

# **Town of Scituate Public Swim Beach Seaweed Removal Policy**

This Policy was adopted by the Board of Selectmen at their public meeting on July 10, 2012.

## **Purpose**

The purpose of this policy is to establish the protocol for removing seaweed and other debris from guarded public beaches during the summer swimming season. The policy must balance the desires of citizens to use the beaches for recreation purposes with the environmental impact of modifying the natural processes of beach dynamics and foraging habitat for shorebirds and wildlife.

## **Background**

- From time-to-time ocean storms wash quantities of plant life onto the public swimming beaches. In many cases, this material returns to the sea within a few days. However, on occasion, the seaweed is re-deposited on the beach.
- Impact upon recreational uses: Putrifaction of the deposits attracts breeding insects and creates offensive odors. The rotting material may encourage bacteria growth in the seaweed rendering the beach and swimming area unsuitable for recreation.
- Impact upon the habitat: Washed-up eel grass and seaweed are sources of nutrients and seeds for pioneer species of flora associated with the wrack lines, providing a primary food source, foraging habitat and cover for shore birds, as well as a substrate for accumulating sand for beach berms. Removing the seaweed from the beach wrack substantially reduces these beneficial functions and deteriorates the quality of the habitat.

## **Beach Cleaning Policy<sup>1</sup>**

1. Beaches covered by this policy: This policy applies to the public swimming beaches staffed by lifeguard personnel in Minot, Egypt, Sand Hills, Peggotty and Humarock (attached is the physical description of these locations).
2. Season during which policy applies: This policy is in effect during the public swimming season (third week of June through Labor Day).
3. Method of seaweed removal: The DPW will obtain an Order of Conditions from the Conservation Commission for this beach cleanup activity on public land.
  - The primary means of removal will entail using small machines with finger-like grapples to minimize sand removal.
  - A secondary means of removal will be using front-end loaders. A determination will be made of the approximate quantity of sand removed, and the beach will be re-nourished with an equal quantity of beach-compatible sand.
  - The removed material will be disposed of at the Bourne landfill or other approved sites.
4. Decision for removing seaweed from the public beaches prior to the weekend: The Recreation Director and the Director of Public Health shall confer with the Conservation Agent and together make the decision to activate the beach cleanup activity.
5. Funding beach cleanup: The Beach Sticker Revolving Account will fund the cleanup activities, including disposal and sand re-nourishment.

Developed by the Director of Public Health, the Recreation Director, the Conservation Agent and the Public Works Director.

---

<sup>1</sup> This policy does not apply to periods outside the swimming season nor to areas outside the lifeguarded public swimming beaches.

**Public Swim Beach Locations**

Minot Beach – 423 feet

- North Boundary – the northern property line of 74 Glades Road
- South Boundary – the beach access opening north of 62 Glades Road

Egypt Beach – 303 feet

- North Boundary – 100 yards north of the walkway
- South Boundary – the fence to the property at 79 Seaside Road

Sand Hills Beach – 527 feet

- North Boundary – the northern property line of 157 Turner Road
- South Boundary – the southern property line of 179 Turner Road

Peggotty Beach – 424 feet

- North Boundary – the northern property line of 10 Peggotty Beach
- South Boundary – the southern property line of 28 Inner Harbor Road

Humarock – 439 feet

- North Boundary – the northern property line of 111 Humarock Beach
- South Boundary – the southern property line of 108 Humarock Beach