



Friends of Sleeping Bear Dunes, Inc.

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2012-2013 Accomplishments

Trail Development and Maintenance

Sleeping Bear Heritage Trail (SBHT) – This non-motorized multi-use trail will eventually be 27 miles long and will generally follow M-22 and M-109 from the northern border of the Lakeshore (CR-651) to the Benzie/ Leelanau county line (Manning Rd. a couple of miles south of Empire). The trail will be built in the state and county right-of-ways and in Sleeping Bear Dunes National Lakeshore.

The first segment of the SBHT, which runs from the Dune Climb through Glen Haven and DH Day campground to Glen Arbor, opened June 20, 2012. The Friends of Sleeping Bear Dunes initiated the Trail Ambassador program to provide knowledgeable volunteers that can answer visitor questions and provide regular reporting on the condition of the trail. There are 61 volunteers who ride, walk, or ski the SBHT on a regular basis as Trail Ambassadors. Eighteen of these volunteers are members of the Trail Crew, that does heavy maintenance and grooms the trail for cross-country skiing in the winter.

A Trail Use survey done each year in August indicated about 400 people use the trail per day during weekends and 350/day during the week through the summer. This estimate is somewhat lower than the counts from 2012 and is dependent upon weather conditions. We estimate about 100,000 people enjoyed the trail since it opened. Traffic and directional signs as well as informational signs were installed along the trail. There are six planting islands at intersections on the first segment of the SBHT. These islands were planted with native grasses and wildflowers and will be used to educate trail users about native, non-native, and invasive plants in our region. We worked with a group of students from TC-West Middle School, a group of Boy Scouts, and a group of students from Central Michigan University to prepare the soil and plant these areas throughout 2013.

The Friends of Sleeping Bear Dunes works in partnership with the Sleeping Bear Heritage Trail Campaign Cabinet led by Traverse Area Recreation and Transportation (TART) to raise funds for construction of new segments of the SBHT. Funds have been raised to build the second segment of the trail from the Dune Climb to the northern boundary of the village of Empire. This segment is scheduled to be open by July 4, 2014. This group provided \$33,510 in 2012 to purchase equipment for trail operations including a John Deere Gator and ski grooming equipment.

The Friends spent **\$39,164** on SBHT operations and maintenance from October 1, 2012 – September 30, 2013 thanks in large part to the funds raised by the SBHT Campaign Cabinet.

Kettles Trail in the Bow Lakes Area – The Bow Lakes Area was added to the Sleeping Bear Dunes National Lakeshore boundary in the early 1980s because the area contains unique geological formations and conditions that create unique habitats not found in other parts of the Park. The geological characteristics of the area include a variety of glacial landforms and features such as kettles, moraines, drainage channels, erratics, and bogs, all the result of melting glaciers about 10,000 years ago. Some of the kettles (deep depressions surrounded by ridges) have trapped water and become ponds, lakes, or bogs creating unique habitats for a variety of plants.

The Bow Lakes Area contains 975 acres, of which, about 540 acres are currently owned by the National Lakeshore. Most of the Lakeshore-owned land is in the southern portion of the Area – south of Lanham Road. The northern portion of the Area, most of which is still privately owned, contains the Bow Lakes and ponds. The southern portion of the Area contains several good examples of glacial kettles, steep valleys, and bog. The proposed Kettles Trail is being planned for this southern part of the area.

The proposed "Kettles Trail" 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 design of this trail. Information about the trail conditions will allow visitors to determine the parts of the trail that are suitable for them. The Friends have worked with Sleeping Bear Dunes National Lakeshore staff to solicit public comment and conduct an Environmental Assessment, which we hope will be completed by early 2014. The Friends have raised the funds to pay for the Environmental Assessment. We hope to complete the trail, interpretive signs, and a parking area in 2014. Fundraising and grant-writing to pay for trail construction is underway. **Donation: \$5,379**

Bay to Bay Trail – This trail will be a water trail and hiking trail for multi-day kayaking and backpacking trips near the shore of Lake Michigan within Sleeping Bear Dunes National Lakeshore. It will run from Platte Bay to Good Harbor Bay and will require a few new backcountry campgrounds accessible to backpackers and kayakers. The hiking trail part of the project will be an earthen single track trail that will use existing trails or old 2-track roads as much as possible. The water trail part of the Bay to Bay Trail will be part of the Lake Michigan Water Trail being created along the entire Lake Michigan shoreline.

We are working with the NPS Roads, Trails, and Conservation Assistance Program to plan for this trail. We have also been working with a team of students from the School of Natural Resources at the University of Michigan to help document kayak launch sites, possible hiking trail options, and possible backcountry campground options. We are also developing concepts for signs to mark trail routes, kayak launch sites, and campgrounds. The Friends paid for student housing this summer (\$1,735), but the payment wasn't made until October, 2013 so it doesn't show up in this fiscal year. The Friends is in the process of raising funds to pay for the Environmental Assessment for this project.

Adopt-A-Trail – Thirty five volunteers clean up around the trailhead parking lots, pick up branches and obstacles on the trail, and report to Park 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.

Trail Accessibility Evaluation – A group of volunteers is assessing hiking trails for handicap accessibility. The Friends sponsored a Trail Accessibility Workshop put on by Cindy Burkhour, Access Recreation Group, this summer to train volunteers how to assess trails for universal accessibility and what to consider while developing new trails. **Donation: \$1,000**

Education & Interpretive Projects

Visitor Booklets – We've worked with Park Staff to develop inexpensive guide books to provide visitors with more information about Sleeping Bear Dunes National Lakeshore. There are now 13 booklets. About 40,000 booklets have been distributed since beginning in 2006. The books are available at the Visitor Center, Platte River Campground, DH Day Campground, Cannery, and Maritime Museum. Booklets are available for a donation of \$2 each. They are also available at the Empire Museum and Cottage Book Shop. The Friends spent **\$7,066** to publish the booklets this year. A new booklet about Piping Plovers is being prepared for distribution in 2014. We also collected \$13,934 in donations this year.

Trail Trekker Challenge – Two students from Glen Lake Schools worked with the Interpretive Division of Sleeping Bear Dunes National Lakeshore to develop a new hiking program. The challenge is to hike all 100 miles of mainland trails in one season. They developed a brochure/record book to describe the program and keep track of trails hiked. The Friends printed additional copies of the brochure in 2013. **Donation: \$239**

Aloha Platform Viewing Scope – A new viewing deck was built around the Lake Michigan fishing tug **Aloha** near the Cannery Boat Museum in Glen Haven. Standing on the deck offers a good view inside the boat and a beautiful view of Sleeping Bear Bay. In response to a request by Park Management, the Friends purchased a dual viewing scope for visitors to watch passing ships, look at the lighthouses (South Manitou Island and North Manitou Island Shoal), and look for birds on the beach or Lake Michigan. The dual viewing scope has two scopes: one set at a height for adults, and one set lower for children and people in wheelchairs. The scope was installed on the deck in the spring of 2013. **Donation: \$2,248**

Platte River Elementary 6th Grade Canoe Trip on the Platte River – Every year for the past 7 years, the 6th grade class has taken a trip to Sleeping Bear Dunes National Lakeshore in the fall to learn about river ecology, see the salmon swimming up river to spawn, pick up trash along the river, and just have fun! This year, one of their sponsors was not able to support the project, so when the Friends Board of Directors heard about it, we authorized **\$600** to help pay for transportation of the class to the river.

Natural Resource Protection

Adopt-A-Beach – 73 volunteers pick up trash and report safety and maintenance issues along 35 miles of Lake Michigan shoreline on the mainland. A few of these volunteers also walk the beaches on South Manitou Island in Sleeping Bear Dunes National Lakeshore. The volunteers record the trash they pick up and report it to our partner, the Alliance for the Great Lakes. Volunteers do at least one Beach Patrol at least once per month on the individual's schedule. Many of our volunteers are on the beach each week.

Adopt-A-River – This is the third year for this program to have volunteers kayak the Crystal and Platte rivers and pick up trash along the way. River Patrol is done on the individual's schedule, and they patrol at least once per month. We also worked with the Traverse Area Paddling Club to do a couple of clean-ups on the Platte River.

Historic & Cultural Projects

Port Oneida Cultural Fair – The 12th annual celebration of the agricultural heritage of northern Michigan is coordinated in conjunction with the National Park Service and several local groups including the Friends and Preserve Historic Sleeping Bear. The fair had over 100 demonstrators and artists and served about 4,500 visitors during the two day event. The Friends acted as fiduciary for the Fair Committee, collecting donations and paying bills. The total expended to cover Fair expenses was **\$11,306**.

Historic Landscape Maintenance – Many of the historic farm fields in the Park, especially in the Port Oneida Rural Historic District, are being overrun by trees, degrading the historic agricultural landscapes. The Friends have several volunteers mowing the fields. The National Park Service management has completed a Landscape Management Plan for Port Oneida Rural Historic District this year. This plan provides guidance on which fields and the mowing boundaries. Over 800 acres of historic fields are in the mowing plan. In 2013, we mowed the fields along Port Oneida Road until the tractor broke down and was sent to the shop to repair the clutch. With the increased acreage, we are applying for grants and raising funds to purchase a larger tractor and mower for the large open fields.

Barn Workshop – Each year the Park's Historic Architect, Kim Mann organizes a Barn Restoration Workshop to rebuild a historic structure and teach area craftsmen and volunteers rehabilitation techniques. This year, the group worked on the Thoreson Farm granary and corncrib. In addition, a concrete pad was built for a historic structure near the Cannery in Glen Haven. The Friends provided materials for the workshop and concrete pad. **Donation: \$401**

Thoreson Farm Renovation – Several members of the Friends of Sleeping Bear Dunes and others have worked for years to complete renovation of the Thoreson Farmhouse in the Port Oneida Rural Historic District of Sleeping Bear Dunes National Lakeshore. The Friends collected donations from these dedicated volunteers for the renovations. The volunteers have nearly completed this project. **Donation: \$1,569**

Oral History – Tom Van Zoeren has been collecting interviews with people who lived in the Port Oneida Rural Historic District and around the Glen Lake area. These interviews are being transcribed and indexed to make them more accessible for researchers and Park Interpretive Rangers. **Donation: \$523**

Old Engine Restoration – Several old engines were brought off South Manitou Island in 2011. One of our volunteers is working to restore a running model from the salvaged parts and some replacement parts. We have also purchased a working engine, which was on display at the Port Oneida Fair along with an exhibit showing how the engines worked and what they were used for on the Islands and on farms in Port Oneida. **Donation: \$2,218**

South Manitou Island Lead Paint Abatement – In order to paint the Fog Whistle Building and the schoolhouse on SMI, the existing lead-based paint had to be removed. The Friends paid a certified contractor (SEEDS) to remove the old paint to prepare these buildings for a group of volunteers to repaint them. **Donation: \$3,000**

South Manitou Island Mower – A group of volunteers who have been mowing the grass in the village area of SMI requested the Friends to purchase a new riding lawn mower. The Friends collected donations from this group of dedicated volunteers and added \$500 from our general fund to purchase the mower this spring. **Donation: \$2,319**

Adopt-A-Garden – The gardens at the Lawr farm on M-22 were maintained throughout the summer for visitors to enjoy as they drive by or stop in for a picnic.

Adopt-An-Orchard – Several old orchards exist in historic areas of the park. For several years, the National Park Service has conducted pruning workshops to teach members of the public how to care for old apple and pear trees. This year some of the workshop attendees offered to “adopt” an orchard to keep the trees pruned and grass mowed to help keep these orchards alive. We have just two orchards adopted, and we are looking for more volunteers.