

# Understanding What's at Stake with the Proposed Sand Dune Mine, Excavation, and Marina

## Background on the Developer's Proposal

NorthShore of Saugatuck (NSS) has proposed a private development that would excavate and remove 250,000 tons of sand from Michigan's Critical Dune Boundary – erasing 6.5 acres of dunes – to add 3,200-feet of waterfrontage for a private marina. NSS is reapplying for a state permit required for their development from the Michigan Department of Environment, Great Lakes, and Energy (EGLE). Sand Dune Mining (the removal of sand for commercial or industrial purposes) within Michigan's Critical Dune Boundary has been prohibited since 1998. If approved, the sand dune mine, excavation, and marina would set a dangerous precedent for permitting other marina developments in the River Mouth Area, potentially including Pine Trail Camp, Ox-Bow School of Art, even Saugatuck's northeast parking lot at Oval Beach.

## Projected Impact of the Proposed Sand Dune Mine, Excavation, and Marina

- Erases 6.5 acres of rare Critical Dunes for commercial gain.
- Drains the groundwater beneath the globally imperiled interdunal wetlands on the Patty Birkholz Natural Area.
- Damages the Potawatomi Traditional Cultural Property by putting at risk lake sturgeon, burial sites, wild rice, and other Cultural Values.
- Destroys the archaeological and historic site of Singapore.

## Impact to the Economic Vision of Tri-Community Master Plan Goals

Douglas, Saugatuck, and Saugatuck Township unanimously approved the Tri-Community Master Plan (TCP) and formally pledged to “mutually cooperate in guiding future development to advance a common vision.” The proposed sand dune mine, excavation, and marina threatens the historical, cultural, and ecological values that drive our tourism economy:

*“...a major attraction of both the Lake Michigan and Kalamazoo River waterfronts is their scenic, natural shorelines composed of forested dunes and large wetland areas. Should these natural areas be greatly damaged or destroyed through inappropriate development, then the ‘goose that laid the golden egg will be dead.’” (TCP, 2016)*

The proposed excavation would:

- Violate local zoning ordinances.
- Degrade our Parks, Natural Areas, Beaches, Waterways, Shorelines, Wetlands, and Dunes by changing the essential character of the Kalamazoo River Mouth.
- Diminish and devalue the Tri-Communities' \$20+-million investment in the adjacent Saugatuck Harbor Natural Area, Tallmadge Woods, and the Patty Birkholz Natural Area by introducing inappropriate noise, vibration, fumes, and visual intrusions.
- Add significant boat traffic to the already-congested River Mouth area.

## Stop the proposed Sand Dune Mine and the Marina: Urge Your Elected Officials To:

- **Pass a resolution stating:** *The proposed sand dune mine, excavation, and removal of 250,000 tons of sand within Michigan's Critical Dune Boundary at the Kalamazoo River Mouth is Contrary to the Public Interest as detailed in the Tri-Community Master Plan.*
- **Submit that resolution to EGLE and U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE)** when asked to provide comment in the state and federal permit reviews of Northshore of Saugatuck's proposed Sand Dune Mine and Marina.

You can download a copy of a sample letter to elected officials at [www.saugatuckdunescoastalalliance.com](http://www.saugatuckdunescoastalalliance.com).



Green - Public Natural Areas  
 Yellow - Private Open Spaces  
 Red - Sand Dune Mining

**Public Spaces of the Saugatuck Dunes Region**  
 Including Conservation Easements, Camps and Private Green Spaces



Allegan County Land Information Services assumes no liability for the conclusions drawn from the use of these data

Map Scale: 1 Inch = 2500 feet  
 Map Amended: 5/15/22