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Restoration of dune grass needs a little assistance

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There's no doubt that the Lake Superior shoreline is one of the most distinguishing features of the city of Marquette.

The shoreline meanders for about 10 miles from the east to west city limits, and contains a variety of shore types, from sandstone shelves and cliffs at Presque Isle Park to rocky outcroppings at Lighthouse Point to stretches of pristine sandy beaches.

Residents of and visitors to the city are drawn to the picturesque shoreline for recreation, enjoying everything from hiking and biking to boating and swimming.

On hot summer days the main beaches in the city can be found packed with swimmers and sunbathers enjoying the relaxing atmosphere and cooling waters of the big lake.

Crowning many of these beaches are dunes that have been built up from wave action and changing lake levels over many years. Unfortunately, though, those same people drawn to the beaches can harm a special feature of the dunes - the native beach grass that tops them off.

The haphazard foot traffic, as well as storms and receding ice in the spring, can strip off these native grasses. In addition, invasive species have also moved onto the dunes and can displace the native plants.

However, there is a project set for Saturday aimed at replenishing some of the native beach grass, as well as removing invasive species, and the Superior Watershed Partnership is looking for some volunteers to help with the effort.

The partnership, in cooperation with the city of Marquette, is sponsoring the event, which gets under way at 10 a.m. with volunteers meeting at SWP offices at Presque Isle Park. The event will run until about 2 p.m.

Volunteers will help transplant native beach grass, remove invasive plant species and pick up litter. All they need to bring along is a pair of work gloves.

According to partnership officials, five primary sites in the city will be worked on, with volunteers planting native grass and removing mainly knapweed, the targeted invasive species.

And, as always, participants will be asked to keep an eye out for trash that can be removed to help keep the wonderful city beaches as pristine as possible for residents and visitors alike.

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