

Rockport Conservation Commission Policy on Long Beach

INTRODUCTION & DESCRIPTION:

Long Beach is a barrier beach and dune along the south east coast of Rockport that has been developed upon with a seawall, summer cottages, patios, paths, and parking areas. Although this development seems to have reduced the capacity of the beach to act as a barrier beach and coastal dune, the Conservation Commission finds that the area still performs the critical protective functions which the state rules and regulations describe. The Rockport Conservation Commission is working to maximize the protective functions of barrier beaches and coastal dunes, with its overall commitment to protect the home owners on Long Beach from storm damage and flooding.

A barrier beach by definition is (310 CMR 10.29) “a narrow low-lying strip of land generally consisting of coastal beaches and coastal dunes extending roughly parallel to the trend of the coast. It is separated from the mainland by a narrow body of fresh, brackish or saline water or a marsh system. A barrier beach may be joined to the mainland at one or both ends....”

Barrier beaches:

1. Are significant and important to storm damage prevention and flood control.
2. Protect landward areas, providing a buffer to storm waves and to sea levels elevated by storms.
3. Control wave action in such highly productive wetlands as salt marshes, estuaries, lagoons, salt ponds and fresh water marshes and ponds, which are in turn important to marine fisheries and protection of wildlife habitat.

Simply said, if we do not maintain our barrier beaches, coastal storms will negatively impact areas upland where many people have their homes and the town its roadways. Recreation along the shores could become nonexistent.

A coastal dune by definition is (310 CMR 10.28) “any natural hill, mound or ridge of sediment landward of a coastal beach deposited by wind action or storm overwash. Coastal dune also means sediment deposited by artificial means and serving the purpose of storm damage prevention or flood control....” Coastal dunes provide much of the same protection as do barrier beaches.

In order to provide this protection:

1. Coastal dune volume must be maintained while allowing the coastal dune shape to conform to natural wind and water flow patterns.
2. Appropriate vegetation cover contributes to the growth and stability of coastal dunes with conditions favorable to sand deposition.
3. Birds’ nesting habitat at the base or sides of dunes and in the intertidal area.
4. Wet meadows or vernal pool habitats require protection; they also serve as important feeding areas for a wide variety of bird species and other wildlife.

POLICY:

With the above in mind, when an applicant comes before the Conservation Commission for a permit on a Long Beach property to:

1. Repair $\geq 50\%$ of the value of the cottage (as required by the Building Department);
2. Construct or replace a deck;
3. Landscape the property; or
4. Do construction which will destroy existing vegetation.

The Commission will require that vegetation be replaced on the dune which will be compatible with the natural vegetative cover for a coastal dune and no new or replacement lawn grasses will be allowed. In addition, the Commission may require that concrete patios, walkways, and other hardscapes (as well as other permanent material) be removed from the beach and be replaced with wooden patios, walkways and other hardscapes under and around which the sand may migrate with the wind and wave action. Driveways/parking areas may be topped only with gravel and may not be enclosed with solid structures to hold gravel.

If a permit application is for the repair of $\geq 50\%$ of the value of the cottage, the Commission will also require that a cottage be constructed on pilings/piers such that wind, water and sand may move under the structure so as to not interfere with the landward or lateral movement of the dune. Lattice may be allowed on such cottages in a manner which does not interfere with the landward or lateral movement of the dune.

The following projects may be permitted **by application** to the Conservation Commission, provided that they adhere to the provisions of 310 CMR 10.28(3):

1. Pedestrian walkways, designed to minimize the disturbance to the vegetative cover and bird nesting habitat;
2. Fencing and other devices designed to encourage dune development. Planting with materials native to dunes.

REASONING:

The above policies in regard to resource areas are mainly to protect home owners from storm damage and flooding. The Rockport Conservation Commission stands ready to work with all Long Beach home owners to best obtain our mutual goals.

For further information, please contact:

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