

# **Sleeping Bear Gateways Council**

## **Promoting Engagement of Area Gateway Communities with the Sleeping Bear National Lakeshore**

### **Our Mission**

In anticipation of continued rapid growth of residents and visitors to the Sleeping Bear Dunes Area we seek to work with local communities, stakeholders, and the National Park Service in preserving the unique character and natural resources of the area for the benefit of its citizens, visitors, economy and environment.

In furtherance of our Mission, we have engaged various Sleeping Bear Dunes National Lakeshore (SBDNL or Lakeshore) stakeholder groups to discuss how these groups interact or intersect with SBDNL. Of particular importance in this dialogue is the participation of the Gateway Communities (GC) which serve as the access points to the Lakeshore.

### **The Importance of Gateway Communities**

GCs, around the SBDNL and other national parks throughout the country, have historically struggled to match the needs of visitors attracted to their local area.

GCs are typically smaller communities located in more rural areas and lack the administrative support and capital to address these needs.

The presence of the SBDNL – with annual visitation at 1.7 million and growing – presents our region with a set of benefits and challenges. GCs benefit from the business growth, employment opportunities and cultural activities that come with the Lakeshore and its visitors, but the same communities may face growing environmental issues, housing shortages and infrastructure needs beyond the capabilities of their small populations.

GCs to National Park Service assets across America are dealing with these and similar issues. The SBGC is working to bring local stakeholders together and build upon the successes of our and other GCs.

## **How The Sleeping Bear Gateways Council Plans To Be Helpful**

SBGC has initiated a program to address the needs of this area's GCs, that may differ by geography and distance to the SBDNL boundaries, by bringing the various stakeholders into discussions to plan for the future of our region.

SBGC is organizing a series of meetings on September 24th and 25th in Benzie and Leelanau Counties to introduce various stakeholders to Gateway Community planning models that seek to better coordinate the needs of all GCs.

Destry Jarvis, a consultant with gateway planning expertise, will speak about the need for communities and stakeholders to develop a planning structure to better meet the needs anticipated in the future.

Destry will also lead a SBGC board workshop each day to further the education and understanding of our volunteers. SBGC members as well as community members are welcome to attend.

SBGC is working to facilitate the necessary discussions, interactions and planning with area stakeholders and the Sleeping Bear Dunes National Lakeshore to preserve our beautiful natural resources, communities and lifestyle while accommodating the continuing significant growth in visitors to our area.