



Jim Mitchell Photo

Grindle Point Light Station and the Elephant.

The Grindle Point Light Station is our island's welcoming beacon. It is in need of restoration and rescue. The Light Station includes five buildings and one elephant. The buildings needing restoration include the current lighthouse from 1874, the former lighthouse from 1851 which is the ell that connects the current lighthouse to the keeper's house of 1874, the boat house of 1886 and the oil house of 1906. The "elephant in the room" at Grindle Point is sea level rise and its impacts on the flooding of the light station. We should expect at least 15 inches of sea level rise along the Maine coast by 2050 according to Sea Level Rise.org. The photo above from James Mitchell in 2015/2016 shows the problem.

A report entitled "*Present and Future Vulnerability to Coastal Flooding at Grindle Point and the Narrows*" was presented to our Select Board in 2017 indicating that rising sea levels will affect access to Grindle Point and the Narrows (http://townofislesboro.com/fileadmin/Departments/selectboard/Final_Islesboro_Report_text.pdf). The report states that we have several options to deal with sea level rise: Accommodate (deal with flooding), Protect (build a seawall or natural barriers) or Retreat to higher ground on the likely new islands of Grindle, South Islesboro and North Islesboro, if climate changes continue unabated.

So, should the Town proceed with restoration of the Light Station structures in place, or protect them, or move them before they are flooded in 30 years (or less)? This question needs to be answered as soon as possible so we have time to do the work. Swan's Island recently completed restoration of their Burnt Coat Light Station after 15 years of effort and a cost of nearly \$900,000 (<https://www.burnt-coatharborlight.com/>). And they didn't need to move anything.

The Burnt Coat Lighthouse is the identical twin to Islesboro's Lighthouse. It's the same height, with the same 30 steel steps needed to climb to the identical lantern room. The major difference between our lighthouse and Swan's Islands? Elevation. The Burnt Coat Lighthouse sits on a bluff some 40 feet above mean sea level. The Grindle Point Lighthouse sits at mean sea level.

We have tough decisions to make. With that in mind, we have formed a Grindle Point Light Station Restoration Committee composed of concerned citizens along with the Town's Lighthouse Committee members. The first step in the process is to identify the restoration projects and to obtain bids for restoration and mitigation from sea level rise so we know the minimum we need for restoration only. We are trying to get an idea of the cost of moving the lighthouse. This is challenging because this is a new skill set and there are no experts.

After the committee has this information, we will present it to the Town, so our community can decide if our welcoming beacon is worth the cost of saving it, or if we should focus our funds on more pressing projects like the ferry terminal relocation away from Grindle Point.

Then, we find funds to complete the projects. And finally, we celebrate our restored light station (if we go that direction). In the meantime enjoy the holidays and the committee's decoration of the Light Station.

Submitted by the Grindle Point Light Station Restoration Committee