

# **Friends of Sears Island Strategic Plan 2016-2020**

## **Mission**

The mission of the Friends of Sears Island (FOSI) is to support permanent protection of Sears Island's environmental and cultural resources; preserve its marine, shoreline, and forest ecosystems; and encourage educational and low-impact recreational uses of the island.

## **Vision**

FOSI envisions that people in local communities and throughout the state feel connected to Sears Island, take pride in the island, and work together with FOSI to ensure its protection now and for future generations. FOSI is funded by multiple sources; has broad community (financial and volunteer) support; has an active, committed, and enthusiastic board; and has established a network of volunteers and partner organizations actively involved in stewardship of the island.

## **What FOSI Does**

FOSI helped secure the permanent protection of a 601-acre conservation easement on Sears Island, and was recognized by the state for its role in the long-term conservation of the island. FOSI works to: protect and conserve Sears Island, its habitats, and native floral and faunal species; inform the public about this unique natural and cultural resource, important not only to the local community but to the state; encourage low-impact use of the island to gain visibility and increase the public's appreciation of it; support activities that minimize the impact of humans on the island; engage the community and local schools in activities on the island that promote a stewardship ethic; provide opportunities for community members to "connect" to the island through education and volunteer opportunities; form partnerships with Searsport and surrounding communities and other conservation organizations in the Penobscot region to stimulate interest, and participation, in conserving and protecting the island.

## **Priorities**

- 1) Write grant proposals and pursue other funding opportunities to grow FOSI's budget, with the ultimate goal of having funds available to hire a paid staff person. Conduct activities to ensure FOSI's sustainability.
- 2) Continue to develop strategies to increase public awareness, low-impact use of the island, and support of FOSI.
- 3) Maintain existing trails and fields (including acquiring necessary tools), improve signage and, collaborating with partners, plan 1-2 community engagement activities per year on the island.
- 4). Increase membership base and volunteer network.
- 5) Form additional partnerships with Searsport/nearby towns and organizations with similar missions for shared funding of activities and stewardship of the island.

6) Expand board strategically, adding new members with skill sets and ages to complement those of existing board.

7) Work with DOT, other state agencies, and the Town of Searsport, to track public use of the island.

### **Strategic Goals and Objectives**

#### **Goal 1: Protect and preserve the natural and historic resources of Sears Island.**

##### **Objectives:**

1. Design new trails and maintain existing ones to minimize human impact to the natural environment and preserve the island's character.
2. Establish a monitoring program to record changes to the environment, focusing on sensitive areas identified in the 2011 Natural Resource Inventory, and invasive species.
3. Work with volunteers, students, and partner organizations to control invasive species.
4. Explore beach and water access improvements that protect fragile resources of the waterfront area and high quality of intertidal and marine waters.
5. Develop a Stewardship Land Management Plan.

#### **Goal 2: Create a strong, active, and vibrant organization.**

##### **Objectives:**

1. Recruit new board members so that the board has complementary skills needed to carry out its mission and programs; greater age diversity; and access to wider networks of people, organizations, and geography.
2. Develop a board leadership and succession plan.
3. Recruit volunteers and attract new members by offering engaging educational and volunteer opportunities and inviting their participation.
4. Increase number of sustaining members to ensure FOSI's long-term viability.
5. Research funding opportunities and apply for grants from appropriate foundations/organizations.
6. Organize at least one event per year for specific audiences to target potential donors.
7. Each year, develop a projected budget for the following year.
8. Maintain the FOSI website, which may entail training board members, volunteers, or paid staff.
9. Maintain FOSI database and train backup support person(s).

#### **Goal 3: Engage Searsport, the broader community, schools, and other partner organizations in activities to encourage them to become stewards of Sears Island.**

##### **Objectives:**

1. Update PowerPoint and develop other presentations about the natural and historical resources of Sears Island to be used with schools, community groups, and partners.
2. Develop and produce interpretive signs about historical, cultural, and natural features for use on the island.

3. Organize recreational events and informational activities, including guided nature walks, to attract people to the island.
4. Create a series of virtual video/audio talks with trail maps and botanical/historical highlights to post on the website.
5. Encourage colleges, schools, and other educational groups to use Sears Island as a teaching/learning resource and to participate in monitoring/stewardship programs.
6. Develop simple field guides and other informational materials about the resources of Sears Island for use by island visitors and to support educational activities.

**Goal 4: Develop programs and strategies so that residents and visitors have a good understanding of FOSI and of the natural and historic resources of Sears Island and so that they enjoy, protect, and sustain those resources.**

**Objectives:**

1. Maintain website with links, and use social media appropriately, to reach a wider audience.
2. Seek opportunities for board and volunteers to promote Sears Island to the broader community.
3. Develop informational materials to promote FOSI, including a new brochure, an updated display, and a video documentary for public broadcasting.
4. Produce at least two newsletters a year and distribute through website, Vertical Response, etc.
5. Establish an ongoing schedule of press releases and public service announcements to highlight FOSI activities and accomplishments—and develop ongoing relations with press and the media.
6. Maintain e-mail lists and continue communications with members and volunteers through regular mailings, e-newsletters, and social marketing tools to alert them about events and opportunities to get involved.

**Goal 5: Create a long-term plan for Sears Island.**

**Objectives:**

1. Create a presence for FOSI on Sears Island and in the state, which communicates that FOSI is the prime conservation steward for Sears Island.
2. Develop a robust board and organization, capable of sustaining an annual operating budget that supports a small staff (possibly an office) and various stewardship and educational projects.
3. Develop a strong and supportive constituency for the portion of Sears Island that is protected by the conservation easement.
4. Work with partners to protect Sears Island.
5. Develop a series of trails with destinations, picnic tables, benches, and interpretive signs—contingent on having a cadre of volunteers to maintain the trails.
6. Explore the possibility of developing a handicapped accessible path.
7. Conduct a feasibility study for an education/visitor/maintenance center on the Conservation Area of the island.