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Expect changes at National Lakeshore

By GORDON CHARLES
Record-Eagle outdoor editor

EMPIRE — Visitors to Sleeping Bear Dunes National Lakeshore will find a number of changes this year at the popular recreation and scenic spot in western Leelanau and Benzie counties.

Headquarters of the National Park Service has been moved from Frankfort to a brand new building at Empire where complete information about the lakeshore is available.

The same new structure also contains the museum which was formerly in a building near Glen Lake and is open to the public seven days a week. The old Coast Guard museum at Glen Haven will also be open on a daily basis and illustrates life-saving methods used during the past century when sailors' lives were endangered by violent storms in the area.

Extensive work has been done on the Stocking Drive which carries visitors to the top of the main Sleeping Bear Dune. Five overlooks have been built, with spectacular views of Lake Michigan and the Manitou Islands, as well as Glen Lake and the surrounding countryside. Gone is the hazardous, steep roadway which tested the brakes of all vehicles. It has been replaced by a gentler slope while still preserving the scenic beauty of the dune and tunnels of cool shade through the hardwood stands.

More athletic visitors will still find the challenge of the Dune Climb up the face of

Sleeping Bear Dune with its resultant reward a tremendous view of Glen Lake as well as the unspoiled dunes rolling off toward Lake Michigan in the other direction. Glen Lake itself offers early swimming in warm waters as does the mouth of Platte River, an even more popular spot within the park boundaries.

Camping is available at the D.H. Day Campground, just off Glen Haven as well as the Platte River Campground, just off M-22 at the Platte River crossing. Fees are \$6 per night with no hookups available. There is a dumping station for self-contained recreational vehicles, however, as well as toilet and shower buildings.

Other primitive camping is possible on both North and South Manitou Islands. Ferry service to both islands is out of Leland anytime after May 16.

National Park Service officials expect record crowds at Sleeping Bear this year, due to several factors. The visitor count is already 63 percent over that of last year at this time and publicity about the area, as a part of the National Governors' Conference in Traverse City, is likely to create other heavy traffic to Sleeping Bear during the summer months.

Information about open hours, as well as recreational opportunities, is available from the National Park Service, Sleeping Bear Dune National Lakeshore, P.O. Box 277, Empire, Mich. 49630 or phone (616) 328-5134.



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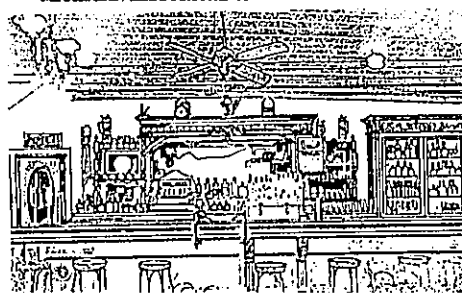
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