



Friends of Sleeping Bear Dunes

Annual Newsletter

2023



Friends of Sleeping Bear Dunes
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YEAR IN REVIEW

In 2023, the Friends of Sleeping Bear Dunes National Lakeshore continued its support of the National Park Service team and their efforts to enhance the visitor experience at the park and preserve the Lakeshore for many years to come. Our commitments, both through volunteer hours and financial donations, would not have been possible without our tremendous volunteers and supporters! Thank you for your many hours of volunteering, donations and dedication to our mission in helping to preserve and protect this special place. Here is a look at some of the projects and programs that the Friends held and supported this year:



PSAR

For the second year in a row, the Preventative Search and Rescue (PSAR) team made contact with over 30,000 visitors. The group, who shares safety messaging and educates visitors on potential safety hazards in the park, stepped up to accomplish this

in place of a full-time NPS PSAR staff member. For the fifth straight year, the combined number of 911 calls and Search and Rescues finished the season at under 20. This was in part due to PSAR volunteers providing 44 hiker assists, preventing the need for more urgent responses through early PSAR intervention.

The team provided community support by participating in a variety of activities including Dune Safety Day, the Glen Arbor Fire Department Open House, offering support for law enforcement at the M22 Challenge and volunteering for the Glen Arbor Half Marathon and the Sleeping Bear Marathon. The team continues to seek volunteers who can share safety messages before visitors hike, bike or swim in the park.



Star Parties

This year's Star Parties were a big hit! Many came out to observe and understand more about the night sky with the help of Park Rangers and the Grand Traverse Astronomical Society. This popular program continues to grow and is one of the reasons

the Friends and the park are seeking Dark Sky Certification. This certification will allow us to further protect the night sky from light pollution.



Accessibility Program

Our Accessibility Program continues to grow year-over-year, expanding our commitment to providing even greater accessibility for all. With the addition of our third track chair, the team of volunteers was

able to help 60 visitors from Leelanau County to Germany and ages 10 to 91 experience the park! Thank you to our amazing volunteers who are fully committed to this program. These volunteers must accompany every use of these chairs and we've never had to cancel a hike due to not having a host!



Snowshoe Program

The Friends and the NPS hosted 1,890 students for our Snowshoe Experience field trips last winter after several years' absence. Of those,

1,290 participated in the broader "Wandering the Watershed" curriculum arc. Designed for 3rd-5th graders, the arc involved a multi-touch approach of a synchronous or asynchronous pre-visit program, winter in-person field trip to the Lakeshore, beach-cleaning design challenge in the classroom using science, technology, engineering & math (STEM) kits, and a final in-person or virtual wrap-up visit. Almost all of the 1,890 students came from local schools within 50 miles of the Lakeshore.



Adopt-A-Trail

This year was another busy season for Adopt-A-Trail hikers! While busy, 2023 was thankfully quieter than past seasons with very little intense weather events causing major issues on the trails. The Friends hosted a National

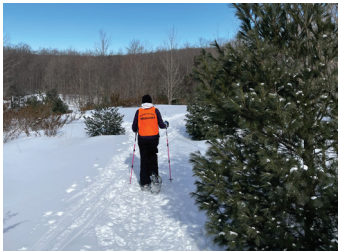
Trails Day event in June, which engaged over 130 visitors and seasoned volunteers to get out, hike a trail and to remind folks to “leave it better than you found it”.



Adopt-A-Beach

More than 100 Adopt-A-Beach volunteers spent 1,350 hours collecting over 2,300 pounds of trash from park beaches in 2023. Trash collected this year included cigarette butts, plastic pieces, balloons, personal hygiene

products, charcoal, a half-buried kayak and many more items. We thank these volunteers for their efforts and encourage everyone to leave no trace in the park.



Sleeping Bear Heritage Trail Ambassador Volunteers

Eighty-four SBHT Ambassadors filed 843 reports logging a total of 2,012 hours on the Heritage Trail this year. Thank you all!

And a special thank you to the two eagle-eyed volunteers who spotted and reported the beginning of a small fire near the northern end of the Trail. In the end, 14 acres were burned. Containment was led by Glen Lake Fire and Rescue, and included participation by nine firefighting units from throughout Leelanau County.



Yoga at the Beach

Yoga on the Beach had a great season in 2023, with beautiful weather and great participation. Every Friday from June through September, this fun program was held at the Maritime Museum in Glen Haven. The classes were

donation based and with many attendees (one class had a record breaking 66 attendees on the spacious beach) we were able to raise funds for the Friends.



Piping Plover Conservation

The Friends continue to support the NPS team in their efforts to study and protect these special birds that call Sleeping Bear Dunes home. Piping plover are a threatened species and in order

to protect them, the park has a robust preservation and protection program specifically for the birds. The Friends aid these efforts by providing funds to hire NPS staff and purchase supplies like spotting scopes and volunteers. In 2023, the Friends were awarded \$10,000 from the *Top Family Foundation* and \$25,000 from the *Andrew R. and Janet F. Miller Foundation* for piping plover protection.



Dune Center Garage

The Dune Center Garage is now complete! This project, several years in the making, was a priority project for both the Friends and the NPS. This solves storage issues for the NPS team by housing key equipment for

the park. The garage was funded by the Friends and through your generous donations.



Business Support

Several area businesses stepped up to help the Friends through generous donations in 2023. Oryana Community Co-Op selected the Friends for their Groceries for Good program

where a portion of the proceeds from shoppers on September 14th were donated to the Friends! Cherry Republic, Northwoods Hardware, Crystal River Outfitters and many others contribute donations, time and space to the Friends' efforts.

New Grants

This year has been a banner year for our Grants Team. The Friends apply for grants from charitable foundations that support national parks, natural resource preservation, outdoor education, and similar causes related to our mission. We received a total of \$66,500 in grants to spend on programs in the last fiscal year and this year, we have so far received almost \$161,800. Major donors who supported many of our programs have been the National Park Foundation, the Andrew R. and Janet F. Miller Foundation, the Top Family Foundation, the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative, the Grand Traverse Regional Community Foundation, and the Conrad N. Hilton Foundation.



Thank you to all
of our Volunteers!





2023
STATS

11,425
Volunteer Hours Completed

316
Volunteers Added

60
Track Chair Users Hosted

1350
Volunteer Hours Spent Picking Up
2360

Pounds of Trash Through
Adopt-A-Beach Program

2,905
Volunteers Hours Spent on the
Adopt-A-Trail Program

30,000+
PSAR Visitor Contacts

Are you ready to help the *Friends* and *Sleeping Bear Dunes*?



Our generous and dedicated volunteers are the backbone of the Friends. Their time and efforts to support a place we love is the reason why so many can enjoy the park in a clean and safe way!

The Friends of Sleeping Bear Dunes is an all-volunteer organization and we have a wide range of volunteer opportunities to choose from. We are always looking for additional volunteers! If you like connecting with visitors; can clear debris while paddling, hiking or riding along the trails; can assist with accessibility to the park or help at community events, we would love your help!

To view our various volunteer program descriptions, visit our website and look under the 'volunteer' tab.

[www.friendsofsleepingbear.org/
volunteer-job-descriptions](http://www.friendsofsleepingbear.org/volunteer-job-descriptions)

Right now, we have a particular need for PSAR volunteers and trail maintenance program leaders. We look forward to hearing from you, answering any questions you may have and connecting you with the perfect role within our organization!



Each and every year, I am amazed at the tremendous efforts our volunteers and supporters make to support Sleeping Bear Dunes, a place we all love dearly. Because of you, we have been able to accomplish much this year. From helping more than one million visitors experience this amazing place and helping the park to provide educational programs to completing a new garage at the Dune Climb and publishing a new version of our popular hiking trail booklet, you have truly made a difference through your volunteerism and donations. Our mission to recruit volunteers and raise money to support the park remains, and in that, we continued to reach new milestones in 2023.

We have so much to look forward to in 2024 and beyond but we need your support. The NPS continues to face budget cuts and staffing challenges, making our efforts more important than ever. Your generous donations of time and money will allow us to support programs and projects that would otherwise not be funded. Through your support we can increase our efforts to expand the Sleeping Bear Heritage Trail, provide Dark Sky Parties, augment our accessibility program, increase our PSAR efforts and so much more.

Thank you again for your support. I hope you will consider helping us to protect the precious resources of the park and enhance the visitor experience even more in 2024 and beyond!

- Kerry Kelly
Board Chairman



This was a year of both growth and determination. We continue to learn how to do more with less but our volunteers show up each and every day without fail to supplement the work of the Lakeshore team. Your National Lakeshore remains a place of respite where people can connect with themselves and nature. In 2023, we welcomed more than 1.5 million visitors to the Lakeshore, and we could not have the impact we do without the dedicated service of you, our volunteers.

To me, impact is not just how many visitors come to the Lakeshore - it's the many ways our team and volunteers connect with visitors, protect wildlife and the landscape, and make a positive difference on Sleeping Bear Dunes National Lakeshore for generations to come. I am excited about the educational programming, Park improvements, piping plover protections, Dark Sky certification and other programs in progress due to volunteers raising their hands to make these happen.

These are just a few examples of the things we can not do without the assistance of volunteers and resources provided by groups like the Friends. Thank you from the entire staff of Sleeping Bear Dunes National Lakeshore.

- Scott Tucker
Superintendent
Sleeping Bear Dunes National Lakeshore

Friends statement: The Friends of Sleeping Bear Dunes is a 501(c)(3) organization whose mission is protecting resources and heightening visitor experiences in partnership with Sleeping Bear Dunes National Lakeshore.

SUPPORT YOUR FRIENDS

Donate Today

You can make a donation by:

Going to the *Donate/Donate Now* tab on our site friendsofsleepingbear.org

or

Returning the enclosed remittance envelope

or

Scanning the QR code



Planned Giving Planned giving enables donors like you to create permanent endowment funds that address community needs in perpetuity. What better way to support the Friend's mission than with an enduring legacy.

Your gifts ensure a current and future thriving, vibrant and engaged community. Foundation endowments and giving vehicles assure that the programs and activities serving the Park community will be sustained.

You can make a difference during your lifetime or by leaving a legacy that will impact the community for years to come through planned giving. Please feel free to reach out to our Treasurer, at FOSBDtreasurer@gmail.com

The Friends of Sleeping Bear Dunes supports the National Lakeshore by providing both volunteers and financial assistance for projects and programs that may otherwise go unfunded. We can only do this through the generous donations of supporters like you. With your support, we are able to help the park host star parties, Anishinaabe educational programming, provide bark rangers, protect piping plover, support park interns and so much more.

These are just some of the many programs we support. A list along with additional details on each program can be found on our website under the 'Donate/How to Donate' tab. Here, you can direct your donation to specific programs of your choice or make a general donation to the Friends.



SPECIAL FUNDRAISERS



In 2024, the Friends is looking to expand our Accessibility Program and International Dark Sky Park Certification efforts and we need your help!

Our Track Chair program has been a game-changer in making the park accessible to all and we seek to build

on that with a new *Duet Bike*. This wheelchair bicycle tandem, will be our newest mobility device and allow families and friends to enjoy a bike ride through the park together.



Photo by Mary Lundeberg

The Friends and NPS team are seeking International Dark Sky Certification. As a certified Dark Sky Place, we show our commitment to protecting the night sky and nocturnal environment from artificial light sources. Your donation will help to provide low emission lights, light covers and light measuring tools to help us achieve this goal.

Statement Of Support

Income Projects

Book and Merchandise	\$2,360
Educational Publication	\$16,660
Other Income	\$6,220
Total	\$25,230

Expenditures Projects

SHBT Operations	\$9,360
Mountain Bike Trail	\$18,790
PSAR	\$1,730
Plover Conservation	\$35,400
Dark Sky	\$250
Snowshoe Field Trip Program	\$3,880
Accessibility Initiatives and Programs	\$9,590
Anishinaabe Programming	\$1,980
Garage Construction	\$109,220
Other Programs	\$0
Total	\$190,200

Park Priority Projects

Park Improvements	\$2,000
Interactive Items for Bear Force One	\$610
Spotting Scopes for Plovers	\$1,270
Supplies for Deer Camera Study	\$2,500
Emergency Services Training	\$3,000
Class A Commercial Drivers License Training	\$5,000
Replacement Air Filters for Water Quality Lab	\$1,800
Trail Tools	\$3,800
Control Tactics/Use of Force Training	\$2,500
Media Supplies	\$2,090
Battery Blowers	\$1,100
Piping Plover Management Supplies	\$1,400
Two Phillips Heartstart AEDs	\$7,000
Portable Interpretive Signs	\$740
Enclosed Snowmobile Trailer	\$12,350
Total	\$47,150

TOTAL SUPPORT \$262,580

Thank you to our 2022-2023 Business Supporters

Art's Tavern
Cherry Republic
Cottage Books
Crystal River Outfitters
LVR Rentals
Northwoods Hardware
Oryana Food Cooperative

Are you a company or business looking to help the Friends and Sleeping Bear Dunes? Contact our team at info@friendsofsleepingbear.org for special opportunities to learn more about our Business Supporters program and get your team involved!

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Open, Vice Chair
William Ichord, Secretary
Steve Klein, Treasurer
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