

Note: Proposed changes to the document appear in blue to make it easy for everyone to see what I'm recommending. Obviously, all of the copies will appear in black in the final document.

Proposed Changes to Rules Addressing Overnight Storage of Watercraft on Goose Rocks Beach

Intent:

Protect the fragile sand dunes from damage and maximize the dry sand area for beachgoers.

Background

For the past three years, the Town, with the approval of the Kennebunkport Conservation Trust (KCT), has provided nine kayak storage racks within the 25' Reserved Area of the eight KCT-owned lots along the eastern arc of Goose Rocks Beach (GRB). The original intent was to encourage folks to use these racks to secure their watercraft rather than pulling them up onto the dunes – which was then, unfortunately, standard practice.

The sand dunes along both the east and west arcs of GRB act as a natural barrier to prevent property damage from storm-driven seas. Healthy dune vegetation is critical to the stability and growth of the dunes. The practice of placing watercraft on the dunes was destroying the vegetation and thus seriously compromising the very existence of the dune field. The term “watercraft” is intended to cover all personal flotation items, including, but not limited to, kayaks, canoes, dinghies, paddleboards, surfboards, and inflatables.

Unfortunately, the storage racks have become a threat to the very thing they were intended to protect. In late August of this year, there were 175 watercraft tied to, or placed near, the nine racks. In addition, there were 45 more watercraft further west between the Tides Inn and Dingy Point. If (when) a strong summer storm hits GRB, these watercraft will become an existential threat to the dunes. Acting as tethered tools of destruction, they would easily tear up protective vegetation and scour away the underlying sand.

There is also the issue of the dry sand area along the dune fronts. Our high tides are measurably increasing. Combined with the needed stakes and twine (protecting the active dune edge), the dense clusters of stored watercraft are seriously limiting the area of dry sand. Removing the stored watercraft would significantly increase the space for beachgoers to sit and play.

Proposal

Based on the concerns stated above, the Beach Advisory Committee is considering a change to the practice of storing watercraft overnight at GRB. With two exceptions, the beach will become “carry in / carry out” only – no overnight storage of watercraft on the beach will be allowed.

The two exceptions:

1. At the time front lot (beach front) owners signed the Beach Use Agreement (BUA), they were granted a private, 25’ reserved area in front of their homes. As such, they would be allowed to continue to store watercraft within that area. These BUA signatories would be sent four (4) free waterproof permit stickers to affix to their, or their guests’, watercraft. This would clearly identify these watercraft as permitted storage and would dissuade others from attempting unauthorized storage. (Additional permits would be provided upon the owner’s request without charge.)
2. At Dinghy Point, boat owners with a registered mooring would be allowed to store a single watercraft that is used to access their vessels. A watercraft storage permit will be issued, at no extra charge, with each mooring registration. No other watercraft would be allowed to be stored overnight at Dinghy Point.

Proposed Mechanism

The Beach Advisory Committee recommends that the Board of Selectmen adopted the following amendments to the Beach Rules (they are set forth in Section 4(C) of the Beach Use Ordinance):

Rule #12 Add: “All watercraft stored by the Beachfront Owner, or their guest(s) shall display a permit sticker which shall be provided by the Town. Watercraft owners who have a permit for a mooring off Dinghy Point will also receive a sticker for overnight storage on Dinghy Point for a kayak or other vessel they use to reach their mooring.”

A (new) Rule # 14: “No walking, storing of watercraft or other beach equipment in the dune grass or dune areas adjacent to the Beach Premises”.

Implementation

A. To successfully implement such a rule, the Town would contract with a commercial towing company to remove unpermitted watercraft based on the following proposed procedure:

- Any non-permitted watercraft found by the Community Safety Officers (CSO) first thing in the AM would be tagged.
- CSOs would report the location of any tagged item older than 48 hours.
- The Police would notify the contracted towing company with the number and location of offending items.
- The contracted towing company would remove offending items between 7-8:00 AM.
 - All items would be photographed before removal.
 - Items would be stored by the contracted towing company.
 - Items could be reclaimed by the owner for a fee of \$85, plus daily storage at \$10/day (maxed at 10 days) – maximum fee: \$185.

B. The Town shall annually mail four (4) free stickers to each front lot (beach front) owner. Owners shall be provided with additional stickers upon request.