



**The 2025 Annual Report
for the
Friends of Plum and Pilot Islands, Inc.**



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A Message from our President

Hello Friends,

My father often said two things are certain: change and taxes. In 2025, we navigated significant changes, becoming both wiser and leaner. The new administration brought uncertainty as two of our key team members, Dave Bolin (Horicon NWR/Leopold WMD Complex Deputy Project Leader) and James Myster (Regional Historic Preservation Officer) retired. But on the bright side, the project manager position vacated by Bill Peterson last year was filled by Cassie Skaggs - just under the wire. Cassie comes to us from Hackmatack, Kankakee and Crap Orchard National Wildlife Refuges (NWR). She now oversees Horicon NWR, Leopold Wetland Management District, Green Bay NWR, Fox River NWR and Gravel Island NWR (whew!). She is an amazing leader and has a great (albeit, skeleton) team supporting her.

We partnered with organizations such as the Wisconsin Underwater Archeology Association, Ridges Sanctuary, Stone Silo Prairie Gardens, Death's Door Cruises, the Coalition for Refuge Friends, and the Historic Alliance of Door County to help guide us. These collaborations led to new programs, participation in a shipwreck discovery (which was featured nationally), and our inclusion in the opening video for Wisconsin's History Center (opening 2027). Shoreline Director, Stiles Meredith and Crew Member, Karen Sporrer met the video team at 3:30 am and went home to take a nap once the taping was done.

The Pilot Island lighthouse roof lost a couple of shingles in one of the winter storms, which gave us an introduction to the work that James Myster had previously done to get approval from the State Historic Preservation Office. We were able to get the Statement of Work approved and the project completed shortly before the government shutdown. The US Fish & Wildlife Service project to restore the Plum Island boathouse pilings got green-lighted and was completed right before the lake began to ice up.

Regardless of the changes, we continued meeting regularly and plan the most efficient way to support our mission with what we have. Your continued support helps us to stay focused, motivated and hopeful. After all, overcoming challenges is part of our DNA!

Thank you for
supporting FOPPI!



Mary Beth Volmer
President, Friends of
Plum and Pilot Islands



Jude
Kuenn,
Mary
Beth,
Cassie Skaggs, Erin Railsback and Dallas Greetham at
Horicon NWR

We are The Friends of Plum and Pilot Islands

The Friends of Plum and Pilot Islands has grown and achieved success through the support of our members, donors, and supporters like you. Our business framework is built upon the foundation of our Mission, Vision, Core Values, and the Impact to our community.

Our Mission

The mission of the Friends of Plum and Pilot Islands is to partner with U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to support the preservation, restoration, maintenance, and contemporary use of the historic resources on Plum and Pilot Islands, and to conserve and protect wildlife resources, while providing opportunities for quality wildlife-dependent recreation.

Our Vision

Preserving the memories of those who came before us.

Our Core Values

1. We believe that preserving and restoring the historic maritime structures on Plum and Pilot Islands is important to Door County to preserve this community's culture and heritage.
2. We support US Fish & Wildlife's BIG SIX priority public uses: Hunting, Fishing, Wildlife Photography, Wildlife Observation, Environmental Interpretation and Environmental Education.
3. We believe that volunteering is important to improve community life, to give back, to learn, to get connected to other people, and to enhance the human spirit of giving.
4. We believe it is vital to sustain the unique ecosystem of the island through conservation and educational efforts.
5. We value our members, donors and volunteers and strive to use these resources responsibly.

Our Impact

Our mission goes beyond the work that we do on the islands. We are a member of the greater Door County community and do our part to protect the environment and be a responsible member of this fine community.

We advocate for environmental sustainability by:

- Following the 'Leave no Trace' principles (<https://Int.org/>).
- Shopping locally whenever necessary for our merchandise.
- Valuing Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion.
- Protecting our water by using special paint on the *Shoreline's* boat hull to prevent the attachment and spread of aquatic organisms, including invasive species.

- Conducting regular Beach Patrol hikes to collect and properly dispose of flotsam that washes up along the shoreline.
- Stationing boot brush stands at areas of contact to raise awareness about invasive species and to reduce the spread and establishment of new infestations of invasive species.
- Planting a pollinator plot to enhance our pollinator friendly habitat on Plum Island.
- Protecting the bat maternity colony on the island.

We value our community by being a part of these events:

- Canoecopia
- Door County Festival of Nature
- Door County Maritime Museum's Passport Days
- Door County Maritime Museum's Wooden Boat Festival
- Fine Art & Antiques at the Barn Show
- Ghost Ships Festival
- History Days, Belgium Heritage Center
- Horicon Bird Festival
- DC VolunteerFest



Jude Kuenn, Kim Krueger, Patti Zarling and Paul Kuenn at Canoecopia in Madison

A Special Donor Thank You!

As a 501(c)3 non-profit organization we can only accomplish the things that you will read about in this report through the continued generous support of our members, volunteers, foundations, donors and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS). We deeply appreciate the support we receive. Your support directly allows us to achieve our mission of supporting the Green Bay National Wildlife Refuge (GBNWR).

A special thank you to these donors:

Donations from Charles Mitchell, Allan D. King, Steve & Jean Fox, Dan & Melinda Sheehy, Paul Schumacher & Deb Logerquist, Raibrook Foundation Inc., Elizabeth Kohl, Dana & Elaine Hilmer, Steven Hintz, Robert Rose, Jim & Ronnie Robinson, Stiles & Deb Meredith, Larel Braatz, Karen A. Case, Michael A. LeClair, Inge Bacon, Margaret Klose, Thrivent Financial, Orv & Dee Langohr, Glen Paul Schubert, PMI, Washington Island Ferry Line, Tidy Landscapes LLC, Colleen Pilat, William and Cheryl Surbaugh, Christopher Nelson, Larry & Linda Perkins, Peter & Marion LeMere, Timothy Sprecher, Gil & Joyce Carlson, Marjorie Lynn Karges, GERAL F. Harris, Tom & Jeannine Biermann, Mark Replogle, Jack Grundmeier, Hans, Shin, Sally Dery, Sandy & Ed Miller, Danielle Englebert

Thank you for making this all happen!



Advocacy

As a Friends group, we are encouraged to advocate to meet our mission to support the Green Bay National Wildlife Refuge and the 573 National Wildlife Refuges across the nation.

FOPPI supports the 'Big Six' outdoor experiences that stand tall as a cornerstone of the National Wildlife Refuges, stretching from Florida to Alaska, and Maine to the Pacific Islands. There are 67 National Wildlife Refuges in the Service's Columbia-Pacific Northwest Region and the Pacific Islands Region, which includes Idaho, Oregon, Washington, Hawaii and the Pacific Islands. There are also five national monuments managed by the Regions' refuge system, in coordination with state and federal partners. These 'Big Six' experiences are:

- Hunting
- Fishing
- Wildlife Observation
- Photography
- Environmental Education
- Interpretation

In support of these guiding principles, this year we:

- Presented these webinars:
 - 'Fundraising 101' during the Coalition of Refuge Friends virtual conference
 - 'Pilot Island and her light' to the Grand Traverse Lighthouse Museum in Northport MI
 - 'History Submerged' (shipwrecks in the area) to the public (<https://www.plumandpilot.org/post/historysubmerged2025>)
- Sent our quarterly newsletter to over 500 members, potential members, organizations, businesses and government officials
- Began a 'Field Day' series of on-site programs:
 - Native American Presence on Plum Island
 - Birding 101
 - Butterfly Cruise
- Completed 10 interpretive panels describing the key sites on Plum Island:
 - Welcome to Plum Island
 - Fog Signal Building
 - Front Range Light
 - Pilot Island Story
 - Pilot Island View
 - Porte des Morts Lighthouse Ruins
 - Plum Island Keepers Quarters
 - Plum Island Boathouse
 - Rear Range Light
 - Crews Quarters



Erin Railsback (USFWS) displaying panel artwork created by FOPPI volunteers.

Financial Picture

Our financial picture was a bit brighter than 2024! Thank you for renewing your membership, purchasing FOPPI merchandise, booking a cruise aboard *The Shoreline*, and donating to our historic preservation projects.

Profit & Loss

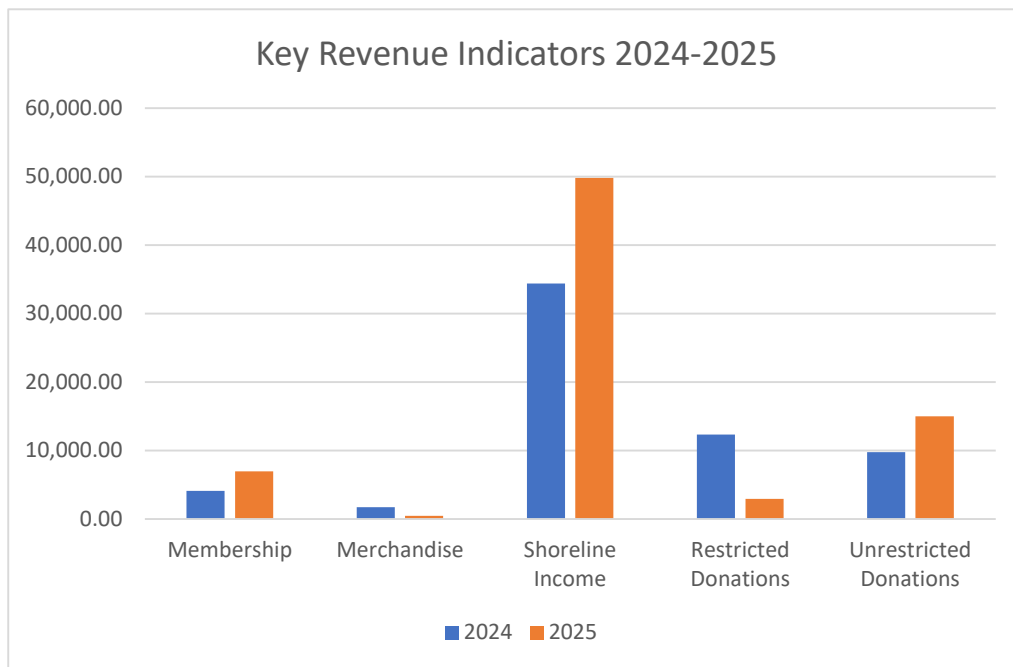
Total Revenue	76,754.04
Total Expenditures	- 61,376.28
Net Income/Loss	15,377.76

Balance Sheet

Total Assets	105,466.21
Total Liabilities	- 0.00
Total Equity	105,466.21



Click on this QR Code to view our financial statements at your leisure.
<http://tinyurl.com/foppifinancials>



Fiscal Development / Fundraising

Fundraising activities we worked on this year included:

- Lambeau Field (home of the Green Bay Packers), assisting with clean-up after football games
- Stone Silo Prairie Gardens native plant sale
- Field Days
- *The Shoreline* tips
- Donations from Outreach Events
- 'Donate Now' button on the website
- Partnership with the Friends of Rock Island for Lighthouse Passport Days transportation



Historic Preservation and Restoration

Before retiring, James Myster managed communication and approvals with the State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) for restoration projects. The administrative changes allowed us to better understand the historic preservation system, as the USFWS team was significantly reduced.

We learned that, even though the Pilot Island Lighthouse roof needed repair due to damage during the winter storms, SHPO needed to understand the why, what, when and how we planned on repairing the roof. Then, add the challenge of getting a contractor to Pilot Island to view the level of damage once the USFWS boat was in the water and prior to when the migrating birds arrived. Next, schedule the repair after they leave and before the weather changes and then add the imminent government shutdown and express a big sigh when we came in just under the wire!



We also worked on some smaller projects: Basement Window coverings, Sidewalk Repair and filling in the Rear Range Light Stoop.

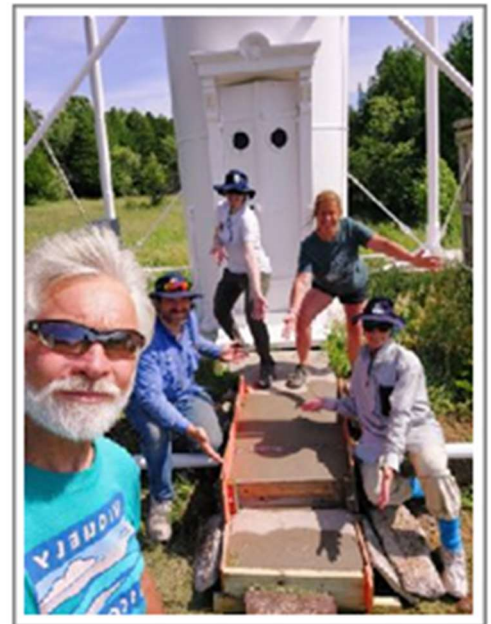
USFWS was able to secure funding to restore the pilings that hold up the historic boathouse, which we were ever so grateful for.



Before and after basement window repair project.



Sidewalk Repair



What an accomplishment! L to R: Paul, Louis, Kimberly, Ginnie, and Jude.

Marketing

We continued posting 'On This Day in History' to social media and created a daily post of gratitude for the month of November. The number of Facebook followers continues to increase.

Our volunteers share similar traits, one of them is continuous learning. Volunteers work with other non-profit organizations such as the Friends of Rock Island, Nature Conservancy and the Ridges Sanctuary. Experiences are shared and we learn to adapt to new ideas. Together we decided to offer the newsletter (via email) to anyone interested, not just members. Marketing this was simple and well received.

Our new website design continues to welcome new friends. We are working to keep the information fresh and inviting.

Membership

What does it mean to be a Friend of Plum and Pilot Islands (FOPPI)? Individual members and supporters of FOPPI are the very foundation on which our organization is built upon to pursue FOPPI's mission, "to partner with the US Fish & Wildlife Service (USFWS) to support the preservation, restoration maintenance and contemporary use of the historic resource on Plum and Pilot Islands, and to conserve and protect wildlife resources, while providing opportunities for quality wildlife-dependent recreation."

Like many times we bump into a challenge, we learn great lessons. We learned that:

1. Identifying a deposit for either membership or donation wasn't easy
2. Updating the membership list was difficult
3. Analyzing the membership list for renewals was even more difficult
4. Reconciling the MailChimp mass mailing list doubled the difficulty

So, we put our heads together and recognized that each of these systems were standalone, causing us to enter the same data multiple times. To resolve this, we moved the list over to QuickBooks, where the first contact begins with a deposit. This allows us to easily send renewal notices and provide a timely membership list for the newsletter.

The first renewal notices went out in December with great response. The second renewal notices are scheduled in April, and we are working on a survey to send to members who have decided not to renew.

With these new processes we are confident that we can increase the membership numbers.

2024 Total number of FOPPI Members = 233.

2025 Total number of FOPPI Members – 236

Membership Class Detail:

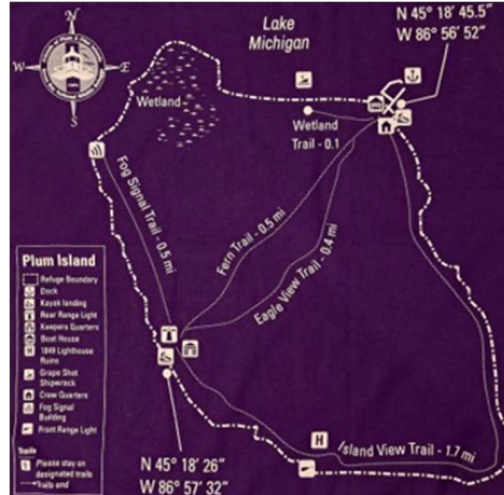
\$30 Individual	70	\$100 Keeper	27
\$50 Family	77	Honorary	4
\$75 Patron	8	Lifetime	51

Merchandising

We added some new products to our FOPPI store:



FOPPI Full-Zip Hoodie



Bandana with trail markings



Moon over Pilot Island Notecards
Photo by Joe Suchy

	<u>2024</u>	<u>2025</u>
Total FOPPI merchandise sales 2024	1,396.75	1629.75
Total spent on merchandise 2024	<u>3,641.94</u>	<u>1019.79</u>
Profit toward FOPPIs mission	\$2,245.19	609.96

Newsletter

Our newsletter remains a valued membership benefit. Members contribute articles, highlighting our island work. Many seek out the editor to express their appreciation.

Two hundred printed newsletters are sent through the US Postal Service. Most of these newsletters are sent to members and institutions that archive the newsletter; the remainder are sent to volunteers who provide them to potential members during our outreach events. This is to maintain the bulk mailing cost of \$.06 per newsletter.



The Shoreline

Captain Stiles Meredith accepted our offer as the Shoreline Director. Stiles schedules captains, manages the maintenance, works with Mary Beth on the registration process and Jim Schwartz to schedule the volunteer crew. Stiles has been a FOPPI member since 2022 and brings a wealth of boating and Door County history experience to our ranks.

We brought on two new captains: Ben Young and Al Hunsader. Both have Door County roots and are excited to be members of our team.

This year we designed a banner which advertises *The Shoreline* to folks that have dinner at The Shoreline Restaurant or Shoreline Resort. We also posted an advertisement on the old ticket booth at the resort.



We had the opportunity to participate in two amazing events this year: the Wisconsin History Museum videotaping with the Wisconsin Historical Society and the discovery of the *FJ King* with the Wisconsin Underwater Archeology Association (WUAA).

Stiles and crew member, Karen Sporrer met the videographers at 3:30 am so they could catch the sun rising over the rear range light. They captured some great photos! This video will be displayed at the new Wisconsin History Center which will open in Madison, early 2027.



The second experience was working with WUAA and a group of citizen scientists to locate a shipwreck that had evaded shipwreck hunters for many years. Press releases made their way to The Smithsonian Magazine and various other important outlets; Stiles, Captain Scott and Dawn Nelson (and The Shoreline) are now famous. [Citizen Science Group Finds Elusive Wisconsin Ghost Ship](#). There is also a YouTube video, featuring our own Stiles Meredith! <https://youtu.be/2K12whgs4O8>.



The ship's wheel sits on the lake bottom just off the King's stern. The top of the King's stern, including the pilot house below apart as a massive rush of air was forced backward when her iron ore cargo slid forward as she sank.

Tamara Thomsen, Wisconsin Historical Society



(Left to Right) Will Peters, Derek Haager, Janet Defnet, Kyle Weidemann, Kevin Cullen, Brendon Baillod, Kevin McConnaughey, Dan Kleewein, Joe Watermolen, (not pictured) Scott Reimer
Brendon Baillod



(Left to Right) Robert Jaeck, Bob Ryan, Lisa Gibson, Matt Ludvigson, Brendon Baillod, David Siegel, Lio O'Shasky, Caitlin Looby, Kevin Cullen, Michael Hansen
Brendon Baillod

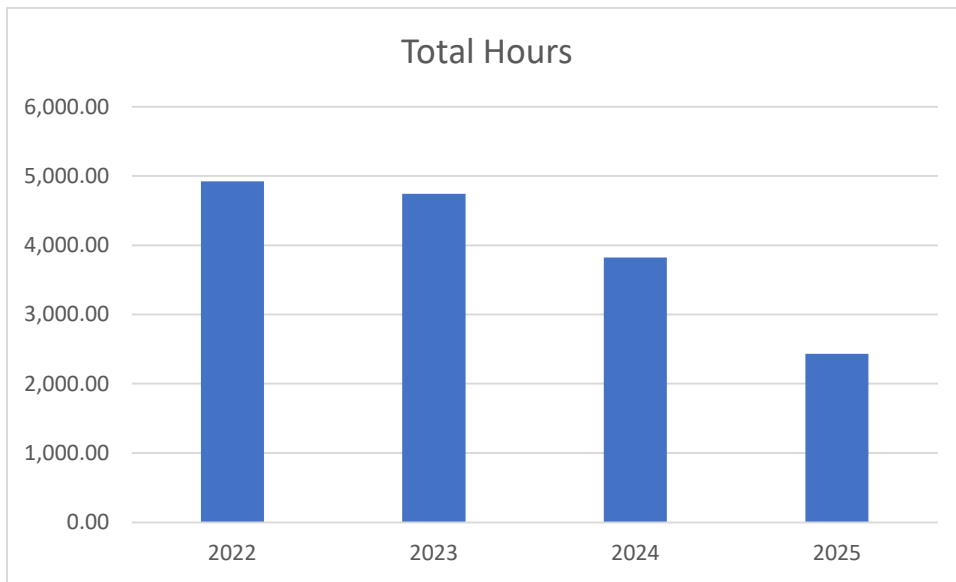
The ship was found by researching the records left by the captain and zeroing in on the spot. *The Shoreline* towed a ROV behind her which reported back to the computers on shore what it saw.

We will be taking WUAA members on another cruise in 2026 to work with the ROV.

Volunteer Coordination

One of the greatest benefits of being a member of the FOPPI community is the opportunity to volunteer our time, treasure, and talents to support the FOPPI and USFWS mission. Our Volunteer Coordinator worked to fill volunteer spots for several events and projects - including the crew for *The Shoreline*.

We had an exciting 2025 season! Even though the total number of hours was less than previous years, our volunteers donated a total of 2,433.75 hours of their time! The government estimates the value of a volunteer hour at \$34.79, equaling \$84,670.16. Kudos to all who volunteered to help make our mission a reality!



We continue to recruit new volunteers through our social media posts and to guests aboard *The Shoreline*.

We continued our work with PMI Entertainment who provide clean-up and ticket scanning, seat rental, and recycling services to Lambeau Field, home of the Green Bay Packers. This year the team earned \$1264.93.

Pictured: Pete LeMere, Jack Miron, Sally Dery, Dallas Greetham, and Jim Schwartz



During the Ghost Ships event, the team met Dale Palecek, a retired videographer for Milwaukee PBS. Dale was impressed with the work we are doing and offered to create a video for us to help promote our volunteer opportunities. You can view the video from this link:

<https://www.plumandpilot.org/post/learn-about-volunteering-on-plum-island>

The US Fish & Wildlife Service annually selects a volunteer who exemplifies the USFWS mission. This year, Scott Nelson was chosen. Scott served on the Plum Island Station 1985 to 1990. He began volunteering with FOPPI as the volunteer coordinator and has since worked with us on historic preservation projects.



2025 FOPPI Distinguished Leaders

Officers:

President: Mary Beth Volmer
Shoreline Director: Stiles Meredith
Treasurer: Kimberly Wells
Secretary: Karen Ellery

Board of Directors:

Membership: Laura Chappell
Merchandising: Sally Dery
Volunteer Coordinator: Jim Schwartz

Emeritus Directors:

Mike Brodd
Lew Clarke
Eric Greenfeldt
Jude Kuenn
Chuck Scheckel
Paul Schumacher
Tim Sweet
Gary Wilson

Volunteer Leaders:

Dallas Greetham	Cheryl Lenz	Dawn Nelson	Roxy Jungwirth
Sue Scheckel	Sue Griem	Jack Grundmeier	Chuck Scheckel
Jake Heffernan	Ginnie Harney	Paul Schumacher	Scott Nelson
Colleen Pilat	Nancy Hoefs Leisgang	Tim Sweet	
Jude Kuenn	Paul Kuenn (PK)	Louis Wegner	

The Shoreline Captains:

Jim Robinson Stiles Meredith
Doug Smith Jason Albertson
Scott Nelson Ben Young
Al Hunsader

The Shoreline Crew:

Sally Dery Deb Meredith
Nancy Hoefs Leisgang Pete LeMere
Dawn Nelson Jon Wall
Ginnie Harney Barb Jacobs
Karen Sporrer Emily Campbell
Gretchen Dominowski Mike Repp

Docents: Kim Krueger, Tim Sweet