



## Van Buren County seeking engineering help to stabilize sand dune threatening Lake Michigan homes

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**PAW PAW, MI** -- With two homes flattened and more threatened, the Van Buren County Board of Commissioners has applied for an engineering grant to stabilize the sand dune in the North Point Land Preserve on Lake Michigan.

Marci Colclough, senior planner of the Benton Harbor-based Southwest Michigan Planning Commission, told commissioners on Monday, Dec. 30, that the engineering study will follow the **recommendations of a recent study by a Calvin College geologist.**

That geologist found there were more than 30 trails through the 7.4-acre dune area and recommended closing all but two to four of them. One of them could still be used for beach access by all-terrain vehicles.

The informal trails are a major factor in making the dune move eastward, a march of 400 feet since 1938. Vegetation, snow fences and boardwalks can help pin the sand down. The dune is moving toward homes in the adjacent Syndicate Park subdivision.

Right now four are threatened. Two others have already been destroyed.

"I don't think it will ever be fully stopped," Colclough said, but the dune can be slowed down. Even with the work the mountain of sand will take several years to stabilize, Colclough told commissioners.

Slowing down the sand filling yards will be a help. "Hopefully they're not going to be trucking truckloads of sand out of there every year," Colclough said. It's an expensive process that requires permits, and excavating also increases the embankment's angle, making it less stable.

The engineering study will be paid by a Michigan Coastal Management Program grant of \$40,000. Under the proposal, if that money is forthcoming, the Southwest Michigan Planning Commission will act as grant manager for another \$4,500.

The engineers will use the geologist's report as a starting point. "It'll be more detailed on the type of treatments," Colclough said.

The 17-acre North Point Land Preserve is on the north boundary of the Van Buren State Park. Syndicate Park lies to the north of North Point.

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