

**STATEMENT OF REPRESENTATIVE BILL HUIZENGA**  
**Before the House Committee on Natural Resources**  
**Subcommittee on National Parks, Forests and Public Lands**

**Sleeping Bear Dunes National Lakeshore Conservation and Recreation Act (H.R. 977)**

**October 25, 2011**

Thank you Chairman Bishop, Ranking Member Grijalva and members of the subcommittee for holding this hearing on the Sleeping Bear Dunes National Lakeshore Conservation and Recreation Act. The legislation, which would designate approximately 32,557 acres as wilderness, enjoys broad public support in Michigan, bipartisan, bicameral sponsorship in Congress and protects an important and popular unit of the National Park System in our state. I would also like to thank Chairman Dave Camp for partnering with me in this effort and being the co-lead here in the House.

Earlier this year, with over 100,000 votes nationwide, Sleeping Bear Dunes National Lakeshore was named the "Most Beautiful Place in America" by ABC's Good Morning America beating such locales as Aspen, Colorado; Cape Cod, Massachusetts; Lanikai Beach, Hawaii; and Sedona, Arizona. With an average yearly visitation of 1.2 million people and an estimated economic impact of \$78 million per year, protecting and maintaining access to the Lakeshore is absolutely vital as its economy is almost entirely dependent on tourism.

The road to introduction for this legislation was not easy. Originally, the National Park Service ignored public input in developing the management plan. As a result, the Park Service recommendations were flawed and were rejected by the public and Michigan's Congressional delegation. However, rather than trying to move ahead, the Park Service, with prodding from the Congressional delegation, went back to the drawing board and engaged in a transparent process with extensive discussions with the local citizens and stakeholders. The result, embodied in this legislation, is a balanced proposal that will ensure access to this popular resource while protecting its most fragile aspects.

An important responsibility of Congress is to hold the Executive Branch accountable for their actions particularly when they do not consult with the public. However, Congress should also recognize and act on those policies and recommendations in which the public has been fully engaged. An example of this is H.R. 977. The Sleeping Bear Dunes National Lakeshore Conservation and Recreation Act demonstrates how the process can and should work. The local citizens and stakeholders have invested significant time and effort in working with us and with the National Park Service in developing the appropriate policies for this area.

Again, I would like to thank the Committee for recognizing the high level of local involvement by scheduling H.R. 977 for action, and it is my hope that the full Committee will soon send this bill before the full House of Representatives for consideration.