

STAKEHOLDER WORKSHOP

Help us protect the Sheridan Beach Esplanade

Thursday, May 23, 2019

5 – 7 pm

*Emergency Operation Center
the lower level of City Hall*

100 E. Michigan Blvd, Michigan City, IN 46360

It is vital that we continue to work together as stakeholders to plan and manage the Sheridan Beach Esplanade.

Please join us as we present findings from many expert partners on the ever-changing dune environment which affects public access, private property and important native habitats.

We will discuss designated beach paths, social trails, increased erosion which is threatening private property, and education and stewardship.

We will share ideas and plan solutions for the management of this unique and valuable natural resource.



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Sheridan Beach Public Access Narrative

The Park Department was contacted in the spring of 2017 by a Sheridan Beach homeowner who is concerned with a quickly growing sand dune adjacent to his property. The dune has grown significantly in the last 5 years and threatens to cover the back of his house.

The Park Department reached out to Natalie Johnson and Nathaneal Pilla of Save the Dunes, Derek Nimetz of the Indiana Department of Natural Resources, Ryan Allison of Cardno, Gia Wagner of the National Park Service, and Erin Argyila of Indiana University NW for their expert advice. After many site visits and meetings, it was determined by all that the dunes were growing so quickly due to the many social paths with exposed sand. We have outlined a multi-faceted approach to address the problem.

It is important to note our 2014 land management plan, which was funded in part by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration and Indiana Department of Natural Resources Lake Michigan Coastal Program, allowed for homeowners to create beach paths behind their homes using specifications outlined in a license agreement. The Park Board suspended the beach path license program on May 2, 2018 and all former license holders were notified of the program's suspension.

Victoria Wittig, Project Coordinator with Save the Dunes, in partnership with the Michigan City Park Department, is developing an educational outreach program to inform residents, realtors and contractors why we need to minimize the use of social trails and maximize the use of designated access paths to preserve and protect the dunes and private property. It will be important to educate people, so they don't feel the city is arbitrarily taking away their beach access. We will create printed materials to be distributed to approximately 300 homeowners. We will hold a workshop for contractors who are hired by homeowners to bulldoze beach paths. We will hold a workshop for realtors because there are many rental properties in Sheridan Beach and they can help us distribute printed materials to short term visitors. We intend to roll out this program in spring of 2019 in partnership with Save the Dunes.

Erin Argyilan PhD, Department of Geosciences, Indiana University, in partnership with the Michigan City Park Department, is currently mapping the history of social trails using Indiana Department of Natural Resources' annual shoreline photos that date back to 2001. This will give us the number and location of the 70 plus social paths in the 2-mile stretch of beach under our jurisdiction.



Gia Wagner, Natural Resources Branch Manager, National Park Service has provided the Park Department with educational signage “Save our Dunes: Stay on Trails.” We believe a consistent message across all northwest Indiana beaches is important. The signs were posted in all of our public beach restrooms in 2018.



Designated Beach Paths

The image is a map titled "Michigan City Parks & Recreation Department Beach Location Map". It shows a satellite view of a beach area with 11 numbered flags (1-11) indicating designated paths. A legend indicates that paths are marked with wooden signs and numbered. Below the map is a table with columns for "Beach Name", "Address", "Phone", "Hours", "Amenities", "Notes", and "Map Location". The table lists various beaches such as "1st Beach", "2nd Beach", "3rd Beach", "4th Beach", "5th Beach", "6th Beach", "7th Beach", "8th Beach", "9th Beach", "10th Beach", and "11th Beach". At the bottom of the map, there is a QR code and the website "www.MichiganCityParks.com | 219.873.1506".

The Michigan City Park Department will implement the “Sheridan Beach and The Esplanade Public Access, Land Management and Implementation Plan” by installing 4 beach access mats at California, Louisiana, Georgia and Illinois Avenues in Michigan City, and planting the exposed sand around them with marram grass per the specifications outlined in our land management plan. Georgia Avenue is an emergency vehicle access path and must be kept 10’ wide. Once the mat is installed grass will be planted on exposed sand no more than 3’ from each edge of the mat. Once these designated paths have been installed, we can begin to address closing social paths by using path markers directing users to the closest designated path. The National Park Service has informed us social trails can experience regrowth in as little as two years which is evident today on Mount Baldy in Michigan City.



Path Markers

