Squirrel Point Light, Arrowsic, Maine

Public Benefits Program

recommended by Citizens for Squirrel Point
August 7, 2003 Draft

Covenant 13 of the 1998 deed to Squirrel Point Light requires that it be "used for educational, historic, recreational, cultural, and wildlife conservation programs for the general public and such other uses as the Commandant, United States Coast Guard, determines to be not inconsistent or incompatible with such uses". CSP also stresses that under the legislation authorizing the 1998 deed (Public Law 104-324, Title X, Section 1001.b.2) the entire property is to be used as a nonprofit center for the preservation of maritime history.

CSP has been asked by both the United States Coast Guard and potential buyers to specify exactly what programs CSP believes would satisfy these requirements.

CSP notes that the following kinds of programs have been put in place at other lighthouses transferred under the same federal law, and/or seem especially suitable for Squirrel Point Light to comply with the intent of the National Historic Lighthouse Preservation Act.

Educational programs for the general public

Because of Squirrel Point's situation, it is ideally suited to youth and outdoors programs. Programs could also be developed for local schools along the lines of those currently in place at Burnt Island Light, Maine, and Rose Island Light, Rhode Island. The Squirrel Point area is not only rich in local history, but provides ample study ground for wetlands, river and marine wildlife and ecological systems.

Historic programs for the general public

Squirrel Point Light is one of five historic lighthouses on the six miles of the Kennebec between Bath and the Atlantic Ocean. The region abounds with history, having been one of the first settled in prehistory and one of the first colonized by European settlers (1604). The light system supported Bath's considerable shipbuilding and river trade industries in the nineteenth century. River tours featuring the Kennebec lighthouses are given regularly by the Maine Maritime Museum and other tour operators. The trail approach to Squirrel Point makes this lighthouse property more accessible than the many others on island locations, at the same time conserving its setting as it was when lighthouse keepers accessed Squirrel Point via boat from Phippsburg (across the river). To preserve maritime history, the trail approach to Squirrel Point must also be preserved. Its relative isolation makes vivid the lives of its lighthouse keepers.

Opportunities exist to:

- Develop and display the history of the Squirrel Point, perhaps in conjunction with the other Kennebec River lighthouse organizations, through a museum area within one of Squirrel Point's buildings; guided tours; and/or brochures and other visitor information which could be made available at Bath's Maine Maritime Museum and elsewhere.
- Open the keeper's house interior for guided tours and/or display of Squirrel Point's history.
- Provide exterior on-site information about the light.
- A resident internship program similar to the one at Seguin Light might be considered.

Recreational programs for the general public

Squirrel Point is a popular spot for anglers and a year round walking or cross-country skiing destination for the local community. Squirrel Point provides primary access to the Arrowsic clam flats and the low tide beach which abuts Squirrel Point's 4.5 acres.

The lighthouse is listed in many guidebooks, and is visited daily by several carloads of in and out-of-state tourists during the spring through fall seasons. The trail to Squirrel Point Light is a pleasant half-mile hike through lands owned by the Maine Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife and abuts additional trail systems to Bald Head maintained by The Nature Conservancy.

Open access to Squirrel Point's grounds has been a traditional use and a major benefit to the local community and visitors from the general public, and continued open access in conjunction with more structured uses of the site is an essential aspect of its value to the public.

The Maine Island Trails Association has expressed an interest in developing a series of kayak stops along the Kennebec. Because of Squirrel Point's situation at the confluence of the Kennebec and Back Rivers, its inclusion in such a system would be important and provide a minimum impact recreational usage.

Cultural programs for the general public

Squirrel Point Light is a popular subject for painters who set up their easels on Squirrel Point's grounds. Use of the facility for art classes or writers' retreats is only one possibility.

Wildlife conservation programs for the general public

The area around Squirrel Point is host to recovering species including bald eagles, artic terns, piping plover, and is well populated by other Maine wildlife. The approximately 340 acres of undeveloped land surrounding Squirrel Point's 4.5 acres is a designated wetlands and wildlife preserve. At a minimum, Squirrel Point's usage should have no

negative impact on resident wildlife and ecological systems at Squirrel Point and in the surrounding area and the vegetation on the property should be kept in a relatively natural state. It could provide an appropriate facility for programs such as spring migratory bird walks or river/marsh species studies, potentially in conjunction with Universities, museums or conservation associations.

CSP again notes that the 1998 deed does require that each element ("educational, historic, recreational, cultural, AND wildlife conservation") be met, and that the authorizing legislation requires It is entirely possible (and to be hoped) that innovative new programs for the general public might be developed by a new owner in concert with the many other existing nonprofit lighthouse, maritime history, educational, cultural, and/or wildlife conservation organizations resident in the area and interested in Squirrel Point.

Further review of proposed programs would also be required by authorities such as the Town of Arrowsic in areas such as code requirements and parking impact on Bald Head Road, and the Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife, which controls land access to the lighthouse. This suggested list has not been reviewed or approved by them.

Citizens for Squirrel Point would be more than happy to serve in an advisory board capacity for the development of programs at Squirrel Point.

Respectfully submitted,

Citizens for Squirrel Point, a Maine nonprofit corporation whose purpose is to ensure that Squirrel Point Light in Arrowsic, Maine is used and maintained in accordance with the terms of Federal law, State law, local law, and the covenants in its 1998 deed from the U.S. Government to preserve the lighthouse property for the public benefit.

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