

LaPointe Harbor – Long Range Plan & Feasibility Study

The citizens of Northwest Wisconsin request:

- **Assistance in securing funding, through available grants, for financing a long range plan and feasibility study to improve and expand the Town of LaPointe harbor.**

The Town of LaPointe has a “town dock”, a/k/a LaPointe Harbor, which serves as an entry point to Madeline Island for residents and visitors as well as all commerce to and from the Island. The Town desires to investigate improvements to the harbor to better accommodate the growing demand for better services, improve public access, reduce congestion, and improve public safety.

The existing harbor consists of the vertical wall main dock and a 330 foot long cellular off-shore breakwater. The Madeline Island Ferry boats can moor on both sides of the main dock, depending on daily prevailing winds and seas. The Town has several finger docks attached to the main dock; they provide mooring space for Nelson Construction’s work vessels along with several recreational craft. With the expected demand for greater use, and conflicting uses on the main dock, the Town is interested in completing a feasibility study to better meet current and anticipated needs of its harbor.

The Town of LaPointe has a year round population of approximately 300, but in the summer the population is approximately 4,000. Madeline Island Ferry Line operates four car ferries from Bayfield to Madeline Island, starting in April until freeze up. During the peak season, ferries arrive and leave every 30 minutes. It is estimated that the ferries annually run between 100,000 and 125,000 “people round trips.” In addition to this, cars, trucks, freight and mail are transported via the ferry line. During the winter, access to the island is via the ice road. In the fall and spring when ice is not safe for vehicular traffic, travel to and from the island is by alternate means.

The construction of the harbor was authorized by Section 107 of the 1960 River and Harbor Act, P.L. 645, 86th Congress, as amended. The Detroit District, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers categorizes the harbor as a “shallow draft recreational harbor” with a project depth of 10 feet. The Corps of Engineers maintains approximately 200 feet of Federal channel and funds dredging of the channel every few years to maintain the navigation depth.

All businesses on Madeline Island, including restaurants, gift shops, construction companies, road crews and lodging establishments rely on goods and services being delivered to and from the island by way of the LaPointe Harbor. The Town owns two ambulances and there is a volunteer crew of approximately 15 Emergency Medical Technicians. The Madeline Island Airport is available for medi-vac flights, but the majority of medical emergencies leave the island by ferry.

The harbor supports:

- Local jobs and economy
- Recreational boating and charter fishing
- Commercial transportation
- Emergency and essential services to the community
- Tourist industry

The Town of LaPointe has established several general goals for harbor improvements that should be considered in completion of the long range plan and feasibility study:

- Safe separation of commercial activity, including ferry service, from recreational boating
- Safe separation of land based traffic (cars, trucks, heavy equipment) from pedestrian and bicycle activity
- Establish a safe harbor for recreational boaters who seek refuge from high seas
- More efficient means of handling ferries and commercial water traffic
- Transient slips for encouragement of water borne tourism (Tourism IS the islands dominant industry)
- Seasonal slips for summer resident boaters to improve public access and generate revenue for the Town

For further information contact:

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