



## New York Sea Grant Spearheads First-Ever Great Lakes-Wide Dune Conference

**F**or the first time ever Great Lakes dunes system researchers, educators and resource managers gathered from eight states and Ontario, Canada, to discuss the needs of the system on a comprehensive scale. The dunes system is vital to Great Lakes Basin environmental, ecological, tourism and economic interests.



A sense of connectedness - particularly among those from geographically-isolated areas - was created by those attending the first Great Lakes Dune Conference in October 2006 in Traverse City, Michigan. Similarly, the sharing of cross-discipline resources and challenges now supports comprehensive planning and more effective interaction with the diverse audiences interested in the future of the fragile dunes system.



*Above: Lake Ontario's eastern shore dunes. Left: the New York contingent to the first Great Lakes Dune Conference. Photo: Mark Breederlund, Michigan Sea Grant*

The Great Lakes dunes system provides habitat for rare plants and animals; provides shelter from the Lakes' storm energy for an immense complex of wetlands with its own diversity of flora and fauna; and, although itself subject to erosion, protects a much larger area of shoreline and lowland properties. In New York, for example, the dunes system protects adjacent wetlands creating a complex while providing habitat for such rare and endangered plant and animal species as Dune Willow, Sand Cherry, Champlain Beachgrass, Northern Harrier and Black Tern.

In cooperation with several partners, New York Sea Grant (NYSG) Steward

Coordinators secured funding, and planned and implemented this groundbreaking conference and its resulting products: post-conference discussions, the [www.nysgdunes.org/confhomepage.htm](http://www.nysgdunes.org/confhomepage.htm) website, a Great Lakes Information Network-hosted listserv, a dune session and posters at the 2007 International Association for Great Lakes Research Conference at Penn State University in May, and development of a Sea Grant Great Lakes Network Committee.

Funding from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's Great Lakes National Program Office via the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation, with additional contributions from NYSG and the Great Lakes Water Studies Institute of Northwestern Michigan College, made the Great Lakes Dune Conference possible.

---

*New York Sea Grant is a cooperative program of the State University of New York and Cornell University. Sea Grant Extension administration is located at 112 Rice Hall, Cornell University, Ithaca, NY 14853.*

*This project summary was written by Mary Penney, Eastern Lake Ontario/Salmon River Steward Coordinator, 315-312-3042, mp357@cornell.edu, www.nyseagrant.org.*