



General Management Plan/Wilderness Study



Dear Friends,

As you may know, the National Park Service is engaged in an effort to develop a new General Management Plan and Wilderness Study (GMP/WS) for Sleeping Bear Dunes National Lakeshore. We have moved into an exciting phase of the planning process—developing and describing alternative management concepts for the future of the Lakeshore. The National Park Service (NPS) hosted a public comment period including three public workshops in June 2006, and many useful ideas and concepts were gathered from participants for this phase of planning. (For more information on the workshops, see the section of this newsletter titled “June 2006 Public Workshops”.) During the workshops, we received comments ranging from one end of the spectrum to the other on several important issues affecting the Lakeshore. We are preparing for many difficult decisions in the near future.

Incorporating public comments received to date, the NPS planning team has developed the draft management zones and management concepts described in this newsletter. We’re very interested in receiving the public’s feedback on these concepts, which are the “building blocks” of a General Management Plan/Wilderness Study. Please look them over and send your comments using the enclosed comment form. Or if you prefer, you may comment online using the GMP/WS link on the homepage of the park’s website (www.nps.gov/slbe) or write to the planning team at the address below:

Superintendent
Sleeping Bear Dunes National Lakeshore
9922 Front Street
Empire, MI 49630

The planning team reviews all comments for consideration during the process; however, comments received by November 10, 2006 will be most helpful for this phase of planning.

After reviewing the public’s comments regarding the material in this newsletter, our next step will be to refine and develop the management concepts into full management alternatives. We expect to present the preliminary alternatives to the public in a newsletter next spring, followed by public meetings in early May 2007. We encourage you to monitor the Sleeping Bear Dunes GMP/WS website (see the link at www.nps.gov/slbe) for updates and additional details related to the planning effort. We have plans to include an on-line discussion forum for the GMP/WS in the near future.

Thank you for your interest in the future of Sleeping Bear Dunes National Lakeshore. We will continue to consider your ideas as we develop the General Management Plan and Wilderness Study.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Dusty Shultz".

Dusty Shultz, Superintendent
Sleeping Bear Dunes National Lakeshore

June 2006 Public Workshops

On June 20th and 21st, 2006, Sleeping Bear Dunes National Lakeshore hosted three public workshops in Traverse City, Michigan and an NPS staff workshop at the park. This section of the newsletter provides a brief summary of the workshops, and the illustration below shows how contributions from the public and park staff were used to develop the management concepts included in this newsletter.

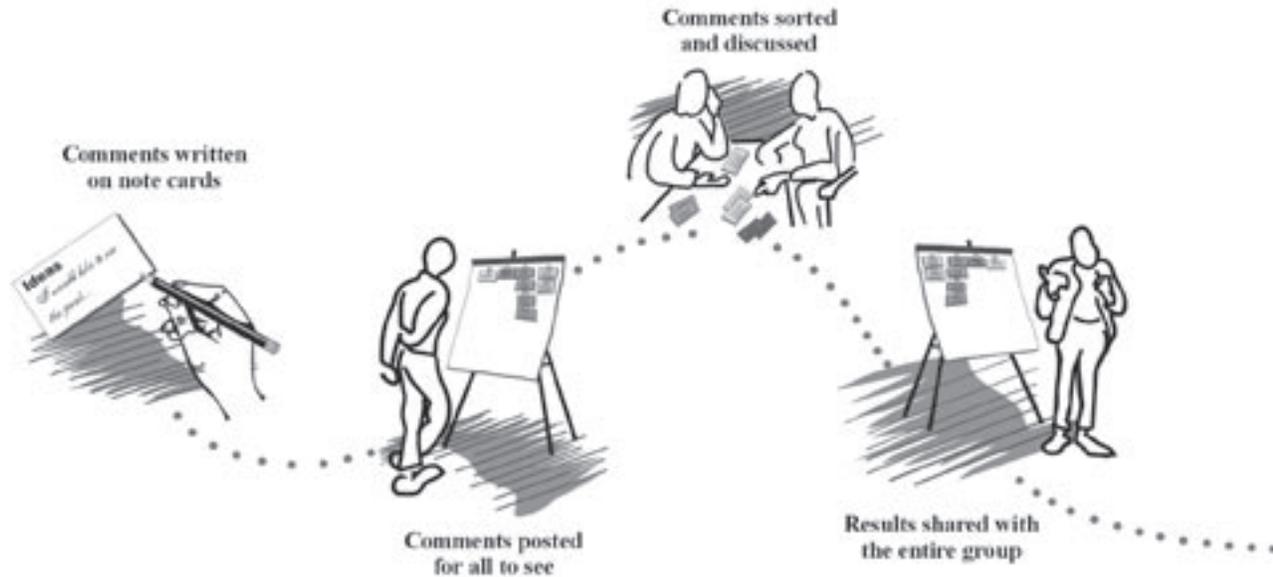
The workshops began with an introductory presentation by the National Park Service (NPS). Next, workshop participants individually contributed ideas on note cards about the types of resource conditions and visitor experiences they would like at Sleeping Bear Dunes National Lakeshore, and the different ways to manage the National Lakeshore to achieve them. Workshop participants then worked in small groups to organize these different ideas into alternative management concepts. Each group then presented its work to everyone at the workshop. Over a dozen preliminary alternative management concepts for different National



Lakeshore areas were developed by the various groups formed at the workshops.

After the workshops, the National Park Service's public involvement consultants summarized the input, grouped

How Public Comments Were Used to



similar concepts together, and removed redundancies. A full summary of input from the workshops and other sources is available on the General Management Plan/Wilderness Study website (see the link at www.nps.gov/slbe). Next, the planning team used this comment summary to refine the management concepts into the ones you see in this newsletter. The NPS believes these concepts represent a broad, yet reasonable range of ways the National Lakeshore could be managed in the future.

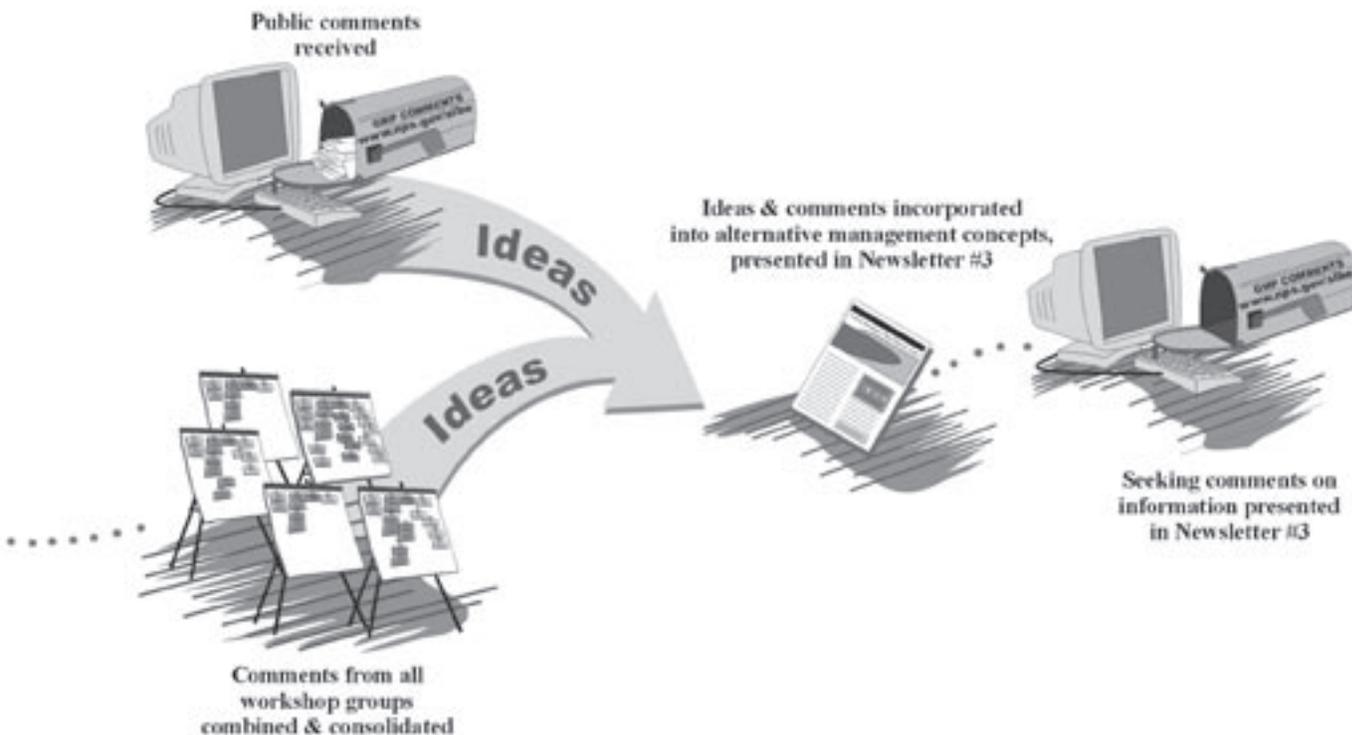
Public comment included opinions at opposite ends of the spectrum on several important management issues. For example, on one end of the spectrum, some individuals preferred that the National Lakeshore be totally wild (no facilities, all historic structures removed, etc.). On the other end of the spectrum, we heard from people who believe wild areas are of little value. The NPS hopes to meet the needs and desires of a wide range of visitors, so the planning team has not included alternative concepts that would provide only one type

of visitor experience (or resource condition) to the exclusion of all others.

Some members of the public provided very detailed or specific suggestions for how to manage the park. At this stage of the planning process, we are developing and considering broad, philosophical management concepts. However, detailed comments and suggestions will be considered by appropriate park staff responsible for day-to-day management of the Lakeshore.

The planning team very much appreciates the time and contributions of those who were able to attend the workshops, and of those who mailed or electronically contributed comments.

Develop Alternative Management Concepts



Draft Management Zones

One of the tools we use in planning for units of the national park system is management zoning. Management zones identify how different areas of the National Lakeshore could be managed to achieve resource preservation, provide for recreational access and use, and serve operational purposes. Eventually, different GMP alternatives will have management zones applied in varying amounts and locations within the National Lakeshore.

The planning team has identified five draft management zones that could be appropriate to various areas in Sleeping Bear Dunes National Lakeshore. Ideas for the zones came from the public and park staff. An overview of the draft management zones is provided below.

High Use Visitor Zone



In these easily accessible areas, large numbers of people enjoy and learn about the National Lakeshore. Viewing scenic vistas, taking short walks, picnicking, and attending interpretive programs are common visitor activities. Typical facilities include visitor centers, roads, parking areas, developed campgrounds, surfaced pathways, picnic areas, and restrooms. Encounters with others, including National Lakeshore staff, are likely, especially around developed facilities and main visitor attractions. Natural landscapes may be altered to restore damaged areas, to preserve or maintain cultural resources, or to direct visitor use to avoid widespread resource impacts. Wilderness would not occur in this zone.

Experience History Zone



These areas are managed primarily to preserve or restore historic buildings and landscapes. The areas may include orchards, fields, cemeteries, and similar cultural features. The primary visitor experience is visiting and learning about the area's cultural heritage through guided walks, sightseeing, educational programs, and enjoyment of the cultural setting. Typical facilities include historic buildings, museums, visitor contact stations, parking areas, and walkways; facilities are compatible with the historic setting. Encounters with National Lakeshore staff and other visitors are common, but overcrowding is rare. Wilderness would not occur in this zone.

Recreation Zone



This zone provides a wide range of opportunities for active and passive recreation. Common visitor activities include scenic driving, hiking, boating, bicycling, hunting and fishing, horseback riding on designated trails, beach-going, swimming, camping, cross-country skiing, and snowshoeing. Generally, there is a sense of being in a natural landscape. Native species and natural processes predominate, but some natural or cultural resources may be modified somewhat to accommodate moderate levels of visitor use. Appropriate kinds of facilities include roads, trailheads, primitive campgrounds, parking areas, vault or composting toilets, and information kiosks. Encounters with other visitors and National Lakeshore staff are common during busy visitor periods, but solitude can usually be found, if sought. Wilderness may or may not occur in this zone.

Natural Zone



This is the wildest, most natural zone. Visitors enjoy primitive recreation on foot or in human-powered watercraft. There are good opportunities for challenge and adventure. Common visitor activities include hiking, backpacking, hunting, fishing, and backcountry camping (bicycles are not permitted). Visitor use is managed to avoid resource impacts. Developed facilities are not found in this zone unless required to protect resources. Appropriate kinds of facilities include trails, signs, backcountry campsites, and special trail surfaces in localized areas (e.g., to protect sensitive dune or wet areas). Encounters with other visitors and National Lakeshore staff may occur on trails during busy visitor periods, but solitude can always be found in outlying areas. Wilderness may or may not occur in this zone.

Administrative Zone



This zone supports management and administration of the National Lakeshore. It is used by National Lakeshore staff and partners engaged in park operational activities and administration. Appropriate kinds of facilities include offices, maintenance shops, housing, indoor and outdoor storage areas, and utility/service areas. Natural processes and resources may be altered to support Lakeshore operations; the degree of alteration is dependent on need. Alterations blend visually with the surrounding landscape or facilities, or are screened from visitor views if possible. Wilderness would not occur in this zone.

Alternative Management Concepts

The General Management Plan/Wilderness Study process involves assessing alternative ways to manage the National Lakeshore in the future. Based on the extensive comments received since the start of the project and at the workshops, we have identified four alternative management concepts for the National Lakeshore (see table next page). Each concept includes a general description of how much wilderness, if any, would be proposed for designation within the National Lakeshore.

Each concept will ultimately guide different management zone configurations or alternative futures for Sleeping Bear Dunes National Lakeshore. Following public comment on the concepts described here, the planning team will refine the concepts. A management zoning configuration and more specific actions and ideas will be developed for each concept. We anticipate sharing the resulting preliminary alternatives and requesting your input in spring 2007.

Each alternative will be evaluated against the park's existing conditions. Eventually, an NPS preferred alternative will be identified that may be very similar to one of the alternatives, may incorporate elements from several alternatives, or may grow out of an entirely new concept.

| Table of Alternative Management Concepts | | |
|---|---|---|
| | No Action Concept | Resource Enjoyment Concept |
| Overall Vision | This concept primarily reflects current conditions (a “snapshot in time”) at the National Lakeshore. | The National Lakeshore is a resource reserve, valued primarily for its publicly owned resources that are conserved for the future. |
| Concept Description | This concept is provided as a baseline against which to compare the other management concepts. Opportunities exist to enjoy active and passive recreational activities in a variety of settings. Facilities such as visitor contact stations, campgrounds, roads, beach access points, and trails remain essentially the same as now. The level and variety of interpretive and educational activities (e.g., summer and school programs, guided hikes, etc.) also remain about the same. Ongoing efforts to preserve or rehabilitate selected cultural sites, landscapes, and districts (e.g. Port Oneida, Glen Haven, and maritime districts) continue, as do efforts to preserve other historic buildings. Natural resource management programs continue to emphasize protection of natural resources and processes; ongoing efforts to control non-native invasive species and restore disturbed lands continue. The NPS continues to purchase lands within the Benzie Corridor on a willing seller basis (for future development of a scenic roadway). | Emphasis is placed on natural resource conditions. The National Lakeshore is in strong contrast with surrounding lands that are becoming increasingly developed. Fundamental cultural resources (i.e., Port Oneida, Glen Haven, and three life saving service stations/South Manitou Light Station) are preserved and actively interpreted; other cultural resources are generally preserved, but those in the natural zone may be left to nature’s forces. Relatively diverse options for visitors remain available. Visitor experiences and recreational activities such as hiking, backpacking, fishing and hunting, paddling, cross-country skiing, and backcountry camping are facilitated. Opportunities for experiencing solitude and natural quiet abound. To increase opportunities to enjoy naturalness yet maintain plenty of vehicle access, the NPS works with the counties to see if any little-used county roads could eventually be closed. If and when the counties elected to vacate these road rights-of-ways, the roads could be considered for other uses, such as trails or natural areas. (The counties control county road rights-of-way within the National Lakeshore, so this decision rests with them). The NPS ceases acquisition of lands within the Benzie Corridor. No scenic roadway or trail is developed. |
| Management Zones (Relative Proportions) | Not Applicable. (The proposed management zones describe <i>future</i> management, which does not apply to the existing condition.) | Small amount of the high use visitor zone, small amount of the experience history zone, moderate amount of the recreation zone, large amount of the natural zone. |
| Wilderness | Existing wilderness proposal remains in place. The NPS continues to manage lands proposed for wilderness in the 1981 Wilderness Recommendation to maintain their existing wilderness character. | Large amount of wilderness proposed. |

| Recreation Enjoyment Concept | Concentrated Use Concept | |
|---|---|--|
| The National Lakeshore is valued primarily for its recreational opportunities in scenic outdoor settings. | The National Lakeshore is managed primarily to achieve two different sets of visitor experiences and resource conditions. | Overall Vision |
| Natural resources are protected, but there is less focus on managing the Lakeshore for natural conditions. Fundamental cultural resources (i.e., Port Oneida, Glen Haven, and three life saving service stations/South Manitou Light Station) are preserved and actively interpreted; other cultural resources are generally preserved, but emphasis is given to historic resources that are well-suited for visitor or other park uses. Opportunities for recreational activities are expanded. New trails (bicycling, hiking, horseback, and skiing/snowshoeing) and backcountry camping options are provided. Scenic driving options are expanded and selected trailhead, parking, and picnic areas are upgraded. Access to inland waters is improved. In general, existing roads (NPS-owned and other) remain open. The NPS continues to purchase lands within the Benzie Corridor on a willing seller basis for development of a scenic roadway. | For one set, certain areas of the National Lakeshore are identified and managed for developed facilities, more structured recreational opportunities, and high levels of visitor use. At these concentrated use areas, facilities such as trails, parking, and picnic areas are improved and/or increased in number. Access to inland waters is improved. Educational, interpretive, and recreational activities for visitors are more structured, and emphasis is given to preservation of historic resources that are well-suited for visitor or other park uses. For the second set of experiences and conditions, most other areas of the Lakeshore are managed for more natural, primitive conditions, and lower use levels. In these areas, cultural resources are generally preserved, but those in the natural zone may be left to nature's forces. Facilities (trails, campgrounds, etc.) in these areas are more primitive, and there are more self-guided visitor opportunities. To increase opportunities to enjoy naturalness in these low-use areas, yet maintain plenty of vehicle access, the NPS works with the counties to see if any little-used county roads could eventually be closed. If and when the counties elected to vacate these road rights-of-ways, the roads could be considered for other uses, such as trails or natural areas. (The counties control county road rights-of-way within the National Lakeshore, so this decision rests with them). The NPS continues to purchase lands within the Benzie Corridor on a willing seller basis for development of a scenic trail. | Concept Description |
| Moderate amounts of the high use visitor zone and experience history zone, large amount of the recreation zone, small amount of the natural zone. | Moderate amounts of the high use visitor and experience history zones, small amount of the recreation zone, large amount of the natural zone. | Management Zones (Relative Proportions) |
| Little or no wilderness proposed. | Moderate amount of wilderness proposed. | Wilderness |

Wilderness Study Update

The current Wilderness Study began with a review of previous wilderness study efforts at the National Lakeshore, to ascertain which areas have been determined to have some wilderness character and thus be eligible for consideration as wilderness. Eligible lands include all of those proposed in the 1981 Wilderness Recommendation, as well as the Sleeping Bear Plateau area. In addition, the NPS evaluated lands added to the National Lakeshore boundary since the last wilderness review was completed in 1981 (Bow Lakes, Miller Hill, and Crystal River). These newly added areas were found to be ineligible for wilderness consideration.

The Wilderness Study's next step is to consider which of the eligible lands should be proposed for wilderness designation. To do this, we develop (with public input) various wilderness configurations and evaluate them to understand their benefits and impacts. The wilderness alternatives are incorporated into the General Management Plan alternatives for this evaluation.

Ultimately, wilderness studies typically result in a recommendation to Congress to designate all, some, or none of the lands possessing wilderness character as part of the National Wilderness Preservation System. Based on the Wilderness Study included with the General Management Plan for the National Lakeshore, the National Park Service will prepare a proposal for consideration.



Desired Conditions

Desired conditions articulate the ideal future conditions that the National Park Service is striving to attain at Sleeping Bear Dunes National Lakeshore. They provide guidance for fulfilling the park's purpose and for protecting the park's fundamental resources and values on a Lakeshore-wide basis.

Ecosystem Management: The National Park Service is a leader in resource stewardship and conservation of ecosystem values. The dunes, forests, and aquatic systems are managed from an ecosystem perspective, considering both internal and external factors affecting visitor use, environmental quality, and resource stewardship. Management decisions about ecosystems

are based on scholarly and scientific information. Resources and visitation are managed in consideration of the ecological and social conditions of the National Lakeshore and surrounding area. Park managers adapt to changing ecological and social conditions and are partners in regional land planning and management.

Natural Resources (General) and Diversity: The resources and processes of the National Lakeshore retain a significant degree of ecological integrity. Natural wind, sand, and water processes function as unimpeded as possible. Management decisions about natural resources are based on scholarly and scientific information and on the National Lakeshore's identified fundamental resources and values. Park resources

and values are protected through collaborative efforts with neighbors and partners. Visitors and employees recognize and understand the value of the park's natural resources. Human impacts on resources are monitored and harmful effects are minimized, mitigated, or eliminated.

Biologically diverse native communities are protected and restored when possible. Particularly sensitive communities are closely monitored and protected. Endemic species and habitats are fully protected; nonnative species are controlled and native species are re-introduced when conditions allow. Genetic integrity of native species is protected. Threatened and endangered species are protected to the greatest extent possible, and are generally stable or improving. Natural fire regimes are investigated and supported where possible.

Air Quality: Sleeping Bear Dunes National Lakeshore is a Class II area under the Clean Air Act (this designation allows for limited amounts of new air emissions). The air quality of the National Lakeshore is enhanced or maintained.

Water Quality and Quantity: Sleeping Bear Dunes National Lakeshore water quality and quantity reflect natural conditions and support natural, administrative, and recreational uses. Outstanding water quality is protected and preserved.

Wildlife Management: Natural wildlife populations and systems are understood and perpetuated. Natural fluctuations in populations are permitted to occur to the greatest extent possible. Natural influences are mimicked if necessary. The National Lakeshore works with neighbors and partners to achieve mutually beneficial goals related to wildlife.

Cultural Resources (General): Cultural resources are identified, evaluated, managed, and protected within their broader context. Management decisions about cultural resources are based on scholarly and scientific information, fundamental resources and values, and consultation with the Michigan State Historic Preservation Office and with American Indians, as appropriate. The historic integrity of properties listed on (or eligible for listing on) the National Register of Historic Places is protected. Visitors and employees recognize and understand the value of the park's cultural resources. Human and natural impacts on

cultural resources are monitored and harmful effects are minimized or eliminated.

Historic Structures: The character of historic structures is preserved and rehabilitated to retain a high degree of integrity. Whenever possible, adaptive use of historic structures for park needs is considered before building new infrastructure.

Cultural Landscapes: Sleeping Bear Dunes National Lakeshore's cultural landscapes retain a high degree of integrity (cultural landscapes reflect human adaptation and use of natural resources and are often expressed in the way land is organized and divided, patterns of settlement, land use, systems of circulation, and the types of structures that are built).

Archeological Resources: Archeological resources within the National Lakeshore are identified and preserved (archeological resources are significant remains of past human activity and records documenting the scientific analysis of these remains; archeological features are typically buried but may extend above ground; they are commonly associated with prehistoric peoples but may be products of more contemporary society).

Visitor Use and Experience: Visitors from diverse backgrounds can experience a range of opportunities consistent with the purpose, significance, and fundamental resources and values of the National Lakeshore. Most visitors understand and appreciate the purpose and significance of the National Lakeshore and value their stewardship role in preserving natural and cultural features. They actively contribute to the park's preservation through appropriate use and behavior. Park programs and services are accessible to all and conflicts between different user groups are minimized.



(Desired Conditions continued)

Visitor use levels and activities are consistent with preserving park purpose, significance, and fundamental resources and values, and with providing opportunities for recreation, education and inspiration. Management decisions are based on scholarly and scientific information. When such information is lacking, managers make decisions based on the best available information, adapting as new information becomes available. Regional recreation opportunities continue to be coordinated among agencies for public benefit and ease of use.



Visitor Information, Interpretation, and Education: Interpretation and education services at the National Lakeshore facilitate intellectual and emotional connections between visitors and park resources. Interpretive programs foster understanding of park resources, resource stewardship, and build a local and national constituency. Outreach programs through schools, organizations, and partnerships build connections to the park. Curriculum and place-based education inspire student understanding and resource stewardship. Visitors receive adequate information to orient themselves to the park and possible opportunities for a safe and enjoyable visit.

Viewsheds: The visual quality of the natural vistas and cultural landscapes provide park visitors with an

immediate and lasting sensory experience that strongly conveys the character of the National Lakeshore. Key scenic vistas are identified and protected. Park managers work with neighbors, local communities, and land managers to preserve scenic values.

Night Sky: The naturally dark night sky is preserved. Artificial light sources within and outside of the park do not impair opportunities to see the moon, stars, planets, and other celestial features. Park staff and partners continue to work with local communities to encourage protection of the night sky. To the greatest extent possible, the NPS works within a regional context to protect the quality of the night sky and the experience thereof as a scenic vista.

Natural Sounds: Natural soundscapes are preserved and sounds of modern society are minimized. Visitors to the National Lakeshore have opportunities in some parts of the park to experience natural sounds.

Facilities and Services: Sleeping Bear Dunes National Lakeshore facilities and development are the minimum necessary to serve visitor needs and protect park resources. Visitor and administrative facilities are as compatible as possible with natural processes and surrounding landscapes, aesthetically pleasing, and functional. Historic structures and properties are adaptively used when practicable. Commercial services in the park are limited to those that are necessary and based on park purpose. In general, commercial services are provided outside the park, if possible, rather than inside. Housing is managed to ensure an adequate level of protection for park resources, visitors, employees, and government property, and to provide necessary services. Adequate response (equipment and people) for visitor, resource, and facility protection, search and rescue, fire management, and safety is available. Decisions regarding park operations, facilities management, and development at the National Lakeshore—from initial concept through design and construction—reflect principles of resource conservation and sustainability.

Park Accessibility: New and renovated facilities are designed and constructed to be universally accessible. Visitors with limited mobility have opportunities to experience the dunes, surrounding sands and waters, historic structures and cultural landscapes, and enjoy representative portions of the backcountry.

Relations with Private and Public Organizations, Adjacent Landowners, and Governmental Agencies:

The National Lakeshore is managed holistically as part of a greater ecological, social, economic, and cultural system. Positive relations are maintained with inholders, adjacent landowners, surrounding communities, and private and public groups that affect, and are affected by, the National Lakeshore. The National Lakeshore is managed proactively to ensure that NPS values are effectively communicated and understood.

Relations with American Indian Tribes: The NPS recognizes that the Sleeping Bear Dunes area has long occupied a prominent position for American Indians in the Great Lakes Region and that the National Lakeshore is included in the Ceded Territory of the Treaty of 1836. Park staff work to ensure that traditional American Indian ties to the National Lakeshore are recognized, and strive to maintain positive, productive government-to-government relationships with tribes culturally affiliated with the park. The viewpoints and needs of

tribes are respected, and issues that arise are promptly addressed. American Indian values are considered in the management and operation of the park.

Wilderness: Potential and Recommended wilderness areas retain their wilderness characteristics and values. Visitors find opportunities for primitive recreation and solitude. Wilderness areas are affected primarily by the forces of nature, and signs of people remain substantially unnoticeable.

Land Protection: The National Park Service works actively with private landholders and reservation of use and occupancy holders to ensure that the National Lakeshore resources and values are protected and preserved.

Research: The National Park Service works with partners to learn about natural and cultural resources and associated values. Research priorities for the National Lakeshore are aligned with its purpose, significance, and fundamental resources and values.

Planning Timetable

| | Planning Activity | Dates | Public Involvement Opportunities |
|----------|---|---------------------------------------|---|
| 1 | Set the stage for planning: Review draft purpose and significance, determine issues and concerns. | February 14, 15 and March 2, 2006 | 150 persons attended three open houses, learned about the planning process, and offered their ideas about what the plan should address. Over 300 written comments were received and reviewed. |
| 2 | Develop Alternative Management Concepts: Identify a range of alternatives for the park's future and consider their effects. (we are at this stage) | June 20 and 21, 2006 Fall 2006 | Nearly 70 people attended three workshops to help craft alternative management concepts. Additional written comments were received and reviewed. Provide comments on the management zones and management concepts described in this newsletter. |
| 3 | Develop Preliminary Alternatives: Develop the management concepts into full preliminary alternatives. Consider different aspects of the preliminary alternatives before selecting or crafting a preferred alternative. | Spring 2007 to Summer 2007 | Attend spring public workshops to provide feedback on the preliminary alternatives. Provide suggestions for a preferred alternative. |
| 4 | Prepare Draft General Management Plan/Wilderness Study/Environmental Impact Statement: Prepare draft plan describing the management alternatives and impacts; distribute to the public. | Fall 2007 to Spring 2008 | Provide written comments on the draft document. Attend public meetings/hearings and provide comments. |
| 5 | Revise and Prepare Final General Management Plan/Wilderness Study/Environmental Impact Statement: Analyze comments, prepare responses to comments, revise draft document, distribute to the public. | Summer 2008 to Fall 2008 | |
| 6 | Implement the approved plan: Prepare and issue Record of Decision and implement the plan as funding allows. | Winter 2008-2009 and beyond | Stay involved throughout implementation of the approved plan. Let the park know what you think. |



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Thank you for your interest in Sleeping Bear Dunes National Lakeshore.

