

April 12, 2011

## **PORT ONEIDA LANDSCAPE MANAGEMENT PLAN/ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT PUBLIC SCOPING COMMENT SUMMARY**

The National Park Service (NPS) at Sleeping Bear Dunes National Lakeshore (National Lakeshore) has begun the process of planning how to best manage the landscapes of the Port Oneida Rural Historic District (Port Oneida). To do so, the NPS will prepare a Landscape Management Plan (Plan) and an associated Environmental Assessment (EA). The purpose of the Plan/EA is to explore the various ways in which the NPS might preserve landscapes in Port Oneida in order to protect cultural and natural resources and provide for visitor interpretive and recreational opportunities.

On November 4, 2010, a letter was mailed to 81 federal, state, and local agencies, elected officials, groups, and interested individuals asking for ideas on the future of Port Oneida, especially on visions for how the landscape will appear many years from now. We also asked for ideas on what impacts and issues should be considered in this planning effort. Simultaneously, the letter was placed on the park's website ([nps.gov/slbe](http://nps.gov/slbe)) with a link to the NPS Planning, Environment, and Public Comment (PEPC) website, which allows the public to comment electronically. On November 8, 2010, a press release was distributed electronically to the 42 media outlets in the National Lakeshore's media database. The official public comment period ended on December 17, 2010.

As a result, we received 113 comments from the PEPC website, eight emails, and six handwritten or typed letters, for a total of 127 comments. These comments will help set the stage for the major topics that the Plan/EA will address. Public input will continue to be invaluable in developing a plan that will make a lasting difference in the long-term management of Port Oneida. We thank all who commented and look forward to your comments on the draft Plan/EA that is expected to be available for review in summer 2011.

A number of comments, particularly relating to trails development, are beyond the scope of this Plan/EA. The main purposes of this Plan/EA are to identify and delineate field boundaries and to describe the "desired future condition" of those fields. The Plan/EA will build on decisions made in the *2008 Port Oneida Environmental Assessment* (2008 EA) and the *2009 General Management Plan/Wilderness Study/Environmental Impact Statement* (2009 GMP). The 2008 EA proposed a visitor center (Kelderhouse), employee housing (Goffar), additional small parking areas in the vicinity of the Eckherth and Ole Olsen Farms on Basch Road and at the Carsten Burfiend Farm on Port Oneida Road, roadside pull-offs, landscape stabilization, and trail development. Trail development was envisioned as a mowed or soft-surfaced hiking trail connecting the Kelderhouse Farm with the Martin Basch Farm and the Carsten Burfiend Farm, and connecting with other existing hiking trails. The Leelanau Scenic Heritage Trail (now called the Sleeping Bear Heritage Trail) was also considered in preparation of this Plan/EA. The 2009 GMP designated all of Port Oneida an "Experience History" zone, meaning that it is managed primarily to protect historic structures and landscapes.

The topics addressed by the public in these comments have been organized into six major subject areas that broadly describe the nature of the contents:

### **Trails and Roads:**

We received many comments about the need to expand horseback riding trails in the park, especially in Port Oneida. Commenters also mentioned associated facilities such as trail camps, water troughs, hitching posts, and toilet facilities, and emphasized the potential economic benefits of this activity on the area. Some commenters suggested combining horse and hiking trails, while others suggested that they be separated. The impact of new trails on the cultural landscape, particularly the Sleeping Bear Heritage

Trail, were a concern, and one commenter suggested that the Bay View Trail not be used as part of the Sleeping Bear Heritage Trail. Many commenters strongly suggested trail surfaces more in keeping with the rustic nature of Port Oneida, specifically, no asphalt. Other suggestions included reestablishing historic transportation linkages in Port Oneida, creating a “history trail” where visitors could travel from farm to farm, limiting privately-owned vehicle use, and keeping Basch Road rustic.

### **Visitor Activities:**

A number of commenters want Port Oneida used as “farmland, not as a static museum of a farmland community.” One person stated that “Port Oneida lacks LIFE—farmers, children, animals, and crops.” Many suggested living history or demonstration farms and it was suggested that some, but not all, be developed as such. There was a feeling that “opportunities for quiet contemplation” at rustic farmsteads was also important and some farmsteads should be stabilized only. Many believed that we should continue fostering use of the farmsteads by artists and writers. Creative partnerships for a number of activities were suggested, such as gardens, orchards, crops, a horse farm, honey bees, and gardening and pruning classes. More interpretation was suggested, including docent-guided tours, resident migration, the dock and shipping, historic archeology (the farmstead no longer standing), and Native Americans.

### **Developments:**

Some commenters were very interested in an unstaffed visitor center in Port Oneida, while another suggested that the one in Empire was sufficient. Commenters suggested no new buildings in Port Oneida and developments, if necessary, should be sited out of public view. Parking lots, if developed, should have a gravel or grass surface, not asphalt, and one commenter suggested a single parking lot for all of Port Oneida. A number of commenters suggested increasing the number of signs and information kiosks.

### **Field Characteristics:**

Comments ranged from returning Port Oneida to pre-human condition to developing crops. A few commenters mentioned removing buildings and allowing the fields to revert to forest. Most commenters, however, wished to see the fields remain. Mowing was mentioned as an economical method of doing this and leased agricultural use was suggested. One commenter mentioned that planting field crops was redundant, since they can be seen elsewhere, while another mentioned using older varieties of crops and animals. The impacts to the large wetland in the center of Port Oneida from beaver-caused flooding was a concern to one commenter. Others suggested that we maintain those landscape features that were present during the period of significance.

### **Lake Michigan Access:**

Some commenters were concerned about the erosion occurring at Pyramid Point and at various other access sites in Port Oneida, such as near the Carsten Burfiend Farmstead. Some were pleased with the new steps at the end of Lane Road, while others thought they were too formal. A number of equestrians wished to have access to the beach for riding or to “water their horses.”

### **Other:**

A number of other comments were provided on a variety of subjects. Included were concerns for long-term maintenance of Port Oneida and the need for a special fund, the impact of fire from burning fields or woodpiles, the recent cutting activities in advance of completing the plan, especially involving white pines and red pine rows.