



9922 W. Front Street, P.O.Box 545 • Empire, MI 49630 • friendsofsleepingbear.org

Friends of Sleeping Bear Dunes 2017 Annual Newsletter

November 2017

Perspective

From the Chair

We've been growing! The number of volunteers, the number and breadth of projects, and the financial support we've been able to provide Sleeping Bear Dunes National Lakeshore have all been increasing!

As an all-volunteer organization, this growth presents its own challenges.

We need more volunteers to help with some of our administrative jobs.

This past year, we spent \$70,675 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.

We had 315 household members (often more than one person per household) who donated \$81,375 and provided over 9,000 volunteer hours in support of our projects. Many of these donations are designated for projects that will be completed in 2018.

If you designate a specific project, 100% of your donation will go to support that project.

If you have a few hours per week to spare, check our web site for a list of ways you can help.

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

Kerry Kelly



The **Friends** of Sleeping Bear Dunes are supportive of projects that make Park facilities easier for visitors of all abilities to enjoy, including our trails and beaches. Beach wheelchairs purchased by the **Friends** over the years are located at the Glen Haven Cannery and Maritime Museum. We also purchased a standard wheelchair for use by visitors at the Visitor Center in Empire.

In 2015, we started to assess our trails and beaches for accessibility barriers. This year, we received an additional grant of \$17,500 from the National Environmental Education Fund (NEEF) to continue this project. This year we assessed several beaches and trails. More assessment work is planned for 2018.



The Beach Accessibility Assessment suggested installing a hardened surface walkway and deck from the parking lot to an area closer to the water's edge.

In August, **Friends** was given approval to install an Adawalk beach deck system at Glen Haven Beach. Park staff was concerned about the need for routine maintenance. We set up a volunteer schedule to assure that at least one person did routine maintenance each day. We also purchased

a broom that was placed at the deck with a sign inviting Park visitors to help sweep. Our volunteer staff noted that visitors were sweeping the deck several times a day!

We hope to offer similar hardened walkways and decks at other beaches in the National Lakeshore in coming years.

We know that some of the trails and beaches at Sleeping Bear Dunes cannot be made accessible without damage to the natural resource due to either sandy soil or steep slopes.

Our Accessibility Committee is investigating the possibility of purchasing a Track Chair, an electric wheelchair that uses tracks instead of wheels, to move on terrain that is difficult for wheelchairs to navigate.

We will be studying this concept with Park management and staff in 2018 and hopefully make such a device available in the future for Park visitors on selected beaches or trails.

It is truly amazing to see the impact this backcountry mobility device has on people confined to a wheelchair or walker who otherwise would be unable to experience a hiking trail or view what many of us take for granted!

The **Friends** spent \$26,641 on accessibility assessments and the purchase of the beach accessibility deck in Glen Haven.

We are raising funds now for accessibility projects in 2018.



Donate Today online at 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 comes 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

The most recent section of the trail was built in 2016 and opened in October 2016. Trail users can ride about 22 miles from Empire to Bohemian Road (CR-669) including the on-road trail routes through Empire and Glen Arbor.

About 65,000 people used the SBHT between October 1,

2016 and September 30, 2017. Six automated trail counters installed at various points along the trail provide accurate trail use data. The data is used 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 50% of the trail use.

The **Friends** of Sleeping Bear Dunes operates and maintains the Sleeping Bear Heritage Trail.

We have 78 *Trail Ambassadors* who walk, bike, or ski the trail to assist trail users, answer questions, and report any trail maintenance issues. Trail Ambassadors reported 1,438 volunteer hours in 2017.

The *Trail Crew* volunteers perform maintenance on the trail by installing signs, mowing and trimming grass along trail edges. Between March and Decem-



ber they blow leaves and tree debris off the trail. Between December and March they groom the trail for cross-country skiing between Glen Arbor and Empire. The 33 Trail Crew volunteers reported 702 hours in 2017.

An agreement with the Leelanau Conservancy to assist them with grooming their Palmer Woods property for cross-country skiing allowed us to groom a portion of the trail between Crystal View trailhead and Port Oneida Road in 2017. Unfortunately, due to low snowfall amounts and warm weather, we were only able to groom the trail three times last winter!

This grooming program will continue in 2018. We are hoping for more snow this year!

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.

Four benches with accessible pads were installed.

Seven bike racks were built by blacksmith volunteers at the Glen Haven Blacksmith Shop and placed at historic sites along the trail.

We hope to install more benches and



picnic tables in 2018. Donors can donate toward these trail furniture items.



Some erosion issues on the crushed stone portion of the trail with slopes caused loose stone and gullies to form. Last spring we contracted with AJ's Excavating to do remediation work in these areas.

The erosion issues are largely resolved. Our Trail Crew volunteers maintain these erosion control ditches and monitor trail conditions after each heavy rain. Some routine leveling and compaction of the gravel trail may be required annually.

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 resulting in a more native plant landscape.

The **Friends** of Sleeping Bear Dunes spent \$8,629.98 on trail operations and maintenance in FY 2017. Additionally, The Sleeping Bear Heritage Trail Long-Term Maintenance Fund provided a grant for the cost of contracted erosion control measures (\$13,917) and bench installation (\$5,000).

Preventative Search and Rescue

Sleeping Bear Dunes National Lakeshore handles over 60 Preventative Search and Rescue (PSAR) missions each year. Most of these occur at the Dune Climb or Pierce Stocking Scenic Drive #9 Lake Michigan Overlook.

The **Friends** supported Park Law Enforcement staff to hire a college intern to develop the PSAR program to work with volunteers to educate Park visitors about the hazards they may face at these two popular park areas.

The program operated in July and August with 6 volunteers and the intern.



Emergency calls were down 50% this summer and no SAR calls were received while PSAR volunteers were on duty.

This program had a significant impact on reducing emergency responses in the Park this summer, and we expect to work with Park Law Enforcement to expand the number of volunteers in the program next year. With additional volunteers, we can expand the areas served to include some of the popular beaches.



Scenic Drive Interpretive Signs

Michigan artist Oliver Uberti was commissioned by Sleeping Bear Dunes National Lakeshore to create interpretive art for new informational panels at stops along the Pierce Stocking Scenic Drive.

These new signs tell the history of the Sleeping Bear Dunes from glaciers to Native American hunting and fishing and finally European settlement, logging, shipping, and tourism. Oliver uses images as well as words and the natural setting to tell this story.

Eleven of these new signs can be found at various places along the scenic drive.

The **Friends** provided \$10,700 for the development of the art for the signs.



Ticket to Ride School Snowshoe Program



Over 1,180 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 \$7,151. Most of these funds were provided by a grant from The North Face Explore Fund.

We also received a grant for \$10,000 from the National Park Foundation to support the snowshoe program in 2018.



Kettles Trail in Bow Lakes Area

The **Kettles Trail** will be built in an area of the Park that has unique geologic features like kettles formed from the way the glaciers melted and bogs that are found in the bottom of some kettles.

A portion of the trail from the proposed parking lot to an overlook on top of a geologic kettle will be hardened and made wide enough to make it universally accessible.

Some work was done with the Park 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 2016-2017.

Work to construct the trail begins in 2018.

Additional funds will be required to finish this trail.



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

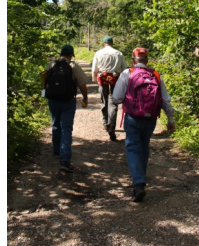
of the park south of Glen Lake known as the Echo Valley or Burnham Road area. We hosted the regional director of IMBA to tour the area being considered for the proposed Mt. Bike Trail

No funds have been spent at this point, but some volunteer time has been used to prepare for an Environmental Assessment beginning in 2018.

Our Adopt-A-Programs

Adopt-A-Trail

Forty-one volunteers clean up trailhead parking lots, pick up branches and obstacles on the trail, and report to Park'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 1,678 hours.



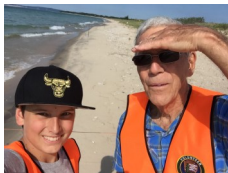
Adopt-A-River

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-Beach



134 volunteers contributed over 2,014 hours picking up 2,500 pounds of 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 control their own schedule and try to carry out at least one Beach Patrol per month.

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.

2017 Project Spending Summary

Friends of Sleeping Bear Dunes - FY 2016-2017 Support

Project	Direct Grant	In-Kind	TOTAL
EMS Supplies	\$503.13		
Trail Tools	\$2,000.00		
Teacher-Ranger-Teacher	\$1,350.00		
Social Media Intern	\$3,000.00		
PSAR Intern	\$3,000.00		
Find Your Park Concert		\$200.00	
Pierce Stocking Scenic Dr. Art		\$5,350.00	
Park Field Trips (snowshoe)		\$7,151.63	
SBHT Operations		\$8,629.98	
Visitor booklets (printing)		\$6,822.76	
Trail and Beach Accessibility		\$26,641.70	
Lyle Gun Demo		\$144.95	
Underground Cable Locator		\$2,299.99	
Video Camera		\$1,159.98	
Great Lakes Water Safety Event		\$1,070.00	
Park GPS Units		\$1,092.24	
Natural Resources Electrolyte Drink		\$258.60	
TOTAL	\$ 9,853.13	\$ 60,821.83	\$ 70,674.96

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 the web site:
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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