

Michigan Every Day **By Patrick Sullivan and Carole Eberly**

Oct. 21, 1970

Sleeping Bear Dunes National Lakeshore authorized

A national park along the Lake Michigan shore in Leelanau and Benzie counties first was proposed in 1961 by U.S. Senator Philip Hart. The natural beauty of the steep bluffs, sandy beaches and pristine lakes and streams that ran through the property was ideal for preservation. But the proposal was not met with resounding approval. Many property owners in the proposed park district feared the government would confiscate their land. Proposals were put forward and compromises offered. Land-owners grew distrustful of politicians. Local newspapers took sides.

Congress finally authorized a park on Oct. 21, 1970 that would include 35 miles of shoreline on the mainland as well as North and South Manitou Islands. The park includes dunes, forests, beaches, a lighthouse dating back to 1871, three former life-saving service stations and a restored farming district. The homeowners' fears were not misplaced. Much of the land was acquired by the federal government. Some residents believed they were bullied into selling their land.

It was 1976 before the park opened. The process of acquiring land for the park proved complicated and bitterness over the park among people who were displaced still lingers.