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News from Save Our Shoreline, Inc.

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House Transportation Committee Scolds Army Corps

BAY CITY, Michigan – October 21, 2002 – Save Our Shoreline announces that the House Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure has issued a Committee Report directing the United States Army Corps of Engineers to seek a resolution to complaints by shoreline residents about its enforcement efforts regarding the current vegetation problem along Lake Huron. Those enforcement efforts include the issuance of hundreds of cease and desist letters and the filing of three lawsuits against Saginaw Bay residents. After stating that it was “concerned about how the Detroit District chose to address” the vegetation issue, the Committee directed the Secretary of the Army to review the law to determine whether beach maintenance activities “actually constitute an activity that requires a permit under federal or state law.” The Committee further directed that if the Corps determines that beach maintenance does in fact violate the law, that it work with property owners to bring beach maintenance activities within the scope of a general permit. The Committee Report can be found at <http://www.house.gov/> and selecting “bill number” below the “Thomas” link. The bill number is hr5428.

“This is a huge victory for our entire region,” said Ernie Krygier, SOS President. “This action will benefit not only shoreline residents, but the local economies of cities and towns all along Michigan’s Lake Huron coastline. It will also reduce the deadly threat of West Nile Virus to residents and tourists who enjoy our beaches,” he said.

The group praises Congressman James A. Barcia for this latest success. “We owe this victory to the hard work and perseverance of Congressman Barcia. He promised action in June, brought us to Washington in July, and now he has brought us some identifiable results. Many politicians talk, but Jim Barcia for one has shown that he can produce for the residents of Michigan,” said Krygier.

The initial strategy of SOS included seeking a general permit for beach maintenance activities, but that strategy became futile and was abandoned by SOS after the Corps sued three Saginaw Bay beach owners. “This move by the Transportation Committee forces the Corps back to the table, where we should have been a year ago,” said Krygier.

In a September meeting with the Corps in Detroit, SOS advised the Corps of what it is seeking: dropping a pending suit against a Caseville resident, and a general permit allowing the moving of sand and plowing of soil up to 4 inches. “We don’t want to destroy the environment. We want wetlands to stay wetlands, and we want beaches to stay beaches,” said Krygier.

Since 2000, the Corps and the MDEQ, observing vegetation growing on beaches during record low water levels, have for the first time in history set out on a coordinated campaign to establish coastal marshes along Lake Huron's coastline. The agencies assert they are just enforcing existing laws, but SOS believes that existing laws were never intended to support these agencies' current policies, and that the agencies improperly bypassed public debate by implementing policies not supported by current legislation. SOS also asserts that the existence of vegetation in some areas is attributable to changes in the water effected by zebra mussels and increasing pollutants which act as fertilizer for the plants.

Founded in 2001, Save Our Shoreline is a nonprofit membership basis corporation of over 1,500 households committed to the preservation of beaches and waterfront areas, and to the protection of rights to maintain beaches and waterfront areas. Those interested in Save Our Shoreline can find more information at <http://www.saveourshoreline.org/> or by calling (989) 667-2910. For more information about this press release, contact Ernie Krygier at (989) 793-3711.

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