Working together towards improving Ontario's beaches and coasts

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Why Do Beaches and Coasts Matter?

- Environmentally
- Socially
- Economically
Environmentally

- Beaches are important habitat for many species: plants, fish and animals
- Link in chain of coastal processes

Photo credit: Ministry of Natural Resources
Socially

- Beaches and coasts important in defining “sense of place”
- Source of community pride and “personality”
- Democratic, multi-generational, multi-cultural
- Encourage recreation, sports and activity
- Key public perception measure of environmental quality of Great Lakes
How many people go to the beach?

- Estimated number of Great Lakes US beach swimmers = 8 million people per year, 80 million swimming days per year
- Wasaga Beach, 2 million visitors per year
- Chicago beaches, 27 million visitors per year
Economically

- Recreational value of Ontario’s Great Lakes beaches $200 to $250 million (Krantzberg, 2008)
- Value of US Great Lakes beaches range $1.1 to $1.4 billion (Saikh, 2004)
- Average day at the beach estimated at $30- $50 per person
Powerful local economic engine

- Large local spinoffs to community
- Total economic impact of beach visitors on Wasaga Beach local and region - estimated $80-100 million and 890 jobs and $25 million in tax revenues (Tourism Strategy, 2007)
Investing in Beach Improvements is good business

- Ontario estimated mean cost of 1 person getting sick from gastro enteritis approx $1,089 (Majowicz, 2006)

- Willingness to pay for 20% reduction in beach closures/postings is $2.74 per person per visit = $2-3 billion dollar benefit to improve our beaches (Austin, 2007)

- Other co-benefits from increased property values = approx $2 billion (Austin, 2007)
What can we learn from others?

- Beaches programs in US and globally: Chicago, Racine, Presque Isle etc.
- Increasing funding of BEACH Act in US
- Great Lakes Restoration Initiative- 100 beach proposals, $20 million
- Sanitary survey
- Dune acquisition
- Great Lakes Beach Association
Challenges:

- Water Quality
- Climate Change
- Increasing population pressure
- Beach and Coast Management
- Coordination
- Communication
- Making a business case for investment

Photo credit: Ministry of Environment
How can we work together to improve Ontario`s Beaches and Coasts

- Build on what we already have:
  - Many exciting projects underway
  - Established partnerships in some areas
  - Increasing interest in nearshore science
  - Increasing public pressure to improve conditions
Identify Gaps

Analyse what we are missing:

- Recognition that beaches and coasts are treasures
- Beach and coast vision
- Good business case for investment
- Stable source of funding
- Common understanding of sources and nature of challenges and solutions
- Integrated, nested multi-jurisdictional strategy
- Effective communication and coordination
Together plan a new path forward:

- Creation of a provincial beach hub
- Discussion of a beach strategy for Ontario: monitoring, management, collaboration, communication
For more information...

- GLSLCI website: [www.glslcities.org](http://www.glslcities.org)
- Conference Milwaukee June 16-18, 2010
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