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CONTACT: Brent Sharpe, Township Supervisor
Diane Akright, Township Clerk
(231) 634-7275, bbiclerk@tds.net

BOIS BLANC TWP. WORKING TO RESTORE FERRY ACCESS FOLLOWING HARBOR DAMAGE

BOIS BLANC ISLAND—Township officials on Bois Blanc Island have been working with the Township’s engineering firm to assess and repair major damage that was caused to the Island’s main ferry ramp last December. Officials are alerting Island travelers that the damage may delay or disrupt routine ferry service during the early part of the season, which typically begins in April and May.

The damage was caused when a heavy boom truck was being unloaded from the ferry on December 13, collapsing a main support pillar for the dock ramp. The incident occurred shortly after engineers inspected the pier and adjacent structures, and deemed them to be in satisfactory condition.

It also comes at a time when record high water levels are already posing a threat to Bois Blanc Island’s harbor access, roads, shorelines, and homes.

Engineers flew to the Island almost immediately after the failure to evaluate the dock damage. They are currently finishing their report and plans for repairs to the harbor facilities. Once those plans are available, whatever can be done, will be done, and rapidly. The Township will also be studying new weight limits for the ferry ramps and marina, to ensure such breakdowns won’t happen in the future.

Unfortunately, contractors capable of completing such repairs are already overbooked due to high water emergencies occurring throughout Michigan, and are having to work through long customer waiting lists. Township officials are doing all they can to ensure the Bois Blanc harbor repair gets the highest possible priority.

Bois Blanc Township has reached out to Plaunt Transportation, which has operated the main ferry service to the Island for many years, to determine whether a smaller ramp adjacent to the main ramp may be used temporarily for access by smaller supply trucks, fuel trucks, and other essential equipment. Collaboration and cooperation between the transportation company, the BBI Harbor Commission and the Township will be necessary to maintain this infrastructure, and to assure that islanders, vacationers, and tourists will have access.

The Township and Harbor Commission are hopeful that the main ferry ramp can be repaired and ready for use by May 1, with construction beginning in early April. However, given unavoidable delays caused by record high water levels and contractor backlogs, it may be necessary to use the smaller ramp for some time longer.

Bois Blanc Island is located in the Straits of Mackinac, just east of Mackinac Island. It has several hundred homes and cottages, several businesses, and extensive natural resources. Access to the Island is typically by ferry out of Cheboygan during the spring, summer, fall, and by charter flight service during the winter. For more information, contact Bois Blanc Township at (231) 634-7275, or visit www.boisblanctownship.org.