

Eastern Lake Ontario Dune Coalition

A coalition of state and local agencies, private landowner/resource associations, and federal agencies concerned about the Eastern Lake Ontario dune complex.

**Summer 2017
Issue No. 19**

Vist the ELODC website - www.nysgdunes.org

Editors note:

The articles in this newsletter were originally composed prior to the high water event currently being experience along the shores of Lake Ontario and the St. Lawrence River. Despite that, it is felt that these stories need to be shared, though some content in the articles may not be as pertinent as it might have been when written.

Our thoughts are with everyone dealing with this event. We are all accustomed to the ups and downs of the Lake, but this event is beyond the experience of anyone currently along the lakeshore. It will change - it always does.

Due to these extreme conditions, contact numbers are listed below that may help at this time. It is not an extensive list, but should help, if you or any of your friends and neighbors have issues or questions.

Department of Environmental Conservation (Region 6 - Jefferson County) - general: (315) 785-2239, permits: (315) 785-2245, email: dep.r6@dec.ny.gov

Department of Environmental Conservation (Region 7 - Oswego County) - general: (315) 426-7400, permits: (315) 426-7438, email: dep.r7@dec.ny.gov

Town of Ellisburg - (315) 938-5542

Town of Sandy Creek - (315) 387-5456

Town of Richland - (315) 298-5174

Jefferson County Emergency Management - (315) 786-2654

Oswego County Emergency Management - (315) 591-9150

Department of Health (Jefferson County) - (315) 786-3770

Department of Health (Oswego County) - (315) 349-3545

Link for Flood recovery information
- Oswego County - <http://www.oswegocounty.com/legislature/flood%20assistance.html>

Despite of the high water, it is hoped that everyone has a safe and healthy summer. We look forward to seeing all members of the Eastern Lake Ontario Dune Coalition at the fall meeting on October 4th.

*Julie K. Covey -
ELODC newsletter editor/
Ontario Bays Initiative Executive Director*



Eroded dune. Photo by Connie Ehindero.



Same cottage - Labor Day 2016 and May of 2017. Photos by Pete Moore.



A message from the Vice Chair

After having served the public for over 38 years, I retired from the Oswego County Soil and Water Conservation District on September 30, 2016. During my employment, I had the fortunate opportunity to be on the ground level when The Ontario Dune Coalition (now renamed as the Eastern Lake Ontario Dune Coalition) was formed. Many interesting and valuable individuals at the time, came together and persevered in creating an organization that I know of no other.

Based upon strong concerns from private property owners as to the sustainability of this unique natural resource, the priorities now being addressed tend to be agency driven that brings the attention of its members together. Our discussions at meetings are the basis for our survival and prove to be our strength: we come together with the understanding that we will not all agree on all matters, but remain as mutual collaborators into the future. Our individual members may take positions on matters that are of interest to them, based upon the knowledge obtained through our discussions around a common table; for this is the role of the Eastern Lake Ontario Dune Coalition (ELODC) – information, dissemination and education.

There are many formats by which this organization looks upon its membership to support its role. Rather it be through the Dune Stewards, the Dune Fest, technical research, workshops, newsletters, general meetings, organized tours, printed pamphlets. These measures and others are meant to elevate the awareness to others of how unique and fragile this Dune/Wetland Complex System along the eastern shoreline of Great Lake Ontario truly is.

Thus, it is with a concern from this Vice Chair that we must continue to move forward with the strength and energy from a younger mindset of interested individuals. The evolvement of our organization has waned to a point that I am sensing that stagnation is beginning to set in. This is by no means anything against our present officers and/or committee chairs. All such similar organizations go through this life cycle. In order to keep moving into the future, other members must make a personal and professional commitment to assume a leadership role in this organization.

Therefore, my charge to you is to strongly consider a more active and engaging position within the ELODC leadership. The current vacancies and the lack of interest is bothersome. I hope, for the sake of this organization, that you will make the necessary effort to keep this wonderful opportunity alive.

Thank you

John DeHollander/Vice Chair - ELODC



A Rare Bird Returns to the Shores of Lake Ontario

Jillian Liner, Director of Bird Conservation, Audubon New York (jliner@audubon.org)

For the first time since the early 1980s, Piping Plovers have been observed nesting on the beaches of Lake Ontario. The Piping Plover's return to the shores of Lake Ontario is an indication of a healthy, functioning system--something we should all feel proud of. The federally endangered Great Lakes Piping Plover population has risen from 12 pairs in 1990 to 70 pairs in 2014 with most nesting in Michigan. In order for the population to fully recover, it needs to expand to other locations in the Great Lakes. In the 1930s, as many as 30 pairs nested along the Great Lakes in New York and we are hopeful that if we adequately protect the pairs that have recently returned, we can reach historic population levels.

The Piping Plover is a robin-sized, sandy colored shorebird that relies on beaches to raise its family. These small adults weigh 50 grams which is equivalent to half a stick of butter! Being listed as federally endangered means every individual bird is significant to the population. That is why Audubon New York, NYS Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation, NYS Department of Environmental Conservation, Onondaga Audubon, SUNY College of Environmental Science and Forestry, and US Fish and Wildlife Service, with help from volunteers, have been working to ensure that the individual Piping Plovers that have returned to New York are protected and able to nest successfully.

With ever-growing demands on our beaches, there are significantly fewer places for plovers to nest, rest, and feed. We are asking that people share the shore with these shorebirds. What may seem like everyday use of beaches to us can disturb breeding Piping Plovers; when an adult bird is scared by close encounters with people or dogs it may leave or abandon its nest or be separated from chicks, which leaves eggs or chicks vulnerable to the elements and predators. Piping Plovers are protected under the Endangered Species Act and disturbing them can be considered harassment under federal law and result in tickets and fines.

Nests, and even adult Piping Plovers, are really hard to see because they are small and well camouflaged against sand. Both parents take care of the nest and take turns to feed on the shore. Newly hatched plover weigh the equivalent of two pennies and cannot fly. Unlike other young that are fed by their parents, plover chicks need to navigate the beach and find food for themselves and need their parents to help keep them warm and safe from the elements. It takes about a month before a plover chick can fly and they are very vulnerable during this period.




Piping Plover. Photo by Wayne Fidler.

The good news is that it is possible for people and wildlife to coexist on beaches. On many beaches, people near nesting areas can read, nap, relax, and birdwatch without disturbing the birds. We are asking all beach visitors this spring and summer to follow these simple steps to share the beach with Piping Plovers and help them survive:

- Respect all areas that are fenced or roped-off to protect nesting habitat and birds.
- Properly dispose of or carry out trash to avoid attracting predators.
- Don't feed wildlife or feral cats, which are predators of Piping Plover eggs, chicks, and adults, especially near the beach.

- If possible, keep your dog off beaches where plovers are nesting. If dogs are allowed, keep them leashed at all times to avoid frightening birds, crushing nests, and killing chicks.
- Be mindful that plover eggs and chicks are hard to see; be careful where you step, even if you don't notice any plovers in the area.
- Give birds space and walk around them if you see them. Observe them from a distance. If you hear a Piping Plover give its warning "peep-lo" call, that's likely a sign that you're too close.
- Fly kites away from plover nesting areas.
- Share the Piping Plover story with your friends and family.
- Contact Audubon New York (jliner@audubon.org) to learn how you can volunteer as a Piping Plover monitor.

For wildlife, beaches need to be more than beautiful. A fully functioning beach is a place where all the plants and wildlife that depend on it are able to survive. We hope you can join us in ensuring Piping Plovers have a safe place to successfully raise their families. 

Share the shore - migrant birds

by Gerry Smith, Onondaga Audubon

During much of the year large numbers of birds congregate along the shoreline of Eastern Lake Ontario. This is particularly true during the peak of migration seasons. Some migrants are present feeding and resting in dune lands and shoreline areas from April to October. These birds are putting on fat for the next steps in their annual life cycle and it's essential they do not waste energy. Intrusions too far into their space but humans and their dogs force these birds to expend precious energy in unnecessary flight.


Sensitivity to human disturbance varies by species and group with birds using shore and dune edge being the most easily disrupted. Our shorebirds, terns and gulls inhabit open areas and are most easily disturbed. If you



Lesser Yellowlegs. Photo by Julie Covey.


approach a group of birds and they stop feeding and begin to stand erect it's a sign you are getting too close. Your four legged friend is seen as a potential predator, after all Fido has wolves as an ancestors, so birds become concerned. Allowing a dog to run at and harass wildlife is both a federal and state offense, as well as very impolite beach etiquette. Be courteous, control your dog, and back off from these feathered beach users.

While other species of birds, such as songbirds, using vegetated areas are harder to bother they can still be impacted. This is yet another reason to stay out of dune areas.

Migrant birds pile up along the shores of the Great Lakes and these habitats are critical to the well being and life cycle completion of many of our native birds. Thoughtful people will give our fellow travelers on this planet consideration and share shoreline regions. If I see bad behavior from thoughtless or self centered users of this shared resource; I will attempt to educate them and hope you will also. 

South Pond Channel Dredging Update

by Jim Shea, South Pond Channel Maintenance Association

The South Pond Channel Maintenance Association (SPCMA) sponsored a dredging project this past December (2016) for the area between the bridge and the entrance to the channel on the South Pond side. The work was completed successfully by Back Bay Contracting out of Alexandria Bay, NY. 

Eastern Lake Ontario Dune Steward Program

By Irene Mazzocchi, NYSDEC

The Eastern Lake Ontario Dune Steward (ELODS) program continues to serve a 17 mile stretch of barrier beach that includes: El Dorado Nature Preserve, Black Pond Wildlife Management Area (WMA), Southwick Beach State Park, Lakeview WMA, Sandy Island Beach State Park and Deer Creek WMA. These areas are owned and operated by various agencies or organizations therefore the rules and regulations on these areas are not always the same. However, the ELODS program has been in existence for over 25 years and the goal of this program continues to be to promote environmentally responsible recreational use of the unique freshwater dune ecosystem that these areas support and the species that depend on it. This takes place by providing public outreach and education, site maintenance, natural habitat restoration and species protection.



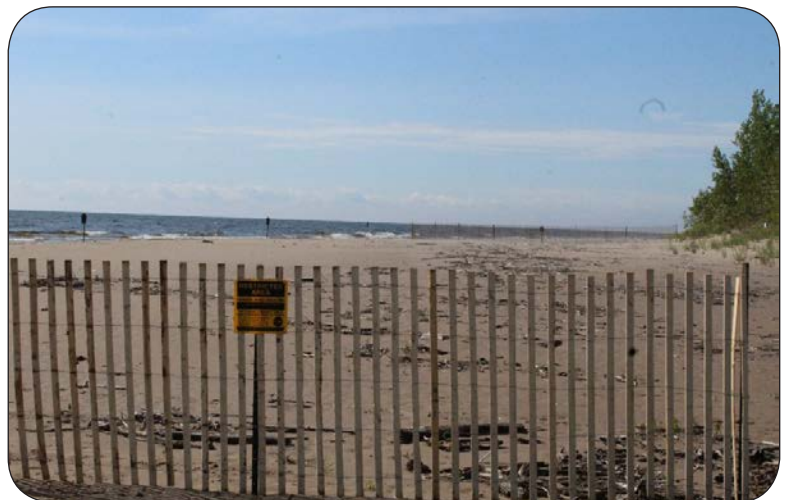
Over the past six years the ELODS program has been funded by the Student Conservation Association (SCA). The initial year one dune steward was hired by this organization, but because it was difficult for one person to effectively cover the 17 mile stretch, SCA has funded three dune stewards every year thereafter. The priority of the dune stewards is to protect the dunes themselves however, the past two years has brought some extra challenges as the federally endangered Piping Plover nested along the dunes on the eastern shore of Lake Ontario. This occurrence occurred after a 30 year absence and helped raise the awareness of how important this dune system really is. Protection of these birds and nesting sites has become a priority for the ELODS program. Over the past two years, the dune stewards along with DEC wildlife staff have spent many hours educating the public on this species and erecting snow and string line fencing, and posting signs. In 2015, two Piping Plover chicks did successfully hatch thanks to the efforts staff put in to protect the nest and birds. Only one of those chicks did survive to the fledgling stage.



In addition to protecting the dunes and monitoring the Piping Plovers, the ELODS program has recently also included: water chestnut pulls in the wetlands, outreach to local schools, snow fencing repairs and installation, and trash pickup. In 2017, this valuable program will continue with three SCA dune stewards and in addition two stewards will be hired by NYS Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation through a GLRI grant that these stewards will also help protect the Piping Plovers if they return and protect the fragile dune system at Sandy Island Beach State Park.

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Sandy Island Beach Grant Update

by Kelly Morrisette, Park Manager, Selkirk Shores State Park

The following is a list of projects to be conducted at Sandy Island Beach State park in 2017.

New Walkover Construction:

- 200ft to the north of the old walkover, and immediately adjacent to the blowout area where there is a suitable beach for landing boats. Length of new walkover will be approx. 300ft. The old walkover will remain in place, although remaining parts of the structure will eventually be removed when it becomes unusable.
- Permits have been submitted.
- Construction window has been moved to Fall 2017.

Snow Fencing Installation:

- Will install approx. 500ft snow fencing for the purpose of directing foot traffic
- Will install 2000ft of fencing across blowout to prevent further wind erosion and assist rebuilding of the dune.
- Will install 2000ft of snow fencing to expand Bird Sanctuary area
- Starting purchasing tools and materials for this season installation by FORCES stewards, park staff, and volunteers
- Still need to flag exact location for snow fence installation in spring

2 FORCES Stewards (*Friends of Recreation, Conservation and Environmental Stewardship*):

- FORCES Stewards duties will include: public outreach and education; installing snow fencing and signage; piping plover protection and monitoring; invasive species detection, control, and monitoring; beachgrass and native species planting; visitor use monitoring; beach and shoreline cleanups; and assisting OPRHP and other state and federal staff as needed.
- They will work full-time for 14 weeks from mid-May 2017 through August 2017. One of the stewards will have an extended season, working part-time (20 hours per week) for six weeks from April through mid-May, and six weeks for September through mid-October.
- Vacancy Announcement is posted and the deadline for applying by is February 21, 2017


Rapid Response & Dune Revegetation Activities:

- Rapid Response will focus on invaders already known in the area such as Glossy Buckthorn, Common Reed, or Purple Loosestrife and on new occurrences.
- A comprehensive survey of the park will be conducted and mapped in iMap invasives (first priority) and an emphasis will be placed on removing. Removals will be done in consultation with the NYS Parks Regional Biologist.
- Dune Revegetation will focus on the blowout and the area around the new walkover.
- Timing for Dune grass planting TBD

Interpretive Panels

- Educational panels focusing on Great Lakes biodiversity and Ecosystem Based management
- Proposed Fall installation

Dune Signage:

- Dunes are Fragile, keep off the dunes signs
- Bird Sanctuary signs
- Proposed installation spring . 

Private Landowners Committee

The Eastern Lake Ontario Dune Coalition (ELODC) was established over 30 years ago to engage in any activities consistent with and in support of:

1. Protection of the eastern Lake Ontario dune system and hydraulically linked nearshore areas, beaches, low sandy plains, bluffs, and coastal ponds, embayments, coves, wetlands, and tributaries as natural systems;
2. Development of measures to maintain their integrity; and
3. Achieving optimum public use in keeping with private property considerations and ecosystem protection and restoration objectives.

ELODC is comprised of all the stakeholders in the eastern Lake Ontario geographical area as stated in other parts of this newsletter.

The only representation for private landowners on the ELODC is the Private Landowners' Committee (PLC). At present, its responsibilities are:

- To perform as a clearinghouse for residential, commercial, and other private landowner interests
- To serve as a point of communication between the ELODC and private landowners
- To provide communication for the Lake Ontario shoreline property owners whose residences are between the outlets of the Salmon River and Black Pond. These include the towns of Richland and Sandy Creek in Oswego County and Ellisburg in Jefferson County.


Membership: Each landowners' association in the areas described above should have a representative on the Private Landowners' Committee (PLC). Regardless of whether or not your area has an association, you are welcome to attend meetings and participate in PLC matters and to be added to our email list for notification about items pertinent to private landowners.

Note: If you are not on our list and wish to be included in ELODC notifications, please send your name, email address and the county (Oswego or Jefferson) where your ownership is listed to Nan Winters, (nanwinters@gmail.com) and you will be added to our mailing list. (Most of the time, Nan remembers to send out ELODC and PLC mailings as blind copies.)

The PLC has not had a formal meeting for several years. Please notify either Tom McLeod or Nan Winters if you wish to attend a meeting this summer. Please suggest agenda items, and add the date and/or day of the week that you prefer to meet.

Would you be willing to host such a meeting?

And even better, would you be interested in taking on a leadership role with the Private Landowners' Committee? Please consider active membership in this important committee. This is the way to be sure you are up to date on which information affecting your property and to the shoreline of eastern Lake Ontario.

Tom McLeod, tom.thm6@gmail.com 

North Pond Channel Dredging update

There is very little to update for the channel at this time. The water levels are high and we were fortunate enough to have had NYS Parks and Recreation mark the channel into Lake Ontario on April 20th. The entrance this year is on the south side.

There will probably not be a dredging operation this year, as we wouldn't be able to get the equipment down the beach. However, we do have the Army Corps of Engineers and Department of Environmental Conservation permits to allow us to dredge throughout the year, if we survey the barrier beach first for Piping Plover.

Cathy Goodnough 



Current ELODC Membership

Central NY Regional Planning & Development Board	Onondaga Audubon Society
Eastern Lake Ontario Dunes Foundation	Ontario Bays Initiative, Inc.
Eastman Place Association	Oswego County Environmental Management Council
Finger Lakes - Lake Ontario Watershed Protection Alliance (<i>FL-LOWPA</i>)	Oswego County Development, Tourism & Planning Department
Friends of Sandy Pond Beach	Oswego County Soil and Water Conservation District
Jefferson County Planning Department	Renshaw Beach Association
Jefferson County Soil and Water Conservation District	Sandy Island Beach Property Owners Association
Jefferson-Sunset Bluff Landowners Association	Sandy Pond Channel Maintenance Association
Montario Point Landowners Association	Seaway Trail, Inc.
New York Sea Grant Extension	Selkirk Beach Association
New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (<i>Great Lakes, Coastal Erosion Hazard Area Program, & Regions 6 & 7</i>)	South Jefferson Park Landowners Association
New York State Department of State	The Nature Conservancy
New York State Office of Parks, Recreation & Historic Preservation (<i>Central & Thousand Islands Regions</i>)	Town of Ellisburg
North Jefferson Park Land Owners Association	Town of Richland
North Rainbow Shores Landowners Association	Town of Sandy Creek
	U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (<i>Region II & Great Lakes National Program Office</i>)
	U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

For more information on the **Eastern Lake Ontario Dune Coalition** please check out our website at
www.nysgdunes.org

Additional Editor's note: Due to the extraordinary events of this spring there is more to see than might be "normal" for the Eastern Lake Ontario Dunes. Below are a few pictures of the flooding in Renshaw Bay (Nan Winters) and near Sandy Pond (Connie Ehindero). ~~Winters~~



Photo by Ted Limpert.



Photo by Nan Winters.



Photo by Connie Ehindero



Photo by Nan Winters.



Photo by Nan Winters.

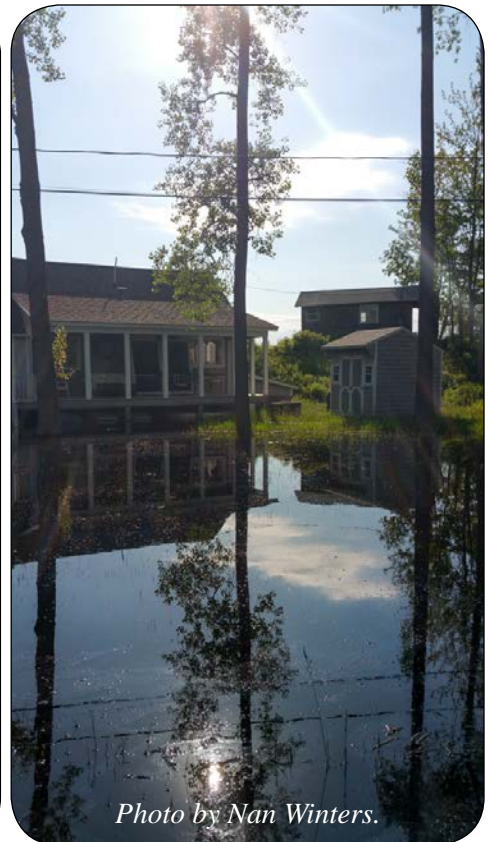


Photo by Nan Winters.