**People in the Dune Ecosystem**

**History of Human Use**

**Valued at First Sight**

From Native Americans who found abundant food supplies and early explorers who sheltered in the bays and competed for territorial dominance to early settlers who harvested the ice and marsh hay and city people who were attracted by the beautiful beaches, this dune ecosystem has attracted people from the very start.

**Native Americans**

The Sandy Pond area was once known as Wigwam Cove for its use as an Ojibwe fishing camp. Native fishermen trapped and netted salmon behind weirs and also sponsored them from canoes.

**Early Explorers**

French explorers probed the harbors and bays seeking shelter. Native allies, and inroads to the interior of the continent.

1720 - Explorer Chauteauvix explores the Salmon River area and notes "whole armadas of (passenger) pigeons."

1699 - La Salle visits while exploring the Great Lakes.

1684 - Champlain lands at Wigwam Cove.

1615 - Champlain lands at Wigwam Cove.

**Early Settlement**

Early settlers cut and burned the trees to clear the land for farms. They built sawmills and homes, harvested marsh hay for their cattle, and cut ice for use in the summer.

1803 - First settlers along the shore at Green Point.

1814 - Champlain dies at Greenpoint.

1830 - Sodus Bay is created.

1835 - Sodus Point is created.

1871 - The Sandy Pond area is annexed to the Town of Sodus.

**Early Recreation**

The shore became a very popular tourist destination. Hotels and restaurants were located around North Pond. Thousands of people arrived on the newly opened Syracuse Northern Railroad (1871).

1893 - Last commercial harvest of fish. Le Grande Smith buys Sandy Island Beach.

1900 - Sodus Bay becomes a New York State Park.

**Commercial Harvest**

Settlers harvested the abundant whitefish using seines from the shore. 1000-foot sections of the beach were leased to commercial fishermen who kept their boats there and used the beach as a base of operations. The heyday of commercial fishing was the 1930s-1940s.

**Bootlegging**

During Prohibition, smugglers received shipments of Canadian alcohol along the lakeshore, hiding it in the dunes to avoid the "revenue officers."

1920s - Bootleggers smuggle alcohol during prohibition.

**Cottage Development**

Several waves of cottage development in the 20th century have resulted in all the land along the beach and dunes being either developed or under some form of conservation ownership.

**Conservation**

Public and conservation lands provided access to the lake and dune ecosystem. Under the leadership of The Ontario Dune Coalition, walkways and educational materials were developed. The Dune Steward Program began to educate people about protecting the dunes.

1962-77 - Last commercial harvest of fish. Le Grande Smith buys Sandy Island Beach.

1960s - New York State acquires land for Wildlife Management Areas.

1965 - Last commercial harvest of fish. Le Grande Smith buys Sandy Island Beach.


1995 - The Nature Conservancy acquires Sandy Pond South Beach, later deeding it to NYS at Sandy Pond Bench Unique Area.

**2010 Activities**

Today the primary uses of the eastern Lake Ontario dunes and wetlands area are recreation and wildlife related, including hunting, trapping, fishing, boating, camping (in designated sites), birding, nature study, hiking, cross-country skiing, and wildlife observation.

**Sandy Island Beach becomes a New York State Park.**

**2005**

**2020**

**Timeline of Human Presence in the Dune Ecosystem**

**Eastern Lake Ontario Dunes, Wetlands, Creeks, and Ponds**

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