

## KELOWNA

### Natural shore line disappearing

by Castanet Staff - Story: 63106  
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The Okanagan Collaborative Conservation Program (OCCP) released the results for the Foreshore Inventory & Mapping and an Aquatic Habitat index for Okanagan Lake on Friday.

Okanagan Lake is considered the most important resource in the Okanagan Valley, and contributes significantly to the overall economy of the valley. The Lake is 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.



Photo: Kelly Hayes - File photo

In order to provide more collaborative lake planning and management, the OCCP, with the support of local, provincial and federal governments, and along with the Okanagan Basin Water Board, initiated a process to document the current condition of the foreshore to help develop a more integrated approach to watershed management.

The foreshore is the relatively narrow strip of land at or near the high water mark of a body of water. The foreshore is a productive area considered essential to natural processes including the lake fishery, its wildlife and water quality.

Foreshore Inventory & Mapping (FIM) and the development of an Aquatic Habitat Index for the entire lake represents a progressive and proactive approach to managing Okanagan Lake and the lake foreshore specifically.

FIM results for this project include a compilation of data from the south, central and north Okanagan that covers the entire 289 km of Okanagan Lake.

The project collected baseline information about the current condition of the shoreline to describe, among other things, the level of human impact.

FIM was first conducted for the Central Okanagan in 2004, while the 2010 study covers all of Okanagan Lake. The 2004 results were used as a benchmark to compare results, extrapolate future impacts and to further refine the methods.

The results of the latest inventory demonstrate that a number of impacts to the foreshore continue to occur. Inevitably these impacts do threaten the health and viability of the lake and the larger watershed.

The analysis indicates that up to two percent of the Central Okanagan shoreline is being changed each year. Since only 43 per cent of the shoreline (125 km of 289 km total) remains in a natural state, the results are dramatic.

Docks were the most common modification observed along Okanagan Lake, numbering more than 2,700. Retaining walls were the second most predominant modification, with close to 1,800 observed, and occupying nearly 20 per cent of the length of the lake and with some extending into the lake.

Nearly 940 changes were made to walls and beach access around the lake; these were the next most commonly observed changes. In total, modification of the lake bed in some form was observed along 47 per cent of the shore length.

Much can be learned from the data collected by the inventory and the comparison between levels of impact from 2004 and 2010. The information can help ensure sensitive areas and natural features are preserved and safeguarded for current and future generations.

The complete report or specific sections of it are available from the Okanagan Collaborative Conservation Program [website](#).