

Maine Islands Coalition Meeting

May 21, 2021

Maine Won't Wait Climate Report Actions

Attendance:

MIC Members

Donna Damon - Chebeague
Rachel Bishop - Frenchboro
Roger Berle - Cliff
Jennifer Fox – Great Diamond Island
Katie Ford - Great Diamond Island
Mark Greene - Long Island
Eva Murray - Matinicus
Donna Wiegler - Swan's Island
Randy Schaeffer - Peaks Island

Island Institute Staff

Kate Tagai
Yvonne Thomas
Susie Arnold
Nick Battista

Guests

Brian Ambrette –Sr. Climate Resilience Coordinator, Governor's Office of Policy, Innovation, and the Future (GOPIF)
Bob Anderson – Steering Committee Member, Great Lakes Islands Alliance (GLIA), Beaver Island, Lake Michigan
Kelly Cotiaux – Office of Senator Collins
Matt Preisser – Lake Coordinator, Michigan Department of Environment, Great Lakes, and Energy- GLIA
Peter Huston - Project Manager, GLIA, South Bass Island, Lake Erie

Welcome- Introductions, name and community or organization

Climate Report: Maine Won't Wait with special guest speaker Brian Ambrette
(See accompanying PDF)

Maine Won't Wait- now and into the Future

Maine's Climate Action Strategies

- a. Embrace the future of transportation in Maine
- b. Modernize Maine's buildings
- c. Reduce carbon emissions in the energy and industrial sectors through clean energy innovation
- d. Grow Maine's clean energy economy and good jobs
- e. Protect Maine's environment and working lands and waters, increase carbon sequestration
- f. Build healthy and resilient communities
- g. Invest in climate ready infrastructure
- h. Engage people and communities in climate impacts and program opportunities.

Brian:

- Spoke to MIC in July 2020 with an update on climate council work
- New content - equity, cost analysis, vulnerability analysis, cost of doing nothing, green house/energy modeling, COVID has had a big influence
- Focused on implementing the Climate Councils plan
- COVID/Fed money gives us a chance to make a down payment on this work
 - Maine Jobs/Recovery, Bond Package - land conservation/roads, Supplemental - climate, fully funding education
- [Climate Dashboard](#)
- [Maine Jobs Recovery Plan](#)

Nick Battista and Susie Arnold:

How are you helping how will you communicate these initiatives? What does it mean for our programming?

Island Institute had a seat on the Climate Council Sub Committees. Tracking funding being made available to help advance community broadband projects and infrastructure.

Questions:

- Donna Damon - DOT – is that for state owned only? Road - state, municipal and even private roads will be assessed, Donna asks about the road to Little Chebeague and a wharf that is underwater making it un-usable by the Chebeague Transportation Company ferry at times. Brian will connect Donna to someone at DOT.
- Donna Wiegler – This is exciting - federal money is really going to help, Swan's has a couple of roads that need attention, 75% of communities aren't addressing sea level rise (SLR), how can we start talking about SLR now and not wait for a crisis?
 - Brian - planning money will help drive municipal action
- Randy - ongoing interest in heat pumps and weatherization, ex. participating in window dressers work this fall, Efficiency Maine website is a great resource.
- Donna Damon - broadband - pandemic has helped people understand the value of broadband, there are currently so many programs for broadband
- Nick:
 - \$15 million bond funds - first half grants are getting announced next week, next round will be later in the summer, federal \$ - National NTIA, states can help with this process/application - \$5-8 million of projects, other funds coming to the state through block grant and will know more about the restrictions soon, also broad funds that can be used
 - For Chebeague, unclear how to benefit from these funds
 - Other money for supporting devices/digital inclusion, affordability, etc.
 - Public-private partnerships are really important, local/private match
- Kelly - Senator Collins is concerned about the warming Gulf of Maine, The Climate Council will help advise where funding should go, lots of money coming into the state, please contact her directly with information and questions. Appreciates the on the ground information.
 - Nick - gratitude to Senator Collins office for ETIP language

Updates

Federal – Congressional offices

Senator Collins Office

- Trying to address seasonal worker shortage - too few H2A Visas
- American Rescue funds - 8 pg fact sheet, (See accompanying sheet), still fine-tuning what funds can be used for

Partner Orgs

Great Lakes Islands Alliance

Bob –

- excited to have their first employee, envious of our relationships with lawmakers, harder for GLIA with so many states/countries, helps to learn about distribution of federal funds and other topics to share back.

Peter –

- Is newly hired as a staff member for GLIA. Interested in learning about relationship building with state government, great to learn about broadband, appreciate being able to listen in. They have been looking at different internet options including satellite.

Donna W- happy to share her experience with starlink internet access

Island Institute Updates

Nick -

- looking for opportunities to reduce CO2 emissions and adaptations (ex. solar panels on lobster coops),
- emerging conversation in Land for Maine Futures - working waterfront projects (Roger on this board)

Susie -

- coastal carbon conversation - blue carbon ecosystems - ex. salt marsh, eel grass, seaweeds - long term sequestration of carbon in Maine, kelp research shows that farming kelp remediates OA locally, helps shellfish, included in an international study - Chebeague farm (10 years old) - could eventually allow kelp farmers to get paid to sequester carbon, SLR - plan for 1.5 ft. by 2030, 4 ft. by 2100,
- energy work with Luke Holden - greenhouse gas assessment on Luke's Lobster supply chain,
- ETIP - energy transition work in rural communities, working with Eastport and Islesboro - builds on work on Matinicus and Isle au Haut,
- SLR - Shore up grants still available, planning for SLR with Gulf of Maine Research Institute curriculum - will lead to regional meetings

Island Updates

Frenchboro/Rachel:

- lots of heat pumps installed last fall, going well so far, all town buildings are using heat pumps
- select board focused on tax possibility of acquired properties,
- MDOT generator for ferry terminal is here
- Kelp and oyster aquaculture businesses are generating a little income

Swan's/Donna

- COVID/vaccines

- Summer people returning early, kind of great to see everyone since so few came back last summer, anticipating a busy summer season, confident that most will be fully vaccinated
- Lots of new residents, real estate is hot, looking forward to meeting new comers
- No town meeting scheduled for 2021, no town manager, at the mercy of 3 managers, one leader has been on since 1964 - change in leadership may be happening
- Lobster season is on - hoping it will be a good one
- Oyster farm on Swan's is going well, oysters are on sale at the store from both sides of the island
- Donna's book - Finding Courage - donated \$45k to ovarian cancer orgs - tealonwheels.square.site
- Broadband - Starlink is fast, up to 180Mbps download and up to 30 Mbps upload, but there are short glitches of downtime, that are most annoying during Zoom meetings. I have had three glitches of short duration during this meeting. More satellites are being launched, so the downtime should improve over time. They usually last 15-30 seconds when they occur.

Vinalhaven/Gabe

- Town update - downtown master plan written in 2019, raising \$5million to do infrastructure road work, will know about a large-scale grant by the end of the summer, construction could start next year
- Restarted housing committee- housing stock is very tight, need more workforce housing
- Broadband campaign has finished, Board of Selectmen has agreed to put broadband out to public vote, big price tag
- Community Development Corp. in the works - would be great for supporting local endeavors in the community
- Over 60% of eligible islanders have been vaccinated, working on a 12+ clinic at the school, met with local businesses about upcoming COVID changes

Matinicus/Eva

- Installing an engine, slow going green, working on solar, money is the barrier
- School will be open next year, haven't yet heard if a new teacher has been hired
- Children's Library will open in June
- No known COVID on Matinicus, high percentage of people are vaccinated - lots participated in the SeaCoast Mission
- Labor shortage - most workers are older and busy, need people to be more self-sufficient
- Can't get ferry reservations for cars, requesting a statutory limit, it's slow going
- Big concern - future of the lobster fishery, that is our only industry
- Lovely spring!

Chebeague/Donna

- Lots of new residents, hard to know who they are due to masks
- Check chebeague.org - calendar is on the website
- Town committees are starting to go in person, town is going hybrid because people off island like to join in
- Covid team is dropping down to meet every 3 weeks, testing team is disbanding, food pantry is going back to just for those with food insecurity, boat/bus follow CDC guidelines, 16 weddings at the hotel , 4th of July parade but no community picnic
- Historical Society - "Growing up on Chebeague" - booklet
- Town truck frame broke - \$160k! Looking for getting a smaller one
- Erosion on Indian Island road to Little Chebeague

- Hopes for Broadband committee and other
- Dredging project may happen in October
- Church is disassociating from the Methodist Church due to their LBDGT stance, creating their own church - like succession process

Long/Mark

- Workforce shortage
- Town meeting last Saturday, went well overall, unexpected change in selectmen leadership when incumbent wasn't reelected.
- Cluster development idea has gone to town meeting - subdivide a lot by clustering houses closer together and leave the other half for conservation/open space, passed, but there was a lot of gossip/negativity about affordable housing
- Portland High School - changing the school day to start later, but hard on the island kids because of misalignment with Casco Bay Lines boat schedule
- New island fellow in the works - to help with the comprehensive plan - housing and climate issues will be addresses, great committee doing the work, zoom makes it so much easier to include more people,
- interested in continuing using zoom for select board meetings, participation is way up
 - The legislation has not passed and faces some significant difficulty.
- Broadband is on hold right now - cost to end user got too high, looking at grant options before moving forward or not, interested in sharing learning with Chebeague
- Amy Tierney/wellness team - 85% of eligible people are vaccinated
- Been a good spring

Diamond Cove/Jennifer

- Commercial entities are starting up, conflict about lawn products
- Leadership - doesn't value the year-round population, a group of year round/seasonal folks are working hard to promote kindness

Great Diamond/Katie

- Echos Jenn - internet, people working from home - some have more than one system in their home - ex. Consolidated and Red Zone or starlink (good reviews on that)
- Lots of early visitors, new folks, lots of real estate sales
- Restaurant and inn and children's camp are opening after a yearlong shut down, hard to find help, kids may have to wear masks
- Annual events - ex. 4th of July will all be held outside only
- Majority of year-round/weekenders are vaccinated

Peaks/Randy

- Getting ready for summer, wished it felt more like remote islands, it's a real challenge
- Casco Bay Lines is piloting a Peaks Island Resident priority boarding, residents get an id card, arrive early and get on first, important for summer weekend crowds, could solve a lot of issues of local residents in the summer
- Working with Portland Police - Wedding/music venues - crush of leaving at the end of the day, trying to deal with bad behavior
- Successful vaccination clinics for age 16 and up
- Portland Charter Review - election coming up on June 8, possibility of redistricting Portland, making smaller districts, could be a counselor to represent the islands of Portland, could strengthen representation at city hall
- Rental cart recommendations are still not yet implemented
- Noise from plane - ordinances being considered