



Frequently Asked Questions: PATH MAINTENANCE NEAR THE WATER'S EDGE

Why is the dune so steep near the water?

Coastal sand dunes often have a low dune called a foredune between the water and back-dunes. Waves reaching the foredune often erode the dune to a nearly vertical slope called the wave-cut face of the foredune. The lake's water levels change with the seasons. Depending on water levels, storms, and people this slope may be so high that it is hard to climb.

My path is not connected to the beach anymore. How do I get to the water's edge?

If you are in a [Critical Dune Area](#) you may apply for a permit to maintain an existing single file footpath, with handheld tools, to cut through the wave cut face of the foredune to the water's edge. A [permit is not needed to construct stairs](#) if they are built to meet specific criteria. The stairs must be elevated above the foredune enough to allow sand movement beneath the stairs, no wider than 5 feet, without roof or walls and constructed with handheld tools. The bottom of the stairs must be above the ordinary high water mark of the Great Lake. Remember the shoreline is always changing. Stairs constructed today may be washed away with the next storm. Maintaining your existing path over the wave-cut face of the foredune with a shovel may be less effort and will be lake friendly. A third option is to access the beach from a local park.

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What are the requirements for a permit?

The path must be an existing path. The foredune must have a steep vertical drop adjacent to the water's edge that is preventing safe access. The path must be dug using handheld tools only and be no wider than five feet. All sand will be disposed within ten feet of the path on the dry beach and not below the ordinary high water mark of the Great Lake. This category does not apply to new paths, a non-foredune path on a lakeward facing slope, the clearing of vegetation outside the five-foot-wide path, work below the ordinary high water mark, or the installation of hard structures. Property owners are cautioned to use care when cutting through the foredune, as the foredune is the property's first defense against erosion. Cut the foredune only as deep as needed to provide safe access to the beach.

How do I apply for a permit?

The application process is explained at Michigan.gov/CriticalDunes. The application is submitted in [MiEnviro Portal](#). Be sure to include the [fee](#), project location, and [site plan with cross-sections](#) in your application.

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