

Taking stock of the foreshore

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The inventory is complete.

A foreshore inventory and mapping project completed in June is so comprehensive, so thorough and so detailed, it reveals every buoy, dock, boat and more on the foreshore of Shuswap, Mara and Little Shuswap lakes and Little River.

And there are lots of examples of human activity.

Docks were the most common human-made item with a total of 2,789 accounted for. Next on the list at 1,529 are retaining walls, many of which were built below the high-water line.

A total of 200 concrete boat launches and 51 marinas were also tallied. Then there were 1,170 groynes – piles of lake bed or beach rocks whose construction, in most cases, required the use of heavy equipment.

The study also revealed that as much as 42.8 per cent of the shoreline has a high level of human impact and only 8.2 per cent shows little or no impact.

Impacts along the shoreline include changes to the lake bottom, removal of riparian vegetation and construction of retaining walls and other structures.

Predominant land use around the lakes includes 32 per cent natural areas, followed by 21.7 per cent in single-family dwellings. Other common land uses include transportation corridors, parks and other recreational areas.

According to the report, wetlands are rare around Shuswap Lake, accounting for only 3.5 per cent of the shoreline. Gravel and rocky shores are the most common.

The report also noted that aquatic vegetation, an important habitat fea-



In detail: Above, an example of foreshore mapping, this one of the Salmon Arm wharf area. To right, Columbia Shuswap Regional District planner Marcin Pachcinski recently completed the Shuswap Watershed Mapping Project.

ture for juvenile salmonids, occurs along 22.7 per cent of the shoreline – most commonly during high water.

Used to improve access and create gravel/sand beaches, the removal of rocks and boulders from along the shoreline inhibits emergent vegetation and spawning areas.

In terms of Shuswap Lake habitat, the inventory revealed that while some areas of the lake ranked very low compared to others, almost all areas of the lake play a role in some part of the salmon's life – staging, spawning, rearing.

"Thus, even in low value habitats, there is still potential to affect important fisheries resources in the lakes," reads the report.

The report prepared for the Columbia Shuswap Regional District and the federal department of Fisheries and Oceans by Ecoscape Environment Consultants of Kelowna will become part of the arsenal of tools used to protect the lakes.

Using their own data

and that of other agencies who have studied the Shuswap watershed, Ecoscape presented a series of 21 recommendations to protect the foreshore.

Ecoscape also recommended completion of a number of studies, including the creation by SLIPP of shoreline management guidance documents. (Funding for this project was recently awarded by the Fraser Salmon and Watersheds Program).

CSRD Planner Marcin Pachcinski says the main reason the CSRD commissioned the study was to gather some solid baseline information around the lake, get an idea of the location of some of the sensitive sites and to get a sense of human impact.

He says even in natural areas, human impact on the foreshore is evidenced by such things as houseboats.

"The two main things we hope to get out of this report is to use it as a public awareness tool and as a guiding document when evaluating development proposals



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and making local government policy decisions," Pachcinski says. "Where should further development occur and where should it be protected?"

Pachcinski said the CSRD board was very supportive of the report and hopes it will raise awareness of the impacts of development already and spur more interest in conservation and changes in individual behaviour.

"I think a lot of people are not aware of how simple changes such as building a wharf have a negative effect on fish habitat," he says, noting zoning bylaws will cor-

respond to site sensitivity."

How big a dock can be and how many buoys they can have will depend on whether the site is high or low sensitivity.

Pachcinski was loading the complete report onto the CSRD website on Monday and says interactive maps should be on the site, www.csr.bc.ca, within two months.

An intensive increase in development over the past nine years has highlighted the lack of regulation and the need for better baseline information and more planning.