

Thinking of adding sand to replenish your beach? Think again.

Owners of waterfront property may sometimes want to truck in sand to replenish or enhance their existing beach. After all, many beaches were created this way in years past. However, we now know that adding sand to shoreline areas of a lake can have a huge impact on water quality, wildlife, and the natural beauty of shoreline areas. (It's also illegal.)



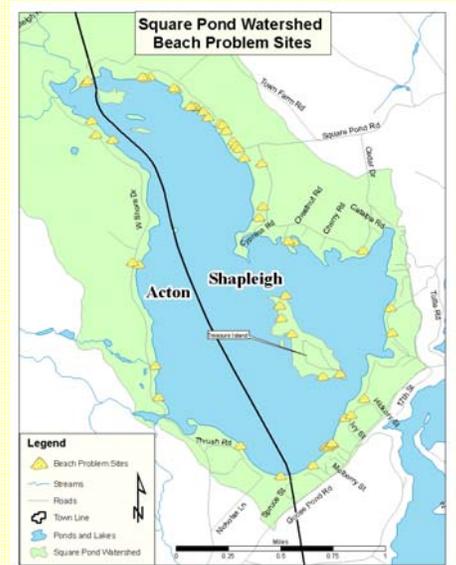
Dumping sand along the shoreline can contribute to significant problems in the lake, especially when carried out repeatedly by a number of property owners. Just like other types of soil, sand contains the nutrient, phosphorus. Phosphorous is food for algae. One pound of phosphorous can produce 10,000 pounds of algae.

When sandy beaches wash into Square Pond, phosphorus is carried along and essentially “fertilizes” the lake. This reduces water clarity and feeds algae. The sand itself also decreases spawning habitat for fish and provides the perfect breeding ground for invasive plants such as milfoil.

Is this really a problem on Square Pond?

In April-October 2006, the Square Pond Association and York County Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD) coordinated the Square Pond Watershed Survey. The purpose of the survey was to identify erosion problems around the lake and watershed. Trained volunteers and technical staff also identified **55** properties with excessive sandy beaches or evidence of sand replenishment. Many of these beaches were also eroding into Square Pond. Problems were identified all around Square Pond and in both towns. (See map at right.)

Many landowners had no idea that they were not allowed to add sand to their beaches. Clearly, landowners on Square Pond need to be made aware that new sand is not allowed and can harm their much-loved lake.



Won't a beach add value to my property?



- While beach front property may seem like a prime selling point, the effects of replenishing your beach with sand can contribute to the overall deterioration of the quality of the lake.
- For every 3 ft. decline in water clarity, shorefront property values can decline as much as **10-20%**.
- Declining property values affect individual landowners and the economics of entire communities.

What does the law say about adding sand to my beach?

- The Natural Resources Protection Act (NRPA), which is administered by the Maine DEP, specifically prohibits sand being brought in from off-site to replenish an existing beach or create a new beach.
- **It is illegal to add sand to a beach area.** Landowners would be forced to remove any added sand and may be subject to fines and other enforcement action by the Maine DEP or Town.
- With a permit from the Maine DEP, landowners may be allowed to retrieve sand from below the normal high water line to redistribute on an existing sand beach. However, before doing so, landowners must also install permanent erosion controls to prevent future erosion of the sand. Contact the DEP for more information (207-822-6300).



What should I do if I have a beach?

You don't need to get rid of your sandy beach to be a good lake steward. In fact, there are many properties around Square Pond that have small, stable beaches that still allow for lounging and playing on nice, sunny days. Take a close look at your beach, though, and see if you can make any changes for the sake of Square Pond.



Part of this beach was planted and mulched. Once established, the plantings will protect the beach from upland erosion.

- Never – under any circumstances – bring in new sand to add to your beach.
- Slow down or divert upland runoff from your rooftops or footpaths away from the beach to keep sand from eroding into Square Pond.
- Think about the size of your beach and how you use it. Reduce the size if possible. Plant native shrubs and groundcovers in areas that are steep or that tend to erode. The York County SWCD can recommend plants for sandy areas. You can also keep off areas and let them grow back naturally.

Where do I go for more information?

Contact the York County SWCD or Acton Shapleigh Youth Conservation Corps (YCC) for free technical assistance. Staff can visit your property and provide ideas and resources to help deal with erosion problems and make your beach or other parts of your property more “lake friendly”.

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