



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:

L76(SLBE)

May 28, 2009

Dear Friends:

Sleeping Bear Dunes National Lakeshore (National Lakeshore) has prepared an Environmental Assessment (EA) that provides an array of alternatives for addressing issues at Lake Michigan Overlooks 9 and 10 on the Pierce Stocking Scenic Drive. Pierce Stocking Scenic Drive is a 7.4 mile self-guided auto tour that provides visitors insight into the history of the area, a sample of vegetative communities, and overlooks of Glen Lake, the Sleeping Bear Dunes, North and South Manitou Islands, and Lake Michigan. This highly-visited site attracts over 200,000 people each year to overlooks that afford spectacular views. It is the only location in the National Lakeshore where visitors can access these views by a short walk from their vehicles.

The perched dune at this location is roughly 450 feet above Lake Michigan. The path from the parking area to the overlooks takes visitors directly across the top of the perched dune, and despite signs discouraging visitors from descending on the bluff face toward Lake Michigan, many do so. Some of these visitors are injured during the descent, due to missteps or falls, or during the ascent, from heat injuries or exhaustion. The intense foot traffic in this location has caused considerable erosion of the dune face. Finally, maintaining the current configuration of the path and overlooks is difficult and expensive because of the blowing and shifting sand.

The *Lake Michigan Overlooks Environmental Assessment* describes the “no action” (current management) alternative and provides three action alternatives to address the issues described above in a way that still allows people to access the outstanding views. The National Lakeshore Preferred Alternative (Alternative D) proposes a tunnel and raised boardwalk to access a newly-constructed Overlook 9 and a new path from the existing parking area to existing Overlook 10 that consists of trails, steps, and boardwalks. Trails on the dune areas may use cable/post and sand ladders, as needed, to delineate the trail.

We would like your opinion on the best way to offer the spectacular views while reducing hazards, erosion, and maintenance costs. The Lakeshore encourages you to comment on the EA until the public comment period closes on July 6, 2009. The document may be reviewed on the National Lakeshore’s website at www.nps.gov/slbe (just click on the “Lake Michigan Overlooks EA” icon). Paper copies are available for review at the National Lakeshore Visitor Center in Empire, the offices of Empire and Glen Arbor Townships, the Village of Empire Office, the Glen Lake Community Library, Benzie Shores District Library, Darcy Library of Beulah, Leelanau Township Library, Leland Township Library, Suttons Bay Bingham District Library, and Traverse City District Library. A very limited number of paper copies and CDs are available upon request.

We strongly encourage you to submit comments electronically through a link on the National Lakeshore's website. Alternatively, you may mail comments to: Superintendent, Sleeping Bear Dunes National Lakeshore, 9922 Front Street, Empire, MI 49630.

A public open house on the project is scheduled for Wednesday, June 17, 2009, from 4:00 p.m. to 7:00 p.m. at the Philip A. Hart Visitor Center auditorium in Empire. A 30-minute presentation on the EA will be held at 5:00 p.m.

We look forward to receiving your thoughts and opinions concerning the *Lake Michigan Overlooks Environmental Assessment*. For more information, please contact the National Lakeshore at (231) 326-5134.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Dusty Shultz". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Dusty Shultz
Superintendent