



Categorical Exclusion

- Project-Specific
- Programmatic

A. Background

Park: Pictured Rocks National Lakeshore

Proposed Action / Project Name: Recurring Modification of Non-Historic Rock Revetment to Maintain Natural Coastal Processes at Sand Point

Location of Proposed Action: Michigan / Alger County [see attached maps]

- Entire Park
- Park Unit: Sand Point

The National Park Service (NPS) at Pictured Rocks National Lakeshore (PIRO) proposes to periodically remove portions of an existing rock revetment at Sand Point to aid in restoration of natural conditions.

Description of Proposed Action: The existing stone revetment on Sand Point is approximately 650 feet by 32 feet. It was completed in 1991 as a flood control measure to protect Sand Point Road and the historic Coast Guard station (now park headquarters). The revetment altered the natural retention of sand at Sand Point, generally decreasing the size of the sand spit, a naturally occurring phenomenon with historical implications. However, the revetment, which has degraded over time, is now mostly buried in sand, and sand deposition is once again occurring.

Under the proposed action, PIRO would leave the revetment in situ, allowing natural processes to occur and would take action only when one or more revetment stones become exposed above the sand or lake water level. When exposed rocks become accessible, PIRO staff would take one of the following actions, either individually or collectively.

Stone Removal

PIRO staff may remove individual stones as they become exposed, when possible. Only a very small portion of the revetment could be removed because the revetment was built in layers. The filter layer, which consists of smaller stones that support the larger armor stones and prevents erosion of the underlying bluff material, was constructed nearest the lake bottom and composed of stones with sizes ranging from 2 to 12 inches. The armor-layer stones were placed on top of the filter layer and have a weight range of approximately 150 to 500 pounds (Baird/URS Joint Venture 2011). The armor-layer stones

are the most likely to be exposed, but the exact size and weight will vary, especially due to degradation that can result in stone splitting.

Depending on the size of the exposed stones, removal operations could involve hand tools or heavy equipment such as a backhoe and front-end loader. These measures would be carried out with NPS equipment and staff already located at PIRO.

Stone Disposition

PIRO could use removed revetment stones for defining parking area boundaries and similar uses. Stones could also be crushed and used for filling holes or paving operations. Stone material could be removed from Sand Point by truck. Removal by truck would only occur with strict adherence to gross vehicle weight limits on area roadways and would generally involve pickup trucks or partially loaded small dump trucks.

Sand Deposition on Revetment

PIRO routinely removes accumulated sand from a small, shallow boat launch located at Sand Point. The access ramp is a concrete slab in shallow water. Shifting sand continually changes the physical characteristics of the area. No more than 100 cubic yards is removed annually to ensure the access is usable. The sand removal is carried out with a backhoe and front-end loader, which scoops sand into a dump truck staged on the paved parking area adjacent to the access site. Sand is currently stockpiled at the PIRO Munising maintenance facility. This action complies with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) (42 USC 4321 et seq.) via the *Sand Point Boat Access Routine Maintenance Categorical Exclusion* (PEPC Project Number 58632).

The proposed action only changes existing operations when the dredged sand would periodically be transported from the boat dock area to the revetment and deposited on the existing revetment to cover exposed stones. Deposition of dredged sand on the revetment is expected to only occur a few times per year. Each occurrence is expected to require between two and ten trips with heavy equipment to deposit sufficient sand to bury exposed stones, although occasionally more trips could be needed.

Staging and Access

Stone removal operations: Heavy equipment (backhoe and front-end loader) used to remove revetment stones would be stored at the Munising Maintenance Shop. When needed, equipment would be loaded on a trailer, hauled to the site, and parked at the end of Sand Point Road. Equipment would be unloaded from the trailer on the paved surface, but would then travel on the beach to access the revetment. The distance from the end of the road to the east termination of the revetment is approximately 200 linear feet and about 500 feet to the west termination point of the revetment.

Sand deposition operations: To deposit sand on the revetment, heavy equipment (backhoe and front-end loader) would dredge around the boat dock near the boathouse and then travel a distance of approximately 850 feet to reach the end of Sand Point Road. The route taken would ensure all but the first approximately 120 feet of the boathouse beach would be on the previously disturbed and developed unpaved surface of the boathouse parking area and entrance drive and Sand Point Road, which is paved. The distance from the paved turnaround at the end of Sand Point Road to the revetment is the same as outlined for stone removal operations.

This Programmatic Categorical Exclusion (PCE) has a sunset date of August 8, 2025, and includes an annual review by the PIRO Interdisciplinary Team (IDT). During the annual review, the IDT would review the proposed activities to occur within specific locations, analyze potential impacts, develop mitigation

measures as appropriate, and execute additional consultation with all appropriate agencies, if needed (see below).

Consultation and permitting would occur as necessary to comply with all relevant laws and regulations, including but not limited to: US Fish and Wildlife Service for section 7; Michigan State Historic Preservation Office for section 106, tribal consultation and coordination; US Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) for section 404; and state and county laws as applicable.

Any action(s) proposed to occur following expiration of this PCE that are the same or similar to this proposed action would be subject to the legal and policy requirements and considerations related to NEPA.

B. Stipulations

The IDT reviewed the proposed action. The PIRO staff undertaking the proposed action will be fully aware of and adhere to these stipulations. The stipulations could, however, be outlined by the IDT during the annual review in more specificity based on the exact locations of stone removal and deposition and the current conditions at the time action is to be taken. The proposed action is referred to as “project activities” below.

Natural Resources:

1. The PIRO chief of resources would be responsible for ensuring project activities remain within the project area limits.
2. To minimize possible petrochemical leaks from motor vehicles, PIRO staff would check vehicles prior to their use for the purposes of implementing the proposed action. All leaks would be repaired prior to use. A spill kit would always be kept on-site.
3. Tools and equipment would be removed from the project area when not actively in use.
4. Disturbance of existing vegetation would be avoided to the greatest extent possible. No trees would be cut. Existing vegetation and topography of natural appearance would be preserved and maintained to the extent possible.
5. Equipment used would be cleaned prior to use to reduce the spread of nonnative plant species.
6. All equipment and materials would be staged on unvegetated surfaces, such as roadways and parking areas, to avoid damage to vegetation.
7. All construction activities would cease if a threatened or endangered species were discovered in the project area while NPS staff re-evaluates the situation. This would allow modification of the project activities for any protection measures determined necessary to protect the species.
8. Northern long-eared bat (*Myotis septentrionalis*) is present on Sand Point. No buildings, large trees, caves, or mines where bats could roost, breed, or hibernate are within the project area. No project activities would be permitted after sunset when bats could forage for insects over the beach.

Cultural Resources:

1. There are no known archeological sites in the project area. If previously unknown archeological or paleontological resources are discovered during project activities, all work in the immediate vicinity (200 feet) of the discovery would be halted until the resources are assessed by an archeologist meeting NPS Professional Qualification Standards and the *Secretary of the Interior's Professional Qualifications Standards*.

2. In the unlikely event human remains are discovered during construction, provisions outlined in the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act of 1990 and NPS Director's Order 28: *Cultural Resource Management* would be followed.

The Visitor Experience:

1. Project activities would occur when visitation is lowest to minimize disturbance to visitor experience on Sand Point and to ensure visitor safety.

C. Mitigation

Natural Resources:

1. When sand deposition is planned, PIRO resource staff will conduct a survey for migratory shorebirds, listed, sensitive, or rare species, prior to sand removal/deposition on an as-needed basis. This includes, but is not limited to, one species listed as endangered under the US Endangered Species Act—piping plover (*Charadrius melodus*). Red knot (*Calidris canutus rufa*) is also listed as threatened. It nests in the arctic but migrates through the area. If sand removal/deposition will be occurring on a frequent basis in a season, PIRO resource staff will determine an appropriate schedule for surveys. The Facilities Division will provide a minimum of 48-hour notice to the SRS Division prior to sand removal/deposition activities.

Cultural Resources:

1. If archeological finds are determined to be potentially eligible for the National Register of Historic Places, an appropriate mitigation strategy would be developed in accordance with pertinent laws, regulations, and policies.

Visitor Experience:

1. PIRO may develop written informational materials for visitors, as necessary, to describe project activities and objectives.
2. The beach area nearest the revetment would be temporarily closed during stone removal to ensure visitor safety. Project activities would be carried out in an efficient manner to minimize the closure duration and spatial extent. In general, closures would typically be no longer than 4 hours in duration and would typically occur early in the morning before many visitors arrive. The spatial extent of the closure would also be minimized. For example, if stone removal is needed near the east termination point, much of the western portion of the beach could remain open. The exact closure area would be determined prior to project activity to ensure visitor safety. The closed area would be monitored by PIRO staff to ensure visitors do not enter the area during project activities. The IDT may also use signage at headquarters and on Sand Point Road to preclude foot and vehicular traffic past the headquarters pull in. Additional signage locations, if needed, would be identified by the IDT prior to project activities occurring.

D. Approved General Management Plan or Other Plan Conformance

Date of Completion: November 2004

E. Compliance with NEPA

The proposed action is categorically excluded from further documentation under NEPA in accordance with 40 CFR §1508.4. A categorical exclusion is appropriate because the proposed action fits within the category of actions described in the NPS NEPA Handbook, Section 3.3 E. *Actions Related to Resource Management and Protection. 4. Removal of non-historic materials and structures in order to restore natural conditions*, and none of the extraordinary circumstances described in 43 CFR §46.215 apply.

As stated above, an annual review would be conducted by PIRO for activities covered under this Categorical Exclusion. If a rule or law or conditions on the ground, subject to law change, such as the addition of a new species to the threatened and endangered list, all project activities would be reviewed, additional stipulations added as necessary, and additional coordination and consultation would be completed. Additionally, the stipulations cited in section B further ensure that the proposed action has no potential for significant adverse impacts.

F. Screening for Extraordinary Circumstances

The IDT has reviewed the proposed action and prepared the following responses with regard to screening for extraordinary circumstances.

Screening for Extraordinary Circumstances: Will this project . . .	Yes or No
<p>1. Have significant adverse effects on public health or safety? The proposed action would not have any adverse effects on public health and safety. PIRO staff would be conducting project activities using approved best management practices, including closures, to ensure public health and safety.</p>	NO
<p>2. Have significant impacts on such natural resources and unique geographic characteristics as historic or cultural resources; park, recreation or refuge lands; wilderness areas; wild or scenic rivers; national natural landmarks; sole or principal drinking water aquifers; prime farmlands; wetlands (Executive Order 11990); floodplains (Executive Order 11988); national monuments; migratory birds; and other ecologically significant or critical areas? There would be no significant impacts to any of the above resources. Ground disturbance authorized under this CE is limited to removal of individual or small groups of nonnative revetment stone averaging approximately 2 ft x 2 ft and localized placement of sand, no larger in volume than the bucket of a front end loader. Please see stipulations above regarding precautions to ensure adverse impacts on resources are avoided.</p>	NO

Screening for Extraordinary Circumstances: Will this project . . .	Yes or No
<p>3. Have highly controversial environmental effects or involve unresolved conflicts concerning alternative uses of available resources?</p> <p>This project’s CE authority [see NPS NEPA Handbook / Chapter 3 / 3.3, E.4] allows for removal of non-historic materials and structures in order to restore natural conditions. The potential effects stemming from the proposed action are not highly controversial and there are no unresolved conflicts concerning alternative uses of available resources.</p>	NO
<p>4. Have highly uncertain and potentially significant environmental effects or involve unique or unknown environmental risks?</p> <p>The activities proposed are similar to long-standing, common, and routine practices within the boundaries of PIRO. The PIRO IDT of resource specialists have reviewed the proposed action and determined there are no highly uncertain, potentially significant, unique, or unknown risks.</p>	NO
<p>5. Establish a precedent for future action or represent a decision in principle about future actions with potentially significant environmental effects?</p> <p>The activities proposed in this CE are authorized under section 3.3 E.4 (NPS NEPA Handbook, page 37) and are categorically excluded because they have no potential for significant impacts; they are not unique and would not set a precedent for action or set a decision in principle about future actions, regardless of their environmental effects.</p>	NO
<p>6. Have a direct relationship to other actions with individually insignificant but cumulatively significant environmental impacts?</p> <p>The IDT considered the incremental impact of the proposal when added to other past, present, and reasonably foreseeable actions, including continued sand dredging around the boat dock, and determined that the project would not result in cumulatively significant adverse impacts. The IDT reviewed the project and incorporated stipulations into the project design to further minimize any potential for adverse impacts to natural or cultural resources and visitor experience and safety, and to avoid off-site impacts that could contribute to cumulative adverse impacts from other projects in the area.</p>	NO
<p>7. Have significant impacts on properties listed, or eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places as determined by either the NPS or SHPO?</p> <p>All historic structures would be avoided under this CE. The project is consistent with the cultural landscape report for Sand Point, which concluded that the revetment “disrupted what was once a single surface of sand across the beach landscape, and disrupts the natural aesthetic at the shoreline.” Therefore, the Proposed Action would not have any adverse impacts on properties listed, or eligible for listing, in the National Register of Historic Places.</p>	NO

Screening for Extraordinary Circumstances: Will this project . . .	Yes or No
<p>8. Have significant impacts on species listed, or proposed to be listed, on the List of Endangered or Threatened Species, or have significant impacts on designated critical habitat for these species?</p> <p>Federal threatened or endangered species that have the potential to occur at Sand Point are gray wolf (<i>Canis lupus</i>), northern long-eared bat (<i>Myotis septentrionalis</i>), piping plover, red knot, and pitcher’s thistle (<i>Cirsium pitcher</i>). The proposed action, including adherence to the stipulations, would not have any significant impacts on species listed, or proposed to be listed, on the List of Endangered or Threatened Species, or have significant impacts on designated critical habitat for these species. Please see the stipulations above for these species, which would prevent impacts with seasonal, activity, and location restrictions.</p>	NO
<p>9. Violate a federal law or a state, local, or tribal law or requirement imposed for the protection of the environment?</p> <p>The proposed action would not violate any federal, state, local, or tribal laws or requirements imposed for the protection of the environment. The proposed action conforms to all NPS policies for management of public lands in areas of jurisdiction and complies with applicable laws, rules, and regulations.</p>	NO
<p>10. Have a disproportionately high and adverse effect on low income or minority populations (Executive Order 12898)?</p> <p>The proposed action would not have a disproportionately high and adverse effect on low income or minority populations.</p>	NO
<p>11. Limit access to and ceremonial use of American Indian sacred sites on federal lands by Indian religious practitioners or significantly adversely affect the physical integrity of such sacred sites?</p> <p>No American Indian sacred sites were identified in proximity to the proposed action.</p>	NO
<p>12. Contribute to the introduction, continued existence, or spread of noxious weeds or nonnative species known to occur in the area or could actions promote the introduction, growth, or expansion of the range of such species?</p> <p>The proposed action would not contribute to the introduction, continued existence, or spread of noxious weeds or nonnative species known to occur in the area or promote the introduction, growth, or expansion of the range of such species per the stipulations listed above, including washing vehicles.</p>	NO

All of the above questions must be answered negatively before the Categorical Exclusion may be approved. If any of the above questions warrant a “yes,” additional stipulations should be considered or an environmental assessment should be prepared.

G. Approval and Contact Information

Based on the description of the proposed action, the stipulations and mitigation measures associated with the proposed action and the environmental impact information given to me by my interdisciplinary team, I am categorically excluding this proposed action from further NEPA analysis. No extraordinary circumstances or conditions apply from 43 CFR §46.215, as included in section 3-5 of NPS Director’s Order 12 NEPA Handbook (see attached ESF), and the action is fully described in section 3.3 E.4.

Superintendent

Signature of Superintendent

Date

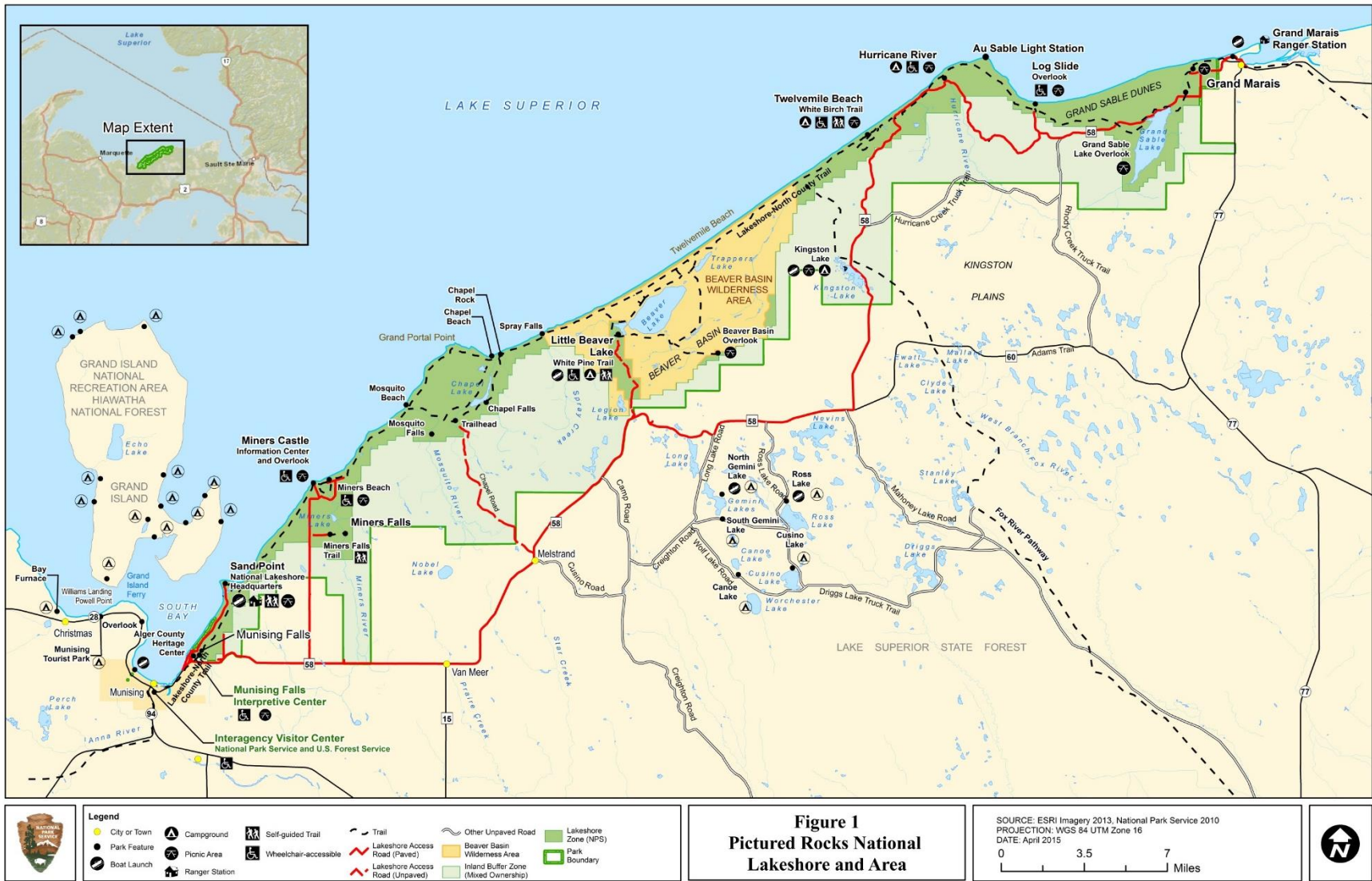




Figure 2
Existing Conditions
 NPS Pictured Rocks
 Munising, Michigan