



The Singing Sands

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Mission of the National Park Service

The National Park Service preserves unimpaired the natural and cultural resources and values of the national park system for the enjoyment, education, and inspiration of this and future generations. The Park Service cooperates with partners to extend the benefits of natural and cultural resource conservation and outdoor recreation throughout this country and the world.

Mission of Indiana Dunes National Lakeshore

The mission of Indiana Dunes National Lakeshore is to preserve for the educational, inspirational, and recreational use of the public certain portions of the Indiana Dunes and other areas of scenic, scientific, and historic interest and recreational value in the State of Indiana.

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Public Invited to New Visitor Center Dedication



Conceptual model created by Gerometta and Kinel Architects

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For eight years, Indiana Dunes National Lakeshore and the Porter County Convention and Visitor Commission (Commission) have been working towards a shared visitor center; and on November 29, the wait will be over! On that date, you are invited to join in the festivities, beginning with the ribbon-cutting ceremony for the \$2.5 million, 12,000-square-foot Dorothy Buell Memorial Visitor Center (Visitor Center). You are also invited to the National Lakeshore's 40th Anniversary Open House on December 2. Ideally located at Indiana 49 and U.S. Highway 20, this new Visitor Center is "expected to attract 300,000 visitors annually, almost four times the combined number who visited the National Lakeshore and Commission visitor centers at their original locations," according to National Lakeshore Superintendent Dale Engquist.

With its barrel ceiling made of Ponderosa pine and multimedia theater, the Visitor Center is a must see and do! It truly provides one-stop shopping for visitors seeking up-to-date information about the Indiana dunes and related Porter County attractions and services.

The Visitor Center features:

- An information desk staffed by park rangers;
- Educational and interpretive merchandise;
- National Lakeshore brochures, State Park brochures, and publications about attractions, services, and events in Porter County and Northwest Indiana;
- A theater where films about the natural and cultural histories of the National Lakeshore are shown daily and interpretive programs are offered;

- Orientation and safety exhibits;
- A 1,400-square-foot exhibit hall, which will, beginning in November, showcase artwork from the National Lakeshore's Artist-In-Residence program;
- A 24-hour vestibule with visitor resources, including a phone that connects visitors directly to lodging and camping;
- Lobby exhibits that promote the area's special events; and
- Public programs about the natural and cultural histories of the National Lakeshore, Indiana Dunes State Park, and Porter County.

Almost immediately following its establishment in 1971, the original Dorothy Buell Memorial Visitor Center had outgrown its location in the small church on the corner of U.S. Highway 12 and Kemil Road in Porter County. Tucked away in its hard-to-find location, only about 60,000 visitors annually found their way to the center. In 1998, the National Lakeshore was approached by the Commission, and the concept of a joint facility in a more prominent location was explored. Both wanted to meet visitor expectations and teach visitors about Indiana Dunes. Because the Commission shared similar visitor experience goals and had a similar problem—a small visitor center well-off the beaten path—the two entities, working together, were a good fit. In the Commission, the National Lakeshore found a partner who was willing to:

- Secure funds to build a visitor center, using mostly federal highway transportation enhancement fee grant money;
- Lease space in the Visitor Center to the National Lakeshore; and
- Allow the federally mandated name, the "Dorothy Buell Memorial Visitor Center," to be transferred to the new Visitor Center from the existing facility in the National Lakeshore.

Superintendent Engquist explains that, "Partnering with the Commission creates a win-win situation for all. Visitors will benefit from a one-stop information center. The National Lakeshore will spread its National Park Service preservation and stewardship messages to new audiences while the Commission will promote Porter County attractions to more people."

Furthermore, the Commission's Executive Director Lorelei Weimer says, "The partnership with the National Lakeshore is a definite enhancement to the Commission's mission; each organization can coexist alongside each other, strengthening and creating dynamic relationships between our communities and their environments while maintaining the unique quality of life in Porter County."



NPS Collection

Left to Right - Indiana Dunes State Park Property Manager Brandt Baughman, Commission Executive Director Lorelei Weimer, and National Lakeshore Superintendent Dale Engquist prepare to ascend up a construction lift to sign the Visitor Center's commemorative beam.