



## Frequently Asked Questions From Property Owners About Removing Sand

Sand dunes are a prominent feature in Michigan. The dunes are enjoyed by homeowners and visitors and are a source of sand for commercial and industrial uses. Blowing sand is common along the shorelines of the Great Lakes. The wind continually reshapes the sand dunes and forms new dunes. Often the sand builds up around structures or is deposited on decks, patios, and driveways. The sand may restrict the use of a structure or hard surfaces. The removal of sand for mining, construction, or protection of a structure is regulated in specific areas designated as Sand Dune Areas (275,000 acres). Within the Sand Dune Areas are Critical Dune Areas (74,000 acres) where sand removal is subject to additional regulations. Depending on the project's purpose and where the project is located within a Sand Dune Area, either a Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) permit or a letter of authorization may be required to remove sand. Landowners should also check with their local government as some local units have their own sand removal ordinances.

**What is a Sand Dune Area?** It is an area designated by the DEQ that includes landforms composed primarily of sand, whether windblown or of other origin, and lies within two miles of a Great Lake. Sand Dune Areas include all Critical Dune Areas.

**What is a Critical Dune Area?** It is an area designated in the "[Atlas of Critical Dune Areas](#)" dated February 1989. Critical Dune Areas are located within Sand Dune Areas.

**How do I know if my property is in a Critical Dune Area or a Sand Dune Area?** Check the maps online at [www.mi.gov/criticaldunes](http://www.mi.gov/criticaldunes) for critical dune areas or the interactive [GeoWebFace](#) for [sand dune areas](#).

**What is Sand Dune Mining?** Sand dune mining means the removal of sand from a sand dune area for commercial and/or industrial purposes. An example of a commercial use would be sand that is sold, donated, or traded and used for a purpose that has some value.

**What is grading?** Grading is moving sand from one contour to another such as levelling a parking area. Grading typically occurs during final site preparation, landscaping or road work. A [permit is required](#) in a critical dune area.

**Do I need a permit to sweep off my deck, patio, or driveway?** No, a permit is not required if the sand is recently blown in. There is [a list of activities not needing a permit](#) on properties in a critical dune area at the program website, [www.mi.gov/criticaldunes](http://www.mi.gov/criticaldunes).



**I want to build a house in a critical dune area and will have excess sand after construction.** What do I do with the excess sand? A DEQ permit will be required before building your house. During the permit application review you'll be asked to identify where the excess sand will be placed. The sand can remain on site or be removed from the site. The DEQ encourages leaving the sand in the critical dune area to help maintain the dune resource protected by the statute. If you choose to leave the sand on your site, you'll be asked to show the location on your application drawings. There are examples of application drawings with the sand placement area identified at [www.mi.gov/criticaldunes](http://www.mi.gov/criticaldunes).

**I am removing a small amount of sand from a project site in a sand dune area but outside of a critical dune area. Do I need a DEQ permit?** If less than 3,000 tons (2,222 cubic yards) of sand will be removed as a one-time occurrence and is not for the direct use for an industrial or commercial purpose, then a DEQ permit is not required. Check with your local unit of government for local ordinances regarding sand removal.

**Can I remove the sand blown onto my property that is threatening my home or structure? Yes.**

Depending on the location of the threatened home or structure within a sand dune area and the intended use for the removed sand, either a letter of authorization or a permit is required from the DEQ to remove greater than 3,000 tons (2,222 cubic yards) of sand. Determine the type of approval needed from the following table.

<b>Project Location</b>	<b>Disposal or Relocation</b>	<b>Required from DEQ before each removal</b>
The project site is in a sand dune area but <i>outside</i> of a critical dune area.	The sand will be removed from a sand dune area and used for a commercial or industrial purpose.	A letter of authorization from the DEQ, Oil, Gas and Minerals Division (OGMD). Contact the OGMD office at 517-284-6823.
The project site is in a critical dune area.	The sand will be removed from a sand dune area and used for a commercial or industrial purpose.	A letter of authorization from the DEQ, OGMD. Contact the OGMD office at 517-284-6823.
The project site is in a critical dune area.	The sand will remain within the critical dune area and sand dune area and will not be used for a commercial or industrial purpose.	A permit from DEQ-Water Resources Division. Go online to MiWaters to apply. For more information go to <a href="http://www.mi.gov/criticaldunes">www.mi.gov/criticaldunes</a> .  Keeping the sand in the critical dune area helps maintain the dune resource protected by the statute. During the permit application review process, DEQ permitting staff will ask you where the sand will be relocated.

**Sand is being mined near me. Does the property owner need a permit?** If the worksite is located within a sand dune area, a permit is required. If the worksite is outside a sand dune area, a permit from DEQ,OGMD, to mine sand is not required. Permits from other state, federal or local agencies may be required. A map and a list of current sand mining permits may be found online at [www.michigan.gov/deqland](http://www.michigan.gov/deqland) by clicking Dunes>Mining>Sand Dune Mining.

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