

#Thankful Season - Iconic piece of Michigan, So Many Reasons to be Thankful

What are you thankful for this season? Your family, fresh air perhaps, food on the table? The 2020 calendar year has left us with much to reflect upon.

For one small community, with a big landmark, those that care about Round Island Lighthouse are celebrating so much to be thankful for.

An Iconic Landmark

Round Island Lighthouse sits as a focal point for anyone visiting Mackinac Island during Michigan summers or really anyone crossing from lower Michigan into the expanse of the Upper Peninsula.

“It’s an iconic piece of Michigan, a 125-year-old landmark, as you venture into Michigan’s Upper Peninsula,” said Matt McMullen, Chairman for the Round Island Lighthouse Preservation Society, “and perhaps one of the most photographed lighthouses in the nation.”

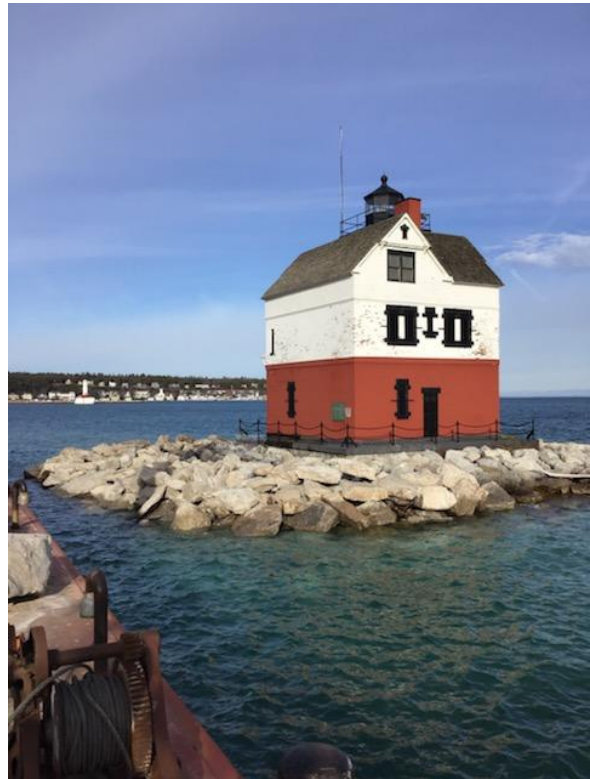
Built in 1895, and in service from 1896 to 1947, Round Island Lighthouse has been under the care of the U.S. Forest Service, Hiawatha National Forest since 1958. The Hiawatha National Forest is the only national forest across the nation that provides the unique care, maintenance and administration of five lighthouses, all of those which are located on the Great Lakes shorelines.

In 2008, given the continual upkeep and maintenance needed of this historic lighthouse, a unique partnership formed, the [Round Island Lighthouse Preservation Society](#). Formed by individuals; including volunteers, Boy Scouts, Scout leaders and community members looking to become more involved in the lighthouse’s restoration and this piece of history.

The [Round Island Lighthouse Preservation Society](#) is a 501(c)(3) non-profit partner able to fully assist with facilitating preservation work of the lighthouse and grounds, under an agreement updated annually with the Hiawatha National Forest.

A Generous Gift, A Community Coming Together

This Spring, as Chairman Matt McMullen and recreation and engineering staff from the Hiawatha National Forest were walking the lighthouse grounds and detailing ongoing needs for the historic



Round Island Lighthouse early this week as contractor, North Shore Marine Terminal prepares to place 3 million pounds of rock around the lighthouse, helping secure the historic structure from harsh winter storms. Photo courtesy of Keepers of Round Island Lighthouse.

structure it became evident that more needed to be done and in a quick manner. In recent years, all the Great Lakes have seen higher water levels, record levels this year.

“We became very concerned that a large amount of upkeep was needed in short order, due to the ongoing high-water levels that take a hard toll on these historic structures,” said McMullen. The concern was for high-water and ice damage, especially during harsh winter storms across much of the Great Lakes.

“Forest Engineers agreed, and we knew the work would exceed the capacity of budgetary funds for any given year,” McMullen continued. “The community here has come together, the Forest Service, the preservation society, fundraising in a year of this pandemic, community members, generous donors, numerous business owners, it’s been amazing.”

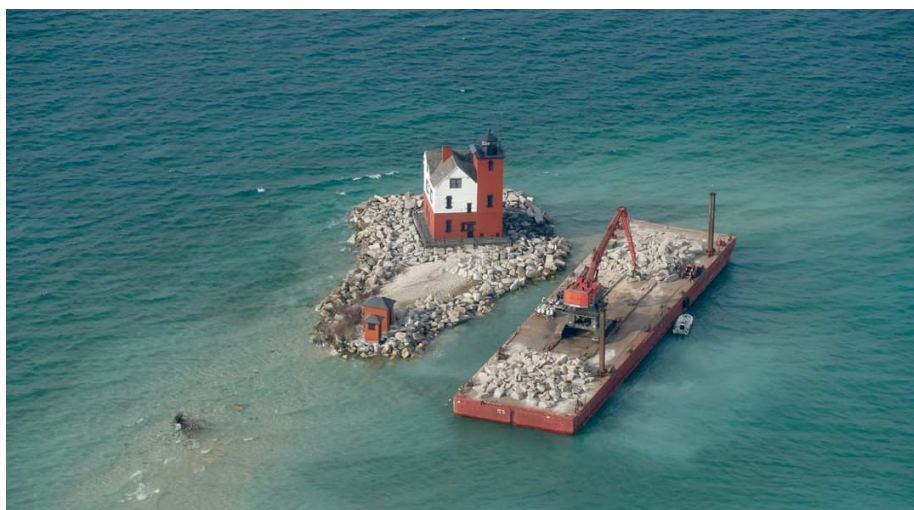
Kari Vanderheuel, East Zone, Recreation Program Manager for the Hiawatha National Forest agrees, we’ve had a long-standing 20+ year agreement with the preservation society, but we formalized this broader challenge cost share agreement, identifying the additional work that needed to be done in quick order.

“The forest oversees the administrative side of the paperwork, along with helping with on-site visits and eagerly working with the preservation society. Ensuring the Army Corp of Engineers, State of Michigan’s Department of Environmental Quality, the State Historic Preservation Officer and the National

Environmental Policy Act processes are all happening and in place is an important element of the work,” said Vanderheuel. “The preservation society has done a tremendous job working with the everyone, securing a willing contractor and preparing us to get the work done, prior to the winter season and is rooted within these communities.”



Contractor, North Shore Marine Terminal out of Escanaba, MI places rock around Round Island Lighthouse. Photo courtesy of Keepers of Round Island Lighthouse.



Contractor, North Shore Marine Terminal works on Round Island Lighthouse on November 19 from a 220' barge. The contractor is adding 3 million pounds of rock to help secure the lighthouse from damage during winter storms. Photo courtesy of Keepers of Round Island Lighthouse.

A Project Brought to Fruition

In late September, a last-minute anonymous donor brought forth enough money to complete the emergency rock project before winter, which will bring an additional 8 feet worth of rock extending out into Lake Huron or 3 million pounds, protecting the historic structure from high water and ice dams throughout the winter months. The additional \$30,000 in fundraising the preservation society raised -- that gets to be used for ongoing lighthouse maintenance, which will continue.

On the evening of Tuesday, November 17, the contractor, North Shore Marine Terminal out of Escanaba, MI set out across Lake Michigan with 1,300 - 1,400 tons of rock aboard a 220' barge, under tow by tugboat *Erika Kobasic*, crossing the Straights of Mackinac and into Lake Huron headed for Round Island Lighthouse. If you haven't been following along in the process catch it on [Round Island Lighthouse Preservation Society Facebook page](#).



Tugboat Erika Kobasic hauls 1,300 - 1,400 tons of rock across Lake Michigan bound for Round Island Lighthouse in Lake Huron. Contractor is North Shore Marine Terminal Photo courtesy of Keepers of Round Island Lighthouse.

"It's been the little engine that could, this whole year, everyone working together in a partnership that is effective, with well over 800 volunteer hours from bankers, engineers, secretaries, boy scouts, Forest Service employees, and other community members. A broad cross section of our community cares about this historic icon." said Matt McMullen, who started himself as a boy scout working on the lighthouse years ago.

I want to give a heartfelt thank you to the amount of people involved and working with this partnership effort," said Cid Morgan, Hiawatha Forest Supervisor. "There are so many people that helped to bring this project to fruition and the excellent work that occurred under tight deadlines to protect an iconic and historic structure for the communities of Michigan and as a broader public landmark for everyone to enjoy is amazing. Thank you!"

To learn more about the history of Round Island Lighthouse and the Preservation Society's work visit online at: <http://www.roundislandlightmichigan.com/> and take a moment to pause today and think about what you are thankful for.

General information about the Hiawatha National Forest can be found at www.fs.usda.gov/hiawatha or on Twitter and Facebook: <https://twitter.com/HiawathaNF>, <https://www.facebook.com/HiawathaNF>.