

The Great Lakes Shipwreck Society Strategic Plan

2014

Background and History

The Great Lake Shipwreck Historical Society (“GLSHS”) has accomplished what many viewed as impossible over the last more than 30 years. GLSHS has taken a forlorn and near abandoned USCG light and station and converted it into one of the premier destinations of cultural tourism and education with respect to Michigan’s maritime history. At the same time, GLSHS has preserved and protected historic property and buildings and remains active in the search for shipwrecks.

In December, 2002, GLSHS signed an agreement with other stakeholders at Whitefish Point pertaining to the management of lands, cultural resources and visitor traffic; the 2002 Human Use and Natural Resource Plan (“2002 Plan”). The 2002 Plan served as the strategic plan for GLSHS until it was largely approved for implementation in 2013. Even as GLSHS implements the 2002 Plan as amended, it must strategically plan for its future.

The 2014 Strategic Plan includes a new Mission Statement, a thoughtful list of core values and prioritizes between and among goals and objectives intended to make GLSHS more secure, relevant and necessary for the full appreciation of Michigan’s rich maritime history.

The Mission of the Great Lakes Shipwreck Historical Society is to

Preserve lights and stations which warned mariners of the dangers inherent,

Honor those who were aboard and who bravely attempted rescue and

Discover, document and interpret vessels which instead took the deep.

Statement of Values

The Shipwreck Society will:

Explore shipwrecks with professionalism and care to understand and preserve the historical record and human stories inherent in these precious underwater time capsules.

Manage its financial affairs utilizing best practices and in a conservative fashion to assure long term viability and security.

Include, encourage and respect the efforts and ideas of members and volunteers to further the mission, recognizing the numerous skills and talents needed to succeed.

Provide an amazing visitor experience in a safe, clean setting with a courteous and knowledgeable staff.

Collect and preserve objects and archival materials that reflect our maritime past, while maintaining collections in our care to the highest professional museum standards.

Present Great Lakes maritime history in an accurate and objective manner, through ongoing research and authentication,

Identify educational opportunities that expand maritime history in rich and exciting ways.

Collaborate with those who share our vision and values.

Develop trusting relationships with its members, volunteers, donors, and government agencies to support its mission through charitable gifts and grants.

Prioritized* Goals and Objectives

We will strive to improve. The following goals have merit and if realized, will serve the mission. Management, with the assistance of the Board of Directors and its Committees, volunteers and members, will focus upon accomplishing as many of the following as is possible:

Improve the Organization

The following improvements may not be visible to our members and visitors, but are important to the security and quality of the organization:

1. Reduce debt from operations. Build equity. Prepare to weather the next financial crisis far better than we were prepared for the last.
2. Invest in and retain key management personnel and staff.
3. Maintain at least one ongoing underwater archeological project or shipwreck search and exploration at all times.
4. Inventory artifacts and documents, return those items on loan, update collections and loan policies.
5. Meet or exceed all American Alliance of Museums standards for collections care.

If GLSHS accomplishes the above, it will be a better museum on more solid ground. It will be positioned with respect to future challenges to not only survive, but thrive.

Improve the Campus and Visitor Experience

1. Install first rate sound and image quality for the Motor Life Boat House theatre.
2. Repair the White Shoal Lens in the main gallery so to permit it to rotate.
3. Expand upon the inventory for the overnight program by renovating and offering the apartment above the radio building.

4. Install Geo-Thermal heat so to reduce costs and extend our season and programs.
5. Tell the story of GLSHS on campus.
6. Monument the Stone Tower on campus.

If GLSHS accomplishes the above, it will be a more interesting and worthwhile destination, to which visitors will want to return and recommend others to visit.

Improve Educational and Subject Matter Content

1. Create short documentary productions or vignettes telling the stories surrounding Great Lakes shipwrecks, lights, rescues, sacrifices and loss.
2. Increase historically relevant live demonstrations on campus.
3. Expand Educational Outreach and off site Presentations.
4. Create on-line accessibility of collections and research center.

If GLSHS accomplishes the above, it will reach more of the population in ways that will leave a lasting impression in furtherance of its mission.

Improve GLSHS's Strategic Position Among its Peers and Competitors

1. Preserve, retrofit and operate the Brown fishery site.
2. Operate the North Grand Island Light as a satellite museum.
3. Operate a vessel for passenger service connected to our mission or illustrative of maritime history.

If GLSHS accomplishes the above, it will retain and improve upon its position as a premier cultural tourism destination and very likely be the best maritime museum in Michigan.

*The ideas are prioritized within each grouping from most impactful, to while still having merit, less impactful.

**Management and the Strategic Planning Committee recognize the opportunity and benefits in possibly charging patrons for visiting just the WFP campus and grounds, without paying admission or gaining entry to the Main Gallery, Motor Life Boat Theatre, Surfboat and Keeper's House. It is perhaps the most significant idea put forth in the Strategic Plan for the generation of revenue with the least amount of investment. The idea is complicated, however and the concept will be carefully studied, further discussed and thoroughly explored.

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