

Beavertail Lighthouse sets new attendance records

By Sam Bari

The Beavertail Lighthouse set a record for the number of visitors in one year, Beavertail Lighthouse Museum board member Varoujan Karentz announced at the Oct. 15 Beavertail Lighthouse Committee meeting. The popular tourist attraction's attendance for 2008 to date has been approximately 27,000 people, he said. The previous record was 25,000.

"Those are just the ones who signed the guest register," Karentz said. "We have no idea how many visited that did not sign in."

Karentz also announced that the lighthouse had received \$230,000 in grant money from the Champlin Foundations to be used for tower repair and restoration. "Unfortunately, the Coast Guard said we couldn't do anything without drawings. We got the drawings and were given permission to proceed," he said.

The lighthouse also received a \$100,000 grant from the Rhode Island Preservation Commission to seal the leaking windows, soffits and ceiling of the aging buildings. "Again, the Coast Guard wanted drawings, even though we were only doing ordinary maintenance and repairs," Karentz said.

According to Karentz, an outstanding grant from the National Park Service for \$550,000 for the

lighthouse and museum restoration and improvement project is pending.

Park maintenance

Rhode Island Department of Environmental Management Associate Director Larry Mouradjian attended the meeting and said that in the absence of a permanent caretaker, DEM and park personnel have taken up the slack and worked beyond their paychecks to maintain the facility.

He commended park personnel for the outstanding job on the construction of a new fence at the back of the tower and for their diligence and dedication to the pristine upkeep of the lighthouse grounds.

Mouradjian said that the deer-hunting program would be the same as last year and would allow the taking of deer by archery only.

Wind generators

Wind Committee representative Joe Logan spoke to the lighthouse committee members about the interests of the Wind Committee concerning the possible construction of a wind-powered generator on park grounds.

Logan explained that the town gave the committee \$25,000 as consultants to do a study on areas where generators could be located. He said they were considering Taylor Point, Ft. Getty, and Beavertail.

According to Logan, one

1.5-megawatt turbine would adequately serve the town's needs for \$500,000 worth of electricity in one year.

Mouradjian said that the town is not the only party interested in getting into the wind-energy business. He said that the state also had interests in finding suitable locations.

"The state-owned portion of the park can only be used for recreational purposes according to present rules," Mouradjian said. "The National Park Service is the landlord and they are now formulating new rules concerning use of park grounds for just this purpose."

Mouradjian said that all federal land has restrictions, and if anyone is going to build a wind farm or even one turbine on state or federal land, it will probably be them. The same goes for the state, he said.

Logan said that the reason he was there was to research the possibilities. Mouradjian offered to talk with Logan after the meeting and said he would put him in touch with the government personnel who could help him.

Licensing

Karentz announced that the license for temporary management by the Beavertail Lighthouse Museum Association was renewed once and that he expected it to be renewed again when the present license expires.

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