

## Snorkel and Paddle Guide

### Thunder Bay National Marine Sanctuary (TBNMS)

TBNMS is jointly managed by NOAA and the state of Michigan. The mission of TBNMS is to preserve nationally significant shipwrecks and regional maritime landscape through resource protection, education, and research. The sanctuary also promotes appreciation and responsible use of Thunder Bay, the Great Lakes, and the oceans. This guide is meant to serve as a resource for the public to enjoy shipwreck viewing opportunities.

The current sanctuary boundary includes 448 square miles off the coast of Alpena County. Some shipwrecks mentioned here are not currently within the boundary, however, the Sanctuary Advisory Council has recommended an expansion of sanctuary boundaries to include waters off Presque Isle and Alcona counties as well, for an expansion to 3,662 square miles. This recommendation has not yet been approved.

### Shipwrecks to Snorkel or Kayak

#### *Schooner Portland* (1863-1877)

**GPS Coordinates:** N45°14.929' W83°24.450'

**Depth:** 8 feet, **Distance from shore:** 250 feet

**Distance from Great Lakes Maritime Heritage Center:** 15 miles

**Description:** The schooner *Portland* is wrecked in the Besser Natural Area. Take US 23 North from Alpena and turn right onto Grand Lake Road, then right on Rayburn Highway to Besser Natural Area. Follow the foot trail to the beach. Walk or paddle northeast along the coast for ¼ mile. The wreck is located 250 feet offshore and is marked by a small mooring buoy.

The *Portland* was a 2-masted schooner built in Clayton, New York in 1863 to carry bulk cargoes. The ship was driven ashore and broken to pieces by a storm in October 1877 while carrying a load of salt. The ship's wreckage includes the bottom of the hull and starboard side, with portions of the port side stern in a nearby lagoon.

#### *Sidewheel Steamer Albany* (1846-1853)

**GPS Coordinates:** N45°19.396' W83°27.508'

**Depth:** 4 feet, **Distance from shore:** 900 feet

**Distance from Great Lakes Maritime Heritage Center:** 18 miles

**Description:** The steamer *Albany* is located in a bay to the south of Presque Isle Harbor. The trailhead behind the Presque Isle Cemetery leads you to the beach on the northwestern edge of the bay after hiking approximately ¾ of a mile. There is a small island in the middle of the bay, and the wreckage lies to the south-southeast of the island approximately 300 yards offshore and 75 yards from the island's southwestern edge. Visibility is usually excellent in the bay.

The sidewheel steamer *Albany* was constructed in Detroit, Michigan in 1846 for the passenger trade. The ship encountered a gale while upbound with passengers on November 25, 1853, and was driven ashore in Albany Bay while attempting to take refuge in Presque Isle Harbor. Following the stranding, the passengers were forced to spend the night on the boat before being rescued by local small craft. The ship was broken to pieces by subsequent storms and salvage efforts and all that remains of the wreck today are large sections of the vessel's lower hull.

#### *Steamer Joseph S. Fay* (1871-1905)

**GPS Coordinates:** N45°29.317' W83° 54.600'

**Depth:** 18 feet, **Distance from shore:** 1,050 feet

**Distance from Great Lakes Maritime Heritage Center:** 45 miles

**Description:** The shipwreck of the *Joseph S. Fay* is located at 40-Mile Point Lighthouse just off US 23 north of Rogers City. Parking is available at the lighthouse and you can start your swim or launch your kayak at the beach to the submerged portion of the wreck, which will be marked by an unofficial float. Half of the starboard side of the *Fay* is located on the beach just north of the lighthouse, as well.

The *Joseph S. Fay* was a 215-foot bulk freighter built in Cleveland, Ohio for the Bradley Transportation Co. The vessel wrecked just in front of the 40-Mile Point Lighthouse on October 19, 1905, in a fierce storm that claimed a dozen ships in the area and smashed the aging ship to pieces after running it aground. Visitors to the site can see parts of the engine, the propeller shaft and some of the boat's final cargo of iron ore. Visibility is usually excellent at this site.

#### *Bark American Union* (1862-1894)

**GPS Coordinates:** N45°21.412' W83° 35.368'

**Depth:** 4-10 feet, **Distance from shore:** 1,000 feet

**Distance from Great Lakes Maritime Heritage Center:** 26.5 miles

**Description:** The *American Union* lies in the bay at Thompson's Harbor State Park. Travel north from Alpena on US 23 to reach the park entrance. To reach the wreck, walk or paddle northwest from the boat launch until you reach the end of the peninsula. Swim or paddle west from the end of the peninsula and you will go over deep water before going over a shallow reef. The main body of wreckage is on the western edge of this reef.

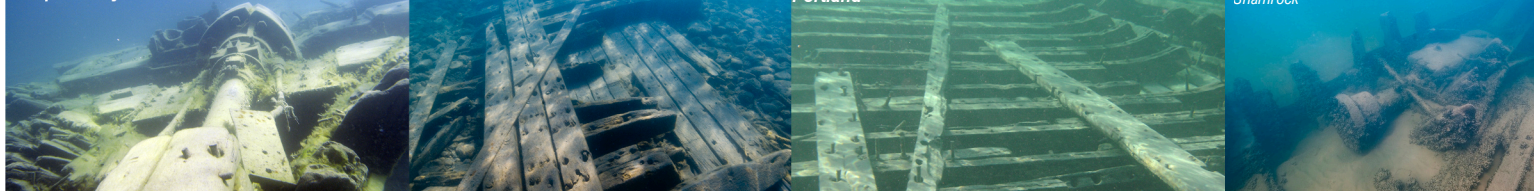
The *American Union* was a 186-foot bark built in Cleveland, Ohio, that carried bulk cargoes on the upper lakes for over 30 years before stranding in a storm on May 6, 1894. Visitors to the site can see the bottom of the ship and the remains of one of the sides. Large iron shrouds that once held the masts lie scattered at the stern of the wreck, and the centerboard trunk lies on its side near the bow.

Joseph S. Fay

American Union

Portland

Shamrock



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## Shipwrecks to Kayak

*Schooner John F. Warner* (1855-1890)

**GPS Coordinates:** N45°03.050' W83°26.128'

**Depth:** 9 feet, **Distance from shore:** 900 feet

**Distance from Great Lakes Maritime Heritage Center:** 1 mile

**Description:** Head to Alpena's Starlight Beach to explore some of the shallow shipwrecks just outside Alpena's Small Boat Harbor. The *Warner* and *Shamrock* are two of four shipwrecks in the area that are buoyed, making them easy to locate. Nearshore shifting sands and murky water may make these wrecks difficult to see at certain times of year, but a paddle along the downtown shoreline is always worth it! You can also launch your small craft in the Thunder Bay River for an extended paddling experience.

The *John F. Warner* spent several years trading between the Great Lakes and European ports like Greenwich and Liverpool, England, and Glasgow, Scotland, carrying lumber and staves overseas and pig iron on the return trips. After 1860, it stayed closer to home, engaged in the booming Great Lakes lumber trade. Anchored off the mouth of the Thunder Bay River, the anchor chain was parted by heavy seas and the ship was driven ashore near the lighthouse. Continuous buffeting by the waves soon broke the vessel in half. The cargo was removed a few days later, and the wreck was abandoned south of the harbor where it lies today.

*Steamer Shamrock* (1875-1905)

**GPS Coordinates:** N45°03.077' W83° 26.052'

**Depth:** 11 feet, **Distance from shore:** 1,000 feet

**Distance from Great Lakes Maritime Heritage Center:** 1 mile

**Description:** This wreck is located south of the harbor just northeast of the *John F. Warner*.

The *Shamrock* was built as a schooner barge and reconstructed as a steam lumber carrier. It was bound from Midland, Ontario, to Toledo with a cargo of lath when it encountered a furious gale on the open lake. The ship sprung a leak and became waterlogged, but the lath cargo kept it afloat until it was beached at Black River, Michigan. The abandoned vessel was later towed to Alpena and sunk. Many interesting structural features can still be seen on the wreck, including a 10-foot diameter propeller, pump valves, and steam equipment.

**For more information on the area's shipwrecks, including GPS locations, histories, and site maps, please visit the interactive shipwreck Google map at our website: [thunderbay.noaa.gov](http://thunderbay.noaa.gov).**

