

**Sleeping Bear Dunes
National Lakeshore**

General Management Plan/Wilderness Study

**Summary of Public Comments
In Response to Newsletter #4
September 2007**

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Summary of Public Comments In Response to Newsletter #4 September 2007

This report summarizes public comment on the Sleeping Bear Dunes National Lakeshore (Lakeshore) General Management Plan/Wilderness Study (GMP/WS) preliminary alternatives. These alternatives were presented to the public in the March 2007 GMP/WS newsletter #4 and at public meetings held on May 1, 2, and 3, 2007. This report summarizes both the public comment on the newsletter and those made at the public meetings.

A total of 362 comments were received by conventional and electronic mail, and through transcripts of comments made at public meetings. This report summarizes all comments received that had been post marked by May 17, 2007. The Lakeshore has on file all comments - including those received after this date. Public comment will be instrumental to the National Park Service (NPS) planning team as they develop the preferred alternative for the General Management Plan/Wilderness Study. Continued public participation is essential in determining the long-term management direction for Sleeping Bear Dunes National Lakeshore.

SUMMARY OF COMMENTS RECEIVED

In March 2007, the National Park Service distributed newsletter #4 to approximately 2400 individuals and organizations. In newsletter #4 the National Park Service presented updated management zones, based on public comments received on newsletter #3: High Use Zone, Experience History Zone, Recreation Zone, and Experience Nature Zone. Each refined management zone provides a sense for the management priorities for the zone by specifying a particular combination of resource conditions, visitor opportunities, and appropriate development for the zone. These zones were then applied to the Lakeshore in varying amounts and configurations to form the preliminary alternatives.

Newsletter #4 also presented four preliminary alternatives – the no-action alternative and action alternatives A, B, and C. Each preliminary alternative description included an overall vision, the amounts of each management zone, areas of proposed wilderness, and management guidance for natural resources; cultural resources; visitor orientation; interpretation and education; visitor facilities, opportunities, and activities; the Benzie Corridor; and Bow Lakes. These preliminary alternatives were developed after closely analyzing public comment on the alternative management concepts presented in Newsletter #3.

The National Park Service conducted public meetings on newsletter #4 on May 1, 2, and 3, 2007 in Honor, Glen Arbor, and Traverse City, Michigan. A total of 185 people attended the meetings. The format was identical for each meeting – informal one-on-one discussions with NPS staff, a formal presentation by NPS staff, a formal public comment session recorded by a court reporter, and an informal question/comment session.

Comment forms were available at each meeting for submission of written comments and, the court reporter was also available to transcribe public comments during the meetings.

A total of 362 public comments on newsletter #4 were received from individuals and organizations via the NPS planning website, the Lakeshore website, standard and electronic mail, and the public meetings. Most comments were submitted to the Lakeshore using the newsletter comment form or by personal letter.

Eighty-three percent of the comments came from Michigan and ten percent from 18 other states. The remaining seven percent could not be identified as to location. Benzie County residents represented 27 percent of the respondents from Michigan, Leelanau residents 32 percent, Grand Traverse residents 17 percent, and the remainder of the state 24 percent. Approximately 4 percent of the comments were from organizations, tribal governments, or local agencies. No formal responses were received from state or federal government agencies, although representatives of the area's federal elected officials were present at each meeting.

NPS planners encouraged the public to focus their comments by asking three questions in the newsletter #4 comment form (see Appendix A.) The questions asked were:

Is one of the four preliminary alternatives (no action, A, B, or C) already close to your idea of a preferred alternative? If so, which one, and how might you modify it to make it just right?

To help us build the preferred alternative, which elements of any of the preliminary alternatives do you think should be included?

Which elements of any of the preliminary alternatives do you think should not be included in the preferred alternative?

Most of the public comments received had responses to more than one of the questions. Nearly all (90 percent) commented on the preliminary alternatives and expressed either support or opposition, and suggestions for improvement. Many people offered their preference among the four preliminary alternatives, explained why a particular alternative was close to their idea of a preferred alternative, and provided suggestions for how it could be improved or elements that should not be included in a preferred alternative. Many comments provided suggestions that were very specific and others provided much broader statements describing what they would like to see in the preferred alternative. It should be noted that overall there was very little opposition expressed to any of the preliminary alternatives (between one and three percent). In contrast, the comments expressing support ranged from 15 percent for the no-action alternative to 42 percent support for alternative A. For this reason there are proportionally more comments in support of specific alternatives. There were some suggestions to incorporate elements from one alternative into another. Some comments expressed a desire for additional details.

PRELIMINARY ALTERNATIVES

The following summary provides the proportion of support or opposition to the preliminary alternatives or elements of the alternatives. The comments are organized according to the three questions from the newsletter #4 comment form, and in some cases they are organized into major themes. Example comments are included – some are direct quotes and others are paraphrased.

No-Action Alternative

Support

Fifteen percent were in support of the no-action alternative because they liked the way the Lakeshore is presently managed and agree with existing areas that have been proposed for wilderness.

“I want as little impact on the land as possible. Keep everything in a natural state, with as little human impact as possible.” SLBE NL4-104

“No Action! Things are just perfect the way they are.” SLBE NL4-172

Opposition

Only one comment was in opposition to the no-action alternative stating that it would not provide a range of recreational opportunities while preserving as much wilderness as possible.

Suggested Modifications

Some comments made specific suggestions about how to modify the no-action alternative. The column with the “% Suggesting Modification” represents the percent of all comments on the no-action alternative that suggested modifications in each of the categories.

TABLE 1: SUGGESTED MODIFICATIONS TO THE NO-ACTION ALTERNATIVE

CATEGORY	COMMENT	% SUGGESTING MODIFICATION
Benzie Corridor	Develop for use as hike/bike trail only	40
	Develop as a road	
	Do not acquire and develop	
Recreation/Use	Non-motorized use on inland waters	32
	Convert existing roads into trails	
Cultural Resources	Provide more emphasis on the historical and cultural heritage of the park	4

CATEGORY	COMMENT	% SUGGESTING MODIFICATION
Development	Provide improved parking at Esch Beach	8
	Do not develop Port Oneida	
	Do not allow any more development within the Lakeshore	
Trails	Develop new trails or convert existing roads into trails	8
	Add backpack trail system that allows overnight camping in the park	
Wilderness	Expand wilderness	8
	Add Sleeping Bear Plateau to wilderness	

Alternative A

Support

Alternative A received the most support of any alternative (42 percent). Supportive comments stated that the alternative closely follows the purpose of the Lakeshore and has the right amount of proposed wilderness.

“This plan seems to most accurately represent a plan that both allows much needed protection to preserve the pristine quality of our lands, and also allow ample recreation.” SBLE NL4-185

“Plan A is the closest – the most important and crucial function of the park is to preserve and protect as much wilderness as possible, motorized boats should not be allowed on the lakes.....” SLBE NL4-220

“We feel that the wilderness areas available now are the Park’s greatest attribute. In the future, these areas will be more valuable as the surrounding areas are continually developed.” SLBE NL4-234

Opposition

Two percent opposed alternative A. Opposing comments generally expressed that there was too much wilderness, insufficient area or attention given to public use and enjoyment, or that it did not adequately address historic structures and sites.

“Too much wilderness designation in Alt A does not allow for any flexibility in adapting the park for future use.” SLBE NL4-316

“...Alternative A’s map includes way too much wilderness.” SLBE NL4-288

“Too much “wilderness” areas.” SLBE NL4-268

Suggested Modifications

Some comments made specific suggestions about how to modify alternative A. The column with the “% Suggesting Modification” represents the percent of all comments on alternative A that suggested modifications in each of the categories.

TABLE 2: SUGGESTED MODIFICATIONS TO ALTERNATIVE A

CATEGORY	COMMENT	% SUGGESTING MODIFICATION
Access	Close Esch Road Tiesma Road – keep open Provide auto tours to Giant Cedars Limit access to Crystal River Limit access to S. and N. Manitou Islands Provide more access for the disabled Don’t maintain access and county roads Provide transportation to Pierce Stocking Drive during busy season	17
Benzie Corridor	Develop for use as hike and/or bike trail only Develop corridor as a roadway	24
Recreation/Use	Develop more recreational opportunities Prescribe non-motorized use of inland waters	23
Cultural Resources	Preserve as many historic structures and sites as possible Do not preserve any historic structures or sites	4
Development	Minimize development within the Lakeshore Develop campsites on N. Manitou Construct boat ramps at Glen Haven, Glen Lake, County Roads 651 and 669 Continue use of picnic area at Little Glen Lake	7
Trails	Develop new trails such as parallel to M-22 and around School and Bass Lakes Convert some existing roads into trails Don’t develop new trails	11
Wilderness	Change existing beach zoning to wilderness use Designate Bow Lakes and Benzie Corridor as wilderness Designate Good Harbor Bay off County Road 651 as wilderness	13

CATEGORY	COMMENT	% SUGGESTING MODIFICATION
Zone Changes	Change existing DH Day to High Use zoning	1

Alternative B

Support

Favorable comments (18 percent of responses) generally cited the expansion of recreational opportunities and increased access to the Lakeshore as reasons.

“I believe Alternative B is the closest to my preferred alternative. I want the use of the park to be made available to a wide range of physical abilities of people.” SLBE NL4-127

“Maximize recreational opportunities. People need to be able to enjoy the park’s features to the greatest extent.” SLBE NL4-111

“.....appears to be the most user friendly with many opportunities for family activities.” SLBE NL4-216

Opposition

Opposing comments (three percent) raised concern that there would be too much indiscriminate access to the Lakeshore, too much recreation, and not enough wilderness.

“Alternative B deviates too far from the Congressional Wilderness recommendations of 1981-1982.” SLBE NL4-318

“Way too much land devoted to “recreation.” SLBE NL4-287

“In Alternative B too much emphasis on recreation is made. The whole point of creating Sleeping Bear was to preserve wilderness. Plan B seems to put little emphasis on wilderness.” SLBE NL4-108

Suggested Modifications

Some respondents made specific suggestions about how to modify alternative B. The column with the “% Suggesting Modification” represents the percent of all comments on alternative B that suggested modifications in each of the categories.

TABLE 3: SUGGESTED MODIFICATIONS TO ALTERNATIVE B

CATEGORY	COMMENT	% SUGGESTING MODIFICATION
Access	Create more access points to the beach Develop access to the beach at Port Oneida No motorized boat use on Bass Lake	19
Benzie Corridor	Develop corridor as a hike/bike trail only Do not acquire and develop the corridor	13
Recreation/Use	Return swimming to Little Glen Continue dispersed camping on North Manitou Eliminate the ferry day trips to North Manitou Island that would occur once or twice a week	34
Cultural Resources	Increase the protection of cultural resources by providing necessary maintenance and upkeep	3
Development	Develop more areas within the Lakeshore Add more signs, boat launches, parking lots Expand camping and picnic areas	16
Trails	Develop new or convert existing roads into trails	9
Wilderness	Designate less wilderness Do not designate all of North Manitou as wilderness	3
Zone Changes	Change Treat Farm to Experience History	3

Alternative C

Support

Support for wilderness while still allowing for increased high use areas for visitors was one of the main reasons for approval (19 percent).

“This alternative appears to provide improvements in higher use areas for the general visitor but keeps much of the park in a more natural state for those of us who value the natural resources and enjoy being able to get away from more crowded attractions...” SLBE NL4-237

“This alternative does rightfully allow for some wilderness area, but still would make it possible for the elderly, the handicapped, and families with young tots who must be carried or put in strollers to cover long distances to get to the lake shore and experience the solitude and beauty of nature.” SLBE NL4-209

“...I believe Alternative C offers opportunity to improve the manner in which the public is able to explore and enjoy the natural features of the park, and has the potential to better promote the cultural resources that are a major component of the park’s importance to the public and to the nation’s historic legacy.” SLBE NL4-174

Opposition

Opposing comments (one percent) raised concerns about less designated wilderness in the Lakeshore and the perception that there is insufficient area for public use and enjoyment.

“Alternative C is far too intrusive on the natural values and wilderness values which make Sleeping Bear the public resource it should be for local residents, visitors and future generations.” SLBE NL4-318

“Alternative C reverses part of the 1981 wilderness recommendations, specifically south mainland from Platte River to Empire.” SLBE NL4-121

“... would not support any GMP along the lines of Alternative C because in this alternative insufficient space and attention is given to the public’s enjoyment and appreciation of the park recreational and historical features.” SLBE NL4-233

Suggested Modifications

Some respondents made specific suggestions about how to modify alternative C. The column with the “% Suggesting Modification” represents the percent of all comments on alternative C that suggested modifications in each of the categories.

TABLE 4: SUGGESTED MODIFICATIONS TO ALTERNATIVE C

CATEGORY	COMMENT	% SUGGESTING MODIFICATION
Access	Provide for increased accessibility for the disabled particularly to hard to access areas Dislike current beach access as described in alternative text.	21
Benzie Corridor	Do not acquire and develop	10
Recreation/Use	Modify existing roads for bike use Allow more bike use within the Lakeshore No motorized boating on School, Bass, Loon, or North Bar lakes Provide ferry day trips to North Manitou Island Provide longer trails for horseback riding	23

CATEGORY	COMMENT	% SUGGESTING MODIFICATION
Cultural Preservation	Preserve as many historic structures as possible	8
Development	Add more development within the Lakeshore Develop more camping, picnic, bike lanes Upgrade access points and facilities	13
Trails	Develop new or convert existing roads into trails Develop Bow Lake trail as described in Alternative B	8
Wilderness	Increase the amount of wilderness in the Lakeshore Wilderness boundaries should be drawn to exclude cultural resources to allow for greater protection of resources Include more beach areas in proposed wilderness Include the area north of M-22 and east of Port Oneida in proposed wilderness	18

New Management Alternatives Suggested

Most of the responses preferred one of the alternatives presented in newsletter #4 although usually with modifications. Of the 362 responses, approximately four percent cited combinations of two or more of the alternatives. Although two made up their own preferred alternative, their alternatives still contained elements of the other alternatives. A selection of suggestions for new management alternatives are included below:

“My preferred plan is a combination of C and A. In particular, I like the policies of Alternative C ... but I believe the land use proportions set in Alternative A will do more to preserve the natural beauty of the Lakeshore.” SLBE NL-4-229

“Both B and C have elements that I find desirable. I think it is important to provide a range of recreational opportunities within the Lakeshore while still preserving as much of the natural, primitive conditions as possible.” SLBE NL4-076

“We think a combination of No Action and Alternative A would be appropriate.” SLBE NL4-189

ELEMENTS TO BE INCLUDED IN THE PREFERRED ALTERNATIVE

There were numerous suggestions about what elements should be included in the preferred alternative. Many comments provided more than one element to be considered. These are organized into the following categories:

Recreation. Comments regarding recreation (19 percent of the total comments) referenced access to the Giant Cedars, use of bikes in the Lakeshore, motorized use on inland waters, dispersed camping, and recreation use in general.

“...if provision for concession auto tours to the “giant cedars” on South Manitou Island is included, I would recommend a hiking trail parallel to Shefler Road be considered.” SLBE NL4-176

“Making North Manitou more useable is excellent. But not a concession haven, please. There are islands that are still islands and there are islands that might as well be anyplace, I hope it stays rustic.” SLBE NL4-292

[Include]“Bay-to-Bay hiking trail; new primitive campgrounds accessible to hikers and paddlers; leave open camping on North Manitou; keep DH Day campground without electric hook ups; boat launch should be in Glen Haven.” SLBE NL4-296

Development. Comments regarding development (eight percent of the total comments) stated preferences for new boat ramps, parking, paving surfaces, adding new facilities, or upgrading existing facilities.

“We still feel that a boat ramp in the Glen Haven area should be included in the plan.” NL4-055

“May be a good idea to have a picnic area and camp ground at docks on South Manitou Island.” SLBE NL4-188

“I like the idea of ... small, primitive campsites along the shoreline.” SLBE NL4-185

Access. Comments regarding access (20 percent of the total comments) discussed access for elderly or disabled visitors, ease of access, and road development (in general).

“An element which allows current road access areas to be made more “accessible” for disabled visitors...” SLBE NL4-285

“Keep the county roads for beach access!” SLBE NL4-160

“Keeping some unimproved or small roads open so access is available getting close to the lakeshore with only a short walk or hike...” SLBE NL4-209

Benzie Corridor. Comments regarding the Benzie corridor (18 percent of the total comments) discussed acquisition of lands, use as hike and/or bike trail, and use as a roadway.

“Keep the Benzie Corridor as a part of the Park.” SLBE NL-160

“Benzie Corridor for hiking and biking only – no cars!” SLBE NL4-220

“Add the acquisition of the Benzie Corridor for eventual non-motorized activity.” SLBE NL4-125

Wilderness. Comments regarding wilderness (12 percent of the total comments) either favored wilderness in general or wanted expansion.

“Much more wilderness than “B” includes. As this area builds up the National Parkland becomes even more important than it is now...” SLBE NL4-130

“Wilderness – keep South Manitou Island developed and North Manitou as undeveloped.” SLBE NL4-133

“Keep the large amount of lands designated as “Wilderness” and “Experience Nature” of Alternative A” SLBE NL4-139

Cultural. Comments regarding preservation of historic buildings and sites represented 10 percent of the total comments.

”Continue to preserve the historical places that are still left.” SLBE NL4-137

“Restore historic structures or let them molder...leave old foundations and other evidence of early habitation...” SLBE NL4-219

“Preserve/restore/rehab cultural resources in Port Oneida, Glen Haven and both North and South Manitou Islands.” SLBE NL4-183

Other. Eight percent of the total comments referenced other elements including expansion of Lakeshore boundaries, rights of inholders, and Platte River user capacities.

“...consider adding a second Benzie Corridor of land purchases, on the ridge between Platte Lake and Little Platte Lake.” SLBE NL4-238

“Continue to purchase adjacent land for any zone of the National Lakeshore as properties become listed and money is available.” SLBE NL4-205

“...but my concern would be that in either the current plan or the choice of A, B, or C, that we recognize where those people are living and understand how this impacts on our living there, on you, and your coming in.” SLBE NL4-355

National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). Comments regarding NEPA issues such as changes to the lakeshore’s purpose statement, timing of the open houses, and duration of comment period represented two percent of the total comments.

“I think the “vision” of the lakeshore should remain the same as established in 1970.” SLBE NL4-157

“We believe we need to reiterate, for the record, our concern for the short time given for this stage of the GMP development in relation to the overall timetable.” SLBE NL4-233

ELEMENTS THAT SHOULD NOT BE CONSIDERED IN THE PREFERRED ALTERNATIVE

Some comments recommended what elements should not be considered in the development or selection of a preferred alternative. Some respondents provided more than one element. These are organized into the following categories:

Recreation. Twenty-three percent of responses wanted to exclude some recreational opportunities from the preferred. These included such activities as access to the Giant

Cedars, expanded use of motorized vehicles and boats, concession tours, horses, bikes, and trails.

“In Alternative C, it is proposed that motorized boats be allowed on North Bar Lake. This area is so unique for its scenic beauty and its affording of solitude both on its shores and along the Lake Michigan shore nearby that to allow motors would severely and permanently diminish the experience of solitude and wildlife observation in this area. I strongly oppose motorized boats here.” SLBE NL4-240

“I would not be in favor of bicycles on existing or future hiking trails, with the exception of the possible future addition of a hiking/biking trail in the Benzie Corridor.” SLBE NL4-227

Development. Five percent of the total comments did not want increases in some or all types of access and infrastructure improvements.

“In Alternative B, too much emphasis on recreation is made. The whole point of creating Sleeping Bear was to preserve wilderness. Plan B seems to put little emphasis on wilderness.” SLBE NL4-108

“Increased development of our now quiet, natural areas. Especially motorboat access and boat ramps. There are options everywhere for boat access, and our beaches and small lakes would never be the same. Imagine the future congestion, jet skis, garbage, etc. polluting our beaches’ solitude. Makes me scared to think this could happen to some of the greatest quiet, beautiful beaches anywhere. Keep it simple, simple access, no huge parking areas.” SLBE NL4-234

Access. Comments regarding not wanting additional access represented 11 percent of the total respondents. Comments regarding access included general improvements, Tiesma Road, and Bow Lakes.

“Anything that requires additional roads for invasive cars, motor homes, trucks, motorboat trailers etc. There are plenty of recreational/ historic areas that are already accessible by car.” SLBE NL4-204

“Bow Lakes area – no paved parking lots – no paved trails – if a trail is created and parking provided minimize impacts as much as possible.” SLBE NL4-155

Benzie Corridor. Comments regarding not including the Benzie Corridor in any of the alternatives represented 10 percent of the total comments.

“Final, total elimination of the Benzie corridor is highly desired by many people. It would serve no significant new service, and would be an open invitation to roam (and thereby degrade) the adjoining forests.” SLBE NL4-41

“I am against most elements of Alternative B. They expand public activities too much beyond the limits imposed by Alternative A. I am also opposed to land purchases in the Benzie corridor for the construction of a road. It would interfere with the beauty and ecology of the lands that contribute significantly to the natural setting of the Park. A hiking/biking trail would be nice if it could be implemented without excessive expenditures of limited Park funding.” SLBE NL4-138

Wilderness. Comments either not favoring wilderness in general or not wanting expansion of wilderness represented seven percent of the total comments.

“Alternate A’s map includes way too much wilderness.” SLBE NL4-288

“Carrying the “wilderness” idea to the extreme should not be included. The park should not be prevented from establishing new trails and parking at trailheads.” SLBE NL4-83

Cultural. Comments not in support of having historic buildings or sites preserved represented less than one percent of the total comments.

“I would deemphasize the “Experience History” element except to the extent that specific features are unique to a national lake shore (e.g. life saving).” SLBE NL4-295

Other. Three percent of the total comments outlined other elements that should not to be considered in the preferred alternative including acquisition of land and amount of high use zoning.

“Do not concentrate money use on acquisition. Use more money for servicing a larger population of park users.” SLBE NL4-016

“Please don’t change Esch Road beach to high use.” SLBE NL4-223

COMMENTS REGARDING THE PLANNING PROCESS

A number of comments were received that indicate some misunderstandings about the planning process and the current planning stage. The preliminary alternatives were presented in newsletter #4 to gain information for the development of the preferred alternative. However, some respondents to the newsletter requested further detail on features mentioned, such as a “list of cultural and historic sites and natural resource study and learning locations”. Others expressed concern regarding the potential for economic impact from wilderness designation and how development of the Lakeshore may affect tourism and development in the surrounding counties. More detail on some of these topics will be addressed in upcoming steps in the GMP/Wilderness Study process.

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APPENDIX A: NEWSLETTER #4 COMMENT FORM

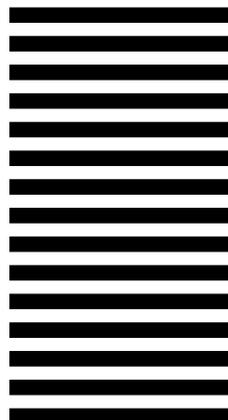
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- Please add my name to the mailing list.
- Please note corrections to my name or address (attach mailing label if possible)
- Please remove my name from the mailing list.

Before including your address, phone number, e-mail address, or other personal identifying information in your comment, you should be aware that your entire comment – including your personal identifying information – may be made publicly available at any time. While you can ask us in your comment to withhold your personal identifying information from public review, we cannot guarantee that we will be able to do so.

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



Comment Form

(Newsletter 4)

Sleeping Bear Dunes National Lakeshore
Michigan

National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior



Your input is important to the planning team. Comments are welcome at any time, although **comments received by May 14, 2007 will be most helpful.** Feel free to attach additional pages if you need more space. Please see the reverse side of this form for the National Park Service's policy on making comments available for public review.

1. Is one of the four preliminary alternatives (no action, A, B, or C) already close to your idea of a preferred alternative? If so, which one, and how might you modify it to make it just right?

2. To help us build the preferred alternative, which elements of any of the preliminary alternatives do you think should be included?

3. Which elements of any of the preliminary alternatives do you think should not be included in the preferred alternative?

