



News Release

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Sleeping Bear Heritage Trail Opens *Ribbon Cutting June 20*

GLEN ARBOR, MI — The Sleeping Bear Heritage Trail officially opens with a ribbon cutting ceremony at the Sleeping Bear Dunes National Lakeshore Dune Climb on Wednesday, June 20, 2012 at 1:30pm. The ribbon cutting celebrates the completion of nearly five miles of hard-surfaced, non-motorized trail between Glen Arbor and the Dune Climb. When fully completed, the 27-mile trail will run from the southern edge of the Leelanau County through Sleeping Bear Dunes National Lakeshore, Empire, and Glen Arbor, to Good Harbor Bay. Construction of the remaining segments will continue as funds are raised.

“This spring we surpassed a million dollars in private funding, much of that generated by the local community. We’ve got some big milestones ahead of us this summer to keep trail construction rolling next year, but I think people can now see and experience the trail and benefits it can bring and they’ll want to help keep the project going,” said Julie Clark, executive director of TART Trails.

The trail was included in the National Lakeshore’s most recent management plan and then was analyzed and approved more specifically in an Environmental Assessment.

“The Sleeping Bear Heritage Trail is the single most exciting project to come out of our recently completed General Management Plan. The Trail will provide a wonderful way to explore and learn

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about the park and become a meaningful alternative for visitors to travel between park sites and local businesses without having to use their cars," said Dusty Schultz, Sleeping Bear Dunes National Lakeshore Superintendent.

Along with strong financial support from local residents and foundations, trail project partners have also had success obtaining federal and state grant funding. So far the Trail has received \$6.3 million in state and federal grants.

"This will be a wonderful day to celebrate the opening of this major segment of the Sleeping Bear Heritage Trail after the many years of planning," said Patty O'Donnell, Sleeping Bear Heritage Trail Project Manager - Northwest Michigan Council of Governments. "This segment was chosen as the first to complete because of the connectivity between the Dune Climb, the Group Campground, Historic Glen Haven, D.H. Day Campground, and Glen Arbor."

Funding for trail construction is secure from the Dune Climb to Empire and Glen Arbor to Port Oneida. To move forward with construction, nearly \$500,000 in matching funds are needed. To learn more about the project and how you can be a part of the effort visit www.sleepingbeartrail.org or call Pam Darling, Development Director, TART Trails, 231-941-4300.

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The Sleeping Bear Heritage Trail is a project of the Leelanau Scenic Heritage Route Committee (LSHR). Trail development is a partnership between the LSHR Committee, the Michigan Department of Transportation, Sleeping Bear Dunes National Lakeshore, Friends of Sleeping Bear Dunes, and TART Trails. Funding for trail development comes from federal and state grants, foundations, and individual donations.

About TART:

Traverse Area Recreation and Transportation (TART) Trails, Inc. is a nonprofit 501 (c)(3) organization formed in 1998 and located in Traverse City, Michigan. TART works to enrich the Traverse area by providing a network of trails, bikeways and pedestrian ways; and encouraging their use. TART Trails include a network of trail systems located in Grand Traverse and Leelanau counties. It is estimated that the trails serve over 200,000 users annually while preserving valuable community green space. TART is working to integrate these trails into the community by advocating for interconnected bike lanes, bike routes and sidewalks, and is also working to extend these trails to connect with a developing regional trails system. For more information about TART Trails, please visit www.traversetrails.org

About Sleeping Bear Dunes National Lakeshore:

Sleeping Bear Dunes National Lakeshore is a unit of the National Park Service established in 1970. The Lakeshore preserves the outstanding natural and cultural heritage of the area so that all may experience and appreciate it. Significant resources of the Lakeshore include forests, beaches, dunes, and glacial landforms, as well as maritime, agricultural, and recreational historic features.



About the Leelanau Scenic Heritage Route Committee

The Leelanau Scenic Heritage Route is a program of the Northwest Michigan Council of Governments, which is funded by the Michigan Department of Transportation. The Committee is dedicated to promoting measures, which protect and enhance the scenic, historical, and recreational characteristics of M-22, M-109, and M-204 as they traverse the rural countryside and unique communities of Leelanau County.

Images are oftentimes available upon request by e-mailing Tom White at tomwhite@nwm.com.mi.us and stating preferences for resolution (300 dpi?), file format (.tif? .jpg?) and file size (1MB or less?). Or, phone (231) 929-5044. Check our online Media Room at: nwm.org/media .

The Northwest Michigan Council of Governments, founded in 1973, facilitates and manages services and programs for 10 counties in the region. These programs include Regional Planning and Community Development, Northwest Michigan Sustainable Business Forum, Northwest Michigan Works, Workforce Development Board, Michigan Small Business and Technology Development Center Region 2, Hospitality Skills Alliance, the Procurement Technical Assistance Center program, KAL-TEC, Healthcare Skills Alliance of Northwest Michigan, and the Regional Repository for US Census data.

Some services of NWMCOG are in direct support of the counties, some are independent services provided to the public and businesses at large. NWMCOG is able to leverage several collaborative partnerships to extend limited resources and provide economies of scale for projects that operate on a regional basis. NWMCOG's member counties are: Antrim, Benzie, Charlevoix, Emmet, Grand Traverse, Kalkaska, Leelanau, Manistee, Missaukee, and Wexford.