A new ‘Shipwreck Alley’ video, produced through the U.S. 23 Huron Shores Heritage Route partnership, showcases the allure and opportunities for communities and visitors to northeast Michigan.

Historical research indicates that more than 200 shipwrecks lie in and around Thunder Bay. The sheer number of shipwrecks is impressive. However, it is their excellent state of preservation and what they represent — a century and a half of maritime commerce and travel on the Great Lakes — that elevates them to national and international significance deserving of protection, study and public interpretation. Serving this role are community volunteers of the Thunder Bay Underwater Preserve — one of fourteen state underwater preserves in Michigan — along with the federally designated NOAA Thunder Bay National Marine Sanctuary. Protection of shipwrecks and underwater artifacts is a fundamental goal of the Sanctuary, as is raising awareness, providing education, and enhancing public access to these underwater resources.

The Sanctuary supports an extensive mooring buoy program that identifies shipwrecks for snorkelers and divers — as well as kayakers, boaters, sailors, and fishermen, among others — to experience these incredible resources that lie beneath the waves in Thunder Bay. From one foot in the water to fully submerged, you, too, can explore Lake Huron’s maritime heritage through these historic shipwrecks:

• Start your shipwreck tour at the NOAA Great Lakes Maritime Heritage Center in Alpena, which features an experiential exhibit called “Explore the Shipwreck Century” that features a life-size replica of a Great Lakes Canal Schooner. From here, you can go out on Lake Huron with Alpena Shipwreck Tours to explore shipwrecks aboard the glass-bottomed boat Lady Michigan. Ask about visiting many other local historical societies and sites located along this coastline that offer a wealth of maritime history experiences.

Lake Huron waters are home to many diverse shipwrecks — from wooden schooners to steel-hulled steamers — lying pristinely preserved by the cold, fresh waters of the Great Lakes. These underwater treasures reflect the past while providing stories and experiences for those visiting these historic shipwreck sites, today.

Plan your trip: www.us23heritageroute.org
• Grab a mask, fins, and snorkel from shore to explore several water wrecks in easily accessed shallow waters. The *Portland*, a wooden schooner (wrecked 1877), lies off the shores of the state managed *Besser Natural Area*. Many other wrecks lie in shallow waters of Thunder Bay and are accessible to snorkelers from shore including the *John F. Warner* (wrecked 1890), *Shamrock* (wrecked 1905), and *Haltiner Barge* (sank circa 1929).

• Take a hike or grab a kayak! From the shore, you can visit the wreck *Joseph Fay* (wrecked 1905); part of which lies embedded in the beach at the 40 Mile Point lighthouse north of Rogers City, and many of the shallow water shipwrecks that can be viewed from the surface by kayakers.

• Plunge in scuba divers! Captain Steve Kroll, recently recognized as National Marine Sanctuary Foundation Volunteer of the year, operates *Great Lakes Divers*, a diving business serving the Alpena and Rogers City area. Aboard the Sweetwater Diver, his dive charter offers opportunities to put visitors in the water with some of the these amazing shipwrecks found in deeper waters, such as the *Defiance* (wrecked 1854), *F.T. Barney* (wrecked 1868), or *Cornelia B. Windiate* (wrecked 1975). Other Alpena area dive shops and businesses in the area include *Great Lakes Dive Charters* and *Thunder Bay Scuba*.

• Celebrate Lake Huron's maritime heritage! Events such as the annual 4th of July *Maritime Festival* in Alpena, and the *Rogers City Nautical Festival* (kicking off at the end of July) offer educational programming, shore side and shipboard tours, and opportunities to explore and learn about Great Lakes maritime history and heritage first-hand. These journeys in time offer memorable experiences, but remember to leave these historic artifacts untouched and as found. Protecting these historic shipwrecks is central in promoting sustainable coastal tourism opportunities in this region, and they are protected by the State of Michigan (it's the law). Community volunteers and resource managers also play an important resource stewardship role, working to preserve, interpret and share these amazing historical places, artifacts and experiences.

Learn more about northern Lake Huron shipwrecks and visiting these sanctuaries by visiting the NOAA Thunder Bay National Marine Sanctuary website: thunderbay.noaa.gov

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