



9922 W. Front Street, P.O.Box 545 • Empire, MI 49630 • [friendsofsleepingbear.org](http://friendsofsleepingbear.org)

## *Friends of Sleeping Bear Dunes 2015 Annual Newsletter*

*December 2015*

### **Perspective**

From the Chair

Each year presents its own challenges, but the storm on August 2, 2015 threw an already busy year into turmoil.

Thousands of trees were blown down in the Park and surrounding community, and the Sleeping Bear Heritage Trail was especially hard hit. The outpouring of community support was amazing.

The storm redirected our priorities. As a result, we were not able to make much progress on new trails, but we expect to pick this up in 2016.

**The Friends of Sleeping Bear Dunes** made direct grants to Sleeping Bear National Lakeshore (the Lakeshore) of \$11,682.50 and in-kind grants valued at \$55,764.65 through a long list of projects this year. Some of the accomplishments are listed in this newsletter.

**The Friends** is an all-volunteer organization, and we work hard to keep our overhead low.

Donations designated for a specific project go 100% to the project. Overhead comes out of general donations. As you read about our work, I hope you will find a project or two that you will want to support – either with your time or your donations.



Kerry Kelly

## *The Storm of 2015*

The August 2 storm brought down hundreds of trees blocking the Sleeping Bear Heritage Trail from Empire to Glen Arbor. The worst damage was between the Dune Climb and Glen Arbor.

For about two weeks after the storm, most of our resources were focused on getting the Heritage Trail open again.

In addition, we dispatched our Adopt-A-Trail volunteers to report storm damage on our rustic hiking trails. Most hiking trails were opened quickly, but Alligator Hill hiking trail was extensively damaged.

**The Friends** reached out to the community and coordinated the efforts of 138 volunteers working a total of 1,052 hours in six days to clear the Sleeping Bear Heritage Trail and reopen it. Many of the volunteers had never volunteered with us before, and some came from as far away as Ohio. In addition to volunteer effort, the **Edmund F. and Virginia B. Ball Foundation** gave us \$10,000 for storm recovery and **Cherry Republic** gave us \$5,000 to open Forest Haven Road and access to the Alligator Hill parking lot. The publishers of Storm Struck, a book describing the storm and its effects are donating \$1 to **The Friends** for storm recovery for each book sold.

Our volunteer tree-clearing work was done in coordination with the NPS Tree Crew who handled the hazardous or large trees that were too dangerous for our volunteer crew. Since reopening the trail we have spent over 230 hours clearing brush and limbs further back from the trail to provide more room for our ski grooming equipment and improve the trail aesthetics.

In addition to tree damage, some of our signs and trail counters were damaged and several areas of severe erosion occurred especially on the new crushed stone section of the trail in the Port Oneida Rural Historic District.



### ***Donate Today!***

I hope you will find in this newsletter at least one project that you want to support. Most of the funding for our projects come from individuals like you, who have a passion to make Sleeping Bear Dunes National Lakeshore an even better place to experience nature, history, and recreate.

**Donate online at** [friendsofsleepingbear.org](http://friendsofsleepingbear.org)

*Protecting resources and heightening visitor experiences in partnership with Sleeping Bear Dunes National Lakeshore  
The Friends of Sleeping Bear Dunes is a 501(c)(3) Non-Profit Volunteer Organization*

## *Sleeping Bear Heritage Trail*

Another section of the Heritage Trail was opened in 2015. Now you can ride your bike from Empire all the way to Port Oneida Road, a distance of about 17.5 miles!

The next section of trail will extend the trail another 3.6 miles to Bohemian Road (CR 669) and will be open in June, 2016. Construction has already begun.

Each section of trail has its own character. The Empire to Dune Climb section includes rolling hills through deciduous forest – some are pretty challenging, especially the hill we call “The Bear” near Greenan Road.

From the Dune Climb to Glen Arbor is generally flat and connects the Dune Climb, the historic village of Glen Haven, DH Day Campground, and the village of Glen Arbor. The newest section starts on the North end of Glen Arbor near the kayak launch and heads over a new boardwalk and past The Homestead Resort.

The trail then follows the lower Bay View Trail through forest and along the edge of historic farms to Port Oneida Road. This section of trail runs behind the Charles Olson Farm – home of **Preserve Historic Sleeping Bear** and ends at the Kelderhouse farm and cemetery.



The trail surface changes from asphalt to crushed stone when the trail enters the Port Oneida Rural Historic District. It has been a learning experience for our trail crew to learn how to maintain the steep grades of the trail in this sec-

tion and repair erosion problems caused by heavy rains.

Our volunteer Trail Crew has been blowing leaves and debris from the trail each week. We are now gearing up for winter ski grooming. Once again this year, we will be grooming for classic cross-country tracks and skate skiing from Glen Arbor to Empire.

The trail north of Glen Arbor will not be groomed, but skiers can use the trail for backcountry skiing and connect up to the more challenging loops on the upper Bay View Trail.



Tree roots grow under the trail and cause the asphalt to crack in wooded areas. Some cracking was observed in the Glen Arbor to M-109 section this year, so we contracted a company to use a trenching machine to cut tree roots about 2-3 feet from the trail all the way from Glen Arbor to Empire. After the storm, we noted that this probably saved our asphalt in this area because when trees near the trail tipped over, their roots did not damage the trail surface.

The gravel shoulders on some areas of the trail have settled, leaving a 2-3” drop-off from the asphalt to the gravel. This presents a safety hazard for bikers or walkers who might accidentally go over that interface. This issue was corrected in June.

Trail Ambassadors ride or walk the

trail with bright orange vests and are available to provide help and directions to trail users. We have about 120 Ambassadors who recorded over 2,000 hours on the trail.



This year we installed several automated trail counters to give us a better idea of the number of people using the trail. This data helps us make operational decisions and establishes use patterns that we use when applying for grants. As you might guess, the trail is most heavily used in the summer, from June through August, but nice spring and fall days saw a lot of people on the trail as well. The trail was used every day of the year! We estimate about 60,000 people used the trail this past year.

The next section of the trail will follow M-22 past the Lawr farm and behind the North Unity School before crossing Narada Lake on a boardwalk. This section will end at Bohemian Road (CR 669) near M-22. Bike riders may enjoy a short ride to the Lake Michigan beach at the end of CR 669.

The effort to raise funds to complete the trail to CR 651 in the North and Manning Road to the South is ongoing. This endeavor is being led by **TART** and **Carol Quaderer**. Please donate to building or maintenance of the Heritage Trail by going to our website, [friendsofsleepingbear.org](http://friendsofsleepingbear.org).

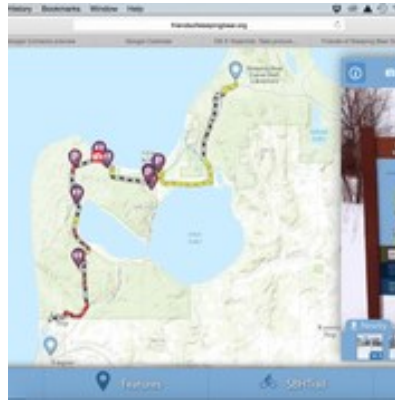


## *Sleeping Bear Heritage Trail Interactive Map*

Today's trail users expect to have trail maps available electronically on their computer, tablet, or smart phone. **The Friends** contracted with a GIS mapping firm, **A Better Map**, 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. The map address is [SBHTMap.org](http://SBHTMap.org).

By drilling down in the map, trail users can get much more detail than is available on a paper map.

Now, when you are planning your trip, you can click on the interactive map and decide which section of the trail you want to ride or walk, find out how difficult that section of trail is, find a parking area and bathrooms, and even find a place for lunch! Several local businesses are supporting this effort and are located on the interactive map.



Over a thousand users per week used the IMAP this summer. We will be adding new features this winter and the map will be even better for next summer.

**The Friends** also built and installed an interactive kiosk for the Heritage Trail at the Park Visitor Center.

It took about 1,000 volunteer hours to develop this map.

## *Improving Accessibility*

**Friends of Sleeping Bear Dunes** is very supportive of projects that improve accessibility of Park facilities including trails and beaches.

While we realize that some Park trails and beach areas by their very nature will not be universally accessible, we are committed to finding ways to make it easier for elderly, families with young children, and visitors with some disabilities to enjoy as much of this beautiful Park as possible.

**The Friends** contributed a grant of \$6,251 to the Park for a National Park Foundation matching fund grant. The grant monies pay for the assessment of several hiking trails and Lake Michigan beaches. The assessment is being con-

ducted by Cindy Burkhour, **Access Recreation Group**.

This study began in September and continued through November, 2015.

**The Friends** is providing volunteers to assist in the study and will provide web site and interactive map capabilities to make the information available to the public.

We begin working on projects identified in the assessment in 2016.



## *Port Oneida Historic Field Mowing*



Field mowing in the Port Oneida historic farm district is a cooperative effort between the **Friends of Sleeping Bear Dunes** and **Preserve Historic Sleeping Bear**.

Mowing maintains the historic agricultural landscapes in the district by

preventing trees from growing in the farm fields and con-

trolling invasive spotted knapweed.

**Preserve Historic Sleeping Bear** purchased a new mower (16-foot wide) and **Cherry Republic** supplied a tractor. We expect a new smaller mower (10-foot wide) will be needed in 2016.

The smaller mower enables **The Friends** to mow around the edge of the woods and fencerows. It can also be used to mow around buildings and in orchards.

**The Friends** continue to train and coordinate volunteer efforts.

## Our Adopt-A-Programs

### Adopt-A-Beach

Our beaches were very clean this summer thanks to 125 volunteers who contributed over 1,450 hours picking up trash and reporting safety and maintenance issues along 35 miles of Lake Michigan shoreline on the mainland.

Higher water levels again this summer meant smaller beaches, so volunteers often had to walk up in the dune grass to monitor their beaches.

Fortunately, we had only one time when we had a significant trash wash-up from the lake. This usually occurs after a heavy rain in municipalities where storm sewers overflow into Lake Michigan.



Our volunteers record the trash they pick up and report it to the Alliance for the Great Lakes. At a minimum, volunteers conduct one Beach Patrol at least once per month on the individual's own schedule. Many volunteers are on the beach each week.

### Adopt-A-Trail

Thirty-five volunteers provided 1150 hours cleaning up trailhead parking lots, picking up branches and obstacles on the trail, and reporting to the Lakeshore'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. After the windstorm on August 2, volunteers were dispatched to walk the trails and report damage.

### Adopt-A-River

This is the fourth year for this program. Volunteers kayak the Crystal and Platte Rivers and pick up trash along the way. River patrol is done on the individual's own schedule at least once per month. Volunteers logged 120 hours this

### Adopt-A-Highway

year.

MDOT has assigned the Friends a section of M-109 from Glen Haven to 0.25 miles south of the Dune Climb to

## 2015 Project Spending Summary

Friends of Sleeping Bear Dunes - 2014-2015 FY Support			
Project	Direct Grant	In-Kind	TOTAL
GIS Intern	\$ 2,352.00		
NMI Intern	\$ 2,500.00		
Accessibility Matching NPF Grant	\$ 6,251.00	\$ 3,479.00	
Volunteer Ambassador Vests	\$ 579.50		
Bay to Bay Trail E/A		\$ 400.16	
Distance Learning Equipment		\$ 1,896.22	
Food for Public Meeting at SLBE		\$ 271.00	
Lyle Gun Black Powder		\$ 100.00	
Natural Resource Gatorade		\$ 249.87	
Automated External Defibrillators AED		\$ 3,996.85	
Carbon Dating Sleeping Bear Pt Shards		\$ 4,800.00	
Interactive Map for SBHT		\$ 6,149.00	
Adopt-A-Trail		\$ 145.75	
Visitor Center WIFI		\$ 999.00	
Publications - Booklets		\$ 5,429.16	
SBHT Operations		\$ 10,138.93	
SBHT Donor Plaza		\$ 16,709.35	
SBHT Pierce Stocking Drive Spur		\$ 534.60	
SBHT Storm Clean-up		\$ 465.76	
	\$ 11,682.50	\$ 55,764.65	
			\$ 67,447.15

### Donate Today!

Thank you for your past donations.  
Please continue to support our work.

You can donate:

1. On our web site:

[www.friendsofsleepingbear.org](http://www.friendsofsleepingbear.org)

**OR**

2. Mail a check to:

**Friends of Sleeping Bear Dunes**

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