



National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior

Sleeping Bear Dunes NL
9922 Front Street
Empire, MI 49630
213-326-4700 phone
www.nps.gov/slbe/
www.nps.gov

Sleeping Bear Dunes NL News Release

Release Date: November 16, 2016

Contact: Kevin Skerl, kevin_skerl@nps.gov, 231-326-4750

Platte River Mouth Restoration and Access Plan/Environmental Assessment is Available for Review

EMPIRE, MI - Sleeping Bear Dunes National Lakeshore (National Lakeshore) Superintendent Scott Tucker announced today that the National Park Service (NPS) has made the Platte River Mouth Restoration and Access Plan/Environmental Assessment (EA) available for public review and comment.

The Platte River is located in the southern portion of the National Lakeshore and discharges into Lake Michigan. Benzie County owns and manages a recreational boat launch at Platte River Point, approximately 900 feet from the river mouth, at the end of Lake Michigan Road. Dredging between the boat launch and river mouth has been performed regularly since 1968 by the NPS or the State of Michigan. Dredging has typically occurred after Labor Day, primarily at the sand bars at the river mouth. A large quantity of stockpiled dredge spoils (sand and gravel removed from the river) is located near the mouth of the river on the eastern side. Dredging of the river and continued deposition of spoils on the shore causes negative environmental impacts. Action is needed at this time to restore, to the fullest extent practical, the river mouth and its adjacent shorelines to a natural condition, while at the same time maintaining recreational boat access to Lake Michigan. This EA outlines and evaluates the environmental impacts of three alternatives.

The NPS proposed action is to implement Alternative 2: Restoration of Platte Point (the Preferred Alternative) where the existing dredge spoil piles along the river bank would be removed and the river banks restored to a more natural condition. Recreational boat access to Platte Bay would remain available via the existing boat ramp at Platte Point. However, the NPS would no longer conduct the annual fall dredging of the river.

Two other alternatives were evaluated. Under Alternative 1 (the “No Action” Alternative), no changes would be made to current NPS management practices. Recreational boat access to Platte Bay would be available via the existing boat ramp. Annual fall dredging of the Platte River would continue dependent upon funding availability and need. Dredging of the river would also continue to add to the dredge spoil pile on the eastern riverbank. However, alternative spoils management (e.g., in-water disposal or off-site disposal) could be considered and impacts evaluated as part of future permitting efforts. Under Alternative 3: Restoration and New Boat Access at Tiesma Road, the NPS would cease dredging the Platte River and conduct restoration actions as described in Alternative 2. In addition, the NPS would provide new recreational boat access to Platte Bay at Tiesma Road, east of Platte Point. The new infrastructure would include improvements to Tiesma Road, asphalt access road to the boat ramp, asphalt parking lot, removable geoweb boat ramp, installed seasonally, and a single vault restroom.

The Benzie County boat ramp would remain open for recreational boat use as determined by the County under all alternatives.

The National Lakeshore would like your thoughts on this Plan/EA. They encourage you to comment on the EA until the public comment period closes on **January 15, 2017**. The document may be electronically reviewed and comments may be submitted on the NPS Planning, Environment, and Public Comment (PEPC) website at parkplanning.nps.gov/platte. Paper copies are available for review at the National Lakeshore Visitor Center in Empire. A very limited number of paper copies may be available upon

Experience Your America™

request. You are encouraged to submit your comments electronically through PEPC. Alternatively, you may mail comments to: Superintendent, Sleeping Bear Dunes National Lakeshore, 9922 Front Street, Empire, MI 49630.

An informational meeting, including a brief presentation, is scheduled for **December 7, 2016** from 5:00 p.m. to 6:30 p.m. at the Philip A. Hart Visitor Center Auditorium in Empire. Park staff will be available to answer questions about the document. Comments may also be submitted in writing at the meeting.

We look forward to receiving your thoughts and opinions concerning the Platte River Mouth Restoration and Access Plan/Environmental Assessment. For more information, please contact Kevin Skerl, Chief of Natural Resources, at (231) 326-4750.

www.nps.gov/slbe

About the National Park Service. More than 20,000 National Park Service employees care for America's 413 national parks and work with communities across the nation to help preserve local history and create close-to-home recreational opportunities. Visit the National Park Service at www.nps.gov, on Facebook at www.facebook.com/nationalparkservice, Twitter at www.twitter.com/natlparkservice, and YouTube at www.youtube.com/nationalparkservice.

Experience Your America™

The National Park Service cares for special places saved by the American people so that all may experience our heritage.