

Friends of Nantasket Beach

M E M B E R N E W S L E T T E R



Mass DCR clearing beach cobble at the Nantasket Beach Reservation in the summer of 2022.

Annoyed With All the Rocks Covering Nantasket Beach? Here's Why We Should Embrace Them

written by Olivia Holbrook

Everyone loves a relaxing beach day, but there is nothing worse than laying on your beach towel and discovering rocks digging into your stomach. For Nantasket Beach, pebbles can be an annoyance while tanning on the sand, but they're even more of a problem when they wind up on ramps. We would all love a beach with fine white sand and constantly smooth ramps, but there are benefits to these pesky pebbles.

In the Spring of 2019 officials in Westport, MA began fining individuals for taking rocks from the beaches. Collecting large quantities of rocks for projects or personal use can now result in a \$250 fine for Westport visitors. Westport's Beach Committee Vice Chair Sean Leach explains the reasoning

cont'd p.2

behind these fines by highlighting the importance of rocky beaches in the fight against loss of beach land. Pebbles on the beach protect properties and roads on the coast from the effects of erosion by holding the sand around the stones in place. To the surprise of many, taking rocks from Nantasket Beach is also a punishable offense. In fact, Massachusetts state law asserts, “*the digging or removal of stones, gravel, sand, or other materials, upon or from any beach... is likely to prove, injurious to any harbor or any navigable tide waters*” and “*shall be punished by a fine of not less than twenty [\$20] nor more than two hundred dollars [\$200]*.” These fines are imperative, for they discourage the collection of pebbles, protecting the beach from faster rates of erosion and beach loss.

Dunes are protected for similar reasons. They are home to many different species and their roots hold the beach sand in place acting as a barrier against the powerful tides. Damaging this plant life can also result in a fine of no more than \$200. It is just as important to refrain from bringing home rocks from the beach as it is to protect dunes and beach vegetation.

Pebbles and rocks are so crucial to beach health that they are sometimes added to beaches to protect the beach from erosion. This method is called **gravel nourishment**. Gravel or pebbles are placed on beaches to hold sand in place. It is commonly known that adding coarser materials like gravel and pebbles can extend beach life and slow the rates of erosion. To protect fine sand beaches against strong waves, beaches have been covered with pebbles to hold the sand in place. Therefore, it is logical that if adding pebbles to beaches prevents erosion, taking pebbles from beaches would make them more prone to shore loss.

The next time you go to Nantasket Beach, do not look at the pebbles scattered across the beach as just an annoyance but instead as nature’s method to mitigate the effects of erosion. Climate change has increased the acidity of our oceans and caused our sea levels to rise to new levels. If we can help protect our planet from these changes by simply leaving pebbles where they were found, then that is the least that we can do for our beaches.

Sources:

- Bitan M, Galili E, Spanier E, Zviely D. Beach Nourishment Alternatives for Mitigating Erosion of Ancient Coastal Sites on the Mediterranean Coast of Israel. *Journal of Marine Science and Engineering*. 2020; 8(7):509. <https://doi.org/10.3390/jmse8070509>
- Gugliotta, Tony. “Taking Rocks from Westport Beaches Will Cost You \$250.” WJAR, WJAR, 13 May 2019, <https://turnto10.com/news/local/taking-rocks-from-westport-beaches-will-cost-you-250#:~:text=It's%20always%20been%20illegal%20to,rocks%20that%20are%20a%20problem>.
- “Section 30.” *The 192nd General Court of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts*, Massachusetts Government, <https://malegislature.gov/Laws/GeneralLaws/PartI/TitleXIV/Chapter91/Section30>.

Check out the [Friends' website](#) and [Facebook page](#). We are a small group of non-profit volunteers. We are frequently in touch with DCR staff so that we can provide updated and transparent information about the Reservation

We will be posting updated information and events soon for the summer 2023 season!

Know anybody interested in advocating for the Nantasket Beach Reservation? They can get in touch directly by emailing us at friendsofnantasketbeach@gmail.com.