

Frequently Asked Questions Beach Rules at Indiana Dunes National Lakeshore

Indiana Dunes National Lakeshore is part of the National Park System, just like such famous parks as Yellowstone and Grand Canyon. Rules and regulations that apply to national parks are often different from those that apply to state or county parks. The National Park Service (NPS) has prepared this list of questions and answers will help you plan for a safe and enjoyable visit to the park. You can find most rules in Title 36 of the Code of Federal Regulations, abbreviated as 36CFR. You can find this online at <http://www.access.gpo.gov/nara/cfr>. You should also read the Superintendent's Compendium which list rules specific to Indiana Dunes National Lakeshore. We have posted this document at www.nps.gov/indu/parkmgmt/lawsandpolicies.htm

The rules and regulations are for your safety and the protection of park resources. We want you to have a safe and enjoyable visit to Indiana Dunes National Lakeshore.

1. Q. Where do park regulations apply?

A. Park regulations apply to all areas of park-administered property inside the boundary. While some lands inside the park are not owned by the National Park Service, many regulations apply no matter who owns the land.

36 CFR 1.2

2. Q. Where is the boundary of the national lakeshore beach?

A. Succinctly, these are the boundaries of the national lakeshore along the coast are:

- At all areas where the national lakeshore is along Lake Michigan, the southernmost boundary is a platted line as described in Federal Register notices.
- At all areas where the national lakeshore is along Lake Michigan, the northernmost boundary is 300 feet from “the shoreline of Lake Michigan.”

Generally speaking, these areas are:

1. From the east side of the U.S. Steel facility in Gary to Lake Street in Gary, (approximately one linear mile). The northern boundary is 300 feet from the shoreline and the southern boundary is above the Ordinary High Water Mark.
2. From County Line Road in Gary to the west bank of the Burns Waterway (approximately 2.25 miles). The northern boundary is 300 feet from the shoreline and the southern boundary is above the Ordinary High Water Mark.
3. From the east side of the Bailly Generating Station to west side of the Michigan City Generating Station (approximately 11.4 miles). The northern boundary is 300 feet from the shoreline and the southern boundary is above the Ordinary High Water Mark.

In all these areas, the national lakeshore includes the area from the Ordinary High Watermark of Lake Michigan (581.5' above sea level) into the lake for a distance of three hundred feet from the edge of the water. In some of these areas, the national lakeshore includes the land

adjacent to the shore. In other areas, such as offshore of Indiana Dunes State Park, the National Park Service does not own the shore. In all areas, the beach below Ordinary High Water is open to public use.

3. Q. How were the national lakeshore boundaries determined?

A. The boundaries of the national lakeshore were established by Congress. Congress included the 300-foot area in the lake so that the National Park Service could protect public safety. In the Senate Report that accompanied the law, the reason for the boundary in the lake was explained:

“In addition the Committee extended the present boundaries of the Lakeshore three hundred feet into Lake Michigan (approximately 542 acres) in order to provide for better management of shoreline recreation and activities on the Lake. At present the Park Service has difficulty in regulating boating and protecting swimmers. (Senate Report No. 94-1189, dated August 30, 1976)

4. Q. When is the beach open?

A. All NPS-owned beaches are open from sunrise to sunset. The parking lot at Lakeview is open until 11:00 p.m. Most other parking lots are open from 7:00 a.m. until dusk. The park is open every day, including holidays.

5. Q. Where can I walk my dog on the beach?

A. Most of the beach is open to pets. You may not have a pet at the West Beach, Portage Lakefront and Porter Beach areas. You must have pets under control at all times and you are required to clean up after your pet. All pets must be on a leash no longer than six feet at all times. Owners must be holding and controlling the leash at all times.

36 CFR 2.15

6. Q. It’s a lot of trouble to bring things to the beach; can I leave them there for my next visit?

A. Unattended property, owned by an individual, group or town, may not remain within the boundary of the park. Any property stored at a beach must remain outside of the park boundary. Property left for more than 24 hours is subject to removal at the expense of the owner. This regulation applies on all land within the park boundary, including lands on the beach below Ordinary High Water.

36 CFR 2.22

7. Q. Where can I park?

A. On warm days, the parking lots fill early and stay full. Visitors should arrive early. Many of our access points are near residential areas. Parking is limited to the designated spaces in the parking lots. You may not park along roadsides, on vegetated areas or in private yards. Unlawfully parked cars are subject to removal.

8. Q. Can I drink alcohol on the beach?

A. You may consume alcoholic beverages in most areas of the park if you are at least 21 years old. Regulations prohibit alcohol at West Beach, Porter Beach, Portage Lakefront and Riverwalk and Dunewood Campground. For safety reasons, we do not permit glass on the beach. Park staff strictly enforces the possession of alcohol in the closed areas and by minors and juveniles.

9. Q. Where can I ride my personal watercraft (PWC)?

A. Federal regulations do not permit this category of watercraft (Jet Skis, Waverunners, etc.) in any area of the national lakeshore. Please see the description of the park boundary for details. Generally, you cannot use a personal watercraft (PWC) anywhere within 300 feet of shore from the NIPSCO Bailly Generating Station to Mount Baldy, or from the Porter/Lake County line to the west side of Burns Waterway, or from U.S. Steel in Gary to the beach west of Lake Street in Gary.

Operators may use their personal watercraft outside of the boundary in accordance with applicable state law and U.S. Coast Guard regulations. PWCs may be used to enter and exit Burns Waterway as long as the user goes east upon exiting or remains 300 feet from the shore if going west from the mouth of the Waterway.

36 CFR 3.9

10. Q. Can I water-ski in the park?

A. Federal regulations prohibit water-skiing within the boundary of the park. This includes towing tubes, parasails, or any other device. As noted in Question #2, this means any area within 300 feet of shore from the NIPSCO Bailly Generating Station to Mount Baldy, or from the Porter/Lake County line to the west side of Burns Waterway, or from U.S. Steel in Gary to the beach west of Lake Street in Gary.

36 CFR 3.12

11. Q. Can I launch my boat from the beach?

A. You may launch and recover unpowered boats (canoes, kayaks, etc.) from any beach except the West Beach area (a designated swimming area). Boaters may not launch or recover

powerboats (watercraft with mechanical propulsion) from the beach anywhere in the boundaries as described in Question #2.

36 CFR 3.8

12. Q. Can I boat into the shore?

A. You can boat into the shore at any place except West Beach. However, you must anchor offshore. Landing your boat on the beach is not allowed. Boating into the shore is also restricted at Indiana Dunes State Park and you should check with them for current regulations.

13. Q. Where can I fish?

A. You may fish in all park waters except at West Beach. A valid Indiana fishing license is required.

14. Q. Is there a place to camp on the beach?

A. We do not have any approved beach camping areas. People are welcome to camp at the Dunewood Campground, about one-mile from the beach. It is located near the intersection of Highway 12 and Broadway, near Beverly Shores. The state park has a campground a short distance from the beach.

15. Q. Can I have a fire on the beach?

A. Fires are limited to approved camp and cooking fires in the fire rings at Dunewood Campground and in picnic area grills. During smelt season, a permit is available that allows for small warming fires in approved containers for those actively fishing. Only those actively smelt fishing may utilize this permit. Outside of the approved smelt fire permit, people may not light or maintain a fire on the beach. This regulation applies on all land within the park boundary, including shoreline lands owned by towns that are within the park boundary.

36 CFR 2.13

16. Q. Can I bring fireworks to the beach?

A. Individuals, groups, organizations or towns may not possess or use fireworks within the park boundary. People may not pollute the park with fireworks debris by launching from adjacent private or town areas so that the fallout enters into the park, including Lake Michigan. Fireworks are not permitted on any beaches in the areas described in Question #2.

36 CFR 2.38

17. Q. Can I drive an ATV on the beach?

A. All motorized vehicles must remain on designated roads, no off-roading or beach driving is allowed anywhere in the national lakeshore. The superintendent must approve official use of vehicles off roads or on the beach. This includes the operation of all-terrain vehicles (ATVs) on any park beach. This prohibition does not apply to bona fide emergency vehicles operated by a government agency during an emergency.

36 CFR 4.10

18. Can I use a metal detector on the beach?

A. No. Metal detectors are prohibited anywhere within Indiana Dunes National Lakeshore.

36 CFR 2.1

19. Q. How do I report a problem or a crime?

A. National Park Service employees staff an emergency dispatch center at all times. We encourage people to report emergencies and violations of regulations by calling our toll-free line at 1-800-PARKTIP (727-5847). Calling 911 may route your call to another dispatch center and your call may be delayed or may not reach the national lakeshore emergency center at all. Using 1-800-PARKTIP (727-5847) assures that you will reach the park emergency center.

20. Q. How do I find out more about beach regulations?

A. There are numerous regulations that apply within a national park. You can find these within Title 36 of the Code of Federal Regulations. The Superintendent's Compendium more clearly defines some of these regulations. Both of these documents can be found at - <http://www.nps.gov/indu/parkmgmt/lawsandpolicies.htm>

Indiana Dunes National Lakeshore Beach and Waters

The areas in green along the Lake Michigan shoreline are within Indiana Dunes National Lakeshore. The National Park Service rules and regulations for beach and water use apply from the Ordinary High Water mark on the shore to 300 feet into the lake from the waterline.

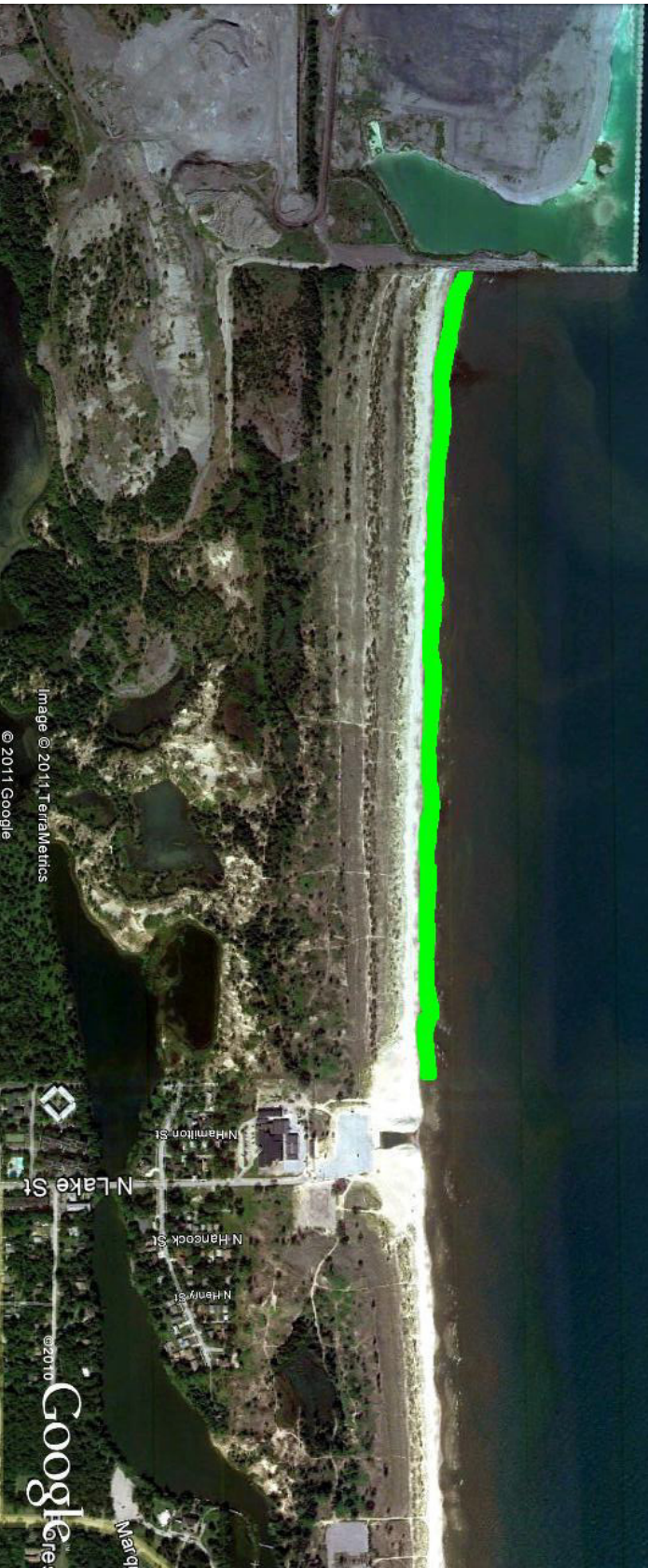


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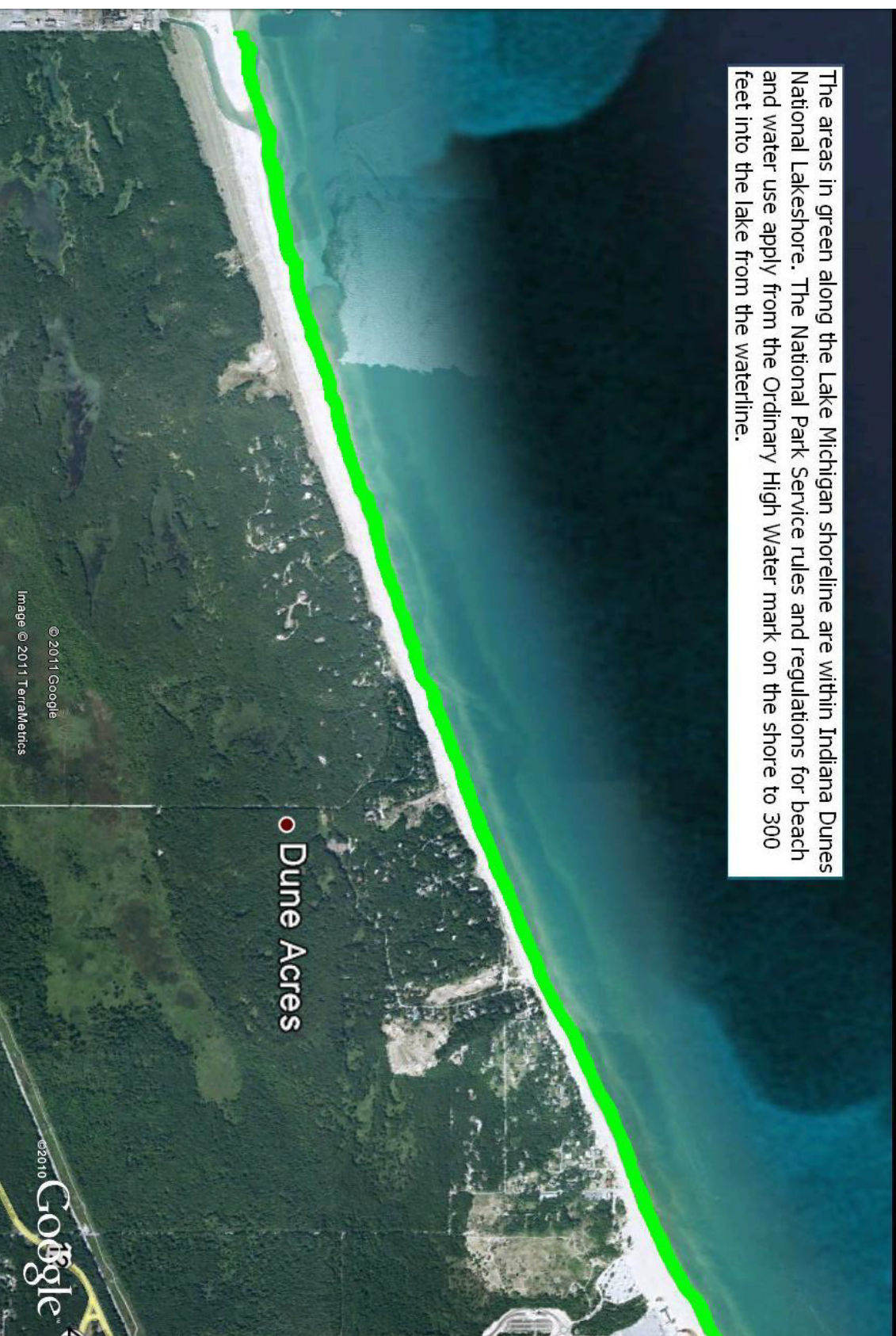
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