



## 2017-2018 Accomplishments

The Friends of Sleeping Bear Dunes (Friends) is an all-volunteer non-profit organization dedicated to protecting resources and heightening visitor experiences in partnership with Sleeping Bear Dunes National Lakeshore (SLBE). The Friends has 434 household members, defined as volunteers or donors. The number of individual members is 618, because there is often more than one individual in a household.

Our members provided over 11,000 volunteer hours to projects managed by the Friends in FY 2018, and many members volunteer for a wide variety of other projects managed by Park staff or by other non-profit organizations, like Historic Sleeping Bear.

The Friends of Sleeping Bear Dunes provided financial support to the park in the amount of \$113,909.50 for FY 2018. Some of our accomplishments are described below.

### **Sleeping Bear Heritage Trail (SBHT)**

The Sleeping Bear Heritage Trail is about 20 miles long and trail users can ride about 23 miles from Empire to Bohemian Road (CR-669) including the on-road trail routes through Empire and Glen Arbor. About 72,000 people used the SBHT between October 1, 2017 and September 30, 2018. Seven 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 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 reported 1,201 volunteer hours in 2018. Our Trail Ambassadors walk, ride, or ski the trail to assist trail users, answer questions, and report any trail maintenance issues. 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 32 Trail Crew volunteers reported 1,371 hours in FY 2018.

The Trail Crew used blowers to keep the leaves and tree debris off the trail each week between March and December. They also groomed the trail for cross-country skiing between Glen Arbor and Empire from December through March. The Friends had an agreement with the Leelanau Conservancy to assist them in grooming their Palmer Woods property for cross-country skiing in 2018. The Conservancy purchased a grooming roller and track-setter that was stored near the Crystal View trailhead, which allowed us to groom a portion of the trail between Crystal View trailhead and Port Oneida Road.

This year we installed benches and bike racks at various points along the trail. Donors can donate toward these trail furniture items. Four benches with accessible pads have been installed. Seven bike racks have been built by blacksmith volunteers at the Glen Haven Blacksmith Shop and were placed at historic sites



along the trail. Several local businesses in Empire and Glen Arbor support the trail through donations. Their logos are printed on the paper trail map, and they have a presence on our online Interactive Trail Map.

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, which is filling in and establishing a native plant landscape.

A total of \$24,079 was spent on Sleeping Bear Heritage Trail maintenance and operations in FY 2018. These funds came from Friends of Sleeping Bear Dunes and Traverse Area Recreation and Transportation Trails (TART), who manage the SBHT development fund and the long-term maintenance fund. These funds were used to repair some gravel areas, install hardened areas near interpretive signs and benches to improve accessibility as well as to conduct routine cleaning and grooming. We also purchased a new John Deere Gator utility vehicle to make it more efficient to do trail maintenance on the sections of trail north of Glen Arbor.

### **Accessibility Projects**

Accessibility at Sleeping Bear Dunes National Lakeshore means making it easy for everyone (people of all abilities) to be able to get to a beach, experience a trail, launch a kayak, etc. Improving accessibility is a major focus of Sleeping Bear Dunes management and of our organization. Beach wheelchairs purchased by the Friends 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.

We received a grant of \$17,500 from the National Environmental Education Fund (NEEF) to continue our Trails and Beaches Accessibility Assessment in 2017 and 2018. Assessment reports describe trail conditions from the trailhead throughout the length of the trail with measurements and photos. This information is available on the Friends web site. A color-coded trail map describing easy, moderate and difficult trail segments for each hiking trail is available on the web site. This will make it easier for visitors planning a hike or visit to the beach to choose the best destination for their abilities. Park staff also uses assessment reports to remove barriers.

In 2017, we worked with the Park to install a hardened surface beach walkway and deck with some benches at the Cannery Beach in Glen Haven. This allows visitors with mobility issues to get from the parking lot to an area closer to the water's edge. We learned that visitors of all abilities were using the beach deck and that it was very much appreciated. As a result, we worked to raise funds to install a similar beach deck at the Maritime Museum in the spring of 2019.

Some trails and beaches at Sleeping Bear Dunes cannot be made accessible without damage to the natural resource due to either sandy soil or steep inclines. To make it possible for people with limited mobility to experience some of these places, we purchased a Track Chair. It is an electric wheelchair with



tracks instead of wheels to allow it to be used in soft sand and snow and on steep slopes. The chair is very stable and has enough power to take an adult on a hike for several hours without recharging the batteries.

The Track Chair will be available for FREE to visitors with mobility issues starting in May of 2019. Advanced reservation through our web site is required. Initially, it will be available for use on the Bay View trail and at selected Park events. Volunteers will accompany visitors using the Track Chair to assure safety and a good visitor experience. This program is the first of it's kind in a National Park, and we hope to expand it in the future depending on our experience in 2019.

The Friends worked with Lake Township and the Park to request a grant from the Grand Traverse Band of Ottawa and Chippewa Indians to replace the fishing dock at Bass Lake. We purchased dock materials and construction is scheduled for the spring of 2019.

The Friends sponsored an Accessibility Open House in August to publicize new accessibility features in Sleeping Bear Dunes National Lakeshore.

Overall, Friends of Sleeping Bear Dunes spent \$42,775 on Accessibility programs in FY 2018.

### **Kettles Trail in the Bow Lakes Area**

The Bow Lakes area of Sleeping Bear Dunes National Lakeshore contains 975 acres, of which, about 540 acres are currently owned by the Park. Most of the Park-owned land is south of Lanham Road. The "Kettles Trail" is an earthen hiking trail, which will give visitors access to this pristine natural area to observe glacial kettles, swales, and bogs. A portion of the trail from the parking lot to an overlook on top of a geologic kettle will be hardened and made wide enough to make it universally accessible.

Significant progress was made this year developing this new hiking trail. It is not often that a national park creates a new trail, and we are privileged to be part of this process. The entire 3.5 miles of hiking trail has been cleared and over half of the trail is completed. The first part of the trail from the parking lot is a 4-foot wide accessible trail made of gravel and topped with diamond dust to create a hardened surface. A rustic observation pad with an interpretive sign describing geological kettles and a bench will be built at the end of the accessible part of the trail.

Sleeping Bear Dunes National Lakeshore staff from the Roads, Trails, and Grounds team led this project. Most of the trail work was done with hand tools. Thirty individual volunteers as well as groups of volunteers like the Marion High School cross country team, Cherry Republic, and CMU Alternative Break students worked over 500 hours on the project. In addition, we contracted with two youth work groups (SEEDS and YouthWork) for a total of 6 weeks to help with trail-building efforts. Overall, the Friends spent \$23,387 on this project in 2018.



The parking lot and driveway will be built in the spring of 2019, interpretive signs and trailhead kiosk will be installed in 2019. Additional funding will be required to complete this project. We are actively applying for grants, and donations are being sought. We are looking forward to a ribbon cutting ceremony in the summer of 2019.

### **Snowshoe Program**

Over 1,400 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 an optional 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 \$11,903. The National Park Foundation is providing a grant for the 2019 winter snowshoe program so we can keep this successful program going.

### **Visitor Booklets**

The Friends worked with park staff to develop inexpensive guidebooks to provide visitors with more information about the Park's cultural and natural resources. There are now 13 booklets with approximately 110,000 booklets distributed since beginning this program in 2006. The books are available at the Visitor Center, Platte River Campground, D. H. Day Campground, Cannery Boat Museum, and Maritime Museum. The Friends spent \$6,861 to publish the booklets this year.

### **PSAR – Preventative Search and Rescue**

Sleeping Bear Dunes National Lakeshore handles a significant number of Search and Rescue (SAR) events each year. Most of these occur at the Dune Climb or Peirce Stocking Scenic Drive #9 Lake Michigan Overlook. The Friends supported Park Law Enforcement staff with volunteers to provide informational contacts with visitors to help them be prepared for the rigors of these hikes and climbs. This program had a significant impact on reducing emergency responses in the Park this summer, and we hope to expand the number of volunteers in the program next year, so we can expand the time we can cover these areas and potentially expand the program to other areas in the Park. Nine PSAR Volunteers provided 422 hours of service and made 13,188 visitor contacts.

### **Pierce Stocking Scenic Drive Interpretive Panel Design**

Michigan artist, Oliver Uberti, was commissioned by Sleeping Bear Dunes National Lakeshore to create interpretive art for new 11 informational panels at stops along the Pierce Stocking Scenic Drive. The new panels have now been installed at various points along the Scenic Drive. We initiated a project to develop a book based on this art work along with photographs and interviews and essays that describe the geology, history, and cultural stories of the Sleeping Bear Dunes area. We will develop this plan in 2019.



### **Historic Agricultural Landscape Maintenance – Collaboration with Preserve Historic Sleeping Bear**

Field clearing and maintenance to maintain historic agricultural landscape is led by Historic Sleeping Bear Dunes. The Friends of Sleeping Bear Dunes assist by coordinating volunteers in the mowing activity. About 900 acres were mowed by 7 volunteers, who provided over 300 volunteer hours of labor.

**Echo Valley Mountain Bike Trail** – Early stage discussions have begun with interested members of the community, SLBE 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. No funds have been spent at this point, but some volunteer time has been used to prepare for an Environmental Assessment beginning in 2019.

**Adopt-A-Trail** – Fifty-eight volunteers signed up to walk their assigned hiking trail, perform minor maintenance like clearing down branches and report maintenance issues like down trees and erosion. One of the most rewarding aspects of being an Adopt-A-Trail volunteer is interacting with park visitors on the trail – answering questions and providing insight about the area, the park, and the trail they are on. Over 53 miles of trails were monitored. Volunteers walked their trail at least once a month on their own schedule. Volunteers logged 1,852 hours.

**Adopt-A-Beach** – Eighty-seven volunteers contributed over 1,278 hours picking up 1,763 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 conduct at a minimum, one Beach Patrol at least once per month on the individual's schedule.

**Adopt-A-River** – Two river cleanups events were held this year with about 10 volunteers in each group. A few volunteers also did river cleanups on their own schedule. A total of 100 volunteer hours were provided. The Traverse Area Paddling Club also conducted three events to clean the Platte River. We hope to increase the river patrol activity on the Platte River and Crystal River in 2019.

**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. Six volunteers conduct these cleanups.



## Summary of Financial Support to Sleeping Bear Dunes National Lakeshore

### Friends of Sleeping Bear Dunes - FY 2018 Support

Project	Support
Accessibility Improvements	\$42,775.18
Kettles Trail	\$23,387.32
SBHT Operations	\$12,926.84
Snowshoe Pgm (transportation)	\$10,016.26
Snowshoes & supplies	\$1,886.94
Educational Publications	\$6,861.00
Sign-making Machine	\$4,989.00
Maintenance Equipment (saws)	\$1,350.00
Museum Vacuums	\$1,293.95
Forest Treatment Equip.	\$2,101.14
Storm Recovery (trees)	\$1,345.08
Bark Ranger Supplies	\$1,422.10
Cavity Nesting Bird Screens	\$898.50
Park Concerts	\$900.00
Thoreson Restoration	\$891.13
Miscellaneous	\$865.06
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$113,909.50</b>

### Board of Directors

- Kerry Kelly, Chairman
- Ross Stephenson, Vice Chairman
- Doug Baker, Secretary
- Jerry Peterson, Treasurer
- Joan Antle
- David Borton
- Jeff Brown
- Jeanne Esch
- George Quarderer
- Chuck Schaeffer
- Bill Stott
- Steve Young