



Foundation Document Overview

Pictured Rocks National Lakeshore

Michigan



Contact Information

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Purpose



PICTURED ROCKS NATIONAL LAKESHORE preserves the character, scenic qualities, and natural processes shaping the multi-colored sandstone cliffs, beaches, dunes, wilderness, and forested ecosystems of a distinctive portion of the Lake Superior shoreline. The park provides for public recreation, inspiration, scientific study, and education about natural and cultural heritage, while still providing for economic utilization of renewable forest resources within an inland buffer zone.



Significance

Significance statements express why Pictured Rocks National Lakeshore resources and values are important enough to merit national park unit designation. Statements of significance describe why an area is important within a global, national, regional, and systemwide context. These statements are linked to the purpose of the park unit, and are supported by data, research, and consensus. Significance statements describe the distinctive nature of the park and inform management decisions, focusing efforts on preserving and protecting the most important resources and values of the park unit.

- The picturesque landscapes of Pictured Rocks National Lakeshore have and continue to be sculpted by impressive geologic processes, forming a number of regionally and nationally rare features. These landscapes include the 200-foot high colorful and scenic “pictured rocks” cliffs for which the park was named, the perched Grand Sable Dunes, the twelve miles of unspoiled and undeveloped Lake Superior beach, and a multitude of cascading waterfalls.
- Pictured Rocks National Lakeshore affords visitors an array of educational and recreational opportunities to experience the quiet solitude, colorful beauty, and endless vistas of the park. Depending on the season, visitors can explore the snow-covered landscapes by cross-country skiing, ice climbing, and snowmobiling; kayaking the brilliantly blue waters of Lake Superior; backpacking more than 100 miles of trails, including a part of the North Country National Scenic Trail; and witnessing the changing colors of the northern hardwood forests.
- Rarely found east of the Mississippi River, the almost complete suite of native plant and animal species protected at Pictured Rocks National Lakeshore are part of diverse, dynamic, and thriving ecosystems. The designated research natural area within the park further provides an important venue for protection and research of a rare example of a pristine, perched dune ecosystem.
- The park protects a spectrum of cultural resources focused on the thousands of years of human use of Lake Superior and the shoreline. Cultural sites and resources depict how the Anishinaabe, early explorers, miners, missionaries, fur traders, mariners, lumberjacks, iron producers, U.S. Life Saving Service, U.S. Lighthouse Service, U.S. Coast Guard, and others have relied on and interacted with this area.
- The early adoption of a collaborative conservation approach at Pictured Rocks National Lakeshore, through the designation of a legislated buffer zone, established the park as a pioneer in partnership and collaboration that continues today.

Fundamental Resources and Values

Fundamental resources and values are those features, systems, processes, experiences, stories, scenes, sounds, smells, or other attributes determined to merit primary consideration during planning and management processes because they are essential to achieving the purpose of the park and maintaining its significance.

- **Geomorphic Processes and Associated Features**
- **Access to Diverse Recreational Opportunities**
- **Visual Resources**
- **Wilderness**
- **Ecosystem Integrity**
- **Abundance and Quality of Water Resources**
- **Maritime Heritage Resources**
- **Collaborative Conservation**

Pictured Rocks National Lakeshore contains other resources and values that may not be fundamental to the purpose and significance of the park, but are important to consider in management and planning decisions. These are referred to as other important resources and values.

- **Other Historic and Continuing Uses of the Land**



Interpretive Themes

Interpretive themes are often described as the key stories or concepts that visitors should understand after visiting a park—they define the most important ideas or concepts communicated to visitors about a park unit. Themes are derived from—and should reflect—park purpose, significance, resources, and values. The set of interpretive themes is complete when it provides the structure necessary for park staff to develop opportunities for visitors to explore and relate to all of the park significances and fundamental resources and values.

- **Change.** Pictured Rocks National Lakeshore's diverse and dramatic landscapes are continually transformed by changes, some occurring at glacial speed, others happening before our eyes.
- **Diversity.** Vibrant communities of life have developed in the lands and waters of Pictured Rocks National Lakeshore, occupying diverse niches in the dramatic geologic story of the Great Lakes.
- **Protection.** Pictured Rocks National Lakeshore continues a tradition of providing a safe harbor in a sometimes perilous world.
- **Magnificence.** Pictured Rocks National Lakeshore offers a range of breathtaking settings, from magically intimate forest paths to spectacular vistas of the largest, deepest, coldest, and most pristine of the Great Lakes.



Description

Lake Superior is the deepest, coldest, and most pristine of all the Great Lakes and the largest body of fresh water in North America. Pictured Rocks National Lakeshore, authorized by Congress as America's first national lakeshore in 1966, hugs the Lake Superior shoreline for more than 40 miles. Bordered on the west and east by the towns of Munising and Grand Marais, Michigan, the park is renowned for its spectacular sandstone cliffs, white sand beaches, waterfalls and streams, inland lakes, boreal and eastern hardwood forests, dunes, abundant wildlife, and more than 100 miles of trails.

The 71,397 acres of the park are divided approximately equally by the enabling legislation into two distinct ownership and management zones. The federally owned shoreline zone was established for the traditional national park reasons of preserving natural and cultural resources and providing for recreation. The non-federal inland buffer zone was created "to stabilize and protect the existing character and uses of the land, waters, and other properties within such zone." Congress intended that the buffer zone serve to preserve the setting of the Lake Superior shoreline and inland lakes and protect the watersheds and streams. Sustained yield timber harvesting and other resource management activities compatible with preservation and recreational use were permitted in the inland buffer zone. For the purposes of this document, the use of the term "park" refers to the federally owned shoreline zone; however, Pictured Rocks National Lakeshore is legislatively defined as the federally owned shoreline zone and inland buffer zone within the official boundary.

The park provides visitors with superb opportunities for day hiking, backpacking, camping, beachcombing, swimming, boating on Lake Superior and the inland lakes, fishing, hunting, scenic driving, snowmobiling, and cross-country skiing.

Pictured Rocks National Lakeshore features an impressive collection of historic resources, including two former U.S. Coast Guard Stations (the Grand Marais Harbor of Refuge and the Sand Point Life Saving Station), the Munising Range Lights, and the Au Sable Light Station—a magnificent lighthouse and double keepers' quarters that date to 1874.

The park operates year-round, has more than 550,000 annual visitors, and is viewed as a critical component of the local and regional tourism economy contributing \$23.4 million to Alger County in 2014. Visitors can find more information about the park at the Interagency Visitor Center operated with the U.S. Forest Service in Munising or at the park's other visitor and information centers along the length of the lakeshore (Munising Falls Visitor Center, Miners Castle Information Center, Au Sable Light Station Information Center, and Grand Sable Visitor Center).

