

# North Point Land Preserve work may begin next fall

By ROD SMITH - HP Correspondent | Posted: Friday, December 11, 2015 5:00 am

SOUTH HAVEN - Van Buren County wants to begin the restoration of the North Point Land Preserve by next fall in South Haven Township.

Commissioners have elected to apply for a Michigan Department of Environmental Quality Coastal Zone Management grant for \$50,000.

"It's a one-to-one grant," said Marcy Colclough, senior planner of the Southwest Michigan Planning Commission. That means the state's share is \$25,000, the county's \$25,000.

The grant's intent is to pay for Phase I of the restoration of the sand dune. That involves work on and along the proposed Syndicate Park-to-beach trail as well as work on the dune on Syndicate Park's side.

Syndicate Park is a subdivision bordering the land preserve on the preserve's northern boundary. The sand dune is threatening to crush some homes there.

The main trail on the preserve's north side begins at Grand Avenue and traverses 675 feet over the sand to Lake Michigan.

It'll be open for foot traffic and off-road vehicles.

The grant will pay for a cedar-plank fence along the trail to keep people off the dunes plus another fence on the beach for the same reason. Dune grass will be planted along the fences to control sand movement.

That's the same theory for planting woodland vegetation along the back of the dune facing houses in Syndicate Park.

"Those houses are being compromised" by the sand moving in to crush them, Colclough said. In the past the dune has destroyed several houses.

The trail will be graded in spots for easier travel. It averages 30 percent grades with one 98 percent grade near the beach.

North Point's land restoration plan calls for two trails, closing the 30 informal trails. The northern one goes to the beach from inland while the other runs south runs from the beach to an overlook 150 feet above the water. The south trail is only for foot traffic.

In total, the project calls for restoring more than 200,000 square feet of dune.

Work on Phase I is set for next fall. Phase II will take place the next year. That involves restoring blown-out areas. The price now is calculated at \$150,000.

But there's the possibility it may not cost that much.

Colclough said Syndicate Park residents have been asking off-road vehicle drivers to stay on the trails and off the dune. Because of that, the dune grass is growing back.

"In the last two years the dune grass there has naturally been expanding by itself," Colclough said. It may expand enough to cut the cost of Phase II, she said.

Plans are to apply for Phase II funding next spring.