

Alongshore Measurement of Beach Width as an Indicator of Foredune Erosion

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Abstract

The beach foredune system alongshore of Rosy Mound Natural Area, Hoffmaster State Park, and Muskegon State Park provide locations to study beach width and its effects on erosion. Our study mapped the dune-beach boundary and the shoreline to determine the utility of beach width as an indicator of foredune erosion. GPS Trimble units were used to map the beach-foredune system. In each location, we measured certain aspects of the foredune-beach system, such as scarp height, the slope of the scarp, and the distance from the scarp to the lake. The results show that there is a correlation between beach width and foredune erosion. The most common trend observed was that a higher foredune can be an indicator of a narrow beach width. This research will increase the understanding of how sediment budgets of the foredune beach system can be affected by wave erosion.

Introduction

Little investigation has been done into the relationship between the dune-beach boundary and the environment's effects on sediment budget, especially within the state of Michigan. Research from other locations have indicated that beach width influences sediment transport on the foredune [1]. Our study investigates the relationship between beach width and foredune erosion along the shores of three parks on the west coast of Michigan.

Our study objectives were to:

- Map the dune-beach boundary and the shoreline in three dune areas
- Measure characteristics of the foredune-beach system, including foredune height/slope and the width of the beach

Study Areas

The study took place along the beach-foredune system in Rosy Mound Natural Area, Hoffmaster State Park, and Muskegon State Park [Fig 1], which are all located along the east coast of Lake Michigan.

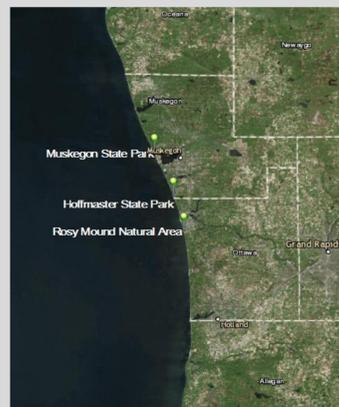


Figure 1: Study areas along coast of Lake Michigan

Methods

Alongshore Characteristics

We mapped the dune-beach boundary and the beach-lake boundary along the coastline in our study areas. We mapped segments along each coastline where there was similar scarp height. In the rough midpoint of each segment, we measured scarp height (using a stadia rod), scarp slope (using a level), and beach width (using a tape measure).

Scarp Heights

Sections of shoreline were categorized by varying scarp heights [Fig 2,3].

Below: Figure 2: Varied scarp heights along Lake Michigan's coast in each study area



A) Low scarp in Hoffmaster State Park



B) Medium scarp in Rosy Mound Natural Area



C) High scarp in Muskegon State Park



D) No scarp in Hoffmaster State Park

Scarp Height	Width of Beach (m)
No scarp	0m
Small Scarp	0-0.8m
Med Scarp	0.8-1.4m
High Scarp	1.4m+

Figure 3: Categorization of scarp heights

Results

We observed in Muskegon State Park and Hoffmaster State Park that the beach-foredune boundaries had more areas of no or low scarp than high scarp areas. Rosy Mound Natural Area differed in that it featured more areas of high scarp.

Figure 4: Map of Muskegon State Park study sections with varying scarp heights and shoreline



The data shown below [Fig 5, 6, 7] displays a moderate correlation in scarp height to beach width. The trendline of the graph from both Muskegon and Hoffmaster State Parks indicate that as scarp height increases, beach width decreases.

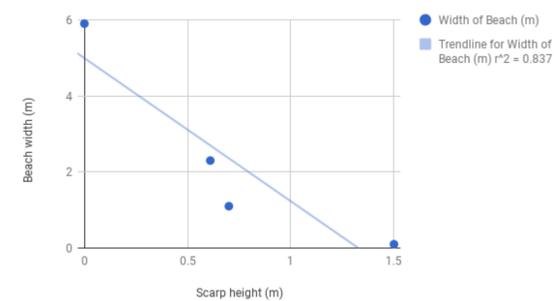


Figure 5: Beach width and scarp height in Hoffmaster State Park

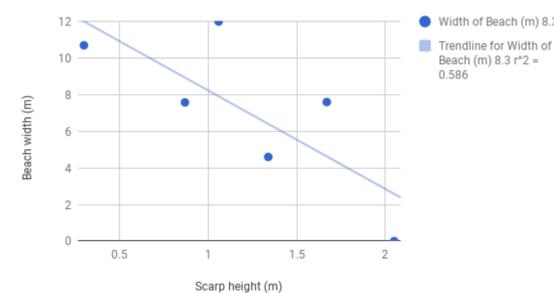


Figure 6: Beach width and scarp height in Muskegon State Park

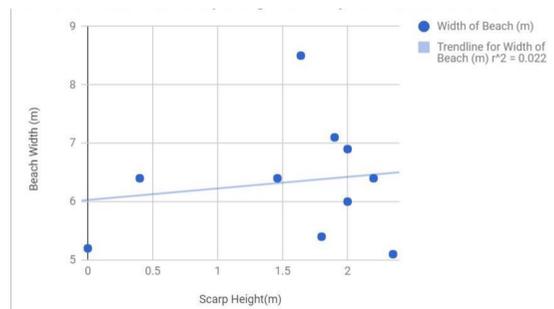


Figure 7: Beach width and scarp height in Rosy Mound Natural Area



Figure 8: Low scarp and wide beach in Muskegon State Park



Figure 9: High scarp and narrow beach in Muskegon State Park

The correlation in our results can be seen above in two segments of our study area in Muskegon State Park on the east coast of Lake Michigan, where low scarp (<0.8m) is present with a wide beach [Fig. 8], and where high scarp (1.4m+) is present with very narrow beach width [Fig 9].

Discussion

Contrarily, Rosy Mound does not share this correlation [Fig. 10], which could potentially be due to increased human impact in that park. Additionally, there may simply be less of a correlation than indicated by the data initially.



Figure 10: High scarp with wide beach at Rosy Mound

The severe weather conditions that took place during measurements at Hoffmaster State Park and Muskegon State Park could have influenced our data collection. Previous studies suggest that severe weather leads to a significant increase of erosion [2].

Conclusion

The data seems to show that along the east coast of Lake Michigan, there is a mild correlation where regions with higher scarps were frequently associated with narrower beaches. Future studies will be able to use the data we collected during a different season with fewer storms to see the changes in morphology and the foredune-beach relationship.

Acknowledgements

We would like to thank the following for information:

- Dr. Deanna van Dijk, geography professor at Calvin College
- Maia Madrid, mentor, Calvin student
- P.J. Hoffmaster State Park
- Ottawa County Parks
- Muskegon State Park
- And the following for funding:
- Michigan Space Grant Consortium
- Calvin College Department of Geology, Geography, & Environmental Studies

References

- [1] Davidson-Arnott, Robin G.D. and Mark N. Law. 1996. "Measurement and Prediction of Long-Term Sediment Supply to Coastal Foredunes." *Journal of Coastal Research* 12(3): 654-663.
- [2] Suarez, Serge, Jean M. Cariolet, Romain Cancouet, Fabrice Arduin, and Christophe Delacourt. 2011. "Dune recovery after storm erosion on a high energy beach: Vougot Beach, Brittany (France)." *Geomorphology* 139-140: 16-33.