

Shoreline Erosion at Gabriola Sands Provincial Park

Recent visitors to Gabriola Sands (aka Twin Beaches) Provincial Park may have observed significant erosion to the shoreline at Pilot Bay. This is a recurring issue caused by winter king tides combined with strong south-easterly winds. Rising sea levels are undoubtedly also playing a significant role. Gabriola Land & Trails Trust (GaLTT) wrote to BC Parks in 2019 to report earlier shoreline erosion at this location and to request that steps be taken to mitigate future damage. No action was taken.

The recent damage prompted GaLTT to write a further letter to our MLA, Doug Routley, in January to express our frustration with BC Parks' continued inaction to address this ongoing issue. We received a rather disappointing response from the Assistant Deputy Minister responsible for BC Parks which acknowledged that: 1) shoreline erosion is being observed in many coastal provincial parks; 2) costly shoreline protection measures have been undertaken at some locations; and 3) there are limited resources for shoreline protection measures and BC Parks has prioritized other parks at this time.

The shoreline erosion is occurring at the same Pilot Bay location where GaLTT is currently completing significant accessibility improvements for people with mobility challenges. Ironically, that work is being partially supported by a Park Enhancement Fund grant from BC Parks! The improvements being made to the trails, picnic table, and toilet by GaLTT volunteers will be at risk if action is not taken soon to prevent further shoreline damage.

Our provincial politicians apparently expect Gabriolans to simply stand by and watch as this precious, narrow strip of parkland between the parking lot and Pilot Bay is slowly lost to the ocean. Yes, sea levels are rising, but doing nothing to protect this popular park doesn't seem like an appropriate response.

So what can you do? Firstly, you can write to our MLA (doug.routley.mla@leg.bc.ca) to strongly express your opinion that "doing nothing" to address recurring shoreline erosion at Pilot Bay is not acceptable. Secondly, you can make a charitable donation to GaLTT so that we can offer to participate with government in enlisting the expertise of a coastal engineer to assess the problem and to identify shoreline protection options in accordance with Green Shores principles. GaLTT has been told that an engineering assessment is a pre-requisite to embarking on any mitigation work. Donations to GaLTT can be made online (www.galitt.ca) through CanadaHelps. If they wish, donors may direct funds to "Improvements for Shore Access: for people with mobility issues." GaLTT plans to seek funding to expand our current accessibility work at Gabriola Sands to the Taylor Bay side of the park, which will also require a coastal engineering study prior to designing and installing a universal access ramp to the beach.

Rob Brockley
President, Gabriola Land & Trails Trust
(250) 247-9467