

# Frequently Asked Questions: REMOVING SAND FROM PROPERTY IN COASTAL DUNES



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 Michigan Department of Environment, Great Lakes, and Energy (EGLE) 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 EGLE 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 available at [Michigan.gov/CriticalDunes](https://Michigan.gov/CriticalDunes) for critical dune areas.

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## 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 leveling 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 Web site, [Michigan.gov/CriticalDunes](https://Michigan.gov/CriticalDunes).



## If I build a house in a Critical Dune Area, what do I do with excess sand after construction?

An EGLE permit will be required before building your house. During the permit application review you will be asked to identify where the excess sand will be placed. The sand can remain on site or be removed from the site. EGLE 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 will be asked to show the location on your application drawings. There are examples of application drawings with the sand placement area identified at [Michigan.gov/CriticalDunes](https://Michigan.gov/CriticalDunes).

## Do I need an EGLE permit to remove a small amount of sand from a project site that is in a Sand Dune Area, but outside of a Critical Dune Area?

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 EGLE to remove greater than 3,000 tons (2,222 cubic yards) of sand. Determine the type of approval needed from the following table.

## 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 EGLE to remove greater than 3,000 tons (2,222 cubic yards) of sand. Determine the type of approval needed from the following table.

Project Location	Disposal or Relocation	Required form EGLE before each removal
Within a Sand Dune Area but outside 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 EGLE, Oil, Gas and Minerals Division (OGMD). Contact the OGMD office at 517-284-6823
Within 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 EGLE, OGMD. Contact the OGMD office at 517-284-6823.
Within 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 EGLE, Water Resources Division. Apply at <a href="https://www.michigan.gov/MiEnviroPortal">Michigan.gov/MiEnviro Portal</a> . For more information go to <a href="https://www.michigan.gov/CriticalDunes">Michigan.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, EGLE permitting staff will ask you where the sand will be relocated.

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