

## Our Shoreline is Changing

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Big moves are being made to protect the Okanagan's greatest asset: our lake.

Conservation officials are making an Aquatic Habitat Index so they can compare the health of various parts of Okanagan Lake.

They've just mapped all 289km of the shoreline.

"It's a fairly complicated survey process. We go out in a boat, we have a sophisticated GPS system which is very accurate. It also has the ability to take video and GIS coordinates," says Environment Manager Todd Cashin with the City of Kelowna.

That video will be used to see how the shoreline changes over the years and to report any big problems to the authorities.

New docks, retaining walls and sandy beaches mean only 43 per cent of the shoreline is still in its natural state.

"On a parcel by parcel basis, it's not a terrible thing... but as you start to put all the pieces together, across the whole lake foreshore, you start to see the bigger picture, how all these little things can have a cumulative impact," says Cashin.

"At this point in time [the mapping] is just an inventory, there are some recommendations for senior levels of government... but the biggest thing for us is that we all need to work a little bit harder at working together to make sure this resource is protected," Cashin says.

"Okanagan Lake is arguably the most important resource in the Valley, contributing significantly to the overall economy of the valley. It's a primary source of water for agricultural purposes, an obvious source of recreation and enjoyment in addition to being a major source of drinking water for Okanagan residents," says Caroline Restrepo-Tamayo from the Okanagan Collaborative Conservation Program.

"In short, Okanagan Lake is a treasure and one worthy of protecting in a pristine or near-pristine state for all that it provides," she says.