



VOLUNTEER

**NATIONAL
PARK
SERVICE**

Handbook for Volunteers-In-Parks

Sleeping Bear Dunes National Lakeshore

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United States Department of the Interior

NATIONAL PARK SERVICE
Sleeping Bear Dunes National Lakeshore
9922 Front Street (Hwy M-72)
Empire, MI 49630

THANK YOU for volunteering at Sleeping Bear Dunes National Lakeshore!

Volunteers are integral to the success of park operations. When you agree to share your talents and skills with us, we know you are also offering a very valuable resource – your time. I will work tirelessly to create opportunities that are mutually beneficial to volunteers, and the NPS, in order to achieve our mission. As a member of the Sleeping Bear Dunes team, you are part of a group of people who preserve treasured resources and provide visitors with both an educational and enjoyable visit.

This Volunteer Handbook will provide you with an overview of the NPS and Sleeping Bear Dunes National Lakeshore, in addition to helping you gain a better understanding of your rights and responsibilities as a NPS and Lakeshore volunteer. Feel free to contact me anytime with questions or concerns, and I always want to hear your suggestions on how to improve the program.

Sincerely,

Matt Mohrman
Volunteer Coordinator
231.326.4729
matthew_mohrman@nps.gov

Be Professional - Be Safe - Have Fun



Mission

Preserve and Protect

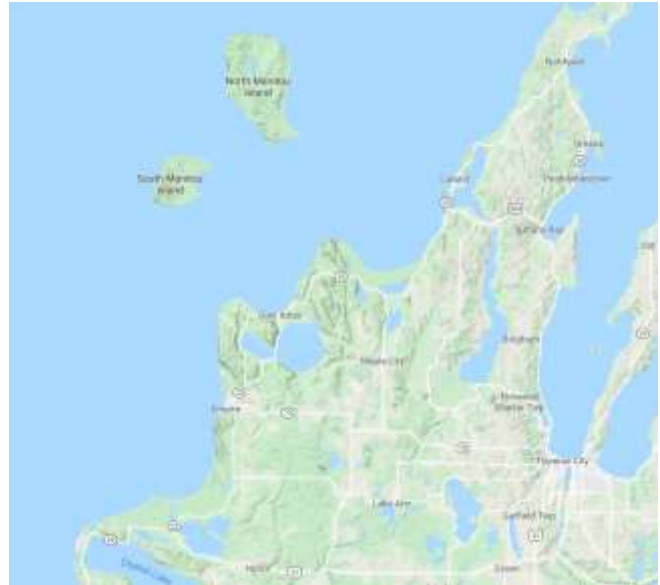
National Park Service

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. The Park Service cooperates with partners to extend the benefits of natural and cultural resource conservation and outdoor recreation throughout this country and the world.

Sleeping Bear Dunes National Lakeshore

Our mission is contained within the establishing legislation, signed into law on October 21, 1970.

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America; the Congress finds that certain outstanding natural features, including forests, beaches, dune formations, and ancient glacial phenomena, exist along the mainland shore of Lake Michigan and on certain nearby islands in Benzie and Leelanau" Counties, Michigan, and that such features ought to be preserved in their natural setting and protected from developments and uses which would destroy the scenic beauty and natural character of the area. In order to accomplish this purpose for the benefit, inspiration, education, recreation, and enjoyment of the public. In carrying out the provisions of this Act, the Secretary shall administer and protect the Sleeping Bear Dunes National Lakeshore in a manner which provides for recreational opportunities consistent with the maximum protection of the natural environment within the area.



Significance worthy of a Congressional Act

The 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.

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.



NPS Values

The foundation which guides our conduct

SHARED STEWARDSHIP- a commitment to resource stewardship & the global preservation community.

EXCELLENCE – continually 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 NPS and SLBE, as such, your conversations with visitors should reflect *policy*, not personal opinions.
- Gambling is prohibited on federal property. This includes raffles, lotteries, and sports pools.
- Turn in lost items to the lost-and-found at the visitor center and complete a 10-166, lost-and-found report.
- 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.



VIP Program

Accomplish park goals through mutually beneficial volunteer experiences



Overview

The National Park Service Volunteers In Parks (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 NPS 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 administration of the Sleeping Bear Dunes VIP program.

Volunteer Supervisors

Each volunteer activity is supervised by a park, or partner, representative from the appropriate division. Volunteer supervisors are responsible for ensuring their VIP's understand the job descriptions, safety precautions, providing job-specific training, setting schedules, and reporting volunteer hours to the coordinator. A supervisor's checklist is available in appendix A.

Who Can Volunteer

Anyone can volunteer, although some positions require special skills and training. 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. If you are accepted to a volunteer opportunity, you will need to complete and sign the Volunteer Services Agreement OF301a. **You must sign a Volunteer Services Agreement (OF301a) form prior to working!** Without a volunteer agreement in place, you will not be covered by any of the workers protections the NPS offers.
2. Your volunteer supervisor will brief you, and give you copies of the position's full description and its job hazard analysis if needed. You and your supervisor must agree on these details. Your duties should not go beyond those agreed upon and documented.



10 Basic Guidelines



1. **Be Professional**, courteous, and helpful, remain patient with visitors. Stay neutral with your opinions.
2. **Be Safe** and proactive. 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. **Contact** visitors and ask questions
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 create the next generation of park stewards!

6. **VIPs should never be alone with a child.** Ensure there is a parent, guardian, staff, or other adult present.
7. The **Visitor Comment Form** is a great way for visitors to voice concerns. Access it online through the contact us button and a hard copy is located here in in Appendix C.
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. **VIP's cannot enforce laws/regulations.** Only our Protection Rangers can do that, everyone else is making educational contacts with visitors. Remind and educate visitors on the rules. However, if they do not seem receptive, disengage and back away. Use good judgment and do not provoke conflict.



Bill of Rights & Responsibilities

You are a member of the team

Volunteers have...

- The right to be treated with respect; as a co-worker and not as free help.
- The right to suitable assignments and consideration for personal preferences.
- The right to proper job training and safety equipment.
- The right to feel comfortable when making suggestions and offering candid opinions.
- The right to receive workers compensation for injuries incurred while actively volunteering.

- The responsibility to follow all NPS and SLBE policies, rules and guidelines.
- The responsibility to say “NO” to **any situation** in which you are uncomfortable.
- The responsibility to be professional and courteous at all times.



Visitor Interactions

People will care for what they first care about.

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.



Tips on Contacting 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



Uniforms

Look Sharp

The uniform designates you as an official volunteer for the National Park Service and 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 a professional image for 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.



Safety

It's a choice you make every day

We take the safety and well-being of our volunteers very seriously. You will receive training for any activity you are asked to complete. 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 equipment rather than their own personal gear. 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 for the loss.

Vehicles: To operate a government vehicle a volunteer must possess a valid driver's license, pass GSA Defensive Driving, and have been briefed on current SOP's.

Radios: Some VIPs may be required to complete training on how to use the park radios in case of emergencies.

Computers: Supervisors will initiate the BI and access process with admin if a VIP needs to work on an NPS computer.

Ticks: Be aware there are an increasing number of ticks in park and Lyme disease is present. Take preventative measures (repellent, tick checks, etc.) SLBE policy S-16 covers all matters pertaining to ticks.

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.



By the Numbers



Sleeping Bear Dunes National Lakeshore

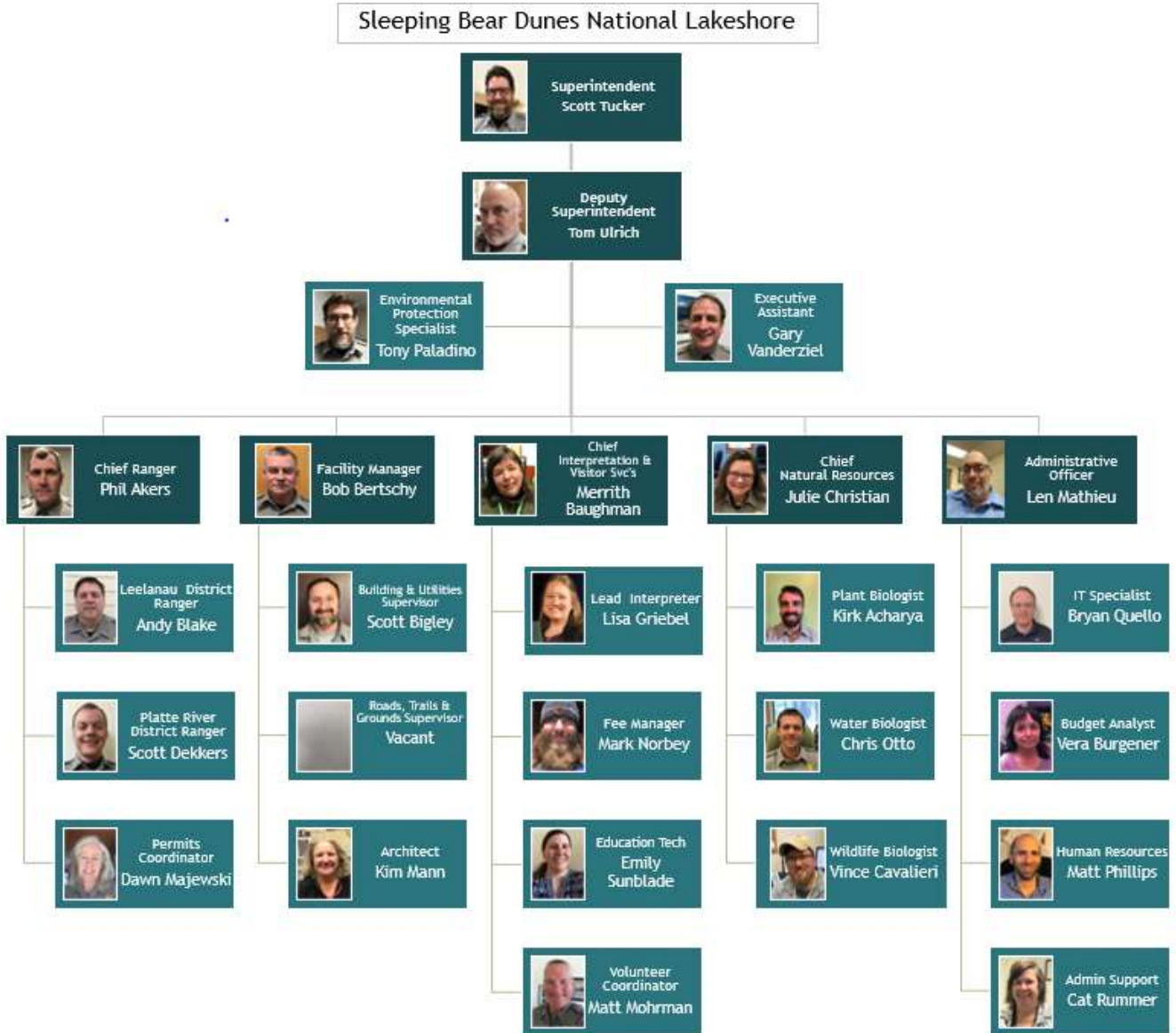
- Established: 10/21/1970
- Acres: 71,210
- Miles of Shoreline: 65 (35 on mainland)
- Visitation: 1.7M (2021)
- Miles of Trails: 108
- Inland Lakes: 26
- Average Summertime Temps: 77 / 58
- Employees: ~130
- Volunteers: ~2000 / ~60K Hours
- Budget: FY21 – 4.2M
- How do I volunteer?
--Contact VIP coordinator, matthew_mohrman@nps.gov

National Park Service

- Established: 8/25/1916
- Units: 423
- Acres: 85 Million
- Visitation: 297M (2021)
- Employees: ~22,000
- Volunteers: ~279K/6M hours
- Budget: FY21 - \$3.3B
- How to get a job: [usajobs.gov](https://www.usajobs.gov)



Organization Chart



The Legend of the Sleeping Bear

Once, long ago, across the great lake in Wisconsin, there was a great hunger and many people and animals died.

A bear and her cubs, desperate for food, left that place to swim the long distance to the other side of the lake. After a while the cubs became very tired, and so the bear said “*Try hard, the land is not very far.*” But, gradually the cubs weakened. Exhausted, one cub sank into the water when they were within sight of the land, soon the other one also drowned.



The bear’s heart was broken, but she could not do anything. She waded ashore and climbed to the bluff to lay down looking out on the water where her cubs had died. However, both of them surfaced as two little islands. And so, the bear still lies there now – looking after her children.

The Disappearing Sleeping Bear Dune

By: Frank C. Gates

[Ecology](#) Vol. 31, No. 3 (pp. 386-392)

July 1950

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.



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-Building/Farm

Preserve Historic Sleeping Bear, in cooperation with Sleeping Bear Dunes National Lakeshore manages this program. Volunteers monitor their adopted historic buildings or farmstead once or twice each month in spring, summer, fall, and if possible, winter, to report animal entry, evidence of intrusions, and features needing immediate repair.

Adopt-a-Landscape:

Preserve Historic Sleeping Bear, in cooperation with Sleeping Bear Dunes National Lakeshore manages this program Garden -. Volunteers help with flower and/or vegetable gardens at historic sites.

Orchard – Volunteers help prune historic orchards– especially in the Port Oneida Rural Historic District. Must have attended at least one Pruning Workshop at Sleeping Bear Dunes to obtain required training or provide other certification.

Field Restoration – Volunteers monitor and remove invasive and non-native vegetation to maintain the boundaries and fields of historic farms, once a month in the spring, summer and fall.

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.

Bark Ranger:

This volunteer opportunity is managed by the Natural Resources - Wildlife division and volunteers work throughout the park. The purpose of the program is to expand our education and outreach opportunities to the public with Bark Rangers (dogs) and their owners as Sleeping Bear Dunes Ambassadors. Specialized training is required prior to performing this volunteer duty.

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. Specialized training is required prior to performing this duty.

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.

Historic Preservation

Preserve Historic Sleeping Bear, in cooperation with Sleeping Bear Dunes National Lakeshore manages this program. Volunteer helps repair or restore some of the 366 historic structures in the Park, from log cabins and farmhouses, to barns and outbuildings on the mainland and North Manitou Island. Group projects offered each spring/summer/fall, typically over a long weekend. Opportunities exist for small projects on an individual/flexible basis.

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.

Interpreters and Docents – Port Oneida Farms Heritage Center

Preserve Historic Sleeping Bear, in cooperation with Sleeping Bear Dunes National Lakeshore manages this program. Docent duties include greeting visitors, providing visitor information, sharing the history of Port Oneida, sales. Interpreters give various tours of historic sites or demonstrate a traditional craft/skill.

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 a resource, visitors, park facilities, construction, and special projects. These photographs can then be used for publicity, interpretive programs, documentation, and historical record.

Preventative Search and Rescue (PSAR)

This position is assigned to the Protective-Ranger Division and the work is performed at high-use and high-response areas of the park. The purpose of this program is to reduce rescue calls to these areas through education contacts with visitors. Specialized training is required prior to performing this duty.



Sleeping Bear Dunes Heritage Trail - Ambassador:

The Friends of Sleeping Bear Dunes in cooperation with Sleeping Bear Dunes National Lakeshore manage this program. The purpose of this program is to make educational and outreach contacts with visitors using the trail.

Sleeping Bear Dunes Heritage Trail - Trail Crew:

The Friends of Sleeping Bear Dunes in cooperation with Sleeping Bear Dunes National Lakeshore manage this program. This group of volunteers perform maintenance and grooming on the SBHT. Specialized training is required prior to performing this duty.

Track Chair Ambassador:

The Friends of Sleeping Bear Dunes in cooperation with Sleeping Bear Dunes National Lakeshore manage this program. The purpose of this program is to enhance the experience for mobility challenged visitors through use of the Track Chair. Specialized training is required prior to performing this duty.



Appendix A: Supervisors Checklist

Paperwork: Complete the Volunteer Agreement form (OF301a). This protects your VIP with federal workers compensation in the case of an accident. Include a description of duties. Forward the signed agreement to the VIP coordinator.

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

Hours: please be sure you and/or your VIPs are reporting 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.

New VIPs: If anyone is asking you how they can volunteer – have them contact me at matthew_mohrman@nps.gov and I will match them up with a volunteer opportunity.

Driving a GV: Reference appendix B of this manual on the following page.....

Interns: Reference the Intern Supplement as well, which contains other helpful intern specific information.



Appendix B: Driving a Government Vehicle (GV)

The Defensive Driving Course is required for staff and volunteers that operate GV's at Sleeping Bear Dunes.

- **GSA 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, and one is required to be completed prior to GV operation.

- 1) Go to this website <https://drivethru.gsa.gov/fmdtsys/dthome>
- 2) Then click on the "Defensive Driving Course" under the "Applications Access" heading (bottom left corner) on main page.
- 3) Your "tag number" is G62-0255S
- 4) Your email address is your standard NPS address (but personal addresses will also work if you don't have an NPS address).
- 5) Create your unique login ID and password.

- **VIP Supervisors** must cover the below items regarding GV Operations

- 1) Visually verify volunteer's valid driver's license.
- 2) Motor pool operations.
- 3) Fuel card; what can and can't be purchased with this card.
- 4) Receipt procedures.
- 5) What to do after a wreck or any damage to GV.
- 6) No cell phone use, at all, while driving.
- 7) No smoking in a GV.
- 8) Remember, you are representing the NPS and SLBE in a GV.
- 9) Be professional – Be Safe



Appendix C: Visitor Comment Form

Sleeping Bear Dunes

National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior

Sleeping Bear Dunes
National Lakeshore



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

