



Sand Point Restoration Site: Environmental Health Project

Mass Mill mining efforts from 1902-1919 unloaded over 6 billion pounds of stamp sands into Lake Superior north of the L'Anse Indian Reservation. Stamp sands have moved with currents, wind and wave action and along with the lake bottom, cover shoreline beaches south of the original mill site, including our tribal property at Sand Point. Without assistance, it is estimated that it would take over 850 years to naturally recover this area. Stamp sands are detrimental to health as they contain heavy metals and are toxic to plant life. In addition, the physical nature of stamp sands with their sharp edges and dark coloring combined with the wind and heat make it very difficult to establish any vegetation in this area to support a healthy ecosystem. This legacy pollution is a concern for our Community as it is part of a large property which is widely used by the public for recreation, is a wildlife conservation area, and a culturally significant place for our Tribe.

In 2010, with the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative, opportunities presented themselves to begin restoration at this site. Since this time, over 2.5 miles of shoreline and 34 acres have been covered with topsoil and native plantings. Sand Point now hosts a pollinator friendly demonstration garden and walking/fitness trails next to Lake Superior as well as wetland trails nearby. This cap not only protects shoreline life but provides a buffer to protect nearby wetlands which hold our wild rice and cranberry beds as well as numerous other medicinal plants. Other life protected includes the numerous wildlife species which have been documented using this area through game camera, waterfowl, and amphibian studies. This area provides unique educational opportunities for community, schools, and organizations on the importance of legacy pollution restoration to the health of the environment.

