



# Sleeping Bear Dunes celebrates opening of new trail

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EMPIRE, MICH. -- For the first time in years, a new loop has been added to the roughly 100 miles of hiking trails at Sleeping Bear Dunes National Lakeshore.

The three-mile "Kettles Trail" loop winds through a section of the park known as Bow Lakes -- a geologically distinct area featuring kettle lakes formed by melting ice when glaciers retreated from the region. The trail is "It is spectacular hiking around these glacial kettles," said park superintendent Scott Tucker. "You can find these [lakes] within the lakeshore as a whole, but this is the first time there's a trail that brings you right up their lip. It's a completely different hiking experience."

Tucker noted that the trail is in a great location for viewing fall color. It also happens to be in a "snow-belt" section of the park, where the snow drifts are usually deeper, making it a great spot for snowshoeing and cross-country skiing.

The first 1,000 feet of the trail lead to an overlook and are fully accessible via a compacted stone surface. The rest of the trail is compacted earth, and it accesses steep hills, ponds, and kettle bogs. Tucker rated the trail's difficulty as easy to moderate.

The trail is already open to the public -- visitors were regularly using it this past summer, Tucker said -- but the ribbon-cutting ceremony will be a chance to celebrate the work of the people who aided in its construction, including National Park Service trail crews, volunteers from the non-profit Friends of Sleeping Bear Dunes, and youth groups like SEEDS Youth Conservation Corps of Traverse City and AmeriCorps YouthWork.

"You don't build trails in the national parks very often," Tucker said. "Most of the trails at Sleeping Bear are trails that have been around since the park's inception, or they're social trails that have become more formal. This is really the first time a brand-new hiking trail has been built."