



United States Department of the Interior

NATIONAL PARK SERVICE
Sleeping Bear Dunes National Lakeshore
9922 Front St. (Hwy M-72)
Empire, Michigan 49630-9797

IN REPLY REFER TO:

November 4, 2010

L1617(SLBE)

Dear Friends:

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

The District is representative of the late 19th and early 20th century farms of the Midwest. The 18 farms, 113 structures, and 3,400 acres constitute one of the largest intact agricultural districts in the National Park System. Because of its size, integrity, and potential for preservation, it is listed on the National Register of Historic Places at the state level of significance and has been suggested as potentially being of national significance by the Michigan State Historic Preservation Office. The entire District is included within the "Experience History" zone in the 2009 Lakeshore General Management Plan, which is managed primarily to preserve historic structures and landscapes.

The District provides an excellent opportunity to preserve a rapidly disappearing landscape associated with an important time period in the heartland of America. The potential exists for National Lakeshore visitors to continue to explore this American farm landscape for both educational and recreational activities.

The Plan/EA is needed to determine the best way to halt deterioration of the cultural landscape, and preserve it on into the future. Since the end of agricultural activity in Port Oneida, historic spatial patterns have deteriorated somewhat. The physical and visual connections between landscape features, agricultural buildings, and community landmarks have diminished, and much of the historic plant materials have been lost. Landscape features such as windbreaks, orchards, and garden areas are deteriorated and overgrown. Invasive vegetation, such as black locust and spotted knapweed, has encroached on the landscape and threatens native plant and animal communities. Although National Lakeshore staff and volunteers have accomplished much to halt and reverse this deterioration, we need to decide the desired future conditions for the District, and how best to achieve them.

The Plan/EA process is just beginning and we welcome your ideas on the future of the District. We are especially interested in how you envision the landscape looking many years from now. Will some fields be allowed to return to mature forest? Will some fields be cultivated or planted with cover crops? We also need your ideas on what impacts and issues we should consider as we begin this planning effort. How might decisions about the fields impact the natural and cultural resources in and around the District? Please provide your ideas electronically through a link on the National Lakeshore's website at www.nps.gov/slbe. Comments may also be mailed to the National Lakeshore (Superintendent, Sleeping Bear Dunes National Lakeshore, 9922 Front Street, Empire, MI 49630).

We request that you provide your comments to us by December 10, 2010. The comments you submit during this "scoping" phase of planning will be incorporated into a range of alternatives and impact analyses in the Plan/EA. The Plan/EA will then be made available for further public review and comment, scheduled for release early next summer, when we will again solicit your input.

If you have any questions on this project, please call us at (231) 326-5134.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Dusty Shultz". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial "D" and a long, sweeping underline.

Dusty Shultz
Superintendent