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Ogden Dunes abandons project to place stone erosion barrier in Lake Michigan

Rebecca Thiele : 3-3 minutes : 12/5/2025

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The town of Ogden Dunes said it's abandoning a project to build a stone barrier in Lake Michigan to protect homes from erosion. This comes after a nearly two-year [legal battle](#) with the environmental group Save the Dunes.

Fights over whether to harden the Lake Michigan shoreline have been going on for years and are likely to continue.

Save the Dunes challenged the Indiana Department of Natural Resources' decision to grant Ogden Dunes a permit for the barrier. The group said hard structures like this block the flow of sand to beaches farther down the shoreline — threatening particularly sensitive plants and animals in the dunes.

A state administrative law judge recently dismissed the case because the town said it had “formally abandoned the project.”

Save the Dunes Executive Director Betsy Maher said the group is thrilled this effort is dead, but it's not clear if Ogden Dunes will try to harden the shoreline in other ways. Maher said the court also didn't rule on the DNR's decision to approve the permit.

“We still need to address the underlying issue, which is that we believe this permit was issued unlawfully in the first place,” she said.

Maher said the DNR may have granted the permit on public property. Allowing that approval to stand could set a precedent for hardening projects in the future.

Ogden Dunes has said in the past that other structures east of town, like the Port of Indiana, are blocking sand from reaching its beaches.

Maher said shoreline hardening often leads to more shoreline hardening.

“You have to stop somewhere right? It's the tendency to just reinforce and fortify these homes, but it's really important to draw a line in the sand where that isn't allowed,” she said.

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Maher said bringing in sand and placing it on the beach, also called “beach nourishment,” is a better solution. Some structures have also been designed to allow for better sand flow.

Ogden Dunes has said it can't afford the amount of sand needed to replenish the beach through beach nourishment.

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