



National Park Service  
U.S. Department of the Interior

Sleeping Bear Dunes  
National Lakeshore

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## Sleeping Bear Dunes National Lakeshore News Release

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For Immediate Release

Contact: Michael Duwe, 231-326-5134

### Lake Michigan Overlooks Environmental Assessment Available for Public Review

**Empire, MI---** Sleeping Bear Dunes National Lakeshore Superintendent Dusty Shultz announced today the availability of the *Lake Michigan Overlooks Environmental Assessment* beginning on June 1, 2009. The Environmental Assessment (EA) describes and analyzes alternative approaches for addressing visitor safety, resource damage, and maintenance issues while continuing to offer the spectacular views at this popular site on the Pierce Stocking Scenic Drive.

The 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 National Park Service at Sleeping Bear Dunes National Lakeshore is seeking public opinion on the best way to offer the spectacular views while reducing hazards, erosion, and maintenance costs. The National Lakeshore encourages everyone to comment on the EA until July 6, 2009. The document may be reviewed on the National Lakeshore's website at

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[www.nps.gov/slbe](http://www.nps.gov/slbe). 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, and at the following area libraries: 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.

We encourage comments to be sent electronically through a link on the National Lakeshore's website. Comments may also be mailed to the National Lakeshore at: Superintendent, Sleeping Bear Dunes National Lakeshore, 9922 Front Street, Empire, MI 49630.

The National Lakeshore will be hosting an open house on the EA on Wednesday, June 17. The open house will be held at the Visitor Center auditorium in Empire from 4:00 p.m. to 7:00 p.m., and will include a presentation by the consulting firm, JJR of Ann Arbor, at 5:00 p.m.

For more information, please contact the National Lakeshore headquarters at 231-326-5134.

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