

# GREAT LAKES SHORELINES

## INFORMATION FOR PERMIT APPLICANTS



With more than 3,000 miles of shoreline in Michigan, the Great Lakes form Michigan's geography and shape our economy, society, and environment. The waves shape our sandy beaches and rocky shorelines. The shallow bays and coastal wetlands provide habitat for wildlife and fish. Sand dunes tower over the shores. The shorelines are a recreational destination for property owners and tourists, and shoreline communities enjoy the economic base provided by their local Great Lake. The DEQ protects Great Lakes shorelines through regulatory oversight with programs that range from the permitting of homes and shore protection, to the protection of High Risk Erosion and Critical Dune Areas.

Beach walking is a popular pastime for residents and visitors. Walking is a legal activity along the Great Lakes shoreline regardless of who owns the property, but walkers cannot linger on another person's shoreline property without their permission. Linger includes sunbathing, camping, building fire pits, and other similar activities.

This Fact Sheet answers the following questions:

**Is my property in a High Risk Erosion or Critical Dune Area?**

**What activities require a permit in a High Risk Erosion or Critical Dune Area?**

**What are the best practices for addressing shoreline erosion?**

**How do I apply for a permit?**



**Michigan  
Department of  
Environmental  
Quality**

Water Resources Division

[www.mi.gov/wrd](http://www.mi.gov/wrd)

Is my property in a High Risk Erosion Area or a Critical Dune Area?

The DEQ offers information on its **High Risk Erosion Area** and **Critical Dune Area** web sites to help identify if your property is in a High Risk Erosion Area or Critical Dune Area:

- **High Risk Erosion Area maps** show the locations of High Risk Erosion Areas along the Great Lakes.
- The **Critical Dune Atlas** shows the locations of Critical Dune Areas along the Great Lakes.
- **MiWaters** Site Map Explorer can also help – type in the address, under Layers turn on Coastal then:
  - select the High Risk Erosion Zones layer, click nearby to see Projected Recession Distances OR
  - select the Critical Dune Area layer.

What activities require a permit in a High Risk Erosion Area or a Critical Dune Area?

The DEQ offers information on its web sites to help identify if a permit is needed including:

- A list of **common activities** that require a permit for High Risk Erosion and Critical Dune Areas, as well as **activities not requiring a permit in Critical Dune Areas**.
- If you are unsure whether your project requires a permit, then you may want to request a **Pre-Application Meeting**, which is an official request to meet with DEQ staff to discuss a project and determine if a permit will be necessary.

What are the best practices for addressing shoreline erosion?

The DEQ offers information on our web sites to help address shoreline erosion using best practices, including:

- **Living on the Coast** – Learn about living and working on the attractive edges of the dynamic Great Lakes.
- **Sand Dune Stabilization Best Management Practices** – How to live with moving sand.
- **Minor Project categories** – Information on regulations for small construction projects along the Great Lakes shorelines.

How do I apply for a permit?

Applicants should use the DEQ Joint Permit Application:

- Permit applications should be submitted through the MiWaters online permit application system.
- Information on the application process and how to submit an application is available at [www.mi.gov/jointpermit](http://www.mi.gov/jointpermit).
- The permit review process may take up to three or four months for activities on Great Lakes Shorelines.