

Foreshore Inventory Management Planning

Submitted by Georgia Peck, Program Coordinator, Lake Windermere Ambassadors

Lake Windermere is known for its breathtaking views, important history and year-round recreational opportunities. It provides a home to bird species including, common loons, ospreys, great blue herons, and bald eagles. It supplies critical habitat to burbot, large-mouth bass, rainbow trout, northern pikeminnow and more. Mammals, including muskrats and beavers take advantage of the calm waters. Sensitive plants such as water marigold and stiff-leaved pondweed can be found in the shallow waters of the water's expansive body. In addition to important biodiversity, Lake Windermere provides a home to full-time and part-time human residents, as



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well as a calming escape to thousands of visitors per year. Humans and nature coexist on Lake Windermere, monitoring efforts to track these interactions and the lake's potential impacts are needed. A variety of habitats can be found in and around it, one of which is the foreshore. The foreshore can be defined as the parcel of ground between the water's edge and cultivated land or the space between the high-water mark and the low-water mark. The foreshore can provide habitat to both aquatic and terrestrial plants and animals as well as an opportunity for human interaction — many times in the form of construction, such as docks and boathouses.

From 2006-2009 Foreshore Inventory Management Planning (FIMP), formerly known as Sensitive Habitat Inventory Mapping (SHIM), took place on Lake Windermere to gain insight into foreshore habitat values and the impacts of human activities can have on this critical space. This process was intended to help stakeholders, decision-makers, local agencies, organizations, provincial and federal governments, and property owners gain perspective on their surroundings and the importance of proper management practices.

In August of 2006, the East Kootenay Integrated Lake Management Partnership (EKILMP), including members from the Department of Fisheries and Oceans, Ministry of Environment and Wildsight, conducted an inventory of the foreshore of Lake Windermere. The inventory's purpose was to collect information on shoreline morphology, land use, riparian zones conditions, and visibly present human alterations, including docks, retaining walls, boat launches, railways, marinas, and boathouses. This work was completed using GPS technology, digital videos and a keen research eye. Results revealed that over 50% of the lake foreshore included human alterations such as vegetation removal, construction or development. Despite these potential impacts, nearly half of Lake Windermere's foreshore remains undisturbed, providing critical habitat for various biodiversity.

The information collected in 2006 has provided the Lake Windermere Ambassadors with baseline data and

have resulted in programs that have aided the Ambassadors in foreshore-related planning, outreach and education, and a foreshore development protection plan, which provides recommendations and identifies guidelines for foreshore development and enhancement. More information can be found in the Lake Windermere Management Plan.

The Lake Windermere Ambassadors, in partnership with Living Lakes Canada, will redo the FIMP in 2020. The information collected will help gain insight into landscape-level changes that have occurred over a 10 year time frame and will give us a better understanding of the impacts a growing population has had on our surrounding environment. The objectives of this project are to test re-FIMP procedures by Living Lakes Canada's Foreshore Inventory Mapping for Aquatic Species at Risk Project, to gain insight into changes on the Lake Windermere foreshore and the impact of land use on fish and wildlife habitat and to update management plan to improve the foreshore of Lake Windermere.

The field data collected, including insight from First Nations Traditional Ecological Knowledge, will help guide policy and management practices and educate individuals within the community. The overall goal of this project is to improve information concerning foreshore health. It will help elucidate species at risk habitat requirements for Upper Columbia Basin waterbodies to conserve and restore the highest ecological value. Fieldwork has begun on Lake Windermere, with support from Living Lakes Canada, the Shuswap Indian Band and additional contracting agencies.

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