Handbook for Volunteers-In-Parks Sleeping Bear Dunes National Lakeshore

Contents

Contents ........................................................................................................................................ - 2 -

Welcome .................................................................................................................................... - 4 -

Mission of the National Park Service ......................................................................................... - 5 -

The Volunteers In Parks (VIP) Program ..................................................................................... - 6 -
   Overview ................................................................................................................................. - 6 -
   Getting Started ....................................................................................................................... - 6 -
   Uniforms .................................................................................................................................. - 7 -

VIP Bill of Rights and Responsibilities ....................................................................................... - 8 -

NPS CORE VALUES .................................................................................................................. - 8 -
   Ethics Cornerstones .............................................................................................................. - 9 -
   Common Dilemmas ............................................................................................................... - 9 -

Safety .......................................................................................................................................... - 10 -

Interacting With Visitors .......................................................................................................... - 11 -
   Formal visitor contacts: ......................................................................................................... - 11 -
   Informal visitor contacts: ....................................................................................................... - 11 -
   Tips on Making Contact With Visitors ................................................................................ - 11 -
   10 Basic Guidelines ............................................................................................................... - 12 -

By the Numbers ....................................................................................................................... - 13 -
   The Legend of the Sleeping Bear ......................................................................................... - 14 -
   The Disappearing Sleeping Bear Dune ................................................................................ - 14 -

Park Leadership ....................................................................................................................... - 15 -

Description of Duties .............................................................................................................. - 16 -
   Adopt-a-Beach: ...................................................................................................................... - 16 -
   Adopt-a-Garden: .................................................................................................................... - 16 -
   Adopt-an-Orchard: ................................................................................................................ - 16 -
   Adopt-a-River: ....................................................................................................................... - 16 -
   Adopt-a-Trail: ....................................................................................................................... - 16 -
   Blacksmith: ............................................................................................................................ - 16 -
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Role</th>
<th>Pages</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Campground Host at DH Day</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Campground Host at Platte River</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interpreter; Glen Haven</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interpreter; Visitor Center</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Natural Resources</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Photographer</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Protection Ranger</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Apendicies:

A: Supervisors Checklist
B: Defensive Driving Course Instructions
C: Visitor Comment Form
Welcome

Thank you for volunteering at Sleeping Bear Dunes National Lakeshore! Volunteers are a crucial component to park operation. As a member of the Sleeping Bear Dunes NL Team, you have the distinct honor and privilege of being part of a group of people who preserve treasured resources and who provide visitors with both an educational and enjoyable visit. You are part of an organization with a long tradition of excellent service.

This Volunteer Handbook has been prepared to help you gain a better understanding of your rights and responsibilities as a volunteer for the National Park Service at Sleeping Bear Dunes NL. Please familiarize yourself with its contents and use it as a ready reference. We would also like to hear from you – how you like your volunteer experience and what suggestions you may have for improvement of our program.

Sincerely,
Matt Mohrman
Volunteer Coordinator
231.326.4729
matthew_mohrman@nps.gov
Mission of the National Park Service & Sleeping Bear Dunes National Lakeshore

“It’s why the park and all of us are here”

NPS Mission

...Preserve and Protect

The National Park Service preserves unimpaired the natural and cultural resources and values of the National Park System for the enjoyment, education, and inspiration of this and future generations.

Sleeping Bear Dunes National Lakeshore

The Lakeshore mission is to preserve outstanding natural features including forests, beaches, dunes and ancient glacial phenomena along 100 km (64 miles) of Lake Michigan shoreline, in order to perpetuate the natural setting for the benefit and enjoyment of the public, and to protect it from developments and inappropriate uses that would destroy its scenic beauty, scientific and recreational value.

The National Lakeshore contains compactly grouped features of continental glaciations, including post-glacial shoreline adjustment, ridge / swale complex, wind-formed dunes, perched dunes, and examples of associated plant succession. These features are of global importance due to their relatively unimpacted state, the variety of features present, and their proximity to one another.

The collection of historic landscapes – maritime, agricultural, and recreational – in the National Lakeshore is of a size and quality unsurpassed on the Great Lakes and rare elsewhere on the United States’ coastline.

The National Lakeshore’s native plant and animal communities, especially the northern hardwoods, coastal forests, dune communities, and interdunal wetlands, are of a scale and quality that is rare on the Great Lakes shoreline. These relatively intact communities afford an opportunity for continuation of the ecological processes that have shaped them.
The Volunteers In Parks (VIP) Program

The mission of the VIP program is to accomplish park goals through mutually beneficial volunteer experiences.

Overview
The National Park Service VIP Program was authorized by Public Law 91-357, enacted in 1970. The primary purpose of the program is to provide a vehicle through which the National Park Service can accept and utilize voluntary help and services from the public. The terms VIP and Volunteer are used interchangeably in this manual.

Volunteer Coordinator
Matt Mohrman is the volunteer coordinator and is responsible for overall management and direction of the program. He handles all aspects of recruitment, training, recognition, communications and administration.

Volunteer Supervisors
Each volunteer activity is supervised by a park or partner representative from the appropriate division. Volunteer supervisors will assist volunteers with anything pertaining to their positions. They are responsible for describing volunteer positions, explaining safety precautions, providing job-specific training, setting volunteers’ schedules, and reporting volunteer hours to the coordinator. A supervisors checklist is available in appendix A.

Who Can Volunteer
Anyone can volunteer, although some positions require selection and/or training for specific skills and abilities. When youth less than 18 years old volunteer, they need written consent from a parent or guardian. Certain limitations and restrictions are imposed on people who have criminal records, and some sensitive positions require security background checks. NPS employees may also volunteer as long as it is outside the scope of their regular duties. Volunteers are accepted without regard to race, creed, religion, age, sex, sexual orientation, national origin, or disability.

Getting Started
1. First, check out the list of volunteer opportunities for Sleeping Bear Dunes National Lakeshore (located at www.volunteer.gov) and choose one that may be of interest to you. Consider your interests, skills, qualifications, and time commitment when choosing an opportunity. If you do not have access to the Internet, contact the volunteer program coordinator to get a copy of the volunteer opportunities list.

2. If you are accepted to the volunteer position, you will need to complete and sign the Volunteer Agreement. **You must sign a Volunteer Agreement form prior to working!** It is the single most important document that you must complete, without a volunteer agreement in place, you will not be covered by any of the protection that NPS offers.

3. Your volunteer supervisor will give you copies of the position’s full description and its job safety analysis. You and your supervisor must agree on these details. Your duties should not go beyond those agreed upon and documented. If they do, you should consult your supervisor and update the volunteer agreement to address any concerns.
Uniforms

The uniform designates you as an official volunteer for the National Park Service. All volunteers should be readily identifiable while working. This can be accomplished by wearing any part of a volunteer uniform (hat, shirt, vest, name-tag.) The uniform is only to be worn while actively volunteering (i.e. don’t wear uniform items off duty). VIPs need to provide their own pants, skirts, or shorts, with the following guidelines: solid colored, blue jean or earth-toned (not green to avoid staff appearance), clean, no rips and conservative. Shoes need to be close-toed and appropriate for environment. Again, be sure to wear your uniform items while volunteering so you will be recognized by park staff and visitors.

- Uniform Appearance
  Uniformed volunteers are in the public eye and, therefore, have a responsibility to maintain the positive image of the National Park Service and Sleeping Bear Dunes NL. Please keep your uniform wrinkle-free, with a clean, crisp appearance. If you resign or are terminated by the volunteer program for any reason, you must return your uniform. Additionally, you can exchange a worn out or damaged uniform item any time.

- Uniform Issue/Check-out
  Uniforms will be issued by the volunteer coordinator and tracked in the Volunteer Reporter database.
VIP Bill of Rights and Responsibilities

The philosophy of the VIP Program at Sleeping Bear Dunes is to treat volunteers like paid staff; earning equal attention, support, direction, and recognition. Like paid staff, volunteers are given real responsibility and are accountable for meeting those responsibilities. As a volunteer, you should understand your rights and responsibilities, be able to give and receive honest feedback and have an opportunity to say “no” or request changes.

Volunteers have…

The **right** to be treated with respect and as a co-worker, not as free help.

The **right** to suitable assignments with consideration for personal preferences, temperament, life experiences, education, and work history.

The **right** to proper job training and sufficient safety equipment as necessary.

The **right** to have a variety of assignments, and increasing levels of responsibility and challenges as desired by the individual.

The **right** to feel comfortable when making suggestions, and to have respect shown for candid opinions.

The **right** to receive workers compensation for injuries incurred while actively volunteering.

The **responsibility** to follow NPS and SLBE policies, rules and guidelines.

The **responsibility** to wear the VIP uniform with pride.

The **responsibility** to demonstrate a professional and courteous manner toward visitors and co-workers.
NPS Core Values
The National Park Service’s core values define the framework in which we accomplish the NPS Mission.

**SHARED STEWARDSHIP** – We share a commitment to resource stewardship with the global preservation community.

**EXCELLENCE** – We strive continually to learn and improve so that we may achieve the highest ideals of public service.

**INTEGRITY** – We deal honestly and fairly with the public and one another.

**TRADITION** – We are proud of it; we learn from it; we are not bound by it.

**RESPECT** – We embrace each other’s differences so that we may enrich the well-being of everyone.

Ethics Cornerstones
- Loyalty to our Country.
- Uphold the Constitution.
- Seek to employ more efficient and ways of performing our duties.
- Never discriminate.
- Never accept favors or benefits that could influence you the performance of your duties.
- We have no private words while on duty, words and actions should always present a positive image to the public that we serve.
- Never use information gained in performance of duties as a means of making private profit.

Common Dilemmas
- You may not endorse one commercial establishment over another in an official capacity. This means that you cannot give a direct answer to a question such as “What is your favorite restaurant?” Instead give visitors a range of available opportunities.
- You are representing the park and, as such, your conversations with visitors should reflect NPS/SLBE policy, not your own opinions.
- Gambling is prohibited on federal property. This includes raffles, lotteries, and sports pools.
- Turn in lost to the Lost and Found at the visitor center.
- Fundraising for outside organizations is prohibited. Such as selling Girl Scout cookies while volunteering or while in uniform outside of volunteering.
- Follow the off-duty, off-premises rule for political activities. We cannot discuss personal political views with visitors when on duty. When sharing your views off duty, such as in a letter to the editor, do not represent yourself as an NPS volunteer or spokesperson.
- There is ZERO TOLERANCE for any type of discrimination or sexual harassment.
Safety

We take the safety and well-being of our volunteers very seriously. You will receive training in the safe operation of any tool or activity you are asked to perform. However, if an accident occurs while you are volunteering, immediately report the incident to your supervisor. First aid kits are located throughout the park and in all government vehicles.

- **Use of Personal Equipment**: Volunteers should use government-owned equipment and property in their work, rather than their own personal property. If a volunteer does use his or her personal property or equipment for official purposes, and that property is lost, damaged or destroyed in the process, the NPS bears no responsibility toward reimbursed for the loss. Exception: if the volunteer was required by an authorized NPS employee to furnish his or her own personal property for use in the assigned work and a statement to this effect is included on the Volunteer Agreement form (must specifically identify and describe the personal property involved) reimbursement may be an option.

- **Vehicles**: To operate a government vehicle a volunteer must possess a valid driver’s license and have earned a certificate of completion for the online defensive driving course. Instructions on how to log into and take this course are located in Appendix B.

- **Radios**: Select VIPs must complete the required training syllabus and have a basic understanding of how to use the park radios in case of emergencies.

- **Computers**: Any volunteer requiring access to a government computer must have a background investigation completed by the park and complete FISSA training prior to using a government computer. Supervisors: use form SLBE A-015 User Request Form to begin this process.

- **Ticks**: Be aware there are an increasing number of ticks in park and Lyme disease is present. We recommend you take preventative measures (repellent, tick checks, etc.) SLBE policy S-16 covers all matters pertaining to ticks and can be emailed to you if desired.

- **Worker’s Compensation and Tort Claims**: When you sign your Volunteer Agreement you are covered by Federal Worker’s Compensation if you are hurt while actively volunteering. Volunteers receive the same protection as NPS employees under the Federal Employees Compensation Act (5 USC, Chapter 81) and the Federal Tort Claims Act (28 USC, 2671-2680) and are considered to be federal employees for those purposes only. In order to ensure benefits under these Acts, it is imperative that you have a signed Volunteer Agreement on file and that you operate under a written job description(s) that contains specific information on the type of work you are assigned to do.
Interacting With Visitors

People will care for what they first care about. Therefore, we must strive to connect people—both intellectually and emotionally—to the resources of Sleeping Bear Dunes.

Formal visitor contacts

- Scheduled programs that facilitate a connection between the interests of the visitors and the significance of the park.

Informal visitor contacts

- Orientation: for the visitor about the visit.
- Information: for the visitor about the resource.
- Interpretation: for the benefit of the visitor and the resource (connection.)

Tips on Making Contact with Visitors

While it’s easier to wait for a visitor to ask you a question, they may not know enough about the park or think you’re too busy to assist them. Try to anticipate their needs and offer information. Some icebreakers or potential greetings are

- “Have you been here before? I would be happy to give you a map of the park and suggestions about what to do.”
- “Are you planning a hike today? I’d be happy to suggest some trails.”
- “Are you aware this is a National Lakeshore? If you’re interested in knowing more, I can answer questions or direct you to our museums, visitor center or trails.”
- “Some of my favorite places in the park are …”
- “Ever wonder why the water is so clear in lake MI?......” mussels/algae/botulism message
10 Basic Guidelines

1. **Act professionally.** Be courteous and helpful. Remain patient with visitors. Be neutral with your opinions.

2. **Safety.** Do your best to be proactive in this area, look for and report hazards; pre-plan how to respond in an emergency.

3. **Take the time to listen** and answer visitor questions no matter how busy you may be.

4. **Approach** visitors and ask questions (see tips on previous page).

5. **Give special attention to children** who could be visiting with their family or school group. A lifelong interest in our national parks can start when a person is very young. Children having a great experience, along with positive interaction with staff and volunteers, may become the next generation of park stewards!

6. Volunteers who work with children are required to have a background check, and **no volunteer should ever be alone with a child.**

7. When a visitor has a comment or complaint, listen with empathy to show that you take the visitor’s opinion seriously. Offer to have them file a **visitor comment form,** found in Appendix C. Treat everyone with respect.

8. **Avoid arguing.** It is unlikely that people will be receptive of your argument, no matter how great an orator you may be. People will be more open to listening after they calm down and feel like they have been heard.

9. **Refer** difficult comments and complaints to a staff member. Whenever a visitor makes you uncomfortable, immediately extricate yourself from the situation and/or find a staff member to take over.

10. **Volunteers are not permitted to enforce laws or regulations.** Your role as a volunteer is to educate visitors about laws and regulations before they are broken and to report violations. If you see a minor violation such as littering, you may remind or educate visitors on the rules. However, if they do not seem receptive, disengage and back away. Use good judgment and do not provoke conflict. Let law enforcement handle major violations.
By the Numbers

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sleeping Bear Dunes National Lakeshore</th>
<th>National Park Service</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Established: 10/21/1970</td>
<td>Established: 8/25/1916</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acres: 71,210</td>
<td>Units: 417 (as of Jan 2017)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Miles of Shoreline: 65 (35 on mainland)</td>
<td>Acres: 84 Million</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Visitation: 1.2M average</td>
<td>Visitation: 307+M (FY15)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Miles of Trails: 105</td>
<td>Employees: ~22,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inland Lakes: 26</td>
<td>Volunteers: ~221,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average Summertime Temps: 77 / 58</td>
<td>Budget: FY17 $3.1B</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employees: ~80</td>
<td>How to get a job: USA.gov</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Volunteers: 2000+ / 60K+ Hours</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Budget: FY17 – 4.37M</td>
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The Legend of the Sleeping Bear

Long ago, along the Wisconsin shoreline, a mother bear and her two cubs were driven into Lake Michigan by a raging forest fire. The bears swam for many hours, but eventually the cubs tired and lagged behind. Mother bear reached the shore and climbed to the top of a high bluff to watch and wait for her cubs. Too tired to continue, the cubs drowned within sight of the shore. The Great Spirit Manitou created two islands to mark the spot where the cubs disappeared and then created a solitary dune to represent the faithful mother.

The Disappearing Sleeping Bear Dune

By: Frank C. Gates
Ecology Vol. 31, No. 3 (pp. 386-392)
July 1950

Through Indian times and the early white occupancy of the region up to very recently, the appearance of a sleeping bear lying on her side was very obvious to one from a boat on the lake. At the present through excessive erosion the appearance of a sleeping bear is becoming less obvious. As first seen by white people from the lake, a densely vegetated dune approximately 600 x 450 feet and more than 135 feet high was perched at the edge of a plateau 350 feet above the lake. My own earliest recollection, as seen from a lake steamer about 1896, is that of a 2-humped pile of material, completely covered throughout with dark green vegetation, with a tree or snag projecting above. It was very conspicuous on the skyline. Since that time the snag has disappeared and much erosion has under-cut trees on the windward side, many of which have rolled even down to Lake Michigan itself. Great white sandy patches have replaced the dense green of the earlier dune.
Park Leadership

Superintendent
Scott Tucker

Deputy Superintendent
Tom Ulrich

Chief, Interpretation
Merrith Baughman

Interpretation Division
Fees / Interpreters

Chief, Administration
Mark Pressnell

Administration Division

Chief, Natural Resources
Open

Resources Division
Wildlife / Plant / Water

Chief, Maintenance
Lee Jamison

Maintenance Division
B&U / R&T

Chief, Protection Ranger
Phil Akers

Protection Division
Leelanau / Platte River

Safety/Environmental Protection
Amanda Brushhaber
Description of Duties

**Adopt-a-Beach:**
The Friends of Sleeping Bear Dunes in cooperation with Sleeping Bear Dunes National Lakeshore manage this program. Volunteers make five clean-up visits per year. These visits will usually occur once a month during spring through early autumn.

**Adopt-a-Garden: (Landscape)**
Preserve Historic Sleeping Bear, in cooperation with Sleeping Bear Dunes National Lakeshore manages this program. Many of the historic farms had flower and vegetable gardens around the house or out-buildings. The role of this project is to maintain some of these gardens and historic landscape.

**Adopt-an-Orchard: (Landscape)**
Preserve Historic Sleeping Bear, in cooperation with Sleeping Bear Dunes National Lakeshore manages this program. Several historic orchards exist in within the park – especially in the Port Oneida Rural Historic District. Volunteers must have attended at least one Pruning Workshop at Sleeping Bear Dunes National Lakeshore to obtain the required training.

**Adopt-a-River:**
The Friends of Sleeping Bear Dunes in cooperation with Sleeping Bear Dunes National Lakeshore manage this program. This group provides regular monitoring and clean-up of the two rivers within the Park (Platte and Crystal). Volunteers must commit to patrolling a river segment about once each month during the spring, summer and fall.

**Adopt-a-Trail:**
The Friends of Sleeping Bear Dunes in cooperation with Sleeping Bear Dunes National Lakeshore manage this program. This group provides regular monitoring and clean-up of the 105 miles of trails within the Park. Volunteers must commit to hiking individual trails about once each month during the spring, summer and fall.

**Blacksmith:**
This position is assigned to the interpretive division and the work is performed in Glen Haven. Duties include demonstrating the work of blacksmith by forging and repairing variety of metal articles.
**Campground Host at DH Day:**
This position is assigned to the Fees Division (Leelanau district) and the work is performed at DH Day Campground, near Glen Arbor. Duties include assisting rangers in the office, patrolling the campground and cleaning sites upon visitor check-out.

**Campground Host at Platte River:**
This position is assigned to the Fees Division (Platte district) and the work is performed at Platte River Campground, near Honor. Duties include assisting rangers in the office, patrolling the campground and cleaning sites upon visitor check-out.

**Interpreter–Glen Haven:**
This position is assigned to the Interpretive Division and the work is performed at the Maritime Museum and Cannery Museum in Glen Haven. Duties include assisting with all operations including talks, demonstrations and informal contacts.

**Interpreter–Visitor center:**
This position is assigned to the Interpretive Division and the work is performed at the Visitor Center in Empire. Duties include assisting with all operations including talks, demonstrations and informal contacts.

**Natural Resources:**
This position is assigned to the Natural Resources Division and the work is performed throughout the park to include the Manitou Islands. Duties may include working with wildlife, plants and water quality in such a way as to preserve and protect the resources of the park consistent with enabling legislation.

**Photographer:**
This position is assigned to the Interpretive Division and the work is performed throughout the park. Duties include documenting resources, visitors, park facilities, construction and special projects. These photographs can then be used for publicity, interpretive programs, documentation, and historical record.

**Protection Intern:**
This position is assigned to the Protective Ranger Division and the work is performed mainly on the Manitou Islands. Duties include providing safety and personal services for the visitors by greeting the passenger ferry as well as private boats, registering campers, conducting foot patrols and conducting tours.

**Partner Organizations:** SLBE works in cooperation with the following partner organizations. They are allowed to fundraise within the park and manage several volunteer projects. Click the links to learn more.

Appendix A: Supervisors Checklist

VIP Supervisors’ Checklist

1. **Paperwork**: ensure a VIP agreement (available on the portal) is completed *prior* to your VIP performing any work; this protects them in case of an accident. Be sure to forward the signed agreement to me.

2. **Uniforms**: your VIP should be readily identifiable while working on a project. This can be accomplished having them wear any combination of volunteer uniform items. (see pg. 7 for uniform policies)

3. **Hours**: please be sure you and/or your VIPs are reporting their hours. This is how we continue this program and tell the rest of the NPS how great our VIPs truly are. Volunteer hours are tracked door-to-door, so driving time does count.

4. **New VIPs**: If anyone is asking you how they can volunteer – send them to volunteer.gov, search keyword sleeping bear, or they can email me at [matthew_mohrman@nps.gov](mailto:matthew_mohrman@nps.gov)
Appendix B: Defensive Driving Course

Below are instructions for accessing the 4-hour National Safety Council Defensive Driving Course through GSA rather than DOI Learn. This is appropriate for those who are not yet set-up to use DOI Learn. The courses are identical.

1) Go to this website https://drivethru.fas.gsa.gov/drivethru/fdt9001/

2) Then click on the "Defensive Driving Course" under the "Applications Access" heading (bottom left corner) on main page.

3) Your "customer number" is 050100145340451

4) Your access code is N901

5) Your email address is your standard NPS address (but personal addresses will also work if you don't have an NPS address).

6) Create your unique login ID and password.
Appendix C: Visitor Comment Form

Sleeping Bear Dunes National Lakeshore
9922 Front Street, Empire, MI 49630
(231) 326-4700  Fax: (231) 326-4719

Dear Superintendent:

I wish to make the following comments about services and/or conditions observed at the following location ______________________________ in Sleeping Bear Dunes National Lakeshore during my recent visit.

________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________

Sincerely,

Signature

Printed name

Address

SLBE I-002
Rev. 03/2015