



Citizens for Access to the Lakeshore

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CITIZENS FOR ACCESS SUPPORTS NEW PARK PLAN and HOPES FOR PROMPT CONGRESSIONAL ACTION

Dear Members and Friends,

Back in 2006 when the new General Management Plan (GMP) was first restarted, our organization had deep reservations about wilderness in general. Since then, however, all our major concerns have been addressed by the Park Service team and documented in their successive newsletters over the past three years. Our Board unanimously endorsed the Preferred Alternative and new Wilderness Study in May 2008. The recently published ***Final GMP*** has only four minor changes and all are positive for access and historical preservation. CAL's hard work since 2002 has paid off handsomely!

To recap, currently governing Sleeping Bear Dunes National Lakeshore is a 1981 Wilderness Study whose boundaries require Park Service (NPS) personnel to remove county roads and either remove historical structures or prevent them from being worked on with mechanized tools. That Study became law by a back door Congressional action in 1982. Since then, we have had 31,000 acres of Congressionally required wilderness in the Park; no Congress nor President in all that time has ever reduced or removed it. Now, however, there is no need. ***The NPS's 2008 Wilderness Study addresses all the access and historical preservation problems of the 1981 Study.***

In addition, the Final Plan incorporates local citizens' major requests:

- The new Study unequivocally marks county roads and major historical resources outside wilderness designation. The 1981 Study did not. *We understand some individuals feel this unimportant since they feel the counties will never give up the road rights of way. However, we need future Superintendents to have accurate governing documents. Until Congress approves the replacement of the 1981 Study with the new Study, future Superintendents will not be authorized to operate except under the unreasonable 1981 access restrictions, nor will the NPS be authorized to implement many of the new GMP improvements. We look forward to Congress taking this necessary step.*
- Historic Boekelodge, the Esch Farmhouse and major historical features in Port Oneida and on the Manitou Islands are mapped out of wilderness in the new Plan, thus allowing the use of mechanized tools on them at any time. *Currently, mechanized tools cannot be used on them except by special permit because they are NOT mapped out of the 1981 Wilderness Study.*
- All beach access points will remain open to vehicles in both Leelanau and Benzie Counties, and parking improvements are already begun on road ends in Leelanau Counties and projected for Esch Road beach.
- Additional campgrounds and trails are proposed.
- The Dune Climb parking area will be improved.
- The Giant Cedars on South Manitou Island will finally be accessible by concessionaire tour.
- The Purpose Statement and the Over-All Vision reflect the original statutory purpose, including the word "recreation".
- The new Study, with all its improvements and increased access, is on its face an obvious enticement for additional tourism with resulting economic benefits.
- Some have voiced concern that the NPS might add new restrictions in wilderness lands as a matter of future policy. However, NPS policies can never override federal law. Besides, the NPS already has responsibility/authority to address usage anywhere in the Park, not just within Wilderness, under its requirement to manage user capacity to protect Park resources and visitor enjoyment.

The new Plan incorporates all the recreation, access, and historical preservation that anyone could reasonably want, while at the same time protecting the woods and Sleeping Bear Plateau from development by a future Superintendent and from incompatible recreational uses that would destroy the woods. Our 12-member Board unanimously endorsed this Plan, as did over 70% of the hundreds of organizations and individuals participating in the multi-year General Management Process. **We hope the necessary Congressional action will follow soon.**

Board of Directors

*Joanne Appelhof - Dan DeGood - Adrian DenHaan, Jr. - John Harkins
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