

Center for State of the Parks



PICTURED ROCKS NATIONAL LAKESHORE

SNAPSHOT

Pictured Rocks National Lakeshore was our nation's first national lakeshore and was set up differently than any other park in the National Park System. Of the park's 73,235 total acres, 33,929 acres and 42 miles of Lake Superior shoreline are managed as the Shoreline Zone, of which all but 10 acres is federally owned. The remaining 39,306 acres are part of an Inland Buffer Zone (IBZ) that is predominantly privately owned. To date, Pictured Rocks is the only national park with a buffer zone within its legislated boundary. The Park Service manages all activities in the Shoreline Zone. Local planning and zoning ordinances determine land use in the IBZ. In 2006, the park received more than 419,000 visitors.

HISTORY

By the mid-20th century, urban centers and industry dotted much of the shoreline of the Great Lakes, and public places for recreation and ecological preservation were dwindling. Congress had to act quickly to preserve some of the region's unique features for the future. In 1958, the National Park Service completed a survey of nearly 5,500 miles of Great Lakes shoreline to identify opportunities for preservation. The report strongly urged that several special places along Lake Superior and



JOHN BURDE / SOUTHERN ILLINOIS UNIVERSITY

Part of Grand Sable Dunes is designated as a research natural area. The dunes harbor several protected species of plants and animals.

Lake Michigan be acquired and preserved. In 1966, Congress established Pictured Rocks National Lakeshore on Michigan's Upper Peninsula to "preserve for the benefit, inspiration, education, recreational use, and enjoyment of the public, a significant portion of the diminishing shoreline of the United States and its related geographic and scientific features."

Fifteen miles of multicolored sandstone cliffs that get their colors from minerals such as iron, manganese, and copper give Pictured Rocks National Lakeshore its name and are some of its most distinctive features. Also noteworthy are the Grand Sable Dunes, perched dunes at the eastern end of the park. Spectacular waterfalls are common along the shoreline where fast-

moving streams plummet down cliffs to mix with the deep, cold waters of Lake Superior.

The cultural resources of Pictured Rocks National Lakeshore also contribute to the park's popularity as a tourist destination. Many reflect the Great Lakes' maritime heritage. Pictured Rocks is home to two lighthouses, the most notable of which is the Au Sable Light Station, and former U.S. Life-Saving Service/Coast Guard Stations. Offshore shipwrecks span a range of historical periods and attract divers willing to brave Lake Superior's cold waters. Former logging camps and farms scattered throughout the park date from the mid-19th century to the early 20th century.

THREATS

- In the last ten years, Pictured Rocks has lost seven permanent positions because of insufficient funding. Such shortfalls prevent the park



National Parks Conservation Association®
Protecting Our National Parks for Future Generations®

from addressing natural and cultural resources management priorities. The park needs a maintenance foreman, additional rangers, wildlife biologist, landscape ecologist, data management specialist, geographic information systems (GIS) specialist, full-time and seasonal biological science technicians, and a historian or curator.

- Preserving historic structures and inspecting them annually is difficult at current staffing levels. In addition, the cost of deferred maintenance on historic structures tops \$1.4 million.
- Past activities such as logging and land clearing significantly affected the habitats and hydrology at Pictured Rocks. Evidence of past logging is still found in the Shoreline Zone of the park.
- Sensitive dune habitats are threatened by heavy visitor use. Aerial photos taken during the past 50 years show an increase in bare sand, which has been attributed, in part, to foot traffic and snowmobiles.
- Non-native species threaten native plants and animals at Pictured Rocks. It is believed that competition with non-native salmon and trout has contributed to the decline of native coaster brook trout populations, while invasive plants such as spotted knapweed and white sweet clover threaten to disrupt native dune communities. Park staff cooperate with other federal and state agencies and nonprofit organizations to target non-native invasive species.
- Pictured Rocks has one cultural resources staff person who is responsible for coordinating a wide variety of management tasks without the assistance of any specialists at the park level. A staff historian would be a boon for cultural resources management.
- Greater knowledge about the park's cultural resources, which would con-

tribute to better interpretation and protection of those resources, would be gained through additional research. Studies should include a combination of historic structure reports, cultural landscape reports, historic furnishings plans, updates to the historic resource study and administrative history, ethnographic studies, and an archaeological overview and assessment.

WHAT'S BEING DONE

- Pictured Rocks National Lakeshore has developed a successful program of sustainable practices as part of the Park Service's new Climate Friendly Parks Program. These include installing solar panels, purchasing products and services that are better for the environment, and implementing a significant number of field-based best management practices. In 2000, the park developed a comprehensive sustainable vehicle and equipment operation and maintenance program using soy-diesel and other vegetable-based fluids. The park is nationally recognized for its environmental leadership program and has received several agency, department, and national awards for leadership in implementing and demonstrating sustainable practices.
- In 1994, 1,830 acres of Grand Sable Dunes were designated as a research natural area because they are home to a suite of federally and state listed threatened and endangered species and good habitat. Such areas are part of a national network of permanent tracts having little habitat disturbance that are set aside for research and to maintain biological diversity.
- The Au Sable Light Station, which the park has restored, is a premier cultural attraction. It is the park's focal point of interpretation, with summer tours attracting about 5,000 visitors annually. An additional

5,000 people visit the historic site during the rest of the year.

ABOUT NPCA AND CENTER FOR STATE OF THE PARKS

Since 1919, the National Parks Conservation Association has been the leading voice of the American people in protecting and enhancing our National Park System. NPCA, its members, and partners work together to protect the park system and preserve our nation's natural, historical, and cultural heritage for generations to come.

NPCA initiated the State of the Parks® program in 2000 to assess the condition of natural and cultural resources in the parks. The goal is to provide information that will help policy-makers, the public, and the National Park Service improve resource conditions in national parks, celebrate successes as models for other parks, and ensure a lasting legacy for future generations.

CONTACT US

For a copy of the full report on Pictured Rocks National Lakeshore published by NPCA's Center for State of the Parks, to get copies of reports on other parks, or for more information about Center for State of the Parks, visit www.npca.org/stateoftheparks or contact Dr. James Nations, vice president for Center for State of the Parks, at jnations@npca.org.

For more information on Pictured Rocks National Lakeshore, contact NPCA's Midwest Regional Director, Lynn McClure, at 312.343.7216 or lmclure@npca.org, or visit the park online at www.nps.gov/piro. For media inquiries, please contact Tracey McIntire, NPCA media relations manager, at 202.454.3311 or tmcintire@npca.org. To learn more about what the public and our elected officials can do to help improve the health of this park, visit www.npca.org/take_action.