife Management Area includes camping facilities, day use, and historic structures listed in the National Register of Historic Places; and

WHEREAS, the Maine Department of Conservation, Bureau of Parks and Lands has special expertise and experience in operating and maintaining recreational and historic facilities for public use; and

WHEREAS, DOC's expertise and experience in that area could assist IFW in supporting the public use portion of the Wildlife Management Area while continuing to comply with USFWS regulations governing management of lands acquired with USFWS funding; and

Now, therefore, the parties agree as follows:

### **I. DOC AGREES TO UNDERTAKE THE FOLLOWING MEASURES:**

1. DOC's Historian will assist Swan Island staff in cataloging the needs of the historic structures on the island, determine the best course of action for each and prioritize the structures based on which should be treated first, how much funding each will need, and how it can be obtained including assistance in preparing grant applications.
2. DOC's Southern Parks Region operations and maintenance staff will assist and advise Swan Island staff on issues that arise at sites that welcome day-use and overnight visitors.
3. DOC's Southern Parks Region operations and maintenance staff will assist with special events by providing necessary equipment and staff expertise.
4. DOC's online camping reservation system will be adjusted, if possible and desirable, to include Swan Island as a camping destination allowing the public to reserve campsites online or by telephone.
5. DOC will add Swan Island as a destination on its Web site as if it was a state park, but with language in the description indicating that it is managed in a somewhat different manner.
6. DOC agrees to be an active member of future advisory committees.

**II. IMPLEMENTATION OF THE THIS AGREEMENT**

1. Timeline for Implementation. This agreement shall be in practice beginning with the 2010 season.

2. Joint Discussions. The parties agree to continue discussions as appropriate on management of the nonwildlife components of Swan Island. The parties hereby execute this agreement by their duly authorized representatives' signatures on the dates indicated below.

3. The term of this Agreement shall be five (5) years from the date of signing by both parties. Both parties will review this Agreement at the end of the five year term for applicability and/or necessary updates.


STATE OF MAINE, DEPARTMENT OF INLAND FISHERIES AND WILDLIFE

By \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

STATE OF MAINE, DEPARTMENT OF CONSERVATION

By \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

# Swan Island History



1605	..... First recorded visit to Swan Island
1607	..... Second visit by Raleigh Gilbert of the Popham Colony
1667	..... Local Native Americans deed Island over to Christopher Lawson
1766	..... Census – 18 residents
1775	..... Benedict Arnold and Aaron Burr visit Island
1790	..... First vessel built – 167 ton Brig Polly
1847	..... Separated from Dresden to become Town of Perkins
1850	..... Census – 50 residents
1853	..... School house built
1860	..... Census – 95 residents
1864	..... 466 sheep, 74 cattle
1874	..... Perkins Highway built
1918	..... Became Perkins Plantation
1929	..... State legislature designated Island as legal sanctuary
1936	..... Ferry service closed, ending the active community
1940	..... State began acquiring Swan Island with funds from USFWS for game management
1946-53	..... Waterfowl trapping and banding
1948	..... Freshwater impoundments created for breeding waterfowl
1952	..... Acquisition completed except for cemetery
1965	..... Campground established
1967	..... Legislature repealed sanctuary status but held by Department rule
1971	..... MDIFW named the area Steve Powell WMA
1977	..... Bald Eagle egg transplant program initiated
1987	..... CMP donated electrical service
1996	..... US Department of Interior designation as a Historic Place
2001	..... Drilled well for campground
2004	..... Restroom Facility constructed
2005	..... Wildlife viewing tower erected
2008	..... Legislature directed Department to make Swan Island self funding

## Appendix D

### 1<sup>st</sup> Meeting – September 3, 2009

1. John Pratte introduced the intent of LD 398 and provided a brief background.
  2. Jim Connolly provided background information on the land acquisition history for MDIFW in general, how federal funding was used and state obligations.
- MDIFW has acquired land throughout the state with the goal of providing wildlife habitat, conducting habitat management, protecting endangered species and to provide places for hunting fishing and trapping
  - Goal MDIFW – to acquire land (5,000 acre blocks within 1 hour drive of the major metropolitan areas) for traditional forms of recreation
  - US Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) has provided money to MDIFW for the acquisition and management of wildlife habitat
    - a. MDIFW required by USFWS as the State Fish & Wildlife Agency to maintain control and management of the land
    - b. MDIFW required to manage the land for the purposes for which it was acquired and as directed by periodic updates reviewed by USFWS in the WMA management plan
    - c. Should State of Maine violate either of these requirements it must regain control, reestablish appropriate management or pay back the USFWS for the land in kind or at current value or acquisition value whichever is higher
    - d. All expenditures of USFWS grant monies must be for approved purposes and projects, camping facilities and historic preservation are not approved expenditures
    - e. Use of the land must be for USFWS approved purposes
  - Swan Island was acquired in the 1940s as a Federal Aid acquisition project for the purposes of wildlife management, as a game preserve, and wildlife research.
  - MDIFW submits Wildlife Management Area Plans for USFWS approval; these plans govern what takes place on the island.
  - MDIFW conducts a variety of wildlife management projects on the island including vegetation management (mowing, forest harvests), maintains nest boxes, and conducts water level management of impoundments.
  - Until the recent legislative change, all revenue from the day and overnight users of the island went in to MDIFW's general account and was not available for improvements to the visitor facilities. Currently that revenue is directed to a dedicated account to be used to support management and operations of the recreational use component of the island.
  - MDIFW employees Rusty Dyke and Lisa Kane have done many promotions of the island including but not limited to: subscribing with a brochure distribution service on a route within the range of the Island for the past 3 years, periodic displays at LL Bean and Maine sportsman shows; a variety of newspaper articles and television stories, a Downeast Magazine article, US Air article, 2009 development of a portable display for shows, conferences and other venues; a permanent seasonal light box display at the Kittery Visitor Center, brochure distribution through all of the state visitor centers; interpretive signage throughout the Island itself; Project WILD teacher workshops and Natural Resource Institute Teacher workshop field trips have been held on the island; seasonal information on the MDIFW Turnpike Radio station; 100s of bi-annual email

and postal mail notifications to schools and teachers about programming available on Swan Island; several TV and cable productions and public service spots/ads about the island; work with the Maine Office of Tourism for special Swan Island Promotions and FAM tour opportunities; and more over the yrs

- Additionally various advertisement in several genres of media have been used to promote the island on it's own and in conjunction with events
  - MDIFW uses the island for wildlife and conservation education programs in the spring and fall for school groups
  - MDIFW has developed partnerships with the Richmond School District and FOSI to develop the public use facility and preserve the historic structures.
3. Tom Morrison provided a summary of Bureau of Parks & Lands process for managing state parks and gave examples of facilities with features similar to Swan Island.
- BP&L has established park fees at a level for average Mainer to enjoy facilities.
  - No state parks are self sufficient, fees cover approximately 40% of costs.
  - State Park revenues go in the general fund and then BP&L requests funds from the general fund to cover anticipated operational costs.
  - BP&L estimated staffing, in addition to other DOC staff resources (for promotion, overall management and operation, etc), for Swan Island - if managed similarly to other state parks– 4 seasonal employees.
    - 1 Park Manager
    - 2 Park Rangers
    - 1 Assistant Ranger
  - Have a phone and web based reservation system for state parks
  - Complexities/constraints noted with Swan Island
    - Transportation system
    - Pier
    - Historic Sites
    - Wildlife Habitat
  - BP&L could assist MDIFW with reservation system and sharing of expertise.
  - Do not currently have resources to take on Swan Island without additional resources
  - No dollars in capital line item for historic site work
    - Currently manage over \$100 million in infrastructure
    - Currently have a \$40 million backlog of repair and upgrade needs

The 3 day curriculum that Biddeford Middle School utilizes was mentioned as a potential model for others, but discussion concluded with it has only worked when a teacher has the interest. Waldorf schools – 7<sup>th</sup> grade was also mentioned.

4. John Pratte discussed potential limiting factors that will need to be considered as discussions progress. As Jim Connolly had mentioned, many of the Departments WMAs were acquired in part with Pittman-Robertson Wildlife Restoration Funds, derived from a 10% tax on ammunition, firearm, and archery sales which were used to acquire Swan Island. As a result, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service must review and approve the management plan for each WMA.

Federal statutes prohibit recreational and commercial activities from interfering with the purpose for which the State acquired the parcel. The Project Statement for Federal Aid in 1961 for Swan Island stated it was acquired to primarily benefit migratory waterfowl, woodcock, upland game birds, and deer with 100% of the area designated as a Game Preserve.

- **State Park & Recreation Commission** provided Land & Water Conservation Funds in 1969 to help fund some of the infrastructure that helps support today's visitation to the Island. The agreement states that any changes to the infrastructure require their approval. Not likely to be an issue.
- **National Register of Historic Places – Maine Historic Preservation Commission**, Includes entire island – structures, roads, stonewalls, mix of fields/forest, etc.
- **LURC Designation as an Unusual Area Protection Subdistrict (P-UA)**, the purpose of the P-UA subdistrict is to protect areas of significant natural, recreational, historic, scenic, scientific or aesthetic value which are susceptible to significant degradation by man's activities, and for which protection cannot adequately be accomplished by inclusion in any of the other subdistricts.
- **Eagle Nests** – NRPA/Essential Habitat regulations
- **Ferry & Parking Limitations** – 12-15 cars, 15 ferry passengers, 20 tour truck passengers

5. Each participant was given an opportunity to express what Swan Island could offer surrounding communities and visitors.

Clarence Cummins, Richmond Selectman

- Swan Island is a great resource
- Could boost area business such as gas and food
- Totality of opportunity on island to attract more people to community
- Make Richmond a destination

Dan Shagoury, Representing Sen. Seth Goodall

- Seconded Clarence's comment on making Richmond a destination
- Importance to surrounding communities
- Condition of buildings is a problem
- Senator Goodall hoped to eliminate bureaucratic boundaries by submitting this LD
- Wishes to realize value of Swan Island

Bert Singer, Bowdoinham Resident

- Would like to see day use w/out reservations
- Rural retreat center for schools
  - Writers workshop
- Potential for eco condominiums
- Rails to trails in Richmond, someone how connect. Perhaps by having canoes available for a side trip to the island.
- Canoes at each end of island to rent



James Rea

- Improve condition and use
- “Publication of interests” to draw people to area – include Swan Island as center point for stay.
- Currently, individual towns are not well advertised, perhaps combine efforts.

Jay Robbins, Robbins Historical Research, Inc.

- Potential to increase environmental education opportunities about Merrymeeting Bay area
- Native American – French Canadian War
- Bowdoin College – partner
- Student community house
- Coastal island community
- Winter recreation opportunities
- Fleet of golf carts at boat landing to campground for self-service
- Chewonki could do education
- Midcoast Chamber of Commerce has Merrymeeting Bay sub developing MB brand

Bruce Trembly, Friends of Swan Island

- South Island has excellent soils – potential for organic farming communities
- Maintaining oldest houses
- Have reroofed 3 houses & Robinson House
- Funding is a problem
- Stabilize chimney
- Inactive this year

Lisa Kane, MDIFW

- Would like to see more educational and recreational use

Rep. Leslie Fossel

- Tourist, wildlife – preserve Maine for future
- Get every one working in same direction
- Create a model for others on conserving all competing uses

Jim Peterson, Richmond Business Owner

- People frustrated with the process for getting on island
- Build a school on island to teach (secondary) agricultural – include wildlife/history
- Improve public access

Christi Mitchell, Maine Historic Preservation Commission

- Solutions will be holistic
- Rehabilitate buildings and use them - self sustaining
- Living building – not exact
- Doesn't have financial resources
- No one has funds or ability
- Perhaps have an effort independent of state agencies to manage island, write grants, partner, etc. (like Baxter State Park)
- Easement on Gardiner House exp. 2013

\*only review where activity is permitted otherwise verbal only\*

- School for preservation – school for kids to learn by fixing buildings

Tom Desjardins, DOC

- Before you start restoring you must determine why or what the desired outcome is.
  - Overnight use,
  - Interpretive opportunities, or
  - Or just to preserve.
- Robinson House close to being livable
- Gave Coburn House example of using various resources to restore historic structure.
- Tourism via river??
- Most attractive thing to get visitors to the area could be Native American History
- Make resin duplicates of artifacts visitors can handle
- Involve tribes – crafts
- Gardiner house may be oldest vacation home in America

John Ottum, Dresden Resident

- Membership group for MDIFW

Kendall Marden– MDIFW

- Clarified dedicated account donations. Swan Island has a dedicated account that all Swan Island revenue/contributions are deposited in and can not be used elsewhere.

James Rae

- Private businesses could run different aspects of Swan Island

Jim Connolly – MDIFW

- Potential for a family season pass to access the island on their own with out reservations for day use.

## **Appendix E**

### **2<sup>nd</sup> Meeting, 10/06/2009**

This meeting occurred on Swan Island to observe transportation logistics and features of the island while allowing time to discuss compatible uses. This meeting was in the field with very engaging discussions.

Some new participants were present and were given an opportunity to express their connection with the island and additional thoughts they had on island functions. Ed Friedman, representing Friends of Merrymeeting Bay, suggested educational and research programming focused on tidal riverine systems or perhaps an archaeology field school modeled after other examples. Both of these could be self funding and would work best with use of a building or two for bunk house/lab facilities. As long as focus was on ecology/wildlife he did not see a conflict with USFWS funding, even if there was a National Endowment for the Arts artist-in-residence program that focused on natural attributes. Eagle Hill/Humbolt Foundation in Steuben was cited as a successful example (Editor's note: Currently this activity is not a permitted use on the Island and would need approval from USFWS and Maine Historic Preservation Commission).

Tammy Lavigne and Douglas Bertrand from the Biddeford Middle School shared the program they have developed for 7<sup>th</sup> graders which has become part of their curriculum. This program includes a three day, two night stay on the island with 100 students following a structured program. This topic generated good discussion around environmental education opportunities, what has been done on the island and potential partners.

This was followed up with a tour of the island where several stops were made to discuss the condition of buildings, wildlife viewing opportunities, wildlife management and trails while allowing participants an opportunity to see how these activities intersect. Jim Connolly also provided an overview of the wildlife viewing tower explaining its history, tie to the area and placement.

Following the tour, everyone gathered at the boathouse for more detailed discussions. The need for additional staffing to better service users and support an increase in use was discussed. Followed was the point that additional funds were needed if staff positions were to be added. The point was made that given recent budget cuts and the poor economy, Swan Island may be better served by implementing low cost ideas that will better promote use to better position the Island when the economy turns around.

## **Appendix F**

### **3<sup>rd</sup> Meeting, October 16, 2009**

Limitations regarding visitor capacity were discussed. Ron Hunt made the point that campsites had to be within 500 feet of a bathroom facility and with state parks visitor expectations were to have bathrooms with plumbing versus a vault system. Ron also suggested that the current septic and well system could be limiting factors. Swan Island currently has a restroom facility with four toilets and sinks and one drilled well which also supplies drinking water for visitors.

Discussion shifted into what type of experience visitors should have. A suggestion was made to have fewer visitors with longer stays versus many visitors with short stays and to distribute the use over the season rather than large events. Use signs and displays to educate about certain features rather than big events. The town of Dresden is not concerned with Swan Island creating economic stimulus within the town but rather providing a quality cultural experience.

Christi Mitchell suggested events may not give visitors a full sense of the island because of the focus on one event and therefore they may not return.

Tammy Lavigne and Douglas Bertrand shared some of the materials they developed for use during school trips to the island. They offered to make the materials available to other school groups via MDIFW and to invite teachers from other schools to observe their outdoor classroom. A power point was suggested to put on the Swan Island web site.

Jim Robbins suggested restoring the Robinson house for use as an interpretive center where volunteers, visiting artists, birders, special event or tour leaders etc could stay.

Tom suggested having a campsite host who could stay in exchange for labor. The group discussed a tax check-off for a donation and Christi Mitchell knows of private foundations with funds to help restore the buildings.

Discussed the need for more town participation such as; removal of docks and advertising in town newsletters/websites. Kendall noted that the town of Richmond provides a lot of help with removal of the docks and cooperation with island promotion on their website but that additional docks and infrastructure would increase the need for assistance outside of MDIFW staffing resources to deal with the theses additional logistics.

The group discussed the need to better accommodate boaters and paddlers. This could be a dock/pull-out area at the campground/boathouse for those who wish to camp and potentially one or two small docks or accessible shoreline adjacent to hiking trails for paddlers. There should be an attempt to encourage day use without negatively impacting the experience for longer stay visitors. Ron Hunt pointed out that if self service day use is allowed that designated these areas will be critical to prevent many such sites from occurring and to better control potential erosion from increased use. Also that having centralized access points at the campground and main landing would provide designated areas for landing in conjunction with the bathroom facilities/campground and trailhead. This would allow for access to prominent starting points

that are utilized when exploring the island and allow better control and oversight in the event of any issues arising from self-access while still promoting additional use of the island and minimizing additional impacts to staff time and resources. It was mentioned a risk exists once some use becomes self service. John Ottum noted the potential for an access point from Green Point.

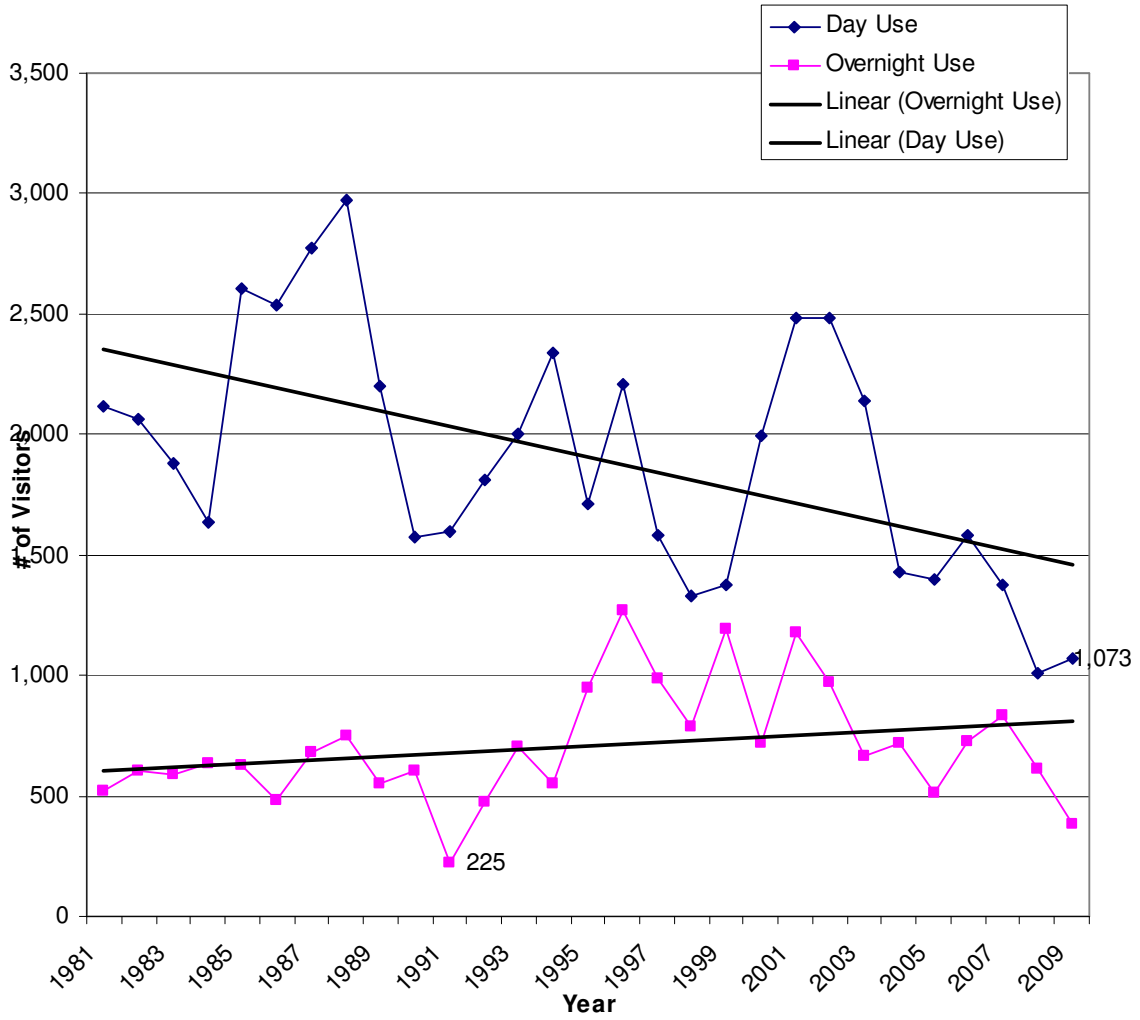
Ideas for events; pow-wow, Lisa Kane offered to again promote Swan Island at the Maine Environmental Education Association conference in March, and Maine Sportsman shows. Other events could include: writers workshop; birding field trips, visiting artists, falconer's presentation; period re-enactors. Four events were advertised and held in 2009; 1] a presentation by a master falconer, 2] French-Indian war reenactment, 3] free tours on Friday and Saturday of Richmond Days, and 4] a volunteer day. Also of note regarding a few of the promotional successes this summer - Featured location in a brochure for Five Rivers Art Alliance as an artists destination, local photography and art clubs held multiple club outings which they promoted and organized themselves, featured in "Home Schoolers of Maine" mailing and Maine Youth Camping Foundation annual mailing, listed in Appalachian Mountain Club location guide, and listed in a Wildlife Viewing guide that is being published by University Press of New England.

A lot of discussion was generated around creating an Advisory Board with two subcommittees; 1] Education, and 2] Building restoration. Tom Desjardins, Jim Robbins, Christi Mitchell, and Clarence Cummins expressed an interest in participating on a building restoration committee. These committees could invite friends groups to participate. Suggested to include LURC in committees.

Discussed previous group efforts on the Island. Friends of Swan Island was created to stabilize buildings. Friends of Merrymeeting Bay has four focuses; 1] land trust, 2] education about the bay, 3] support of scientific research, and 4] advocacy.

Appendix G

Swan Island Public Use Trends



Appendix H

Swan Island Revenue Trends

