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News from Save Our Shoreline, Inc.

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Shoreline Task Force Completes Its Work Without Resolving Beach Issues

BAY CITY, Michigan – April 17, 2003 – Save Our Shoreline reports that after over three months of meetings, the Shoreline Task Force, made up of representatives from SOS, MDEQ, ACOE, MDNR, USFWS, Michigan Sea Grant, The Lonetree Council and Tip of the Mitt Watershed Council, have agreed to disagree on the fate of Michigan's ever-extended beaches caused by the continuing low Great Lakes water levels. "This is a real slap in the face for the public interest of all the citizens of Michigan that our regulators aren't interested in preserving this great resource of beautiful beaches," said Ernie Krygier, SOS President.

"When we first heard that this Task Force was being formed back in October by State Rep. Joseph Rivet and Lt. Col. Thomas Magness, who heads the Detroit District of the Army Corps of Engineers, SOS was not initially invited to be a part of it. That in itself should have been a signal of what was to come from a meeting loaded with state and federal regulatory agencies and environmental groups. But we pressed to have the shoreline residents involved and were allowed to participate," continued Krygier. "We hoped that we could make a difference. But the final 'Consensus Document' shows no change in the Army Corps' and MDEQ's misguided enforcement actions against shoreline property owners. The final document even indicates a step back by the MDEQ from the mowing that the MDEQ has allowed the past two years. Instead of progress in saving Michigan's beautiful beaches, the Task Force took a step backward," Krygier said.

Remaining Task Force members are scheduled to present the final "Consensus Document" to the public at meetings in Bay City and Traverse City during May. Save Our Shoreline has determined it will not be part of those meetings. Shoreline owners will be given a list of activities that beach residents can do, in the view of the regulators, without seeking a permit. Plans for permitting a 6-foot wide path from the ordinary high-water mark to the water's edge will be unveiled. The list will go on to detail those activities that require only a DEQ permit application, like mowing, which, under the regulators' interpretation of existing law, is allowed under federal law but prohibited without a permit under state law. The document also will list recommendations for future studies and educational programs.

"We gave the Task Force our best effort," said Krygier. "SOS was told at the final Task Force meeting that we were rigid and unwilling to negotiate our beach maintenance position. But when you have been told by both federal and state legislators that the current enforcement wasn't the legislative intent of the laws that both the DEQ and Army Corps are prosecuting shoreline residents under, it isn't a negotiable point," he said. SOS

agrees that the thousands of acres of historical wetlands along the Michigan coast, as well as the hundreds of miles that are designated as Environmental Areas under state law, should be protected. But the areas that have historically been beautiful vegetation-free beaches should have equal protection in the name of the public trust for the citizens of Michigan and the protection of the Michigan tourism that depends on travel to both public and private beaches. The Michigan economy is suffering, as indicated by the latest unemployment figures, and the MDEQ and MDNR would have us believe more tourists visit wetlands than beaches. Governor Granholm is leading a new push to control West Nile Virus, but the MDEQ and MDNR want to leave pools of stagnate water along the shore next to homes. “This Task Force just didn’t give the right balance to what is in the best interest for the future of this State. The Task Force is over, and now all of our resources will again be focused on legislative and judicial avenues to fight for a great piece of Michigan’s heritage and a key factor in the future sustainable growth of the State,” said Krygier.

Founded in 2001, Save Our Shoreline is a nonprofit membership basis corporation of 1,650 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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