



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

## *Friends of Sleeping Bear Dunes* *2016 Annual Newsletter*

*November 2016*

### **Perspective**

From the Chair

2016 was a special year at Sleeping Bear Dunes National Lakeshore. We were celebrating the Centennial of the National Park System. The theme for the year was “**Find Your Park**” and many of our activities revolved around encouraging people to explore Sleeping Bear Dunes!



Kerry Kelly

The **Friends of Sleeping Bear Dunes (Friends)** spent \$66,385 in support of a wide variety of projects for Sleeping Bear National Lakeshore. This newsletter highlights some, but the whole list can be found on our web site.

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.

In 2016, we had 475 household members (often more than one person per household) who donated \$97,467 and provided over 7,000 volunteer hours in support of our projects. Many of these donations are designated for projects that will be completed in 2017.

Thank you for being part of this dynamic group. Together we are making a positive impact on our National Park!

### *Celebrating 100 Years of NPS*

August 25, 2016 was the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the creation of the National Park System, which now includes 413 units covering over 84 million acres. Our very own Sleeping Bear Dunes National Lakeshore is one of these units, and we are happy to celebrate!

Many of the projects the **Friends** supported this year were part of this celebration.

We sponsored the creation of a **Find Your Park** video for Sleeping Bear Dunes National Lakeshore. The video was produced by MyNorth Media in Traverse City, publishers of Traverse Magazine. The project was directed by the Park's Interpretive staff and the video is available for viewing on our web site: [www.friendsofsleepingbear.org](http://www.friendsofsleepingbear.org).

One of the objectives of the NPS Centennial is for every 4<sup>th</sup> grader and their family to visit a park in 2016. We worked with the Park's Interpretive staff and with area schools to bring students to snowshoe programs last winter. Students learn how to snowshoe and explore trees and wildlife in wintertime.



The program included school visits by Park Rangers before the field trip and classroom follow-up activities after the field trip. One of the biggest obstacles for classes to make a field trip is the cost of transportation. Our role was to cover that cost. Over 1,120 students attended this program. We received a grant from The North Face Explore Fund to continue the program this coming winter.

The **Friends** paid travel expenses for several musicians who were invited to perform concerts in the Park and throughout the Grand Traverse region this summer as part of the Find Your Park Concert Series. One of the groups to perform was the National Park Centennial Band from the New Orleans Jazz National Historic Park.

The Pierce Stocking Scenic Drive is one of the most popular sites in the Park. The interpretive signs on the Scenic Drive were created and installed in the 1980s and need to be replaced. The Park's Interpretive staff contracted with Michigan interpretive artist, Oliver Uberti, to create new artwork for 13 new interpretive signs along the Scenic Drive. The **Friends** are providing a grant to pay for the development of the artwork. We have covered half of the cost and will pay the remainder when the final artwork is approved. We expect the new panels to be installed in the Spring of 2017.

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

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.

*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 Sleeping Bear Heritage Trail (SBHT) was opened in October, 2016. Now you can ride your bike from Empire all the way to Bohemian Road (CR-669) a distance of about 22 miles.

This new section has an elevated boardwalk that provides an up-close view of Narada Lake. The trail also winds past the historic North Unity School – the log structure on the west side of Narada Lake.



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 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 ques-

tions, and report 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.

The winter crew also groomed the trail for cross-country skiing between Glen Arbor and Empire from December through March. This coming winter, we plan to groom a portion of the trail between Crystal View trailhead and Port Oneida Road.



This year we began working with Park Management to implement a program to install benches, bike racks, and picnic tables at appropriate points along the trail. Donors can 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 Tom Obrecht and Kerry Kelly (blacksmith volunteers) and Ken Rosiek (who made the black locust pedestals). They will be placed at historic sites along the trail in the spring of 2017.



Some erosion issues on the crushed stone portion of the trail have caused loose stone and gullies to form in some areas. The Park 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 controls and monitor trail conditions after heavy rains. We are working with Park management to evaluate alternative stabilization techniques to minimize erosion issues.

Mary Ann and Dave Borton led the effort to remove invasive weeds from the landscaping around the Donor Plaza at the Dune Climb trailhead. This work helped to establish native dune grass and bearberry plants, which we hope will fill in and establish a native plant landscape.

## *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.

We purchased a new beach wheelchair, which is located at the Cannery in Glen Haven. There is another one at the

Maritime Museum. These wheelchairs are available to visitors who need assistance to explore the beach. We also purchased a standard wheelchair for use by visitors at the Visitor Center in Empire.

We received an additional grant to complete our Trails and Beaches Accessibility Assessment. We are working with the Disability Network of Northern Michigan and the Northern Michigan Adaptive Sports and Recreation. We plan to invite community members with disabilities and their families to an open house event to showcase the enhanced accessibility features at the park.



## *Kettles Trail in the Bow Lakes Area*



The proposed Kettles Trail in the Bow Lakes Area of the Park will be an earthen hiking trail, which will take visitors into this pristine natural area to observe glacial kettles and bogs.

A portion of the trail from the parking lot to an overlook will be hardened with crushed stone and made wide enough to be universally accessible. Some work was done with the Park Roads and Trails crew to define the trail alignment and with Natural Resources to survey possi-

ble environmental impacts to plants and animals of the proposed trail alignment. No funds were spent on this project in 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.

A parking lot will be built on Baatz Rd near Fritz Rd. Volunteers will be needed to work with Park staff and SEEDS Youth Corps in 2017.



## *Echo Valley Mountain Bike Trail*



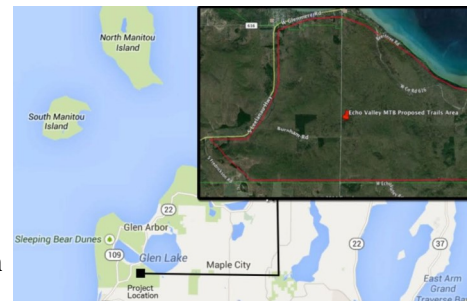
Early stage discussions have begun with interested members of the community, Park management, and the International Mountain Bike Association (IMBA) to develop concepts for a

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 the donations we have received will be used to fund the Environmental Assessment, planned to begin in 2017.



## *Port Oneida Rural Historic District Field Mowing*



This is a collaborative project between the **Friends** of Sleeping Bear Dunes and Preserve Historic Sleeping Bear (PHSB).

Field clearing and maintenance is led by PHSB and the **Friends** assist by coordinating volunteers in the mowing activity. About 900 acres were mowed by 7 volunteers, who provided over 300

volunteer hours. More volunteers will be needed in 2017

The **Friends** also gave a grant to PHSB to help purchase a new field mower used to mow historic farm fields in the Port Oneida Rural Historic District.



## Our Adopt-A-Programs

### Adopt-A-Trail

Thirty volunteers clean up trailhead parking lots, pick up branches and obstacles on the trail, and report to the 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, logging 1,541 hours in 2016.

### Adopt-A-Beach



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 each month on the individual's schedule.

116 volunteers contributed 1,848 hours picking up trash and reporting safety and maintenance issues along 35 miles of Lake Michigan shoreline on the mainland.

### 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.

## 2016 Project Spending Summary

### Friends of Sleeping Bear Dunes - FY 2015-2016 Support

Project	Direct Grant	In-Kind	TOTAL
Storm Recovery - Forest Haven Clearing	\$ 5,000.00		
BARK Ranger Intern & Supplies	\$ 3,000.00		
Educational Intern	\$ 2,500.00		
Piping Plover Monitoring Eq.	\$ 1,650.00		
Storm Recovery - Safety Eq.	\$ 1,350.00		
School Snowshoe Program	\$ 697.95	\$ 5,767.25	
SBHT Operations		\$ 19,017.31	
Visitor Booklets - printing		\$ 6,620.23	
PS Scenic Drive Interpretive Panel Art		\$ 5,350.00	
Port Oneida Mowing - Mower		\$ 4,000.00	
Trail and Beach Accessibility		\$ 3,760.00	
Find Your Park Video		\$ 2,400.00	
Automated External Defibrillator AED		\$ 1,704.85	
Find Your Park Concert Series		\$ 1,300.00	
BioBlitz - Blitz the Bear		\$ 1,000.00	
Interactive Map for SBHT		\$ 590.00	
WIFI Hotspot		\$ 235.51	
Natural Resources Electrolyte		\$ 248.10	
Thoreson Farm Restoration		\$ 194.57	
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$ 14,197.95</b>	<b>\$ 52,187.82</b>	<b>\$ 66,385.77</b>

### Donate Today!

Thank you for your past donations. Your continued support is very much appreciated.

You can donate in the following ways:

- Click the DONATE button on our web site:

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

- Use PayPal to send donations directly to:

Treasurer@friendsofsleepingbear.org

- Mail a check to:

**Friends of Sleeping Bear Dunes**

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