



TOWN OF GODERICH COASTAL ENVIRONMENTAL PLAN



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COASTAL ENVIRONMENTAL PLAN

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1 INTRODUCTION

The Town of Goderich is located along the eastern coast of Lake Huron, within the County of Huron. The Town is found at the intersection of the Bluewater Highway (Highway 21) and Highway 8 (Huron Road). The Town has approximately 3 km of shoreline along Lake Huron, from Maitland River south to Dechert Road, which forms the boundary with the Municipality of Central Huron. The population of Goderich is approximately 7,900 permanent residents, and the Town is also a popular tourist destination in the summer months.

The waterfront area of Goderich is characterized as a relatively narrow fringe of shoreline, separated from the remainder of the Town by a bluff. It includes recreational and natural areas, as well as a deep-water industrial harbour and municipal infrastructure facilities. The multitude of uses has created a unique waterfront area, which also brings unique environmental opportunities and challenges. The current shoreline ecosystem is influenced and shaped by the physiography of the area, human impacts, lake levels, coastal processes, storms, and climate change.

In 2023, the Council of the Town of Goderich approved their Strategic Action Plan 2023-2027. During the consultation for the Strategic Action Plan, 90% of public participants identified the waterfront as a unique and special feature in Goderich. Given the strong local connection to the environment, including the waterfront, the Strategic Action Plan has a goal of environmental stewardship. One of the objectives under that goal is the completion of a Coastal Environmental Plan (CEP).

The intent of this CEP is to inventory existing coastal assets and provide recommendations relating to maintaining and improving existing natural areas, education opportunities, access to the waterfront, new and existing facilities, and addressing potential impacts related to climate change. The CEP is intended to complement existing resources (as noted in Section 5), including the Town of Goderich Official Plan, Waterfront Master Plan, Maitland Valley Shoreline Regulations and Policies, among others. It is important to note the CEP is not a development guide nor a master plan – it does not include an assessment of specific coastal hazards or infrastructure recommendations. Rather, the CEP is an examination of potential opportunities related to preserving and improving the local coastal environment.

2 GODERICH SHORELINE AREA

The area for this CEP includes the shoreline area along Lake Huron within the municipal boundary of the Town of Goderich. This includes the outlet of the Maitland River, Goderich Harbour, Goderich Main Beach, St. Christopher's Beach, Rotary Cove and the shoreline south to Dechert Road. The study area also includes the bluff that separates the shoreline from the urban area of the Town. For the purposes of this CEP, the extent of the bluff included in the shoreline area is from the toe of the slope to the 'top of bank' as identified by Maitland Valley Conservation. The study area is shown in Figure 1.



	TOWN OF GODERICH GODERICH COASTAL ENVIRONMENTAL PLAN GODERICH SHORELINE AREA		DATE December 2025	PROJECT No. 24084
			SCALE AS SHOWN	FIGURE No. 1

The shoreline of Goderich includes five distinct areas, that have differing uses and are unique in terms of features and assets. These five areas include:

- Maitland River and Goderich Harbour
- Main Beach
- St. Chrispher's Beach
- Rotary Cove
- South of Rotary Cove

2.1 Maitland River & Goderich Harbour

The Maitland River and Goderich Harbour area of the shoreline are grouped due to their proximity and shared features, including the river wall, which isolates the harbour from the Maitland River. Maitland Valley Marina, which is privately owned, accesses Lake Huron via the Maitland River. The Town of Goderich operates two seasonal public boat launches, one off North Harbour Road adjacent to the Maitland Valley Marina, and a second at Snug Harbour at the west end of North Harbour Road.

The mouth of the Maitland River has been influenced by the river wall, industrial harbour, and marinas on the north and south sides. There is little in the way of natural habitat on the south side of the mouth of the Maitland River.

Goderich Harbour is owned and operated by the Town of Goderich, but it is also the location of the Compass Minerals salt mine, a Parrish and Heimbecker marine terminal for grain, and Da-Lee Dust Control. Salt, grains and aggregates are the major commodities moved through Goderich Harbour. The mine and harbour are accessed via North Harbour Road as well as by the Goderich-Exeter Railway (GEXR). Goderich Port Management Corporation (GPMC), which operates the Harbour on behalf of the Town, is a member of Green Marine. The Green Marine program is an environmental certification program for marine facilities to improve environmental performance beyond what is regulated. GPMC currently has policies for monitoring environmental exceedances, monitoring vessel atmospheric exceedances, a water and land pollution prevention plan and environmental policy in place.

2.2 Main Beach

The Main Beach of Goderich is located at the west end of Harbour Street, immediately south of Goderich Harbour. The Main Beach area features a sand beach and is a popular destination for swimming and water-related recreational activities (e.g. paddleboarding, kayaking) for local residents and tourists. There is a concrete boardwalk providing access to the south pier, pavilion, and Rotary Beach Hut, which includes a concession stand, washrooms/changerooms, water fountains and refilling stations and seating areas. There is also a beachside playground and numerous benches. On the east side of Cove Road, the area features a parking lot, a grassed and treed parkland area, a truck staging area and probing station for Parrish and Heimbecker, and the Beach Street Station restaurant.

During the summer months, this area is extensively utilized by locals and tourists. The Town of Goderich maintains the beach using a mechanical groomer on a biweekly basis. Local groups, such as the Lake Huron Coastal Centre, have also organized annual beach cleanup activities.

At the south end of the Main Beach area, the sand beach transitions to an armour stone protected shoreline. There is also a staircase and trail from the Goderich Lighthouse down to the Main Beach.

2.3 St. Christopher's Beach

St. Christopher's Beach is the area of the Goderich shoreline characterized by the presence of armour stone revetments and groynes along the shoreline. The shoreline protection measures were historically installed along this section of shoreline to protect the area from erosion and offer protection for the Goderich Drinking Water Treatment Plant.

This section of shoreline features pavilions and picnic shelters, public washrooms, a wooden boardwalk, parking along Cove Road, and the Goderich Drinking Water Treatment Plant. This area of the shoreline is the 'dog-friendly' section of the beach and is not generally utilized for swimming. There are grassed areas north and south of the Water Treatment Plant, with mature trees, offering a more shaded environment than other areas of the shoreline.

Immediately east of Cove Road is the toe of the shoreline bluff, which is heavily treed. A staircase from Sunset Park leads down to this section of shoreline.

2.4 Rotary Cove

Rotary Cove is the longest portion of the shoreline, stretching from the Rotary Cove gate to the end of Cove Road. The shoreline features rocky areas and shoreline revetments that transition to a shallow, sandy beach at the end of Cove Road. At the beach, there are three areas of dune grass plantings. North of this area is a playground and large parking lot. The wooden boardwalk from St. Christopher's Beach continues south to Rotary Cove. Parking is also available along the west side of Cove Road. The areas between the boardwalk and the water are generally grassed, mowed regularly by the Town of Goderich. Trees have been planted along the boardwalk but the majority of these trees are generally still young and provide little shade. Other amenities along the boardwalk include fitness equipment and at the south end is a concession stand, with public washrooms and a picnic area. West of Cove Road at the south end of Rotary Cove is an open, grassed area.

Rotary Cove can be accessed via a trail and staircase from Rotary Park, at the top of the bluff. The bluff along this section of shoreline is generally well vegetated, with a diversity of trees and shrubs. A section of the bluff, between Blake Street West and Bingham Drive, has significantly less tree coverage than the surrounding areas.

2.5 South of Rotary Cove

The area south of Rotary Cove is characterized by the narrowing of the shoreline and shore cliffs to the Town of Goderich's southern municipal boundary. Immediately south of the end of Cove Road, the shoreline is rocky

Immediately south of the end of Cove Road, the shoreline is rocky with armour stone extending south along the shore, approximately 240 m past the footbridge and outlet for the Goderich Wastewater Treatment Plant. The area between the footbridge and the south end of Cove Road is utilized as a dog run.

The shoreline transitions to shore cliff, approximately between Bethune Crescent and Coast Drive. A section of this area of shoreline has recently been regraded as part of a subdivision development. Further south, to the municipal boundary, the shore cliff includes gullies. This area of the shoreline is prone to erosion at the toe of the slope.

3 INVENTORY OF COASTAL ASSETS & AREAS

The Goderich Shoreline Area encompasses numerous natural, recreational, and infrastructure assets. For the CEP, an inventory of major facilities and assets was undertaken for each shoreline area. The intent of this inventory is not to identify each and every asset in detail, but to provide an overview of the general features of each area.


- Maitland River
- Maitland Marina
- Goderich Harbour
- Riverwall
- Breakwaters
- Snug Harbour

Maitland River & Goderich Harbour



- South Pier
- Concrete Boardwalk
- Playground
- Sand Beach
- Parking areas
- Park space
- Concession building with washrooms/changerooms
- Stair access from Lighthouse Park

Main Beach




- Pavillions
- Public washrooms
- Parking areas
- Rocky beach
- Armour stone groynes and shoreline protection
- Wooden boardwalk
- Mature trees
- Goderich Water Treatment Plant
- Dog-friendly
- Stair access from Sunset Park

St. Christopher's Beach




- Wooden boardwalk
- Parking
- Fitness equipment
- Concession stand and public washrooms
- Rocky beach area
- Sand beach area
- Playground
- Stairway access from Rotary Park
- Grassed Parkland
- Beach grass areas

Rotary Cove



- Armour stone shoreline protection
- Leash-free dog area
- Goderich Wastewater Treatment Plant Outfall
- Steep shoreline bluff

South of Rotary Cove



4 RECOMMENDATIONS

The following section summarizes a series of municipal recommendations related to maintaining and improving natural areas, education opportunities, access to the shoreline, existing and potentially new facilities along the shoreline, and strategies or approaches for addressing climate change-related impacts. The recommendations are intended to be actionable at the municipal level and independent of each other so that they may be implemented as resources allow.

4.1 Maintaining and Improving Natural Areas

Areas of the Goderich shoreline have been significantly altered from their natural state related to economic purposes, such as the development of the Harbour, as well as protecting vital infrastructure such as the Water Treatment Plant. Much of the shoreline consists of areas that are actively managed by the Town, however the shoreline bluff maintains natural tree coverage. The establishment of beach grass and dune areas at Rotary Cove are important natural features that should be improved and maintained.

The following recommendations may be implemented to maintain and improve natural areas, reduce pollution, and improve water quality.

- Consult with approval agencies (e.g. Maitland Valley Conservation Authority) prior to implementing shoreline projects and obtain any required permits and approvals.
- Obtain professional advice for environmental projects as needed.
- Utilize native perennial species in garden spaces and planters and discourage the use of invasive, decorative plantings.
- Continue efforts to restore and protect beach grass and dune areas.
- Monitor shoreline area for invasive species (e.g. phragmites) and remove if found.
- Limit tree removal along the bluff. If removal is required due to a hazard, leave the rootball of the tree and if possible, plant a replacement tree.
- Limit tree trimming around stairs to only what is necessary.
- Identify areas along the shoreline where additional tree planting can occur. Plant native tree species.
- Consider permeable pavement when rehabilitation of existing parking areas is required.
- Plan and plant drought tolerant gardens to deter geese.
- Monitor and maintain existing shore protection measures.
- Continue to close Cove Road south of the Water Treatment Plant in the winter to reduce salt usage. Limit salt usage on Cove Road as much as possible.
- Support continued environmental efforts at the Goderich Harbour through the Green Marine program.
- Evaluate garbage and recycling generated at the beach, especially during the peak summer season to ensure there is a sufficient number and size of garbage, recycling and organic waste collection bins. Consider opportunities to optimize collection locations and/or increase the size of bins or utilize underground bins to reduce littering and overflows.
- Consider if biweekly beach grooming is necessary and if manual spot raking would be sufficient. Explore opportunities to work with local groups to “adopt a beach” or to reduce the frequency of grooming (e.g. seasonal grooming)

- Encourage residents to utilize rain barrels and other stormwater retention to reduce stormwater flows over the bluff.
- Explore opportunities to utilize dredge material for shoreline replenishment south of Rotary Cove.
- Encourage private property owners along the bluff to maintain and replant trees.
- Ensure there are sufficient garbage and waste disposal facilities at the Town owned boat launches.

4.2 Education Opportunities

The shoreline as a destination for residents, locals and tourists provides an opportunity to educate the public on Lake Huron, the local shoreline and how to protect and enhance what we are privileged to have access to.

- Explore opportunities for signage regarding garbage and waste disposal – identifying sites, acceptable materials, the impacts of littering on the shoreline.
- Provide additional website information and social media posts on activities that are allowed and not allowed at the beach, where dogs are allowed or must be leashed.
- Consider opportunities to showcase the environmental features of the beach and explore opportunities for signage regarding the importance of beach grass, dunes and shoreline health.
- Consider additional educational opportunities for residents to reduce stormwater runoff on their properties.
- Explore opportunities for signage regarding water quality for swimming - where and how water quality is tested, where results can be found or checked, and general rules of thumbs for water quality.
- Look for opportunities to collaborate with local environmental groups to share resources, promote educational opportunities and events (e.g. Yellow Fish Road, children’s events,
- Encourage and support environmental activities (e.g. beach cleanups, “bring a beach chair” lectures, etc.)
- Consider an “adopt a beach” program.
- Consider developing education material regarding the Lake Huron shoreline in a storyline along a section of boardwalk.

4.3 Access & Wayfinding

In recent years, the Goderich shoreline has seen an increase in the number of people utilizing the area. In response to the increasing pressure to access shoreline areas and the range of amenities available, the following actions are recommended for improving access and wayfinding.

- Include wayfinding maps for the shoreline area on the Town’s website.
- Brochures and website information should include where accessibility features (e.g. MOBI mats, water wheelchairs) are available.
- Consider developing a beach brochure available at the tourism office and local shops.
- Continue to monitor trails and stairs for hazards and maintenance needs to ensure access to the shoreline.
- Block vehicle access from sensitive shoreline areas i.e. parkland, beach and dune areas.

- Clearly delineate desired pathways from parking areas to beach areas and the boardwalk.
- Monitor the shoreline for new access pathways and discourage the establishment of new access pathways.

4.4 Existing and New Facilities

The shoreline area of Goderich has established facilities and infrastructure. Many of these facilities, such as the Harbour and boardwalk, are important features of the Goderich shoreline. The following are recommendations relating to existing municipal services and new facilities that may be proposed in the future.

- Limit further expansion of hard and impermeable surfaces along the shoreline.
- Monitor and maintain existing shoreline protection measures in the vicinity of the Water Treatment Plant and Wastewater Treatment Plant outfall.
- Evaluate opportunities to support canoe, kayak and paddleboard launch facilities at Rotary Cove.
- Limit new concessions (food or market stands) to the Main Beach area where there is sufficient infrastructure to support them. Encourage seasonal stands that can be removed for the winter season.
- Consider opportunities for traffic calming along Cove Road.
- Limit further disturbances of the shoreline bluff by discouraging ad-hoc paths and limiting further staircases.
- Consider a monitoring program for bluff vegetation and development of a program to address replanting to ensure the bluff stays vegetated over the long-term.

4.5 Climate Change

Climate change will impact local temperatures, change the frequency and intensity of precipitation and storm events, and influence lake levels. Within Huron County, it is expected that climate change will result in higher annual temperatures, additional heat waves, warmer winters, decrease the extent and duration of lake ice and have more extreme variations in high and low lake levels. Climate change is a significant global issue and following recommendations are measures to help mitigate the local impacts.

- Explore and identify where additional trees can be planted along the shoreline, specifically in parkland, near the boardwalk and near playgrounds to provide shade. Where trees cannot be planted, shade structures could be considered.
- Plan drought resistant plantings in gardens and planters.
- Areas currently maintained as grass lawns may need to be reconsidered in the future in response to drought conditions. Native meadowlands or tall grass prairie type plantings may be more suitable under future hotter and drier conditions.
- Pursue opportunities to enhance shoreline protection for vital infrastructure (i.e. Water Treatment Plant, Wastewater Treatment Plant outfall).
- Utilize GIS to monitor shoreline erosion/shoreline changes.
- Budget for increased costs related to storm damage to shoreline infrastructure.
- Invest in reducing and slowing stormwater flows to the Lake, as well as reducing inflow and infiltration into the wastewater system to minimize the potential for overflows during storm events.

- Prepare for changes in erosion rates and locations as lake levels vary.

5 RESOURCES

There are a number of environmental resources available and these documents should be reviewed prior to implementing any changes to shoreline policies or projects.

- Huron County Climate Projections https://www.huroncounty.ca/wp-content/uploads/2025/12/Climatic-Projections-Summary-Graphic_Accessible-2025.pdf
- Lake Huron Forever Pledge https://www.goderich.ca/en/town-hall-and-services/resources/Environment/Lake-Huron-Forever-Pledge_Final.pdf
- Maitland Watershed-Based Resource Management Strategy https://mvca.on.ca/wp-content/uploads/2024/10/Watershed_Strategy-Oct_11_2024.pdf
- Climate Change Declaration <https://www.goderich.ca/en/town-hall-and-services/resources/Documents/Climate-Emergency-Declaration-Accessible.pdf>
- Maitland Valley Source Protection Plan <https://www.sourcewaterinfo.on.ca/portfolio/maitland-valley-source-protection-plan/>
- Maitland Valley Conservation Coastal Resiliency Project <https://storymaps.arcgis.com/stories/df3e455a37804e7fa3df38b707d5d4e9>
- Maitland Valley Conservation Shoreline Regulations and Policies <https://mvca.on.ca/wp-content/uploads/2016/12/Regs-Policy-Manual.pdf>
- Lake Huron Stewardship Guide for the Lake Huron Coastline https://www.lakehuron.ca/files/ugd/697a03_d8d0d24c96204ef498726ed06edc0f4b.pdf
- Goderich Port Management Corporation Environmental Policy https://www.goderichport.ca/Port_Corporation/uploads/files/GPMC_Environmental_policy.pdf
- Goderich Port Management Water and Land Pollution Prevention Plan https://www.goderichport.ca/Port_Corporation/uploads/files/WaterLandPollutionPreventionPlan.pdf
- Town of Goderich Waterfront Master Plan <https://www.goderich.ca/en/town-hall-and-services/resources/Documents/By-Laws/Waterfront-Master-Plan-Final-Report1.pdf>


All of which is respectfully submitted.

Yours very truly

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