



2015-2016 Accomplishments

The Friends of Sleeping Bear Dunes (Friends) is an all-volunteer non-profit organization dedicated to protecting resources and heightening visitor experiences in partnership with Sleeping Bear Dunes National Lakeshore (SLBE). The Friends has 475 household members, defined as volunteers or donors.

We had a positive impact on the Sleeping Bear Dunes National Lakeshore in FY 2016. Our members provided over 7,000 volunteer hours to projects managed by the Friends in FY 2016, and many of our members volunteer for a wide variety of other projects managed by Park staff or by other non-profit organizations, like Preserve Historic Sleeping Bear.

The Friends of Sleeping Bear Dunes made direct grants to SLBE of \$14,197.95 and in-kind grants and activities valued at \$52,187.82 through a long list of projects this fiscal year for a total contribution of \$66,385.77. Some of the accomplishments are described below.

Sleeping Bear Heritage Trail (SBHT)

A new section of the trail was built in 2016 and will be opened in October 2016. This will bring the trail length to 17 miles. Trail users can ride about 22 miles from Empire to Bohemian Road (CR-669) including the on-road trail route through Glen Arbor. About 75,000 people used the SBHT between October 1, 2015 and September 30, 2016. Six automated trail counters installed at various points along the trail provide accurate trail use data, which we can use to prioritize volunteer projects and set maintenance schedules. The busiest section of the trail is between Glen Arbor and The Dune Climb, which accounts for about 75% of the trail use.

The Friends of Sleeping Bear Dunes operates and maintains the Sleeping Bear Heritage Trail. We have 87 Trail Ambassadors who walk, ride, or ski the trail to assist trail users, answer questions, and report any trail maintenance issues. Trail Ambassadors reported 1,658 volunteer hours in FY 2016. The Trail Crew volunteers are Trail Ambassadors who also do maintenance on the trail by installing signs, mowing and trimming grass along trail edges, blowing leaves and tree debris off the trail, and grooming for cross-country skiing among many other tasks. The 25 Trail Crew volunteers reported 988 hours in FY 2016.

Our Trail Crew installed directional and interpretive signs on the new section of trail this summer. The Trail Crew used a blower to keep the leaves and tree debris off the trail each week between March and December. They also groomed the trail for cross-country skiing between Glen Arbor and Empire from December through March. We plan to groom a portion of the trail between Crystal View trailhead and Port Oneida Road in 2017.

This year we began working with Park Management to implement a program to install benches, bike racks, and picnic tables at various points along the trail. Donors will be able to donate toward these trail furniture items. One bench has been installed, and three others have been built and will be installed in 2017. Seven



bike racks have been built by blacksmith volunteers at the Glen Haven Blacksmith Shop and will be placed in the spring of 2017. We will finalize our picnic bench design and will install a few of these in 2017.

Some erosion issues on the crushed stone portion of the trail with slopes of more than 3% have caused loose stone and gullies to form, which need to be repaired. The Park's Roads and Trails Crew provided assistance in repairing some of the wash-outs and digging water diversion ditches. Our Trail Crew volunteers maintain these erosion control ditches and monitor trail conditions after each heavy rain. We are working with Park management to evaluate alternative stabilization techniques to minimize erosion issues.

Our volunteers held several work bees to remove invasive weeds from the landscaping around the Donor Plaza at the main trailhead. This work helped to establish native dune grass and bearberry plants, which we hope will fill in and establish a native plant landscape.

The Friends of Sleeping Bear Dunes spent \$19,017 on trail operations and maintenance in FY 2016.

Interactive Map (IMAP)

Trail users expect to have trail maps available electronically on their computer, tablet, or smart phone. The Friends contracted with a GIS mapping firm to create a web-based interactive map that allows trail users to view the Sleeping Bear Heritage Trail map at many levels of detail and specify the trail features they are interested in. By drilling down in the map, trail users can get much more detail than is available on a paper map. Several thousand users per week used the IMAP.

Here is the link: <http://friendsofsleepingbear.org/sbht-i-map/>

In 2016, we offered local businesses the opportunity to be placed on the map along with information about their products, services, hours of operation, and links to their business web site. Minor modifications were required, costing \$590.

Storm Recovery Grant

The destructive windstorm of August 2, 2015 caused a significant amount of damage due to down trees. The SBHT Trail Crew worked with SLBE Roads and Trails crew for several weeks to clear the edges of the SBHT trail for grooming and to clear portions of the Alligator Hill hiking trail.

Forest Haven Road which leads to the to the Glen Arbor section of the Sleeping Bear Heritage Trail was closed due to hundreds of down trees. We received a \$5,000 grant from the Utopia Foundation through the Re-Arbor Glen Arbor fundraiser to open the road to the trail. This grant used to contract the Park's Roads and Trails crew to clear Forest Haven Road.



Ticket to Ride School Snowshoe Program

Elementary school students and their chaperones came to Sleeping Bear Dunes National Lakeshore last winter to learn how to snowshoe and to explore trees and wildlife in wintertime. This program included a school visit by Park Rangers before the field trip and classroom follow-up activities. The Friends of Sleeping Bear Dunes paid transportation costs for the school groups and purchased new snowshoes and repair parts. The total cost was \$6,465.20. We anticipate supporting a similar program in 2017.

Visitor Booklets

The Friends worked with park staff to develop inexpensive guidebooks to provide visitors with more information about SLBE. There are now 13 booklets with approximately 90,000 booklets distributed since beginning in 2006. The books are available at the Visitor Center, Platte River Campground, D. H. Day Campground, Cannery Boat Museum, and Maritime Museum. The Friends spent \$6,620.23 to publish the booklets this year.

Pierce Stocking Scenic Drive Interpretive Panel Design

Michigan artist, Oliver Uberti has been commissioned by Sleeping Bear Dunes National Lakeshore to create interpretive art for new informational panels at stops along the Pierce Stocking Scenic Drive. The current panels were developed in the 1980s and need to be updated and replaced. We provided a grant of \$5,350 and will make an additional \$5,350 grant when the final art is delivered. We expect the new panels to be installed by spring of 2017.

Historic Agricultural Landscape Maintenance – Collaboration with Preserve Historic Sleeping Bear

A grant of \$4,000 was given to Preserve Historic Sleeping Bear to help purchase a new field mower used to mow historic farm fields in the Port Oneida Rural Historic District. Field clearing and maintenance is led by Preserve Historic Sleeping Bear Dunes. The Friends of Sleeping Bear Dunes assist by coordinating volunteers in the mowing activity. About 900 acres were mowed by 7 volunteers, who provided over 300 volunteer hours.

Trail and Beach Accessibility

The Friends are very supportive of projects that improve accessibility of Park facilities including trails and beaches. We purchased a new beach wheelchair, which is located at the Cannery in Glen Haven. This wheelchair is available to any visitors who need assistance to explore the beach in Glen Haven. We also purchased a standard wheelchair for use by visitors at the Visitor Center in Empire. We have received an additional grant to complete our Trails and Beaches Accessibility Assessment in 2017.



BARK Ranger Program

The goal of the BARK Ranger program is to encourage visitors with pets to understand and follow the pet regulations and help protect the endangered Piping Plover shore bird. Programs included education about pet safety. The Friends funded a summer intern to lead the program and provided materials for use in the program. The total amount of the grant was \$3,000.

Educational Intern

The Friends of Sleeping Bear Dunes supported a college intern this summer to work with students ages 13-17 in a Wilderness Ambassador Youth program to give them a week-long backpacking experience in wilderness. Our intern also helped implement a Distance Learning system that will be used to share educational programs with school groups around the world from the Park's studio via internet connection. The cost of supporting this summer intern was \$2,500.

Find Your Park Video

A new 2-minute video showcasing the beauty and diversity of Sleeping Bear Dunes National Lakeshore was produced by [MyNorthMedia](#) in Traverse City, publisher of Traverse Magazine. This project was managed by the Park's Interpretive division and funded by Friends of Sleeping Bear Dunes. This video will be used in a number of ways including with school groups, on social media, at fairs and other public settings. [Watch the video](#) and share it with your friends! The grant for this project was \$2,400.

Automated External Defibrillators – Three AEDs and associated equipment were purchased for the SLBE Law Enforcement division in 2015. This was made possible through a grant from the Consumers Energy Foundation. The Friends purchased one more AED in 2016 to fulfill the Park's request. The cost for the additional AED was \$1,704.85.

Piping Plover Monitoring Equipment

Park staff and volunteers monitor the endangered Piping Plover shorebirds on the mainland beaches and on North Manitou Island. The Plover Crew on North Manitou Island has a campsite near the Plover nesting area, which they use as base camp. A grant of \$1,650 was given to SLBE to purchase new tents, sleeping bags, camping equipment for the base camp.

Storm Recovery Safety Equipment

After the destructive windstorm of August 2, 2015, Park crews did a lot of work on the Sleeping Bear Heritage Trail and throughout the park removing down trees. Some of their safety equipment was worn out or damaged and had to be replaced. A grant of \$1,350 was given to SLBE to replace safety equipment.



Find Your Park Concert Series

As part of the National Park Centennial celebration this summer, the Friends of Sleeping Bear Dunes paid travel expenses for several musicians who performed at Sleeping Bear Dunes National Lakeshore. This included the National Park Centennial Band from New Orleans. The cost of the concert series was \$1,300.

BioBlitz

Sleeping Bear Dunes National Lakeshore was host to a BioBlitz coordinated by the Cerullian Center. The event was held on a Friday and Saturday in September. On Friday, students from two local schools worked with scientists to collect biodiversity data in the Park and enter it into the BioBlitz database. On Saturday, the public was invited to participate with the scientists. We provided a \$1,000 grant to support the event.

Kettles Trail in the Bow Lakes Area - The Bow Lakes area of SLBE contains 975 acres, of which, about 540 acres are currently owned by the NPS, mostly in the southern portion of the area, south of Lanham Road. The northern portion, most of which is still privately owned, contains the Bow Lakes and ponds. The southern portion contains several good examples of glacial kettles, steep valleys, and bogs. The proposed "Kettles Trail" is being planned for the southern portion and will be an earthen hiking trail, which will take visitors into this pristine natural area to observe glacial kettles, swales, and bogs. Accessibility for disabled visitors will be considered in the trail design, and a portion of the trail will be hardened and made wide enough to make it universally accessible. Some work was done with the SLBE Roads and Trails crew to define the trail alignment and with Natural Resources to survey possible environmental impacts to plants and animals of the proposed trail alignment. No funds were spent on this project in 2015-2016, but now that the Environmental Assessment has been completed, work will begin in 2017 to build the trail and provide way-finding and interpretive signs.

Echo Valley Mountain Bike Trail – Early stage discussions have begun with interested members of the community, SLBE management, and the International Mountain Bike Association (IMBA) to develop concepts for a mountain bike trail in the area of the park south of Glen Lake known as the Echo Valley or Burnham Road area. We hosted the regional director of IMBA to tour the area being considered for the proposed Mt. Bike Trail. No funds have been spent at this point, but some volunteer time has been used to prepare for an Environmental Assessment beginning in 2017.

Adopt-A-Trail - Thirty volunteers clean up trailhead parking lots, pick up branches and obstacles on the trail, and report to SLBE's Roads & Trails crew any large trees down or erosion problems. Over 100 miles of trails are monitored. Volunteers walk their trail once a month on their own schedule. Volunteers logged 1,541 hours.



Adopt-A-Beach - 116 volunteers contributed over 1,848 hours picking up trash and reporting safety and maintenance issues along 35 miles of Lake Michigan shoreline on the mainland. The volunteers record the trash they pick up and report it to the Alliance for the Great Lakes. Volunteers conduct at a minimum, one Beach Patrol at least once per month on the individual's schedule.

Adopt-A-River - Volunteers kayak the Crystal and Platte Rivers and pick up trash along the way. River patrol is done on the individual's schedule, patrolling at least once per month. We have been coordinating with the Traverse Area Paddling Club to clean the Platte River three times per year.

Adopt-A-Highway - MDOT has assigned the Friends a section of M-109 from Glen Haven to 0.25 miles south of the Dune Climb to "Adopt." We are required to clean the roadsides of trash in this section of highway three times per year.