

Amanda Smith Rasnick—Destination Development Director

Director of Destination Development at Shores and Islands, Ohio, Amanda Smith Rasnick discusses several important aspects of the upcoming 2024 solar eclipse. Rasnick explains the role of Shores and Islands, Ohio in marketing Northwest Ohio for eclipse tourism, while promoting local businesses. Rasnick continues with an explanation of planned events, where to locate this information, and how many travelers to expect. The interview concludes with discussions of what eclipse cruises are, and if they will be available on Lake Erie.

Interviewee: Amanda Smith Rasnick

Interviewers: Ernest Okine (EO), Trenton Nelson (TN), Amilcar Challu (AC)

Date: October 20, 2023

Location: Zoom in Kuhlin Center, Bowling Green State University

[START OF INTERVIEW]

[Note: Some tangential discussion from the audio file has been omitted]

EO: [00:01:18] Hello, Amanda! My name is Ernest Okine, I'm a second-year master student of BGSU, and I'm here with...

TN: [00:01:25] I'm Trenton. I am a senior undergrad here at BGSU.

EO: [00:01:31] Okay, I am wondering, can you please introduce yourself? Tell us about your name, your role, and if you've ever seen any eclipses before.

AR: [00:01:39] My name's Amanda Smith Rasnick. I am the Destination Development Director for Shores and Islands Ohio. Shores and Islands, Ohio is a destination, but it is also the name of our organization. I've been in this—I've been with the organization for about 14 years. Actually, I lied 15 years and in in another capacity before. But most recently I've been in Destination Development. So this is right up our alley to take care of our residents and the visitors that are gonna be coming in for the eclipse. I'll get into a little bit more about exactly who we are here shortly, but I have never seen a total eclipse, just fortunate to seen some partials that have come across Ohio in the past, because I'm full Ohio resident my whole life.

TN: [00:02:41] So you said that you could get into your organization a bit more. Could you elaborate more on that?

AR: [00:02:49] Yeah, yeah, for sure. So the Shores and Islands Ohio is a convention, and Visitors bureau, or some people might have also heard of it as a destination marketing, organization or management organization. We are comprised of 2 counties; we have Erie County, and then Ottawa County. So within Erie County you have here on Vermillion Kelly's Islands and Sandusky. Yeah, some other smaller cities in there and then over in Ottawa County that would include Putin Bay, Middle Bass Island, Port Clinton, Genoa, Oak Harbor, Catawba. So that is the area in which we promote, we promote the destination for visitors to come in and

enjoy everything that we have to offer. But we also promote the area to live and work here as well. We work a lot in conjunction with the economic development organizations, and especially with workforce development and such. But so the organization was historically separate to Erie County visitors viewer on Ottawa County Visitors bureau, but because the general consumer doesn't see county lines, and many people who might come to Cedar Point will also go over to Putin Bay. It just made sense for the Bureau's to come together and create a partnership which was previously called Lake Erie, Shores and Islands. But we've recently changed your name to Shores and Islands, Ohio. Give us a little bit more naming on the map, including the State. And so that's a little bit about Shores and Islands. We are funded through lodging tax, so if anybody stays in a hotel or a B&B vacation rental, there is a small portion of tax that is on that bill, and that does get filtered through each county and then gets back to us.

EO: [00:4:54] That sounds interesting. The next question is, we understand, you will have events planned during the eclipse day. And so, can you tell us about your plans?

AR: [00:05:05] Yeah, absolutely. I am going to share my screen, so I don't know if it'll work or if this will be, pardon me. Okay, I'm going to share it, but I will also talk through it as we go, but I wanna make sure you can. Whoever can see can see but our main effort here at Shores and Islands, Ohio is to create an awareness and basically be the main gathering collector of information. So we are working with all of our communities, main streets, chambers, different organizations. We also do have individual businesses, lodging partners, local [inaudible], emergency management associations that are coming together in order to make sure that everybody is basically aware of what's going on. It's quite, it boggles my mind that you, you might talk to one person walking down the street, and they have no idea, or a hotelier who might have no idea. And and it it, it's going to affect a lot within the community, which I believe that we're gonna chat about here in a little bit. But I would welcome everybody to visit shoresandislandseclipse.com. That's our website. And within that website you will be able to see some quick links of all of the events that are taking place. So we have encouraged all of our local communities to input all of their events because we are encouraging them to create it. So, for example, Sandusky will be putting on concert series, speaking series, there's gonna have a whole bunch of activities and other events. But all of that information will actually land here on our page as well as lodging information, locations and specific times, where you're actually going to see the eclipse in the area and the duration, which is pretty impressive that we'll have about over. In Lorrain, it's 3 minutes and 52 seconds and and goes on down to Sandusky at 3 minutes and 45 seconds. And lots of interactive maps on here as well as safety information little bit about where you're gonna stay. We are also working with a lot of our media partners. We wanna encourage the national channels to come here bloggers to come here. We want people to actually set up shop here, at the Shores and Islands to broadcast around the world about what is going on. And then, of course, we have a lot other additional information. Safety like, I cannot reiterate the importance of safety, but also the different phenomenon that takes place, and other and other questions. So once again, that's shoresandislandseclipse.com. So while we're not specifically putting on any events, we are encouraging our partners to do so, and we will help promote that.

TN: [00:08:14] So part of what you talked about was lodging. How many tourists do you expect to show up? And do you anticipate any challenges in handling the number of tourists.

Amanda Smith Rasnick: [00:08:26] Well, that we have started to talk about, at least, you know, 2 years prior to the the eclipse. So every month we do have meetings with our specific partners that when I say partners, those are hoteliers and attractions and restaurants and etc. But yes, specifically with the lodging and doing some research with other destinations which is extremely important to do. knowing that we will see an increase of about 2. I've heard upwards of 4 times as many people as as population will be coming to the area. So of course, when you add that much strain on the infrastructure, on the demand for gas food. That'd be traffic jams like you name it, we've heard that we will experience it. There's a lot of a lot of chances for for mitigating some of those, some of those main issues, but other ones you'll have to deal. We'll have to deal with at that time, right? So it's encouraging people to have bathrooms open because we know that the number of port-a-potties aren't gonna be able to be rented, to having cash on hand to knowing that you might not have cell service at that time, because the amount of influx of demand people on their phones, people trying to call out, I mean, even when we have some some festivals down here. We've hosted Iron Man before over the summer, and and you couldn't even call out so, we're expecting it. We're trying to work through that with a lot of the other government agencies and some of the other you know, through the Ema, they're doing a lot of work on that. But yeah, we know that there's gonna be some things, but we just hope that everything runs as smoothly as it can be. But who knows how people will act and what will go on when the world go when our area goes dark, you know, and it's complete for 3 minutes in April, who knows?

EO: [00:10:33] Thank you for your time, Amanda. I don't know if Dr. Challu has something to say for you, but we are done, and we thank you for your time, and we hope to visit to your site and also expect whatever going to happen on the eclipse day.

AC: [00:10:52] Amanda, a couple of curiosity—we had yesterday an interview where the interviewer talked about eclipse cruises... So I was wondering if in Lake Erie, there's going to be something like that, or people that own boats, or I mean tourism over the lake to chase the eclipse.

AR: [00:11:24] Yeah. I know that the jet express, the ferry boat line, and I believe also the Miller Ferry. They're going to be doing special eclipse cruises which I would expect they're gonna sell out pretty quickly. Just due to the low capacity on each boat. And I'm sure I know the division of watercraft has is is trying to monitor and get out some voter safety for that day but I know specifically with John Express Miller Ferry. There there will be, there will be special eclipse cruises which a neat way to experience it. Right? That would be great. Actually, lake er relocation is, is ideal, because cloud coverage is expected to be better there than in other parts, eclipse classes on hand that we have partnered with. so those will be distributed as well.

[END OF INTERVIEW]