



# Town Crier 75¢

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## Renovation Is Underway at Island Marina



A cloud of cement dust blows across the Mackinac Island Marina as a worker cuts through a retaining wall and improvement work continues Friday, September 21. The renovation project includes dock replacement, new riprap, infrastructure upgrades, dredging, and landscaping. A barge is transporting old decking and walkways off the Island and will deliver new materials to the site. "The weather has been good for us, and we're working the site pretty much as planned," said Tom Bajko, project manager for Ryba Marine Construction of Cheboygan, which was awarded the contract. The \$5 million renovation at the 76-slip marina is being funded by boater registration fees allocated from the Michigan Waterways Commission. The marina, which is expected to reopen by May 2008, is operated by the Michigan Department of Natural Resources (DNR). A 51-page set of blueprints is available for public viewing at Community Hall on Market Street. "It is an enormous project with many details," said Keith Cheli, the district planner for the DNR from the Gaylord Operation Service Center.

## Passage of H2B Visa Bill Expected by Year's End, Rep. Stupak Says

**By Karen Gould**  
Straits area business owners who employ seasonal workers from other countries will find their path smoothed by pending legislation that exempts returning workers from visa quota limitations. Federal legislation to keep that system in place has been vigorously sought by

be part of the Omnibus Bill, which will be passed by legislators at the end of the year.

"I'm telling those who use the H2B visa program to apply, as before," Congressman Stupak told the *Mackinac Island Town Crier*, Thursday, September 27.

Many motels and restaurants in northern Michigan employ foreign workers to meet the surge in tourist traffic in the summers.

Grand Hotel General Manager John Hulett said the hotel tries to hire more Americans each year by attending job fairs, visiting colleges, placing the hotel's job application on-line, recruiting at culinary institutes, and advertising in magazines.

"I don't think we can do anything more," he said. "We're doing the very best we can in that arena."

The hotel also hires European students, although they work under three-month to four-month visas. The students help fill in some staffing gaps, he said, but they don't meet all of the hotel's need.

"We rely heavily on the H2B program," he said.

The nationwide 66,000 visa allotment has been reached in the last few years, even with the returning worker exemption in place. The allotment is divided in half, allowing 33,000 workers for winter businesses and 33,000

workers for summer businesses. Under the law, a business is not allowed to apply for worker visas sooner than 120 days before it opens for the season.

Before the temporary clause exempting returning workers for the nationwide cap of 66,000 was enacted in 2005, the allotment of visas was used up by the

time Straits area businesses were allowed to apply.

A hearing in the House of

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**"I'm telling those who use the H2B visa program to apply, as before."**

*— Rep. Bart Stupak*

Until two years ago, workers from Jamaica, Mexico, and other countries who wanted to return to seasonal jobs here found their work visas snapped up by workers going to resorts in other states, before local employers were ready to seek their return. A special clause, added to federal legislation in 2005, exempted returning workers from the nationwide visa allotment.

That clause expired this week.

For now, all foreign seasonal worker visa requests, whether for returning workers or new workers, will be considered as part of the maximum number of 66,000 available work visas.

New legislation, however, sponsored by Congressman Stupak, again would exempt returning workers from the nationwide pool, and likely will

## Movie Filmed on Island in September

**By Karen Gould**  
The cast and crew of "Mr. Art Critic" have become comfortable filming on Mackinac Island. They say it feels like home, and they want to come back and shoot another movie in the future.

Since arriving September 17 to make the feature-length independent film that stars Emmy-nominated Bronson Pinchot, the film crew has smoothly moved from one Island location to another.

"I'm not as pretty as Jane Seymour, but I bet I'm just as smitten with Mackinac Island," said Mr. Pinchot, who often takes on comedic roles, and now claims his character in the film, M.J. Clayton, will be the Island's new contender for a fan following.

"In any case, it's time the Island had a new movie to add to its roster," he said.

Ms. Seymour, who portrayed 19th turn-of-the-century actress Elise McKenna in the drama

"Somewhere In Time," filmed on the Island in 1979, is scheduled to return to Grand Hotel just three weeks after shooting wraps up on this movie. Like "Somewhere in Time," "Mr. Art Critic" also will be filmed, in part, at the hotel.

Although only on Mackinac Island for a short time, Mr. Pinchot jokingly said now he represents the Island in the 21st century, and he already has grown to love it here. As he was

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Interested Island visitors joined the crew of "Mr. Art Critic" to watch filming Friday, September 21, along Main Street. The movie is being filmed on the Island by Brauer Productions, Inc. of Traverse City. Rich Brauer, owner of the company and director of photography, operates the camera.