

Lake St. Clair Tourism Initiative Launches, Eric Foster is Co-Founder and Board Treasurer

Those of us who boat on Lake St. Clair regularly already know, appreciate and love our great gem. But many of the eight million people who live within an hour's drive of the lake know little or nothing about its charm and beauty—and the promise of great experiences they can have.

That's one of the principle reasons Eric Foster teamed up with several key players from the private and public sectors to establish what is now known as the Lake St. Clair Tourism Initiative.

After many months of due diligence, discussion and collaboration, this non-profit entity is ready for its formal launch—and had its coming out party at the Detroit Boat Show at Cobo Hall. Visitors to this year's Boat Show had the chance to visit with Eric, who worked the booth, along with Brad Simmons, long-time Belle Maer resident, and Justin Robinson, senior analyst from the Macomb County Planning and Economic Development Team.

The story we have been telling is being welcomed with great enthusiasm among boaters and non-boaters alike.

Lake St. Clair Tourism Initiative Makes a Splash

Led by a diverse think tank that includes industry leaders, non-profit associations, stakeholder groups, leading law firms and governmental agencies, the Lake St. Clair Tourism Initiative has become a living, breathing entity, a 501(c) (6) non-profit corporation.

The Initiative was formed to increase awareness and improve perceptions of Lake St. Clair and its many assets. The objective is to establish the Lake and its neighboring recreational, business, entertainment and educational assets as tourism destinations.

The Initiative will provide an umbrella of organizational and marketing support for existing merchant and business associations, web sites and other business and civic organizations which ultimately support the business community.

Another goal of the Lake St. Clair Tourism Initiative is to create a dynamic and memorable communications program which builds confidence and pride in the region by promoting a message of discovery/re-discovery of Lake St. Clair with its rich, varied and interesting destinations.

All in all, the Lake St. Clair Tourism Initiative will define new travel and recreational opportunities that will help shape behaviors and position the Lake and its assets to attract greater growth in the years ahead.

Discover Lake St. Clair: New Branding to Promote Special Destination

Whatever inspires you, you can find it in, on or near Lake St. Clair.

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Eric Foster is shown staffing the Lake St. Clair Tourism Initiative booth at the 2010 Detroit Boat Show. Eric is one of the co-founders of this non-profit Initiative, which is designed to attract visitors from within an hour's drive of the lake, and to encourage more travel on and around this great gem.

On any given day, Lake St. Clair is home for such pleasures as a ride on a go-fast boat, reeling in a trophy musky, taking a refreshing dip, kicking back at the beach, rafting off at a "floating party," savoring an awesome sunset over a romantic dinner—and so much more. On this lake of many riches, you can discover your own personal passions and pleasures.

But for many residents in southeast Michigan, Lake St. Clair is a still a gem waiting to be discovered. The Lake St. Clair Tourism Initiative has one primary purpose: to increase awareness of the rich and diverse assets offered by the area's communities and businesses in order to connect more of the region's residents and visitors to its shores.

Through our unique business plan and brand strategy, existing and new visitors to Lake St. Clair will be attracted then engaged; they will learn things they didn't know about the Lake's rich assets—and do this through the promise of a great experience on our shores, in our businesses, at our attractions or on the water itself. As a result, we believe more people will discover the Lake St. Clair area as a top destination in which to live, play, shop—even consider starting a business here.

Primary Target: People Within an Hour's Drive

There are some eight million people who live within an hour's drive of Lake St. Clair on both the Michigan and Ontario sides of the lake. Of those eight million, there are people who know about Lake St. Clair and its assets—but there are a lot more who do not.

It's really kind of a no-brainer: if you live in Northern Oakland County, Washtenaw County, you might not put the Lake St. Clair area on your list of places to see and things to do on any given weekend. And if you haven't been here for a while, perhaps a decade or so, well, things have changed.

The primary target of our marketing messages, therefore, is the potentially new visitor who just doesn't know about everything we have to offer. And our collective offering, tailored then packaged to match his or her particular interests, will be the essence of what we need to communicate.

The goal is to work with each business to determine how their unique offering can be packaged and communicated to a waiting prospect!

Benefits of Participation for Area Businesses

Businesses that participate in the Lake St. Clair Tourism Initiative will receive a multitude of benefits in return. New visitors and old friends will be discovering and rediscovering the Lake and its many assets; and businesses will be linked through a powerful and innovative marketing toolbox. Depending on the participation level, businesses will be prominently featured through a comprehensive web profile, interactive calendar, photo and video galleries and more. Public Relations support, with professionally written articles about your business, are also available.

In addition, we will be connecting users to businesses via the incredible power of social networking to bring more fun, vitality and exposure in unique ways.

Lake St. Clair Tourism Marketing, Website Will be Your 'Eye on the Lake'

The Lake St. Clair Tourism Initiative has created a brand positioning strategy and a marketing plan like no other. The new Lake St. Clair "brand" will be seen and heard in a number of important and unique ways, and in a variety of different media. The website will be posted soon (we will let you know once it's up), and will be one of the most ambitious and useful tools anyone can use to learn more about the experiences they can have on or around this body of water.

Among the more unique ways the brand will be delivered is through social networking. This is expected to take the form of blogs, forums, chat room conversations and more—and may be delivered in an unconventional media mix such as Twitter, Facebook and others.

The idea here is to provide the kind of content-and discussion about that content-that users are looking for and likely respond to.

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Research, experience and insight on media usage patterns clearly point to trends away from traditional media such as print and more toward media information sources users can access "on demand." The Lake St. Clair Tourism Initiative plans to put its marketing on the cutting edge of these trends, making its website—and the many dialogues that will inevitably flow around it—accessible to those who are most interested.

One example may be fishing reports, which can be developed and disseminated daily if needed and which can include "live action" reports via video, cell phone, Twitter, etc.—all posted to the website.

When it comes to marketing and managing information, the Lake St. Clair Tourism Initiative staff plans to be "on the scene" all the time!

Events Calendar Offers Everything in One Place

The Lake St. Clair Tourism Initiative will offer visitors to its website a robust interactive calendar where they'll find everything there is to see and do.

Our Events Calendar will feature a growing number of major festivals, which have become magnets for visitors from all over southeast Michigan. It will also include events like the Selfridge Air Show and the multitude of Fourth of July Fireworks displays on and around the lake.

In addition, the Events Calendar will guide visitors to regions and districts, and the businesses that serve those areas, in a way that is personalized and relevant to their interests. They will be able to search through the Calendar's various features and functions to find everything from the Boat Town Festival of Lights Parade to your favorite local Blues band gig to when the Musky season begins and ends.

Users will be able to easily find what they're looking for, plus they'll be able to find you and your business as a participant in the program.

User Content Featured to Showcase, Share Experiences

The hallmark of the Lake St. Clair Tourism Initiative is content. Through our website, publications and other communications, we will provide the depth and breadth of content prospects will find most relevant.

Much of this relates to how you begin your "relationship" with the Lake, and that process usually begins with a public access point. This can be a beach, but it can just as easily be a drive along the shoreline or lunch in one of our numerous restaurants.

Included under the content umbrella will be Things to Do, Nature and the Outdoors, Fishing, Events, Fun Things, Family Activities, even Waterfront Real Estate.

Finding and sharing content will be fun and intuitive using the website, blogs, forums, and other ways to share photos and stories that come with another incredible Lake St. Clair experience.

Got an Idea for an Event or Activity at the Marina This Summer?

If you have an idea for an event or activity for the up-coming season, be sure to let us know now that launch is only 37 days away!

And if you'd like to get involved in the planning and coordination of an event, let us know about that as well.

The Belle Maer Activities Committee was formed last season to help plan and coordinate some cool events for family and friends and we want to continue the momentum we started. We want to continue many of the events we started in 2009, and create even more this season, but need your help to pull it off. So if you have the time and the interest, please contact Brad Simmons, newsletter editor and member of the BMH Activities Committee, at simmons.company@sbcglobal.net

Thank you!

Lake St. Clair Tourism Initiative Launches With an Exclusive: A Circle Tour with the Top 50 Destinations

As part of its launch at the Boat Show, the Lake St. Clair Tourism Initiative created an official Lake St. Clair Circle Tour map, complete with 50-plus top destinations and attractions. Though most boaters at Belle Maer are familiar with the lake, many are always looking for new ideas on where to go and what to see—and the new map offers up many suggestions all the way around the lake, even on the Ontario side. The maps are available free of charge in the Marina Office.

The Tour

For many, Lake St. Clair is a secret waiting to be discovered. The Circle the Lake Tour Map was created to connect the millions of residents in the region to the greatest experiences on and along the shores of this fresh water gem. This map provides a guided tour of the major destinations extending from Ambassador Bridge in the south to the Blue Water Bridge in the North. It identifies the "Top 50" destinations waiting to be explored and provides visitors with the ideal route for navigating the roads, ferries and international border crossings that are all part of the adventure.

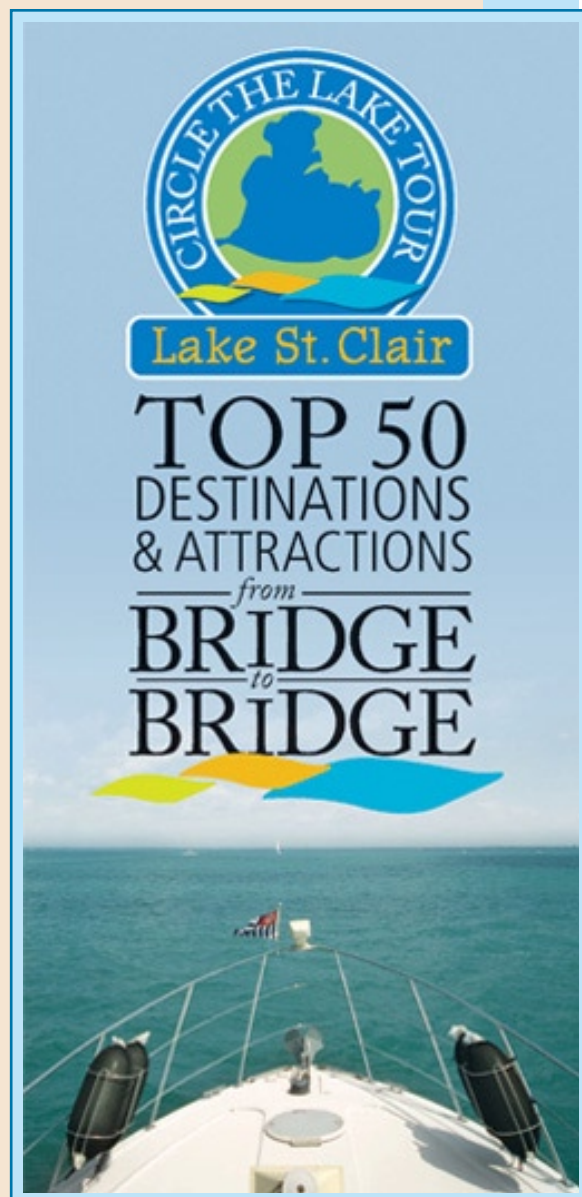
While not as large as its cousins to the north (Lake Huron) or south (Lake Erie), Lake St. Clair still covers an area of 440 square miles and has more than 160 miles of shoreline - that is a lot of area to explore! The Circle the Lake Tour Map is your guide to navigating it all. And while it is possible to drive all of Lake St. Clair Tour in one day it would be a very rushed experience. The real goal is to provide a tool to explore all the lake has to offer - one or two destinations at a time. In this way, users can see it all but plan their trips based on geography, interest and time.

The Destinations

On any given day, Lake St. Clair is home to such pleasures as reeling in a trophy musky, kicking back at the beach, biking along the lake shore, taking a refreshing dip, savoring an awesome sunset over a romantic dinner—and so much more. On this lake of many riches, you can discover your own personal passions and pleasures. The "Top 50" destinations identified in this map represent the best experiences offered across numerous categories of interest. Some destinations will allow users to get out on the water while others allow visitors to enjoy the views and sounds from shore. Either way, each of the top destinations has something unique to offer and provides visitors a different glimpse of this amazing fresh water community.

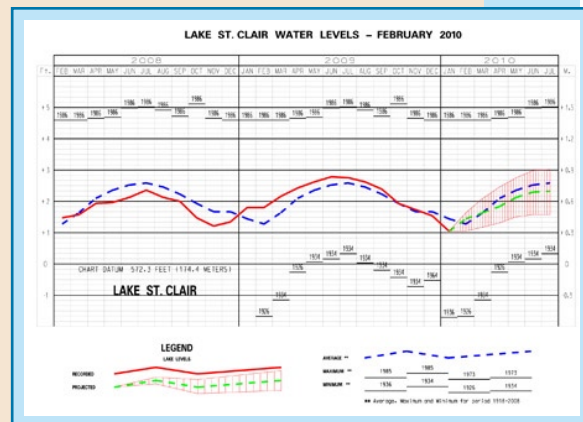
In addition to the "Top 50" destinations there are many other varied experiences that can be found while exploring the tour. Whether you're a family member, a fisherman, an adventure junky or just looking for something new to do in the region, this guide will get you there.

This map is designed to be used in conjunction with a new website the Lake St. Clair Tourism Initiative will be launching in Spring 2010 - www.TourLakeSt.Clair.com. At launch, the site will only include additional information on the "Top 50" destinations but will be expanded over time to include much more. Features will include: business listings, suggestions for half day excursions, an interactive lake guide, photo albums, user submitted favorites and the ability for visitors to search activities that appeal to them. We also want to make sure we incorporate those things in the website that are important to you. To that end, at the launch of the site we will be collecting ideas from visitors about what we can add to the site to make it better.



Water Level Forecasts Close to Last Year

According to the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, water levels in Lake St. Clair will be about the same as last year by the time boating season arrives. The latest six month projections indicate that Lake St. Clair will be near average in February and March, then 3 inches below average through July. The chart below shows some historical data and forecasts; the shaded area in the far right (dotted line) shows the Lake St. Clair data:



Boaters' Association of Michigan (BAM) Under Way

If you love boating and enjoy your hobby in the great waters of Michigan, you'll want to join the Boaters Association of Michigan (BAM). BAM and its website unites all boating enthusiasts whether you fish Michigan's lakes, rivers and streams, cruise on the big waters of our Great Lakes, or ski across the glassy waters of quiet inland lakes. We all share the love of water, the desire to protect it and the ability to enjoy boating in the great state of Michigan.

This website offers boating enthusiasts a comprehensive resource to all things boating. BAM is dedicated to protecting boating and preserving water quality and access by uniting the voice of Michigan's boating enthusiasts.

For more information or to join BAM, please visit at BoatMichigan.org



Belle Maer Sponsorship Program Continues This Season

A reminder that Belle Maer is continuing to offer a sponsorship credit to current customers for each new boater they sponsor who leases a Belle Maer Harbor rental well for the 2010 season. (This offer excludes the lease of condominium wells which are not owned by Belle Maer Harbor.) The BMH sponsoring boater will receive a \$250 credit, and the new boater will receive a first season \$500 credit. For the first time, this program will be offered to new boaters renting racks in the in and out storage building.

We are sure that most of you have friends who keep their boats in other marinas. Why not make a phone call and suggest they check out Belle Maer before they make their 2010 slip deposit? After you have called your friend and asked them to consider Belle Maer Harbor, simply call our office at (586) 465-4534 or email me at ecfoster@bellemaer.com and register their name as your contact. We would like to send them a brochure and informational packet if you would kindly supply us with a mailing address and phone number.

With high gas prices and fewer boating trips, Belle Maer Harbor offers resort-style amenities (including the new Cable TV and WiFi service), giving you an even better value for your boating dollar. Please take this opportunity to recruit your boating friends to join you at the best marina on Lake St. Clair while reducing your own 2010 marina dockage costs!

Latest Pleasure Boat Reporting Requirements

To avoid hassles during the boating season, we would advise Belle Maer boaters and their friends to learn more about what they need to do, then apply for the proper credentials during the winter. That way, in the spring, you'll be ready to travel anywhere!

As we have reported, operators of small pleasure vessels, arriving in the United States from Canada and other foreign ports are required to report their arrival to Customs and Border Patrol immediately. CBP has designated specific reporting locations within the Field Offices that are staffed during boating season for pleasure boats to report their arrival and be inspected by CBP.

Exceptions to Face-to-Face reporting to CBP

There are exceptions to the face-to-face inspection at a designated reporting location. Most notably, are the use of NEXUS, Canadian Border Boat Landing Permit (I-68). Participation in any of the programs does not preclude the requirement for physical report upon request by U.S. Customs and Border Protection.

Any small pleasure vessel leaving a United States port into international or foreign waters, without a call at a foreign port, does not satisfy the foreign departure requirement. Therefore, certain fishing vessels, cruises to nowhere, or any vessel that leaves from a United States port and returns without calling a foreign port or place, has not departed the United States.

Canadian Border Boat Landing Permit (I-68)

Canadian Border Boat Landing Permit (I-68) applicants for admission into the United States by small pleasure boats are inspected and issued an I-68 permit for the entire boating season. The I-68 permit allows boaters to enter the United States from Canada for recreational purposes with only the need to report to CBP by telephoning in their arrival.

NEXUS

NEXUS Marine program is a joint Canada-U.S. initiative that offers facilitated customs and immigration clearance for recreational low-risk boaters entering either country through registration into the program. NEXUS is valid for 5 years and satisfies the boat operator's legal requirement to report to a port-of-entry for face-to-face inspection in accordance (see related article, below).

User Fees/Transponder Decals

If you operate a private vessel that is 30 feet or more in length, and you are traveling to and from Canada, you need to have a Transponder Decal for your boat. The transponder, also known as a User Fee, is a sticker that contains an electronic chip that transmits information about a vehicle and border crossing User Fee payment status. The cost of the U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) User Fee Decal is \$27.50 (U.S.) per calendar year.

The User Fee year begins January 1st and ends December 31st. Therefore, all User Fees expire December 31st and are eligible for renewal.

To learn more, visit the CBP website at http://www.cbp.gov/xp/cgov/travel/pleasure_boats/user_fee/user_fee_decals.xml or call (317) 298-1245.

Winter Office Hours

Monday – Friday
8:30am – 5:00pm

Saturday
10:00am – 4:00pm

Our front gate will be locked throughout the non-daylight hours of the winter. Tenants will be allowed access to the yard from 8:30 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. Contractors will only be permitted access during the hours the marina office is open (or with advance authorization from the marina office).

NEXUS Trusted Traveler Program: The Easiest, Fastest Way to Travel

The NEXUS alternative inspection program has been completely harmonized and integrated into a single program. NEXUS members now have crossing privileges at air, land, and marine ports of entry. Under the Western Hemisphere Travel Initiative, the NEXUS card has been approved as an alternative to the passport for air, land, and sea travel into the United States for US and Canadian citizens.

The NEXUS program allows pre-screened travelers expedited processing by United States and Canadian officials at dedicated processing lanes at designated northern border ports of entry, at NEXUS kiosks at Canadian Preclearance airports, and at marine reporting locations. Approved applicants are issued a photo-identification, proximity Radio Frequency Identification (RFID) card. Participants use the three modes of passage where they will either present their NEXUS card or have their iris scanned and make a declaration.

U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) and Canada Border Services Agency (CBSA) are cooperating in this venture to simplify passage for pre-approved travelers.

Individuals approved to participate in NEXUS receive an identification card that allows them to:

Receive expedited passage at NEXUS-dedicated lanes, airport kiosks, and by calling a marine telephone reporting center to report their arrival into the United States and Canada; and

Cross the border with a minimum of customs and immigration questioning

NEXUS applicants only need to submit one application and one fee. Applicants may apply on-line via the CBP Global On-Line Enrollment System (GOES) Web site. Qualified applicants are required to travel to a NEXUS Enrollment Center for an interview. If they are approved for the program at that time, a photo identification card will be mailed to them in 7-10 business days. NEXUS allows United States and Canadian border agencies to concentrate their efforts on potentially higher-risk travelers and goods, which helps to ensure the security and integrity of our borders.

Applications can be submitted using the CBP on-line application system, Global On-Line Enrollment System (GOES), or to one of the Canadian Processing Centers (CPC), along with photocopies of their supporting documentation and the US \$50 or CN \$50 application-processing fee.

For NEXUS information or to apply on line, visit <https://goes-app.cbp.dhs.gov/> or call 1-866-NEXUS 26 (1-866-639-8726).



Boating Safety Courses Starting Now at Many U.S. Power Squadron Units

If you are interested in an exciting, in-depth boating safety course, check out America's Boating Course offered through the U.S. Power Squadrons.

Many boat insurance companies will offer discounts on boating insurance to boaters who successfully complete America's Boating Course. And, this beginner boating class will give you the knowledge needed to obtain a boat license or safety certification in many states.

America's Boating Course can be taken in any of three ways: on the Internet, by studying a 244-page course manual, or with a CD. No matter which option you choose, participants will receive a complete package that includes the course manual, the boating course CD, and a PIN number to access to the web course.

The boat and water safety course topics include:

Introduction to Boating: types of power boats; sailboats; outboards; paddle boats; houseboats; different uses of boats; various power boating engines; jet drives; family boating basics.

Boating Law: boat registration; boating regulation; hull identification number; required boat safety equipment; operating safely and reporting accidents; protecting the marine environment; Federal boat law; state boating laws; personal watercraft requirements.

Boat Safety Equipment: personal flotation devices; fire extinguishers; sound-producing devices; visual-distress signals; dock lines and rope; first aid kit; anchors and anchor lines; other boating safety equipment.

Safe Boating: bow riding; alcohol and drug abuse; entering, loading, and trimming a boat; fueling portable and permanent tanks; steering with a tiller and a wheel; docking, undocking and mooring; knots; filing a float plan; checking equipment, fuel, weather and tides; using charts; choosing and using an anchor; safe PWC handling; general water safety.

Navigation: the U.S. Aids to Navigation system; types of buoys and beacons; navigation rules (sometimes referred to as right-of-way rules); avoiding collisions; sound signals; PWC "tunnel vision."

Boating Problems: hypothermia; boating accidents and rescues; man overboard recovery; capsizing; running aground; river hazards; strainers: emergency radio calls; engine problems; equipment failures; carbon monoxide (CO); other boating and PWC problems.

Trailing, Storing and Protecting Your Boat: types of trailers; trailer brakes, lights, hitches, tires, and bearings; loading, balancing, and towing (and backing) a trailer; boat launching and retrieving; boat storage and theft protection; launching, retrieving and storing a PWC.

Hunting and Fishing, Water-skiing and River Boating: carrying hunting gear and weapons in a boat; fishing from a boat; water-skiing safety guidelines and hand signals; water-skiing with a PWC; navigating rivers, and other boating tips.

To learn more or to enroll, follow this link:

http://www.americasboatingcourse.com/ABC_WebSite/intro.htm

For more information on locations offering this and other boating courses, log on to the District 9 U.S.P.S. education link: <http://www.usps.org/cgi-bin/fclass.cgi?9>

