



# ANNUAL NEWSLETTER

WINTER 2019

## Perspective From the Chairman

It's with much pride, I reflect on the past 15 years of my involvement with the Friends. Due to term limits, 2019 is my last year on the Board of Directors.



Since joining Friends I've seen our support for the Park grow many times over and I could not have imagined how big our role would become enhancing the visitor experience. This newsletter lists many of our achievements and programs – many of which depend on your continued support – both as volunteers and through donations.

Our growth and contributions would not have happened without many talented and dedicated staff volunteers. I want to thank all of those I've worked with over the years for their friendships and professionalism.

I'm not disappearing! I'll continue to be the Sleeping Bear Heritage Trail Manager and I'll be volunteering on projects throughout the Park. I'm happy to report that the Friends are in good hands with our new Chairman – Jeff Brown and I look forward to the next chapter in the history of Friends of Sleeping Bear Dunes!

*Kerry Kelly*

## Celebrating 25 Years of Support for Sleeping Bear Dunes

In 1994, a group of about a dozen local residents decided to form a group that would work in partnership with the park to protect resources and help ensure visitors have a wonderful experience.

From these modest beginnings, the Friends of Sleeping Bear Dunes has blossomed into a robust, sustainable organization with over 800 members who, in 2019, raised \$133,000 in donations and reported 13,689 volunteer hours in direct support of our National Lakeshore!



As we celebrate 25 years supporting Sleeping Bear Dunes National Lakeshore, we are proud of the synergistic relationship we have developed with park management and staff.

### Why are the Friends Needed?

For years, the number of visitors to our National Lakeshore has steadily increased, yet during this same period, park budgets and staff levels have been significantly cut. Friends of Sleeping Bear Dunes exists to help the National Park Service reach beyond its current staff and budget limitations.

The Friends provides volunteers and financial grants that help bridge this gap and we remain an all-volunteer, non-profit organization.

Over the years, we built trails, educational exhibits, bought equipment and paid for college interns for all park divisions.

Members of the community, local businesses, and park visitors recognized our work and joined the organization.

Today, our programs include operating and maintaining the Sleeping Bear Heritage Trail with a volunteer Trail Crew who keep up the trail and Trail Ambassadors who ride, walk, or ski the trail to assist other users. Other programs organize volunteers to walk our beaches, hike our trails, and

*(continued on page 4)*

## Congratulations Friends!

*"Sleeping Bear Dunes National Lakeshore is proud to call Friends of Sleeping Bear Dunes a park partner."*

*"Over the last 25 years, their support has made an impact far beyond the park boundary. Not only have they made a positive impact on the visitor experience in the park, they have created thousands of advocates for the Lakeshore along the way."*

*"We look forward to seeing what this partnership will bring in the next 25 years."*



Scott Tucker,  
Superintendent  
Sleeping Bear Dunes  
National Lakeshore



### DONATE TODAY ONLINE AT [FRIENDSOFSLEEPINGBEAR.ORG](http://FRIENDSOFSLEEPINGBEAR.ORG)

Funding for our projects depends on individuals like you, who have a passion to make Sleeping Bear Dunes National Lakeshore an even better place to experience nature, history, and to recreate. (See Page 4)

## Sleeping Bear Heritage Trail Popular this Summer

With fewer beaches this past summer due to high lake levels, about 68,000 people used the Sleeping Bear Heritage Trail! Many young families especially enjoyed the summer-time biking and in the winter, the groomed trails were very popular with cross-country skiers.

The Friends Trail Crew maintained the entire SBHT with blowers, chainsaws, and mowers to provide a safe trail experience. They also groomed the trail for cross-country skiing between Empire and Glen Arbor and from Glen Arbor to Port Oneida Road. The Friends also assisted the Leelanau Conservancy in grooming their Palmer Woods

property and received their "Volunteer of the Year" award for their outstanding efforts. The 28 Trail Crew volunteers reported 1,214 hours in FY 2019.

We installed 8 new benches and 3 new bike racks. Ken Rosiek built the benches and the bike pedestals. Tom Obrecht and Kerry Kelly fashioned the steel parts and did the assembly. We now have benches and bike racks in all approved locations along the SBHT.

### Work to Begin on New 5-mile Segment!

A study work group worked for several months before making a recommendation

on the exact trail route for the new segment of the SBHT from Bohemian Road (CR-669) to Good Harbor Trail (CR-651). Engineering and design will begin soon on this paved and boardwalk, 5-mile segment. The Friends will begin working with TART Trails to raise funds for construction.

When complete, the Friends will maintain this new section of the SBHT and will build and install new trail furniture items, like benches. Donating directly toward these future trail enhancements is very popular among our members, especially in memorial donations. Please use our online donation form and indicate who you'd like to honor with a trail bench.

## NEWSFLASH! New Kettles Trail Opens!

The new Kettles Trail ribbon-cutting ceremony took place on October 20th.



A nice turnout of Park leadership, Friends staff and volunteers, donors to the project, and members of the public gathered to take part in the celebration.

The 3.0 mile trail takes hikers through a pristine natural area to experience glacial moraine kettles, swales, and bogs in a 500-acre section of Sleeping Bear Dunes National Lakeshore that has never been developed.

Planning for this trail started in 2013, and construction began in 2018. Trail construction was a cooperative effort led by the park's Roads, Trails, and Grounds team. Volunteers and trail crews from SEEDS and YouthWork (a division of Child and Family Services) worked side-by-side with park staff to build this trail in some very difficult forested hills and valleys.

This part of the park is isolated from the rest of the park in a geologically unique area created by receding glaciers 10,000 years ago. The steep hills and valleys are covered with wildflowers in the spring, and because of its higher elevation, winter snows provide the some of the best snow-shoeing in the park.

The trailhead parking lot is located southeast of Glen Lake near the intersection of Fritz Rd and Baatz Rd. 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. It ends with a platform overlooking one of the kettles.

## Preventative Search & Rescue Makes BIG Impact

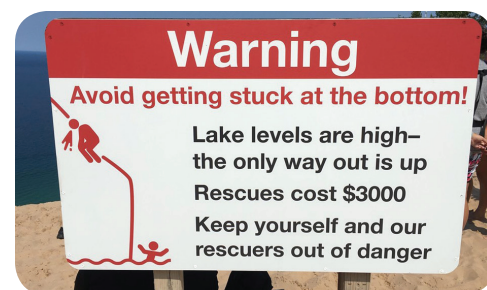
Sleeping Bear Dunes National Lakeshore handles a significant number of Search and Rescue (SAR) events each year. Most of these occur at the Dune Climb or Pierce Stocking Scenic Drive #9 Lake Michigan Overlook.

For the past three years, the Friends have supplemented the Park Law Enforcement staff with volunteers who provide informational contacts with visitors to help them be prepared for the rigors of these hikes and climbs. New improved warning signs

were also installed and communications strategies were implemented.

Due to the high water levels this year, efforts were focused on Pierce Stocking Scenic Drive #9 Overlook, where erosion resulted in no beach at the bottom of the bluff and blocked shorelines. Consequently, anyone who ventured down to the lake would have to climb back out.

16 PSAR volunteers provided 475 hours of service and made 11,879 visitor contacts. **As a result, at #9 there were only 2 calls**



**to 911 and only 4 rescues. At the Dune Climb, there were just 6 calls and 6 rescues.** These are historic low numbers. In 2016, prior to the Friends involvement, there were 56 calls to 911 and 31 rescues.



## Track Chair Program is HUGE SUCCESS in its First Year!

“The Track Chair Program opens up the opportunity to get on a trail to people who may never have been able to have this experience,” said Jeanne Esch, Friends of Sleeping Bear Dunes accessibility committee member. “It is really rewarding to watch chair users beam with joy when they can be independent and head out on a trail that they would never have been able to go on, or to see a view of Lake Michigan that is normally unattainable for them.”

Many heart-warming stories emerged from the new program – the first of its kind in a National Park! We received national media coverage with stories running on CNN, MSN, The Weather Channel, and many others – even a Japanese language publication!

The track chair is completely free to use and reservations were popular all summer. 20 volunteers assisted 70 hikers with Track Chair experiences and dedicated 746 hours to this program.



Additionally, a number of parks and organizations around the country have contacted the Friends to learn how they can implement a Track Chair Program of their own!

Currently, the Track Chair is only used on the Bay View Trail Farm Loop, which can be accessed from the Kelderhouse Farm on Port Oneida Road. More information is available at [trackchair.org](http://trackchair.org).

### New Track Chair Purchased!

The tremendous success of the program and generous donations from individuals has allowed the Friends to purchase a second, smaller track chair! The new chair is a better fit for small adults and older children. This will allow the program to serve a wider population and provides the opportunity for two track chair hikers to go on an outing together.

### “Beaches and Trails for ALL!”

Accessibility is a primary focus of the Friends and the National Lakeshore. Initiatives can be found throughout the park.

- Sleeping Bear Heritage Trail – 17 miles of multi-use accessible trail. Visit [SBHTmap.org](http://SBHTmap.org)
- Fully enhanced Trail Maps with accessibility info at [friendsofsleepingbear.org/trails](http://friendsofsleepingbear.org/trails)
- Accessibility info on all inland & Lake Michigan beaches at [friendsofsleepingbear.org/beaches](http://friendsofsleepingbear.org/beaches)
- Fishing Piers at Loon and Bass Lakes
- Accessible Kayak Launch at Loon Lake
- Accessible Campsites at both campgrounds
- Accessible beach boardwalk and Beach Wheelchairs at the Cannery & Maritime Beach
- 1/3-mile hardened surface accessible trail at Kettles Trailhead

## Friends 'Adopt-A' Programs Popular with Volunteers

Each year, Friends volunteers help protect park resources and heighten visitor experiences through their participation in our 'Adopt-A' Programs. Many of these programs allow volunteers to do service projects on their own schedule, an hour or two at a time.

### Adopt-A-Trail

70 volunteers logged 2,001 hours in 2019 walking their assigned hiking trail, performing minor maintenance, reporting larger issues, and interacting with park visitors on the trail – a most rewarding experience! Over 53 miles of trails were monitored. Volunteers walked their trail at least once a month on their own schedule.

### Adopt-A-Beach

88 volunteers contributed over 1,466 hours, picking up 1,688 pounds of trash, including thousands of pieces of glass and plastic. Volunteers report safety and maintenance issues along 35 miles of shoreline. They



record the trash they pick up and report it to the Alliance for the Great Lakes. Volunteers conduct a Beach Patrol at least once per month on their schedule.

### Adopt-A-River

28 volunteers participated in two river clean-ups this past summer – one on the Crystal River and one on the Platte River. Throughout the summer, volunteers also paddle the rivers on their own schedule and accounted for 114 hours in 2019.



Please visit the VOLUNTEER section of the Friends website to discover all volunteer opportunities, including openings on our staff!

## Celebrating 25 Years of Support... (continued from page one)

paddle our rivers, reporting maintenance issues and picking up litter. We also assist the Park in developing new hiking and biking trails. Park visitors recognize our 13 visitor booklets that provide a variety of information about the park.

We strive to make the Park beaches, trails, and other facilities more accessible to people of all abilities. That means building accessible trails, installing hard-surface beach decks, and providing use of a track chair that allows people with mobility challenges to experience some of our hiking trails.

As we look back at the past 25 years, we can see the positive impact the Friends has made, and we look forward to building on that foundation for the next 25 years.

Upcoming big projects include adding another 5-mile section to the Sleeping Bear Heritage Trail and the Environmental Assessment of a proposed mountain bike trail.

Donations to our general fund are used for a variety of projects including: Visitor Enhancements – especially enhancements supporting greater accessibility, Resource Management – including the protection of endangered plant species and the removal of invasive species, food storage lockers at the campgrounds, greater law enforcement presence, equipment needs, park interns, and more projects in the works!



### Your Contributions at Work

Friends of Sleeping Bear Dunes is a 100% volunteer organization with minimal overhead (we have no offices). Be assured your donations go directly to support YOUR National Lakeshore.

#### SUPPORT FOR SLEEPING BEAR DUNES NATIONAL LAKESHORE – FY2019

Project	Support Provided
Building of Kettles Trail	\$46,347
Accessibility Initiatives & Programs	\$24,586
Educational Publications	\$10,669
SBHT Operations	\$14,247
Snowshoe Field-trip Program	\$8,090
Book Publication: <i>The Life of the Sleeping Bear</i>	\$3,466
<b>Park Partner Projects:</b>	
52" Saw Stop Table Saw	\$5,226
Autoclave for Water Quality Lab	\$4,275
Traffic Counters	\$1,819
Teacher-Ranger-Teacher Program	\$1,350
Other Park Partner Projects	\$1,886
Miscellaneous	\$620
<b>Total Support</b>	<b>\$122,581</b>

### Friends of Sleeping Bear Dunes Mission:

Protecting resources and heightening visitor experiences in partnership with Sleeping Bear Dunes National Lakeshore.

### Become a Friends Member – it's EASY!

- ☐ Volunteer for one of our programs
- ☐ Become a staff member
- ☐ Make a donation
- ☐ Of course we'd love it if you do all three!



### Volunteer!

- If you are already a volunteer, just keep volunteering or try out some of our other programs.
- If you would like to volunteer, go to our website ([friendsofsleepingbear.org/volunteer](http://friendsofsleepingbear.org/volunteer)). Read the job descriptions and fill out the Volunteer Registration form.



### Donate Today!

- Use the enclosed return envelope to donate by check or credit card.
- Click the DONATE button on the website: [friendsofsleepingbear.org](http://friendsofsleepingbear.org).
- Mail a check to:  
Friends of Sleeping Bear Dunes  
P.O. Box 545, Empire, MI 49630



**THANK YOU FOR YOUR PAST DONATIONS. YOUR CONTINUED SUPPORT IS VERY MUCH APPRECIATED.**

*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*