

# How to Look After Dunes

## Fact sheet

### Why are sand dunes important?

Sand dunes are important for many reasons as they:

- Provide a natural protection barrier from damaging storms, waves, and winds.
- Hinder waves from penetrating inland and inundating low-lying areas.
- Provide critical habitat for plants and animals, including threatened and migratory shore birds.
- Defend against coastal flooding and beach erosion.
- Provide protection for houses, walkways, roads, public parks, storm water outlets and sewage infrastructure.

### How does Council manage sand dunes?

Council strategically manages the coastline by using 'soft' or 'hard' solutions. Soft techniques including dune restoration and beach scraping (also known as Nature Assisted Beach Enhancement (NABE)) help to manage erosion and protect the coast with lower costs and lower environmental impacts. Hard engineering solutions, such as groynes or rock walls, may have a higher impact on beach amenity, the surrounding environment and require a more detailed environmental due diligence process. These structures are only implemented when necessary and designed using modern and environmentally conscious coastal engineering techniques.

Council is currently undertaking the following actions to manage dunes along our coastline:

- Monitoring the condition of the beaches and ensuring appropriate maintenance and risk mitigation measures are in place along the foreshore.
- Upgrading, maintaining, and consolidating formal beach access tracks to improve foreshore resilience and provide safe beach access for our community and visitors alike.
- Closely monitoring and responding to acts and reports of vegetation vandalism.
- After storms, Council may assist dunes in their natural recovery by undertaking NABE or beach scraping. NABE is a simple, low-cost method to raise low points in dunes and help accelerate natural beach recovery. It involves moving sand from the lower part of the beach onto the higher part of the beach to help protect dunes from erosion in the short-term and expedites a dunes natural recovery process.



*Erosion of sand dunes following storm, Shoalhaven Heads, January 2023.*



*Dune restoration at Narrawallee Beach, July 2022.*

## How can I take care of sand dunes?

With over 85% of the population living within 50 kilometres of the Australian coastline, human activities can have a major impact on dune systems and their ecology. Everyone can contribute to dune protection and the health of our shorelines by:

- Using the formal beach access tracks maintained by Council instead of informal accessways.
- Do not mow, prune or landscape coastal vegetation areas.
- [Disposing of garden waste](#) in red-lid bins to avoid spreading weeds. Council offers [green waste collection services](#) for excess amounts of garden waste.
- Disposing of plastics and litter in bins to leave our coastal spaces pristine. You can [report littering](#) or [illegal dumping](#) to the NSW EPA.
- Staying clear of nesting shore bird areas.
- Walking your dog in designated off-leash areas only, avoiding areas designated as prohibited.
- Joining a [local community Bushcare Program](#) to protect and plant native coastal vegetation.
- [Reporting vegetation vandalism.](#)

*Little Tern (Sternula albifrons) – listed as Endangered under the Biodiversity Conservation Act 2016 (NSW) and Migratory under the Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999 (Cth) Nests in small, scattered colonies in low dunes or on sandy beaches just above high tide mark near estuary mouths or adjacent to coastal lakes and islands. Photo credit: Leo Berzins*



### Find out more

[getinvolved.shoalhaven.nsw.gov.au/  
foreshore-protection-management](https://getinvolved.shoalhaven.nsw.gov.au/foreshore-protection-management)  
Or search “**Foreshore**” on our website.

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