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ABSTRACT

Maine's islands have always had a mystical allure. Crossing open water takes the average person to another place, another era, bringing out the explorer in all of us. The islands of Islesboro, Vinalhaven, and North Haven are powerful places with strong identities. Each is unique, yet each is very much a part of Penobscot Bay. All three places still maintain active year-round populations that swell with the great influx of summer visitors.

The focus of this study is an inventory of the significant scenic areas on each of these islands, as seen from public access points and the major viewsheds. The methodology used to identify scenic areas on land is derived from A Proposed Method for Coastal Scenic Landscape Assessment, by Holly Dominie and Mary Droege, 1987, and refined in the Scenic Inventory, Mainland Sites of Penobscot Bay, by Terry DeWan and Don Naetzker, 1990. The method is a "professional" approach to scenic assessment, which uses trained observers to evaluate the landscape in terms of eight scenic indicators.

The methodology involves both an office phase and field investigation. During the desktop evaluation all the land masses on each of the islands were evaluated to identify potential scenic areas, based upon a review of landform, open land, shoreline configuration, special scenic features, and views to water. After the completion of the field visits, which looked at landscape character, vegetation, and landscape composition, a list of 51 scenic areas was developed which are described in the report. The areas of highest scenic character are clearly of state-wide significance.

Nineteen sites are recommended to be evaluated for inclusion on the Critical Areas Register. An additional 28 places, of moderate to high scenic quality, warrant further field investigation and verification before being considered for Critical Area status. Four additional sites of generally local significance are also described. The relatively small number of sites at the lower end is both a reflection of the initial filtering process and the uniformly high level of scenic quality throughout the islands.

In addition to the detailed evaluation of scenic areas seen from the land, the study assesses views of the land as seen from the water. The methodology, which is still being refined, is based upon Evaluation of Island Resources, Hancock County and Portion of Knox County, Maine by Bruce Jacobson and Holly Dominie, 1988, and The Second Report of The Evaluation of Island Resources, by Annette Naegel. Both of these documents were prepared for Acadia National Park as part of the management plan for the islands within the viewshed of the park. As a result of this portion of the evaluation, over 70 areas with significant scenic quality have been identified for further evaluation.

In addition to describing and mapping each site, the report includes management recommendations where appropriate to guide local and state officials with specific actions to preserve or improve the visual environment.