South Fox Island Lighthouse Association Moves Ahead!

By Sandra Serra Bradshaw

It has been a labor of love and patience, along with a learning experience for all those involved in the South Fox Island Lighthouse Association (FILA) in efforts in saving this important 1867 light station.

The progress is impressive, given this is one of the most isolated lighthouses in all the Great Lakes. The complex is situated some seventeen miles off the tip of northwest Michigan’s Leelanau peninsula (and a twenty-five mile boat trip from the Northport or Leland marina’s).

Over the past four years we have transported 10,000 plus pounds of building materials ashore on what we affectionately dubbed the “Little Red Dinghy.” This has not been easy as we must moor our boat, LIGHTKEEPER, hundreds of feet offshore, and transport everything by dinghy to the island in much the same manner as GLLKA has been doing at St. Helena Island.

Several small foundation grants have allowed us to get out to the island and get much work accomplished in helping this station.

An entire network of walkways connecting all seven buildings has been uncovered. Over the past four years we have cleared tons of stones out of the boathouse, and also uncovered the marine railway. We have done conservation work on several of the buildings, including pushing away vegetative materials that encroached upon the structures.

FILA has been awarded a Michigan Lighthouse Assistance Program (MLAP) matching grant to do an Historic Structures Report (HSR) on the 1867 lighthouse building. It also included funds to replace the failing wood shingled roof of the carpenter’s building.

We look forward to another successful season in continuing efforts to save the South Fox Island Light and her accompanying buildings. Come join us!

For additional information and numerous photographs of the group’s progress, visit their website at Website: www.southfox.org or find their Facebook page by searching for “South Fox Island.”
South Fox Island Photographs

The boathouse as it appeared in 2004. Note the severe lean

The boathouse after straightening an installation of a new roof

Since they began work at the lighthouse, the faithful “Little Red Dinghy” has carried over 10,000 pounds of material to the island

The decaying summer kitchen at the rear of the 1867 lighthouse

Workshop the group hopes to re-shingle through an MLAP grant
The beautifully restored and repainted oil storage building

Huge volumes of brush have been cleared to reveal pathways

After countless hours of brush clearing, the 1867 lighthouse is visible from the water for the first time since it was abandoned in 1959

The Beacon, Spring 2010