

**SLEEPING BEAR DUNES NATIONAL LAKESHORE  
KETTLES TRAIL ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT  
PUBLIC SCOPING COMMENT SUMMARY**

The National Park Service (NPS) at Sleeping Bear Dunes National Lakeshore (National Lakeshore) proposes to develop a trail system (“Kettles Trail”) of federal lands in the Bow Lakes Area of the National Lakeshore. The Bow Lakes Area is a detached area of the National Lakeshore, created when a 1982 amendment of the National Lakeshore’s enabling legislation authorized a boundary revision adding it to the park. The NPS will prepare an Environmental Assessment (EA), with the purpose of exploring the various ways of developing a trail system for hiking, cross-country skiing and snowshoeing, a small parking area, adequate signing, and interpretive information.

On April 15, 2013, a letter was mailed to 80 federal, state, and local agencies, tribes, elected officials, groups, and interested individuals asking for ideas on what issues and concerns 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 allowed the public to comment electronically. On April 16, 2013, a press release was distributed electronically to the 58 media outlets in the National Lakeshore’s media database. The official comment period ended on May 20, 2013.

As a result, we received 11 comments from the PEPC website, six emails, and six handwritten or typed letters, for a total of 23 comments. These comments will help to set the stage for the topics that the EA will address. Public input will continue to be invaluable in developing a plan that will make a lasting difference in the project area. We thank all who commented and look forward to your comments on the EA that is expected to be available for public review in late summer 2013.

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

**Private Property and Trespass:**

Many of the commenters were concerned about potential for trespass on private lands near the Bow Lakes and how the project proposal might impact the pristine nature of these areas. Some suggested that the NPS maps are not clear, and should indicate that most of the land north of Lanham Road, including the Bow Lakes, is private. There appears to be a misconception on ownership, particularly since the unit is called the “Bow Lakes Area.” One commenter suggested changing the National Lakeshore boundary to omit all private lands. Signage, barriers (fences, posts), and better publications were all suggested as possible ways to reduce trespass. Others suggested limiting the size of the trail system, suggesting that trespass issues will increase when parking and trails are developed.

**Parking and Access:**

Three different sites were suggested for parking, including the end of Lanham Road, the Fritz/BaatZ Roads intersection, and about one-half mile east of this intersection on an existing two-track. One

commenter felt that parking along Baatz Road was not appropriate because it is like a roller coaster. Another commenter thought that the parking area should be located away from private homes, and a few commenters suggested that the parking area should be small and rustic (gravel surface). One commenter suggested that the parking area should be close to a county road and another said that restrooms were not needed. Designated hours of operation and a gate and booth were suggested by one commenter.

#### **Visitor Use:**

A variety of visitor uses were identified and some were concerned about overuse and diminished quality of the area. Camping, dogs, bicycles, and grooming machines (for cross-country skiing) were suggested as prohibited activities by some. Others suggested allowing mountain bikes and horses.

#### **Resource Protection:**

A variety of subjects were mentioned that related to resource protection, including potential impacts to wildlife from pets, keeping the trails as natural as possible (no hardened surface, no tree cutting to widen the trail, mitigating erosion problems), and potential impacts to bogs and other wetlands from foot traffic. One commenter mentioned that formal trails help to reduce social trails and another felt that this is a special area that should not be improved.

#### **Planning and Public Involvement:**

One commenter asked why they were just hearing about this now, as they thought scoping had been occurring since prior to 2009. Another felt the NPS planned to develop the area before seeking input. And another suggested that the NPS should wait until the entire area is acquired and then prepare a comprehensive plan.

#### **Hazards:**

A few hazards were mentioned by commenters, including “quicksand” in the wetlands, gravel slopes (from adjacent pits), fire hazards from litter and smoking, excessive speed on nearby roadways, and hunting (and the need for caution signs).

#### **Other Comments:**

The Michigan Department of Natural Resources and U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)-Region V had no concerns with the proposal, although the EPA suggested a number of Best Management Practices (BMPs) to consider. Examples of the BMPs suggested include using permeable surfaces in parking areas, constructing steps in areas of steep topography, minimizing soil compaction and minimizing total disturbed area. Commenters were almost split as to “for” and “against” the proposal. One commenter felt that the primary purpose of the area should be for peaceful enjoyment of nature, not mechanized/enhanced recreation. Another commenter stated that there are already numerous logging trails to enjoy and there are many other trails in the National Lakeshore to hike, so “please let this one be.”