



A.J. Van Beest/Staff Photo

**OAK ISLAND GUFFAWS** — Geof Smith, Congressman Dave Obey and Martin Hanson share a laugh on Oak Island's beach. Smith shared some of the National Park Service's restoration plans for the Apostle Islands National Lakeshore with Obey Thursday. Obey said Hanson was instrumental in bringing the original plan for the lakeshore to fruition. "Martin was the town nag who never let anyone forget the idea," Obey said with a smile.

## Obey surveys projects in Apostle Islands

By A.J. VAN BEEST  
Staff Writer

**APOSTLE ISLANDS** — The throb of the NPS Kiwatin's dual diesel engines gradually died and left the Chequamegon Bay side of Long Island quiet except for the wind and Geof Smith's voice.

"This is critical habitat for the piping plover," the National Park Service natural resources man-

### Congressman looks at results of lighthouse restoration, erosion control, wilderness conservation projects

agement specialist said, pointing at Long Island's beach. "For 50 years, there wasn't a nest here, then in 1998, we found a nest with three chicks and banded them. This year, we found another nest, and one of the birds that

returned had a band. This is the only successful plover nest we've found in Wisconsin."

Smith and the Kiwatin were part of a Thursday NPS tour of the Apostle Islands for U.S. Congressman Dave Obey, D-Wausau,

to show him which projects have been accomplished since his visit last year, and what still needs work.

"We've put a predator-resistant fence around the nest and strung fishing line over the top to keep gulls out," Smith continued. "We've also posted signs about a quarter of a mile from the nest to warn people away

See OBEY on page 9



# OBEY: Had a first-hand look at problems faced by the islands

Continued from page 1

from the area, and for the most part, they've been pretty cooperative."

Another Long Island project Smith told Obey about is purple loosestrife control. When the 1979 storm that sank the Edmund Fitzgerald turned Long Island back into a peninsula, it also cleared the way for the invasive exotic plant to get a foothold in the islands.

Smith said the park tried cutting the plants, but couldn't keep up with them. Next they tried cutting and spraying the stalks with a herbicide. That approach was more effective, but the park prefers to use natural controls when possible.

Currently, the NPS has released a beetle that feeds exclusively on loosestrife. The park is continuing to cut and spray while waiting for the beetle population to grow to the point where it controls the plants. Smith also mentioned that zebra mussels had been found on the bottom of a barge in Chequamegon Bay. He said the park service was looking for any further incursion into the lake. Obey said zebra mussels have caused him some headaches on Capital Hill.

"We had a heck of a battle in '96 when a few newcomers on the (appropriations) committee thought zebra mussels were funny because of their name," he said. "They changed their tune when one had an infestation in his own district."

At Oak Island, Smith showed Obey the park service's efforts to remediate damage to fragile beach ecosystems. Smith said vol-

unteers were harvesting seeds from beach plants, starting them in greenhouses, then replanting them in spots that had been trampled bare by visitors.

Another problem throughout the Apostle Islands is campsite sprawl. Smith said the NPS is mapping all the sites, including boundaries, vegetation and trails and will work to redefine sites to keep them from spreading through sensitive areas.

At Raspberry Island, Obey looked at the cliff eroding toward the island's historic lighthouse. Bob Mackreth, NPS cultural resource management specialist - "just call me the park historian," he said, grinning - that if nothing is done to slow the current rate of erosion, the fog signal building will fall into the lake in 15-20 years.

"Fortunately, we're planning on building a seawall and regrading the slope to a natural angle of repose next summer," Mackreth said.

## Obey says Bush does well for the well-to-do

As well as touring the inner Apostle Islands Thursday, U.S. Congressman Dave Obey had a few minutes to talk about national politics.

"How you rate the President's job depends on what's important to you," Obey said. "If you think huge tax cuts that primarily benefit people making more than \$300,000 a year are good, then he's doing well.

"If you think smaller tax cuts with money left over to help the Social Security, health care and education programs would have been a better idea, then he's not doing so well.



A.J. Van Beest/Staff Photo

**LANDING CRAFT** — Because the NPS Kiwatin draws too much water to land at Oak Island, the park service brought out a smaller boat to transfer passengers from ship to shore. Here Will Painter, left, assistant to Congressman Obey, Obey and his wife get a lift to the shore.

"If you like having gas, oil and mining industry executives sprinkled throughout the administration, then you like the president's approach to energy.

"If you think we ought to conserve what we have and look more at alternative sources of energy, maybe you see room for improvement.

"The President talks like he's expanding education, but his bill cuts in half the average rate at which education funding was expanding for the last five years.

"He passed a huge tax cut based on a \$125 billion projected surplus outside Social Security. Thanks to his tax plan

and the current economic slowdown, there's nothing left. He took off the table all the money that was available for social security or prescription drugs for seniors of education. It was nothing but short-term gratification that will lead to long-term neglect.

"When we go back, we still have to fund defense, labor, health, education... We still have about two-thirds of our plate full and no money to deal with it because it all went to the tax cut.

"It should be an interesting September and October."