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Shorline residents say they appreciate getting new guidelines

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By Amy Bartner
times writer

It'll take more than easing restrictions on beach care to keep some Bangor Township residents happy.

"You can't change nature," said Helen Singer, an eight-year resident of Athlone Beach, in Bangor Township.

"The bay is going to do what the bay wants to do when it wants to do it. But please, while we have it, let us keep it clean."

Federal and state officials announced Monday that beachfront property owners will be allowed to mow weeds to the waterline, but are still prohibited from disturbing the root system of any vegetation.

Singer said she hires someone each year to "clean up" her backyard beach, which is growing larger and exposing more weeds as the Saginaw Bay recedes.

Singer also said she never filled out any of the paperwork, which before Monday was a 41-page application for a permit before she could even touch the sand or vegetation with power tools.

Singer said she "went out a little further" than was regulated to mow the weeds.

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"When I bought this property, I was advised that it was mine to the water's edge," Singer said. "If they didn't want us to keep it clean, they should pay to clean it."

The application has now been reduced to one page.

State and federal officials have decided to come together and enforce one set of rules for residents. Before, Singer said, she didn't know what the regulations were since the different offices had some conflicting policies.

"I ignored it, because they did not know what they were doing," she said. "I'm really happy that they got together."

Singer said she'll continue to "clean" her property as she has been for years by hiring someone to mow and care for the lawn in her back yard, but she said she would fill out the new permit application if she plans to do any sand-on-sand moving.

One of Singer's concerns is the potential mosquito problem from the pools of stagnant bay water left in the weeds.

Her fear of mosquitoes is shared by Singer's neighbor, Dianne Weidner.

"Frankly, I'm concerned about West Nile," she said, referring to the virus spread by mosquitoes. "I read in the paper how you should dump out tires and buckets filled with water, but what about the pockets of water back there?"

Weidner said she doesn't do any maintenance on her weeds, but as a member of the group Save Our Shorelines she advocates that homeowners be allowed to take care of their own private property.

"People ought to have the right to do something out there," she said, adding she doesn't understand how preserving the small strip of beach she and her neighbors own will make a positive, if any, difference in nature.

Bay City resident Ric Greve said he regularly visits his mother, Rita Greve, on Athlone Beach and does all of her yard maintenance.

"Let's be realistic," he said. "We have to blend the environmental policies with the well-being of the citizens."

Greve said there's a balance that environmental officials need to strike between those who believe the beach should remain private and to use at their discretion, and those who believe the beach needs to be preserved.

Killarney Beach resident and S.O.S. member John Dwan said he was under the impression he owned his land until the water's edge, and like many of his neighbors, said he reserves the right to maintain

the area within reason.

Dwan said although he doesn't do anything that violates the new regulations, he wouldn't follow them anyway.

"I don't see where anyone can tell me what to do," he said. "If they have jurisdiction over my property, I should have jurisdiction over their property."

- Amy Bartner is a staff writer for The Times. She can be reached at 1-800-875-4444, ext. 647 or (989) 894-9647.

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