

# Currents



1000 Islands International Tourism Council

Sackets Harbor on Lake Ontario

## Great Lakes Small Harbors Initiative

The economic impact of recreational boating in New York is sizable. In 2003, a NYSG-funded study found that NYS-registered boaters spent an estimated \$2.4 billion in the state on gas, food, lodging, launching fees and other boating-related expenses. "The survey gave the boating community an initial understanding of just how large their clout is on New York State's economy," said NYSG Recreation and Tourism Specialist **Dave White**.

Data from a January 2009 Great Lakes Recreational Boating Economic Benefit Study published by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers expanded on this concept, showing recreational boaters in the Great Lakes states – New York, Pennsylvania, Ohio, Indiana, Illinois, Wisconsin, Michigan and Minnesota – produce \$22 billion in economic value annually. The region has 4.2 million of the 8.4 million boaters nationally.

"The study estimated that boaters in the Great Lakes states spend \$529 million on vessel-related expenditures and another \$665 million on trip-related expenditures," said Great Lakes Commission Special Projects Manager **David L. Knight**. "That makes the cost-benefit ratio of a funding request to maintain a new Great Lakes Small Harbors Coalition initiative pretty attractive."

In Fall 2009, **Chuck May**, Chair of the Great Lakes Small Harbors Coalition (GLSHC), worked with NYSG on a grassroots effort to secure federal funding for federally-authorized shallow depth harbors in New York's Great Lakes region. There are 20 such harbors in the area: three ports along the St. Lawrence River, 10 along Lake Ontario, three along the Niagara River and four along Lake Erie.

"The regional coalition will help New York's recreational and commercial small harbors address management, dredging and funding needs by recognizing the eight Great Lakes states and hundreds of shoreline communities as all part of the greater Great Lakes system," said White.

White has reviewed 10 years' worth of research funded by NYSG and others that shows the NYS-level value of marinas, sportfishing, charter services, and scuba diving. "This research identifies user groups whose interests connect with those of the GLSHC," White said.

In October 2009, NYSG co-sponsored meetings in Oswego and Albion (near Brockport) to further connect with users. During the meetings, May spoke with nearly 50 representatives of New York's waterfront interests – harbor masters, elected officials, and representatives of marinas and marine trade associations, yacht clubs, port

authorities and government, environmental, and tourism agencies.

As a direct result of these meetings, at least nine new resolutions have passed with others now pending to become members of the GLSHC. These include ones in Niagara, Orleans, and Oswego counties, the Towns of Wilson, Carleton and Sandy Creek, and the City of Rochester. In addition, Congresswoman **Louise Slaughter** submitted a request with Reps. **Dan Maffei** and **Bill Owens** late last year to the U.S. House of Representatives Subcommittee on Water Resources and Environment's Transportation and Infrastructure Committee to establish a dedicated fund to dredge federally-authorized harbors on Lake Ontario and the Niagara River. Between their three offices, Slaughter, Maffei and Owens represent all of the Federal harbors on Lake Ontario.

"It's critical that we maintain adequate funding to protect and leverage New York's north coast harbors to help create jobs and spur economic development," said Rep. Slaughter. "Lake Ontario is our region's largest and most important natural resource. Over the past five years I have been proud to have secured over \$3 million to complete dredging and pier repair work in Rochester Harbor, Oak Orchard Harbor, Olcott Harbor, and Wilson Harbor."

—Paul C. Focazio and Kara Dunn