



Friends of Sleeping Bear Dunes, Inc.

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2013-2014 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 4.25 miles from the Dune Climb through Glen Haven and DH Day campground to Glen Arbor, opened June 20, 2012. This section of trail was groomed for cross-country skiing over 30 times in 2013-2014. The cold winter and frequent snows, provided excellent ski conditions. The Friends conducted a Winter Open House at the DH Day Log Cabin for skiers and snowshoers in February.

The second section of trail was built in the spring of 2014. The Ribbon-Cutting ceremony was held July 2, 2014. This section included some projects that were not included in the MDOT construction contract, so the Friends took on the responsibility of project manager for these construction projects. They include the spur trail to the Pierce Stocking Scenic Drive parking lot and the Donor Recognition Plaza located at the main Trailhead on the north end of the Dune Climb parking lot. **Cost: PS Drive Spur = \$50,412.40 and Donor Recognition Plaza = \$114,478.93. These projects were funded through private fundraising for the SBHT led by the Campaign Cabinet and TART.** Because these projects are not completed, a small amount of additional spending will roll over into 2014-2015.

The Friends of Sleeping Bear Dunes managed 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 84 volunteers who ride, walk, or ski the SBHT on a regular basis as **Trail Ambassadors. They provided 1,660 volunteer hours** in 2013-2014. Of these volunteers, 28 are also members of the Trail Crew, which does heavy maintenance and grooms the trail for cross-country skiing in the winter. In 2013-2014, the **Trail Crew provided over 900 volunteer hours.**

A Trail Use survey done each year in August indicated an increase in trail use of about 25% over 2012. We estimate about 60,000 people used the trail this year, which amounts to about 160,000 people who have enjoyed the trail since it opened. The Friends have been working with TART to identify reliable automated trail counters, which can be installed at various places along the trail to provide more accurate use counts. These will be installed in October before ski season.

Friends volunteers installed directional and interpretive signs along the new section of trail between the Dune Climb and the village of Empire as soon as the section of trail was completed. **Cost: \$16,749.17**

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 next segment of the trail from the Glen Arbor to Port Oneida Road. This segment is scheduled to be built in the spring of 2015. Funds have also been raised to build the segment of trail from Port Oneida Road to Bohemian Road (CR-669), which is scheduled to be built in 2016.

The Friends spent \$6,045.65 on SBHT operations and maintenance. These funds were provided through donations from trail users and members of the Friends.

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 bogs. 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 (E/A), which we hope will be completed soon. **The Friends have spent \$3,193.07 in 2013-2014** to pay for the E/A. Building the trail will begin as soon as the E/A is completed and will be reported next year.

Bay to Bay Trail – This trail is proposed to 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 is expected to run from Platte Bay to Good Harbor Bay and would require a few new backcountry campgrounds accessible to backpackers and kayakers. The hiking trail part of the project is expected to 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 would be part of the Lake Michigan Water Trail being created along the entire Lake Michigan shoreline.

We worked with the NPS Roads, Trails, and Conservation Assistance Program to create trail concepts and collect data for this trail project. We also worked 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. They also developed concepts for signs to mark trail routes, kayak launch sites, and campgrounds. The Friends paid for materials and travel for the students final project presentation at Sleeping Bear Dunes National Lakeshore. **Cost: \$1,312.94. The Friends also paid \$2,000 in consulting fees for the Environmental Assessment.** The E/A will continue into 2014-2015 and additional costs will be paid next year.

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. **Volunteer hours provided to the Park through this program = 653.**

Trail Accessibility Evaluation – The Friends sponsored a Trail Accessibility training for employees of Sleeping Bear Dunes National Lakeshore and sponsored a 2-day workshop conducted by Cindy Burkhour, Access Recreation Group. The purpose of the staff training was to raise awareness of the issue and provide a way for park staff to communicate accessibility needs to management. The workshop was to train volunteers and park staff on how to assess trails for universal accessibility and what to consider while developing new trails. **Cost: \$3,500.**

Sunset Shores Beach Access Stairs – The Friends received a grant from the National Parks Conservation Association to build stairs from the Sunset Shores road end down to the Lake Michigan beach. **This project involved 15 volunteers providing 250 volunteer hours and material costs of \$1,882.25.**

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 60,000 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 \$3 each or 2 for \$5. They are also available at the Empire Museum and Cottage Book Shop. **The Friends spent \$4,259.43** to publish the booklets this year. A new booklet about Piping Plovers is being prepared for distribution in 2014.

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 brochures are available where our booklets are displayed. The Friends print additional copies of the brochure as needed. This year, we had sufficient stock that we did not have to print more copies.

DH Day Campground Information Boards – Friends supported the purchase of weather-proof information boards for each of the comfort stations at DH Day campground. These will be installed before the 2015 camping season. **Grant to NPS = \$500.**

Digital Signage for Visitor Center and Campground Offices – The Interpretive Division of Sleeping Bear Dunes National Lakeshore requested a grant to purchase digital signs for high visitor use areas. These signs will display important information for visitors and can be easily changed as the information changes. **Grant to NPS = \$1,983.80**

Natural Resource Protection

Adopt-A-Beach – 90 volunteers pick up trash and report 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 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. **Over 1,000 volunteer hours were logged by these volunteers in 2014.**

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. **Volunteers logged 126 hours cleaning the rivers this year.**

Purchase GPS Units – The GPS units owned by the Natural Resources Division of Sleeping Bear Dunes National Lakeshore were experiencing technical problems due to their age. They were difficult to use and costly to repair. **Friends gave a grant of \$2,500 toward purchase of several new GPS units.**

Adopt-A-Highway – M-109 – Michigan Department of Transportation (MDOT) has assigned the Friends of Sleeping Bear Dunes 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 3 times per year. The first cleaning event was in September.

Interns

Park Fire Suppression Intern – All park buildings were evaluated for appropriate fire suppression protection. The stipend and travel was covered by the NPS Structural Fire Program Office, but housing was not provided. **The Friends gave a grant of \$560 to cover summer housing.**

Campground Recycling Program Evaluation Intern – The concept was for each campground to have multiple recycling stations, where redeemable bottles and cans could be deposited by campers and volunteers could collect, separate, and redeem the deposits. An intern was hired to develop a process and evaluate feasibility this summer. **The Friends provided a grant of \$1,510.05 to pay for stipend, travel, and housing for the intern.**

Historic & Cultural Projects

*Many of the historic and cultural projects the Friends have done in the past were transferred to **Preserve Historic Sleeping Bear**. Those projects include: The Port Oneida Fair, Historic Agricultural Landscape Management – field mowing, Barn Workshop, Oral History, Adopt-An-Orchard, Adopt-A-Garden. Because the transfer occurred during the year, the Friends did spend some funds on these projects before the transfer.*

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, we spent \$302.25 to purchase materials before the transfer.**

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, and we expect this project to be completed in 2014-2015, so it was not transferred to Preserve Historic Sleeping Bear. **Friends purchased materials costing \$449.50.**

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. This project was transferred to Preserve Historic Sleeping Bear, but **Friends paid transcription fees of \$453.50 before the transfer.**

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. **Friends purchased materials for the interpretive display costing \$275.**

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 in the spring of 2013. The official transfer of the mower to the park occurred in March, 2014, so we are reporting it here. **Cost = \$2,319.00**